



weekly worker



**'Revolution' in one square:
danger of divisions
descending into civil war**

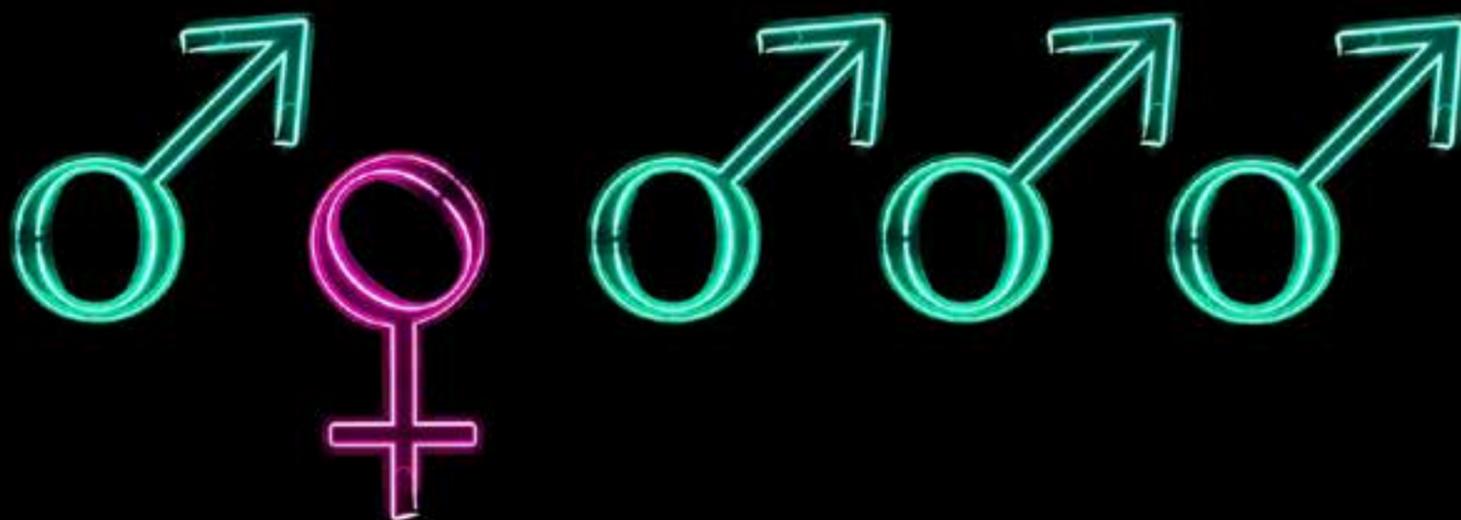
- Letters and debate
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Towards a Communist Party of the European Union

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Quotas harm the cause
of women's liberation

LETTERS



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

Platform points

Sinead MacLean writes of the contradictions she perceives between the 'What we fight for' column in the *Weekly Worker* and the motions agreed by the Communist Platform (Letters, February 20).

She questions the principle of 'one party, one state' in relation to Ireland. This is the CPGB's position and is by no means in contradiction to our call for a united Ireland. We could in the future, for example, urge comrades in Northern Ireland to join a reformed CPGB in order to take on the UK state and to fight for a united Ireland. We are clear that Ireland is Britain's oldest colony and that the hiving off of the Six Counties was designed to ensure the division of the Irish working class and continued British dominance over the whole of Ireland.

She also takes issue with the WWFF call for a "united, federal Ireland". Tensions between the Irish majority and the British-Irish (or however you want to term that community) cannot be wished away and federalism, in this case, is a means of bringing about voluntary unity. This was fiercely debated within the ranks of the CPGB and with others in the pages of our paper in 1999-2000 - check out the back issues.

Comrade MacLean seems confused by the point made by John Bridge (CPGB), that federalism isn't something that communists advocate in general, yet the WWFF column makes two references to it - first, Scotland, England and Wales, and then a united, federal Ireland. Well, in general, we are not in favour of federalism, but circumstances where it would address national antagonisms in a positive way, to promote unity, are exceptions.

A federal republic of Scotland, England and Wales recognises the national questions within Britain, although, unlike Ireland, we do not believe that Scotland and Wales are oppressed nations. We do recognise the democratic right of the Scottish and Welsh people to self-determination, but we don't advocate secession - rather the working class in Scotland and Wales should fight for unity with the working class in England, while the latter should champion the democratic right to self-determination in order to promote unity. If the concrete circumstances were different in Britain (ie, had there not been a Scottish national question) then there would be no need to adopt a federal approach. Again, there has been extensive discussion on this question in the *Weekly Worker* over the years.

Lastly, the comrade seeks clarification about the position of the CPGB and Communist Platform on Europe. She says that the two federal solutions seem to have been subsumed into the call for a United States of Europe. But these things are not mutually exclusive. They are all part of the same militant struggle for the greatest possible unity of the working class, so that it stands more chance of making revolution and maintaining power once it has done so. The Communist Platform statement says: "Left Unity wants not a quasi-democratic, confederal EU, but a united Europe under the rule of the working class." This is obviously not in contradiction to a United States of Europe. Nor does it rule out the possibility of a federal *stage*, as in the case of Britain and Ireland.

The comrade concludes by asking: "Is it not rather unusual that the CP, which is a kind of united front with others within the Left Unity party, appears to have more advanced positions, from a CPGB perspective, than its own WWFF?" WWFF is a 585-word column that seeks to give readers a very basic and concise taste of our politics; the Communist Platform motions take up over 6,000 words and therefore can flesh out positions a little more.

For a more comprehensive response on all these questions, I would recommend not only the back issues of this paper, but

Jack Conrad's *Remaking Europe* and Mike Macnair's *Revolutionary strategy*, where they are dealt with in greater detail.

Sarah McDonald
email

Federal EU

Please allow me to correct, somewhat belatedly, an error in comrade Daniel Harvey's report on the February 8 national meeting of the Communist Platform in Left Unity ('Solid basis for intervention', February 13).

The report says: "Comrade Machover proposed that instead of calling for the total abolition of the EU commission, which represents the constituent nation-states on a more equal basis, it should still exist, but be made more accountable to the parliament. In this sense, he was calling for a small concession to federalism, stating that he thought absolute democratic centralism across Europe would be unworkable."

Here he conflates two different amendments I proposed to the draft resolution on the EU. (As these were submitted orally at the last moment, he cannot be blamed for getting them wrong.)

The draft resolution called for the abolition of *both* the EU commission and the EU council of ministers. Regarding the commission, I argued that it fulfils a necessary function as the executive branch of the EU, but does so in an undemocratic way; so my first amendment proposed that it should not simply be abolished, but replaced "by an executive democratically responsible to the parliament". This amendment - which has nothing to do with federalism - was adopted by the meeting.

My second amendment *did* concern what I regard as the necessary federal structure of the EU. I argued that, due to the great disparity between the populations of the member-states (Germany's population is about 200 times greater than Malta's), an EU parliament, elected by proportional or near-proportional representation, is inadequate *on its own* as a decision-making body. My amendment therefore said that, rather than simply abolishing the council of ministers, it should be replaced by a directly elected second chamber, with equal representation to each of the member-states, thus giving an audible voice to the concerns of the smaller nations.

As Daniel reports, one of the comrades commented: "Fuck national sentiments!" I would share this - as a wish for the very long term. But in my opinion it is not a tenable position before the smaller nations feel comfortable with it.

My second amendment was rejected by the meeting, but I feel this was a mistake and intend to continue arguing for a truly federal EU.

Moshé Machover
email

Disunited unity

Like many I was glad to learn that the CPGB had written to the International Socialist Network with the aim of pursuing unity - even if it was my, possibly mistaken, understanding that ISN comrades had previously rejected such a proposal.

That said, with the ISN holding its first national members meeting of 2014 on March 1, it will be interesting to see what is discussed regarding this matter. As things currently stand, the ISN is in the process of helping to initiate a conference as a step towards revolutionary unity with Workers Power, the Anti-Capitalist Initiative, Socialist Resistance and, it is hoped, even the Anarchist Federation, Industrial Workers of the World and Plan B.

While any talk of unity should be applauded, it is doubtful how successful the approach will be. Bear with me while I explain:

- Socialist Resistance and ACI are hesitant to unite with Workers Power, this despite leading ISN comrades appearing more favourable towards the latter.
- Plan B have already said they're not interested.

- IWW is in the broadest sense a union and would first have to deal with its own constitutional complexities and difficulties.

Sooner or later, however, the realisation needs to set in that revolutionaries are already part of a united party. For those unaware, it is called Left Unity! Rather than seeking to unite ourselves separate to the project, viewing our revolutionary 'activity' as distinctively different, we must have the view of coordinating a fight for communist politics in Left Unity.

If we can't agree on that - and the ISN would appear not to, with comrades signing competing platform statements prior to the November launch conference - then what hope do we have?

Bob Dunne
email

Right and wrong

Ben Lewis, in his attack on Peter Taaffe's review of Lars T Lid's *Lenin rediscovered: 'What is to be done?' in context*, takes Taaffe to task for claiming that Lenin admitted to bending the stick "too far" rather than "the other way" in some of his formulations in the book *What is to be done?* ("Superannuated teacher, superannuated politics" February 20).

Lewis writes: "This is where things start to become really desperate. After all, 'bending the stick too far' is not taken from Lenin 'in his own words', as Taaffe maintains, but from the sectarian Lenin of Tony Cliff - how appropriate!"

While at first sight this may appear to be just a case of polemical point-scoring, Lewis seems to be echoing Lih, and denying that this was an admission on Lenin's part that some of his formulations from *What is to be done?* were one-sided and went too far. Whether the stick was bent "too far" or "the other way", Matron, Trotsky and others at the time certainly read it as such an admission.

Taaffe is not taking this argument from Cliff at all, but from Trotsky, who had the following to say on the question in his biography of Stalin, long after he had come to accept the position of Lenin on a revolutionary party as fundamentally correct:

"In August, 1905, Stalin restated that chapter of Lenin's book, *What is to be done?*, which attempted to explain the correlation of the elemental labour movement and socialistic class-consciousness. According to Lenin's representations, the labour movement, when left to its own devices, was inclined irrevocably toward opportunism; revolutionary class-consciousness was brought to the proletariat from the outside, by Marxist intellectuals ... *The author of 'What is to be done?' himself subsequently acknowledged the biased nature, and therewith the erroneousness, of his theory, which he had parenthetically interjected as a battery in the battle against 'economism' and its deference to the elemental nature of the labour movement*" (my emphasis).

We can argue whether Trotsky's recollection is accurate, and I'm sure Lih, as a historian, would, but is Lewis really suggesting that there is nothing one-sided or problematic in the formulation that "the working class, exclusively by its own efforts is able to develop only trade union consciousness ... socialist consciousness is introduced into the proletarian struggle from without"?

It is clear Trotsky did not agree with the formulation and I have no doubt that, if he were alive today, Lenin would be the first to see how it could be misused by Stalinist bureaucrats, political sects and self-important academics alike. Lenin never subsequently used the same formulation. On this question I believe that Taaffe and Trotsky are right, and Lih and Lewis are wrong.

Carl Simmons
email

Receiving end

In the 1970s and early 1980s Peter Taaffe ran a minority platform (the *Militant*

newspaper) in the Labour Party. In 1983 Taaffe's expulsion from Labour was orchestrated by, among others, Peter Kilfoyle MP for putting forward positions in opposition to the Labour Party as a whole and the Labour leadership.

I'm not surprised when those afraid of political criticism defend their leadership position (or even majority position) in a group by expelling or suspending members who are critical. Positions of privilege will engender this behaviour. The only thing that's new is that Peter Taaffe is being exposed for supporting this manoeuvre himself ('A bureaucratic farce', February 20). This time Taaffe is orchestrating the suspension of Bruce Wallace for political criticism, instead of being on the receiving end.

Jon D White
Socialist Party of Great Britain

Way of living

Comrade Mark Adams seems to be suggesting that any discussion of population and resources is redundant, because all we need to do is raise the level of productive forces (Letters, February 20). This, however, is not unproblematic, not least because the abundant and cheap supply of oil which underpinned capitalist expansion has declined. Hence, the frantic search for high-energy output sources of oil in the Alberta tar sands and the pushing through of fracking, at whatever cost to the environment.

This is not to argue that new technologies could not be developed in a socialist society. Indeed, it is probably only a socialist society, based on need, not profit, which could carry out the task to find alternative, sustainable sources of energy. Thus, we really need to consider whether a 20th century model of economic growth is still relevant in the 21st century.

As to food resources, it is surely the case that a socialist society could eliminate the obscene waste of something like 50% of food, but it will still be vitally necessary to implement a food production and consumption pattern which is sustainable, efficient and ethical. Such a programme may well conclude that the vast amounts of water and land resources, not to mention global gas emissions - currently 20% - implicated in meat production, are neither viable nor necessary. After all, despite what the meat corporations and their huge PR and marketing moguls tell us, meat is not an essential requirement of a healthy human diet.

As to the idea that "the earth has never been better suited to human habitation than it is now", comrade Adams seems to be ignoring the evidence which presents a very different picture: rapid loss of biodiversity, soil erosion, water course pollution, deforestation, air pollution and climate change leading to extreme weather patterns, which are now known to be a result of human activity.

Crucially, however, what comrade Adams seems to be saying is that the choice is between Marxism or environmentalism. I would beg to differ. If Marxists do not take up the challenge of environmental issues, by proposing a qualitatively different way of living, then this does a disservice not only to humankind, but to Marxism itself.

Jo Russell
email

Muslim law

Michael Copestake notes that Islamic fundamentalist Jordan Horner "was a part of a sharia law vigilante group in and around Waltham Forest in London. He and his fellow radicals would set about intimidating locals who they deemed were behaving in an unIslamic fashion, or living unIslamic lifestyles. They regularly targeted female drinkers" ('Asbo mania threat', February 20).

Copestake seems to have listed the mildest of Horner's activities, as I understand that he also threatened to stab beer drinkers and attacked a passer-by - an offence to which he pleaded guilty.

So Copestake's assertion that "Horner

has been nailed with an Asbo specifically for his ideological 'extremism'" is absurd. With the top sentence for carrying a knife four years in prison and a fine of £5,000, allied with his string of other offences, Horner must be considered to have got off incredibly lightly with only an anti-social behaviour order. Indeed, some may see the sentence, yet again, as one law for Muslims and another for the rest of us. There may be things wrong with the Asbo regime, as Copestake points out, but restraining religious bigots from threatening those who are not so inclined is not one of them.

Ted Hankin
email

Open borders?

Millions of people today question open borders in countries facing recession, with unemployment set to continue rising, or, as in Britain, where new jobs are mainly low-paid and part-time. The left's usual response is the sentimental, utopian assertion, 'Capital can move around the world, so all workers should be able to go anywhere they want to earn a living - no questions asked' (which also amounts to 'no consequences considered').

I've never understood the logic that states because capitalists can move investment around that means millions of workers can follow that investment. That seems to be accepting capitalist values - not challenging them. It also raises the question - can workers go anywhere they choose, to get better pay (compared to pay rates in their own country) over and above the indigenous populations in each country - with no regard to indigenous people's right to paid work and need to feed their family? Must they endlessly welcome foreigners who have no regard for the indigenous population's own economic circumstances and are competing with them for work? How is that promoting international solidarity and uniting workers against the exploiting bosses?

Immigration continues to be one of the top three issues 'on the doorstep'. Survey after survey consistently records 70% of those asked expressing opposition to more immigration and not agreeing that it has been beneficial to Britain. If the question was 'Do you agree mass immigration has been good for Britain?', I'd bet the negative response rate would be even higher. Some on the left may be surprised that about 38% of black people also agree there is too much immigration now. By the way, most immigrants today are white, not black.

I've never seen an article showing 19th century Marxism proclaiming support for open borders. Marxist opposition to racist treatment of immigrants - yes. But no controls at all, before the attainment of worldwide socialism, I've not seen.

The left are not winning workers to support open borders and they will not do so unless they answer the fears people have. There is a real need for the CPGB to re-examine the effect of open borders on trade union organisation, and on what workers need to protect their living standards from limitless, undercutting competition that those policies would surely entail.

If trained as a doctor, for example, are you entitled to sell your labour wherever you can get the best price abroad, abandoning your own people who need you? When we had thousands of black workers coming into the NHS or becoming bus conductors there were labour shortages. That doesn't apply today and doesn't apply at all to illegal immigrants. As for 'needing skilled workers from outside' - that is only because employers here cut funding for training and apprenticeships.

I cannot improve on Willie Hunter's letter in this regard (February 20). During high local unemployment migrants (and illegal immigrants) coming from countries with lower living standards are able to undercut the rate for the job for workers (black or white) born here. Asserting, 'We should fight for the rate for the job' for indigenous and foreign workers misses

the point. If we can obtain 'the rate for the job' (we can't with an unlimited supply of foreign workers being brought in by employers) it raises the question, why then take on foreign workers at all? They would be giving up their prime employability factor - their willingness to work for cheaper wages than the local populace.

Where is the international worker solidarity here? Immigrants come here to get jobs for themselves, then bring more of their community over with no consideration for the indigenous population, or unity. They secure jobs for their community only. All three main parties argue that migrants benefit our economy by paying taxes, but many send their money home, rather than spending it here. We have others arguing that 75% of new jobs have gone to migrants, who have depressed wages. Again, who is telling the truth? The bosses' CBI argues against immigration controls - an odd ally indeed for those in favour of open borders!

A wider concern - what is the difference between 'oppressor-enforced' settlement against an indigenous population at the point of a gun (West Bank) or settlement where people from one country come into an area in such numbers over a short period of time that they intentionally transform it out of all recognition (with different food, religion, architecture, different cultural values and so on from those born there)?

Some celebrate this as wonderful diversity in action. In some cases that is true if most people in an area see it that way. What about those who see it as an unasked for takeover? Much depends on whether there is true integration or just one culture imposed on another. The left needs to answer this - do indigenous people have any right to continue their traditions and culture or is it a case of occupiers enforcing their own culture over that of those there first? Are native Americans and Aborigines (and Palestinians?) right to complain that 'their' land has been taken from them or must they accept 'free movement of people' with no say or control over the impact? Are they just reactionaries and xenophobic bigots?

If the 'open borders' left had been in control would they have equally welcomed racist, pro-apartheid whites fleeing black majority control in South Africa? Would they have welcomed Nazis here fleeing justice over war crimes committed during World War II?

Pete McLaren and his sort proclaim, 'They only do the work British workers don't want to do.' As Willie Hunter put it, McLaren and co have swallowed the whole anti-British working class shite of the media and liberal state. British colonialists used to say that blacks were workshy and lazy. Now we have so-called socialists lining up with scab foreigners, Tories and employers to kick our own people who will not accept the low wages on offer. Isn't that why trade unions were created - to refuse to work for slave wages?

To deny the evidence many working class people have right in front of them - that immigrants are undercutting their wage rates - is driving people to consider the UK Independence Party. In the 70s it was said Thatcher undercut the growth of the National Front by adopting anti-immigrant rhetoric. Today we have Labour, Tories and Ukip all saying that accepting uncontrolled immigration has caused some significant problems (still denied by many on the left) and pledging to do something about it.

My final point - if we ever achieve true socialism/communism worldwide all human needs will be met, there will be no war or shortages and people will not need to move across continents. Some may wish to live elsewhere but millions will not need to.

Dave Vincent
Manchester

No-one illegal

I am writing in response to the scathing interventions by Willie Hunter (Letters, February 20) and Richard Tomasson (February 6), opposing Rugby Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition's statement against immigration controls (January 23). But may I first congratulate Rugby Tusc for taking a

bold and brave stand on this question. I hope that other Tusc groups will take up the challenge and that the Tusc leadership takes heed.

Comrade Tomasson seems to be falling for the 'we are full up' discourse - there is neither the room nor the resources for immigration. People have been saying this for over a hundred years, as each new group of migrants has made its appearance. Yet the fears put about have never materialised. Overcrowding and deprivation existed and got better or worse according to the cycles of the capitalist economy and the relationship of forces between the classes, rather than immigration.

Yes, materialists ought to take account of the limitations of resources, but we must look at this globally. At a global level it is the multinational companies who have trashed the planet, logging and mining land into desert and generating global warming, which desertifies one area and floods the next. This is one of the causes of migration. It gives an extra argument if one was needed for the defence of the right to free movement.

Turning to comrade Hunter, he sees opposition to immigration controls as an essentially neoliberal idea, dovetailing with the defence of the free movement of capital, goods and services. For the capitalist, the movement of labour is something which can be switched on and off at will. But for socialists, labour is real people, with real needs and desires.

It is not migration which weakens the working class: it is immigration controls. Immigration controls are weapons by which the capitalists can discipline the working class. By deeming a group of people 'illegal', you create a section of the class who risk everything if they raise their head above the parapet and attempt to fight for a decent wage and conditions of work.

By creating a variety of 'legal' groups of workers, but with different, limited rights, immigration controls create what they hope to be a more malleable and exploitable section of migrant workers, which in turn undermines all workers. We can only address this by fighting for equal rights for all workers - which means no immigration controls, along with demands for secure contracts and a living wage.

Despite the detrimental effect of immigration controls, migrant workers have nevertheless got organised and fought back. There have been heroic struggles by migrant cleaners employed by agencies in the City of London and on the tube trains.

Ellie Weizel, survivor of Auschwitz, spoke at a Sanctuary conference in the USA, defending migrants coming to America. He coined the slogan, 'No-one is illegal'. He argued that, once you start creating laws which criminalise people because of who they are, where they were born, where their parents were born, what language they speak and what colour their skin is, it could be the start of the slippery slope to death camps. Socialists must take up that slogan.

Dave Landau
email

Willie fort

The influx of eastern Europeans is nothing new to the labour movement, particularly in Scotland. Upon reading "class-struggle trade unionist" Willie Hunter's letter, what struck me was the absence of a class response, and particularly a trade union one, to foreign workers. Instead there is an expectation that the capitalist state will protect the 'privileges' of the native-born worker.

At the beginning of the 20th century in Lanarkshire, there was much vitriol against Lithuanian incomers. They were employed in the iron works and the coal pits, and they too were accused of wage-cutting and scabbing. Nevertheless, the Lanarkshire County Miners' Union, in the space of some 15 years, went from offering support to miners willing to strike against Lithuanian workers to demanding that Lithuanian miners in Lanarkshire should not be deported. During those 15 years, the Lithuanians had joined the union in large numbers and were active in it. Unionisation was the key to improved relations between the Lithuanian labour force and the LCMU.

Once the Lithuanians began to respond positively to local strike demands, the other allegations made against them were simply not an issue. The adoption of a more class-conscious attitude and the strength of their newfound loyalty to the union was in part due to the fact that the union had taken some very positive steps to encourage Lithuanian membership, such as printing the rules in Lithuanian and offering entitlement to claim full benefits.

I suggest Willie refreshes his class-struggle credentials with a read of *A voice from the aliens* from 1895 and one of the earliest appeals against immigration controls (<http://goo.gl/GIPkUV>).

Yes, Willie, we are worlds apart. Fear-mongering and divisive politics play well in creating more xenophobia and it has a long history, as I have shown. But those who fall for the propaganda should know that keeping out immigrants with a 'fortress Britain' (or a 'fortress Europe') has not and will not solve our problems and make us better off.

Alan Johnstone
Socialist Party of Great Britain

No daylight

Basically, Ian Donovan's 'alternative' to abolition of the state's interference in the age at which you can consent to have sex is essentially to keep it ('Don't abolish: reform', February 20). Keep an arbitrary line in the sand, drawn by the state, which tells us when we can have sex regardless of what our own desires and wishes are.

The reformist part of Ian's 'bill' is that if both parties are under-age, neither of them shall be charged. So someone of 15 with a 13-year-old partner will be ok, but a 17-year-old with a 15-year-old will still be charged. They and anyone of any age older than (presumably) 16 having consensual sex with anyone younger than (presumably) 16 will be arrested, and charged - with all the social stigma, victimisation, hostility, etc that goes along with it. They will be taken to court, and made to stand before a jury of people, nothing to do with the relationship, or emotions or circumstances of the accused person and asked to judge if the law breaker should be jailed or not.

As mitigation the defence can be offered that the 'under-age' partner consented. Then what? Can the jury then decide that only the law decides when you can consent, so you're still going down? If, on the other hand, the defence of actual consent means the person is automatically acquitted, why bring the charge in the first place and drag both parties through the mud, ruining their lives?

Sorry, Ian, I don't see much daylight in this proposal. It is still arbitrary, and still at base just the state telling people when they are allowed to have sex. The simple solution is, if there is no complaint, if the relationship or act is consensual and both parties are happy with it, it's no-one else's business. If there is a complaint that the acts were done without actual consent, then that's subject to the normal rape laws.

Don Browning
email

Left dictionary

Further to Tim Reid's letter (February 13), comrades may not be familiar with *A dictionary of Marxist thought* (edited by Tom Bottomore, with an editorial board consisting of Lawrence Harris, Victor Kieman and Ralph Miliband).

This 647-page tome, contributed to by a list of 105 authors - mainly academics - with an introduction, bibliography and index, covers a whole range of topics from abstract labour to the Young Hegelians, including alienation, Austro-Marxism, Bolshevism, bureaucracy, class-consciousness, credit, economism, Feuerbach, Hilferding, historical materialism ... and much else of value. It does, to use a phrase beloved of the late Jim Higgins, "contain an omission", however: there is no entry under 'Zinoviev'. Perhaps the editors did not consider him capable of Marxist thought.

Chris Gray
email

ACTION

CPGB podcasts

Every Monday we upload a podcast commenting on the current political situation. In addition, the site features voice files of public meetings and other events: <http://cpgb.org.uk/home/podcasts>.

London Communist Forum

Sunday March 2, 5pm: Weekly political report from CPGB Provisional Central Committee, followed by open discussion and *Capital* reading group. Calthorpe Arms, 252 Grays Inn Road, London WC1. This meeting: Vol 1, chapter 25, section 5, 'Illustrations of the general law of capitalist accumulation', part E: 'Ireland'. Organised by CPGB: www.cpgb.org.uk.

Radical Anthropology Group

Introduction to anthropology: the science of mythology
Tuesday March 4, 6.15pm: 'Bunbangfai: Buddhism and the carnivalesque'. Speaker: Paul Twinn. 88 Fleet Street, London EC4 (next to St Bride's church, 5 minutes walk from Blackfriars tube). Admission free, but donations appreciated. Organised by Radical Anthropology Group: www.radicalanthropologygroup.org.

Miners' Great Strike

Thursday February 27 to Sunday March 2: Photo display and miners' banners commemorating the coal strike of 1984-85, Tyneside Irish Club, Gallowgate, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1. Organised by North East National Union of Mineworkers: 0191 384 3515.

Resist austerity

Thursday February 27, 7pm: Strike rally, Trades and Labour Club, Frenchgate Centre, Doncaster. Speakers include Owen Jones, Sam Fairbairn (secretary, People's Assembly) and careworkers. Organised by People's Assembly: www.thepeoplesassembly.org.uk.

Remember the miners' strike

Saturday March 1, time tbc: Speakers, live music, buffet and sketches, Red Shed (Wakefield Labour Club), 18 Vicarage Street, Wakefield. Organised by Wakefield Socialist History Group: www.theredshed.org.uk/SocialHist.html.

Stop the cuts

Monday March 3, 5.45pm: Demonstration against cuts and job losses at Middlesbrough council. Middlesbrough town hall, Albert Road, Middlesbrough TS1. Organised by Teesside People's Assembly: www.teessidepa.tumblr.com.

The people vs austerity

Tuesday March 4, 7pm: Pre-budget rally, St Mellitus Church, Tollington Park Road, London N4. Organised by People's Assembly: www.thepeoplesassembly.org.uk.

Teesside People's Assembly

Wednesday March 5, 7.15pm: Organising meeting, St Mary's Centre, 82-90 Corporation Road, Middlesbrough TS1. Organised by Teesside People's Assembly: www.teessidepa.tumblr.com.

A better way

Saturday March 8, 11am: Protest at Lib Dem spring conference, York (route to be confirmed). Organised by Yorkshire and Humber TUC: nfoster@tuc.org.uk.

Still the enemy within

Saturday March 8, 12 noon to 9pm: Commemoration event, RichMix, 35 Bethnal Green Road, London E1 (nearest tubes: Shoreditch, Liverpool Street). Marking the 30th anniversary of the 1984-85 miners' strike. Forums, debates, film, photo exhibition and art. Organised by Still the Enemy Within: www.facebook.com/StillEnemyWithinDay.

Radical London walking tour

Saturday March 8: Political walking tour of the East End on International Women's Day with Lindsey German and John Rees. Stop the War Coalition members only: email members@stopwar.org.uk with 'Radical London' in the subject line to RSVP. Organised by Stop the War Coalition: www.stopwar.org.uk.

Socialist films

Sunday March 9, 11am: Screening, Bolivar Hall, 54 Grafton Way, London W1. Michael Winterbottom's *The shock doctrine* (UK, 79 minutes) and Michael Tynan's *The doctors' revolution* (Cuba/UK, 29 minutes). Followed by discussion. Organised by London Socialist Film Co-op: www.socialistfilm.blogspot.com.

100 years of war

Monday March 10, 7.30pm: Brent Stop the War Coalition AGM, Rumi's Cave, 26 Willesden Lane, London NW6. 'The year ahead for anti-war movement' with Lindsey German, STWC national convenor. Organised by Brent STWC: brent@stopwar.org.uk.

St Patrick's Day and the Irish in England

Wednesday March 12, 7.30pm: Discussion, Five Leaves Bookshop, 14a Long Row, Nottingham NG1. Speaker: Marc Scully. £3 on the door, including refreshments. Organised by the Nottingham Irish Studies Group: www.nottinghamisg.org.uk.

Media, police and the miners' strike

Thursday March 13, 7pm: Book launch and talks, council chamber, Civic Hall, Leeds. Speakers: Nick Jones, former BBC industrial correspondent; Barbara Jackson. Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign; Ray Riley, ex-miner, Frickey Colliery. Organised by Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom: www.cpbf.org.uk.

CPGB wills

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

ITALY



Renzi's cabinet

New beginning signals further attacks

Renzi's administration intends to further erode workers' rights, writes Toby Abse

Italy's new cabinet clearly bears the imprint of Matteo Renzi, the newly installed 39-year-old prime minister - even if like any recent Italian prime minister (or any premier heading a coalition government) he has had to accept some names that he might not have chosen if he and his Partito Democratico (PD) had actually won a general election with a large majority.

In reality, since he achieved the premiership by a treacherous intrigue against his predecessor and fellow member of the PD, Enrico Letta, he has had to make some concessions to both president Giorgio Napolitano and Angelino Alfano, the leader of the Nuovo Centrodestra (NCD - New Centre Right), his principal coalition partner. Nonetheless, the overall balance of the cabinet shows Renzi's determination to get his own way as far as he can. Renzi is totally obsessed with image, and the image he has sought to convey is that of a 'new beginning'. Therefore, it is not surprising that the average age of the 16 members of the cabinet - deliberately smaller and more streamlined than those of any of his recent predecessors - is 47, noticeably lower than the average of 53 in the Letta cabinet, which itself was relatively young by Italian standards. Three members of the Renzi cabinet are still in their 30s and only two are in their 60s.

However, there are certain limits to this very Blairite notion of a new beginning. After long, and at times rather fraught, negotiations, Renzi has had to accept that the three ministers from the NCD still in place at the end of the Letta government¹ should retain their ministries (Angelino Alfano as the minister of the interior, a crucial post in the repressive apparatus of the state²; Maurizio Lupi at infrastructure and transport; and Beatrice Lorenzin at health), even if Alfano has lost the rank of deputy prime minister that he held in the Letta administration. No other minor party has more than one minister³ - Scelta Civica has Stefania Giannini, its party leader, at education, while the new environment minister is Gian Luca Galletti of the Unione di Centro (UdC) - and the Popolari per l'Italia has been deprived of its one minister, Mario Mauro, who held the defence portfolio under Letta.⁴ The PD has eight of the 16 cabinet posts, with the remaining three going to what

the Italians call *tecnici* - allegedly non-political or technocratic figures.

Yes women

Even more noticeable than its relative youth is the fact that this is the first cabinet in Italian history with gender parity - eight of the 16 ministers are women - bringing it closer to a Scandinavian pattern than a southern European one. Nobody of any political persuasion is alleging any similarity with Silvio Berlusconi's penchant for advancing the career of young women in politics on the basis of their appearance rather than their ability (most notoriously in the case of Mara Carfagna, the former topless model appointed as minister of equal opportunities). The criteria adopted for these female promotions have undoubtedly been similar to those used in choosing the male ministers - in other words, Renzi's eight women ministers do not seem particularly forceful characters. The most dynamic and loquacious woman in the previous cabinet - the 65-year-old former European commissioner, Emma Bonino, active in the Radical Party for four decades - has been ousted as foreign minister. This decision is generally believed to have been the central issue in the clearly rather heated one-and-a-half-hour conversation Renzi had with Napolitano before the ministerial list was finalised - a conversation which left the prime minister hoarse, after shouting at the elderly president.

Whilst it may be slightly unfair to Renzi's women appointees to compare them to 'Blair's babes', keeping Bonino in post would have been a more serious indication that he was actually willing to take advice from a female politician in an area of policy - foreign affairs - about which the former Florentine mayor is notoriously ignorant.⁵ Bonino's female successor, the 40-year-old PD member, Federica Mogherini, did work in the foreign department of the Democristiani di Sinistra (the ex-'official communist' predecessor party of the PD), was in charge of the Italian delegation to the Nato parliamentary assembly and has, for the last month or so since Renzi's election as PD secretary, been responsible for European affairs in the PD's national secretariat. However, she is no more known to her European counterparts than Renzi himself is.

Renzi's sacking of Cécile Kyenge, the first black minister in Italian history, and the abolition of her ministry of integration are arguably even more

significant than his decision to dump Bonino. Kyenge has been subject to a continuous and well orchestrated hate campaign by the Lega Nord and other racist elements on Italy's far right. They have insulted her on the internet, in numerous public speeches and even face to face, calling upon her to go home to the Congo or comparing her with African prostitutes on Italian roads. Therefore, despite Renzi's vague talk before his accession to the premiership of repealing the particularly repressive immigration legislation generally known as the Bossi-Fini law, it looks as if this self-proclaimed paladin of modernity has in fact yielded to the reactionary populism of the Lega Nord. No doubt he imagines, in all probability wrongly, that this abject capitulation will lessen the Lega's chances of revival in the European election this May, for which it has formed a pan-European alliance with Marine Le Pen's Front National, the Austrian Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs, the Flemish far right and other similar forces, centring on the issue of immigration as an alleged threat to western civilisation.

It is worth noting that if Napolitano lost the argument over the foreign ministry, it was Renzi who had reluctantly to accept the president's choice in two other ministries - economics and justice. The economics minister, Pier Carlo Padoa-Schioppa, is at 64 the oldest member of the cabinet and was previously an executive director of the International Monetary Fund in Washington and chief economist of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development in Paris.

Andrea Orlando, the new justice minister, had the environment portfolio under Letta. Now aged 45, he has had a very long career as an apparatchik in the Partito Comunista Italiano and its successor organisations, which commenced when he took on the post of provincial secretary of the Young Communists of La Spezia straight from school at the age of 20. Moreover, he belongs to the Young Turks (Giovani Turchi), which the *Corriere della Sera* defines as a "post-Dalemanian" current in the PD. In short, as somebody associated with both Letta and D'Alema, as well as with the apparatus of every single post-communist party (all very major disqualifications in Renzi's eyes), Orlando is very obviously the choice of Napolitano, not Renzi.

Renzi's own choice, Nicola Gratteri, a magistrate from Reggio Calabria, well known as a fearless scourge of the Ndrangheta (Calabrian Mafia) - was

totally unacceptable to Napolitano, who believes that it is not the place of magistrates to pursue over-zealous inquiries into possible links between politicians and organised crime. Orlando's most famous contribution to debates on judicial reform was an article in the Berlusconi daily *Il Foglio*, which gained a very favourable response on the centre-right, but excited much ire from Napolitano's *bête noire*, *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, a newspaper whose journalists the president sees as his persecutors.⁶

Another two key economic ministries also went to so-called *tecnici* - Federica Guidi, 44, got economic development and Giuliano Poletti, 62, the ministry of labour. Guidi comes from a family of prominent industrialists: her father was for 10 years the vice-president of Confindustria, the employers' federation roughly equivalent to the CBI. Berlusconi was very quick to praise her appointment; unsurprisingly she and her father had had dinner with the aged criminal at his palatial Lombard villa at Arcore the previous Monday. This appointment has given rise to some controversy in some quarters, since her family firm, Ducati Energia, has now outsourced most of its business, and particularly the manufacturing side, to Croatia, Romania, India and Argentina, which sits badly with responsibility for 'economic development' within Italy itself. Perhaps even more interestingly, the firm is regularly in the running for contracts for government business - as Stefano Fassina, the Keynesian from the PD's left wing, whom Renzi forced out of Letta's government, has rightly said, "The potential conflict of interest is completely evident. But beyond that what worries me is the minister's vision of industrial policy, her idea of relaunching nuclear energy, her opposition to the role of the state in the economy. I think there should be need of a minister of development with a very different orientation."⁷

Renzi intends to modify the labour law, further eroding even what remains of article 18 of the workers' statute of 1970 through what he calls his 'Jobs Act' (his admiration for Tony Blair is accompanied by a copious use of a bizarre form of pidgin English, which none of his obsequious acolytes have ever dared to correct, but which will doubtless be the source of merriment at future international summits). Given this, his choice of labour minister is significant. Giuliano Poletti was PCI secretary in his native Imola from 1982 to 1989, and from 2002 he has been

the president of the Legacoop, which groups together 15,000 cooperative enterprises. In practice Poletti sees things from an entrepreneurial rather than a working class viewpoint, but his apparent long-term identification with the labour movement makes him an ideal front man to impose neoliberal counter-reforms on the trade unions.

Here perhaps Renzi has learnt a little tact - grasping that the combative approach of Mario Monti's labour minister, Elsa Fornero, aroused such opposition from the unions that it slowed down the piecemeal destruction of workers' rights - he has avoided making a provocative choice like Pietro Ichino, the former PD rightwinger whose extreme neoliberal position on labour law led him to defect to Scelta Civica ●

Notes

1. The NCD agriculture minister had already been forced to resign as a result of corruption allegations linked to a criminal inquiry into some of her associates.
2. Some have alleged that Alfano played a key role in the forcible and illegal deportation of the wife and child of a leading Kazakh dissident from Italy last summer; he claimed that leading police officials spontaneously carried out orders from the Kazakh embassy without his knowledge. The PD's willingness to back up Alfano's implausible version in a parliamentary vote was seen by many as the low point of the grand coalition.
3. The Italian press has claimed that unlike Alfano and the NCD, such parties had to negotiate with Renzi through intermediaries, and not face to face - with the PD prime minister making 'take it or leave it' offers through trusted courtiers after the minor parties had put forward their wish lists.
4. Mauro regards this as a humiliation for his political group as well as a personal insult and has made it very clear that, although the Popolari will give Renzi a vote of confidence, they are only doing so in the spirit of the speech that president Giorgio Napolitano made at the very beginning of his second term - he called upon all Italians to display a spirit of national unity in the face of the severe crisis the country was facing. Although the Italian establishment had quite a high regard for Mauro as minister of defence, one might suggest that his continual change of parties - he had been a PdL supporter of Berlusconi until he jumped ship to support Monti's Scelta Civica, so his desertion of Scelta Civica for the Popolari was his second defection in as many years - may not have strengthened his case in negotiating with Renzi, who preferred to reward those who he felt he could rely upon, such as the new Scelta Civica leader given the education portfolio.
5. It might be added that sacking Enzo Moavero, the European affairs minister in the Letta cabinet, and actually abolishing the European affairs ministry itself seems another rather injudicious decision on the part of somebody with such minimal knowledge in this crucial area for Italy - which, while it may have narrowly escaped the fate of Greece, Ireland or Cyprus, has in practice been under close observation by the European Central Bank and the European Commission since the summer of 2011.
6. Their most famous polemicist, investigative journalist Marco Travaglio, has written a very long and hostile study of Napolitano's presidency.
7. *La Repubblica* February 23.

VENEZUELA

Right wing smells blood

What is happening to the Bolivarian revolution? Daniel Harvey calls for working class independence



Students: revolt from right

Venezuela has seen violent clashes and protests in the last week, as tensions have continued to rise following the death of Hugo Chávez last year. His successor as president, Nicolás Maduro, very narrowly won a majority to continue the Bolivarian revolution for another five years, until 2019. He managed to defeat his rightwing opponent, Henrique Capriles Radonski, by barely more than one percent (50.6% as against 49.1%).

It would be fair to say that since then the right has smelt blood, as it seeks to capitalise on the fact that the support of the United Socialist Party has gradually declined due to economic instability and deepening levels of corruption. Capriles himself is a long-standing opponent, as are most of the leadership of the rightwing opposition, the Mesa de la Unidad Democrática coalition (Democratic Unity Roundtable or MUD). Capriles was involved in the CIA-sponsored coup against Chávez in 2002, but vacillated at the last moment. He did not sign the declaration with the other conspirators. The coup was defeated after popular protests.

For 15 years the Chávez regime has been able to rely on an enduring popularity with the poor - Venezuela was and remains one of the most unequal societies on earth. However, the United Socialist Party has managed to alleviate some of the symptoms of extreme social deprivation through the redistribution of oil revenues to various social projects, including public health and education.

Official rates for 'extreme poverty' have fallen from 23.5% to 8.5%, while unemployment is half of what it was in 1999 and infant mortality has declined from 20 to 13 deaths per 1,000 live births between 1999 and 2011. Whilst on the face of it, this is an excellent record, it happened at a time when oil revenues have soared from \$14.5 billion to \$60 billion per year.¹

However, there have been growing problems.

Mass protests have featured professionals such as teachers, medical personnel and small business people, but have of lately been spearheaded by students. On February 12 MUD called a 'Day of Youth'. One of the main concerns is the high crime rate - not least murders, which has nearly trebled from 25 to 79 per 100,000 of the population (122 per 100,000 in Caracas). Venezuela is one of the most violent countries in the world.²

This high murder rate, together with similar increases in robberies, kidnappings and car-jackings, results to a large extent from *organised* crime. For example, there were 583 kidnappings reported in 2012, but police estimate that this represents only about 20% of the actual figure, as most cases go unreported. Armed robberies are numerous, and criminal gangs are able to set up checkpoints with impunity in some areas. The conviction rate for murder is as low as 10%, meaning effective impunity.³

Disintegration

In this context, it is not hard to see why the government has been losing support. Complaints from protesters have mainly emphasised what they see as the disintegration of society.

But behind the spiralling levels of crime is the obvious failure of the economic programme. Class-based inequality continues to scar life. So does corruption, with government cronies feeding off the mushrooming oil revenues. Leading figures in the USP now constitute a super-rich, a 'revolutionary bourgeoisie'.⁴

Corruption is, of course, a multi-layered phenomenon. According to one estimate, \$17 billion is spent on bribes, while billions more disappear into untraceable bank accounts. Similarly, what is called in the jargon *systemic corruption*, as large state-owned corporations interface with

the private sector, has also expanded dramatically.

The Chávez regime was well known for purging government bureaucracies of all opponents, whilst bringing in loyalists. At the same time private companies with suspicious ownership structures have been used to oversee government programmes. The Proarepa group, for instance, which manages the government's food handout programme, is not only owned by Chávez's brother, Adán, but has an upper management packed by leading USP officials. Investigations into this arrangement have been hurriedly terminated.⁵

Furthermore, as is the case in all rentier states, there is an inevitable unbalancing effect, as the country comes to rely more and more on easy money and the rest of industry fails to keep pace. Imports flood in and inflation soars. Official statistics put inflation at 50%. Chávez deployed the military against those accused of hoarding goods in response to his price controls. A chronic shortage of toilet paper has led to similar threats from president Maduro. Even so, shops and supermarkets across Venezuela are often bare. Another cause of angry protests.

As much as the government would like to blame the capitalists for deliberately creating an economic crisis for its own purposes, the fact is that discontent amongst Venezuelan workers has been growing too. Strikes have become common. The Bolivarian revolution has not stopped increasing casualisation and other neoliberal type measures.

And the fact that the regime has its roots in the military only reinforces its bureaucratic tendencies. Thirteen protesters have now been shot dead by police, including a mother with her child. Meanwhile, censorship, particularly in relation to the internet, is become more pronounced.

On Venezuelan television there is surprisingly little coverage of the protests, whilst the response

of Maduro and other USP leaders has been to accuse the protesters of being "fascists" and working on behalf of the CIA, as well as the plutocratic president of Colombia, Juan Manuel Santos. No doubt there are some such elements, and the right is doubtless trying to destabilise the country. Nevertheless, the support base of the Bolivarian revolution is being hollowed out because of the government's own actions.

The Venezuelan military has grown increasingly influential and powerful, as its officer class has become ever more integrated into the regime. The interior minister, Miguel Rodríguez Torres, sent a battalion of paratroopers into the border region of Tachira in response to the protests there, turning the area into what some have described as a "free-fire zone".⁶

There has been a lot of criticism on the left of the Human Rights Watch report which lays out in 200 pages of detail the political discrimination, the undermining of the courts, the curtailment of the media and organised labour under Chávez.⁷ A list of distinguished academics got in on the act, excusing the government from criticism as far as they could.⁸ No doubt Human Rights Watch is influenced by US and western interests, as are Amnesty International and other NGOs. But that does not mean we can ignore the reality of repression just because Chávez called himself a 21st century socialist.

What about the attitude of the left in Britain to the Venezuelan government? It has varied from the supine to the faintly critical over the last week, warning of the danger of a rightwing takeover, jeopardising the gains made by the poor over the last decade and a half.

Socialist Action has been the most fawning, repeating Maduro almost word for word. Its February 13 statement focuses on a condemnation of the "extreme right wing" (a phrase used over and over again) for seeking a *salida*

(ousting) of the legitimate government. The statement offers "unconditional support for president Maduro". There is not even a hint that there could be legitimate grievances at play.

SA makes no criticism whatsoever of the shooting of protesters. The statement mentions two deaths and 23 injuries, but justifies this by parroting Maduro's line that we are seeing a repeat of the rightwing provocations of 2002. The statement condemns violence only from the right, and not from the military.⁹

Socialist Worker's comment appears under the headline, "Old rulers see chance for revenge", but it too does not mention the deaths caused by the military, or the strikes and protests of the poor, except those in support of the government. It briefly mentions that there may be some issues with corruption and shortages, but ends on the basic loyalty of the poor to the regime and that "real solutions to the real problems they face are the only way to guarantee that the old order will never return".¹⁰

No, what is needed is working class political independence. That, of course, does not mean joining with the right and those who wish to bring about another coup. No, it is perfectly possible to fight the right today, in order to fight the Chávez state bureaucracy tomorrow ●

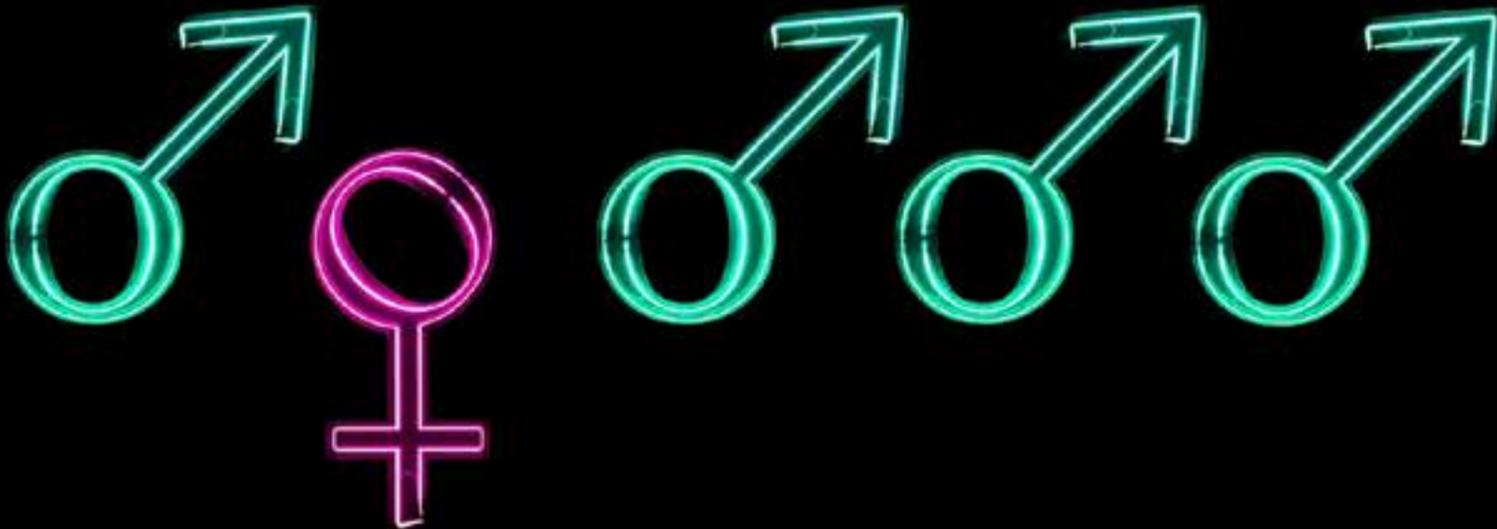
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7. <http://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/4051>.
8. *Ibid.*
9. www.socialistaction.net/International/Latin-America/Venezuela/VSC-Statement-Condemning-Extreme-Right-wing-Violence-in-Venezuela-that-Seeks-the-Exit-of-the-Government.html.
10. *Socialist Worker* February 25.

IDENTITY

Quotas harm the cause

The left should not succumb to neoliberalism's phoney version of equality, argues **Yassamine Mather**



Communists recognise the double burden of oppression, relating to production and reproduction, suffered by women in class society - and we struggle to end it. For us the fight for women's emancipation is an integral part of the struggle for socialism. It is indeed one of the many reasons why we fight for a classless society.

Having said that, it would be utterly wrong to suggest that we might as well forget about women's struggles under capitalism and wait for socialism. We fight in the here and now for demands that will improve the lot of working class women and for genuine social, political and economic equality.

Yet the majority of the left (both in advanced capitalist and developing countries) have been duped by formal, often ineffective forms of gender equality. They are quick to praise the adoption of such superficial 'equality' measures that appear to favour women's participation in social and political life, but in reality are nothing more than an integral part of "cultural capitalism."¹ In other words 'global capitalism with a human face'.

Over the last two-three decades capitalism has succeeded in convincing many that formal equality, mainly benefiting upper-middle class and upper class women, is the same as genuine equality for all. Most rational human beings oppose obvious injustice, and modern capitalism has been able to use such emotional responses to its benefit, concealing the class character of inequality (especially when it comes to gender inequality) through superficial measures and short cuts. Slavoj Žižek has argued that cultural capitalism "short-circuits" the emotional process by championing the 'charitable act'. I would say the entire quota system is part of this form of 'charitable act'.

Far from helping those affected by discrimination, cultural capitalism is actually harmful to the people it claims to benefit, mainly because it fails to mention the causes of inequality, never mind addressing those causes. It relies on cheap sentiment and plays on guilt.

In the words of Peter Suechting of the blog, *AC Voice*,

Our involvement in cultural capitalism is, in fact, the most maddening of all its injustices: it involves every one of us in its immorality, making every one of us guilty, without our knowledge or explicit approval, just through naive participation.²

Financialisation

Let me start then with identity politics and intersectionality, in order to explain what they are and how they have influenced the issues of quotas, and positive and negative discrimination.

I think it is fair to say that if you live in the academic world or if you have spent time with students or staff in some faculties, you might come to the conclusion that the whole issue of identity politics has become the 'hegemonic theory of our time'. Of course, this is not true of the rest of society, even though we hear a lot about identity politics and to a certain extent the issues arising from them influence policy-making in the public sector.

To understand the politics of identity we have to look at capitalism, and how contemporary modes of production and social relations, as well as reproduction, have changed since the 1970s; we have to understand that these changes have been as influential as women's liberation, the events of 1968, black movements, gay liberation and so on.

It is true that identity politics and intersectionality came as a response to second-wave feminism. Second-wave feminism looked at production in terms of labour relations, but also at reproduction and women's rights. By reproduction, I do not mean just childbirth, but housework and women's tasks regarding the family's physical and mental health. Both of these relations have dramatically changed in advanced capitalist countries. Despite gains made by women during

World War II, in the post-war decades capitalism continued to rely on a gendered division of labour. If the woman went to work, she remained solely responsible for housework, while the main breadwinner was still the man. That division created a very clear demarcation between productive and reproductive roles.

This gender separation was manifested in the whole of society, not just in the family. For example, during the daytime you would not see many men on the streets: it was the women who were out doing the shopping and so on. It is true that the 'nuclear family' was confronted by many changes in the 1970s - I do not underestimate the influence of the women's movement, the other liberation movements, 1968 and so on. But what was happening beneath all this was western capitalism's financialisation - moving away from domestic production and the transfer of industries to where there was cheaper labour and an absence of workers' rights: fewer obstacles to the maximum extraction of surplus value. At the same time, we were seeing the advance of women's liberation, the advent of the pill, the sexual freedoms of the late 60s and so on. The combination of these two created a particular situation - in some ways a very important phase in the change of the structure of the family. As casualisation and contracted, short-term labour increased, women gained employment and became part of the workforce, while at the same time what were regarded as male jobs were being lost and unemployment amongst men grew. So we had, on the one hand, a change in social relations and, on the other, political change resulting from the demands of the liberation movements, at the same time as the economy was being transformed in most advanced capitalist countries.

In this situation capitalism was able to use the ideas of the liberation movements to its benefit - overseeing superficial changes in terms of gender without addressing the fundamental causes of inequality. There is no reason why surplus value should only

be extracted from one gender and its extraction from women had a specific rationale: by focusing on inequality in terms of the individual woman, class oppression was obscured. For identity politics society became a collection of individuals, or social groups with natural characteristics; these were not based on their economic or class position, but on their gender, race or sexual orientation. In this way identity politics took over what were the remnants of the left within the women's liberation movement, which separated itself from class struggles and became engulfed in an individualistic, or 'personalised', version of struggle.

Intersectionality

It was in this situation that intersectionality came to address the shortcomings of identity politics, by talking of the autonomous struggles of gendered, radicalised sections of labour. In addition we saw the development of radical movements that took into consideration the black power, LGBT and women's movements. By the mid-late 1970s, they were also functioning as critiques of the 'western labour aristocracy', which had, under Keynesianism, become part of the establishment, according to these views.

I do not think this was simply a reflection of 'Maoist spontaneity'. The left in Europe and North America was paying attention to the third world, and was concerned about issues of racial and sexual inequality, while the labour aristocracy, a beneficiary of Keynesian economics, was no longer interested in radical forms of struggle. It is, of course, essential for the left to champion the struggles of the most oppressed. In the US racial segregation applied to jobs, while in Northern Ireland skilled jobs were only for Protestant workers. So there was some justification in terms of intersectionality when the left argued that in specific circumstances it was fighting for black workers rather than just 'workers'. The problem arose when this became the *dominant* discourse.

Sections of the left were *primarily*

concerned with women's, black and gay rights, at a time when the workers' movement was being successfully attacked in terms of anti-union legislation, the removal of services and welfare and in terms of the strengthening of free market ideology and impact of neoliberalism. However, the state could respond to these demands for gender/race equality, dilute their class content and divert the movement into individualism. Capitalism's dual oppression of women remained in place. Obviously it was not going to divert resources to free childcare, cooperative kitchens or care of the elderly.

Women were told that they were free to work, that they were liberated from the shackles of the nuclear family - there was some truth in that - but at the same time they had no additional support as they took up full-time or part-time work: the double burden of oppression - production and reproduction - remained. Capitalism was able to benefit in a number of ways: sections of the labour force had to accept lower wages for part-time, contract employment at a time when blue-collar, skilled employment for men was being undercut.

The arguments about intersectionality, which developed quite considerably in the United States, emphasised the politics of difference: gender, race, sexuality. Within this developed the idea that the *most* oppressed would make the most militant and therefore the best leaders.

This in my view is a completely mistaken idea. First of all, the most oppressed will not necessarily become the most class-conscious. There is no direct correlation between the two. When I was active in Kurdistan, the woman whose husband had joined the guerrilla movement and was regularly beaten by him would have been amongst the most oppressed - but it probably would not have been a good idea to make her a member of the central committee.

By the late 1980s and 1990s, as the attack on labour continued, as we approached the era of the 'end

of history', the era of 'there is no alternative', capitalism had absorbed and incorporated some of the demands of the women's movement and to a certain extent those of the black, anti-racist movement too.

Capitalism appeared victorious, it seemed to have won the ideological argument. It is precisely during this period that a significant part of the women's liberation movement became part of the status quo, part of the system. The absence of major class battles aided this process. This is not to say that the demands put forward by the women's movement were secondary - any principled working class organisation would have to embrace them. And it is not true that we are all just workers, so we are all the same. If you were a black female cleaner at that time then quite clearly you were different from a white skilled worker. Different forms of oppression demand specific slogans, specific programmatic demands. But the idea that in the absence of fundamental systemic change such oppression can be removed through intersectionality is foolish indeed.

There is no doubt that capitalism has no problem with the extraction of surplus value from women - it can benefit from the employment of a cheap female workforce, which in times of high male unemployment accepts casual, low-paid work. However, this has nothing whatsoever to do with gender equality. Yet capitalism has convinced large sections of the female population that they have achieved such equality, because the most obvious forms of gender discrimination have gone, because they are free to go out to work. What is forgotten is that often this formal equality has been achieved at the expense of increased poverty, of greater exploitation.

But such superficiality has its attractions. It fuels support for the idea that 'if only we could get equal representation then everything would be fine'. This, together with individualism, has played a significant part in the acceptance of the quota system as a means of promoting women alongside men.

'Equality'

Most of my arguments so far have been about the use of a corporate ideology to fool the many. This has had its effect in both the public and private sector.

Positive discrimination is more prominent in the public sector, but in the private sector too anti-discrimination measures are overseen by 'equality officers' who are supposed to monitor and ensure the implementation of equality legislation. In the public sector job applicants are asked to supply information about their gender, sexuality and race. Of course, you can opt out of answering particular questions, but the system has advanced beyond the formal approach. In any case, are you, for example, going to admit you are gay if you are applying for a post where staff are likely to be predominantly male and possibly homophobic? When it comes to the interview panel, it should whenever possible include a woman and a person of colour - although the token woman may often be tougher on members of her own sex than her male counterparts. The main purpose of such procedures is to protect the public sector from legal challenge, and in reality prejudices remain and selection processes have not changed that much.

So this formal, legalistic approach creates the illusion of dealing with equality, but often it results in new means of protecting discrimination. Women face sexism on a daily basis at work, be it in the form of cheap, prejudiced comments or in the form of an unwillingness to employ pregnant women or those with young children, who are classified as unreliable. So,

although we have the *appearance* of equality, in reality it is mainly formal.

Having said that, when we are arguing against quotas there is a danger in saying that it is because we want the 'best' person for the post. The reason I am saying this is that 'best' is an ambiguous word - best for whom? On what level? It brings with it elements of the liberal meritocracy. When it comes to leftwing politics, we should judge comrades in terms of their class-consciousness, their radicalism in defending the working class irrespective of gender, sexuality or race. But that is different from arguing against quotas in terms of personal characteristics - we should put politics in command.

The whole quota system presents a danger when you specify the number of women or members of national minorities you want on this or that committee. You are accepting, perhaps unconsciously, that the politics of the gay black man/woman do not matter - she/he is the most oppressed, and the most oppressed is the 'best militant'.

In terms of race, the quota system has been introduced into many institutions, particularly in the United States. Of course, we have had the first black president, and earlier Colin Powell was the top military figure. But recently I came across a book explaining how the US military in Vietnam had used racial quotas for its officers in order to reduce tensions amongst soldiers. The first thing that came into my mind when I read this was, what would I think if I was being carpet-bombed? 'Isn't it great that the officer giving the orders is an African-American?'

You could make similar points about gender quotas. Lloyds Bank recently announced that it is changing its approach, since some of its strategies had been "too aggressive" in the past. The new policy is for more women executives on the board, because they will create the framework for less aggressive banking.³ You can really see this working when someone who cannot pay their mortgage goes to their branch to ask for an extension or relaxation of the terms. The bank will obviously show more understanding (and be less concerned about the effect on its profits) now that it has become feminised!

In fact the opposite is likely to occur. When capitalism places women in positions of power, it 'masculinises' them - whatever their personal characteristics, such positions will impose ruthlessness and callousness upon them - we live, after all, in a capitalist, misogynistic society. Its essence remains the same; only the superficial appearance has changed. And because such 'equality' is based on individualism, because there is no class content to it, there is little which unites this layer of privileged figures - the female Lloyds board member or the black US military commander - with the ordinary people of their sex or race. In fact the gap is much bigger than that between a working class man and woman or a black man and woman. For instance, the Institute for Public Policy Research published a report in March under the headline, "Elitist feminism failed working class women". It stated that the pay differential amongst women is much more substantial than between men and women.

Glass ceiling

In contrast to this superficial equality, the writings of Kollontai, Zetkin and so on are concerned with fundamental change. Sometimes we can see a glimmer of such a society in, say, a mining village during a militant strike or a liberated zone in an occupied country, where the norms of class rule have temporarily broken down and the expectations of women have changed for the better.

The difference with the current reality is that there is, on the one hand, formal equality, but, on the other, the

continuation of dual oppression, made worse by low-paid jobs and all the rest, and this can be quite difficult to cope with - many women *cannot* cope with it. Single working class mothers in particular are often impoverished despite being in work - and they have all the reproductive, domestic and childcare work as well.

And then there are those who say, 'We've given you equality, but you're still not doing very well, are you?' Women have access to higher education and to the top jobs, but very few of them actually make it. So there must be something wrong with them, or maybe they just aren't as ambitious as men. That is the logical corollary of the quota-based individualistic approach. The misogynists have drawn their own conclusions from this constant obsession with the gender 'glass ceiling'.

The argument is, of course, that, since women make up 50% of the population, 50% quotas for all responsible positions will make the relevant organisation more representative. It was this thinking that lay behind New Labour's all-women short lists for the selection of MPs.

But things are never that simple. The majority of women will be unable to 'accept the opportunity' provided by quotas because of their personal circumstances - the double burden has not, after all, been abolished, so can they accept an additional workload when they are already struggling to juggle paid employment with housework and childcare? Some of those who agree to apply for a particular post just to make up the quota may do so reluctantly. Many of 'Blair's babes' - those who benefited from women-only short lists and were able to become MPs - confess that once in parliament they did not like to focus too much on women's issues (which, remember, they were meant to be there to champion), suspecting that this would not be the best way to advance their political careers.

Academic studies analysing the impact of quota systems may measure their 'success' in terms of the number of women now taking up the positions that have been opened up. Yet their findings are often discouraging for supporters of the new arrangements. For example, in a book called *The impact of gender quotas* Franceschet Susan, Mona Lena Krook and Jennifer M Piscopo came to the conclusions that women's symbolic presence does little to increase overall political interest and participation. That is in line with other findings, which have concluded that women's quotas had no 'trickle-down' effect when it came to political activity and did little in terms of attracting others to follow the example of the 'role models'.

Despite all this those within the women's movement who have accepted the structures and the legal, political and economic existence of capital continue to champion quota-based 'gender balance' on company boards and in political parties. We were constantly told that things would change for the better as a result, that the system would become more humane. Nothing could be further from the truth. The economic infrastructure has not changed, and political and cultural prejudices persist. Under such circumstances the exercise was bound to fail.

A study in Norway, where companies are required to appoint female directors and board members, is interesting, as it shows the shallowness of such approaches. Sabina Tacheva and Morten Huse in a paper entitled *Mediating and moderating effects of board working style* summarise a conclusion shared by many other studies of the Norwegian experience: "Minority directors are less likely to be well connected in the managerial world and need to engage in an ingratiating behaviour in order to be appointed to

corporate boards."⁴ Women directors are often appointed not for their existing contacts and membership of business networks, but rather for their acquaintance with the CEO or other senior figure: "Hence, women directors are less likely to effectively perform their service task, and boards with female members are less linked to the firm's external environment, have less access to critical external resources and are therefore less efficient in their service task than homogeneous boards composed of only male directors."⁵

No solution

My next example of a system of positive discrimination comes from Iran's Islamic Republic. In Iran the families of the 'martyrs' of the Iran-Iraq war (1980-88) that took the lives of half a million Iranians benefit from positive discrimination. They get special consideration when it comes to entering university, applying for medical insurance, buying a car ... But, over the years, these measures have caused resentment, especially amongst youth. Students who have studied hard but cannot enter university are angry that their places taken by a relative of a *janbaz*, who has not even sat the entrance exam. However, the beneficiaries are not particularly happy either. They often complain of the way fellow students dismiss or play down their achievements, even when they do well during their university course.

In this there is a parallel with critiques of quota systems in academia. Women who work hard or who have a strong commitment, and are therefore able to advance, are judged alongside those who have been given privileged treatment and their work is downgraded as a result.

In Norway, the only country where there are regulations governing the number of women on company boards, those who have actually been appointed on merit are numbered among the 'golden skirts' - those who are there just to make up the quota. Similarly, Amy Wallace, a journalist who created a campaign called Women Eds We Love, is very clear on this point in her own area of work: "Women editors don't want to be judged or rewarded for their gender."⁶

And quotas in leftwing organisations may often have the effect of devaluing the actual achievement of women comrades who work as hard as, or harder than, their male counterparts. These women are striving to represent the interests of the working class, not looking for the prestige of a more senior position, but the quota system conflates these two outlooks.

There is the additional problem that very often women promoted as a result of quotas are quite subservient to the authority that has put them in

that position. There is good empirical evidence to show that they are less questioning of authority, less questioning of the existing political structures. In terms of the left they are often less questioning of the leadership, even if they are part of the central committee - because they have been incorporated, they feel a sense of gratitude and loyalty - an obligation not rock the boat.

There is a well known example of this from the Iranian left, where the quota system employed meant that half the central committee had to be women. However, because many were regarded as being there just to make up the numbers, their views were not properly considered. That resulted in the effective establishment of two parallel bodies: the official central committee and the *real* central committee, which met, discussed and produced actual policy, completely divorced from its impotent twin.

All these examples demonstrate the dangers of a policy that merely addresses surface appearances rather than the actual reality. It may be adopted with good intentions, but cannot deliver if it continues to operate within a deeply unequal, misogynist framework, leaving its substance untouched. Neoliberal capitalism has incorporated demands for equality in respect of gender, race and sexuality and in the process robbed them of their radical content. The empirical data provided from within the system shows that this approach cannot work.

The same applies to the use of quotas within leftwing organisations. They will not just result in the kind of practical problems I have mentioned, but in the long-term their adoption can actually harm the cause of women's liberation - the bad examples can be used to reinforce discriminatory practices, to 'prove the validity' of misogynistic ideas.

I am realistic enough to accept that we may be alone amongst many political organisation in arguing against quotas. But I do not think that succumbing to neoliberal 'cultural capitalism' is the solution ●

yassamine.mather@weeklyworker.org.uk

Notes

1. The term 'cultural capital' was used by Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron. Slavoj Žižek has used 'cultural capitalism' to refer to ethical consumption, as a solution to global problems. I would add 'ethical campaigns for equality' to the list.
2. <http://acvoice.com/2012/12/02/global-capitalism-with-a-human-face>.
3. www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-26011447.
4. J Westphal, M Bednar, 'Pluralistic ignorance in corporate boards and firms' strategic persistence in response to low firm performance *Administrative Science Quarterly* 2005, 50, pp262-98.
5. www.boeckler.de/pdf/v_2006_03_30_huse2_f5.pdf.
6. www.amy-wallace.com/news.

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OUR HISTORY

The gathering storm

Over the coming months we will be featuring, in this paper and on our website, articles, interviews and other materials that tell the story of and draw the lessons from the miners' Great Strike of 1984-85. We start our occasional series with extracts from an important article that actually preceded the epic battle, James Marshall's 'Britain:

before and after the election' from a 1983 issue of *The Leninist*, the factional journal, run by oppositionists within the 'official' Communist Party, that was the forerunner of today's *Weekly Worker*.¹ *TL*'s 1981 founding statement explicitly linked its *open* factional battle with the task of programmatically and organisationally re-equipping the working class

itself. Thus, the principle of transparency and the willingness to air the 'dirty linen' of the CPGB in public was crucial to this, but not simply to politically educate the existing cadre of the CPGB and the wider revolutionary left: "Open struggle would ... have the most important effect of drawing new forces into the Party from the working

class, for the ideological struggle in the Party is not the preserve of intellectuals, but the vital concern of the working class itself."² Just how "vital" was to be negatively confirmed in the miners' strike of the following year, as the articles in this series will show. For now though, the extracts from comrade James Marshall's article below provide not only

a thorough overview of the state of the class struggle on the eve of the strike, but also the prescient observation that, whatever the balance sheet of victories and defeats between our class and the Thatcher government at that stage, a *strategic confrontation* was in the offing - one for which our side must be thoroughly prepared to fight and win.

Mark Fischer

Britain: before and after the election

1. The election

Future historians might well look back upon the June 83 election as a milestone on Britain's path to social revolution. For, while the Tories secured a massive post-1945 record majority of 144 seats, this has revealed and exacerbated the deepening crisis of reformism.

This crisis and the consequent dangers for social stability were referred to, in oblique fashion, even as the election campaign was in progress. Former foreign minister Francis Pym expressed his fears for parliamentary democracy if the Tory victory were to turn into a landslide. While he concentrated on the possibility that a landslide might create divisions on the Tory backbenches, it was clear that he was referring to the ramifications which would flow from a collapse of the Labour Party as *the alternative party of government*. Similar fears were voiced by other Tory 'wets' after the massive majority had been secured; both Heath and St John Stevas openly warned of the prospect of working class discontent breaking out from the confines of the parliamentary system. And Arthur Scargill and Ken Livingstone, eager to secure leadership of any future extra-parliamentary mass movement, quickly threw their hats into the ring and called for opposition to Tory attacks using mass actions rather than parliamentary rhetoric. Scargill vehemently argued that "we should undoubtedly need to take extra-parliamentary action, and that includes the possibility of political strikes".

Certainly the prospect of the working class seeing no realistic possibility of defeating the Tories on the parliamentary field, and seeking other avenues, is real enough. What's more, it must be stressed that, although the Tory Party gained a sweeping victory, it achieved its landslide on the basis of a fall of 2% in its popular vote. Also this was a peak of popularity, for if we look at opinion polls and by-elections over the last four years we can see that public opinion has been exceptionally volatile. Thatcher's early years saw the polls registering her as the most unpopular prime minister since records began; and when the Social Democratic Party was formed it soon swept ahead of both the Tory and Labour parties, confirming its standing with dramatic by-election victories in alliance with the Liberals. It was only with Thatcher's determined - some say even fanatical - struggle to 'liberate' the Falkland Islands from Argentina that the Tories saw their fortunes lifted to the 'dizzy heights' which enabled them to win 42% of the popular vote.

So we must note that the Tory victory represented their standing in relation to other parties at the moment which Thatcher considered most favourable: ie, when the volatile electorate were swept by a jingoistic fervour and, because of the British constitution, could be 'photoed' at

their most rightwing. Nevertheless, while the Tory landslide must be seen as only a parliamentary landslide, this must not distract us from the growing fundamental crisis which is affecting the Labour Party.

(...)

2. The first term

Although the working class had been somewhat disorientated by the vicious attack launched on them by 'their' Wilson/Callaghan government, the Tory general election victory in May 79 saw the workers' movement by no means cowed.

Trade union membership was at a record high - 12.5 million; the class had just emerged from the 'winter of discontent', when a strike wave of proportions not seen since 1926 had forced the restoration of wage levels to something near the level before Wilson had been in office. What is more, over the preceding decade or so the workers' movement had secured important victories as a result of outstanding militant struggles: the 1972 and 1974 miners' strikes, with their mass pickets, solidarity strikes and, as a result of Heath, the February 74 general election. These were linked to the overtly political battles against the Industrial Relations Act, which witnessed tens of thousands participating in one-day strikes organised by the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions, culminating in the massive strike wave in solidarity with the Pentonville Five and the threat of a general strike.

Because of the militant record of the late 60s and the 70s, and the ability of the working class to resist successfully measures designed to force down wages and attempts to chain the unions, whether from Barbara Castle or Robert Carr, there were many who were brimming with confidence at the prospect of a showdown with the newly elected Thatcher government. But such a view was soon shown to be based on a foolish misreading of the last decade - the fallacy that the miners had in 1974 swept the Heath government out of office in semi-revolutionary fashion - and above all the failure to take into account the changing economic conditions. For, whereas the 60s battles took place at the end of the boom, and those of the 70s in a time of stagnation and transition, the 80s saw the emergence of the early but unmistakable signs of a looming general crisis of capitalism.

In the 60s the capitalist class could afford to placate the working class with not inconsiderable increases in living standards. This course had become impossible by the 80s and, far from a general increase in prosperity, the needs of the day led to attacks on working class living standards, pitiless speed-ups and a staggering growth in the number of unemployed.

The first great battle under the new Thatcher government, one that

clearly marked a turning point and was destined to affect the general pattern for the proceeding period, was the steel strike of 1980. The rightwing ISTC leadership under Sirs did its best to tone down the struggle, to prevent it going too far. But, despite them being ever willing to compromise their members' jobs and living standards, the strike assumed a bitter and protracted nature as a result of the determination of the rank and file and the intransigence of the Tory government. It lasted 13 long weeks, but, despite the mass picketing, solidarity strikes from the private-sector steel workers and widespread sympathy from the working class (all taken to their highest forms in South Yorkshire), the failure to organise effective assistance meant that the strike collapsed.

The result on the position of steel workers was appalling. British Steel Corporation chairman MacGregor implemented a programme which included increased exploitation, differentials to facilitate divide and rule and a decimation of the number of workers in the industry. Between 1979 and 1982 the workforce was cut by 52%, and because of the demoralisation caused by the defeat of the 1980 strike this was carried out with only minimal resistance.

This pattern was paralleled in many respects by the car industry. Even before the election of the Tory government the employers had been on the offensive, and in the summer of 79 they successfully defeated strikes by Vauxhall and Talbot workers.

As a result speed-ups were imposed and real wages cut. Following this and the debacle of the steel strike, the Labour-appointed Edwardes

was the ideal target. Despite 57,000 workers downing tools to defend Robinson, the management won the dispute, mainly as a result of overt betrayal by the AUEW leadership and the passivity of the TGWU. Because of this failure to prevent Robinson being sacked Edwardes felt completely confident, whereas the shop stewards were despondent and the workforce was completely disorientated and powerless to resist. Isolated pockets of militancy were crushed, a rigid works discipline, the 'slaves' charter', was introduced, along with a speed-up, cuts in real pay and a rationalisation programme which cost 70,000 workers their jobs.

The sacking of militant Cowley shop steward Alan Thornett in 1982, along with the successive imposition of real pay cuts and the inability to resist the erosion of rights, all bear witness to the extent of the retreat by Leyland workers. And, as with Leyland, the other car producers were equally successful in imposing their own versions of the 'Edwardes plan' and the 'slaves' charter', thereby increasing their rate of exploitation.

Despite partial and isolated victories, the overall picture of Thatcher's first four years was clearly one of working class retreat. Public-sector workers saw their struggles undermined by inept and sectional leaderships, and in the case of the healthworkers and train drivers defeat was ensured through cynical betrayal by the TUC itself.

The miners exemplified above all others the crisis of the working class.

management at Leyland smelt blood. A concerted assault was directed at undermining the shop stewards' organisation; particularly because of his prestige, but also because of his isolation from the shop floor, the Longbridge convener, Derek Robinson,

During the 70s they had justly earned the reputation of being the most powerful, most determined and best organised section of the working class. So with the retirement of the dearly beloved (by the bourgeoisie) Joe Gormley, and the election of Arthur Scargill with a massive 70% first-preference vote, the stage seemed set for decisive confrontation. But this was not to be, for the divisive productivity deal which set pit against pit and area against area, plus the government's refusal to be drawn into an early - and for them premature - battle, meant that not only did one strike ballot after another show that the miners had no inclination to fight, but, even when the National Coal Board closed pits in Scotland and South Wales, attempts to launch solidarity actions collapsed in disarray and despondency.

The lack of resistance to the Tory onslaught was vividly illustrated by the dramatic slump in strike figures. They fell from a post-war peak of 29.5 million days in 1979 to a low of only 4.2 million days in 1981, and the figure for 1982 continued to reflect the low level of struggle. Such conditions enabled the Tories to attack social services with near impunity - healthcare, education, childcare and benefits for the working class all deteriorated.

One central element changing the balance from the days of militancy of the late 60s and early 70s to the setbacks of the 80s has been the massive growth of unemployment. It not only doubled under the Wilson/Callaghan government, but doubled again in Thatcher's first term, rising by 1.71 million from 1.3 million to 3.02 million. Using the old method of calculation, the number unemployed at the time Thatcher called the 83 election would have been nearer 3.35 million (at the height of the 30s slump Britain had 2,796,000 unemployed). Commenting on the effect that this had on the economic power of the working class, Philip Basset, the Labour correspondent of the *Financial Times*, wrote: "... fear of unemployment has dramatically altered the bargaining climate. Long gone are the days of the wage free-for-all in the 'winter of discontent' of 1978-79, and the less noticed, but at least as pervasive, wages explosion in Mrs Thatcher's first year in office. Then pay across all industries and services rose by an average of 22.4% ... Now most settlements are running at about a third of that rate ... [unemployment has] produced a cowed and demoralised workforce."³

Faced with mass



Margaret Thatcher: determined

unemployment, the unwillingness or inability of the trade union leaders to fight and a determined offensive by the employers and the Tory government, the working class saw their living standards stagnate. While real take-home pay for those with jobs rose by about 3% over the last year of Thatcher's first term, the living standards of the working class as a whole fell by 1.25% since she took office. "But the drop in real (inflation-adjusted) personal disposable incomes - the official measure of living standards - has been borne almost entirely by the 2.25 million people who have lost their jobs over the past four years."⁴

(...)
Well, in our short potted survey we have shown that the working class has suffered a long string of defeats; one industrial dispute was lost after another. As to the 'victories', the Cowley 'washing up' strike ended in defeat after the election, while the water workers' struggle saw Thatcher openly denounce and belabour the Water Council for *not* fighting. So these 'victories' showed all too clearly that the exception most definitely proved the rule of defeat. But we must note that, despite the near universally bleak last four years, the working class has only been forced to retreat - it has not suffered a defeat of a strategic nature, along the lines inflicted by the Tories in 1926, when trade union organisation was decimated and thousands of militants were blacklisted.

The first four years of the Thatcher government showed that the bourgeoisie was prepared to carry out an increasingly vicious attack on the working class, screwing down the real incomes of our class in order that we should pay for their crisis. But, while the bourgeoisie's leadership showed great determination to fight the class war, our Labourite leaders showed no such determination. One sell-out followed another; one after another piece of utopian and even chauvinistic hypocrisy was cynically proclaimed as the salvation of 'Britain' and the workers' movement - all in order to avoid the task of leading the class struggle against the bourgeoisie and their system. But in contrast to the increasingly evident treachery of the reformist leaders, sections of the oppressed took to the streets spontaneously, providing a lesson of combativity and militancy for all workers. What's more, the Six Counties of Northern Ireland witnessed the continuation of a protracted military and political campaign for national liberation, which proved a constant thorn in the side of the bourgeoisie, the only solution for which they see as being military terror.

But, all in all, the important lesson for us is the fact that Britain has not only three million unemployed, declining industrial production, growing social unrest and a seemingly intractable (for the bourgeoisie) armed conflict going on inside the 'United Kingdom', but this is *before* the capitalist system has plunged into general crisis. This indicates that Britain is becoming far more ripe for socialist revolution than ever before in its history - something that will be fully revealed when the general crisis emerges.

For let us remember that slumps occur in direct proportion to the preceding boom. This phenomenon is closely connected to the role played by the credit system, which allows booms to be far more protracted and powerful than would otherwise be the case, but, when the over-extended credit system finally bursts, the resultant crash is catastrophic (see articles by Frank Grafton in *The Leninist* Nos 2 and 3). So the longest ever capitalist boom, that of the 50s and 60s, will paradoxically result in

the deepest, most protracted, most destructive and dangerous slump in the grotesque history of capitalism.

6.1. The class war

In its first term Thatcher's government was able to force the working class into one retreat after another, but, as we have stated, these defeats for the working class have not assumed a strategic nature. The working class is thus bloodied but unbowed; its trade union organisations are still intact, membership only marginally weakened by loss due to the growth of unemployment.

But, importantly, the underlying mechanisms of the capitalist economy propel the capitalists towards imposing measures on the working class which could well require a strategic struggle. For, while the expected economic upturn may produce an upsurge in pay demands, for British capitalism to compete on an international scale requires that wages are kept down, while profits are boosted. A fierce clash is therefore well on the cards, and it is to meet such an eventuality that the Tories have not only passed through parliament anti-trade union measures, under both the 'wet' Prior and the 'dry' Tebbit, but have also assiduously prepared the forces of coercion to ensure that the law can be imposed.

For, while the Tories have exploited many of the undemocratic procedures in the trade union movement, using them as a cover to introduce anti-trade union legislation, the key question at the end of the day is the ability of the state to enforce its will. The Tories have not forgotten the fiasco of Heath's Industrial Relations Act, and the humiliating reversal they suffered at the hands of the working class, organised in defence of the Pentonville Five. The fact that they were forced to release the imprisoned dockers from jail, using the shadowy figure of the official solicitor in the face of a growing general strike threat, made a deep impression on the ruling class. This and the miners' strikes of 1972 and 1974, especially the failure to keep the Saltley Gates power station open, despite a massive police presence, not only led to near hysterical editorials in the bourgeois press about Britain becoming ungovernable, but, years later, under the Thatcher government, to the measures which would, they hoped, ensure that there could be no repetition.

Under the guise of anti-IRA and anti-'terrorist' operations, the police and army have been trained in what brigadier Kitson called "low-intensity operations". The riots of 1981 crippled the process, for, during the struggle to control the streets, we not only saw a situation where certain chief constables were on the verge of calling in specially prepared army units, but the aftermath swiftly witnessed emergency measures carried through in the organisation of the police, and a radical upgrading in their anti-personnel equipment. The end result means that now illegal mass pickets, such as witnessed at Saltley Gates, would not be facing mass counter-pickets of 'good old-fashioned bobbies', so loved by our opportunists, Euros and Straight Leftists alike, but in all likelihood highly trained, specially equipped police, just itching to deliver swift, deadly and vicious assaults, using CS gas, rubber bullets and a host of other newly introduced instruments of intimidation and repression.

The fact that during Thatcher's first term the mailed fist was reserved for the nationalist population of the Six Counties, rioting youth and Argentinians should in no way make us complacent, for this was unquestionably not the result of Tory concern for the sensibilities of British workers, but a reflection of the fact that at no point did British workers raise the struggle to a stage which required either extensive or significant use of the new-style forces of coercion

against them.

The laws of capitalist economics, the entire mentality of Thatcher and her team, can only lead one to the conclusion that an attempt to deliver a strategic defeat on the scale of 1926 is far from impossible. Already the Tories are making the issue of no-strike clauses a fact of life in the public sector; many new industries - the darling sunshine industries, so beloved by Thatcher - are keeping their operations union-free. On the basis of a strategic defeat such isolated measures can become generalised in order to facilitate a substantial increase in the rate of exploitation.

6.2. Organising the offensive

(...)
How does our Party meet the challenge? Of course, it opposes the Tory offensive, declares that the struggle to defend the trade union movement is "a major democratic question of key importance to all workers", but, instead of directing this struggle against the capitalist system, we are told to "support all campaigns by the TUC", to fight for "binding ever closer the traditional organic links between the trade unions and the Labour Party, which is the mass party of the working class and its allies"; for our leadership believes that the crisis of capitalism can be overcome, without socialism, that the TUC's Alternative Economic Strategy can transcend all the economic laws of capitalism, including the tendency for the rate of profit to fall.

(...)
We must raise the slogan, *Begin with what the working class needs, not what capitalism can afford.*

What we must do is to build our Party to fight around what the working class needs, something which under the conditions of emerging general crisis comes into direct conflict with what the capitalist system can afford. We must also fight for changes in existing mass workers' organisations, and the creation of new forms to facilitate, deepen and underpin the struggle for what the workers need, something which today inevitably leads to raising the question of power.

It is because many old organisations of the working class are incapable of meeting the offensive against working class living standards and rights, let alone the tasks of revolution, that we must seek changes in them, and create new ones. The first term of Thatcher's government, and even the last Labour government, showed all too clearly that the trade union movement had great difficulty in even maintaining the living standards of their members in work, but what about fighting unemployment, women's oppression and racism? Thatcher's second term will undoubtedly expose the weaknesses of the existing trade union structure, its inability to defend wages, and most certainly democratic rights.

Already, we have seen workers' struggles undermined, not only by direct sell-out, but by the sectionalism of trade union organisation. Examples of this have been legion, but vivid examples must include workers in the car industry, the health service and printing. The fact that workers in these industries are organised in many different unions not only creates difficulties in terms of coordination, but leads to sectional conflict, divide and rule, and the collapse of united struggles by one union leadership caving in. There can be no question that a restructuring of the unions, so that one union organises one industry, would greatly strengthen the ability of the workers to fight. The slogan, 'One union in one industry', must be revived. This must be achieved not as a result of trade union mergers based on narrow financial considerations, as we saw with the Agricultural Workers

Union merging with the TGWU, not as a result of bureaucratic self-interest, but by action and pressure from the rank and file.

(...)
Paradoxically, in order to have a vision of the future, we must look at the past. In the light of this, communists today should not only learn the lessons of the Russian Revolution, but study the history of our own Party, with particular emphasis on the struggle to build the National Minority Movement, the National Unemployed Workers' Union, councils of action and factory councils. It is not a question of reinventing the past, imposing alien forms, for new organisations will emerge out of the class struggle itself. As this struggle grows more widespread and intense, the new will be ushered in at the call of necessity, the mother of invention.

Surely to expect the TUC and the Labour Party to put up a serious fight against Thatcher would be, on past performance, naive. Most leaders of the official labour movement are content with petitions, protests that are securely confined within 'moderate' shackles. For these leaders, cosy chats with government ministers and schoolboy catcalls and hoots on the floor of the House of Commons are to be preferred to mass political strikes, occupations and other forms of direct militant action, which might lead to a challenge to 'parliament and the rule of law'. It is because such leaders are in the overwhelming majority in the official labour movement, and even most of the left Labourites show great determination not to go beyond rhetoric, that we must seek to construct forms that circumvent the deadly bureaucratic grip.

(...)
The National Minority Movement sought to unite all workers committed to an unremitting fight for what the working class needs. It linked rank-and-file organisations around unified demands and structure. On its foundation in August 1924 it not only represented 200,000 workers, but, as we can see from its programme, it was under no illusions about the need for revolutionary perspectives: "to organise the working masses of Great Britain for the overthrow of capitalism, the emancipation of the workers from oppressors and exploiters and the establishment of a socialist commonwealth; to carry on a wide agitation and propaganda for the principles of revolutionary class struggle, and work within existing organisations for the National Minority Movement programme and against the present tendency towards social peace and class-collaboration and the delusion of the peaceful transition of capitalism to socialism; to maintain the closest relations with the Red International Labour Unions."

The programme also made detailed proposals around the need for a minimum wage, the fight for higher wages, the abolition of overtime. It also dealt with the issue of reorganising the trade union movement: calling for factory committees and representation of trades councils and the National Unemployed Workers' Movement on the Trades Union Council. What is more, it demanded workers' control of industry and a united front of workers to fight capital.

The pursuance of a broadly similar perspective today would surely meet the needs of the working class, avoiding the pitfalls of relying on the TUC. It would provide not only the best means of uniting all militants, but also the basis on which to launch a struggle to boot out the knight-errants of capital in the workers' movement, such as Frank Chapple and Roy Grantham.

(...)
What of the problem of the unemployed? While the present structure of the labour movement atomises unemployed workers, casts

them into despair, today's conditions can propel unemployed workers into actions which violently oppose the capitalist system. It is no good the Party political committee coming out with pious speculations, such as "The possibility of the development of an unemployed workers' movement should be kept continually under review". We must declare the creation of an unemployed workers' union our solemn aim.

But the real damning indictment of all recent Party proposals and initiatives over the unemployed is the determination to make the unemployed subjects of charity and parsimonious liberals. This and the obsession to subordinate the unemployed to the official labour movement is something that can only lead to defeat.

No, the communists must realise that the unemployed are of tremendous revolutionary importance - the fact that around half of the long-term unemployed are under 25 can only underline this. Their energy, courageousness and latent revolutionism must be harnessed. By doing this, the struggle to oust the toadies who head so many unions today can be enhanced. For, by uniting unemployed workers' organisations with the class struggle, minority struggles can be extended far beyond the limits of the original conflict, can come to threaten traitors in our movement, and become the launching pad for strategic offensives.

While the unemployed are used by capital as a reserve army of labour, used to force down wages, they can even become victims of fascist contamination, organised as strike-breaking gangs. In the face of this, the political committee seems determined to mould the unemployed into cannon fodder for the TUC and the Labourites. But, instead of this disgraceful course, surely we should focus ourselves on making the unemployed into an *active army of the revolution*.

(...)
We have already referred to the undeniable truth that a strategic struggle is on the cards. The ability of the working class to resist the onslaught, to turn the defence of their interests into an offensive against capitalism, rests ultimately on the state of their revolutionary party - the Communist Party. While it is dominated by Eurocommunist revisionism, there is no chance of the working class acting independently, charting its course to socialism.

Opportunism disarms the workers, delivers us bound and gagged to the altar of capitalist profit. The period ahead demands a relentless struggle against all forms of opportunism, for, unless the Communist Party ends its tailism to the official trade union movement, ends its servile attitude to the Labour Party and its infatuation with the reformist, myopic AES, the working class will be like an army with no general staff. Resistance can be heroic, but any offensive will prove to be nothing more than a desperate gesture.

(...)
Comrades, now is not the time to slink off into domestic 'bliss', to drop into cynical despair, because of the state of the Party. Now is the time to rally to the fight in the Party. The period ahead promises fierce battles; the decisive, life-and-death struggle with our class enemy looms over the horizon. The first skirmish, the vital preparation, is the ideological and political struggle in the Party. The best elements in the class, all genuine communists, whether in the Party or excluded, must take up the challenge ●

Notes

1. *The Leninist* No5, August 1983, p10. The full text of this article will soon be available on the CPGB website.
2. *The Leninist* No1, winter 1981, p7.
3. *Financial Times* December 2 1982.
4. *The Times* June 30 1983.

UKRAINE

Svoboda partisans: carrying portrait of Ukraine's Nazi ally Stepan Bandera

'Revolution' in one square

Ukraine is in danger of being torn apart by rival nationalisms and descending into civil war, warns **Eddie Ford**

In what some are referring to as the 'weekend revolution', the government led by Viktor Yanukovich was ousted on February 22 by the Ukrainian parliament. Hence the *Verkhovna Rada* voted unanimously to remove the president from office and hold early presidential elections on May 25, despite the fact that only a day earlier he had struck a 'peace deal' with the opposition which would have seen him remaining in office until at least December.

A mere hour before his impeachment, Yanukovich had made a televised address angrily denouncing the "coup" as a "repeat of the Nazi events" of the 1930s and insisting he had no plans to resign. Then, upping the stakes two days later, acting Ukrainian interior minister Arsen Avakov announced on Facebook that Yanukovich had been placed on

Ukraine's most wanted list for the "mass murder of peaceful citizens" - some 100 people (including police) having been killed during the anti-government disturbances.

Yanukovich fled Kiev (or Kyev) on February 21 and his current location is unknown, though it is strongly rumoured to be in the port of Sevastopol - the historic home of Russia's Black Sea fleet in the Crimean peninsula. The acting interim president is now Oleksandr Turchynov, who - somewhat unusually for traditionally orthodox and Catholic Ukraine - is a Baptist pastor and a prolific writer of lurid novels. He is generally considered to be the right-hand man of the former prime minister and leader of the Fatherland Front, Yulia Tymoshenko, who was imprisoned in 2011 for "abuse of power" and corruption.¹ She was released on February 22 and flew straight to Kiev

to participate in the anti-Yanukovich protests. At the moment, Ukraine has no prime minister after Mykola Azarov resigned on January 28 and then legged it to Russia.

To nobody's great surprise, the United States lost no time in recognising the new government, signalling on February 25 that it no longer recognised Yanukovich because his actions have "undermined his legitimacy". The US, of course, has never supported a leader or regime that engaged in dubious or repressive activities. Jen Psaki, a state department spokeswoman declared that the emergence of a new government in Kiev was not "a zero-sum game for Russia or any other country" and urged Congress to quickly approve US aid to Ukraine. Other US officials have said the International Monetary Fund is "considering" an aid package as

high as \$15 billion, which by a strange coincidence is exactly the same sum promised by Russia in December - having already forked out the first tranche of \$3 billion.²

Significantly, US vice-president, Joe Biden, spoke on February 24 with the Georgian prime minister, Irakli Garibashvili, in the first of several meetings with leaders of other former Soviet republics about "regional security" - which if you are Vladimir Putin is an alarming, if not intolerable, intrusion into what is considered a Russian sphere of influence. For all of Psaki's fine words, everything indicates that we are indeed witnessing a great power struggle over the future of Ukraine between the US/European Union and Russia - a sort of cold war of a new type, but one which could hot up very quickly.

Perhaps another indication of the

potential conflict brewing, and one not widely reported in the western press, is that after the parliament voted to dump Yanukovich it was almost immediately followed by a vote to effectively downgrade the status of the Russian language by scrapping the 2012 law, 'On state language policy' - that allowed the country's regions to add more 'official' languages to the existing Ukrainian if these languages were used by over 10% of the population. Obviously, the law was originally passed in the interests of the predominantly Russian-speaking industrial southern and eastern part of the country, where regional legislatures quickly recognised the official status of Russian,³ but it also benefited two western regions that have introduced Romanian and Hungarian as official languages (and the Crimean as well, where a

What we fight for

relatively large minority speak Tatar).

Clearly, this move was a provocative slap in the face for the Russian-speaking population of Ukraine, especially given the fact that it constitutes the largest Russophone community outside the Russian Federation. Nor should it be forgotten that nearly half of those who specify Russian as their native language are not actually ethnic Russians, but rather Belarusians, Greeks, Bulgarians, Moldavians, Armenians, etc - so their rights are under threat too by a resurgent Ukrainian nationalism. When we also remember that 60% of those living in the Crimean region are ethnic Russians, and an overwhelming 97% name Russian as their first language, it is not hard to see how events in Ukraine could further deteriorate.

Hundreds

As our readers will know, the 'uprising' began in November when Yanukovich rejected a pending EU association agreement in favour of a Russian loan bailout and closer ties with Russia. Unsurprisingly, many western Ukrainians - particularly the younger ones - were not exactly enamoured by the idea of a 'customs union' with countries like Belarus and Kazakhstan, as opposed to closer ties to the EU. This led to protests in Kiev, now more the capital of western Ukraine than the country as a whole, and the occupation of Independence Square - dubbed 'Euromaidan' by the demonstrators, a term originally used as a hashtag on Twitter and obviously being a contraction of the words 'Europe' and 'Maidan' (ie, Independence Square).

In some senses, the overthrow of the Ukrainian government fits into a recurring pattern - 2001 (the 'Ukraine without Kuchma' movement), 2004 (the so-called Orange Revolution) and now 2014 (the 'weekend revolution'). Of course, the Orange Revolution was one of many 'colour' revolutions - rose in Georgia, purple in Iraq, pink in Kyrgyzstan, cedar in Lebanon ... Naturally, these 'revolutions' were much touted in the western media and lauded by liberals, not to mention some gullible leftwingers. However, you do not have to be paranoid to believe that they all have the hallmarks of outside 'encouragement'. The 'weekend revolution' was certainly not the result of a mass rebellion from below for sweeping social change.

On the other hand, to view the ousting of Yanukovich as a fascist coup is far too simplistic - there were many forces involved in the Euromaidan protests, including a spontaneous reaction against a corrupt regime. Having said that, it cannot be denied that orange-brown ultra-nationalists played a leading role. And the fact of the matter is that Svoboda and organisations such as Patriots of Ukraine, Pravy Sektor (Right Sector) and Spilna Sprava (Common Cause) conform to the classic description of fascism as supplied by Leon Trotsky in the 1930s. They are non-state fighting formations whose ultimate purpose is to destroy anything that passes for leftwing politics and resolve the crisis gripping the top of Ukrainian society negatively.

Hence on February 23 Pravy Sektor thugs trashed the headquarters of the Communist Party of Ukraine. True, the KPU is no principled Marxist party, but more akin to the Communist Party of the Russia Federation - ie, Slavophile and chauvinist. For instance, in its journal *Communist*, we are informed that "Soviet man did not emerge from nothing" - rather, "before him stood the courageous Slavic-Rusich, the labour-loving Ukrainian peasant, the self-sacrificing Cossack".⁴ Nevertheless, attacks on the KPU are clearly an attack of anyone deemed to be tainted by the malignancy of

socialism and communism - 'foreign agents' or traitors to the glorious Ukrainian nation.

However, it is very important to note is that the 'uprising' was very geographically specific - essentially confined to *one* square in one city. By contrast, if you had lived in Petrograd in 1917, you would have been well aware that the whole of society was in transition - something *big* was going on. But in Kiev outside Independence Square life went on as normal. No workers' strikes, occupations of workplaces or mass demonstrations. Basically the Euromaidan was an *encampment* staffed by middle class professionals and students. Unlike our general view or expectation of students today - 1968 and all that - students in some countries tend to *the right*, not left. Just as in Venezuela, students in Ukraine are playing a reactionary role. Without pushing the point too far, the political outlook of Ukrainian students is similar to the 1926 students who signed up to the Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies, the scab operation run by Winston Churchill.

Euromaidan was policed by orange-brown fighting squads. If you were a leftist in Liberation Square, chances are you would get attacked, with the full approval of those running the show. Svoboda, Pravy Sektor and Spilna Sprava occupied buildings and managed everyday life. Tellingly, we had defence units called *sotnias* - or "hundreds" - formally under the command of Andriy Parubiy, a founder member of the Social Nationalist Party of Ukraine⁵ (becoming Svoboda in 2004) but now part of the more 'respectable' Fatherland Front.

For anyone even vaguely familiar with Russian history, the term "hundreds" has a chilling ring - instantly recalling the Black Hundreds, pre-fascist fascists who launched murderous pogroms against Jews and all progressives. Using such a name sends a very powerful and unmistakable message, like calling yourself a Nazi in today's Germany - saying we are the inheritors of this counterrevolutionary movement that butchered tens of thousands of Jews and leftists. Ironically or not, the Black Hundreds denied the existence of a Ukrainian nation and defined Ukrainians as Russians.

What next?

It is instructive to read the recent remarks of Sergei Glazyev, a senior adviser to Putin.⁶ He makes the point that Yanukovich, from the point of view of the ruling elite, did not act in a decisive enough manner - instead, we had a pattern of repression followed by compromise and vice versa. Of course, Machiavelli in *The prince* advised rulers to do one of two things in a crisis: either ruthlessly crush the opposition or come to a compromise - but do not do both, as that always leads to disaster. The obvious example is Tiananmen Square, where the Beijing regime sent the tanks in and made sure such a situation would not recur - it did what, from its perspective, had to be done. Yanukovich, on the other hand, waited three months to show the opposition who was boss - and by then it was too late - deep fissures had opened up in the regime and the army itself was obviously split. This was manifested by troops parading into the square and swearing an oath of allegiance to the speaker of the parliament.

Glazyev also argued that there was a "clear need" for the "federalisation" of Ukraine in order to avoid its bloody break-up. According to him, this would require giving the various regions "sufficient rights", the ability to "form their budgets" and even the possibility of "partial foreign identity" - he used the example of Greenland, which is an autonomous country within Denmark. In other words, his envisaged Ukrainian 'federation' would be totally unlike the one to its north, where the constituent

parts have no right to separate. But Glazyev's proposed new structure would allow parts of Ukraine to be swallowed up by Russia.

Yes, in 2001 there were moves in the east towards secession - but the dire conditions of the Russian economy - and the political situation in general - ensured that nothing happened. Even then, Russia made sure it kept its naval base in the Crimea - giving it access to the Bosphorus and thus the Mediterranean. The need for access to warm waters was always a vital part of tsarist foreign policy, of course - as Trotsky revealed after the Russian Revolution, publishing the secret treaties which promised the Dardanelles to the tsar. It is no longer true that Russia is a basket case: it is now attempting to *reassert* itself - thus the courting Ukraine and offers of aid.

When looking at Glazyev's comments, we must not think of this 'federalisation' as a warm-hearted desire to prevent bloodshed or a civil war. He is basically recommending creating *facts on the ground*. We already have the precedent of Georgia, which only a few years ago was lined up by the US to become a Nato member, panicking Russia at the possibility of having US forces stationed on its southern borders. To prevent Georgia and its near abroad falling into the American sphere of influence, Russia promptly acted in 2008 and we saw the secession of South Ossetia and Abkhazia - which were forcibly broken away from Georgia and remain separate to this day, albeit with only Russia and a handful of other countries recognising the two states.⁷ But it does not really matter because Russia achieved its prime objective of creating those facts on the ground. First Georgia, next Ukraine?

With Ukraine we face the very real danger that it could be torn apart and possibly descend into a fratricidal civil war along the lines of Syria. There are various concentrations of peoples in the west, south, east, etc - but in no way are you dealing with ethnic population centres that can be neatly divided up. Rather, the Ukrainian peoples are interpenetrated - and the same goes for the army and the state machine as a whole. If the EU gave a nod and a wink then a swarm of irregular fighting squads could be unleashed - potentially meaning meltdown.

Ukrainian ultra-nationalists are already crazily suggesting that the Russian language could be banned, along with the KPU and other parties - which is tantamount to a call for civil war. Meanwhile, calls for secession

in the pro-Russian south are growing. At a protest attended by thousands in Sevastopol, the crowd voted to establish a parallel administration and civil defence squads - electing a new pro-Russian mayor, Aleksei Chaly. Demonstrators waved Russian flags and chanted "Russia, Russia, Russia" during the gathering - a common theme being that "we will never surrender to those fascists in Kiev". Vowing to defend Sevastopol, protestors also voted to set up a fledgling militia that would mirror those established in the west - where up to 200,000 people could be "counted on" in the fanciful opinion of Dmitry Sinichkin, president of the local branch of the Night Wolves motorbike group (which enjoys the personal patronage of Vladimir Putin).

Demonstrating the seriousness of the situation, Moscow has heavily hinted that it would be prepared to go to war over Crimea in order to "protect the large population and army installations". According to an unidentified Russian official, "If Ukraine breaks apart, it will trigger a war. They will lose Crimea first [because] we will go in and protect [it], just as we did in Georgia."⁸ Ominously, on February 26, Putin ordered a "test of combat readiness" of the military units in Russia's central and western military districts, including areas bordering Ukraine ●

eddie.ford@weeklyworker.org.uk

Notes

1. Her crime was ordering the Ukrainian firm, Naftogaz, to sign a major gas deal with Russia, a deal widely considered "financially disadvantageous" to Ukraine. Tymoshenko was sentenced to seven years in prison, banned from seeking elected office while imprisoned, and ordered to pay the state \$188 million. Prior to her political career, Tymoshenko was a highly 'controversial' businesswoman in the gas industry and by some estimates one of the richest people in the country. In 2005 she was placed third in the *Forbes Magazine's* list of the world's most powerful women.
2. <http://online.wsj.com/article/BT-CO-20140225-707423.html>.
3. Meaning that Russian was declared the second official language in Odessa, Kharkiv, Kherson, Mykolaiv, Zaporizhzhya, Sevastopol, Dnepropetrovsk, Luhansk and Donetsk regions.
4. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communist_Party_of_Ukraine.
5. An intentional reference, made all the more explicit by its adoption of the Nazi-like Wolfsangel logo. Membership of SNPU was restricted to ethnic Ukrainians, its official programme defining it as an "irreconcilable enemy of communist ideology" and declaring all other parties to be either collaborators or enemies of the Ukrainian revolution.
6. *News Europe* February 6 (<http://tinyurl.com/mw28ptm>).
7. Those countries being Nicaragua, Venezuela, Nauru, Vanuatu, Tuvalu, Nagorno-Karabakh and the Pridnestrovian Moldovan Republic (or Transnistria) - the last two republics themselves are unrecognised by the vast majority of states.
8. *Financial Times* February 20.

Fighting fund

£200 in two days

Over the last week there has been a gratifying response to my appeal last week to step up of the pace and make sure we reach our £1,500 fighting fund target for February. I reported that we hadn't quite made the halfway mark with just over a week to go.

However, thanks to the generosity of our readers, £572 came in over the last seven days, taking our running total to £1,315. But there are just two days left to raise the extra £200 we need. We can do it if comrades make use of the internet to get us their donations. Either click on the PayPal button at the bottom of the 'Subscribe or donate' page on our website (www.cpgb.org.uk/home/weekly-worker/subscribe); or make a bank transfer from your online account. Make your payment to account number 00744310 (sort code: 30-99-64).

Last week we received four

PayPal donations - thank you, PD (£25), DS (£20), FG and MM (£10 each), who were among 12,336 online readers last week, by the way. There was also a total of £312 in standing orders, plus three last-minute cheques - from PK (£50), GF (£20) and DO (£10). Last but not least, comrade TM made one of his monthly visits to the *Weekly Worker* office so he could hand over a fantastic £120.

All that takes us within touching distance. We are just £185 short - let's call it £200, shall we? Just a few sizable donations will do the trick, although I wouldn't say no to a lot of smaller ones. Either way, please act quickly. We need the money by 5pm on February 28! ●

Robbie Rix

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

■ Without organisation the working class is nothing; with the highest form of organisation it is everything.

■ There exists no real Communist Party today. There are many so-called 'parties' on the left. In reality they are confessional sects. Members who disagree with the prescribed 'line' are expected to gag themselves in public. Either that or face expulsion.

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

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

■ Communists are internationalists. Everywhere we strive for the closest unity and agreement of working class and progressive parties of all countries. We oppose every manifestation of national sectionalism. It is an internationalist duty to uphold the principle, 'One state, one party'.

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

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

■ Capitalism in its ceaseless search for profit puts the future of humanity at risk. Capitalism is synonymous with war, pollution, exploitation and crisis. As a global system capitalism can only be superseded globally.

■ The capitalist class will never willingly allow their wealth and power to be taken away by a parliamentary vote.

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

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

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

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

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

weekly worker

**David Bowie
brings a little
cry of joy for
Cameron**

Cyberspace oddity

As the Scottish independence referendum approaches, the ugly side of the argument is in full view, writes **Paul Demarty**

Not since The KLF put up Extreme Noise Terror to perform their rave classic, '3AM eternal', in 1992 have the Brit Awards sparked so much controversy. This time, however, there was no need for a grindcore band, or pop pranksters firing blanks into the crowd from a machine gun. All that was required was an acceptance speech from the evergreen David Bowie, as he pipped the various young mediocrities of British pop to the Best Male Artist award off the back of his critically acclaimed album *The next day*.

What did he say (or, rather, what did Kate Moss say in his place)? Five words: "Scotland, please stay with us." He was, of course, referring to the September 18 independence referendum.

Bowie is, of course, no stranger to controversy. There was the omnisexual glam image of the 1970s; there were ambiguous (at best) statements about fascism at the height of his cocaine years, which became one of the sparks for Rock Against Racism; most unforgivable of all, there was the industrial rock abortion, Tin Machine.

All of which has come back to haunt him, now that he is the latest target of the 'Cybernats', a semi-organised strike force of Scottish Nationalist trolls, who have taken exception to the erstwhile Thin White Duke's mildly worded plea for the union. Who is this Hitler-loving, multi-millionaire has-been to lecture the Scots? "Fuck off back to Mars," runs one of the politer contributions to Bowie's Facebook page in recent days.¹

Much is also made of Bowie living in New York, and therefore not paying taxes to Westminster. This is rather silly, given the nationalists' reliance for good PR on an endless parade of movie stars and thespans. At least Bowie pays taxes to Washington; unlike Sean Connery, who waves the saltire in the Bahamas. Given also Alex Salmond's initial attempts to hang his case for independence on the 'success' of Irish capitalism, which came about thanks to attractive tax incentives (and died on the back of related asset bubbles), it is even more ridiculous.

So are the 'Cybernats' representative of the broader 'yes' campaign? There are certainly signs that this is not the case. Bowie's plight has been picked up primarily in the rightwing press - the *Telegraph*, *Mail* and *Express* have all run stories on the trolls' exploits, allegedly including death threats and property damage; these are not media outlets above a little wild exaggeration, nor are they likely to favour independence.

We live in the age of the internet, and its partial flattening of media hierarchies has the most immediately obvious effect of providing a far more visible platform for cranks and malcontents than was ever previously the case. Look 'below the line' at any major newspaper website, and you will find a cross-section of society you would rather did not exist: everyone

with their own little hobby horse will bend your ear out of shape. The left has conspiracy theorists and Stalinists; the right has fascists; feminists have the intersectionality brigade and their Twitter pogroms.

Hardly surprising, then, that Scottish nationalism should have its ugly side, and that ugly side should appear in fatuous troll attacks on an ageing rock star. Yet, equally, none of the political 'ugly sides' have arisen by chance. The left, of course, has been corrupted and disoriented by Stalinism; there is not actually much difference between the British National Party's election manifesto and the average editorial in the *Mail*; feminism really has failed to unite women as women.

And Scottish nationalism - even in its present, right-on leftist form - is based on anti-English sentiment. Leftwing arguments, if anything, are the worst of all in that respect: a shopping list of iniquities are interpreted as being imposed on the Scottish by the English. The Scottish Socialist Party, even at the height of its success, counted in its ranks vile ultra-nationalists whose hatred of the 'Brit left' was palpable. It was the nationalist left that came up with the absurd argument that Scotland is an 'oppressed nation' - absurd, and deeply offensive to all the peoples of the world who suffered genuine oppression under the yoke of the British empire - very much a joint and cordial partnership of England and Scotland.

Here, the trolls play the role they always do: exposing the shameful face of whatever cause they purport to represent. For Scottish nationalism, the flipside is the same as all nationalism - chauvinism and xenophobia.

At least one man appreciates Bowie's sentiments: David Cameron let out "a little cry of joy", apparently.² The official 'no' campaign, Better Together, took immediately to social

media to recruit on the basis of this endorsement; we would expect that significant success is unlikely.

But Cameron, perhaps, has more reasons to be cheerful. As far as David Bowie goes, the pro-independence lobby - as noted - has a sackful of celebrity endorsements, largely as a result of independence becoming a kind of left-liberal common sense. Any notable in the other column allows the unionists to act warm and inviting, for a change.

After all, they are more or less barred from doing so apart from that. Sarah MacDonald last week quoted the SSP's Colin Fox on the benefits of independence: "... no measures like the hated bedroom tax ..., no privatisation of Royal Mail, no more poll tax experimentation, no more blaming immigrants and claimants for an economic crisis caused by City bankers ..." It is delusional horseshit, of course; but an empty promise that can nevertheless be made by the 'yes' camp. Their opponents, on the other hand, stand precisely for these hated policies from a position of governmental power. Thus, the principal weapon in the 'no' armoury is fear: fear of the consequences of separation.

In recent weeks, defenders of the union have been playing this card for all it is worth, and they - obnoxious as they are - have a point. The SNP does not have a plan B on the currency front; George Osborne and Mark Carney are perfectly at liberty to boot a fledgling independent Scotland out of any input into the governance of the pound, and even from their own narrow interests would be well advised to do so.³ Salmond's threat to renege on debt obligations is a stupid bluff (try starting a new currency after defaulting!) and Westminster has called it.

Scottish membership of the European Union has been all but ruled out by José Manuel Barroso

of the European Commission; and, as much as Salmond and his allies huff that 'common sense' ought to secure Scotland's entry, the political precedent it would set for separatist-minded populations throughout Europe is intolerable for the existing member-state regimes. Playing 'good cop', David Cameron has only guff to offer - guff about the Olympic spirit, about the global reach of British popular culture (we are the "soft-power superpower", apparently, which will come as a surprise to the Afghans).

The trouble with fear-mongering is that it can easily backfire: people tend to recoil from being blackmailed, cajoled and threatened. The solid barrage of anti-independence news items, however, seems to be having an effect. *The Scotsman* reports a five-point swing to 'no' since Salmond was effectively shut out of the pound.⁴ It is one thing to raise a middle finger to threats from the south; quite another to invite the actual consequences of separation.

It seems this ominous message is getting through to the trade union movement, after a fashion. Though widely expected to come out for independence, the Public and Commercial Services union has voted overwhelmingly to stay 'neutral' in the coming referendum. "Today does not mean sitting on the fence," says PCS president and Socialist Party in England and Wales member Janice Godrich. "PCS informs - you decide" will mean taking our arguments - for an alternative to austerity, for properly resourced public services, for jobs, for fairness - to all sides of the constitutional debate in the run-up to the referendum and beyond.⁵

Also splitting the difference is the Scottish Trades Union Congress; while many trade unionists, according to general secretary Grahame Smith, are "disappointed with the lack of vision

from the 'no' campaign", an STUC report nonetheless finds "none of the currency options [proposed by the 'yes' camp] ... wholly compelling".⁵ Several other unions, including GMB and Aslef, have endorsed a 'no' vote; while the Prison Officers Association has come out for independence.

What the unions - especially 'fence sitters' like the PCS and STUC - are unable to do is provide a serious political lead. Their bet-hedging is based on lobbying both sides to ensure Scotland, after the referendum, is kinder to the union agenda, in terms of jobs, pay and the rest; they have nothing to say about the substantive issue of what the relationship between Scotland and the rest of Britain ought, in fact, to be.

Such leadership, however, is nowhere to be seen. The 'yes' camp makes an attractive case, but only through lies; the 'no' camp is a group of bullies, who are, however, telling the truth about their threats. The left is divided between the two - lying or shamefacedly fearmongering. A genuine answer for the British working class is not on the table; but only because the workers' movement and the left are too disaggregated to provide one ●

paul.demarty@weeklyworker.org.uk

Notes

1. <http://telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/10651075/David-Bowie-abused-by-CyberNats-after-pro-UK-Brits-speech.html>
2. <http://telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/scotland/scottish-politics/10658358/David-Cameron-I-let-out-cry-of-joy-over-David-Bowies-Scottish-independence-comments.html>
3. The liberal Keynesian economist Paul Krugman expresses the mainstream objections from a 'neutral' perspective - <http://krugman.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/02/24/scots-wha-hae>
4. www.scotsman.com/news/politics/top-stories/scottish-independence-poll-points-to-close-result-1-3317310
5. www.ajustscotland.org/files/Report/AJS2%20final.pdf

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