



weekly worker

Daniel Bensaid and the failed perspectives of the Mandelite Fourth International

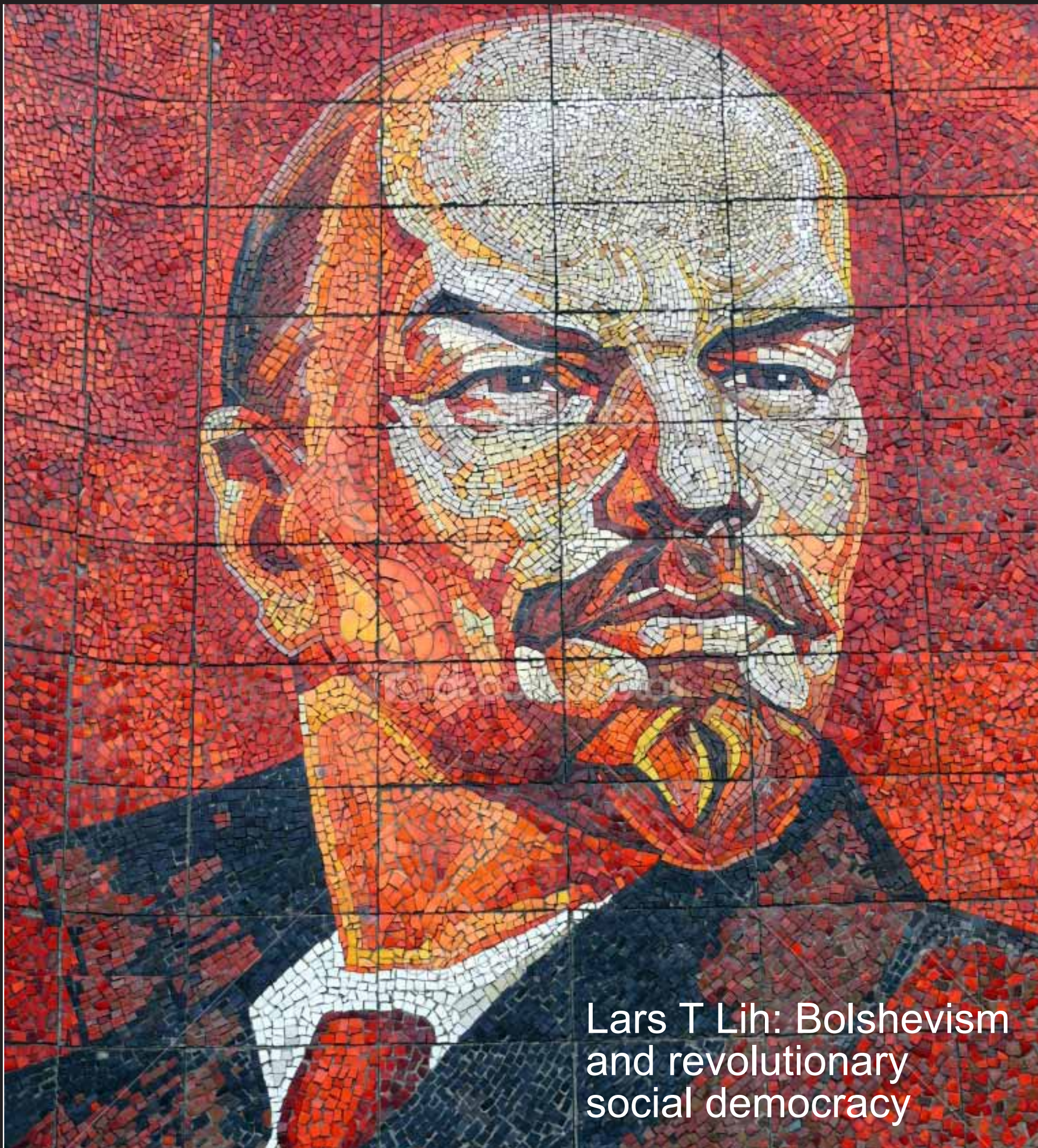
- Sex workers
- Scottish referendum
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Lars T Lih: Bolshevism
and revolutionary
social democracy

LETTERS



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

Stop sneering

Overall, Tina Becker did quite a good summary of the main decisions at PCS national conference ('Reality behind the fighting talk', May 31). Sadly though, when it came to describing my contributions, she was rather less good.

To reduce my contribution to the debate on the voluntary strike fund levy to my seemingly only saying, "People who collect the money might dip into the pot" is disingenuous. I mentioned PCS reps having enough to do without expecting them to continually ask low-paid members to make further donations and face the demoralising effect of members saying, 'Not this month - sorry' in front of others. I asked who decides what selective action should be taken - by whom, for how long? I mentioned the climate of austerity cuts and pointed out that the need for the maximum fightback of many unions demands much more than the odd selective action here and there by PCS.

Next, Tina moves to the motion from the NEC that seemingly simply called for closer working relations between PCS and Unite. Tina opines that it was really about preparing the ground for a merger. She makes no mention of my speech, but it was I who said that every delegate I had asked about this motion instantly said, "Merger"! It was I who then challenged Mark Serwotka to state whether he was in favour of a merger and whether it was true he will be general secretary of a merged union once Len McCluskey leaves in three years time (that's the rumour going around). We needed to hear what the NEC position on Unite's affiliation to the Labour Party is. Would the merged union ballot members on disaffiliation or would PCS members have to accept affiliation as the price to be paid for such a merger? Mark was a little rattled and, although he didn't answer my questions fully, assured conference this wasn't about a merger.

Tina correctly assesses the failure of the PCS 'Make your vote count' campaign to exert any real pressure on politicians (*How* should we make it count? PCS never suggests who members should vote for once they've had replies to the questions put to candidates). However, she will not know that I had submitted two emergency motions concerning the campaign. One argued that we should go beyond only standing our own candidates "in exceptional circumstances" and "only to achieve publicity for our campaign aims" to actually trying seriously to get anti-war, anti-cuts candidates elected to shake the main three parties out of their arrogant complacency. The other argued that PCS should actually recommend to members who they should vote for. But these were not debated, as the standing orders committee, dominated by the Socialist Party in England and Wales, X-marked them as not being emergency motions (I had argued that George Galloway's shock success had produced new circumstances since the deadline for motions in January).

Whilst Tina can point out that things look a little grim now for a successful pensions fightback, she didn't give PCS credit for calling for unity or mention that it was Labour-affiliated unions that were the first to desert the battlefield. There'd never have been the biggest action since 1926 on November 30 if PCS had been affiliated to the Labour Party. We'd all still be wasting our time trying to pull Labour left instead of striking.

Finally, another NEC motion was

not mentioned by Tina, concerning a 'review' of what effects independence would have on members in Scotland. Once again I was the only opposer, stating that this motion was really arguing members should vote for independence, but that Scotland was not an oppressed nation by any Marxist analysis, and that you cannot weigh up the consequences of independence without dealing with whether it is under capitalism or socialism.

I readily agree with Tina's assessment that there is very little opposition at PCS conferences due to the SPEW dominance of the executive and amongst activists. But I try, Tina!

By the way, the Democracy Alliance electoral pact (Left Unity and PCS Democrats) once again easily won nearly all the NEC positions, with the rightwing '4themembers' losing a couple of places, but finishing far ahead of the Independent Left. There was the usual pathetic turnout of around 10%. Once again, I came bottom in the elections despite (or because of) my oppositional stance at conference, being beaten by all other independents, including total unknowns! I am not universally hated though - delegates often say they vote for me and cannot understand why I do so badly!

It seems to me that the CPGB main players seem to be in ivory towers, looking down at strikes and protests, and commenting that they're all a waste of time really, while those involved below look up and say, 'At least we are doing something here and now!' I sympathise with both sides. I can see why various tactics will probably not succeed overall, but feel we need to fight on nevertheless and see who else may join in.

Why not try to be a little less antagonistic to the efforts of other left groups to get anything off the ground? Analysis by all means, but rather less sneering, misrepresentation and gloating! But at least you publish the annoyed letters! The *Weekly Worker* is the best publication on the left for airing different opinions and polemics.

Dave Vincent
Manchester

State of denial

Instead of relating the facts about Rochdale, which presumably are politically unpalatable to liberal leftists, Paul Demarty led his reader on a wild goose chase of apologia ('The abuse of abuse', May 17).

The overall tone of Demarty's piece can be noted in that there is not one word of compassion for the sexually abused girls and the whole article is geared to minimising the crimes committed. Demarty informs us: "It is the most tantalising myth to circulate around the far right in the last decade - the notion that there exist gangs of Muslims who groom and sexually abuse vulnerable young white women."

Demarty's implication here is that to expose the reality of what is happening automatically places one on "the far right". It is a classic case of blaming the messenger. When one of the girls reported in 2008 that she was being abused the police did not believe her. We have seen a similar pattern in the cases of those abused by Catholic priests. People simply did not want to believe them: the consequences were too awful to contemplate. However, as the case has shown, far from being a 'myth', the abduction and rape of white women by Pakistani Muslims is an established fact. These men, "inculcated with the most barbaric ideas", to use Christopher Hitchens' phrase, obviously view the young girls as white trash.

In an example that contradicts his argument that Muslim rape gangs are a "myth", Demarty refers to a television

documentary 10 years ago that was praised by the BNP. The implication here being that one should never have the same view as the BNP. This is the line that was pushed by the unctuous Labour MP, Keith Vaz, when he was interviewed about the Rochdale verdicts. Obviously the intention is to stifle any debate. Well, the BNP - some of them anyway - are against Westminster democracy and, from a somewhat different perspective, so am I. If that is capitulating to the BNP, so be it. The argument is pathetic and totally untenable.

Demarty then leads us on a magical mystery tour covering Trevor Phillips, multiculturalism, his perceived inadequacy of professionals working in this area, *The Guardian* newspaper and so on. He says: "As long as class society persists, we can be certain: there will be more such horrors to come." Whilst accepting that the fundamental contradiction is the presence of capitalism, one cannot accept that all sorts of reactionary behaviour are to be left unchallenged until capitalism is overthrown.

In the case of radical Islam - and remember that we are thinking here of some of the most reactionary and backward ideological elements on the face of the planet - it may very well be that they are extremely resistant to change: after all, unlike many 'Marxists', they actually do believe in their doctrine. One could easily envisage radical Islam having to be severely repressed under any new socialist regime.

Ted Hankin
email

No go-to guy

Paul Demarty (Letters, May 31) doesn't like my use of statistics and thinks I "recycle bunkum". The figures quoted in my letter about the Rochdale grooming trial (May 24), Julie Bindel and sexual violence were not based on speculation. They reflect the actual number of women contacting Rape Crisis or the Poppy Project/Eaves.

Maybe there have been many people making estimates of these figures to support their own political agendas, but the fact remains that hundreds of women have identified themselves as victims of trafficking into the sex industry. Notice - they identify themselves as having been trafficked. Thousands more disclose our experience of unreported sexual violence. Do you really believe we are all lying? A ludicrous suggestion.

Please point out where I claim that "half of Britain is dominated by gangs of men involved in the systematic abuse of young girls". I didn't, because it's not true. That doesn't mean there aren't any, though. Nor did I claim "thousands upon thousands of women" are trafficked into prostitution. Nobody knows how many are involved. But tell us - how many would be acceptable? A thousand? A hundred? One? I only referred to those documented at one specialist agency. Paul seems to be under the impression that we should rely on the state to define our own experience and produce accurate statistics of it. Is this a new slant on Marxist analysis? Did I miss a meeting? Is he unaware that the state has its own agenda to impose immigration quotas, whereas feminists have neither the desire nor the resources to do so? If the immigration office misuses research, blame them, not feminists.

Paul refers to my implied affiliation to "liberal, 'radical' feminism". Is he aware that these comprise two distinct and often conflicting strands of thought, neither of which I support? But I'm not so blinkered as to dismiss all research produced by them. He indicates that feminists demand state repression as a solution, but offers

no evidence for this. His claim that feminists view pornography and, particularly, prostitution as violence against women is true. We do, because it is. Paul briefly discusses and dismisses the idea that pornography and 'lads' mags' have any associations with violence against women. He is probably unaware of recent research at the University of Surrey which concluded there was little difference in lads' mags' attitudes to women from those of convicted sex offenders and they therefore do normalise those attitudes and behaviours.

The sex industry marks the conflation of personal libertarianism with neoliberal economics - two buttocks of the same arse. Socialists show no comparable commitment to individual commercial 'choice' in any other sphere. The facts of prostitution include the following: 70% of prostitutes have been in care, 45% were sexually abused as children, around 90% are drug users, 68% fit criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder. Clearly, many would be described as vulnerable by any reasonable person. More than half are subjected to sexual violence.

Please indicate the ways in which you think these women will benefit from their involvement in the 'sex' industry. Do you think the average punter will suddenly develop a deep respect for women if you achieve your dream of decriminalisation?

The forthcoming Radical Feminist Conference has been designated an all-women event because women attending feel more comfortable discussing some issues (eg, sexual violence) without the presence of men. Can you guess why that might be, Paul? And hold that thought when you consider whether Paula Witherspoon, a convicted sex offender now identifying as a transwoman, would be welcome in that discussion. There is no necessity for a biological man to have surgery or hormone treatment before he can be legally considered to be a woman, just the support of one doctor. (We need two doctors to approve an abortion, by the way.) But an invited feminist speaker has been refused entry by Conway Hall because she may offend trans people by her political position on transgenderism. Finally, you mention penis-in-vagina sex. It is true that most mainstream sex researchers identify PIV intercourse as being sexually unsatisfactory for about 75% of women. It can lead to sexually transmitted infections more easily passed male to female, pregnancy and childbirth (both carry risks for women), and is frequently a feature of sexual violence as a weapon of war. But you are apparently mystified why anyone would criticise its ideological dominance.

The observant reader will note that my statements are supported by research, not mere opinion or "wild distortions". In that sense they can be considered statements of fact. Paul states that his refusal to accept the validity of this research does not mark him out as "a card-carrying hater of women". It certainly doesn't mark you out as the go-to guy for women's liberation.

Heather Downs
Medway

Sectarianism

I think Mike Macnair misses the main point of my letter (April 19) in relation to the Labour Party and building a mass workers' party.

Mike says: "The quotation [from the *Communist manifesto*] makes clear that comrade Bough's inference does not follow. The society is in process of change, and in consequence the dominant ideas are themselves in process of change: the process of change raises up negations to them

and they do not go unchallenged" ('Overcoming the enemies within', May 17).

But my argument does follow precisely from this! Material changes in society do indeed proceed "behind men's backs" and produce changed social relations and changed sets of ideas. But the point is precisely what kinds of social relations, and what ideas? It is the implication from Mike's argument here that tends towards "determinism", not mine. The implication of his statement above is that the "negations" are in some way inherently socialist, but it is that which does not at all follow.

As Engels makes clear in his letter to Bloch: "... history is made in such a way that the final result always arises from conflicts between many individual wills, of which each in turn has been made what it is by a host of particular conditions of life. Thus there are innumerable intersecting forces ... which give rise to one resultant - the historical event." And the result of all these "intersecting forces" can just as easily be workers arriving at reactionary or simply bourgeois reformist ideas as revolutionary socialist ideas. In fact, they are more likely to be led to the former than the latter, because the former by their nature tend to be reproduced and reinforced by the daily life of the worker. It is precisely for this reason that Marx based his ideas on fusing revolutionary ideas with the mass movement.

It's in that context that I was arguing, "A workers' party can act via a dynamic, dialectical interaction with the class to stimulate the class struggle, but it cannot substitute for it." In other words, the workers' party - and, more specifically, the Marxists within that party - can help the workers to draw out the lessons of the experiences they go through, and from that can attempt to direct them towards appropriate solutions. These in turn change the material conditions - ie, new cooperative and democratic forms - which enhance the workers' position *vis-à-vis* capital, and which in the process also replace the conditions the workers daily face of a competition of all against all, which lead them to the adoption of those reactionary or reformist ideas. And, of course, the extent to which the workers are able to advance on this basis, and to develop their party, their trade unions, etc, these too form a change in the material conditions existing in society.

Mike continues: "In the first place, 'Marxists do not believe in a parliamentary socialism' muddles the difference between, on the one hand, the belief in a socialism introduced within the framework of the constitution; and, on the other, the idea that communists winning an electoral (not necessarily a parliamentary) majority might be a decisive moment in the end of today's 'capitalist old regime'."

I don't think it does muddle the two. I believe the Marxist position remains that the bourgeoisie would launch an all-out attack on the workers and their party long before any truly revolutionary party was able to win any such election. More importantly, to the extent that such an election victory was not based upon an extra-parliamentary mobilisation of the working class and the establishment of alternative organs of workers' power - ie, unless this was a situation of dual power and the government was essentially a workers' government - then such a government would certainly be swept away.

When Mike says, "The task of 'legitimising the actions of the workers' therefore involves efforts both to create workers' press and media, and to delegitimise the existing constitutional order", what is this other

than changing the material conditions within society? And, if this workers’ press and media really is to belong to the workers and achieve those aims, it must actually be the workers who own and control it, and not some sect - however large - substituting itself for them.”

Mike continues: “It [the Labour Party] is a long-established institution controlled by a professional bureaucracy, deeply committed to the British constitution and hence against workers’ democracy.” Which is, of course, true. But it is no more true than it is of the trade unions. So what would Mike conclude from that? Should we then adopt a Luxemburgist approach that relies on the kind of spontaneous arrival at socialist ideas that is inherent in Mike’s argument above?

Mike says: “The problem with this narrative is that it is flatly false history. Outside Britain, the German Social Democratic Party was created when the 1875 fusion of ‘Eisenachers’ and ‘Lassalleans’, which Marx and Engels opposed, gave the fused group the ‘critical mass’ to go beyond thousands to tens of thousands.”

But I was not suggesting that a mass workers’ party could only be built by the trade unions. I was suggesting that Marxists had to go to the mass of the workers wherever they were! In Britain, it was in the trade unions and the liberal clubs. Actually, it’s not true that Marx and Engels opposed the fusion of the Eisenachers and the Lassalleans. Marx opposed the Gotha programme, which he believed gave unnecessary concessions to the Lassalleans, but he commented that “Every step of real movement is more important than a dozen programmes”. And in his preface to *Anti-Dühring* Engels makes clear that his main concern for writing it was to minimise the damage to the newly unified organisation that a sectarian split might cause.

But the main point is that the development of the SDP fully conforms with the argument I have put forward. Yes, a mass party was built, but what were the ideas that it pursued? In reality, the ideas that dominated the party were the same ideas that dominated the British Labour Party - Lassallean statism and Fabian reformism. In practice, SPD politicians were not as radical as even this programme would suggest, and the reality also was that, although the party on paper had membership in the millions, the vast majority of the membership were inactive, with local branches being dominated by a small core. The limitations of that were most stark when, in 1914, the party voted to line up with its own bourgeoisie, a position which again only reflected the nationalist sentiment that dominated the German workers, and which again demonstrated the power of the material conditions in shaping their ideas even against the counterweight of such a large workers’ party.

Mike is also factually incorrect when he claims it was “the Georgist electoral movement Engels recommended to Florence Kelley Wischniewsky”. Engels did no such thing. Quite the opposite. In the US preface to *The condition of the working class*, Engels commented: “And it seems to me that the Henry George platform, in its present shape, is too narrow to form the basis for anything but a local movement, or at best for a short-lived phase of the general movement.” And, in his letter to Florence Kelley Wischniewsky, he makes his opposition to sects like George’s even clearer, writing: “The great thing is to get the working class to move as a class; that once obtained, they will soon find the right direction, and all who resist ... will be left out in the cold with small sects of their own.”

As for Mike’s comments about the Social Democratic Federation and Independent Labour Party, I

think they are equally misplaced. I don’t think it is at all true that it was pressure from sects like the SDF or ILP, let alone their electoral success, that led the TUC leaders to set up the Labour Party. I think it was genuine rank and file pressure from the actual working class, alongside the need to address the attacks that were being waged against them in parliament and in the courts, which brought that about. As Engels pointed out, the Tories were themselves using Hardie to split the Liberal vote, and financed his 1892 election campaign. And, in 1895, when the ILP stood 28 candidates, all of them, including Hardie, were defeated. As for the SDF, I have elsewhere - <http://boffyblog.blogspot.co.uk/2008/06/1905-reform-and-revolution.html> - described the role played by one of its members, John Ward, who was one of the first Labour MPs, but moved increasingly rightward, recruiting Labour battalions as part of the intervention forces against the Bolsheviks.

Mike says that the CPGB’s position is “to change the relationship of forces both within and outside the Labour Party by uniting itself to fight openly for Marxist politics”. The left’s “refusal to do so is a matter of the subjective choices made by small groups due to a false conception of the ‘revolutionary party’”.

Mike’s conceptions of ‘sect’ and ‘sectarianism’ are completely misplaced. An organisation of one may not be a sect or sectarian, whereas an organisation of a million can be! What makes an organisation sectarian is the fact that it places its own interests above those of the class as a whole. It is not sectarian to remain independent of other sects, and to refuse to join with them, if doing so would mean being tied to their own sectarian attitude to the class. The first responsibility of a Marxist is to the class and its interests.

That means doing whatever can be done to assist the class in its own self-organisation and self-activity, irrespective of the inadequate basis on which it does that at any particular stage. That was why Engels advised the US socialists to work inside the Knights of Labour, and thereby to try to raise its level up. It was the same approach he and Marx took in respect of the workers and the German Democrats, and later in their attitude towards the unification of the Eisenachers and Lassalleans.

If sections of the left can unite, then that is good, but only on the basis of a non-sectarian attitude to the existing working class and labour movement, including the Labour Party.

Arthur Bough
email

No free speech

Perhaps CPGB comrades were naive in thinking it was just a question of turning up at Tower Bridge on Sunday to sell a few papers and badges and hand out agitational literature as part of the demonstration organised by Republic at the queen’s silver jubilee pageant. However, security around City Hall that Heathrow would have been proud of prevented us from doing just that.

The authorities were determined that nothing but the tameest of opposition could be tolerated and this came from the liberal Republic group, which had compliantly negotiated before the event to be allowed a presence in a small, cordoned area. They had agreed to be on their best behaviour, even going so far as to wear name badges to identify themselves to the police and security. We were allowed to join them, but were told that we could not do so much as hand out a leaflet - not even to Republic supporters - as we were on “private property”.

Obviously this clampdown goes deeper than mere security to protect the royal family: it is about freedom of

speech and basic democratic rights. On the day there was to be only one voice permitted - that of the monarchist establishment. Private property or not, *The Sunday Times* and *Sunday Mail* were on sale, with free flags being handed out to customers. Others were selling all sorts of merchandise festooned in red, white and blue. Everyone was encouraged to join in the hullabaloo and opposition to the ‘dear leader’ had to be portrayed as coming from only a handful of killjoys.

The state has demonstrated once again that the right to protest is not permanent. We saw this with the ‘pre-emptive’ arrests before last year’s royal wedding and we will see it again, I guarantee, leading up to the Olympic Games.

Shawn Carter
East London

Linke update

I see that at the annual conference of the German left party, Die Linke, on June 2-3, the east German ‘reformer’ (read: rightwinger) Dietmar Bartsch lost his attempt to take over the leadership and pull the organisation further to the right. He got 45.2% and lost to the little-known Bernd Riexinger, who achieved 53.1% (there were also two other candidates).

Riexinger’s main claim to fame is his close friendship with Oskar Lafontaine, the former German finance minister who left the Social Democrats (SPD) to help form Die Linke. Lafontaine, who has moved steadily to the left and is now your archetypical left Keynesian, withdrew his candidature for the top job after Bartsch was not prepared to stand down. Instead, Lafontaine sent his ally into the race - in the knowledge that a victory for Riexinger would be seen as his own, whereas a defeat could have always been blamed on the latter’s lack of profile.

Riexinger, a long-standing organiser in the Verdi trade union, was supported by the more radical left (including the sister organisation of the Socialist Workers Party, Marx21) and all those who are opposed to actively pursuing government coalitions with the SPD - something that Bartsch and his followers, who are mainly located in the east, openly advocate. The left quite rightly argues that as a minority within such a government, the Linke would inevitably have to carry out attacks on the working class. Which, of course, the party has already proved more than once - for example, when it entered a coalition with the SPD in Berlin and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.

That does not mean that Lafontaine and his supporters are principled enough to oppose such government coalitions outright - they have formulated so-called “red holding lines” that “cannot be crossed by the party”, but these do not rule out participation in a capitalist government *per se*. Nevertheless, the left was right to support Lafontaine (and now Riexinger), as Die Linke has reached something of a crisis point.

The party still has a culture of open debate and allows political platforms to operate openly (although, incredibly, it still does not have its own newspaper and so public debates can only be held via the bourgeois media). But the two wings of Die Linke might not keep it together for much longer. Apparently, the conference was characterised by open hostility, with delegates shouting at each other and speaker after speaker complaining of the “hateful” atmosphere. When the result of the leadership elections was declared, the left spontaneously starting singing ‘The Internationale’ - but with a twist, according to the magazine *Der Spiegel*: they replaced one of the lines with *Ihr habt den Krieg verloren* (‘You have lost the war’), which is normally reserved for neo-fascists on demonstrations.

Tina Becker
Sheffield

ACTION

CPGB podcasts

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

London Communist Forum

Sunday June 10, 5pm: Weekly political report from CPGB Provisional Central Committee, followed by open discussion and *Capital* reading group. This week: Vol 1, part 1, section 4. Caxton House, 129 St John’s Way, London N19. Organised by CPGB: www.cpgb.org.uk.

Radical Anthropology Group

Tuesday Jun 12, 6.15pm: ‘Avebury: from pillar to post’. Speaker: Lionel Sims. St Martin’s Community Centre, 43 Carol Street, London NW1 (two minutes from Camden Town tube). Organised by Radical Anthropology Group: radicalanthropologygroup.org.

National Shop Stewards Network

Saturday June 9, 11am: Conference, Friends Meeting House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1. Speakers: Bob Crow (RMT), Mark Serwotka (PCS), Kevin Courtney (NUT). Organised by National Shop Stewards Network: www.shopstewards.net.

Stop the EDL

Saturday June 9, 12 noon: Rally, Broadfield Park, St Albans Street (off Drake Street), Rochdale. The EDL is trying to exploit the sex abuse case by gathering in Rochdale. Organised by Rochdale Unity: 07903 586191.

European unity

Saturday June 9, 3pm: Meeting, ‘The fragmentation of the euro zone and the unification of the peoples’, North London Community Centre, 22 Moorfield Road, Tottenham, London N17. More in formation: vasacan@yahoo.com.

Vis-a-Visibility

Sunday June 10, 3pm and 7pm: Community theatre production about the lives of LGBT disabled people, People Show Studios, Pollard Row, London E2. Wheelchair-accessible, with BSL interpretation and sur-titles. Free tickets available. A Vis-a-Visibility production: tickets@visavisibility.org.uk.

Carnival of Dirt

Friday June 15, 11am: Demonstration. Assemble steps of St Paul’s cathedral, St Paul’s Churchyard, London EC4. Come dressed in black to show solidarity with those paying with their lives for resisting western mining and extraction corporations. Funeral procession to London Metal Exchange. Organised by Carnival of Dirt: www.carnivalofdirt.org.

Refugees Are Welcome Here

Saturday June 16, 12 noon: All-Scotland demonstration. Assemble George Square, Glasgow G1. Stop the evictions, end destitution, no dawn raids! End detention and deportations now! Organised by Glasgow Campaign to Welcome Refugees: glascamref@gmail.com.

Defend our pensions

Sunday June 17, 5.15pm: Fringe meeting, Unison local government service group conference, Trouville Hotel, Priory Road, Bournemouth. Sponsored by Tower Hamlets Unison: john.mcloughlin@towerhamlets.gov.uk.

Battle of Saltley Gate

Friday June 22, 7.30pm: UK première of *The battle of Saltley Gate*, South Birmingham College, Digbeth Campus, Floodgate Street, Birmingham B5. Tickets: £8 (£4 concessions). Banner Theatre production: mailout@bannertheatre.co.uk.

Unite the Resistance

Saturday June 23, 11am to 4.30pm: Conference - ‘Austerity and resistance’, Bloomsbury Baptist Church, 235 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2. Speakers include Mark Serwotka, John McDonnell MP. Organised by Unite the Resistance: <http://uniteresist.org>.

Keep Our NHS Public

Saturday June 23, 9.15am to 4pm: AGM, followed by conference for NHS supporters: ‘Reclaiming our NHS’, Friends Meeting House, Euston Road, London NW1. Organised by Keep Our NHS Public: www.keeppournhspublic.com.

Resisting austerity

Wednesday June 27, lunch break: Fringe at Unite policy conference, restaurant, Brighton Centre, Kings Road, Brighton BN1. Organised by United Left: unitedleft.org.uk.

Defend Council Housing

Saturday June 30, 12 noon to 4pm: National meeting, Sheffield Trades and Labour Club, 200 Duke Street, Sheffield S2. Organised by Defend Council Housing: info@defendcouncilhousing.org.uk.

Labour Representation Committee

Thursday July 19, 8pm: Public meeting, Ruskin House, 23 Coombe Road, Croydon. The radical alternative to austerity. Speaker: John McDonnell MP. Organised by Greater London LRC: milesbarter@yahoo.com.

CPGB wills

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

ECONOMY

Last-chance saloon closing for business

Spain's 'total emergency' could bring down the entire euro zone, argues Eddie Ford

"Single currency gloom goes viral" - so went the headline to an especially downbeat editorial in the *Financial Times*, a newspaper to be avoided these days if you are after a cheery read (June 1). The universally gloomy economic news is reviving unfortunate memories of late 2008 and the collapse of the once mighty Lehman Brothers, which sent the world's major economies into a tailspin - and only massive state intervention by a reluctant George Bush saved the day for the global financial/banking system.

But this time round the stakes are, if anything, even higher - a potentially catastrophic break-up of the euro zone itself which triggers an unprecedented global slump. Yet the capitalist ruling class as a whole seems paralysed by the pace of events, seemingly unable to come up with any viable plan or strategy to save *their* system. Instead, locked into a state of near permanent crisis management, they jet from one carbon-unfriendly summit to another - going precisely nowhere. Giving the unfolding story an air of tragic - or farcical? - inevitability. In the words of one online broker, "When the tide is this strong, there is no point in swimming against it: simply get in your lifeboat and hope for the best." An almost perfect summation of the bankrupt capitalist system, seemingly drifting towards the abyss.

Grim data

Billions were wiped off stock markets in a panic sell-off between June 1 and 4 as investors responded to the relentlessly grim data about the state of the world economy - everywhere you look things are bad. The markets were particularly spooked by the deteriorating performance of the US and Chinese economies, the supposed economic powerhouses that would come to the rescue of capitalism.

Hence the jolting news that just 69,000 jobs were created in the US last month, meaning that unemployment went *up* by one percentage point from the last quarter to 8.2%. This naturally increased fears that weak demand from crisis-hit Europe is directly hitting US businesses and growth prospects in general. Of course, these statistics conceal even greater human misery. Almost half of the 8.2% without a job are long-term unemployed and thus may find it a lot harder to return to work when - and if - the jobs eventually come back.

But the situation for US workers is even worse than that when you consider that the official unemployment rate only includes those who have 'actively' looked for a job - or are deemed to have done so - in the previous four weeks. Therefore the so-called underemployment rate, which includes part-time workers who would prefer to work full-time as well as people who have simply given up looking for work, remains extremely high at 14.5%. It almost goes without saying that the number of temporary workers has significantly increased, indicating that bosses are reluctant to take on permanent staff, and that hourly earnings rose by a mere 1% - showing that most of the jobs created are insecure, low-paying, positions.

There was more gloomy US economic data over the last week, as it emerged that orders for new factory goods was down for the third time in four months. Consequently the manufacturing PMI index for May registered at 53.5 points, a decrease of 1.3 when compared to April's reading of 54.8 (a reading above 50 indicates that the manufacturing



Gathering: one hell of a storm

economy is generally expanding; below 50 indicates that it is generally contracting). Overall, according to the commerce department, GDP in the US rose just 1.9% in the first quarter - significantly slower than the 3% reported in the fourth quarter of last year.

Then there is China. 'Normally', if you can use such an expression about China, the country can be relied on to produce rocketing, official growth figures that put a broad smile on the faces of 'official communists' and corporate capitalists alike. Not any more, it seems. China's services sector, which accounts for almost 43% of China's total economy, saw its pace of growth slow down considerably in May - leading the non-manufacturing PMI index to drop to 55.2 from the 56.1 in April.

That news comes just days after Beijing reported a sharp drop in activity in its manufacturing sector during the month. Thus the PMI for manufacturing fell from 53.3 to 50.4 in May, its lowest in five months. Yes, it was the Chinese PMI's sixth straight month above the 50 level, but the index fall highlights a clear slowing of growth momentum. Other official economic data for May appears to confirm this trend. The sub-index for output fell 4.3 points to 52.9, while the new orders sub-index was down 4.7 points to 49.8, signalling an outright contraction and a continued fall in economic growth.

Needless to say, European economic data goes from bad to worse, to even worse. The euro zone's jobless rate has now hit a record high of 11% and is only set to get higher and higher. Europe's service sector, quite predictably, has suffered its worst monthly decline in almost three years. The Markit Group reported that Germany's service sector barely grew in May, when its PMI score was 51.8 - but that is positively booming compared to France (45.1), Italy (42.8) and Spain (41.8). The euro zone's private sector shrank at its fastest pace since June 2009. At only 46.0, May's 'composite' PMI for the euro zone area was the fourth month in a row to show a marked contraction. Even Germany's output fell, although at a slower rate than the rest of the euro zone. Take comfort from that if you wish.

Meanwhile, in the UK, which relies, of course, on the rest of Europe for almost half of its exports, the PMI slumped from 50.2 to 45.9 - the second steepest fall in its 20-year history. With the economy already in a double-dip recession, Bank of England governor Sir Mervyn King has warned that the UK will not remain unscathed with the euro zone "tearing itself apart" - so we might see another round of quantitative easing and a further cut in interest rates.

Perhaps more critically still, the very latest economic data shows that the real money supply (ie, cash and

overnight deposits) for China, the euro zone, Britain and the US has been contracting rapidly since the early spring - a sure sign that a full-blown global recession is in the offing. Such facts help to explain why commodity prices are falling hard, with Brent crude down to a 16-month low of under \$97 a barrel.

Anger

Unsurprisingly, there is mounting anger in some sections of the North America political establishment - and amongst the Asia elites - over the chronic failure of the European governments to harness their vast resources to contain the bushfires that have broken out in Greece and now Spain. With each radical *inaction* taken, the crisis steadily escalates.

Capturing this sentiment, George Soros, the notorious billionaire investor, declared on June 3 that Germany only had three months to save the euro or risk the destruction of the European Union and a "lost decade". In his assessment, Greek voters were likely to elect a 'probailout' government on June 17, but no future government could meet the conditions insisted upon by the European Commission, European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund troika. Meaning that the Greek crisis, as far as Soros is concerned, is "liable to come to a climax" in the autumn. By that time, however, the German economy will also be weakening so that the Angela Merkel administration will find it "even more difficult than today" to persuade the German public or taxpayer to shoulder any further European responsibilities - such as effectively bailing out Greece or the dysfunctional Spanish banking system through a new system of 'mutualised debt' (ie, Eurobonds). Therefore, for Soros, this creates a three month's "window" within which the German government and the Bundesbank have the opportunity - if they show leadership - to do something serious to save the euro.

Yet there is still no sign of *any* sort of coherent plan being adopted - whether in German governmental circles or elsewhere. Rather, we had what was widely billed as an 'emergency' teleconference between G7 finance chiefs on June 5. Curiously though, given the enormity of the crisis, they could not even be bothered to issue a joint statement afterwards. All we got was an incredibly bland statement from the US treasury saying that the G7 ministers and governors "reviewed" developments in the global economy and the "policy response under consideration", including the "progress towards financial and fiscal union" in Europe - a development that is more imagined than real, as things stand now. Amazingly, Japan's finance minister, Jun Azumi, told reporters in Tokyo that the possibility of Greece leaving the euro zone was not even

discussed during the teleconference - despite the fact that the rest of the world is endlessly talking about it and, more to the point, *planning* for it to one degree or another.

More upfront, British officials described the G7 teleconference call as a "stocktaking session" ahead of the upcoming G20 summit on June 18-19 in Los Cabos, Mexico - another meeting about a meeting. Apparently, a blueprint for a "federalised" euro zone will be unveiled at Los Cabos. Having said that, we might have to wait until an EU summit scheduled for the end of June to see more details. Though it would be inadvisable to hold your breath until then, we do read that Paris and the EC - maybe heeding Spain's pleas for an EU rescue of its banks - have voiced strong support for a euro zone "banking union". The scheme, insofar as there is one, could see national debt and banking liabilities pooled - then buttressed in turn by the financial strength of Germany. If established, this banking union could use the EFSF/ESM to inject cash into collapsing banks - direct payments of this nature being impermissible under the existing rules.

As part of the deal, the respective euro zone governments will have to surrender sovereignty over their budgets and fiscal policies to a centralised euro zone authority. You could even call it, approvingly or disapprovingly, an outline for a United States of Europe. "You can't demand Eurobonds but not be prepared for the next step in European integration," Merkel sternly but logically argued over the weekend, contending that "no-one outside will lend us money any more" without seeing moves towards greater union - politically, economically and fiscally.

And on June 6 the EC also unveiled proposals designed to stop taxpayers' money being used to bail out failed banks, the stated aim being to ensure that losses are borne mainly by bank shareholders and creditors as opposed to you and me. However, as is always the way with such things, new legislation to this effect is unlikely to come into force before at least 2014. Under current conditions, however, that is almost an age away and, given the dismal track record so far of all the various 'blueprints' and 'plans' to save the euro, it is impossible to escape the feeling that it is far too little, far too late - if it happens at all. There are only so many times the world leaders can enjoy a drink at the last-chance saloon before it closes for business.

Total emergency

Inevitably, tensions are surfacing again within the euro-bureaucracy. Olli Rehn, the EC vice-president, told journalists at the beginning of the week that use of the EFSF/ESM to bail out lenders was a "serious possibility" - adding that it was imperative to "break the link between banks and sovereigns". However, there is no evidence whatsoever that the German government is willing to abandon its veto on such action. For Merkel, barring a Damascene conversions, the proposed banking union - and closer banking supervision - is a "mid-term goal".

Similarly, the German finance minister, Wolfgang Schäuble, strongly emphasised that anything which "resemble Eurobonds" are for the "distant future" - no matter how desirable that lofty goal might be. There are no quick fixes. Playing hardball, Schäuble bluntly asserted that "it's up to national governments [like Spain] to decide whether they want to avail themselves of

aid" - as "the rules prescribe". And Spain is now a country which in the opinion of Felipe González, the former prime minister, is in state of "total emergency". In fact, González claimed, Spain is facing the "gravest danger" since the end of the Franco dictatorship.

He might have a point. International market confidence in Spain has drained away since Mariano Rajoy, the prime minister, announced plans for a €23.5 billion rescue of Bankia, the country's fourth biggest lender. Of course, feeding into the mix, a raft of other Spanish banks are also struggling under toxic property loans - part of the poisonous legacy generated by the implosion of the property market in 2008. Spain's borrowing costs have soared to some 6.7% for 10-year government bonds with the risk premium for 'safe haven' German bonds reaching a euro-era record. For example, German two-year bond yields at one stage went *negative* for the first time in history - meaning investors are effectively paying Berlin in order to have the pleasure to lend money to it. A totally unsustainable position.

The markets are on tenterhooks, as Madrid plans to issue €1-2 billion worth in 10-year debt on June 6 in a key market test. There is every possibility that Spanish yields will reach the same sort of levels that compelled it to launch a €1 trillion liquidity blitz last November - only to find itself back in the same position after six months. So what will the ECB do this time? Andrew Roberts, credit chief at Royal Bank of Scotland, said that "nobody" is dealing in short-term Spanish debt at present because they are "expecting imminent ECB intervention". But if such help does not arrive and Spanish yields hit 6.8% and more, "we're going to see a hyperbolic sell-off". Meanwhile, Spanish tax revenues have collapsed, replicating the pattern in Greece. Fiscal revenues have fallen 4.8% over the last year and VAT returns have slumped 14.6%, while the cost of servicing debt has risen by 18%. Do the maths yourself.

Clearly, the central Spanish government cannot afford to bail out the banks. Economists at US bank JP Morgan have estimated that Spain might require a bailout of €350 billion, of which €75 billion needs to be directly pumped into the ailing banking sector. Rajoy needs and wants a bailout of some description, which has to come from what he termed "European institutions". Cristobal Montoro, Spain's finance minister, openly admitted that the credit markets were "effectively shut" to his country.

Yet Rajoy is desperate to avoid requesting a full-scale 'official' bailout from the troika, or similar bodies, due to the humiliating and *politically destabilising* conditions that would be attached to such funds. Just look at Greece which *at best*, from the viewpoint of the euro establishment, will on June 17 essentially reproduce the results of the May 6 parliamentary elections - continued electoral stalemate and a fundamental constitutional crisis, if not a developing revolutionary situation (some opinion polls have Syriza with a narrow lead over New Democracy). Definitely not what the Rajoy government wants. Hence he told the Spanish senate that Europe must underline the "irreversibility" of the euro by agreeing a "common banking union" and the introduction of Eurobonds. But will Merkel blink? ●

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OLYMPICS

End harassment of sex workers

Prostitutes are being targeted in the run-up to the Olympic Games. Simon Wells reports

Sex workers in east London are facing victimisation in more ways than one leading up to the Olympic Games. There is an unholy alliance between, on the one hand, the government-driven police ‘clean-up’ operation and, on the other, often well-meaning victim support groups. The harassment leading up to the games is opposed by, among others, sex worker cooperatives such as x:talk, the English Collective of Prostitutes and John McDonnell MP, who are calling for a moratorium on the arrest of sex workers.

These arrests are based on the erroneous claim that big sporting events lead to an increase in trafficking for sex. However, there appears to be no evidence of this. Reports by the Swedish Development Agency, the German government, the Sex Work Education and Advocacy Taskforce (Sweat) and the Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women all contradict the idea that trafficking for sex increases when major sporting events take place. In fact a report commissioned by London mayor Boris Johnson criticised the police for failing to find the expected victims of trafficking in the run-up to the games. Andrew Boff, the author of the report, *Silence on violence*, writes that the information gathered “demonstrates that police have been proactively raiding sex establishments without complaints nor significant intelligence that exploitation is taking place”.¹

The Christian Brothers Investment Services has garnered the support of Olympic sponsors, including major airlines, soft drink manufacturers, hotel and car companies to stop “the issue of trafficking from blighting this summer’s games”.² The group has also written to the International Olympic Committee, claiming: “Some reports indicate that the potential for trafficking victims for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation and/or slave labour increases at major sporting events.”³ However, as far as I can ascertain, this is nothing but an uncorroborated assertion. I can find no hard facts linking trafficking with major sporting events - organisations such as the Anti-Trafficking Alliance seem to rely on



Against criminalisation

very flimsy circumstantial evidence from newspaper reports, etc to support their claim that ‘targeted campaigns’ are necessary. There again, I suppose the ATA has to be seen to be doing something to justify its National Lottery funding.

In fact there is no evidence that large numbers of women are forced into sex work against their will, whether or not there is a major sporting occasion. In a letter to the *Weekly Worker* Heather Downs asks: “Who were the almost 2,000 (about five a week) women who contacted the specialist support Poppy Project” in relation to “trafficking into the sex industry”?⁴ But in 2008 the Puppy Project was accused of employing “unethical” methodology - its “mode of data collection and analysis” was “seriously flawed”. PP was accused of “conflating fears over trafficking with general prostitution” and Dr Belinda Brooks-Gordon of the University of London commented: “You can’t just churn out political propaganda and say it’s research.”⁵

Despite the lack of evidence, allegations of trafficking - including

sensational stories in the media about ‘thousands of prostitutes’ descending on the five Olympic boroughs⁶ - have led to demands that ‘something should be done’. This is similar to the myth that 40,000 sex workers would descend on South Africa for the 2010 football World Cup⁷ (for a start, where would they be accommodated?). But, disregarding the truth, the mainstream media provide a script for local residents wishing to complain about “soliciting, street drinking, littering and public sex acts”⁸ - a melange of undesirable behaviour which gives the green light for a clampdown, which began towards the end of last year. In November and December the Metropolitan Police arrested 21 women for loitering and prostitution.⁹ The ‘something must be done’ attitude also opens the door for vigilante groups in those boroughs to target sex workers, with women too scared to report attackers for fear of being arrested or harassed themselves.

Scotland Yard’s trafficking unit has received £500,000 from the government for its ‘clean-up’ drive.¹⁰ As a result there have been numerous raids on targeted premises (the borough of Newham alone has seen the closure of 80 alleged brothels¹¹), combined with the imposition of strict bail conditions and anti-social behaviour orders - in short the complete reversal of the previous police attitude towards sex workers. In reality this clampdown has nothing to do with trafficking.

For the sex workers themselves all this has created a climate of fear, forcing women to take more risks to avoid arrest - for instance, going underground or moving away from areas and resources they are familiar with. This atmosphere has been aided by the moral panic created by an alliance of faith-based groups and various NGOs, who see themselves as akin to anti-slavery campaigners. For example, the Liberal Democrat Christian Forum suggests: “Just as in Wilberforce’s day, we need modern-day activists who will mobilise their communities on this issue.”¹² Items such as the BBC documentary, ‘Trafficked: sex slaves seduced and sold’, have fed into such campaigns.¹³

The clampdown has been justified by the bourgeois commentariat’s portrayal of all sex workers as victims pure and simple: the choices that female sex workers make are regarded as forced upon them in every case. And clergymen - such as cardinal Peter Turkson, the head of the Vatican’s Office for Justice and Peace, no less, and archbishop Patrick Lynch of Southwark - have offered to use church resources to help the ‘victims’ (although when Turkson equates human trafficking, and by implication all prostitution, with terrorism you have to call into question the priorities of these people).¹⁴

Sections of the left, while mostly opposing police moves against sex workers themselves, favour action against men who use their services. The Socialist Workers Party at least does not go along with that, stating: “... while prostitution exists we should support all attempts to make it safer for the women involved. This means challenging the hypocrisy of the government and the sexism of the society we live in.”¹⁵ But the SWP argues that sex work and the oppression of women has to be understood in the context of the capitalist family unit and the commodification of sex in the marketplace. As such it blames capitalism for normalising the sex industry, leading to a situation where women have no control over their own bodies. The SWP also believes that sex workers are all victims pure and simple.

It would be very easy therefore to see the SWP joining an alliance with the likes of the Liberal Democrat Christian Forum. And this is what it did when it was the main force within Respect, campaigning for the closure of lap-dancing and strip clubs in the London borough of Tower Hamlets back in 2006-07.¹⁶

The communist response is different. We say that people who choose sex work - whether they are migrants or not - do so overwhelmingly because they have to make a living and pay the bills at the end of the month. As such sex work should be treated like any other work under capitalism, and the laws

controlling it should be abolished, so that the problems associated with it that are currently kept under wraps by virtue of prostitution’s semi-legality - violence, trafficking and exploitation - can be exposed to the light of day.

What of ‘trafficking’? Many people pay huge fees to illegal gangs for the ‘privilege’ of being smuggled to the developed capitalist countries. Extortionate rates of interest are levied, adding to the debt of such migrants. Should the debtors default, the gangsters resort to blackmail, threats and outright violence directed against the migrants themselves or the families they have left behind. Measures to prevent them entering the country do little to deter the illegal trade, instead driving even more migrants into the hands of the gangsters and slave labour operators.

We should support the call for a moratorium on arrests, but go further. If the state did not insist on maintaining its inhuman border controls, there would be no illegal trafficking, and the current police clampdown would be seen for what it is. Communists demand the ending all immigration controls. Every human being must have the right to travel, visit, live and work where they choose ●

Notes

1. <http://glaconservatives.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/03/Report-on-the-Safety-of-Sex-Workers-Silence-on-Violence.pdf>.
2. <http://blueandgreentomorrow.com/2012/05/10/investment-coalition-demands-anti-trafficking-and-slavery-measures-ahead-of-the-london-olympics>.
3. *Ibid*.
4. *Weekly Worker* Letters, May 24.
5. ‘Big Brothel research “seriously flawed”’ *The Guardian* October 3 2008.
6. Waltham Forest, Hackney, Tower Hamlets, Newham and Greenwich.
7. See www.newint.org/blog/2012/02/01/sex-trafficking-rumours-at-olympics.
8. *Newham Recorder* April 4.
9. *Ibid*.
10. *The Independent* May 12.
11. www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-17588665.
12. <http://ldcf.net/web/?q=node/53>.
13. BBC News, May 22.
14. *The Tablet* May 11.
15. ‘Prostitution: the government put women in danger’ *Socialist Worker* February 26 2008. The same phrases have appeared in other articles on the subject.
16. See ‘SWP puritanism’ *Weekly Worker* January 11 2007.

FORUM

Challenging media monopoly

Donnacha DeLong, president of the National Union of Journalists, addressed a CPGB London Communist Forum on ‘Lies, Leveson and a progressive alternative’ on June 3. Also speaking was *Weekly Worker* writer James Turley.

Comrade DeLong argued that it was there has been an overload of information from the Leveson enquiry, but it has produced enough headlines to clearly illustrate the depths of corruption that not just News International, but the political establishment as a whole, is capable of. What is even more telling, said comrade DeLong, is the number of lies that have been told under oath - which only confirms the standard of depravity. One particularly huge whopper came from the lips of Rupert Murdoch, who told the enquiry that he has never asked a politician for anything.

The challenge for Leveson, thinks comrade DeLong, is how he is going to put together a coherent

report from the plethora of lies and facts. However, even if it ends up as yet another whitewash, this enquiry will nevertheless serve as a catalyst for change, he thought. A case in point is the Press Complaints Commission, which comprises a “gang of editors”, which, despite the statement on the PCC website that it is “independent of the newspaper industry”, includes Ian Macgregor, editor of *The Sunday Telegraph*, Tina Weaver, editor of the *Sunday Mirror* until her abrupt sacking last week, and Peter Wright, editor emeritus of Associated Newspapers. The particularly insidious tactic by the PCC has been to disallow third party complaints about press articles, so that only the targeted individual can legitimately make representations. Comrade DeLong is of the opinion that an alternative system to regulate complaints will be rolled out soon.

The “vulture capitalism” of the big news groups has “sucked the local press dry”, he said, and there are fewer and fewer regional or

local newspapers of any worth. This is an unfortunate state of affairs, since traditionally there has been a strong link between the national and local press that has sometimes help to produce good journalism. The breaking of this chain of communication has led to such fiascos as the appalling reporting by the local press of the riots last August. A diminishing number of journalists are now expected to produce ‘news’ and the term ‘churnalism’ is used to describe the result. Comrade DeLong believes that in order to end the domination of the big media corporations and broaden the scope of journalism there must be “alternative business” and “community-based” models.

James Turley also talked about the rampant corruption involving interlocking power structures. The collusion between big business and the establishment is endemic and the Leveson enquiry has shed some light on this - the scandal of parliamentary lobbying is yet to be fully revealed,

he predicted. The machinations of David Cameron prove once again that the establishment cannot be trusted to control and pass judgement on the media. That is why the CPGB is opposed to both the PCC and certainly to a more powerful alternative ‘with teeth’. We oppose nationalisation of the press for the same reason - it is madness to seek to hand yet more power and control to the state. Instead we need to look to the working class itself. We need to develop our own powerful, alternative media to end the monopoly of the capitalist class.

Comrades from the floor pointed to the abysmal state of the current working class media - left papers and trade union journals alike are mostly deadly dull. Others said it was an illusion to expect Leveson to come up with a solution to transform the media - surely the proposals that emerged would amount to no more than tinkering.

An experienced media worker told the meeting how he and his

colleagues are forced to work in a highly pressurised and insidious ways. Far from being the noble profession that it was traditionally and romantically said to be, journalism is first and foremost about meeting targets. Young journalists soon have their idealistic aspirations destroyed and disillusion sets in. There is still a myth about the so-called ‘objectivity’ of the media, but decisions about ethics are contaminated by commercial interests. The internet with its unlimited space has not led to the blossoming of contending viewpoints as far as the mainstream media are concerned. Rather, word limits have been rigorously imposed, leading to the further curtailing of journalistic integrity (although comrade DeLong said that the compact size of articles online often results from presentational needs rather than a deliberate attempt to stifle good journalism) ●

Ellie Lakew

LENIN

Bolshevism and revolution

Lars T Lih completes his series of articles on Lenin's view of the party question by examining the context in 1920 of '*Leftwing*' communism

Lenin's pamphlet '*Leftwing*' communism - his last work of more-than-article size - was written in spring 1920 in order to be distributed to the delegates of the 2nd Congress of the Communist International, or Comintern. The message that Lenin intended to send cannot be understood apart from the particular circumstances of this event.

Comintern was founded in spring 1919, a time of great enthusiasm and hope about the possibility of soviet-style revolutions sweeping across Europe. Exuberantly confident predictions were made by Lenin and Grigori Zinoviev that the second congress of the new international would be a gathering not just of parties, but of new soviet republics. Accordingly, little attention was given to the party as such. As Trotsky put it later, the hope was that "a chaotic, spontaneous [elemental or *stikhiyniy*] assault" would mount in "ever-rising waves, that in this process the awareness of the leading layers of the working class would become clarified, and that in this way the proletariat would attain state power in the course of one or two years".¹

Only a year later, the hopes for soviet revolution in Europe had receded - as it turned out, for good. In spring 1920, Comintern leaders were still confident that they were on the eve of a new revolutionary crisis. Zinoviev brought up his 1919 prediction that soviet revolutions would triumph in one year, and remarked: well, not one year, but the European revolution would still happen in two or three years - let the bourgeoisie enjoy their short respite! But the optimism of the 2nd Congress was nevertheless of rather a grim sort.²

In fact, the change in outlook was more than just adding a few years before the expected revolutionary triumph. Bolshevik leaders now realized that, for the time being, Europe had moved out of a revolutionary situation and therefore into a phase in which the only useful activity was preparation for the next crisis. This new diagnosis was not only presented at the congress, but can be found in Lenin's pamphlet - always, of course, with the most positive possible spin.

The essential feature of the new situation in 1920 was that capitalists were jailing communists and not the other way around. Lenin presented this capitalist repression as the last gasp of a terrified bourgeoisie: "Life will assert itself. Let the bourgeoisie rave, work itself into a frenzy, go to extremes, commit follies, take vengeance on the Bolsheviks in advance and endeavour to kill off (in India, Hungary, Germany, etc) hundreds, thousands, and hundreds of thousands more of yesterday's and tomorrow's Bolsheviks. In acting thus, the bourgeoisie is acting as all classes doomed by history have acted."

Nevertheless, the practical bottom line was: "It is possible that in certain instances, in certain countries, and for more or less brief periods, it will succeed in this [repression]."

Lenin also noted the absence of what for him was a key component of a revolutionary situation (especially well exemplified by Russia in 1917): the inability of the normal elites to rule, because they were overwhelmed by a society-wide crisis of some sort. And an even more crucial marker of a non-revolutionary situation was the mood of the "broad masses", who were (Lenin observed with regret) "now, for the most part, slumbering, apathetic,



Lenin: speaking to delegates at Comintern's 2nd Congress

hidebound, inert and dormant."

Lenin's remark about England thus sums up his attitude to the situation in Europe as a whole: "We cannot tell, and no-one can tell beforehand, how soon the real proletarian revolution will flare up there, and *what* immediate cause will most serve to rouse it, kindle it, and impel very wide masses who are at present dormant into the struggle. Hence it is our duty to carry on our preparatory work in such a way as to be 'well shod on all four feet'."

Given this view on the prevailing non- (and only hopefully pre-) revolutionary situation, the focus was no longer on setting up soviets, but rather on the party as a vehicle of revolutionary preparation in a non-revolutionary situation. The question then arises: what kind of party? And Lenin answers: a Bolshevik-type party, as opposed to the philistine, opportunist, careerist parties of the pre-war Second International. The rhetorical contrast between these two kinds of party runs through the pamphlet.

Nevertheless, if we want to understand what *type* of party Lenin is advocating, we have to dig deeper than this rhetorical contrast, for a number of reasons. Lenin's rejection of the *actual* parties of the Second International does not mean he is rejecting its *party ideal*. For example, in my writings about pre-war Bolshevism, I often employ the term 'SPD model': that is, the ideal party best exemplified by German Social Democracy. I show that Lenin was directly inspired by the SPD model when he wrote *What is to be done?* in 1902. Some readers have responded to this interpretation by saying: well, although Lenin may well have been inspired by the SPD model in 1902, he obviously became disillusioned with it later on, as shown by his writings after 1914. But this response overlooks the possibility that Lenin rejected the *actual* SPD precisely because it failed to live up

to the SPD *model* - and indeed I think this is exactly what happened.

Furthermore, the blanket label, 'party of the Second International', overlooks the fundamental fact of the long-standing division within all of these parties between "revolutionary social democracy" and "opportunism". Opportunism won out in the Second International, and therefore Lenin rejects the international as it existed. But this rejection does not mean he is renouncing his long-standing self-identification as a partisan of "revolutionary social democracy".

On the contrary: Lenin goes out of his way in '*Leftwing*' communism to claim that "history has now confirmed on a large, worldwide and historical scale the opinion we have always advocated: that is, that *revolutionary* German social democracy *came closest* to being the party which the revolutionary proletariat required to enable it to attain victory". As the discussion makes clear, Lenin is not choosing sides between Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Kautsky in their disputes after 1909 - rather, he is endorsing the long-term wing of German social democracy for which *both* Luxemburg and Kautsky were the recognised spokespersons up to 1909. (For more on this point, see Lenin's remarks on Kautsky as discussed below.)

Finally, we should note that the main focus in this pamphlet is not 'the party in a revolutionary situation' or, even less, 'the party in power' - topics that underline the contrast with the 'peaceful' pre-war parties - but precisely "the party doing preparatory work in a non-revolutionary situation".

The polemical target of the pamphlet - "leftwing communism" - is defined as the outlook of revolutionary leftists who reject the party in principle at any time. As such, the pamphlet was designed as a contribution to a debate at the Comintern 2nd Congress about "the party principle". A look at this

neglected debate provides essential context for understanding '*Leftwing*' communism.

The purpose of this debate was to reaffirm "the party principle" as such in opposition to the more anarchistic leftists, who were nevertheless seen as valuable additions to the Communist International - *if* they could be taught to see the error of their ways. The Bolshevik leaders were not propagating a "new type of party," as later Stalinist historians had it. They were propagating the party principle *as it had always been understood in the Second International*. Indeed, Zinoviev held up for special ridicule some language used by the 'left' German Communists: we are founding a party (they wrote) but "not a party in the traditional sense". According to Zinoviev, this was "an intellectual capitulation to the views of syndicalism and industrialism that are reactionary".³ This remark of Zinoviev's was incorporated into the official resolution of the congress on the subject - putting the congress on record, as it were, against any talk of a "new type" of party.

Paul Levi (the German communist who was the most important non-Russian delegate to the congress) felt that the whole issue of the party principle was old hat. He objected to "focusing the discussion on a question that the majority of the western European working class settled decades ago". Trotsky objected to Levi's condescension. Now, Trotsky *could* have said something like this: 'Excuse me, but we are *not* advocating the same old party ideal, but rather a new and refurbished one.' In reality, he just defended the anarchist and syndicalist delegates to the Congress as more revolutionary in spirit than many social democrats, even though the latter understood the party principle in theory.

Taking all these factors into consideration, the suspicion arises

when reading '*Leftwing*' communism that Lenin is using the revolutionary prestige of 'Bolshevism' in order to propagate the party principle as such. Of course, Lenin spends more than a few pages going over the history of Bolshevism for the benefit of the foreign comrades. But, when we look closer at this history, we notice that the *specifically Russian* aspects of Bolshevism are missing. Bolshevism arose in Russia primarily as a strategy for an anti-tsarist democratic revolution. According to the Bolsheviks, this revolution would succeed only if the socialist proletariat acted as class leader for the peasantry. This whole scenario is absent from Lenin's historical overview. Indeed, Lenin almost goes out of his way to dismiss the scenario as one that cannot be directly applied to Europe.

Lenin also makes no real attempt to initiate the foreign comrades into the complexities of the factional struggle between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. His lack of interest in this topic can be misunderstood. Lenin writes: "As a trend of political thought and as a political party, Bolshevism exists since 1903." Mike Macnair reads this and similar statements as an historically absurd claim that Bolshevism was already an independent party organisation in 1903.⁴ I read this particular sentence as saying: Bolshevism has existed since 1903, first as a trend of political thought and later as an independent political party. But Macnair is certainly correct that Lenin uses the word 'party' in a very vague way in his historical excursus, so that the reader gets no idea when, how and why the Bolsheviks moved from "trend of political thought" to "political party".

The reason for this is not that Lenin wants to give a misleading impression about the historical evolution of Bolshevism. *He is simply not interested in this aspect of Bolshevik history*. He is not trying to impress on the foreign comrades the importance of purging the opportunists and moving from factional status to party status. He realises how impossible it would be in a short section to give an adequate picture of the ins and outs of the Russian factional struggle, and he does not try - because his big point is elsewhere.

His big point can be put like this: the 'SPD model' is discredited with some justice because the SPD itself has disgraced itself. Nevertheless, it would be disastrous - especially as we are now in a not-yet-revolutionary situation - to reject the model along with the party. To drive this point home, Lenin shows how the model was incarnated in what everybody admitted was a truly revolutionary party: the Bolsheviks. Thus the 'SPD model' becomes the 'Bolshevik model'. The exemplary incarnation of the model has changed - but has the model itself changed?

'Bolshevism' and the party principle

Throughout '*Leftwing*' communism, Lenin sneers at the parties of the Second International as corrupt and degenerate. The question that interests us is: why does Lenin reject these parties? Because they were inspired by a false ideal of what a party should be? Or because they failed to be sufficiently inspired by their own official party ideal - an ideal that Lenin himself explicitly shared in earlier days? I believe an attentive reading of

onary social democracy

the pamphlet unambiguously confirms the second alternative.

To make this case, we need a sense of what the official party ideal was. I take the liberty of going back to my study, *Lenin rediscovered*, which is devoted to Lenin's outlook circa 1902. In this study I coined the term 'Erfurtian' to describe the ideal party of 'revolutionary social democracy' - a model that was the basis of the outlook of Russian social democracy. Erfurt was the town where the German Social Democrats in 1891 held their first party congress after regaining legal status and where they produced the immensely influential Erfurt programme. The influence in Russia of Kautsky's book-length commentary *The Erfurt programme* can hardly be overstated. For all these reasons, 'Erfurtian' seemed an appropriate word to describe the outlook of Russian social democrats such as Lenin.

The essential idea for such a party comes from the work of Marx and Engels. The proletariat has a historical mission to take political power and introduce socialism - but this means that the proletariat must be prepared ideologically and organisationally to carry it out. Thus the historical mission of the party is to provide this preparation - to ensure that the proletariat (to use Marx's own English vocabulary) would be "united by combination and led by knowledge".

This overall conception of the party's mission leaves open the question of the concrete strategy and techniques for carrying it out. These techniques had to be worked out, and here the pivotal figure is Ferdinand Lassalle. Lassalle came up with the idea of a political organisation devoted to carrying out a *permanent campaign* ("legal and peaceful, but unwearied, unceasing agitation") in support of its message. In my view, this project was one of the greatest political innovations of the last century or so, and Lassalle's crucial role in its development has been unjustly overlooked. But I digress. Here I want to bring out the striking unity of tone between Lassalle, writing in the 1860s, and Lenin, writing in 1920.

Lassalle: "Found and publish newspapers, to make this demand [universal suffrage] daily and to prove the reasons for it from the state of society. With the same funds circulate pamphlets for the same purpose. Pay agents out of the union's funds to carry this insight into every corner of the country, to thrill the heart of every worker, every house-servant, every farm-labourer, with this cry ... Propagate this cry in every workshop, every village, every hut. May the workers of the towns let their higher insight and education overflow on to the workers of the country. Debate, discuss, everywhere, every day without pausing, without ending."⁵

Lenin: "The communist parties must issue their slogans; real proletarians, with the help of the unorganised and downtrodden poor, should scatter and distribute leaflets, canvass workers' houses and the cottage of the rural proletarians and peasants in the remote villages ... they should go into casual meetings where the common people gather, and talk to the people, not in scientific (and not in very parliamentary) language, they should not at all strive to 'get seats' in parliament, but should everywhere strive to rouse the minds of the masses and to draw them into the struggle, to catch the bourgeois on their own statements, to utilise the apparatus they have set

up, the elections they have appointed, the appeals to the country they have made, and to tell the people what Bolshevism is in a way that has never been possible (under bourgeois rule) outside of election times ..."

In *Lenin rediscovered*, I provided a check-list of eight identifying features of the Erfurtian outlook.⁶ Let us quickly run down the items of this list with '*Leftwing' communism* in hand.

The first item on this list is "Erfurt allegiance": that is, an explicit statement of loyalty to the SPD model, to the Erfurt programme and to Karl Kautsky as authoritative expounder of the Erfurtian outlook. We can hardly expect to find such explicit statements of allegiance in 1920, given the extreme hostility between Lenin and Kautsky at this point. But the amazing thing is that we actually *do* find very striking affirmations of Erfurtian allegiance - in particular, to "Kautsky when he was a Marxist". Lenin gives a *page-long quote* from Kautsky dating from 1902, and comments with enthusiasm: "How well Karl Kautsky wrote 18 years ago!" And this in a book aimed at readers for whom Kautsky was nothing but a dirty word!

In the Kautsky passage cited by Lenin, we find the following comment: "The Russian revolutionary movement that is now flaring up will perhaps prove to be a most potent means of exorcising that spirit of flabby philistinism and temperate politics which is beginning to spread in our midst and may cause the thirst for battle and the passionate devotion to our great ideals to flare up in bright flames again." Do we need to change a word to make this a summary of '*Leftwing' communism* as a whole? We see that Kautsky in 1902 is *already condemning* the parties of the Second International for degeneration from their own ideal.⁷

In this connection, let us take a look at the full title of Lenin's pamphlet: '*Leftwing' communism: an infantile disorder*'. The standard translation of the subtitle is most misleading in tone, since "infantile disorder" sounds like a dismissive sneer. The Russian original, *detskaia bolezni*, means "childhood disease" and refers to mumps, measles and the like. A translation that brings out Lenin's point better than the standard one is: '*Leftwing' communism: a symptom of growing pains*'. The anarchistic or syndicalist rejection of the party principle is treated as the passing mistake of a rapidly maturing, but genuinely revolutionary spirit.

I bring this point of translation up now because both the metaphor and the underlying argument were first used by Kautsky in *The Erfurt programme*. We can also find in Kautsky's writings the argument that unless social democracy showed a proper revolutionary spirit, impatient workers would not only reject the parties, but the party principle as such. In other words, opportunist revisionism had long been seen as giving strength to anarchist illusions.

In another striking passage, Lenin brags about the "granite theoretical basis" enjoyed by Bolshevism since its inception, a basis achieved by "following each and every 'last word' in Europe and America in this sphere with astonishing diligence and thoroughness". We often hear that after 1914 and his break with the Second International, Lenin came to realise that the entire theoretical basis of "Second International Marxism" was faulty and needed to be revamped from the ground up. Well, if Lenin thought this, he was being very remiss in letting slip this opportunity of exhorting the

congress delegates to rethink basic precepts of European Marxism of the late 19th century. Instead, Lenin shows his pride in the fact that Bolsheviks had so thoroughly assimilated those precepts.

The next item on my Erfurtian check-list is the aphoristic definition of social democracy as "the merger of socialism and the worker movement". The idea behind this formula is that socialism will only be achieved when the mass worker movement accepts the socialist programme, and social democracy is the vehicle for bringing about this acceptance. This theme can be seen reflected in Lenin's insistence in this pamphlet of bringing the message to the workers wherever they are - even if they can only be reached via "reactionary" trade unions and parliaments. Not to undertake this task means neglecting "that function of the proletarian vanguard which consists in training, educating, enlightening and drawing into the new life the most backward strata and masses of the working class and the peasantry".

This last comment brings us to the third item in the check-list: the project of spreading the socialist message by means of expanding circles of awareness. In '*Leftwing' communism*, Lenin sums up these expanding circles in the formula "leaders-party-class-mass". The insistence and confidence that the message will spread to the very wide circle of the non-proletarian "masses", especially the peasantry, is a core feature of what I have elsewhere called Lenin's lifelong "heroic scenario".⁸

Lenin's emphasis on leadership is often seen as a great innovation on his part, but in '*Leftwing' communism*, we find Lenin claiming that *his* point is the one that is "elementary, simple and clear". His opponents, the ones who challenge the need for leaders, are said to be "striving to *invent* something quite out of the ordinary, and in their effort to be clever make themselves ridiculous ... Why do we need all this rigmarole, this new Volapük [an invented language like Esperanto]?"

The next item on our list is the ideal of an independent, class-based political party - one that is centralised, disciplined and programmatically pure. We can certainly say that Lenin and the Bolsheviks put a new emphasis on centralisation and discipline because of the challenges of civil war and state-building - but in so doing they were building on long-accepted values in the socialist movement. Lenin's drive to kick out the "opportunists" should also be seen as based on the old model of a party with a programmatic commitment to a particular message. In the past, the Second International purged itself of anarchists - now it was the turn of the opportunists and the "spineless" centre.

The next three items relate to political goals: political freedom as a proximate goal, party leadership of the whole people, and the 'hegemony' strategy of proletarian leadership of the peasantry. These have a much more complicated relation to Lenin's message in 1920, and constitute a topic I cannot discuss in this essay. The final defining feature of Erfurtianism in my check-list is internationalism, and this, of course, remains as an ideal.

What is to be done? (1902) and '*Leftwing' communism* (1920) can almost be said to book-end Lenin's career. In 1902, Lenin was propagating the European SPD model, suitably modified, for Russia. In 1920, Lenin was propagating the Russian 'Bolshevik' model, suitably modified, for Europe. How far do these models differ?

We have to remember the special focus of '*Leftwing' communism*. Lenin and the other Bolshevik leaders wanted, first, to get across that there was no immediate revolutionary situation in Europe, so that *preparation* was the order of the day; and, second, to bring the more anarchist-minded delegates up to speed on "the party principle". These two goals made them stress those parts of the party ideal that were *in common* between pre-war "revolutionary social democracy" and the new Communist International. The picture would look different if the topic at hand was the role of the party in a revolutionary situation or the role of the party after a soviet-style revolution.

Nevertheless, Lenin's pamphlet helps us understand a basic, if overlooked, historical role of the Communist International: it *preserved the old party ideal* in the new, post-war era. Both the spirit and the techniques of the party-organised permanent campaign became basic to the new communist parties. Of course, the new parties tried to be more militant, less 'careerist', than the old parties. They nevertheless had to confront the same essential challenge and dilemma: being a revolutionary party in a non-revolutionary situation.

Continuity is perhaps even more striking when we look at the techniques of the permanent campaign. In the generation or so after Lassalle, the socialist parties came up with a whole array of innovative techniques: the party-controlled press, the petition campaign, the rally, the political strike, the mass street demonstration with slogans and banners. Even the English word 'demonstration' and the French word *manifestation* acquired their current political meaning around the turn of the century and were explicitly tied to the socialist parties.⁹ The far left has kept these techniques alive and they are still around today, remarkably unchanged. (Will perhaps the social media bring about a real evolution in the techniques of the permanent campaign?)

Thus concludes my three-part

series about Lenin's use of the word 'Bolshevism'.¹⁰ Obviously, 'Bolshevism' is a word that could and still can refer to a wide variety of things. Lenin's use of the word depended on the rhetorical context. In 1912, in a debate that was restricted to the world of revolutionary social democracy, 'Bolshevism' meant a faction that (Lenin insisted) should not be confused with the whole. In 1917, Lenin was forced rather grudgingly to accept the fact that 'Bolshevism' was used by the wide public as a label for the party in general. In 1920, we see Lenin himself using 'Bolshevism' in order to stress not what was distinctive about Russian Bolshevism, but rather the party as an exemplary incarnation of what used to be called 'revolutionary social democracy'.

Despite the changing rhetorical use of the term 'Bolshevism', Lenin's basic outlook did not change in its fundamentals over this turbulent period •

Notes

1. Cited by J Riddell (ed) *Workers of the world and oppressed peoples, unite! Proceedings and documents of the 2nd Congress*, 1920 Atlanta 1991, p27 (translation modified).
2. Sometimes the 2nd Congress is described as "optimistic" because of enthusiasm about the possibility about a soviet regime in Poland. But actual statements about Poland during the congress are more sober and defensive than this description suggests.
3. J Riddell (ed) *Workers of the world and oppressed peoples, unite! Proceedings and documents of the 2nd Congress*, 1920 Atlanta 1991, p147.
4. See 'Both Pham Binh and Paul Le Blanc are wrong' *Weekly Worker* April 6.
5. As cited in LT Lih *Lenin rediscovered* Leiden 2006, p59.
6. The list can be found in LT Lih *Lenin rediscovered* Leiden 2006, pp113-14.
7. Another theme of Lenin's pamphlet is the need for flexible tactics, and "Kautsky when he was a Marxist" is cited as an authority on this topic as well.
8. As described in LT Lih *Lenin* London 2011.
9. KJ Callahan *Demonstration culture: European socialism and the Second International, 1889-1914* (Leicester 2010) brings out this and other fascinating information about the campaign techniques of the Second International.
10. Part one: 'A faction is not a party' *Weekly Worker* May 3; part two: 'How Lenin's party became (Bolshevik)' *Weekly Worker* May 17.

Fighting fund Painless!

We start our June fighting fund with £295 received towards our £1,500 target. Most of that comes in the shape of the many standing orders that land in the *Weekly Worker* account at the beginning of the month. And amongst them I would like to mention the comrades who have just increased their payments over and above the minimum of £12 a quarter for subscriptions. Particular thanks, then, to comrades TB, MM, DG, BG, ET, GW and TG.

But once again I must remind those SO subscribers who have not yet increased their payments that we have had to raise the rate from the old £10 just to cover the new postage charges. We really need you to return those standing order forms double quick.

Of course, this last week was an especially short one, in that there were two bank holidays, which I expect will have held up the delivery of a good number of items - including no doubt one or two SO forms. There were no cheques in the post either - but at

least we could be in for a bumper week next time.

But we did receive two PayPal donations - the usual monthly £30 gift from comrade EJ, plus £3 from BC. They were among the 10,367 online readers last week. I would like to appeal to those thousands - why not follow the example of EJ and BC and get out your credit or debit card? It's simple and quite painless! Better still, we could do with a lot more regular gifts and it's even more straightforward to set up a standing order. Download a form from the website or cut out the one on the back page of the paper. Or, if you have an online bank account, set it up yourself in two minutes. It's account number 00744310 and sort code 30-99-64.

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REVIEW

The Fourth International and failed perspectives

Daniel Bensaïd, Alda Sousa, Alan Thornett and others *New parties of the left: experiences from Europe* London 2011, pp202, £7

Fred Leplat's preface to this book outlines its basic premise. He says that in the last 25 years the rightward evolution of the socialist and 'official' communist parties has changed the political landscape on the left:

"This has opened up a political space to the left of social-democracy which the radical left and revolutionary Marxists have a duty to fill. This task cannot be carried out by these currents simply continuing in their traditional forms without seeking new levels of unity. What is therefore necessary are broad, pluralist parties embracing both the radical and Marxist left to restore independent working class organisation."

As John McNulty comments in his sharply critical review of the book,¹ the general regroupment line comrade Leplat outlines has been that of the Mandeliste Fourth International since the 1980s, though it was given a semi-codified form in 1995. The book is a collection of articles, of varying dates, by Mandeliste authors involved in 'new party' projects. The countries covered are France, Denmark, Britain, Germany, Italy and Portugal. These are bracketed at the beginning by a 'left academic' political science piece by Berthil Videt on new left parties in general, and at the end by the resolution, 'Role and tasks of the Fourth International', adopted at this organisation's 16th world congress in March 2010.

It is clear, therefore, that what the book really offers is perspectives on the 'new parties' question very much from the particular experience of militants of the Mandeliste Fourth International participating in such projects. The book's coverage of European parties to the left of the social-liberals is defined by Fourth Internationalist involvement. Syriza in Greece is absent, since the Fourth Internationalist OKDE-Spartakos (Organisation of Communist Internationalists of Greece-Spartacus) is in the rival and much smaller anti-capitalist coalition, Antarsya. The Netherlands Socialist Party (in origin a Maoist formation) is similarly absent. And so on. Some of these parties are discussed (using academic political science methods) in Bertil Videt's introductory chapter. We should not conclude that the book is worthless; merely bear in mind its limitations.

Limits

A second limitation is inevitable, and hence equally not a criticism of the book. This is that since the outbreak of the crisis of 2008 - a real capitalist crisis with destabilising political effects, as opposed to the 'crises' the far left has talked about endlessly since the 1970s - there has been a fast-moving and unstable evolution of configurations of political forces. The book is in consequence inevitably partly out of date by the time of this (rather belated) review, as will be apparent below in comments on the individual chapters.

Among European parties at least officially to the left of the social-liberals not covered by the book, the most prominent case is that of the strong showing of the coalition-party, Syriza, in the May general election

in Greece and its (so far) continued strength in the opinion polls for the June 17 rerun. Opinion polls in May 2012 in the Netherlands show the Socialist Party running second behind the right-liberal VVD, well ahead of the PVdA Labour Party.² In Spain Izquierda Unida (effectively derived from the old Communist Party) after a long decline revived in the 2011 elections and is now standing at around 10% in opinion polls.³

It should also be said that in several other countries there are surviving communist or post-communist parties which have *not* travelled all the way to social-liberalism and have been able to retain significant shares of the vote in their respective countries. These, of course, do not fall within the subject-matter of this book, which is *new parties*. But the fact calls into question the Mandelites' judgment of the available political space, so clearly expressed by Fred Leplat above.⁴

As I said, none of this implies the book is useless. What it offers us is a series of histories of the experiences of 'soft Trotskyists' in trying to create and build new parties to the left of social-democracy over somewhat varying periods: in chronological order, the Red-Green Alliance from 1989 to 2011; Rifondazione Comunista from 1991 to 2008; various British attempts from 1992 to 2011; the Left Bloc from 1999 to 2011; Die Linke from 2007 to 2010⁵ the Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste project from 2007 to 2010. Within this framework - of the record of FI experiences - it is worth adding João Machado's 2012 'The experience of building DS and the PT, from 1979 to the first Lula government', on the FI's experience in Brazil, which has been published on the *International Viewpoint* website.⁶ The various attempts show some radical diversity, but also some common features.

This review will be in two parts. The first part will examine the individual chapters and the Machado article critically. The second part will try to draw out the common lessons and questions that emerge from these histories.

I will treat the chapters, etc, in a different order from that in which they appear in the book: that is, chronologically in order of appearance of the new parties. The reason is that what has happened first has influenced the choices made later. Hence Brazil comes first, followed by Denmark, Italy, Britain (taking Arthur Scargill's Socialist Labour Party as the starting point), Portugal, Germany and France.

Brazil

The Brazilian Workers Party (PT) is an outlier relative to the European parties discussed in the book for several reasons. It is outside Europe. It was created as, and remains, a workers' party based on the trade unions, like the Labour Party. It has passed from being a left minority party in its early history to being, since 2002, a *governing* party, albeit one which cannot command anything like a majority in the legislature and has to govern in coalition with other parties. In addition, the Brazilian Mandeliste organisation was created *in* the PT; before the formation of the

PT took place, Brazilian Trotskyism was dominated by the Morenista (Argentinian-based), Lorista (Bolivian-based) and Lambertiste (French-based) international Trotskyist trends.

That said, João Machado's article discusses a number of features of the Mandelites' intervention in the PT which reappear in the European cases discussed in the book; and the PT was to a considerable extent a model in the Mandelites' more general thinking about 'class struggle parties' which were 'not programmatically defined between reform and revolution'.

Brazil had been under military rule since a coup in 1964, but with a gradual transition from the mid-1970s towards a parliamentary-constitutional regime, giving rise by the late 1970s to significant openings. The Brazilian left had been dominated by a series of popular front projects more or less animated in origin by 'official communist' ideas, but which in the period of transition from military government rapidly evolved from left rhetoric into centre-right clientelist party formations.

The PT therefore represented a distinct break in the direction of the idea of the independent political representation of the working class. It was based on a combination between a militant steelworkers' trade union leadership round Luiz Inácio da Silva - 'Lula' - with both far-left and 'liberation theology' activists. Lula's personal popularity as a militant was an important part of the mix. The idea of a *workers'* party rather than a new popular front project probably indicates an ideological influence of ex-Lambertiste militants who were involved in the new initiative: the idea of fighting for a workers' party based on the trade unions in countries where there was no workers' party was orthodox Trotskyism, but only taken seriously by the Lambertistes at this period.

The PT remained - and remains - very much a minority party in Brazil's fragmented party system. But by the late 80s-early 90s it was beginning to win local elections, and Lula was achieving respectable results in presidential elections. In the early 90s a split in the central leadership gave the left in the PT temporary control. But Lula's failure to win the 1994 election (as it had been hoped he might) led to a shift towards 'realism', which was to accelerate as the 1990s went on, until in 2002 Lula could win the presidency as a 'safe pair of hands' for capital.

Democracia Socialista was created with 60 members in the period of the campaign in 1979-80 to launch the PT. It grew to around 1,000 members by 1990 and 2,000 by 2002. Within the PT it was in competition with other Trotskyist tendencies, even after the 1992 expulsion of the Morenista Convergencia Socialista for acting as a 'party within a party': part of the failure of the PT left in the early 1990s was its inability to propose a common project. After 2002, DS participation in the Lula government led to a split, drawn out over 2004-05, in which the majority of DS broke with the FI to stay with the PT and in government. Only about a quarter of the group left

the PT, and this segment lost further forces to demoralisation after the split.

Comrade Machado attempts to draw a self-critical balance sheet of the fact that the DS majority broke with the FI rather than with Lula. In essence, the self-criticism comes down to two elements. The first is that the DS was over-optimistic about the political trajectory of the PT. This over-optimism led it to a dual identity: as partisans of the PT and partisans of DS/the FI; and, when it came to the crunch, for the majority the PT identity was more important. The second element is, though FI leaders - Mandel and Bensaïd - warned the DS in 1994 of the dangers of a Lula government and participation in it, the DS leadership did not educate the militants of the party sufficiently on this question.

There are, I think, two other elements displayed in comrade Machado's narrative. The first relates to *political method*, and affects both the conduct of DS in relation to the PT leadership and the conduct of the FI leadership in relation to DS. Both were characterised by *diplomacy*. The Mandelites quite properly want to avoid the denunciatory style of the 'orthodox Trotskyists', in which all political opponents are treated as scabs, and to avoid premature and unprincipled splits. But their alternative turns out to be equally problematic: they sign up to dodgy diplomatic deals on policy, write murky and diffuse documents which avoid giving straight answers to questions, and keep criticisms and differences for private conversations and correspondence. In doing so, they are as much denying the membership access to real debates as people who do so by expulsions and splits. When splits *do* come after such a practice, they are as unclear to broader forces involved as the ortho-Trots' splits.

The second relates to political strategy. What is the Mandelites' *positive alternative* to the reformist policy which is reflected in Lula and his co-thinkers' choices, and those of the majority of DS? So far as it is possible to tell, it is that a PT government should 'adopt a left line of confronting the bourgeoisie and imperialism'. But the blunt fact is that this line is desperately unrealistic. Do the Mandelites want Brazil to introduce generalised nationalisation and autarkic central planning, go break-neck for the bomb and build a large enough navy to defeat a Nato naval blockade? Or simply to default on the debt and crash the economy, *à la* Argentina in 2001 (which, though it has produced widespread occupations and cooperatives, is certainly not a socialist revolution)?

The reality, which is evident all through Machado's article, is that the Mandeliste FI's rejection of international 'democratic centralism' in the 1970s-80s was a rejection of the *international* element of the practice on the ground of 'national specificities', rather than a rejection of the *bureaucratic centralism* which affected the national sections in the peculiar form of diplomacy. As a result, it has involved a move away from facing up to the fact that the *capitalist class* organises on an

international scale and that, hence, 'confronting the bourgeoisie and imperialism' with any hope other than disastrous defeat requires the working class also to organise itself, and to begin to act, on an international scale, or at least on a continental scale. And this means more that a "centre for reflection and exchange, and ... a network of sections" (Machado).

Socialist revolution in a single country under globalisation is as unrealistic a project as 'socialism in one country.' It is therefore unsurprising that the DS majority - forced by real politics to choose between a *sentimental* attachment to the FI and revolution, and the real, if extremely limited, reformism of the Lula governments - should choose the latter.

Denmark

Michael Voss's chapter shows that the Danish case is, in reality, not one of the creation of *new* political space to the left of the social democracy and 'official' communism, since the Danish proportional representation system has allowed significant representation of forces to the left of the Social Democratic Party since the World War II. The Socialist People's Party (SF) was established on the basis of a split to the right from the CP after the 1956 Hungarian uprising. A left split from SF created the Left Party (VS) in 1969. The Mandelites split from VS in the early 1970s to create an independent organisation, which was renamed the Socialist Workers Party (SAP) in 1980.

Enhedslisten (Unity List)/Red Green Alliance was created in 1989 as a regroupment of the CP (of around 4,000 members), VS (of around 500-600) and SAP (of around 100) (p53). This amounted to more than simply the adherence of VA and the SAP to the CP, partly because the CP was going through the crisis created by Gorbachevism; partly because VS and the SAP were able independently to raise sufficient signatures to stand for parliament, forcing the CP to take these small groups more seriously. 'Red-Green Alliance' is merely branding: at the time of the creation of the party there was no Green Party in Denmark, because the existing left had already occupied the space (p54). The party gained parliamentary representation in 1993 by being the only party to oppose Danish membership of the European Union; it continues to boycott EU elections.

Comrade Voss is positive about some democratic aspects of Enhedslisten's internal culture, but remarks that the unity sentiment and anti-factionalism created at the time of its foundation has the effect that there is little open discussion of varying *strategic* perspectives (pp58-60). The party's reaction to the economic crisis has been dominated by Keynesianism (pp64-65) and in Copenhagen local government the party's representatives have been sucked into managing the system (p65).

Enhedslisten made substantial gains in the 2011 general election, and has been since then 'externally supporting' the Danish coalition government of the Social Democratic Party and Socialist People's Party. The

Danish Fourth Internationalists rightly warned in October 2011 of the dangers of this situation;⁶ but that is the most recent news from Denmark in the Fourth International's *International Viewpoint* online magazine.

The English-language *Copenhagen Post* website reported on April 3 this year that Enhedslisten was threatening to vote against the budget and bring the government down if it did not back off on 'welfare reforms' (the vote is not due till the autumn); and on May 7 the Enhedslisten party conference was reported, with the party leadership promising to "push the government to the left"; the leadership was defeated by 202 to 151 on a proposal to abandon the party's existing platform and draft a new one, which delegates feared would be a move to the right.⁷

It looks, therefore, as though 'external support' will prove not to avoid the problem of perceived responsibility for government decisions, so that the Mandelites in Enhedslisten may in the near future be about to confront the choice which was faced by Democracia Socialista in the Brazilian PT under the Lula government. The pull towards supporting the Social Democrat government will be all the stronger because of Enhedslisten's traditional anti-European policy: an attempt to face down the EU through economic autarky or a national policy of 'soak the rich' and Keynesianism is far less plausible for Denmark, a country with a smaller population than Greater London, than it is for Brazil.

Italy

Salvatore Cannavo's contribution on Rifondazione Comunista consists of the first and last chapters of a book he published in 2009: *La rifondazione mancata* ('The failed [or perhaps more exactly 'missed'] refoundation'). This gives it a rhetorical, generalising and broad-brush character, and makes it hard to get clear exactly what lessons comrade Cannavo draws. There is no element of self-criticism of the Mandelites' practice in Rifondazione.

Rifondazione was founded in 1991 by factions in the Italian Communist Party in opposition to the decision of the Eurocommunists to rename the party 'Democratic Left' (now, of course, the 'Democratic Party'). It pretty much immediately absorbed Democrazia Proletaria, which was the 'last man standing' of the large Italian far-left groups of the 1970s (originally a joint electoral list of two of them, the Partito di Unità Proletaria and Avanguardia Operaia). DP had continued in operation through the 1980s, obtaining parliamentary representation with around 1.5% of the votes, thanks to the Italian proportional representation system then in force. By this time DP had absorbed a good deal of the Trotskyist left, including the Mandelites. The latter appeared in Rifondazione as a tendency, Sinistra Critica, and obtained elected representatives in 2006.

It can thus be seen that, though the ex-PCI element of Rifondazione was very much larger in numbers than the ex-DP element, the latter accounted for a substantial element of Rifondazione's share of the vote, which never got beyond 8.6% and was more usually around 5%-6%.

Comrade Cannavo's outline narrative of the history of Rifondazione is broadly a description of a roller-coaster ride, as the party leadership took a series of turns in the hope of a breakthrough beyond single figures in elections - into and out of government in 1996-98, oriented round the 'anti-globalisation movement' of the early 2000s, back into government in 2006-08. Finally the party was effectively destroyed by the fall of the Prodi government (in which Sinistra Critica senator Franco Turigliatto played a significant role,

voting against the government and being expelled from Rifondazione), a disastrous showing in the 2008 elections, and a series of splits.

His critical assessment boils down (I think, since it is not entirely clear) to the propositions that Rifondazione never really settled accounts with Stalinism; that the several PCI factions and left groups that formed it never got beyond their own historical identities; and that Rifondazione *could have* gone for the long-haul project of consistent opposition and building at the base, but instead went for get-rich-quick solutions of one sort or another, which also implied *increasing* apparatus control of decision-making; the combination ended with a split over the question of government.



The Trotskyists in Rifondazione were never able to unite *themselves*, even presenting three platforms when they were all in opposition to government entry in 2006. This is clearly *partly* due to the dogmatic ortho-Trot character of the Ferrando-Grisolia group (now the Partito Comunista dei Lavoratori) and the competing interests of the Mandelite Fourth International, the Argentine-based (Altamira) Coordinating Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International, the (Morenista) International Workers League, and the International Marxist Tendency, in having 'their own' Italian groups. But Sinistra Critica cannot be exempt from criticism here. Its policy in Rifondazione was until a late stage to identify itself as a loyal (or diplomatic) critic of the Rifondazione leadership and take distance from the 'sectarian' Trotskyists who *formally* shared its fundamental political orientation.

Britain

Alan Thornett's and John Lister's article on Britain is largely and quite legitimately a catalogue of failures, which will be too familiar to readers of this paper to need recapitulation. That said, George Galloway's victory in the Bradford West by-election has somewhat revived the fortunes of Respect compared to when they were writing, while the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition's results in the May local elections, though they certainly did not amount to a breakthrough, were on the better end of recent far-left results.⁸

Comrades Thornett and Lister criticise the far left for sectarian pursuit of the apparatus interests of the individual groups (Socialist Workers Party, Socialist Party in England and Wales), and manoeuvrism; and Scargill's Socialist Labour Party and No2EU-Tusc for top-down bureaucracy. More generally they argue that the history displays "failure to organise the various formations ... as political parties, with their own political life"; "failure to establish genuine democracy"; and "failure to establish the right relationship between the far left organisations ... and the leadership structures" (p95). All these criticisms are broadly sound.

They are effectively silent on the Tommy Sheridan affair and the collapse of the Scottish Socialist Party, merely noting it at the end of a discussion of the 'Respect Party Platform' they supported within

Respect (p87). This is a matter of some importance, because the SSP got substantially further than the other attempts in Britain, and earlier in the chapter (pp76-77) comrades Thornett and Lister present it as a model. Indeed, Socialist Resistance split from Respect in 2010 on the ludicrous ground that *after* the collapse of the SSP it would still be unprincipled for Respect to stand George Galloway in Glasgow (pp94-95).

The chapter contains no element of *self*-criticism. The nearest thing to it is the criticism of the former International Socialist Group members organised as the Fourth International Supporters Caucus (Fisc), who acted for a while as Scargill's enforcers in the SLP (pp75-76). If the ISG itself had not been sticking to the Labour Party at the time of the launch of the SLP, it is likely that it would have pursued the same policy of acting as enforcers: witness the comrades' characterisation of the groups which did join the SLP as "sectarian leftists" (p76). Fisc was merely carrying to an extreme the general policy of the Mandelites of acting as loyal - that is, at most diplomatic - critics of the leaderships of the 'new parties' and voicing real differences in private. The reality is that this was the substance of the ISG-SR's policy towards the leadership majority in the SSP, towards the SWP in the Socialist Alliance, and towards Galloway in Respect. The breaks which inevitably follow this policy appear as unmotivated.

Portugal

The two chapters on the Portuguese Left Bloc - a 2010 interview with Left Bloc MP Francisco Louça and an article by Alda Sousa and Jorge Costa - are in a sense more encouraging. The Left Bloc was formed in 1999 as a party uniting the soft-Maoist União Democrática Popular, the Mandelite Partido Socialista Revolucionário, and Política XXI, a group arising from a split in the Portuguese Communist Party. The bloc was formed out of discussions at leadership level and there was an early decision to form a unified leadership, although the constituents remained in existence. Starting with 2.4% of the vote in 2000, it has progressed to 6.4% in 2005 and 9.8% in 2010.

The articles show a realistic assessment of the fact that the party is 'in there for the long haul', and of one aspect of the relation of forces: that is, that the Socialist Party in spite of its social-liberal character remains the dominant party of the Portuguese working class and tactics towards this party are necessary. The authors also show a sense of the need to think seriously about using the parliamentary tribune to make concrete proposals for alternative policies, and the irrationalism of 'revolution in one country'.

The party also pursues united-front tactics towards the PCP, but there is some sense that they may underestimate its weight. The Left Bloc proved not to be immune to the overall shift to the right in the June 2011 parliamentary elections, with its share of the vote falling by nearly half and its seats by half from the results achieved in 2009. The Democratic Unity Coalition run by the PCP, in contrast, held its 2009 share of the vote and slightly increased the seats it holds.⁹ *IYP* has not commented on this result.

Germany

Klaus Engert's account of Die Linke is that of an outsider, since the Revolutionär Sozialistische Bund of which he is a member is the part of the FI section which did not go into the Arbeit und soziale Gerechtigkeit - the Wahlalternative (WASG) party founded in 2005, which was one of the major constituents of Die Linke. The RSB is apparently engaged with other

small far-left groups in discussions with a view to an initiative for a new anti-capitalist organisation.¹⁰

Comrade Engert characterises the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) as having by now become a purely bourgeois party, not a bourgeois workers' party (p97). Certainly, the 'Agenda 2010' labour market 'reforms' of the Schröder SPD-Green administration led to a split in the SPD in 2004 and the formation of the WASG; most of the far left joined the WASG (p101). Meanwhile, the former governing party in the German Democratic Republic had after unification reorganised itself as the Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus (PDS) and managed to survive, though tending to decline



(pp98-100). When Schröder called a snap election in 2005, this forced the WASG to run on the PDS ticket, renamed PDS-Die Linke, in the 2005 federal elections. This ticket won 8.7% of the vote, giving it a substantial parliamentary representation. In 2007 the two parties fused as Die Linke, the former PDS remaining numerically dominant.

Comrade Engert characterises Die Linke quite simply as a social democratic party, and in that sense unlike other 'new parties of the left', and takes a pretty negative view of its membership and prospects. To the extent that the left is involved, he argues (from the outside) that "a common strategy of the radical left forces" is needed, but hard to see because of the far leftists either pursuing a sectarian course (Sozialistische Alternative and the Committee for a Workers' International affiliate) or integrating themselves more or less uncritically in the party (Linksruck, the International Socialist Tendency affiliate). This is true enough, but comrade Engert's approach is rather static and somewhat sociological, and in some respects this paper's (very episodic) coverage of Die Linke is more informative. No explanation is given of the divergent choices of the German Mandelites in relation to the WASG and Die Linke.

Since comrade Engert wrote, Die Linke has now lost its parliamentary representation in two western *Land* (provincial) parliaments as a result of the unexpected emergence of the Pirate Party, leading to a strengthening of the right within the party, as Tina Becker reported in this paper on May 24.¹¹

France

In relation to France, the problem that the book has dated rapidly is exacerbated by the choice to translate an article by Daniel Bensaïd from 2008, while the supplementary article by Alain Krivine from January 2011 failed to face up to what was already obvious then: that the Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste project had failed to produce the hoped-for breakthrough on the back of the popularity of Olivier Besancenot, and ended with a rebranded group of the size of the original Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire. The NPA is not, therefore, really a 'new party of the left'.

The 2012 French presidential elections have made it brutally clear that the Parti Communiste Français

has been able through alliance with Jean-Luc Mélenchon's Parti de Gauche to recover the electoral ground it had lost to the Trotskyists around 2000. Krivine remarked about Mélenchon's Parti de Gauche: "Trapped between the PCF and the NPA, the PG risks disappearing by remaining alone" (p45). The reverse was the result: the NPA (and Lutte Ouvrière) were squeezed out by the weight of the alliance of the PCF and PG.

The failure results from a combination of a correct but unpopular political judgment, with a mistaken but commonplace one - in combination leading to a certain political silence. The correct but unpopular judgment is that what the working class needs at the moment is a party of *opposition* to the dominant order, and this implies a clear commitment in advance not to participate in a social-liberal government. But the question this poses is: OK, under what conditions *would* you participate in or back a government? Or, put another way: what's your minimum programme?

The mistaken but commonplace judgment is one common to the 'children of 68': that the way to a mass party is *around* the existing mass parties and through newly radicalising young activists, strikers and street-fighters. That was the character of the decision to launch the NPA.¹² The result is an underestimation of the political weight of the existing organised left, whether it is the traditional mass parties or the smaller groups. The leadership of the Ligue underestimated the resilience of the PCF and of LO, and the ideological influence of Lambertisme in the left of the PS - which is reflected in the character of the PG.

The political silence which is implied by both is to be found in the NPA's 'founding principles' adopted in 2009.¹³ The party identifies 'reform or revolution' as counterposing the mass struggles, and their coordination, to the institutions. As a result it says nothing positive about *alternatives to* the institutions. Similarly, the manifesto on which Philippe Poutou stood for the presidency and NPA candidates are standing for the legislature¹⁴ is less clear and more ambiguous than the manifesto of the PG-PCF Front de Gauche on this issue, which call for the immediate convention of a constituent assembly to change the French constitution¹⁵ ●

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Notes

1. www.socialistdemocracy.org/RecentArticles/RecentReview/NewPartiesOfTheLeft.html.
2. www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2012/05/support_drops_for_ruling_vvd_b.php.
3. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spanish_general_election_2015.
4. The 2010 resolution printed in the book is more cautious: see p187.
5. www.internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article2630.
6. www.internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article2346.
7. April 3: http://cphpost.dk/news/national/enhedslisten-threatening-scupper-budget; May 7: http://cphpost.dk/news/politics/feisty-enhedslisten-promises-push-government-left.
8. Peter Manson's 'Same old failings' (*Weekly Worker* May 10) emphasises the negative point that these results are *not* a breakthrough.
9. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portuguese_legislative_election_2011.
10. 'Zusammenarbeit und öffentliche Debatten', February 21: www.rsb4.de/content/view/4537/88/; cf also the polemic by Manuel Kellner on the website of the other FI group, Internationale Sozialistische Linke, March 12: www.islinke.de/ under 'Debatte'.
11. 'Split looming in Die Linke' *Weekly Worker* May 24.
12. The same judgment is reproduced in a cruder form Chris Bamberg's September 2011 review of the book: http://internationalist.org.uk/index.php/2011/09/renewing-the-left-a-look-back-to-move-forward.
13. www.npa2009.org/content/principes-fondeurs-du-nouveau-parti-anticapitaliste-adopt%C3%A9s-par-le-congr%C3%A8s.
14. www.npa-legislatures.org/IMG/pdf/programme-poutou-2012_1_.pdf.
15. www.lepartidegauche.fr/system/documents/docs-pg-humain_dabord.pdf.

SCOTLAND

Referendum has nothing to offer

Neither Scottish independence nor British unionism. **Sarah McDonald** looks at the launch of the 'yes' campaign

On May 25 the Yes Scotland campaign was launched. Unlike most election or referendum campaigns, this new drive for independence has been declared not months, but years in advance of the likely date of the vote.

The Scottish National Party wants the referendum to be held in the autumn of 2014, something that the Scottish secretary, Michael Moore, and prime minister David Cameron claim they are "not to be fussed about".¹ But obviously they are concerned about when it is called, as the timing of any referendum will affect its outcome. A tarnished (and already deeply unpopular with the Scottish electorate) Conservative Party, coming to the end of its first term and presiding over economic recession, job losses and public service cuts, would be used as a reason to vote 'yes' - independence is one sure way of being rid of the Tories.

The Scottish National Party's campaign, subtitled 'Scotland's future in Scotland's hands', will focus on the great cultural and mineral wealth beckoning. The anti-independence campaign will be launched in a couple of weeks (incidentally, it will not actually be featuring the word 'no' in any of its publicity, as it wants to run a 'positive' campaign) and will be made up of an alliance of unionists of all hues from the Scottish Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats, through the Labour Party, to George Galloway.

What would Devo do?

So what would the ballot paper look like? Here, it appears, is where Cameron and Moore are a little more "fussed". Most of those on the 'We're not saying no, but no' campaign are in favour of a single, straightforward question - Galloway is an exception in supporting a two-question ballot paper.

SNP leader Alex Salmond, Scotland's first minister, also wants two questions, since something short of full secession would provide the SNP with a fallback position, should it not get the desired outcome of a majority in favour of separation. The option known as 'devo max' would further extend the powers of the Scottish parliament. But, to repeat the question asked by the band, Devo, on its famous T-shirts, "What would Devo do?" The answer is that no-one really knows what maximum devolution (or 'independence light', as it has been satirically rebranded by sections of the media) would mean.

A rejection of outright independence is quiet likely (given that support for it consistently fluctuates between 30% and 35%, and has done for decades). Should that happen in the context of a single-question ballot, the whole issue would be taken off the agenda for a very long time and that would represent a severe setback for the SNP's whole project, given that Scottish independence is supposed to be its *raison d'être*. If, however, the Scottish people reject secession, even by a sizable majority, but favour 'devo max', the SNP can push to extend the powers of the Scottish parliament, with the long-term goal of full independence still in view. The SNP could still claim, with a degree of legitimacy, that the majority of Scottish people want some form of constitutional change.

The polls are not in Salmond's



Alex Salmond would keep her as head of state

favour right now. According to YouGov, the same old 33% are for separation. However, its poll also shows that only 58% of those who backed the SNP in the last election would vote for independence in a snap referendum, while 28% of its voters actually oppose it.² This is something that Cameron knows all too well, so, while it might not be in his interest to hold off till the autumn of 2014, he would be happier if he could secure a single-question ballot. He would be prepared to gamble on Scotland returning a clear 'no' vote. That would not only push the Scottish national question off the political agenda and damage the SNP, but boost the Tories' own standing - in Scotland as well as the UK as a whole.

The Tories are, to their core, unionists and therefore will fight from a British nationalist perspective to retain the United Kingdom in its current form at all costs. However, they would undoubtedly gain electorally if Scotland departed from the UK - after all, since the 1950s the Conservative Party has been steadily losing support north of the border, to the extent that it is now the no-hope third party at best. In 1997 the Tories were completely wiped out in Scotland and in the last general election they won just one seat. Added to that, in proportion to its population Scotland is overrepresented at Westminster, so if Scotland were to go it alone that would, on the face of it, almost guarantee electoral success for the Tories in what remained of Britain.

What, then, of Labour? Of course, not only is the Labour Party ideologically opposed to Scottish separation but, of the mainstream parties, it has the most to lose from seeing Scotland secede. Without Scotland, Labour would find it hard to secure a majority in any Westminster election.

Imagine

Let us imagine, for the sake of argument, that Yes Scotland bucks the odds and emerges victorious (happy and glorious). What would this actually mean? Well for starters it would mean that Elizabeth Windsor or her successor would still be 'long to reign over us' - the SNP does not want to see a Scottish republic of any form.

No future for the British army in Scotland? Think again. The SNP has suggested that it might allow Scottish regiments to remain part of

the British Army should they choose to do so - the possible complications are multifold. No future for Trident? Potentially, but the implications and cost of moving nuclear warheads to Southampton or the like are significant - would the British government allow such a situation to arise?

No future for the Scottish economy? Well, here we might be on to something. Not too long ago we were told by Alex Salmond that Scotland as an independent state would thrive along the lines of the 'Celtic tigers', such as Ireland (enough said). The reality is that this small country with limited resources, independent of the City of London, would be badly hit in a time of global economic recession. The SNP can currently promise the world and lay the blame at Westminster's gates, but an independent Scotland would be a far cry from the one it has painted.

Not quite as far removed from reality, though, as the fantasy in many Scottish comrades' heads of what an independent 'socialist' Scotland would look like. Sitting pride of place on the Scottish Socialist Party's website is an updated article from 2005, written by Alan McCombes, 'Why the left should back independence'. It is so riddled with stupidity, you could pick it apart virtually sentence by sentence - perhaps mercifully, there is not the space to do that here.

However, it asks three central questions, and so I will answer them:

"First, does socialist internationalism mean that we are striving to replace capitalist globalisation with socialist globalisation? Are we aiming to build gigantic socialist mega-states? Or should our more immediate goal be to build socialism from below - a socialism that is based on decentralisation, diversity and voluntary cooperation?"

Yes, we should be striving for socialism globally. Would a revolution be more likely to succeed in a larger entity - eg, a United States of Europe - than in smaller, more backward states, where it would quickly and easily be crushed? Well, again, yes. Should the movement be a voluntary one, based on cooperation? Of course. Does that mean decentralisation? Once again, of course. But in certain circumstances that might be a part of the process (ie, the demand for a federal republic as a way of overcoming national antagonisms with the aim of achieving

a deeper unity).

"Linked to that is a second question. Should socialists be in favour of larger, broader states under capitalism? Is bigger always better? Do large-scale, multinational states unify and strengthen the working class or can forced unity from above sometimes aggravate national conflict and resentment?"

As communists we would wish to see the largest *voluntary* unity of people, the breaking down of national barriers under capitalism and thereby the opportunity for revolution on the largest possible scale, lessening the chances of it being defeated. Yes, forced unity can create national antagonisms and resentment - people should have the democratic right to national self-determination. Communists should, in these circumstances, champion that right while in general advocate unity.

"The third question revolves around the process of change. Will socialism be achieved as the product of a single big bang, a simultaneous, worldwide revolt of the working class and the oppressed? Or, because of differing national conditions and traditions, will social change be more fragmented and disjointed? Will it tend to develop at local and national level first, before spreading outwards?"³

If the former were to happen that would provide the best conditions for a successful transition. Historically the failure for revolution to spread (from Russia to Germany and the rest of Europe) was the reason why the 20th century played out the way it did and our movement was set back for generations. However, the global development of capitalism and the subsequent increasingly common conditions encountered by the international working class would tend to suggest that simultaneous revolution could be less disjointed than comrade McCombes thinks.

But the point is that socialism in one country is an impossibility, as comrade McCombes once knew. Revolution may occur first in a single country, but it is crazy to *aim* for it. Especially in the circumstances of Britain, where we have historically constituted working class capable of taking on the British state. Given the disaster of the last eight years, with the SSP destroyed and the left now completely marginalised, Scotland is not exactly in the forefront of world revolution. Judging by the state of

the organised left, you could make a better case for the London boroughs of Haringey and Hackney going it alone.

The Socialist Party Scotland is also for a 'yes' vote, though its reasons for doing so, if you follow the logic of Philip Stott's article on the SPS website, seem thoroughly opportunist. In short, support for Scottish independence is to be found primarily among the working class and youth (the people we must aim to win over first and foremost), because many are under the illusion that it will provide an escape route from unemployment and austerity. We, the SPS, know that it won't, of course - so we'll campaign for a 'yes' vote, but put working class economic demands at the heart of our campaign. Of course, as socialists, we are internationalists, so we would want to see voluntary unity with England and Wales in a socialist future. And we will somehow get there by opposing the cuts in the here and now.⁴

Let us not bother with the big constitutional, political questions that the working class must engage with if it wants to become the hegemonic class. While, of course, job losses, hospital closures and so on can have a devastating effect on people's lives, workers can only hope to emancipate themselves if they fight for *political* change, not least concerning the way we are ruled. In fact an independent Scotland would hardly provide an escape route from austerity - just look across the water to Ireland.

Active boycott

So what position do we adopt when faced with this referendum? Well, for us, it is not an ideal situation to be in. As communists and internationalists we cannot give support to the 'yes' camp. We are against breaking up the historically constituted working class in this country along national lines. We are for the greatest *voluntary* unity of people. So, we must call for the right for the people of Scotland to decide if they want to remain part of a British state. That is clearly not the same as advocating independence. We champion the right to national self-determination, but *advocate unity* as its outcome. That said, we are against the current UK state - the monarchy, the unwritten constitution, the House of Lords and the whole shebang! We are for a democratic, federal republic, where Wales and Scotland have the right to self-determination, up to and including secession, and we are for a united Ireland.

Sadly, however, we do not get to write the question on the ballot paper and we do not favour any of the options likely to be on the table - 'yes', 'no' or 'devo'. That will leave us in the unenviable position of calling for a boycott - not because we have nothing to say, but because nothing that they will offer us is in the interests of our class. It is unlikely, given the balance of forces on the left and their politics and the level of political struggle in Scotland (just as in the rest of Britain), that an active boycott campaign will see a vast groundswell of support. (Still two and a half years is a long time in politics ...) Yet it is the only principled stance to take ●

Notes

1. *The Scotsman* May 17.
2. *The Guardian* May 25.
3. www.scottishsocialistparty.org/new_stories/issues/socialists-should-back-independence.html.
4. <http://socialistparty-scotland.org.uk/news-analysis/scottish-politics/397-yes-scotland-independence-referendum-campaign-launched>.

IRELAND

Time for self-criticism

The left missed out on a big opportunity during the fiscal treaty campaign, writes Anne Mc Shane

The result of the Irish referendum on the European Union's fiscal treaty is hardly a shock. What is surprising is that as many as 40% of those who voted were prepared to brazen out state bullying and coercion and vote 'no'.

The Fine Gael/Labour government threw everything into winning acceptance. We were browbeaten for weeks with promises, intimidation and exhortations. In alliance with Fianna Fáil, the main opposition party, the government toured the length and breadth of the country for weeks drumming up support. They were joined by the Employers Federation and well-known economists who advised us confidently that it would be suicidal to vote 'no'. Placards and posters demanded that we 'Vote yes for jobs', 'Vote yes for economic security'. The only way 'we' can survive apparently is through access to more bail-outs. The imposition of stringent conditions on these bail-outs, which have already impoverished the Irish working class, was conveniently omitted from establishment press releases. In the words of Joan Burton, Labour minister for social protection, "I cannot understand why anyone would urge voters to say no to a €700 billion safety net at a time of such extraordinary tumult in Europe".¹

The involvement of Fianna Fáil was decisive in securing victory, with its campaign manager meeting daily with his opposite number in Fine Gael to plan tactics and issue sound bites. New FF leader Michael Martin used the campaign to good effect to rebuild his party's battered reputation. He was prominent in TV debates, delighting media hacks with his combativeness and well-rehearsed attacks on Sinn Féin and the United Left Alliance. This was in stark contrast to taoiseach Enda Kenny, who shrank away from any media confrontations. Members of the three parties went door to door to bring out their own constituency. This was a battle they were not prepared to lose.

Unrestrained use of fear tactics was another weapon in the arsenal of a united capitalist class. Joan Burton, erstwhile defender of the poor (before she was elected to the Dáil, of course), led the bullying. She warned repeatedly in media interviews that rejection of the treaty would mean no money for social welfare. In one article she argued: "Ireland needed to ensure the government had money to pay" for "this humane social welfare system" (sic). She appealed to women as wives and mothers, "because at the end of the day they have to make the best decisions for themselves, their families and their communities".² Pensioners, the unemployed, students - all were told that they would be left to starve if they voted 'no'. In the face of such blatant coercion it is astounding that so many still voted against the treaty.

The turnout was low, at just over 50% nationally. National surveys found that, while many refused to vote 'yes', the arguments of the 'no' campaign just did not convince them. However, there were solid 'no' votes in some working class areas. In Donegal - a county with huge unemployment and poverty - there was a margin of 11% for 'no', but a turnout of only just over 40%. In Dublin three constituencies rejected the treaty. Brid Smith, Socialist Workers Party member and People before Profit/ULA councillor, was pleased that this included Dublin South Central, which is "the biggest working class constituency in the country". She went on to argue in the online edition of *Socialist Worker* that, "the poorer the area, the higher the 'no' vote. Cherry Orchard in Ballyfermot is a notoriously disadvantaged area with over 40% unemployment among young men. It has a large young population, no services, no jobs, no hope. That area returned a 90% 'no' vote."³

This point is taken up also by the Socialist Party in Ireland. Joe Higgins



Richard Boyd-Barrett: don't mention socialism

argues in a statement on behalf of the ULA that "across the country those most affected by austerity have said no and sent a message, particularly to Labour, that they have had enough of austerity".⁴

Left campaigns

However, we need to take a very critical look at the campaigns of the left in this referendum. Although ULA TDs both from the SP and SWP performed well despite their political limitations, the ULA was deeply undermined by its main constituent organisations. At its April 28 conference, ULA MEP and SP member Paul Murphy argued for a strong, united ULA campaign against the fiscal treaty and received solid support from conference. Yet three days later the SP launched its own anti-treaty campaign,⁵ and the SWP's People Before Profit Alliance followed suit the next day.⁶ Reading the media reports, I saw no mention of the ULA at either press conference. The alliance itself finally launched its own poster campaign on May 3.

It was very hard to get the ULA campaign or branch activity off the ground, especially when the SP and SWP had, to put it mildly, divided loyalties. The existence of three campaigns caused confusion and demoralisation. Understandably many non-aligned members of the ULA felt cheated by the disingenuousness of the SP and the SWP and their hypocrisy in pretending to be for a united ULA campaign at conference. Interestingly, however, it was the ULA itself that attracted interest when it came to media coverage.

A crucial issue which needs to be subjected to serious criticism is the limited political nature of the leftwing campaigns. I have mentioned in a previous article the problems of being in an umbrella campaign dominated by Sinn Féin.⁷ The Campaign Against the EU Constitution (CAEUC) also included the Communist Party, the Workers Party, SP and SWP, but it was dominated by Sinn Féin and, of course, dominated by nationalism. It was more an alliance of convenience than a real campaign.

Sinn Féin focused on getting a better deal in Europe. As TD Mary-Lou McDonald argued, a 'no' vote would "strengthen the hand of all those, at home and across Europe, who are arguing for investment in jobs and growth. It will send a strong signal to the government that austerity simply isn't working and that a change of direction is needed".⁸ She and her colleagues made it clear that they stand for capitalism, but of a Keynesian type. Gerry Adams argued that a 'no' vote would mean that Ireland could renegotiate the treaty. He was adamant that the EU leaders would never refuse to bail out Ireland.

Sinn Féin's campaign was really about positioning itself as an alternative to the mainstream. It did manage successfully to become the leading voice of the 'no' campaign and has come out of the referendum as a stronger nationalist party. The leadership does not pretend to be socialist of any hue. In government in the north, it has shown itself willing to impose cuts and slash living standards. Sinn Féin

might have leftwing members, but is a deeply nationalist, Catholic party, not a party of the left.

So why did the left join with Sinn Féin in the referendum campaign? With our own TDs, MEP and councillors, the ULA could have run our own campaign on the basis of working class demands. We could and should have distinguished ourselves sharply from Sinn Féin. Perhaps it says something about nationalist illusions within the left that we did not.

Because the ULA conference was a powerless talking shop, members were unable to discuss and agree policy on the fiscal treaty. The ULA programme repudiates the debt, calls for a wealth tax and for solidarity of workers across Europe. But, when questioned about what they would do if the EU pulled the plug on Ireland, our representatives floundered. Joe Higgins argued in the first television debate that a wealth tax and the nationalisation of natural resources were the answer. Paul Murphy in an SP pamphlet on the treaty argues for these policies as part of a Europe of workers' governments. The SWP has a similar approach. In essence they all offer a left social democratic 'solution' to the present crisis. This involves trying to balance the books through a fairer method of accounting. It will not work. Relying on a wealth tax means relying on corporations and the wealthy to remain in Ireland and fund the new state. Why would they do so when they stand to make a lot less money and pay a huge amount of tax? Of course, it will never happen.

Instead of peddling such dangerous illusions, the left should have been agitating for an internationalist approach. We should have been explaining what our class needs in order to transform itself into a ruling class. The answer to the EU pulling the plug must be the self-organisation of the working class organised in a revolutionary party and in alliance with the working class across Europe. Ireland is a tiny country and could not survive on its own. We have learned from the last century that we cannot have socialism in one country. So we need to reach out to European workers not just to defend ourselves collectively, but to present our own vision in the face of deep, unforgiving capitalist austerity.

Of course, we could never have convinced the media. They would have been even more vitriolic in the face of such radical socialist ideas. But the section of the working class that is looking for answers will hear us.

ULA TD Richard Boyd-Barrett of the SWP has taken me to task in the past for raising such 'abstract' questions as socialism. No doubt he believes that he can achieve his programme without ever needing to raise difficult arguments. He took part in a TV debate on May 5, where the question of renegotiating the current bail-out was discussed once more. When he was asked by the presenter what he would do if the plug was pulled by the European Central Bank, he evaded the question. When asked again and again, he simply stated that he did not think it would happen.

While such evasion is characteristic of bourgeois politicians, we should not expect it from our own. Is it that comrade Boyd-Barrett has no solution or that he believes it is too radical to be mentioned at this time? ●

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Notes

1. *The Independent on Sunday* May 27.
2. *Irish Times* June 6.
3. www.swp.ie/content/voters-bullied-accepting-eu-treaty-fight-continues-0.
4. www.joehiggins.ie/2012/06/ula-press-statement-ula-says-people-were-bullied-into-accepting-austerity-treaty-resistance-to-austerity-will-continue.
5. www.breakingnews.ie/ireland/socialist-party-launch-no-campaign-on-fiscal-compact-549755.html.
6. www.peoplebeforeprofit.ie/node/756.
7. 'Sectarian stumbling block', May 3.
8. www.sinnfein.ie/contents/23521.

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 readied 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.

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SWP calls for Islamic victory

None of the above

Calling on Egyptians to vote for the Muslim Brotherhood is insane, argues **Paul Demarty**

The May 23-24 first round of voting in the Egyptian presidential elections produced, as has been widely noted, the worst possible outcome for the masses, lining up the Muslim Brotherhood's Mohamed Mursi against erstwhile Mubarak crony Ahmed Shafiq.

It is a bad outcome indeed - but hardly unexpected, given the circumstances. Proceeding rapidly to elections following the overthrow of Mubarak would inevitably reward the best-rooted social forces going into it - that means, precisely, the army establishment and the Muslim Brotherhood.

It may seem counter-intuitive that Shafiq recorded such strong support, given his implication in the manifold crimes of the Mubarak regime; but he seems to have been the beneficiary of innumerable chains of patronage outside the major urban centres. The MB, meanwhile, is a seriously mass force; its relatively low-level participation in the Tahrir Square protests and so forth represents, in fact, a group of highly astute political operators picking their moment. The elections - both for the presidency and legislature - would suggest that its moment has come.

There is, of course, a third major player in this drama: the American state department. While the manner of Mubarak's downfall wrong-footed the US spectacularly, there was never any doubt that the world's dominant state would seek to retrench its authority at the earliest possible opportunity. The pregnant silence from Washington concerning the onward march of the MB suggests that the American establishment now consider it a force with which it can do business.

All this represents the frustration of the revolutionary momentum, and also the aspirations of the left internationally. The 2011 events in Tunisia and Egypt were rightly hailed the world over as moments of immense promise; but this euphoria gave rise to a certain hubristic faith in the motor force of the revolutionary process itself. This, in retrospect, can be seen to be a step too far (albeit an error to which the Trotskyist left, especially, is prone). The Arab awakening *is* indeed a moment of promise - but the pay-off cannot be in the immediate term. The mass organised forces necessary to shift decisively leftwards the balance of power in the region - the 'subjective factor', as it is called - is lacking.

For all the disappointment in the third-place showing of left-Nasserite Hamdeen Sabbahi, this is in fact a *pleasant* surprise. It shows that a substantial audience exists alienated both from the corrupt army regime and the reactionary MB. Twenty percent of the vote is very much short of the mass support needed for a social revolution, but it is something to build on. Turning such people from a dead-end nationalism (which ultimately resulted, last time around, in the very regime against whom the revolution took its stand) to active pursuit of working class rule, in Egypt and throughout the Arab



Mohamed Mursi: reactionary

world, is the first strategic objective for the far left.

Vote Mursi?

Alas, some comrades have some funny ideas about how to reach that objective.

Step forward the reliably unreliable Socialist Workers Party - which does have an Egyptian section of its 'international', existing absurdly alongside *another* group in solidarity with the former SWP comrades in Counterfire, and thus some microscopic influence over the course of events in that country.

When the left gets excited about something, the SWP gets flatly delusional. And so *Socialist Worker's* piece on the presidential elections (June 2) is a real treat. "When Egypt's parliamentary elections produced a majority for the Muslim Brotherhood last year, many journalists and academics declared that the revolution was over," writes Phil Marfleet, with a legible sneer. Now the jeremiads are flowing forth once more; but "they were wrong last year and are likely to be wrong again".

He runs through the bare bones of the election results, and comments that many are calling it a "nightmare scenario", where "Egyptians are asked to choose merely between military rule and Islamism". For comrade Marfleet, however, "the choice is clear": voting

Shafiq is a vote against the revolution, after all.

At this point, Marfleet's train of thought departs from Reality Station and proceeds directly to la-la land: "Revolutionary activists will not enjoy voting for Mursi," he writes (just wait until he gets into power!). "If they do not do so, however, they are likely to experience the real nightmare scenario - a president cloned from the dictator they overthrew last year."

Should we not be worried about Mursi's own clerical-reactionary agenda? Apparently not: "Mursi is not in a strong position. The Brotherhood has struggled since the start of the revolution ... They have suffered many splits and defections, as it becomes clear that they can't meet the people's needs and expectations." So that's all right then. And while this inevitable process of disillusionment is going on, revolutionaries must "continue struggles over jobs, wages, union rights and for radical political change."

There is so much wrong with this that it is difficult to know where to begin.

The revolution's *practical* advantage to Marxists and socialist activists is that it has prised open an amount of political freedom, which could allow our forces to clarify their politics and start to build serious roots in the working class. The *precondition* for a good outcome to this process is keeping this space open. The "nightmare scenario" is not the return of some military functionary to a slightly downgraded top spot - it is *any* form of political rule that denies us the light and air we need to turn the situation to our advantage. The reason the second-round Hobson's choice is part of such a possible scenario is simply that it lines up two prospective presidents who can *both* be expected to impose draconian rule, if allowed to get their way. Heads I win, tails you lose.

The notion that the Muslim Brotherhood is "not in a strong position" is laughably absurd. Comrade, are these the election results evidence

of a 'struggling' organisation - one that gained the largest slice of parliamentary seats and whose candidate is the frontrunner for the top job? Do these results show that the masses are already losing their faith? The MB is reaping the benefits of its strategic nous, its eye on the long view, while the left trumpeted every passing strike in Alexandria as the 'spark' of momentous things to come. The SWP will not learn the importance of long-term, patient organising from the history of the Marxist movement, let alone from the *Weekly Worker*. Perhaps it will learn the lesson from the MB - although on this evidence, it does not look likely.

Many liberals (and, one assumes, the SWP) have an eye on Turkey as a likely analogous outcome of this process. Indeed, there is some justification for this view: the ruling 'soft' Islamist AKP is in uneasy accord with a politically powerful army. Yet there are also uncomfortable echoes of Iran here, where large sections of the left were happy to tail Khomeini in 1979 on the basis that he would be swept aside by the immanent logic of the revolution. It was the *left* that was swept aside: rounded up, butchered in their tens of thousands, the survivors scattered into exile (Turkey itself is hardly a paradise on earth for the left).

All in all, while a vote for Shafiq is certainly a vote against the revolution, a vote for Mursi is an endorsement of *reactionary* opposition to the godless military regime. One imputes benign intentions or irrelevance to clerical reactionaries at one's peril.

Economism

Just before the turn of the 20th century, there was a mercifully brief fashion for so-called economism among the Russian socialist underground. The idea that the nascent workers' movement should undertake political action against the tsarist autocracy was disdained and the economists preferred to leave that to the liberals - the working class could concentrate on carrying on the trade

union battle. The economism tendency is remembered today principally for having been the subject of merciless polemics by Lenin.

However, with the SWP we have economism reduced to absurdity. For now it is not the liberal intelligentsia which is to carry on the political struggle, but Islamic fundamentalists; and we are to take heart from the fact that they struggle not against the army, but (supposedly) among themselves. Meanwhile, it is "jobs, wages, union rights" and unspecified "radical political change" for the left ...

We need to do *better* than that, comrades. It is not enough to call for a tactical vote against an army candidate - we need to call for the *disbandment of the army*, the number one existing block on political democracy in Egypt. We need to further open up space for free political association, and fight the MB for the hearts and minds it has won. Reducing our remit to 'jobs and wages' is erroneous in a country like Britain. In today's Egypt, it is beyond silly.

Marfleet's perspective, from one angle, stems from long-running political errors of the congenitally economic SWP. It is fuelled primarily, however, by a salutary faith in the significance of last year's events: a *need* to believe that the revolution is not over. Indeed, it is not. Yet this is a revolution which in its full scope has implications for all the hundreds of millions in the Arab world; it will be a long process with breakthroughs and setbacks, perhaps over the course of decades.

This revolution was never going to be as easy as Tahrir Square made it look - many protestors were of course murdered in cold blood by state forces, but in the main the Mubarak regime collapsed remarkably easily, principally because it did not really collapse at all. The left needs to put in the hard yards - that is how the Brotherhood got where it is now. Building up the MB's vote is frankly insane ●

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