

weekly worker



**Stephan Grigat and the
anti-German warmongers
line up with imperialism**

■ Spanish break-up?
■ CPGB aggregate
■ Aslef motion
■ Tusc advocates

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Towards a Communist Party of the European Union

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LETTERS



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

Rate of profit

In my previous discussions with Nick Rogers I put forward an example where a capitalist owns a firm with a production function such as: (1) $C 1,000 + V 1,000 + S 1,000 = E 3,000$ (C = constant capital, V = variable capital, S = surplus value, and E = the exchange value of the end product).

I argued that, using Marx's method, if the value of C (let's say it is 100 kilos of cotton) doubles, because the labour-time required for its production rises, then the production function becomes: (2) $C 2,000 + V 1,000 + S 1,000 = E 4,000$.

Nick argued various versions in which this was not the case, but that the value of C was determined not by its value, but by what the capitalist had paid for it. For example, in the above case if all capitalists had only paid £1,000 for the cotton, then it would be this price that would be transferred to the final product, not its current value.

In his interview with Andrew Kliman, Andrew, on this substantive point, agreed with me, rather than Nick, that it is the £2,000 current value which is transferred ('Crisis, theory and politics', September 27). However, the rest of Andrew's argument simply does not stand up. Let me give just a few of the many reasons why.

Andrew agreed that the production function is as I have set out in (2) above, but he also wants to argue that, when it comes to calculating the rate of profit, it is the £1,000 in money the capitalist laid out which has to be used, not the £2,000 current value of the cotton. So he agrees with Nick that the rate of profit would be 1,000 surplus value/1,000 constant capital = 100%, rather than the 1,000/2,000 = 50% that Marx's value analysis derives (in actual fact, the rate of profit including V is: $S/C+V = 1,000/2,000 + 1,000 = 33.3\%$.)

Yes, I measure the rate of profit using the historical cost of the fixed capital because a rate of profit is a rate of return on investment and the money that's been invested in the fixed capital is its original, or historical, cost. It is inconsistent to step outside a value analysis and argue that, although the value created in and transferred to the product is £4,000, the cost to the capitalist is only £1,000 V plus £1,000 C . Marx states clearly that surplus value is the difference between the value of the product and $C+V$.

This combining together, eclectically, of values and money prices within the same calculation is rather like counting up all the apple trees in an orchard, but then working out its value on the basis of the price of oranges!

Claiming that the capitalist has, in fact, made £1,000 profit, and £1,000 capital gain, leaves you needing to explain the source of the capital gain. It is clear that it has not come from the labour employed, and so its only alternative source is the constant capital itself, in which case you have abandoned Marx's labour theory of value in favour of a factor-contributions theory of value. Andrew correctly states that, prior to production, the revaluation of the cotton from 1,000 to 2,000 represents a capital gain of 1,000 for this capitalist. But capital gains are not increases in surplus value. They are not an expansion of capital in general. On the contrary, capital gains can only be realised if surplus value is created elsewhere.

Moreover, it is no more acceptable

to simply state that a capital gain has arisen without explaining its source than it is to say that other forms of profit have arisen without identifying their source. Capital gains only redistribute existing surplus value via the realm of distribution. Assume there are two people with houses, or some other such asset. Each house is valued at £100,000. House A is revalued to £150,000. Its owner could realise a £50,000 capital gain if they could sell. But the owner of house B only has their house to offer in exchange, so the capital gain cannot be realised - it is purely theoretical. The owner of B cannot make up the difference by working, because selling their labour-power at its value means all their income goes on buying wage goods. The only way that B could buy A's house at £150,000 is if they could produce and realise a surplus value of £50,000. Having done so, they exchange their house plus the £50,000 of surplus value for A's house. The surplus value was created in the realm of production by B, and was redistributed to A, in the sphere of distribution/exchange.

Capital can only truly expand when it is able to employ more abstract labour-time because it is this which creates surplus value. In fact, it is for this reason that capital can most easily expand when constant capital is devalued rather than when it is revalued.

As Marx points out, the increase in value of the cotton arises not in this sphere of production, but in the sphere of the cotton manufacturer. The capitalist can only realise this capital gain if he liquidates his capital. Suppose he does this. He does not employ the £1,000 of variable capital, and instead sells his cotton stock to realise his £1,000 capital gain. Capitalist B pays him £2,000 for the cotton, and lays out £1,000 for variable capital. What is the production function his firm now faces?

It is precisely that set out in (2). Moreover, even on an historic-cost basis, the situation for capitalist B is exactly the same as the current-reproduction-cost basis, because his historic cost is the current value of the cotton. Viewed objectively from the standpoint of capital then, rather than the subjective standpoint of the individual capitalist, the situation is clear - it is the value relation that gives the true picture, not the historic cost.

If we continue to look at this situation from the standpoint of capital in general, things do not improve for Andrew's argument. Capitalist A has undoubtedly realised a capital gain of £1,000. But capital exists simultaneously in its various forms - money capital, productive capital, commodity capital. The total national capital is contained in the combination of these forms. Now capitalist A had his capital in the form of productive capital. To realise the capital gain on it, he had to sell it to capitalist B, who had his capital in the money form. But the same cause of the revaluation of the cotton increasing its exchange value against money is the same cause that devalues B's money capital, reducing its exchange value against cotton. In other words, capitalist A has made a capital gain of £1,000, but capitalist B has made a capital loss (in real terms) of £1,000, cancelling it out from the standpoint of capital in general.

But if capitalist A continues production - which is the expectation of Marxist analysis - then it is clear that, once it has entered the final product, the increased exchange value of the cotton no longer represents a capital gain. Its exchange value is £2,000, and this exchange value

passes into the final product. The final product has an exchange value of £4,000, but, if the capitalist is not to contract rather than expand his production, then all of this £4,000 is required, so that the capital gain disappears. He started the production cycle with 100 kilos of cotton, and 100 workers and, leaving aside the surplus value, he would be able to commence the next cycle again with only 100 kilos of cotton and 100 workers.

But is the real cost to the capitalist just £1,000 C ? On an opportunity-cost basis, clearly the answer is no. On this, as in other aspects, the temporal single-system interpretation (TSSI) method for calculating the rate of profit provides spurious results. Looking just at the return on the constant capital, for ease of calculation, demonstrates this. Suppose that capitalist A can make a surplus value of £100. As a rate of profit on the £2,000 value of their constant capital this is a 5% return. But on an historic-cost basis it is a 10% return. Suppose the capitalist could invest their capital elsewhere and obtain a 7.5% return. According to historic cost, the capitalist should leave his capital invested where it is because 10% is more than 7.5%. However, on a value basis, he should clearly take his actual current £2,000 of value in his constant capital, and invest it at 7.5%, thereby obtaining a return of £150 rather than £100. In other words, the historic-cost basis would result in a misallocation of capital.

Finally, if the concern of the TSSI is to view the situation in terms of the actual money laid out by actual capitalists, and the returns they achieve on it, then why bother with examining productive and value relations at all? Why not apply this logic consistently? A few years ago, I had a debate with a supporter of the Austrian school on precisely this point. He argued that what counted as the rate of profit for capitalists was indeed the total return (yield plus capital gain/loss) they made on the money they laid out. He pointed out, however, that the majority of money is not laid out by capitalists in buying constant and variable capital, but on buying shares, and bonds and other financial assets. That is undeniably true, and nor is the majority of this money even spent in buying productive capital indirectly. Most shares and bonds bought by capitalists are not new issues, but are bought in the secondary markets. If the real concern is what return individual capitalists make on their money, then it's on this basis that the calculation should be undertaken.

Supporters of the TSSI, if they were consistent, would found their analysis on that basis. It is consistent with their philosophy and stated objective of analysing things in terms of the real world - though, as Marx points out, that real world is merely a superficial reflection of the underlying reality.

Arthur Bough
email

One-way street?

Heather Downs' determination to portray all opposition to her views on rape as "reactionary" or "patriarchal" are as befuddled as they are wrong (Letters, September 27).

She is also determined to avoid trickier questions, such as the use of allegations of rape in the context of societies based on racial superiority, segregation and imperialism. I gave the instance of the Scottsboro boys in my previous letter (September 20). But there were many other such instances where a black man or youth was lynched because he looked at a

white woman the wrong way or was found in a sexual embrace and the woman vindicated her 'honour' by proclaiming rape. Heather seems to suffer from tunnel vision in dismissing this. Some acknowledgment that it isn't all a one-way street would be honest.

I mentioned the radical feminist support for Israel and Zionism that was current in the 1980s. But I could have pointed to a long tradition of feminist support for and identification with imperialism and indeed fascism. Nora Elam, the suffragettes' general secretary, graduated to become the British Union of Fascists women's organiser for Sussex and Hampshire in 1935. No doubt she believed in women's equality: it was just that Jewish women weren't equal. Likewise white women in the dominions fought for equality, but not alongside indigenous women.

I'm sorry that Heather doesn't recognise that feminists like Andrea Dworkin, in supporting imperialism, supported the oppression of the most oppressed women. Instead she caricatures what I said as suggesting that "feminism is a branch of imperialism". But Women of Colour formed the paper *Outrage* in response to the Zionism of *Spare Rib* magazine.

I have never said that Assange cannot rape someone because of his looks or alleged anti-imperialism. What I do raise is the context in which these allegations are made - the convening of a secret grand jury in the United States and the desire to extradite him. Heather Downs obviously considers these irrelevant and if the cry of 'rape' is made then someone must be extradited regardless. I disagree.

Feminists portray rape as one seamless horror without recognising that there are shades of grey. 'Yes means yes, and no means no' is a good slogan, but it can often belie reality. A man may well believe he has the woman's consent when he hasn't, since a situation of intimate sexual encounter might be seen as one of implied consent. The woman herself may be uncertain as to whether she wants sexual intercourse and that is taken as a signal by her bedmate. To raise these questions is to risk bringing howls of outrage on one's head, but to fail to do so is to lose touch with the experience of ordinary people and how they develop sexually.

By way of contrast, crimes of violence are subdivided legally into several categories and it might well be better if rape was not separated off into its own separate category, but was also seen as an offence of violence. It is not at all true that "only in rape is the victim's behaviour under closer examination than the perpetrator's". The behaviour of the victim of any form of violence is examined - for example, to see if their injury was sustained in self-defence. Was this not the argument put forward by women who attacked and killed their violent partners: that it was a form of self-defence? Or would Heather rather have seen them serving a life sentence instead?

Heather argues: "Continuing a sexual or social relationship with a man [following an alleged rape] is not evidence of his innocence or guilt." It depends on the circumstances. Where there is an economic tie of dependence or children, this is undoubtedly true, but the Swedish women in this case had no such ties. What possible reason could they have for wishing to persist in a relationship with someone who has raped them, or for actually boasting of the encounter in text messages? Clearly they took it a lot less seriously than either the Swedish state or Heather.

I am aware of the judgement of the witch-finding judge, Sir Matthew Hale. I am also aware that the common law was changed by that otherwise reactionary judge, Lord Justice Lane (he who declared that, the longer he had heard the appeal, the more convinced he was of the guilt of the Birmingham Six).

I can also speak from personal experience. At university I had a one-night stand with a feminist who threatened to get up and leave if I went for a drink with my comrades. I then found myself accused in public, some months later, of rape. At the time I had campaigned against her as a local area National Union of Students official, because she was a political opportunist in the Socialist Students Alliance. It was clear to those present, men and women, that she had made the accusation out of anger at my role in having organised her political defeat, but the fact that it was made by a self-declared feminist made me wonder about how some feminists, who are not mentally ill, will use such an allegation in a totally unprincipled fashion. But maybe I was just the 1%?

Feminist demands are, like their gay equivalents, demands for the democratisation of capitalism. They come from the least oppressed women, who talk glass ceilings in investment banks, not the low wages of cleaners. We saw this in Brighton, when the organisers of Gay Pride openly supported the police attack on and kettling of the Queers Against the Cuts contingent.

Tony Greenstein
Brighton

Doubled up

The best example of 'doublespeak' seen in recent years has been that accompanying the outcry over a runaway couple - a student and her teacher. 'Doublespeak' was a means of oral deceit, whereby the state redrafted words to mean something entirely different from their true meaning - even their direct opposite.

So we have 'a child', who is a 15-year-old young woman and not a child at all, 'abducted', although she went quite of her own free will, by the man she volunteered to accompany, pushed into a corner by pressure of their love and a restrictive, repressive British state, fled to France where their relationship, had they been French, wouldn't have been an offence and they wouldn't have to flee. She can't consent to go with him or have sex with him because at 15 the state says you can't, and you haven't even if you actually have. At 15 you are a child not because you feel or act like a child, not because you haven't reached puberty or sexual maturity, but because we deem you to be so. You can't consent because we deem you not to have the mental capacity to do so.

The 10pm BBC news headline on Saturday September 29 headed up the arrest of the teacher and return of the 'child' to Britain. Second item - seven British climbers killed in a plane crash! That the deaths of seven young people in Asia, plus their Asian fellow travellers, would take second place to a puerile exploration of an absolutely private family relationship problem should at first gasp be remarkable. It had never occurred to me that the *News of the World* editorial team had been moved over to run the BBC news, but there you go.

It got worse the next morning, following the 'child' being returned, with the pronouncements of all sorts of self-declared experts and well paid reps of the child protection industry. We had the announcement that a 14-year-old girl had been charged with murder. Now this girl clearly

wasn’t a child - she was deemed able to voluntarily and consciously have enough maturity, intelligence and self-choice to decide to murder someone. Odd, isn’t it? You can’t consent at 15 to go away with your boyfriend, but you can decide to murder someone at 14? No great child protection experts here saying how she couldn’t possibly make such a decision because she was just a child, and why the very notion was absurd.

Then the USA, which set all this bollocks loose in the first place, goes one better. Announcing that they have arrested another 14-year-old girl for ‘distributing child pornography’ *of herself* on MySpace! So she will appear on the child abuse register as a child molester (of herself) for life, whatever happens in court, and now is facing the charge of ‘child sex abuse’ (against herself) with a potential sentence of 22 years. Anyone see any ‘child abduction’ headlines on this one? No 10 o’clock national news on ‘child’ abuse? Nope, me neither.

David Douglass
 South Shields

No no-platform

The motion to ‘no-platform’ Tony Benn and George Galloway was put to the National Union of Students just a short while after ‘national culturalists’ were chased from Liverpool University’s freshers’ fair (September 23).

The far-right group, led by Jack Buckby with assistance from Craig Crooke (British Freedom Party), had been refused a stall, but planned to leaflet anyway. They were opposed by protestors, who chanted “Nazi scum, off our streets” and some protestors grabbed their leaflets and tore them up. One student said: “It’s a bit over the top ... Obviously I don’t agree with what they’re [the national culturists] saying, but I don’t agree with what they’re [the anti-fascists] doing either”.

Countering ideas that are wrong, dangerous and offensive, as both rape apologism and the far right’s ideas are, cannot be achieved by censorship. It doesn’t make a difference whether the censorship is by the state or by militant working class direct action. Freedom of speech is a principle, not a tactic, but at the very least comrades and students should be able to admit no-platform hasn’t and doesn’t work at suppressing undesirable ideas.

Jon D White

Socialist Party of Great Britain

Choice of words

At the United Nations last week Binyamin Netanyahu talked of “Iran’s nuclear plans to build a bomb” and, as usual, both the mainstream and alternative media ignored a fundamental fact: the unanimous view of the US intelligence agencies (as of February this year) that Iran not only doesn’t have a nuclear weapons production programme, but it hasn’t even *decided* to have one. Moreover, to go back one more step, it hasn’t even decided to make enough highly enriched uranium for a single nuclear warhead.

These facts should be central to the interventions of Hands Off the People of Iran and others, because it isn’t just the warmongers who have raced ahead of events. As an example of the misunderstanding on the left, here was John McDonnell in a February 20 parliamentary debate partly quoted in the *Weekly Worker* (March 1): “The notion of Iran being close to having nuclear weapons is open to doubt, as there is no solid evidence, but, as the honourable member for Basildon and Billericay said, the issue is really about nuclear capability” (*Hansard*, column 692).

No, not weapons, not capability, because the Iranian state managers haven’t even decided to make enough highly enriched uranium for one

warhead, let alone started to discuss whether they want to devise a nuclear weapons production programme.

Why do I say this? Three weeks before this Commons debate James Clapper, US director of national intelligence (DNI), made public what the federal ‘intelligence community’ thought of the nuclear weapons talk: it has no basis in reality. Clapper is the head of the US’s 16 federal spy agencies and the principal advisor to the president on intelligence matters concerning ‘national security’. On January 31, Clapper testified to the Senate select committee on intelligence and had written into the record his ‘worldwide threat assessment of the US intelligence community’ (www.dni.gov/files/documents/Newsroom/Testimonies/20120131_testimony_ata.pdf). Iran was so marginal to the perceived threats that it appeared only at the bottom of page 5. He used the following evasive language to describe my first point: “We assess Iran is keeping open the option to develop nuclear weapons, in part by developing various nuclear capabilities that better position it to produce such weapons, should it choose to do so. We do not know, however, if Iran will eventually decide to produce nuclear weapons.”

Clapper adds in the next paragraph but one: “Iran’s technical advancement, particularly in uranium enrichment, strengthens our assessment that Iran has the scientific, technical and industrial capacity to eventually produce nuclear weapons, making the central issue its political will to do so” (p6). His next sentence makes my second point: “These advancements contribute to our judgment that Iran is technically capable of producing enough highly enriched uranium for a nuclear weapon, if it so chooses”.

Clapper’s assessment was not challenged, either by commentators or, significantly, by an off-the-record comment of even a minority of analysts from any of the 16 agencies he was speaking for. His assessment was simply ignored - at the time, and since. Now the world is transfixed by Netanyahu’s poster, seemingly inspired by the turban-bomb depiction by a Danish cartoonist.

Has Clapper revised or updated this assessment? Does the DNI still believe that Iran has not decided to enrich enough uranium for even one nuclear warhead? Perhaps a more observant *Weekly Worker* reader can tell us.

Part of the problem here is the making of general statements, sometimes deliberately chosen, sometimes plain sloppy. So instead of particulars - ‘nuclear weapons programme’, ‘nuclear weapons production programme’, ‘enriched uranium programme’, ‘highly enriched uranium programme’, ‘nuclear power programme’ or ‘nuclear power generation programme’ - we get the blanket ‘nuclear programme’, ‘nuclear plans’, or ‘nuclear capability/capacity’. Our choice of words is important.

Dave Gannet
 email

Soviet treasure

Two years ago I requested and received the index of *Pod Znamenem Marksizma* (‘Under the banner of Marxism’), the leading monthly philosophical and socio-economic journal of the Soviet Union. At http://libcom.org/library/under-banner-marxism there is an online translation of the titles from 1922 to 1929 and a few articles - eg, on abstract labour, the quantity theory of money, credit romanticism, international exchange and the law of value. I invite Marxists of every stripe to look into the debates held in *PZM*, to make more of this freely available resource and

to discuss which articles should be translated from it.

PZM published on a wide range of topics: eg, ‘Physics and reality’ (Einstein, 1937), ‘Towards the question about the tasks of Soviet palaeontology’ (1937). I expect everyone can find articles worth saving from oblivion, but the theoretical legacy of Soviet Marxism must also be confronted in depth. While the names of the authors are mostly unfamiliar, from a purely academic standpoint many titles provoke interest: Hegel’s ‘Philosophy of right’ (1935), ‘Schelling and his philosophy of transcendental idealism’ (1938), ‘John Locke and his essay concerning human understanding’ (1940), ‘Critique of classical German philosophy in the works of Herzen’ (1943).

There are other intriguing titles: eg, ‘Dialectics of revolution and sophistry of O Bauer’ (1930), ‘Theory of social-fascism on the transition period’ (1931), ‘Theoretical foundation of “Hooverism” and the bankruptcy of bourgeois economic thought (Theory of cycles and crises in the work of Foster and Catchings)’ (1931), ‘Social-fascist theory of crises of Hilferding’ (1931).

In particular, the CPGB could take up the task of confronting such titles. *PZM* grappled with the history of the socialist movement and in its own way attempted to recover the history of Marxism and of socialism in general. Despite practical difficulties in accessing *PZM*, it is wholly intolerable that up until now communists have not bothered to look into this journal.

Noa Rodman
 email

Grassed up

Rajah Bagal makes some comments about the National Shop Stewards Network and Grassroots Left (Letters, September 27).

He is completely misinformed about the nature, origin and policies of Grassroots Left, which is a genuine rank-and-file group that emerged in Unite in a battle against the bureaucratic apparatus. This led to a contest between Grassroots Left and the bureaucracy in the election for general secretary. Jerry Hicks stood on a principled campaign: (1) election of all full-time officials; (2) right to recall those officials if they fail to carry out the membership’s wishes; and (3) a worker’s wage for all elected officials. Grassroots Left is not controlled by anyone; it is building an organisation that is independent of capitalist interests - and that means the bureaucracy, whether left or right (the NSSN, unfortunately, is very close to the left bureaucracy of Crow, Serwotka, Wrack and McCluskey).

We in Grassroots Left are not “ex-Marxists/Stalinists who see the British bourgeoisie as their mates in the struggle against Brussels”. Rajah Bagal better get his facts right before he makes false statements. Bagal makes some correct criticisms of the bureaucracy before then throwing his hands up by saying there is nothing to be done and sticking his head in the sand. That is not the policy to defeat capitalism or wage a ruthless struggle against this bureaucracy.

The task, as I have said in this paper before, is to build a genuine rank-and-file movement in the trade unions that is independent of the bureaucracy, and that is Grassroots Left. We will be organising a series of regional conferences, to be held in London, Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham. I would call on all serious workers to come to our first one in London on November 4 from 12-4pm at the Calthorpe Arms, Grays Inn Road, London NW1.

Laurence Humphries
 email

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

Sunday October 7, 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 5, ‘Contradictions in the general formula of capital’.

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

Radical Anthropology Group

Tuesday October 9, 6.15pm: ‘Cultural evolution, language and robots’. Speaker: Luc Steels. St Martin’s Community Centre, 43 Carol Street, London NW1 (two minutes from Camden Town tube). Session cost: £10 waged, £5 low-waged, £3 unwaged. Whole-term discounts. Organised by Radical Anthropology Group: www.radicalanthropologygroup.org.

Free Raul Ally

Friday October 5, 6pm: Public meeting, Gateshead Leisure Centre, Alexandra Road, Gateshead. End detention, stop deportations. Organised by Fight Racism, Fight Imperialism: frfinortheast@googlemail.com.

Stop G4S convergence

Saturday October 6, 10am to 4pm: UK-wide activist meeting, the Workstation, 15 Paternoster Row, Sheffield S1. Organised by Stop G4S Convergence: stop-g4s@riseup.net.

Bin Veolia for Palestine

Sunday October 7, 3pm: Anti-Veolia services meeting. Rooms 3-4, Birmingham Council House, Victoria Square, Birmingham, B3. Speakers include Clare Short, Salma Yaqoob. Organised by Palestine Solidarity Campaign: www.palestinecampaign.org.

Birmingham for the alternative

Saturday October 7, 11am: March against Tory conference. Assemble Victoria Square, Birmingham B1. Organised by Midlands TUC: www.tuc.org.uk/events/index.cfm?regional=6.

Bring the troops home

Sunday October 7, 1pm: Naming the dead ceremony - end the war in Afghanistan. Trafalgar Square, London WC2. Organised by Stop the War Coalition: www.stopwar.org.uk.

Down the drones

Monday October 8, 7pm: Meeting, Margaret Fell room, Friends Meeting House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1. No more civilian casualties resulting from unmanned drones. Organised by Drone Campaign Network: <http://dronecampaignnetwork.wordpress.com>.

No western intervention

Tuesday October 9, 7pm: Anti-war meeting on Syria and Iran, University of London Union, Malet Street, London WC1. Organised by Stop the War Coalition: <http://stopwar.org.uk>.

EDL out of Walthamstow

Tuesday October 9, 7.30pm: Public meeting, Harmony Hall, 10 Truro Road, off High Street, London E17. Organised by We Are Waltham Forest: waltuaf@gmail.com.

Miscarriage of Justice Day

Saturday October 13, 10am to 5pm: Conference, St George’s Lecture Theatre, Mappin Street, Sheffield S1. Organised by National Federation of Miscarriage of Justice Campaigns: www.unitedagainstinjustice.org.uk.

Austerity, injustice and the power of protest

Sunday October 14, 11.30am to 5.30pm: National conference to defend the right to protest, University of London Union, Malet Street, London WC1. Workshops and forums include: ‘Policing austerity’, ‘Defending the right to strike’, ‘Know your rights’, ‘Whose streets?’ Speakers include: Darcus Howe, Owen Jones, John McDonnell, Tony Benn, Alfie Meadows, Nick Wrack, Mark Serwotka, Gareth Peirce. Waged £6, unwaged £3, solidarity £10.

Organised by Defend the Right to Protest: www.defendtherighttoprotest.org/national-conference.

Socialist theory

Thursday October 18, 6pm: Study group, Social Centre, Next from Nowhere, Bold Street, Liverpool L1. ‘Marx’s vision of communism’. Organised by Socialist Theory Study Group: teachingandlearning4socialism@gmail.com.

A future that works

Saturday October 20, TUC demonstrations
London: Assemble from 11am, Hungerford Bridge, Victoria Embankment, London WC2, for march at 1.30om to Hyde Park.
Glasgow: Assemble from 11am, George Square, Glasgow G1, for march to rally at Glasgow Green, Glasgow G40.
 Organised by TUC: www.afuturethatworks.org.

Europe against austerity

Sunday October 21, 11am to 5pm: International conference, 128 Theobald’s Road, London WC1. Organised by Coalition of Resistance: www.coalitionofresistance.org.uk.

Unite the Resistance

Saturday November 17, 10am to 5pm: National conference, Emmanuel Centre, 9-23 Marsham Street, London SW1. Organised by Unite the Resistance: www.uniteresist.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.

ECONOMY

Troika demands yet more austerity

The euro crisis could trigger nationalist disintegration, warns **Eddie Ford**

Amidst a relentless barrage of grim economic data concerning the euro zone, attention is currently focused on Madrid. It seems only a matter of time before Spanish prime minister Mariano Rajoy requests a full sovereign bailout - or has one thrust upon him by an anxious Brussels, keen to stop Spain from effectively being forced out of the bond markets. That would substantially increase the risk of contagion spreading to Italy and beyond - the nightmare scenario that could possibly see the total collapse of the euro and the triggering of a deep, worldwide recession, perhaps even something far worse.

Piling on the bailout pressure, on September 28 a 'stress test' report revealed a €59 billion black hole in the Spanish banks - caused, of course, by the dramatic bursting of the housing bubble, leaving them saddled with toxic real estate assets. The report, carried out by consultancy Oliver Wyman, lists seven banks that will certainly need bailout money or must raise further capital themselves by the middle of next year. Bankia, the country's fourth-largest lender, topped the list with capital needs estimated at €24.7 billion.

It is one of several that sold their own clients diabolically complex preference shares, which will now see hundreds of thousands of investors seriously out of pocket. In fact, some put their life savings into these dodgy preference shares - and the courts are dealing with thousands of cases where banks are accused of conning them into buying those shares.

As part of the terms, those banks that receive bailout money will offload their toxic debt onto a new 'bad bank', which will pay prices well below the stated value. The 'bad bank' will sell its newly acquired 'assets' if and when the real estate market recovers - quite a hope, it has to be said. Though the details are still a bit hazy, it seems the 'bad bank' will be given up to 15 years to do its job.

Secretary of state for the economy Fernando Jiménez Latorre estimated that overall Spain's banks would eventually need some €40 billion of the €100 billion bailout money on offer to cover the bad loans. Rather unconvincingly, he added that this marked the beginning of the end of the country's banking crisis - "With this process capitalisation and restructuring needs will all be met." Indeed, "all doubts should be dispelled". If you say so, Fernando.

Humiliation

Formal acceptance of an 'official' euro zone rescue programme would automatically see, at least in theory, the European Central Bank buying up unlimited amounts of Spanish government bonds in order to increase demand and in turn drive down the yield (interest rate). According to reports in the financial press, euro zone officials are considering a so-called 'enhanced conditions credit line' that would keep Spain in the credit markets with support from the euro zone rescue funds (European Financial Stability Facility/European Stability Mechanism) and the ECB.

Even now, at the 11th hour, Rajoy is still denying that he is about to go cap in hand to Brussels. At a press conference on October 2 following a tense meeting with Spain's increasingly rebellious regional leaders - nationalist/separatist sentiment is rising fast - Rajoy answered in the negative when directly asked if a bailout request is



Catalonia: independence referendum

imminent. His public disavowal of what seems to be all but inevitable is easy to understand, of course. Rajoy's Popular Party is already massively unpopular, and the September 27 budget announcing a fresh round of cuts guarantees that he will become even more unpopular - the highly militant anti-austerity demonstrations in Madrid last week conclusively proved that (showing what is surely to come, the police went on the violent rampage in the Atocha railway station and elsewhere).

Therefore Rajoy is desperate to avoid the further political humiliation of having International Monetary Fund, European Commission and ECB inspectors - the hated men and women in black - crawling like locusts all over Spain in the same way as they did in Greece, Ireland and Portugal. Indeed, in a September 12 TV interview he haughtily declared that he could not accept "anyone else telling us what our policies should be" or "where we have to make cuts". But they do say that pride comes before a fall, because in the same interview he also said he had no intention of applying for "what people like to call a bailout" - so expect that clip to be run and rerun in the near future.

Yes, there had been considerable speculation that Rajoy was stalling a bailout bid until after the October 21 regional elections in his home state of Galicia and the Basque country - obviously not an impossibility. However, it does appear that Spain will now submit the request at the weekend, so that euro zone finance ministers can discuss it at their next regular meeting on October 8. Failing that, Madrid could make the application before the European Union summit in Brussels on October 18-19, but countries such as France and Italy are strongly pushing for an earlier decision - concerned that chronic uncertainty is beginning to grip the markets again.

For instance, Spanish bond yields are creeping once more into dangerous territory - currently hovering just below the 6% mark. Maybe ominously, Moody's rating agency has said that some time this

month it will publish the results of a review of Spain's sovereign debt rating - just one notch above junk status at the moment. A further downgrade could well scare the horses, especially when you consider that rating agencies tend to hunt in packs. Meaning that a definite statement or commitment from Rajoy regarding the bailout would be extremely welcome in many quarters.

But there is just one problem - Berlin. There is every indication that Germany fiercely objects to a full Spanish bailout. Finance minister Wolfgang Schäuble maintains that Spain is "taking all the right steps" to overcome its fiscal problems and therefore does not need a bailout at this time - arguing that investors will "reward" Spanish reforms in due course. Let the market work its magic.

According to participants at the euro zone ministerial meeting in mid-September, there were sharp exchanges when Schäuble told his peers that the German government could not take yet another bailout request to the Bundestag so soon, when only in July it had approved up to €100 billion in financial aid for dysfunctional Spanish banks. Unsurprisingly, Angela Merkel prefers to avoid putting more individual bailouts for distressed euro countries to her increasingly reluctant parliament - not to mention the German electorate.

Eager to please the insatiable Euro-bureaucracy, the Rajoy government has promised to enact 43 "structural reforms" over the next six months - cuts, cuts, cuts. In an approving statement, Brussels said the detailed timetable provided by Madrid "goes beyond" what the EC had originally asked for and represents an ambitious "step forward". Well done, what a good boy. Naturally, watching his popularity ratings plummet, Rajoy has pledged that pensions would be the "last thing" to be cut, as he takes his axe to the social security system. Hardly reassuring, given his previous comments about introducing a "new law" on pensions before the end of the year.

Yet things are going from bad to

worse for Spain. It needs to refinance some €29 billion in maturing debt, including €9 billion in short-term paper, by the end of this month. And, with the tourism season ending, unemployment rose by 1.7% last month to 4.7 million, as service-sector lay-offs accelerated - with the reasonable expectation that the figure will keep rising. Furthermore, as from September 1 VAT rose from 18% to 21%, further hitting consumer spending and adding to the recessionary spiral.

Collapse

Inevitably, Spain's social fabric is starting to fray - 500,000 homes have no breadwinner, while half of all under-25s and migrants are jobless. And, with one-third of them not qualifying for unemployment benefit, despair is setting in amongst large swathes of the population. One telling consequence of this breakdown is the removal of old people from care homes, with families either unable to pay the fees or just desperate to have the stable - albeit meagre - income provided by a pension 'relocated' back home.

Almost all welfare sectors can tell similar stories. Hospital wards are being closed. Madrid's state schools have started the term with fewer teachers and some secondary schools have closed their science laboratories. The Catholic church's Caritas charity, which hands out food packages, says it is now aiding one million people. In some neighbourhoods of the capital, increasing numbers of people root through bins at night hoping to find food - a pattern being replicated across the country. As austerity and poverty envelops greater parts of Spain, squabbling over increasingly scarce resources is bound to intensify - potentially threatening breakaways from national minorities. Bluntly, Spain could disintegrate. If so, a break-up of the euro zone's fourth largest economy - and the world's 12th biggest economy - could kindle nationalist feelings in the rest of Europe. Numerous unresolved national questions still remain on the continent.

Rajoy has bullishly stated that the various regions have agreed to a "fiscal consolidation path" and insisted that there was no prospect of Catalonia separating from Spain - but no-one seems to have told that to the Catalan parliament or people. After a pro-independence rally in Barcelona last month involving at least 1.5 million people, Catalan president Artur Mas called snap regional elections for November 25. This was followed by a Catalan parliamentary motion exhorting whatever regional government that emerges to hold an independence referendum - with or without central government permission. Needless to say, opinion polls clearly suggest that parties opposed to Catalan independence are heading for a heavy defeat.

Madrid has reacted with fury. Deputy prime minister Soraya Sáenz de Santamaría warned that the government would halt any attempt at a unilateral referendum - there are "legal instruments" to stop it, she said. One enraged Popular Party MP went further. Alejo Vidal-Quadras told Spanish TV that if Mas continued down the secessionist path, then Madrid should send in the country's civil guards to impose central control - the government "should think of intervening in the rebellious region if they persist". Of course, such comments have an immediate and jarring resonance in a country that

experienced a failed coup attempt by civil guards in 1981. Similarly, a former PP interior minister, Jaime Mayor Oreja, compared Catalan nationalists with the Basque terrorist group, Eta. He even hinted at a separatist conspiracy, claiming that Eta is "seeing a historic opportunity that Spain will break up" and that we are witnessing a "break-up plan that has been implanted both in Catalonia and the Basque country."

As the economic crisis continues and as the cuts are deepened and widened, it is not too difficult to imagine the existing state system - and structures - in Europe coming under severe strain. And not just in the euro zone. The UK economy is at best flat-lining. Were the euro to tank, the economic fall-out for Britain would be devastating - the euro zone accounts for about 40% of all British exports. Under such conditions, the call for Scottish independence could well find far more receptive ears.

Misery

Greece had its first official general strike on September 26, though in reality there have been almost innumerable unofficial nationwide actions. The strike was backed by the country's biggest private sector union, the General Confederation of Greek workers (GSEE), the union of civil servants (ADEDY), and PAME, the coordinating centre set up by the Communist Party (KKE). There were huge demonstrations in Athens and some 65 urban centres, with 350,000 protesters marching on parliament. The police fired tear gas at crowds throwing rocks and petrol bombs.

The governing Pasok-New Democracy-Democratic Left coalition, coming under immense pressure from the troika to impose yet more cuts, ordered bulletproof barriers to be erected around the parliament. So much for the motherland of democracy. The general strike almost brought the country to a complete standstill and was hailed - not without good reason - as a "triumph" by the unions. Ilias Iliopoulos, ADEDY secretary general, described it as a "warning to the government not to pass the measures" - if it "pushes us further into a corner, we will react".

Much of the anger is directed at spending cuts worth nearly €12 billion over the next two years, equivalent to more than 5% of the country's entire GDP. But that is what the Greek government has promised the troika in order to secure its next tranche of bailout aid. The bulk of those cuts will come from slashing wages, pensions and welfare benefits, heaping a new wave of misery on ordinary Greeks, who are being pushed to the absolute brink. Unemployment is at a record high of almost 24% and Greece now has the dubious distinction of having the highest levels of youth unemployment in the euro zone at 55.4% - surpassing Spain's 52.9%.

Yet even the butchery envisaged by the Greek government, which becomes more despised by the day, does not appear to have satisfied its international lenders. Negotiations aimed at unlocking the bailout money appeared to hit deadlock on October 1, after troika officials flatly rejected €2 billion-worth of cost-cutting measures as "unworkable" - they do not go far enough. Interior ministry figures indicate that there may well be as many as 180,000 civil servants fired if the troika gets its way ●

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ONE NATION

Labour turns blue

Ed Miliband invoked the legacy of Benjamin Disraeli in order to embrace the agenda of Blue Labour, argues **Paul Demarty**

We on the far left, despite our carefully cultivated image as fearless revolutionaries on the avant-garde of history, are quaintly old-fashioned in some ways. For example, we foolishly hold to the quirky old shibboleth that states, ‘The purpose of a party conference is to decide policy.’

Not nearly ‘modernised’ enough a notion for the Labour Party machine in its present state. At least, in the good old days before Blair, Brown and Miliband, Labour tried to *pretend* its conferences mattered, passing all manner of hotly controversial motions, which would then be ignored by the parliamentary party. Now, the purpose of a party conference is the same in their eyes as it always has been in the Tories’: to provide a platform for leaders to shine, unchallenged, before the bourgeois media.

Not the only thing they borrow from the Tories these days. The start of Labour’s conference was one calculated build-up to the ‘main event’ on Tuesday night - when Ed Miliband announced the new branding for his party. It is apparently the party of ‘one nation’, a phrase cheekily lifted from Benjamin Disraeli in a manner designed to raise a few eyebrows. All the carefully orchestrated buzz the day after focused on that soundbite, and rumours abound that Labour MPs are under orders to drop it into every interview possible.

Grumbles

Until Tuesday, the conference looked like being pretty run-of-the-mill.

Alongside the thin policy announcements and cheap shots at the government, there were the usual gripes and grumbles from those (marginally) to the leadership’s left. The leadership’s present attitude to such insignificant expressions of dissent is, in one sense, the story of a motion. Its text called in essence for the two Eds, Miliband and Balls, to commit to the reversal of the privatisation and marketisation of the national health service in recent decades - it was a model motion, of which numerous variants were submitted by CLPs.¹

It was Hull North’s version that finally made it to the conference floor. In order to do so, the constituency had to organise a 200-strong lobby of the conference centre and face down the conference arrangements committee, which first attempted to rule the NHS motions out of order and then attempted to gut them through the compositing process, and possible further tricks (it can be overruled by the NEC, for instance).

This is a pretty substantial amount of effort to go to, just to see a motion voted down by a horde of careerist creeps and apparatchiks; or, failing that, ignored with impunity by Ed Miliband, in time-honoured Labour leadership fashion. It is hardly a great incentive to fight for policy, and it is quite miraculous that enough CLP delegates could be found who were sufficiently masochistic to fight a bureaucratic guerrilla war against the party *apparatus*.

Perhaps these individuals will be heartened by ‘tough talk’ from Unite general secretary Len McCluskey and his Unison counterpart, Dave Prentis. The Eds have endorsed the government’s public sector pay freeze, on the basis that they prefer to keep jobs rather than pay, and it was this



Ed Miliband: yet another rebranding

matter that exercised the two trade union men: McCluskey called the policy ‘crazy’, and described the jobs-versus-wages argument as a ‘false choice’: it is ‘time for Labour to once and for all turn its back on the neoliberalism of the past’, he concluded.²

It may be that, for once, a union figure as significant as McCluskey is inclined to back up his words with action; until he proves it, we must assume that he is all mouth and no trousers (indeed, subsequent statements have made the latter look very much the more likely state of affairs, as we shall see). On that assumption, the interventions of McCluskey and Prentis are a minor theatrical performance: they make intransigent noises, and the Eds dismiss their statements as irresponsible balderdash.

The Eds get to display their ‘independence’ from the unions (read: cravenness before the capitalist class) for all the world to see. Meanwhile, the union bureaucrats get an extra chance to rally the troops for October 20, and otherwise paint themselves to the left of the Labour leadership. Everybody wins, except public sector workers.

The theatrics are insubstantial, but preferable to the main event - the various statements from the Eds and their shadow-cabinet toadies. Stitching up conference is all very well

this year is a very old one indeed: ‘We are one nation!’ he told the assembled faithful no fewer than 46 times in his speech on Tuesday. That was no accident - the patron saint of Miliband’s speech was not Kier Hardie or Sidney Webb, but Benjamin Disraeli.

‘Let us remember what Disraeli was celebrated for,’ Miliband exhorts us. ‘It was a vision of Britain where patriotism, loyalty, dedication to the common cause courses through the veins of all and nobody feels left out. It was a vision of Britain coming together to overcome the challenges we face.’ (Must have been grand!) ‘Disraeli called it ‘one nation’; one nation - we heard the phrase again, as the country came together to defeat fascism, and we heard it again as Clement Attlee’s Labour government rebuilt Britain after the war.’

(And - as an aside - the response of the gripping union tops to this bilge? ‘This is a *tour de force*. It is the best speech from a Labour leader I have heard and it will offer genuine hope to voters,’ gushes McCluskey. ‘This was the day Ed Miliband showed that he was prime minister material. He delivered a truly inspirational vision of a fairer, united Britain under the next Labour government,’ reckons Prentis. ‘Pass the sick bag,’ pleads the nation.)

This rehearsal of one-nation Toryism tells us something about the ideological make-up of Miliband’s inner circle. Above all else, one figure haunts the speech - Maurice Glasman, the idiosyncratic academic and founder of so-called ‘Blue Labour’. The latter’s basic proposition - that working class politics is small-c conservative, concerned with the construction and maintenance of a stable, organic community - is very obviously at work in the one-nation land grab.

There is more to it, though. Miliband’s integral nationalism explicitly reaches out beyond the workers’ movement to small business, to the south as well as the north, and so on - all important components of the indivisible British nation. All these old saws are most associated today with his brother - and in the recent period above all with Tony Blair. The ‘one nation’ concept is an attempt to split the difference between Glasman and the Blairites - undercutting the slickness of the latter with the philosophical grandiosity of the former, and vice versa.

It may be that this nationalist narrative gets your heart-rate up, and causes you spontaneously to break into ‘Land of hope and glory’. If so, you are reading the wrong paper; but more importantly, you probably vote Conservative as a matter of course, and it will take more than an unconvincing lend-lease of moth-eaten Tory jargon to stop you. After all, nobody does Tory jargon like the Tories.

So if the fine phrases do not get you excited, then what of the politics? Sadly, as usual, there wasn’t any. There were pledges on reversing changes to the NHS that - apart from a specific commitment to ditching Andrew Lansley’s bill, which no sane person can take for less than an utter debacle - were simply too vague to amount to anything much. Beyond that, there was an awful lot of guff about how the Tories were bad sorts of people, divisive and ‘unfair’ - which

made them enemies of the organic national community, as opposed to ‘one nation’ Labour.

As for Balls, there was the same mix of nostalgic bluster and policy announcements so tiny that you could be forgiven for missing them entirely. At least, in his case, the model was not so much the 1870s as the 1940s - to be precise, the Attlee government, shorn of what radical rhetoric it could muster at the time and incorporated into the great, nauseating national story peddled by Miliband.

For daring even to mention Attlee, Balls got a standing ovation. Apart from that, you know a speech was deathly dull when the headline policy announcement is using the proceeds from selling off the 4G communications infrastructure to build 100,000 new houses.

Escape to victory

It may be asked, exactly how do Miliband and Balls expect to get people excited about a possible Labour government with so little detail about what it would actually do? This would be to miss the point. The excuse offered by both, on several occasions, is that it would be irresponsible to make policy pledges now, when those pledges come due in two or three years, in which time all kinds of things might have happened.

The subtext is this: the strategy adopted by the Labour leadership is to *do nothing*, and hope that the chaotic flux of capitalist crisis makes the Tories an untenable party of government. Under those circumstances, they will sail into government with the wind behind them. For this to work, it is crucially necessary not to scare off the Confederation of British Industry or the City. Beyond that, it is necessary to have a ‘big idea’, or rather a branding strategy, and a key policy pledge (one nationalism and reversing the Lansley bill, respectively), which can then be picked up as the reasons for the bourgeois establishment to back Labour over the Tories in an election.

It is a long shot, and whether it will pay off or not is entirely out of the Labour leadership’s hands. Still, it should be remembered that it was not the masses of the people - most of whom will not have paid any direct attention to the proceedings in Manchester - who were targeted by Miliband’s rhetoric, it was not his own party, and it was not the unions either. It was the press. He has made his pitch, and now he must wait and see.

Those who watch poorer football teams play against better ones will recognise this strategy - keep all the players behind the ball, building a grand defensive shield, and attack only when there is no risk of conceding a goal. Sooner or later, the opposing team will get frustrated and make a fatal mistake, which can then be exploited. As a strategy, it requires patience and discipline, and it bores the socks off the spectators. It has only the one justification: the point of football is to *win*, no more and no less.

The strategy of the two Eds is directed at exactly the same goal - and no amount of hot air about Benjamin Disraeli will fool anyone as to their true motives ●

Notes

1. <http://labournhslobby.wordpress.com/2012/08/29/contemporary-motion-for-clps>.
2. *The Guardian* October 2.

AGGREGATE

The establishment and the left

Michael Copestake reports from the CPGB members' meeting

On the agenda at an aggregate meeting of the CPGB membership on Saturday September 29 was the Labour Party, the general state of UK politics and the CPGB's own tasks and organisational methods in the current political downturn for the far left.

It was Mike Macnair, representing the CPGB's Provisional Central Committee, who introduced the first debate on the current state of play in Britain. He began with a few observations about the party conference season. With the Labour gathering yet to begin, the comrade looked first at the Liberal Democrats, whose conference was over and done with. The Lib Dems, said comrade Macnair, have effectively merged with the Conservative Party in parliament, but used their conference to feebly attempt some kind of political differentiation.

Labour is ahead in the polls and seems content on maintaining its 'keep right' (though left of Blairism) trajectory, emphasising its fiscal responsibility and so on, in the hope that the bourgeois media will view the party as a safe pair of hands come the next general election. Here Labour is gambling that the Tory-led government will become as unpopular as the Conservatives alone were from 1994 to 1997, following which sections of the ruling class were prepared to dump them for Labour - 'made safe' by the ascendancy of Blairism. But Labour's 'do nothing' strategy may be a foolish gamble, said comrade Macnair - it took 18 years of Tory government for it to succeed last time round.

He noted that, as far as the cuts programme goes, we are still very much in the 'phoney war' stage, with most of them due to bite over the next two years and the programme continuing into the next parliament. There may be an increase in strike action and other protests in response to this, said the comrade, though it has to be said that current strike levels are still at an historic low. However, although the cuts as a whole could only be defeated by a movement that seems to threaten the very continuation of the system, there is a greater chance of success in pay and workplace disputes.

On the economic situation comrade Macnair commented that talk about 'making Britain competitive again' in manufacture and exports was utopian - the required drop in the cost of labour-power makes this almost impossible. In reality Britain continues to rely on the 'invisible earnings' of the City of London and is therefore dependent on finance capital. And only the far left, he added with not a little frustration, could be idiotic enough to think that Britain alone, rather than "we, the workers of Europe", could break with this dependence on finance capital.

This left continues to loudly and idiotically advertise exactly this brand of nationalistic, Keynesian nonsense, whose disastrous consequences they have not even begun to think through. What is more, the left's lack of real forces, the comrade added, is leading to its tailing the line of organisations which do have real forces: that is, the trade union bureaucracies, whose reaction to the failure of neoliberal globalisation is nationalistic and limited - something which then colours and shapes the politics of the left groups busy trailing behind them.

In the discussion that followed comrade John Bridge humorously noted that Mike had 'forgotten' to mention the Occupy movement,



The left is still hopelessly fragmented

which, given its low starting level and subsequent evaporation, was perhaps understandable, he added. The left's state of advanced decay is demonstrated by the fact that it is being played like a musical instrument by the bourgeoisie on issues like the Julian Assange controversy.

Comrade Farzad commented on the foolishness of those left groups that hope to see the establishment of a new version of the Labour Party by wooing the trade union bureaucracies - the very same people who keep the rightwing Labour leaders in place. That they seek to do this by accommodating to the nationalistic and reformist politics of those union bureaucrats creates a conveyor belt for this ideology into the left itself.

She pointed out that even in Scotland Labour continues to trail behind the Scottish National Party, while, for her part, Sarah McDonald believed that the SNP remained unlikely to win an independence referendum, although it may achieve the 'devo max' option. Comrade Macnair commented that the SNP would not have to win a referendum vote to destroy Scottish Labour - an eventuality which would make the election of a Tory governments in Westminster much more likely.

Labour

Up for discussion was a PCC motion on the resolution proposed by the Aslef train drivers' union at Labour's conference, aimed at the rightwing Progress group. Aslef targets Progress indirectly by calling on the Labour executive to impose "acceptable standards of democracy, governance and transparency" on internal groupings, and for 50% of the funding of such groupings over and above £25,000 to be handed over to party centre. John Bridge introduced the PCC motion, which strongly supports the anti-Progress sentiment of the Aslef call, but not the highly problematic method, which would very likely rebound against the left.

Comrade Bridge began by shining a light on Progress. This rightwing think tank provides - at the generous expense of Lord Sainsbury, who accounts for two-thirds of its funding - training, networking and sponsorship

for wannabe careerists, councillors and MPs within the Labour Party. Tellingly Sainsbury has withdrawn his funding for the party itself and the union bureaucrats have taken a dislike to this: leaders such as Paul Kenny and Dave Prentis have spoken out against the group, comparing it to the Militant Tendency of old - a destructive interloper, to be removed. The trade union bureaucrats have a clear motivation for taking action against Progress - Lord Sainsbury is threatening their turf.

Importantly, comrade Bridge stated that the CPGB has no objection to expulsions in principle. Giving a concrete example, he reminded those present that the CPGB's call for the expulsion of those Labour MPs who have flagrantly collaborated with the coalition government - namely, Frank Field, John Hutton and Alan Milburn - still stands (see 'Expel the collaborators' *Weekly Worker* August 26 2010). We do not adopt a 'live and let live' attitude to the right wing.

In that sense it is important to build up the left within Labour. He added that, as the left wing of Labour grows in strength, as it has done in the past, the right will 'expel itself' by splitting - something we saw from those who left Labour to form the short-lived Social Democratic Party in 1981. In any case, questions around expulsion are *tactical*, he said.

The discussion that followed revealed broad agreement amongst comrades over the problematic nature of the Aslef motion as an administrative rather than a political attack upon Progress, which the drafters of the motion could not even bring themselves to mention. Paul Demarty pointed out that, no matter what the Labour Party rule book may say, so long as the right remains dominant it will find ways to bureaucratically ban or harass troublesome lefties, so worrying that the Aslef motion is too administrative in nature is perhaps misguided. Ironically, he added, if the left ever were to achieve any measure of success in the Labour Party it would find itself hamstrung by the measures in the motion aimed at Progress requiring the sequestration of funds by the party centre from all internal

groupings. Also, he continued, attempts to restrict the right's access to funds from the capitalist class are more or less doomed anyway - if anyone will get around attempts to control the flow of money, it will be the capitalists.

Comrade Farzad said that the attacks upon Progress by the trade unions and parts of the Labour left represented a sea change within Labour, something that even a short time ago would not have been thinkable. Concurring with this line of thought, John Bridge said that the battle over Progress was one between those whose ultimate aim was the transformation of Labour into an American-style Democrat-type party and those who wished it to remain a bourgeois workers' party. The Aslef motion, however problematically, represents an attack on the right and so provides a valuable opening for Marxist politics in the party. The PCC motion was carried unanimously.

Organisation

It was comrade Farzad who introduced the discussion on organisation and the future tasks of the CPGB. She stated that the present political environment is one of downturn for the left, and it was in such periods that we must consolidate and reassess. Wondering if the organisation would be ready for a sudden dramatic turn of events - say, a new imperialist land war in the Middle East - she gave her opinion that our work was treated too much as a matter of routine and that there was a lack of ambition within the organisation.

The work of the CPGB, she went on, places too many tasks upon too few people, which prevents more of the wider membership from being fully involved. That would provide relief for a few overburdened comrades and help spread skills. It would also give comrades a the opportunity to develop their political education through their greater involvement.

She suggested that comrades be assigned areas of study by the PCC so that they can be called upon to write on or present a topic. Comrade Farzad reminded those present that the *Weekly Worker* remains one of

the best read Marxist papers around. Its principled political positions have stood the test of time, in contrast to the opportunistic flailing around of the left as a whole. Greater optimism was justified, she concluded, but that means greater ambition.

Comrade McDonald agreed that many of the party's tasks have taken on a routine nature, naming CPGB interventions at the Socialist Workers Party's Marxism festival and the annual Communist University as examples. Comrade Laurie Smith ventured that the *Weekly Worker* could do with using a wider pool of writers and that the party needed to see a better distribution of web work. On the question of education, he emphasised that basic Marxism was something missing not just from public consciousness, but also increasingly from the far left itself, especially its younger members.

Tina Becker stated that the left as a whole is quite happy remaining splintered and impotent, which means that there is a distinct lack of 'unity initiatives', within which the CPGB can push the *Weekly Worker's* message of Marxist partyism. This has adversely affected the CPGB's sense of direction. Agreeing with comrade McDonald on the problem of routinism, she said that the *Weekly Worker* itself is not being used to its maximum potential as a political weapon and organiser.

Comrade Simon Wells re-emphasised that there was little on the left in its dire state to which our work could be oriented, but disagreed with comrade Farzad's suggestion that party members should be asked to become experts in a certain field and go on to give presentations at Communist University or such like. Comrade Bridge agreed that experts cannot be pre-selected, but he accepted comrade Smith's point that the *Weekly Worker* would benefit from wider commissioning.

Comrade Macnair added that it was functioning party cells on the ground that are lacking, given the uneven distribution of CPGB members across the country. It is this which prevents 'on the job' education in the basics, such as writing leaflets and intervening in local forums ●

Progress and Aslef's Labour motion

The following text was unanimously agreed by the September 29 CPGB aggregate

1. The left-led train drivers' union, Aslef, has submitted a constitutional amendment to the Labour Party conference in Manchester. It would introduce a changed rule 5B and the following reformulation:
"B. Political organisations not affiliated or associated under a national agreement with the party, but who engage in internal activity, shall be required to:
(i) notify the national party of all legally reportable donations received;
(ii) transfer 50% of all donations received beyond the first £25,000 per annum to the national Labour Party.
C. Incorporated organisations that engage in internal activity shall be required to provide upon request all legal, constitutional and financial documentation to the National Executive Committee to ensure that they meet acceptable standards of democracy, governance and transparency. These organisations are expected to abide by the authority of the NEC in such matters.
D. The NEC shall be responsible for the interpretation, implementation and enforcement of these rules."
2. In the highly unlikely event that this amendment is passed, the new rule could become a doubled-edged sword. A catch-all. Leftwing organisations such as the Labour Representation Committee, the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy and Labour Party Marxists could find themselves targeted. Of course, the Aslef motion is not aimed at the left. It is squarely aimed at Progress. That is the New Labour 'party within the party'. When considering various tactical options, this should be a central consideration.
3. Progress is mainly, though not exclusively, financed by Lord David Sainsbury. He has donated around £2 million since 2001. That amounts to roughly two-thirds of its total income over the 2001-11 period. And his annual giving has increased considerably since the election of Ed Miliband as Labour leader. So Progress is very well financed. Progress is also very well organised and doing its utmost to promote its people into positions of power and influence. Potential councillors and MPs are provided with one-to-one mentoring, all manner of valuable advice, stepping stones and friends in high places. In short, everything the aspiring careerist requires.
4. Progress has numerous establishment sponsors: eg, Barrow Cadbury Trust, the British Council for School Environments, Brook, DEA, Nationwide, the Parliamentary Committee Against Anti-Semitism, the Police Federation, the Institute for Government, the Open University, City and Guilds, UnionLearn, the Local Government Association, Elephant Family, the IPPR and Unions21. Clearly Progress is thoroughly integrated with the ruling class and the state bureaucracy.
5. Chaired by former transport minister Lord Andrew Adonis, Progress produces a glossy monthly magazine, boasts over 2,000 paid-up members and includes within its ranks a whole pack of rightwing Labour MPs and prominent grandees, including Peter Mandelson. Politically it should be characterised as the hard right of the Labour Party. Its barely hidden agenda is to reconstitute the Labour Party along the lines of the

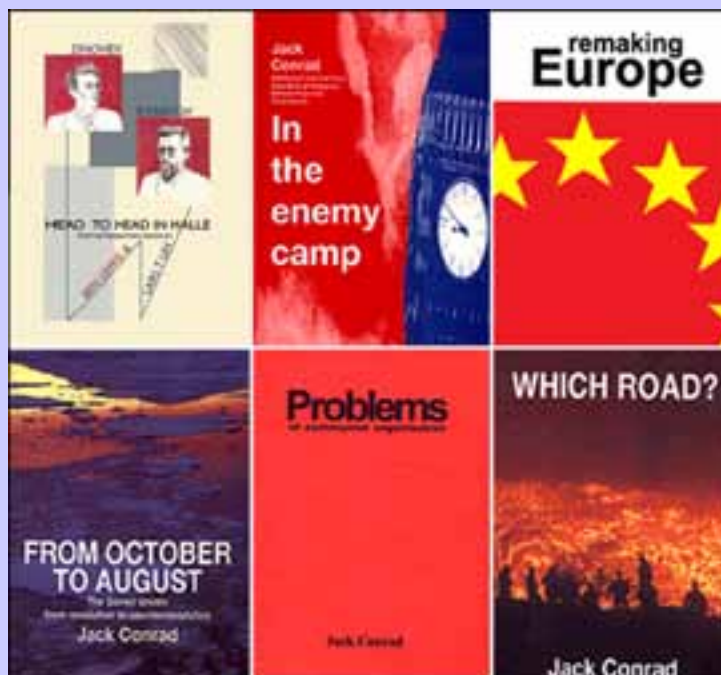


Dave Prentis: fighting talk

US Democratic Party.
6. Towards that end Progress enthusiastically embraces neoliberalism, fetishises electability and opposes any manifestation of trade union militancy. In the not too distant future it would not be unexpected to find Progress splitting off from the Labour Party and, in the name of the 'common interest', joining a national government of some kind. In that sense Progress is a pre-split formation.
7. Progress has been vigorously attacked by heavyweight trade union general secretaries, such as Dave Prentis and Paul Kenny. They have compared it with Militant Tendency and complained about it being financed by "external interests". It would be wrong, however, to dismiss the Aslef motion - and the statements coming from Prentis and Kenny - as nothing more than a minor squabble within the labour and trade union bureaucracy. Though we cannot support it in its present form, the Aslef motion should be welcomed. It represents an attempt by the left in the trade union bureaucracy to hit back against the openly pro-capitalist right and those intent on de-labourising Labour. Marxists and other revolutionary socialists have every reason to take advantage of this dispute. Our position on the Aslef motion should therefore be one of 'sympathetic opposition'.
8. The agreed perspective of the CPGB is to call upon the revolutionary left to conduct a strategic battle to transform the Labour Party into a workers' united front of a special kind. Special because we envisage the Labour Party as a permanent united front (similar in that respect at least to the soviets in Russia). That not only means opening up the Labour Party to the affiliation of all pro-working class parties and organisations. It means winning the Labour Party to oppose the existing state and constitution, and a commitment to working class rule, socialism, internationalism and universal human liberation.
9. The Labour Party remains what Lenin famously called a "bourgeois workers' party". That means it can feasibly be won from the pro-capitalist right that has historically dominated it. Certainly the Labour Party should not be dismissed or ignored. That

would be akin to giving up on the unions and the mass of the working class. Obviously, achieving the goal of transforming the Labour Party will necessarily entail defeating and driving out the pro-capitalist right. Long experience tells us that the right, backed by the capitalist media and the courts, usually splits away once the left becomes strong. But we do not rule out taking tough, decisive, even draconian organisational measures against the right. Who exactly and when exactly is, of course, a matter of tactics.
10. We do not adopt a 'live and let live' stance towards the pro-capitalist right. That would be sheer liberalism. We are engaged in a form of the class struggle and the pro-capitalist right is not, and should not be regarded as, a legitimate part of the workers' movement.
11. Even with the Labour Party as presently led and presently constituted, it can be advantageous to deploy tactics demanding the expulsion of the openly pro-capitalist right, even when that means just a few particularly obnoxious individuals. Eg, the *Weekly Worker* led with the front-page call to "Expel the collaborators" - namely Frank Field, John Hutton and Alan Milburn (August 26 2010). That call was and remains correct. Field, Hutton and Milburn have worked hand-in-glove with the Tory-Lib Dem coalition government and helped legitimise its austerity and cuts. If the Labour Party, even as presently constituted, was to expel these collaborators, then we should support that move. It would not mean that the LP had been transformed into a united workers' front. But it would be a significant victory for the left and serve to intimidate, warn and reduce the right.
12. In that light it would be better to have a clear-cut political motion that would exclude Progress and its supporters from the Labour Party. Not because Progress fails to maintain "acceptable standards of democracy, governance and transparency". No, because *politically* Progress is pro-capitalist, because *politically* it seeks a coalition deal with the Lib Dems and because *politically* it opposes any hint of militant trade union resistance to the coalition government's savage programme of austerity and cuts ●

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TRADE UNIONIST AND SOCIALIST COALITION

For a new, united socialist party

Nick Wrack and Will McMahon plead with the SWP and SPEW to take Tusc seriously

The ruling class is waging a vicious war against the working class. The profit system is in its most serious crisis since the 1930s and this government is determined to defend both the system and those who benefit from it at the expense of everyone else.

This is not just a national crisis, but an international one. The euro crisis shows the depth of the crisis, with Greece, Portugal, Ireland and Spain showing the economic fault lines in sharpest relief. But no country, not even Germany, can escape. Unelected 'technocratic' governments, as we have seen in Greece and Italy, make a mockery of 'democracy'. Bailouts are awarded only if massive cuts in government spending are implemented.

Across the world, the same policies are enforced both by governments of the right and those that claim to be of the left: austerity for billions, but billions for the few.

Trillions of pounds of public money have been poured into the world economy in a desperate attempt to stabilise the economy and save capitalism. It is ordinary people who are being made to pay. Meanwhile, the super-rich owners of capital wallow in their obscene wealth, created by the work of those who are now suffering.

Individual capitalists and companies are sitting on a huge stockpile of money, which they refuse to invest because they cannot obtain the profits they want. They are hoarding this money, waiting for better prospects, or squandering it on a luxury lifestyle that is a million miles removed from the day-to-day existence of mere mortals. The private ownership of the means of production by this tiny class is a complete obstacle to tackling the urgent issues of living standards, debt, unemployment, housing, health, education, leisure time, as well as the developing ecological crisis.

The political and economic policies of austerity are designed to create the conditions for an increase in profitability - public sector cuts in jobs and pay, increasing unemployment as a means to drive down wages and pensions, smashing open the public sector to private investment, forcing the unemployed and disabled to work for poverty pay by cutting benefits.

The most vulnerable are swept to the side, but even those in work fare little better. Almost seven million adults in Britain are just one bill away from penury, despite being in work and not dependent on benefits. All the past gains won by struggle are being smashed before our eyes. The health service and education have been opened up to the market, where decisions are made according to profit, not need.

Most of those who consider themselves middle class are finding their standards of living, job security and pensions evaporating. In reality, this section is just

a slightly better-off sector of the working class. A university education can now only be obtained at the cost of accumulated debt of £40,000-£50,000. Young people cannot afford to buy a home, while their housing benefit is cut or removed.

Workers' interests

Despite all this and more, we have no party in Britain that even begins to address these issues. There is no party that champions the interests of the working class against the opposite interests of the bosses.

Instead of seeing the market and the profit system as the cause of the crisis, all the parties believe that only the market can resolve the crisis. This includes Labour. Ed Miliband and Ed Balls support cuts, but say they should be implemented more slowly. They both support a public sector pay freeze. Labour supports the cuts in pensions and an increase in fees for university. It supports privatisation. In government Labour maintained the anti-union laws, which hinder trade union action in defence of jobs, pay and conditions.

Instead of siding with those

under attack, Labour plays the role of a false friend, feigning sympathy, while doing everything to ensure that austerity goes ahead. In short, Labour supports austerity just as much as the Tories and Liberal Democrats. A cut is a cut is a cut, no matter who implements it.

We urgently need a new party that will fight against austerity. Any party that seeks to win the support of the working class must have one basic principle: it must never make things worse for the working class. It must reject completely the austerity agenda that intends to place the burden of the crisis on the working class. This means that a new party has to refuse to vote for cuts in jobs, pay or pensions. It must refuse to make working class people pay more for services by increased taxes, rents or other charges.

A new party, therefore, has to be resolutely

committed to defending the interests of the working class. It must fight alongside all those who seek to resist austerity - defending jobs, pay, pensions and services. That means supporting workers who take strike action, supporting communities who occupy to prevent library closures and students who protest against the increasing cost of education.

Resistance is essential. But it is not enough. Any party that seeks to represent the working class must not only be determined in defending what has been achieved in the past: it must also show how society could be different and fight to make it so. This means arguing for an end of the profit system - capitalism - and for its replacement by a completely different system, one based on common ownership of the means of production, with investment being decided democratically in the interests of all.

With the capitalist class squatting on its vast wealth and holding back the development of society, there can be no justification for austerity. And with the

replacement of the profit system and the private ownership of the world's resources, production could be planned rationally to meet the needs of everyone, when talk of austerity would disappear.

Ed Miliband's call for a 'better' or 'fairer' capitalism is nonsense. Capitalism cannot be made to work in the interests of those it exploits. Even some on the left look to the economic ideas of Keynes, which attempt to make capitalism work better, for solutions. We need something much more fundamental.

So long as we have private ownership of industry and services, transport and finance, land and the mineral resources within it, there will always be a struggle between those who labour and produce and those who own and profit. There can be no end to unemployment and the constant battle over wages, no ready access to services or confidence in a secure future in old age, so long as we have capitalism. The profit system will allow nothing to stand in its way. If we want to achieve a society in which this constant strife is left behind, then we have to leave capitalism itself behind.

A new party, then, must set itself an ultimate goal: a breach or rupture with the present system and the establishment of a socialist society, based on the common, democratic ownership of the world's resources. The struggles of today must be linked with that longer-term objective of changing the very nature of present society.

We are now a long way off from such a party. The left in Britain is fragmented, divided and mistrustful of each other. This will not be easily overcome. But every section of the left must have a sense of proportion and a sense of perspective. Divided and antagonistic, we are much weakened. There has to be a serious commitment from all to attempt to unite.

There are millions of potential supporters for a new party that sets out its stall in the way described. Every day a million people ponder how things can improve; a million conversations discuss what can be done.

There are tens of thousands who would broadly describe themselves as socialist. They are not presently members of any particular party or group. But they might be persuaded to join a party in which they had a say and in which they could

participate. The same is true of many thousands of trade union members

who would gravitate towards a new party that was seen to identify with their class interests.

There are many thousands of young people - students, workers and unemployed - who have already concluded that this system needs to be replaced. Many have turned their



Bob Crow: Tusc boss

backs on the established parties. Along with millions who no longer vote, they have concluded that all parties and politicians are essentially the same - self-interested, careerist and corrupt.

Socialists must show themselves to be different. We must reach out and engage these layers in debate and discussion about how change can happen. All those who believe that the effects of capitalism must be opposed should unite to resist them. All those who believe that capitalism has to be replaced with a system based on common ownership and democratic planning should unite to fight for that.

A new party would have to set itself the objective of persuading the majority of people that capitalism is the problem and that it must be replaced with socialism. It would have to explain why this is so and how it could be achieved. Any systemic change is impossible without having achieved this. But we are a long way from that. A start must be made. It cannot constantly be postponed.

Step forward

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition is an important step in the right direction. It has the support of the RMT, one of the most militant unions in Britain, representing some 90,000 members. It brings together the two biggest socialist organisations in Britain today - the Socialist Workers Party and the Socialist Party - in limited joint work around elections. It also incorporates the Independent Socialist Network, which aims to bring together those independent socialists who want to build a new, united socialist party. The Tusc steering committee is made up of representatives of those four organisations - RMT, SWP, SP and ISN - and some prominent individual trade unionists.

At the local elections in May 2012, Tusc candidates outside of London polled an average of 6.2% - not an insignificant vote, given the size of the coalition and its lack of resources

and public profile. There is no reason to doubt that this vote can be repeated and extended.

But there is a problem in the way the coalition is presently constructed which must be addressed, because there is a danger that the potential for winning supporters and voters will not materialise.

The coalition is made up only of the four component parts. There is no basis for individual membership. No-one can participate directly in the coalition unless they are a member of one of those four organisations. They can make donations and give out leaflets, but they have no democratic right to vote on policy or strategy. This will not inspire people to get involved. It means that the coalition is limited in size to the membership of the present four organisations. There is an inbuilt barrier to growth.

An obvious answer would be to create a membership party, with democratic rights for all members. Ultimately, only in this way will people feel inclined to put their energy, time and money into building it. It is difficult to be enthusiastic about supporting something that will not allow you to join it.

At the moment, however, the RMT and the SP, at least, are not in favour of moving to a membership organisation (we are unaware of the position of the SWP). And there is a lot of sense in that position. Given the experiences of past attempts at building left-of-Labour electoral coalitions or parties (Socialist Labour Party, Scottish Socialist Party, Socialist Alliance, Respect), there is an understandable nervousness about how Tusc will develop.

The RMT sensibly will not allow its members and resources to be used by organisations over which it has no control. The SP and the SWP are wary of each other and of being outvoted on issues that would be problematic. So the issue of a membership party is not, for the time being, on the agenda.

But this issue will not go away.

The component parts of the coalition as currently constituted will have to grapple with the issue of how to build beyond its present participants. At some time the question of a fully-fledged membership party will have to be addressed.

A period of time working together is valuable in breaking down barriers and obstacles to unity. The Tusc steering committee should commit itself to setting a timetable and a process for discussing how Tusc can grow and what sort of constitution should be adopted to satisfy the component parts, while also ensuring democratic rights for those who 'join'.

In the absence of individual membership of Tusc, the Independent Socialist Network can play a very important role. The ISN has been set up to bring together all socialists who are not currently members of existing socialist organisations who believe that we need a new, united socialist party. It aims to provide a place where individual socialists can debate and discuss in a non-sectarian environment, without fear of being ridiculed or condemned for holding particular points of view.

The ISN sees Tusc as an important stepping-stone towards a new party. No-one can be sure about how it will develop. It has the potential to grow and incorporate large numbers in its ranks, but this will depend on how it opens up to others - both groups and individuals.

Anyone who agrees with the need to build a new socialist party who has not joined one of the existing socialist parties should join the ISN (it is a membership organisation) and help it to campaign for that new party. This would also allow for an indirect route to participation in the discussions about the policy and practical steps to be taken by Tusc. While not a satisfactory position, it would go a long way to bring new individual supporters towards Tusc.

In addition to individuals, there

are also socialist groups which may want to get involved with Tusc. For example, Socialist Resistance has applied to join. In our opinion, Tusc should open up participation to SR. This would immediately bring a new group on board, even if it may be argued that it is only a small group. That is not the most important thing. It is important that Tusc conveys a sense of dynamism, showing that it wants to expand and recruit new groups and individuals. We need to find a way to involve national and local groups who want to help fight for an alternative to austerity.

Expanding the Tusc steering committee to enable someone from SR to participate would not alter anything substantially. The RMT could not be bounced into doing something it did not want. Nor could the SP or SWP or the ISN. At present each participating group on the coalition steering committee has a veto, so nothing is done unless it has the support of all parties.

Permanent profile

Another obstacle to the growth of Tusc and one which restrict its electoral appeal is the fact that Tusc has a very limited national profile. If Tusc is to do well at elections, it must be active in between them. Again, this is an argument for Tusc to move towards becoming a party rather than a federation or coalition of parties. In between elections, inevitably, the SWP and SP turn to build their own parties and the profile built up during the four weeks of an election dissipates. We have to find ways of preventing this happening.

Any party that hopes to win the trust and support of the working class cannot just turn up at election time and then disappear once polling day has past. It has to be involved in workers' struggles at work and in the communities, day in and day out. This raises the need for permanent Tusc branches across the country doing consistent work round the year.

Tusc has to find the resources to develop its profile, through media work and publicity. It has to develop a national profile, utilising the prominent figures we have within the coalition. It has to begin a serious intervention into the trade unions, with leaflets, pamphlets and fringe meetings at the union conferences. Tusc should have stalls at students' freshers' fairs. We must have a Tusc leaflet on the TUC October 20 demonstration.

In the last two years Tusc intervention at elections has been very belated and limited. Inevitably this impacts on the vote. It takes a lot of hard work, carried out regularly over a long time, to build up a profile. We have to start work now, planning our intervention for elections over the next three or four years. In 2013 there are local elections; in 2014 there are elections in all the London boroughs. In 2014 there are also the European elections. These would provide an excellent opportunity to Tusc to present candidates across the country. But this will be very expensive. We need to start discussing now whether it will be feasible to stand in the European elections.

In 2015 there will be a general election. Tusc should start planning now. We should be identifying constituencies and starting the campaigns now. We need to start raising funds. We should stand in at least 100 constituencies (at least enough to get a parliamentary political broadcast on the television). We should be drawing up lists of supporters in every area of the country and be pulling them together to set up Tusc branches. In 2016 there are the London mayor and assembly elections.

We must all take Tusc seriously. There is no other force on the left that is capable of presenting a serious alternative to the pro-austerity parties at the next general election. The task is enormous. But we cannot avoid our responsibilities ●

Robin Hood and solidarity

On Sunday September 30, six bright-eyed and bushy-tailed runners from Workers Fund Iran lined up with around 6,600 other competitors to take part in the Ikano Robin Hood half-marathon in Nottingham. The event was billed as a "fast and scenic route through the city" and "an ideal course for beginners and faster runners looking for a personal best".

For the WFI team, the event was a key part of our training for the Florence marathon on November 25 (more on this below), as well as a way of publicising the charity and recruiting new runners. While some of us were wondering whether going for a team curry the night before was the optimal form of pre-race nutrition, all of our runners - old and new - did WFI proud.

Having previously crossed the finish line together at the Vienna marathon, Jamie Tedford and I ran separately this time around. In the end I beat him by a mere six seconds, with a time of 1 hour, 27 minutes and 46 seconds. (I can only explain this six-second victory by the fact that a bloke dressed as Robin Hood was closing down on me in the back straight, so I somehow managed a bit of a sprint to ensure that he did not pass!) Jamie and I finished, probably in a much worse state than in Vienna, 205th and 200th respectively.

Particular credit must go to two of our new runners, Natalya and Melissa. Having heard about the fund from their two brothers, who have both taken part in WFI solidarity cricket matches, they decided to join us in Nottingham. Sporting the swish WFI

T-shirts, they finished 33rd and 42nd in the women's race, clocking up seriously impressive times of 1:34.14 and 1:36.03.

Our two Iranian comrades, Nasrollah and Ali, did not exactly trouble the leaders, but their efforts to even get to the race perhaps embody the dedication involved in solidarity running. Ali, without doubt WFI's best runner, has almost 60 marathons under his belt. Although 13 miles is little more than a stroll in the park for him, he came all the way from Italy to run and say hello to his WFI comrades in Britain.

Up until recently, Nasrollah has mainly concentrated on the organisational side of things for WFI. But of late he has subjected himself to a strict dietary regime in order to prepare for Florence. Chocolate and beer were the first casualties, he assures me. He has not run in a long time, so decided to mainly walk around Nottingham, battling through in a time of 3:40.26. He was joined over the line by his faithful comrade, Ali, who probably accumulated something close to 35 kilometres along the way. (He would run little stretches ahead of his co-runner, come back to join him and then set off again!)

Despite all the runners noting how hard the race was, we all thoroughly enjoyed ourselves, and the seeds have been very much sown for Italy in November. The WFI team is starting to diversify - while most of our runners are Iranian exiles, there are several non-Iranians in Europe who have been recruited.

Quite frankly, the more people

that can be attracted to WFI and its message, the better: the situation in Iran is now spiralling out of control. Iran's currency, the rial, has fallen in value by 60% in just over a week, which will bring nothing but desperation and hardship for the Iranian people. If they get paid at all, wages can drop in value within the space of just a day. Basic foodstuffs and life necessities can shoot up in price in a very small time.

Regardless of what some of the more unhinged elements of the far left may think, these conditions are not exactly propitious to some kind of democratic and progressive change in Iran. When people are struggling to even put food on the table, then this does not bode well for the cause of human liberation.

This is where Workers Fund Iran steps in, raising much-needed funds to ensure that those suffering the most under the burden of International Monetary Fund 'reforms', sanctions and a brutal theocratic regime are not simply left to rot.

Obviously, for all the hard work and dedication of our small number of activists and runners, the funds that we raise through our sporting events, social meals and film/music nights are very limited. For the time being at least, we cannot compete with the slick machinery of charities like Macmillan or Unicef, let alone the funds of the Central Intelligence Agency and its heinous operations. But such basic solidarity work is also an act of great symbolic importance: there *is* an alternative, however embryonic, to both the imperialist war drive against Iran *and* the

mullahs' regime: working class solidarity.

And this is the message we will be taking to the streets of Florence, where we are expecting around 30 runners to fly the flag. With so many, and with your support, we can easily raise thousands of euros for Workers Fund Iran. But don't wait to be asked

to donate. Go to workersfund.org and transfer some cash. If you would like to take part, or just fancy a trip to Italy to cheer on our runners, then please get in touch via workersfundiran@gmail.com.

Ben Lewis

ben.lewis@weeklyworker.org.uk

Fighting fund

Little to spare

Despite comrades TR, KM and SL rushing in their PayPal donations at the very end of September, our fighting fund fell rather short of our £1,500 target, ending on £1,333. The £168 received during the last four days of the month also included a few standing orders, including JT's usual generous gift of £75.

But it's the beginning of the month when the largest chunk of our standing order income lands in the *Weekly Worker* account - there were 19 SO payments in the first three days of October, totalling £227 in all. Among them were £30 from AD and SD, and £20 from SM and CF. Then there was DH's £35 bonus added to his subscription cheque. Thanks to all those comrades, this month's fund already stands at £262.

But we really need to make up for the September shortfall of £167

- more than 10%. So I would like to appeal to those occasional donors to step up to the mark: now is as good a time as any. And why not get your cheques or transfers in early? - you don't have to wait till the 31st!

That £1,500 target is almost all used just to cover our running costs, so we have very little to spare in the event of an unexpected expense (and it goes without saying that they come along more than occasionally). That's where you could help. Those standing orders, even for £5 or £10 a month, can really mount up - and, of course, they have the advantage of adding to our regular, reliable income.

So how about it? Can you help?

Robbie Rix

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

GERMANY

Not part of the left

The 'anti-Germans' should have no place in working class organisations, argues Maciej Zurowski

According to some circles in Germany, Fabian Köhler is a Nazi and anti-Semite pure and simple. In 2009, when he interviewed a local member of the National Democratic Party for the student paper *Unique* under the pretence of investigative journalism, so they say, his real intention was to provide a platform for his comrade in spirit. Like other neo-Nazis, his adversaries continue, Köhler instrumentalises the Israel-Palestine conflict in order to stir up anti-Jewish hatred. His articles contain "hate-fuelled agitation that is second to none" and are informed by a "pure contempt for humanity", attests Erfurt's 'German-Israeli Society', which campaigned to have Köhler removed from the *Unique* editorial board.¹

But *Unique* refused to dismiss the dangerous agitator. What is more, the cunning Köhler has been writing for *Neues Deutschland*, Germany's biggest leftwing daily, since last August. Among his "hate-fuelled" agitational pieces, we find one entitled 'War in the diaspora', in which he pulled off the audacious balancing act of criticising both the Syrian rebels and president Bashar Assad, as well as speaking up for the Palestinian minority in that country.² One cannot help but admire the camouflage skills of a man who manages to write for leftwing newspapers, oppose nationalist tyrants and defend ethnic minorities while actually being a Nazi!

Except, of course, Köhler is far from being one. Rather than being driven by "hate" and "contempt", the journalist identifies an "interest for other cultures and diverse points of view" as his driving force. In an interview with the *Muslim Markt* website, he recalls how his six-month stay in Palestine as a student introduced him to a movement rarely reported: that of "peaceful resistance" against the Israeli forces in the occupied territories. He joined the International Solidarity Movement, which primarily aims to raise awareness of the situation in Palestine through meticulous documentation and prevent arbitrary violence against Palestinians by tactically placing foreign journalists and observers at checkpoints, public protests and the like.³

Köhler's fundamentally pacifist, 'human rights'-orientated work is enough to earn him the scorn of Zionists, and that of the *Antideutsche* ('Anti-German') movement in particular. To make matters worse, on September 2 *Neues Deutschland* published '*Deine Mutter baut Atombomben*' ('Your mother builds nuclear bombs') - a piece in which Köhler cautiously but courageously exposed the defamatory and intimidatory methods of Stop the Bomb, a campaign that pushes for harsh sanctions and, somewhat less openly, military action against Iran.⁴ I say 'cautiously', because the word *Antideutsche* is not mentioned once in the article - despite the fact that Stop the Bomb is packed to the rafters with 'Anti-German' activists. 'Courageously', because to be branded an "anti-Semite" in Germany, no matter how erroneously or maliciously, can mean the end of a journalist's career.⁵ The 'anti-Germans', who are best imagined as cross between the Euston Manifesto grouping, the black bloc and collective neurosis, have long learned how to utilise this. Originally a part of the 'undogmatic' German left, they have



Stop the Bomb campaign - supports bombing Iran

become something altogether nastier over the past decade or so, directing most of their energies against German communists and socialists, who they allege constitute an 'anti-Semitic international'.

'Drop the Bomb'

Stop the Bomb presents itself as a campaign that "demands economic and political sanctions against the Iranian Islamist regime" - a regime which, it argues, "calls for the genocide of an entire [Jewish] people" and aims to "destabilise the region". With the soft war against Iran well underway, campaigners continue to call upon the west to increase the pressure. In a November 2011 interview on Austrian television, Stop the Bomb co-founder and 'scientific advisor' Stephan Grigat emphasised that not "just any mild sanctions" would do: "harsh and strict sanctions" were the order of the day. However, if the "preferable" policy of harsh sanctions did not achieve the desired results, "military action is, naturally, an option".⁶

The TV presenter was dumbstruck at such rhetoric on behalf of a campaign that, after all, was named 'Stop the Bomb', yet Grigat's statements were consistent with the logic of regime change from above. Sanctions, of course, are a form of war - and often a tactical prelude to armed conflict. As we have seen with Iraq in the 1990s, they serve to starve, demoralise, divide, weaken and tie to their despots the local working class, preparing the ground for military intervention and regime change by imperialism, on imperialism's terms, and with imperialism's best interests at heart.

Elsewhere, too, Grigat did not mince words: in a 2008 interview entitled "Iran as a threat", he pushed for a regime change "by any means necessary ... I support everything that can bring this regime down".⁷ In Stop the Bomb - aptly nicknamed 'Drop the Bomb' by German lefts - Grigat rubs shoulders with people such as the Israeli historian, Benni Morris, who complements his hysteric blustering about a "demographic threat" posed by high Palestinian birth rates with unambiguous calls for a nuclear first

strike against Iran.⁸ Morris was first heard publicly making these calls at the Stop the Bomb conference in Vienna in 2008.⁹ Like Grigat, who considers Israel "too liberal", Morris does not waste time with anything resembling a rational political argument: after all, there is always the holocaust.

Good 'anti-Germans'

It may come as a surprise to the uninitiated, but Stephan Grigat also fancies himself - or at least presents himself - as a Marxist of sorts, being one of the key figures of the radical 'left' *Antideutsche* movement. Emerging from the Maoist (later 'undogmatic left') Kommunistischer Bund around the time of German reunification, the Anti-Germans perceived the rise of neo-Nazi activity after 1989 as testimony to their alarmist theory of a gradual "fascistisation" of German society, which they had been propounding since the 1970s. Against the background of neo-Nazi hooligans running amok everywhere from Hamburg to Hoyerswerda and a general upswing of national chauvinism, they decided that Germany was on its way to becoming a Fourth Reich and another *shoah* was potentially on the cards. Buttressing their theories with a carefully selected handful of quotes from Theodor Adorno, according to which preventing a new holocaust was the categorical imperative to be put above any other consideration, they embarked on a mission to hunt down Nazis and anti-Semites all across the Reich - and they claimed to see them virtually everywhere they looked, including on the anti-imperialist left.

Over the years, the 'anti-Germans' drifted further to the right until they essentially arrived at neo-conservative positions, albeit bolstered by left rhetoric and decorative (post-) Marxist theory snippets. Whatever value there may have initially been in their ambition to offer a critique of the stifling 'my enemy's enemy' outlook of the 'idiot anti-imperialist' left, they merely inverted the dogma, serving as uncritical auxiliaries of the US, Israel,

the 'war on terror' and imperialism. For all its problems, George Orwell quite accurately observed in his *Notes on nationalism* (1945) the need of a certain type of leftwinger to identify with a particular country or nation, "placing it beyond good and evil and recognising no other duty than that of advancing its interest".¹⁰ For the 'Anti-Germans', the object of their transferred nationalism is Israel, against whose unconditional 'defence' everything else must take a back seat. In the parallel universe of their making, all of humanity is divided between Zionists and anti-Semites.

Unfortunately for the German left, the 'anti-Germans' are no longer a tiny sect of delusional intellectuals, but have become a political force that is as influential as it is unpleasant. Having taken control of a considerable segment of the antifa and autonomist left, they have made inroads into the left party, Die Linke (where they are supported by the reformist leadership), and the Social Democratic Party's youth organisation. Occupying key positions in traditionally leftwing foundations such as the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, they are strategically well placed to promote 'young talent', while cutting off their opponents' money supply.

'Soft' anti-Germans are distinguished by the fact that they have not given up on influencing the left, making it part of their mission to patronisingly sneer at anti-war protestors and Occupy/Blockupy activists over their "anti-Semitism". 'Hard-core' anti-Germans, on the other hand, operate according to the slogan, 'Deny lefts and other Nazis the right to exist'. This premise manifests itself in smear campaigns against anti-Zionists and soft critics of Israeli foreign policy alike, threats, physical violence, cooperation with the police and judiciary against left activists, and other such methods of intimidation.

Whether a line between 'soft' and 'hard-core' can truly be drawn becomes a moot point, once you realise that someone like Stephan Grigat, who is considered 'soft' by members of the Platypus group (more on this later), addresses the left with articles such as 'To know the worst: anti-Semitism and the

failure of the left on Iran',¹¹ while at the same time courting xenophobes at the Wiener Akademikerbund, an academic circle close to the right-populist Austrian People's Party.¹² The German bourgeoisie has long taken a liking to such quirky 'Marxists', with funds flowing from the Axel Springer foundation,¹³ among others.

The left

Of course, it is not sufficient to gasp in horror at the latest 'anti-German' machinations, lament at how it has undermined the left and limit oneself to defending one's turf against them - even if the latter will be necessary. To counter reactionary movements like the anti-Germans politically, we need to look at the left that threw them up in the first place.

The Kommunistischer Bund (KB), from which the early Anti-Germans emerged, was but one piece in the mosaic of the German 'undogmatic left'. In opposition to the bureaucratic socialism of the eastern bloc countries and the 'official communist' parties of the west, but also drawing on semi-anarchist interpretations of Mao's Cultural Revolution, it threw the baby out with the bathwater, rejecting any central decision-making processes as "authoritarian". This allowed for a lively journal, *Arbeiterkampf*, in which a variety of positions and controversies could be openly discussed, but also for political eclecticism, including then-fashionable opposition to 'class reductionism', to which the group's social base - almost exclusively students and academics - was not unresponsive.

After all, it hailed from a generation whom Marcuse had taught that students, minorities and the declassed - rather than the "coopted" proletariat - were the future agents of revolutionary change. The fact that neither the impatient student left's strategy of 'entering the factories' nor the desperate terrorism of the Red Army Faction and similar groups ignited the desired revolutionary fire in the working class seemed to confirm this. At the turn of the 80s, as most German 'K-groups' collapsed into the Green Party, cross-class alliances and broad social movements became the KB's main focus - most prominently

against nuclear energy. Helpfully, popular frontism had been in its political DNA from the outset.

When the original core of the ‘anti-Germans’, the *Bahamas* group, broke away in the wake of German reunification to spread the gospel about ‘fascistisation’ and ‘left anti-Semitism’, they found a willing audience in the anti-fascist groups that had been formed by *Autonome* activists to defend left spaces against skinhead and football hooligan attacks in the 1980s. The *Autonome* understood themselves as a radical libertarian left that aimed to operate and live ‘autonomously’ of political parties, trade unions, and - to some extent - capitalist society itself. The alternative structures they created in the form of squats and youth centres set the scene for a life-stylist, direct action-fixated subculture that was hostile to the “talking left” and held ordinary people (“society”) in contempt. One was not required to use one’s brain too much to be part of the *Autonome* scene - theory came second-best behind romantic left idealism, street-wise bravado and, especially later, a philistine political correctness. Frankly, it was enough just to be there, wear the right badge and like the right bands.

Though initially set up as mere self-defence units, the antifa groups increasingly assumed a life of their own with the rise of far-right violence in the 90s. What they inherited from the *Autonome* was their *moralistic* critique of fascism, which they, not unlike official German state ideology, simply regarded as The Great Evil. At best, they flogged a sub-Dimitrov line, according to which the fascists were *at all times* in cahoots with the state. Anti-fascism, if it constitutes one’s main political focus, has the advantage of not requiring a great deal of critical thinking. It targets an immediate, tangible enemy. Because no-one in their right mind could seriously argue *for* fascism or racism, it appears as the most righteous of struggles, providing plenty of opportunity for heroic posturing.

And, since it elevates the perceived threat of fascism over all other political concerns, often without positioning it in a more comprehensive theoretical framework, it is vulnerable to all manner of ideas and prone to alliances with various forces. When the police increasingly began to crack down on neo-Nazis in the early 2000s and the SPD-Green coalition government invested vast amounts of resources in anti-fascist campaigns, this caused a cognitive dissonance among many antifa activists: in content, the campaigns were not vastly different to antifa agitation. It was perhaps only a matter of time before parts of the antifa movement, lacking a materialist analysis of fascism, would be swayed by ‘anti-German’ arguments. These reproduced ruling class ideology in counterposing the “Islamofascism” of the Arab world to a Zionist project which allegedly represented “the Jews”. Were the imperialists not providing “shelter” from anti-Semitism by backing Israel, after all?

What all these left currents had in common - whether the more theoretically sophisticated Kommunistischer Bund cadres or the antifa foot soldiers - was their ‘non-dogmatism’, which in practice translated into a popular frontist outlook and had its roots in the *frustrated workerism* of the new left. The latter’s revolutionary impatience was accompanied by a rejection of ‘vanguardism’, relying on the spontaneous movement of the masses. When this was not forthcoming, the “coopted” working class was ditched and replaced by ‘third world’ nationalism, liberation struggles of the specially oppressed, autonomist projects, movementism and so on. It is true that for the ‘anti-Germans’, this served as a conveyor belt for their present anti-working class politics: at the end of the process we see them identifying the working class with Nazism and the ruling class with progress. The answer, however, is not found in a new workerism or spontaneism, which in the long run can only result in a repeat of the cycle. To rebuild the working class movement, there really is no way around the patient educating, agitating and organising of the

revolutionary Marxist party, as outlined in Lenin’s *What is to be done?*

Platypus

Constituting a scurrilous Winston Churchill-Sir Arthur Harris-Binyamin Netanyahu fan club that, at its most extreme, wishes death and destruction upon German workers (‘Bomber Harris, do it again’), the ‘anti-Germans’ might have been relegated to the cabinet of specifically German curiosities by the international left, which they dub the “anti-Semitic international”.

Auxiliaries of imperialism and of the German ruling class, their self-perception as a moral supervisory body to whom even anti-Zionist Israelis ought to justify themselves, the ‘anti-Germans’ might just have been dismissed as a characteristic expression of the German middle classes, which have always been adept at kissing up and kicking down, depending on the historical circumstances. Their brand of Islamophobia, which is more accurately described as anti-Muslimism, would have placed them in the same camp as Geert Wilders and the English Defence League - an organisation for which the ‘anti-German’ magazine *Bahamas*, in a rare bout of sympathy for the underclass, finds many a word of support and understanding.¹⁴

Internationally, the ‘anti-Germans’ might well have remained in relative obscurity had the Platypus group not taken it upon itself to provide a platform for their views by translating articles such as the already mentioned ‘Anti-Semitism and the failure on the left of Iran’ - an attempt by Stephan Grigat to push Stop the Bomb’s pro-war agenda by cloaking its calls for sanctions in leftistish vocabulary. Platypus, which refers to its project as “pre-political”, did not find it necessary to comment on the article - after all, “the left is dead” and Platypus is only “hosting the conversation” among its remnants, as the group’s mantras would have it. If you alert Platypus members to the poisonous nature of Grigat and his brethren, you can expect little more than to be pointed to their statement of purpose, which reminds you once more that it is not Platypus’s role to actually intervene in “the conversation”.¹⁵

As anyone with a bit of experience on the left will be quick to tell you, claims to political neutrality are often euphemisms for something fishy going on, usually located to the right of the target audience. The Platypus “pre-political” variant pays lip service to the notion that neither it nor the left more broadly has any control over world events today. More often than not, this serves as a thought-terminating cliché that can be conveniently wheeled out whenever Platypus members feel they are being put on the spot. Choosing to publish particular articles rather than others is, of course, a political decision. A ‘common sense’ can be established through editorial decisions: a strong polemic alongside a mildly critical reply, for instance, aims to leave the reader with the impression that the truth is to be found somewhere in the middle.

This becomes all the more pertinent when one goes out of one’s way to translate the monomaniac writings of a current that has hitherto played no role internationally. To refuse to comment on, let alone fail to inform the reader about, the realities of the ‘anti-German’ movement amounts to preying on ignorance. The impression is created that Grigat’s are new, exciting ideas which ought to be considered in the course of reconstituting the left - rather than the dishonest outpourings of a current that has long since crossed every class line. It is hard to believe that Platypus, as a body, is unaware of the material realities pertaining to the ‘anti-German’ movement, seeing as some of its German members are embedded in the ‘soft’ *Antideutsche* milieu themselves. This does not stop the group from treating the musings of Grigat *et al* as if they existed in isolation from the material world. To focus on the realm of ideas exclusively, to disconnect theory from practice - to Marxists, these are strange traits indeed.

More to the point, the very fact that Platypus considers the ‘anti-Germans’ to be part of the left is where trouble begins. One should be careful not to respond in kind to the ‘anti-German’ speciality of smearing everybody and everything as ‘Nazi’ or ‘fascist’. However, it is difficult not to

experience a certain *déjà vu* at the sight of an overwhelmingly middle class movement that combats and intimidates the left with any means at its disposal - ranging from defamation and threats, including posting *Redwatch*-type left activist profiles on the internet, through to open cooperation with the repressive state apparatus.

Arguably, the relative infrequency of physical violence has more to do with the fact that the ‘anti-Germans’ have thus far failed to recruit street thugs rather than with their good intentions. Beside targeting the far left, they have campaigned against the remnants of the social democratic welfare state that are in the way of the capitalist offensive. We have seen all of this before, including from historical movements that fought the working class and its organisations under the guise of anti-capitalism, sometimes led by people who had emerged from the left. At our most generous, we could point to the ex-Eurocommunists who ended up among Tony Blair’s closest advisors: to seriously publish articles by Martin Kettle *et al* by the early 2000s in order to help ‘reconstitute the left’ would have been an absurdity.

Naturally, it is not a sin to publish or debate *any* text, including transparent attempts at weakening the left’s resistance against the war on Iran - as long as you make your own position clear. If Platypus refuses to do so, it must accept that the left will take the group’s connections, its evasions and the general direction in which its idiosyncratic understanding of what passes for ‘left’ politics seems to be pointing as a clear enough answer. At its most elemental, the left opposes privilege, while the right defends it. The ‘anti-German’ movement has amply demonstrated in both theory and practice to which camp it belongs, and eventually Platypus, too, will have to decide on which side of the class divide it stands. However much it refers to the “dead left” - and to some extent justifiably so - its magazine does not exist in a political vacuum.

As for the ‘anti-Germans’, there is not much more to say about them except that they should be driven out of the left as far as they still stick their heads inside it. For those groups that are in contact with Platypus, including the CPGB, there is certainly some value in engaging with those who are open to debate. Nonetheless, it is vital to keep a sense of perspective and priorities: are endless debates about the left’s alleged anti-Semitism worth devoting one’s time and energy to, or are there more crucial issues at stake? Ultimately, we cannot afford to repeat the errors of vast segments of the German left, which, by jumping through every hoop held before them by the ‘anti-Germans’, has truly debated itself to death ●

Notes

1. www.jenapolis.de/2009/11/die-jenaer-hochschul-zeitschrift-unique-muss-sich-von-ihrem-redaktionsmitglied-fabian-koehler-trennen.
2. www.neues-deutschland.de/artikel/235583.krieg-in-der-diaspora.html?sstr=fabian|k%F6hler.
3. www.muslim-markt.de/interview/2008/koehler_fabian.htm.
4. www.neues-deutschland.de/artikel/237545.deine-mutter-baut-atombomben.html.
5. Köhler has not always been cautious with regard to politically correct etiquette. Editing *Unique*, he uncompromisingly pursued the magazine’s ambition of “featuring an uncensored and undogmatic diversity of opinions”. This diversity included interviews with prostitutes and porn actresses about sexism, an interview with a Palestinian journalist with alleged Hamas links, opinions from a local Jewish ‘community leader’ and the previously mentioned interview with a local neo-Nazi cadre. But, however controversial the magazine’s choices, its focus on anti-racism and what it called “interculturalism” - ie, the exchange and merging of different cultures instead of multiculturalism’s secluded coexistence - always provided an explicit context. Antifa activists did not approve of *Unique*’s journalistic ethos and ritualistically burned several hundred copies in the town centre of Jena, dubbing the magazine an “anti-Semitic agitational organ”.
6. http://fredalanmedforth.blogspot.de/2011/11/orf-interview-mit-stephan-grigat-stop.html.
7. www.cafecritique.priv.at/IranAlsBedrohung.html.
8. http://derstandard.at/3325698?seite=9.
9. http://derstandard.at/3325059.
10. http://orwell.ru/library/essays/nationalism/english/e_nat.
11. http://platypus1917.org/2012/09/01/anti-semitism-and-failure-of-left-on-iran.
12. https://linksunten.indymedia.org/de/node/35171.
13. The Axel Springer Verlag is the German equivalent of the Murdoch empire and publishes the papers *Die Welt* and *Bild*, both of which feature contributions from ‘anti-German’ writers.
14. www.redaktion-bahamas.org/auswahl/web59-2.html.
15. http://platypus1917.org/about/statement.

What we fight for

■ **Our central aim is the organisation of communists, revolutionary socialists and all politically advanced workers into a Communist Party. Without organisation the working class is nothing; with the highest form of organisation it is everything.**

■ **The Provisional Central Committee organises members of the Communist Party, but there exists no real Communist Party today. There are many so-called ‘parties’ on the left. In reality they are confessional sects. Members who disagree with the prescribed ‘line’ are expected to gag themselves in public. Either that or face expulsion.**

■ **Communists operate according to the principles of democratic centralism. Through ongoing debate we seek to achieve unity in action and a common world outlook. As long as they support agreed actions, members have the right to speak openly and form temporary or permanent factions.**

■ **Communists oppose all imperialist wars and occupations but constantly strive to bring to the fore the fundamental question - ending war is bound up with ending capitalism.**

■ **Communists are internationalists. Everywhere we strive for the closest unity and agreement of working class and progressive parties of all countries. We oppose every manifestation of national sectionalism. It is an internationalist duty to uphold the principle, ‘One state, one party’. To the extent that the European Union becomes a state then that necessitates EU-wide trade unions and a Communist Party of the EU.**

■ **The working class must be organised globally. Without a global Communist Party, a Communist International, the struggle against capital is weakened and lacks coordination.**

■ **Communists have no interest apart from the working class as a whole. They differ only in recognising the importance of Marxism as a guide to practice. That theory is no dogma, but must be constantly added to and enriched.**

■ **Capitalism in its ceaseless search for profit puts the future of humanity at risk. Capitalism is synonymous with war, pollution, exploitation and crisis. As a global system capitalism can only be superseded globally. All forms of nationalist socialism are reactionary and anti-working class.**

■ **The capitalist class will never willingly allow their wealth and power to be taken away by a parliamentary vote. They will resist using every means at their disposal. Communists favour using parliament and winning the biggest possible working class representation. But workers must be readied to make revolution - peacefully if we can, forcibly if we must.**

■ **Communists fight for extreme democracy in all spheres of society. Democracy must be given a social content.**

■ **We will use the most militant methods objective circumstances allow to achieve a federal republic of England, Scotland and Wales, a united, federal Ireland and a United States of Europe.**

■ **Communists favour industrial unions. Bureaucracy and class compromise must be fought and the trade unions transformed into schools for communism.**

■ **Communists are champions of the oppressed. Women’s oppression, combating racism and chauvinism, and the struggle for peace and ecological sustainability are just as much working class questions as pay, trade union rights and demands for high-quality health, housing and education.**

■ **Socialism represents victory in the battle for democracy. It is the rule of the working class. Socialism is either democratic or, as with Stalin’s Soviet Union, it turns into its opposite.**

■ **Socialism is the first stage of the worldwide transition to communism - a system which knows neither wars, exploitation, money, classes, states nor nations. Communism is general freedom and the real beginning of human history.**

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War and
sanctions
must be
opposed

Credibility drains away

A prominent member of the German left party, Die Linke, has joined others in withdrawing support for the Iran Tribunal. Tina Becker reports

The Iran Tribunal continues to divide the Iranian left. Ever since Yassamine Mather first exposed the links of the organisers to the imperialist-backed National Endowment for Democracy (NED),¹ Hands Off the People of Iran has been pointing out the nature of the tribunal and urging comrades not to cooperate with it.

Comrade Mather's articles in the *Weekly Worker* have been hotly debated in Iran, across Europe and the United States. A number of organisations and individuals have withdrawn their support. Other groups and parties have split over the issue.

During the 1980s, tens of thousands of political activists in Iran were arrested, tortured and sentenced to death. Many leftwingers fled abroad and around 20,000 dissidents were murdered. The worst massacre was in the summer of 1988, when between 5,000 and 7,000 political prisoners - mainly leftwing revolutionaries - were systematically executed in a matter of weeks, their bodies dumped in anonymous mass graves.

Ostensibly the idea of the Iran Tribunal is to investigate this crime. However, its main organiser, Payam Akhavan, is not only centrally involved in a number of organisations that have accepted money from the NED, which is funded by the US congress. For years, he has been pushing his sponsors' agenda for ever harsher sanctions on Iran (and, in effect, regime change from above). He is one of the authors of the *International report* published by the 'Responsibility to Prevent Coalition', which calls for "a comprehensive set of generic remedies - smart sanctions - to combat the critical mass of threat, including threat-specific remedies for each of the nuclear, incitement, terrorist and rights-violating threats". This 2010 report was, incidentally, also signed by Tory MP Michael Gove.²

The first stage of the tribunal sat from June 18-22 in Amnesty International's London HQ, where 60 witnesses (all of them survivors of the massacre or relatives of those murdered) gave accounts to a "truth commission", detailing their horrific experiences and those of their family members at the hands of the theocratic regime (they had also supplied written statements beforehand). The report of the commission will be handed to a 'court' in a second stage of the tribunal. This court, made up of bourgeois 'human rights' lawyers from around the world, will meet in The Hague from October 25-27 in order to evaluate the material and announce a 'judgement'.

But the furore over its funding might well overshadow the proceedings, as this issue starts to impact on the non-Iranian left. When German MP Norman Paech, a leading member of the left party, Die Linke, was confronted with the evidence gathered by comrade Mather, he immediately ended his cooperation

with the tribunal. This is his statement in full:

"I have indeed supported the intention and the work of the committee to prepare this tribunal. I still think it is absolutely necessary that all facts about the horrific murders, the torture and the crimes of the 1980s are brought to light. But the background of the funding and the obvious links to the NED, of which I had no knowledge and which have only just been brought to my attention, make it impossible for me to continue this support. I find myself in particularly strong disagreement with the committee when it comes to my resolute opposition to sanctions and the threat of war on Iran. I do not want to be part of a project which is supported by the pro-war Mujahedin."

He has since come under pressure from a number of Iranians in Germany to withdraw this statement. But his political biography suggests he is astute enough to stand firm.

Paech quit the then governing Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) in 2001, when it sent German troops to Afghanistan. He became a member of parliament for Die Linke in 2005, where he acted as the fraction's spokesperson for foreign affairs and led the (failed) attempt by the party to declare the despatch of fighter jets to Afghanistan to be illegal.

In 2010 he was on board the ship, Mavi Marmara, which attempted to deliver goods and food to Gaza. Notoriously, it was raided by the Israeli army and nine people were killed. Afterwards, Paech and two other Die Linke members on board were heavily criticised by the German media for their involvement in a mission which 'harboured extremists and Hamas supporters'. Because of the still strong German 'collective guilt' complex over World War II and the holocaust, any kind of criticism of Israel is widely misconstrued as anti-

Semitism and Paech was slammed even by rightwing sections of his own party.

It is also important to point out that, to his credit, he has been very critical of attempts to charge so-called 'war criminals' in international courts. These act very much as the courts of the victors who are rewriting history for their own purpose. They are not interested in and cannot deliver 'justice'. Neither should we have any illusions in the ability of the US, Israel or any western government to bring democracy to Iran. Iraq and Afghanistan surely serve as horrific examples of imperialist-led 'regime change from above'.

According to Israeli socialist and leading Hopi supporter Moshé Machover, "The plan is to rebuild the politically unstable Middle East in a US-friendly way and preserve the regional hegemony of Israel. The biggest obstacle here is the regime in Iran." The Iran Tribunal is a secondary, but nonetheless important, part of that reactionary project.

As a result of Hopi's work, many Iranians have withdrawn their support. For example, a number of tribunal witnesses have condemned the links of the committee to the NED and publicly stated that they are against war and sanctions on Iran. Several organisations withdrew their witnesses, support for and cooperation with the tribunal - amongst them the communist organisation, Charikhaye Fadaei Khalgh (one of the offshoots of the original Fedayeen), and Rahe Kargar (Komitee Ejraai). "It is inconceivable that a genuine tribunal of victims of the 1988 massacre would be associated with individuals or organisations who have such connections to the United States government," says Mohammad Reza Shalgouni, a founder-member of Rahe Kargar, who spent eight years in prison under the shah.

Others, like the Communist Party of Iran, also dropped their support.

The Marxist-Leninist Party of Iran (Maoist) has split over the issue, as has the Iranian Left Socialist Alliance in the US and Canada. Ashraf Dehghani, a prominent member of the Iranian People's Fadaee Guerrillas, has also come out strongly in opposition to the tribunal.

But perhaps the most ferocious criticism has come from the tribunal's Norwegian support committee. In two highly critical statements it describes how all tribunal witnesses who arrived in London on June 17 were taken to a briefing session, where they were explicitly asked not to raise any politics during their session. They would not be asked the name of their organisation or their political views, as this was "not a political tribunal".

Worse, they then spotted that Maurice Copithorne was about to chair one of the sessions - between 1995 and 2002 he acted as UN human rights rapporteur for Iran. This was at a time when the US was making efforts to stage a rapprochement with Tehran and to enlist it as an ally in the fight against the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq. It was in this geo-political context that Copithorne's annual 'human rights' reports were seen as a political whitewash of the theocracy's oppression.

Copithorne's sudden interest in the 1988 massacre of political prisoners (in the new geo-political context of a US-led drive to war against Iran, of course) impressed few, and most of the witnesses from Norway (as well as a number from Great Britain and Germany) decided at this point to withdraw from the proceedings. In protest at the farce unfolding in London, the Norwegian committee decided to dissolve itself, explaining that its members felt they had been "duped" by the organisers.

Despite all of this, there are still a number of Iranian 'left' groups who continue to support the tribunal as an important element of their opposition

to Tehran: for example, the Mujahedin-e-Khalq (MEK). For this organisation, the overthrow of the regime has always been the key objective and it explicitly supports sanctions and war to achieve it (in the first Gulf War, it famously sided with Saddam Hussein and supported his attacks on Iran, including militarily). The Mujahedin's backing for the Iran Tribunal is actually disputed by the organisation, yet the involvement of people with close links to the MEK seems to tell a different story. Hardly surprising: after all, the US government has recently announced that it has removed the Mujahedin from its list of terrorist organisations.

The website of the pro-Mujahedin organisation, Human Rights and Democracy for Iran, has just published a very sympathetic interview with Payam Akhavan, who is not only chair and spokesperson of the tribunal's steering committee, but founder of the US-funded Iran Human Rights Documentation group. In the interview Akhavan is sympathetically prompted to tell readers how he feels about being "slandered" by the *Weekly Worker*.³

"For some, the end justifies the means," concludes Yassamine Mather. "They think that sanctions, the tribunal, even the threat of war will help to topple the regime in Iran and their day will have come. But they seem to wilfully ignore the fact that the US and Israel have no interest in democracy of any sort for Iran. So they are playing a dangerous game. I am sure that many of those who were killed in 1988 would be turning in their grave if they could see how their comrades are behaving now" ●

Notes

- See 'Regime change must come from below' *Weekly Worker* June 14; 'Accepting funds from the CIA' *Weekly Worker* July 5.
- http://irwincotter.liberal.ca/files/2010/05/2010_11_17_-_R2P_IRAN_REPORT.pdf.
- www.hrd4iran.se.

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