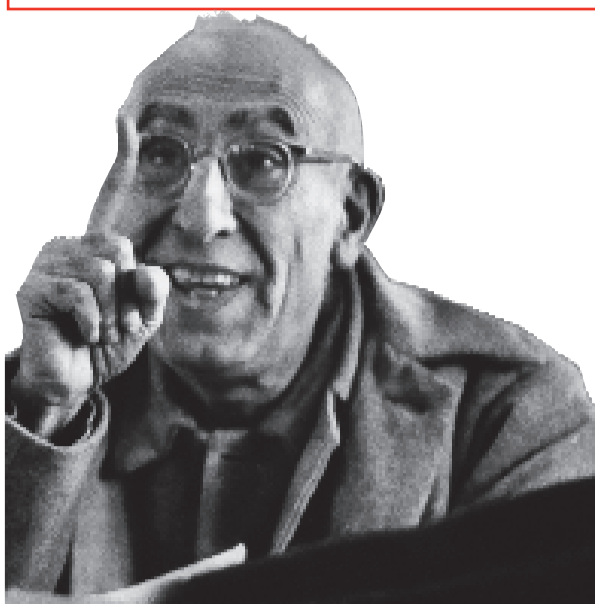


weekly **worker**



**Mossadeh and the CIA's
1953 coup: the roots of
modern US-Iranian relations**

- Leveson politics
- By-elections
- ACI fiasco
- Tyneside keelers

No 941 Thursday December 6 2012 Towards a Communist Party of the European Union

www.cpgb.org.uk

£1/€1.10

**'Anti-
German'
fake 'left'
excuses
capitalism
of its role in
the rise of
Hitler**



LETTERS



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

We were right

Many thanks for the plaudits handed out by Andrew Northall (Letters, November 29), but I'd like to address a few of his other points.

The two branches that were expelled from the Socialist Party of Great Britain were in breach of the party's democratically decided rules and decisions. It is not ridiculous or sectarian to expect members of an organisation to abide by its constitution and, in the face of persistent defiance, to carry out expulsions, despite continued adherence to the organisation's aims and objectives.

There appears to be a slight contradiction in ex-comrade Northall's letter. He writes that "the SPGB is of the view that capitalism will of itself generate the political and socialist consciousness required to take the necessary revolutionary action to establish socialism", but later states "socialism is to come via the SPGB".

To answer, the SPGB won't make the revolution - the working class will. The Socialist Party is a propaganda group, agitating for socialist principles within the working class. That means a materialist understanding of the world and the way it functions. We understand that ideas and consciousness come from our interaction with the real world, not from the outside. From our perspective, people's ideas change as a result of the struggles they engage in. If that were not the case, there would be little point in our engaging in propaganda or activism - we simply would be unable to convince the huge number of people in the world of our ideas. Likewise it is obvious the workers of the world won't just wake up one fine morning, decide capitalism is bollox and become socialists. We'd be very poor materialists if we failed to realise that ideas are produced by the material and social conditions of the day. But, even so, ideas themselves do carry weight and are worth engaging with. We strive to educate people, not ignore their ignorance.

In regards to the 'Great' October 'Socialist' Revolution, the SPGB does consider it to be a bourgeois, not a socialist, revolution and that the bourgeois nature of the revolution made it historically necessary, not some kind of mistake or betrayal. We simply point out that the level of productive forces in the Soviet Union forced them into the world market and into the capitalist system. The dictatorship over the proletariat, rather than the dictatorship of the proletariat, was a product of the conditions Lenin had to deal with (our 1924 obituary of Lenin makes this clear - <http://goo.gl/pytRc>). The directives of the Third International imposing its Russian model had little application in the western industrialised capitalist countries. Rewrite and revise history, nit-pick and cherry-pick the facts, but the SPGB analysis has proved to be overall the correct one.

If the SPGB erred in not accepting "the evolution of capitalism into its decadent phase of imperialism", it is because we await the appropriate convincing evidence of such; nevertheless we'd caution against any theory of the collapse of capitalism that does not include the working class as the principal actors in its ending.

Alan Johnstone
SPGB

Spin docs

Despite claiming to have a monopoly on what socialism is and isn't, the SPGB have remained largely

irrelevant to the working classes of the world. As for that *Socialist Studies* lot, they are just a disgruntled group of around 20, who left the party in 1991 and their *raison d'être* seems to be to attack the larger SPGB, to whom they sneeringly refer as the 'Clapham SPGB'. They don't do much apart from run a website.

The Clapham-based SPGB is very wealthy and has its own headquarters and monthly journal, yet still fails to get more than a handful of votes whenever it stands. Both groups will always talk about the successes they have had. If over 100 years of failure is what they count as success, I'd hate to see what *they* class as failure. Mind you, they'd make good spin doctors. No matter how much the working class ignore them, they continue to believe that they know what is best for them.

Steven Johnston
email

Deserving rich

Liberal notions of justice take private property for granted, treat ownership as a natural right and, more fundamentally, as a natural condition. Any effort to undermine this institution is characterised as unjust. For the liberal, the status quo is obviously just, saving for the want of a few minor tweaks. But, of course, there is nothing just about a tiny coterie of monopoly proprietors lording it over the masses, disposing of the fruits of their labour and privately appropriating the profits.

How can there be anything just about a society in which the pure chance of birth, to whom and where, decides your life chances and indeed the very conditions of your existence? Alas, the rich like to think that they are rich not because of mere chance, but as the result of merit. They are rich either because of the things they are doing in this life or as a reward for the virtues they displayed in a previous one.

However, whilst the one percent clearly believe that they are the deserving rich, and the rest of us by extension are the deserving poor, they utilise every form of bribery, corruption, coercion and violence to maintain their position. Nothing after outrageous fortune has had its initial say is then left to it.

But the ruling class, capitalists and their ruling ideology, liberalism, soon came to be challenged by socialists representing a new class becoming politically conscious of the injustices all around them, which they quickly came to understand were not about good and evil, the virtuous and the sinful, the deserving and the undeserving, but systemic in nature. The man who did most to prove that we live in an unjust society was Karl Marx, the founder of scientific socialism.

His notion of a just society was as revolutionary as it gets. From each, he said, according to their ability and to each, he concluded, according to their needs. A society based on this conception of justice would indeed represent the complete overturning of the capitalist status quo, which, for good measure, Marx also proved was not natural at all, but historically contingent.

Fear of this new class has driven the bourgeoisie first to violence, then bribery, and then attempts at cooption. From ruthless laws and methods of imposing them to buying off sections and layers of the emerging opposition class, to trying to make them partners in the imperialist imprisoning of less fortunate peoples.

In fact, one of the biggest overheads threatening to overwhelm the economy and society nowadays is the cost of trying to make capitalism

appear just - ie, the enormous efforts to mitigate the injustice of chance through remedial action, such as welfare, education, social workers and a myriad of other measures that create the illusion of some kind of social mobility or American dream.

The last and final effort to breathe new life into the deluded ideology of social mobility and a sclerotic, monopolised and dying capitalist system was the 30-year Thatcher/Reagan credit bubble-turned-Ponzi scheme that exploded in 2008, leaving the global capitalist system sclerotic, monopolised, bankrupt and dead. This is a system no longer capable of reproducing itself. Austerity and stimulus, the capitalist class's two ideological responses to the crash (ideological in that what is dead can no longer be saved), represent only the bleeding of a corpse or the attempted resuscitation of a headless cadaver. Behind these two ideologies is the reality of a dash for cash, heading inevitably towards global depression, as the global super-rich and national elites frenziedly try to turn their counterfeit assets into real money, which increasingly means gold.

What was left of liberal notions of justice lies in tatters on the trading floors of Europe, Asia and the USA, and humanity is left asking, 'What next?' The answer again comes from Marx, who correctly predicted that in the end it would come down to a choice between socialism or barbarism.

Denuded of their ability to buy social peace, the lucky few can only reverse their policy of bribery and convert to the kind of sustained and ruthless violence that even the medieval dark ages would hesitate before. That is what it will take to maintain a tiny economic and social elite in a sea of undifferentiated global poverty encompassing billions. But it is unlikely that with its new and revolutionary understanding of justice this backlash will, ultimately, succeed.

It is far more likely that today's lottery, so laughingly called society, will be replaced by the multi-billioned masses with a society where each individual is born into equality. A society where every man and woman is expected to put in a shift at work and at home, a society where there is full employment through the sharing of the available productive work, a society where part-time is the new full-time and each gets a living wage. A society, in short, where each gives according to their abilities and each receives according to their needs.

David Ellis
via Facebook

'Vanguard'

The South African Communist Party held an augmented central committee meeting over the weekend of December 1-2. Yet, despite all the top brass being present, the SACP in its statement of December 2 failed to call for support for the December 4 farmworkers' strike.

The concern of the SACP leaders was that workers should not be violent and should not damage property. Not one single word about the armed vigilante groups posing as security companies, nor about the fact that the farm bosses had bought up all the available live ammunition in local gun shops. Is this the voice of the vanguard of the working class? Or of the vanguard of the black capitalists?

The SACP claims that the 'first phase' of the democratic transition has passed and now we are in the second phase. The SACP claims that the first phase passed the farms by. This is a complete falsification of events and covers up on the role of the

African National Congress capitalists in maintaining slave conditions on the farms.

Billionaire ANC capitalist Tokyo Sexwale is a farm boss, having purchased the Bloemendal farm. We called the management of this farm to find out if they were willing to pay a minimum of R150 (£10.50) per day to workers. The farm management replied: "We pay above the minimum wage, but to ask for R150 per day is a ridiculous ask." There you have it, from the horse's mouth: the ANC capitalists are not prepared to end slave conditions on the farms.

We also called the 'black economic empowerment' (BEE) director of KWV, the biggest wine exporter in the country, Khutso Mampeule. We asked him, seeing that Phetogo Investments, of which he is head, has received a R120 million (£8.5 million) cash injection from the Industrial Development Corporation, whether they would be prepared to take a stand and support a R150 per day minimum on the farms they source their grapes from. Mampeule refused to give any support to any workers' demand, saying it was "too political". How strange, Mr Mampeule. It was not too political when you received R120 million in public money, R40 million (£2.8 million) from the wine bosses and R40 million from KWV itself, to enable you to pose as a BEE capitalist parasiting on the continued slave conditions of farm workers.

Did it not occur to the 'vanguard' of the working class to question high food prices and the fact that 75% of the cost of food bought in the large retailers goes to the distributor and the retailer itself? And that only between 3% and 10% of the actual cost of food goes to the farmworker?

This was not a 'democratic advance' that passed the farmworkers by: it was slave conditions being maintained by the BEE ANC capitalists for a few pieces of silver.

We can understand why the ANC leaders made an amicable settlement not to sing the song, 'Kill the boer, kill the farmer', because it means singing that the black *boere* like Tokyo Sexwale and Valli Moosa, should also be dealt with by the masses. The truth is that the farmers have been killing farmworkers with impunity for centuries - under the ANC government, this is set to continue.

We support an indefinite strike by the farmworkers until their demands are met, but it is essential that the rest of the masses, victims of high food prices, should also support them.

Shaheed Mahomed
Workers International Vanguard Party

Labels

The discussion on what happened in the Soviet Union under Stalin is now pretty much a moot question. No-one in their right mind would now consider Russia or China 'workers' states', but the revolutionary left is still discussing, 'What hit us?'

There was a period after World War II when the Trotskyist definition, 'degenerated workers' state', seemed unreal. Stalinism was triumphant in eastern Europe and China. I heard Max Shachtman speak in 1955 about the danger of Stalinism conquering the world. Imperialism for him was a lesser evil. He ended up supporting the US bombing of North Vietnam.

However, comrade Paul Flowers misses the dialectical process within Trotsky's description, 'degenerated workers' state' ('Sticking with old dogmas that have failed time and again', November 29). While Shachtman and Tony Cliff emphasised the devastating power of Stalinism, Trotsky was emphasising

the inherent weakness of Stalinism. History has since shown that Stalinism is not a viable alternative to capitalism, despite the atrocities. Trotsky brought up dialectics during this discussion, though he did not succeed in linking it up. Stalinism clearly was contradictory - though that did not make it both good and bad, any more than slavery was both good and bad.

The contradictions of Stalinism prevented it from growing and developing the productive forces. There is an analogy in biology: there are many mutations which do not survive - they cannot reproduce or adapt. It would be useless to give each of these mutations the name of a species, since there is no historical hope for them.

The task of revolutionaries is not to stick labels on every process, but to see the internal movement within the process that is often difficult for us to describe, because we are used to our old pre-existing labels.

Earl Gilman
email

Splitter

Doesn't Mohammed Mursi, having "decreed that no presidential decision can be challenged by the courts until a new constitution is established", partially address the problem of a politically unaccountable judiciary ('Showing his true colours', November 29)?

Really though, with all the historical precedents of conflict between politically accountable executives and 'legislation from the bench' by constitutional affairs specialists not themselves politically accountable, I'm surprised that Mursi didn't split the supreme court in two: one for typical criminal and civil cases that could retain 'judicial' independence; and the other dealing specifically with constitutional affairs, but being politically accountable. In countries with proletarian demographic majorities, the minimum programme should have commoner juries in both, but in the other countries, such as Egypt, it would suffice for those dealing with constitutional affairs to be politically accountable to the chief executive via appointment and dismissal.

On that note of proletarian demographic minorities, I find myself in disagreement with comrade Lars T Lih's article ('Before and after April 1917', November 22). I feel he has contradicted what he wrote in earlier papers. Nowhere in those did he mention a "workers' revolution supported by the peasants" or workers "giving political leadership to the peasants" - a position shared by Leon 'civil war with the peasantry' Trotsky and Rosa Luxemburg, but not part of old Bolshevism.

Jacob Richter
email

Smoking

"We are on the edge of a political earthquake in British politics. In polling conducted at the weekend, the Respect candidate in the November 29 Rotherham by-election, Yvonne Ridley, has the lead over Labour." So prophesied Respect [sic] national secretary Chris Chilvers (Letters, November 29).

But there was no earthquake; we weren't shaken, not even stirred. The final result was Sarah Champion (Labour) 9,866 and Yvonne Ridley (Respect) 1,778.

I don't know what Chris has been smoking, but I'd like to get my hands on some of it. I also hope that Ms Ridley will finally get treatment for Stockholm syndrome.

Pat Corcoran
Dublin

MARATHON

Running through the pain

Ben Lewis calls for more donations to support the solidarity efforts of Workers Fund Iran runners



For the sake of solidarity

I must apologise to readers if this report comes across as slightly downbeat or tired: I am typing these lines while wrapped up in blankets and drinking Lemsip. Ever since returning from Italy I have been feeling slightly under the weather. This is often known as 'post-marathon blues' - the effect on a runner's immune system makes illness more likely.

Whereas I and my fellow runner, Jamie, essentially breezed through our first solidarity marathon back in April in Vienna, this one proved - for me at least - to be a rather arduous affair. They say that pride comes before a fall. But I certainly did not think that my lack of preparation (mainly due to the shorter winter days and a very busy work schedule) would have had such a negative impact on race day. After all, in total I have probably run something close to 450 miles over the last year or so, and am generally quite fit.

Indeed, 25 kilometres in, just over halfway through the race, Jamie and I were more than happy as we ran past the beautiful Ponte Vecchio alongside the river Arno, singing aloud and joking - in particular about a fellow competitor sporting a 'With Jesus to the finish line' T-shirt. But then at 28k things started going badly: my right hamstring felt as if it was about to snap. And, although the body adjusts accordingly by making other muscles take more of the slack, a few kilometres later these were starting to pull too. And by 36 kilometres things were really rough.

I had 'hit the wall': this is the point where your body runs out of energy to burn and so therefore turns on your fat stores. This may sound fun, particularly to those looking to lose a few pounds. But I can assure readers that it is physically and mentally akin to the kind of place where our Jesus-loving

friend thinks us non-believers will ultimately end up. Dizziness, nausea and even hallucinations can result. How fitting it was that in these latter stages of the race we ran past a statue of the Florentine poet, Dante!

While I did not have Jesus to get me to the finish line, I was able to rely on my old friend and comrade, Jamie, who had managed to put in a bit more training than me. He could not say much in the last few kilometres either, but he did manage to talk me through the worst parts of the race. I am very grateful: I certainly could not have done it alone.

We eventually crossed the line together in a new record time of three hours, 30 minutes, 40 seconds, shaving about three minutes off our Vienna performance. (Jamie also assures me that we overtook our bible-bashing friend on the home straight - good news, but slightly worrying that this completely passed me by!)

We did not have much time to relax after the race. After a shower and a bit of food we hobbled over to the Piazza della Repubblica to take part in a demonstration in solidarity with political prisoners in Iran, such as the lawyer, Nasrin Sotoudeh. She has been on hunger strike since October and is an increasingly unstable state. Here we were able to establish links with some Iranian and Italian activists from several campaigns and initiatives. It was a fitting reminder of the seriousness, and indeed the importance, of the cause we are fighting for.

The evening saw the traditional celebrations with our fellow runners and activists from across Europe - around 30 of us in total. Because Jamie and I were (once again!) the fastest runners from the group, we had to sing a song. We opted for a rendition of the famous Italian communist anthem, 'Bandiera rossa' ('Red flag'). Much

to the delight of 75-year-old communist Roberto, who also completed the Florence marathon with the rest of us. He stems from one of Italy's 'red cities', Livorno, where the Italian Communist Party was established in 1921.

We set ourselves a fundraising target of £500 and our current total stands at £265. We thank those who have shown their appreciation for our efforts by parting with their cash. We understand that things are rather tight for most people at the moment, especially in the run-up to Christmas. But even just a handful of readers donating a fiver would really get us over our second finishing line. We have until December 25 to reach that £500 target, so make sure you donate!

Jamie and I will now be taking a well-deserved break over the winter, resting our creaking bodies. But the important fundraising work will continue: in the new year we will be organising a solidarity screening of *This is not a film* by the award-winning Iranian filmmaker, Jafar Panahi. He is still under house arrest and actually banned from making films altogether. Defying the censors, he shot his latest cinematic offering on his smartphone. 2013 will also see the return of our fundraising cricket match between Hands Off the People of Iran and the Labour Representation Committee, a solidarity gig with some East London bands, and - I shudder slightly when writing this - a few more solidarity marathons as well ... Oslo, Stockholm and Pembrokeshire have all been mentioned.

Please rush your donations to us via www.charitychoice.co.uk/fundraiser/jamiedford/florence-marathon.

For more information on how to get involved, see workersfund.org ●

ben.lewis@weeklyworker.org.uk

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 December 9, 5pm: Weekly political report from CPGB Provisional Central Committee, followed by discussion and *Capital* reading group. Caxton House, 129 St John's Way, London N19. This meeting: Vol 1, chapter 10: 'The working day'. Organised by CPGB: www.cpgb.org.uk.

Film from Palestine

Friday December 7 - Sunday December 16: Film festival, various locations. Programme: www.bristolpff.org.uk/festival-programme-2012.

Organised by Bristol Palestine Film Festival: www.bristolpff.org.uk.

Greece at the crossroads

Friday December 7, 7pm: Meeting hosted by Syriza London, University of London Union, Malet suite 7, Malet Street, London WC1. Speakers include: Costas Douzinas, Seumas Milne. Organised by Syriza - www.syriza-uk.org/syrizaevent7december.

Target Starbucks

Saturday December 8, 2pm: Protests against tax dodging, central London. Meet 2pm outside The Rocket (corner of Chalton Street and Euston Road).

Organised by UK Uncut: www.ukuncut.org.uk/actions/962.

CPGB oppositionists

Saturday December 8, 6.30pm: Book launch, Calthorpe Arms, 252 Grays Inn Road, London WC1. Author Lawrence Parker introduces *The kick inside: revolutionary opposition in the CPGB 1945-1991*. Organised by CPGB: www.cpgb.org.uk.

Save adult education

Saturday December 8, 11am to 3.30pm: Second national delegate conference, Leicester Adult Education College, Leicester LE1. Organised by Local Associations for National Action Campaign: www.nutlan.org.uk.

Manchester against austerity

Saturday December 8, 12.30pm: Protest march and demonstration. Assemble All Saints, Oxford Road, Manchester M13, for march to rally at Manchester Cathedral Gardens.

Organised by Greater Manchester Association of Trade Union Councils: www.gmatuc.org.uk.

Socialist films

Sunday December 9, 11am: Screening, Renoir Cinema, Brunswick Square, London WC1. UK premiere of Eran Torbiner's *Bunda'im* (Israel, 48 minutes); and Adela Peeva's *Whose is this song?* (Belgium/Bulgaria, 70 minutes).

Organised by London Socialist Film Co-op: www.socialistfilm.blogspot.com.

Action for Rail

Tuesday December 11: Day of leafleting at stations and meetings. Go to website to get involved.

Organised by Action for Rail: www.actionforrail.org/get-involved.

This is my land - Hebron

Tuesday December 11, 7pm: Film screening and discussion of the award-winning documentary film, the Polygon, St Mary's Church, St Mary's Road, Ealing, London W5.

Call a general strike

Tuesday December 11, 9.30am: Lobby of TUC, Congress House, Great Russell Street, London WC1.

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

Class wargames

Wednesday December 12, 6.30pm: Collective playing of Guy Debord's *The game of war*, plus Jim Dunnigan's *Chicago! Chicago!* Housmans bookshop, 5 Caledonian Road, Kings Cross, London N1. Free entry.

Organised by Class Wargames: www.classwargames.net.

Left Front Art

Thursday December 13, 6.30 pm: Discussion - 'Labour: vehicle for queer liberation?' Bonnington Centre, Vauxhall Grove, London SW8. Speaker: Hannah Thompson (Labour Representation Committee). Organised by Left Art Front: www.facebook.com/leftfrontart.

End violence against sex workers

Monday December 17, 7.30pm: Talks and film showing, Old Hairdressers, 20-28 Renfield Lane, Glasgow G2. See www.facebook.com/events/170089976468366.

Socialist theory

Thursday December 20, 6pm: Study group, Social Centre, Next from Nowhere, Bold Street, Liverpool L1. 'The nature of the transitional epoch' (continued).

Organised by Socialist Theory Study Group: teachingandlearning4socialism@gmail.com.

Solidarity with Greek anti-fascists

Saturday January 19, 12 noon: Demonstration, Greek embassy, 1A Holland Park, Notting Hill, London W11.

Organised by Unite Against Fascism: www.uaf.org.uk.

CPGB wills

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

PRESS

The dog that didn't bark

The recommendations of the Leveson report are worse than the status quo, argues **Paul Demarty** - but not by much

There are bad things afoot for everyone who values the hard-won right of freedom of expression in this country, it seems. The papers are awash with jeremiads about things to come - state-regulated media, stripped of the ability to speak truth to power, comparable to the likes of Kazakhstan.

Of course, this is not strictly true. The report of the Leveson inquiry into press ethics - hotly anticipated by the whole Westminster village and dreaded by the titans of Fleet Street - is a masterclass in judicial conservatism and moderation. Brian Leveson demands a more serious form of press regulation, through a body "independent" of the commercial interests directly involved, with an ill-defined "statutory backstop" to give press regulation some legal teeth.

Participation in the new regulator would be, strictly speaking, voluntary and its board (which would not include any newspaper editors) would decide on its own codes and procedures. The problem is then how it is to avoid ending up like the Press Complaints Commission of today. In effect, this means that the regulator itself will have to be regulated (Leveson suggests that Ofcom should take up this duty), in order to make sure it is doing its job properly.

The "backstop" then would be this second regulator, which would directly regulate media outlets which refused to submit to the new regime voluntarily. This would apparently exclude those outlets that did not meet certain readership and influence requirements (which, again, are left vague).

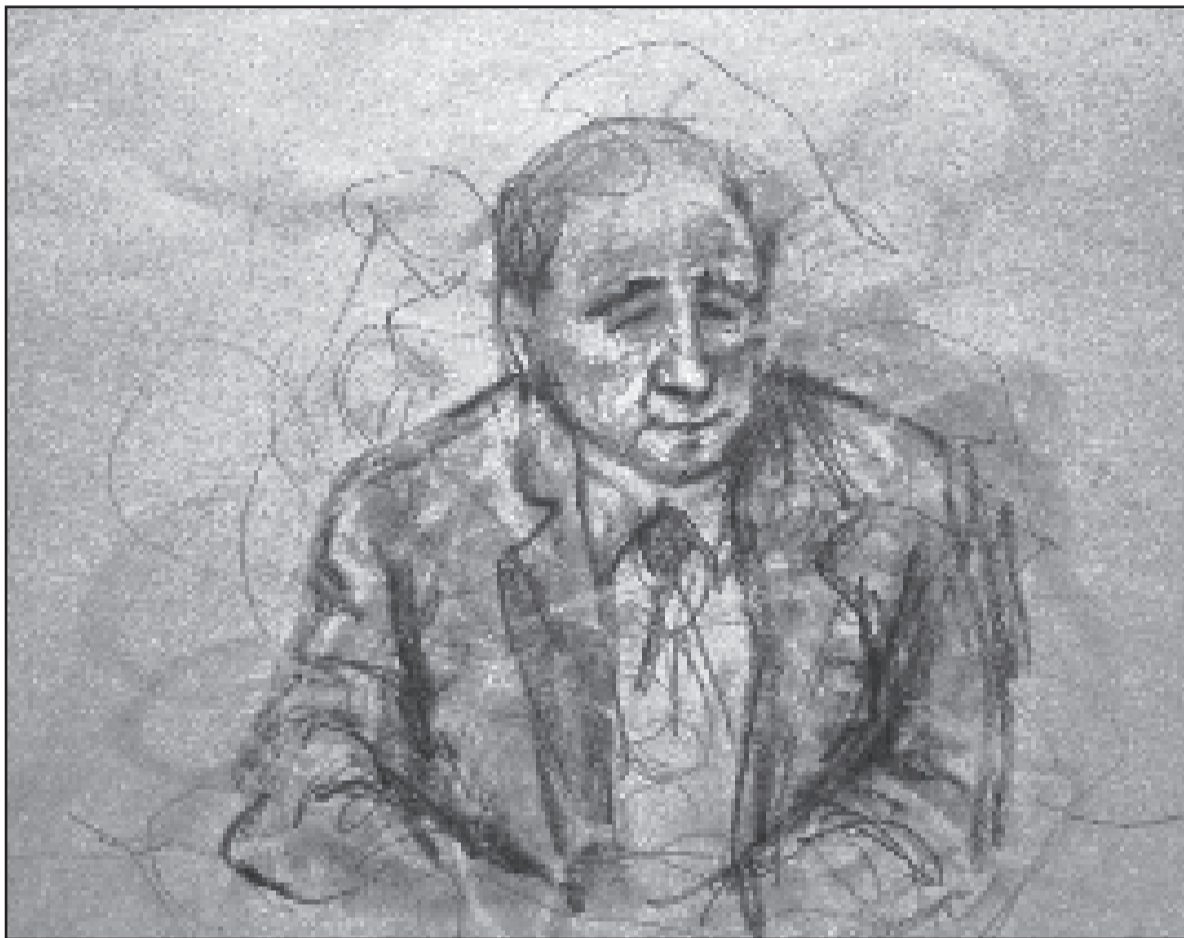
What all this amounts to is a variation on the status quo. Avoiding regulatory capture on this new body will hardly be a matter of simply shunting editors aside; the Murdochs of this world will worm their way in. Leveson has even come up with one or two 'incentives' to ensure the compliance of the media institutions - handling complaints through a regulatory body with some meaningful authority (and a grounding in statute) would cut down on the legal costs of dragging such things through the courts. There would also be a legal clause enshrining the freedom of the press.

Spitting blood

You would not know it from the bourgeois press's response. While *The Guardian*, which broke (and doggedly pursued) the phone-hacking scandal which led us to this pass, has been broadly sympathetic to Leveson's proposals, the Murdoch press, the *Daily Mail* and so on are spitting blood.

They appear to have the ear of the prime minister in all this, who came out immediately against statutory regulation, in a move widely regarded as an act of obvious and craven opportunism. It is probably not too unfair a characterisation of his stance, at that. David Cameron is smart enough to know that, whatever regime of press regulation is in place come the next election, the institutional power of the press will be enough to make it a powerful ally - or dangerous enemy.

In the cold light of day, Cameron cannot afford to antagonise the attack dogs of the rightwing press too badly. They already - at best - tolerate him, rather than love him, and, if he is not exactly a creature of *Mail* editor Paul



Lord Leveson: not for us

Dacre, many of his increasingly restive backbenchers certainly are. Cameron's room for manoeuvre is limited.

Ed Miliband's game is harder to puzzle out. He certainly loves to take a clear line on matters where he cannot possibly be accused of being a loony leftie; and the ever-expanding Murdoch scandal, pitching as it does a series of amoral press barons and editors against every extant standard of taste, decency and fair play, may seem to him to be an attractive option for easy public credibility.

Yet it does not fit very well into his overall political strategy, which seems rather to consist of not having a strategy at all, lest having one or two eye-catching ideas lead to Labour looking unelectable. The ultimate arbiters of what is and is not electable are the bourgeois papers. It is they who turned Neil Kinnock - despite his terrible politics a talented politician - into a soulless windbag; and they who sold Tony Blair, despite his painfully obvious vacuity, as a 'fresh start' (although, in all probability, he would have won in 1997 anyway, so decrepit was the Tory government).

Miliband does not seem scared at the moment. He suspects, correctly by the look of things, that the government is deeply split on the issue. Nick Clegg supports the implementation of Leveson's findings as well; culture secretary Maria Miller now refuses to rule out statutory underpinning for press regulation. The latter, in particular, raises the attractive possibility of forcing the government into an embarrassing *volte face*. Whether the gambit will succeed is another matter.

Death by misadventure

Miliband has taken a risk by piling into the issue again - but it is quite exceptionally difficult for the press to hammer him for it with any authority just now. After everything that has happened, it is simply not feasible

for the likes of Dacre and Murdoch to come out on the side of the angels in this affair.

Every time the pressure group Hacked Off, for example, is dismissed by *The Sun* as a bunch of griping celebrities, the latter can wheel out the likes of Christopher Jefferies, essentially hounded for a murder he did not commit on the basis that he was supposedly a bit weird; or the family of murdered teenager Milly Dowler; or Kate and Gerry McCann; or any of the other utterly innocent victims of rabid tabloid harassment.

The scandal, then, has come full circle. Having expanded rapidly from newsroom bad behaviour at the late and unlamented *News of the World* to cover the dubious practices of the press as a whole, and from there to the patently corrupt relationships between the press and other wings of the establishment, it has finally become contained again as an issue of press ethics. This was always, surely, what Cameron wanted Leveson to do - although the latter's inquiry provided ample opportunities for all parties to the crisis to mortally embarrass each other.

This is what has to be remembered, now that the crisis has reached the point where all sides are concerned to come up with a 'solution' to the 'problem' of press regulation - because this was never about the venality of the tabloids (we hardly needed the spurious authority of a 'judge-led inquiry' to uncover that), but rather about how we reached a point where the dodgy ethics of the press should become a catastrophic weak point in the legitimacy of the establishment as a whole.

The central problem for the bourgeoisie is that it is small by its very nature, and, terror aside, has the same means as any minority class at hand to maintain its dominance - bribery and blackmail. To put it very crudely, the press is bribed, so that it may blackmail the rest of us. The press reached the point it did, because

that crude statement has become increasingly true over the decades, at least since Rupert Murdoch's entry into the British newspaper market.

If sensationalism had always been a part of the press's DNA, Murdoch refined it into a kind of art. The transformation of *The Sun* - a former paper of the labour movement, of all things - into the ultimate 'red top' under his proprietorship is emblematic. The paper has, through this entire period, been politically conservative in all meaningful respects; yet its provocative, populist style - the implicit equals sign it places between 'real' news and celebrity tittle-tattle, the spiky headlines, bare breasts on page 3 - allowed it to *appear* anti-establishment, especially as the staid post-war settlement decayed.

This is not a superficial matter. It is extraordinary, for any leftwinger, to read that we all supposedly live under the cosh of an unaccountable lefty elite - which is more or less the line, day in and day out, of the *Mail* and *Sun*. Yet pushing such an obvious falsehood achieves some purpose, inasmuch as *Mail* readers identify the frothing gibberish in the paper's pages as in some way the voice of British 'common sense'; or *Sun* readers identify that paper's contents with the views of the 'man in the street'.

A completely inverted view of the balance of power in society is sold to the mass readerships of these papers, in the hope or expectation that they will come to identify their interests with the ruling bloc. This is what Marxists of the Second International, and more famously Antonio Gramsci, called hegemony. The problem is that it is based on a lie - which breeds, inevitably, other lies, to feed the bizarre world view that is being put forward.

There are more directly economic factors involved too. Also spearheaded by Murdoch was the practice of aggressively discounting the face value of a newspaper - profits would instead come from advertising

revenue, which could be increased, along with circulation figures. While the rumours of the looming death of the print media are probably overstated, circulation figures have been hit hard, and therefore so have advertising revenues. (It was not public outcry that forced Murdoch to shut down the *News of the World*, but the threat of an advertising boycott.) So papers are driven to *more* sensationalism, and ever grubbier tactics, to keep figures riding high.

When the phone-hacking scandal broke, the true cost of the business strategy at work in the tabloids became abundantly clear, but so did the deep complicity of the police and bourgeois politics in the affair - which was hardly surprising, as their legitimacy rests in part on precisely that distorted world view presented by the press. The police benefit from the country *appearing* to be full of predatory weirdoes, with terrorists hiding under every bed - and thus from the repugnant press campaigns against the likes of Christopher Jefferies. The politicians benefit from the *appearance* of a divergence of political opinion in parliament - although not all of them benefit equally, or simultaneously.

Free expression

If statutory regulation does come into force, and does indeed destroy press freedom, it will not be Leveson, but Paul Dacre, Richard Desmond, Rebekah Brooks *et al*, who bear the lion's share of responsibility. Which media, pray, have done the most to put a 'hanging's too good for them'/'throw away the key' spin on issues of criminal justice in this country? Which have made the witch-hunt the basic means of dealing with a scandal? Now that *they* find themselves tied to the stake, it is difficult to feel much sympathy.

In a sense, it is a shame. Papers from *The Independent* to the *Daily Mail* are correct: statutory regulation of the media should be vigorously opposed. We do not favour state interference in the media at all; it can only have reactionary and authoritarian outcomes (the relatively timid proposals of Leveson will not be catastrophic, but still represent movement in the wrong direction). All those who peddle the idiotic illusion of an 'independent' regulatory body, somehow relying neither on the state nor the media moguls, ought to have another look at the revelations of the last year and a half. The notion will only ever be a lie in this society.

The only way to fight the cabal of cynical moguls behind the filth on the news stands is to beat them at their own game. There is no iron law that says their papers will always be bigger sellers - still less punchier, more provocative or more readable - than those of the workers' movement. Unfortunately, the latter lacks any kind of serious media strategy, putting out endless dire periodicals that nobody sensible would read more than once a year.

Getting a shout-out in *The Guardian*, or a well-trodden hashtag on Twitter, is the height of our collective aspirations at the moment. We can do much, much better - and it should go without saying that the fight for the most complete freedom of expression (necessarily extending to our enemies) is a pivotal part of that ●

paul.demarty@weeklyworker.org.uk

POLITICS

Austerity assault intensifies

The coalition is not as 'weak' as last week's election results suggest, says Peter Manson

Despite the dismal results from the three November 29 by-elections, where both the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats were trounced, the coalition has shown that it intends to push ahead with fresh, devastating attacks on the population, and in particular the working class.

Readers will need no reminding of the intensity of the renewed assault heralded by chancellor George Osborne's December 5 autumn statement. The cost-cutting, job-slashing austerity programme is to be extended by a year until 2017-18, with tens of thousands more public sector jobs to go and welfare benefits to be cut in real terms. This in itself gives the lie to the repeated assurances from the likes of the Socialist Workers Party that the coalition government is "incredibly weak".¹

The SWP's internal *Party Notes* correctly points out that the Lib Dems are in "freefall" and both parties are divided over Leveson. But then the comrades add - rather contradictorily, it has to be said - that we are nevertheless facing "momentous assaults" on our class. This is absurdly illogical. How can people so "incredibly weak" inflict such damage? Of course, by saying that, the SWP leadership is attempting to inspire comrades to throw themselves into anti-cuts campaigning and general strike agitation with renewed vigour. They want us to believe that a show of strength from the movement will see the government start to hesitate, stumble and finally fall in the midst of the general strike.

Yes, the coalition partners are divided, but parties representing different constituencies will always be divided over some questions too - for example, the Tory Party is rent with divisions over the European Union. But this has never stopped bourgeois parties uniting against a common enemy - be it a rival power, a colonial rebellion or the working class.

And so it is with the current coalition. What alternative does either party have but to continue their alliance? Some Tories are canvassing a deal with the UK Independence Party on Europe and in general moving right on social issues in order to capture the Ukip vote. A hopeless strategy. Instead David Cameron and George Osborne seem determined to keep on keeping on: blame Labour for the national mess, stay social-liberal and promise that austerity will eventually work. Some might be tempted to interpret the results from Middlesbrough, Croydon North and Rotherham as demonstrating that the Tories are staring defeat in the face in 2015, but that would be a mistake. There will be plenty of room and opportunity for a Tory recovery before the next general election.

The same cannot be said, of course, for the Lib Dems. The Tories will certainly attempt to win their base - and there is good reason to believe that they could be successful. Meanwhile they can effectively treat their coalition partners as slaves until the 2015 election, when they can be offered either an official or semi-official pact in a limited number of constituencies or seats in the (unreformed) House of Lords for Nick Clegg, Vince Cable, Simon Hughes, etc.

In a sense, you could say that the big dip in Tory votes was normal by-election fare - the governing party is expected to lose support. Dropping to fifth in Rotherham was, however, very bad - the Conservative share of the vote was more than halved and candidate Simon Wilson barely saved



Nigel Farage: pleased as punch

his deposit at 5.42%. As for the Liberal Democrats, the results confirmed yet again that their participation in the coalition has almost certainly damaged them as a serious force in electoral politics for many years to come. Indeed it is quite possible to imagine the rump Lib Dems being reduced to a wing of the Tory Party, as happened to the National Liberals in the 20th century.

In Rotherham the Lib Dem share fell precipitously from 15.98% in 2010 to just 2.11% (and 451 votes) last week. That is the territory of fringe candidates like those of the left (see below). Similarly in Croydon North the party's vote was cut from 13.98% to 3.5% - although in Middlesbrough its support was 'merely' halved (from 19.91% to 9.91%).

Ukip advance

The big story was, of course, the advance of Ukip, which more than trebled its share of the vote in all three constituencies. Much has been made of the possibility that Ukip is now set to replace the hapless Lib Dems as the main recipient of protest votes. But we should not discount Nigel Farage's dismissal of this: the Ukip leader declares that his party is now a serious contender - not just in by-elections, but as a more permanent force.

It is true that Ukip is on the extreme right of the mainstream, but its policies overlap significantly with those of the Tory right wing - over the EU and immigration in particular. Clearly, whereas the British National Party cannot realistically hope to gain true mass support - its roots are just too close to the British version of the German Nazis - Ukip most certainly could become a major force.

As might be expected in view of Ukip's performance, the BNP lost ground in both Rotherham and Middlesbrough (it did not contest Croydon North). In fact in Middlesbrough its already low return in 2010 was halved. The truth is that a bunch of former Nazi fans gone respectable will never win the backing of the bourgeoisie - if we are talking about a potential street-fighting force to save British capital from revolution,

look elsewhere. Swastikas and *Sieg heil* salutes do not exactly sit easily with the World War II myths of British chauvinism. While I am not suggesting that Farage is a fascist dictator in waiting, Ukip's political programme, tone and middle class Britishness certainly make his party a more serious potential player than the BNP.

Amongst all this Ed Miliband will obviously be smugly content with the success of his 'do nothing and wait' strategy. Labour increased its share of the poll in all three seats (although in Rotherham, where the decision of the Labour council to bar a Ukip couple from fostering clearly boosted Ukip at Labour's expense, the rise was only marginal). The way things are at the moment, Miliband does not even have to pose left. There is no upsurge from below to which he has to respond. Many workers are undoubtedly worried, even angry, at their predicament under austerity, but only a minority are motivated enough even to go to the polling station. While the union leaders are hardly chomping at the bit for strike action, they are not under a huge amount of pressure from their members either.

This is reflected in the lack of enthusiasm among workers for leftwing opponents of the coalition cuts agenda. For example, despite the claim by Respect national secretary Chris Chilvers on the eve of polling that Yvonne Ridley "has the lead" in Rotherham and Lee Jasper was "neck and neck" with Labour in Croydon, Respect's two candidates could only manage 8.34% and 2.88% respectively.² In fact, had it not been for comrade Chilvers' ridiculous spin, the outcome would have been regarded as quite reasonable - especially compared to the usual left results. True, expectations may have risen since George Galloway's tremendous win in Bradford West in March, but since then it has been back to normal - two weeks earlier Respect picked up just 1.1% in the Manchester Central by-election.

However, overall Respect is far ahead of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, whose candidates in Rotherham and Middlesbrough did

very poorly. John Malcolm, a member of the Socialist Party in England Wales, won 277 votes (1.64%) in Middlesbrough, while National Union of Teachers activist Ralph Dyson could only manage 261 (1.22%) in Rotherham.

Partly in order to avoid this kind of embarrassment, Tusc had written to Respect back in May offering to "discuss how our two organisations can collaborate in the period ahead" and "how we can attempt to avoid an electoral clash". Eventually comrade Chilvers replied, pointing out that Respect had already selected candidates for some forthcoming contests and "the Respect Party does not feel it has the right to ask that Tusc does not select candidates to contest these elections". In fact it would be "improper for the Respect Party to ask Tusc to stand down". Comrade Chilvers concluded by stating: "We entirely accept that Tusc will make its own decisions about whether to contest these elections, based upon its own analysis of the situation and its own best interests, just as the Respect Party has already made its decisions." I think that was a 'no'.³

Left folly

It is just about possible that the vote for Tusc's comrade Dyson suffered a little as a result of his decision to opt out of a local BBC radio live hustings session, to which, unsurprisingly, all Rotherham by-election candidates were invited, including the BNP's Marlene Guest. As everyone knows, it is a matter of 'principle' that 'fascists' must not be given a platform, and so the debate went ahead without comrade Dyson, who did not even wait to make his anti-BNP statement on air before walking out (Labour's Sarah Champion also decided at the last minute to stay away, but not out of 'anti-fascist principle': she told BBC Sheffield that door-to-door canvassing would be more likely to pull in votes on the eve of polling).

It has to be said that most of the left has really got itself into a twist over this question. It is not, and ought never to have been, a 'principle' not to debate with fascists (leaving aside the question of whether or

not the BNP can still be accurately described as such). We must consider the best *tactics* in attempting to defeat our enemies, whether they be establishment pro-capitalists or fringe groups on the far right. In general the best means of defeating them is by forcefully arguing for *our* politics - or do we think those politics are so weak that we have no chance of winning the debate? It goes without saying that all this passes SPEW and the SWP by: for them it was much more sensible for comrade Dyson to no-platform himself.

Continuing this theme of leftwing foolishness, what should we make of the SWP decision to refuse to vote for Respect? Referring to Croydon, *Socialist Worker* stated: "Respect's Lee Jasper has tapped into anger around police racism in the Croydon run-off. But *Socialist Worker* is not calling for a vote for him, following Respect leader George Galloway's disgraceful and well-publicised comments on rape. Instead we encourage supporters to vote for Labour in this instance."⁴

So, because Galloway made a clumsy and undiplomatic remark in support of Wikileaks founder Julian Assange, who is wanted by a vindictive USA for revealing embarrassing state secrets and also by Sweden for questioning over rape accusations, it is no longer possible to critically vote not just for comrade Galloway, but *any* Respect candidate? Presumably Tusc has withdrawn its offer to discuss electoral arrangements too then.

Is this the same SWP that *uncritically* supported George Galloway when it was part of Respect? The George Galloway who ensured that pro-abortion demands were kept out of Respect election material so as not to offend the sensibilities of good Catholics like himself, for whom abortion is the equivalent of murder? But the SWP did not need much persuading, because at the time it was wooing the Muslim Association of Britain and mosque leaders - who share Galloway's views on this central question for women's rights. And earlier this year it urged people in Egypt to vote for the Muslim Brotherhood, whose proposed constitution contains anti-women clauses that will make Galloway seem like a raving feminist.

By the way, the SWP's support for Labour in Croydon was short-lived. The day after *Socialist Worker* came out, the online version of the article had been amended, and a new rider had been added: "An earlier version of this article called for a vote for Labour in the Croydon North by-election. This was an editorial error. *Socialist Worker* is not endorsing any of the candidates in the Croydon North by-election."⁵

"Editorial error," did they say? Come on, comrades, there is no shame in changing your line. Although in this case, you got it wrong in both cases. Why not offer critical support to Respect? Lee Jasper, despite his numerous failings, is not only a campaigner against "police racism", but counts himself as part of the working class fightback against austerity. And, if you could not do that, for whatever bizarre reason, why not vote for the Labour candidate? ●

peter.manson@weeklyworker.org.uk

Notes

1. *Party Notes* December 3.
2. See Letters, November 29.
3. The correspondence can be viewed via the link at www.tusc.org.uk/press011212.php.
4. *Socialist Worker* December 1.
5. www.socialistworker.co.uk/art.php?id=30100.

GERMANY

Excusing capitalism c

Susann Witt-Stahl of the Hamburg-based Assoziation Dämmerung examines the enigma of the 'anti-German' Germans



Millions (of marks) behind him

The so-called 'anti-German' Germans, although they are obviously a specifically German phenomenon, should be of concern to the international left. The *Antideutsche* pose a big problem for the left in Germany, especially the anti-capitalist left. Their ideology can

perhaps be compared to the kind of thing you will see on the blog *Harry's Place*.

The German left is suffering from a process of neo-conservatisation - a very regressive development that comes in the guise of anti-nationalism and even communism. For me this

phenomenon is a structural-historical development that has to be explained with regard to German history and so-called German reunification. It has filled the political vacuum generated within the anti-capitalist left by the collapse of 'really existing socialism'.

A left no longer able to project

its hopes and dreams through the old 'official' communism now sees its land of milk and honey in Israel. The emblem of 'anti-German' anti-fascist groups is made up of half the flag of the USA and the other half of Israel.¹ I have often wondered why people involved in anti-fascist, grassroots and autonomist groups in Germany stopped protesting against imperialist wars and instead began to wave the flags of the USA and Israel² and chant, 'Anti-fascism means an airstrike!'³ Hardly what you would expect from the left. I have also wondered why, on the one hand, these people declare themselves to be anti-nationalist, yet, on the other, they are fanatically pro-Zionist and pro-US. And I have noticed that many people who called themselves communists oppose anti-capitalism and say that it is anti-Semitic. Some say that the Third Reich represented a classless society featuring a 'negative sublation' of capitalism.

'Anti-German' demonstrations and blogs feature militaristic symbols⁴ and demands for the arming of Israel - a very common slogan. Young people especially will curse and swear at the traditional leftwing movement, calling us 'inter-National Socialists' - a play on 'National Socialists' obviously. They also talk about the 'anti-Semitic International'.⁵

'Anti-German' groups slander working class people, referring to them as the *Volksgemeinschaft* - a term used by the Nazis to refer to the German 'people's community', free from Jews, Marxists, etc.⁶ These same groups spread hatred of the Arab people, especially the Palestinians, whom they call anti-Semites and Jew-murderers, and who they maintain are the successors to the Nazis. The 'anti-Germans' began to appear in the early 1990s. After the dissolution of the German Democratic Republic there were many racist and xenophobic attacks against immigrants and non-white Germans. You may know about the shameful pogroms conducted in Rostock-Lichtenhagen in 1992, for example. In response to these events parts of the communist movement began discussing the possibility of an impending 'fourth Reich'.

The 'anti-Germans' were born from a struggle within the important Kommunistischer Bund group. It was a struggle between the traditional 'official' communist wing and the emerging 'anti-German' wing, which saw in Saddam Hussein the reincarnation of Adolf Hitler. They claimed that Saddam Hussein would complete the 'final solution' in Israel. As a result the 'anti-Germans' demanded unconditional solidarity with the Jewish state, where holocaust survivors and their children are waging the final, ongoing defensive battle of World War II, which in their opinion never really ended.

They think that the continuation of Nazi ideology was imported into the Arab world by the then grand mufti of Jerusalem.⁷ By the way, the leftwing historian, Gilbert Achcar, has recently written a very interesting book on this issue⁸ and he did a good job in demonstrating that the stories about the importation and supposed influence of Nazi ideology in the Middle East were false.

In the following years the 'anti-Germans' began to take on a neo-con agenda - it was a radically new politics that embraced the neo-conservatism

of the Bush doctrine. The so-called Bahamas - a leading group of hardcore 'anti-Germans' who publish a magazine of the same name - call themselves 'friends of the American war'.⁹ Their proponents have agitational images of George Bush mixed with communist iconography, implying that today real communism is represented by George Bush.¹⁰

A Bahamas leader, Justus Wertmüller, referring to the 'historical task' of the anti-German movement, said: "We are the wrecking company of the international left." I am confident that they will not succeed in this project, but at the moment it is certainly making an impact. It has managed to paralyse a good part of the autonomist scene, much of the communist left and especially the anti-fascist movement.

As I have said, many of the *Antideutsche* came from the communist movement. But I think it is very important to note that the majority of them came and come from the upper and middle classes. Many are students and academics, but there are also a lot of journalists in this movement. And what worries me is that the art and music scene is also very much embroiled. 'Anti-German' politics have also spread into the foundations of the wider left and liberal politics: for example, the Rosa Luxembourg Foundation, the leftwing Die Linke party and also the union movement and its Hans Böckler Foundation, something which saddens me a lot.

Ideology

So what are the theories of the *Antideutsche*? Many 'anti-Germans' insist that they are Marxists, but on closer examination one can find that their 'Marxism' amounts to little more than the neutralising of its revolutionary impulse. Integration and reformism instead of revolution. They spread a version of Marxism that is more like something derived from Friedrich von Hayek than from Karl Marx.

The mainstream of the *Antideutsche* is strictly against anti-capitalism and anti-capitalist struggle, because such a struggle 'always end in barbarism'. So, they say, we have to restrict our criticism to political economy. A leading 'anti-German' theorist, Stephan Grigat, says that "Communism is nothing more than the movement of materialistic criticism". With such a point of view, class struggle is removed from the practical agenda of global change: in other words, the negation of Marx's 11th thesis on Feuerbach: "Philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to change it."

Many 'anti-Germans' refer especially to the value theory of Moishe Postone, who reduces class struggle to a mere contradiction within the relations of capital - an interpretation without any potential to open the way for a free society and the emancipation of its people.

Then there is a concept that is very important for 'anti-German' ideology: the 'automatic subject' of Karl Marx. Everybody knows that for Marx capital is a social-economic relation that is produced and reproduced by human agency within given structures. Hence, it can be liquidated and re-ordered through human agency. But the *Antideutsche*

of role in rise of Hitler

mainstream, in the name of Karl Marx, says that capitalism is the automatic subject and interprets this to mean a mystical, irrational structure moving independently of any agency. They deny that the relations of capital are those of class. Some 'anti-Germans' go so far as to deny the existence of class and class relations.

Capitalism, they say, is the irrational logic of a subjectless 'capitalistic self-purpose'. The denial that capitalism is a man-made social-economic structure is at the core of 'anti-German' ideology: because capitalism arose historically and reproduces itself in an entirely automatic fashion, its limits can likewise only be set according to the same automatic logic. The 'automatic subject' is viewed as a god-like entity.

The consequence of this type of thinking is that humanity is powerless to do anything other than sit and wait - and watch, as one disaster after another engulfs the world. It is a kind of political Buddhism, where everything depends on fate. It is a 'Marxism' without a proletariat, without class war and without revolution, presided over by an impotent Marx.

It would seem that there is a close relationship between the critical theory of Theodor W Adorno and the thinking of the 'anti-Germans'. They claim in some way to be spiritual successors of Adorno, but if you take a closer look you can see that they do not actually base their ideas on *any* critical theory. Even on the essentials the 'anti-Germans' contradict critical theory.

For example, does the proletariat have any role as an agent of global change? According to Joachim Bruhn, one of the chief 'anti-German' ideologists, the revolutionary impulse of the European proletariat ended with the Spanish revolution in 1936 and will never reappear.¹¹ He assumes the complete historical failure of the proletariat, which was only ever a passing moment in the transition from the formal subsumption of labour under capital to its *real* subsumption. The proletariat is now seen as impotent individuals dominated by capital - a system which no longer allows for social contradiction or for class and human agency.

The proletariat represents the fetishisation of labour in the sense of the Nazi slogan, *Arbeit macht frei* ('Work sets you free') - that is the opinion of the mainstream of the 'anti-Germans'. The proletariat is no longer capable of class war, let alone socialism. Its existence can only be manifested through fascism and anti-Semitism. So the 'anti-Germans' think that the priority is to ensure that the proletariat can never again become a fascist *Volksgemeinschaft* - in order to repress its fascistic impulses it must be integrated into bourgeois society.

The 'anti-Germans' quote Adorno almost as a founding father of their ideology, but I want to stress that Adorno has nothing in common with their cultural pessimism. In 1969, the year that he died, he wrote a work focusing on the contradiction between class and society: *Can one live after Auschwitz? - a philosophical reader*, in which he says the following:

"The rigidified institutions, the relations of production, are not Being as such. Even in their omnipotence they are man-made and revocable. In their relationship to the subjects from which they originate and which they enclose they remain thoroughly antagonistic. Not only does the whole demand its own modification in order not to perish, but by virtue

of its antagonistic essence it is also impossible for it to extort that complete identity with human beings that is relished in negative utopias."¹²

So you see that Adorno does not agree with this despair with civilisation that characterises 'anti-German' thought. Adorno also said in 1969 that capitalist society remains founded on class war today just as much as when it emerged. So he never renounced the idea of class struggle and human agency.

Another very important issue with the 'anti-German' ideology is the concept of anti-Semitism. For Moishe Postone, whom they constantly refer to, Auschwitz was an attempt to exterminate value.¹³ But Postone made a big mistake in his theory. From the fact that Karl Marx at the beginning of his *Capital* abstracts from the use-value of the produced commodity - something he did only for methodological reasons, just to analyse their value - Postone draws the false conclusion that value itself is "abstract". And because some anti-Semites have characterised the "power of the Jews" as "abstract" Postone deduces that their hate is directed at the value which they personalise as being in "the Jews". And so his 'anti-German' supporters maintain that the holocaust was not a phenomenon of capitalist society: it was in fact an *anti-capitalist* phenomenon. If you look at the book by Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of enlightenment*, you get a completely different perspective on modern anti-Semitism. Adorno and Horkheimer regarded it as a form of false consciousness within capitalism, which distracted the aggression from the capitalist to the Jew.

I will give you one example: "The responsibility of the circulation sector for exploitation is a socially necessary pretence. The Jews were not the sole

owners of the circulation sector, but they have been active in it for so long that they mirrored, in their own ways, the hatred they had always borne. Unlike their Aryan colleagues, they were still largely denied access to the origins of surplus value. It was a long time before, with difficulty, they were allowed to own means of production."¹⁴

In the chapter, 'Elements of anti-Semitism', you will find a lot of very interesting analysis on how anti-Semitism is connected to capitalism. One cannot be divided from the other - anti-Semitism is not an *anti-capitalist* phenomenon.

Practice

Let me turn now to the actual political practice of the 'anti-German' movement. As I have noted, the 'anti-Germans' demand unconditional solidarity with the state of Israel and by extension the 'defence' forces of the USA. This means that they condemn all forms of criticism of Israel and all forms of protest and resistance against Israel and Zionism as pure anti-Semitism and nothing but anti-Semitism.

For the *Antideutsche*, anti-Zionism is just anti-Semitism in an acceptable form. In practice this means that they oppose not just anti-Zionism, but anti-imperialism, internationalism and especially Islam. For them Islam is the Nazism of today. They say: "Never again, Germany; never again, Islam".

It is important to understand the depth of 'anti-German' hatred for the leftwing movement as a whole. They hate the concept of the Marxist-Leninist party. To quote one 'anti-German' website: "Down with aggressive criticism of capitalism, anti-Semitism, anti-Zionism and anti-Americanism! Take away the rights of the German left and other Nazis! Never again, Germany! Solidarity with

Israel!"¹⁵

One of my favourite pieces of *Antideutsche* nonsense is taken from a sticker produced around the time of the second Gulf War against Iraq in 2003. It has a picture of bomber pilots and the words, "Sir Arthur Harris did the right thing. Mr Rumsfeld, proceed with his anti-fascist mission!"¹⁶ A very typical slogan of the anti-Germans is: "IDF in Ramallah is the real anti-fa!" Another rhyming chant is: "We wear Gucci, we wear Prada - death to the intifada!"

Lifestyle is a very important part of 'anti-German' politics. They are aggressively pro-consumption, prohedonism and pro-gentrification.¹⁷ They are pro-culture industry, pro-McDonald's - which for them is a symbol of civilisation and progress. Very central in this lifestyle is fetishising Israel. They repeat the usual neo-con lines about Israel being the 'only real democracy in the region', how its a paradise for homosexuals in contrast to the Arab states, how the Israeli Defence Force is the most moral army in the world, and so on.

The 'anti-Germans' also have a thriving subculture. The band Egotronic plays to sell-out concerts, with its homages to the old punk-rock scene, but the neoliberal politics of the music stand in stark contrast. Egotronic calls for solidarity with the IDF and support for the war on Gaza. Its lead singer has even said that a Die Linke politician, Anne Höger, who took part in the Gaza relief flotilla deserves a bullet in the head. He even dedicated the song, 'Hunting Nazis', to her!

The most important media outlet for the 'anti-Germans' is *Bahamas*, although there are also more moderate publications. For example, until 1990 *Konkret* was actually a straightforward anti-imperialist, anti-Zionist magazine, but it suddenly metamorphosed into an 'anti-German' journal: it supported the first Gulf War in 1991, for example. Then there are the vulgar magazines - *Jungle World* for example - for the more casual and life-stylist 'anti-Germans'. I always joke that these are the 'party Zionists'.

Another problem we have is the position of the *Antideutsche* within broadcasting. In fact most independent radio stations are now in the hands of the 'anti-German' movement. In Hamburg SFK radio regularly spreads rumours about individuals involved in the anti-imperialist movement. For example, it was claimed that anti-imperialist activists in Hamburg were planning "pogroms" against the Jewish community.

It is important to understand just how far these people are prepared to go politically. For example, the Bahamas 'anti-Germans' are in solidarity with the English Defence League. According to their reasoning, the EDL is a very good, patriotic organisation, which embodies the spirit of Churchill (who was a *real* anti-German), so we have to be close to them.¹⁸

Finally, let me touch on the influence of the 'anti-Germans' within Die Linke. Their neo-con ideology has been responsible for promoting significant changes in party policy. In the past Die Linke was critical of Israel and called for solidarity with the Palestinians. But now a part of the party is pro-Israel.

In 2011 the Die Linke fraction in the Bundestag decided unanimously and published a declaration in which anti-Semitism was redefined along neo-conservative lines. Examples of anti-Semitism are: demanding a one-state solution; taking part in the Gaza flotilla; and boycotting Israeli goods.¹⁹

No other party in Germany has adopted such a definition of anti-Semitism.

The problem we have on the streets is that the 'anti-Germans' do not just talk aggressively: they *act* aggressively. Some work closely with the political police - and they are proud of it. They make malicious false charges against anti-imperialists.

Historic burden

So what is the 'anti-German' movement? Since the founding of the Berlin republic there has been a strong tendency in Germany to share the historic burden of National Socialist history - including the anti-fascist imperative of 'No more wars', which is seen as rather obstructive to military operation like the one in Afghanistan.

While the right either denies the holocaust or tries to put an end to debates about it, the ex-left pursues similar goals through a presumptuous and distasteful lack of distance from, as well as a hostile takeover of, all those they identify as Jewish victims. But the desire to be aligned with innocent victims - without ever having had to suffer, of course - goes hand in hand with another desire: to shed not only the distasteful history of that victimisation, but also the chauvinist pain of military defeat. To be associated with the historical victors, in other words.

The Zionist 'Bear Jew' of the film *Inglourious basterds* who defends the eastern borders of the civilised west against the barbaric Islamo-Nazis represents this 'anti-German' fantasy and projected identity. On the other hand, Jews who embody the extinct diasporic world and the related experience of suffering, as well as the Jewry to which the Marxist philosopher, Max Horkheimer, once attributed an "infinite gentleness", are treated with contempt by the 'anti-Germans'. Mourning for the victims of the holocaust - just like committing to anti-militarism and peace - is perceived as 'unsexy'. They prefer to celebrate the liberation of Auschwitz with a week of raves, as they chant, "Palestine, on your knees - the settlers are coming back" or "Bomber Harris, superstar, come and join my anti-fa".

The Nazis' grandchildren today claim to be the successors of the Allied 'liberators' ●

Notes

1. <http://dissonanz.wordpress.com/2010/06/06/12-juni-kundgebung-gegen-das-bundnis-der-kriegstreiber-von-linkspartei-und-hamas>,
2. <http://platus1917.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/antideutsch2.jpg>.
3. www.myspace.com/progressiv_antifa/photos/13234369.
4. <http://groupmerkava.blogspot.de>.
5. www.trend.infopartisan.net/trd0503/t220503.html.
6. www.ca-ira.net/isf/beitraege/bruhn-metaphysik.klasse.html.
7. www.matthiaskuentzel.de/contents/das-erbe-des-mufti.
8. G Achcar *The Arabs and the holocaust* London 2011.
9. <http://redaktion-bahamas.org/auswahl/web42-2.html>.
10. <http://kriegistfrieden.wordpress.com/category/vorbilder/karl-marx>.
11. www.ca-ira.net/verlag/leseproben/huhn-etatismus_lp-bruhn-avantgarde.html.
12. TW Adorno *Can one live after Auschwitz? - a philosophical reader* Stanford 2033, p120.
13. www.audiodactproject.org/other/postone1.html.
14. TW Adorno and M Horkheimer *Dialectic of enlightenment* London 1997, p174.
15. <http://aad.blogspot.de/2008/08/20/honi-soit-qui-mal-y-pense>.
16. <http://twoday.net/static/kommunikationsgue-rilla/images/harris1.jpg>.
17. www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=452164398129840&set=a.447541671925446.114292.447162631963350&type=1&theater.
18. www.redaktion-bahamas.org/auswahl/web59-2.html.
19. www.die-linke.de/nc/dielinke/nachrichten/detail/artikel/entschieden-gegen-antisemitismus.

Assoziation Dämmerung

The group to which I belong to, the Assoziation Dämmerung, is based in Hamburg. The name refers to a collection of aphorisms written by Max Horkheimer, which were published on the eve of the Third Reich. The word *Dämmerung* has a double meaning in German, referring to dawn on the one hand and dusk on the other. What Horkheimer was trying to say was that it is up to the working class to rise against burgeoning fascism or be paralysed and silent for many, many years.

One of our key subjects is the Marxist theory of the human-nature relationship and the perspective of animal liberation. For our group it is very important to revive internationalism and to practise international solidarity. One significant activity was the organisation of an anti-repression conference called New Roads of Solidarity, which was held in Hamburg in 2010 with speakers from all over the world, including the US and Israel.

The other main practice we engage in is what you might call ideological critique. In particular we critique the regressive developments on the German

left and we have organised a conference called Well Adjusted People - taken from a quote from Theodor Adorno - where we looked at the decline of autonomism in Germany. Also, we are in a big coalition with other Marxists and communist groups involved in organising an ongoing series of events called Capitalism in Crisis.

I myself come from a union background, and for more than 15 years was chair of a union committee in a Hamburg theatre - if any of you want to know how to silence Andrew-Lloyd Webber then you can ask me! I helped organise a successful musical theatre strike in Germany to fight for wage contracts. At the moment I work as a freelance journalist for the biggest socialist daily paper, *Neues Deutschland*, for the leftwing magazine, *Hintergrund*, and also for a union art magazine called *Kunst und Kultur*. One of the issues I focus on is the influence of the culture industry, especially its influence in war propaganda. I belong to a milieu which thinks that the average leftwinger is underestimating the level of indoctrination that the culture industry is responsible for ●

THE LEFT

Up the Swanny

The Anti-Capitalist Initiative hosted two events over the weekend of December 1-2. **Mark Fischer** was not impressed

Comrade Joana Ramiro, who gave the welcome speech at the 250-300-strong Anti-Capitalist Initiative-sponsored 'Up the anti: reclaim the future' conference on Saturday December 1, was quite unique: she was the only platform speaker on the day who was actually tagged as 'ACI'.

What was striking about the event was the virtual absence of ACI speakers, or of any real voice for the group that had been at the centre of organising the whole shebang. Instead it seems that the comrades consciously limited their role to just providing a neutral 'space' for discussion; or, as leading ACIer Simon Hardy puts it in his initial assessment of the event, "We wanted to build a broad, leftwing conference that appraised the big questions facing radical politics in a fraternal atmosphere of critical debate, where people from different political traditions (and none) could discuss the future of the movement and progressive politics more generally."

The politically 'shy' shell of this group has a political kernel to it, of course. That is, the adaptation of the comrades around Simon Hardy and Luke Cooper, who collectively walked out of Workers Power earlier this year, to the anarcho/autonomist/left-liberal milieu that WP once cynically sought to recruit from. This adaptation is shared by the other major component of the ACI, Permanent Revolution (an earlier split from WP). However, as we predicted, members have actually leaked the other way.

So, while Joana's opening was rather breathless - the day, which was by then only three minutes old, was already "very exciting", she assured us - I would actually dub the comrade's speech as 'keynote', in that it flagged up a number of important themes and ideas that other ex-WP comrades expressed over the weekend. The event was part of the process of "leaving superfluous arguments behind", she told us. Now the central challenge we had was to "do more, do it more radically and do it now".

This impatience with the controversies and schisms that have characterised the Marxist movement manifests itself in two forms. In my contribution to the second day's 'Get organised' event (a smaller, 30-40-strong gathering that aimed - rather desperately, I thought - to turn the ACI into "a more defined and recognisable movement", according to its advertising puff), I actually applauded the *spirit* that led young comrades like Joana to be keen to get cracking. However, 'didn't do enough stuff' was not a convincing diagnosis for the drawn-out programmatic crisis and decay of the workers' movement in the 20th century, I suggested.

Youthful impatience is forgivable. However, what is far more poisonous is its manifestation in more experienced comrades; that simply speaks of cynicism. "I'm sick of talking to the left," Dan Jefferies told us at the Sunday organising meeting. After all, "Marxism is not about 10 people speaking about the Russian Revolution above a pub," he categorically asserted. (Actually, comrade, given specific historical circumstances and national

conditions, that *is* what it is about.)

This paper has chronicled for years the rather ugly consequences that the search for 'relevance' through unprincipled accommodation to forces to your right can produce: the key one is the demand that the Marxist left shuts its mouth in the interests of 'unity', as we have repeatedly seen. Although the two ACI-hosted events were relatively open and chairs allowed critics speaking rights, an incident was recounted at the 'Get organised' event that may have worrying implications, as might the knee-jerk responses of some ACIers present.

Philistinism

Comrade Barbara Dorn of the International Bolshevik Tendency - which is a recognised part of the ACI - complained about a decision of the alliance's web team to spike an article on Greece submitted by her organisation (it was subsequently published after protests). Leading Permanent Revolution² member Stuart King claimed that the article had been too long and opined that this created a "bad impression" and as a result "people won't read it". What we "don't want" on the ACI's website he said, "is walls of print". Comrade King was backed up by ACIer Rachel Archer, who told us that a priority for her organisation was "trying to get away from long articles and from alienating people".

This cheery philistinism was a recurring theme, unfortunately. In another contribution, comrade Jefferies argued against a written contribution authored by ex-CPGBer Cat Rylance, which, amongst other things, made a case for a programme to be adopted in the future "as a tool of accountability for the members against the leadership". Dan shrugged and said that "the Bolsheviks didn't have a programme for every situation" and that more often than not they made do with simple conjunctural slogans like "Land, peace and bread". Luke Cooper implied that a minimum programme for communists was simply a low-level shopping list of run-of-the-mill demands on "wages, conditions" and the like.

While I agree with comrade Hardy that some of the openings on the Saturday could have been better, I found the criticism he made of the only one he explicitly branded as rough to be equally philistine. The session entitled 'Radical interpretations of the crisis' (involving Hillel Ticktin, David Graeber, Saul Newman and James Woudhuysen) had received "mixed, indeed many negative, reviews that were summed up by one person as 'four middle-aged white men arguing with each other'".³ If that indeed was the summation of the criticism, then it was moronic, not to beat around the bush ...

Even that hoary old bugbear of the right wing of the workers' movement - democratic centralism - made an appearance in ACIers' contributions. A sensitive theme for the ACI throughout the day, for example, was one flagged up in the publicity blurb: "Should we retain the current autonomous structure that allows local groups to organise their own strategies and events? ... what should the balance between coordination and autonomy be?" Repeatedly, the ex-WP comrades spoke about their years

of (non-recreational) bondage in that sect and recounted tales of leaflets for local branches or for comrades active in a particular union being drafted by out-of-touch-comrades at centre. This was something comrade Hardy dubbed an "ultra-Bolshevik" form of organisation, implying heavily that what he called "democratic centralism" was counterposed to autonomy.⁴

When comrades Hardy and Cooper led the split from WP that rapidly melted into the ACI, they confided to some CPGB comrades that material we had published in the *Weekly Worker* on the authentic history of Lenin, the Bolsheviks, the model of a mass Marxist party and democratic centralism had influenced their thinking. I have to say, comrades, it really does not show.

In fact, ACI comrades (PR included) seem to have a consensus that what is required in the here and now is, as Luke Cooper put it, "a Syriza-type organisation in Britain". Comrade Hardy writes in the autumn issue of the journal *Permanent Revolution* on the "need for a united left". Again, Syriza is cited as an example of what can be achieved. Now this is true, but only in a narrow sense. At one time, we made a parallel point about the left in Scotland and its enhanced societal impact when the serious battalions came together in the Scottish Socialist Party - the problem was the politics. However, it is clear that Hardy and his comrades regard it as a given that said united entity cannot be Marxist; it will instead be a "credible left", he writes evasively.⁵

Comrade Hardy becomes more explicit when he writes of "the kind of programme" any such new formation should have: "Certainly it should have an anti-capitalist basis, though it can leave some of the bigger questions unresolved ...".⁶ However, he really *nails* it when he writes that the 'action programme' for his 'Syriza-type' party could potentially "focus on the goals that Dan Hind identifies ...".

Now I think the author/journalist Dan Hind has some interesting things to say. Essentially he is a left-liberal mainstream commentator and I thoroughly enjoyed his thought-provoking session at 'Up the anti', where he spoke with Flaminia Giambalvo (*Occupy Times*) and Hicham Yezza (*Ceasefire*) on 'What should 21st century journalism look like?' However, the notion that the Marxist left should look to *him* for the political platform of our unity is perverse.⁷

Unviability

Of course, the ACI comrades will be generally pleased with Saturday's 'Up the anti' conference - given the nature of their project, they have a right to be. But the 'Get organised' event which followed the next day will not be viewed as successful, I suspect. What it starkly exposed was the fragility and unviability of the whole hopeless project.

This gathering was convened, according to its publicity, to "discuss the direction" the organisation should now move in and also for participants to "voice their position on a number of policy platforms". Readers will recall that the ACI majority around comrades Cooper and Hardy have

repeatedly put off the discussion and adoption of any sort of even sketchy political platform. This caused its then largest component - the 'parent' group, Workers Power itself - to leave in frustration, dubbing the ACI "useless for the tasks that alone would give it some meaning". And, as illustrated by the 'Get organised' meeting, WP was also right that its ex-comrades had "developed an aversion to any serious discussion of programme" - so, as has been its wont, exit Workers Power, stage left.⁸

In fact, the December 2 'Get organised' event revealed the extent to which the ACI is floundering. Although there were policy motions to be debated, amended and voted on by the assembled comrades, the decision was once again taken to defer discussion and voting on the *politics* of the ACI until a later date. Clearly, the comrades involved sense the fragility of this profoundly unconvincing Potemkin village and are not keen to commit the organisation to political specifics. Comrades such as Simon Hardy and Stuart King initially came forward with motions and amendments that would have given the organisation a defined membership structure and a fairly extensive platform (opposition to all cuts, abolition of immigration controls, support for the Palestinians, etc).

In the debate, comrade King initially argued quite feebly - almost apolitically - that, as the organisation was producing occasional national bulletins, it needed national positions. However, both he and comrade Hardy allowed themselves to be persuaded that this was premature. A number of reasons were offered for this. A speaker from the floor cautioned against adopting "detailed platforms too soon" (like eight months into your existence as an organisation?). Comrade Hardy concurred that there be "a general discussion of principles" before policy specifics could be hammered out. And tellingly all agreed that the debate in the local branches had been totally inadequate.

The real reason, of course, is the determination of the 'Marxists' not to offend the localist and spontaneist prejudices of the sparse anarcho-'anti-capitalist' elements the ACI has managed to attract. A written contribution to the pre-conference bulletin from members of the Brighton New Left Initiative posed the question, "What unites us?" Apparently it is only "precisely the desire *not* to jump into already tested organisational structures". Practically, this means that "we need to keep our autonomy, as local groups, in terms of the struggles we seek to defend" and thus the ACI should remain "simply as an aggregate of its local branches".

The bulk of the 'Marxists' present subordinated themselves to this miserable, anti-democratic perspective. Thus no vote, no serious perspectives ... no chance, in other words.

But will there be any more discussion prior to the next ACI conference? A chance to nail down differences and areas of agreement as a prelude to the adoption of firm political positions? An IBT leaflet distributed on the day told us that this organisation had engaged with the ACI "as a possible opportunity to debate contrasting political ideas".

But "we were disappointed", they write flatly. Clearly, outside of the occasional national event staffed with 'celebs', the organisation barely exists: "Although the groups in Manchester and Brighton seemed to have a little more life, in London, where our comrades were working, it was an uphill struggle to arrange regular political discussions."

Naive

The IBT at least has the merit of being clear about what it wants out of the Anti-Capitalist Initiative: members. Not so the couple of comrades who left our ranks for the ACI. Cat Rylance and Chris Trafford were the motivators of motion 3 and this was supported by a written contribution which - while transparently sincere - was simply wrongheaded. It advocated that the ACI recognise the need for a serious critical engagement with the left and - more controversially for those assembled on December 2 - the need in the not too distant future to agree a "document of strategy" rather than a 'here today, gone tomorrow' "list of all our opinions": a "programme", in other words.

I joked with comrade Rylance that she seemed to be engaged in an attempt to turn the ACI into a fluffy version of the CPGB: I got an amused, but firm 'no'. It is gratifying in a sense that these comrades retain (a version of) our politics and fight in this forum for it. However, it is naive and, ultimately, hopeless. At the beginning of the day, not the end, you have to *characterise* the political nature of the configurations our movement throws up as its crisis unfolds. Is it the answer? Does it even contain *part* of it?

For example, our intervention in the Socialist Alliance had a totally different character from our participation in Respect. We were loyal partisans of the first process, as it was a partial break from sectarianism for the key organisations of the revolutionary left in this country; we threw polemical and constitutional 'bombs' into the latter, as it embodied a reassertion by the Socialist Workers Party of not just popular frontism, but the opportunist impatience for an immediate political breakthrough.

The ACI is a product of the ugly decay and splintering of the left and *nothing* in its practice or in its methodology shows that it has learned *any* positive lessons from the series of political disasters the ex-WP comrades have inflicted on themselves in past years. 'Up the anti'? Up the Swanny, more like ●

mark.fischer@weeklyworker.org.uk

Notes

1. <http://anticapitalists.org/2012/12/03/initial-reflections-on-up-the-anti>.
2. PR split from WP in 2006 - see *Weekly Worker* July 6 2006.
3. <http://anticapitalists.org/2012/12/03/initial-reflections-on-up-the-anti>.
4. A nonsense, of course. See *Weekly Worker* November 8 2004.
5. *Permanent revolution* autumn 2012, p8.
6. *Ibid*.
7. "Campaign for an end to the country's predatory foreign policy, for the dismantling of the offshore network, for democratic control of the central banks, urgent action to address the threat of catastrophic climate change and the reform of the national media regimes" (Dan Hind: www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/08/201282371559392829.html).
8. *Weekly Worker* August 2.

IRAN

Tudeh's inglorious role

Ervand Abrahamian **The coup: 1953, the CIA and the roots of modern US-Iranian relations** New Press, 2013, pp304, £16.84

With the continuing efforts made by the self-proclaimed global imperial power, the USA, to achieve 'regime change' in Iran, it is timely that a book about the 1953 coup - in which the US, with the help of the British government, carried out exactly such regime change - has been published. The coup was aimed against Mohammad Mosaddegh's National Front government, which had nationalised the British-controlled Iranian oil industries.

If Los Angeles-based Iranian TV stations or Facebook campaigns have given the imperialists a false impression that a nation is waiting to be liberated by the US and its allies, this book should remind them why there is in fact still a deep and widespread hostility in Iran towards the USA and Britain: precisely because of this event.

The historical irony is that the forefathers of the current dictators in Tehran were indeed part of the very same 'pro-democracy' coalition of forces that helped the US in its 1953 coup. The Shi'ite hierarchy was instrumental in it. Indeed the coup succeeded at the second attempt because of the help accorded by Shi'ite rent-a-crowd mullahs. The same rabble-rousers who were instrumental in helping the CIA save the shah in 1953 organised riots two decades later in support of ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. Indeed, the whole calamity called the 'Islamic Republic of Iran' would not have come into existence if it had not been for that coup.

The last century or so of Iranian history has been shaped by four such regime changes. The combined effects have held back the Iranian people's aspiration for democracy and progress enormously. The first was organised by the Russian Cossack army in order to place Mohammad Shah Qajar on the throne and defeat the Constitutional Revolution of 1906. The second, in 1921, was organised by the British, who had by then taken over control from the Russians, to suppress the newly formed soviet republic in Gilan province and establish Reza Shah's military dictatorship, but the third one - carried out by the Allies during World War II - ousted the very same Reza Shah (for supporting Hitler). Finally the 1953 coup firmly reinstated his son on the throne. This book covers the latter part of the period leading up to the coup.

This last regime change reversed the democratic changes gained after the fall of Reza Shah's dictatorship, and installed a grateful pro-US shah carrying out pro-imperialist policies. These were directly responsible over two decades later for dropping political power into the lap of the mullahs - who, in terms of Iranian social history, could be called the last remnants of Asiatic despotism. Of course, the situation now is entirely different. Nevertheless, when one looks into this last example of US-led

regime change in Iran one cannot but imagine what further horrors await us. I wonder what odds they will give against the next regime change leading to the rule of even more prehistoric thugs.

The coup, therefore, covers an important period in Iranian history. The author, once associated with the Tudeh Party,² is a well known historian of contemporary Iran and has published a number of important books. However, the stated aim of his current work is rather more limited. While Abrahamian knows well the discourse of the time and has the resources to dig deeper, he decided to limit the subject matter to challenging the narrative offered by US and British governments at the time: they had tried to negotiate in good faith, but because of Mosaddegh's intransigence had no alternative but to back the coup.

The hypocrisy behind this explanation has long been exposed and the book does well to go over the reasoning again. However, especially after the publication in recent years of diplomatic documents of the period, there is probably no-one left who still accepts such stories (with the exception, of course, of Fox News!).

The author concludes in the last chapter that the "dismantling of the Tudeh and National Front left a gaping political vacuum ... filled eventually by the Islamic movement". But in the light of such hindsight it would have also been helpful to examine in a little more detail the tendencies in that history and the role of the particular currents which set the scene for this later takeover. The coup not only marginalised the so-called "democratic and secular" forces (although calling Mosaddegh "secular" or the Tudeh Party "democratic" is hardly credible), but actually showed the bankruptcy of both bourgeois nationalism and Stalinism. This bankruptcy is not exclusive to Iran, of course. Syria, Egypt and Iraq have all suffered similar fates.

Indeed by limiting himself to the actual coup

Abrahamian offers only a cursory glance at the period immediately after the war, without which the background to 1953 cannot be understood. He, therefore, conveniently omits the role of Tudeh and its effects on the workers' movement in Iran. The reader is left with no answers as to why the working class did not manage to play a more important role in the nationalisation movement and indeed how Mosaddegh succeeded in becoming the leader of this movement. On this important aspect of the period, even within its own scope, the book has many shortcomings.

The Tudeh Party was built in 1941 on the ashes of the old Communist Party of Iran (destroyed by the combined efforts of Reza Shah and Stalin³) and, as its name suggests (Tudeh means 'the multitude', 'the masses'), it was formed on the basis of 'popular front' policies promoted by the Soviet Union before and during the war. As Reza Shah's dictatorship had shut down all political parties, there were no bourgeois parties of any substance with which to form a popular front. The USSR, therefore, helped create one from scratch. At first it was not even claimed that Tudeh was a workers' party, let alone either communist. It even attracted 'intellectuals' who had been Hitler sympathisers only a few years earlier. But it

grew rapidly to become the largest political party in Iran with a strong base within the new workers' movement which had started to organise and fight for its rights after the war.

Indeed the demand for the nationalisation of the oil industries was first raised by the striking oil workers. What appears so strange is the fact that the Tudeh Party, with its huge support amongst the striking workers, at no time attempted to radicalise this movement or raise the demand for nationalisation under workers' control. The reason was that it was at the time supporting the Soviet Union's bid for the oil concessions in the Caspian Sea. Instead, Tudeh joined Ahmed Ghavam's 1952 bourgeois government, which promised to accede to Soviet wishes. This government was against nationalisation and promoted what was called a "positive balance" in foreign policy, (ie, promising not only to respect British oil concessions, but to grant similar ones to the US in the Gulf and the Soviet Union in the Caspian Sea).

The book hardly deals with any of this. But the period was crucial in sidelining the workers' movement and led to the gradual rise to fame of Mosaddegh as the champion of Iranian independence. This is the same Mosaddegh who had earlier (during the 14th parliament) blocked the debate on nationalisation by asking his followers to withdraw support for the bill proposed by a number of independent deputies. Once again the book does not mention any of this. The Soviet Union was duped by Ghavam's government into withdrawing support from the Azari and Kurdish national movements, paving the way for the brutal military repression by Tehran. The disastrous effects of this policy on the national movements in Iran cannot be underestimated.

The book discusses the strength of

the Tudeh military organisation and discusses why the party did not carry out its own coup. But this is hardly the central question. The real criticism of Tudeh relates to the fact that it did nothing on the day of the coup, despite its military organisation, to help the popular resistance against the armed thugs roaming Tehran's streets. Furthermore, the book does not cover the period in which the Tudeh Party, having lost its influence within the nationalisation movement and having helped create the situation leading to Mosaddegh's leadership, instead of supporting nationalisation was calling it a sham and accusing its popular leader of being a US agent. Whilst the masses were mobilising around the nationalisation question, Tudeh members were busy collecting signatures for the first anti-cold war peace conference in Beijing.

So readers searching for crucial answers concerning the failure of the workers' movement to establish itself within the nationalisation movement and the role of the Tudeh Party in the fiasco that followed will be at a loss. Although the book mentions the fact that the Shi'ite hierarchy supported the coup, it does not detail this to any extent which would shed light on the rise to prominence of Khomeini's faction (whose Islamic government the Tudeh Party supported to the last breath of its jailed leaders).

However, despite all this, for those unfamiliar with the events of 1953 *The coup* is a very useful contribution - well researched, with plenty of new facts. If you want to know what an imperialist 'pro-democracy' movement looks like, this book explains in graphic detail its constituent parts and how it was bought and organised. US imperialists have used very similar tactics in many other countries ●

Torab Saleth

Notes

1. A loose coalition of various bourgeois nationalist parties.
2. His current political affiliations are unknown. He has been living in the USA for many years and is now associated with the semi-official *Iranian Lobby* with its pro-regime leanings.
3. Four of its main leaders were executed in 1938 after the Moscow trials and there is also strong circumstantial evidence suggesting those at the top of the new party had a hand in the murder of a number of communist leaders imprisoned by Reza Shah.

Mohamed Mossadegh: took wind out of sails of opportunist 'official communists'



REVIEW

A legacy of struggle

Joseph M Fewster **The keelmen of Tyneside: labour organisation and conflict in the north-east coal industry 1600-1830** The Boydell Press, 2011, pp232, £60



River Tyne 1823: class battles

There will be few Tynesiders who do not know the local song, 'Weel may the keel row', which celebrates the life and labours of the 'keel lads o' coaly Tyne'. Most will also know perhaps, what the keel was and what the keelmen did.

More than that only regional historians will know - and not many among them either. Most local histories make a nod in the direction of the keelmen, and some will enumerate the long list of strikes and riots which raged along the river from the 1600s to their demise in the 1860s; though usually without detail of what the strikes were about or how the men were organised.

The keelmen, who worked on the boats (keels) carrying coal along both the Tyne and Wear, left a rich legacy of music and song. It was legendary for its powerful dialect, the form of which was said to be distinctly their own. This has been a matter of conjecture for some time, some saying it was 'Scottish' or 'Scotto-Geordie'. I personally have resisted these descriptions, believing them to be based on a misunderstanding of the ethnic composition of Tyneside/Northumbria and its dialect, which was almost identical to what came to be called 'La'lands', or 'Scots'.

With this work, we at last get some colour and facts to bolster the assumptions and vacuums of previous historians. Joseph M Fewster for the first time is able to demonstrate that indeed near enough half of the Tyneside keelmen not only came from Scotland (though where exactly is only hinted at - "the borders", "Tynedale" and "Reddesdale", all of which are more Northumbrian than 'Scottish' anyway), but actually still declared themselves to be 'residents

of Scotland'.

In a word, they were migrant workers, heading home for the winter months and returning to work the keels in the summer. They were described as the 'young'uns with families' and seemed to work as offshore oilworkers do today, with long spells on and off the rig. This subject may not be as fascinating to others as it is to me, but the discovery seems to beg more questions and impose more assumptions.

The keelmen were highly skilled workers who not only learned to master the weird (dangerous) and unique craft, but also navigate the river Tyne, which in those days was undredged and peppered with sandbanks, many of them moving, and numerous wrecks and obstructions, together with rapid and turbulent stretches of water. The skill to carry this off could only be developed from years of local experience and knowledge, by men to all intents and purpose 'local'.

The Tyne keel was oval in shape, 42 feet long, 19 feet wide and cumbersome. It was skulled by a single, huge oar, which itself was more than 20 feet long, and manned by two men and a boy on the port side, while the skipper in unison with the crew managed a shorter oar which also served as a rudder. As it hit shallower water, it was propelled by long poles walked along the side of the craft pushing off the river bed. When the vessel managed to skulk to the river entrance, where the water was deep enough to accommodate the seagoing colliers, the coal was hand-filled from the keel through ports in the ship's side and stowed aboard. The loading itself was a task of monumental skill, with both vessels rising and falling on the

heavy swell and winds.

The author does not tell us why this large group of migrant workers came to Tyneside, or how they could from scratch learn to master such a specific and awkward craft, as well as gain the almost unique local knowledge needed to carry the shifting and dangerous cargo through the wrecks and obstructions, unloading them by hand in tidal waters given to lethal swells at the mouth of the river.

Class and ethnicity

We know that this was the most tightly guarded skill in the coal trade, with keelmen and their families living in discrete communities, intermarrying within it and passing on skills from father to son. In the absence of any explanation to the contrary, I believe these workers and their migration between what became 'Scotland' and 'Northumberland' probably predates the border and the Normans, and they considered the lands in which they worked as much their own as the ones further north, in which they chose to spend the winter months with their families.

Such migrations during harvest times - and those following the great fleet, as it landed catches from Peterhead to Whitby, gutting and curing fish, and involving armies of fisher lasses from right along that coast - was a fairly common phenomenon. The coal industry started to become a real industry way back in the 1100s with the keel becoming crucial to the export of the fuel, particularly to London. This was in all probability before the 'English'-based Normans seized Northumberland from Scotland's sphere of influence, or 'the lion' had tried to seize it back again in 1174 and, forced to accept defeat,

Scotland lost its southern territory. By 1384, when Richard II was ensuring that Tyne keels conformed to taxable specifications, the trade was already long established. So the proposition is far from fanciful.

To many readers such speculation over ethnicity and migration will be irrelevant, as it is the class strength and powerful industrial intervention of the workers as an organised body which is of key interest. The men clearly had one of the earliest 'trade unions' (those who are hog-tied by the definition of Beatrice and Sydney Webb will not like that term, but in practice that is what they were) - in existence since at least the early 1600s.

However, the ethnic question leads to a second interesting observation. The last surviving feature of this dynamic group of workers is the Keelmen's Hospital - still standing in all its glory on the Newcastle side of the (new) Tyne Bridge, just up from old Sandgate, where the keel and maritime community lived. Attempts to get it established from the early 1600s could be seen as an early example of community self-help and self-organisation, in the style of the later miners' welfare clubs, retirement and convalescent homes, sports and educational facilities. Both were driven by the necessity that nobody else was going to provide them, but in this case there was a more compelling reason.

As a large bulk of the keelmen were classed as 'non-resident', since they described their homes as being further north in Scotland, neither they nor their families could rely on the parish for relief in times of hardship, injury or death of a breadwinner. The keelmen as a community felt this huge injustice and devised a grand

scheme to establish a hospital, and a convalescent and retirement home. It was not to be that simple, and the scheme was wracked by controversy, strikes and disturbances, acts of parliament and countless petitions.

The author spends the best part of three chapters on the issue - from 1700, when the plot of land was first bought, through its construction to the near total eclipse of the skill in the late 1860s. At root was the organisation of the men themselves and their decision to impose a levy both for their society and for the hospital, together with the demand that the council - and more importantly the 'hostmen', who owned the coal trade and licensed the keels - to likewise pay a levy per keel. This to the owners was vexatious because (a) it empowered the workers and granted them a *de facto* closed shop and (b) it imposed regulations on the volume carried and stopped the keels carrying more coal than was safe. The hostmen had previously been able to dodge tax on the coal and avoid paying the keelers what they were due.

Eventually though, the keelmen made a lethal mistake in allowing "men of good standing, authority and principle" - ie, the hostmen themselves and the likes of magistrates (most of whom were coal-owners) - to become the trustees and governors of the facilities and funds, thus losing control of the product of their own endeavour and sacrifice. The governors wasted no time in imposing rules preventing men of "bad behaviour and standing" - ie, union activists, strikers and rioters - from using the facilities they had paid for, and even from working. This led to mass disturbance, petition and counter-petition, and argument in the houses of parliament. Daniel Defoe became a tireless fighter for

the workers against the monopolisers of privilege and wealth, and suffered massive abuse and slander as a result. The issue was never seriously resolved, although over many years the hold of the magistrates and masters was subject to more public scrutiny and legal regulation.

Not ‘Geordies’

The question of political allegiance and the Jacobites is briefly touched upon. Tynesiders, contrary to the designation ‘Geordies’, were never such (ie, supporters of King George). In fact they leaned heavily toward the Jacobite cause, which Northumberland had joined from the earliest times. Indeed the rebellion of 1715 had initially been meant to start with a Northumbrian rural march on Newcastle and rising by the ‘toon’ populace.

Fewster points out by contrast that hundreds of keelmen had signed a petition promising to defend the city against them, although how general that sentiment was we do not know. But the destination of the march was changed from Newcastle to Kelso - an easier start for the rebellion.

As for the demonstration of 1750 by keelmen, miners and sailors declaring Charles Stuart king and Newcastle Scottish, the author declares it to have been no more than a drunken prank. General Wade, on the other hand, dared not move his troops from Newcastle in 1745, because he did not trust the keelmen. In 1746, when rumours were rife of plans to ‘seize Newcastle’, magistrates did not dare act on information against two leading keelmen for fear of setting “the keelmen in motion, who are too ready to rise and become tumultuous upon the least pretence”.

Fewster sets aside a chapter apiece on the most important strike movements: 1710-38, 1740, when there were riots, 1744-50, 1809, 1819 and the ‘long stop’ of 1822, when the keelmen were badly defeated. The Keelmen’s repeated attempt to find justice by petition to parliament and challenges via the courts and the Lords are recorded. Despite the investment of large amounts of funds and enthusiasm by libertarian lawyers and politicians, these were repeatedly defeated in the interests of “free trade, commerce and profits”.

One of the most interesting chapters deals with the community’s resistance to being pressed into naval duties and the battle, both political and physical, against the press gangs - one the keelmen, almost uniquely among the nautical trades, won. The penultimate chapter deals with the death agony of the trade on the back of modern technology, and river improvements, both of which robbed the coal trade of its dependence upon the keelmen to transport the coal down river. The final chapter deals with a review of the long and vexed relationship between the city magistrates and the keelmen community.

During the strike of 1710 over newly imposed wage rates and fees for shipment of coals and ballast returning, “The keelmen proceeded to block navigation in the river ‘in a riotous and tumultuous manner’ and threaten to ‘pull down houses and to commit other great disorders’ unless their grievances were addressed. The magistrates were insulted and ‘opposed in a hostile manner’ when they read the proclamation against riots.”

As has occurred throughout history, troops and navy forces were sent for, almost as a matter of course - the city chiefs demanding that navy ships should remain at Shields to contain the river men. There are never enough volunteers and ‘noodles’, as they are locally called, to take on the keelmen, let alone put down the workers’ actions in pit, sea and river trades:

“Any keelmen who attempted to work were soon intimidated. A mob of more than one hundred women, armed with sticks and clubs, threatened to kill the crew of a keel laden with lead if they proceeded further. Several men boarded another keel and confined one of its crew in the stocks in Sandgate. Another man was beaten and condemned to death by a keelman posing as a judge ... One boasted that they would ‘turne levellers’ and seize provisions that came into market.”

In May 1719 acting (unusually) in concert with the Sunderland keelmen to jointly leave off work without an overall increase in their wage scales, the strikers “disregarded the proclamation against riots and, as the civil authorities were powerless to curb them, continued to act ‘in a riotous and dangerous

manner””. What is impressive during all of these actions is the resolve that, whatever the outcome of the particular demand, none of them would return to work unless all imprisoned men and women from their communities were released from jail. In one case a ship with impressed men had already put to sea and was engaged in battles with the Dutch, while the entire river was at a standstill demanding their immediate return. As luck would have it, both these respective battles were victorious and the men were not only released, but received a share of the bounty from the captured vessel far in excess of their wage for keeling.

Ongoing struggle

Some core issues recur again and again - ‘truck’ demands to be paid in coin and not kind, or beer; against the overloading of vessels shipping more chaldrons than they were paid for; for payment for having to return with a full vessel when weather would not allow loading at sea or for shipmen of ballast on the return trip. These demands were almost always conceded, only over time to be eroded and then resurfacing.

The great risings of 1740 had at their core an extreme winter, in which trade along the coast came to a stop. Continuous rain in August and September 1739 had devastated crops, and by March of the following year supplies were nearing exhaustion. The rich bought up stores of grain and food, speculators cornered supplies and forced up prices, and the poor began to starve and freeze in great numbers. Food riots by miners, keelmen, wagoners and their communities seized grain and provision stocks, and with great maturity sold them at customary prices to repay the merchants. Large numbers of women blocked the movement of grain destined for ships and export, while attempts to arrest ‘ringleaders’ were easily repulsed. At length, with delegates elected from the pits, wagon ways and keels, and the magistrates acting as arbiters, the merchants were forced to produce invoices and sell the grain and provisions at cost price.

Space does not allow for blow-by-blow accounts of all the strikes and riots and I can only heartily recommend that you buy the book and read it from start to end.

Alongside the raging battles over wages and conditions, a growing demand was for the restraint of the ‘staiths’ or ‘spouts’ - a new technology which, fed by railway lines, led chaldron wagons to the river to load the coal loose into shallow colliers directly. Steadily the numbers of spouts grew, displacing the men’s labour and obstructing the river, as they thrust out to meet the waiting vessels. Between 1837 and 1845 the quantity of coals capable of loading further downstream into deeper water, and directly into vessels, and coals loaded into shallow vessels directly upstream, grew by multiple progression. Steam tugs started to force themselves upon the trade, towing a number of keels behind them, loading directly from spouts or even by traditional drops, but eradicating more and more of the keelmen’s highly tuned skills. With the coming of the Tyne Improvement Act and the dredging of more and more of the river, bigger vessels could proceed further, to be loaded without the need for the keel or her crew.

The last hunting ground for the keelmen had been those further upstream beyond the bridges. The old Tyne Bridge, with its low arches preventing the dredging of upstream areas, had allowed the above-bridge keelmen to cling on, but the old bridge was demolished and replaced by a swing bridge in 1876, opening the way for extensive, deep dredging of the upper river. As the author notes, “Steam power, both on land and water, played a large part in the demise of the keelmen”, the last of those remaining in the hospital declaring: “Its them steamers that’s bust up the keelmen” - “It’s a bonny bad job, but it cannot be helped.”

The keelmen, a feature for 400 years and probably more, who stamped an indelible mark on the character, culture and dialect of Tyneside, were no more. But their hospital - a monument to their collective endeavour and the common working class cause - remains ●

David Douglass

What we fight for

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

office@cpgb.org.uk

Become a Communist Party member

Name _____

Address _____

Town/city _____

Postcode _____

Telephone _____ Age _____

Email _____ Date _____

Return to: Membership, CPGB, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX

Fighting fund Streamlining

My appeal last week for 11th-hour donations to our November fighting fund didn’t fall on deaf ears, I’m pleased to say. Three comrades transferred cash via PayPal on the last day of the month - thank you, PC and EJ (£50 each) and AN (£20). Add to this the three standing orders that also came through and we reached a final total of £1,481 - tantalisingly short of our £1,500 target.

But not a disaster by any means. Especially when you take into account recent problems some comrades have encountered with the website. There are immediate technical questions that have to be addressed, including errors on some pages and overall slowness. Like the *Weekly Worker* itself, however, our website is designed entirely by our own comrades, who learnt much on the hoof, having created the current site after a virus destroyed our old archive.

The same comrades are now preparing for a serious streamlining of the underlying code. We also want the website to be updated more frequently than the *Weekly Worker* publishing cycle allows. The aim is not just the odd article, but new podcasts and video series. Comrades will also be interested to hear that, following the positive response to the relaunched site early this year, the web team has already begun work on ‘version 2’. The aim is to make the valuable political material on it even more accessible, and the site more useful as an educational tool for both experienced comrades and those

new to Marxism.

Speaking of web readers, two comrades have reacted unexpectedly to my November 22 column. I had itemised some of the costs incurred in the production of the print version of the paper, and as a result they decided to cancel their subs - to save us money! As they read us online anyway, they saw no reason to burden us with the cost of postage. But both comrades are keeping up their PayPal or standing order payments.

While the postage savings involved are small, these much appreciated acts of solidarity did underscore an important point about the way our paper is accessed by most people. Last week, for example, we had 9,172 web readers, compared to the few hundred who read the printed version. Clearly, a significant minority subscribe at least partially as an act of solidarity.

But we do not intend to stop printing! We know how much the paper version is valued, and how useful it is on stalls and at meetings. Which is why we need that £1,500 each and every month.

Speaking of which, our December fund has got off to a good start, with £242 received in standing orders. Keep it up, comrades! ●

Robbie Rix

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

weekly worker

UN vote produces show of contempt

Israel annexes more land



Israeli terrorism

It is widely accepted, not least amongst Israeli public opinion, that Operation Pillar of Defence - the murderous attack on Gaza, which indiscriminately killed all in its path - achieved nothing, other than emphasising Israel's growing impotence in the region.

The month-long Operation Cast Lead attack in 2008-09, which killed nearly 10 times as many people and led to a ground invasion, also ended up achieving nothing (Cast Lead was, of course, fully supported by the quiescent Palestinian Authority in Ramallah under 'president' Mahmoud Abbas, as the leaked *Palestinian papers* reveal). The recent offensive merely emphasises that the Middle East is changing. No longer did Israel have a pliant and corrupt puppet in president Hosni Mubarak in Egypt. Reactionary though Mohammed Mursi and the Muslim Brotherhood undoubtedly are, they are the product of the revolution, half-finished, which overthrew Mubarak and his elite. Egypt has moved to emphasise that it is no longer merely an extension of Israeli foreign policy, but that it has interests of its own. It is not unlike Turkey in this respect.

The very last thing the Egyptian rulers wanted was to see thousands of Palestinians crossing the border at Rafah to become refugees in Egypt. At the very least the consequences would have been extremely destabilising for a regime in which the US has invested so much. Pressed on all sides, Israeli prime minister Binyamin Netanyahu agreed to a ceasefire after eight days, having previously agreed to end the blockade and the targeted assassinations. Of course, the Israeli state is a past master at tearing up or ignoring agreements which are inconvenient.

On November 22 the ceasefire came into effect, and a week later, on November 29, the United Nations gen-

eral assembly voted to accord Palestine 'non-member observer status'. Within hours Netanyahu had promised to build an extra 3,000 houses in the West Bank and East Jerusalem and put into effect the 'E1 plan' that envisages the expansion of the settlement Ma'ale Adumim, to the east of Jerusalem.

In addition to stealing £120 million from the Palestinian Authority in tax revenues it continues to hold, Netanyahu has thrown down the gauntlet. The Israeli state, the only active settler-colonial state surviving, was not brought into being through peace treaties, but through creating 'facts on the ground'. This is an old Zionist tradition - common to both its 'left' and 'right' wings.

So Mahmoud Abbas got his meaningless recognition of Palestine as

a non-member state, the only effect of which is that it will now have the right to take Israeli war criminals to the International Court of Justice. It changes nothing on the ground, but it has given Netanyahu the excuse to go ahead with a plan, which, if realised, would deal a death blow to the idea of a two-state solution, as is widely recognised even by its most ardent supporters.

Abbas received the support of some 138 states at the UN, with another 41 abstaining and just nine voting against recognition of Palestine, which included four Pacific island 'states'. It is clear that there is a significant majority in the west which realises that, far from weakening Hamas, the recent Israeli attack has strengthened its position and undermined that of Abbas. That is why

countries like Britain and Germany abstained rather than vote with the US.

It is unlikely that when push comes to shove either the EC or the United States will do anything other than rap Israel over its knuckles. After all, the logic of settlement has always been one Jewish state from the Mediterranean to the Jordan. No wing of Zionism - labour or revisionist - has seriously countenanced anything other than a Palestinian Bantustan, at best. The only serious difference has been between those who wished to expel the Palestinians outright, with their slogan 'Jordan is Palestine', and those who envisaged small enclaves like Ramallah controlled by a Palestinian paramilitary.

Since the conditions are not conducive to the 'transfer' (mass expulsion)

of the Palestinians - to do so would require another major conflict in the region - the alternative is a *de facto* apartheid state, where Jews now constitute a minority ruling over a majority, complete with their own ghetto wall.

Israel is and has been seen by the west as a solid and stable base for imperialist interests in the Middle East. What recent criticism by people like Zbigniew Brzezinski, Jimmy Carter's former national security advisor, suggests is that a section of the US ruling class is wanting to put a distance between the actions of a not wholly rational and strutting Zionist state, which seeks regional domination even at the expense of the US, and American wider interests. Although it is unlikely that Obama will want to adopt Brzezinski's suggestion that Israeli warplanes over Iraq should be shot down!²

This change in attitude towards Israel is partly a result of the United States itself weakening as a global power, a consequence of its economic decline. It also stems from a fear that an over-confident and aggressive Israel could destabilise the Hashemite monarchy in Jordan, lead to more radical elements challenging Mursi in Egypt, as well as taking the west's eye off the ball in Syria in the past month.

What is clear is that there will be no solution to the question of Palestine by itself. Neither Hamas nor Abbas have the political ability to reach out to the Palestinian masses. Hamas seeks an alignment with friendly Middle Eastern states, such as Turkey and Qatar, and Abbas is content to play the role of the USA's pet poodle. The key question in the region will be the overcoming of sectarianism - be it between Arabs and non-Arabs, or Christians, Sunnis and Shi'ites - and the unification of the working class and the poor against their real enemies, not least the sheiks and emirs of the Gulf ●

Tony Greenstein

Notes

1. www.guardian.co.uk/world/series/palestine-papers-documents.
2. <http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/politics/2009/09/zbigniew-brzezinski-obama-administration-should-tell-israel-us-will-attack-israeli-jets-if-they-try-to-a>.

Subscribe here

UK subscribers: Pay by standing order and save £12 a year. Minimum £12 every 3 months... but please pay more if you can. Your paper needs you!

Standing order

	6m	1yr	Inst.
UK	£30/€35	£60/€70	£200/€220
Europe	£43/€50	£86/€100	£240/€264
Rest of world	£65/€75	£130/€150	£480/€528
New UK subscribers offer: 3 months for £10			

I enclose payment:
 Sub £/€ _____
 Donation £/€ _____
 Total £/€ _____
 Date _____
 Name _____
 Address _____
 _____ Post code _____
 Email _____ Tel _____

Send a cheque or postal order payable to 'Weekly Worker' to:
 Weekly Worker, Box 928, London WC1N 3XX, UK.

To _____ Bank plc _____
 Branch Address _____
 _____ Post code _____
 Re Account Name _____
 Sort code _____ Account No _____
 Please pay to **Weekly Worker**, Lloyds TSB A/C No 00744310
 sort code 30-99-64, the sum of £ _____ every month*/3 months*
 until further notice, commencing on _____
 This replaces any previous order from this account. (*delete)
 Signed _____ Name (PRINT) _____
 Date _____ Address _____