

A paper of Marxist polemic and Marxist unity



weekly **worker**



**Charlie Kimber's SWP:
nothing worthwhile to say
about the Labour Party**

- Letters and debate
- Moshé Machover
- 1920s CPGB and NLWM
- Trump and Iran n-deal

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Towards a Communist Party of the European Union

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1967 AND ALL THAT

LETTERS



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

Confused heads

I confess I've never got my head around this crime of "third campism" that Gerry Downing and Ian Donovan accuse the CPGB of (Letters, October 12). I guess what it means is that you support neither the imperialists nor their victims, but an imaginary third force. I am not a member of the CPGB and therefore it is difficult for me to defend it against their charges, but I would like to comment nonetheless on the letter.

There was a time, during the Vietnam war, for example, when the US imperialists faced a national liberation movement in the form of the Vietcong. It was not difficult to know who to support. There was also the time when Britain was waging a war in the north of Ireland and again it was incumbent upon socialists to support the republican movement.

However, there are genuine difficulties in supporting, critically but unconditionally, the forces of opposition to US imperialism in Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria, for example. One of the problems in all these countries is that there is no single, unified national liberation movement. Certainly in Iraq I supported the right of the Iraq people to wage armed resistance against the American and British occupiers, but this didn't translate into support for one or more particular groups.

Those groups who were resisting the US by force of arms in Iraq were also waging war on other Iraqis of a different confession. Would one really have supported al Qa'eda in Iraq, which metamorphosed into Islamic State, despite their waging war on Shi'ite Iraqis, to say nothing of their imposition of feudal religious barbarities? Would one really support IS in Syria and Iraq despite their attempted genocide of the Yazidis and their enslavement and mass rape and sexual slavery of women? Or perhaps the Taliban is a model of a national liberation movement? It is a fact that for historical reasons the Arab countries have been unable to throw up resistance movements that united all of the Arab peoples regardless of creed.

Of course, I welcomed the resistance to the Americans, but this did not translate into support for a particular movement because there wasn't one. Supporting the Iraq regime, which was a monstrous police state, was also politically impossible, given that it was also a genocidal regime which spawned, in part, IS.

The allegation that the CPGB was neutral in the Iraq war or when Abbas and Israel attempted to overthrow Hamas in Gaza does not accord with my recollection. Certainly, this could be said of that social chauvinist group, the Alliance for Workers' Liberty. Indeed it would be more accurate to call the AWL a critical friend of the US occupation, since it refused to call for the withdrawal of US troops. As far as I'm aware, the CPGB is quite clear that in the event of a US or Israeli attack on Iran they would support the Iranians.

Gerry and Ian take Mike Macnair to task for characterising their position as "the United States backs the state of Israel because of the large number and influence of specifically Jewish capitalists in the US". Well, if Mike has misunderstood you, comrades, so have I. It would appear that both Gerry and Ian are incapable of understanding the natural and ordinary meaning of that which they argue.

Referring to South Korea, Colombia, the UK and Saudi Arabia, the pair say: "In none of these cases is the ethnic composition of the ruling class relevant to the conduct of the alliance the US carries out. But anyone can see there is a difference between the relationship of the USA with these states and with Israel." What Gerry and Ian are saying is that in the case of the US's relationship with Israel the "ethnic composition of the ruling class" is the difference. There is no other

possible interpretation.

And, as if to confirm my interpretation, they go on to say that "Jewish bourgeois are massively overrepresented in the US ruling class compared to the Jewish population in general, which is only 2%". What would this "massive overrepresentation" matter if it didn't have any effect on US policies?

Both Gerry and Ian recoil from the logic of their own position, because they realise that it is inherently anti-Semitic. Hence they take issue with Mike. They are right to say that the US ruling class treats Israel as if it were an adjunct of their own state. They are right to say that the relationship of Israel to the United States is different from that of the US to any other state. But it is not right to suggest that this is a product of the Jewish composition of the US ruling class. If anything, the latter is a consequence of the US's relationship with Israel, not its cause.

In fact, it is wrong to say that Israel is merely an extension of the US ruling class. They do have separate and distinct interests and sometimes conflicts. Iran was one such. The war against IS was another. Israel was not happy with the war against IS. For it, the Shi'ite axis of evil was the main enemy. But these are tactical, not principled, differences.

Gerry and Ian are also hopelessly confused about the Jewish nature of the Israeli state. Of course, Israel appropriates the symbols and cultural artefacts of being Jewish, like for example the star of David. It also, incidentally, rejects diaspora Jewish culture. It has also transformed the Jewish religion and majority Jewish identity. But where they both go wrong again is in comparing Zionism's relationship with Jewish nationalism and Ukip's with British nationalism and Nazism with German nationalism.

The British people are a nation or a conglomeration of nations. The German people too are a nation, although Nazism was not so much a form of German nationalism, but, rather, a fascist movement which redefined German nationalism in ethno-racial terms. The Jews, however, are not a nation and will never be.

Zionism is in a sense a false nationalism. Zionism is not, contrary to Gilad Atzmon (whom Ian admires), a consequence of Judaism or being Jewish. On the contrary, the first Zionists, from Cromwell and Napoleon onwards, were non-Jewish European imperialists. To see Zionism as a form of Jewish nationalism is to look down the telescope from the wrong end.

The suggestion that there is an actual overlap between the US and Israeli ruling class is nonsense. To suggest that this is caused by the Israeli 'right of return' law, which allows the Jewish capitalists to take up citizenship in Israel, is a fiction. Pure invention. I too, despite not even being an honorary member of either ruling class, have the same right of 'return'. This is not a materialist basis for the existence of a transnational ruling class. It is a product of the confusion inside both comrades' heads!

Tony Greenstein
Brighton

Balance sheet

The successes of the Corbyn movement are fairly obvious:

1. The revival of Labour into a party with an active mass membership - a membership which is moving left and seeking a pro-working class alternative to austerity capitalism.
2. The defeat of the attempted coup against Corbyn by the right of the Labour Party and the consequent marginalisation of the pro-capitalist Blairite right within the labour movement.
3. Moving the political debate in British society to the left and forcing pro-working class measures back onto the agenda after 20 years of absence - this was codified in the Labour manifesto for the general election in June 2017, which gained widespread support from workers and youth.

The main failures of the Corbyn

movement so far are:

1. The failure to democratise the Labour Party - ie, by supporting the mandatory reselection of all Labour candidates and a failure to fight the exclusion of socialists by the old pre-Corbyn Labour Party apparatus;
2. The failure to create a democratic pro-Corbyn rank-and-file organisation, which is under the control of its members and encourages political debate on the way forward. Momentum is a travesty of a working class democracy and is obviously a show under the tight control of a section of the labour bureaucracy;
3. The failure to link up with socialist forces in the rest of Europe and pose a European-wide fightback against austerity and for socialism.

All three failures can be overcome if the socialist left organises itself to fight for democracy in the labour movement and attempts to develop a programme that will take the working class movement forward.

What can a Corbyn-led Labour government deliver? The aim should be to increase the social weight of the working class movement in British and European society and implement various pro-working class reforms that will improve the living standards of working class people and provide the basis for a leap forward in mass socialist consciousness and solidarity. What is not on the agenda in the next five years is an overthrow of capitalism in Britain, since consciousness of a need to move beyond capitalism is not yet a mass phenomenon in British society and, even if it were, it would be necessary to have a mass European-wide movement for socialism in existence before a decisive, 'full frontal' move was made.

The forces of democratic socialism have to realise just how weak we are at present when formulating the way forward for the working class movement in the next period. The overthrow of capitalism in Britain is not a realistic immediate goal to set for the working class movement if Corbyn comes to office. If we can use a Corbyn-led Labour government to democratise the labour movement, win significant pro-working class reforms within British society and promote the growth of a European-wide socialist movement that organises to oppose austerity, nationalism, militarism and war, we will be taking a big step forward towards the goal of a socialist society.

Sandy McBurney
Glasgow

Disputes head

Having boxed itself in by expelling professor Moshé Machover - ostensibly for writing for your newspaper, although, of course, not really for that reason at all - Labour is now having to expel everyone who shares your articles on Facebook or what have you. The list of Labour Party members opposed to professor Machover's expulsion is easily strong enough economically, socially, culturally and politically to secure the transfer of the *Weekly Worker* to the ownership of something on the model of the People's Press Printing Society. That now needs to happen.

I think that I once had a telephone conversation with the 'head of disputes' - one Sam Matthews. It ended just as I was about to ask if his mummy or daddy was available. One of the Tory-boy interns whom the Corbyn leadership has, alas, failed to purge from the party's staff, perhaps because there would be no one left, he has never heard of figures on the list of professor Machover's supporters, such as Geoffrey Bindman, Avi Shlaim or Gillian Slovo, I would confidently assert. It is more than possible that Joe Slovo was dead before the boy Matthews was born.

David Lindsay
Co Durham

Streetwise

I have previously repeated a few words from a song by Bob Dylan: "Come, gather round, people, wherever you are, for the times they are a-changing!"

Anyway, as things have turned out,

it seems I was correct in that prediction. Merely glance at the wildly enthusiastic events surrounding Jeremy Corbyn and Bernie Sanders for corroboration of this claim - not to mention Podemos in Spain or the rising up of freshly liberationist activity from Julius Malema's Economic Freedom Fighters in South Africa.

But all is not ripe fruit set amidst golden sunrises. Whilst most Marxist-Leninists/Trotskyists nowadays are both superbly informed and extremely knowledgeable, that is not matched in terms of streetwise politics. However, these failings will progressively be overcome. At some stage in the not-too-distant future the communist movement will acquire the attributes necessary to secure support from a vast number of working people - not only here in UK and other so-called advanced nations, but also in places that currently remain nothing more than quasi-colonialised assets.

There is no pathway down which humankind will achieve profound improvement to its experience of life other than to nurture the ideas, ideals and values of communism. We should be doing so not only with enthusiasm and spirit, but also at each and every opportunity that presents itself. After all, as Rosa Luxemburg advised, it's either "socialism or barbarism".

Always, I keep tucked away in a tiny corner of my mind: "Beauty has velocity. Death has gravity. The consolidation of truth requires both."

Bruno Kretzschmar
email

Opportunists?

I thought we were making progress. I thought we had reached some sort of conclusion. Clearly, I was mistaken. It now seems to be a case of 'one step forward, two steps back' for Alan Gibson (Letters, October 12).

Like the worst kind of old-new left philistine, comrade Gibson casually dismisses Bolshevik democratic centralism as belonging to a pre-1914 bygone age. He does not consider it "sensible" to apply "organisational forms" which stem from "a quite different historical situation".

In fact, those very organisational forms - crucially freedom of criticism and unity in action - enabled the Bolsheviks to gain the strength and cohesion needed to lead the world's first, and so far only successful, proletarian revolution in 1917.

Hence the continued "international significance" and "international validity" of the Bolshevik model. A model, which beginning in 1903, progressed because it consciously built on the "granite" foundations of prior Marxist theory and prior Marxist practice (Lenin, 1920).

Rather than the historically proven model of Bolshevik democratic centralism, comrade Gibson clings, for reasons of "tactical efficacy", he claims, to the bog-standard bureaucratic centralism practised by the confessional sects (including, of course, his old organisation, the International 'Bolshevik' Tendency). Except when granted special permission, members of the sect are required to keep political differences secret and parrot the leadership line.

Obviously, comrade Gibson has thoroughly internalised bureaucratic centralism. After all, he insists that this mode of organisation suits "today's world". Yet looking at "today's world" and the disastrously fragmented, ineffective and programmatically adrift left, let alone the countless freelance sects of one (including a certain Alan Gibson), it would be criminal to agree with such complacency.

In "today's world", the rediscovery of the abundant tactical and strategic lessons of Bolshevism is long overdue. Unless the revolutionary left breaks with bureaucratic centralism and embraces democratic centralism there can be no serious prospect of advance, no serious prospect of overthrowing capitalist rule. Indeed one irresponsible, trivial, theoretically half-baked split will continue

to follow another.

It is surely impossible to unite different Marxist thinkers, different Marxist shades, different Marxist groups, different Marxist factions in what is, yes, in "today's world", the pivotal task of laying the foundations for a mass Communist Party, without proclaiming the right to explain oneself before the entire population: ie, open polemics.

Of course, come an agreed action, then there must be the most resolute and most determined unity. And that *centralism*, if embodied in a mass Communist Party, can be brilliantly effective in terms of gaining substantive reforms, and, at the end of the day, decisive in terms of achieving a revolutionary breakthrough, precisely because it involves not just tiny handfuls, but hundreds of thousands, millions of members.

Comrade Gibson remains sadly attached to what he calls the "political principle" of "never" giving "political support to any formation" he understands to be a "popular front". Poor fellow, that is what he defines as "working class political independence". An umbilical cord that still joins him with the entirely pointless International 'Bolshevik' Tendency.

But, for Marxists, working class independence does not require 'thou shall nots'. Working class independence is nothing more and nothing less than the organisation of the working class into its own distinct political party (something which goes hand in hand with arming the working class with a Marxist programme).

Even without such a party - that is, in the struggle for such a party - it is necessary to employ the most varied tactics. Those tactics can include operating in all manner of non-working class political formations, giving support to this or that non-working class candidate, etc. As long as the communists do not silence themselves or refrain from criticism and fighting for their programme, it is perfectly principled (because, even at the lowest level, an active engagement with the "real movement" helps to gather, educate and temper cadres).

Hence, this writer *approvingly* cited Marx's membership of the cross-class Cologne Democratic Society in 1848: to get the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* off the ground Marx sold shares to the "democratic wing" of the bourgeoisie. Then there is the role played by Marx's comrades in the *bourgeois* Republican Party in 1850s and 60s America. They energetically campaigned for Abraham Lincoln as president.

Likewise, this writer, *approvingly* cited Lenin's support for the young CPGB seeking affiliation to the Labour Party and voting for what he rightly categorised as a *bourgeois* workers' party, which was led by reactionaries of the "worst kind".

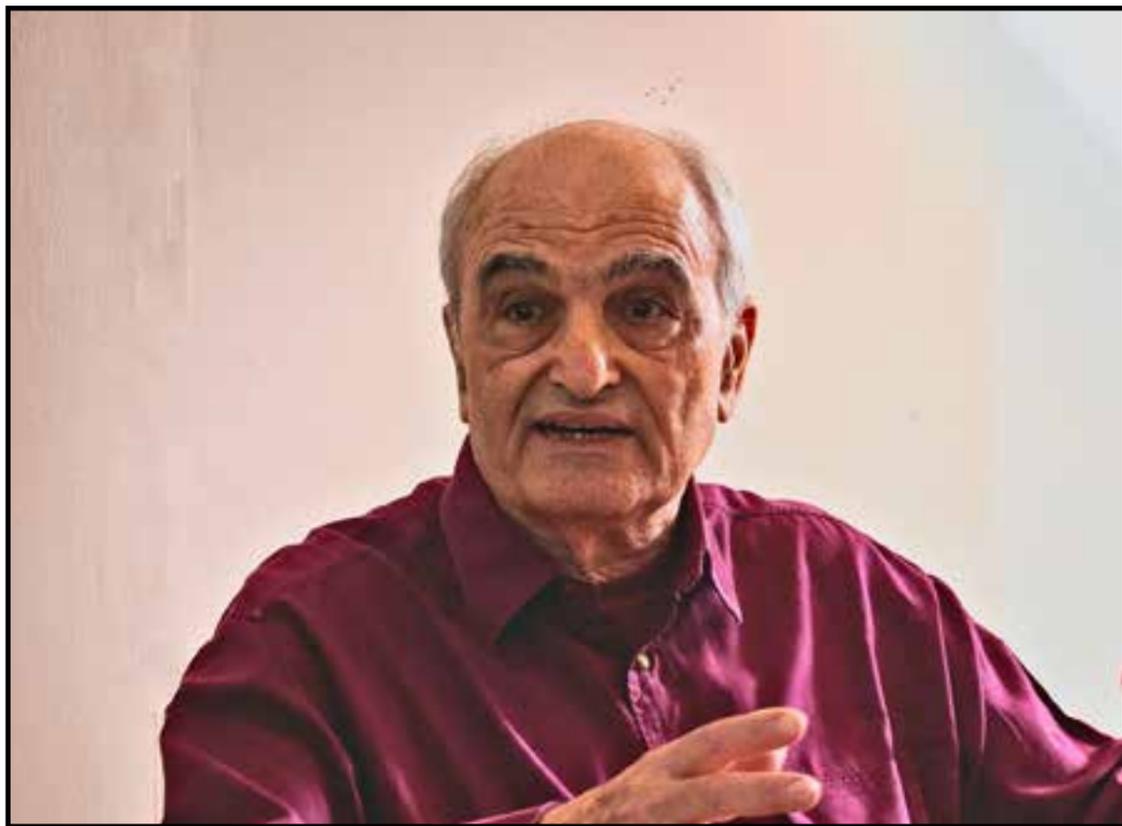
Again, here, in this context, it is well worth learning from Trotsky, and the entry of his small band of followers into the ranks of the mass parties of the Second International (that despite their undoubted reformism and the lead role they played in the Spanish and French popular-front governments of the 1930s).

And, talking of Trotsky, in September 1926 we find him saying that the "participation" of the Communist Party of China in the Kuomintang "was perfectly correct in the period" when the CPC was "a propaganda society, which was only preparing itself for future *independent* political activity" (*Leon Trotsky on China* New York 1976, p114). Needless to say, the Kuomintang was a *bourgeois* nationalist party which gathered under its banner masses of peasants, workers, intellectuals, petty bourgeois traders, small capitalists, etc.

I suppose in the name of preserving his "political purity" comrade Gibson would brand Marx, Lenin and Trotsky "unrepentant" opportunists. Or does he dismiss what they had to say as belonging to another age?

Jack Conrad
London

LABOUR



Over a thousand signatures already

Reinstate Moshé

This petition, organised by Jewish Voice for Labour, has been signed by hundreds of Labour Party members, Jewish and non-Jewish

We, the undersigned members of the Labour Party, condemn the expulsion of Moshé Machover from our party. This decision is a political attack on a life-long socialist activist, and a scholar of international renown.

Professor Machover has been told that his expulsion results from his "support" for Labour Party Marxists and the Communist Party of Great Britain. The evidence offered for this is that he has had articles printed in their publications, and has spoken at their meetings. This is no evidence at all. It is, for example, completely normal for senior figures in our party (including MPs and indeed our current leader), as well as senior figures in the trade union movement who are Labour Party members, to write for Communist Party publications.

There has never been a suggestion that willingness to engage with these publications constituted support to a rival political organisation. This is guilt by association - once notoriously indulged in by the House Un-American Activities Committee.

The apparent implication is that membership of our party is incompatible with publishing in outlets that may not always support the Labour Party. Such a rule would clearly make it *ultra vires* for Labour Party members to write anything in the pages of the *Financial Times*, *The Times*, the *Daily Mail*, *The Express*, and so on. It is surely inconceivable that a major political party would seek to prevent its members from expressing their views publicly in the major newspapers of the country, on the grounds that these papers offer support to a rival political party. This proffered reason for the expulsion of professor Machover is evidently a pretext.

The real reason is surely revealed in the opening remarks of the letter to professor Machover announcing his expulsion. These refer to allegations made against an "apparently anti-Semitic article" authored by him, which "appears to meet the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of anti-Semitism". No source of these allegations is identified in the letter. No argument is provided to justify this absurd

allegation against professor Machover, an Israeli Jew and a lifelong anti-racist activist. Criticisms of Israel - in respect both of its brutal policies against the Palestinians, and of its character as a systematically and constitutionally discriminatory state - are not anti-Semitic in any reasonable understanding of the term. Not even by reference to the flawed and discredited IHRA definition in the form accepted by the Labour Party can such criticisms be considered anti-Semitic.

The character and personal history of professor Machover speak powerfully against this absurd charge of anti-Semitism. An author of books and many articles on Zionism and its varied iniquities, and for three decades a founder and leader of the Socialist Organisation in Israel (Matzpen), he is a life-long activist against racism of all kinds, both in Israel and elsewhere. The allegation against him is a serious abuse of the accusation of anti-Semitism.

That there is no rationally sustainable ground for this expulsion raises serious concerns about the operation of the party's apparatus for dealing with disciplinary matters. The letter of expulsion was signed by the head of disputes, located within the governance and legal unit. The operation of our party's compliance unit has also given grave cause for concern. All, of course, are subject to the party's general secretary, Iain McNicol. He has ultimate responsibility for a process which has seen Machover excluded without an inquiry, and without the opportunity to answer the accusations against him. The Chakrabarti report called for all disciplinary procedures of the party to follow principles of natural justice, and to do so transparently; this has patently not happened in this case.

From its complete failure to observe these principles it will be widely inferred that pressure has been exerted on the relevant Labour Party organisational units from supporters of Israel (not excluding the Israeli embassy) to act against critics of Israel and of Zionism. That they have exposed themselves to such criticism is an indication of how far the organisation has deviated from due process, and from its responsibilities.

The compliance unit in particular cannot allow itself, cannot be allowed, to harass members of the party who support justice for Palestinians. It must not become party to the misuse of the accusation of anti-Semitism for partial and propagandistic purposes. It cannot allow itself, or be allowed, to become a mechanism for silencing criticism of Israel, and denying its own party members the right to speak out on grave injustices.

We, Jewish and non-Jewish members of the Labour Party, call upon the leader of the party, and on the national executive, to reinstate professor Machover pending investigation and to apologise to him for the totally unjustified assaults that have been made on his integrity.

We further call for an immediate inquiry to be established, headed by an independent legal expert, to review all the circumstances of this particular expulsion; and also to investigate the operation of the compliance unit, including the moral, political and legal implications of the unit's procedures and its recent decisions ●

Signatories include:

Brian Eno (Kensington), Ken Loach (Bath), Sir Geoffrey Bindman (Hornsey and Wood Green), prof Tim Shallice FRS (Hampstead & Kilburn), prof Avi Shlaim (Oxford and Abingdon), Gillian Slovo (Hampstead and Kilburn), Hillary Wainwright (Hackney South and Shoreditch), prof Haim Bresheeth (Hornsey and Wood Green), prof Jonathan Rosenhead (Hackney South and Shoreditch).

If you are a Labour Party member, add your name to the petition here: www.jewishvoiceforlabour.org.uk/labour-party-policy/open-letter-leader-labour-party.

Labour Against the Witch-Hunt

12 noon, Saturday October 21
Public meeting

Calthorpe Arms, 252 Grays Inn Road, London WC1.

ACTION

London Communist Forum

Sunday October 22, 5pm: Weekly political report from CPGB Provisional Central Committee, followed by open discussion and reading group: study of August Nimtz's *Lenin's electoral strategy from Marx and Engels through the revolution of 1905*. This meeting: chapter 2, 'Revolutionary continuity' (continued).

Calthorpe Arms, 252 Grays Inn Road, London WC1.
Organised by CPGB: www.cpgb.org.uk; and Labour Party Marxists: www.labourpartymarxists.org.uk.

Radical Anthropology Group

Tuesday October 24, 6.45pm: Series of talks on human origins, Daryll Forde seminar room, Anthropology Building, 14 Taviton Street, off Gordon Square, London WC1. This meeting: 'Ritual life among the Hadza: therianthropes, the dancing dead and animal kindred spirits'. Speaker: Thea Skanes.

Organised by Radical Anthropology Group: <http://radicalanthropologygroup.org>.

Revolution then and revolution now

Saturday October 21, 10am to 5pm: Conference, room 1, Central Library, William Brown Street, Liverpool L3. Speakers: David Lowes, Anne McShane, Hillel Ticktin. Entrance free, but donations welcome.

Organised by Supporters of *Critique* Journal of Socialist Theory: contactpaulinehadaway@gmail.com.

Stand Up To Racism

Saturday October 21, 9.30am to 4pm: National conference, Friends Meeting House, Euston Road, London NW1. Register at www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/confronting-the-rise-in-racism-2017-tickets-35900328850.

Organised by Stand Up to Racism: www.standuptoracism.org.uk

Labour Against the Witch-Hunt

Saturday October 21, 12 noon: Public meeting, Calthorpe Arms, 252 Grays Inn Road, London WC1. Reinstate Moshé Machover.

Organised by Labour Against the Witch-Hunt: <http://azvsas.blogspot.co.uk>.

National Shop Stewards Network

Saturday October 21, 1pm to 4pm: Trade union forum, Birmingham and Midland Institute, 9 Margaret Street, Birmingham B3.

Organised by National Shop Stewards Network: www.facebook.com/events/232299653965812.

End the pay cap

Tuesday October 24, 12.30pm: Rally, City Hall, Queen Victoria Square, Carr Lane, Hull HU1.

Organised by TUC: www.tuc.org.uk.

Imperialism then and now

Tuesday October 24, 7pm: Educational, Marx Memorial Library, 37A Clerkenwell Green, London EC1. With Simon Renton. The nature of the political and economic crisis which began in 2008.

Organised by Marx Memorial Library: www.marx-memorial-library.org/index.php.

End US-North Korea showdown

Wednesday October 25, 7pm: Public meeting, The Showroom, Paternoster Row, Sheffield S1.

Organised by Sheffield Stop the War Coalition: www.stopwar.org.uk.

Social histories of the Russian Revolution

Thursday October 26, 6.30pm: Discussion meeting, Birkbeck, University of London, 26 Russell Square, London WC1. '1917: a century on' - debate. Speakers include Simon Pirani.

Organised by Social Histories of the Russian Revolution: <https://socialhistories1917.wordpress.com>.

Free speech on Palestine

Thursday October 26, 7pm: Public meeting, Queens Crescent Community Centre, 45 Ashdown Crescent, London NW5. Speakers include Moshé Machover.

Organised by Camden Momentum: www.facebook.com/MomentumCamden.

Labour Assembly Against Austerity

Saturday October 28, 10am to 5pm: Conference, Student Central, Malet Street, London WC1.

Organised by Labour Assembly Against Austerity: <http://labourassemblyagainstausterity.org.uk>.

October revolution: 100 years on

Wednesday November 1, 7.30pm: Political discussion, Partick Burgh Halls, 9 Burgh Hall Street, Glasgow G11. The October Revolution, its legacy and the lessons for socialists today. Speaker: Hillel Ticktin.

Organised by Labour Party Socialist Network: <http://socialistnetwork.org.uk>.

Make it right for Palestine

Saturday November 4, 12 noon: National march and rally. Assemble Speakers Corner, Marble Arch, London W2.

Organised by Palestine Solidarity Campaign: www.palestinecampaign.org.

Remember John Maclean

Sunday November 26, 1pm: Graveside commemoration, Eastwood Cemetery, Thornliebank Road, Glasgow G4 (near Thornliebank station). Followed by social, St Mary's church hall, 150 Shawhill Road, Glasgow G43.

Organised by Scottish Republican Socialist Movement: <http://scottishrepublicans.myfreeforum.org>.

CPGB wills

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

LABOUR

Scurrilous allegations

Following his summary expulsion from the Labour Party Moshé Machover has responded to the governance and legal unit. This is a slightly abridged version of his letter

October 16 2017

I refer to your letters of October 3 and 6 2017, excluding me from the Labour Party on allegations that I am in breach of rule 2.1.4.B. In the alternative you appear to suggest that if I were not expelled I would face investigation for breach of rule 2.1.8 for alleged anti-Semitism. I profoundly disagree that I am in breach of either rule.

I have taken legal advice before writing this letter and should make clear at the outset that I reserve all my legal rights in connection with the false statements that have been made against me and which have been repeated in your correspondence to me, the fairness of the procedure you have adopted and my right to freedom of political speech.

Introduction

1. First, I must say that I find the lack of precision in the words you use in making such serious allegations to be unhelpful and confusing. In your letter of October 3 you refer to an "apparently anti-Semitic article" (suggesting you have come to a decision about the content of the article in question) but in your letter of October 6 you refer to an "allegedly anti-Semitic article" (suggesting no decision has been made about the content).

2. Furthermore, in your letter of October 3, after referring to "an apparently anti-Semitic article" (ie, a single article) you go on to state "these articles" (ie, more than a single article) *are* anti-Semitic. Which is it? You are making the gravest of allegations against me, yet you are not precise in what is being alleged against me and do not identify with clarity whether it is a single article or an array of articles upon which I am being accused and judged. The copy articles (plural) referred to in your letter of October 3 in section 1 are dated December 15 2016 and September 21 2017. You do not identify the precise words you say are anti-Semitic. Please do so.

3. Indeed, it seems you have been selective in what you have chosen to disclose to me, as the article of December 15 2016 has "p7" in the bottom right-hand corner and the article of September 21 2017 has "p3" in the bottom right-hand corner. I assume you have had at least seven pages of documents passed to you by my anonymous accuser. I refer below to my right to know my accuser and the case I am facing.

Personal background

4. I am an Israeli citizen and a naturalised British citizen.

5. I have long been an Israeli dissident, holding internationalist socialist views, and hence am an opponent of the Zionist project and ideology.

6. Since my arrival in Britain, in 1968, I have continued my political activity, which has mainly taken the form of giving talks and writing articles advocating my views on Zionism, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the wider region of the Middle East. I have been happy to appear at numerous meetings organised by a variety of organisations - such as student socialist societies and Palestine solidarity groups - and to be interviewed by and publish articles in various publications. My only condition is that I am allowed to speak freely and that my articles are not censored.

7. In 2007 I came across a leftist group calling itself the Communist Party of Great Britain ('CPGB'), of whose existence I had not been previously aware. They soon

invited me to publish articles in their weekly journal, the *Weekly Worker* ('*WW*'). I was pleased to discover that the *WW* has a very liberal publishing policy and provides space for a variety of radical left views, without insisting that they agree with the CPGB political line, or subjecting them to political censorship. I was therefore happy to continue publishing articles in the *WW* and am, of course, grateful to the CPGB for its kind hospitality. Likewise, I was happy to speak at various meetings organised by them, just as I have been happy to speak at meetings organised by various other groups and organisations.

Allegations in relation to CPGB and LPM

8. I have never joined the CPGB as a member, as I do not wish to subject myself to their organisational discipline, and have several political differences with them.

9. I am not, and have never been, a member of the organisation known as Labour Party Marxists. I have never written any article for their publications. In September 2017 they contacted me and asked my permission to reprint an article (in fact an edited version of a talk) by me, originally published in May 2016 in the *WW*. They told me that they intended to distribute or sell a publication containing the reprint in the fringe of the Labour Party conference that took place in Brighton during that month. I willingly gave them my permission - as I would do, and have often done, to any publication that is prepared to disseminate my views. I am grateful to LPM for distributing my article.

10. The evidence provided for my alleged "support" for the CPGB or LPM does not indicate any such support, as further addressed below.

11. In any event, I am not aware that, even if I were a supporter of either organisation, this would be a breach of the rules - given that no evidence has been provided to me that these are organisations proscribed by the Party under the rules.

12. I challenge the purported evidence that you appear to rely on that I am a supporter of those organisations. I challenge its validity in the strongest possible terms, as all I have done is exercise my freedom of speech under their aegis, and for these reasons:

(i) Section 1 in your letter of October 3 is an article published by LPM last month, but I did not write this article for LPM. See 6 above.

(ii) Section 3 shows that I spoke at a session of the Communist University 2016, co-sponsored by the CPGB and LPM, but the evidence cited notably does not claim that I am a supporter (or member) of either organisation and, on the contrary, includes a disclaimer that "the views in these videos do not necessarily represent the views of either organisation".

The fact I spoke at that educational meeting on an issue within my expertise is in principle, as far as Party rules are concerned, no different from David Lammy speaking at the Conservative Party's fringe event on justice issues, together with the current Tory justice minister²; and does not make me a supporter of those organisations any more than speaking at the above event makes David Lammy a supporter of the Conservative Party. It is in fact quite common practice for Party members, including senior ones, to speak at



meetings of other parties, including rival ones. As two out of innumerable examples, I cite the above and the recent appearance by Lisa Nandy (Labour MP) with Caroline Lucas at a Compass fringe meeting at the Labour Party conference, talking about a Progressive Alliance³.

The evidence goes on to display an obituary by me that was published in the *WW* (December 2016); and a comment published in the *WW* that refers to what I said at a meeting that I attended (March 2016). The fact that I attended such a meeting does not make me a supporter of the CPGB, nor does anything the article says about me give any such indication. This applies also to the fact that the author of the comment in question refers to me as "a friend of the CPGB". Calling someone who shares a platform with you a "friend" is an accepted form of normal courtesy, such as when Jeremy Corbyn referred to a representative of Hamas as a "friend", or when a barrister refers in court to another barrister - who may indeed be her opponent - as "my learned friend".

13. It is clear that the purported evidence you have presented is nugatory; and cannot possibly support the arbitrary step you have taken against me: expulsion without a hearing or proper enquiry.

14. On the contrary, presenting such material as "evidence" for my alleged guilt is evidence for something quite different: an extremely dangerous and reprehensible attempt to restrict my freedom of speech, as well as that of other members who hold legitimate critical views on Israel and Zionism - views that are now gaining wide support in the Labour Party, as shown by events at the recent Party conference.

15. I am led to this conclusion by the fact that in your letter of October 3 you have mentioned prominently, and without expressing any reservation, despicable and utterly false insinuations of "anti-Semitism" made against me by anonymous persons. Your letter quite wrongly implies there is some merit in the complaints you have received, by referring to my above-mentioned article reprinted by LPM as being "apparently anti-Semitic". There is no anti-Semitic content in that article and I am deeply offended and disturbed that you have made this false and scurrilous allegation against me. My article is in fact a serious discussion, extremely critical of Zionism.

These insinuations were quite irrelevant to the purpose of your first letter of October 3, as you admitted, and reiterated in your second letter of October 6, that they were not a cause of my (unjustified) expulsion. The fact that you included that smear against me in your letter leads me to doubt seriously your good faith.

16. I demand a proper apology for that smear you have unnecessarily included in your letter of October 3, and an immediate rescinding of my expulsion.

Knowing my accuser and disclosure of evidence

17. I have been advised that, pursuant to the contractual agreement that I as a member have with the Labour Party, any consideration by you as head of disputes of allegations made against me must be fair. Further, I understand that the fairness of the procedure the Party must adopt is protected under common law and under article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights 1950 (hereafter 'ECHR'). Commensurate with ECHR principles and natural justice, the right to be heard and meaningfully respond requires full disclosure of the evidence given by those accusing me.

18. The requirement to disclose the full details of the case against me is also reflected in the report published by Baroness Chakrabarti in 2016. When commenting on the Party's complaints procedure she wrote:

It is also important that the procedures explain that those in respect of whom allegations have been made are clearly informed of the allegation(s) made against them, their factual basis and the identity of the complainant - unless there are good reasons not to do so (eg, to protect the identity of the complainant).

Baroness Chakrabarti also recommended that the Party "... should seek to uphold the strongest principles of natural justice".

I ask for the immediate full disclosure of the documents and complaints made against me that have led to the decision to exclude me from the Party. As stated above, you appear to have only disclosed pages 3 and 7 of a complaint. Such partial disclosure in such an important matter is grossly unfair. You have made the very serious decision to exclude me from the Party without giving me any opportunity to know the identity of my accuser and to respond to the accusations.

19. Please provide me with full disclosure of all the evidence that has been given to the Party accusing me of anti-Semitism and please let me know the identity of my accuser/s.

Right to my freedom of speech

20. I am advised that your investigation and consideration of the allegations against me must comply with the Human Rights Act 1998. In particular, the Party cannot unlawfully interfere with my rights to freedom of speech under article 10 of the ECHR, which provides:

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers ...

21. In the context of freedom of expression, the Party will be only too aware that political speech is afforded the highest level of protection in a democratic society.

22. I note that in your letter of October 3 2017 you state that "... language which may cause offence to Jewish people is not acceptable ..." and that "language that may be perceived as provocative, insensitive or offensive ... has no place in our party". I again emphasise that the allegation that I am an anti-Semite

is utterly false and absurd. I have no common cause with anyone who holds racist opinions. I abhor racism. I am very concerned that the language you have used in your letter of October 3 utterly fails to protect my rights to hold and receive opinions that may not be accepted by all members in the Party. I am an anti-Zionist, which is quite different from being an anti-Semite.

23. Importantly, in the context of free expression, the courts recognise that some views may "shock, offend or disturb", but still retain and attract protection under article 10. I do not in anyway suggest that anything I have said is shocking, offending or disturbing, but, as the European Court of Human Rights held in *Handyside v The United Kingdom* [1976] ECHR 5, at paragraph 49:

Freedom of expression constitutes one of the essential foundations of [a democratic] society, one of the basic conditions for its progress and for the development of every man. Subject to paragraph 2 of article 10 ..., it is applicable not only to 'information' or 'ideas' that are favourably received or regarded as inoffensive or as a matter of indifference, but also to those that offend, shock or disturb the state or any sector of the population. Such are the demands of that pluralism, tolerance and broadmindedness without which there is no 'democratic society'.

24. I am advised that the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights has been adopted by the domestic courts. For example, the divisional court has highlighted the wide margin given to free speech in this jurisdiction, as per *Sedley LJ in Redmond-Bate v Director of Public Prosecutions* [1999] EWHC Admin 73, at paragraph 20:

Free speech includes not only the inoffensive but the irritating, the contentious, the eccentric, the heretical, the unwelcome and the provocative, provided it does not tend to provoke violence. Freedom only to speak inoffensively is not worth having.

25. I am sure that you will agree that debate concerning the contentious issues surrounding the condition of the Palestinian people and the political situation in the Middle East quite obviously attracts the protection of article 10, as political speech. I cannot see how you consider my primary right of free speech on such matters can be interfered with lawfully within a democratic society on the basis of the material you have adduced.

Conclusion

- I absolutely challenge the finding you present and the evidence that you rely upon that I am in breach of rule 2.1.4.B.
- I absolutely reject all and any allegations that I am in breach of rule 2.1.8.
- Please disclose all the evidence against me, including the identity of my accuser/s.
- I reserve all my legal rights against the Party in respect of the decisions that have been taken to exclude me from the Party and to find anything I have written or said to be "apparently anti-Semitic".
- I look forward to your full response within the next 14 days ●

Notes

1. politicshome.com/89397/toryconference (scroll down).
2. www.compassionline.org.uk/events/alliance-building-for-a-progressive-future-what-next... <http://weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1107/dont-apologise-attack>.
3. www.politicshome.com/news/uk/politicalparties/conservative-party/theresa-may/opinion/p

SWP

First Corbyn, then us

As the first *Pre-conference bulletin* shows, Labour presents a huge dilemma for the SWP. Peter Manson wonders if it has any answers

The annual conference of Charlie Kimber's Socialist Workers Party will take place over the weekend of January 5-7 2018, which means that we are now in the three-month discussion period, when comrades are permitted to communicate with each other outside the official branch structure. There are three *Pre-conference Bulletins*, known as 'internal bulletins' or *IBs*, which are distributed to the entire membership - the only time during the year when groups of members may come together to promote or oppose a particular line. Should they do so outside the pre-conference period, they risk being immediately expelled for 'factionalism'.

On very rare occasions in the past the *IBs* have been crammed with contributions. But these have been times of crisis and splits - notably in 2010, when former leaders John Rees and Lindsey German walked out following the Respect debacle, and 2013, when an SWP leader, Martin Smith, also known as 'comrade Delta', was accused of rape.

However, in normal times the *IBs* are largely ignored and the one just issued (October 2017) is no exception. Of the 18 A4 pages it contains, all but three are taken up by submissions from the central committee or by official announcements. All four contributions from individual members or groups of members are totally non-controversial, such as 'The importance of fighting Islamophobia' from "Sophie (Sheffield)" and 'Building a new district and branch in North Yorkshire and Hull' under the names of three local comrades (only first names are given for security reasons - although, of course, the *IBs* must not be passed on to non-members).

If the CC's main perspectives document, entitled 'Corbyn, anti-racism and debates around capitalism', is anything to go by, the SWP's continuing loss of membership has been exacerbated by the Corbyn phenomenon. According to the CC,

... there is now a massive pull towards joining the Labour Party. Many people, who may have joined us previously, have instead joined or are seriously looking at Labour. So how can a revolutionary party not only remain relevant in this period, but also grow?

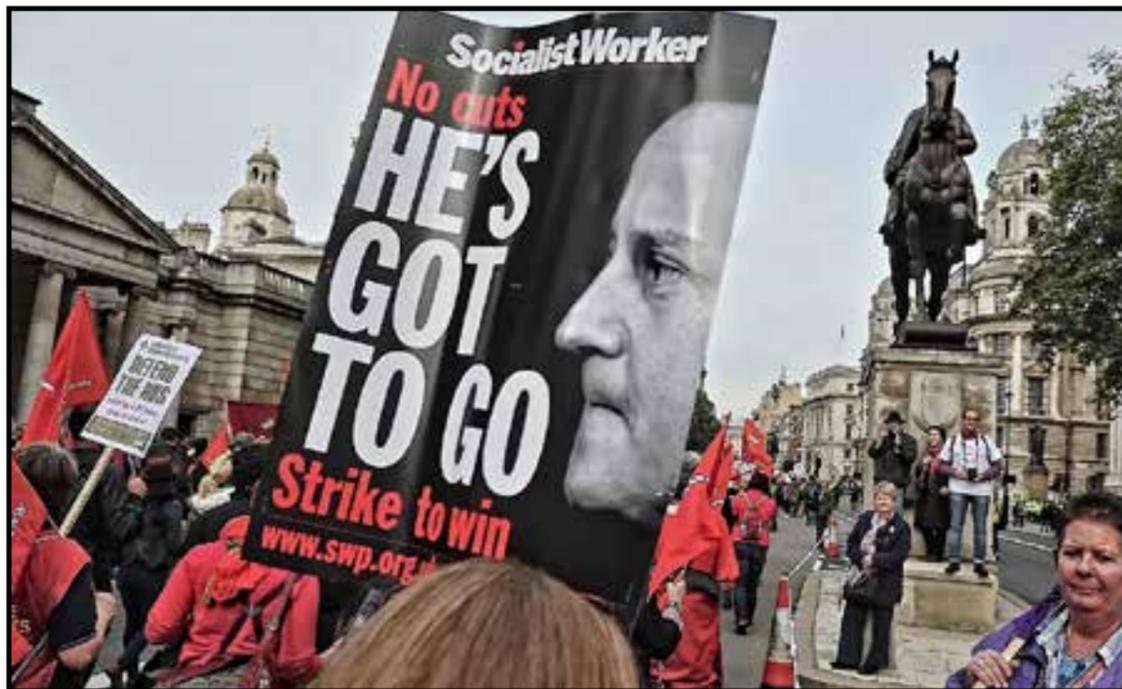
Here we can be our own worst enemies. If we start from assuming that we cannot recruit to the SWP, then this can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Far too many branches have got out of the habit of even asking people to join the SWP (or in some places even having forms at meetings or on sales).

Nevertheless, "So far this year 505 have joined the SWP", but the leadership warns that "Winning people to revolutionary and Marxist ideas takes politics and attention to detail to ensure that new members are won to our ideas and involved in activities."

No, you did not misread that. First of all, SWP cadre are supposed to recruit anybody and everybody, and only then try to win them to "our ideas" and get them "involved in activities". *IB* No2 will no doubt reveal the current official membership figures, but it goes without saying that the vast majority of such 'members' are little more than names on a contact list, who never attend meetings or pay dues.

Labour

Correctly, the main focus of this CC submission is the Labour Party. It quotes the *Financial Times* to the effect that



Is everything really falling into place, now that Cameron has gone?

"an intellectual revolution is taking place in British politics" and notes that the general election "showed that socialist ideas can be popular". The leadership continues: "The rise of Corbyn was central last year, but it's even more important now. Everything that revolutionaries do at the moment takes place in this context."

But, when it comes to *what* revolutionaries should do, the conclusions are dire. In relation to Labour's internal battles, the SWP does not propose intervening in any way. There is not a word about, say, the role of the unions - the need for the rank and file to pressurise the union leadership to take sides within Labour. All non-affiliated unions must be won to apply for affiliation in order to strengthen the party's working class pole and help transform it into a fighting, working class body.

Yet the SWP, although it accepts that Labour remains a bourgeois workers' party, does not believe that the outcome of the internal battle is of much importance in itself. Yes, Corbyn's victory "keyed into a bitter mood against austerity, unaccountable politicians, and declining living standards", but "Corbyn successfully focused this mood through his campaign of mass rallies. He did not create it." In reality, states the CC, "Everyone who marched against Britain's imperial wars or campaigned and struck against cuts and for better wages, or who has fought racism and Islamophobia, contributed to the June 8 results, whether they are in Labour or not."

The real focus must be "in the streets", where, of course, the SWP's own 'united fronts' have apparently had such a significant effect: "The more protests, demonstrations and strikes there are, the greater the gains and the more likely that Corbyn will win."

The SWP leadership unreservedly states: "We want Corbyn as prime minister as soon as possible. We are part of the movement to get him there." In fact, "We worked successfully to be an independent detachment of the Corbyn campaign." But what Corbyn and his supporters in Labour fail to see is that "the key battles are in the streets and the workplaces, not parliament. We need revolution, not working inside the system."

In other words, it is a case of 'first Corbyn, then us'. However, "As Greece

shows us, the failures of a reformist party in no way guarantee the growth of left alternatives." So the SWP must focus on the key issues of "migration, racism and Islamophobia", which are "central to British politics". That means continuing to prioritise Stand Up To Racism, which is "our most important united front". Building SUTR, not defeating Labour's pro-capitalist right, is the "central strategic task".

And, as it makes clear in its second document, 'The rise of the Football Lads Alliance', the CC believes that SUTR should be the main vehicle for defeating the emerging far-right FLA - just as (or so the SWP claims) another SWP 'united front' was the key to seeing off the English Defence League: "Thanks to the efforts of Unite Against Fascism over many years, the EDL is now a farcical shadow of its former self."

Now, however, it is the FLA - whose October 7 London demonstration managed to mobilise up to 20,000 people behind an anti-migrant, anti-Islamic agenda - which must be defeated. The SWP concedes that, including for the FLA, racism "is not respectable, even if Islamophobic ideas are" - thanks partly to "the legacy of the anti-racist movement", not least the SWP's own 'united fronts', of course.

The CC also states: "The FLA is not a fascist organisation. At present there is a differentiation of views inside its ranks." That is true, but it is, first and foremost, an embryonic street-fighting, anti-working class formation - in other words, it can be described as *proto-fascist*. Like the EDL, it may quickly lose any initial attraction, but, if we view it in this way, then surely a cross-class alliance like SUTR (which welcomes Greens, liberals and even Tories) is hardly up to the task of defeating it.

If the UK ruling class were to turn to fascism - which is still a remote possibility at this stage despite the twin crises it faces in the shape of Brexit and Corbynism - then only the organised working class, under the leadership of a mass Marxist party, would be able to defeat it.

Nationalism

The SWP continues to argue that what is bad for the ruling class and its state must be good for us. So the comrades backed, and still back, Scottish independence and, of course, campaigned for Brexit:

We argued a 'leave' vote would immediately force out David Cameron and destabilise the Tory Party. We said this could lead to a general election that would give Jeremy Corbyn an opportunity to lead Labour to victory.

The SWP got it all right! Similarly today, "We back the Catalanian struggle for independence."

In this context the CC recommends an article published in the SWP's *International Socialism* journal, written by a comrade called Héctor Sierra. And, just by coincidence, one of the four non-CC contributions to this *IB* is headed 'Catalonia: what should socialists say?' and its main author is a certain "Héctor" (the 'first names only' policy is not always completely reliable in protecting comrades' identities).

He and his four co-writers note: "It is most unfortunate that, as the worst crisis in 40 years unfolds, there isn't a consolidated group of the International Socialist Tendency in the Spanish state." What a pity, because the rest of the left in Spain have got it all wrong - or so the SWP and IST contend:

... Podemos and the United Left leaders condemned the police repression on October 1 and asked for Rajoy's resignation, but now are refusing to lend support to a declaration of independence. Thus, in practice they are propping up Rajoy's government in a moment of great weakness.

After all,

As internationalists, we must see independence as a tool not only to pursue the interests of the Catalan working class, but to spark a revolutionary process in the whole of the Spanish state

If a unilateral proclamation of independence goes ahead, demands for its recognition should be a new focus for the campaign.

The right to self-determination cannot be supported as an abstract principle and then ignored when it concretely materialises

From a revolutionary Marxist perspective, we welcome the potentiality of the independence movement for accelerating trends like the collapse of the centre neoliberal parties or the decomposition of the crisis-ridden EU.

Note that for the SWP the "right to self-determination" is identical to the demand for independence and, it seems, that demand must be supported whenever it arises. That is because the ruling class will oppose the disintegration of its state and surely, if that happens, it will "spark a revolutionary process" that will also affect "the crisis-ridden EU". As I have stated, what is bad for them must be good for us.

Or is it? In fact, all this is completely antithetical to a "revolutionary Marxist perspective". Yes, we are for the right to self-determination, but, in general, we are *against* separatism: the two are *not* identical. Our aim is a world without borders, without states, and we support demands for separation only in exceptional circumstances - when it is the only way to end oppression in order to rebuild unity from below.

In reality the battle between rival nationalisms, of the sort that is taking place in Spain and is still a threat in Scotland, *inhibits* the struggle for working class power by dividing our class along national lines. Yes, an independent Catalonia and an independent Scotland would weaken the ruling classes of Spain and the UK respectively, but it would also weaken our own class.

Central committee

In line with its usual practice, the CC proposes a slate of comrades which it recommends should be elected to the leadership.

In this context it is worth reminding readers that the SWP's central committee is a totally self-perpetuating body. Every year the outgoing CC puts forward a recommended slate to replace it - but it almost always consists of exactly the same comrades! What is more, there is no way conference delegates can change the slate's composition - it is a question of 'take it or leave it', because you must either vote for the official slate or propose a totally different one. But if your alternative slate seeks to replace just one or two of the outgoing members with newcomers, there is no guarantee that the rest of the current CC will agree to be part of that alternative.

This year, in fact, the central committee is proposing one change to its composition - the departure of Judith Orr, who "has decided to step down from the CC":

Judith ran [the SWP bookshop] Bookmarks, edited *Socialist Review* and then edited *Socialist Worker*. Her writings include the important book *Marxism and women's liberation*. She is a long-term representative of the party in the Stop the War Coalition, as well as her activity in Abortion Rights and other campaigns.

We are sure that everyone in the party will offer her huge thanks for the crucial work she has done for the CC, the party and the wider movement, and look forward to her continuing involvement in the SWP and the fight for socialism.

All of which begs the question, why is she stepping down? No reason is given. Her departure means that the new CC will be reduced from 13 members to 12 (all the other outgoing comrades have made it onto the new slate!) - unless the CC subsequently decides to propose a replacement for comrade Orr by amending the list of recommended members just before conference ●

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NATIONAL LEFT WING MOVEMENT

Party's Sunday best

The *Sunday Worker* reached a circulation of 100,000. And, far from shunning argument, it encouraged different leftwing viewpoints, says Lawrence Parker

The *Sunday Worker* was launched in March 1925.¹ It was the initiative of the Communist Party of Great Britain and was designed to play a role in the organisation and education of leftwing workers active in a number of labour-movement spheres: in the Labour Party; the trade unions; trades councils; the Independent Labour Party (ILP); cooperative societies; the National Council of Labour Colleges; the Plebs League; the Minority Movement; and the CPGB itself.²

The *Sunday Worker*'s first editor was CPGB member William Paul - although Andrew Rothstein was responsible for the party's editorial and political control over Paul's role. Walter Holmes took over the editorship in 1928. The paper received a subsidy from the Comintern amounting to £20,000.³ There seems to be a general consensus from sources that the circulation of the *Sunday Worker* was around the 80,000-100,000 mark - giving it an influence way beyond the ranks of the CPGB. Its editorial board did include non-communists, although its key placeholders were CPGB members.

There is also an idea that the *Sunday Worker* was, in EH Carr's phrase, "not a party journal"⁴ or, in the words of one more recent account, a paper with a "broad left outlook and content",⁵ which are problematic ideas, given the circumstances. Certainly it was 'broad' in terms of its readership, but this whole jargon of 'broadness' rests on somewhat sectarian conceptions of what 'Communist Party' means. The obverse of defining the paper as 'broad' is the idea that the CPGB itself was intended to be narrow and exclusive, a so-called 'party of a new type'. That should not be surprising, as this bifurcation and flip-flopping around the twin poles of 'broad' and 'narrow' has been a major feature of the Comintern-influenced left in the 20th and 21st century, and is still a major organiser of ideas around its history.

However, it might be useful to pose another idea about the *Sunday Worker* - that it was a CPGB *partyist* paper: ie, it was looking to engage with the ideas and personalities informing the mass movement in an attempt to shape them in a communist direction. (I am using *partyist* in the positive sense of a partisan attempt by a political party to interact with and influence a much broader mass.) In other words, the CPGB had its own designs on becoming 'broad' in the sense of building a mass party. How successful it was in this is, of course, a moot point. On the whole, the difficult history of the communist-led organisation that arose from the CPGB's attempt to organise the left in the Labour Party - the National Left Wing Movement (NLWM) - would tend to suggest that the ultimate outcome was not a happy one. Nevertheless, the beginnings of the *Sunday Worker* and the NLWM, and the ideas of the CPGB about these



Holborn: unanimity in mixed meetings

forces, cannot be understood without this - relatively healthy - partyist framework.

Stuart King, writing from a Trotskyist perspective, says of the *Sunday Worker*: "While participation in such a venture would not have been of itself opportunist, had the CP (which had its own independent press as well) put clearly its own positions and its differences and criticisms of the 'lefts'. This was not to be the case."⁶

The historian, Kevin Morgan, largely concurs with this view. He quotes from the CPGB's editorial guidelines for the *Sunday Worker*, which suggested that, although the "maximum freedom" was to be accorded to non-communist members of the left wing in writing for the paper, opportunist ideas that were "particularly dangerous" were to be corrected through symposiums, editorial notes and leading articles.⁷ Morgan argues that *Sunday Worker* contributors from the wider left "were not in practice subjected to symposia or disclaimers and were not likely to have carried on contributing if they had been".⁸

Divisions

The evidence does not sustain these opinions. The paper's CPGB correspondents were certainly critical of other 'lefts' in the pages of the *Sunday Worker*. This was Harry Pollitt after the Labour Party's Liverpool conference of October 1925, where it was resolved to exclude communists from individual membership:

The left wing of the Labour Party were scared stiff and allowed [Labour leader Ramsay] MacDonald to ride roughshod over them ... Not a single leftwinger in the executive committee dared to burn his boats and warn the 'hero worshippers' where MacDonaldism was leading to.⁹

Pollitt's article featured alongside a more positive review of the conference by Morgan Jones MP¹⁰ and another by George Lansbury MP.¹¹ Lansbury, who had initially welcomed the appearance of the *Sunday Worker*,¹² complained:

The attacks on MacDonald and others produced such a reaction in favour of the executive that even reasonable criticism had no chance. The communists were defeated partly for the above reason, but mainly because of the statements repeatedly made that the British section is disciplined and receives its orders from Moscow.¹³

Clearly, the *Sunday Worker* symposium was offering up a debate around the Liverpool conference and illustrating the difference between Pollitt's militancy and Lansbury's more cautious approach to the Labour leadership.

After the Liverpool conference, Frank Horrabin of the Plebs League, wrote in to the *Sunday Worker* to complain that, by daring to remain as members of the Labour Party, the CPGB was compelling its "fellow members of the Labour Party (who also have a party discipline to observe) to expel them, by refusing to give up their membership of the Communist Party".¹⁴ He added: "They have no right to throw the onus on taking action in regard to the expulsion decision on their leftwing comrades inside the Labour Party."¹⁵ Unsurprisingly, Pollitt gave a forthright reply:

[Horrabin] knows (none better) what a dismal failure some of the most vocal of leftwingers made at Liverpool, and he wants to relieve the leftwingers in the local Labour parties - not of voting for the exclusion of their comrades in the Communist Party ... but of fighting the reactionary policy of the Labour Party executive committee. I tell comrade Horrabin straight that without the Communist Party there cannot be any organised left wing inside the Labour Party.¹⁶

There were also divisions on display when the *Sunday Worker* inaugurated a meeting at the end of 1925 to discuss the future of leftwing organisation, which proposed a resolution based around a set of five principles for "all who serve the working class in its fight against the capitalist class".¹⁷ The report added:

[Raymond] Postgate¹⁸ said he thought it was very unwise to try and pass the resolution, and urged that only a general discussion should take place. He was supported in this by Frank Horrabin and two members of parliament, who argued that a left wing [that] included communists would not be very successful.¹⁹

One of these Labour MPs may have been AA Purcell,²⁰ also a TUC general council member and *Sunday Worker* supporter, who, from an amalgamation of separate accounts from December 1925, was said to have made the "most savage and vindictive attack" on the CPGB. He was reported as stating that "he and [George] Hicks²¹ could not countenance any split in the Labour Party" and that the "communists could do nothing but

disrupt and make trouble".²²

There then followed a fractious dispute with a group that was perceived to be around *Lansbury's Labour Weekly*, which was accused of convening its own leftwing meeting "in dead secret, excluding even communists with whom they had worked for two years".²³ In the following month, an article in *Lansbury's Labour Weekly* suggested that it saw negotiations with the CPGB over the future organisation of the left wing coming to an end: "It is, then, in our view, quite useless and misguided to base leftwing policy or organisation on the idea of armed revolution, or indeed on any question of method or tactics."²⁴

Notwithstanding this political spat in late 1925/early 1926, Lansbury received a medal for his work with International Class War Prisoners' Aid in March 1926 from CPGB member Marjorie Pollitt.²⁵ The MP also remained a prominent supporter of the Soviet Union. The CPGB's attitude to Lansbury - subject to further criticism in the *Sunday Worker* after failing to take any place in the fledgling NLWM to fight the expulsion of communists²⁶ - seems principled enough in this instance.

Therefore, Trotskyists and academics are hampered by a severe lack of imagination on the issue of opportunism towards the broader left wing. One suspects that they genuinely cannot see any other alternative to either a CPGB frantically bowing and scraping before Labour left luminaries; or pedantically going through and adding editorial rejoinders to every single 'false' leftwing idea that appeared in the *Sunday Worker*. This says everything about the historical experience of the British (and international) workers' movement, which has often been unable to offer any alternative to an endless dichotomy of 'broad' and 'narrow', and almost nothing about the *Sunday Worker*.

Opportunism

However, there was certainly a movement into some bouts of opportunism by the *Sunday Worker* in its early years. After the public falling-out with Lansbury and company, it was becoming clear that a future Labour left organisation with CPGB involvement would exclude some of the self-defined Labour left, who were unwilling to stand against the expulsion of communists and uphold basic revolutionary demands, such as the arming of the working class. There was a palpable sense of disappointment among some of the paper's readers.

Thus Robert Moores, secretary

of the Manchester Plebs League, wrote: "The active rank and filers, who, after all, are the left wing, are becoming more and more confused by the wrangling of those who ought to be the most united in the struggle."²⁷ WM Crick, president of Rusholme Labour Party, said:

It is only a few months since Lansbury and William Paul spoke together here ... and we all looked forward to these two comrades standing side by side in a joint struggle to help to save the Labour Party from the liberal virus [that] was so plainly revealed at Liverpool.²⁸

This type of thinking was abroad in the labour movement in 1925. In November, Labour MP Ellen Wilkinson said: "Just think of the effect if the whole Labour Party machine and press, reinforced by the ILP and the *New Leader*, *Lansbury's Weekly* and the *Sunday Worker* ... could all join in one campaign for 'socialism in our time. Down with reaction. End the capitalist system'.²⁹

The *Sunday Worker*, in contradiction to the overall refusal of the CPGB to back down on issues of principle with other leftwingers, began to emote some of this opportunist sentiment:

The *Sunday Worker* does not voice the views of any political organisation. It stands above cliques. It seeks to serve the thousands in our movement, to be found in nearly every Labour organisation, who are eager to fight capitalism and its lackeys.³⁰

But it would have been intensely difficult to stand above cliques, when some left cliques were effectively threatening the future existence of the CPGB in the Labour Party by refusing to actively stay the expulsions initiated by the Labour leadership in 1925. The article added: "... we emphatically declare that [the left] cannot hope to have a real discussion by representative leftwing leaders by excluding communists and such important militants as AJ Cook and company."³¹

But then the obverse was also true. It would have been very difficult for the CPGB to have meaningful discussions with those willing to countenance the expulsion of communists from the Labour Party. Discussing the debate with Horrabin mentioned earlier, the article continued:

... cannot Frank Horrabin find something better to do with his sword than to turn it against those who are near to him in the movement? ... While the enemy is pressing hard and threatens to engulf us all, he chooses that moment to force forward a quarrel with those who are his own comrades.³²

This has the implication that the CPGB should have dropped its differences with Horrabin in the cause of unity, which, in the circumstances of Horrabin being unwilling to help its members against a witch-hunt, would have seemed an unlikely outcome. With the benefit of hindsight, this period was signalling that what was to become the NLWM was going to be a relatively narrower body, as against the 'all-inclusive' rhetoric on display here. But, importantly, this sentiment was a partial result of a process of debate and clarification around whether the Labour left should be passive or combative in relation to the bureaucracy's offensive.

Not that this 'all-inclusive' line was preserved in isolation. In the same period, Paul was outlining a much tougher line on elements of the left wing and a more plausible account of

the process the CPGB and the *Sunday Worker* had just gone through with the Labour left. In a *Labour Monthly* article from February 1926 he argued:

... the propertied interests always demand good value for their money. They knew that a leftwing movement was bound to come into existence and they were determined to kill it at birth by smothering it as a 'red' menace. So successful were they in creating this psychological atmosphere that when attempts were made, last year, to build up an organised militant movement, many leaders who thought themselves leftwingers got cold feet and ran away from it as something that had been specially concocted by the communists.³³

In terms of Labour leftwing MPs, Paul continued:

The leftwing parliamentarians are not afraid to use bold phrases in the constituencies when they are amongst the rank and file. But they are not prepared to organise the rank and filers and give them a socialist policy.³⁴

He concluded that an organised leftwing movement could "expect little help from the 'ginger group' in the House of Commons".³⁵ Rather, it was deemed that the "only organised group" that opposed MacDonaldism in 1924-25 was a "small band of communists, who fought very bravely to bring the Labour Party back to its Labour principles".³⁶ Paul had reached a sobering set of conclusions regarding the emerging NLWM. The CPGB had not united the whole of the self-defined left wing in the labour movement; nor did it look likely to. There is little sense here of 'left' Labour MPs and trade union leaders needing to be gently coaxed back onto the path of righteousness.

Clear conception

We have knocked down the idea that the CPGB controllers of the *Sunday Worker* did not criticise its contributors and combat ideas that it felt were particularly harmful to the leftwing movement as a whole. But it is true that the CPGB did offer a space for the views of other leftwing figures beyond its ranks and did not feel the need to constantly add editorial rejoinders on every single article. Leaving aside the fact that this would have been a perfectly ridiculous and untenable publishing operation, and that it had been a conscious decision to offer 'maximum freedom' to non-CPGB leftwingers, the publishers of the *Sunday Worker* had a relatively clear conception of what the paper was trying to achieve from the outset.

First, it set out a path of travel:

The *Sunday Worker* will be (if it realises its ambition) an organ of the left wing of the labour movement. [The left wing] is not an organisation. It has, at present, neither programme nor clear objective.³⁷

This sense of transition is important to understanding how the paper intended to treat its intakes from across the left wing:

The *Sunday Worker* aims at presenting the varied data of the workers' struggle so fully and clearly (circumstances considered) that we not only express the left wing, but aid it to consolidate itself - and in so doing the workers' struggle as a whole.³⁸

This process of clarification would then "aid in the formulation of a programme and a policy, upon which the left wing can concentrate and unite".³⁹ This sheds a rather different light on the *Sunday Worker's* willingness to publish intakes from across the left wing, even from those to its political right, this being, as stated above, "the varied data of the workers' struggle" that needed expressing

"fully and clearly".⁴⁰ However, this was not treated as the end of a process, but as the start of one.

This political approach from the *Sunday Worker* team was not an aberration on its part. Other CPGB writers of the same period showed this same commitment to the notion of a process of clarification and strengthening in regards to the left wing. For example, 'Vanguard' wrote in *Communist Review* in December 1925:

We have learned to smile a little cynically at the person who says, 'I am just a leftwinger', because too often we have found that to be a cloak for indefiniteness, for opportunism, if not for sheer cowardice. The term 'left wing', as we are to understand it in the future, must admit of no vagueness in its meaning. It must stand for clearly stated aims and for organisation to secure those aims.⁴¹

Neither was the editorial approach of the *Sunday Worker* necessarily at odds with that of other papers across the British labour movement. *Lansbury's Labour Weekly* was launched in the same period as the *Sunday Worker*. In the first issue, Lansbury himself set out its editorial policy: a mixture of unsigned articles, for which Lansbury would deem himself responsible; and signed articles from various writers, "for which they alone will be responsible".⁴² He added: "Within very wide limits we shall endeavour to give all sides a show."⁴³ This reads like an echo of the *Sunday Worker's* editorial stance - albeit one strung around a vague notion of fair play rather than any particular project of political clarification.

Nevertheless, this relative openness was carried through into future editions, with a number of CPGB members writing for the journal and advertisements for communist publications, as well as portraits of Russian revolutionary leaders, appearing fairly liberally. Postgate repeated the complaints that Lansbury had made over the CPGB's 'conduct' at the 1925 Liverpool Labour conference, stating that the "communist method ... scared off and angered the delegates".⁴⁴ However, there was no editorial attempt to make it appear that the CPGB was 'beyond the pale' in terms of the labour movement. A week after Postgate's intervention, an editorial in *Lansbury's Labour Weekly* read: "At the present moment the Communist Party is the butt of police attention, and internal disagreements must wait. The need for a common working class front comes first."⁴⁵

Hamilton Fyfe, then editor of the *Daily Herald* (a paper previously associated with Lansbury, but in 1925 under the auspices of the TUC), offered up a critique of a homogenous political culture in an interview with the fledgling *Sunday Worker* (albeit with what one suspects as a none-too-subtle dig at the CPGB):

It is true that you can always find a public for a journal filled with a pure gospel. Flat-earthers, Seventh-Day Adventists, British Israelites and so on exist who delight to read week after week just what they believed before, without stint or stay, modification or subtraction.⁴⁶

The attempt by the CPGB to use the *Sunday Worker* in the partyist manner that we have sketched out above, to promote open debate and clarification in the cause of ideologically arming a broader mass of leftwing workers, was a fragile exercise. We have already seen how his process was not a fixed one and drifted briefly rightwards under the pressure from leftwing workers in the Labour Party for a more broad-based unity than the CPGB was ultimately able to offer. However, to reduce this (and the opportunism that the CPGB exhibited in the 1926 General Strike) to

a generalised 'right opportunism', for example, is to concentrate on appearance and to neglect essence.

Comintern

The main root for the CPGB's oscillation between 'right' and 'left' was the hyper-centralised conception of the party regime in the infamous '21 conditions' agreed at the Comintern's Second Congress in 1920, which meant that the early CPGB eschewed positive conceptions of factionalism and was unable to formally concede notions of 'unity in diversity'. When it took this culture into the broader labour movement, opportunist adaptations and subsequent tacking to the left blighted the work of CPGB members. In other words, organisations that could not maintain 'unity in diversity' internally were very unlikely to be able to maintain it externally in the form of united fronts and vice versa.

With this in mind and considering the further regimentation that the process of so-called 'Bolshevisation' involved in the mid-1920s, it would seem counter-intuitive to suggest, as I am doing here, that 'unity in diversity' in a public form had been, to some extent, accomplished by the CPGB in the form of the *Sunday Worker*. However, such contradictions are the outward forms of a lacuna in Bolshevisation itself.

The fifth plenum of the enlarged executive committee of the Communist International in March-April 1925 produced a set of theses on the issue of Bolshevisation that significantly amplified the terms of the 21 conditions:

Bolsheviks ... must realise that the civil war cannot be fought, political power conquered, or the proletarian dictatorship maintained and strengthened, without the strictest internal discipline founded on ideological unanimity; without this the civil war is doomed in advance to failure.⁴⁷

It was this aspiration to "unanimity" that the CPGB took into elements of its work in the NLWM. The CPGB's fraction working in the Holborn (London) Labour Party recorded the following in early 1926:

Arising from the reports of January meetings, at one of which a comrade disregarded the lead of the steering committee, and at another of which CPers opposed the view put forward by a CP spokesman on the Peace Letter campaign, the following resolution was agreed to:

'Each member of the communist fraction in the HLP must consider it a part of party discipline to keep a united front in the discussion arising at a mixed meeting of the HLP. If an individual member of the communist fraction differs in any point on matters of policy, that member should not split the communist front at the mixed meeting, but should reserve the difference for discussion at the next fraction meeting.'⁴⁸

This seems a long way from the "iron discipline" of Bolshevisation, but does suggest the CPGB's intentions towards its work in the movement. This tendency to close party ranks even in discussions is only too likely to spread into opportunistically closing ranks with those in the wider movement, in turn spawning sectarian responses from others in the party. Such happenings are part of the essential 'laws of motion' of the Comintern-inspired left.

The "ideological unanimity" that was presumably the aim of the CPGB's involvement in episodes such as the campaign against 'Trotskyism' was thus being offset in more practical arenas. However, this longing was partly undercut in the very same April 1925 Comintern resolution on Bolshevisation:

The forms of internal party organisation are subordinate to the overriding interests of the struggle for the proletarian

dictatorship. But in all circumstances the Communist Party must preserve a certain freedom of criticism within the party, a spirit of equality among the party members ...⁴⁹

This "certain freedom of criticism" was clearly present in the CPGB of the 1920s, where you could often read about the CPGB's internal differences in its various open journals and, although this was less present in weekly papers such as *Workers' Weekly* and *Workers' Life*, you can occasionally see reports there of inner-party meetings and political differences being referred to. There was then a degree of 'unity in diversity' inside the CPGB that was communicated in a relatively open fashion, and that probably translated into the pages of the *Sunday Worker* and the interaction with the left of the Labour Party.

Contradiction

However, there was a bigger contradiction lurking in Bolshevisation than we have uncovered thus far. To even consider ideological unanimity is the hallmark of a sect, but Bolshevisation did not have a set of communist sects as its aim:

A Bolshevik is, above all, a man of the masses. The slogan of the third world [Comintern] congress [1921], 'to the masses', remains in full force. Far from removing this slogan from the order of the day, the fifth world congress [1924] gave it a deeper and broader meaning.⁵⁰

Even with the judgement that the turn to 'socialism in one country' had started to pull the Comintern away from its original revolutionary aims in favour of being a diplomatic adjunct of the Soviet Union, there would have been little point in establishing small sects. As Carr put it, "... when the policy [in 1925] of Comintern was at all costs not to lose touch with the masses ... the policy of the Soviet government demanded the support of a maximum number of sympathisers in important capitalist countries."⁵¹

However, Carr, I think, is mistaken when he suggested that following this line of reasoning had the result that:

... these policies could be effective only if a certain appeasement of the right was practised in the communist parties concerned. This in turn provoked uneasiness and dissent on the left wing of the party, resulting in the phenomenon of ultra-left deviations ...⁵²

But this phenomenon, which Carr has correctly sketched in appearance, was not at all episodic, as far as the Comintern was concerned. Rather it was cast into its fundamental precepts, as we have argued above.

Similarly, the debate inside the CPGB that attended the aftermath of the first Labour government was shot through with the idea of mass politics. In a riposte to Rajani Palme Dutt, JT Murphy argued:

Comrade Dutt sees the Labour Party from the newspapers as one reading from afar and impatiently dismisses the Labour Party as finished and calls up the only hope - a mass Communist Party; forgetting entirely that the Labour Party is a mass movement of which we are a part, in spite of the efforts to crush us as a party.⁵³

What Murphy is describing here is precisely a situation of 'unity in diversity' and this, in fact, was the only real way to conceive of a genuine attempt at a mass CPGB, as opposed to "ideological unanimity" and militarised "iron discipline" - the flip-side of the Bolshevisation coin. Therefore, when we look back on the early days of the *Sunday Worker* - as the CPGB sought to start organising the left wing of the Labour Party, and to politically and programmatically clarify it after a process of open debate - this was not

a mere aberration. It was in tune with the CPGB's political conceptions; it reflected the practice of other constituent parts of the British labour movement's press; it fed off the relative political openness shown in the rest of the CPGB's publications; and it drew upon some of the contradictions inherent in Bolshevisation: notably its aspiration to mass parties and mass politics.

It certainly was an episodic occurrence, cutting against the grain of the CPGB's more generalised oscillation between right opportunism and left sectarianism. However, the appearance of the *Sunday Worker* was a relatively healthy episode in the tortured history of communist politics in Britain and its attempts to relate to the mass labour movement ●

Notes

1. A version of this paper was given at the CPGB's 2017 Communist University.
2. 'The "left wing" and the *Sunday Worker*' - *Sunday Worker* March 15 1925.
3. K Morgan *Labour legends and Russian gold: Bolshevism and the British left* part one, London 2006, p117.
4. EH Carr *Socialism in one country 1924-1926* Vol 3 Harmondsworth 1972, p354.
5. R Griffiths and B Stevenson *The Communist Party 1920-2010: 90 years of struggle for the working class and humanity* Croydon 2010, p5.
6. Retrieved from www.fifthinternational.org/content/communists-and-labour-party-expelling-left-wing-%E2%80%93-lessons-1920s.
7. K Morgan *op cit* p117.
8. *Ibid* p118.
9. H Pollitt, "'Liberal' conference" *Sunday Worker* October 4 1925.
10. Jones (1885-1939) was Labour MP for Caerphilly, 1921-39.
11. Lansbury had been Labour mayor of Poplar from 1921 and was imprisoned for contempt of court along with 29 other councillors in the Poplar 'rates revolt'. He became Labour MP for Bow and Bromley, 1922-40. Lansbury also served as the leader of the Labour Party, 1932-35.
12. 'Greetings from George Lansbury' *Sunday Worker* March 15 1925.
13. 'What Liverpool means' *Sunday Worker* October 4 1925.
14. *Sunday Worker* October 18 1925.
15. *Ibid*.
16. H Pollitt, 'After Liverpool' *Sunday Worker* October 25 1925.
17. 'Our left wing meeting' *Sunday Worker* December 20 1925.
18. Postgate (1896-1971) was then on the staff of *Lansbury's Labour Weekly*.
19. 'Our left wing meeting' *Sunday Worker* December 20 1925.
20. Purcell (1872-1935) became president of the TUC in 1924.
21. Hicks (1879-1954) was general secretary of the Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers, 1921-41; TUC president, 1927-28; and Labour MP for Woolwich East, 1931-50. He was an early supporter of the *Sunday Worker*.
22. Cited in K Morgan *Bolshevism, syndicalism and the general strike: the lost internationalist world of AA Purcell* London 2013, p72.
23. 'Left wing problems' *Sunday Worker* December 20 1925.
24. 'What is the left wing?' *Lansbury's Labour Weekly* January 9 1926.
25. R Postgate, 'At the Albert Hall' *Lansbury's Labour Weekly* March 13 1926.
26. See 'Towards a fighting left wing' *Sunday Worker* June 27 1926.
27. *Sunday Worker* January 17 1926.
28. *Sunday Worker* December 27 1925.
29. E Wilkinson, 'The left wing group' *Lansbury's Labour Weekly* November 28 1925.
30. 'We stand for an all-inclusive left wing' *Sunday Worker* January 10 1926.
31. *Ibid*.
32. *Ibid*.
33. William Paul, 'The left wing' *Labour Monthly* February 1926.
34. *Ibid*.
35. *Ibid*.
36. *Ibid*.
37. 'The "left wing" and the *Sunday Worker*' - *Sunday Worker* March 15 1925.
38. *Ibid*.
39. *Ibid*.
40. *Ibid*.
41. 'And now to action a leftwing policy' *Communist Review* December 1925 (my emphasis).
42. G Lansbury, 'What we stand for' *Lansbury's Labour Weekly* February 28 1925.
43. *Ibid*.
44. R Postgate, 'Left-wing "unity"' *Lansbury's Labour Weekly* October 17 1925.
45. *Lansbury's Labour Weekly* October 24 1925.
46. *Sunday Worker* May 3 1925.
47. 'Extracts from the theses on the Bolshevisation of communist parties adopted at the fifth ECCI plenum' in J Degras (ed) *The Communist International 1919-1943 documents* Vol 2 (1923-28), Oxford 1956, p198.
48. Minutes of CPGB Holborn Labour Party fraction, February 3 1926, Johnson Collection, Bodleian Library.
49. J Degras (ed) *op cit* p198.
50. *Ibid* p192.
51. EH Carr *op cit* p317.
52. *Ibid*.
53. JT Murphy, 'How a mass Communist Party will come in Britain' *The Communist International* (no date, but probably March 1925). Original emphasis.

ITALY

Pisapia's soap opera

Thankfully the attempt by the former mayor of Milan to pull fragments to the left of the PD back into the fold has ended in failure, writes Toby Abse

Disputes over the budget look like dominating Italian parliamentary politics this autumn - minimising the time available to discuss other issues, perhaps even the latest electoral reform proposals, the so-called *Rosatellum*,¹ let alone what looks like a doomed attempt to revive the *ius soli*.²

Whilst the imminent general election - probably scheduled for February or March 2018 - means that the government led by Paolo Gentiloni has no desire to bring in a really harsh and unpopular austerity budget, the measures now being outlined fit into the same broadly neoliberal framework that has characterised the budgets of the two previous governments - those of Enrico Letta and Matteo Renzi - that held office during the present parliamentary term. It is undoubtedly the case that there is considerable pressure from the German government and the European Central Bank to curb spending, on welfare in particular, because of what they see as Italy's sacred duty to reduce its considerable national debt, and the weakness of Italy's banks make resistance difficult. However, Gentiloni shows no great desire to resist.

It is therefore not surprising that the government rejects trade union demands not to raise the pension age to 67, and that its proposed solution to youth unemployment is to reduce employers' national insurance contributions if they take on workers under the age of 29, rather than to begin much needed public investment. Instead of attempting a detailed analysis of the budget, one might summarise it as being pro-business rather than pro-labour - no surprise there. However, the left social democratic Movimento Democratico e Progressista (MDP) has caused a bit of a crisis by seeking to 'unduly influence' it.³ The MDP has, since its split from Gentiloni's Partito Democratico (PD) in February, offered frequent verbal criticism of the neoliberal economic and social policies of both former prime minister (and continuing PD leader) Renzi and current premier Gentiloni. However, in choosing to take a stand over the budget it has ceased to behave as an organic part of the government's majority in parliament.

On October 3 Filippo Bubbico, the deputy minister of the interior - the only MDP member to hold government office - resigned his post in accordance with his party's new, more oppositional line. This 'tougher' stance was shown in the vote in the Senate on October 4 on the update to the *Documento di Economia e Finanza* (DEF), which gives broad advance indications of the proposed budget and on which the MDP abstained. Rather predictably, however, the PD had recourse to the votes of groups to its right, which are not formally part of Gentiloni's coalition, in order to preserve its nominally wafer-thin majority in the Senate. In fact, the government easily won the vote - by 164 to 108 - which, as many journalists pointed out, made the MDP seem rather insignificant.

In the other budget-related vote on the very same day - the proposal to postpone the balancing of the books until 2020 - the MDP voted with the government, giving Gentiloni a substantial winning margin of 181 to 107. The reasons for this rather nuanced stance by the MDP were, firstly, that the second measure had to have an absolute majority of all the senators rather than just a majority of all those senators participating in the vote, so there was theoretically a more real chance of bringing the government down; and, secondly, that if it had not



Giuliano Pisapia: doing deals

passed, this would have rapidly triggered an automatic rise in VAT, which would, as an indirect tax, have hit the working class constituency that the MDP claims to represent particularly hard.

It is now very unlikely that the government will be brought down over any aspect of the budget, both because the MDP is, as I have indicated, somewhat half-hearted in its opposition - leading MDP figures have repeatedly stated that they would not do anything that would bring the troika to Italy⁴ - and because the votes from dubious figures like Denis Verdini (notorious for numerous cases of alleged financial malfeasance, including the sudden collapse of his own small Florentine bank), which proved so important on October 4, will be forthcoming on subsequent occasions.⁵

Quarrel on the 'left'

However, even if the MDP's abstention on the DEF proved to be of purely symbolic importance in terms of the parliamentary arithmetic, this episode once again exposed the totally incoherent position of Giuliano Pisapia, and precipitated the final breach between his Campo Progressista and the MDP.

There had been various attempts to bring about a reconciliation between the MDP and Campo Progressista after the quarrel precipitated by Pisapia's public embrace of Maria Elena Boschi, which I discussed at length in an earlier article,⁶ including one meeting in September attended by 10 representatives of both groups, which led to a temporary truce. However, trouble flared up on every occasion when Pisapia was forced to make a choice between the MDP and the PD.

Before the budget votes, the most serious dispute had been over which presidential candidate (and therefore which list) to back in the Sicilian regional elections. At first, it was not clear whether foreign minister Angelino Alfano's centrist Alleanza Popolare (AP), which is stronger in Sicily than in any other region, was going to ally with forces to its right or left. The PD, aware of its own weakness on the island, decided to try and build a broad coalition around a so-called 'civic' candidate, with no previous publicly avowed party allegiance, and chose Fabrizio Micari, the rector of Palermo University, for this role. The MDP made it clear from the start that they did not want to be part of this project if it also involved AP. Pisapia, although he had frequently made public criticisms of Alfano, was

much more enthusiastic about a broad Micari-led alliance.

When it became certain that the hard-right Forza Italia was going, despite Berlusconi's initial marked reluctance, to support an alliance led by neo-fascist Nello Musumeci, which wanted to have no truck with AP, and that AP was therefore negotiating with the PD for places in Macari's bloc, the MDP started discussions with Sinistra Italiana (SI) about standing a leftwing list. Eventually, Claudio Fava - the son of a leftwing journalist murdered by the Mafia and himself previously associated with groups to the left of the PD - agreed to head what was essentially a combined MDP/SI list.

Pisapia took umbrage, saying that the MDP had acted without consulting him, effectively breaching the implicit conditions of the MDP-Campo Progressista alliance. But, given Pisapia's enormous hostility to SI - a grouping largely composed of the left wing of the now dissolved Sinistra, Ecologia e Libertà (SEL), the very party with which Pisapia himself was once associated - this reticence about consulting him was hardly surprising. As far as one can tell, Pisapia now appears to back Fava rather than Micari, but Campo Progressista has done little or nothing to support the more leftwing candidate.

Pisapia has tried to put forward a similar line of argument - about the disloyal unilateral actions of the MDP - in relation to the budget vote. Pisapia and two representatives of the MDP had a meeting with Gentiloni about the contents of the budget a couple of days before the vote. The meeting seems to have been rather inconclusive - the premier probably confined himself to generalities - and the MDP said they would wait until finance minister Pier Carlo Padoan made a detailed statement to parliament the following day. Quite reasonably, the MDP parliamentarians, having listened to Padoan's speech, concluded that no substantial concessions had been made, and therefore decided they could not vote for the DEF.

However, the six self-proclaimed supporters of the Campo Progressista in the Senate voted with the government.⁷ Pisapia's immediate response to the MDP's abstention over the DEF was to attack Massimo D'Alema as being "as divisive as Renzi", proclaiming with absolutely no sense of irony: "I am available for a unitarian project; he continues to make divisive declarations." The former mayor of Milan (Pisapia) rather arrogantly urged the former

prime minister (D'Alema) to "take a step aside". Pisapia even alleged that D'Alema had wanted the MDP to abstain on the vote postponing the balancing of the budget - an abstention which would have automatically provoked a rise in VAT.

Nichi Vendola, the former leader of SEL and still influential in SI, responded pointedly on social media: "Pisapia is right: D'Alema is divisive; he divides the left from the right." The prickly Pisapia - so often ludicrously depicted as the calm and reasonable voice of the left by the mainstream media⁸ - angrily tweeted back at his former comrade (and in their SEL days party leader): "One can change ideas, but not forget - you governed Puglia in very varied company. In Milan, there were no rightwingers in the cabinet."

'Broad coalition'

Within days of this public quarrel, Renzi made an appeal to those to his left to join a "broad coalition" and claimed that "our adversaries are not those people who have gone from here" (ie, the MDP). This apparently welcoming rhetoric was clearly designed to split Pisapia's followers from the MDP, since Renzi has absolutely no intention of making any serious programmatic concessions. Moreover, any Renzi-led coalition of the 'centre-left' would in reality involve three lists: on the right, AP and any other 'centrist' flotsam and jetsam, probably including what the Italian media euphemistically call "unpresentables" like Verdini; in the middle, the predominant partner, namely the PD; and on the 'left' Pisapia's followers and any other tame non-PD 'centre-left' that can be rounded up.

The MDP president of Tuscany, Enrico Rossi, responded in a lucid and forthright interview with *La Repubblica* (October 8) that "Renzi is presenting a more affable face, but in his actions he is accentuating the turn to the right in order to create the 'party of the nation'."

Addressing Renzi's apparent opening to the left, Rossi shrewdly observed:

It seems to me an attempt to convince Pisapia. As the opinion polls show, Renzi is not taking more votes from the right, so he tries to turn to the left. But at the same time he confirms the alliance with Alfano and speaks of Calenda⁹ as the moderate pole. Verdini is the man who has in reality entered the majority. We have reached the 'party of the nation', even if it is dressed up in a more attractive manner; however, an alliance with Forza Italia after the election has not been excluded.

Roberto Speranza, the official leader of the MDP, expressed the same thoroughly understandable impatience in an interview with *Corriere della Sera* (October 8):

Pisapia is naturally the protagonist of this story, but one can't lose even a minute more ... It has become an unsupportable soap opera ... Mine is an appeal to everybody, everybody will make their own decisions ... The future of the country and of the Italian left is at stake. Now is the time - we can't go beyond November.

The closing words were a reference to a planned 'democratic assembly' on November 19, involving the MDP and unspecified others; according to an article in the *Corriere della Sera*, the MDP was working for a list that included Nicola Fratoianni's SI, Pipo Civati's Possibile and even the more horizontalist, radical left movement led by Anna Falcone and

Tommaso Montanari, whose meeting at Rome's Teatro Brancaccio earlier this year gave a resounding boo every time the name of Giuliano Pisapia was mentioned.

Pisapia exploded with rage as soon as he read Speranza's "soap opera" interview: "There is no problem. On your bike, Speranza, and your little party of the three per cent." In an interview with *La Repubblica* (October 9), Pisapia pompously repeated his usual empty phrases about "the need for a new centre-left that is open, broad and makes a break with the recent past", but made it obvious he was open to a deal with Renzi.

Needless to say, the devious and scheming Pisapia, who never made any real effort to build the Campo Progressista at a grassroots level, is now seeking to detach the weaker elements of the MDP parliamentary group from Speranza. Whilst it is too early to judge who will succumb to the lure of allegedly safe seats and to hopes of ministerial office in a list linked to the PD, it was predictable that amongst the seven names profiled in the *Corriere della Sera* (October 10), none had followed the trajectory of the core group of the MDP, which collectively broke with the PD as an organised current in February. All seven potential defectors had been in three or more parties: two were ex-Rifondazione, two were former Greens, five had been in SEL at some stage. In short, an unsavoury collection of rightward moving, burnt-out former leftwingers who have already yielded to financial temptations and parliamentary cretinism. They, like Pisapia, are no great loss.

The soap opera is thankfully at an end. It remains to be seen whether the more serious elements of the MDP will succeed in their new unity project with SI, Possibile and the movement led by Falcone and Montanari. But the fact that the MDP leadership is opening up to elements to its left and, unlike Pisapia, imposing no vetoes, bans or proscriptions on the participants, suggests there is more hope of a revival of the Italian left than at any time since the PD eliminated communists from the Italian parliament in 2008 ●

Notes

- This draft law was originally associated with Ettore Rosato, the Partito Democratico group leader in the Chamber of Deputies.
- 'Right to the soil' - legislation giving citizenship to Italian-born children of immigrants on certain conditions.
- The MDP's opposition to the 'Superticket' - charges for medical tests and consultations that undermine the general principle of a health service free at the point of use - has been ridiculed basically over technicalities.
- Whether or not the failure to pass a budget would actually have such apocalyptic consequences is debatable, but in the light of the events in 2011 during Berlusconi's last months as prime minister, as well as the troika's interventions in Greece, Portugal and Ireland, it has some plausibility.
- It is not just a question of assorted scoundrels whose parliamentary seats shield them against a judicial process. There is a more mundane consideration for many parliamentarians with no hope of re-election. As a legislature draws towards its close, they are anxious to hold on for as long as possible to their high salaries, expenses, contribution-based increases in pension entitlements and so forth.
- See 'Pisapia's deadly embrace' *Weekly Worker* August 31.
- According to *La Repubblica* (October 5), at this stage Campo Progressista had 20 deputies and two senators - these figures presumably originated from Pisapia. None of these Pisapia fans were elected as such; the six senators were defectors from either the left-populist Italia dei Valori or the Five Star Movement (M5S).
- A fawning profile in *Corriere della Sera* (October 9) claimed that Pisapia was distinguished by his "tact and prudence".
- Another centrist minister in Gentiloni's government.

IRAN

Redrawing the map

Why is Trump abandoning the nuclear deal? Yassamine Mather looks beyond the rhetoric

In a single speech on October 13, lasting just a few minutes, Donald Trump managed to succeed in doing what had seemed impossible for decades - uniting the Iranian government and the almost all the opposition to the regime (ironically including sections of Trump's own 'regime change from above' gang), as well as the majority of Iranians inside and outside the country.

Having turned a deaf ear to pleas from European leaders, members of Congress and the Senate, as well as a large chunk of his own administration, the president's 'decertification' of the Iran nuclear deal was, at least in the short term, in effect a gift to the Islamic regime in Tehran. As sections of the Iranian left have maintained, the country's religious leaders thrive in situations of crises provoked by US threats - it could be argued that they owe their survival to them.

Over the last 16 years the US 'war on terror' has provided helpful conditions - not only by getting rid of its main regional enemies, the Taliban in Afghanistan and Saddam Hussein in Iraq, but internationally the Islamic regime loves to present itself as a victim of global injustice. Trump has given Tehran a helping hand on this one, with Britain, Germany and France united in their opposition to the US president's stance. In the British parliament, condemnation of Trump's statement united Blairites with Corbyn supporters, pro-Brexit Tories with 'remainers', and the Democratic Unionist Party with the Scottish nationalists. Meanwhile, European politicians did not shy away from expressing their disappointment.

A joint statement by British prime minister Theresa May and German chancellor Angela Merkel said the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) - the Iran nuclear deal - was "the culmination of 13 years of diplomacy" and "a major step toward ensuring that Iran's nuclear programme is not diverted for military purposes".

Of course, the European Union's main concern is the economic benefits of the Iran nuclear agreement and the possibility of lucrative deals, which they hope will open up new markets. Having said that, many European firms have in the past faced huge penalties for trading with Iran and, at a time when we are witnessing renewed trade wars, Trump's line on Iran could become a serious matter of contention between the EU and the US - although at this stage, of course, no-one can predict where the UK will stand, if such a situation occurs. However, if the US Congress agrees to new sanctions, it is also possible that European countries - not only threatened with potentially heavy penalties, but also eager to maintain economic relations with the US - would toe the line of the world hegemon.

Can we deduce from all this that there is consensus in opposition to Trump's position? Not really. As always there are those in the US administration whose only purpose in politics seems to be taking revenge on Iran, and more particularly on the Iranian people, for the 1979 revolution, which saw the overthrow of the US stooge, the shah of Iran. Former chief strategist Steve Bannon may have left the White House, but Trump is surrounded by neoconservatives whose central political ambition seems to be the enforcement of regime change from above in Iran: John Bolton, Rudy Giuliani and even Trump's main Republican opponent, John McCain, agree with this particular



War will follow war

piece of Trump lunacy. And, of course, there remains amongst Iranians a minority under the illusion that regime change from above will bring about 'civil society', democracy and the rule of law (presumably with the return of the shah's son or the rule of the loony religious cult known as the Mojahedin).

Within minutes of Trump's speech Iranian president Hassan Rouhani appeared on TV with his response: "As long as our rights are guaranteed, as long as our interests require, and as long as we enjoy its benefits, we will respect the JCPOA within the framework of the interests of our nation." However, Rouhani's foreign minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, warned of a different outcome:

If they revive the sanctions and we face an inability to use the deal in oil, gas and shipping arenas, and for bringing our money to the country, we have the right to make a decision about the continuation of our presence in the JCPOA.

If Congress imposes new sanctions, the first victim will be Iran's multi billion-dollar contract with US plane manufacturer Boeing. On this, Zarif said: "In our view, there is no problem, but if the US government impedes this contract, then they haven't honoured their commitments under the JCPOA."

Iran's supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, confirmed that Tehran would not willingly abandon the internationally backed nuclear deal - he welcomed the reaction of its European signatories to Trump's decertification.

'Rogue state'?

Iran's relations with Hamas and Hezbollah are often mentioned as a source of 'instability' in the region. Apparently this is what Trump means by claiming Iran is breaching the "spirit" of the deal.

I have been a life-long critic of Hezbollah and I have no illusions about its 'social' activities in south Lebanon. I blame it for events that led to Irangate. As far as Hamas is concerned, after the 1967 war with

Egypt, Israel hunted down secular Palestinian Liberation Organisation factions, but in Gaza it dropped what had been Egypt's policy for many years: the imposition of restrictions against Islamist activists. This relaxation played a crucial role in the creation of Hamas (influenced ideologically by the Muslim Brotherhood) and its subsequent evolution into a major political force.

In fact, for many years Israel tolerated and at times encouraged such activists as a counterweight to the secular nationalists of the PLO and its dominant faction, Fatah, and this inevitably strengthened the position of Hamas - although Iran's own relations with Hamas has had its ups and downs.

We have to remember that, as far as Iran's Islamic republic is concerned, sending arms to both Hamas and Hezbollah is a form of insurance. Iranian nationalists, who keep telling us that 'Iran should stop arming these terrorists' and 'concentrate on the country's own interests', forget that, had it not been for fear of retaliation by Hezbollah, Israel would have bombed Iran's nuclear installations a long time ago. That would have had disastrous consequences not just for Iran, but for the entire region. Of course, now that Egypt's Abdul Fattah el-Sisi, not Khamenei, is Hamas's best friend, Trump claims Iran is supporting the Taliban.

Here a bit of history might help the US president. When the Taliban were in power in Kabul their main religious/political opposition was from Iran's Islamic Republic. In 2001, as far as the war against the Taliban was concerned, Iran's then reformist president, Mohammad Khatami, gave all the political and logistic support he could to the US under its neoconservative president, George W Bush. What was Bush's response? Naming Iran as a "rogue state". So if there is any 'cooperation' between Iran and the Taliban, we know how that came about.

As for the claim that Iran's Revolutionary Guards (or Pasdaran) are a terrorist organisation, up until a few months ago when Iran was fighting

Islamic State in Syria, the Pasdaran were hailed in the US media as the most effective force fighting 'Jihadi terrorists' and all this culminated in the Guards' commander, major-general Qasem Soleimani, appearing on the cover of *Time Magazine*, which welcomed Pasdaran's military operations.

Kurdistan

Of course, all this is related to the current situation in Kirkuk. As we predicted, while Islamic State is losing territory in Syria as well as Iraq, the battle for the areas 'evacuated' by the jihadi group is creating new conflicts. The Kurdish regional government tried to take advantage of all this by organising a referendum on Kurdish independence, but this week Baghdad government troops, accompanied by Shia militias, have moved into Kirkuk.

This is a rather sad end to the silly miscalculation of Kurdish regional

president Masoud Barzani, but it also reflects the worries of both the Iranian and the Iraqi governments about the current White House incumbent and his closest 'advisors'. As Trump keeps saying, they are not into 'nation building', so the claim that they want regime change in Tehran is in reality code for their preference to see the destruction of the current states of both Iran and Iraq, and their replacement with smaller, national/regional governments more subservient to US foreign policy.

Of course, as far as economic policy is concerned, both Iran's Islamic Republic and the Shia government installed in Baghdad in 2003 work entirely within the frameworks of neoliberal capitalism. However, when it comes to politics, Iran is not exactly in the US sphere of influence and current thinking on Iraq in the White House seems to be: 'Let us get rid of the problem once and for all, by overturning the entire national set-up - Iraq can be divided into three separate entities surely.'

In these circumstances one can only laugh at 'leftwing' Iranian Kurdish leaders who claim that a future 'independent' Kurdistan ('liberated' from Iran and Iraq thanks to US military and financial help) will be a step towards socialism. Global capital is already up in arms about the soft anti-austerity economic programme of the Corbyn/McDonnell opposition in the UK, because it challenges neoliberal economic dogma (it definitely does not challenge capitalism, as so many Corbynistas keep telling us). So how can anyone imagine that imperialism would tolerate 'socialist' economic policies in a tiny, land-locked Kurdish republic?

The US state department (not just Donald Trump) is the main sponsor of the attacks of the Labour Party right and the UK media on Corbyn's soft anti-war stance. So are we really saying that it will allow a new 'independent' Kurdistan to exercise a 'socialist' foreign policy? One that might challenge Israel's nuclear programme, for example? One that will be in solidarity with the Palestinians? The answer is, of course, in the negative. The Iranian Kurdish groups propagating such ideas have lost touch with reality - they are now part of the problem rather than the solution to the upheavals in the region ●

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Fighting fund

Striking distance

RC writes: "Thanks for your brilliant coverage of the Labour witch-hunt. This time McNicol will be forced to retreat!" Let's hope so, comrade. And let's also hope that others will show their appreciation of the *Weekly Worker* in the same way as you - thanks very much for that £25 cheque!

Another who used the same method of payment was comrade KN, who added £20 to his subscription, while regular PayPal donor DB contributed his usual £7. He was, however, the only one out of the 2,827 online readers of our paper last week to use that facility - maybe we should do something to make it more attractive, like surrounding

it with beautiful colours ...

But the most generous donor this week was comrade KB, who gave a remarkable £280. Others who made their usual standing order contributions were MM (£75), TB (£50), DG and TR (£40 each). They all helped boost our October fighting fund by a more than useful £537, taking our running total to £1,209.

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LIBERATION

1967 and all that

It is 50 years since the Sexual Offences Act 1967 partly decriminalised gay sex. Mike Macnair examines its significance

Under the 1967 Sexual Offences Act homosexuality between consenting adult males in private was no longer an offence. 'Adult' was defined as someone over the age of 21; and 'in private' was subsequently defined by the judiciary: homosexual acts were only permitted in private property and there had to be only two people present. In a public place like a hotel it would still be an offence. Given the limits of the 1967 act, I did not expect anything like the scale of celebration there has been around its 50th anniversary.

In addition we have had a brief rush of publicity around a group of LGBT anarchists forming a fighting unit alongside the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) in Syria against Islamic State. Rather startlingly, the *Daily Mail* on July 25 ran the headline, "These faggots kill fascists" - a photo showed them raising the rainbow flag in Raqqa.¹

This story of a very small group of volunteers has been all over the mainstream media. There has been, I think, a valid argument, presented on *Al Jazeera* by a Syrian-Palestinian woman activist, that this group was in substance holding up the flag in favour of the general frame of western intervention in Syria, rather than having any realistic expectation that the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) will display strong and persistent solidarity with lesbian and gay rights.²

But the coverage demonstrates that this summer's celebration of gay rights is very broad. The story is that our modern liberal society has liberated lesbians and gay men from the chains of medieval oppression. Alongside this celebration, LGBT issues, just like women's issues, have been made into an instrument for the justification of dropping bombs on foreign countries.

In this context it is worth looking a little bit further at what has been celebrated: the 1967 act, what followed it and what went before it. As I have said, it decriminalised homosexual conduct between consenting males over the age of 21. Even though the 'age of majority' was reduced to 18 in 1969, as far as homosexual acts were concerned, it remained at 21 until 2000.³

The act had an interesting consequence, in that it initially led to a substantial increase in prosecutions! Roy Walmsley, a member of the Home Office Research Unit, reported in 1978 that offences for 'indecent between males' recorded by the police had doubled since 1967, and the number of persons prosecuted *trebled* between 1967 and 1971. Most of the additional prosecutions involved two males 21 or over, so it was not primarily about consent, but about the 'in public' issue. In 1978 there were wide variations between police areas in respect of this.⁴

This is by no means the only instance of law reform leading to an increase in prosecutions. The same was true of the reforms of street prostitution (introduced under the Street Offences Act 1959), of the 1959 Obscene Publications Act, and of the 1967 Abortion Act. Nearer to the core of criminal law, it was also true of the various offences under the Theft Act 1968. The replacement of laws which are understood to be ancient, unfair, technical and difficult to understand by new legislation incentivises the police to prosecute - and makes it easier for them to do so. And it makes it easier for magistrates and juries to convict.

I might add that the 'gross indecency' offence, which had previously been



No mainstream acceptability in 1967

triable by jury, became, as a result of the act, triable before magistrates. That increased the number of prosecutions, as magistrates have always been more willing to convict than juries.

Resistance

This is not the whole story, however. There has also been a good deal of judicial and prosecutorial resistance to liberalising measures like the Sexual Offences Act. In 1997 - the moment of the Blair landslide - there was, unusually, an opinion poll which took account of people's professional activities. At that time the general rate of support for the Conservative Party was 30%. However, among lawyers support for the Tories was 60% and among the police 90%.

I suspect that support amongst lawyers has today probably fallen - it is certainly the case that some of the senior judiciary have been considerably more liberal over the last 10-15 years. Amongst policemen, however, I suspect Conservative support is still very high - partly because the job entails constantly dealing with those who have victimised fellow working class people. Many police officers have a perception of the world which corresponds to the theory of original sin: humans are naturally sinful and need the smack of firm government to keep them under control. In other words, the police are more likely to be pro-Conservative.

What about the far right? Internationally studies have been undertaken on the development of mass fascist movements: the Black Hundreds in Russia, the Italian Fascists, the German Nazis and various others. Invariably these movements had a large spinal core in the police force. It is not usually the case that fascist movements arise as pure extra-state organisations - they present themselves as fighting from outside the state, but are in fact para-state organisations reflecting the particular ideologies within police forces.

We can see judicial and prosecutorial resistance to liberalisation of the law relating to homosexuality in a series of cases:

● *Shaw*, in 1962, before the act, was a pre-emptive response by prosecutors and the judiciary to the recommendations of

the 1957 Wolfenden committee for reform of the laws relating to homosexuality and prostitution. Taking a hard-to-defend case (the publication of a directory of prostitutes), the House of Lords ruled that the courts have a general power of supervision over 'public morality', entitling them to invent new crimes if parliament abolishes those which ought to exist. Thus Lord Tucker, in justifying the ruling, said:

Suppose parliament tomorrow enacts that homosexual practices between adult consenting males is no longer to be criminal: is it to be said that a conspiracy to further and encourage such practices amongst adult males could not be the subject of a criminal charge fit to be left to a jury? Similarly with regard to a conspiracy to encourage and promote lesbianism today, or incestuous sexual intercourse in the year 1907? My lords, if these questions are to be answered in the negative I would expect to find some clear authority during the past centuries which would justify such an answer. I know of none.

The defendant was convicted of 'conspiracy to corrupt public morals', though all the judges conceded that there was no direct authority for the existence of such a crime.⁵

● In *Kneller* (1973) the House of Lords applied this idea, upholding a conviction for "conspiracy to corrupt public morals" through the publication of a magazine which contained contact ads for gay men. The broadest claims of general powers to supervise public morality in *Shaw* were rejected - but so was the argument that it is not an offence for gay men to contact each other because homosexuality was decriminalised under the 1967 act.⁶

● *Lemon* in 1977-79 was a prosecution for blasphemy for the publication in *Gay Times* of a poem which represented Jesus as homosexual. It was initially privately prosecuted by Mary Whitehouse, a 'morality' campaigner in the 1970s, against what she saw as 'obscenity' on television. The House of Lords upheld the conviction.⁷ That the conviction was about homosexuality, rather than about Jesus as a sexual figure, is shown by the non-prosecution of contemporaneous

representations of the relationships of Jesus and Mary Magdalene as lovers or possible lovers.⁸

● *Masterson and Holden* in 1986 was a prosecution for "threatening, abusive or insulting behaviour liable to cause a breach of the peace", which in this case consisted of two gay men kissing at a bus stop. A couple of women complained to the police that what they had seen was disgusting and offensive. The Queen's Bench division (the equivalent of the court of appeal in this particular context) ruled that it was perfectly proper for the magistrates to find that this was indeed "threatening, abusive or insulting behaviour liable to cause a breach of the peace".⁹

● Finally there is *Brown* in the early 1990s.¹⁰ A group of male sadomasochists had filmed a group session and the police somehow got hold of the video. They intended to charge them under the Sexual Offences Act on the basis that this was homosexual conduct not "in private", as it involved more than two men. Unfortunately for the police, the time limit laid down under the 1967 act had been exceeded. The police, having made arrests and seized property, felt they could not let the matter drop. So instead the participants were charged with assault occasioning actual bodily harm. It was argued that their conduct was liable to have caused injury, and that it is impermissible to consent to being beaten. This opinion was upheld in the House of Lords and in the European Court of Human Rights.

A couple of years later, in the case of *Wilson*, where a man had branded his wife on both buttocks as part of consensual sadomasochistic behaviour, the court of appeal ruled that it was improper to penalise people's private sexual conduct by using this offence.¹¹ *Wilson* was on the basis of the details, involving permanent marking, a stronger case for "assault occasioning actual bodily harm" than *Brown*. The different outcome of the two cases emphasises the point that the courts in *Brown* were really mainly concerned with using a loophole in the Sexual Offences Act to convict gay men.

The persistence of this judicial resistance to liberalisation begs the question: when did the transition occur - to the point where the *Daily*

Mail celebrates LGBT fighters against IS, not to mention the across-the-board celebration of the act's 50th anniversary?

Change in attitudes

It very clearly did not occur in 1967 itself. Nor in 1969 - the year of the Christopher Street riots in New York, when a whole bunch of gay men and transvestites fought back against police raids on gay bars. Arising out of that, and imitating the civil rights and women's liberation movements, the gay liberation movement was formed, first in the US and shortly after in the UK - I was involved myself in the 1970s. However, while we carried out stunts, took part in debates and made other interventions, we were unable to fundamentally change the public atmosphere.

The real transition in my view took place in 1984-85 with Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners. The consequence was that the National Union of Mineworkers - one of the core, militant manual trade unions - came onside, promoting changes in Labour Party and TUC policy on the question. The workers' movement began to shift.

As a result the Tories ran a counteroffensive around the 1988 Local Government Act, section 28, which was designed to stop local authorities "promoting" homosexuality - particularly as an alternative family institution. It was a peculiar act, because it was carefully designed to do nothing except threaten - there were no operative effects. It merely provided that it was unlawful for local authorities to promote homosexuality, and in particular to do so "as a pretended family institution".¹²

Although section 28 was passed, it created a public image of the Tory Party as backward relative to Labour, the TUC and the core industrial unions - indeed relative to almost everybody. Moreover, we had along with this the Tory Party going on about 'family values', the 'return to Victorian values' and so on. So the press had a field day and dug up every single sex scandal affecting a senior Tory. No wonder Theresa May ended up declaring that the Conservative Party had to get rid of the 'nasty party' tag.¹³ David Cameron did that in a spectacular way, by actually promoting gay marriage, in an attempt to shake off the image of the Tories as Christian backwoodsmen.

So it was in the 80s when the shift in public opinion really began to take place and there was a substantial reduction in prosecutions. As I have pointed out, the immediate effect of the 1967 act had been an *increase*.

Its introduction had actually been related to the self-image of the 1964-70 government of Harold Wilson, which did not, of course, present itself as a radical socialist administration, but rather as a "modernising" one - Wilson famously talked about the "white heat of the technological revolution". It was in this context - a "modernising" government getting rid of archaic law - that the 1967 Sexual Offences Act was introduced.

There were a whole number of other acts of the same sort, starting with the 1965 Law Commissions Act, which set out to codify the law of England, in the hope that it might conceivably catch up with France and Germany. The lawyers, of course, got control of it and turned it into an instrument for private lobbying, whereby lobbyists do not even have to talk to ministers, but can instead make

What we fight for

their proposals to the Law Commission, which is very much captured by City lobbyists.

Other 'modernising' acts were the 1965 Murder (Abolition of Death Penalty) Act; the Race Relations Acts of 1965 and 1968; the 1967 Abortion Act (another piece of legislation that led to a short-term increase in total prosecutions); the 1967 Criminal Law Act, which abolished the ancient distinction between felonies (originally crimes attracting capital punishment) and other offences ('misdemeanours'); the 1968 Theft Act rolled up a vast mass of legislation about theft and related offences (blackmail, robbery, burglary and so on) into a general code; the 1969 Family Law Reform Act reduced the age of majority from 21 to 18 - and also got rid of certain forms of discrimination against illegitimate children, which had existed for centuries; and the 1970 Equal Pay Act - just about the last act passed by the Wilson government before it was repealed by Edward Heath after the 1970 general election.

As Toby Abse pointed out in our discussion of this issue at Communist University 2017, the 1967 act originated as a private members' bill promoted by his father, Labour MP Leo Abse. In this it was not unique: the abolition of the death penalty for murder was introduced by Labour MP Sydney Silverman, and the Abortion Act 1967 by Liberal MP David Steel. The fact remains that private members' bills can only progress as far as being passed if government is prepared to make time for them - and these particular examples were consistent with the Wilson government's more general 'modernising' agenda.

In fact, much of what today is regarded as 'modern Britain' can in fact be traced back to the Wilson government. However, liberalism was a part of the cold war narrative, along with abstract expressionism in art, and so on: celebrating 'our' liberalism against Stalinist and third-world backwardness. In that sense the role of Wilson can be linked to that of Tony Blair. The 21st century end product turns out to be liberalism on LGBT rights as self-congratulation and as justification for imperialism - "These faggots kill fascists" is an example.

Sodomy and buggery

Is this, nonetheless, a story of very ancient law being modernised out of existence? No. The serious criminalisation of homosexual behaviour is a product of the development of capitalism.

It is true that sodomy was condemned in the *Bible* and in consequence was contrary to canon law - in England you could be prosecuted as a sodomite in the Bishop's Court in the Middle Ages, although such prosecutions were extraordinarily rare. That was not because the actual conduct was extraordinarily rare - when the church was at odds with the king, allegations of sodomy were routinely flung in both directions.

In 1533 the Buggery Act was passed by Henry VIII - in the midst of agitation about the immorality of the monasteries, which was used to support their assets being expropriated by the crown. However, when Henry VIII died and his son, Edward VI, acceded to the throne, the first thing he did was to repeal all the new felonies created by his father. The Buggery Act was not the only one: for example, there was a felony created by Henry VIII called 'Egyptians', which made it a crime for gypsies to be in England.¹⁴ A special offence was also created for cooks who poisoned their masters - ordinarily murder, but the act provided for them to be boiled to death. Perhaps it was little wonder that the regency government for the child king, Edward VI, repealed such legislation.

The regency government changed, Northumberland replacing Somerset, and in 1549 shifted towards more radical Protestantism. It not only introduced

the first version of the Protestant book of common prayer, but also abolished 'chantries', where prayers were said for the dead - and reintroduced the act against buggery.

Then Edward VI died and his half-sister, Queen Mary, came to the throne in 1553. Again, she repealed a whole list of the new offences created by both Henry VIII and her brother. That is, the Catholics were back in charge, and they got rid of this prohibition, because this was the state interfering in ecclesiastical jurisdiction.

"Enter sodomy, dressed as a monk." This is a stage direction from a government-sponsored play put on in 1562 by the Protestant government of Elizabeth I. The Buggery Act comes back yet again. But how many prosecutions are there? The answer is, extremely few. Perhaps some of the explanation of this is found in lord chief justice Coke's report of a 1607 case: in order to successfully prosecute for buggery, "penetration and ejaculation" had to be proved.¹⁵

All this is a part of the transition from feudalism to capitalism. The feudal social order involves a split of the exploiters between the military-landlord class and the clerical and monastic caste: a split found both in western medieval Christianity and Japanese medieval Buddhism. Reformation, or secularisation - in Japan the anti-Buddhist seizures of the Meiji restoration of 1868 and following - *dethesaurises* gold and silver held by churches and monasteries, releasing it for increased monetary circulation in the economy, and at the same time takes large tranches of land out of *mortmain* holding, pushing both landlords and tenants towards market imperatives and capitalist agriculture. Meanwhile, secularisation also undermines ideologies of 'natural values' and, in particular, the idea that lending money at interest is in itself immoral.

The point is not to adopt Weber's 'dominant ideology' approach in his 1904-05 *The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism* - a belated product of Bismarck's 1870s *Kulturkampf* against German Catholicism. It is that the institutional and expropriatory aspect of reformation or secularisation is a part of the transition to capitalism.

Mollies and homos

Now, between this period and the 19th century there is a further shift - in England it begins in the 1660s-70s, but it does not really become visible in the literature and the judicial records until the 1720s. This coincides with the development of a homosexual subculture, producing a political reaction from the same people who ran nationalist and anti-Semitic campaigns.

Guido Ruggiero in *The boundaries of Eros: sex crime and sexuality in Renaissance Venice* (1989) identifies very clearly from late medieval Venetian judicial records a transition between very occasional prosecutions before there was a homosexual subculture, to people being more regularly prosecuted for participating in that subculture. The same transition is also identified in Alan Bray's *Homosexuality in Renaissance England* (1982) and Rictor Norton *Mother Clap's Molly House* (1992).¹⁶

That subculture begins to generate attention from the Tory Party on an episodic basis. So we find it with the Society for the Reformation of Manners in the 1690s-1700s and the Society for the Suppression of Vice in the 1740s-50s. Tobias Smollet, a Tory author, wrote about the "terrible problem" of homosexuality in the Royal Navy around that time. It was highlighted again in the 1820s, when the Tories were losing ground to the Whigs, while in 1829 the Offences Against the Person Act made it easier to convict people of sodomy.

And then we come to the 'Labouchere amendment', or section 11 of the Criminal Law Amendment Act 1885. This followed the launching by WT

Stead, editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, of a press campaign against the prostitution of teenage girls, which led to a bill to increase the age of consent for women from 12 to 16, and to create various other offences relating to prostitutes.

Henry Labouchere was a radical who thought that the bill was hypocritical, in particular because there had recently been a spectacular *homosexual* prostitution scandal in Dublin, in which, because important Irish ascendancy figures were implicated, things were partly hushed up. Labouchere thought it was a case of double standards to go after the prostitution of young women, when the scandal had been limited in Dublin; and he drafted a very broad general prohibition on homosexual relations as an amendment. This was voted through in a late-night sitting of the House of Commons.¹⁷

It's capitalism

What drove all this anti-homosexual legislation was the appearance of a subculture which itself was driven by the emergence of large-scale manufacture. The period of manufacture is one of the development of capitalist urbanisation: people came to the cities looking for work in factories and workshops.

The converse of this is that space now existed for a subculture. People no longer had to live in a family (or in some kind of institution, such as a monastery or college), where the opportunities did not arise for same-sex relations as a *specific subculture*. Indeed, marriage in the Middle Ages was not defined by sexual attraction: it was defined by arrangements between the parents of the bride and the groom, made with a view to gaining economic advantage. Arranged marriage continued to be the case down to the emergence of manufacture, urbanisation and the beginning of commodification of lodgings, food supply and leisure arrangements. These developments created 'cruising grounds' for heterosexuals - and also for homosexuals. Marriages could now be arranged on the basis of attraction.

But what does attraction in this context mean? In essence it means some degree of fetishisation of the attributes of heterosexual desirability. Men are expected to be more manly and women are expected to be more feminine than would be the case under the old arranged-marriage regime. But the intensification of the fetishism of the attributes of heterosexuality produces its own negation in the form of homosexuality - and also, since 1967 through to the 1980s, an efflorescence of all sorts of divergent, divided and subdivided specificities of fetishisms of one sort and another.

This is a set of dynamics which emerges out of the development of capitalism: a society based on the market and the wage relationship in manufacture sets up a transformation in the nature of marriage. That creates negotiations in the form of a whole variety of deviant sexualities of one sort or another. And that in its turn gives rise to the possibility of political parties, religious groups, etc calling for 'purity' to make the issue of sexuality a major campaigning point.

That was not what was going on with the Buggery Acts of 1533, 1549 and 1563. These were part of the reformation: simultaneously the culmination of the medieval regime of conflicts between church and state, and, by the radical subordination of the church to the state, opening up a range of space for market incentives and proto-capitalist order.

But it *is* what was going on with the increasing prosecutions, along with Tory Party election campaigns, episodically in the 18th and 19th centuries, and then with the Labouchere amendment and so on. It is as yet unclear whether the Tories' 1983-87 offensive around 'loony left councils' 'promoting homosexuality,' leading to section 28, will prove to be the last such offensive. For the present, the dominant trends among the Tory

leadership have remained committed to the liberal appearances expressed by gay marriage and so on; and this approach has continued to be promoted by the core of the US state, and its military, in spite of the election of rightwing Christian extremists in the Congress and Donald Trump to the presidency.

But the popularity among the party faithful of the Catholic fundamentalism of Jacob Rees-Mogg should remind us that Tory anti-homosexual campaigns go back to smears against William of Orange in the 1690s and against the Whig Earl of Sunderland in the early 1700s. The matter is as deep-rooted as Tory anti-immigration campaigns, going back to the Huguenot refugees from France in the 1680s, and certainly alive today. It is probably better to assume that the fear of being the 'nasty party' will evaporate, as Trumpist and Brexiteering nationalism continue to undermine the liberal aspect of neoliberalism, and the old order of ideas will gradually resurface.

Should we be celebrating 1967? Well, yes, we should. But we have to be aware of the double edge of these issues. Gain and loss are in this matter interpenetrated negotiations. 1967 was *both* a victory against the witch-hunting of homosexuals *and* used by police, prosecutors and courts to increase prosecutions. Equally, it was *both* a victory for actual liberty *and* a show of liberal modernisation in the interests of 'western' imperialist policy.

As long as we continue to approach issues of this sort through the framework of single-issue politics or of 'intersectionality', we remain prisoners of the choice between warmongering, liberal capital (Clinton, Blair, Cameron and so on) and witch-hunting, patriarchal-traditionalist-nationalist capital (Trump, Thatcher, Rees-Mogg and so on).

We have to get beyond these sectional choices, and hence beyond the mere celebration of 1967, to the more fundamental aim that "the emancipation of the productive class is that of all human beings without distinction of sex or race" - or of gender and sexuality ●

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Notes

1. www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4727522/First-LGBT-unit-fighting-ISIS-photos-rainbow-flag-Raqa.html.
2. R Ghazzawi, 'Decolonising Syria's so-called "queer liberation"' *Al Jazeera* August 5 2017: www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2017/08/decolonising-syria-called-queer-liberation-170803110403979.html.
3. Sexual Offences Amendment Act 2000, passed by Parliament Act procedure over the opposition of the House of Lords after a 1997 decision by the Strasbourg Court of Human Rights in *Sutherland v UK* that the different ages of consent for homosexual and heterosexual conduct was discriminatory and groundless. Convenient summary account in Wikipedia, 'LGBT rights in the United Kingdom'.
4. 'Indecency between males and the Sexual Offences Act 1967' (1978) *Criminal Law Review* pp400-07.
5. *Shaw v DPP* (1962) AC 220.
6. *Knulier v DPP* (1973) AC 435.
7. *Whitehouse v Lemon* (1979) 2 WLR 281.
8. J Schaberg *The resurrection of Mary Magdalene* Continuum 2002, pp71-72.
9. (1986) 3 All ER 39.
10. *R v Brown* (1994) 1 AC 212.
11. *R v Wilson* (1996) 2 Cr App R 241.
12. On its mainly rhetorical character, see M Macnair, 'Homosexuality in schools - section 28, Local Government Act 1988' (1989) 1 *Education and the Law* 35-39.
13. "'Nasty party' warning to Tories" *The Guardian* October 8 2002.
14. Poisoning Act 1530, 22 Hen 8 c 9, repealed 1547 1 Edw 6 c 12; Egyptians Act 1530, 22 Hen 8 c 10; Romanies were thought to have come from Egypt, hence the corruption to 'gypsy'. In contrast to the Buggery Act, Mary's government made the offence more severe - Egyptians Act 1554 1 and 2 Philip and Mary, c 4. This difference points to the religious significance of the Buggery Act.
15. 'Buggery' (1607) 12 Coke Reports 36. The requirement of proof of ejaculation was abolished in 1829 by Offences Against the Person Act 1829, 9 George 4 c 31, s 18.
16. And see also NM Goldsmith *The worst of crimes: homosexuality and the law in eighteenth century London* Ashgate 1999.
17. FB Smith, 'Labouchere's amendment ...' *Historical Studies* 17, pp165-73 (1976). HG Cocks *Nameless offences: homosexual desire in the 19th century* London 2010, pp135-44; D Boyle *Scandal: how homosexuality became a crime* Newcastle upon Tyne 2016.

■ 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.

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weekly WORKER

It's the power
relations,
stupid

Six degrees of Harvey Weinstein

What does the downfall of one of the film industry's most powerful men tell us? Paul Demarty investigates

So, farewell then, Harvey Weinstein - a man not yet convicted of any crime, but accused of so many misdeeds across so small a territory in the vast open space of human viciousness that nobody will ever believe he is innocent of all of it.

The roll call of alleged victims is striking first of all for its length - dozens of accusers have come forward in the wake of the initial news stories in the *New York Times* and *New Yorker*, just as a single hole in the dyke yields to a great flood. Among them are Hollywood A-listers such as Angelina Jolie and Gwyneth Paltrow, begging the question of how many more women found that their path to stardom led through Weinstein and his greasy paws. Several told the *New Yorker* that they strongly suspected they were dropped from films after raising the alarm about Weinstein's appetites, and Rose MacGowan claimed that Amazon's production department canned a project of hers after she reported that Weinstein had raped her.

The primary difficulty we face with this matter is finding an appropriately wide canvas to understand its true significance. You could visualise a crime - any crime - as the point at the centre of a series of concentric circles, in which ever more of the causative material is encompassed. The innermost ring is the criminal's immediate motives; the outermost the Big Bang. How far must we allow ourselves to travel?

Not too terribly far, if we are caught up among the furious reactions that have poured forth from mainstream media outlets and the like. There is first of all the sight of that most trusty of modern folk-devils, the sex-pest, the rapist indeed - evil, if anything can be so called. There are demands for justice on that individual level, and it is hardly surprising. At this level, if in nothing else, *The Sun* stands in principled solidarity with *Vagenda*.

The most vulgar of the rightwing press make it no further than here; but it is hard indeed not to take the additional step of placing the Weinstein affair within the very slightly wider context of the 'casting couch' practices endemic to the film industry and similar high-profile culture scenarios. Many indeed are the people aspiring to make a life for themselves on stage and screen - mostly women, but sometimes also men - who find success at least in part a matter of 'how much you want it' (*double entendre* intended). So far as the law is concerned, the vast majority of such activity is consensual; but those whose *moral* scruples do not advance so far as to denounce it may be assumed to benefit from it from time to time.

Cinema remains a very centralised business, in spite of the relatively modest material costs associated with putting together two hours of video in the contemporary era. Weinstein, along with his brother Bob, are central figures in the last three decades of the industry; it was their company Miramax that (in concert with Robert Redford's Sundance festival) turned independent film into a sub-industry in its own right, with its own financing channels, distribution networks and aesthetic sensibilities, overlapping



She knew nothing ... of course!

with the studio system, but not absorbed by it. It made Weinstein famous in his own right, and very rich - Miramax sold to Disney for \$60 million, after which the other major studios noticed that there was money in 'independent' films, even if their independence was strictly relative. A strong performance in a well-received indie film is a big leg-up. (See, for instance, Jennifer Lawrence in *Winter's bone*: a fine audition reel for the money-machine that is *The hunger games* franchise.)

At the gates of such opportunities lurk men like Weinstein - a few women, but mostly men. They are immensely wealthy, and they have *droit du seigneur* over all they survey. It is *perhaps* the case that Weinstein's individual appetites stand out in their depravity, but maybe he has merely been busier or less careful than his peers. We should be astonished if *nobody else at all* is sucked along into ignominy in Weinstein's slipstream.

Power relations

At this point, the matter is settled for a great many others - Hollywood is Hollywood, and full to bursting with people who will take advantage of you, one way or the other. Why should a psychopath not find a comfortable home there? But that is not enough, at least, for yet a further set of fellow travellers, above all the feminists, for whom this is merely a single example among

countless other indignities inflicted upon women on account of the persistent male pre-eminence in society's upper reaches.

The difference, so far as Weinstein is concerned, consists in the glamour of stardom, which amplifies the voice of Angelina Jolie far beyond those of all the world's *obscure* actresses, wannabe pop stars, aspirant politicians and professionals, etc - never mind those in random white- and blue-collar jobs. Dov Charney - the similarly disgraced CEO of the unlamented clothing brand, American Apparel - made a point of plucking AA's models direct from his California factory floor, in the course of which we are given to understand that Weinsteinian methods of recruitment were employed. In our own line of reportage, we note a letter to *Socialist Worker* on the subject of Weinstein's crimes and the systematic sexism of society, which will no doubt provoke a grim grunt of laughter from anyone who still remembers the Socialist Workers Party's own rape scandal a few years back (that is, more people than you think, comrades).¹

How this works today is a little complicated by the fact that it is official ideology that sexual harassment (never mind sexual assault and rape) is a very bad thing, that women should be afforded the same opportunities as men, that employers should (and do) adopt right-on diversity policies ... Yet - for reasons we will defer for a moment - it

does not actually seem to have worked terribly well, so far as ensuring the kind of roughly equal gender distribution at all levels of the corporate and state hierarchies is concerned, or for stamping out sexual assault and the like.

The result is first of all that a story like Weinstein's shall inevitably arise; and secondly that there is plenty of opprobrium to throw at the matter when it does. It will be remembered that the word 'scapegoat' comes ultimately from the practice of Second Temple Judaism (and after) of expelling a goat into the desert as a symbolic host of the community's sins. The goat, of course, is innocent, whereas Weinstein appears not to be. Nonetheless, the fire with which he is being roasted is based on the same logic - because we have failed to abolish crimes like his, we must all the more obsessively denounce him.

The problem, then, with these periodic orgies of expiation, is in the end a matter of what they leave out, rather than what they include. The subordination of women is such a difficult ghost to exorcise, even when every establishment worthy available is on hand to tell us that it is unacceptable, because social subordination *in general* is inherent to class society. Rage at the crimes of a vicious individual comes at a cost - the cost of underestimating how ordinary such activities are in a wider sense, how, just as the threat of rape lurks within

routine sexual harassment, so ugly violence is the last resort at keeping the machinery going which feeds us all.

A neat symbol of all this is the rather awkward position Hillary Clinton finds herself in, having accepted generous donations from the Weinsteins and also posed as womankind's last bastion against the tangerine nightmare who would grab them by the you-know-what. She claims to be shocked - shocked! - at all the recent revelations, but it is barely credible, any more than if she had claimed to be shocked about Monica Lewinsky, after Gennifer Flowers and all the rest.

Clinton knows full well that such abuse arises fundamentally out of the *power relations* endemic to the system of capital. Men (and women) at the top are frequently in a position where they are able to force underlings to act in a way they do not wish. Her feminism is in the end a matter of making sure women *like her* get ahead; but to accept the fundamental, economic form of social inequality is to hamstring the fight against any of the rest ●

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Notes

1. *Socialist Worker* October 17. The letter's author, Emma Davis, is a frequent *Socialist Worker* contributor, dating back many years, and presumably an SWPer. Why no article? Is that the still small voice of conscience at work?

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