

weekly worker



Abortion: the United Left Alliance opportunistically fudges the issue

- Drugs war failure
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SWP: expelled before conference begins

LETTERS



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

Dream on

A popular strategy among ‘anti-German’ sympathisers, but also among German lefts who have been tolerating, or at least hushing up, the former’s pro-capitalist and bellicist political theory for many years, is to deny or downplay the problem. That is no surprise, because the ‘anti-German’ phenomenon is so obviously anti-communist and neo-conservative in its origins; the opportunism and servility with which the German left, in and out of parliament, has been responding to it to this day is, unfortunately, nothing short of a cowardly betrayal of the enlightenment and a historical failure. It is particularly in the international arena that German lefts try to conceal this embarrassing weakness.

I am in no position to judge whether Angelus Novus is motivated by this desire when making a statement that is so out of touch with reality: ie, “the whole anti-German thing is deadlier than a doornail” (Letters, December 13). I am certain, however, that in saying so he imparts a completely wrong view of the true power relations and struggles on the German left.

It is probable that ‘anti-Germanism’ has passed its zenith. Part of the reason is that the shocking reality in the Middle East increasingly undermines its arguments for unconditional solidarity with Israel and warmongering. In addition, the economic crisis and cuts in welfare services complicate the ‘anti-German’ project of aligning the left to the fetish of a pursuit of happiness through a capitalism that has been cleansed of Keynesianism.

It is true that some ‘anti-Germans’ have ‘grown up’, taken up academic careers and now work for neo-conservative think tanks and media (most notably for the Axel Springer corporation). It is also true that many ‘anti-Germans’ no longer refer to themselves as such. But that is because popular forms of their ideological concepts have long become hegemonic and are now the quintessence of being ‘leftwing’ in Germany. What used to operate under the name ‘anti-German’ a few years back is today called ‘criticism of ideology’, ‘anti-national’,

‘post-anti-German’ or simply ‘left’. This is often even more effective, not least because former ‘anti-Germans’ now hold positions of power in politics, the media and science.

What is the point of this silly nomenclature argument? It seems that Angelus Novus is an idealist who tries to make us believe that a problem can be eliminated if you only change its name. But the hijacking of emancipatory terms is part of the matrix of neo-conservative ideology. The ‘anti-Germans’ in the Left Party’s youth organisation, for instance, call themselves the ‘federal study group, Shalom’. Does that turn their influential anti-Iran warmongering, their hysterical pro-Israel solidarity and their agitation against Muslims and leftwing Jews into the politics of peace? And if the ‘anti-Germans’ disappeared in 2006, as Angelus Novus believes, how come Henryk M Broder, a close ally of Thilo Sarrazin and Geert Wilders, was recently welcomed like a pop star by more than 800 ‘anti-Germans’ and their supporters at the Antifaschistische Hochschultage, a series of ‘anti-fascist’ lectures and seminars at Halle University? If they don’t exist any more, how did an alliance of ‘anti-Germans’ and social democrats manage to split the traditional coalition that has been organising the annual memorial march for Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht for decades?

There is an elephant in the room and Angelus Novus doesn’t see it. In response to his rhetorical question, “what decade is the *Weekly Worker* living in?”, I will reply equally polemically: “What dream world is Angelus Novus living in?”

Susann Witt-Stahl

Assoziation Dämmerung, Hamburg

Angel of history

Not only is Angelus Novus wrong about Platypus trying to reassert the “relevance” of the ‘anti-Germans’, but the supposed time-lag he is referring to is but a blip in recent history. The years surrounding 2006 still feel very present to me - and I mean that in the sense that the Bush era, and war on terror, still feels opaque to my, or anyone else’s, full understanding (not to mention that Obama is still carrying out many of Bush’s foreign policies!).

If there truly is a lag in consciousness when trying to make sense of the

course of history and outcome of socio-political events, isn’t it most urgent to attend to the political responses from our recent past, even if their trajectory did lead to the ‘anti-Germans’ openly moving to the right?

Given that 2006 represents a deepening of failures for the left, and the anti-war or anti-imperialist movement was a flop on an international scale, how can we be so sure that revisiting the ‘anti-German’ argument is now wholly ‘outdated’? How can we be so confident that the anti-war movement did not end up becoming an expression from the right since, it is clear post-2006, it did not bring humanity one step closer to emancipatory possibilities?

Revolutionary consciousness is now actually in a worse spot because, even if consciousness of history comes to full fruition after the Owl of Minerva takes its flight at dusk, we are still utterly confused practically. When history cannot be practically transformed in a post-2006 world, then we can sure bet that consciousness is still lagging far off in the distance. To say that we are somehow beyond the ‘anti-German’ phenomenon, like Angelus Novus would like to think, is like being caught up in shifting fads without really understanding why we choose to express ourselves through them in the first place. There is no time like now to digest the ‘anti-German’ phenomenon.

If there is a relevance in the ‘anti-Germans’ for Platypus, it is in our project’s mission to bring their disintegrative history to the level of an international conversation, where different perspectives and motives will transform the discourse that, until now, was mostly relegated to the provinces of Germany (and Europe). To wish away the ‘anti-Germans’ as insignificant for us today is to treat them as a thought-taboo and an inconvenience rather than a symptom that necessarily needs working through. As the angel of history should know, the present only becomes clear when confronting the disintegration of the past instead of avoiding it.

Chris Mansour

Platypus Affiliated Society

Youth welder

Over the last few months, I have thought very long and very deeply about where Marxists should concentrate their energy and resources.

Trotsky famously wrote: “devote the most attention to the youth”. Similarly, Lenin wrote: “those who have the youth have the future”. At the same time, Ted Grant often wrote about middle class students in the rarefied atmosphere of the universities going through their “socialist measles”.

However, in 2012, in great contrast to 30 years ago, 55% of female and 45% of male school and college leavers now go on to university. It would therefore be a big mistake for Marxists not to carry out work amongst the student fraternity, as well as amongst the young unemployed.

Communist Students must have friendly relations with Socialist Students, Socialist Worker Students, Marxist Students and similar student societies. The aim should be for Marxists to work together to break the stranglehold that Progress has on 93 out of 96 university Student Labour Clubs. Progress, by controlling the Student Labour clubs, effectively controls the National Union of Students and, more importantly, Young Labour. Although they may appear very strong, Progress is actually very weak. It only has 2,000 members and is dependent on the backing from a very rich ‘angel’.

At the same time, it would be another big mistake for Marxists not to carry out work amongst the 50% who don’t go on to university. Many of these 50% are unemployed. The riots in

the big cities in 2011 show the despair amongst a section of these unemployed youth. However, it would be wrong to write off all unemployed young people as being lumpen unemployed. Many unemployed youth have qualifications.

Whilst there are differences, the work of the Black Panther Party in the USA in the late 60s shows how to organise unemployed working class youth. At the same time, the evolution of Malcolm X, who went from being a petty drug dealer to a revolutionary, shows how the disenfranchised can be radicalised.

One of the things I have noticed over the last few years is that members of left groups, including the CPGB, are either aged under 25 or over 45. This 20-year gap is entirely due to the negative and demoralising effect of New Labour, together with the long economic boom between 1992 and 2008. The aim of Marxists, therefore, should be to weld the energy of the youth to the political capital accumulated in the experience of the older generation.

John Smith

Cambridgeshire

Quote

All I can say to Alan Johnstone (Letters, December 13) is reiterate what was written in the *Communist manifesto*: “The communists do not form a separate party opposed to other working class parties. They have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole. They do not set up any sectarian principles of their own, by which to shape and mould the proletarian movement.”

Steven Johnston

email

No contest

Who would have imagined that Unite would be holding a ‘snap election’ for general secretary so soon after the last one? Who would have guessed that Len McCluskey would be seeking a mandate after only two years in office and with three more years still to go?

So who did demand this ‘election’? Was it the thousands of branch secretaries? No! Was it the hundreds of Unite committee chairs? No! So was it the tens of thousands of workplace representatives? No! As far as can be gathered, not one of these groups was calling for this ‘election’.

Actually to call it an election is being more than generous, as it bears all the hallmarks of an organisation seeking to avoid a challenge and thereby holding no election at all. Indeed many in Unite believe that if Jerry Hicks, the rank-and-file candidate in the 2010 election for Unite general secretary, and runner-up with 52,527 votes, had not decided to stand, there would be not be an election.

Rushing through the election gives little time for anyone to organise other than the existing general secretary, Mr McCluskey. Unless there is a challenger, Mr McCluskey will be ‘elected’ unopposed and is effectively extending his term of office until 2018, when he reaches 67, without members actually voting, but allowing him and his supporters to claim it to be a mandate.

Jerry Hicks believes that whatever Unite has done for the good over the last 2 years has now been tainted and that the election should not be happening, that it’s been called on a flawed premise and it’s being fast-tracked. It’s an election tailor-made to suit one member above all others - 1.5 million others - and that far from ‘seeking a mandate’: it is an affront to democracy. It also means by holding the election in 2013 that 1.5 million members are being denied an election for general secretary in 2015, when we would have maximum influence over the Labour Party, as it would be during a general election year.

Jerry Hicks has decided to stand now the election process has begun in order that members do have a chance to vote and to present a positive alternative. However, just to get the 50 nominations required to be on the ballot paper will be a big achievement in this most uneven contest.

So what’s going on? If things in Unite are as good as Mr McCluskey and his supporters say, then why not just carry on doing these good things? And are we to believe that if no-one from Unite’s huge number of officials puts themselves forward for the position of general secretary, it’s because they all agree with things as they are?

One clue to an absence of challengers might be that, despite Mr McCluskey asserting that Unite is a “tolerant” union, there may be another story. Try asking those officials who left Unite in the weeks following the last general secretary election. Some felt obliged to leave the union, albeit with a ‘pay-off’, possibly for nothing more than not backing the winner. For if any were guilty of wrongdoing surely they should have been disciplined or dismissed, not paid off.

Mr McCluskey talks about a coordinated fight against the assault on members’ pensions, jobs and conditions and of building a united campaign of resistance, and on that Jerry Hicks agrees. Yet when presented with an opportunity to do just that, Unite’s leadership chose instead to undermine the PCS and the NUT by not supporting the proposed coordinated strike action against the devastating attack on the pensions of health workers, MOD, government departments and local authority workers last March. That was a huge mistake. It’s not too late to start a serious campaign of opposition to the government cuts and attacks, but it will take more than hot air at demonstrations.

Grass roots Left

www.grassrootsleft.org

Bourgeois right

I agree with all that Ben Lewis says (Letters, December 13) in his reply to David Ellis. However, it’s also important to point out that, as Marx makes clear, not only are the demands of the Gotha programme for equality not achievable under capitalism: they are also unachievable even in the first stage of communism!

That is so because this stage continues to operate under the law of value, meaning that choices have to be made about how to allocate available social labour-time. It is this, which ensures that bourgeois right, and the real inequality based on equal distribution to meet unequal needs, will continue. Read that section, as well as what he says in *Capital* about the way poor relief operated, and it’s clear that Marx was no advocate of welfarism. Outside the higher stage of communism, when general abundance means that choices about how to allocate available social labour-time do not have to be made - ie, you can have more of A without having to give up a portion of B - welfarism under either capitalism or socialism is utopian.

Moreover, as Lenin points out in *State and revolution*, in discussing this passage, there is nowhere that Marx says that this higher stage of communism is even possible. It is something we can aim at, and in doing so we can gradually undermine bourgeois right, precisely because we will raise the productive power of society. But, as Marx puts it, “... these defects are inevitable in the first phase of communist society, as it is when it has just emerged after prolonged birth pangs from capitalist society. Right can never be higher than the economic structure of society and its cultural development conditioned thereby.”

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stage of communism will only be able to provide more to meet the needs of each of its members divorced from the actual contribution each of them makes to it, in proportion to its ability to raise its productive power. Part of the reason for that under socialism, as now under capitalism, will be that workers will be reluctant to act selflessly in simply handing over a proportion of their own entitlements earned from their hard work to others, simply because others have chosen to make different decisions: eg, to have more children and so on. Any attempt to force them to do so would require the continued existence of a state and coercion, and would in any case quickly break up the needed social cohesion of such a society.

Arthur Bough
email

Prize letter

If there was a prize for misunderstanding a letter or comment, I think it would have gone to Ben Lewis for his reply to my offering the previous week (December 6).

In my letter I outlined a revolutionary Marxist notion of a just society as being one into which every individual is born not in accordance with the bourgeois lottery they so laughingly call society, but into equality. Born not into poverty or enormous wealth as a result of the pure chance of where and to whom you were born, so that your life chances and conditions of existence are predetermined in advance, but immediately into a society based on full employment, a living wage and the social appropriation of the fruits of human labour. I used Marx's famous *Critique of the Gotha programme* quote, "from each according to their ability; to each according to their needs", to back up my argument.

The thrust of the piece was a criticism of the bourgeois and reformist notion of 'social mobility', whereby vast amounts of social and natural treasure is expended on trying to mitigate the effects of the social lottery through remedial action in order to prevent revolution and save injustice - ie, the private appropriation of the social product by the very fortunately born 1%.

Somehow, though, Ben seemed to think that my use of that quote meant I was for the wretched Gotha programme and against the revolutionary thinking of Marx. He then rounds on me for suggesting that all people are born equal both in their abilities and their needs, which at no point I did. Indeed, if I believed that all people were born not into equality but equal in their abilities and their needs, then there would be no point saying, "From each according to their abilities; to each according to their needs". It would be mere tautology.

The whole point of Marx's summation of what constitutes a just society is that needs and abilities vary from individual to individual. The needs of a person trapped in an iron lung will differ from everybody else's, but so will their abilities. Marx caters for both. Full employment for a man in an iron lung might simply be doing nothing all day as per his abilities, but his needs will still be met. One man's living wage will differ from the next, as will his abilities.

Marx's critique of the Gotha programme was not that it advocated socialism in the sense that the social product is dished out fairly, but that it didn't. It advocated not a 'living wage', but that every worker keep and dispose of the entirety of the surplus value he/she created, not ignoring the unemployed and the need for redistribution to the sick, the disabled, the young and the old.

No, there was nothing Lassalleian in my letter, nothing of the Gotha programme: it was Marxism pure and simple. Of course, terms like 'full employment' and 'living wage' are transitional demands designed to put us on the road to the just society into

which every individual is born into equality. In full-blown communism, wages and employment will be a thing of the past, along no doubt with the slogan, "From each according to their ability ...", the so-called iron law of wages and the ridiculous notion of a free state.

I am not sure why Ben has chosen to misunderstand my offering. Perhaps he doesn't like popular programmatic demands that represent the immediate and transitional needs of the working class or he simply thinks that sharing the available productive work isn't radical enough. I'm not sure, but I am bemused.

David Ellis
via Facebook

Armless

The capitalist system uses murders as in Connecticut to disarm us, so they can crush us when there is a real crisis.

More youth will undertake stupid/ desperate actions if they have no hope of finding a job, and higher education requires they go into debt for the rest of their lives. A friend of mine's daughter owes \$50,000 to the banks for college expenses - she may also end up doing something stupid. We are driving the youth to suicide and a few to murder. College education should be free! Jobs for everyone who can work should be a priority, even though 'free market capitalism' says that's impossible.

Murder has become part of American culture, from Obama's 'kill list' to drone planes that also kill children, to stupid films like James Bond that romanticise murder. Banning guns is not a solution: the newspapers have just announced the *stabbing* of Japanese children by another maniac. Capitalist society produces maniacs.

In Chile in 1973 the working class did not have weapons to defend themselves against the army coup, instigated by the CIA. Before the coup, an arms control law was approved. When I was there, in July-August 1973, before the coup, the Chilean army was marching into factories and disarming workers. On August 6 1973 I attended a rally of 500,000 people in the centre of Santiago that warned of a possible coup. But no-one there had weapons.

I can only hope Greek workers today have guns to defend themselves against the fascists.

Earl Gilman
email

Motionless

One of the things I feel our website is missing is access to a list of motions which have been agreed by CPGB aggregates or the organisation as a whole.

A list of this sort would facilitate an understanding for members, the periphery and opponents of what the majority and minority positions are within the organisation. It would be an invaluable point of reference for *Weekly Worker* commissioned articles. Ultimately it would be a great time-saver and educator, and make it easier to consider the organisation's evolutionary trajectory.

Sachin Sharma
Leeds

No lie

Jacob Richter misses the point about agitation on a number of levels in his call for 'leftwing' conspiracy theories (Letters, December 13).

It is all well and good for Rush Limbaugh and Glenn Beck to peddle nonsense about an imminent Marxist takeover of the United States of America. The point of bourgeois ideology is, above all, negative: it is to *prevent* the working class, or any other subaltern threat, from coming into a state of being where it could run things. The point of Marxist politics, on the other hand, is to *enable* a whole class to do so. For this, we need the *truth*, the *whole truth* and *nothing but the truth*, not convenient fictions. To start portraying the world as under the heel of a conspiracy of the capitalist elite is not simply to avail ourselves of a neutral weapon, but to spread forms of thought which are *in themselves reactionary*.

As far as mobilising "the most backward elements" goes, the point is surely to purge them of their backwardness, not mobilise them as they are. The implication is that a large chunk of our class will always, under all circumstances, act as a bloc of gullible fools. We are not well served setting ourselves up as demagogues to manipulate a mob, and that should not be the role of workers' media. Frankly, capitalist society is bad enough without us having to embellish its demerits into the bargain.

Paul Demarty
London

Fighting fund

Last 2012 thank-you

"Today I received my £10 Xmas bonus from HM government," writes JS, and "I've topped it up with another £40 from my savings." This £50 donation is the comrade's "thank-you to all the CPGB comrades who worked so hard during 2012".

For his part, RM was moved by the obituary published in last week's paper. His £20 was donated "in appreciation of the tribute to our friend and comrade, James May". He adds: "And for a great weekly paper, of course." Of course!

Thanks to both comrades for their PayPal transfers, which helped take our December fighting fund to a respectable level. They were among the 10,429 people who read us online last week. And there were also several contributions received in the post - not least the £75 from that most modest of comrades, RG, who as usual slipped his cheque into an envelope without a covering note. His admiration for the *Weekly Worker* is so overwhelming he can't bring himself to put it into words!

Also in the post were cheques from SD and FG (£20 each) and PL

(£5). Plus a total of £195 landed in our account via standing orders - thanks to AM, DW, SP, MKS, SP, JD and MM. So, all in all, quite a successful week for the fund, coinciding with our final 2012 edition. The excellent £460 we received over the last seven days more than doubles our December total, taking us to £803. But we need £1,500 to finish the year on a high and there are only 10 days to go.

With the Christmas post being what it is, we need more comrades to take a leaf out of the book of JS and RM and give us some PayPal cheer. Or, if you have an online account, why not transfer your festive donation to the *Weekly Worker* yourself (account number: 00744310; sort code: 30-99-64)? That would be a splendid way to end the year.

See you on January 10!

Robbie Rix

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

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>. Resuming on January 7.

London Communist Forum

Sunday January 6, 5pm: Weekly political report from CPGB Provisional Central Committee, followed by discussion and *Capital* reading group. Calthorpe Arms, 252 Grays Inn Road, London WC1. This meeting: chapter 10, section 3: 'Legal limits to exploitation'. Organised by CPGB: www.cpgb.org.uk.

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.

Capita - hands off Barnet services

Thursday December 20, 5pm: Protest, 71 Victoria Street (Capita HQ), London SW1.

Justice for Paps and Philmore

Thursday December 27, 5pm: Candlelit vigil for Habib 'Paps' Ullah and Philmore Mills, who died in police custody. Police station, Windsor Road, Slough. Organised by Justice for Paps campaign: justiceforpaps@aim.com.

End the siege

Thursday December 27, 1pm: Protest, Israeli embassy, 2 Palace Green, London W8. Organised by Palestine Solidarity Campaign: www.palestinecampaign.org.

Free the children

Thursday January 17, 7pm: Discussion meeting on Palestinian political child prisoners, Friends Meeting House, 6 Mount Street, Manchester M2. Speaker: Victoria Brittain. Organised by Palestine Solidarity Campaign: www.palestinecampaign.org.

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.

For a general strike

Thursday January 26, 11am: Conference for organisation of potential coordinated strikes in the north-west. Adelphi Hotel, Ranelagh Street, Liverpool L3. Organised by Merseyside County Association of Trades Union Councils: merseyadvice@btconnect.com.

Palestine Solidarity Campaign

Saturday January 26, 10am to 5pm: AGM, London Irish Centre, 50-52 Camden Square, London NW1. Register online at www.palestinecampaign.org/PSC_AGM. £8 waged, £6 unwaged. Organised by Palestine Solidarity Campaign: www.palestinecampaign.org.

Confronting war 10 years on

Saturday February 9, 11am to 5pm: International conference, Friends House, 173-177 Euston Road, London NW1. Speakers include: Owen Jones, Tariq Ali, Tony Benn, Jemima Khan, Seumas Milne, Sami Ramadani, Jolyon Rubinstein. £15 (concessions £8). Organised by Stop the War Coalition: www.tenyearson.org.uk.

Unite Against Fascism

Saturday March 2, 11am: National conference, TUC congress centre, 28 Great Russell Street, London WC1. Organised by One Society, Many Cultures and UAF: www.uaf.org.uk.

End the arms trade

Saturday March 9, 10.30am to 4.30pm: National gathering, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1. Organised by Campaign Against the Arms Trade: www.caat.org.uk.

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weekly 
worker

This is the final edition of the *Weekly Worker* for 2012. The next issue will appear on Thursday January 10 2013. We wish all readers a happy and prosperous new year.

THE LEFT

Expelled before conference begins

Once more the SWP central committee has acted to silence critics and cut off debate, reports **Peter Manson**



Expelled, but not from heaven

Commenting on the contributions from a minority of Socialist Workers Party comrades in the second of this year's *Pre-conference Bulletins*, I wrote: "It is most encouraging that these ... comrades ... are clear-sighted and courageous enough to make such far-reaching proposals - proposals aimed at transforming the SWP into a genuinely democratic-centralist force, capable of playing a leading role in the struggle for the mass party we so desperately need". I concluded: "It remains to be seen for how long they would be tolerated if their ideas began to make headway" ('An anatomical investigation', November 8).

Unfortunately, however, even before those ideas have had a chance to make such headway, the central committee has responded in the only way it knows: by summarily expelling two of the comrades who had written such powerful criticisms, together with two others who are alleged to be involved in "secret factionalism" alongside them.

The four expelled members are Paris Thompson (Leeds), Tim Nelson (Bristol), Charlotte Bence (London) and Adam Marks (London) - the first two had contributions published in the *Internal Bulletins*, as the documents are known. Ironically, temporary factions

are permitted during the three-month pre-conference period and we are in such a period right now (the 2013 SWP conference will be held in London over the weekend of January 4-6). But the SWP constitution stipulates that the central committee must be notified of their formation in a document signed by "at least 30 members of the party".

According to the constitution, "A faction will be given reasonable facilities to argue its point of view and distribute its documents. These must be circulated through the national office, to ensure that all members have the chance to consider them. Debate continues until the party at a special or annual conference reaches a decision on the disputed question. Permanent or secret factions are not allowed."

I understand that the charge relates to communications exchanged among the four via social networking sites. I say 'charge', but in the SWP there is no such thing as 'innocent until proven guilty'. Members can be instantly expelled without the accused being given an opportunity to state their case, literally at the whim of the CC or even the national secretary. I hear that the four are attempting to mount a campaign within the organisation in the hope that their case will be taken up at conference, and that they intend to appeal to the disputes committee - the

body elected by conference, which for some reason always seems to uphold CC decisions.

It is clear that this rule serves only to prevent members from exchanging views, so as to prevent any effective opposition to the leadership from emerging. All horizontal communication must take place through official structures - branch meetings, district aggregates and national delegate gatherings, including 'party councils' as well as conferences. In addition, discussion documents from individuals and groups of members are restricted to the three *IBs* published in October, November and December each year.

But how are such groups of members supposed to organise their submissions in the first place? How are they supposed to know which other comrades agree with them, apart from those in their own branch, for example? In other words, the process leading to the formation of an officially recognised national faction before conference must itself involve the risk of being charged with 'secret factionalism' - if the CC decides to interpret your efforts in that way, of course.

It is notable that the only recognised temporary faction in the recent history of the SWP was the misnamed Left Platform, organised by deposed

national secretary John Rees in 2009, with the support of 64 members across the country. Of course, comrade Rees was able to make use of the numerous contacts he had officially collated and knew exactly who would support him. In his case the minimum of 30 signatures could be rapidly obtained. But how are less prominent members to do that? The very act of canvassing for support will leave them open to accusations of factionalising - that surely is the conclusion to be drawn from these latest expulsions.

What is the CC worried about? A handful of comrades exchange views in the run-up to conference and some get their branches to propose critical motions. What is the problem? It is not as though oppositionists have ever been able to come near to winning a vote - the Left Platform was trounced at the January 2010 conference. The CC's control is so overbearing that it dominates regional meetings to select delegates and the overwhelming majority attending conference unquestioningly accept the leadership's recommendations.

Of course, a genuinely democratic-centralist organisation would positively encourage members to express their views, relishing the opportunity to strengthen the group's fighting capacity through deepening its collective understanding. Neither can the ideas proposed be described as retrogressive in any way. In fact for the most part they appear to be useful and constructive proposals for change.

For example, comrade Thompson, writing as "Paris (Leeds and West Yorkshire)" in *IB No2* (only the first name of contributors is given for 'security reasons'), pointed to the CC's dishonesty in constantly inflating "registered membership" figures by including everyone who has filled in an application to join over the last two years. He commented: "It is well known that the majority of people on the lists are not members (many never were), and that it is easier to squeeze blood from a stone than getting people taken off. These lists are then used as a basis for an assessment of our organisation's size, which is clearly going to be completely distorted."

The motion proposed by comrade Thompson contained proposals which must have had CC members trembling with rage, representing as they did a revolution in SWP culture: "Political differences should be openly acknowledged, with the debates open to the party. Different political tendencies should be represented on the CC, not suppressed behind a veil of 'unity'. This would be an important step to fostering a culture of open and honest debate within the party."

In comrade Thompson's view, "the democratic aspect of a revolutionary party is not an added extra, but an absolutely integral element ... The complete freedom of exchange of ideas and criticism in the first instance, and the absolute unity in action once a decision has been reached, remains the clearest and best way of organising a revolutionary working class organisation."

The comrade concluded by stressing the connection between democracy and effectiveness: "Taken overall, far from the organisation being one of controversy and debate, most comrades are politically under-confident to raise criticism, unused to the rigour of constructive debate and argument, and the overall political level remains very low."

Writing in *IB No3* was a certain

Tim (Bristol), who I assume is Tim Nelson. His piece, headed 'Ending substitutionism', like comrade Thompson's submission criticised the "top-down style of leadership from the central committee and a lack of participation by the membership in party democracy". During the anti-war upsurge of the last decade the SWP had adapted to "movementism", where "we dissolved into the movement and neglected the building of a revolutionary party" and "our apparatus, as a result, had to substitute itself for the membership".

He continued: "The apparatus, becoming used to the necessity of substituting itself for the membership, can become a potentially conservative bloc. A virtue is made out of a necessity, and the self-organised activity of the membership can become viewed with suspicion. This can lead to a top-down, anti-democratic view of party structure, which can become extremely damaging, particularly when the movement begins to come out of a downturn."

Adam Marks had previously made similar criticisms in relation to Respect. The leadership had used the metaphor of "concentric circles" to describe the relationship between the "revolutionary party" and the Respect "united front of a special type" - with the SWP at the centre, of course. Comrade Marks had witheringly pointed to the vacuity of the metaphor: "We 'build' the circle and then what? Does one circle expand in relation to the others? Does Respect grow into a mass party and we sink our roots into it, or does the SWP build itself and Respect fall away like scaffolding?" (*IB No2*, November 2007).

While comrade Marks, like Charlotte Bence, did not contribute to this year's *IBs*, you can see how his disquiet with the SWP leadership's bureaucratic-centralist method and practice might have overlapped with those of the others. But so what? Any constructive critique can only benefit from interchange with others of like mind - and with those who disagree. It is perfectly natural, and desirable, for comrades to engage in such interchange, whether or not what results is labelled a faction.

That is why it is vital for healthy forces in the SWP to forthrightly demand the immediate reinstatement of the four expelled comrades - and the withdrawal of sanctions against those like "Justin (Cambridge)", who tells his story in *IB No2* (see 'An anatomical investigation', November 8). This is not the first time such cynical action has been taken in the run-up to conference. But it should be a matter of principle that disciplinary measures should be avoided if at all possible in the pre-conference period. What makes it even worse is the fact that the CC has not even bothered to inform the membership as a whole - through its weekly *Party Notes*, for example - that it has taken such drastic, unwarranted and anti-democratic steps.

Instead of taking the usual form of a series of tame rallies, the SWP conference ought to see a full and honest political debate. The bureaucratic-centralist ban on the right of members to form permanent or semi-permanent factions must be ended by delegates. In truth it is an important means by which the only permitted permanent faction - which goes by the name of 'central committee' - ensures its own total control ●

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DRUGS

Irrational war continues

Nick Clegg is calling for a royal commission. Eddie Ford, on the other hand, demands immediate legalisation

Throwing the *Daily Mail* into a frenzy, Nick Clegg last week condemned the “conspiracy of silence” surrounding the futile and counterproductive ‘war on drugs’ conducted by successive governments for over 40 years. Going over the top with never a hope of advancing an inch, Clegg commented, quite correctly, that “if you were waging any other war where you have 2,000 fatalities a year” and “your enemies are making billions in profits” - not to mention “constantly throwing new weapons at you” - then you would have to admit you are losing and do something different. Maybe even call off the war.

“It’s time we told the truth,” Clegg declared. “We are losing the war on drugs on an industrial scale” - both in this country and globally. The deputy prime minister went on to say that former Mexican president Felipe Calderón had confessed to him last year that his attempt to crush the drug barons by military force had spectacularly failed, claiming 60,000 or more lives in the process. The Mexican killing fields. “We can’t win against these odds,” Calderón had concluded - and he is hardly alone in thinking this. Instead, quite predictably, the gangsters have grown in size and confidence.

Hysterical

Clegg, of course, was giving his backing to the cross-party home affairs committee year-long inquiry, *Drugs: breaking the cycle*, published on December 10. After taking evidence from “all sides” of the debate, including ‘expert’ witnesses like Richard Branson and Russell Brand (he should know), the committee argued that “more than ever” there is a case for a “fundamental review” of the UK’s ‘anti-drugs’ policy. In fact, they stated, we are now at a “critical” stage - perhaps a “now or never moment” for serious reform. Or just go grimly back to the trenches.

The committee said the prime minister should “urgently” set up a royal commission to look at every aspect of drugs policy and report back by 2015 - no hurry then. Keep filling up the prisons. Keith Vaz, chair of the inquiry, told the BBC’s *Today* programme that such a request was “not a big ask”. A most modest demand, actually. Indeed, Vaz was at pains to emphasise that neither he nor the committee were advocating as such the “legalising or decriminalising” of any drug - perish the thought. No hippy stoners or irresponsible libertarians on our committee. Merely that the government should “look at what is happening all over the world”: ie, moves towards various forms of decriminalisation. Hence the committee recommended that the British government should fund, despite austerity, a detailed research project monitoring the recent legalisation of marijuana in the US states of Washington and Colorado and the proposed state monopoly of cannabis production and sale in Uruguay.

Among the other recommendations contained in the report is the suggestion that home office and health ministers should follow the example of committee members and visit Portugal to examine its system of ditching criminal sanctions for drugs use. But “don’t get hysterical”, Vaz added - “we’re not suggesting ministers jump on a plane, go to Lisbon and start taking cannabis”. Understood.

Historically Portugal has had one



Fun

of the highest levels of hard-drug use - and abuse - on the continent, measuring between 50,000 and 100,000 heroin-users by 2000 (with a correspondingly high level of HIV/Aids infection, needless to say). But in 2001 it became the first European country to officially abolish all criminal penalties for personal possession of drugs - defined as up to 10 days’ supply, including cocaine, heroine and LSD. Therefore prison sentences were replaced with therapy and treatment. Yet, far from becoming a drugs tourist hotspot though, as stupidly claimed by those who wished to retain the failed authoritarian policy of prohibition, after five years of decriminalisation Portugal found that the illegal use of drugs by teenagers had significantly declined. Rates of HIV infection also sharply fell, as you would expect, and the numbers of people requesting therapy to get off drugs more than doubled. By any yardstick, a definite and measurable achievement in terms of public health and general societal well-being. Surely any rational government would want to emulate such a policy success and take seriously the inquiry’s advice that legalising possession of small amounts of ‘soft’ drugs “merits significantly closer consideration”.

Absolutely not. “Drugs use is coming down,” Cameron maintained without any qualification or evidence, and the government’s “emphasis on treatment is absolutely right” - despite the fact that drugs treatment and education is almost impossible to find. And will become even rarer, as the cuts intensify. Just say no and don’t break the law - that is the government’s real policy. Cameron claimed too that the government “can really make a difference”, which is true enough - its reckless and bigoted policies have made things far, far worse. More mendaciously still, if anything, Cameron could not prevent himself from uttering pious nonsense about the “need to do more to keep drugs out of our prisons”. Yet anyone with even the slightest acquaintance

with those barbaric, chronically overcrowded institutions knows full well that its inmates turn to drugs - even if they have never been users before - in order to find some release, or temporary escape, from their hellish existence. Alternatively, they can riot.

Meanwhile Theresa May, the home secretary - like the monstrous hypocrite she is - lectured us about the necessity of maintain a “tough stance”. As if closing your eyes to reality means you were dealing with the problem. Let the addicts go untreated and the professional criminals further enrich themselves. Retreating into total fantasy, May claimed that the government was making “good progress” on drugs but, of course, was “open to imaginative thinking” - so long as it does not involve anything even hinting of decriminalisation or legalisation. Nor a royal commission either, which Cameron completely ruled out. Too expensive. A waste of time.

Ed Miliband, naturally, was equally opposed to any decriminalisation of drugs. Just like previous Labour leaders. He is a responsible politician, after all, seeking public office. Tiresomely obliged to put a distance between himself and the government, however - some clear water - he waffled on about how the government’s approach to drugs needed “re-examination” and how the Labour Party will “look in detail” at the home affairs committee report and then “come to a conclusion”. Seeing how any measure of decriminalisation has already been dismissed, such an exercise would be a charade, as only one conclusion is possible - continued drugs prohibition.

Whatever they might secretly think in the middle of the night, both Cameron and Miliband are running scared of the rightwing press. They both know full well that, were they to propose the decriminalisation of cannabis, let alone anything more radical, they would immediately be portrayed as being ‘soft’ on drugs - and probably as lunatics as well.

Electoral suicide, in other words.

Risk taking

Trying to get an accurate picture about the nature and frequency of drug use is obviously not a straightforward task. Evidence indicates, though, that it has been falling since its 2002 peak - although that was after a significant rise across the previous two decades. According to the British Crime Survey, which by definition has to be treated very cautiously, in 1996 just over 11% of adults had used an illegal drug in the past year and by 2002 that proportion had peaked at just under 12%. In 2012 it sits at just under 9%. But it would be profoundly mistaken to deduce from these figures that Britain is getting bored with drugs. Drug use remains both higher than in 1990 and than in the rest of Europe and by no means are we witnessing a decline in use across the board.

The prime mover behind the downward trend is cannabis, still the most popular illegal drug (reclassified from class C to class B in October 2009). Now 6.9% use it, as opposed to 10.9% in 2002, so it is a drug which seems to be going relatively out of fashion - possibly because the cannabis market has become saturated by the more potent skunk (though this is debatable). Yet there is no way that this can be attributed to any domestic policy, enlightened or otherwise, pursued by this or that British government. Rather, it appears to be a *European-wide* trend that has been going on for more than a decade. Class A drug use, however, is higher than it was 15 years ago. Despite falling from a peak in 2002, ecstasy and cocaine are still extremely popular drugs taken by many thousands of people in a wide range of venues, with anything between a quarter and a half of club-goers estimated to take illegal drugs on a night out.

Furthermore, the established dance drugs have been joined by a growing array of new substances, such as mephedrone, ketamine, GHB/GBL, as well as a near bewildering profusion of legal highs (some of which are as potentially dangerous as illegal drugs). Mephedrone, in particular - cheap, easily available and potent - is increasingly becoming an ‘everyman drug’, whether swallowed orally by teenagers or subcutaneously injected by more seasoned heroin-users looking for a bigger fix. For those going on a night out there is an expanding menu of legal and illegal highs to chose from, with users often having very little idea - if any - as to the exact nature and composition of the white powder they are trying (mephedrone, for instance, has a plethora of street names). Every time you pop a pill in a club, therefore, you are taking a *risk* - no matter how small the probability that you will come to any harm (or even die).

Of course, the same is true of legal drugs, such as alcohol and tobacco - which by any objective or scientific measurement are highly dangerous substances. But, being legal and regulated, they are subject to quality control and you effectively know what you are taking, weak or strong. If you are drinking whiskey you restrict your intake and if you are on the beer you can be more lax (most of the time). Unlike illegal drugs, where to a greater or lesser degree you could be taking *anything* - quality control, it goes without saying, is hardly the prime concern of the outfits that control supply. They just want to make a

profit by any means necessary (a bit like investment bankers or hedge fund managers).

But at the end of the day drinking a pint of beer or smoking a joint poses no unacceptable dangers, either to yourself or society as a whole. Any more than horse-riding, rugby, mountain climbing or driving a car. You will not automatically die a horrible death nor will civilisation collapse. Hence for communists the crucial struggle is for the *socialisation* of drug-taking, whether it be alcohol, cannabis, ecstasy - you name it. Far more harm and social destruction has been caused by ‘anti-drug’ laws than by their actual use. Something no royal commission study will tell you, no matter how long the deliberations. Logically then, *all* drugs should be fully legalised - not just decriminalised or grudgingly tolerated. At a stroke, the gangsters’ lucrative businesses would be wiped out.

There is another very important point to be made. The UK government, like many others, propagates the absurd viewpoint that all users are pathetic addicts enslaved to drugs due to some fatal flaw in their personality - maybe due to a lack of moral or intellectual fibre. Or bad parenting when young. Yet we know that, even with the most addictive drugs (heroin, crack cocaine and crystal methamphetamine), most users do not actually become addicted, even under today’s conditions of severe alienation. And, of course, in the beginning *nobody* is addicted, with almost everyone who tries out a drug doing so through personal choice or a desire for experimentation, rather than having it imposed upon them by an ‘evil’ pusher - a largely imaginary villain found in mainstream Hollywood films and suchlike. The guy you buy your bit of weed off in some London pub or from a friend of a friend is also probably a user like you who deals purely in order to subsidise his own ‘recreational’ drug-taking. No Mr Big, that is for sure.

All of which shows that one of the most important motivations for taking drugs is one which cannot easily be acknowledged by governments and a perpetually fearful bourgeoisie - namely, personal pleasure. *People like getting high* and have done since the dawn of human history. The hope of finding a higher state of mind or a new beginning, escaping from grievous circumstances or the chains of an unwanted self. Fourteen centuries before the birth of Christ, the *Rigveda* describes Hindu priests chanting hymns to a “drop of soma” - the wisdom-inducing plant that “make us see far; make us richer, better”. Philosophers in ancient Greece used to gather at the symposium, which literally means “drinking together”. Seneca, the Roman Stoic, celebrated Bacchus’s embrace as a liberation of the mind - “from its slavery to cares, emancipates it, invigorates it and emboldens it for all its undertakings”. Omar Khayyam, the feted 12th-century Persian mathematician and astronomer, drank wine “because it is my solace”, allowing him to “divorce absolutely reason and religion”.

David Cameron’s ‘war on drugs’ is a war against human nature. Once we have put an end to the dull, one-dimensional existence of class society, the consumption of ‘drugs’ will not be regarded as a problem. Who knows, it might even contribute to the living of a full, rounded, joyful life ●

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ITALY

The end of Mario Monti?

Toby Abse reports on the latest manoeuvres in Rome

After 13 months, Silvio Berlusconi has finally pulled the plug on Mario Monti's technocratic government.

Monti was appointed by president Giorgio Napolitano in November 2011 after Berlusconi as prime minister brought Italy to the verge of a Greek-style financial meltdown that could have wrecked the entire euro zone. But now Berlusconi has withdrawn the support of his Popolo della Libertà (PdL) from the left-right 'strange majority' that had sustained Monti in parliament. PdL party secretary Angelino Alfano, acting as his master's voice despite his grave personal reservations about hard-line Europhobic populism, made the requisite bitterly critical speech in parliament, lambasting the entire economic record of Monti's government and indicating that the PdL would abstain in all future votes of confidence.

Within days Monti, fearing that the PdL would go further and veto any proposed law that was not to their taste or even ambush the government at short notice, felt it was far more dignified to quit while he was still ahead rather than to struggle on for months as a lame-duck premier. He therefore took the decision on December 8 to tell Napolitano that he was resigning - not with immediate effect, but from the moment that the 'stability law' (budget) for 2013 was passed. There is every likelihood that the budget will be passed without opposition from the PdL, although the latter has engaged in delaying tactics in an attempt to prevent that taking place on December 20 - if it is not passed by the end of the year, that would undoubtedly panic the markets. It is thought Monti will resign immediately afterwards.

It is extremely probable that the subsequent general election will be held in late February or early March. Predictably, despite all the talk of electoral reform, the election will be held under the system devised by the Lega Nord's Roberto Calderoli in 2005, which Calderoli himself described as the *legge porcata* (pig law) and which more cultivated journalists and political scientists have now dignified with the more pompous Latinate label of 'the Porcellum'. This law was originally inspired by Berlusconi's desire to prevent Romano Prodi's centre-left from gaining a stable majority in 2006 and has a number of wilfully perverse provisions. For example, whilst there is a straightforward national prize for the leading party or coalition of 55% of the seats in the lower house, in the Senate each regional winner picks up its own majority bonus. As a result, there could well be a different overall majority in the upper house, given the right's longstanding dominance in a few large regions, such as Lombardy, Lazio and Sicily.

With the clear lead of the ex-'official communist'-dominated Partito Democratico over the PdL in the opinion polls in the last few months, it seems very likely that one of Berlusconi's motives for pulling the plug on Monti was to ensure that plans for electoral reform vigorously advocated by president Napolitano and supported by Monti were killed off in a relatively discreet way: various parliamentary manoeuvres to delay an agreement were becoming increasingly embarrassing, as the PdL had to keep inventing spurious schemes that it knew the PD would reject in order not to take political and moral responsibility for keeping the

infamous 'pig law' in being.¹

Euro spotlight

Berlusconi's decision to ditch Monti has turned the spotlight of Europe (and to some extent the USA) on Italy. And he drew further attention to himself by making a number of well publicised speeches attacking the austerity policy of the Monti government, which he blamed on the European Union in general, and Germany and indeed Angela Merkel in particular.

Whilst xenophobic populism might well have been quite an effective means of boosting the PdL's domestic poll ratings from the roughly 15% to which it had fallen in early December, it was bound to elicit a negative reaction abroad, not only in Berlin, Frankfurt, Paris and Brussels, but even in Washington, where a newly re-elected Barack Obama has no reason to forget the Italian's racist gibes about his 'suntan'. Whilst *The Times* may have confined itself to cartoons mocking Berlusconi's sexual antics on an inside page, the French daily *Libération* on December 10 had a front page portraying Berlusconi as an Egyptian mummy, indicating that the reaction to Berlusconi's return within the euro zone is one of fear, not patronising amusement.

Therefore, the European People's Party - the centre-right bloc in the European parliament that used to be labelled Christian Democratic before it admitted Berlusconi's Forza Italia/PdL into its ranks - decided to take what was by its standards rather vigorous action, inviting Monti to a caucus of the EPP, a group of which he is not officially a member, in order to praise his government's record over the last year and implicitly disavow Berlusconi, whose party is still nominally attached to the group. Berlusconi was well aware of his isolation from the rest of the European centre-right, which had aligned itself, whether from conviction or from self-interest, behind the German chancellor - at one stage she had allowed it to be believed that she might boycott the EPP caucus to avoid meeting Berlusconi.

So the latter did a quick somersault and suggested that he would withdraw his own candidacy if Monti was willing to lead an electoral cartel of 'all the moderates', including the PdL and - as far as anybody could understand in the absence of any contra-indication, Lega Nord - against the threat from the centre-left, which Berlusconi still portrays as barely disguised 'communists'.

It should be borne in mind that even Berlusconi, despite his own tendency to megalomania - he once notoriously described himself as 'the anointed of the Lord' - is unlikely to believe his own propaganda about the possibility of a PdL victory in February and is now more concerned with protecting himself and his economic interests against the judiciary. Having recently been found guilty of fraud, he awaits the outcome of the Ruby trial, in which he is accused of paying an underage prostitute for sexual services. Further sittings of the court have been scheduled for January 21, January 28 and February 4, which means there could be a verdict a week before the general election; no doubt the defence will come up with ingenious delaying tactics, however.

A Monti politically dependent on Berlusconi and the PdL might be bamboozled into acting as the tycoon's protector against the magistrates. Whilst such a deal would appeal to Berlusconi, it has few attractions for Monti, whose foreign fan club was built on his reputation as a sincere



Monti: austerity

practising Catholic with an immaculate personal life and a convinced Europhile neoliberal - the polar opposite of the sleazy and increasingly Europhobic populist. Whilst Monti may well have been willing to act as Berlusconi's client in order to secure his old post as a European commissioner, such days are long gone and it seems unlikely that Monti would want the poisoned chalice of a second premiership dependent on the whims of Berlusconi for his parliamentary majority.

What still remains in doubt is whether Monti intends to play a direct part in the forthcoming election. Whilst Merkel, Obama and, if the Italian press is to be believed, François Hollande too may see Monti as a safe pair of hands who would minimise the risk of Italy precipitating any further euro zone crisis, he does not have the same degree of support amongst the Italian people as he has amongst the European elites. A recent poll² makes it clear that only 30% of the Italian electorate favour Monti standing at the general election, whilst 61% are against such an intervention. As many as 78% of PdL voters are opposed, which further undermines the credibility of Berlusconi's offer to Monti. On the other hand, 44% of PD voters support Monti intervening, even if a slightly larger number - 50% - oppose it. After more than a year of utterly abject subservience to Monti and his neoliberal agenda, the PD is only reaping what it has sown - however irked its leader, Pierluigi Bersani, may be at the prospect of his own premiership slipping away from him. It should also be pointed out that if 30% of the electorate are in principle in favour of Monti standing, only somewhere between 3% and 5% would definitely vote for any list he headed.

Obviously the existing centre formations, such as the Unione di Centro (UdC), are the most consistent supporters of a Monti candidacy, since they are convinced that all the components of any potential bloc led by him would benefit from an increased share of the vote. The centre of the political spectrum is becoming quite crowded, as it is almost certain that the think tank, Italia Futura, founded by Ferrari boss Luca di Montezemolo, is going to stand as a political party, even if its name and candidates are still to be decided. Montezemolo's grouping seems willing to make some deal with the UdC, but currently has reservations about working with Gianfranco Fini's Futura e Libertà per Italia (FLI), with which the UdC has been loosely aligned since Fini's break with Berlusconi in 2010. In addition to Montezemolo's

followers, there are other embryonic centre formations involving some of Monti's former ministers, as well as the leader of the traditionally Catholic trade union confederation, the CISL.³ If Monti does throw his hat in the ring, there is also the real possibility of defections from the more moderate Europhile wing of the PdL or the more neoliberal and/or former Christian Democratic right wing currents of the PD, which would swell the ranks of the centre bloc and make it a real rival to the PD-Sinistra Ecologia e Libertà alliance.

It is now crystal-clear that Nichi Vendola's Sinistra Ecologia e Libertà (SEL) will be part of a PD-led coalition in February's contest. Vendola participated in the first round of the PD-organised centre-left primary contest in November, coming third out of a total of five candidates, and then threw the electoral weight of his followers behind Bersani in the second round against the rightwing candidate. Although Bersani's dependence on Vendola for his second-round victory has pulled him to the left to some extent, the chances of the PD returning to a more traditionally social democratic position in the event of a general election victory are poor, to say the least. The choice of the Americanising name, Partito Democratico, marked a clear break with any vestigial attachments to the traditions of the labour movement.

'Fourth pole'

Recent weeks have seen the emergence of a 'fourth pole' opposed to the three existing party groupings - PD-SEL, PdL-Lega and UdC-centre. This new Movimento Arancione (Orange Movement) is supported by Rifondazione Comunista (PRC), the Partito dei Comunisti Italiani, the Verdi (Greens)⁴ and, it now seems, Antonio di Pietro's Italia dei Valori. It also incorporates the grouping known as Alba, led by Paul Ginsborg, the British expatriate history professor from Florence university, and a somewhat broader grouping of left intellectuals, including the sociologist Donatella della Porta.

It is likely that the Movimento Arancione (MA) will be led by the former Palermo anti-mafia magistrate currently working for the United Nations in Guatemala, Antonio Ingroia. Whilst not exactly the Italian Syriza of PRC leader Paolo Ferrero's dreams,⁵ the MA is clearly opposed to both Berlusconi and Monti, to neoliberalism as well as corruption and the Mafia, and believes the PD has made too many concessions to the austerity agenda - although some of its components are still vague as to whether they might do a deal with the PD after the election if they secured parliamentary representation.

However, if Ingroia becomes the figurehead of this cartel, conflict with the PD is fortunately absolutely assured, since he is the magistrate who became involved in direct confrontation with Napolitano over the president's four notorious intercepted phone calls to former Christian Democrat interior minister Nicola Mancino, currently accused of involvement in illicit negotiations with the Mafia in 1993-94. Whilst Ingroia's involvement would prevent any backsliding towards the PD, it is not clear whether even having such a famous figurehead would allow the MA to get over the 4% threshold for the Chamber of Deputies, the stumbling block for the ill-fated Sinistra Arcobaleno (Rainbow Left) of 2008.

Marco Ferrando's hard-line Trotskyist Partito Comunista

dei Lavoratori (PCL) will stand independently of the MA and may by using the hammer and sickle symbol and the word 'communist' on the ballot paper take votes away from some who might otherwise have voted for the PRC or PdCI if these communists had raised the red flag rather than an orange one.⁶ Given that the PCL has no chance whatsoever of getting anybody into the Chamber of Deputies, it seems an act of extreme sectarianism to prevent the working class from regaining some measure of communist representation of however flawed a character - something whose loss in 2008 has had disastrous consequences for militant trade unionists, student activists, environmentalists and all other serious opponents of the existing order.

Whilst the Movimento Arancione, despite its own weaknesses, represents a genuine left opposition to the system, greater media and popular attention will unfortunately be focused on Beppe Grillo's Movimento 5 Stelle (M5S) as a new phenomenon on the Italian political scene. Whilst M5S has a record of taking up environmental issues and correctly attacks the widespread corruption of the established political parties (which has infected large chunks of the PD and not just the PdL, Lega Nord and UdC), it cannot, of course, be regarded as a leftwing force. Grillo has taken a racist position in opposing the extension of citizenship rights to the children of immigrants and M5S in Bologna has joined the PdL in supporting the murderously violent, hard-line neo-Nazis of Casa Pound. This fits in with the ultra-nationalist Europhobia manifested in repeated calls for Italy's immediate return to the lira.

Despite his rhetoric about direct democracy and internet-based horizontalism, Grillo is adopting an increasingly authoritarian stance, expelling local M5S councillors over trivial issues without any pretence at due process. Moreover, the M5S online primary selection of candidates has lacked any transparency. Questions have also been raised about the party's financing and the precise role of the mysterious Casaleggio Associates in running the party centre. In short, there are rather too many parallels between Grillo and Berlusconi for comfort ●

Notes

1. It ought to be pointed out that, as things stand, the 'pig law' in the lower house works to the advantage of the PD: with any luck it could get 55% of the seats with only 35% of the vote if the remaining 65% is fragmented. The offers being made by the PdL involved setting a threshold of 40% or higher before the majority prize kicked in, so that the PD would have great difficulty in winning outright and might perhaps be forced into a national unity coalition with the PdL against the threat of a rising M5S.
2. See *Corriere della Sera* December 16.
3. The Catholic church hierarchy, which favoured Berlusconi for so many years, now seems to have dumped him for a revived centrism under Monti. This choice is based on political, not personal or religious, considerations, since the church never had any hesitation in backing the libertine Berlusconi against the pious Catholic family man, Romano Prodi.
4. It is, of course, slightly bizarre that the rump Green party, consisting of its old centre and right, has aligned itself with the PRC, after its left split a few years ago to join the right wing of the old PRC in Vendola's SEL.
5. After the myopic refusal of Nichi Vendola and SEL to respond to his call for radical left regroupment on the Syriza model, Ferrero had a rather limited choice of potential allies.
6. I assume that Sinistra Critica, which is in a weaker state than the PCL, lacking even its limited implantation in the working class and almost entirely consisting of students, will not be repeating its own sectarian exploit of 2008. Whilst the PRC made some grave errors in 2006-08, it was the candidacies of the PCL and Sinistra Critica - obtaining more than 1% taken together - which in all probability prevented the Sinistra Arcobaleno from crossing the parliamentary threshold and deprived the class of representation in the Chamber of Deputies for the first time in more than a hundred years.

SOLIDARITY

What a legalistic shambles

The ‘resolutions’ of the Iran Tribunal have proved Hopi right, argues Yassamine Mather



Anger at executions should not mean support for ‘first force’

In the good old days of the Moscow trials it was customary for fallen members of the Soviet leadership to disappear from group photographs, their image wiped out of history, as they fell out of favour with Stalin. How ironic that the 21st century unholy alliance between Iran’s soft left and neo-conservatives in what is known as the Iran Tribunal seems to have adopted the same method in dealing with the embarrassing outcome of its second phase.

The Farsi version of the long-awaited final resolution never made it to the IT website and the English version¹ has been either removed or hidden away somewhere where it is difficult to find.² As the embarrassing clauses were translated into Farsi, the organisers were confronted with a barrage of criticism. The soft left has attempted to justify the disappearance of the final statement with the claim that the ‘findings’ were temporary resolutions - although the ‘prosecutor’, Payam Akhavan, and his allies consider the job done and deny the ‘temporary’ nature of the findings.

For months the soft left acted as cheerleaders for this dubious project and told us they easily outnumbered the ‘three or four’ liberal (neo-conservative) figures involved in the tribunal; there was no danger of their politics being watered down - they were in charge and they knew what they were doing. They dismissed our criticisms of the participation of these rightwing, pro-imperialist figures as scaremongering by sectarian forces. However, as we have said on a number of occasions, the problem is not just the presence of the likes of Akhavan and the Boroumand Foundation (which openly flaunts its connections with the imperialist-funded National Endowment for Democracy in the United States), Sir Jeffrey Nice (the Conservative Party’s chair of Human Rights!) or dozens of similar figures. It is a fact that these individuals, the organisations they are associated with dominated the agenda of the Iran Tribunal.

So, unlike the deluded soft left, we in Hands Off the People of Iran were not surprised that clause one in the IT resolution called in the first instance on Tehran itself to deal with the issue of the executions of political prisoners in 1988. The tribunal recommended: “That the Islamic Republic of Iran as the prime authority, bearing the

greatest responsibility, investigate these atrocities and bring the alleged perpetrators to justice.”

This is a very interesting development. The entire religious state - its current supreme leader, ayatollah Khomeini, his predecessor, ayatollah Khomeini, leading figures of the ‘reformist’ Islamist opposition, Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, Mir-Hossein Moussavi - all were directly involved in the decision to physically eliminate the radical left in Iran, and these executions were part and parcel of that process. How on earth can they be expected to “bring the alleged perpetrators to justice”?

Now, Hopi has faced many accusations from the more die-hard supporters of the Iran Tribunal because of our principled approach to this event and amongst them was the allegation that we had cuddled up to the Islamic Republic because of the threat of war. The resolution passed at the end of the second IT phase proved who truly harbours illusions about the theocratic regime. From the very beginning it was predictable that the tribunal, as a minor player in US plans for regime change from above, would follow the usual imperialist cycle of threats, negotiation and further threats. This is what happens when you give bourgeois lawyers a free hand - their understanding of international law is solely based on acceptance of existing states and institutions.

The second point in the IT resolution states: “That the Human Rights Council of the United Nations establish a commission of inquiry, as recommended by the special rapporteur, to investigate these atrocities.”

Now the rapporteur, Maurice Copithorn, visited Iran in the late 1990s and, as many witnesses have said, he was not interested in these executions, because at that time the US, and by extension the UN, was in favour of negotiations with the ‘reformist’ wing of the regime: the last thing they wanted brought out was Iran’s ‘human rights’ record. So this clause demonstrates the result of relying on the UN to monitor abuses.

By far the worst clause is the third one: “That the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation mandate its Independent Permanent Commission of Human Rights to designate these violations a ‘priority human rights issue’ and ‘conduct studies and research’ into it.”

In other words, the OIC, consisting of 57 reactionary regimes, is given the task of overseeing Iran’s compliance with the findings!

The whole story would be comical, were it not for the enormity of the crimes committed. Apart from the fact that referring Iran to the Sunniled OIC is a blatantly political message from our ‘non-political’ ‘human rights’ advocates, at a time of worsening regional tensions between Sunnis and Shias, it makes a mockery of the whole claimed process of achieving justice for all those executed by the Iranian regime in 1988, who were overwhelmingly *working class partisans*. The execution of communist men and women in a religious state is to be judged by another group of backward religious states headed by Saudi Arabia, the Arab Emirates, Muslim Brotherhood-led Egypt ... In Saudi Arabia women are not even allowed to drive a car, many of them cannot venture out of the house unaccompanied, let alone join a Marxist organisation calling for the overthrow of the religious state. It will be interesting to see how helpful Saudi sharia law is in winning justice for the comrades we lost in the dungeons of the Islamic Republic.

Vindication

Over the years we have seen some bizarre positions taken up by sections of the left in relation to Iran. In the first years after the revolution, pro-Soviet parties followed Moscow’s directive that Iran’s move from the sphere of influence of the US represented some sort of ‘revolutionary change’ and subsequently the takeover of the US embassy in Tehran, the war with Iraq, and so on were claimed as proof of the regime’s ‘anti-imperialism’. Not only that, but appallingly these groups justified and supported the regime’s suppression of working class protests, and the imprisonment and execution of leftwing political prisoners. Many Trotskyist groups and organisations also adopted such positions. In fact it was years later, following revelations about the Irangate scandal, that our position was vindicated and the left finally admitted that such events had nothing to do with anti-imperialism.

As far as Iran’s new rulers were concerned, taking hostages in the US embassy in November 1979 was part of a plan to simultaneously divert attention from rising workers’ protests and the consolidation of the power of the new state. The hostages were pawns in the political games played by the US and later Israel. Certainly the Hezbollah hostages in Lebanon, they were released as part of the elaborate Iran contra deal: hostages were exchanged for Israeli weapons, to help Iran fight its ‘anti-western’ war against Iraq. In exchange for these weapons, Iran paid funds into Swiss accounts belonging to the Nicaraguan contras, as well as sending oil to Israel.

However, while the congressional hearings that finally exposed Iran’s sham anti-imperialism only took place seven years later in 1986, it has taken just a few months for Hopi’s position on the Iran Tribunal to be vindicated with the release of the ‘resolutions’ of the second phase.

Of course Hopi comrades have been very patient in dealing with the accusations levelled against us because of our principled stance (there have also been cyber attacks on our website and attempts to hack into our email accounts), as well as the sneers and even threats by what can only be described as the most ignorant factions of the Iranian left. The comrades on

our steering committee responded very well and indeed the whole saga has consolidated our position, strengthened our unity and once again proved that principled opposition to popular frontism does pass the test.

Sectarian?

Having said that, I believe there is a need to reply to some of the accusations levelled against Hopi, especially as they are still being repeated, now as former advocates of the tribunal are trying to distance themselves from both the findings and the process itself. Apparently our ‘sectarian’ attitude in wanting to expose the tribunal did not help them realise its true nature.

So let me reply to one such individual, Taghi Rouzbeh of the ‘Central Committee’ faction of Rahe Kargar.³ He might well be an expert on the various factions of the Iranian regime (his supporters will tell you he can predict which ayatollah in Ghom will take which side in the debate over nuclear capability), but when it comes to Marxist politics, his knowledge could fit on the back of a postage stamp.

First of all, sectarianism refers to positioning within the left at the expense of the class. “By directing socialism towards a fusion with the working class movement,” wrote Lenin, “Karl Marx and Frederick Engels did their greatest service: they created a revolutionary theory that explained the necessity for this fusion and gave socialists the task of organising the class struggle of the

proletariat.” This has nothing to do with the dissolution of a revolutionary project into a non-revolutionary one or, in the case of the Iran Tribunal, into a pro-imperialist, reactionary one.

When we warned the Iranian left about the dangers, we were not acting in a sectarian manner. We were saying that, contrary to their claims, they are not part of the ‘third force’ confronting both the Iranian regime and imperialist forces. Once we give free rein to the likes of Akhavan and so accept the hegemony of bourgeois forces, including those who are proud of their association with the National Endowment for Democracy, we are no longer defending the Iranian working class. On the contrary, such forces are allies of the ‘first force’ - the imperialist powers and world capitalism - irrespective of whether this betrayal is carried out consciously or not. In the same manner, apologists of one or other faction of the Islamic regime, those who refuse to call for its overthrow, should be counted within the ranks of the ‘second force’.

Far from being sectarian, Hopi was acting in a responsible way, trying to stop comrades from falling into a dangerous trap ●

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Notes

1. The removed final statement can be viewed on the website of Hands Off the People of Iran: www.hopoi.org/pre.doc.
2. See <http://irantribunal.com/Eng>.
3. <http://rahekaregar.com/maghalat/2012/12/10/teribonal.htm>.

We stand by our principles

Hands Off the People of Iran has been accused by some forces in the orbit of the Iran Tribunal of abandoning its central political slogans and effectively becoming an apologist for the Tehran regime. Hopi categorically rejects these accusations. Our opposition to the IT flows precisely from the principles embodied in our founding statement - principles that uphold implacable opposition to both imperialism *and* the theocratic regime. At the same time we were - and remain - crystal-clear about where change must come from: the struggles of the working class and the social movements.

Our criticism of the Iran Tribunal and the left organisations that have collaborated with it flows from this. The refusal of this body to stand against sanctions and the threat of war against Iran makes its condemnation of the regime’s crimes - accurate though they are in the abstract - an aid to imperialism’s plans and manoeuvres in the region. Quite apart from murky questions to do with the tainting of the IT through funding or indirect support, its silence on US threats and the possibility of an Israeli attack provide a damning indictment of the whole initiative.

Despite protestations to the contrary, some of those on the ‘left’ who have cooperated with the IT have effectively given up on the ability of the working class to win

fundamental change in Iran. Their political decay and disorientation is illustrated by the agency they now look to in order to defeat the theocratic regime: the stance of the IT proves that, for these people, that force is now imperialism. Others who have given their support in hope of raising awareness of the crimes committed by the theocratic regime have done so at a political cost that is too high. Whatever media interest has been gained has been placed within the framework of strengthening the imperialist arguments for deeper sanctions and the possibility of a military strike.

In stark contrast, Hopi stands proudly by the founding principles we adopted at our first conference in 2007:

- No to any imperialist intervention. The immediate and unconditional end to sanctions on Iran.
- No to the theocratic regime.
- Opposition to Israeli expansionism and aggression.
- Support to all working class and progressive struggles in Iran against poverty and repression.
- Support for socialism and democracy in Iran and therefore solidarity with all democratic, working class, socialist and secular movements in that country.
- Opposition to Israeli, British and American nuclear weapons. For a Middle East free of nuclear weapons as a step towards worldwide nuclear disarmament.

<http://hopoi.org>

ZIONISM

How Zionist McCarthyism

Antony Lerman **The making and unmaking of a Zionist: a personal and political journey** Pluto Press, 2012, pp240, £20

Tony Lerman was, for over 25 years, at the heart of the British Jewish establishment. Lerman is a former director of Anglo-Jewry's foremost research body, the Institute of Jewish Affairs (IJA), and subsequently the Institute of Jewish Policy Research (IJPR), as well as a former columnist on *The Jewish Chronicle* and editor of the *Jewish Quarterly*. His experiences should be compulsory reading for Jewish students, in particular, who want to understand the structure and power relationships of their own community.

I can identify with Lerman's experiences on a number of levels. Like him I was brought up as a Zionist, albeit in the religious orthodox rather than the socialist Zionist tradition. Like him I have experienced the McCarthyite attitude of those small-minded leaders of the Jewish community who brook no dissent with the prevailing Zionist norms. Jewish academics are expected to toe the line and to produce research that conforms to the accepted and hegemonic narrative, prime amongst which is the idea that the Israeli state must on no account be criticised beyond the odd disagreement over a particular policy. In particular the founding ideology of Israel, Zionism, is sacrosanct and those of Jewish extraction who venture across these red lines and ask awkward questions should accept that they will be branded as traitors and 'self-haters'. Although it died a death in Germany, the 'stab in the back' legend is alive and well amongst the Board of Deputies of British Jews and its sycophants.

The Board of Deputies, first set up in 1760 in order to pay tribute to George III, has always been a loyal poodle to the British establishment. Today it combines this with unswerving devotion to Israel. Based on the affiliations of synagogues, many of which are just rotten boroughs, it excludes virtually all secular Jews. Nonetheless it is a paragon of virtue compared to the wholly undemocratic Jewish Leadership Council - chaired by one Mick Davies, who controls the mining company, Xtrata, the only qualification for which is the depths of one's pocket.

Kibbutz life

Lerman, a member of the socialist Zionist youth group, Habonim, took his politics seriously, spending two years in Israel working on *kibbutzim*. He also became an Israeli citizen. These are both the most interesting aspects of the book and also the most frustrating. When I was young, much of the left saw Israel as a socialist paradise in which the *kibbutzim* heralded a new future. Property was owned in common, private possessions were frowned upon, income and child-rearing shared.

Yet, as Lerman points out, those running the *kibbutzim* were seen, both by themselves and others, as the elite of Israeli society. In the army they dominated the officer corps, having created the left-Zionist Palmach shock troops, dominated primarily by the 'Marxist', Hashomer Hatzair, and the militaristic left Ahdut Ha'avodah party. They were, in the words of another 'self-hater', Gerald Kaufman MP, the Israeli equivalent of Eton. After 1967 leaders of Ahdut Ha'avodah, such as Yitzhak Tabenkin, became the advocates of the Greater Israel Movement and settlement in the occupied territories. The



Communist colonialism, not communist emancipation

kibbutzim were indeed unique, but they were unique forms of collective colonisation. The separation of children from their parents had more to do with ancient Sparta than emancipatory communism. Children were the property of a military state and ties of love and affection were frowned upon.

Through manual labour the 'Jewish nation' - which Zionism, in common with the anti-Semites, saw as a degenerate and deformed people - would be renewed through a mystical attachment to its land. As Jacob Klatzkin, editor of the official Zionist newspaper *Die Welt* (1909-11) explained, Jews outside Palestine were "a people disfigured in both body and soul ... At the very worst it can maintain us in a state of national impurity and breed some sort of outlandish creature ... some sort of oddity among the peoples going by the name of Jew." Palestine, according to Pinchas Rosen, Israel's first minister of justice, was an "Institute for the Fumigation of Jewish Vermin".²

It does not take much imagination to see the parallels between Zionism, a 'volkish' Jewish political movement, and anti-Semitism - which is why the Zionist charge that anti-Zionism is a form of anti-Semitism is so ludicrous. The *kibbutzim* were at the forefront of the creation of the new Jew. It is no accident that one of their main proponents was Arthur Ruppin, justly known as the father of land settlement in the Yishuv (pre-state Israel). Ruppin was a devoted believer in the racial sciences and a fierce protagonist of the idea that Palestine should not accept just any Jew for immigration.

In 1933 Ruppin made a pilgrimage to see his hero, Hans Gunther, who had been installed as professor of racial anthropology at Jenna University, at the insistence of Wilhelm Frick, the first National Socialist state minister and later Nazi minister of the interior, who was hanged at Nuremberg in 1946. Gunther, who was Himmler's ideological mentor, welcomed Zionism as "a positive development, praising it for recognising the genuine

racial consciousness (*Volkstum*) of the Jews".³

Lerman, however, by his own admission found his stay on the *kibbutzim* less than fulfilling. Without challenging its ideology he found "nothing intrinsically valuable" in manual labour (p23), but put this down to a personal failing. In fact the fetishising of manual labour for its own sake was a by-product of the divorce between the *kibbutzim* and socialism. There is nothing intrinsically progressive in manual labour. The capitalist abolition of drudgery in the house and home is a progressive development. It is no accident that when the *kibbutzim* diversified into manufacturing, they became collective capitalists, employing cheap Arab and oriental Jewish labour.

If I have a criticism of Lerman's account of his stay on the Yifat and Amiad *kibbutzim*, it is his passing reference to the nearby ruins of Jubb Yosef, an Arab village, though later he attempts to establish whether it was built over a razed Arab village. Elsewhere he refers to Mahmood, the Arab caretaker, as "a local Arab who lived on the plantation in a hut with his wife and children" (p21). It does not seem to have occurred to Lerman to ask why Mahmood was not a fully-fledged member of the *kibbutz*. Of course, the answer was that he was not Jewish, and the *kibbutz* was a wholly Jewish affair. Zionist socialism excluded the indigenous population, whilst dismissing their hostility as nothing more than the product of manipulation by feudal *effendis*. Socialist Zionism saw its role as bringing modernisation to the backward Arabs.

Lerman was typical of a whole generation of young Zionists who accepted socialist Zionism at face value without ever questioning the purpose and political context of collective forms of organisation. Lerman was unaware of how the 'socialist' Zionist leaders, David Ben-Gurion and Berl Katznelson, had worked hand-in-glove with the British military rulers of Palestine to expel

and imprison the Jewish communists who did take joint work with the Arab working class seriously.

Nor was he aware of the fierce battles in the 1920s between the Zionist 'trade union', Histadrut, and the *gdud avodah* (work brigades) based in the northern *kibbutzim* - some of whom moved to an anti-Zionist position and collaboration with the Arabs - who were literally starved into submission.⁴ From its very inception socialist Zionism belonged to the right wing of the labour movement internationally - not merely an adaptation to, but in Palestine the engine behind, colonisation.

Wrong buttons

Much of Lerman's book is taken up with the trials and tribulations of a free-thinker confronting a Jewish and Zionist establishment with its own pre-determined conclusions about racism, anti-Semitism and Jewish history.

Lerman was expected to be an establishment Zionist academic, a David Cesarani or Martin Gilbert. The role of the Zionist academic, especially in the Jewish diaspora, is to prove that which is already known! It is a form of reverse academic engineering. Lerman was too naive to realise, when applying for a research post with the IJA, that the very term 'anti-Semitism' had a different meaning for Zionism. His first mistake was to become editor of an ailing magazine, the *Jewish Quarterly*, a cultural/political journal which had staggered on from one crisis to another for 30 years and which, on the death of its editor, Jacob Sontag, was facing imminent demise.

But Lerman's major mistake was the second editorial he wrote for the *Jewish Quarterly* in early 1985, coupled with his commissioning of an article, with which he disagreed, from David Rosenberg of the Jewish Socialists Group. The JSG had been anathema to the Jewish establishment from the moment it had set up stall. The Board of Deputies and the various misleaders of the Jewish community did not take kindly to

Jewish radicalism, especially when it came dressed in the clothes of the Bund, an anti-Zionist Jewish party that was influential in pre-war Jewish Poland. Lerman's editorial managed to press all the right (or wrong!) buttons. It questioned not only the misuse of anti-Semitism as a weapon against Zionism's adversaries, but also the role of the Jewish diaspora vs Israel (the 'Jewish' state).

In the eyes of Zionism there is no role for a Jewish diaspora other than as a support mechanism for Israel, cheerleading from the side. It was axiomatic that Jews outside Israel do not question or criticise those on the front line of the war against the Arabs. In the words of Lord Tennyson, theirs is not to reason why! In suggesting that Jews outside Israel might have interests that are not synonymous with that country and, even worse, to suggest that it was the actions of Israel, which claims to speak on behalf of all Jews, that was creating the very 'anti-Semitism' that it deprecated. This created a tsunami of hatred and abuse, made even worse when Lerman started suggesting that maybe the life of Palestinians inside Israel was not everything it was cracked up to be.

Despite or maybe because of his work for the IJA, the IJPR and for the Rothschild Foundation's Yad Hadaniv, in which he consciously sought to strengthen the internal life and institutions of European Jewry, he brought down on his head the wrath of people like Lord Stanley Kalms of Dixons plc, former treasurer of the Conservative Party, and the Thatcherite ghoul, Sir Alfred Sherman. Kalms simply walked out of the IJPR, taking with him a number of other trustees and making the life of Lerman's remaining supporters even more difficult.

Tony Lerman was an innocent abroad who felt it was his duty to point out that the emperor had no clothes. He did not realise that his job was to maintain the pretence that all was normal. He clung to the naive belief that what mattered was logic, persuasion and argument. So, although in his editorial in *Jewish Quarterly* he disagreed, rightly in my opinion, with David Rosenberg's argument that anti-Semitism was on the increase, this was irrelevant. What was important was that he had taken discussion of anti-Semitism outside the accepted parameters. After all, what his Zionist critics termed 'anti-Semitism' was a different creature anyway.

In his battles with the petty-minded petty bourgeois of the Board of Deputies, Lerman attracted the support of the cream of the British Jewish intelligentsia - people like professor George Steiner and Rabbi Julia Neuberger. But it was to no avail, because the Zionist leadership of the Jewish community in Britain does not do debate. Anti-Semitism had already been redefined as hostility to Israel - 'the Jew amongst the nations' - and weaponised accordingly. When the battles against Oswald Moseley were at their height, the board ran for cover and when anti-fascists mobilised against the National Front in the 1970s, it and its Zionist echo chambers were more concerned about anti-Zionism.

'Anti-Semitism' became transmuted into the 'new anti-Semitism': anti-Zionism. Traditional anti-Semitism was only useful in so far as it was connected with opposition to Israel. Islam became the real enemy.

devours its own

Incidents in which Arabs or Muslims took Zionist claims to represent Jews at face value and engaged in anti-Semitic acts are magnified out of all proportion. At the same time there is virtually no comment about the fact that the English Defence League marches with Israeli flags or Andres Breivik massacres scores of young socialists in Norway, whilst proclaiming his undying love for Israel. Neo-Nazis and far-right politicians, such as Euro-MPs Michal Kamiński (Poland) and Robert Ziles (Latvia), are also ardently pro-Zionist and pay homage at Yad Vashem, Israel’s holocaust propaganda museum. Ziles even manages to march each year with the veterans of the Latvian Waffen SS!

Israeli organisations sought to gain a monopoly on the collection of statistics of anti-Semitism for one purpose only - to show how dangerous Europe was for Jews amongst the Muslim hordes and how much better off they would be in Israel. The British end of this operation is the Community Security Trust, a group set up by the Board of Deputies, allegedly to monitor anti-Semitism in Britain, but it also collates intelligence on leftwing Jews. This year it supplied false information to the home office in its failed bid to deport Sheikh Raed Salah, the leader of the northern branch of the Islamic movement in Israel. Unsurprisingly the CST “played a role both in vilifying me personally for my views and undermining the work JPR was doing” (p187).

So when Lerman says things like “Zionism failed to eliminate anti-Semitism and now Israel provoked it”, he was putting his head in a noose (p132). When he was appointed in January 2006 to the post of director of JPR it was greeted by a headline over an article by one of *The Jewish Chronicle*’s hack columnists, Geoffrey Alderman, which read: “JPR loses mind in choice of new head”.⁵ Round-robin emails, secret meetings, conclaves and other examples of skulduggery resulted in Lerman’s position becoming personally and politically untenable. Yes, he became paranoid - but with good reason.

‘Outdated’ Zionism

The book is replete with various symposia and conferences that Lerman participated in. However, while polite academic debate in Israel and elsewhere was one thing, the Zionist propaganda machine required compliant and tame academics like Robert Wistrich, a professor of history at Tel Aviv University, who could use their credentials to further a Zionist agenda.

Lerman himself had begun to draw the conclusion that Zionism was outmoded and outdated, a vehicle for the interests of the Israeli state via institutions such as the Jewish Agency. In one paper, presented in January 2007 to a conference at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, he outlined four particular aspects of what was termed “Jewish peoplehood”: the particular vs universal; diversity of identity and opinion; the threat to an Israel-centric definition of peoplehood; and Jews as the subject, not object, of history. He could have asked what the material basis of the existence of Jewish people outside Israel was.

All of these are important questions in their own right. For example, Jews as the subject directly challenges the Zionist notion of eternal anti-Semitism (itself a reflection of the Nazi idea of the ‘eternal Jew’), according to which anti-Semitism is one unchanging constant over some 2,000 years. Jews

were held to be passive victims rather than players in history. As Lerman summed it up, “What is peoplehood anyway? Just another con-trick on the part of the Jewish Agency and Zionist bodies” (p160). To those like Stanley Kalms, the enemy was Islam and the purpose of the JPR was to support Blair and Bush, the only people who had stood up to it (p167).

The book cleared up one minor mystery for me. In 2007 an organisation called Independent Jewish Voices was launched, but missing from its list of prominent signatories, including Mike Leigh, Stephen Fry, Susie Orbach and Jacqueline Rose, was Tony Lerman. It transpires that it was almost a condition of his continued employment that he was not seen to associate with IJV, although in practice he attended its committee meetings. IJV was an attempt to create a space for Jewish people to debate issues free from the narrow confines of Zionist orthodoxy. As such it attracted the venom of people like Melanie Phillips, who notoriously described it as “Jews for Genocide”!

Like many dissident Jews, Lerman was accused of ‘self-hatred’ which, he describes as a way of “strengthening a narrow, ethnocentric view of the Jewish people” (p178). In fact it is worse. It is a racist calumny which assumes that to be Jewish you have to be a chauvinist. It is the same charge that the Nazis levelled against anti-fascist Germans.

On January 22 2008 Lerman decided that he had had enough and handed in his resignation. Almost immediately the fake leftist David Hirsh from Engage, a campaign that fought a losing battle against the academic boycott in the University and College Union (and which is now known to have been financed by the Board of Deputies) had applied to be Lerman’s replacement!

As Lerman recognises, having worked at the heart of the Jewish establishment for more than 25 years, “to hold views usually associated with the marginalised, dissenting groups was an unprecedented danger, a traitorous act that simply could not be tolerated” (p197).

Valuable

Tony Lerman is not an anti-Zionist. As far as I can discern he has not formulated a critique of Zionism as a movement - which was, from the start, bound to end up as a rightwing, chauvinist movement. I suspect that even today he holds that it had progressive origins rather than seeing that Zionism, formed in the crucible of anti-Semitism, was a counterrevolutionary movement which accepted the argument of the anti-Semites that Jews did not belong in non-Jewish society. That it was a movement forever condemned by its alliance with imperialism and its nationalism, a settler movement that had no progressive content, but which owed its nationalism to the volkish currents of central Europe.

Tony Lerman is no Ahad Ha’am, the cultural Zionist who after visiting Palestine warned: “We who live abroad are accustomed to believe that almost all Eretz Yisrael is now uninhabited desert ... But this is not true ... We who live abroad are accustomed to believing that the Arabs are all wild desert people who, like donkeys, neither see nor understand what is happening around them. But this is a grave mistake. The Arab, like all the Semites, is sharp-minded and shrewd ... But, if the time comes that our people’s life in Eretz Yisrael will develop to a point where we are taking their place, either slightly or

significantly, the natives are not going to just step aside so easily ...”⁶

A glaring omission is Lerman’s failure to say what might be the basis of a secular Jewish identity that is freed from Zionism’s poisonous racism. In times gone by Jews played particular social, economic and political roles and their religion and identity reflected that. The Bund, for example, was formed as a result of a distinctive Jewish proletariat. The Jews of medieval times played the role of money-lenders and traders, which in turn helped define and mould the oral tradition of Judaism. What distinctive role today would Jews play if and when Zionism is discarded? I suspect that minus Israel most Jews would assimilate, as in fact they are already doing, leaving the remnants of Jewish orthodoxy.

It is a subject that Lerman barely mentions, but which is elephant in the room. Zionism itself is proving a massive turn-off for young Jews in particular and is insufficient to provide the basis for a separate Jewish identity. Lerman also makes very little connection between his own ideas and of those Jews who are now active in support of the Palestinians.

Tony Lerman’s book is, though, a valuable depiction of how Zionist McCarthyism devours its own if they stray from the path. What happened to Norman Finkelstein at De Paul University, the attacks on Ilan Pappé, exiled from the University of Haifa, the attacks on academic freedom on American campuses, where groups such as *Campus Watch* (any group with ‘watch’ in its name is almost certainly an organisation set up to curb the freedom it watches) has also happened to Tony Lerman.

Perhaps the most pathetic gesture of all was the decision of Stephen Pollard, editor of the declining *Jewish Chronicle* and ex-editor of the *Daily Express*, to commission a ‘review’ by a Daniel Hochhauser,⁷ which instead of criticising the message attacks the messenger - Lerman is a “career bureaucrat”. Hochhauser neatly sums up the argument of the Zionist McCarthyite. Thus he finds it surprising that Lerman used various conferences to put his own views across and yet he resented “being held accountable” for them.

It is difficult to know whether to laugh or cry at the ignorance of this hired gun. The whole point of academic tenure is to ensure that people can express their views without being subject to dismissal or detriment. Working for Jewish policy and research institutes, Lerman was in a particularly exposed position. Hochhauser sees nothing wrong in waging vendettas against those whose views he disagrees with - to the point where their jobs and careers are threatened.

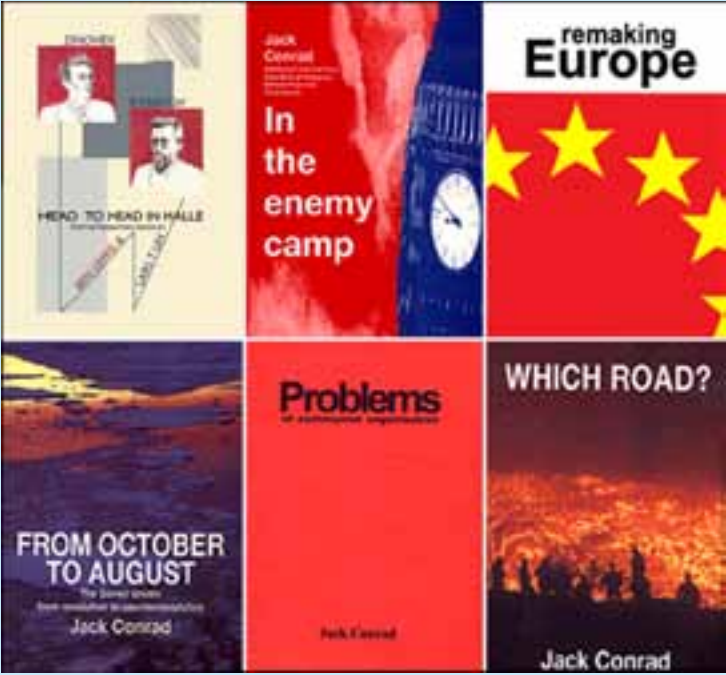
In many ways Antony Lerman should consider it to his credit that *The Jewish Chronicle*, a paper bereft of any reputation, dare not take up the challenge that Lerman’s book has thrown down ●

Tony Greenstein

Notes

1. A Hertzberg *The Zionist idea* Philadelphia 1997, pp322-23.
2. J Doron, ‘Classic Zionism and modern anti-Semitism: parallels and influences (1883-1914)’ *Studies in Zionism* autumn 1983.
3. A Morris-Reich, ‘Arthur Ruppin’s concept of race’ *Israel Studies* Vol 11, No3, fall 2006, pp8-9; and E Bloom *Arthur Ruppin and the production of the Modern Hebrew culture* (PhD thesis) Tel Aviv 2008.
4. See Z Sternhell *The founding myths of Zionism* Princeton 1998.
5. *The Jewish Chronicle* January 13 2006.
6. Quoted in T Kushner *Wrestling with Zion* New York 2003, pp14-15.
7. www.thejc.com/arts/books/90167/communal-courtier-controversy.

Communist Party Books



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IRELAND

ULA chickens out

It is a disgrace that the left refuses to campaign openly for abortion on demand, says Anne Mc Shane

Intense controversy has been sparked by the Irish government's announcement on December 18 that it will legislate for limited abortion in the new year. It has actually been hugely out of proportion to the decision itself.

The Catholic church reacted quickly and furiously, absurdly stating that this would be the first step on the way to a "culture of death" in Ireland.¹ In fact the legislation would mean little change compared to the current position, where abortion is permitted in very limited circumstances: when there is a 'real and substantial' threat to the life of the mother. The only real difference will be that 'threat to the life of the mother' will now include suicide. It is this that has set the church and its allies into convulsions of rage. We are told that Irish women will abuse this legislation. They are implicitly deviant and manipulative by nature, and able to pull the wool over the eyes of psychiatrists. Irish women are so eager to bring about the "intentional killing of unborn children" that they will successfully feign suicidal ideation.²

A leading spokesperson for the church, bishop Leo O'Reilly, claimed that this would mean the beginning of the end for Irish society - it "would be a radical change in the culture of life we have had in this country ... it would be an irrevocable change: there would not be any going back".³

It is to be hoped that these scare tactics, aimed at frightening the waverers back into the arms of the church, will backfire. Over the last few months there has been an intense campaign, with leaflets, posters, pastoral letters and fiery speeches from the pulpit. People leaving Sunday mass have reported being harangued by campaigners from the wondrously misnamed Youth Defence. Facebook advertising and billboards show pictures of bouncing babies and falsification about the reality of abortion.

People in Ireland will also remember the systematic abuse of children by the clergy for decades. Working class and disabled children were treated with contempt. They were starved and abused, physically and sexually, in industrial schools and residential homes. Now the bishops who protected the abusers and threatened families who complained pretend to really care about children. But when they cry crocodile tears about the 'killing of the unborn', what they are in reality bemoaning is loss of their own control over the lives of women.

The government is beset by crisis over the legislation, with up to 20 Fine Gael TDs threatening to vote against. They and their allies in the church have called for a free vote over this "matter of conscience". Fine Gael has been targeted by the Life Institute, Youth Defence and a whole plethora of well-funded and sophisticated pro-life organisations. These organisations peddle myths and scare stories presented as independent medical facts. Their key manoeuvre is to allege that the legislation is the first step on the road to abortion on demand. Pretending to be suicidal will soon give way to actually demanding control over your own fertility.

The focus on medical opinion is confusing and contradictory. It is also a diversion from addressing the needs of real women. The death of Savita Halappanavar in Galway Hospital in October revealed the human face

of the victims of Ireland's repressive laws. It showed a woman who asked repeatedly for a termination being denied because there was still a foetal heartbeat. By the time her life was deemed to be at risk, it was too late.

It is said that the problem for Savita was that the leading doctors in Galway are anti-abortion. However, this is a problem that is replicated in many hospitals. The church continues to run the majority of institutions and exerts huge influence over psychiatrists, obstetricians and gynaecologists. Doctors for Choice is one honourable exception, which campaigns for free and safe abortion at the request of the woman. One of their leading members, Mary Favier, has been at the forefront of demanding this right.

If, or when, this legislation is passed it will change nothing for most women in need of an abortion. The vast majority will continue to look abroad. This means an expensive and stressful journey to Britain, Holland or Denmark. A first-trimester abortion in Britain or Holland can cost between €1,000 and €2,000, including travelling expenses. A lot of money for any woman, but particularly students and part-time workers. Banks and credit unions have closed their doors to people on low incomes. The situation is very serious.⁴

However, women continue to travel anyway. Between 12 and 20 go abroad *every day* for abortion - up to 7,000 a year. They range from teenagers to the middle-aged. All women who for whatever reason need to end their pregnancy. Some, possibly younger, women are turning to illegally imported abortion pills as a way to avoid the expense of travelling. However, this has major safety risks - they are used without any medical supervision or back-up.

ULA response

The mealy-mouthed response of the United Left Alliance to the government announcement is a disgrace. Instead of adopting a clear pro-choice position, the ULA has fudged the question. In its press release it welcomed the government decision and urged immediate legislation, but deliberately obscured the demand for abortion on demand. According to the statement, the "vast majority of the population agree that a risk to the health of a woman should be grounds for the right to an abortion. The majority also think a woman should be able to terminate a pregnancy arising from rape or incest, or where the foetus has a fatal abnormality. Many think that it should be up to a woman, in consultation with her doctor, to decide if she should continue with a pregnancy. We support all of these arguments - which give women the choice."⁵

But a woman's right to choose is not the same thing as being allowed an abortion on the say-so of doctors and psychiatrists. Why should a woman have to be a victim of rape or incest or prove she is suicidal, as the press release seems to imply? Is the ULA setting itself up as a moral guardian, believing that women should have to prove their desperation in accordance with a few 'legitimate' categories? Presumably women who want an abortion because they cannot afford another baby, because they are a teenager in school, in the middle of a marriage break-up or for any of the many other personal reasons will still have to go abroad. If the ULA really supports abortion on demand, why did

it sneak it in at the end of a list of other, hopelessly restricted, options?

In practice it is in contradiction with the ULA's official position. Before the branch delegate meeting in November there had been no policy on the question. But the Savita case had put the ULA under pressure to take a stand. A motion from the Galway branch stated that the ULA stands for full freedom of reproductive choice. Another from North Kildare branch declared: "The United Left Alliance affirms a woman's right to choose whatever happens to her own body. We believe that society - through the state - should provide free assistance and support to anyone seeking it, in a confidential and supportive environment. This must include providing free and completely unfettered access to state-funded pregnancy-termination procedures and post-procedure support." Both were passed with no opposition from the leadership. However, almost immediately the backtracking began.

In arguments on the question on the ULA non-aligned email forum, I have been accused of wanting to impose a 'maximalist' position on the pro-abortion campaign. It has also been argued that I am being formalistic by insisting that because the ULA has a pro-choice position it should actually build a campaign on that basis. I am told that it is better to ride with the tide of public opinion and go for the middle ground. We should tack onto what is most popular among the general population.

The ULA is putting a lot of store by a recent poll, conducted by Red C on behalf of the Sunday Business Post. This reported that 85% supported abortion in the terms of the government legislation (although, rather contradictorily, 63% also said they were against any extension of abortion rights, even on grounds of suicide), while 82% supported abortion also in cases of rape. It is this 82% that the ULA is depending on to make its arguments for extending the legitimate grounds for abortion. But what about the 36% who favoured abortion on demand? Surely that is a good starting point for a *principled* campaign.⁶

To me this poll shows that, despite the obvious contradictions, there has been a change in attitude and that there is now a significant part of the population which is pro-choice.

This can only mean that the situation is very fluid and that the argument is still there to be won. The ULA seems to think that the shift in public opinion will guarantee increasingly progressive legislation. But it has not counted on the determination of the church and its supporters.

The only way to take on this question is through a clear call for a woman's right to choose. I have heard a number of pro-choice activists flinch at the accusation that we are for abortion on demand. But why? Abortion on demand simply means that a woman is entitled to choose for herself. The decision should not be up to psychiatrists or doctors or politicians. Men never face such issues about their own health or decisions. Pro-choice activists should be ready to fight back with clear calls for choice. They need to reassert what abortion on demand means, and clearly expose the scare stories of the pro-lifers for what they are. Avoiding this question is opportunism and ignores the plight of the thousands of women who travel abroad every year because they feel they have

14 that "we will be diminishing our participation in the ULA".⁷ What this means is not clear. Apparently Joe Higgins, the SP's remaining TD, will vote with the ULA when it suits. Presumably the SP will no longer do any organisational work or help build the alliance. Perhaps its comrades will still come along to national steering committee meetings to keep an eye on things.

It is a sectarian move, guaranteed to undermine the ULA still further. The fact that the SP uses abortion as one of its reasons for this step is truly ironic. There has been no mention of the question from the SP in any of its ULA election literature, including that of Ruth Coppinger, who is now its spokeswoman on the issue. And the organisation has been at the forefront of calls to allow abortion in cases of rape, incest health, etc, thus in reality undermining the pro-choice position. It is clear that the SP has cynically used this serious issue as a posture to justify its effective withdrawal from the ULA.

The Woman's Right to Choose group and other activists remain determined to fight for choice as a principle. There will be a national meeting in January, when I and others will fight for that to be the leading slogan of the campaign. It is a principle and should be a right. We will fight for the immediate scrapping of the eighth amendment and, in the words of last month's resolution, for "free and completely unfettered access to state-funded pregnancy-termination procedures and post-procedure support". To the church and its supporters we respond in the words of that well-known slogan: 'Keep your rosaries off my ovaries!' ●

Notes

1. www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/breaking/2012/1219/breaking1.html.
2. www.rte.ie/news/2012/1219/abortion.html.
3. www.rte.ie/news/2012/1219/abortion.html.
4. www.abortioninireland.org.
5. www.claredaly.ie/united-left-alliance-statement.
6. www.businesspost.ie/#story/Home/News/Red+C+poll%3A+majority+demand+X+case+legislation/id/78241919-150b-a2a0-577f-97741195800.
7. www.socialistparty.net/component/content/article/1-latest-news/1103-the-socialist-party-a-the-political-position-a-operation-of-the-ula.



No ifs, no buts

REVIEW

Artistic branding iron

Kjell Sundvall (director) *The hunters* (1996); *False trail* (2011)



False trail: hands up

Following what has now become a healthy tradition, recent works from Scandinavia have engendered a growing appreciation of ‘police procedural’ crime fiction in its different formats as something well worth reading or watching. A couple of its currently released films may help enhance this reputation.

Perhaps you might imagine that the reindeer and timber country of the far north of Sweden is not a location where heinous crimes are likely to occur. But in this estimation you would be wrong, if Kjell Sundvall’s two sequential films are anything to go by (Sundvall’s earlier work premiered on DVD in the UK a few days before the sequel’s film release).

Though the two films’ storylines are separated by 15 years (as are the years of production), Stockholm cop Erik Bäckström (Rolf Lassgård, the first on-screen Wallander) appears as the key outsider in both. He gets a lot more than he bargained for in each case.

In *The hunters* (*Jägarna*) Erik returns to his home town in the sparsely populated top half of Sweden, Norrland, to take up a job in the local police department. He is publicly welcomed at first as a star returnee, later even celebrated with a large, open-air plaque ceremony and an article in the local paper.

But Erik, the city-trained policeman, is not about to turn off his criminality radar. And therein lies the rasp that sets his erstwhile homeboys on edge. For the first case that comes across his desk is one of reindeer-poaching, which the local police boss (Åke Lindman) and others consider relatively unimportant, since it only adversely affects Sami (known pejoratively as Lapp) herders. Erik, however, is not prepared just to go through the motions and, once he mounts a routine check of all the many hunting rifles in the area, his card is marked.

From there things spiral to hell in a handbasket, as the pack of thugs and their friends in high places do everything to keep a lid on their activity, including assault, gang-rape and murder. Local police boss complicity is written all over it. Despite being caught red-handed, without a Swedish equivalent of that good old English legal standby, ‘joint enterprise’, the killers cannot be prosecuted: no-one knows whose bullets were responsible.

Fifteen years after all this, *False trail* sees Erik Bäckström sent back to his home town in Norrland by the Mordkommissionen (National Murder Commission) in Stockholm - although he is understandably reluctant to return to the scene of so much personal misery. And this time Erik’s new nemesis is one of the local policeman, Torsten (Peter Stormare of *Fargo* and *The big Lebowski*).

They lock horns early on when everyone is looking for a missing woman, Elin Ledin (Ellenor Lindgren). Torsten and the rest of the local force want to hang her disappearance on his main bugbear, lowlife Jari Lipponen (Eero Milonoff). Sadly for

them, Erik is equally clear and adamant that Jari was not involved, nor is he going to fall for their ‘it’s obvious’ routine. Instead, Erik applies his best police practice to ferret out the real culprit. Torsten’s dirty tricks fail to gain purchase and the denouement sees Erik vindicated, methodological exactitude paying big dividends.

Lineage

These two films are part of a whole genre of police procedurals and thrillers. The godparents of this creative ‘family’, which has acknowledged authorial ‘offspring’ in the UK and around the world, were the Swedish Marxist couple, Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahlöö, who wrote alternate chapters of their ‘Detective Martin Beck’ decalogy¹ over 10 years, from 1965 to 1975. The 10 books were in fact conceived by the authors as but 10 sections of one big book. They made no bones about having been themselves inspired by such as Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler and Georges Simenon. In their writing they aimed to reflect the real nature of a changing Swedish society, striving to strip away the ‘social democratic consensus’ that attempted to disguise its class nature, deprivation and exploitation.

As exemplars of police procedurals within crime writing, Sjöwall and Wahlöö’s works were unparalleled at the time. During the 1940s and 1950s there had been a strangely persistent, sentimental hankering for cosy Agatha Christie mysteries solved at the last moment by a solitary, private or amateur detective’s brilliant insight. This milksop approach is still rife in such recycled works as the *Poirot* and *Miss Marple* series, and unfortunately has been continued in the new-old cosiness of *Hart to Hart*; *Murder, she wrote*; *Jonathan Creek*; *Hetty Wainthropp investigates*; *Rosemary and Thyme*; *Midsomer murders*, and so on. But the way is open for new police procedurals, with their levels of complexity, reality and humanity.

Indeed, their literary ‘progeny’ took such inspiration from Sjöwall and Wahlöö that several leading crime writers² were easily persuaded to write a series of introductions to recent reprints of the couples’ 10 books. You have to look back to 1973, however, for a Hollywood production of the work: only *The laughing policeman* (as *An investigation of murder*) has been filmed in English, though with its location moved to San Francisco; over the years there have been several Swedish one-off films and series. But UK screenings of Sjöwall’s and Wahlöö’s works have been sadly absent.

Yet it is the gritty, hardboiled work of more realistically portrayed detectives and police work that can move us beyond mere entertainment and to where complacency is dislodged. It is reality rather than quiescent fantasy that enlivens the kind of crime writing that Sjöwall and Wahlöö

rejuvenated 40 years ago. A hallmark of their work, which also distinguishes the best of those who follow in their literary lineage, is that their stories are about more than just one person. So it becomes more than merely sharing Beck’s thoughts, strivings and foibles, but extends to those of his colleagues, members of the public and criminals upon whom we focus. In fact, it becomes akin to how the reader might get to know those around her or him in the real world - but with the added insight of the author and the characterisations brought out in concrete dramatic situations.

While novels such as Irvine Welsh’s stunning *Filth* can take us into the cesspit mind of an individual police officer, what the police procedural is often able to do is expose the failings of our capitalist society, through skilled characterisation. As Sjöwall and Wahlöö showed, at its best such fiction is an artistic branding iron searing the soul.

This is what Sjöwall and Wahlöö accomplished. Indeed, Wahlöö is widely quoted as saying that it was essential to “use the crime novel as a scalpel cutting open the belly of the ideologically pauperised and morally debatable so-called welfare state of the bourgeois type”.³ Even non-Marxists find they too are enamoured of the pair’s work, arguing, for example, that “... the Martin Beck series itself ... is not only unique in presenting a detailed and evolving vision of police work from a definable political perspective, but consistently transcends the level of the average police procedural thanks to a prevailing sense of unease, which in the end seems as much existential as ideological.”⁴

The acknowledged legacy of these 1960s Marxist pioneers of the revitalisation of police procedurals continues in the work of excellent writers within the same genre, including Henning Mankell, Val McDermid, Jo Nesbø, Ian Rankin and others working exclusively in film and television. Long may this continue, as it seems very likely to do.

Jim Moody

False trail is currently on UK film release, while The hunters is available on DVD.

Notes

1. Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahlöö *Roseanna* 1965; *The man who went up in smoke* (*Mannen som gick upp i rök*) 1966; *The man on the balcony* (*Mannen på balkongen*) 1967; *The laughing policeman* (*Den skrattande polisen*) 1968; *The fire engine that disappeared* (*Brandbilen som försvann*) 1969; *Murder at the Savoy* (*Polis, polis, potatismos!*) 1970; *The abominable man* (*Den vedervärdige mannen från Säffle*) 1971; *The locked room* (*Det slutna rummet*) 1972; *Cop killer* (*Polismördaren*) 1974; *The terrorists* (*Terroristerna*) 1975.
2. In volume order: Henning Mankell, Val McDermid, Jo Nesbø, Nicci French, Colin Dexter, Michael Carlson, Lee Child, Michael Connelly, Lars Kepler and Dennis Lehane.
3. Quoted in C Beyer, ‘Death of the author: Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahlöö’s police procedurals’, in V Miller, H Oakley (eds) *Cross-cultural connections in crime fictions* Basingstoke 2012.
4. M Dibdin *The Picador book of crime writing* London 1994.

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■ 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.

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

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Compromising with bigots

The marriage equality law is now a shambles - because David Cameron's government is hostage to incorrigible reactionaries, argues **Paul Demarty**

In 2006, as part of his 'nice guy Dave' tour of the world, David Cameron, then newly elected as Conservative Party leader, visited South Africa. While he was there, he made time for a photo-op with Nelson Mandela, hoping to catch some reflected glory from a modern-day secular saint.

He also took the opportunity to attack his most successful recent predecessor, Margaret Thatcher, for her government's policies towards the apartheid regime: "The fact that there is so much to celebrate in the new South Africa is not in spite of Mandela and the ANC: it is because of them - and we Conservatives should say so clearly today," he wrote in *The Observer* (August 27 2006).

Nothing remarkable here - except the reaction from certain Tory grandees was hardly enthusiastic. Bernard Ingham, Norman Tebbit and others revealed themselves to be pretty much unrepentant about the designation of Mandela as a 'terrorist'. What Cameron must have thought would be an open goal to mitigate his party's malignant reputation served also to remind people of how malignant the Tories actually were, if you scraped a little beneath the surface.

One cannot help but be reminded of that - in retrospect, pretty minor - hiccup in Cameron's decontamination of the Tory brand, in the light of the farce unfolding in the government surrounding gay marriage.

Cameron may be sincere in his desire to spread good, old-fashioned family values among the gay and lesbian community, but in any case it is a good idea - in the long run - to adopt a 'liberal' position on this matter. The results of the 2011 census show a considerable increase - from 14.8% to 25.1% - in the proportion of people who claim no religious affiliation at all, and religion is the most common excuse for anti-gay bigotry. The social attitudes survey show a pretty consistent long-term trend away from anti-gay attitudes among Britons. There is nothing inevitable about this; but on a cynical level, the Tories have little to lose by dropping their historic hostility to gay marriage.

And so it is that Maria Miller, the culture secretary, has unveiled plans to legalise same-sex marriage. It is couched with guarantees - she proposes a 'quadruple lock' protection, whatever that means, for religious organisations opposed to the idea, so they cannot be challenged by equalities legislation - and equally no individual minister can be compelled to marry same-sex couples. As far as the Church of England (and Church of Wales) is concerned, there are additional complications - and these organisations are to be banned from consecrating gay marriages until further primary legislation is passed.

The result, as Labour's Yvette Cooper was able to indicate, is a complete mess, which has left the government pleasing nobody. The Churches of England and Wales are deeply embarrassed that they are to

be specifically excluded from the law. Anglican canon law rules out gay marriage in any case; but liberal clergy and bishops are frustrated, especially given the recent 'women bishops' debacle, that there is barely any point in attempting to build a movement inside the church to change that any time soon.

Collective neurosis

For hard-line reactionaries, meanwhile, any drift towards conceding even the principle that two people of the same sex could be involved in committed, healthy and stable long-term relationships is unconscionable. Craftier versions come from the likes of Sayeeda Warsi, who was one of many to claim to be insufficiently reassured that recalcitrant vicars would not be marched to the altar at gunpoint to bless the union of Adam and Steve. (This was exactly the mendacious line of argument advanced by the troglodyte traditionalists against women bishops at the Anglican general synod a few weeks ago.) Defence secretary Philip Hammond was the man to raise that other classic Tory-discomfort get-out clause: the issue is a distraction from the real problems the government has to solve!

One can, however, always rely on some cast-iron cranks to let us know what is really at stake. Step forward, first of all, David Davies, the MP for Monmouthshire (not to be confused with David Davis, a rather cannier Tory rightwinger). Don't get Davies wrong - he is not homophobic. In his earlier life as an amateur boxer, he even sparred with the not particularly legendary gay pugilist, Charles "Pink Pounder" Jones. (Exactly why he would think that punching a gay man in the face counts in favour of his enlightenment on the issue is left unclear.) Yet Cameron's and Miller's proposals are 'barking mad' - because



George Carey: backward

parents on the whole would prefer their kids to be straight, so they might have grandchildren.

Other Tory MPs have trotted out the old 'there'll be polygamy next' line, which conveniently forgets the fact that there's a good deal of polygamy in the *Bible*. The wooden spoon for most absurd comparison, however, goes to former Arch-Reactionary of Canterbury, George Carey, who infamously compared unnamed sections of the pro-gay-marriage lobby to Nazi persecutors of Jews. After all, the persecution of Jews "started [with their] being called names. That was the first stage towards that totalitarian state."

It's easy, and perfectly legitimate, to be both amused and repulsed by comments of this kind, but above all they smack of desperation. The perverse claim of such elements to the status of 'oppressed' is increasingly irritating, but signals above all that their irrational prejudices are not defensible with rational argument, and can only be posited as an irrational but

harmless quirk, criticism of which is somehow on the level of racist abuse.

If these people were *really* concerned only that anti-gay-marriage ministers might be 'forced' into marrying same-sex couples, then they would have no reason to complain, seeing that Maria Miller's proposals are so cautious as to be obviously incoherent. We all know what is really at stake. These people just don't like 'perverts'. Their particular positions on 'social issues' have always been inexplicable except as a collective neurosis, with a social determination to which the reactionary is almost necessarily oblivious.

Press power

The underlying framework for anti-gay prejudice is 'family values' - or rather the defence of the patriarchal nuclear family in the face of a modern world, which (it is believed) undermines the former at every turn. That is most obviously at issue in the social situation of the petty bourgeoisie: petty economic activity, while presented as individual effort, invariably relies on the super-exploited labour of the patriarch's wife and children. The family is an economic unit inseparable from petty production, inasmuch as it continues to exist.

It continues to exist mainly for political reasons; the petty bourgeoisie - and petty bourgeois aspirations on the part of sections of the working class - present a *potential* mass base of political support for the continuation of bourgeois political rule. Numerous direct and indirect levers exist to mobilise well-rooted class fears.

Religion is one such lever, but more important is the press. Cameron and co will not sniff too publicly at *Bible*-thumping clerics, but will feel confident that the latter cannot destroy their political authority alone (such elements are more influential in the US). The press, on the other hand, presents a serious obstacle to any

government; correctly handling them is an increasingly obvious concern.

Having dumped Fleet Street in Brian Leveson's dock, Cameron cannot afford to give the bloodthirsty reactionary papers many more reasons to hate him. The *Daily Mail* is not known for its sympathy to the LGBT cause; neither is *The Sun* or the *Express*. Tony Blair expended enormous effort neutralising these outlets, with considerable success; yet even those more 'sincere' Blairites, who really wanted to 'make a difference', found themselves politically paralysed by the terms of the bargain.

For the Tories, the incentive to rebel against *Mailism* barely exists. They benefit from an oppressive atmosphere of bigotry. As history rolls on, bigotries come into being and then decline in significance (although they take a long time to die out completely) - overt racism can now no longer be exploited for political advantage as it once could, for example. It looks, on the strength of this latest fiasco, that overt anti-gay prejudice has some life left in it, however - and its ties to the 'family values' complex make it particularly intractable.

The fight for equal sexual rights - and that includes in relation to marriage - is an integral part of the fight for a truly democratic society. Yet the more general issue is that of secularism. Once again, the absurd position of an established church, which enjoys little overall control of its own dogma, has come into public view - but the broader matter is that state support for marriage is in itself anti-secular, and amounts to the incorporation of religious ritual into official society.

People should be free to celebrate their love with whatever rituals, religious or secular, they wish. But the Tories have demonstrated amply that they simply cannot get the state out of people's private relationships, even when they try ●

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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 _____