

# weekly worker



**Olympics: a celebration of  
money, national chauvinism  
and ruling class values**

- Syrian opposition
- Kurdish self-determination
- Andrew Kliman debate
- Communist University

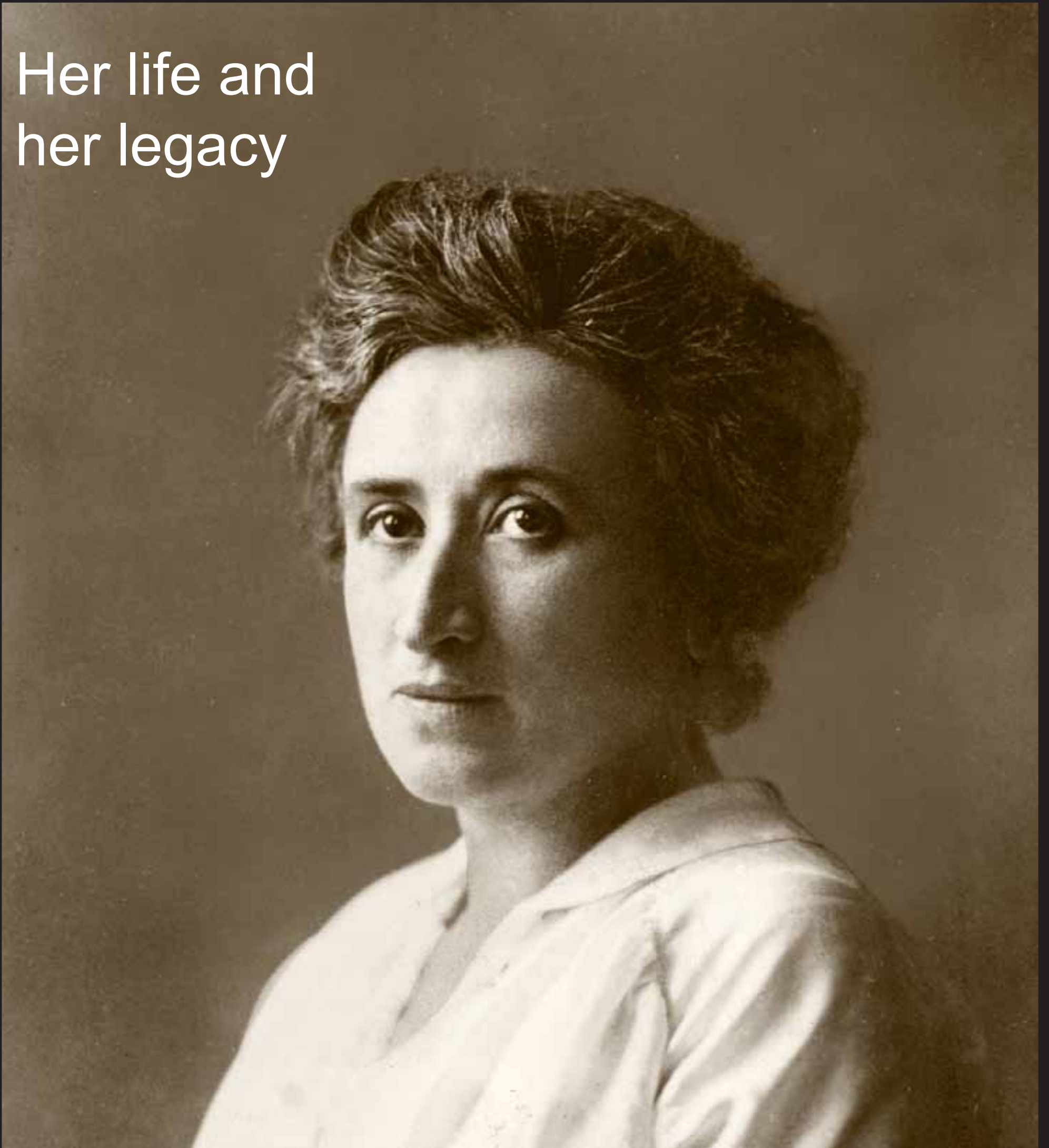
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## Her life and her legacy





# LETTERS



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

## Paranoid

I am flattered you found my anthology of Proudhon of such interest ('No guide to revolution', July 19). While it is nice to read that "overall McKay and his translator collaborators have done a significant service to the Anglophone left", I fear that Mike Macnair's review gets much wrong.

I am surprised that Macnair spends so much time disputing that Proudhon matches "the profile of a worker, artisan or peasant autodidact", given that he admits Proudhon "had to work for a living". Macnair is alone in this: *every* writer on Proudhon - including Marxist John Ehrenberg - acknowledges his working class roots.

The facts are clear. His father was employed in a brewery and as a cooper and, after failing as a self-employed brewer-publican, worked the small family farm of his wife. Proudhon only attended secondary school thanks to a bursary arranged with the help of his father's former employer, and was forced to leave in 1827 because of family poverty to become employed in a printshop. After a failed attempt to become a master printer and winning a scholarship, he became the employee of a transport company before, in 1848, finally becoming a full-time writer.

Is Macnair really suggesting that someone who had to sell his labour to capitalists is *not* a worker? Or is he taking Kautsky's and Lenin's elitist nonsense that workers cannot develop socialist theory to new lows? He *is* correct that being working class does not automatically make you right, but rather than leave it at that he denies that Proudhon was working class! Which should make you wonder how accurate the rest of his piece is. Sad to say, it is riddled with errors and often repeats distortions refuted in my introductory material.

For example, to proclaim "Proudhon was an opponent of political democracy as such" is simply nonsense. He was opposed to democracy limited to picking masters in a centralised political hierarchy, favouring one based on mandated and recallable delegates: as implemented, with praise from Marx, in the Paris Commune by Proudhon's followers (*Property is theft!* pp28-29, 41). Macnair's summary of *The social revolution demonstrated by the coup d'état of December 2* shows he has not read it.

He is wrong to assert that "*System of economic contradictions* is a deeply incoherent book, precisely because of its methodology." It is only "incoherent" if you fail to understand that Proudhon is analysing an economic system riddled with contradictions, aspects of which he discusses in turn. True, his presentation is flawed, but with patience his argument becomes clear - particularly as it expands on the one presented in *What is property?* Sadly, Macnair does not understand that work, proclaiming it an "internal critique of defences of rent-bearing property". This is not the case, as it also explicitly addresses how surplus value is produced by wage-labour (pp116-7).

To reduce *Solution of the social problem* to "a polemic against political democracy as involved in the solution to the social problem" is misleading. It is a critique of bourgeois representative democracy in favour of a delegate democracy based on mandates and recall (p273). During 1848 Proudhon urged workers to go beyond political reform into social reform to secure the revolution - and so sought to extend democracy (crucially into the economy), making it *genuine* (p55).

It is also strange to see it proclaimed that Proudhon's "political ideas were

somewhat closer to the 'small is beautiful' (Schumacher) approach", when my book shows, Marxist myths notwithstanding, that he was not against large-scale industry. To present him as urging peasant and artisan production is simply untenable (pp10-11, 73). He also states that Proudhon thought "the right of withdrawal" could "provide the only real controls ... against managerial power". Yet Proudhon explicitly argued for industrial democracy, the election of management (pp11-12) - something Mondragon is deficient in.

Then there is the claim that I "sidestep Proudhon's patriarchalism", while proclaiming that he sought "to hive off" family relations "by making them into a separate sphere handled by women, *under the authority* of men". So rather than apply his ideas on federalism to relations between men and women, as between communes and workplaces, he embraced the hierarchy he rejected elsewhere. Macnair misses the obvious: Proudhon's sexism *is*, as I state, "in direct contradiction to his own libertarian and egalitarian ideas". As for my alleged "discomfort" with it, in reality little discussion is needed to prove this (p48), showing Macnair's speculations to be false.

The "problem with Proudhon", apparently, is that he does not avoid "the problem of political ordering". Yet he repeatedly argued for socio-economic organisation - hence the "universal association" of the 1840s, which became the "agricultural-industrial federation" of the 1860s. Rather than the "tyranny of structurelessness", Proudhon advocated non-statist, federal socio-economic structures. And if Macnair considers that federations "immediately pose within themselves the same problems of political ordering as states", then he is implying that the state will never wither away.

Macnair wonders why the texts included were picked - my biographical sketch indicates why for the major works. As for the shorter pieces, I felt those speak for themselves. As for *What is property?*, how can you have a Proudhon anthology without it? It would be like excluding *The manifesto of the Communist Party* from one on Marx.

As my book is about Proudhon, not Marx, I did not spend too much time on works by Marx that he was not aware of. Apparently, I accuse "Marx of having in *The poverty of philosophy* misread Proudhon", which is not true - I show how he repeatedly *misrepresents* Proudhon (and contradicts himself in later works). As I note, Marx at times does point to flaws in Proudhon's ideas, but to state my "objections to Marx's critique are largely extremely secondary" fails to acknowledge that Marx does not meet the basic standards of honest debate. He also wonders if I included Proudhon's letter to Marx as "as evidence of Marx's sectarianism". How paranoid to ponder the reasons for the inclusion of a famous letter between two giants of socialism!

Macnair concludes it "is worth reading Proudhon, then. But not in any sense as a guide, as McKay suggests, to the 'general idea of the revolution in the 21st century'." It is sad that he takes my obvious drift on Proudhon's *General idea of the revolution in the 19th century* to imply that I am urging people to accept all of his ideas, when, being a revolutionary class-struggle anarchist, I explicitly did not: "... we should not slavishly copy Proudhon's ideas; we can take what is useful and, like Bakunin, Kropotkin and others, develop them further in order to inspire social change in the 21st century" (p51). Still, I hope your readers will take his advice - but spend more time actually reading what Proudhon (and I) wrote!

Finally, Macnair states that "Marx and Engels from 1846 onwards more or

less constantly urged the organisation of the working class for *political* action." He fails to discuss its outcome - unsurprisingly, given its utter failure. Perhaps because these dire results were predicted by anarchists helps explain the current rise in our ideas?

**Iain McKay**

www.property-is-theft.org

## Illusion

Comrade Ralph Schoenman (Letters, August 9) commits an elementary logical error by claiming that Matzpen's call for equal national rights for Palestinian Arabs and Israeli Hebrews (within a socialist regional federation) favours the present oppressor, Israel. It is self-evident that putting an end to national oppression is a *necessary precondition* for equality of national rights. Equal rights are in the interest of the oppressed. And we were always very clear about this: overthrow Zionism, *in order to obtain* equal national rights.

Moreover, it is a matter of elementary logic that by opposing the call for equality, comrade RS is in effect advocating *inequality* of national rights. This is incompatible with a socialist outlook.

By drawing a false analogy with the settlers of South Africa, Rhodesia, Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia, comrade RS tries to deny the existence of a Hebrew nation. In this he displays wilful blindness to reality and ignorance of the basic Marxist distinction between colonies (including all those he mentions) whose political economy depended on exploiting indigenous labour-power and those where the indigenous people have been excluded and displaced. In all colonies of the latter type - such as the United States, Australia and New Zealand - the settlers formed new nations; and the Israeli case is no exception. Ironically, in denying the reality of this nation, comrade RS agrees with Zionist ideology, which (for reasons of its own) shares this denial.

Comrade RS tells us that a struggle for national liberation is an avenue towards "the mobilisation of the working masses, into the call for social ownership of the means of production." Sadly, this Trotskyist theory has proved to be wishful thinking. There has been no instance in which it has actually worked out. Victorious national liberation in Vietnam, Algeria and elsewhere has not been followed by socialist revolutions, but by oppressive regimes.

In the Palestinian case there is no way in which national liberation can be achieved without a socialist regional Arab unification, because there is no other way in which the present highly unfavourable balance of power can be overturned, creating favourable conditions for the overthrow of Zionism. Until then, the struggle of the Palestinian masses, aided by international solidarity, is vital for defending against Zionist oppression and preventing the worst. But it is a dangerous illusion to imagine that there is a short cut to victorious national liberation, followed *later on* by regional socialism.

**Moshé Machover**

email

## Salience

I hesitate to intrude on the debate between Dave Walters, Ralph Schoenman and Moshé Machover. However, I feel it is necessary to make a few salient points.

Politically, Moshé and I disagree fundamentally. Dave and Ralph are right that you cannot put an equal sign between the oppressor and the oppressed. Even if the Israeli Jews constitute a nation, and that in itself is doubtful, then they are an oppressor nation and do not have the right to self-

determination. Self-determination is not a fundamental principle applicable to all, or we might start calling for the right of the bourgeoisie to self-determination!

It follows that, although the Jews of Israel have certain national rights which should certainly be respected, be they linguistic or religious, what binds them together as a 'nation' is precisely their antagonism to the indigenous population.

In fact, the so-called Hebrew nation would most likely fall upon itself in a bitter civil and sectarian war were the Palestinians to disappear from the equation. But, equally, just as we didn't support the right of the whites of South Africa to self-determination, we did support, for example, the right for Afrikaans as a national language.

However, the posing of the right to form a separate Hebrew state would be a recipe for the return of Zionism in another guise. What possible reason could there be for such a state, even within a socialist federation, but to reverse the gains of the Arab masses? In the context of the Middle East, the assertion of a Hebrew political identity could not help but be a Zionist one or an attempt to reverse the gains of revolution.

But there are also dissimilarities with South Africa, apart from the fact that apartheid was exploitative rather than exclusionary. Zionism is far stronger, both militarily and demographically, than the whites of South Africa ever were. There is a rough numerical parity between the Palestinians and the Israeli Jews. This cannot be ignored. It has major implications for any successful resolution to the conflict. Moshé is undoubtedly correct when he says that the solution to the Palestinian question cannot be achieved within the confines of what was Mandate Palestine itself. It is only with a successful social revolution in the Arab East that the forces of imperialism, Israel's main backers, will be defeated and forced to abandon their protégé. And there is also little doubt that the overthrow of the tyrants and gulf sheikhdoms and the ushering in of democratic control over the resources of the region will have a powerful effect on sections of the Israeli Jewish population. There is every reason to believe that a wider social revolution would have consequences among Israeli Jews themselves, albeit a minority of them.

However, I do also wish to make it clear that these debates should be comradely. It is one thing to disagree; it is another thing entirely to say that one's opponent is little better than a left Zionist. Moshé's advocacy of socialism in the abstract and the concept of a Hebrew nation may indeed be a concession to Zionism, but anyone who has worked with Moshé knows that he is a dedicated and fierce opponent of Zionism. Matzpen, of which he was a co-founder, was the first group to develop a coherent analysis of Zionism as a settler-colonial movement in contrast with that of Stalinism. Someone who is a Zionist believes in a Jewish state as a solution to what used to be called the 'Jewish question'. No-one seriously thinks that Moshé believes any such thing. Nor, if Moshé were any kind of left Zionist, would he be a supporter of boycott, divestment and sanctions. At least I don't know any other Zionists who take this position!

Perhaps I can also comment briefly on Jim Creegan's reply (Letters, August 9) to my letter (August 2) about Alex Cockburn's obituary ('A radical for all seasons', July 26). I think we agree on most, but not all, of the issues involved.

I accept that Jim was unaware of *Counterpunch's* predilection for publishing the works of Atzmon and Shamir. His analysis of their politics is spot on, though I would disagree

that they differ from Hitlerite anti-Semitism because they are not biological racists. In fact, the more intelligent, if that is the right word, anti-Semitic theoreticians did invoke the Jewish 'spirit' and cultural supremacy - Rosenberg and Houston Stewart Chamberlain, for example. Nor is the 'virus' of anti-Semitism prevalent around the Palestine solidarity circle, as he believes. Mearsheimer isn't a respected liberal scholar, but a ruling class ideologue who believes US interests aren't best served by its alliance with Israel. That Shamir's son is the official representative of Wikileaks in Sweden is worrying, given the allegations that Shamir senior handed over details of individuals in the leaks to the Belorussian state.

The question of the reaction to the holocaust in the Middle East is an entirely different matter and is a consequence of Zionism's weaponising of the holocaust against the Palestinians. Anti-Semitism in the Middle East does not have the same social roots as it did in Europe (a useful book on this is Gilbert Achcar's *The Arabs and the holocaust*).

However, I refute Jim's suggestion of subjectivism, that I judge everything solely from the perspective of Israel and the Middle East. Cockburn also shared with the right hostility to the idea of climate change or that global warming was a result of the burning of fossil fuels. People may wish to read the exchanges he had with George Monbiot, where he effectively turned his back on the accepted notion of scientific analysis and peer-reviewed articles (see [www.monbiot.com/2007/05/31/alexander-cockburn-and-the-corruption-of-science](http://www.monbiot.com/2007/05/31/alexander-cockburn-and-the-corruption-of-science)).

One of his last articles, 'Who are the real fascists: Marine Le Pen - or the United States?', showed the direction he was heading in. He had become a critic of capitalism and imperialism from the right. He paid fulsome tribute to the leader of France's Front National, Marine Le Pen: "Marine Le Pen is a nationalist politician, quite reasonably exploiting the intense social discontent in France amid the imposition of the bankers' austerity programmes." I think Jim would agree that this puts Cockburn outside the pale of anyone on the left. That he opposed US imperialism is, of course, admirable. In seeing fascist and racist politics as a solution, he was merely following a path that others on the left, such as Independent Labour Party MP John Beckett had trodden before him.

Alex Cockburn, despite detesting him, was a pale caricature of another recently deceased ex-radical, Christopher Hitchens.

**Tony Greenstein**

Brighton

## Anti-Semitism

Jim Creegan is no less unhinged than Tony Greenstein if he thinks Atzmon is an anti-Semite - unless, of course, criticising the Jewish religion is anti-Semitism, in which case most Jews are anti-Semites and everybody who isn't Jewish must by definition be anti-Semite.

The Jewish religion is a collection of unreconstructed outlooks and beliefs that belong more properly to the ancient slave and pre-slave societies, reflecting as they do the early bloodthirsty beliefs of the emerging ruling classes - especially those that were happy to go around pillaging already settled lands and who were responsible for the original world-historic defeat of women. Criticising the Jewish religion is not anti-Semitism. It's almost a duty.

Atzmon is of Jewish heritage, so clearly he doesn't believe there is anything genetic about being Jewish and he majors in criticism of that religion because that's his background. No doubt most of us



began by questioning Christianity and its hypocrisies.

Zionism (which you don't need to be Jewish to believe in) has managed to make both itself and Judaism off limits to criticism and the likes of Creegan and especially Greenstein help them with this. These two would destroy Marxism if we took their rantings seriously.

Also as Marxists surely you would recognise the historically progressive side of Christianity's criticisms of Judaism, which allowed it to break from that gruesome world outlook? Unfortunately if Marxists find Judaism out of bounds for criticism, then reactionary Catholic clerics will be allowed to make the correct criticisms hypocritically and reap the rewards.

**David Ellis**  
via Facebook

## Islamophobia

I agree with your analysis regarding the Socialist Workers Party ('Rebelling against rural values in Warrington', August 9). Their position is always to ignore social problems such as the one you highlighted. Their way is always to: (1) pretend it is all the fault of the capitalist press; (2) pretend that there is no problem within Islam or at least Islam practised in Pakistan or the UK; (3) call everyone a racist or Islamophobic if they dare point out any problems. All this glosses over very real social problems.

It also has other consequences. I recently attended a 'We are Waltham Forest' anti-English Defence League meeting, where a room full of aging white lefties (me included) all pretended we are a wonderfully integrated borough and would stop the evil EDL from marching. Unpleasant as the EDL are, they are not Martians, but alienated white working class who take exception to the Muslim community not integrating. Well, they are correct about this, of course, but their solution is both dangerous and unwelcome.

Whilst I don't want the EDL terrorising the borough, we shouldn't pretend we are integrated as a borough or that Islam is a religion of peace. In the room there were two Muslims - one on the platform and one in the audience. Where were the others in the borough? I think the answer is at the mosque, but they certainly wouldn't attend a meeting such as this.

The Muslim woman from the platform argued we should not be divided by race, religion or sexuality. I doubt if she could have said this in the mosque or would even wish to. She was free to say it at the meeting because there were virtually no Muslims in the room and there is no doubt in my mind that we are divided, except by superficial solidarity, where all the white lefties make the concessions. The problem is that the SWP and others all ignore the shocking abuses that take place within Islam in the name of opposing a so-called greater problem.

I raised the issue from the floor that division in our society will feed resentment and the EDL. The policies of this government are the main cause of the division. But Waltham Forest will soon have new 'free schools' and three are religious in character - including a rumoured all-girls Muslim free school. I mentioned that religious groups (Muslims) will send their kids to these schools if instructed to by their community and urged them not to do this. The applause was minimal, of course, because I should have come out with some ghastly rhetoric about how we are all one and the EDL are evil scum (which I don't actually believe, by the way).

The problem remains that Islam is not a religion of peace and remains one that oppresses women. It will perpetuate these ideas through religious schools sponsored by this government. The EDL only force the communities back into themselves, but the SWP and the like just ignore this issue. We need

to take the abuse of youth and women in Muslim communities seriously, just as your article did.

**Steve White**  
email

## Pentonville 5

Forty years ago, in the summer of 1972, new technology had revolutionised dock handling, and 'containerisation' - the pre-packing of transit goods in containers by non-dockers - was in place. The consequence of this development was that there would be loss of work for many dockers, who were members of the Transport and General Workers Union.

The Tory government of Ted Heath had set up the National Industrial Relations Court (NIRC) under the 1971 Industrial Relations Act, which was to be used to attack the trade unions. Laws on picketing - particularly 'secondary picketing' - criminalised workers who were trying to defend their jobs and livelihoods. 1972 was a period of great class battles, involving not just the dockers, but building workers and miners, and now their basic democratic rights were being infringed, as the capitalist state attempted to restrict workers' right to withdraw their labour.

The NIRC, which the TUC and its affiliated unions had refused to recognise, prohibited picketing at two east London container depots. But the picketing continued and five dockers - all TGWU shop stewards (Bernie Steer, Vic Turner, Derek Watkins, Cornelius Clancy and Anthony Merrick) - were committed for contempt and imprisoned. Bernie Steer and Vic Turner were both members of the Communist Party, which had successfully set up a rank-and-file body, the Liaison Committee for the Defence of the Trade Unions (LCDTU), to campaign and mobilise workers in opposition to the NIRC. The union itself was fined £5,000 for contempt. Meanwhile haulage bosses at Chobhams and Midland Cold Storage were seeking fresh injunctions and court orders.

In response to the jailing of the five dockers, the LCDTU organised unofficial strikes involving 44,000 dockers and 130,000 other workers, and the TUC general council voted 18-7 to call a one-day general strike for July 31. Jack Jones, TGWU general secretary, rather than call his membership out on indefinite strike, had taken the issue to the TUC.

In view of the threatened general strike the Tories and the capitalist state caved in and had the five dockers released on July 26. Someone called Norman Turner, occupying the post of 'official solicitor', was used to free the five dockers. The official solicitor is supposed to act on behalf of those unable to manage their own affairs, and had never previously intervened in this way. He successfully applied to the high court to have the NIRC ruling overturned.

In fact, it was the magnificent response of the working class that freed the five dockers. When it came to the crunch, the Tories were defeated and the ensuing Labour government repealed the Industrial Relations Act. Subsequently Thatcher and Blair used other anti-union laws to try to shackle the trade union movement. Today there is a complete distrust of the Labour Party, whose support for austerity measures means the working class will have to seek out new perspectives.

It is open to question whether 24-hour general strikes are the answer. There have been in the recent period many such one-day protests in Britain, Greece, Spain, Portugal and the United States. But no government has been forced out and capitalism still remains. In 1972 workers downed tools and there was a complete change. The question of who rules was posed. The state had to use 'other means' in the shape of the official solicitor to solve

its dilemma.

To overturn the property relations of capitalism will require not just one-day strikes, but picketing where necessary and the abolition of all anti-union laws. Capitalism can only be overthrown using a scientific socialist method.

**Laurence Humphries**  
Email

## Not guilty

Eight months after being spuriously accused of burglary, imprisoned overnight and deprived of our clothes and shoes, before being released to find our way home in the small hours, 16 of us arrested on November 30 2011 were finally declared not guilty of criminal offences under the Public Order Act.

It all started with a banner-drop from the roof of a central London office block. "All power to the 99%," read our huge banner, neatly tying the ethos of Occupy London to the anti-cuts agenda of the TUC's N30 day of action. Appropriately enough, the office in question was home to the obscenely remunerated Mick Davis, CEO of the mining conglomerate, Xstrata.

After the initial violence of our arrest, what followed was tedious rather than anything else. Nearly 24 hours in detention, an appointment to answer bail and a total of six days in court, all spanning a period of 252 days, seemed contrived to bore us into submission. Happily it also gave us a great opportunity to socialise. I knew none of these folks before N30, whereas now I count them among my best friends.

I also knew nothing about Xstrata and if we'd simply been given a wagging finger that might still be the case. But that's not what happened, so it was only right and proper that Xstrata should be thoroughly investigated: the Carnival of Dirt was born. When I heard that Peruvians, blighted by Xstrata, had heard of our Carnival and were planning a solidarity action, all the hassle of the arrest felt worthwhile.

That's not to say I sought the arrest. It's been an expensive and time-consuming business, which I could have done without. I was roughed-up, but not injured; some of the others on that roof weren't so fortunate. None of us had been made aware of the risks or nature of our target by Occupy London before we were sent into action, leaving us subsequently feeling quite annoyed. Lessons need to be learnt - ignorance may be a defence in court, but it's no basis on which to build an ongoing direct action movement.

My abiding thoughts, however, are positive: the sense of justice in fighting our charges, the mutual support of a very special group of friends and, of course, the massive relief of a 'not guilty' verdict.

**John Ranson**  
email

## Fight for Sites

We're writing to let you know about our new campaign and the common issues it has with the work you do. As the current crises bite, it can feel like we are fighting on many fronts. Traveller rights - and specifically the fight for adequate site provision - are about housing, anti-racism, the Localism Bill, land rights and many more crucial struggles. These are at the core of the Traveller Solidarity Network's new Fight for Sites campaign.

Sadly, traveller rights are too often found near the bottom of the agenda, or remain unexplored parts of campaigns for social justice. We would like to work with other groups for political as well as practical reasons. These struggles are linked and connecting our different networks can only make us both stronger.

**Traveller Solidarity Network**  
travellersolidarity@riseup.net

# 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.org.uk/home/podcasts>

### London Communist Forum

**No forums Sunday August 19 and 26 - come to Communist University!**

**Sunday September 2, 5pm:** Weekly political report from CPGB Provisional Central Committee, followed by open discussion and *Capital* reading group. Caxton House, 129 St John's Way, London N19. This meeting: Vol 1, chapter 3, section 3, 'Money'.

Organised by CPGB: [www.cpgb.org.uk](http://www.cpgb.org.uk).

### Stop the EDL

**Saturday August 18, 11.30am:** Protest march, Tindal Square, Chelmsford.

Organised by Chelmsford Trades Council: [www.chelmsford-tuc.org.uk](http://www.chelmsford-tuc.org.uk).

### How did Kingsley die?

**Saturday August 18, 12 noon:** Protest march - still no answers as to why Kingsley Burrell died in police custody in March 2011. Assemble Summerfield Park, Icknield Port Road, Birmingham B16 for march to Centenary Square, B1.

Organised by Justice for Kingsley Burrell: [www.justiceforkingsleyburrell.blogspot.co.uk](http://www.justiceforkingsleyburrell.blogspot.co.uk).

### UK Black Pride

**Saturday August 18, 12noon to 8:30pm:** Black LGBT event, Ministry of Sound, 103 Gaunt Street, Elephant and Castle, London SE1.

Organised by UK Black Pride: [www.ukblackpride.org.uk](http://www.ukblackpride.org.uk).

### Home from home?

**Ends Friday August 31:** Exhibition, Swansea Museum, Victoria Road, SA1. Forced to flee because of violence or persecution.

In collaboration with Swansea City of Sanctuary, Swansea Bay Asylum Seekers Support Group: [www.swansea.gov.uk/swanseamuseum](http://www.swansea.gov.uk/swanseamuseum).

### Stop the EDL

**Saturday September 1, 11am:** Demonstration against English Defence League march, central Waltham Forest.

Organised by Unite Against Fascism: [www.uaf.org.uk](http://www.uaf.org.uk).

### Immigration deaths: end the impunity

**Wednesday September 5, 6pm:** Annual review and discussion, followed by a BBQ. Community Hall, Athlone Street, London NW5.

Organised by Medical Justice: [www.medicaljustice.org.uk](http://www.medicaljustice.org.uk).

### No deportations

**Saturday September 8, 10am to 5pm:** National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns annual general meeting, Praxis Community Projects, Bethnal Green, London E2.

Organised by NCADC: [www.ncadc.org.uk](http://www.ncadc.org.uk).

### TUC action call

**Sunday September 9, 12noon:** Lobby the TUC for a 24-hour general strike. Assemble 1pm, The Level park, Union Road, Brighton. March 1.30pm to Brighton Centre.

Organised by the National Shop Stewards Network: [www.shopstewards.net](http://www.shopstewards.net).

### Build for October 20

**Monday September 10, 7 pm:** Public meeting, Stockwell Community Resource Centre, Studley Road, Lambeth, London SW4. Build for national TUC demonstration.

Organised by Lambeth TUC: [www.lambethtradesunioncouncil.com](http://www.lambethtradesunioncouncil.com).

### Love Music, Hate Racism

**Saturday September 15, 1pm to 1am:** Anniversary event, Rich Mix, Bethnal Green Road, London E1. Day and evening: £12 waged, £6 unwaged. Day or evening only: £6 waged, £3 unwaged. From Rich Mix: [www.richmix.org.uk](http://www.richmix.org.uk).

Organised by Love Music, Hate Racism: [www.lovemusichateracism.com](http://www.lovemusichateracism.com).

### Free Miami Five

**Tuesday September 18, 6pm:** Vigil, US embassy, Grosvenor Square, London W1 (nearest tube: Bond Street). Speakers include Aleida Guevara, daughter of Che Guevara.

Organised by the Cuba Solidarity Campaign: [www.cuba-solidarity.org](http://www.cuba-solidarity.org).

### Facing the abyss

**Wednesday September 19, 9:30am to 4.30pm:** Conference, Tavistock Centre, 120 Belsize Square, London, NW3. Exploring the challenges for separated children seeking asylum as they turn 18.

Organised by National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns: [www.ncadc.org.uk/events/facingtheabyssflier.pdf](http://www.ncadc.org.uk/events/facingtheabyssflier.pdf).

### Save our services

**Wednesday September 19, 6pm:** Lobby - defend public services in Lambeth, town hall, Brixton Hill, London SW2.

Organised by Lambeth Save Our Services: <http://lambethsaveourservices.org>.

### CPGB wills

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

## Weekly Worker

This is the last *Weekly Worker* before our summer break. The next issue will appear in three weeks time, on Thursday September 6.



## OLYMPICS

# And they call this sport

The establishment intends to use the 'legacy' of the Olympics to consolidate British national chauvinist ideology and ruling class values, writes **Peter Manson**

**A**t last the Olympic Games are over, but the British establishment is determined to reap long-term benefits by unifying the overwhelming majority of the population behind the UK constitutional monarchy state.

It goes without saying that the August 12 closing ceremony was every bit as nationalistic as the opening spectacular two weeks earlier - the stadium field had been divided into sections which formed a huge union flag, into which the national contingents of athletes were herded. It was rather incongruous, however, that among the collection of has-been pop stars celebrating the last 50 years of British popular music, the late John Lennon appeared on the giant screens overhead singing his famous communist anthem: "Imagine there's no countries ..."

While the finale was by no means as stunning or as politically coherent as the opening ceremony, it did the job the ruling class had been hoping for - setting the seal on a fortnight of organisational and sporting achievement intended to make every one of us proud to be British. In the words of Lord Sebastian Coe, chair of the London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (Locog): "When our time came, we did it right" - a sentiment echoed by the entire establishment.

Coe was followed onto the podium by International Olympics Committee president Jacques Rogge, who, according to *The Daily Telegraph*, "stopped short of describing London 2012 as the greatest Olympics".<sup>1</sup> Rogge actually remarked merely that London had "refreshed the games in many aspects", but obviously he was just being "diplomatic" - everybody knows that this showcase for the British nation could not have been bettered. It certainly captured the attention of the overwhelming majority of the British people - the Olympics were the "most watched" TV sporting event on record, with 50.2 million, or 87% of the population, having followed at least one session.

Politicians of all the main parties attempted to outdo each other in their expressions of nationalistic pride. Prime minister David Cameron referred to the "golden summer of British sport, with Britain showing the world what we can deliver in all sorts of ways". For his part, Labour leader Ed Miliband reminded us that "people from across Britain, people from every race, class and background", had been "part of the national experience" - part of the "millions cheering our Team GB athletes, ranging from the granddaughter of the queen to a Somali refugee".

Miliband gave his own Labourite interpretation of Danny Boyle's opening ceremony: it "made plain how the strength of our nation lies with our people - from the staff of the NHS and the suffragettes, to the inventors of punk and the internet." Adding his own personal twist to the multiculturalist celebration, he said: "My mum and dad came here as Jewish refugees in the 1940s. My father loved this country, but was also an internationalist. After this past fortnight, I think he would have been a little more likely to call himself what he always was: a patriot."<sup>2</sup>

What was that about Ralph Miliband "turning in his grave"?

## Legacy

The motto of London 2012 was



**Closing message**

"Inspire a generation". Inspire them to do what? Well, yes, to take up sport - that is part of it. But mainly the idea is that the younger generation will be inspired to work for the 'common good' of Britain in every field, including sport. No-one, of course, needs persuading that such a 'common good' actually exists within the current order. Surely the last fortnight dispelled any doubts about that?

So, in order to build upon the British Olympics success, we need a special inspirational body, and who better than Coe himself - a one-time world record-holder, no less - to head it? The Locog chair and former Conservative MP has agreed to be the new Olympics "legacy ambassador" - whose role, you might not be surprised to learn, has not yet been clearly defined.

Rather similar in fact to the less than precise remit of that other magnificent post, the 'Big Society tsar'. Readers may recall that Lord Nat Wei was appointed to that position by Cameron after the 2010 general election, but stepped down after less than a year. For some reason the Tories did not think it necessary to replace him.

The name 'Big Society' might be fading from memory, but Cameron has most definitely not lost sight of the thinking behind it. The official aim was to "create a climate that empowers local people and communities, building a big society that will 'take power away from politicians and give it to people'".<sup>3</sup> Behind the hogwash was the notion that state responsibilities should be 'devolved' to charities and local volunteers - who, after all, understand what is happening on the ground better than any Whitehall civil servant. At the time everyone from Ed Miliband to the Socialist Workers Party pointed out that the 'Big Society' nonsense was being used as a cover for cutbacks.

And now the Olympics have demonstrated how much better it is if thousands of volunteers can be mobilised to work 'for Britain'. One of the biggest cheers at the closing ceremony came when Coe praised the thousands who had given so freely of their time. No wonder Cameron

has given his backing to *The Daily Telegraph's* 'Keep the Flame Alive' campaign, one of whose aims is to "increase volunteering".

No doubt the intention is to build on the work already undertaken by Jubilee Hour, an establishment initiative set up to mark the queen's jubilee. Jubilee Hour "aims to recognise Her Majesty the Queen's 60 years of public service by encouraging people to undertake at least 60 minutes of volunteering, or an act of goodwill".<sup>4</sup> No fewer than 1.2 million people have signed up so far this year to do their stint of voluntary work for 'good causes'. The numbers were given a boost during Olympic fortnight, when 100,000 were said to have been inspired to add their names.

In reality, of course, it was a huge mobilisation of *the state* that delivered the Olympic Games. Yes, thousands did indeed volunteer to help out, but those who were selected acted as unpaid labour, saving the state a fortune in wages.

The second aim of Keep the Flame Alive is to "return competitive sport to all schools". Cameron has announced that every primary school child will be obliged to take part in such activity. According to the prime minister, the current school curriculum is "too prescriptive" (I think he means 'not prescriptive enough'), as it refers only to the obligation to include vague "games activities". Ministers are said to be keen on measures forcing teachers to run extra-curriculum sports activities. Apparently "rigid" contracts make it difficult to persuade them to do so at present, so, like those employed by 'academies' and 'free schools', teachers' pay and conditions should be more "flexible", according to education secretary Michael Gove.<sup>5</sup>

'Only' about four in 10 children regularly take part in competitive sport, complained Cameron, but you can see why he said that "simply spending more" is not the answer. He plans to launch yet another attack on workers' conditions to oblige teachers to carry out extra duties. Of course, teachers have always willingly given their time to supervise extra-curricular activity, but in recent years the additional workload resulting from,

for example, bureaucratic paperwork has imposed an extra burden on them and made many reluctant to give up their free time.

As for *obliging* school students to participate in "competitive sport", that can be both oppressive and counterproductive. While it is right that sport, 'physical education' and, yes, "games activities" should be part of the curriculum, no-one should be made to *compete* in an activity to which they are not suited.

Demonstrating the insincerity of the Conservatives' commitment, however, one only has to point out that on coming to office the coalition cut £162 million earmarked precisely for school sports and overturned Labour's target of two hours school sports for all each week. But now, it seems, at least some of that funding is to be restored - together with the proportion of national lottery takings directed to sport - it is to be raised to 20% once again. In particular the £125 million funding for elite athletes is to be retained.

## Perversion of sport

It goes without saying that the idea of all this is not to enhance the lives of millions of school students, or even those of the select few. The idea is to achieve 'success for Britain' in international sporting contests - at virtually any cost - and in so doing strengthen and consolidate the dominant ideology of British national chauvinism. Cash-strapped universities have been only too pleased to hire out their facilities for such purposes and state funding has also ensured that some of the world's top coaches have been recruited to 'Team GB'.

One sport for which the policy of subsidising elite athletes has paid off is cycling - Britain dominated events in the velodrome at London 2012. Members of the full-time British cycling squad made good use of the Mercedes-AMG-Petronas wind tunnel at the team's base in Northamptonshire at a cost of £3,000 a day. Such facilities are essential in the design of sportswear and equipment

in order to shave vital seconds off performances.

Not that they are restricted to Britain. For their part US sprinters wore the TurboSpeed suit designed by Nike, which claims to cut 0.23 seconds off their time in the 100 metres by reducing aerodynamic drag. The dimpled polyester suits were the result of 12 years of testing in a wind tunnel. Britain's Olympic athletes also had their sportswear and equipment such as cycling helmets individually designed for them. They underwent a body scan to determine the most precise aerodynamic shape for each item. British cyclists took advantage of so-called 'hot pants' specially designed by Adidas, which warm up the thigh muscles.

According to the letter of the law, this may not be categorised as cheating (it was implied by rival squads that it was precisely that), but no-one can claim that there is a 'level playing field' any more. According to South African socialist Terry Bell, "South Africa's total investment in all Olympic sports over the past four years is equal to what Britain put into the minority sport of badminton."<sup>6</sup>

Athletes themselves are put through the mill as part of the process. Top British cyclist Chris Hoy described earlier in the year what his training sessions were like: "When the session is over, people have to unclip me from the bike, ease me out of the saddle and lay me down on a padded mat." He went on: "You feel as if you are dying. You're physically sick and you writhe around on a mat in a world of pain until you can form a foetal position, which you stay in for 15 minutes thinking you can't go on."<sup>6</sup>

You can call this sport if you like, but it sounds more like a form of torture to me ●

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## Notes

1. *The Daily Telegraph* August 13.
2. *The Sunday Telegraph* August 12.
3. [www.number10.gov.uk/news/big-society](http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/big-society).
4. [www.thejubileehour.org/Home/Introduction](http://www.thejubileehour.org/Home/Introduction).
5. <http://terrybellwrites.com/2012/08/10/the-forgotten-legacy-of-workers-olympics>.
6. *Daily Mail* April 21.



# Comment is not always free

Why did *The Guardian* censor Israeli anti-Zionist Moshé Machover? Tony Greenstein investigates

A strange thing happened on August 9. Brian Robinson, a retired psychiatrist, posted a comment on *The Guardian's Comment is Free* website in response to an article in that day's paper entitled 'Israel and the US would come to deeply regret air strikes against Iran' by Yossi Melman and Dan Raviv.<sup>1</sup>

I do not think I am maligning Brian to say that he is a liberal with radical tendencies who hovered between Zionism and anti-Zionism before finally falling down on the right side. He cited this paragraph in the article: "Iran is not Iraq or Syria. The Iranians have drawn lessons from those two events. They dispersed their nuclear facilities and buried them underground, making them more difficult to reach and destroy. Success is thus less assured. Instead of a quick, surgical strike, Israel will likely find itself in a long war of attrition against Iran and Shia Muslims everywhere. In the name of national pride and defending its Islamic revolution, Iran was willing to lose millions of people in a long war against Iraq through the 80s ..."

Brian decided he should bring to people's attention the viewpoint of professor Moshé Machover, who argues that the main reason behind the calls to war is the opportunity it offers for Netanyahu to carry out the ethnic cleansing of Palestine's remaining Palestinians. Brian therefore wrote a short comment:

"Well worth reading the article by Moshé Machover in *Weekly Worker* February 9 2012. Why would Israel want to risk such a dangerous war?"

Moshé had written: "... we need to turn our attention to Zionism's nightmare: the Palestinian 'demographic peril' ... opposition to a sovereign Palestinian state in any part of Eretz Yisrael is not a mere quirk of a rightwing Israeli government, but a deep-seated and fundamental principle shared by all mainstream Zionist parties ... for mainstream Zionism any admission that 'the Palestinians are entitled to their own state because they are natives of the same country and have the same rights' would undermine the legitimacy of the Zionist state, and eventually its very existence ..."

He went on to describe a "third option: neither a two-state solution, nor a single state with an Arab majority, but 'population transfer'. Large-scale ethnic cleansing of Palestinian Arabs would result in a single state in the entire territory, with a large Jewish majority, which is the ultimate aim of all mainstream Zionist parties ... but implementing ethnic cleansing on a sufficiently large scale - while technically quite easy ... - is politically very tricky. It cannot be done in normal, politically tranquil circumstances. It requires what in Zionist parlance is called *she'at kosher*: an opportune moment of major political, and preferably military, crisis ..."

"A war with Iran would present a golden opportunity for large-scale expulsion of Palestinians, precisely because (unlike the Iraq invasion of 2003) fighting would not be over too soon, and major protests and disturbances are likely to occur among the masses throughout the region, including the Palestinian Arabs under Israeli rule. What better way to pacify such disturbances than to 'expel many people'?"

Machover presented the same ideas at the weekend school run

by Hands Off the People of Iran last April.<sup>2</sup>

Barely an hour had passed before Brian received an email from a comrade to say: "The *Guardian* moderator removed your comment. What did you expect?" In fact Brian expected free speech, especially from a site that calls itself *Comment is Free*. He also expected a serious discussion on the merits or demerits of Machover's arguments. But, of course, some people are not interested in debating the finer points of Zionism and its appetite for war.

## Value-free

Both Brian and myself emailed Becky Gardener, the editor of *CiF*, to protest at what had happened. It is fair to say that the system she presides over is not one of her own creation. Credit for that can be given to Matt Seaton, the previous editor, whose only claim to fame were three books on bicycles!

In her emailed response she effectively hit the nail on the head. "... moderators work independently from editorial staff - one way in which we try to keep moderation as value-free as possible. It is their job to apply the community standards criteria even-handedly."

And that is the point. Censors, which is what moderators are, by definition work within the context of an accepted political framework, which to them is "value-free". Anti-Zionism has been labelled within *The Guardian*, under the influence of it senior editorialist and *Jewish Chronicle* columnist Jonathan Freedland, as a close cousin, if not twin, of anti-Semitism. Hence all Zionist propagandist has to do is to allege 'hate speech' and 'anti-Semitism' and the moderators move into action according to their own, pre-defined but "value-free" criteria.

Becky Gardener accepts that the moderator who censored Brian "was unaware of Moshé Machover's reputation. Had he been aware of it, I doubt he would have deleted the comment." But that kind of exceptionalism merely reinforces the problem. She goes on to say that the censor "was concerned by the repetitive use of 'Zionist' and 'Zionism', which moderators know from experience is often used as an anti-Semitic proxy for 'Jewish', although they fully understand that it can be used in a way that is completely legitimate. After some deliberation, the moderator concerned decided that the abuse report was warranted."

This merely compounds the problem. The repetitive use of the term 'Zionism' apparently indicates that anti-Semitism is on the agenda.

Value-free? Quite how you can write an article on Zionism and not use the term repeatedly defies me. And why would you want to avoid the word? Is there not a World Zionist Organisation? Does not Israel define its defining ideology as Zionism? If a moderator is unable to distinguish between the anti-Semitic use of the term 'Zionist' and its normal political usage then they need to emerge from their "value-free" bubble and read about the ethnic cleansing of the Bedouin of the Negev or the Palestinians of Jerusalem in order to achieve the Zionist dream of an ethnically pure Jewish state.

What happened is in its own way a demonstration of how *The Guardian* has under the influence of Freedland and co moved to the right. Freedland is wedded to a 'two-state solution', which, as anyone with a cursory knowledge of the situation knows, will never occur, although it still plays a useful role in providing a smokescreen for depriving four million-plus Palestinians living under occupation of any democratic or civil rights. The illusion being that they will one day attain a state and thus it is only to be expected for oppressive forms of rule - including, of course, the Palestinian Authority - to be maintained in the interim, since all occupations are by definition undemocratic.

Not only will two states not happen, because a genuinely independent state alongside Israel is incompatible with the aims of Zionism, but, were such a creature to emerge, it would be a bastardised version of the South African Bantustans. It would be an open invitation to transfer the remainder of Israel's Arab population into it.

Machover argues that one of the

reasons for Netanyahu's eagerness for a war on Iran is that it will provide the ideal cover for a transfer of Palestinians from the West Bank to Jordan. Today this is outside the narrow confines of *Guardian* liberalism and an article to that effect is deemed 'anti-Semitic'.

*Comment is Free* has on its masthead a quote from CP Scott, who edited the paper for over half a century until 1929: "Comment is free, but facts are sacred." Scott was, like most of the ruling class at the time, a Zionist (he was a Liberal MP too). It would appear that some facts are more sacred than others. But, as we are discovering with the coalition, when you scratch a liberal you find a conservative underneath.

This small incident at *CiF* - the online blog that *The Guardian* hopes will enable it to rise to the challenge of the internet - is merely symptomatic. Time was when *The Guardian's* coverage of the Middle East was second to none. When I grew up as a young Zionist, it was the only paper that dared to print the articles of an Arabist, the late Michael Adams. Michael was the first British journalist to reveal the brutality and racism of Israel's occupation of the West Bank, having cut his teeth on opposition to the Suez War on the *Manchester Guardian*. Michael was fortunate to have as an editor Alistair Hetherington. This was a time when the whole of the media was pro-Israel. The BBC's Michael Elkins could not contain his glee when Israel captured Jerusalem in 1967. We often forget how the debate has changed and how Israel's main supporters used to be on the left, not the right.

Unfortunately New Labour has long since captured *The Guardian* and today, with a shrinking circulation, it is a mere shadow of its former self. Along with its sister paper, *The Observer*, it supported Blair's war on Iraq and to this day has refused to repent. Whereas the *Manchester Guardian* under editor AP Wadsworth, together with *The Observer*, were prepared to oppose Anthony Eden's war against Egypt after Nasser had nationalised the Suez Canal, those papers swallowed Blair's lies wholesale.

Another great *Guardian* journalist, the equivalent of *The Independent's* Robert Fisk, was David Hirst, who wrote *The gun and the olive branch* on how Zionism had successfully transformed the aggressor into victim, whilst portraying the Palestinians as the ones who wanted war. Today Hirst is confined to the odd obituary and is otherwise marginalised in his retirement.

I speak with a certain personal experience, because when *The Guardian* set up *Comment is Free* I was one of a number of contributors.<sup>3</sup> However, after Zionist pressure from a blog called *CiF Watch* (the word 'watch' is a favourite of Zionist McCarthyite groups), I was banned from

contributing articles. My particular offence was making a comparison between Israeli practices towards the Palestinians, such as barring Arabs from renting apartments, refusing to sell them land, demolishing their villages, etc, etc, and those of the Nazi state pre-1941.

## Double standards

Almost unreported by those who flinch at the very mention of the term 'anti-Semitism' is the visceral Nazi-like hatred for Arabs that manifests itself in the Jerusalem Day march of thousands, chanting "Death to the Arabs", or a rabbinical establishment that seeks to justify the genocide of the Palestinians. In the book *Torat Hamelech*, defended by hundreds of Israeli rabbis, Rabbi Yitzhak Shapira wrote: "There is justification for killing babies if it is clear that they will grow up to harm us, and in such a situation they may be harmed deliberately, and not only during combat with adults."<sup>4</sup>

Which, of course, is exactly the same argument that the Nazis used to justify murdering Jewish children. If an Arab in Israel had written that about Jews, he would have been arrested. But a member of the orthodox establishment is literally untouchable. We only have to recall the bogus charges of anti-Semitism levelled at Muslim League leader Raed Sallah in this country, when Theresa May tried to deport him, to appreciate the double standards involved.

But for *The Guardian*, along with the rest of the press, it is only Arab reaction to settler racism that is of interest. Certainly they will cover the antics of the settlers and the practices of the Israeli army, but the underlying ideology of Zionism, why it does what it does, goes unremarked. It is 'no go' territory.

One could also point to the rabbinical establishment, which is unarguably on the Zionist right. Attitudes of hostility to Arabs pervade Israeli society. In a 2007 article in Israel's largest circulation daily, *Yediot Aharonot*, entitled 'Marriage to an Arab is national treason' we learn that over half of the Jewish population in Israel believes the marriage of a Jewish woman to an Arab man is equal to national treason and that over 75% of Israeli Jews do not approve of apartment buildings being shared between Arabs and Jews, whilst 60% would not allow an Arab to visit their home.<sup>5</sup>

More significant still, over half of the respondents agreed that Israel should encourage its Arab citizens to emigrate from the country and 55% believed that Arabs and Jews should be separated at entertainment sites.

This is the reality of present-day Israel that Jonathan Freedland and the censors of *CiF* are busy trying to erase, from both the newspaper and *The Guardian's* blog. And, of course, the censors work in a "value-free" atmosphere where dissident politics are frowned upon. Hanna Arendt called it the "banality of evil" ●

**Tony Greenstein's blog is at**  
**<http://azvsas.blogspot.co.uk>**

## Notes

1. [www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/aug/09/israel-us-deeply-regret-strikes-on-iran](http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/aug/09/israel-us-deeply-regret-strikes-on-iran).
2. The video of his talk, and those of others, can be seen here <http://hopoi.org/?p=2082>
3. See [http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/tony\\_greenstein/index.xml](http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/tony_greenstein/index.xml).
4. See <http://azvsas.blogspot.com/2010/11/rabbi-schochet-of-racist-lubavitch-big.html>.
5. March 27 2007: [www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3381978,00.html](http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3381978,00.html).

**Johnathan Freedland: arbiter**



## SYRIA

# Seeking a new redivsion

Syria's opposition is increasingly dominated by Islamists and is openly backed by imperialism, writes Eddie Ford

It is now more than obvious that the regime of Bashar al-Assad, and the actual Syrian state itself, is disintegrating. The government has effectively lost control of the Kurdish-dominated areas of northern Syria, now run largely by forces loyal to the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) - which is broadly affiliated to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), itself engaged since 1978 in an armed struggle against the Turkish state. Heavy fighting sporadically breaks out in Damascus. Then there is the continuing bloody battle for Aleppo, the largest city with an official population of over two million.

Riad Hijab, the ex-prime minister who defected to Jordan last week, told a press conference in Amman on August 14 that the Assad regime is collapsing "morally, financially and militarily" and now controls no more than 30% of Syrian territory. There is no particular reason to doubt him. Hijab also called on the opposition abroad to "unite" and for the Syrian army to "follow the example of Egypt's and Tunisia's armies" and "take the side of people". He also stated that Syria is full of officials and military leaders who are "awaiting the right moment to join the revolt" - it is doubtless true that more rats like him will desert the sinking ship.

The 57-member Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, meeting in Mecca on August 15, look set to formally suspend Syria from membership: another nail in Assad's coffin. Naturally, Iran has vociferously protested against the decision - allied as it is to Damascus basically due to geopolitical considerations. Desperately, Assad has sent a prominent aide to Beijing for talks on the crisis with Chinese officials. Perhaps signalling that the wind is about to change direction, a Chinese foreign ministry spokesman said it was also "considering" giving an invitation to members of the Syrian opposition.

Foreign secretary William Hague pledged on August 10 to give £5 million to the opposition. Chickenfeed, of course, from a purely financial point of view, but highly significant as an act of political symbolism. Farcically, he initially claimed that the money would be mainly spent on providing mobile phones to the opposition - which then, for example, "could be used to warn civilians of impending regime assaults". The idea that people in Syria - whoever they are, opposition supporters or not - do not already have mobile phones is just too ludicrous for words.

The current line is that the aim is to provide "non-lethal" assistance - another obvious nonsense. Yes, the British government, for the moment, may not be *directly* supplying weapons and so on to the opposition. But the latter will be making damn sure, as the British government fully knows, that this "non-lethal" aid has distinctly lethal consequences - directly aiding the forcible overthrow of the Assad regime.

As for the Americans, they have given the go-ahead for Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar to arm various opposition factions, crucially those associated with the Muslim Brotherhood. Various sources have been strongly suggesting strongly that there has been a major policy shift at the State Department - in

favour of MB. While anti-Obama conspiracists will have a field day with this, the reality is infinitely more serious than the idea that the US president is a closet Islamist. The majority line in Washington is that the Muslim Brotherhood is going to be the dominant force in Middle Eastern politics for some time to come ... and that America can do business with the winning side.

In other words, the US and its allies are now more or less openly backing the Syrian opposition - and yet *Socialist Worker* continues to kid itself with comforting stories about those opposing Assad "on the ground" "not acting under the mandate of outside forces". So the revolution has "not been hijacked" and the SWP must "stand with the revolution against the regime and at same time stand against international intervention" (August 18). Yes, comrades, there are many in Syria who oppose Assad and who want nothing to do with outside intervention. But the tide has moved against them. There is outside intervention. US imperialism has clearly decided to try a cut a deal with the MB and bank on the victory of anti-Assad forces. Going into a state of denial about this obvious fact helps no-one, least of all those tendencies within Syria that have progressive and pro-working class politics.

## Kaleidoscope

Therefore we have to ask, who or what is the Syrian opposition? The answer is that it is made up of a kaleidoscope of almost countless parties, groups and factions - very many of which have different and often competing aims and programmes.

By far the most prominent is the Syrian National Council, an umbrella organisation consisting of several organisations - akin in some respects to the undoubtedly imperialist-backed National Transitional Council in Libya. Indeed, the NTC recognises the SNC as the sole and only "legitimate" government of Syria - which surely tells you something about its *general* political-ideological orientation. The SNC claims to represent approximately 60% of the Syrian opposition.

Organisationally speaking, the SNC has a secretariat general consisting of representatives of the various components, which elects a nine-member executive committee and a president whose term is renewable every three months. The current president is Abdelbaset Sayda, a Kurd who lived in exile in Sweden for many years. He has no real power and no mass base. Sayda was appointed SNC president for the sake of appearances. To show that the SNC can reach out to the Kurdish population. The dominant force in SNC is the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood and it uses the SNC to provide it with a liberal veneer. Eg, inside the SNC are the Local Coordination Committees, a network of various grassroots movements formed in March 2011 that have led anti-Assad demonstrations - the LCC website daily chronicles the vicious attacks by government forces, carrying amateur video footage and utilising social media to disseminate information. Currently, the LCC opposes outside military intervention and is said to consist of young activists of multiple religious and ethnic backgrounds. Nevertheless, some claim more than half of the

SNC's leadership are Islamists. In response, Melhem al-Droubi, a high-ranking member of both the MB and the SNC, said only 30% of the body was Islamist - including two members of the executive committee. Either way it is MB which is in the driving seat.

Then there is the Coalition of Secular and Democratic Syrians, created by the union of a dozen Muslim and Christian, Arab and Kurd parties and which urges minorities within Syria to fight the Assad regime. Unlike the LCC though, the CSDS does call for outside military intervention in the form of no-fly zones similar to those deployed in Kosovo and Iraq. Others involved in the SNC are the Supreme Council of the Syrian Revolution - committed to a "political solution", whilst also recognising the "importance of armed struggle" - and the Syrian Revolution General Commission, another coalition of 40 opposition grassroots groups set up in Istanbul last August. According to an initial statement, the long-term aim of the SRGC, with its "aggressive platform" for the removal of Assad, is to build a "democratic and civil state of institutions that grants freedom, equality, dignity and respect of human rights to all citizens". The SRGC's relationship with the SNC has been fractious - at one point it expressed complete "disillusionment" with the latter's "endless internal power squabbles".

Another prominent member of the SNC is the Damascus Declaration for Democratic Change grouping, an umbrella movement born during the so-called 'Damascus Spring' of 2000-01 and which in October 2005 issued a five-page "unity" statement denouncing the Syrian government as "authoritarian, totalitarian and cliquish", calling instead for "peaceful and gradual" reform "based on dialogue" and "recognition of the other" - most notably a "fair solution" for the Kurdish question which "insures the equality of Kurds with all other Syrian citizens". Five organisations have committed themselves to this statement - the National Democratic Rally; the Kurdish Democratic Alliance; the Committees of Civil Society; the Kurdish Democratic Front; and the Movement of the Future.

One of those five, the NDR, is itself an coalition of six groups: the 'left' Nasserite Democratic Arab Socialist Union; Syrian Democratic People's Party (until 2005 the Syrian Communist Party/Political Bureau or Syrian Communist Party/Riyad al-Turk); Arab Revolutionary Workers Party (which split from the Ba'ath Party in 1966 declaring allegiance to "scientific socialism"); the Movement of Arab Socialists; the Democratic Socialist Arab Ba'ath Party, and the Communist Labour Party - a "Marxist-Leninist" splinter group from the Syrian Communist Party.

However, to complicate matters even more, most of the parties in the NDR are actually full members of the National Coordination Committee for Democratic Change - a significant rival to the SNC and one that mainly functions within Syria, as opposed to the Paris-based SNC leadership. Led by Hussein Abdul Azim and other longstanding dissidents, the NCCDC consists of about 13 mostly left-leaning political parties, including three Kurdish groups. Ironically,

despite its unmistakably left/secularist orientation, the NCCDC is sometimes described or denounced as more 'moderate' or 'reformist' than the more Islamist-orientated SNC, due to its calls for "dialogue" with the regime conditional on the withdrawal of the military from the streets, the end of attacks on peaceful protestors by security forces and the release of all political prisoners. Additionally, some senior NCCDC figures have attacked the call for the "overthrow of the regime" as being "unpractical, unrealistic and useless".

But life moves on, and the NCCDC now calls for the "dismantlement" of the Syrian dictatorship. More importantly still, it says it is utterly opposed to foreign intervention - thus leading to persistent conflicts with the SNC leadership, some of whom openly call for western military intervention. Haytham Manna, one of the few NCCDC leaders who lives abroad, has offered the sharp opinion that the SNC is a "Washington club" and that anyone who agitates for foreign intervention is a "traitor". Needless to say, the NCCDC is extremely wary of the influence that the MB seems to exert over the SNC - so it is unlikely to join up in the immediate or near future.

It is very difficult to fully keep track of the innumerable anti-Assad Kurdish groups. The only Kurdish party operating from *inside* Syria to have declared itself an affiliate of the SNC so far is the Kurdish Future Movement Party, which was led by Mashaal Tammo - until he was gunned down by masked men on October 7 2011 in the north-eastern city of Qamishli. The next day more than 50,000 mourners marched through city in a funeral procession for him, only to be shot at by the security forces - five were killed. Interestingly, the PKK accused the Turkish government of carrying out the assassination.

As recently noted by the *Weekly Worker*, the Kurdish Supreme Committee was formed on July 12 in Erbil under the auspices of the Iraqi Kurdish president, Massoud Barzani. The KSC is comprised of the PYD and the Kurdish National Council, the latter loosely modelled on the SNC and which itself is composed of 15 Syrian Kurdish parties. The key difference between the KNC and the SNC is over their approach to the issue of self-determination, with the KNC pressing strongly for Kurdish autonomy, whereas the SNC has rejected anything more than "administrative decentralisation". Accordingly, rifts are opening up between the KNC and the SNC. A spokesman of the Kurdish Youth Movement - the largest youth movement in the Kurdish areas of Syria and a major KNC component - declared that Abdulbaset Sieda had "joined the ranks of the enemies of the Kurdish people" when in March he refused to walk out of the SNC unlike all the other Kurdish parties/representatives (apart from the KFMP). Using even stronger language, a representative of the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Syria accused Sieda of "following the Turkish agenda".

Which brings us to the Free Syrian Army - now fused with the smaller Higher Military Council. Made up of between 10,000 and 40,000 assorted fighters, such as defectors from the regular armed forces and various

civilian volunteers, the FSA has often - and mistakenly - been described as the "armed wing" of the SNC. But those who condemn the FSA as a Turkish-Saudi-Qatari-Salafist client or puppet are equally mistaken, despite the obvious support it gets from the Turkish government.

In reality, the FSA/HMC is as politically/ideologically variegated as the LCC - or indeed the entire opposition itself. Hence the SNC has found it difficult to work with the FSA, which to date has refused to cooperate with the military bureau set up to much fanfare by the SNC in May - even though the official announcement specifically mentioned that the new bureau was being established in order to provide arms to the FSA. But the nominal head of the FSA, colonel Riyad al-Assad - a defector from the Syrian airforce, whose family members have been executed by the regime - has gone on record stating that he does not want any "political interference" from the SNC and that the FSA "has its own military strategy". It hardly seems like a love affair between the SNC and the FSA, which if truth be told is poorly organised and lightly armed (the FSA's rank and file appear to be largely Sunni, while its leadership seems mainly Alawite).

US officials and Arab intelligence officers told the *New York Times* in June that automatic rifles, rocket-propelled grenades, ammunition and some anti-tank weapons were being funnelled, mostly across the Turkish border, by way of a "shadowy network of intermediaries" - including the MB, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar. CIA officers are reportedly operating in southern Turkey, with the aim of deciding which armed groups to back - the US does not want weapons falling into the 'wrong hands' - groups allied to al Qa'eda, in other words. The US is also suspected of providing satellite imagery and intelligence on Syrian troop movements, and advising how to establish command and control systems.

Similarly, the FSA has acknowledged that some foreign jihadist militants, including those linked to al Qa'eda like the Al-Nusra Front to Protect the Levant, have travelled to Syria to join its ranks - but insists, believably, that they do not play a decisive role. The Al-Nusra Front has said it is behind a series of suicide bombings which have rocked Damascus since January. Paradoxically, official Iranian media has shown images of opposition fighters captured by the Syrian army - seemingly Islamists/jihadists from Saudi Arabia or Pakistan totally unconnected to the SNC or FSA, with their own separate agenda and programme.

The situation in Syria is highly complex and possibly just ready to bust apart into all-out sectarian carnage. And the same is true of the region. The post-World War I colonial maps, with their straight lines - drawn over the corpse of the Ottoman empire - will soon be museum exhibit. Many in the field of international affairs are predicting a redivision of the entire Middle East and the creation of a series of new states - naturally dominated by US imperialism. Of course, the cost in human terms threatens to be horrendous. A new form of barbarism ●

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## KURDISTAN

# Only through socialism

Esen Uslu begins his examination of the attitude of the left in Turkey to the Kurdish national question

**W**hile the borders of the Middle East are surely about to be redrawn, a clear-cut, radical, democratic programme in relation to the national question is sorely missing. The oft-repeated slogans, such as ‘We are internationalist’, ‘We are anti-imperialists’ and ‘We unreservedly recognise the right of nations to self-determination’ ring hollow in the face of bloody struggles between communities against the background of open and covert imperialist interventions.

In this series of articles I will describe the viewpoints of differing political trends of the Turkish left on the national (specifically Kurdish) question. I will try to summarise them by quoting the relevant texts.

The first trend I would like to examine treats the Kurdish question as a distraction or a harmful side-issue, which diverts the attention of the movement from the main issue - the winning of power by the working class through direct struggle. This trend also regards the national question as something that should have been resolved by the bourgeoisie in the past. But the failure to do so rendered the national question insoluble and presents it before the working class today as a hindrance in its struggle for class unity.

Therefore, according to this line of thought, in our day and age the solution to the national question can only be attained through the victory of socialism, and all national struggles should be subordinated to this central fight. Any ‘deviation’ from this direct struggle for socialism, such as fighting for autonomy or a separate state, can only but help imperialism in its attempt to divide and rule. For that reason communists should defend the integrity of the Turkish state with all their might.

### Legal TKP

The best example of this tendency is represented by the legal Communist Party of Turkey (TKP). Its 2001 programme is the basic document that sets out this line.

The first section, ‘Introduction’, has been translated into less than perfect English.<sup>1</sup> Under the heading, ‘Establishment of socialism in Turkey is possible and a necessity’, the programme deals in this way with the history of the Kurdish question:

The newly established Turkish capitalism also refrained from discharging Kurdish feudalism and integrating the poor Kurdish peasants to the working class of modern capitalism. Instead of a ‘revolutionary transformation’ that includes thrusting out a hand to the Kurdish people and, as necessarily implied by this, to foster a mass movement, the state preferred to build an alliance with Kurdish sovereigns. Thereby, Kurdish labourers have been discriminated, their identities have been denied and their national democratic rights have been extorted.

Further down under the same heading the programme links the solution of the national question to socialism:

The economic, social and political problems of Turkey cannot be solved by an alternative except socialism. Speaking concretely, socialism is the precondition of

deepening secularism in Turkish society and living it as a process of enlightenment; securing economic, social, military and cultural independence; granting equal rights to Kurdish people, and establishing a democratic political structure.

Under the heading ‘Revolution of Turkey will have a socialist character’, the programme reveals its true character when it specifies the defence of the Turkish state as the principal anti-imperialist duty:

The liquidation of the Republic of Turkey for the sake of direct imperialist domination and on behalf of the interests of the capitalist class will lead to the complete submission of our working class to poverty and darkness, and drag Turks and Kurds into conflict as well.

It would be impossible for the working class of Turkey to take any further steps in any other agenda of the class struggle without standing against this process of dissolution and liquidation with anti-imperialist proletarian patriotism.

The movement to be created against imperialism should include Turkish and Kurdish identities together. The solution to the national problem and the precondition to build a brotherly union of our people who speak different native languages is to establish a common will to expel imperialism.

The Communist Party of Turkey claims that the anti-imperialist struggle of Turkish and Kurdish labourers exercised together on a common patriotic identity could win a victory only with the socialist revolution, and the process of socialist revolution could be deepened only with the anti-imperialist struggle.

Further down under the heading, ‘Building a new working class movement is more than possible’, the programme dismisses the Kurdish struggle for freedom in this way: “Kurdish movements which originated from the left have drifted apart from the left under the influence of both liberalism and Kurdish nationalism.”

The second section of the document is entitled ‘The program of socialism’. Unfortunately this section is not available in English, so the following translations are mine.

Kurds are mentioned only twice. The first reference is under the subheading, ‘Character of the TKP and its identity’:

Our working class is a whole that consists of Turks, Kurds and other national and ethnic elements. The TKP accepts this entity as its basis, and stands for the political and organisational unity of the working class against any discrimination.

The other instance where Kurds are mentioned is under the subheading, ‘Programme of socialist power/political structure’:

Turks and Kurds are the equal founding elements of socialist Turkey. Measures shall be taken to liquidate discriminatory, chauvinistic practices and approaches, which are the

dominant characteristic of capitalist Turkey, in their entirety.

### Congress documents

In order to avoid any accusation of judging a political organisation on the basis of 10-year-old texts, I should point out that the most recent documents of the party still follow the same line.

The legal TKP held its 11th Congress in June 2012. A political report was submitted to the congress, and two main documents were adopted. One of them was ‘Resolutions’ and the other was entitled ‘Religionisation and communists’.

The political report had two sections, and the second section, entitled ‘Class struggle, foci of resistance and the TKP’, contained the subsection, ‘Kurds’, after others on the working class, youth and women. The text is as follows:

Which political stream the demands of the Kurdish movement flow into still remains uncertain. The Kurdish political movement is making contradictory inputs to the politics of Turkey, not only because it contains different class and ideological dynamics, but also its leadership has preferred a political culture that favours such diversity.

Kurdish politics, which carries a grave responsibility for the establishment of the JDP [Justice and Development Party], is also one of the political forces that creates the most difficulties for that force, and that is not only a matter of political culture, but also related to the insoluble nature of the Kurdish question within the circumstances of capitalism. The zigzags of Kurdish politics towards US and European imperialisms are a phenomenon that should also be considered in its dual aspects. The fact that the Kurds of Turkey, unlike those in Iraq, are unaccommodating to the American project could not be reduced to a simple problem of ‘bargaining’. There are serious hindrances preventing Kurdish politics entering into an engagement under the auspices of the Americans while maintaining its present-day structure. A similar confusion could also be observed in the attitude of Kurdish politics towards the religionisation of society. It is a fact that, while they were attempting to protect the secular gains that were products of the Kurdish awakening, they were acting under the illusion that reactionary moves may also be ‘liberating’.

The Communist Party of Turkey rejects the idea that it is possible to become a part of this picture in the name of Kurdish people’s demands. It is impossible for communists to impact on Kurdish politics and the Kurdish people by becoming part of this picture, since Kurdish politics is not an inert element open to any intervention and socialist ideology is not able to tolerate such elasticity.

On the other hand, evaluations such as that which believes Kurdish politics is set on an irreversible course, that in the end it will seek a compromise

within the body of the Second Republic, or that it is shedding the revolutionary element that exists within it, are exceedingly expedient and misleading.

The principled position of the Communist Party of Turkey should remain that of focusing on activities oriented to alter the political balance in Turkey instead of judging the Kurdish dynamic against this or that criterion, and defending the justified demands of the Kurdish people with a socialist perspective, and openly standing against the oppression of the Kurdish people and politics, but not deviating from the independent line of the socialist movement in regard to the questions of imperialism, reaction and liberalism.

In this context, we should continue our propaganda to the effect that the JDP government’s preparations for a new constitution, which have created expectations for a resolution of the Kurdish question, actually contain no remedy - without denying the burning desire of the Kurdish people for a quick resolution, every initiative should be taken to prevent approaching the new constitution in a piecemeal fashion, and it should be persistently stressed that the JDP constitution, like the September 12 constitution [following the 1980 military intervention], will have no legitimacy.

Within that framework an open, honest and constructive dialogue and solidarity should be maintained with the representatives of Kurdish politics, party organisations especially within Kurdish areas in the west should be strengthened, and channels and means to address the Kurds should be developed.

There was only one other reference to the Kurds in the political report. It is in the first section entitled ‘JDP government in its 10th year: its strengths and weaknesses’ under the heading, ‘7. Only the working class can settle scores with the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie’:

The JDP has claimed, especially in the last five years, that it has brought before the people historical, social and political problems to solve. However, far from resolving them, it has rendered them more inextricable. The initiatives undertaken in regard to the Alevis and Kurds have come to a dead end quite quickly and the confusion that ensued in relation to several questions taken up by the government has started to give the JDP a headache.

Among the resolutions adopted at the congress only one has a tangential reference to the Kurdish issue. The final resolution is entitled ‘No to fascism and lawlessness! Freedom to the revolutionary prisoners!’ and contains the following declaration: “The 11th Congress of the TKP condemns ... all operations against Kurdish politics and ... all violent and repressive policies pursued by judiciary and police ...”

The second document adopted at the Congress was entitled ‘Religionisation and communists’ and carried some references to the Kurdish question that might be

illuminating in regard to the TKP approach to the issue.

The ruling forces of Turkey need Islamic help to fill the gap left by the disappearing social state: they need the Sunni identity in order to enhance their role in the Middle East; they need the ‘religious brethren’ idea in the name of finding a solution to Kurdish question; they need to scour the fields of art and culture in order to choke off the resources of progressive ideologies, and they need to extend and deepen the sphere of religion in order to legitimise inequalities, and injustices in general.

Further down the text deals with the same issue again:

In order to lure Turkey into imperialist scenarios in the Middle East, Sunnism could be sharpened up; on the other hand, the success of the peace struggle would hamper religious reaction. Whereas they want to subjugate the Kurdish people in the name of religious brethren, the participation of Kurdish toilers in the class struggle would mean capturing one of the fortresses of religious reaction.

Further down under the subheading, ‘Religious intervention in Kurdish question’, the text deals with several current issues:

The strengthening of religious orders and of Hezbollah, support for Barzani and tribalism as an integral part of Kurdish society, and developments such as the launching of an attack by religious reaction in the ideological field are all diseases of the Second Republic. In this field [ie, the Kurdish question] the use of a certain religionisation in order to maintain a popular base has been widespread. This should be accepted as infiltration of religiousness into the popular ranks, not as a base of resistance. The left should defend the secular character of the Kurdish awakening and try to bolster that dimension.

The last section of the document, entitled ‘What should communist do?’, contains this declaration:

The TKP asserts that the Kurdish question will be resolved as a product of the struggle of workers and toilers of all origins on the basis of the principles of equality and justice, where national characteristics are not considered grounds of discrimination, not on the basis of ‘religious brethren’. Extending the reach of religious reaction within the Kurdish people would hamper a solution that accepts the brotherhood of peoples as its basis. The TKP fights to reveal the enlightening background of Kurdish demands for freedom, and to strengthen it.

So much for the line of the legal TKP on the Kurdish question. Next time we will look at the position of other trends •

### Notes

1. This section of the programme can be found in English at [www.tkp.org.tr/ing/program-of-the-communist-party-of-turkey-722](http://www.tkp.org.tr/ing/program-of-the-communist-party-of-turkey-722).



## ECONOMY

# Rooted in capitalism

Nick Rogers responds to Arthur Bough

In my review<sup>1</sup> of Andrew Kliman's *The failure of capitalist production*, I sought to set out the main lines of Kliman's argument about the causes of the current economic crisis, explain some of the theoretical underpinnings of Kliman's analysis, and link my discussion to issues that have been raised by other writers in the *Weekly Worker* (specifically Hille Ticktin and Moshé Machover). In the latter part of the review I raised some reservations about Kliman's treatment of the role of the devaluation of capital in the economic cycle.

Arthur Bough's response<sup>2</sup> takes issue with comments I made in two paragraphs of the original article. However, since these relate to questions of importance to Marxist political economy - the validity of the temporal single-system interpretation (TSSI) and the nature of current economic developments - Arthur deserves a reply.

## TSSI

Turning first to Arthur's critique of the TSSI, there certainly is no consensus among Marxist economists about how to interpret some very important features of Marx's political economy. Arthur will be able to find many anti-TSSI quotes to add to the one he reproduced from Fred Moseley. The TSSI school is very much not part of the mainstream of Marxist economics.

The Moseley quote relates to how commodities and their inputs - specifically constant capital - should be valued. So does the passage from volume 3 of *Capital* that Arthur goes on to quote. It concludes (on p207 of my 1981 Penguin translation) with the sentence: "As the retrospective expression of more labour-time, this cotton adds a higher value to the product which it goes into as a component than it possessed originally and the capitalist paid for it."

Marx is discussing here what happens to the value (and price) of existing stocks of cotton if the price (and value) of newly produced cotton rises. This is in the context of a chapter that tackles the impact on the rate of profit of changes in the value (or price) of constant and variable capital inputs into the production process. The principle Marx establishes is that if the value of constant capital falls the rate of profit will rise and if it rises the rate of profit will fall. Note that the quantity of profit is left unchanged - we are talking about changes in the denominator (rather than the nominator) of the calculation  $S/(C+V)$ , where S represents surplus value (profit), C constant capital (buildings, machinery and raw material) and V variable capital (wages).

This passage is often cited because it bears on the debate around whether the value of commodities is determined by the *historic* cost of inputs (the price capitalists paid for them) or *current replacement* costs of inputs (their current price on the market). Andrew Kliman argues in favour of *pre-production reproduction* costs - the costs of inputs at the time that they entered the production process. Kliman discusses this issue in his 2007 book *Reclaiming Marx's 'Capital'* (pp95-105), citing, as it happens, the very same passage of Marx as Arthur.

In one sense changes in values across time are precisely what

the TSSI is interested in. The key question is how these changes should be captured in measuring the rate of profit.

Arthur illustrates the implications of the quoted passage from Marx with the equation  $C\ 1,000 + V\ 1,000 + S\ 1,000 = K\ 3,000$ , where K is the price of the commodity produced in a production process that absorbs 1,000 constant capital and 1,000 variable capital. New value of 2,000 (as the monetary expression of the labour-time expended) is created in this production process, leaving a surplus value of 1,000 (and a rate of profit of 50%).

I do not think I do Arthur a disservice if I point out that the equation can represent the production of a single commodity, or the output of a production line, an industry, one of Marx's economic departments or the whole economy.

Arthur asks what happens if the value of the constant capital rises (after the capitalist has purchased it) to 2,000? He suggests that the TSSI approach would show the same value for the inputs of constant capital and variable capital, but value the output price at K 4,000. The capitalist would receive surplus value of 2,000 - 1,000 of which would not be attributed to the labour involved in the production process. Labour would not be the only source of profit - a non-Marxist conclusion.

Arthur's alternative proposal is to retrospectively revalue the constant capital input and show  $C\ 2,000 + V\ 1,000 + S\ 1,000 = K\ 4,000$  (a rate of profit of 33%).

In my view neither of these equations accurately reflects what has happened - or the position of followers of the TSSI school. Now I would argue (in opposition, I think, to Kliman's position) that it is the aggregate price paid by capitalists for inputs (in other words, the historic cost) that determines the value of the constant capital transferred to the aggregate price of the output - and therefore forms the basis of the calculation of the rate of profit.

So, if every single producer of K has paid 1,000 for C, it does not matter if the price of C subsequently changes before, during or after the commodity (or aggregate output) has been produced: competition will ensure that K will reflect the price that was actually paid for C. Remember that for Marx it is competition that enables the law of value to be expressed (albeit only in the aggregate).

If the value of any stock of commodities (however large) reflected only the conditions of production of the most recent flow of commodities entering the market (however small), then in these circumstances profits could be made independently of the quantity of value created in production. Capitalists would receive K 4,000 as the aggregate price of their commodities when they had only paid C 1,000 + V 1,000 for the inputs. Surplus value would have doubled without any additional labour-time being applied to the production process. It appears to me that Arthur unwittingly demonstrates against the 'current cost replacement' theorists the very charge he levels against the TSSI.

For the purposes of the equation, Arthur (along with the majority of mainstream Marxists) can revalue the input C to 2,000 (irrespective of what was paid for it) if he wishes, but that does not change the reality

of the situation - only 1,000 was actually paid.

Arthur argues that my approach amounts only to a subjectivist study of capitalists rather than an objective study of capital. But Marx make clear that aggregate prices equal aggregate values, aggregate profits (and interest and rent) equal aggregate surplus value and the aggregate rate of profit equals the aggregate value rate of profit. Marx's economics is rooted in the world of real capitalists.

For instance, read on a few paragraphs from the passage in volume three of *Capital* we have been discussing: "Without going into the detailed effects of competition here, we may remark for the sake of completeness that (1) if there are substantial stocks of raw material in the warehouse, they counteract the price increase arising from the conditions of their production; (2) if the semi-finished or finished goods on the market press heavily on the supply, they may prevent the price of these goods from rising in proportion to the price of their raw material ....

"The smaller the amount of stock to be found in the production sphere and on the market at the end of the business year, at the time when raw materials are supplied afresh on a massive scale (or, in the case of agricultural production, after the harvest), the more visible the effect of a change in raw material prices."

Is Marx not saying that prices are influenced by both the labour-time required to produce pre-existing stocks and the new supplies? Certainly, stocks of the raw material are revalued, but the price of newly created commodities is also affected. To my mind, none of the examples of Marx's valuation of constant capital that Fred Moseley discusses in the article<sup>3</sup> cited by Arthur contradict my interpretation.

Say half the mass of C was previously produced at a price of 1,000 and the other half newly emerges onto the market at a price of 2,000 (or rather their conditions of production entail differing expenditure of labour-time equivalent to these differing prices). Since the prices of all commodities of the same type tend towards an average, the price of C would be neither 1,000 nor 2,000, but would gravitate towards 1,500.

Thus Arthur's equation should now be  $C\ 1,500 + V\ 1,000 + S\ 1,000 = K\ 3,500$  (a rate of profit of 40%). 1,500 would be the average *historic* price paid for the constant capital input. In aggregate, the same new value (2,000 V + S) is being created as before and the same surplus value (1,000 S) is grabbed by capitalists. However, those capitalists who paid the lower price for their input of constant capital would gain a surplus profit, while those who were forced to buy the more expensive raw material will reap a rate of profit below the average.

Note the differing rates of profit in my calculation (40%) as against Arthur's (33%) - both down from the profit rate of 50% before the price rise kicked in. What does Marx say about the impact of the revaluation of the stocks of constant capital on the rate of profit? On the very same page as Arthur's original quote: "This revaluation can compensate the individual capitalist, or a whole particular sphere of capitalist production - even more than compensate, perhaps - for the fall in the rate of profit that follows from the

raw materials rise in price."

So the rise in the price of constant capital would be expected to lead to a fall in the rate of profit. However, those capitalists who bought stocks of the raw material before the price rise will not experience that fall. Sounds as if the historic price might just be relevant to the determination of the rate of profit after all.

I suggest that my proposed treatment of the results of an increase in the value of new supplies of constant capital not only takes account of the broader context of Marx's understanding of the aggregate relationships between values and prices (the spirit of his work, if you like), but, in this case, the letter.<sup>4</sup>

## State capitalism

Turning to the discussion of the economic crisis, it strikes me that Arthur determinedly grasps the wrong end of the stick. He takes issue with a paragraph where I dismiss the assumptions of the underconsumptionist explanation of the current economic crisis and weaves a tale in which my "view of capitalism seems stuck in an early 19th century neoclassical world" (*classical*, surely, if we are discussing the era of Adam Smith and David Ricardo).

Now, Arthur says he is not an underconsumptionist, but I do not think his protests can be taken at face value, for he also says: "The basic contradiction of capitalism is that it expands production faster than it can expand the capacity to consume that production at prices that ensure the capital consumed can be reproduced: ie, at a profit." Sounds like a fairly unambiguous statement of the underconsumptionist case to me.

The trouble is Arthur has not been paying very close attention to what I wrote and I am far from convinced he has read Kliman's *The failure of capitalist production* at all. In the book Kliman is debating those Marxist economists who measure a sharp rise in the rate of profit, but a relatively slow rise in growth rates, through the 1980s and 90s.

Arthur's statistics establishing that economic growth rates and profit rates have risen between 2000 and the crash do not disprove Kliman's thesis. As I mentioned in my review, Kliman measures just such a rise, attributing it to the credit and asset price boom of those years. And Arthur's evidence about corporations hoarding profits since the crash is precisely the behaviour we would expect in a period of recession.

For that matter, citing one analysis of trends in the rate of profit (that of Michael Roberts) is neither here nor there. Much of *The failure of capitalist production* is devoted to explaining why the way the rate of profit is measured is crucial in determining the results. Kliman admits that his rate of profit only partially captures the phenomenon Marx was interested in (crucially, missing the rate of turnover of capital that Arthur takes up), so is provisional. But that is the case with all other attempts by Marxists to measure the rate of profit, including Michael Roberts'.

I have not analysed the US statistics on profit rates myself (so I am neutral on the trends they may display, although broadly sympathetic with Kliman's temporal methodology), but I think it is implausible to maintain that, while profits in the productive sectors were at a historic high,

investment in those sectors stagnated. If there were a lack of demand for the output of the productive sector, that would have reduced the profits capitalists could have realised. Kliman's argument that economic growth (ie, the rate of accumulation) was low because profit rates were low is logically a stronger explanation.

Logically sound, but, in Arthur's eyes, evidence of a failure to take account of moves away from free-market capitalism. Such an accusation certainly cannot stand against Kliman, whose thesis is predicated on governments (in the "state capitalism" that emerged in the first half of the 20th century) blocking the wholesale devaluation of capital that alone would allow an escape from ongoing crisis.

For Arthur, my crime was that I suggested capitalists do not have sufficient foresight to accurately predict future levels of demand. Apparently, we live in a world of planned capitalism. While planning undoubtedly takes places within large capitalist companies, and cartels and states seek to establish a secure and predictable space for capital on a wider scale, the results of such efforts are far from perfect.

There is a process of ongoing concentration and centralisation of capital and an increasing role for the state in advancing the interests of national capitals. But from time to time existing industrial behemoths tumble and new ones rise to take their place. New fields of competition between corporations and states are thrown up.

If that were not the case, then "the decline of the law of value" (in Hille Ticktin's words) would be complete. It is ironic that Arthur, who in other writings sets himself up against the concept of the decline of capitalism, in this article makes the case for the view that competition is all but extinguished.

In that case, the drive to both profit maximisation and technological innovation would be severely weakened. The dynamics of capitalism identified by Marx - such as a (very tendential) equalisation in the rate of profit and any tendency for the rate of profit to fall - would no longer apply. Capitalism would have reached a state of almost complete cartelisation.

However, Arthur's view that profit maximisation today is orientated to the longer term is hardly compatible with the reality of short-term speculative booms and sharp economic crises.

The crash of 2008 is a striking example of the inability of capitalists to very accurately foresee the future or buck the cycle of boom and bust. It is proof that capitalism today is an amalgam of planning and anarchy and that its basic contradictions remain acute.

That is why I maintain that, a century and a half on, Marx's project of political economy can continue to help us understand the social system we seek to overthrow ●

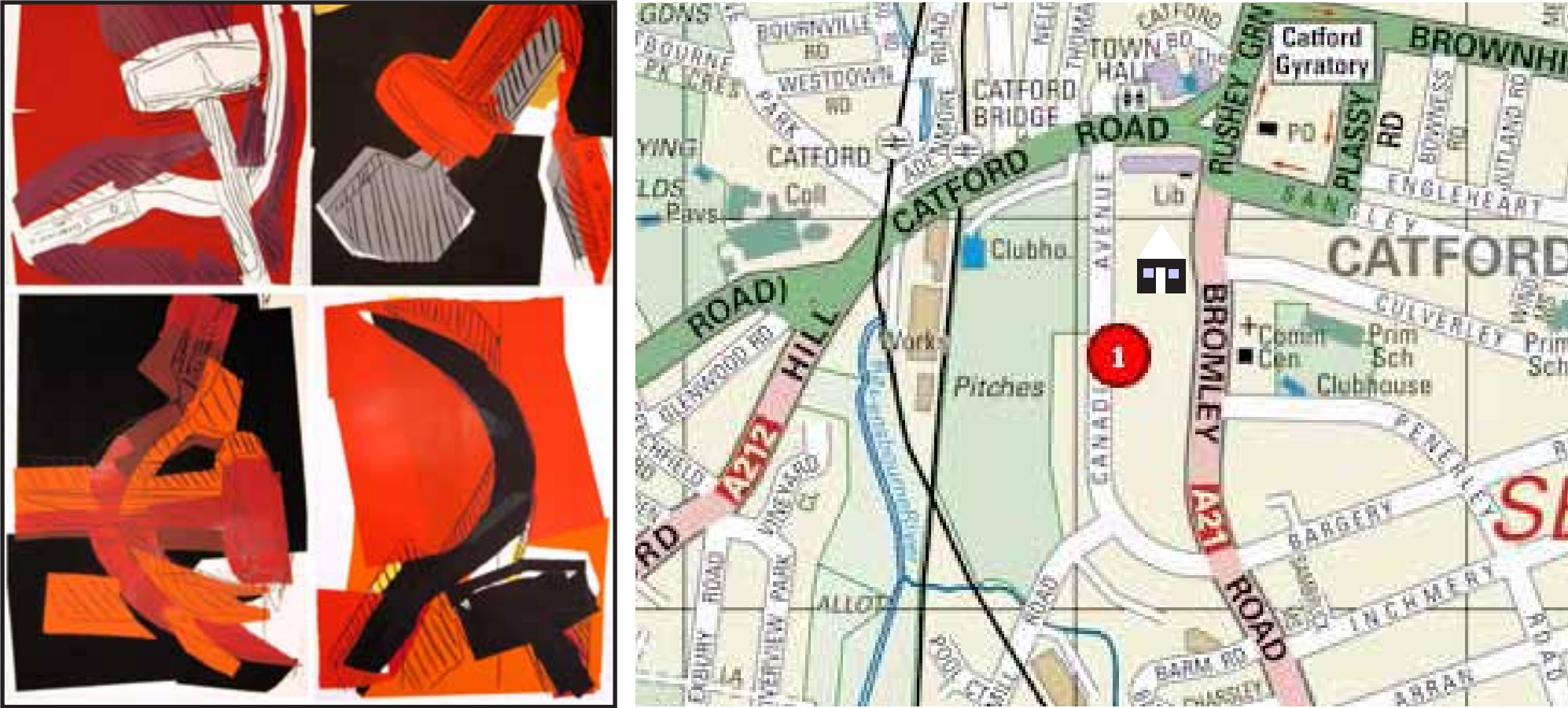
## Notes

1. 'Value, profit and crisis' *Weekly Worker* July 5.
2. 'Stuck in the neoclassical world' *Weekly Worker* July 26.
3. F Moseley, 'The determination of constant capital in the case of a change in the value of the means of production': [www.mtholyoke.edu/~fmoseley/CONCP.htm](http://www.mtholyoke.edu/~fmoseley/CONCP.htm).
4. I must admit that I fail to grasp Arthur's point in his philosophical digression on the impossibility of fixing a single point in time. Surely Arthur does not believe that time is an irrelevance in Marxist political economy? What is volume 2 of *Capital* if not an extended treatise on the multitude of ways in which capital in its various manifestations interact over time?



TIMETABLE

LEFTWING MYTHS AND THE  
 COMMUNIST ALTERNATIVE ■  
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|                        | 10am - 12.30pm  | 2pm - 4.15pm  | 4.45pm - 7pm   |
|------------------------|---|---|--|
| Monday<br>August 20    | Registration and access from 12.30pm  | <b>The Euro crisis, the left and the question of government</b><br>Mike Macnair (CPGB; author, <i>Revolutionary strategy</i> )  | <b>Iran and Israel: conflict and symbiosis</b><br>Moshé Machover (Israeli socialist)<br>Yassamine Mather (chair, Hands Off the People of Iran)                 |
| Tuesday<br>August 21   | <b>Bourgeois liberty and the politics of fear</b><br>Marc Mulholland (Oxford University)  | <b>The real Lenin and the sectarian caricature</b><br>Paul Le Blanc (US International Socialist Organization; author, <i>Lenin and the revolutionary party</i> )  | <b>Georg Lukács - philosopher of revolution?</b><br>James Turley (CPGB)  |
| Wednesday<br>August 22 | <b>Building the revolutionary party in the USA</b><br>Paul Le Blanc (International Socialist Organization; author, <i>Lenin and the revolutionary party</i> ) | <b>The emergence of capitalism within feudalism</b><br>Hillel Ticktin (editor, <i>Critique</i> )  | <b>Eden: did primitive communism ever really exist?</b><br>Lionel Sims (Socialist Workers Party)   |
| Thursday<br>August 23  | <b>Liberating women: the Bolshevik experience</b><br>Anne Mc Shane ( <i>Weekly Worker</i> correspondent, Ireland)   | <b>The triumph and maturity of capitalism</b><br>Hillel Ticktin (editor, <i>Critique</i> )  | <b>The tower of Babel</b><br>Chris Knight (Radical Anthropology Group; author, <i>Blood relations</i> )  |
| Friday<br>August 24    | <b>The left in Scotland: what happened?</b><br>Sarah McDonald (CPGB)<br>Gregor Gall, author, <i>Tommy Sheridan: from hero to zero?</i>                        | <b>The decline of capitalism</b><br>Hillel Ticktin (editor, <i>Critique</i> )   | <b>Marxism and religion</b><br>Book launch: <i>Fantastic reality</i> , second edition<br>Jack Conrad (CPGB)  |
| Saturday<br>August 25  | <b>Anti-German Germans: from 'communism' to neo-conservatism</b><br>Susann Witt-Stahl (Assoziation Dämmerung, Hamburg)  | <b>Rosa Luxemburg and the politics of spontaneity</b><br>Mike Macnair (CPGB; author, <i>Revolutionary strategy</i> )<br>Paul Le Blanc (International Socialist Organization; author, <i>Lenin and the revolutionary party</i> )                   | <b>Has the Arab spring turned to winter?</b><br>Moshé Machover (Israeli socialist)<br>Speaker from Rahe Kargar (Organisation of revolutionary workers in Iran) |
| Sunday<br>August 26    | <b>The trouble with 'economic growth' and 'environmentalism'</b><br>Gabriel Levy  | <b>1pm-3pm</b> (note shorter lunch break):<br><b>What sort of party?</b><br>Simon Hardy (Anti-Capitalist Initiative)<br>Ben Lewis (CPGB; co-author, <i>Zinoviev and Martov: head to head in Halle</i> )<br>Mike Phipps ( <i>Labour Briefing</i> ) | <b>3pm-3.30pm</b><br><b>Evaluation of Communist University 2012</b>  |



## DEBATE

# Her life and her legacy

Mike Macnair asks whether the modern 'new left' use of Luxemburg is part of the problem rather than the solution



Heroic, but surely flawed

Rosa Luxemburg was a heroine and martyr of the workers' movement: a leader of the left in the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD); imprisoned for her political activities in Germany in 1904 and Poland in 1906; a standard-bearer of anti-war socialism from 1914; imprisoned once again in 1915 and again 1916-18; a founder of the German Communist Party; and finally murdered by the SPD's far-right allies in the aftermath of the failed uprising in Berlin in 1919.

In the 'official' communist movement and fully 'orthodox' Trotskyism, Luxemburg was remembered this way - as a fighter, heroine and martyr. But she was also thought of as a defender of flatly erroneous views: 'spontaneism' on the questions of the party, its organisation and leadership; an ultra-left (and perhaps Lassallean 'one reactionary mass') view of the peasantry and the agrarian question; a view of the national question which was ultra-left sectarian or even "imperialist-economist" (Lenin's tag); and, perhaps related, a fundamentally mistaken understanding of Marx's 'reproduction schemes' in Volume 2 of *Capital*, which produced a radically misconceived theory of imperialism.

For the 'new left' which emerged after 1956, the Stalinist campaign against 'Luxemburgism' in the later 1920s and 1930s made Luxemburg's actual ideas more attractive. She combined impeccably revolutionary credentials with criticisms of Bolshevism: in her 1904 'Organisational questions of Russian social democracy'<sup>2</sup> and in her 1918 draft *The Russian Revolution* (published after her death by Paul Levi on his road back to the SPD).<sup>3</sup> These could make her appear as foreseeing Stalinism. For the 'new

left' she could thus be combined with the young Lukács of *History and class consciousness*, with the young Gramsci, with 'left' and 'council' communist critics of the Comintern (Pannekoek, Korsch and so on).

In particular, emphasis could be placed on her 1906 work attempting to make the SPD learn lessons from the 1905 Russian Revolution, *The mass strike, the political party and the trade unions*, and on her, and Anton Pannekoek's, polemics with Kautsky in 1910-12 over 'mass action' versus parliamentarism and the 'strategy of attrition'.<sup>4</sup> This debate could be read as offering a critique of the policy of the western mass 'official communist' parties, which had evolved (through force of circumstances in the cold war, rather than explicit choices) into something rather like Kautsky's 'strategy of attrition'.

In the 1960s-70s Luxemburg's ideas could also be idiosyncratically combined with elements of Maoism in western 'soft Maoism' or 'Mao-spontaneism'. In this context her theory of imperialism could re-attain respectability, and it continues to have some influence: for example on David Harvey's *The new imperialism* (Oxford 2003).

If 'orthodox' Trotskyism had common ground with 'official' communism on the 'Luxemburg question', a substantial part of the Trotskyist movement engaged with, and eventually became more or less part of, the 'new left'. The International Socialists, forerunners of the British Socialist Workers Party, in the 1960s came close to identifying themselves as 'Luxemburgists'. Both factions of the Unified Secretariat of the Fourth International identified to some extent with Luxemburg: the US SWP, centre of the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency, in 1970 published Mary-

Alice Waters' edited collection *Rosa Luxemburg speaks*; Ernest Mandel, one of the leaders of the European-led International Majority Tendency, in 1971 offered a substantial article on 'Rosa Luxemburg and German social democracy' in *Quatrième Internationale*.<sup>5</sup>

By these routes a certain reading of Luxemburg has become the common inheritance of the modern far left: she is the woman who diagnosed what was *really* wrong with the SPD and the Second International, before Lenin or Trotsky understood the problem. Her polemic against Eduard Bernstein, *Social reform or revolution* (1900), is still recommended reading for the left, where the contributions of Parvus, Kautsky and Plekhanov to this debate are left to specialist historians; and the polemical jabs of Belfort Bax round the question of imperialism, which forced Bernstein's views into the open, are almost written out of left accounts of the history.<sup>6</sup> *The mass strike*, similarly, remains on the far left's reading lists.

Luxemburg is commonly rolled together with Lenin and Trotsky among the 'classical Marxists' or 'Second International left', as she is by British SWP-tradition authors like Dave Renton and John Rees, and by Platypus authors;<sup>7</sup> or with Marx, Lenin, Trotsky and the young Gramsci, as in Paul Le Blanc's 1996 collection *From Marx to Gramsci*. The effect is, perhaps paradoxically, to assimilate these other authors to Luxemburg's and Pannekoek's arguments in 1906 and 1910-12, as interpreted after Luxemburg's death by Lukács and Korsch.

This may be true for the young Gramsci, and perhaps for the Trotsky of 1904, but it is certainly not true for Lenin or the later Trotsky. Lenin's, and Trotsky's, definite *non-acceptance* of

these arguments in 1910-12 is a matter of record. This tends to be treated by supporters of the view of a unified 'Second International left' either as a mistake due to the failure of Lenin and Trotsky to break openly with Kautsky until 1914, or as a manoeuvre in the complex internal struggles of the Russian Social Democratic Workers Party. Lenin's sharp polemic against the real inheritors of the 1910-12 Luxemburg-Pannekoek line (including Pannekoek himself) in *Leftwing communism, an infantile disorder* (1920) is 'out of the picture'.

## SDKPiL sect

The modern far left's 'Luxemburg narrative' contains an important silence. Luxemburg was not only a leftwing activist in the SPD. She was also one of the co-founders and central leaders - along with her partner of a good many years, Leo Jogiches (aka Tyszká), and with Julian Marchlewski (Karski) and Adolf Warszawski (Warski) - of the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland. In 1899 this merged with the Union of Workers of Lithuania to become the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania (SDKPiL), bringing Felix Dzierzhinsky into the central leadership.

The SDKPiL was a plain bureaucratic-centralist sect. Mandel's article at least admitted that Luxemburg "had simultaneously fought against Lenin's 'ultra-centralism', whilst tolerating Leo Jogiches' iron regime in her own underground Polish Workers Party". But it was not just a matter of 'tolerating' Jogiches: it was *Luxemburg* who argued after 1906 for SDKPiL organisational control of illegal trade unions, a policy which destroyed SDKPiL political influence in the emergent unions.<sup>8</sup>

The 1906 split in the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) separated Józef Piłsudski's pure-nationalist terrorist 'Frak' and drove the other wing, the mass movement-oriented PPS-Left, to the left. *Luxemburg* wrote the polemics using the agreed ultimatic line on behalf of the SDKPiL executive, demanding from the PPS-Left *complete* acceptance of the SDKPiL's anti-nationalism before any unity - even trade union unity - would be possible.<sup>9</sup>

The SDKPiL split in 1911 when the leadership expelled critics who dissented on these two issues and aligned with the Bolsheviks on all-Russian issues. The primary charge was holding an unauthorised Warsaw inter-district conference to elect an equally unauthorised local leadership.<sup>10</sup> The leadership proceeded to bring factitious charges of theft against Karl Radek, which Luxemburg had to drag into the SPD to get Radek expelled from that party.<sup>11</sup>

In the end the two wings of the SDKPiL, and the PPS-Left, did unite in 1918 to form the Polish Communist Party; but if the SDKPiL supplied some famous leaders, it was the PPS-Left which supplied much of the cadre and base.

Why is this an "important silence"? The importance of the issue is that the modern far left has created many such sects: precisely "two, three, many SDKPiLs". In a certain sense, overcoming this problem is the fundamental issue of our time.

## And Luxemburg?

The question this poses is how far Luxemburg's ideas on working class strategy may be connected to her and her co-thinkers' sectarian practice in the Polish workers' movement.

I should say at once that I do not have a clear and unambiguous answer



to this question. I have argued previously that the ‘general strike strategy’, even in the form of the more fluid analysis of Luxemburg’s *The mass strike*, attempted to dodge the problem of political authority, and hence, in the conditions of revolutionary crisis which it addressed, failed to answer the urgent need of the masses for some *governmental* solution to the crisis.<sup>12</sup> This weakness, however, does not in itself imply sect formation.

There is, also, a historical *correlation* between syndicalism and direct actionism and sectism: beginning with Bakunin’s ‘invisible dictatorship’, also visible pre-1914 in Anglo-Saxon DeLeonism, and in the 1920s in the ‘left’ and ‘council’ communists after their splits from Comintern, as well as in the modern far left. I have argued before that this *correlation* reflects a real *connection*, albeit what can best be called a ‘law of tendency’, rather than a strict logical entailment. That is, that the *concept of revolution* involved promotes a party practice of a kind which drives towards a high level of central control, which in turn forces differences to lead to splits.<sup>13</sup> Was the sect character of the SDKPiL an instance of this dynamic?

I am not in the least inclined to go back on these judgments, that the ‘mass strike’ or ‘direct action’ orientation does not represent a viable strategic alternative for the working class to the class-collaborationist reformism of most of the mass workers’ parties and trade unions; and that the same ‘mass strike’ or ‘direct action’ orientation in the modern far left works as part of a self-reinforcing dynamic of sectarianism and bureaucratic centralism.

However, I pose these issues *in relation to Luxemburg* as questions rather than answers. The question is how far the *modern far left’s version* of Luxemburg as an icon of its own ‘revolutionary Marxism’ involves not only airbrushing out the SDKPiL, but also an oversimplification of Luxemburg’s ideas about the party and the revolution.

Her academic social-scientist biographer, Peter Nettl, argued that Luxemburg from 1898, when she moved to Germany, led in effect a double life, holding her activities in the Polish leadership and in the SPD completely separate. For Nettl this assisted in structuring what would otherwise be a confusing biography, as he treats German matters and Polish and Russian matters separately. It can, however, hardly be true. The SDKP-SDKPiL sought to build in Russian Poland an imitator in broad terms of the SPD - as Lars Lih has put it of the *Iskra* group project in Russia, an “Erfurtian” party.<sup>14</sup> Conversely, though Luxemburg avoided holding a formal position in the SDKPiL leadership, her interlocutors in the German SPD cadre cannot have been unaware of her involvement in Polish and Russian affairs, since she had first become prominent in the international through her heretical position on the Polish question, wrote on Poland for *Neue Zeit* and other periodicals, and continued to raise Polish matters in the SPD and international down to the Radek case in 1912 and the issue of attempts to reunify of the Russian RSDLP in 1914.

The SPD had survived illegality in the 1880s and built itself through the line that it was a revolutionary party, but not one which set out to make an immediate revolution. Rather, capitalism itself was heading for a general breakdown, *Zusammenbruch* or *Kladderadatsch*; up until this happened, the party’s task was simply to build the organised workers’ movement as the strongest possible force in society; when it happened, the SPD and the workers’ movement more generally would be there to pick up the pieces and reshape them in a way which gave political power to the working class.

Luxemburg’s initial intervention in the SPD’s internal debates, *Reform or revolution*, was precisely a defence of this line, even if the reflections in chapter 8 on the “conquest of political power” depart to some extent from the pattern of the *Zusammenbruch* concept by rejecting the idea that attempts of the working class to take power could be ‘premature’.<sup>15</sup> In *The accumulation of capital* she was still defending the *Zusammenbruch*, if moving

into the territory of linking the tendencies to breakdown to the rise of imperialism.

*The mass strike* was not just about teaching the Germans Russian lessons about what would happen in a real revolutionary crisis, but also carried with it the message: *Zusammenbruch* is coming closer, and you need to be prepared for it.

I make these points to emphasise the extent to which Luxemburg’s polemics as well as her actual German activities (writing for the SPD press, speaking at meetings, electoral campaigning) took the SPD, its existence as an enormous mass movement and its underlying strategic line for granted.

There are two possible interpretations of this statement. The first is a positive one: that we should read Luxemburg’s polemics before 1914 as *limited* critiques of the SPD’s *current* tactics on the basis of an assessment that revolutionary crisis was coming nearer, which accepted a common universe of discourse, rather than - as post-1919 users often have - as global, or cosmos-level, critiques of the SPD.

The second would be a negative one: it would be that Luxemburg wrote in the way she did because she took the SPD for granted *and did not understand how the strategy related to what was objectively involved in building a mass party*. This negative reading would make Luxemburg more like Trotsky, who similarly ‘freelanced’ in the pre-1914 period, and admitted after 1917 that he had never before 1917 understood the party question. There is some support for this negative view in the 1904 *Organisational questions of Russian social democracy* - and in the history of the SDKPiL.

Either way, the modern ‘new left’ use of Luxemburg seems likely to be a part of the far left’s problems, not of any possible solution ●

## Summer Offensive

# On the fringe

This has actually been the best seven days so far for our annual fund drive, the Summer Offensive. £3,228 has been added to our overall total, taking us to £17,422. We are well on the way to our £25k target, which we need to reach by August 26. But, still, no room for complacency, comrades.

Particular thanks are due this week to sterling supporter MM for his magnificent £880; JE for his £250; and MC for his hours on the badge-making coalface - hard work that added £80 to the comrade’s SO total. Meanwhile comrade CG added a £20 donation to his payment for next week’s Communist University.

A special shout needs to go out for SK. As a result of his patient political work in his trade union branch, the comrade has won over £200 in donations to Hands Off the People of Iran and the charity it supports, Workers Fund Iran. (All monies raised for campaigns and organisations the CPGB is closely involved in count towards our comrades’ individual targets and the overall total for the SO: it is a measure of the political work of our communist collective in a broad, inclusive way, not simply narrowly defined as the cash that *we* - as the CPGB - get in.)

This is the last SO column before this paper has a two-week break for Communist University. In our first paper after this, I’ll announce our final (hopefully triumphant) total. Comrades will see the more or less definitive (keep checking online) CU timetable in this issue of the paper. I have to say that, reading over it, I do get a little surge of what might be termed ‘party patriotism’.

The content of our school is ambitious, enquiring and challenging. More than that, comrades will be intrigued to hear that Communist

## Notes

1. Usefully discussed in P Nettl *Rosa Luxemburg* Oxford 1969, Vol 2, pp798-820. This book is a cold war product whose analysis is based on the sociology of Weber and Talcott Parsons, and thus has to be read with considerable caution, but it is well documented for the facts of Luxemburg’s life and political activity, and on this issue, though its more general historical claims are often unreliable.
2. Published in English in 1961 by the ex-‘right communist’, then cold war warrior, Bertram D Wolfe, under the pointed title ‘Leninism versus Marxism’.
3. Also included in Wolfe’s pamphlet.
4. Largely available in German on the *Neue Zeit* website (<http://library.fes.de/nz/index.html>); or a substantial selection in French in H Weber (ed) *Socialisme: la voie occidentale* Paris 1983; only fragments are on the Marxists Internet Archive.
5. [www.ernestmandel.org/en/works/txt/1971/rosa\\_luxemburg.htm](http://www.ernestmandel.org/en/works/txt/1971/rosa_luxemburg.htm).
6. . Partial collection in H Tudor, JM Tudor (ed and trans) *Marxism and social democracy* Cambridge 1988; several of Plekhanov’s interventions are on MIA at [www.marxists.org/archive/plekhanov/index.htm](http://www.marxists.org/archive/plekhanov/index.htm).
7. See my review of Renton’s and Rees’s books in *Weekly Worker* September 11 2003; and for Platypus, see C Cutrone, ‘Defending Marxist Hegelianism’ *Weekly Worker* August 11 2011, and the prior debate referred to there.
8. P Nettl *op cit* Vol 2, pp575-76; the effects on the SDKPiL’s influence are discussed by R Blobaum *Feliks Dzierżinski and the SDKPiL* New York 1984, chapters 8-9.
9. P Nettl *op cit* Vol 2, pp562-65; R Blobaum *op cit* pp184-85.
10. R Blobaum *op cit* pp200-02.
11. *Ibid* pp206-08; see also P Nettl *op cit* Vol 2, pp585-90.
12. M Macnair *Revolutionary strategy* (2008), chapter 2; also ‘Spontaneity and Marxist theory’ *Weekly Worker* September 6 2007, ‘Leading workers by the nose’, September 13 2007, ‘Anarchist origins of general strike slogan’, March 17 2011.
13. ‘End the cycle of splits’ *Weekly Worker* May 24 2012.
14. LT Lih *Lenin rediscovered* (2006) chapter 1. On the SPD building itself in German Poland, see P Nettl *op cit* Vol 1, pp133-34. In Galicia (Austrian Poland) there was another set of groups - see R Kuhn *Henryk Grossmann and the recovery of Marxism* Champaign 2007, chapters 1-2.
15. [www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1900/reform-revolution/ch08.htm](http://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1900/reform-revolution/ch08.htm).

# 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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## Ed Miliband's 'do nothing' strategy

# Honour among thieves

Recent frictions in the Tory-Lib Dem coalition are an object lesson in the cynicism of bourgeois politics, argues **Paul Demarty**

The world's eyes were on Stratford, watching thousands of athletes run, jump and swim their way into history (or oblivion, as the case may be). Yet no physical feat is wondrous enough, and no ceremony sufficiently spectacular, to dissolve the odour of cynicism and hackery hanging over Westminster these past few weeks.

The coalition government, while hardly fatally undermined in the short term, is sailing into choppy waters. The Liberal Democrats are aggrieved that the miserable concessions extracted from the Conservative Party in the agreement that sealed their partnership - centrally, varying levels of support for utterly trifling constitutional tweaks - lie, today, in ruins. For the Tory right, meanwhile, even that fig leaf of compromise is too generous to Nick Clegg. Dissatisfaction grows every day with David Cameron and George Osborne - and the malcontents are emboldened by various similar misgivings in the bourgeois press.

Cameron, in particular, feels the breath of Boris Johnson down his neck. It is now beyond any doubt that 'BoJo', the buffoonish mayor of London, has his eye on the top job - and he is making influential friends. The Murdoch press, bent on revenge for the Leveson inquiry, never misses a chance to embarrass Cameron and give a platform to Johnson's half-baked views (the latter's criticisms of the BBC represent the *quid pro quo*, which Murdoch assures us he never seeks). He did not hesitate to make hay while the sun shone over Stratford either: though the Olympics contract was won under Tony Blair and Ken Livingstone, and Danny Boyle's opening ceremony was widely perceived as leftwing, Johnson remains the politician with the clearest ownership claim over this circus.

Both partners, then, are feeling the pinch. The public at large have taken notice. Only 16% of people, according to a recent *Guardian*/ICM poll, reckon the government will last a full term.<sup>1</sup>

The spark, this time, has been that old and persistent antagonist to Liberal governments in this country - the House of Lords. Lords reform was in the coalition agreement - and, unlike the alternative vote system, the Tories were supposed to support it. Still, getting Tories *actually* to support anything that runs the risk of conceding half an ounce of democratic initiative to the British people is a hard sell: and Clegg cannot be accused of failing to make the effort.

His plan - a new Lords, 80% elected and 20% judges and bishops, with proportional representation given on the basis of party lists and 15-year terms - would hardly make for a tectonic shift in the British constitution. Clegg's and Cable's predecessors, Asquith and Lloyd George, took on the Lords in 1910, and divested them of the right to veto any law more than three times, or filibuster it for more than a few years. Clegg proposes nothing more radical than a more even apportionment of cushy upper house seats to brown-nosing hacks.

All too much for the right wing of



**David Cameron: balancing**

the Conservative Party, of course; the timetable proposal for Clegg's bill fell before the threat of a mass rebellion in the parliamentary Tory Party, and Cameron has washed his hands of it. It just will not happen, he says, shedding a few crocodile tears.

Clegg, for his part, was having none of it - and promptly withdrew his support for constituency boundary changes, that would reduce the number of MPs by 50 - the largest part of whom sport red rosettes. This change was originally tied to the AV referendum; but Tory MPs were formally allowed to oppose AV, and the 'no' camp included most of the government front bench.

Any declaration of principled support from Tory grandees for this boundary change bill should be treated with the utmost suspicion. The supposedly 'unfair' distribution of seats is based on the number of *registered* voters in a given constituency. Those constituencies with lower registration rates tend to be in poorer areas, where large numbers of effectively itinerant residents never stay in one place long enough to show up on the electoral roll. The changes are a more diluted form of the 'anti-voter fraud' laws being rushed

through by Republican legislators in American swing states. Still less principled, however, is Clegg's reverse-ferret on the law. Canning it amounts to an act of pure, cynical revenge.

So much, then, for the carefully cultivated nice-guy images of both leaders. Cameron pitched himself as a new kind of Tory - the compassionate conservative who loved the NHS and urged people to 'hug a hoodie'. He made endless Blairesque promises to "fix broken politics", and the cheap point-scoring from the Commons floor and provide honest leadership to a battered nation.

Yet he is here engaged in the same game he has been playing all along (with the strategic leadership of George Osborne) - playing the loony right of the Tory Party off against his Lib Dem coalition partners. His Pilate-style response to the failure of the Lords bill is this classically-educated Eton boy's attempt to steer the course between Scylla and Charybdis once more.

He has, in fact, done a fairly good job of it on the whole. His time in government has seen the world teeter on the brink of economic meltdown almost constantly, and also - in the form of the Murdoch scandal - the most serious blow to the establishment's legitimacy for many years. He has been more successful than John Major in holding it all together, under far more dire circumstances. Yet it is a cynical game of divide and rule, whose moves take place in the back room and whose object is nothing more than to hold onto power for its own sake.

As for Clegg, the story is even more dire. The appeal of the Lib Dems centres on their relative disconnection from the Labour-Tory tit for tat, and founded firmly on the luxury of opposition. But they clearly employ the same sort of cynicism as everyone else. Clegg is utterly reliant on Cameron; killing this bill redresses the balance somewhat, reducing considerably the probability of an outright Tory victory

at the next election. Cameron can no longer afford to rush things; and if the coalition finally collapses, Clegg may hope he has a second bite of the cherry with Ed Miliband.

Speaking of 'Red' Ed: he hardly comes out of this affair with reputation enhanced. Labour political strategy at the present time can be summarised simply: oppositions do not win elections, but governments lose them. The government is weaker by the day; the gloomy economic outlook and the fallout from Osborne's austerity programme mean that the Tories will have an uphill struggle to reverse this trend. And so, the argument goes, all Labour has to do is not say anything that will alienate the 'middle classes' (read: the big and financial bourgeoisie, who hold the opinions of every ignorant petty bourgeois in their back pocket), and attempt to nudge the coalition onwards to its inevitable demise.

Ed Miliband cannot have had any principled objections to the Lords reform. It is exactly the sort of tinkering that the Blair government enacted. Yet Labour chose to oppose it on cynical tactical grounds, in the hope that its defeat would sow discord between the factions on the front bench.

To give the devil his due, it has paid off beyond the wildest dreams of those miserable technocratic hacks that come up with Labour Party strategy these days. Not only are Clegg and Cameron throwing sharp objects at each other: the sharpest of all is the scrapping of boundary changes, which benefits Miliband directly. The fallout will continue into the autumn. Cameron is expected to announce a cabinet reshuffle that will principally benefit his own right wing. Danny Alexander, the appointed Lib Dem underling at the treasury, is expected to titillate the audience at the party's Brighton conference with a speech excoriating the environmental record of his boss, Osborne. The centre cannot hold forever.

Given all this backstabbing, manoeuvring and treachery, it is worth remembering that there *are* points of principle here. The proposed Lords reform is a monstrous fraud even by the standards of a huckster as grubby as Nick Clegg. It merely takes the abject and obvious cronyism of the current set-up and conceals it under the most feeble pretence at a democratic process. A 15-year stint in the upper chamber (*15 years!*), with all the material and personal privileges that accrue to bogus nobility, would still function as a kind of retirement gift to the most craven and obsequious nonentities in politics, together with donors and other outliers of the Westminster racket.

A gold watch is more than most of the rest of us expect upon retirement - and it is more than these creatures deserve. The only democratic solution to the 'problem' of the Lords is its *abolition*: together with the monarchy, the judicial power and every other obstacle to popular sovereignty.

Nothing is more alien to the slick young company men that sit on the Commons front benches than any notion of democratic principle. One recalls Hunter S Thompson's memorable description of Richard Nixon's political methods: "He had the fighting instincts of a badger trapped by hounds. The badger will roll over on its back and emit a smell of death, which confuses the dogs and lures them in for the traditional ripping and tearing action. But it is usually the badger who does the ripping and tearing ... Badgers don't fight fair, bubba. That's why god made dachshunds."<sup>2</sup>

No better characterisation exists of the political bankruptcy of the bourgeois parties today ●

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## Notes

1. www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2012/aug/12/coalition-government-brink-collapse-voters.
2. www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1994/07/he-was-a-crook/8699.

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