



weekly **worker**

Liquidationism and broad front masks: Mike Macnair locates the Fabian origins

- N Ireland: handshake
- Ed Miliband: migrants
- CPGB new website
- Democratic centralism

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Towards a Communist Party of the European Union

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**Eurocrats haunted by
danger of collapse**

LETTERS



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

Got wood

Tony Clark says no previous long-wave boom has been undermined by the depletion of an essential resource (Letters, June 14). He has yet to prove that this one will be either. But a look at history shows what is wrong with his argument.

In fact, for a long time industrial production in Britain was based not on oil, or even on coal, but on wood. Right up until the middle of the 18th century - ie, into the beginning of the industrial revolution, and the first long-wave boom, iron was smelted using charcoal. This essential resource had been dwindling since Elizabethan times, when, due to rising industrial production, the country's forests were being depleted, causing concern that there would be insufficient wood to build the ships required for the navy.

The iron producers were all located in or near forest areas because of the need to utilise the nearby timber due to the difficulty in transporting it. Coal production increased, but it could only be increased marginally, because the technical problems of excavating deep-mined coal had not been overcome. Only surface coal could essentially be hewn, and then its use was restricted due to the limitations of road transport using pack horses. Moreover, the technique for using coke from coal to produce iron had not been developed. Abraham Darby developed the technique in 1707, but it was kept secret until around 1760. In fact, what we see here is an application of the principle Marx has described, and to which I have referred previously.

The depletion of the once essential resource (wood) led not to the kind of Malthusian calamity Tony Clark envisages, but to the development of new techniques to deal with it, and this was dialectical in nature. Not only did coal replace wood, but more efficient means of using the coal were developed - for example, the use of blast furnaces. Far from a calamity, it spurred on whole new industries - coal mining for one! And, in order to get the coal from one place to another, it spurred on the development of transport industries - first canals, then railways, which in turn required coal. Steam engines were another industry that was developed, and created a need for skilled engineers. The steam

engines too were developed so as to use coal more efficiently, and used to resolve the problems of extracting deep-mined coal. There is a saying in economic history - necessity is the mother of invention.

I do not at all believe that the long wave can necessarily overcome such problems, still less in worshipping demand-supply economics. The long-wave cycle is not some mystical process, but the result of real economic forces. Marx recognised the existence of the long wave, and thought it might be due to the time needed to develop and the duration of large elements of fixed capital, such as the building of factories. He was not far off, but we now know it is more than just factories, but related to the time needed to locate and develop new resources, the role of the innovation cycle, etc. Indeed it's because of that, and the way these play out, that each cycle is unique, such that its duration is not exactly the same from one to another. So the factors that lead to the ending of a boom include the relative rise in the prices of raw materials (including fuel) and the increasing inability to offset that by rises in productivity. But we are a long way from that point in this cycle. Moreover, the role of oil within that process is clearly not what it once was.

In the 1970s, a four-fold rise in the price of oil triggered a deep global recession. In the late 1990s, oil stood at \$10 a barrel. Its price rose four-fold, whilst economic growth increased rapidly from 2000 on - it's almost doubled global warming potential in the intervening period. And, in fact, the price of oil is now 10 times what it was then, and yet global growth still continues at around 4%-5% per annum. Moreover, if - and I agree it's a big 'if' - scientists succeed in developing nuclear fusion, then Tony's argument disappears completely.

Faced with the fact that his claims about gas production were factually and dramatically wrong, Tony falls back on a hope that gas might run out sooner than all the experts say. But the next part of his argument is even worse. From speaking about global capitalism at one moment, he slips into an argument based purely on the position of Britain. He says: "While there may be some uncertainty about the world gas peak and how much of it remains, one thing we can be certain about is that Britain's gas production in the North Sea has already peaked and is in decline. Gas fields in America, mentioned by Bough, are not going to

help Britain. We are being kept afloat by Russian gas."

This is both factually incorrect and irrelevant. There is likely to be large quantities of shale gas in Britain too, but why does it matter if there isn't? There is a global market in oil and gas, and Britain can simply buy in cheap gas from the US, Algeria, Russia or whoever wants to sell it! Japan has never had any sizeable energy resources, yet during the last long-wave boom that did not prevent it being the most dynamic and fastest growing economy in the world. On the other hand, Iceland has plenty of energy resources, being self-sufficient in geothermal, and essentially free energy. Yet its economy has been dependent upon fishing and fish processing, alongside a very dodgy financial services industry.

The reason I believe that peak oil will not be a problem is the same reason that Marx set out against the Malthusians. It is based not on a belief in demand-supply economics, but in the law of value. As Marx set out in his letter to Kugelmann, the law of value has operated throughout man's history, and the basic requirement of it to reduce the amount of labour time necessary for the production of man's needs is what has spurred innovation and the development of new productive forces and new productive relations. That is why we moved from burning wood to burning coal.

Finally, to give another example in reply to Tony, he speaks about the world's seven billion people. In the 1950s, the economist, Colin Clarke, showed that, just with the world's existing agricultural land, it would be possible, using the same level of capital investment, and techniques such as those used in the Netherlands at the time, to provide a global population of 12 billion people with the same level of nutrition as that enjoyed by that country. Advances in technology mean that figure would today be much higher. That is before we take into consideration the massive increase in agricultural production that will ensue from the development of Africa, where agriculture is being developed on an industrial scale to take advantage of current high food prices.

We'd better hope that Marx is right, and Tony Clark is wrong, because otherwise not only is capitalism dead, but the possibility of transcending it and moving forward to socialism is impossible.

Arthur Bough
email

Penetrating

In response to Heather Downs' earlier proposition that 75% of women found sexual intercourse unsatisfactory (Letters, June 7), I responded that by remarkable coincidence myself and every bloke I had ever met had only ever had sex with the other 25%. Heather now comes back in all seriousness to this remark and is clearly unable to see it was a *joke* (June 21). It was meant to be a self-critical reflection on male sexual ego, for god's sake. Do you seriously think I actually meant that as statement of fact on my sexual relationships? Chance would be a fine thing.

Perhaps Heather's lack of a sense of humour is matched only by her amazing ability to miss the point being made and extract only those items from the debate which suit her purpose, totally ignoring the rest of the argument. So it is that she ignores the bit of my letter that says: "If the claim is that most women reach an orgasm other than through penis penetration, I could fully accept that is the case" (June 14). She goes on to cite all the sources which prove this fact anyway.

What I went on to say is, because a heterosexual sexual encounter mostly involves other sexual activity to

achieve a female orgasm, that doesn't mean the female partner doesn't enjoy the penis penetration as well. In my humble experience, they certainly do. Heather draws the conclusion that, because sexual intercourse isn't enough on its own to give most women sexual satisfaction, therefore most women don't enjoy sexual intercourse. That's the bit I'm challenging and it's quite clear in my original letter.

It's simply a matter of fact that heterosexual couples engage in most sexual engagements open to other sexual orientations *as well* as penis penetration. It has never been a question of either/or. And, believe it or not, most of us blokes had learned this by the time we were 17. We'd scarcely have had girlfriends or wives and partners if we hadn't.

David Douglass
South Shields

Detached

This paper and the CPGB can never be accused of getting carried away when political or social change is underway. Instead we get an appeal to be accurate in our estimates of what is possible, and the usual conclusion is that we shouldn't expect too much.

One fact that caught my attention during the last six weeks of elections in Greece and Egypt was the abstention rate. In the four elections, the abstention rates were 35%, then 38%, in Greece; and 54%, then 49%, in Egypt. These figures are higher than any achieved by either a political party or a candidate (those figures were 30% for New Democracy, and the 52:48 split in the final Egyptian vote). I don't know the causes of the abstentions nor the reliability of the state-provided figures. I just want to remind readers that in these two countries many people are not involved in electoral politics and probably not in organised politics at all.

Marxists, correctly, often focus on activists and 'the class', but it is necessary to appreciate what is happening to all citizens to avoid being adventurist and detached from reality.

Dave Gannet
email

Housing poverty

David Cameron has recently said that he is going to cut benefits for under-25s, claiming that it gave the message that people were "better off not working, or working less", and that "it encourages people not to work and have children, but we should help people to work and have children".

This, of course, coming from the prime minister, had to be backed up with reliable statistics to prove his case surely? Oh, wait - since 2010 there have been 300,000 extra claimants of these benefits, 279,000 of which were employed. Moreover, the Building and Social Housing Foundation showed that 93% of new housing benefit claims made between 2010 and 2011 were from households containing at least one employed adult. George Eaton of the

New Statesman writes that only "one in eight" of under-25s who claim housing benefit are unemployed. So why is this the situation?

The problem is not the hugely inflated idea that benefits are an incentive for people not to work, but that many employed people simply get paid too little in relation to the price of their rent. By taking housing benefit from these people (who are actually the majority of people claiming it), you may well be forcing them to uproot and, due to the economic climate, leaving them potentially unable to find a job elsewhere, further adding to the crippling unemployment figures that the government still has to face.

The fact that many working people are unable to support themselves or the family without taking out housing benefits should be a far bigger concern to Cameron than a minority who are unemployed and claiming benefits (many of whom have genuine reasons for being unemployed). People are trapped inside an economic system which forces wages as low as they can go, whilst increasing the profit margins and wealth at the top, meaning that working does not give people a good wage to live on. Cameron is blaming the poor for being in the situation they are in, while his associates make money out of public sector contracts. It is also categorically untrue to assume that people's financial state is directly correlated to how hard they work.

David Cameron will, regardless of the situation, claim that the housing benefit budget is too high, and in addition that cutting it will somehow reward those who work. This, however, is purely perfunctory if he does not consider why the housing benefit budget is so augmented. He doesn't stop to think that this may be the case due to the choice by successive governments to subsidise private landlords and businesses, creating a quasi-Conservative nanny state for the rich, rather than invest in affordable housing. He is deliberately ignoring the fact that housing prices are so exorbitant that it leaves those at the bottom unable to buy, and forced to pay rents that are higher than many mortgages. Meanwhile, his government is continually privatising public services, which succeed as businesses by lowering wages.

Instead, Cameron would rather punish poverty, force individuals back into dysfunctional or potentially abusive situations, create homelessness by leaving people who have left home with nowhere else to go, due to either not having a family to go back to, or not having parents who want them back. In the long run, cutting housing benefits will not have any positive impact either economically or socially, and even if the former were true, it would be no excuse for a policy so detrimental to innocent people.

Rory Svarc

Fighting fund

Two days to raise £182

This column will be replaced for a couple of months by the CPGB's Summer Offensive fundraiser - we are within touching distance of our £1,500 target. Thanks to the total of £243 received this week, we now have £1,318 in the bag. But there are only two days to go!

This week pride of place goes to PM for his £80 donation, made by bank transfer, with JT's regular standing order of £75 coming a close second. There were also standing orders received from SP, GD, DO and EL. And then I got a nice pledge of a new one from NR - he's going to stump up £18 a quarter for his subscription (an extra £6).

Thanks also to comrade PB for adding £10 to his resubscription cheque and to RP for his £10, contributed via PayPal. But,

despite the generosity of these comrades, we still need £182 by close of play on Saturday June 30. What I really need is for comrades to make a bank or PayPal transfer as soon as they read this, so the money lands in the *Weekly Worker* account by Friday.

As there were 8,434 online readers of this paper last week, how about just 182 of you paying £1 via the website? That would see us home. Just get out your card and click on 'Make a donation' - I would love to hear from you.

Anyway, have a good summer - this column will be back in September.

Robbie Rix

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

Head to head in Halle

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

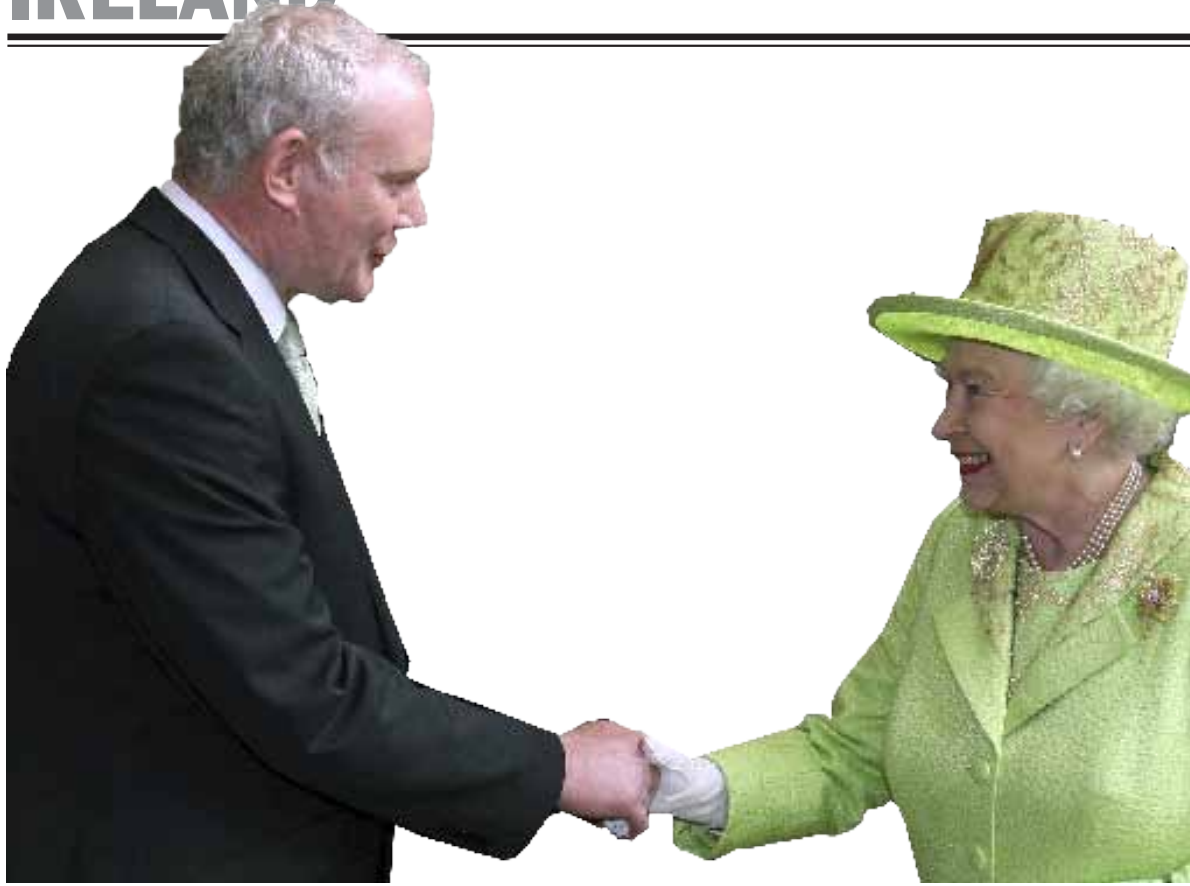


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IRELAND



From freedom fighter to government minister

Sinn Féin and the handshake

Anne Mc Shane reports on the latest step in the ‘peace process’

The June 27 ‘groundbreaking’ meeting between Sinn Féin’s Martin McGuinness and Elizabeth II produced a range of emotions among establishment and republican forces in the north and south of Ireland.

In the south the government has tried hard to talk down the event, with Fine Gael minister Brian Hayes declaring that Sinn Féin is “hyping” a “very minor” event as part of a “cheap little media game”.¹ The *Irish Independent* - a Fine Gael paper - raged against the effrontery of McGuinness, arguing that the event was simply a cynical move to divert attention from the alleged misdemeanours of his party’s TDs in the Dáil. The same publication gave Hayes centre-stage to accuse RTE, the national TV station, of pandering to republicanism. *The Independent* has historically been a vitriolic opponent of republicanism, famously calling for the shooting of the 1916 leaders and dismissing that year’s uprising as “criminal and insane”.² Sinn Féin is regarded as some kind of satanic force.

The public handshake of the former IRA leader with the commander in chief of the British military has also provoked anger within republican ranks. At a commemoration ceremony at Crossmaglen on June 24, former Provisional IRA founder Laurence O’Neill denounced McGuinness as “a Judas” and said he should “hang his head in shame” for meeting the queen while Northern Ireland remained under British rule. McGuinness had sold out those who had lost their lives in the struggle for Irish freedom and was now “shaking the paw of the queen of England as a guarantee that will see her dream come true of Ireland remaining a cosy, peaceful colony”.³

It shocks many republicans that the organisation which fought for the military overthrow of the Northern Ireland part of the United Kingdom now seems prepared to embrace that state. The occupation of the north has witnessed the systematic repression of the Catholic minority. The history is a grim one, with the British ruling class trying out many of its most brutal military devices and legislative acts in Ireland. It can be remembered for detention without trial, sensory

deprivation torture, heavily armed policing and ‘shoot to kill’. And tactics used to police demonstrations of students and trade unionists today in Britain originated on the streets of Belfast and Derry.

Gerry Adams defended the decision with a declaration that we “don’t have to do it. We’re doing it because it’s the right thing to do, despite the fact that it will cause difficulties for our own folk.”⁴ The SF leadership apparently made the decision after four hours of debate, with a significant minority voting against. It will be interesting to see if there is any fallout within the organisation itself. There are continuing and significant tensions in SF north and south, which are bound to find expression as the leadership continues to exert pressure to the right.

Adams was playing the statesman. He hailed the occasion as a good day for the people of Ireland, while admitting that “some people in the north - especially in my own home district of Ballymurphy - who are big supporters of the peace process are hurt”.⁵ However, the views of oppositionists within the Catholic working class in the north come a poor second to the ambitions of McGuinness and Adams, who nowadays emphasise the importance of ‘governments working together’. Of course, Sinn Féin is *in* government in the north. It now sees an opportunity to advance the project of becoming a governing party in the south too.

Last year SF staged a boycott of the queen’s visit to the south. Rumours circulate that on reflection the leadership concluded that this was a mistake. They decided that national opinion was not with them and they had appeared rather churlish in refusing to take part in the ceremonies. Loss of popular support would not be risked again. Months of ‘sensitive’ tick-tacking went on behind the scenes, culminating in Wednesday’s handshake. There is, of course, nothing wrong with leaders of popular movements engaging in diplomacy with representatives of the oppressor - which obviously will include exchanging formal greetings and so on - but for many that moment symbolised Sinn Féin’s transformation from a movement

of national emancipation to one of accommodation and insinuation into the political establishment.

There are important historical parallels. In 1916 Éamonn de Valera was a military leader in the Irish Republican Brotherhood. He was a military commander, as McGuinness once was in the IRA. In 1921 de Valera refused to accept partition and went on to lead the civil war against the newly formed pro-treaty government under Michael Collins. Fianna Fáil was formed in 1926 as the party to continue the heritage of 1916 and the civil war. The name is usually translated as ‘Soldiers of Destiny’. It was committed to a democratic united Ireland, free of corruption - an aim not unlike that of today’s Sinn Féin.

The first Fianna Fáil government was formed in 1932 and held power for 61 out of 80 years. I have written often about the experience of living under this government. Its support for the Catholic church and disdain for the working class have been its hallmarks - along with its greed and corruption. It became the sworn enemy of the new republican movement which arose in the 1970s and 1980s, leading a crusade of intimidation against southern supporters of the IRA.

Today Sinn Féin is in government in the north. There it presides over austerity and cuts in public services. It is clearly an enemy of the northern working class. There should be no illusions that SF will do anything different in the south. Adams wants to replace Fianna Fáil as the republican party of the *establishment*. In the north the leadership is appealing to unionists by welcoming the queen. He and McGuinness want this to be the new ruling party north and south.

Ditching a few principles is a price worth paying for power ●

anne.mcshane@weeklyworker.org.uk

Notes

1. www.independent.ie/national-news/sinn-feins-cheap-little-power-game-with-queen-3147562.html.
2. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irish_Independent.
3. www.newsletter.co.uk/news/local/mcguinness-a-judas-say-ex-ira-men-1-3986748.
4. www.irishexaminer.com/breakingnews/ireland/mcguinness-and-queen-elizabeth-to-shake-hands-556376.html.
5. www.sinnfein.ie/newsroom.

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 24, 5pm: Weekly political report from CPGB Provisional Central Committee, followed by open discussion and *Capital* reading group. This meeting: Vol 1, part 2. Caxton House, 129 St John’s Way, London N19.

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

Radical Anthropology Group

Tuesday July 3, 6.15pm: ‘The decadence of the Shamans’. Speaker: Alan Cohen. Organised by Radical Anthropology: radicalanthropologygroup.org.

Labour Representation Committee

Tuesday July 3, 7.30pm: Meeting of Lambeth and Southwark LRC branch, conference room, Karibu Education Centre, 7 Gresham Road, London SW9.

Thursday July 19, 8pm: Public meeting, Ruskin House, 23 Coombe Road, Croydon. The radical alternative to austerity. Speaker: John McDonnell MP.

Organised by Labour Representation Committee: <http://l-r-c.org.uk>.

Afghanistan - 10 years on

Friday June 22 to Sunday July 8: Photography by Guy Smallman, St John on Bethnal Green, 200 Cambridge Heath Road, London E2. Sponsored by *Peace News*: www.guysmallman.com.

Picnic and subversion

Saturday June 30, 1pm to 5pm: Talk by Richard Barbrook and Fabian Tompsett, followed by game: 1791 Haitian revolution. McKenzie Pavilion, Finsbury Park, London, N4.

Organised by Class wargames: www.classwargames.net.

Hands off Syria and Iran

Thursday June 28, 6.30pm: Public meeting, room G3, School of Oriental and African Studies, Thornhaugh Street, London WC1. Speakers: Jeremy Corbyn MP, Sami Ramadani, Lindsey German.

Organised by Stop the War Coalition: office@stopwar.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.

Netroots UK

Saturday June 30, 9am: Conference, Congress House, Great Russell Street, London WC1. Helping the progressive left network and inspire activists using the internet

Organised by Netroots UK: www.netrootsuk.org.

Welsh Shop Stewards Network

Saturday June 30, 10am to 3pm: Conference, Temple of Peace, King Edward VII Avenue, Cardiff CF10.

Organised by National Shop Stewards Network: www.shopstewards.net.

No missiles in east London

Saturday June 30, 1pm: Demonstration, Wennington Green (junction of Roman Road and Grove Road), London E3 (nearest tube: Mile End). No to missiles sited on roofs to ‘protect the Olympics’.

Organised by Stop the Olympic Missiles: www.stoptheolympicmissiles.org.

Don’t Iraq Iran

Saturday June 30, 1pm: Protest against Nato moves against Iran, outside National Gallery, upper concourse, Trafalgar Square, London WC2.

Organised by Student Stop the War Coalition: studentstopwar@gmail.com.

Miners’ history

Sunday July 1, 11am: Wardley Miners Gala, Wardley Club, Palmer’s Hall, Sunderland Road, Wardley.

Organised by Wardley Colliery Heritage Community Project: djdouglass@hotmail.co.uk.

Haringey Justice for Palestinians

Tuesday July 3, 7pm: Public meeting, St John Vianney church hall, 386 West Green Road, London N15. Speakers include Ronnie Kasrils (African National Congress).

Organised by Haringey Justice for Palestinians: secretary@hjfp.org.uk.

No to a Virgin NHS

Saturday July 7, 10.30am: Picket, Virgin Media, Abington Street, Northampton. Followed by public meeting.

Organised by Save Our Services: davegreen@nhampton.fsnet.co.uk.

Labour Briefing

Saturday July 7, 12 noon: Annual general meeting, University of London Union, Malet Street, London WC1. *Briefing* readers can attend and vote on whether LRC should adopt *Labour Briefing* magazine.

Organised by Labour Briefing: www.labourbriefing.org.uk.

Barnet council not for sale

Saturday July 7, 12 noon: Conference, Greek Cypriot Community Centre, 2 Britannia Road, North Finchley, London N12.

Organised by Barnet Alliance for Public Services: <http://barnetalliance.org>.

CPGB wills

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ECONOMY

Haunted by danger of collapse

Another week, another summit. Yet, writes **Eddie Ford**, with five euro countries now members of the bailout club and Germany declining to foot the bill, there is a distinct danger that the euro will collapse

This week saw a rash of yet more conferences and summits, surely an ominous sign. On June 26 there was the evening 'mini-summit' in Paris of the finance ministers of Germany, France, Italy and Spain - the 20th such discussion since the financial crisis broke out anew in early 2010. Apparently, the euro zone's top four members met in order to "resolve their differences" ahead of the June 28-29 European Union summit in Brussels.

However, by most accounts, the finance ministers' session - far from being a magnificently dignified rallying of the troops - was called at very short notice in an unseemly rush to repair the damage caused by the semi-public rift between Angela Merkel and the leaders of the other three euro states when they briefly met in Rome the previous week. So in reality just another meeting about a meeting. And, as I write, there does not appear to have been any sort of statement or news conference following the talks - hardly suggesting that we are about to see a breakthrough or bold step forward.

Then, on June 27, François Hollande and Merkel held "very important" eve-of-summit bilateral talks at the Élysée Palace. This meeting too appears to have been hastily arranged. Indeed, there was a whiff of desperation about it, as the differences between Paris - along with the majority of other euro countries, as well as the United States administration - and Berlin become all too apparent. In short, Hollande wants to see the introduction of measures like mutualised/collectivised debt (aka Eurobonds) and joint bank deposit guarantees, whilst working towards greater fiscal integration, but Merkel is insistent that there has to be a cast-iron agreement on much closer *political* and financial integration before any other steps are taken. Until then, as the German finance minister, Wolfgang Schäuble, commented, schemes like Eurobonds are for the "distant future" (June 5). Dream on, François.

In fact, in the run-up to the EU summit, Merkel seems to have *hardened* her position over Eurobonds - perhaps feeling angered by the two attempts to ambush her at the G20 Mexico summit and then Rome. On both occasions the US and UK governments - in cahoots with the leaders of France, Spain and Italy - sought to press-gang Merkel into paying for various fiscal stimulus and bank recapitalisation policies (or adventures, as some would see it) in a bid to reduce the crippling rates of interest that increasingly vulnerable euro zone members like Spain and Italy currently have to pay on the open markets in order to finance themselves (by issuing government IOUs, etc).

Therefore we read that on June 26, during a supposedly closed meeting with MPs from the Free Democratic Party, Merkel's junior coalition partner, she was met with rapturous applause when she declared that Europe would not have pooled debt liability "as long as I live"; or, as *The Daily Telegraph* mischievously sub-headed it, "Eurobonds? Over my dead body, Merkel tells MPs" (June 26).

In other words, Merkel is refusing to take out the Berlin credit card to write off the debts generated by other countries' financial 'profligacy' - a message she repeated the next day, albeit a little more tactfully, when she addressed the Bundestag. She reminded her audience that Eurobonds were "constitutionally

impossible" in Germany, as well as being "economically wrong" and "counterproductive" - and if Germany did become "overburdened" in this way, taking on the debts of countries like Greece or Spain, it would have "unforeseeable consequences" for Europe as a whole. The only conditions under which Germany would consent to the notion of "joint liability" (Eurobonds), she emphasised again, is by the creation of an environment where "sufficient supervision is ensured" - essentially meaning that the other euro countries will have to cede control of fiscal policy to Germany/Brussels/the European Central Bank.

But without a Franco-German deal of some description, the prospects of anything meaningful, as opposed to more fine words and flummery, emerging from the Brussels summits looks even less likely - and expectations were not exactly high to begin with. Expressing the dominant mood amongst investors, Paul Donovan - managing director of global economics at the UBS banking group - stated that the "markets are waiting for nothing to happen" between June 28-29, though there is the perverse chance that they may "react positively" to *any* sign of leadership from Brussels, precisely because nobody believes that the planless EU leaders will come up with anything at all. Alternatively, and much more probably - at least in the opinion of Donovan - the markets, as another summit drearily comes and goes, will simply lose patience with the never ending "travails of the euro" and deliver a harsh verdict: ie, Spanish and Italian government bond yields will start to inexorably soar just like they did last week and are now beginning to do again.

Catastrophic

Clearly though, the current situation of political deadlock cannot last much longer - whether we are five minutes

or one minute to midnight will be decided by later historians. What is beyond doubt, except for those with an incurably Panglossian outlook, is that the euro is in distinct danger of busting apart in the near future, with catastrophic consequences for the world economy - possibly plunging us into 1930s territory. Summing up this apocalyptic sentiment, Mario Monti, the technocratic prime minister of Italy, declared on June 22 that EU leaders had a "week to save the euro" - *Weekly Worker* readers will know by the time they read this whether his prediction has come true or not.

However, Monti's overall prognosis for the currency, and the euro zone bloc as a whole, is perfectly sound - namely that without a "successful outcome" at the Brussels summit there will be "progressively greater speculative attacks on individual countries", combined with the "harassment of the weaker countries". This means that a "large part" of Europe would have to "put up with very high interest rates", which would "impact on the states and also indirectly on firms"; which, of course, is the "direct opposite of what is needed for economic growth".

As for the political ramifications, Monti stressed, they will be considerable if the Brussels summit turns out to be a damp squib. Failure would mean that the "frustration of the public towards Europe would grow" and this would create a vicious circle: to "emerge in good shape" from the crisis "ever more integration is needed", but the chronic inability of the EU leaders - and others - to resolve the problems ensures that not only "public opinion" but also "governments and parliaments" will eventually "turn against that greater integration" required for that very survival. He cited the "traditionally pro-European" Italian parliament as an example - Silvio Berlusconi having acknowledged that his Popolo della Libertà party has bled support

due to its former backing for the government's hugely unpopular austerity measures and now openly speaks of torpedoing Monti's technocratic cabinet and reintroducing the lira.

Confronted by massive problems, with the euro clock loudly ticking, you would not think that any more urgency would be required by the leaders at Brussels - even if only to maintain their physical existence as a viable political class. Extra impetus, however, could be gained by looking at Cyprus, which on June 25 finally threw in the towel and became the fifth euro zone country to formally request a bailout for its distressed banks after being turned away by both China and Russia - the latter having kept the country afloat since November, but now tiring of this commitment.

In a terse statement, Nicosia said it required assistance, following "negative spill-over effects" throughout its entire financial sector due to large exposure to the toxic Greek economy. Cyprus has been shut out of the international capital markets for more than a year, with the yields on its 10-year government bonds over the 16% mark as of June 26 - spelling utter economic ruin without dramatic action. Government officials admitted that in the end they may need a bailout of up to €10 billion, *over half the size of its official economy* (ie, €17.3 billion). To complete the grim picture for the EU leaders, most analysts expect - not that you particularly have to be a genius to work it out - that Greece and Spain will have to get on their knees again soon and plead for further bailouts. Maybe as early as next month. Then who next - Italy?

Yes, just about every summit over the last two years has been billed - almost tiresomely - as a 'make or break' affair. No going back. And so on. Then everything carries on as before. But the prospects of a euro meltdown have never been greater and without *something* being done - and *quickly* - all that may be left for further EU summits to do is just pick up the pieces and sing a lament for the former currency known as the euro.

Banking union

The drift towards disaster is unmistakable. Thus we are not too astonished to read that Herman Van Rompuy, president of the European Council, significantly watered down plans to "reshape" the euro zone, or that the seven-page draft document released by the EC at the beginning of this week is significantly less ambitious than the 10-page version leaked to various media outlets at the end of last week. According to the *Financial Times*, the original, more "detailed" document urged euro zone leaders to use the European Financial Stability Facility/European Stability Mechanism bailout funds - roughly calculated at between €500 and €750 billion - to immediately recapitalise European banks; it also contained other measures to directly address the current crisis. However, as the *FT* notes, the draft that appeared on the EC website contained far fewer concrete details and, perhaps even more critically, suggests "no timetable for implementation" - so expect more fudge and evasion (June 26).

For what it is worth, and we shall soon find out, the document was drafted by the 'gang of four' - the quartet of European presidents/

bureaucrats: Van Rompuy, Mario Draghi of the ECB, José Manuel Barroso of the European Commission and Jean-Claude Juncker of the euro group. It calls for a "quick start" on establishing a new European banking union, says that the ECB could be given "supervisory authority" over EU banks and proposes "common resolution funds" (for winding up bad banks and funded by a banking levy to spare EU taxpayers), as well as a "common deposit guarantee scheme" for Europe's ordinary savers. Some rather excitable rightwing commentators, not to mention the *Morning Star*, are trying to portray the document as an "incendiary" set of proposals for a fully-fledged political federation that would transform the euro zone into a United States of Europe - even a 'Fourth Reich'.

Naturally, the UK government - to name but one - has reacted with venom to the draft document's quite logical stance that banking union should extend beyond the euro zone. Under no circumstances, David Cameron protested, will he allow the UK's pride and joy, the jewel in the crown - the parasitical City - to be placed under the authority of the ECB. Rather, he argues, any banking union - if there has to be one at all - should be a "purely" euro zone matter to deal with internal problems - as he sees it. Therefore Cameron will demand "safeguards" to quarantine the City from dastardly foreign control and "guarantees" that any new financial/fiscal regime within the euro zone does not "impair" Britain's national interests in the EU single market.

Needless to say, the more prosaic reality is that the draft document proposals now under discussion at the Brussels summit - generously presuming that it does not get discreetly dumped in the bin further down the line - will take at least a *decade* to come to fruition: time that the EU leaders and Eurocrats simply do not have. There is next to no chance that the markets will be placated by the lofty, but thoroughly intangible schemes. Nor will the working class - resistance will escalate in some form or another, whether by the ballot box or other means.

Meanwhile, pressure is building up on Spain again - which has now formally requested assistance of up to €100 billion for its struggling banks, though the *exact* figure is still unknown pending a full audit. Bond yields rose steeply again as the week started and by June 27 had reached 6.99% at one point - before finishing the day at around the 6.85% mark. Italy, in turn, was back over the dangerous 6% level - climbing on June 27 to 6.13%.

The precipice dangling before him, Mariano Rajoy, the Spanish prime minister, gravely informed parliament early on June 27 that the country "can't keep funding ourselves for long" at this price. We will just go bankrupt. In response, the euro group declared that Spain will get the funds from the EFSF until the permanent ESM bailout fund is active - that was the good news. The bad news, however, is that the Spanish government will be "fully liable" for any funds distributed to it from the euro zone rescue facilities.

Making it surely only a matter of time, barring a miracle, before an acute banking crisis becomes an even worse full-on sovereign debt crisis ●

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Euro leaders have no rescue plan

MIGRATION

Miliband turns a deeper shade of blue

Is the Labour leader ‘pandering to racism’? Peter Manson looks at Ed Miliband’s June 22 speech

It would be easy to dub Ed Miliband’s speech on immigration to the Institute for Public Policy Research¹ as a shift to the right pure and simple. But there was more to his anti-migration rhetoric than that.

The Labour leader was not appealing on this occasion primarily to those hankering for the old nationalist certainties. True, he mentioned in passing “problems with the pace of change in some of our communities”. He noted that “rapid changes in population led to pressures on scarce resources such as housing and schools”, which “brought to the fore questions about entitlements”.

However, the main thrust of this particular speech was directed, in true ‘Blue Labour’ style, to the party’s working class constituency - and specifically employed workers, some of whose jobs, pay and conditions are being undercut by non-union, often casual or sub-contracted, migrant workers.

For Miliband there are two reasons for this. First, the allegedly excessive pace of immigration under previous governments (including Labour); secondly a ‘minority’ of ‘irresponsible’ employers who take advantage of the availability of migrant workers to lower “labour standards”: “The ready supply of temporary, low-wage, low-skill migrant labour has further pushed some businesses to take a short-term, low-skill approach.”

He told a story about a factory in his Doncaster constituency, which “overnight” had “started getting eastern European workers from a recruitment agency”. A local Labour member had told him that these workers, who were sleeping “19 or 20 to a house”, were paid far less than the minimum wage - “It worked out at about £4 an hour.” So the local member “got the union involved to sort it out”.

Miliband commented that there are “lots of stories like this - of wages having been pushed down”. And it was not just a question of employers flouting existing legislation: “Even where there has not been illegality, there has sometimes been an immediate and direct effect on wages.” He mentioned construction and social care as sectors where there is a tendency to take on “foreign-trained workers, rather than to train up workers from Britain”. This enables bosses to “pay low wages and hire on short-term contracts”.

His solution? We “need to enforce the laws we currently have on the protection of wages”. After all, the introduction of the minimum wage was “one of the proudest achievements of the last Labour government”, so we should “increase the fines on employers who breach the law and pay below the minimum wage”. He talked of doubling the current maximum fine to a not quite so pathetic £10,000. When it comes to employers who undercut wages legally, however, he was rather more vague: there ought to be “tougher labour standards to do more to protect working people from their wages and conditions being undermined”.

Populism

While much reporting of the speech - particularly on radio and TV - focused on Labour’s (allegedly new) tough stance against mass immigration and Miliband’s insistence on the need for “proper control of who comes into the country”, others were not slow to highlight the pro-“working people” populism that Miliband has no doubt picked up from Maurice Glasman. The *Mirror* introduced its



report by claiming that Miliband had “vowed to stop ruthless bosses from undercutting the minimum wage by taking on foreign staff”,² while the *London Evening Standard* headline read: “Ed Miliband targets ‘nasty, brutish’ bosses who ignore minimum wage.”³

For his part, Michael Deacon, writing on *The Daily Telegraph*’s website, commented: “On the one hand, Mr Miliband is trying to win back working class Labour voters who want immigration curtailed. On the other, he can’t afford to upset middle class Labour voters who interpret any criticism of immigration as racist.”⁴

It was true that Miliband was “trying to win back working class Labour voters” and it was also true that he was trying to face both ways, as Deacon claimed. There were the obligatory references to immigration’s “benefits” - “economically, culturally and socially”. After all, Miliband pointed out, he himself is the son of migrants. However, “when I talk about immigration, I know I must be true not just to my mum and dad, but to other parents across the country ... They worry about immigration. They worry it might make things harder rather than easier for them and their kids.” According to the Labour leader, the impact of immigration often depends on your “class”, with workers more likely to be adversely affected.

That is why “Worrying about immigration, talking about immigration, thinking about immigration, does not make them bigots.” It was here that Miliband was implicitly criticising his predecessor, Gordon Brown, for his remark, picked up by a live microphone, that Gillian Duffy, who had just publicly challenged him over migration during the 2010 general election campaign, was a “bigoted woman”. On the contrary, said Miliband, Labour had become “too disconnected from the concerns of working people”.

But in practice, it seems, the last Labour administration’s ‘lack of firmness’ over migration amounts to its failure to “limit the numbers of people who can come to work here for seven years after accession” to the European Union. And the only proposal he made to slow down immigration was: “... when it comes to the accession of future countries ... we should take advantage of the maximum transitional controls”. So when Croatia (population: four million) joins the EU next year, Labour will perhaps shut the gate on some of the thousands who *may* wish to migrate to the UK.

Similarly, as Miliband pointed out in his speech, the Tory-Liberal Democrat cap on immigration is 20,000 a year, but 589,000 people - mainly from EU countries - arrived in Britain in 2011, who overwhelmingly cannot be kept out. But Miliband promised: “Of course, we’ll look at caps, limits and numbers ... And if there is evidence that measures work, we will keep them.”

In reality, none of the three main parties wants to close the borders to migrant workers. But all three want to control the quality and quantity of incoming labour according to the needs of British capital. Strict immigration controls also have a side effect that is beneficial for the bourgeoisie: it criminalises many thousands of ‘illegal’ workers who are employed as worst-paid labour and dare not complain about long hours and sub-minimum-wage pay, despite Miliband’s tough talk.

Nevertheless, migration is a convenient scapegoat, especially in these times of cuts and austerity, which can be blamed for the “pressures on scarce resources” that Miliband talks about - even though his own policy is for marginally less severe austerity and marginally slower cuts which would continue to exacerbate those scarcities.

All this explains why neither the Tories nor Labour propose measures that would seriously reduce the *numbers* of migrants (they are, of course, perfectly happy to impose inhuman conditions on them, in relation to permanent residence, the right to marry and live with a spouse, and so on). Apart from delaying the migration of people from Croatia, Miliband is proposing ... nothing.

It is the same with his inane comments about recruitment agencies which are “effectively open solely to foreign workers” and “exclude local workers from their books”. Labour will “strengthen the law” in some unspecified way to prevent this. But there is already employment and anti-discrimination legislation in place covering their operation. So what will Labour do? Ban such agencies from recruiting overseas?

A Labour government would also “commission the Migration Advisory Committee to identify the sectors and regions ... where there are more than 25% migrant workers.” This will “help identify where a problem might exist with skills. Then we can set about providing the training to fix it.” Wow.

Obviously Miliband’s Blue Labour guff about protecting “labour standards” cannot be taken seriously. He said in his speech that he wants to “build a more responsible capitalism”, where “owners, managers and employees see themselves as being part of one shared project”. In Miliband’s fantasy world employers do not attempt to “exploit” their workforce (everyone knows that only a small minority try to keep down wages).

As I have said, the speech does not represent a shift to the right purely and simply. In fact, compared to Blairism, Blue Labour is a move to the left in a narrow sense - that of recognising the existence of the working class, with its “ties of solidarity and community”,

as Miliband put it. But these are “not built overnight”, he said, which is why the pace of migration must be slowed.

Racism?

None of this represents a departure from traditional Labourism, which has always combined its appeal to workers with class-collaboration and nationalism. And I must say I disagree with *Socialist Worker*, which declares that Miliband’s populist rhetoric is “pandering to the anti-immigrant racism whipped up by the Tory press”.⁵ It is most certainly undesirable for workers to seek to defend ‘their’ jobs, pay and conditions from what they see as the incursions of outsiders, but this is fundamentally driven by sectionalism, not racist or any other form of prejudice. In this case the sectionalism is given an aura of respectability by the accompanying nationalism - after all, everyone agrees that we have to put ‘the country’ first, don’t they?

Nationalist sectionalism is the ideology of the trade union bureaucracy, which is why most union tops are so comfortable with the slogan, “British jobs for British workers” (a phrase employed by Brown, of which Miliband says he disapproves). Meanwhile, the task of all working class partisans is to stand firm against all forms of sectionalism, including nationalism - as well as other divisive ideologies, such as racism, sexism and homophobia. Our working class organisations must ensure that the slogan ‘Unity is strength’ is not limited to the individual workplace, trade or country, but encompasses workers the world over. That is why the Labour member in Doncaster was right to get “the union involved” - not in order to exclude eastern European workers, but ensure they were employed on the agreed terms. But, more than that, we must strive to build our working class organisations - political parties as well as trade unions - across international borders.

I further disagree with *Socialist Worker* when it states: “Miliband also blamed immigrants for driving down wages. This ignores the wealth of evidence showing no clear link between immigration levels and wages ... In fact wages fell after 2008, just as immigration dropped off.” It is plain irrationality to deny the link between the use of imported labour, including ‘illegal’ workers, and low wages. Why on earth does the Socialist Workers Party think the capitalists *favour* the use of labour from eastern Europe and other low-pay regions? To point this out is not to deflect “the blame for low pay” onto migrants. Here I agree with *Socialist Worker* - the blame lies “with the bosses”.

However, if we are to effectively combat the capitalists, then we need to go much further than *Socialist Worker* ever does in its agitational articles. Instead of going off on a side issue by focusing on “anti-migrant racism”, the left needs to challenge the right of the ruling class to control migration. We say, if capital can move freely across borders, then so must labour. Workers must have the right to travel, work and settle wherever they choose ●

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Notes

1. www.edmiliband.org/to-deal-with-peoples-concerns-on-immigration-we-must-change-how-.
2. *The Mirror* June 23.
3. *London Evening Standard* June 22.
4. www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/immigration/9349667/Sketch-Ed-Milibands-immigration-seesaw.html.
5. *Socialist Worker* June 30.

THEORY

Liquidationism and

Mike Macnair recently addressed a CPGB aggregate on liquidationism and ‘broad frontism’. Below is an edited version of his talk

The two topics, liquidationism and ‘broad frontism,’ are distinct, but nonetheless related to one another. In the case of US socialist Pham Binh and the comrades who recently split from Workers Power, we see a straightforward case of liquidationism - liquidationism ‘on the left’: ie, in an anarchist direction.

Broad frontism uses liquidationist arguments, but does not immediately take the form of liquidationism, because in most cases the broad front is conceived as being ‘on the road to’ the construction of a ‘revolutionary party’ - meaning by the latter a bureaucratic centralist group which lurks within whatever broad front its comrades happen to be involved in.

The first step, then, is to understand what the issues hidden in the word ‘liquidationism’ are: the historical origins of the idea.

History

Pham Binh has responded to criticisms of his liquidationism by claiming that liquidationism means *only* the liquidation of the clandestine illegal party - the proposal of the ‘liquidators’ of 1907-12. In the 1920s there were some in the Communist Party of the USA who maintained that it was necessary to maintain a clandestine, illegal party, and James P Cannon fought against those people. The supporters of maintaining a clandestine apparatus then charged Cannon and his followers with ‘liquidationism’. Pham Binh says his critics are like Cannon’s opponents - raising ‘liquidationism’ merely as a scare-story.

In the debate of 1907-12, liquidationism took the superficial form of proposals to wind up the illegal party; but actually there was a deeper political argument involved. To grasp this political argument we have to go substantially further back to understand what it was that was to be liquidated.

A continuous thread of Marx’s and Engels’ political arguments was the need for the working class to organise for *political* action: beginning with the 1846 address to Feargus O’Connor and continuing through the criticisms of the Fourierists for rejecting political action in the *Communist manifesto*, and the formation of the First International, on the back of solidarity with the north in the US civil war and triggered by the ‘Polish question’, and the argument for the international working class to develop its own foreign policy; followed up by Marx’s intervention in favour of political action at the 1871 London congress and the resolution of the 1872 Hague Congress.

The line of working class political action was opposed by Proudhon and the Proudhonists, and by Bakunin and the Bakuninists, on substantially the same ground: that political action admitted the legitimacy of the state and would inevitably lead to the election of careerists.

On the other hand, both the Lassallean General German Workers Association (ADAV), formed in 1863, and the Eisenach Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), formed in 1869, were committed to working class organisation for political action, though both ‘fell away’ from the full strength of Marx’s and Engels’ arguments for working class political independence in different directions:

the Lassalleans by aiming for an alliance with the monarchy against the liberals; the Eisenachers by clinging to the liberals. In spite of Marx’s and Engels’s criticisms, the 1875 Gotha fusion of the ADAV and SPD created a party which could sink roots and grow in spite of repression, and by 1878 Engels could present the fused Socialist Workers Party of Germany (SAPD) as a model for the workers of Europe.¹

Though the 1880s and 1890s, the SAPD, renamed the SPD after legalisation in 1890s, grew and threw up imitators in Europe and beyond. A counter-policy was urged by the Fabian Society in Britain. The Fabians argued that the obstacle to real growth and the achievement of real reforms for workers was the SPD’s revolutionism and hostile, irreconcilable opposition to the bourgeois state. The Fabians pointed out that the SPD might be a huge organisation, but it was in opposition and not actually achieving much in the here and now. So instead of principled opposition to the state, the Fabians urged lobbying and coalition-building for *gradual* reform in a socialist direction, without “provocations” about revolution and so on.

In the mid-1890s, a debate developed within international social democracy between Eduard Bernstein, who was Engels’s literary executor and thus one of the central leaders of the SPD’s Marxist wing, and the British semi-Marxist, Belfort Bax. This debate was a straightforward dispute about imperialism, beginning with the Armenian question. Should the Second International support Armenian self-determination against the Turkish regime? And if so, why? Bernstein argued that the Second International should do so, because the Armenians represented civilisation and progress, as against the backward Islamic Turkish regime. The International should be in favour of the development and extension of capitalism to the maximum possible extent, because it represents progress over what would now be called ‘Islamic reaction’. Belfort Bax, to the contrary, argued that the International was for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. Not only did Bernstein’s line involve imperialist hypocrisy, but also, he argued, capitalism is going to come to revolution through its own contradictions (the official line of the SPD), and thus if we constrain capitalism to the narrowest possible area and *prevent* it spreading across the world, then this will accentuate its contradictions, and the revolution will arrive earlier. Both sides are clearly talking nonsense in this argument.²

But in the course of this polemic, Bernstein generalised his position against Bax’s utopian revolutionism, producing increasingly Fabian arguments. And in his 1898 *Evolutionary socialism (The preconditions of socialism)* this key Marxist leader argued that it was necessary to abandon Marx’s ‘Hegelianism’, to abandon the ‘illusory’ idea of the necessity of revolution, to abandon the idea that capitalism’s contradictions will intensify, and opt for a workers’ movement with a perspective of gradual reforms based on Kantian moral grounds.

In Russia, the mid-1890s saw the social democratic circles, which

originated in the student movement, turn to first working with the skilled workers in the various factories, and then to actual agitation in the factories, the establishment of workers’ newspapers and proto-trade unions in the factories. After this had been going on for a little while, a group of ex-students active in the emigration became fans of Bernstein, saying that if we get rid of all the nonsense about overthrowing the state, and just focus in on the workers’ economic demands (which is what workers were ready for), then in that way we will mobilise the masses and the movement will grow. These were the original economists.

In the revolution of 1905 the error of the economists became absolutely obvious, as the revolution was triggered by a *police-sponsored* trade union, Father Gapon’s organisation, raising demands for universal suffrage and political rights. The revisionists’ and economists’ claim that it is only the ‘intellectuals’ who want to talk about politics, whereas the workers are only interested in economic issues, was now transparently false. In a movement sponsored by the police with a view to making it apolitical, the workers themselves had made it political.

The revolution of 1905 had effects internationally. The politics of the SPD, for example, shifted to the left as a result of the revolution. Afterwards, however, the Russian autocracy clawed back its position step by step. It dissolves the first duma and elects the second on a more restrictive franchise. It dissolves the second duma and elects the third on an even more restrictive franchise. It imposes repression, while simultaneously making concessions to the richer peasantry in the form of opening up the market in relation to peasant land, extending marketisation to the villages.

Meanwhile, in 1907 the German regime created a broad coalition against the SPD in the ‘Hottentot elections’: ie, on the question of imperialism. The SPD was very badly wrong-footed here and suffered a big electoral defeat.

In Britain, on the other hand, the Labour Party had come into existence. It was run by the trade union leaders, and clearly and unambiguously committed to Fabianism and Lib-Labism. Although MPs were elected as ‘Labour’, the parliamentary Labour Party operated as a fraction of the Liberal Party on everything except trade union questions. But this Lib-Lab alliance produced a genuine step forward in the form of the Trade Disputes Act of 1906. This created the most favourable legal regime for trade unions and strikes almost anywhere in the world. It can be seen as an enormous victory for Fabianism.

As a result, in Germany we see an enormous revival of revisionism and the pro-Fabian right wing around Bernstein. In the Russian émigré groups scattered across western Europe we see exactly the same thing. These people were the liquidators, or at least the ‘liquidators on the right’.

Now, the ‘liquidators on the right’ presented their argument as winding up the illegal party because it was useless and a waste of time. But their underlying argument was not that too many comrades were going to jail, but that the party’s illusory belief in

the necessity of revolution was an obstacle preventing it from going to the broad masses. The way to go to the masses, they argued, was to build a *Labour Party*. So the liquidators agitated to dissolve the illegal party because it was a *provocation*; they wanted to create a broad conference of all the trade unions and labour organisations in order to create a Labour Party on the British model, as opposed to the model of the German SPD, which under Russian conditions has to be illegal. Labour was to be seen as the vanguard of the workers’ movement, the vanguard of reformism in that sense.

This is not my peculiar interpretation of this period. The link between the Russian liquidators and German revisionism is there in Samuel Baron’s biography of Georgi Plekhanov, and again in Israel Getzler’s biography of Julius Martov.³ These sympathetic biographies of Mensheviks make clear that liquidationism was not about the tactical issue of legality and illegality, but about the *strategic* question of whether it is desirable to build a broad labour party that does not scare the horses with revolutionism, or whether it should be a social democratic party with political commitments to the overthrow of the existing state order.

The underlying argument of ‘liquidationism on the right’, therefore, is Bernstein’s. The revolutionary programme, for him, represents a practical obstacle to winning reforms, mass support and so on and so forth. To quote him: “The movement is everything, the final goal nothing”.

Of the left

1909 saw a split between a fairly narrow majority of the Bolshevik emigration and the sub-faction or trend led by Bogdanov, Lunacharsky and others, variously called the ‘otzovists’ (‘recallists’), ‘ultimatists’ and various other names. The split group established the periodical *Vpered*. Lenin in the context of this split characterised the group which became *Vpered* as ‘liquidators of the left’.

Why? Lenin’s immediate usage is simple. The core of the Marxist workers’ party project is working class political action - in and out of parliament. The ‘liquidators on the right’ propose to abandon this project by winding up the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party in favour of a British-style Labour Party. The ‘liquidators on the left’ do not openly propose this policy, but their fetishism of *non-parliamentary* action amounts to the same thing: the practical abandonment of working class *political* action. The *Vperedists* promptly proved the truth of this claim by focusing their work entirely on formal education of selected workers in philosophy and theory at the schools they organised in Capri and, later, Bologna.⁴

There is an interlock between Bernsteinian revisionism and liquidationism: not just ‘liquidationism on the right’, but also the ‘liquidationism on the left’. *Vpered* was at least partially influenced by the European syndicalist left. To a very considerable extent, the syndicalists accepted Bernstein’s point that August Bebel, Karl Kautsky and co had made Marxism into a dogma. But they came up with a different

solution to Bernstein’s Fabianism, Kantianism and gradualism. This solution, which emerges most clearly in Georges Sorel’s book, *The decomposition of Marxism*, is that you have to ‘re-Hegelianise’ Marx, focusing attention on the movement of the ‘idea’, as expressed in mass consciousness when it appears as mass *action*. You find very much the same line of reasoning in Arturo Labriola, a leader of the left in Italy.

The same influence is also visible in the Hungarian left. It is not as explicit in György Lukács, but it is explicit in the people from whom Lukács learnt his leftism in the left wing of the Hungarian Socialist Party. Such authors argued that Bernstein was right to make the big criticisms of the mechanist, gradualist Marxism of Kautsky, but we have to resolve this contradiction that Bernstein locates in Kautsky and Bebel in *the other direction* - in favour of a ‘real revolutionism’.⁵

It was against philosophical arguments of this sort, deployed by militants who were to become leaders of *Vpered*, that Lenin wrote *Materialism and empirio-criticism* (1908).

The practical result is an approach which can best be characterised as Bakunin reborn. In the semi-syndicalist left’s theoretical critique, Kautsky stands in for ‘the Germans’ (meaning Marx and Engels, but also Lassalle and Liebknecht) in Bakunin’s critiques from the late 1860s and early 1870s. As with Bakunin, *political* action is rejected in the name of *mass* action.

Fronts

We have recently been through a whole series of broad front projects of one sort and another. I have discussed some of the European history, and some of the problems, in my recent two-part review of the Mandelites’ book *New parties of the left*.⁶ How does the issue of early 20th century revisionist ‘liquidationism on the right’ and semi-anarchist ‘liquidationism on the left’ relate to these projects?

There is a peculiarly British political problem with ‘new left formation’ projects, which is the persistent attempt to pretend to be the Labour left. Arthur Scargill, of course, was a Labour left, and the fact that his Socialist Labour Party turned out to be attractive mainly to various sorts of communists was a problem for him. Both the Scottish Socialist Party and the Socialist Alliance displayed tendencies to represent organisations in fact mainly composed of revolutionists as Labour left formations. George Galloway, an actual ex-Labour left, projected Respect as a people’s front or ‘Rainbow Alliance’, or simply as an anti-war party, but the Socialist Workers Party obsessively presented it as ‘old Labour’. The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition displays the same character.

In spite of using the French New



'broad front' masks

Anti-Capitalist Party brand and image, Workers Power's Anti-Capitalist Initiative is also characterised by a broad frontism, albeit one of a different type: one which, like the SWP's old Globalise Resistance front, presents itself as defined politically only by mass-action activism.

These patterns display an interesting combination of 'liquidationism on the right' with 'liquidationism on the left'. On the one hand, the approach is one of 'Don't scare the horses' in terms of the *political programme* to be put forward. On the other, the far-left groups and their fronts are to differentiate themselves from standard Labour only by the commitment to mass action.

The underlying idea is that any serious mass alternative must grow out of the trade unions, and hence we have the politics of relations with the trade union leaderships. This, of course, is Labourism, economism and revisionism repeating itself on a smaller scale, within the framework of the left groups.

The comrades would, of course, deny furiously that they are liquidators. They are advocates of the need for a 'revolutionary party'. The broad-front project is merely for now - a step on the road to the 'revolutionary party', which is for the future.

However, because the 'revolutionary party' is to be the little cog that drives the bigger broad-front wheel, which drives mass extra-parliamentary action, the cog has to be bureaucratic centralist. It follows from the whole conception that initiatives in action are the decisive thing.

Because initiatives in action are the decisive thing, the leadership (to use the example of the SWP) has to be able to tell every branch in the country: 'Right now you are going to turn out forces for the next Stop the War demonstration' or 'Send your forces to canvass in Preston'.

Hence such a 'revolutionary party' needs an enormous degree of mechanical bureaucratic centralisation, to a far greater degree than the RSDLP or the Bolsheviks had at any point before around 1920. But then the unanticipated consequence is that the mechanical centralisation sterilises the broad front initiative, because the people who come in from the outside of the leading party see that the broad front is all being run from people within the leading party - down to the level of extreme micro-management.

To give a single example, in the (small) Oxford Respect branch in 2004 we were discussing the motions which had been submitted to conference, including a couple that were opposed to nuclear power. Some of the non-SWP militants who had come into Respect wanted to argue against these anti-nuclear power motions on the basis that nuclear power was important to green energy. The SWP comrades, who had the large majority in the room, had not been handed a line about this and were actually unable to say anything, so they proposed that we should not vote

on the question. The internal *Party Notes* had not told them what opinion they ought to hold, and therefore they could not say anything and could not vote - and the rest of us should not either!

No matter how much you *want* to attract broad masses, you are not going to do it with these methods. At work and in politics we live under capitalist managerialism. The alternative that the broad front run by bureaucratic-centralist methods offers is ... leftist managerialism. You would have to have a pretty bad boss to imagine that being managed by Peter Taaffe or Charlie Kimber represented a real alternative. We have seen this over and over again. The difference with the Anti-Capitalist Initiative is that it is simply smaller than the projects that have gone before.

Defences

Broad front advocates have a series of 'proof texts' of their approach from the history of the workers' movement and in particular from Marx and Engels. Endlessly referred to is the statement in the *Communist manifesto*, that the "The communists do not form a separate party opposed to the other working class parties ..."

Next comes the claim that in the First International Marx and Engels created a party based on nothing but a defence of the immediate interests of the working class.

Third is Marx's 1875 letter to Bracke, which formed the covering letter of the *Critique of the Gotha programme*, that "Every step of real movement is more important than a dozen programmes."

The most obscure of these claims is that based on the *Communist manifesto*, because the *Manifesto* is addressed to a historical political situation profoundly different from our own and the quotation is torn from its context by broad-front advocates. The passage needs to be quoted in full:

In what relation do the communists stand to the proletarians as a whole? The communists do not form a separate party opposed to the other working class parties. They have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole. They do not set up any sectarian principles of their own, by which to shape and mould the proletarian movement.

The communists are distinguished from the other working-class parties by this only:

(1) In the national struggles of the proletarians of the different countries, they point out and bring to the front the common interests of the entire proletariat, independently of all nationality.

(2) In the various stages of development which the struggle of the working class against the bourgeoisie has to pass through, they always and everywhere represent the interests of the movement as a whole.

The communists, therefore, are on the one hand, practically, the most advanced and resolute section of the working class parties of every country, that section which pushes forward all others; on the other hand, theoretically, they have over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the lines of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement.

The immediate aim of the

communists is the same as that of all other proletarian parties: formation of the proletariat into a class, overthrow of the bourgeois supremacy, conquest of political power by the proletariat.

Once the whole passage has been quoted, it should be apparent that it is on its face internally contradictory. The communists "do not form a separate party"; yet, on the other hand, the communists "are distinguished from the other working class parties ...". Moreover, the *Manifesto* is precisely the manifesto of the Communist League (in modern terms a distinct party), and section 3, 'Socialist and communist literature', is characterised by an excoriating criticism of much of what existed as a socialist movement at the time.

Section 4 of the *Manifesto*, 'Position of the communists in relation to the various existing opposition parties', begins with the statement that "Section 2 has made clear the relations of the communists to the existing working class parties, such as the Chartists in England and the agrarian reformers [National Reform Movement] in America." These were closely connected movements.⁷ No other party is characterised as an "existing working class party", not even the *Réformistes* or "Social Democrats" around Ledru-Rollin and Louis Blanc in France, a group to which the *Manifesto* gives partial critical support.

With this the meaning of the contradiction in section 2 becomes clear. The communists do not form a party *opposed to* (*gegenüber* in the German) any actual attempt to organise the working class to fight for its (perceived) independent class interests, however weak the politics (and the politics of the National Reform Movement in the US were pretty weak). On the contrary, they seek to join and build such attempts. They do organise within, but in a manner *not dependent on*, these movements, with their own manifesto, membership, if possible press and organisational forms.

They do not take the same attitude to utopian socialist, statist socialist, etc, movements, which do not attempt to organise the working class to fight for its independent class interests: even if they give partial critical support, as in the case of the *Réformistes*, they do form a party *gegenüber* these parties.

The underlying principle then becomes clear. Marxists argue for the working class to organise to fight for its independent class interests and to take the political power. Therefore any attempt to do that will attract their support, however weak the politics.

Utopian and cross-class (populist, left nationalist) projects are a different matter altogether. Here the idea of the working class organising to defend its class interests is *counterposed* to the nature of the project. The strategic task of Marxists in this situation is to fight to split the broad movement along class lines. We want to see, for example, an end to trade union support for the US Democrats or the Argentinian Peronists. In the case of small sects which directly counterpose themselves to the mass movement of the working class, like the Fourierists at the time of the *Manifesto*, these can safely be ignored.

But these principles are insufficient for the solution of modern problems in two ways.

First, there have developed mass parties which *claim to stand for the*

independent interests of the working class, but are actually committed to subordinating those interests to those of the capitalists, either by support for the capitalist state (social democracy) or by strategic commitment to cross-class coalitions in which social democracy and small pro-capitalist groups call the tune ('official communists'). These parties are directly analogous neither to the (left) Chartists nor to the utopians and populists/left nationalists.

Second, the errors of the first four Congresses of the Comintern and of the Trotskyists and Maoists have produced a sectarianism of a new type, which *does not* directly counterpose itself to the *mass* movement, but rather intervenes in it, and poisons any movement in which it has significant influence by its adherence to bureaucratic centralism (and is for the same reason an obstacle to the creation of unity *of the Marxists*). This sort of sectarianism is not analogous to the 1840s Fourierists.

In approaching these modern problems, the formulation that 'Sectarian groups put the building of their own organisation before the process of developing the working class movement as a whole' is useless for two reasons.

First, the *mass workers' movement* is dominated by class-collaborationism, which is a step *backwards* from left Chartism, so that simply to build the mass movement as it is would be to build class-collaborationism. As soon as we set out looking for an alternative 'movement as a whole' to the actually existing class-collaborationist mass workers' movement, we are forced to make political choices about this 'movement as a whole' - which people who disagree with them can identify as 'sectarian principles of their own, by which to shape and mould the proletarian movement'.

Second, the modern sectarians do not abstain from or oppose the mass class movement (in the sense of the trade unions, mass strikes, etc), but actively endeavour to build it. Varieties of modern sectarians can even be found in the mass social democratic and 'official communist' parties - not abstaining from or opposing these mass parties, but actively endeavouring to build them.

First International

The case of the First International is very clearly not one of an *initiative* of the 'Marx party' dressing themselves up as trade union militants to draw in broader forces, but of an initiative of British trade unionists and French Proudhonists, initially on the issue of Poland, made possible by the previous development of working class solidarity with the north in the US civil war, in the form of opposition to British or French intervention on the side of the south. Marx came to be involved and to draft the famous 'Inaugural address and rules' as a result of a set of disputes and manoeuvres described in Marx's letter to Engels of November 4 1864.⁸

Even so, the address contains fundamental Marxist claims: that "To conquer political power has, therefore, become the great duty of the working classes"; that "Past experience has shown how disregard of that bond of brotherhood which ought to exist between the workmen of different countries, and incite them to stand firmly by each other in all their struggles for emancipation, will be chastised by the common discomfiture

of their incoherent efforts"; and, connected to the latter, that "If the emancipation of the working classes requires their fraternal concurrence, how are they to fulfil that great mission with a foreign policy in pursuit of criminal designs, playing upon national prejudices, and squandering in piratical wars the people's blood and treasure?"⁹

A new party standing on this basis would be regarded by many broad-front advocates as plainly ultra-left.

The case of the comment in the letter to Bracke is simpler. Broad-front advocates by extracting this comment from its context use it in *exactly the opposite* sense to what Marx meant by it. The Eisenach SDP and the Lassalleian ADAV had agreed to fuse on the basis of a programme which Marx thought made too many concessions to Lassalleianism. Hence:

"Every step of real movement is more important than a dozen programmes. If, therefore, it was not possible - and the conditions of the item did not permit it - to go beyond the Eisenach programme, one should simply have concluded an agreement for action against the common enemy. But by drawing up a programme of principles (instead of postponing this until it has been prepared for by a considerable period of common activity) one sets up before the whole world landmarks by which it measures the level of the party movement."¹⁰

In reality, of course, the 1875 unification *did* lead to a "step of real movement": it gave the critical mass which allowed a mass party to develop. The point is worth noting, because of the CPGB's approach to unity projects. We do not simply reject unity projects which have bad programmes. In relation to the SLP, the Socialist Alliance and Respect, we said in each case that, in spite of more or less severe political criticisms, this *could* lead to a step forward of real movement. We have, indeed, said the same about Galloway's recent electoral success in Bradford West.

We do not say the same about the ACI. This is *not* because of political criticisms of comrades' liquidationism and broad frontism. It is purely and simply because for the three fragments of Workers Power to set up a broad front on a political basis indistinguishable from the existing and much larger competing broad fronts controlled by the SWP, Socialist Party in England and Wales and Counterfire is obviously completely incapable of leading to a step in the real movement ●

Notes

- References for the last three paragraphs in 'Principles to shape tactics' *Weekly Worker* April 21 2011.
- Some of the texts of this debate are in H and JM Tudor *Marxism and social democracy* Cambridge 1988, chapter 2.
- SH Baron *Plekhanov* Stanford 1963, pp282-85; I Getzler *Martov* Cambridge 1967, pp125-28.
- See JE Marot, 'Alexander Bogdanov, *Vpered* and the role of the intellectual in the workers' movement' *Russian Review* Vol 49, 1990, pp241-64.
- RL Tokes *Bela Kun and the Hungarian Soviet Republic* New York 1967, pp16-21; G Stedman Jones, 'The Marxism of the early Lukács: an evaluation' *New Left Review* Vol 1, No70, 1971, pp27-64 (at pp43-44).
- Weekly Worker* June 7 and 14.
- On the link, see the review by Howard B Rock of JL Bronstein *Land reform and working class experience in Britain and the United States, 1800-1862* (1999): www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.cgi?path=202956170085; and on the Communist League's attitude to it, K Marx *et al*, 'Circular against Kriege', section 2 (1846): www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1846/05/11.htm.
- www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1864/letters/64_11_04-abs.htm.
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ITALY

Economic woes and new scandals

The labour 'reforms' have finally been pushed through parliament, but president Napolitano could be brought down over alleged Mafia contacts. **Toby Abse reports**

The victory of New Democracy in the Greek general election seemed to bring at least a temporary measure of relief to the Italian stock exchange. However, on June 25 the Milan stock exchange went down by 4.02% and the following day the spread between Italian and German 10-year bonds rose to 469, with an interest rate of 6.15% (ie, back in the danger zone). This clearly indicates the temporary nature of the previous week's rally and the continued nervousness of the markets. Italy's domestic situation remains very turbulent and this will increase if prime minister Mario Monti fails to extract major concessions from the Germans at the Brussels EU summit on June 28-29.

The outcome of the brief Roman quadrilateral summit on June 22, attended by Monti, Mariano Rajoy, François Hollande and Angela Merkel, suggests that such concessions are increasingly unlikely; the whole tone of the gathering was set by Merkel's rather discourteous insistence that the discussions begin promptly, without the original formal lunch that the hospitable Italians had so carefully planned, so that Merkel could leave early to attend the Germany-Greece football match in Poland - doubtless eagerly anticipating an opportunity to publicly display her glee at another Greek humiliation.

Silvio Berlusconi is widely believed to be planning to pull the plug on Monti's government if he returns from Brussels empty-handed, preparing the way for an election in October. Berlusconi's Popolo della Libertà (PdL) is itself in some disarray, since the former prime minister seems to be trying to reverse his earlier delegation of the party leadership to Angelino Alfano, toying with the idea of once more putting himself forward as leader of the PdL (or perhaps a new personal party). Alfano and most of the more pragmatic career politicians in the PdL are also rather concerned about Berlusconi's repeated suggestions that Italy would be better off if it left the euro and returned to the lira.

However, the likely failure of any Monti-Hollande-Rajoy alliance to get Merkel and her hard-line northern European allies to back down would strengthen the hand of the reckless old man (who is anxious to obtain a sufficient force in the next parliament to stop any serious legal consequences flowing from his ongoing trials), and not those trying to transform the remnants of the PdL into a more mainstream, conventional, conservative party. Berlusconi's comment that Germany "should get out of the euro, or others will do so" would have more, not less, popular resonance in such circumstances, especially in the context of the rabid Europhobia of Beppe Grillo's populist Movimento Cinque Stelle (M5S).

Earlier this week, Monti had been desperately trying to ensure that the labour market reform law - effectively destroying the protection offered by article 18 of the workers' statute - completed its passage through the Italian parliament by June 27, before Monti goes to Brussels, and was quite prepared to use a succession of confidence votes to get it through (he finally succeeded on June 26). But it is increasingly unlikely that such belated compliance with the August 2011 demands of the European Central Bank at the expense of the Italian working class will be enough

to placate such a fanatical partisan of austerity as Angela Merkel.

Corruption scandal

The wave of popular indignation about political corruption in general, and the misappropriation of state funding for political parties' election expenses in particular, has boosted the fortunes of Grillo and his M5S. This has more or less forced the Senate, which generally defends its members from the magistrates, to lift the parliamentary immunity from arrest of Luigi Lusi, the former treasurer of the now defunct Margherita (Daisy). The majority of the members of this Christian Democratic party had fused with the former 'official communist' Democratici di Sinistra to form the Partito Democratico (PD) and Lusi was expelled from the PD some months ago. This followed his confession of at least partial guilt in the course of a judicial investigation into his alleged misappropriation of €25 million of party funds.

Lusi, who is now being held in Rome's Rebibbia prison, had hoped that the Senate would opt for a secret vote on his arrest (a procedure which protects parliamentarians inclined to rally round their corrupt colleagues from the wrath of ordinary voters or hostile journalists), in which he assumed a majority would have voted to uphold his immunity. Instead he was thrown to the wolves by 155 votes to 13, with one abstention.² Lusi's best hope of avoiding being kept in jail for the many months preceding his own trial lies in successfully incriminating others, since the usual justifications for such preventive detention for non-violent offences revolve around possible tampering with physical evidence or attempts to persuade others to give false testimony.

Lusi claims that he was not a solitary fraudster acting for purely personal gain. Rather, he was acting in his official role of party treasurer in collusion with many leading figures in Margherita - which rather bizarrely continued to receive reimbursements from the state for electoral expenses years after its official dissolution in 2007. He alleges they had agreed to divert party funds for their mutual benefit, whether factional or personal, and has now made a detailed confession to that effect.

Grillo in particular is making a great deal of political capital from this affair, which is likely to finish off the largely discredited Francesco Rutelli, the former leader of Margherita. Rutelli's constant changes of party allegiance - in chronological order, Radical, Green, Democrats, Margherita, PD and now the relatively insignificant centrist fragment, Alleanza per Italia (API) - have eroded the once substantial influence of a man who was mayor of Rome from 1994-2001, minister of culture and deputy prime minister under Romano Prodi in 2006-08 and unsuccessful prime ministerial candidate for the centre-left Olive Tree coalition in the 2001 general election. So Lusi's imprisonment looks set to trigger further revelations involving not just the API under Rutelli, but prominent figures of the Christian Democratic wing of the ex-'official communist'-dominated PD.

Mafia deal?

However, the most dramatic scandal of the last few days has impacted upon no less a figure than president Giorgio

Napolitano himself. Napolitano, another prominent ex-member of the Partito Comunista Italiano (PCI), has been linked to allegations of an attempt to interfere in a judicial investigation into what seem to have been clandestine negotiations between representatives of the Italian state and the Sicilian Mafia in 1992-93.

The revelations about these negotiations have led to particular public outrage, because they took place at a time when the Mafia was using massive bombs first to assassinate, on Sicilian soil, the two leading Palermo magistrates associated with the crackdown on the Mafia in 1992, and then for the far more indiscriminate terrorism against cultural institutions and random civilians in Milan, Florence and Rome in 1993.

Whilst some have tried to claim that tales of such negotiations are lurid fiction, it has to be noted that, after the mainland bombings of 1993, 441 mafiosi who had been subject to the harsh prison restrictions known as 'regulation 41b' were transferred to a normal prison regime.³ Giovanni Conso, the minister of justice at the time, claims he decided on this change "in solitude",⁴ but suspicions remain that the government took a collective decision to capitulate to Mafia pressure.

There certainly seems to be a *prima facie* case that Loris D'Ambrosio, currently legal adviser to Napolitano and in 1992-93 a leading civil servant in the ministry of justice, has given some measure of assistance to Nicola Mancino, the interior minister in 1992-94 and now under investigation in relation to the alleged Mafia negotiations. Mancino's phone was recently being tapped by the magistrates and as a result there can be no dispute that he and D'Ambrosio had frequent conversations relating to the current investigation, which seems, to say the least, unwise on the part of somebody like D'Ambrosio, who is advising a serving head of state in an official capacity.

In the initial stages, the allegations of misconduct centred around D'Ambrosio, and criticism of Napolitano arose from his decision to stand by his legal adviser and reject his offer of resignation. However, the whole scandal took on a far more serious character when it emerged that during the period when the magistrates had been tapping Mancino's phone there had been two telephone conversations between Mancino and Napolitano himself.

Authoritative sources claim that the tapes have been destroyed and no transcriptions made. Nonetheless, the interception of the president's phone calls has led to a very angry public outburst by Napolitano, denouncing the "campaign of insinuations and suspicions in relation to the president of the republic and his collaborators constructed on nothing". Anna Maria Cancellieri, minister of the interior in Monti's government, has claimed that the Quirinale, the official residence of the president, is "above all suspicion". This attempt to "undermine the authority of the head of state" deserves "the greatest indignation".⁵

Amongst the major Italian political figures only Antonio Di Pietro, current leader of Italia dei Valori (IdV), has responded to the affair with any degree of rationality. He

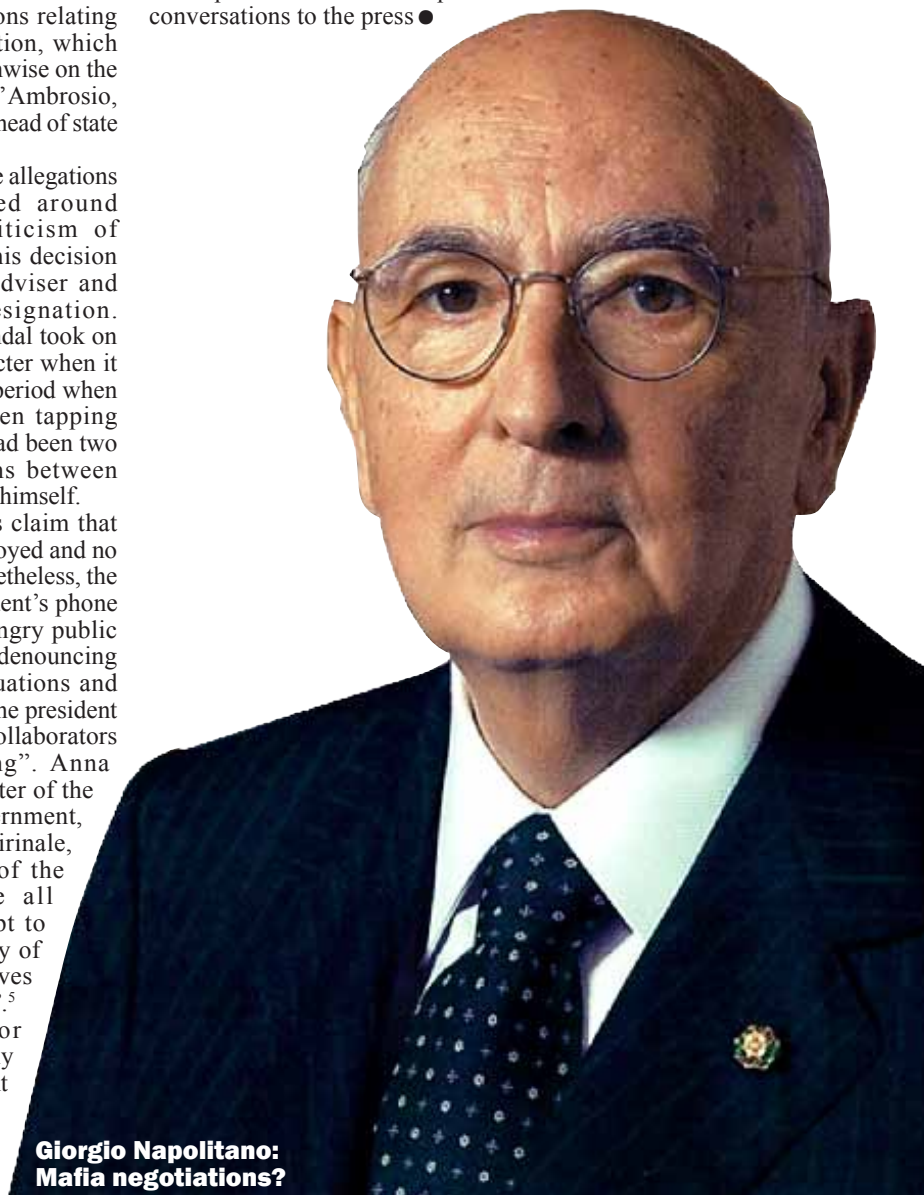
correctly pointed out: "The president of the republic ought to know full well that nobody, not even him, is above and outside the law. We take it that he supports the behaviour of his closest collaborators, who have attempted to interfere in an ongoing criminal investigation into the negotiations between the Mafia and the state."⁶

By contrast, Napolitano fans - especially the staff of *La Repubblica* - have indulged in the most crass conspiracy theories,⁷ according to which the whole episode is somehow an attempt by Berlusconi to discredit Napolitano and Monti, precipitate an early general election and perhaps get himself elected to the Quirinale in place of his hapless victim. Given the frequent allegations by Mafia supergrasses about the alleged role of Berlusconi and his right-hand man, Marcello Dell'Utri, in the more obscure aspects of 1992-93, it seems highly improbable that Berlusconi would have any desire whatsoever to return the media spotlight to anything remotely connected with the alleged state-Mafia negotiations. That applies even more to the mainland bombings of 1993, whose uncanny temporal coincidence with Berlusconi's decision to 'take the field' in Italian politics has been the subject of so much, doubtless unfounded, speculation.⁸

The only political force that would really gain from Napolitano being undermined by a scandal centring on the negotiations with the Mafia in 1992-93 would be Beppe Grillo and M5S, not Silvio Berlusconi and the PdL. And there is absolutely no reason to assume that the Genovese comic is closely aligned with the Palermo magistrates, the secret services or anybody else capable of leaking the existence of the Napolitano-Mancino telephone conversations to the press ●

Notes

1. *The Guardian* June 25.
2. Many senators were too cowardly to attend the session and make the stark choice between standing by their colleague in the face of public opprobrium and voting to condemn somebody for behaviour not so far removed from their own.
3. The Mafia chiefs can usually continue to communicate with their followers on the outside and even give instructions to commit new crimes when held under normal conditions of imprisonment. Regulation 41b put a stop to this.
4. *La Repubblica* June 22.
5. *Corriere della Sera* June 22.
6. *La Repubblica* June 22.
7. See, for example, the June 22 editorial and article by Claudio Tito, which expounds the self-justificatory and apparently paranoid line of Napolitano and his close collaborators, rather than attempting a balanced discussion of the president's own entirely voluntary actions. The president is not some private citizen subjected to unexpected, random phone calls on the spur of the moment, without dedicated operators employed to filter out unwelcome or inappropriate callers. Napolitano did not have to answer Mancino's first call, let alone have a second conversation with him.
8. Whilst there are numerous versions of this argument, the best English account can be found in John Follain's *Vendetta: the Mafia, Judge Falcone and the quest for justice* (London 2012). According to one supergrass, at a meeting with three of those involved in an assassination, Salvatore Riina, the overall head of the Mafia in 1992, said: "... we can sleep easy. I've got Dell'Utri and Berlusconi in hand. And that's a good thing for all of Cosa Nostra ... Because these people are the ones who will do good for us. We have to cultivate them; we have to assist them today and even more tomorrow" (p81). According to Follain, the Mafia sealed a pact in the summer of 1993 with Dell'Utri. To use his exact words, "Under the alleged deal, Cosa Nostra pledged to halt its wave of terror in exchange for an easing of the pressure from police and judiciary, fewer seizures of the society's assets and fewer benefits for collaborators. After consulting Cosa Nostra bosses, [Mafia chief] Provenzano threw the organisation's weight behind the new Forza Italia party led by media mogul Silvio Berlusconi" (p 236). Follain goes on to explain that in the autumn of 1993 there was an independent attempt to negotiate with Berlusconi. There were threats that "the massacres would continue" unless Berlusconi eased prison conditions for Mafiosi and tried to do something to reverse the outcome of a prominent trial (see p237).



Giorgio Napolitano:
Mafia negotiations?

TURKEY

One step from a shooting war

The downing of a Turkish plane by Syria has brought the contradictions of Istanbul's soft-Islamist government to the fore. **Esen Uslu** explains

The shooting down last week of a Turkish air force reconnaissance plane by Syrian forces over the Mediterranean Sea represents yet another step on the road leading to a Nato intervention.

After the incident a disinformation campaign began immediately, with Turkey and Syria giving conflicting versions aimed at winning over international public opinion, while diplomatic as well as military moves were set in motion. Although neither version can be verified at this time, it is possible to draw certain inferences.

The Turkish plane took off from the Malatya base, which is part of the Nato air command - situated nearby is the mountain-top radar site at Kürecik that played an infamous role during the cold war. And recently we have seen the state-of-the-art AN/TPY-2 radar system added to the USA's so-called 'ballistic missile shield' under nominal Nato control. It is also noteworthy that another component of the same defence shield is a similar radar unit based in the Negev desert in Israel.

The RF-4-ETM aircraft that was shot down is part of a batch that was phased out by the US and German air forces, and transferred to Turkey. Those planes have passed through several recent upgrading programmes to improve their structural integrity, engine, radar and avionics. The 'ETM' suffix indicates that it was the Turkish aircraft industry that carried out the upgrading of its photo and electronic reconnaissance suites.

These planes were scheduled to be further improved through the inclusion of up-to-date ELOP Condor-2 LOROP photo reconnaissance pods made by the Israeli defence industry. However, after the attack on the Mavi Marmara - the Turkish-owned vessel boarded by Israeli commandos in 2010, while attempting to sail to Gaza in breach of the Israeli blockade - the contract was terminated unilaterally by the Israeli side. Despite this, the planes' electronic and optical suites are believed to be more than efficient; however, they need to receive flight information close to their target to obtain the relevant data.

Brinkmanship

Istanbul claimed that the plane was on a mission to calibrate the Turkish radar system, and that when it was warned by ground control that it had committed an incursion the plane was ordered out of Syrian air space. In the secret world of reconnaissance and intelligence, both information and misinformation are put out, so we cannot be sure if the aircraft carried any other specialist equipment. But its standard complement was sufficient to spy deep inside Syria from along the border - and collect electronic data about the status of the Syrian air defences.

It was also possible that the plane was approaching Syria from a seaward direction simulating a low-altitude attack in order to test Syria's early-warning radar systems and tease out the response of the surface-to-air missile defence system, as it attempted to track the plane. That would reveal up-to-date data on Syrian electronic signatures to the sensors of the approaching plane.

A new Russian-made radar system has recently been deployed by the Syrians on a hill near the border with Turkey in order to implement the lessons learned in September 2007. During 'Operation Orchard', Israeli jets bombed the construction site of



Ready to attack

a nuclear facility in north-eastern Syria, and their approach and return routes were over Turkish territory. The Turkish side turned a blind eye, allowing the low-flying Israeli jets to use the radar screen provided by the mountains lying along the Turkish-Israeli border, until they turned south to their target from deep inside Turkey.

Syria previously had quite a substantial number of surface-to-air missile sites, some old and some new, but they were designed to meet attacks coming from the sea and from the southern border. With the recent addition of the new radar on the Turkish border, the Syrian air defence system has succeeded in closing a gap.

Testing the capabilities of such radar and missile systems and collecting up-to-date data is crucially important for Nato planners, who are in the process of drawing up various contingency plans in relation to Syria. Of course, testing radar and SAM defences and collecting electronic data in such a manner would be a very dangerous form of brinkmanship, but an old airplane and a Turkish aircrew are considered expendable items in such a high-stake game.

Neo-Ottoman

How much the soft-Islamist Justice and Development Party (AKP) government of Turkey was aware of this particular mission is hard to tell. It would, of course, be aware of the general state of play, but it is quite possible that the government was kept in the dark about the actual operation.

While the AKP has done a lot to push back the boundaries of military tutelage over the political and social life of Turkey, it still does not have full control over the military-industrial complex. At present more than 60 generals and high-ranking officers, as well as scores of retired officers, are in detention and several trials are going on of those accused of trying to subvert the constitution. However, currently the top brass seems intent on maintaining the semblance of civilian control. But disputes between military officers, security personnel and state intelligence occasionally flare up and are easily discernible. So the flight

could also be a part of a deceptive move forcing the government to act.

The media controlled by junta supporters (including the press of the former Maoists!) are full of articles on how the Islamists have weakened our proud army, and warning that unless all the accused officers are released at once the country will suffer a devastating defeat in the event of an armed conflict. Even in the mainstream media such nationalistic, militarist opposition to the AKP government has become more visible.

As has been widely publicised in the western press, Syrian rebels have been recruited from among the refugee camps along the border with Turkey, which are home to more than 24,000 people. The oil-rich Arab countries provide the finance for the military training carried out by US officers, and the rebels' general supply routes into Syria are protected by Turkish military and paramilitary forces. Meanwhile diplomatic efforts to amalgamate the different groups and forces of the Syrian opposition under a unified command have been centred on Istanbul.

With the downing of the aircraft, a blow was struck against the two publicly declared foreign policy aims of the AKP. Those aims - dubbed 'neo-Ottomanism' - are "zero problems with our neighbours" and "increasing the presence of Turkey as a role model in the region on the basis of its economic, social and cultural strength". The AKP regards its Islamist credentials as an important asset.

However, recent unexpected developments on the southern shores of the Mediterranean in the shape of the Arab uprisings against various dictatorships, as well as deteriorating relations with Israel, have severely tested these neo-Ottomanist pretensions. And the government still seems unable to find its footing in the international arena.

By coincidence, on June 25 the *Financial Times* published a supplement on Turkey, including a headline which read: "Rising power, growing questions". The article went on to explain how the underlying weaknesses of the Turkish economy

are stalling its ambitions: "Not since there was a sultan in Dolmabahçe Palace [ie, before World War I] has Turkey been so active in the region. Surveying the world from the same spot, [prime minister Recep Tayyip] Erdoğan is all too aware - and his officials freely admit - that what comes with that more active role is a region likely to be unstable for at least a decade. He also knows his country's economy is deeply entwined with his own political fate."

After the blatant shooting down of one of its aircraft, the initial response of the government was quite subdued. It claimed it had to collect all the necessary information before proceeding to the international arena. It put together a package of evidence which stopped short on many details. And instead of acting as a 'regional power' and formulating its own response, it ran to Nato - but did not invoke clause 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty dealing with an attack on a member-country.

After all those measured steps, Erdoğan made a speech to the AKP parliamentary group on June 26, stating that the government had changed the rules of engagement for Turkey's armed forces deployed along the Syrian border. Any further hostile act would meet with an immediate and appropriate response. Press reports indicated that reinforcements are being deployed to the southern borders. That means we are one step away from a shooting war.

Intervention and consequences

The AKP government's liberal facade is affixed to its conservative, Islamist core. Its knee-jerk reactions split open that facade and reveal the core. In Syria, the Alawi-minority-based army has been the mainstay of the Ba'athist regime that rules over the Sunni majority. And now suddenly the AKP's anti-Alevi stance has been brought into the open - possibly with very dangerous consequences within Turkey.

Syria represents another relic of the cold war era, where the Russians and Iranians have been striving to

maintain their dominant position. Syria has also been in the forefront of Arab hopes in the face of an expanding Israel. With the Muslim Brotherhood victory in the elections in Egypt, Syria has now been deprived of almost all its support in the Arab world. So a hardened stand against Turkey and a veiled Nato intervention could be a way of winning popular support for Damascus in the Arab world.

In such an international arena, where political fault lines are superimposed on gas and oil supply lines, the AKP government has limited options. However, it has been trying its best to show the western world its agreeable side. It has just signed a new agreement with Azerbaijan to supply gas to Europe via the pipeline being constructed across Turkey.

The day after the downing of the reconnaissance aircraft, the Turkish air force carried out nine bombing runs in the Qandil mountains deep inside Iraqi Kurdistan, where the headquarters of the PKK guerrillas is situated. According to the AKP government and its supporting media, the recent examples of increased Kurdish guerrilla activity inside Turkey are operations sub-contracted by Syrian intelligence. The AKP is also stepping up its repression of Kurdish legal opposition groups on the pretext that they support the separatist aims of the PKK - thousands of elected members of municipal councils, trade unionists, intellectuals and university students have been targeted, and they are now the subject of harsher treatment.

The AKP has tried to divert attention from the Kurdish war and a possible intervention in Syria by highlighting issues such as religious training and the role of women that always find a favourable audience among religious, conservative sections of the population. It has initiated a campaign against an alleged increase in abortions through caesarean operations. It has introduced a new system whereby any woman undertaking a pregnancy test will be informed of the result by SMS - a copy of which is sent to her husbands or parents! Women's organisations have been leading the opposition to these attacks, and for a while the government seemed to backtrack. But after the downing of the plane, the relevant minister was brought out to declare that the government would introduce new legislation before October.

It has also introduced a new system in primary education, where eight-year-olds will be subjected to compulsory religious education. The secularist opposition to this has been quite vocal.

Despite all these diversionary tactics, and the drummed-up nationalism and militarism in response to an 'unprovoked attack', the general public seems set against an intervention in Syrian affairs at the behest of the US and Israel. However, the weakness of the left in Turkey, and the seeming inability to draw Kurds and Alevis into close cooperation with the working class and trade union movement in the struggle for democracy, still persists.

Without such a unified opposition, any chance of a creating a strong movement defending peace seems unlikely in the short run. One hopes that the learning curve of such a unified, democratic opposition to a bloody intervention would be quite steep and that the forces for democracy will be quick to act ●

CPGB



The power of the web combined with the power of print

A site to be proud of

June 30 sees the launch of both the CPGB's Summer Offensive fundraising drive and our new website - **Mark Fischer** discusses the broader challenges of the next two months

A venerable and entertainingly curmudgeon Socialist Workers Party veteran put me straight about the future of the *Weekly Worker* outside the Unite the Resistance conference on June 23. He waved away the copy of the paper I was pressing on him, but not for the usual dull-wittedly sectarian reasons.

"I keep telling my own comrades that the papers are dead - it's all about the web now," he said - or that was gist of it, at least. This comrade used to be a pretty regular punter for the physical version of the paper and never evidenced any shyness about buying it in front of disapproving SWP hacks, so this is clearly a sincerely held view. And remarkable, really - this from an *SWPer*! By implication, he is downgrading the importance of the Saturday morning sales round that at times seem to be the SWP's sole reason for existence - the weekly chance to impersonate a 'mass' organisation by turning out its ill-educated membership to *adapt* to (rather than critically engage with) the consciousness of Saturday morning town-centre shoppers. What iconoclastic madness was this!

But, although I disagree with our SWP comrade, his observation has at least a germ of truth to it. The internet is undoubtedly a huge challenge for all newspapers, proletarian and bourgeois alike. For instance, we have noticed a gently rising curve of people who instead of subscribing have turned to reading us on their Kindles. An appreciable number of them send encouraging and supportive messages, some telling us they will continue to pay for the privilege of reading the

Weekly Worker online. So it is not a general *political* disengagement we are seeing. It is more a matter of convenience for some; the pressure of finances for others. The general trend that we have previously highlighted - that the sympathising periphery of the paper and the politics it champions has actually considerably *expanded* over the past decade or so - continues as far as we can see.

Apocalyptic assessments about the 'death' of this or that form of human cultural forms are generally overplayed. As it turned out, films did *not* kill off theatre; TV did *not* do for cinema; CDs did *not* trash-can vinyl; Michael Sheen seems to have breathed fresh life into passion plays with his epic Port Talbot effort, etc.

Back to the Unite the Resistance event. Fortunately, quickly following my unsettling exchange with my 'print is dead' comrade, my world was set back on its feet when a sour-faced SWP full-timer peeled away a new recruit who had been casually chatting to me. I caught her opening line of "Don't talk to that man because ...", but traffic drowned out the rest of her thought-police spiel, so I can't enlighten readers why you too should perhaps think twice before engaging with me. From past experience of the SWP school of falsification, perhaps it's my Islamophobia. Then again there's my entrenched racism, my complex web of financial relations with MI5, my unreconstructed Stalinism or my organisation's repeated attempts to stage physical confrontations at SWP events via blatant provocations such as, er, turning up, giving out leaflets, organising stalls or even intervening

with critical comments in the time allocated for discussion. However, I did catch her concluding instructions to this hapless young comrade - "Just concentrate on selling the paper," she told him. 'Don't think: flog,' she might have just as well have said.

Clearly then, we are not going to see the demise of *Socialist Worker* any time soon. For the SWP, the print version of their paper is key. For us too, despite the fact that we are on the cusp of launching our new CPGB website, the paper remains key - but for very different reasons from those of the SWP, I think.

Website launch

I am indeed very happy to tell readers that we are now bearing down on the deadline for the launch of our much heralded, long delayed new website.

Before I discuss this in a little more detail, a massive 'thank you' has to go out to all the comrades who have contributed to this project. There's the final team of 'closers' that have force-marched it to completion, but then there are those comrades who worked might and main to dredge the site up after it was attacked in June 2009. The organisation owes thanks to all those comrades - including sympathisers in other organisations and those in other countries - who have contributed useful criticisms as well as practical work on the e-coal face. Ditto the comrades who have nagged and badgered about the inadequacies of the existing site. They have kept the issue live when the pressures of day-to-day political tasks might have pushed it far lower on our agenda. Not that they were greatly appreciated at the time,

obviously. 'Moaners' was a word I seem to recall using in my less generous moments ...

It is very appropriate that the launch coincides with that of our 27th Summer Offensive, our annual fundraising drive - again set this year at a target of £25,000. Regular readers may recall that last year we placed the *Weekly Worker* at the very centre of the campaign. The discipline of physically producing and distributing the publication structures the core of the organisation and made the success of the SO 2011 - we raised not far off £30,000 - over £4k more than our target. A real achievement for what remains a very small organisation, numerically.

Returning to the paper/website discussion, we are very clear that this SO success reflected the esteem - sometimes grudging, as with our professionally grumpy *SWPer* cited at the beginning of this piece - that our paper commands. In turn, the paper has driven the content of our interim site and accounts for its relative success in terms of visitors - the web version of our paper attracts massively more attention than its paper twin.

Obviously this will not change with the new site, but it has been clear for some time that our existing web presence was totally inadequate. For instance, following the way arguments and ideas have unfolded in this paper has been made almost impossible by the fiddly way comrades have to access them. Poor search facilities have exacerbated this. Material has been presented in a format that - while it did not lock comrades out - has made it hard for visitors to the site to

get a quick handle on the CPGB; what makes it distinctive on the left (and let's face it, we *are*); or where they go, quickly and time-efficiently, to learn something from us that might be useful to them as Marxists, *whatever* organisation they are in.

What comrades will be presented with in the next week or so will be far from perfect. It is still very much a work in progress. There are all sorts of 'bells and whistles' to come from the dedicated amateurs that have put it together. For instance, when I was first told about potentially "sticky features", it brought to mind a rather different sort of website. Thankfully, this is actually about what might be called the 'Amazon effect' - ie, the capacity of the site to automatically recommend articles based on past browsing history. It will also feature study guide buttons, which will group - hopefully in a clear, explanatory and useful way - articles, books and videos on particular key themes. We want to create facilities for comrades to post comments and responses to what they read/view on the site (with the appropriate troll guards in place. The left is still to evolve an appropriate etiquette for itself in terms of the web and we have no intention of policing a facility like this 24/7).

The CPGB - the organisation that publishes the *Weekly Worker* - has set itself the target of raising £25,000 over the next two months. If you think the left in this country - *internationally*, actually - is a better place with the *Weekly Worker* rather than without it, let's hear from you, comrades. And your comments and criticisms on our new website would be very welcome too ●

PARTY

Democratic centralism and idiocy of the sects

Comrades need the space to develop and express their ideas, argues **Jim Creegan**. The wider the distance between a given question and the party's immediate objectives and tasks, the more latitude they should have to do so in public

Debates in the *Weekly Worker* over the relationship between Kautsky and Lenin involve more than purely historical questions. By criticising the received wisdom that Bolshevism represented a 'party of a new type', the CPGB, with the aid of Lars Lih's extensive scholarship, appears to be taking indirect aim at the 'democratic-centralist' practice of the 'confessional sects' that invoke the so-called Leninist model to forbid public disagreement among their members.

The CPGB stresses the organisational continuity between Lenin and the Second International in order, among other things, to promote the broader party conception modelled in the pages of the *Weekly Worker*, which features letters and articles representing a wide range of (often conflicting) Marxist opinion. Such public debate is permissible, and even desirable, says the CPGB, so long as it does not stand in the way of 'unity in action'. Without commenting on the historical disputes, I would like to offer a few reflections on the 'party question' based upon my personal experience.

On parting company with the International Bolshevik Tendency 14 years ago as a result of a faction fight I started and lost, I found myself confronted with a choice between two unsavoury alternatives. I could either have continued my membership by accommodating myself to leaders who argued their positions in ways I thought not only wrong, but a travesty of Marxism; or I could have gathered around me a handful of co-factionalists and tried to found yet another micro-vanguard, with a three-member national section, a seven-member cyber-international, and a list of 'differences' with the IBT that would seem far less important to anyone not involved with the group. Yet it seemed to me that by taking the second course I would be replicating a pattern for which Trotskyism is ridiculed, in my opinion with much justice: the proliferation of ever more minuscule sects. I thought the time had come to stand back and take a hard look at the causes of this seemingly endless mitosis.

My first conclusion was that leftwing groupuscules often cannot withstand the differences of opinion and personality that inevitably arise among members who tend to take theoretical and historical questions more seriously than those outside the Trotskyist tradition, and are not always distinguished by personal modesty. I further concluded that isolation was the main cause of this fragility. Although participation in mass struggle by no means inoculates parties against personal rivalries or splits, high political stakes and responsibility for the fate of many can sometimes act as a counterweight to the schismatic impulse.

Rank-and-file workers, who did not fully understand the reasons for the Bolshevik-Menshevik split, exerted pressure for unity on the two factions, compelling Lenin and Martov to make several attempts at reconciliation before the final parting of ways (whenever that was); Trotsky (at least according to Deutscher's speculations) voted for the treaty of Brest-Litovsk against his own inclinations because he feared that a breach between himself and Lenin under life-and-death circumstances would be more harmful than bowing to the outrageous territorial demands of the central powers.

Tiny groups, on the other hand, are more defined by what they say than what they do. Political isolation inclines some revolutionaries to substitute arguing amongst themselves over abstract questions for mass struggle, and, in the absence of



Expected to swallow one line after another

any serious consequences, to carry such arguments to the point of a complete break.

But it also seems to me that certain organisational practices are implicated in far-left fractiousness. When I joined the Spartacist League in 1981, I found that I was publicly responsible for upholding the party line on a ragbag of issues quite remote from the group's political practice or the reasons for which I joined. The SL held that Israel should have been defended against the Arab Legion in the 1948 war (an idiosyncratic position that Spartacist leader Jim Robertson inherited during his Shachtmanite youth from Hal Draper); that the USSR should have extended its nuclear umbrella to North Vietnam during the 60s; that there had been no economic boom in the US and other western countries in the quarter century following World War II.

I was also expected to toe the line on a number of half-baked, idiotic 'theoretical' pronouncements on the part of the organisation's megalomaniac cult chief. During a discussion with Gerry Healy's American followers, Robertson had once declared that "programme generates theory", and subsequently presented this dictum to his own members as the height of Marxist wisdom. He also decreed that there was no state in Nicaragua during the 1980s. In a masterful demonstration of dialectical logic, Robertson reasoned that, since the state is an organ of class power, and that the Sandinista regime was class-ambivalent, it could not constitute a "state in the Marxist sense" (as if Marxists, more than having their own theory of the state, used the word itself to denote something different from its object in ordinary usage).

When, several years later, my jagged political trajectory took me from the Spartacist League to the International Bolshevik Tendency, I questioned some of the above positions, all of which the IBT had taken over uncritically from its Spartacist progenitor. While the debates I initiated were certainly more thorough and democratic than those in the SL, these controversies over abstract questions were treated in the same way as differences about urgent political matters: ie, with a view to affirming a party line, binding in public on all members. I argued - to no avail - that broad scientific questions requiring background knowledge, such as the dialectics of nature or the transformation problem, might not be appropriate matters for up-or-down vote by the membership, like proposals for slogans at an upcoming demonstration.

In justification for having a line on everything under the sun, certain precedents are inevitably invoked. Did not Lenin expel Bogdanov and the 'god-builders' from his faction in 1908 for a philosophical 'deviation'? Did not

Trotsky, in *In defence of Marxism*, upbraid Shachtman and Burnham for mentioning their disagreement over dialectics in the pages of the US Socialist Workers Party's magazine, *The New Internationalist*? I am a little fuzzy on the details of the 1908 expulsions; in the latter case I think Trotsky was simply wrong. But, for every example of narrow-mindedness one can cite, there are many more examples of public theoretical debate in socialist, and even in Bolshevik, history. Excavating these counter-precedents is one valuable result of the re-examination of Marxist history now being conducted in the *Weekly Worker*.

It is hard enough to get the stubborn, contentious types who typically inhabit the Marxist left to agree on the basics of principles and programme, let alone a host of ancillary questions they have never had occasion to think about, and concerning which they begin to discover differences once they do. Basic respect for the intellect of members requires a certain latitude in which they can develop and express their own ideas, inside and outside the party. That latitude should, moreover, be in direct proportion to the distance between a given question and the party's immediate objectives and tasks. The wider it is, the better it can defuse the tensions that accumulate over various disagreements, sometimes culminating in splits.

Which is not to say that open public disagreement should be allowed on all things at all times. The freedom of public debate should no more be regarded as an absolute right than its suppression should be seen as an unvarying imperative of 'democratic centralism'. The founding principles of a party provide certain parameters for debate. There are programmatic points that any organisation considers more fundamental than others. There are also situations of heightened conflict, either with the class enemy or political opponents, in which the line between thought and action tends to become indistinct. Open disputes can sometimes expose weak points, which adversaries can take advantage of to sow disunity. What questions a party has an official position on, and the degree to which those positions can be criticised by members in public, should not be treated as matters of principle, but be subject to situation-specific decisions, over which the membership as a whole - and the leadership in the absence of the assembled members - should exercise broad discretion.

It may be necessary at certain times to march in close formation. But in our own time, in which we lead no masses, and so many former certainties have been confounded and so many things must be rethought, the widest margin for debate seems to me the correct default setting ●

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.

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

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The school as straitjacket

Michael Gove’s plans to ditch GCSE exams are socially regressive - but, writes **Paul Demarty**, so is the obsession with examinations itself

It is not surprising that the one Tory policy to finally draw the open and complete disagreement of Nick Clegg and his party of patsies should have issued from the department for education, headed by that oaf-savant, Michael Gove.

His barely concealed enthusiasm for the wholesale deconstruction of Britain’s state education system, from the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) fiasco to his enthusiasm for academies and promotion of so-called ‘free schools’, and the hiking up of university fees that caused the Liberal Democrats so much discomfort in the first year of this government - almost every bright idea of Gove’s comes with a free migraine for Clegg.

This time around, he has gone too far even for the yellow mediocrities with whom he shares governmental office. The plan in question is to ditch the current system of general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) school qualifications, and return to a two-tier system after the fashion of the certificates of secondary education (CSEs) and O-levels that preceded them.

Gove may be a wilfully destructive troll of a minister, but he is not stupid. The very manner in which the plans came to light - leaked to the *Daily Mail*, before the Lib Dems even got a look at them, while Clegg was the other side of the world at the latest redundant climate change summit - should tell us that Gove and his office did not expect their partners to buy it. That was clearly never the point. It has not stopped Clegg from taking severe umbrage at the education secretary’s behaviour. “This has not been subject to a collective discussion in government,” he huffed to Radio 4’s *World at one*. “Neither myself nor the prime minister were aware of it.”¹

Alas! For poor Nick Clegg, insult is piled upon insult. A day later, aides at number 10 suggested that Cameron was indeed aware of Gove’s plans in advance of the leak.² In fact Cameron seems to be in broad support of the proposals, and has indicated that he would like them to be included in the Tories’ next election manifesto (clearly, they are ruled out for this parliament).

The silver lining for Clegg is obvious enough - just as this policy shows Gove’s eagerness to distance himself from the Lib Dems, so it provides a clear line of demarcation for Clegg, whose attempts to appear as anything other than a Tory whose blue tie is in the wash have so far been quite risible.

Master plan

The Gove proposals are transparently reactionary in themselves. They amount to an *explicit* avowal of elitism in the education system. The emergence of the comprehensive school system was a serious blow to this ideology, which was absolutely bread and butter to the Tories, but the maintenance of a two-tier exam system extended its lifespan by decades.

Leaving things at this level,

however, is inadequate. Like Martin Luther King, Michael Gove has a dream. It is an education built specifically to the design of extremely old-fashioned Tory values. It will be elitist; it will inculcate good, old-fashioned British values, and a chauvinist identification with the state. It will be thorough in its discipline. It will be purged of the obsessions of the politically correct, namby-pamby liberal elite - such as secularism.

This may seem overly apocalyptic - but only to those who have not been paying attention. The axing of BSF - a large scale, and deeply flawed, private finance initiative school-building programme - kicked schools further down the road to becoming academies, or ‘free schools’. The proposal, in the wake of last summer’s riots, to introduce ‘male authority figures’ (ex-soldiers and so forth) into classrooms is one step short of corporal punishment, and nakedly patriarchal. The proposed Simon Schama-penned British history curriculum needs no further commentary.³ It is abundantly clear what animates Gove as a political actor.

It will not be a two-tier system, but a system of Byzantine complexity - every sect of religious fruitcakes, every patrician bourgeois philanthropist, will have its own academy or ‘free school’. To this end, Gove’s leaked proposals contain - bizarrely unremarked upon, in favour of the question of exams - the abolition of the national curriculum, something already implicit in the flagship free schools programme (and, for that matter, the academies, which were, of course, a product of Blairism).

If Gove is successful (if there is an ounce of common sense still floating around Whitehall, he will not be), the education system will have taken a giant leap into the past - probably far enough into the past for the likes of

Cameron and Gove to manage to sell it as ‘modernisation’.

Pseudo-rational

Given the present state of affairs, such a sales pitch will not be hard.

The recent history of the British education system consists, for the most part, in its pseudo-rationalisation. The ever-expanding tyranny of the national curriculum, the shift from O-levels to GCSEs, and from ‘old-fashioned’ A-levels to New Labour’s highly modular version of the same - all have the result that education provides a streamlined series of quantitative metrics.

Slicing a chemistry A-level into six weighted and carefully delimited chunks, and doing the same with English literature, provides the illusion of a comparison with mathematical precision. And the multiplication of such chunks - which have long penetrated into the GCSE system - has the effect that the subjects under study lose their coherence as subjects. Turning up at university with one’s chemistry A-level says no more than that one has the requisite intellectual skills to study the hard sciences to a certain level, along with a superficial and increasingly arbitrary scattering of subject knowledge.

That schools have taken on this character is part of a broader technocratic ideology which has flourished since the rise of the new right, and most especially under New Labour. Such political trends self-conceived not, as an older Toryism did, as defenders of traditional social hierarchies, but as the friends of aspiration and ‘social mobility’. The role of government is to administer a system which allows anyone, regardless of background, to make a ‘success’ of themselves.

Education, for this ideology, is about *results* - ultimately this means how many school-leavers go on to contribute to Britain’s GDP; but the

intermediary metrics (school-leavers going to university, school-leavers getting apprenticeships, league tables of exam results, etc) are equally flourished as evidence of successful education policy, or wielded by opposition parties as evidence of failure.

This ideology is a pretty poor representation of reality, however. After 30 years of Thatcherism and post-Thatcherism, society is as stratified as ever. GCSEs, in fact, do quite as good a job of social stratification as O-levels and CSEs ever did - students are routinely streamed into ‘foundation-level’ exams, in which the highest grades are not available. Those who leave formal education at 16, for the most part, will never do more than the most draining unskilled labour. On the other end of the scale, simply maximising the number of students in universities has resulted only in a huge spike in graduate unemployment.

In order to spin things as a success, governments must effectively cook the books. They must equally be seen to *do something* - hence the endless reorganisations of Ofsted (the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills) and tweaks to the examination system. To the extent that the system *actually* succeeds on its own terms, it simply spits out people with the requisite faculties to carry out social functions of varying degrees of mindlessness. It consists not in maximising the development of all, but of *limiting* the development of *enough* people, such that they will face an economic compulsion to drudgery.

It is this hopeless state of affairs which Nick Clegg implies is worthy of defence.

Break

It should go without saying that for communists this approach to education is little short of an abomination (it says something

about Gove’s policies that the status quo looks *attractive* next to them). It should be said, first off, that the whole system of examinations needs to be torn up, and replaced with more meaningful approaches to judging students’ aptitudes and potential. Exams have become so dominant not because they are a good measure of such things, but because they produce numbers.

Yet the fetishisation of exams is only one of the many ways that schools are set up as straitjackets for students (and, for that matter, teachers). The process - explicit in the old grammar-school/secondary modern system, implicit today - of separation of future manual and mental workers is equally a recipe for stunted development. We favour a *polytechnical* approach to education, as a means of *eventually* overcoming the distinction between mental and manual labour altogether.

Lastly, the obsession with ‘discipline’ - present in an almost homoerotic form in Gove’s ‘male authority figures’ proposal - is a self-fulfilling prophecy. Teachers are increasingly forced, thanks to the general structure of education and almost invariably against their own instincts, to act like prison guards (had they wanted to do so, they would have become prison guards); it is to be expected that pupils will thus come to act like the more recalcitrant lifers in Pentonville. We want the general culture to be as collaborative as possible in schools - something that is the more possible, the more the perverse values of capitalism are overturned in society at large.

Almost every feature of contemporary education under capitalism, alas, points in the opposite direction •

Notes

1. *The Guardian* June 22.
2. *The Guardian* June 23.
3. See J Turley, ‘The history boys’ *Weekly Worker* October 14 2010.

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