

A paper of Marxist polemic and Marxist unity



weekly **worker**



**From 1905 to October 1917
Lenin's programme was clear
and consistent: supplement**

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No 1178 Thursday November 9 2017

Towards a Communist Party of the European Union

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US and Saudi
Arabia seem to
be readying for
war against Iran

LETTERS



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

Dogmatism

I really have to take issue with Stan Keable's comment: "That particular instance of fixed-category thinking - that Marxism and Labour must not mix - was formative for the dogmatism of the SPGB back in 1908, when it pulled out of the Second (Socialist) International, then led by Marxists, because the Labour Party had affiliated" (Letters, November 2).

In the first place, this is historically inaccurate. The SPGB never was in the Second International. According to David Perrin's excellent book, *The Socialist Party of Great Britain: politics, economics and Britain's oldest socialist party*, the SPGB despatched two observers to the Amsterdam congress of the International in 1904 (the year the party was formed) and, in that same year, washed its hands of that organisation on discovering that it was riddled with reformism and "organisational chaos" (p22). This was two years before the Labour Party was established! Subsequent events completely vindicated the SPGB's approach to the Second International. With the outbreak of World War I, the organisation broke up with the different political parties comprising it going their separate ways to patriotically support their respective capitalist governments in that imperialist bloodbath.

Secondly, Stan raises the question of Marxists and the Labour Party. No doubt there are "Marxists" in the Labour Party, but the pertinent question to ask is - what on earth are they doing in the Labour Party? It is hardly "dogmatic" to ask such a question.

Sure, Jeremy Corbyn seems a decent sort of bloke you could happily sit down and share a pint with (even if I cringe at the cult of the personality that has been built up around him). But anyone who seriously believes the Labour Party has got anything, or ever had anything, to do with socialism, has to be seriously deluded - or else has a totally different definition of 'socialism' to what I have always known.

Indeed, for the Labour Party, 'socialism' seems to mean the kind of 'socialism' that prompted Sir William Harcourt, a liberal politician, to famously announce to the British parliament, while introducing the subject of death duties - he might just as well have been talking of the death of meaningful socialist discourse - in the budget of 1894, that "We are all socialists now". It seems to be the kind of socialism that prompted Herbert Morrison, a Labour politician, to remark in a speech he gave to the pupils of Malvern College in 1944 that "more socialism was done by the Conservative Party, which opposed it, than by the Labour Party, which was in favour of it" (*The Times* February 12 1944). It is not even the calculated obvious distortion of the original Marxian definition of socialism (as a synonym for a stateless, non-market communist society), which Lenin introduced and popularised when he defined socialism as a merely state-capitalist monopoly, made to serve the interests of the whole people (*The impending catastrophe and how to combat it* 1917). No, for the Labour Party, socialism means just some vague, wishy-washy and well-meaning way of running capitalism. Period.

The problem is, as the SPGB has tirelessly pointed out since its inception, that capitalism does not operate on the basis of sentiment, but in accordance with its own inner dynamic - its drive to accumulate capital out of surplus value in a system of ruthless market competition. Capitalism can only be operated in the interests of capital. Even the very reforms it implements, insofar as they benefit the workers, have

also - and more importantly - to benefit the capitalists who finance these reforms (mainly through taxation). If not, such reforms will be withdrawn, watered down or simply ignored and honoured in the breach, as the case may be. Like water finding its own level, capitalism has a way of ensuring the interests of capital prevail.

It is not the politicians that run capitalism, but capitalism that runs the politicians. The record speaks for itself. There is not a single obnoxious, anti-working class measure that the Tories have introduced that has not also been introduced in some form by Labour.

I find it truly astounding that the SPGB of all organisations should be accused of "dogmatism" for simply stating the completely verifiable, if unpalatable facts, of the matter. It's time to turn the tables. It is time for those critics of the SPGB to look deeply into the mirror and to consider, for once, whether or not their own knee-jerk ripostes and oh-so-predictable jibes at the 'Small Party of Good Boys' are not themselves born out of an overweening dogmatism.

Robin Cox
email

Policing workers

Jim Brody asks readers to consider an important question. During the present period of a transition to socialism, what forms of organisation will "advance working class interests"? (Letters, November 2). His answer is the transformation of the British trade unions and the Labour Party (BTULP). These will be changed from organisations that - on behalf of the capitalist class - manage workers' consciousness and activity within a national economy into "militant, fighting bodies" that believe in socialism.

Jim is surely correct that - within the limits of a declining capitalism - a Labour government would advance workers' interests by ameliorating the harsher aspects of austerity. It might also restore some trade union rights and increase spending on health, education, transport, housing and small businesses.

However, I think - when he refers to advancing working class interests - Jim means something different from advances within the boundaries of bourgeois society. He mentions socialism as "a classless, moneyless, stateless society on a global scale". It follows he thinks the BTULP can "advance working class interests" beyond the barriers of commodity fetishism, nationalism and social democracy.

I assume he means these organisations (once transformed) will facilitate the development of class-consciousness through the participation of groups and individuals that "openly describe themselves as ... 'socialist', 'Marxist' or 'communist'". I guess Jim thinks that this participation will lead workers to understand the only way they can advance their interests is to overthrow capitalism and establish socialism. Put differently, Jim thinks that critical support for the BTULP is a stage on the road to socialism.

My thinking is different from Jim's. In previous letters to this newspaper I have argued that the BTULP represent the interests of a section of the ruling class. The argument is that, in order for capitalism to continue with the consent of a majority, the ruling class has to make political and economic concessions to the subordinate class. These concessions entail addressing workers' needs and concerns.

Concessions are especially required during crises when the survival of the system is in question. Thus Keynes' ideas of demand management arose during the depression of the 1930s. Modest reflation, through improving the standard of living of workers, coupled with the policing of workers' expectations, is a ruling class strategy.

The BTULP has been part of this for some time. The risk of a breach in commodity fetishism and the malfunctioning of the industrial reserve army of labour is worth taking if the working class can be coopted and divided along national and sectional lines.

I agree with Lenin, who argued that, when capitalism is in decline, trade unions lose their socialist dynamic and become a barrier to class-consciousness. The capitalist class has incorporated them as atomised units competing on a local, sectional or national scale to better their members' interests. For example, despite the severity of the attacks on workers over the last 40 years, British trade unions refused to mobilise effective collective action. Their attachment and acquiescence to the 'rule of law' is evidence of how they continue to be an insuperable block to socialist political activity. Moreover the investment of their members' contributions in financial markets has given them a bureaucratic structure that mimics that of commercial enterprises.

So what are the forms of organisation that can "advance the interests of the working class"?

Capital is organised globally - across nations. It follows that the future of workers' organisations will be transnational in scope and multinational in composition. They will be open, democratic bodies that reach in influence beyond sectional, local or national barriers. They will be inclusive of allies - especially Marxist individuals, groups and parties. (The latter is a crucial ingredient missing from all contemporary workers' organisations. The house-cleaning of the putrid stain of Stalinism on the working class has yet to be completed. Marxist education and propaganda are essential tools for this).

Organisations of the future will also recognise the centrality of productive labour. Productive workers preserve value and create surplus value. Without the exploitation of their labour-power there is no capital. Of special note are workers in the arms, energy and transport sectors, who during a revolutionary crisis have the power to permanently disable the repressive arm of the bourgeois state.

Finally, Labour is likely to form a government in the UK at a time when the ruling class is fragmenting and losing confidence in its ability to rule. The largest section of the class prefers austerity and will fight the slightest concession. The BTULP therefore has to prove both that concessions are limited and that they are effective in policing and controlling workers' organisations and consciousness. This means intensifying political surveillance in order to atomise workers and socialists. I believe the present trend of expelling members who attend meetings of socialist organisations critical of the BTULP will grow. If the BTULP fails in this task, I have no doubt the state will intervene to complete it.

Paul B Smith
Ormskirk

Free speech

In his speech at the 2017 Labour Party conference in Brighton, Jeremy Corbyn received a standing ovation when he stressed the importance of giving "real support to end the oppression of the Palestinian people, the 50-year occupation and illegal settlement expansion". These words should give confidence to every member of the Labour Party who wants to take forward the struggle for justice in Palestine. Every mention of Palestine at this year's conference was received with a standing ovation.

In this spirit, Camden Momentum hosted a successful public meeting, 'Free speech on Palestine: no support for Israeli apartheid', at a community centre in Belsize Park on October 26. The full meeting was recorded and will be made available online.

Over 100 people gathered to hear

Salma Karmi-Ayyoub, a Palestinian lawyer and legal consultant to Al Haq (the independent Palestinian non-governmental human-rights organisation based in Ramallah, West Bank), discuss how the UK government's new working definition of anti-Semitism, adopted in late 2016, has been used to chill free speech and deter forthright criticism of the state of Israel. Karmi-Ayyoub argued that this situation should be seen as an opportunity to raise the arguments of the Palestine solidarity movement. Campaigners for justice should not be intimidated into silence.

Emeritus professor Moshé Machover, an Israeli socialist and distinguished co-founder of Matzpen (a socialist and anti-Zionist organisation established in Israel), also spoke from the platform about his unjust, summary expulsion from the Labour Party. Machover, whose case won support from a number of Constituency Labour Parties and branches, thoroughly debunked the allegations that the Labour Party's disputes unit made against him, and pointed to a number of logical inconsistencies in the government's new definition of anti-Semitism.

Many Constituency Labour Parties and Labour Party branches passed resolutions in support of Machover. Camden Momentum also passed a resolution calling for his immediate reinstatement, and criticised Momentum's leadership for making decisions about people of colour, LGBT people and people with disabilities without consultation.

Nana Asante, former Labour mayor of Harrow, spoke about the wider context of suspensions in the Labour Party, and her involvement in campaign groups working to establish due process and rein in Labour's star chamber. Paul O'Brien, a member of Camden Momentum, spoke about his own experience of false allegations.

The organisers of the meeting made clear that they oppose racism in all its forms, including anti-Semitism, that it is not anti-Semitic to campaign for Palestinian human rights, it is not anti-Semitic to criticise the state of Israel's apartheid policies, and it is not anti-Semitic to support the Palestinian call for boycott, disinvestment and sanctions against Israel.

There were many Jewish people in the audience, including a number of Israelis, who were outspoken in their criticism of Israel. Many Jewish members of the audience also made clear that it is not anti-Semitic to criticise the political ideology of Zionism, which, like any other political ideology, can be supported or rejected and should be open to question.

Moreover, such discussion does not take place in a vacuum. The political reality for people of colour today has seen an alarming rise in violent attacks, with Muslim women often targeted. Since 1993, there have been over 500 BAME deaths in police custody, yet not one successful prosecution; people of colour are 17.5 times more likely than white people to be stopped and searched by the police, and three times more likely to be arrested. Black and immigrant women receive the lowest wages, and asylum-seekers are forced into destitution. The government's 'Prevent' programme targets Muslim families, resulting in children being taken from their mothers. Yet anti-Semitism - and the huge publicity given to allegations of anti-Semitism in the Labour Party - has become a focus, elevated above these widespread forms of racism.

Camden Momentum

Campaign on

Thank you to all the signatories of the open letter in defence of Moshé Machover. You have been part of a successful attempt to rein in the Labour Party hit squad, but much remains to be done. Moshé Machover has been reinstated in

the Labour Party following nationwide outrage by party members - over 1,300 individual members signed an open letter deploring his exclusion and many party branches and constituencies passed resolutions calling for his reinstatement.

That's the good news. The bad news is that the letter he received (in the name of the party, but conceived and written by officials hostile to the Corbyn project) is grudging and petulant. It places all blame on Moshé for behaving in such a way that, in their words, "any reasonable person looking at the evidence available in public ... would conclude that you have given support to at least one, if not both, of these organisations over a period of 10 years, including while you were a member of the Labour Party". We remain of the view that "any reasonable person" would have asked him if that was the case instead of rushing to judgement. There is no hint of apology for accusing Moshé of being an anti-Semite - a hurtful and unwarranted suggestion.

They have the audacity to end their letter: "The party would like to urge you to take a cautionary approach towards any actions which appear to be clear *prima facie* breach of the party's rules in order to avoid any future misunderstandings regarding your eligibility for membership of the Labour Party." This continues a woeful practice of the party staffers insisting they were right, even when they fail to produce any evidence for suspension or exclusion. Many members who have not been found guilty of any misdemeanour have received letters which tell them that they remain under suspicion and are, in effect, 'bound over to keep the peace'.

The campaign in support of Moshé will continue until there is full redress and the causes of this shambles have been eradicated.

Push your CLP to pass motions demanding: all the damaging insinuations of anti-Semitism must be publicly retracted; a full apology, as requested by Moshé, must be published; the whole system that allowed this travesty of justice, which has brought the party into disrepute, must be fully investigated and reformed; and those who instigated this damaging course of action held to account; all the recent expulsions and suspensions to be reviewed and must be revoked where there is no clear evidence of breach of rule.

There must be no more Labour Party kangaroo courts. The party should adopt trade union best practice on discipline of members: natural justice, not procedural unfairness based on prejudice. Moshé Machover must be the last to suffer this injustice.

The campaign to reinstate Moshé has been led by Free Speech on Israel (FSOI) and Jewish Voice for Labour (JVL). We hope that, if you have not already done so, you will sign up as a friend of FSOI (www.is.gd/FSOIfriend) and a member of JVL (www.jvl.org.uk). FSOI and JVL are changing the terms of debate about Palestine, Israel and anti-Semitism inside the Labour Party and in many other places, and can do more with your support.

Mike Cushman
FSOI and JVL

Deselect them

The Saudi war in Yemen rages on, and the Saudi civil war has now begun. Both are being armed to the teeth by the United Kingdom, with no concern as to the hands into which arms to the global nerve centre of Islamist terrorism might end up. When the British arming of the Saudi war in Yemen was last brought to the floor of the House of Commons, then anti-Corbyn Labour MPs ostentatiously abstained. But, since then, the hateful Michael Fallon has been forced from office, and it has been found that British-made cluster bombs were being used by Saudi Arabia in Yemen. Since as long ago as last December, that has been admitted

by absolutely everyone.

Saudi Arabia is not poor. It is fabulously rich. Its British-made cluster bombs, in use in Yemen and soon (if not already) by Saudis against Saudis, are not from the 1980s. On this country's absolutely toxic relationship with what is jointly the most repressive regime in the world, matched only by North Korea, Jeremy Corbyn has been right all along. The supply of British arms to Saudi Arabia needs to be brought back to the floor of the House of Commons as a matter of the utmost urgency.

The rather good Labour chief whip ought to publish in advance the list of MPs with leave of absence. For anyone else, abstention this time ought to mean deselection in due season, and universal moral revulsion with immediate effect. No such person ought to be re-elected. Therefore, no such person ought to be reselected.

David Lindsay
Co Durham

International

It seems to me that the main point of Lars T Lih's supplement is that Trotsky, in *Lessons of October* (1924), misrepresented the positions taken within and outside the Bolsheviks about which policy had to be favoured in 1917 - a 'democratic' or a 'socialist' revolution.

Trotsky would seem to be contradicting his own position and avowing in the text of 1924 that in 1917 he demanded socialism in Russia: that is, *socialism in one country*. Can this be the Leon Trotsky that we are so familiar with, the one first and foremost identified with international revolution?

But who was it who did proclaim in 1917 that the choice in Russia was one between a bourgeois revolution and a socialist one? Not Trotsky or Lenin. Lenin, in the famous *Tasks of the proletariat in the present revolution* ('April theses'), proposes this important distinction to the Bolsheviks: "It is not our *immediate* task to 'introduce' socialism, but only to bring social production and the distribution of products at once under the *control* of the Soviets of Workers' Deputies" (italics in original). There is no demand here that the Bolsheviks should press for socialism in Russia: that is, in one country. Could he have meant, like Trotsky, that the socialist revolution is a process of *international* development?

However, the orthodox, dogmatic view up to 1917 was that Russia was so backward that it couldn't have more than a bourgeois revolution (like the French) and, after that, a struggle for socialism. Lenin and Trotsky, on the other hand, had taken note of the international situation, amidst the war, as well as the condition of the Russian capitalist class and judged that a bourgeois revolution in Russia would be incomplete and be more than likely betrayed by those in power, *because* of the stage of the country's development. It might even collapse - defeated by Germany or fall into a military dictatorship. In any case, following Marx, the realisation of communism is international. One example being that the advance of the proletariat and party in Russia might well help the German comrades make up their minds.

But does rejection of an unlikely bourgeois revolution, or nowadays 'socialist' self-sufficiency, mean we cannot press for democratic demands like workers' control, gender equality, land nationalisation and an anti-imperialist foreign policy? No, these can be national, or transcontinental, policies inclining towards socialism, which itself can only be defined as global.

So does Trotsky's later account in *Lessons of October* misrepresent the debate as one between calls for democratic demands and urging towards socialism? Early in chapter 2 Trotsky writes: "Lenin, even prior to 1905, gave expression to the peculiar character of the Russian Revolution in the formula, 'the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry' [the

poorest peasants, that is]. This formula, in itself, as future development showed, could acquire meaning only as a stage towards the socialist dictatorship of the proletariat supported by the peasantry. Lenin's formulation of the problem, revolutionary and dynamic through and through, was completely and irreconcilably counterposed to the Menshevik pattern, according to which Russia could pretend only to a repetition of the history of the advanced nations, with the bourgeoisie in power and the social democrats in opposition."

Later in chapter 2, Trotsky comments: "The soviets had either to disappear entirely or to take real power into their hands. But they could not take power in the capacity of a democratic coalition of workers and peasants represented by different parties, but only as the dictatorship of the proletariat, directed by a single party and drawing after it the peasant masses, beginning with their semi-proletarian sections."

In 1924 Trotsky had to assure his opponents that Lenin's demand for workers' control was not the same as the Mensheviks' 'democratic revolution'. It was "a socialist invasion of the workers' state into the sphere of capitalist property rights". But the internationalist knows that even an advance to proletarian rule is not socialism. A revolution is a dynamic process: you cannot fit it into an either-or and call a single country *socialism*.

Mike Belbin
email

No stopping us

The Russian Revolution shook the world, but it failed, claim the bourgeois celebrators of its 100th anniversary.

Back then capitalism still had sufficient energy and dynamism to defeat the European socialist revolution and contain the youthful Soviet Union. No mode of production disappears from history until it has completely exhausted all of its capacities and potential.

The result was the Stalinist degeneration of the revolution. Stalin was responsible for his own crimes, but western imperialism was responsible for Stalin. The blood is on its hands.

Nowadays, however, capitalism really has come to the end of its existence. Super-monopolised, stagnant and moribund, it threatens to take humankind back to a new dark ages, from which it is unlikely to escape with its life. Imperialism was the highest stage of capitalism, but Pax Americana and globalisation was the highest stage of imperialism. The law of diminishing returns has finally caught up with capitalism and there are no possible alternative political-economic arrangements available to it that could give it a new lease of life.

David Ellis
Leeds

Off the fence

The popular democratic movement in Catalonia which culminated in the declaration of the Catalan republic is not simply a Catalan or even a Spanish matter. It is part of battle for democracy across Europe and the wider world. This is a link made by author Liz Castro. She says: "with the establishment of the Catalan republic, we hope that the triumph of grassroots ... democratic process can be a precursor to a much more democratic Europe".

The Catalan rebellion has the characteristics of a democratic revolution - the declaration of the republic, a provisional government, a process for a new constitution and rank-and-file 'Committees for the Defence of the Referendum and the Republic'. But the revolution is unarmed and faces the might of the fully armed Spanish state. Already the republic has been overthrown by a counterrevolutionary coup by the Spanish state.

The class struggle between the Spanish ruling bourgeoisie and Catalan petty bourgeois nationalism - the kingdom versus the republic - is vital

for the development of the revolutionary democratic working class. The vanguard of the working class is neither indifferent to the Catalan rebel republic nor sitting on the fence. On the contrary, the revolutionary working class takes sides with the republic against the (United) Kingdom of Spain.

Paul Demarty seems to criticise the Socialist Workers Party's Alex Callinicos for "arguing that Spain retains its Francoist state core, that Rajoy's Popular Party is the inheritor of the Franco regime" ('Enough wishful thinking', November 2). What is wrong with that? The Spanish monarchy was put on the throne to claim the mantle of 'democracy' for entry into the European Union, whilst retaining Franco's police state apparatus. It was only with the attempt to hold a people's referendum that the Spanish state revealed its true colours.

That the rebellion in Catalonia is not a 'socialist revolution' is a statement of the bleeding obvious. It is a democratic, republican revolution, more akin to the 1916 Easter uprising in Dublin. Lenin's famous observation on the proclamation of the Irish republic was: "To imagine that social revolution is conceivable without revolts by small nations in the colonies and in Europe, without revolutionary outbursts by a section of the petty bourgeoisie with all its prejudices, without a movement of the politically non-conscious proletariat and semi-proletarian masses against oppression by the landowners, the church and the monarchy, against national oppression, etc - to imagine all this is to repudiate social revolution" ('The discussion on self-determination summed up', July 1916).

Lenin saw the Irish uprising as a European event and this is how we should see the events in Catalonia. They are obviously connected to the democratic movement in Scotland and the unfinished business in Ireland. The people of Catalonia were inspired by the Scottish democratic movement, expressed in the 2014 referendum. They hoped they could go one better.

The SNP government wanted to keep the British monarchy and Bank of England. The Catalan movement embraced the republic, as their unionist opponents clung to the Spanish monarchy. Cameron thought he would win easily in Scotland and got a nasty shock before being rescued by Gordon Brown. The Spanish 'Cameron' knew the republic would win and was determined to stop it or disrupt it by all means necessary, including violence.

Paul Demarty makes a very important point. He says: "The long-distance left urges support for the 'Catalan Republic'; but that republic exists largely in theory, and the local state apparatus is largely obeying the new direct rulers. To make the republic a reality, what is demanded is nothing less than the organisation of a militia or other armed force."

On Demarty's demand to arm the republic we can compare the Irish Republic in 1916 and the Kurdish referendum earlier this year. The Irish republic existed "largely in theory", but had arms. It lacked popular support. The Catalan Republic has mass support amongst Catalan workers - not least Barcelona firefighters - but no militia and no weapons except those in the hands of the Catalan police. The Iraqi Kurds won their referendum and are backed up by the armed Peshmerga.

The Kingdom of Spain is opposed to the Catalan Republic, has declared it illegal and is determined to crush it with as much state violence as necessary. Without arms to defend the democratic revolution, it is, as Paul says, a very unequal contest unless the working class in the rest of Spain and Europe come to their aid. It is therefore time for every socialist and communist across Europe to come off the 'self-determination' fence and support the Catalan republic against the United Snakes of Spain.

Steve Freeman
Left Unity and Rise

ACTION

London Communist Forum

Sunday November 12, 5pm: 'Defeating the witch-hunt' - **Moshé Machover** on his expulsion from the Labour Party and subsequent reinstatement.

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 November 14, 6.45pm: Series of talks on human origins, Daryll Forde seminar room, Anthropology Building, 14 Taviton Street, off Gordon Square, London WC1. This meeting: 'The sex-strike theory of human origins'. Speaker: Chris Knight. Organised by Radical Anthropology Group: <http://radicalanthropologygroup.org>.

Historical Materialism

Thursday November 9 to Sunday November 12: Conference of leftwing academic journal, School of Oriental and African Studies, Thornhaugh Street, London WC1. 'Revolutions against capital, capital against revolutions?' Thursday: 1.30pm to 8pm; Friday and Saturday: 9.15am to 8pm; Sunday: 10am to 7pm.

Organised by *Historical Materialism*: www.historicalmaterialism.org.

The Bolshevik revolution

Saturday November 11, 1pm: Discussion, the Red Shed, Vicarage Street, Wakefield. Admission free, including light buffet.

Organised by Wakefield Socialist History Group:

www.theredshed.org.uk/SocialHist.html.

Free speech on Israel

Tuesday November 14, 7pm: Public Meeting, Room B102, Brunei Gallery, School of Oriental and African Studies, Thornhaugh Street, London WC1. A discussion of anti-Semitism, solidarity and justice for Palestine.

Organised by Free Speech on Israel: <http://freespeechonisrael.org.uk>.

Free education now

Wednesday November 15, 1pm: Demonstration. Assemble Student Central, Malet Street, London WC1. All education costs must be borne by general taxation on the wealthy.

Organised by National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts: <http://anticuts.com>.

Sack the Tories

Tuesday November 21, 6pm: Budget day protest, Downing Street, London SW1.

Organised by People's Assembly: www.thepeoplesassembly.org.uk.

No more austerity

Wednesday November 22, 5pm: Protest, Waterstones, 24-26 High Street, Birmingham B4.

Organised by Birmingham People's Assembly:

www.facebook.com/BirminghamPeoplesAssembly.

Social histories of the Russian Revolution

Thursday November 23, 6.30pm: Discussion meeting, Birkbeck, University of London, 26 Russell Square, London WC1. 'Early Soviet society and world revolution, 1917-27'. Speaker: Gleb Albert.

Organised by Social Histories of the Russian Revolution:

<https://socialhistories1917.wordpress.com>.

Taxi co-ops versus Uber?

Friday, November 24, 10am-1pm: Discussion of cooperative economic practice, 1 Drummond Gate, Pimlico, London, SW.

Organised by Cooperatives UK: www.uk.coop/taxicoops.

Craft and peace

Saturday November 25, 11am to 6pm: 7th annual fair, Birch Community Centre, Brighton Grove, Manchester M14.

Organised by Greater Manchester CND:

www.facebook.com/greatermanchester.cnd.

Palestine solidarity

Sunday November 26, 2pm to 6pm: Festival, community centre, 150 Ossulston Street, London NW1. Music, readings, speeches, Palestinian goods.

Organised by Palestine Solidarity Campaign:

www.palestinecampaign.org/events/festival-for-palestine.

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>.

Labour's support for Zionism

Tuesday November 28, 7pm: Meeting, 1st floor, The Wellington, 37 Bennetts Hill, Birmingham B2. Speaker: Paul Kelemen.

Organised by Birmingham Socialist Discussion Group: 07771 567496.

Monopoly power against democratic rights

Tuesday November 28, 7pm: Political economy talk with Simon Renton, Marx Memorial Library, 37A Clerkenwell Green, London, EC1. The final in a series of four classes on 'Capitalism, crisis and imperialism'.

Hosted by Marx Memorial Library: www.marx-memorial-library.org.

The coming war on China

Tuesday November 28, 6.30pm: Fundraiser screening of John Pilger's documentary, followed by Q&A with the filmmaker. Rio Cinema, 107 Kingsland High Street, London E8.

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

Stop universal credit

Saturday December 2, 12noon to 1pm: Protest, Old Market Square, Nottingham NG1.

Organised by Nottingham People's Assembly:

www.facebook.com/PeoplesAssemblyNottingham.

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.

SOCIALISM

Marx, Lenin and 1917

Was it possible, asks **Marc Mulholland**, for a bourgeois revolution to end in socialism?

What makes a bourgeois social revolution? It is not an upheaval which triggers capitalist development. Capitalism predated the bourgeois revolution. We may define bourgeois revolution as the subordination of the state to the requirements of capitalism. In essence, this means making the state dependent upon capitalism. The state is denied an independent or feudal income drawn from crown lands, taxation of direct labour or plunder. Instead it is made dependent upon capital - the surplus of market transactions in a commodity economy. This dependence takes place primarily in the form of deficit financing: the state being made dependent upon credit lines generated by bourgeois society.

Bourgeois revolutions were typically constitutional in form. They ended the fiscal independence of the state by instituting parliamentary control of supply in return for the rule of law. Parliamentarianism (which implies civil liberties) remained and remains the most reliable political form for capitalism, but more fundamental - and at a pinch sufficient - is state dependence upon debt.

The point here is that capitalism is already developed as a system, to a greater or lesser degree, before bourgeois revolution. Nonetheless, bourgeois revolution is pretty recognisable: it institutes representative government and basic liberties in civil society. Capitalism may exist without civil liberties, but so far only capitalism supports them.

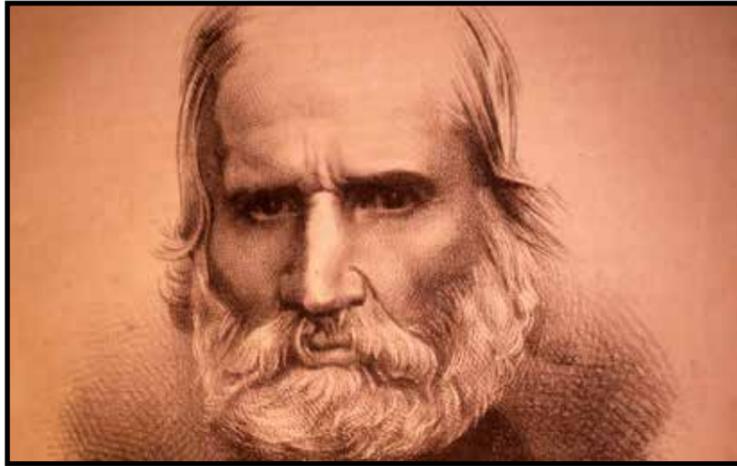
What, therefore, would a socialist revolution look like? For the utopian socialists of the first half of the 19th century, state remodelling was of no priority, if it featured at all. Socialism in this period was primarily about saving workers from proletarianisation. It proposed the formation of more or less productive associations of workers exchanging equitably. Socialists usually looked upon themselves as reformists. They were not proposing a class-based revolution with immediate political effect, which had been the model of the French Revolution, as they saw it.

Cooperatives

While most socialists were thinking about cooperative associations in one way or another, there was often an exception made when it came to the hopelessly proletarianised - those brutalised victims of industrialisation and agricultural labour, without any skill or self-reliance, who were nothing other than degraded wage-labourers. Quite often, socialists imagined these people being taken in hand by the state and organised into labour armies.

Auguste Blanqui, the French revolutionary, became known as a 'communist' because he did approve of class struggle, a political overturn and the mobilisation of the proletariat. The German communists, including Marx and Engels, also saw themselves as communists. Characteristically, they tended to imagine socialism not as a society of cooperative associations, but rather as state ownership of the means of production. They spoke in the *Communist manifesto*, and elsewhere, of armies of labour.

Marx was never enthusiastic about cooperatives. He thought, reasonably enough, that cooperative workshops owning their own capital would quickly evolve into capitalist enterprises and all the old crap would revive. This, indeed, was the tendency. He also pointed out that small-scale cooperatives could hardly handle large-scale production problems - when he was writing, most notably railways. Marx polemicalised against Proudhon on precisely these



Auguste Blanqui: not dissimilar to Lenin

lines. For Marx a socialist economy would involve state ownership of the means of production operating a social plan to supply the needs of the population. (I am leaving aside the question of whether this would be a 'state' in the sense understood by Marx - it would certainly be a state in a sense we can understand).

Marx and Engels, however, did accept cooperatives to the extent that they saw them as a foundation for constructing a socialist economy, so long as cooperatives themselves did not own their means of production, which would be the property of the state. In the *Civil war in France* (1871) Marx spoke of cooperatives as a starting point for "possible communism". Engels wrote to August Bebel:

Nor have Marx and I ever doubted that, in the course of transition to a wholly communist economy, widespread use would have to be made of cooperative management as an intermediate stage. Only it will mean so organising things that society - ie, initially the state - retains ownership of the means of production and thus prevents the particular interests of the cooperatives from taking precedence over those of society as a whole.¹

The experience of state socialism persuades me that cooperative management cannot be considered merely intermediary. Indeed, Marx should have been more alive to the problem of statism than he was, given his awareness of the despotic power of state organisation of production in his analysis of the so-called oriental mode of production. The problem, it might be argued, was that Marx did not clearly theorise the distinction between proletarian revolution and socialism. Proletarian revolution may be the necessary vehicle for overcoming the capitalist mode of production. But socialism, or at least an effectively operating socialism, must be based not upon the proletariat, but on the associated producers.

Proletarians are wage-earners without scarce skill sets. They have little or no individual bargaining power in the labour market. A proletarian's property is their individual portion of a more or less undifferentiated social labour-power. In a complex production process dominated by scientific management, such as Marx more or less accurately anticipated, they have little freedom at work other than to obey direction.

Though there are ambiguities and contradictions in his work, it is not at all clear that Marx thought this fate could be escaped for most workers: freedom would be freedom from work rather than freedom in work. But simply working for the state can hardly be said to destroy the proletarian status.

It is difficult to give any conceptual reality to the idea of associated

producers, if the association spreads much beyond face-to-face interaction. There must be some distinction between the collective worker - as formed by capitalism and defined by Marx in *Capital* as a more or less helpless subject of technocratic control - and the associated producers.

Associated producers, it seems to me, must have conscious control of their work environment. They control their own work processes, recruitment and time management. They take on contracts for an agreed price with representatives of wider society. In short, the associated producer contracts with the state, rather than being employed by it.

I say the 'state', but in practice one must think of this as a nesting process. Most workers are not likely to have the confidence - or perhaps more importantly the interest - to run entire production processes. So we should think, rather, of the state arranging contracts with the enterprise; the enterprise, in turn, arranging contracts with the workshop, the office, the distributors, and so on. The principle would be subsidiarity, but surely not abolition of the division of labour. Categories of associated producers will no doubt specialise in management and administration: an irreducible requirement of any complex production process.

Each contract would end with the job and at least technically the cell of associated producers would dissolve at the end of each job contract, in the sense that it would not have a legal personality to accumulate capital. Insofar as workers may wish to move from one work process to another, the cell of associated producers would in reality as well as in theory continually dissolve and re-form.

It is surely important that the workshops do not own their own capital. This would lead to the reproduction of capitalist competition, as Marx anticipated, and thereby a rentier bourgeoisie living by capital alone. Equally, however, the means of production would not rest in the hands of a state personality. This is because state functions themselves would similarly be contractually arranged. There would be associated producers of economic planning, bureaucracy, judiciary, military, but no corporate state apparatus with permanent legal identity. Permanent sovereignty would rest with the people, which itself would reconfigure its opinions at the end of each electoral cycle, as is well understood in the democratic process.

As it happens, some form of this process already exists in the management techniques of contemporary capitalism. Corporations and public services are now generally organised as internal quasi-markets. Of course, this itself does not end wage labour, because the

relatively unskilled proletariat brings only "his own hide to market",² as Marx put it. Workers are employed as individuals and plugged into work teams as needed. This requires a minimum assemblage of capabilities in a group of associated producers - a group having proprietorial rights over their necessarily cooperative labour, to conclude collective contracts.

Clearly cooperative management of labour through collective contract needs space for income inequality and price competition (even if money price is increasingly superseded by social labour time). Whether this would evolve - as the cooperative spirit develops, and as Marx anticipated - into complete communism, seems to me not a terribly profitable speculation. However, there would obviously be required the underpinning of communism, already embryonic in the welfare state, in which socially defined minimal needs are satisfied regardless of the individual's contribution to social labour.

There was a strong stress on cooperative rather than statist socialism within the socialist movement up until about the 1870s. From this point, there was a significant shift toward statism. This coincides with a historic cleavage opening up between the small master artisans, shopkeepers and so on, who had often been organic intellectuals of the working class movement in the first half of the 19th century, and the wage-earning proletariat. The self-management ethos of artisans curdled into petty bourgeois hostility to wage labour. Kautsky referred to this newly rightwing petty bourgeoisie as the "reactionary democracy".³

State socialists - generally known as collectivists - emphasised the development of large-scale industry unamenable, in theory, to worker control. German socialism, which in the 1860s had been proposing state financing of worker cooperatives, was by the mid-1870s arguing straightforwardly for state ownership. Jules Guesde in France was a good representative of this collectivist socialism. As he told the French National Assembly in a much reproduced speech:

Individual property is represented to us by the past as the guarantee of individual liberty and the most powerful stimulant to production ... [But] Capitalist property [has] established itself upon the ruin of private property ... It is this divorce between property and labour that creates the whole social problem ... the tool of former times has grown into the 'works' of today ... Collective property is growing even under your capitalist regime ... Aristotle was right when he declared that slavery would only disappear when machines could do the work. Well, that moment has arrived. We have them - our slaves of iron and steel; they are our steam horses and mechanisms.⁴

Proletarian revolution, for Guesde, would simply be the "capstone" on an economic evolution towards collectivism. This argument was very similar to that outlined in Frederick Engels' enormously influential *Socialism: scientific and utopian*. This presented a picture of the massification of production leading inexorably to socialism. Class struggle plays a surprisingly small role in this work.

Socialists of the Second International were quite frank that wage earners were unmotivated in their work compared to the petty bourgeoisie and peasantry, and they had little interest in self-management. The emphasis of the Second International was on

shortening the working day and releasing proletarians from work by rationalising the economy, rather than workers themselves taking control as associated producers. This did come under some pressure in the early 20th century with the rise of revolutionary syndicalism, which posited unions as the organisers of production, and theorisations such as guild socialism in England.

Marxists in this period generally thought of the proletariat as effective precisely because it was a mass which favoured security and regularity of wage. This, it was argued, predisposes workers to the elimination of the market. The proletariat was seen as a revolutionary class because it could be organised in mass to this end.

Bolsheviks

In order to establish what proletarian revolution meant to the Bolsheviks, we need to look further back.

The Russian Marxists were much influenced by the 1848 revolution in France. In February of that year, a largely working class insurrection in Paris had overthrown the monarchy and a democratic republic had been established. The new republic included in its number Louis Blanc, a socialist seen as representing the worker interest. This arrangement did not last long. An election replaced the revolutionary Provisional Government with a conservative Constituent Assembly which summarily dismissed socialist influence on the government and provoked a workers' rising in Paris. This was bloodily crushed in the June days insurrection. The most significant active theorist of working class militancy in this revolution had been Auguste Blanqui.

Blanqui proposed an organisation of the revolutionary clubs resting upon the proletariat. He argued for the arming of the working class and the disarming of the bourgeoisie, not in order to establish, in the short run, socialism, but rather to consolidate a militant, pro-worker republic, protected against counterrevolution, and leading transitionally to socialism. He is often presented as an insurrectionist who by minority coup would bring about socialism, but this is not really accurate. When a minister in the republican Provisional Government of France in 1848 said to Blanqui, 'You wish to overturn us', he replied: 'No, to bar the road behind you.'

Such a permanent mobilisation of the proletariat, putting pressure on the government, would lead inexorably and ultimately - but not in one leap - to a proletarian socialist government. This is really very close to Marx's idea of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat', which should be understood in connection with his theory of the 'revolution in permanence'. The armed and organised working class would pressurise a radical government until finally the proletariat were ready to take power themselves; and this could be a matter of decades. One should think of the dictatorship as dictating to government before assuming it altogether.

When Marx was writing primarily as a revolutionary democrat during the German revolution of 1848, he consistently argued for the urban crowd to pressurise the middle class revolutionary parliaments as a counterweight to counterrevolutionary manoeuvres. After the June days insurrection in Paris in 1848, he moved to arguing in favour of 'revolution in permanence'. Proletarian pressure on a petty bourgeois revolutionary government, seeking to dictate to it, would - in an uninterrupted

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Putting the record straight

Over the course of this centenary year we have featured a range of different authors giving their evaluation of Bolshevism and the role of Lenin. **Jack Conrad** argues that those who still insist on claiming that there was some kind of programmatic break in April 1917 are, for their own particular reasons, desperate to defend a radically false version of history

Bolshevism shook the world in October 1917, yet it is clear that the left has still not succeeded in assimilating Bolshevism. Despite the countless centenary speeches, conferences, articles, supplements, pamphlets and books the true significance of Bolshevism continues to go almost entirely unseen.

Saying this undoubtedly carries the risk of being accused of spoiling the 100th anniversary celebrations. But we have a left fragmented into numerous impotent confessional sects, a left which puts forward little more than sub-reformism when standing in elections, a left which worships economic strikes and street protests, a left which considers its highest priority to be uniting 'all right-minded people' against various racist splinter groups, a left which proudly proclaims its programmatic indifference. Under such ghastly circumstances it is surely an obligation to challenge the ignorance, the dissembling, the cosy fantasies.

Till recently a dull consensus has reigned. Leon Trotsky's 1924 version of 1917 goes almost universally accepted as the definitive account.¹ In *Lessons of October* (1924) he painted the pre-1917 Bolsheviks as calling for a proletarian-led overthrow of tsarism ... but wanting to limit social and political tasks to those of a "bourgeois democratic revolution".² Socialism - ie, a socialist economy - was categorically ruled out due to impoverished material circumstances and the overwhelming peasant majority. Moreover - again according to the 1924 Trotsky - given the 1917 February revolution, the overthrow of tsarism and the emergence of workers' and peasants' soviets, the Bolshevik leadership *within Russia* proved worse than inadequate (when it comes to 1917, this article will stick to the Julian calendar because the key moments are generally known by their old monthly dates).

Anyway, under the duumvirate of Lev Kamenev and Joseph Stalin, which lasted only a matter of a few weeks, the commitment to a "bourgeois democratic revolution" continued undiminished. Because of this "ossified" formulation Kamenev and Stalin sought to achieve an unprincipled reunification with the Mensheviks. Trotsky's 1924 version of events goes on to claim that, despite having no popular mandate, Kamenev and Stalin flatly rejected mounting rank-and-file demands to overthrow the Provisional government.

The Provisional government was, of course, not only stuffed full of capitalist ministers, but wholly committed to the Anglo-French alliance and a continuation of the horrendous war with Germany-Austria. Like the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries, the Bolsheviks merely wanted to exert "pressure" on the Provisional government in order to "remain within the framework of the bourgeois democratic regime".³ So went Trotsky's narrative. They therefore found themselves inexorably swept along by the prevailing mood of "revolutionary defencism". An outcome, which, we are told, logically flowed from the deeply flawed theory of stages - a "scholastic parody of Marxism" that can be traced back to the Emancipation of Labour group in the 1880s.⁴

This theory insisted that Russia would have to undergo two distinct revolutions. First stage - a bourgeois democratic revolution, which would sweep away tsarism and all its remnants. Second stage - after a considerable delay - the socialist revolution would come onto the agenda. Supposedly, "it is clear ... from all Lenin's writings up to 1917" that he expected a substantial interval to elapse between "the coming bourgeois revolution and the proletarian revolution" (Tony Cliff).⁵ Purportedly, Lenin envisaged that the overthrow of tsarism would be followed by a "prolonged period of bourgeois democracy and capitalist economic development, after which a second socialist revolution would be possible" (Neil Davidson).⁶ In a similar fashion we are told that Lenin merely aimed for a "bourgeois republic", which, after a suitable time lapse, would constitute "a democratic prerequisite of the struggle for socialism" (Paul Le Blanc).⁷ In



Lenin: the revolution will be uninterrupted

other words, Lenin too advocated a "scholastic parody of Marxism". In actual fact, though, as I shall show, the theory of stages was held not by the Bolsheviks, but the Mensheviks.

The Trotsky of 1924 was, surely, the originator of this version of Bolshevik history - a version of history which claims that Lenin's April theses represented a dramatic rupture with the complacent orthodoxy of stagism. Eg, as recounted in *Lessons of October*, only "after the arrival of Lenin in Petrograd", in early April 1917, was the "problem of the conquest of power" put before the party.⁸ Indeed, Trotsky even claims that Lenin "came out furiously against the old

Bolshevik slogan of the 'democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry'.⁹ Instead of a "bourgeois republic", Lenin held out the prospect of a "full socialist state".¹⁰ Though he never admitted it in any publication, speech, letter or telegram, Lenin had stolen, adopted - or maybe through his own gallant efforts independently arrived at - the theory of permanent revolution, as put forward by Trotsky in his *Results and prospects* (1906).

Over the years, Trotsky's *Lessons of October* has been elevated into an article of almost religious faith, guarded over by leftwing popes as various as Gerry Healy, Ernest Mandel, Tony

Cliff and Alan Woods. Given the horrors of the 1930s, maximising the moral distance between the left and Stalin is perfectly understandable. But this should not have gone hand in hand with maximising gullibility, when it came to his most famous contemporary opponent.

Trotsky's *Lessons of October* began life as the introductory chapter to volume 3 of his never-to-be-completed *Collected works*.¹¹ However, it had nothing to do with dispassionate self-assessment. *Lessons of October* was a polemic ... and needs to be understood as such. It triggered, as doubtless Trotsky intended, the hard fought 'literary discussion'. Of course, this was no obscure dispute with the literati. Therefore a better term might be 'literary wars'. Trotsky had thrown down a *political* gauntlet and other prominent members of the Russian Communist Party - not least those on the politburo and central committee - piled in against him: Grigory Zinoviev, Lev Kamenev, Joseph Stalin, Alexei Rykov, Nikolai Bukharin, Nadezhda Krupskaya, etc.

Though Trotsky fulsomely praised the dead Lenin and spoke about "we Bolsheviks", his aim was to attack, to demean, Lenin's closest lieutenants. They were hardly going to take that lying down. And, besides defending their own revolutionary records and sense of honour, they feared that Trotsky might be contemplating staging a Bonapartist military coup. He had certainly set his sights on replacing, or at the very least augmenting, Leninism with Trotskyism.

Trotsky knew full well that his claims to be one of the "we Bolsheviks" were weak. The fact of the matter is that he only managed to get back into Russia in May 1917 and, of course, he did not join the Bolshevik Party till the summer of that year. Understandably then, Trotsky plays down the importance of the pre-1917 political struggles between the Bolsheviks and their rivals, crucially the Mensheviks. His whole account pivots on the concentrated 12 months of February 1917 to February 1918.

Targets

Naturally, all contributions to the 'literary discussion' are marked by factional considerations. And, of course, that includes Trotsky's *Lessons of October* (and his subsequent articles: eg, 'Our differences'). However, what is notable, is that even cold-war warriors have gladly echoed Trotsky. Not with any intention of glorifying him, obviously, but with the intention of dismissing, deriding and diminishing the Bolsheviks in general and Stalin in particular (albeit for entirely different reasons, compared with the anti-Stalin left).

Take Leonard Schapiro: he refers to the Bolsheviks' all-Russian conference held in March 1917 (the first since the fall of tsarism). Schapiro quotes, *very sparingly*, the agreed resolution on the Bolsheviks' attitude towards the Provisional government (the reporter for the central committee being Stalin). That resolution called for "vigilant control" over the Provisional government and celebrated the Petrograd soviet as the "beginning of revolutionary power". Schapiro then proceeds, in the manner of Trotsky, to claim that Stalin's approach was "based on the assumption, which no-one questioned, that a long period of bourgeois middle class democratic government had now begun, and that the dictatorship of the proletariat only related to the distant future".¹² In other words, Schapiro, like Trotsky, accuses the Bolsheviks of *de facto* Menshevism.

With the *Lessons of October*, Trotsky launched what amounted to a battle of ideas. In effect he sought to win the Russian Communist Party and the Communist International to what had long been called Trotskyism. His main targets were Zinoviev and Kamenev. Note, Trotsky rather foolishly dismissed Stalin as little more than a grey blur. He chose not to even mention him in *Lessons of October*. Stalin was, in Trotsky's eyes, a nonentity who was far less dangerous to the prospects of the revolution than, firstly, Zinoviev and Kamenev and, then, Bukharin. Of course, later in 1926 there was a Trotsky-Zinoviev-Kamenev rapprochement. Together they formed the United

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Opposition. However, even in the late 1920s, Trotsky's slogan was: "With Stalin against Bukharin? Yes. With Bukharin against Stalin? Never."¹³

Although Zinoviev, Kamenev, Stalin, Rykov, Bukharin, Krupskaya, etc lacked Trotsky's natural brilliance as a writer, when it came to the burgeoning Lenin cult, he - that is, Trotsky - was objectively at a distinct disadvantage. Prior to 1917 he had been a dogged, albeit annoyingly talented, opponent of Lenin's. Hence his inescapable admission that he had "made real and major organisational mistakes". However, Trotsky insists, Zinoviev and Kamenev committed their "real and major organisational mistakes" when it really mattered: in the revolutionary year of 1917, when the tactics appropriate to the underground, to the needs of surviving tsarism, had to give way to the much more demanding tasks of preparing for an insurrection. Here - and it is true - Lenin and Trotsky proved ready; Zinoviev and Kamenev unready.

However, Trotsky's non-Bolshevik past cannot so easily be disposed of. Certainly not if Zinoviev, Kamenev, Stalin, Rykov, Bukharin, Krupskaya, etc had anything to do with it. One after the other they listed off and duly denounced Trotsky's numerous anti-Bolshevik schemes and pronouncements.

Eg, having belligerently sided with the Mensheviks, Trotsky broke with them in 1904, but he remained on friendly terms. Indeed Trotsky dismissed the Bolshevik-Menshevik split as entirely needless. He blamed "Maximilien" Lenin for the disunity. In that semi-Menshevik spirit he became an inveterate unity-monger. In 1912 Trotsky famously brought together a motley crew of Bundists, Menshevik liquidators and Bolshevik boycottists - the August bloc - in an attempt to sabotage the 6th (Prague) Conference of the Russian Socialist Democratic Labour Party. A move which an infuriated Lenin denounced as an attempt to "destroy the party".¹⁴

Needless to say, when it came to the two really sizeable factions of the RSDLP, it was the "uncultured", "barbaric", "sectarian-frenzied", "Asiatic" Bolsheviks whom the thoroughly "European" Trotsky considered the biggest obstacle to the unprincipled unity he was desperately seeking.¹⁵ Not surprisingly then, he denounced Leninism as "being built on lies and falsification" and containing the "seeds of its own destruction".¹⁶ All eagerly quoted in the 'literary discussion' by Trotsky's Bolshevik opponents.

By contrast, of course, since 1903, Zinoviev, Kamenev and Stalin were Lenin's loyal disciples and co-workers. During the struggle of *Iskra* to form the party; the bitter fallout after the 2nd Congress; the 1905 dress rehearsal; the election campaigns of 1906, 1907 and 1912, they were with Lenin. And naturally Lenin trusted and valued them.

Admittedly, in April 1917, Lenin had to crack Kamenev and Stalin into line (though I believe there was a genuine Lenin-Kamenev convergence too). And in October 1917, there can be no doubt, Zinoviev and Kamenev (and a few others, such as Rykov and Nogin) recoiled - took fright - at Lenin's increasingly agitated demand that the Bolsheviks had to go for 'All power to the soviets' (as it turned out, a Bolshevik-Left Socialist Revolutionary Party coalition government). Much to their later shame, they constituted a two-strong minority on the central committee, which opposed the vote to support *in principle* the call for an uprising (the colourful account in John Reed's *Ten days* that a "rough workman" intervened during the central committee meeting and thereby helped swing the vote from 10:2 against to 10:2 for is, not surprisingly, untrue¹⁷). Just two weeks before it happened, Kamenev and Zinoviev publicly issued a protest letter opposing the widely known Bolshevik plans for an insurrection. Although their letter was couched in veiled terms, it was gleefully published in *Novaya Zhizn* (a daily paper associated with the leftwing writer, Maxim Gorky). Lenin branded them "strike-breakers" and demanded their expulsion.¹⁸

Seizure of power by one party, the Bolsheviks, could only but split the worker-peasant camp and lead to horrendous bloodshed - so reasoned the frightened pair. Zinoviev and Kamenev banked on forthcoming elections to the Constituent Assembly and securing a solid leftwing majority. In that timid spirit they wanted the central committee to continue with Lenin's old line of calling for a coalition of the socialist parties and a "peaceful revolution". To realise that perspective - agitationally useful in August and September 1917 - relied, of course, on the generals and admirals not launching another putsch ... and on winning the Socialist Revolutionaries and Mensheviks to accept Bolshevik dominance.

To state the obvious, that tactic had exhausted itself by October. Rightwing Socialist Revolutionaries and rightwing Mensheviks were, in fact, more and more revealing themselves as counterrevolutionaries.

Zinoviev and Kamenev expressed their scepticism about the imminence of revolution in Europe. Russia, they warned, would suffer the fate of the 1871 Paris Commune and be drowned in blood. Reactionary forces were, it is true, openly proclaiming that they preferred German occupation to the chaos of revolution. Kerensky ominously talked of abandoning Petrograd. Unwilling to choose between counterrevolution and *making the revolution* - and that is objectively what circumstances amounted to - Zinoviev and Kamenev resigned from the central committee.

Then there was the regrettable role they played in the immediate period post-October 1917. The railworkers union, the Vikzhel, demanded a socialist coalition government - minus Lenin and Trotsky. Zinoviev and Kamenev were prepared to countenance negotiations on that basis and for a brief moment their viewpoint commanded a majority on the central committee. However, Bolshevik victory in Moscow swung opinion round on the central committee back in Lenin's favour. Negotiations were rejected. In response, once again Zinoviev and Kamenev resigned from the central committee (this time joined by Alexei Rykov, Vladimir Milyutin and Victor Nogin). Lenin denounced them as "deserters".¹⁹

However, while the Trotsky of 1924 makes everything of such episodes, the same cannot be said of Lenin. When the leader of the Italian Socialist Party, Giacinto Serrati, attempted to excuse his refusal to abide by Comintern resolutions demanding a split with the centrists, he cited the position upheld by Zinoviev and Kamenev in October 1917. Lenin would have none of it:

On the eve of the October revolution in Russia, and immediately after it, a number of very good communists in Russia committed an error, one which our people are now loath to recall. Why are they loath to recall it? Because, unless there is particular reason for it, it is wrong to recall mistakes which have been completely set right.²⁰

However, the overall problem with Trotsky's account is that to all intents and purposes it threw out the whole of pre-1917 Bolshevism in the attempt to rouse the post-Lenin membership of the Russian Communist Party against Lenin's most trusted lieutenants. Even at the level of a literary discussion Trotsky was, surely, bound to lose.

More to the point, current leftwingers who dogmatically repeat Trotsky's 1924 version of events in 1917 as verily blind themselves - mostly unintentionally, but always stupidly - to the significance of Bolshevism: its lasting commitment to a minimum-maximum programme; its strategic vision of a worker-peasant alliance; its stress on the demand for a democratic republic; its militant opposition to all forms of economism; its profound internationalism; its robust, open internal and external polemics; its unproblematic acceptance of factions; its deep social roots; its mass membership and its accompanying galaxy of trained and tested local, regional and national leaders.

It amounts to false-memory syndrome. Instead of aiming for a programmatically guided, mass revolutionary party, much of the contemporary left is quite content with life as one of the "many grouplets" (Steff Grainger in *The Clarion*).²¹ The belief is that one fine day their 1917 will come ... the confessional sect will rise from the depths of obscurity to lead the masses in storming the heavens. A perspective that sees the left discount the patient strategy of Marxism for an unacknowledged version of Bakuninism: worship of street protests and economic strikes is combined with the most extreme forms of opportunism: eg, Respect and the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition.

Dual power

Let me briefly sketch out the situation in early 1917.

As everyone knows, tsarism ignominiously collapsed with the February revolution. Political strikes by engineering workers, mass demonstrations on International Women's Day, army mutinies, the seizing of police arsenals, the arming of the people ... and high-command panic forced the abdication of Nicholas II.²² Prominent members of the pseudo-democratic fourth duma - there was a constitutionally inbuilt landlord-capitalist majority - then agreed a rotten deal with Menshevik and Socialist Revolutionary leaders. A Provisional government was to be put together and placed in the safe hands of prince

Georgy Lvov - a Cadet and potential prime minister under Nicholas II. Other top ministers included Pavel Milyukov, another Cadet, and Alexander Guchkov of the Octobrists. Needless to say, the Octobrists were loyal monarchists and the traditional party of the big capitalists and landlords. As for the Cadets, they too represented capitalist interests, but advocated a constitutional monarchy along the lines of a Britain or a Sweden. And behind these parties, behind the Provisional government, there stood the directing might of Anglo-French imperialism. The Provisional government felt compelled to declare for press freedom, a republic and a just peace, but - and this was decisive - it remained firmly committed to war and the secret treaties (including securing Constantinople for Russia). The human slaughter would therefore continue unabated.

However, the Provisional government could present a left face. Alexander Kerensky agreed to become minister of justice, then minister of war (in July he was made prime minister). He is described as either a Trudovik or a Socialist Revolutionary, depending on which source one reads. Other 'socialists' soon joined him around the cabinet table: eg, Victor Chernov, an SR, and Irakli Tsereteli of the Mensheviks. This shift to the left happened both in response to mass pressure and in order to deceive the masses, who were moving to the left. The war with Germany-Austria was therefore dressed up as a defence of the gains of the February revolution - not the continuation of tsarist foreign policy in a new, republican, guise. In the first few months following February 1917 defencism was therefore a widespread popular sentiment.

But the Provisional government was not the sole centre of power. In fact, almost from the start, there was dual power. Years of education by the leftwing press ensured that the memory of the 1905 revolution lived on. Workers and members of the armed forces needed little prompting, when it came to establishing their own soviets (councils) in factories, on board ships, in barracks and in every city and urban district. In due course the peasants too elected their own soviets. Moreover, in many ways the soviets - in particular the Petrograd soviet - were where real authority lay. Eg, soldiers would only obey orders if countersigned by the Petrograd soviet - a form of workers' control over the military. Adding to the complexity of the situation, however, the SR and Menshevik majority in the Petrograd soviet was determined to strengthen the power of the Provisional government. So there was a dual power that drained authority in the direction of the Provisional government (ie, away from the masses to the bourgeoisie).

What of the Bolsheviks? They were no confessional sect, no grouplet. Historically they were, in fact, the *majority party* of the working class (as proven by 1905, the mass support for *Pravda*, trade union elections and the last, 1912, elections to the tsarist duma, where their candidates won the entire workers' curia). So the Bolsheviks were deeply rooted amongst the proletarian masses.

However, tsarist oppression, unleashed with the onset of World War I, saw the Bolsheviks hit with particular severity. All their duma deputies were arrested (the Mensheviks were left untouched). Members of their central committee based in Russia were put on trial - Siberian exile quickly followed. Rank-and-file members were rounded up by the score, were drafted into the army, and those who retained their liberty often kept their distance out of fear ... that or they were forced into semi-invisibility to avoid capture by the okhrana (the tsarist secret police). All this was punishment for Bolshevik opposition to the imperialist war in the duma and Lenin's uncompromising demands from abroad to turn imperialist war into civil war. By contrast social pacifists and social chauvinists were tolerated. Indeed the activities of Georgy Plekhanov and his right Menshevik group were "secretly subsidised" by the tsarist authorities.²³

So, in February 1917, the Bolsheviks were considerably weakened. Membership was down to some 40,000-45,000.²⁴ And their committees were debilitatingly cash-strapped - many barely functioned. In terms of leadership, the Bolsheviks within Russia had to make do with the politically limited abilities of Alexander Shliapnikov and Vyacheslav Molotov. And, whereas even the small centrist faction, the RSDLP (Internationalist) - or the Mezhrainy, as they were commonly called - had, already, in January, obtained a printing press²⁵ (possibly due to German finance, channelled through the 'merchant of revolution', Alexander Parvus), the Bolsheviks only began publishing *Pravda* in Petrograd, and *Sotsial Demokrat* in Moscow, after the February

revolution. Unsurprisingly, Bolshevik delegates to the Petrograd soviet therefore constituted a minority, at least to begin with.

Like the Cadets, the Mensheviks and SRs united around the slogan, 'Defend the revolution'. In other words, defend the continued rule of the landlords and capitalists and defend the continued alliance with Britain and France. Tsarism in a republican guise. Nevertheless, bizarrely, according to the Socialist Workers Party's founder-leader, the "existence of dual power" and the eminently predictable behaviour of the Mensheviks and SRs exposed the "bankruptcy" of the 'old Bolshevik' programme.²⁶ Hence Lenin, we are seriously told, was forced to carry out "a complete break" with what he had written up to 1917.²⁷ And, of course, what Tony Cliff says here is still what passes for truth on much of the left.

Democratic revolution

Let us take the argument forward by going back. From the outset - yes, from the foundation of the Emancipation of Labour group in 1883 - Russian Marxists (eg, Georgy Plekhanov, Vera Zasulich and Pavel Axelrod) were agreed, contra the anarchists and narodniks, that the country was not yet ripe for socialism, if by that one means a socialist economy, leaving behind commodity production, etc. The autocratic state, the lack of capitalist development, the domination of the economy by a woefully backward peasant agriculture - all explain why the coming Russian Revolution was envisaged by *all* Marxists as having two stages. Trotsky was no exception - there could be no "jumping-over of the democratic stage of the revolution or any of its specific steps".²⁸

It was the narodniks, and following them the SRs, who raised the call for a "socialist Russia". A nonsense in Lenin's view. In 1905 he characteristically writes: "Only the most ignorant people can ignore the bourgeois nature of the democratic revolution which is now taking place."²⁹ Note, the SRs, formed in 1902, advocated a programme that included the "expropriation of capitalist property and the reorganisation of production and the entire social system on socialist foundations" (in truth a utopian peasant socialism).³⁰

What about the Menshevik (minority) wing of the RSDLP? As I have said, it was committed to a theory of stages, which, yes, inevitably resulted in tailism. According to the Mensheviks, the overthrow of tsarism had to be crowned by the class rule of the bourgeoisie and a western-style parliamentary government. Nevertheless, in step with the subsequent growth of capitalism, the working class grows too. Eventually this class eclipses and finally replaces the peasantry in population terms. Only then does socialism become a feasible proposition.

If the forthcoming revolution against tsarism was bourgeois, then, agreed the Mensheviks in a conference resolution of April-May 1905, the working class and its party "must not aim at seizing or sharing power in the provisional government, but must remain the party of the extreme revolutionary opposition".³¹ So, for mainstream Menshevik thinking, the immediate role of the working class was to edge, push or lift the bourgeois parties into their predetermined position as leaders of the anti-tsarist revolution.

Participating in a provisional revolutionary government was ruled out for two main reasons (obviously violated after February 1917 despite the Provisional government embodying the rule of capitalists and landlords). Why non-participation? Firstly, if the working class succumbed to the temptation of power, it would cause the bourgeoisie to "recoil from the revolution and diminish its sweep".³² Secondly, without an already established European socialism, the working class party in Russia would be unable to meet the economic demands of its social base. Failure to deliver far-going changes would produce demoralisation, confusion and eventual defeat.

If the anti-tsarist revolution proved successful, the workers' party should, argued the Mensheviks, exit the centre stage, so as to allow the bourgeoisie to assume power. Obeying the 'laws of history', the workers' party then bides its time in the wings until capitalism had carried out its preordained historic mission of developing the means of production. Hence, for the Mensheviks there had to be two - necessarily distinct - revolutions, the one separated from the other by a definite historical period.

While not including socialist measures in their minimum programme, Lenin and the Bolsheviks were resolutely opposed to handing power to the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie in Russia was both cowardly and treacherous. Despite occasional leftish flourishes, their parties

sought a compromise with tsarism, not a people's revolution. Eg, the Cadet Party, the flag-bearer of the liberal bourgeoisie, committed itself to a constitutional monarchy. Russia therefore had no Cromwell, no Washington, no Robespierre. The only force capable of scoring a *decisive victory* over tsarism and pushing through the most radical changes objective circumstances permitted was the proletariat, in alliance with the peasant masses.

Naturally, because Russia was overwhelmingly a peasant country, the Bolsheviks paid particular attention to their agrarian programme. In fact, peasant interests set the limit on how far the revolution could go. Landlord power could certainly be destroyed and the land nationalised and given, according to their wishes, to the peasants. This 'black redistribution' was, of course, not a socialist measure. It would though serve to uproot Russia's semi-feudal social relationship and allow capitalism in the countryside to develop along an "American path".

As an aside, Trotsky's *Results and prospects* programme was *not* limited by the interests of the peasants. While a hegemonic working class could take the peasantry along with it in the overthrow of tsarism, an irreversible split between these two popular classes was bound to occur. The peasants were, for Trotsky, "absolutely incapable of taking an independent political role". They would gravitate towards either the rule of the proletariat or the rule of the bourgeoisie. And, because working class political domination is incompatible with "its economic enslavement", Trotsky reasoned, the workers' party would be "obliged to take the path of socialist policy" ... even if that risked a bloody "civil war" with the peasantry.³³ Thankfully by the summer of 1917 Trotsky underwent his Leninist conversion. If one reads him when he was the leader of the Left Opposition, it is obvious, despite accusations to the contrary, that he was painfully aware of the vital importance of keeping the peasantry onside. Eg, in the early 1930s he roundly condemned Stalin's drive to forcibly collectivise agriculture.

Time

The fact of the matter is that the Bolsheviks were determined that the anti-tsarist revolution would see the fulfilment of the party's *entire* minimum programme - a democratic republic, the election of judges, free universal education, abolition of the police and standing army, a popular militia, separation of church and state, extensive democratic rights, decisive economic reforms, such as workers' commissions to inspect factories, an eight-hour day, etc. Such a package could only be delivered by establishing a *provisional* revolutionary government, which embodied the interests of the great mass of the population.

Lenin used a famous algebraic formulation to sum up the majoritarian regime envisaged by the Bolsheviks: the 'democratic (majority) dictatorship (rule) of the proletariat and peasantry'. Such a hybrid regime could not abolish classes and bring full liberation for the working class. That was impossible. Economically Russia would have to progress capitalistically - albeit under the armed rule of the working class and peasants. That meant the continuation of wage-labour (albeit with workers taking over abandoned factories), the nationalisation of the central bank, etc.

How long was the provisional revolutionary government going to last? There are those who reckon that prior to 1917 Lenin envisaged it being nothing more than a brief moment. After the provisional revolutionary government had carried out its radical package of measures there would be elections to a constituent assembly that would see the bourgeoisie come to power with the support of peasant votes.³⁴ Frankly, a 'worst outcome' version of the Bolshevik programme. Yes, Lenin admitted the possibility that the first national elections might see the return of the workers' party to being a party of extreme opposition. It is also true, however, that Lenin extensively wrote about the revolution being *uninterrupted*.

Given that the provisional revolutionary government was going to be committed to carrying out the *full* minimum programme, it was conceived of as being relatively long-lived. Why? Far from the provisional revolutionary government being imagined as a mere prelude to the bourgeoisie assuming power, the party of the working class had every interest in spreading the flame of revolution to Europe.³⁵

Lenin seems to have seriously contemplated war for the "purpose" of "taking" the revolution into Europe. One of his key slogans was for a "revolutionary army".³⁶ Depending on their success in furthering the *world socialist revolution*, the Bolsheviks looked towards a purely working class government in Russia and

embarking on specifically socialist tasks. The fact that the tasks of the provisional government included uprooting every last vestige of tsarism, enacting sweeping reforms, defeating bourgeois counterrevolution - and maybe even fighting a revolutionary war in Europe - explains why I have argued that the provisional government would have been expected to last not a few brief months, but years.

However, my main point is that the Bolsheviks were not committed to handing political power to the bourgeoisie, as were the Mensheviks. Of course, for the Bolsheviks, the international dimension was crucial. The revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry in Russia could not survive in isolation. It would - it had to - "rouse Europe" and the socialist proletariat of Europe to carry through the "socialist revolution".³⁷ The United Socialist States of Europe would then, in turn, help Russia move in the direction of socialism (which requires definite material conditions in terms of the development of the productive forces). And a revolution uniting Europe and half of Asia had a realistic chance of rapidly spreading to every corner of the globe.

Inevitably, there would, within Russia, be a differentiation between the proletarianised rural masses and the emerging class of capitalist farmers. But *not* necessarily a specifically socialist revolution: ie, the violent overthrow of the state. Put another way, for the Bolsheviks there would not necessarily be a democratic or bourgeois stage and then a socialist stage at the level of regime. Democratic and socialist tasks are categorically distinct, premised as they are on different material, social and political conditions. But certain features can evolve and assume dominance. The revolution could, given favourable internal and external conditions, proceed *uninterruptedly* from democratic to socialist tasks through the proletariat fighting not only from below, but from above: ie, from the salient of state power. The revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry thereby *peacefully grows over* into the dictatorship (rule) of the proletariat. As the size, organisation and consciousness of the urban and rural working class grew, so would the strength of the workers' party. The necessity of a coalition government would at some point disappear. The tasks of the maximum programme then decisively come onto the agenda.

Lenin defended and elaborated upon the Bolshevik programme for the democratic revolution as being the shortest - in fact, the only viable - route to socialism in *Two tactics of social democracy* (1905).³⁸ A seminal pamphlet that armed the Bolsheviks with the political weapons needed, first to lead the "whole people" for a republic, and then lead "all the toilers and exploited" for socialism.³⁹ In terms of the rural sea: first the Bolsheviks would seek to lead the entire peasantry against tsarism and the aristocratic landlords, then the Bolsheviks would seek to lead the poor and middle peasantry against the kulak exploiters, in the struggle for socialism. By any objective assessment then, Lenin and the Bolsheviks had their own version of permanent revolution from at least 1905 onwards.

Permanent

Too often comrades who should know better associate permanent revolution exclusively with Trotsky. Of course, the phrase long predates him, going back to the "literature of the French Revolution".⁴⁰ From there it spread far and wide, becoming a common "programmatic slogan" of European radicals, socialists and communists, including Karl Marx and Frederick Engels.⁴¹ And, as Hal Draper helpfully explains, for Marx, the word 'permanent' in 'permanent revolution' describes a situation where there is "more than one stage or phase" in the revolutionary process. He usefully adds that the expression "retains its specifically French and Latin meaning". It does not mean perpetual or never-ending. It is employed by Marx to convey the idea of "continuity, uninterrupted".⁴²

Bearing this in mind, consider Lenin's "uninterrupted revolution". A typical example is from 1905. Lenin declares: "We stand for uninterrupted revolution. We shall not stop halfway."⁴³ He wants to take the anti-tsarist revolution to the socialist stage through a process that does not halt at some artificial boundary. No, the Bolsheviks will push the revolution forward both from below and above (ie, employing state power).

Not without interest in this respect, when it came to Russia, Kautsky too can be cited as an advocate of permanent revolution. He was, remember, a close ally of the Bolsheviks in the years before World War I. Almost an honorary

Bolshevik. Here is Trotsky's own - albeit rather self-serving - description of Kautsky's approach "when he was a Marxist":

At that time (true, not without the beneficial influence of Rosa Luxemburg) Kautsky fully understood and acknowledged that the Russian Revolution could not terminate in a bourgeois-democratic republic, but must inevitably lead to the proletarian dictatorship, because of the level attained by the class struggle in the country itself and because of the entire international situation of capitalism. Kautsky then frankly wrote about a workers' government with a social democratic majority. He did not even think of making the real course of the class struggle depend on the changing and superficial combinations of political democracy.

At that time, Kautsky understood that the revolution would begin for the first time to rouse the many millions of peasants and urban petty bourgeoisie and that, not all at once, but gradually, layer by layer, so that, when the struggle between the proletariat and the capitalist bourgeoisie reached its climax, the broad peasant masses would still be at a very primitive level of political development and would give their votes to intermediary political parties, reflecting only the backwardness and the prejudices of the peasant class.

Kautsky understood then that the proletariat, led by the logic of the revolution toward the conquest of power, could not arbitrarily postpone this act indefinitely, because by this self-abnegation it would merely clear the field for counterrevolution. Kautsky understood then that, once having seized revolutionary power, the proletariat would not make the fate of the revolution depend upon the passing moods of the least conscious, not yet awakened masses at any given moment, but that, on the contrary, it would turn the political power concentrated in its hands into a mighty apparatus for the enlightenment and organisation of these same backward and ignorant peasant masses. Kautsky understood that to call the Russian Revolution a bourgeois revolution and thereby to limit its tasks would mean not to understand anything of what was going on in the world.

Together with the Russian and Polish revolutionary Marxists, he rightly acknowledged that, should the Russian proletariat conquer power before the European proletariat, it would have to use its situation as the ruling class not for the rapid surrender of its positions to the bourgeoisie, but for rendering powerful assistance to the proletarian revolution in Europe and throughout the world.⁴⁴

I do not deny in the least that Bolshevik ideas, perspectives and expectations underwent change from 1905 to 1917. It seems clear to me that with the outbreak of World War I Lenin and other Bolsheviks began to talk positively about the "Commune state" and taking "steps towards socialism" in the immediate aftermath of the anti-tsarist revolution.

Lenin's writings on this subject were later called by the Stalin-Bukharin duumvirate in order to pharisaically justify their theory of socialism in one country. In effect Paul Le Blanc too. He quotes a range of memoirs to the effect that the pre-October, post-April Bolsheviks aimed for a "socialist revolution". Given that his sources, both Menshevik and Bolshevik, are post-October, that does not surprise me in the least. There was in almost all cases a retrofitting of post-October realities onto pre-October perspectives. And, suffice to say, there was disjuncture between pre-October perspective and post-October realities. Eg, after the split with the Left SRs, Lenin could no longer *seriously* claim - well, at least in terms of *representative* democracy - that the Soviet republic embodied the rule of the proletariat and the peasantry. Not long after that, Bolshevik leaders (ie, Zinoviev), were saying that the dictatorship of the proletariat amounted to the dictatorship of the Communist Party. Hence, in my view, the 1920s memoirs need to be treated not as gospel, but - certainly when it comes to programmatic aims - with a degree of caution.

Nevertheless, pre-October 1917, what I insist on is programmatic continuity. Like a river, Bolshevism was added to by tributaries, had its becalming eddies, but broadened and continued to flow towards the sea. There was, in its overall course, no break.

Lenin vs Trotsky

All in all, to any objective observer Trotsky's differences with Lenin are clear. Lenin wanted a majoritarian regime. Trotsky wanted a minority regime that would lead the majority. Different, but

not that different. True, in *Results and prospects* and in Lenin's so-called replies there was a fierce polemic between the two men. However, factional interests often produced more heat than light. Eg, in 1906 Trotsky dismissed out of hand any suggestion of a "special form of the proletarian dictatorship in the bourgeois revolution". He was, at the time, intent on rubbishing the Bolsheviks in particular. On the other hand, Lenin attacked Trotsky for "underestimating" the importance of the peasantry by raising the slogan, 'Not a tsar's government, but a workers' government'.

Not least, on the basis of this slogan, Trotsky is no doubt right when he says that Lenin had "never read my basic work". That slogan was proclaimed not by Trotsky, but his friend and collaborator, Alexander Parvus (yes, the very same man who went on to become an agent of German imperialism in World War I and who arranged the 'sealed train' which took Lenin and co from their Swiss exile to Petrograd in April 1917). "Never did Lenin anywhere analyse or quote," says Trotsky, "even in passing, *Results and prospects*."⁴⁵ Moreover, he goes on to cite the "solidarity" that existed between himself and the Bolsheviks during and immediately after the 1905 revolution.

And for the benefit of those idiots who demonise the term 'stage', who sneer at Lenin because of his use of the word, Trotsky can be quoted boasting that he "formulated the tasks of the successive stages of the revolution in exactly the same manner as Lenin". This should provide food for thought - to those who permit themselves the luxury of thought. The same can be said for Trotsky's proud affirmation that "Lenin's formula" closely "approximated" to his own "formula of permanent revolution".⁴⁶ Despite that, we are told time and again that Trotsky's theory was far superior to Lenin's. Perhaps yet another example of dead generations weighing like a nightmare on the brains of the living.

Undoubtedly, Trotsky's decision to invent the "complete break" narrative in 1924, was a bold move. By pretending, in effect, that Lenin had become a Trotskyite in April 1917, Trotsky could pump up his own standing and at the same time target the role played by those who constituted ruling triumvirate: Stalin, Kamenev and Zinoviev. We have already mentioned Kamenev and Stalin in March 1917, and Zinoviev and Kamenev in October and November 1917. Then there was the dispute over China in the mid to late 1920s. Stalin and Bukharin advocated a bloc of four classes - workers, peasants, the intelligentsia and the national bourgeoisie. This class collaboration - the political subordination of the Communist Party of China to the Kuomintang - was, of course, excused under an orthodox sounding 'democratic dictatorship' rubric. Opportunism is seldom honest.

However, Trotsky directly - and, at least in my view, incorrectly - dismissed Lenin's formula, the 'democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry'. He even claimed Lenin's authority for this. As already quoted, in his *The lessons of October* Trotsky maintained that in 1917 Lenin "came out furiously against the old slogan of the 'democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry'".⁴⁷ In fact, Lenin attacked not so much the 'revolutionary dictatorship' formula, but rather those who misused it - those who he thought were showing a willingness to compromise with the Menshevik and SR 'revolutionary defencists'.

March to April

As already argued, the Provisional government acted in the interests not of the proletariat and peasantry, but of the capitalists and landlords (and behind them Anglo-French imperialism). *Ipso facto* Lenin concluded that the proletariat and peasantry (in the form of the soviets) had "placed power in the hands of the bourgeoisie". And, though Alexander Kerensky's ministry, formed in July 1917, contained many who had been hunted by the tsarist secret police - Matvey Skobelev, Irakli Tsereteli, Victor Chernov, Nikolai Avksentiev, Boris Savinkov, Alexei Nikitin, etc - no Marxist will find Lenin's designation at all strange. Programme, policy and practice determines class content. Not only did the Provisional government continue Russia's involvement in World War I: it cynically prevaricated over peasant demands for land redistribution and fearfully delayed convening the Constituent Assembly.

What was Lenin's approach during this "first stage of the revolution"? Did he junk his old call for the replacement of tsarism by a workers' and peasants' republic? Yes, of course he did ... in the same way as Trotsky junked his 'Not a tsar's government, but a government of the people', and the followers of Parvus junked his 'Not a tsar's government, but a workers' government'. Nor

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were the Mensheviks, the SRs or anyone else on the left unaware that one of their key demands had been realised. The Romanovs had fallen. Tsarism was no more. Russia had become a republic.

It did not take a cover-to-cover study of Hegel's *Logic*, or the "recovery of the dialectic" to recognise such a *qualitative* development. If Trotsky had not made a "complete break" from his 'Not a tsar's government' slogan, his close friends would have been well advised to seek out suitable psychological treatment for the poor fellow. Ditto Lenin's friends, or anyone else's for that matter.

Obviously the demand to overthrow the tsar was totally obsolete. Future progress lay in combating the "honest" popular illusions in revolutionary defencism, exposing the true nature of the provisional government and raising sights. The Bolsheviks were a minority in the soviets. Their task was to become the majority by agitating for ending the war, seizing landlord estates, introducing workers' control, replacing the police with Red Guard units, demanding elections to a Constituent Assembly, etc.

This would prepare the "second stage of the revolution" and with it the transfer of all power into "the hands of the proletariat and the poorest sections of the peasants". The "only possible form of revolutionary government" was a "republic of soviets of workers", agricultural labourers' and peasants' deputies", writes Lenin. Surely, a concrete application of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry' slogan. Lenin made no claims that the party's "immediate task" was to "introduce" socialism. Only that the banks should be nationalised and production and distribution had to be put under workers' control to prevent an economic catastrophe. Such measures could be classified as "taking steps towards socialism". But - and this is the key point - they would not meet any objections from the peasantry (quite the contrary: the peasants could be enthused by the Bolshevik's determination to save the country).

Does the perspective of a workers' and peasants' republic which would commit itself to "taking steps in the direction of socialism" indicate an abandonment or a *development* of Lenin's theory in light of new and unexpected circumstances? I make no excuse for once again turning to Lenin himself for an answer. In the article, 'The dual power', he says the following:

The highly remarkable feature of our revolution is that it has brought about a *dual power*. This fact must be grasped first and foremost: unless it is understood, we cannot advance. We must know how to supplement and amend old 'formulas' - for example, those of Bolshevism - for, while they have been found to be correct on the whole, their concrete realisation *has turned out to be* different. *Nobody* previously thought, or could have thought, of a dual power.⁴⁸

Yes, in April 1917 Lenin got into a brief, but heated, dispute with the 'old Bolsheviks': ie, the party's Russian-based leadership. There are all manner of reports of Lenin angrily berating Kamenev and other top leaders on his arrival back in Petrograd. He was certainly unhappy with what he had read in *Pravda*. However, the idea that when he presented the April theses he was met with widespread hostility, even incomprehension, by his Bolshevik comrades does not stand up to serious examination. Lenin was never an isolated figure. Most Bolsheviks welcomed the April theses. That does not mean that there were no differences. There were. But the differences were those of shade, even nuance.

The differences revolved around five closely related questions: (1) the attitude to the provisional government; (2) revolutionary defencism; (3) unity with the Mensheviks; (4) the peasants; (5) socialism.

Lenin feared that under the direction of Kamenev and Stalin *Pravda* had gone soft on the Provisional government. He intransigently demanded that the Bolsheviks should give no support whatever. Politically the Provisional government was pro-capitalist, pro-imperialist and pro-war. It is certainly true that Kamenev did give the Provisional government *critical support* in his first *Pravda* editorial (March 14) - both the words "critical" and "support" appear in the text. However, Lars T Lih explains that what Kamenev's editorial was designed to achieve had nothing to do with strengthening the Provisional government. On the contrary, the Bolsheviks should work to expose the Provisional government and ready the masses for an "inevitable clash".⁴⁹ So the emphasis was on 'critical' rather than 'support'. A judgement surely confirmed by the March All-Russian Conference of the RSDLP - ie, before the arrival of Lenin - where Kamenev is reported as saying this:

In Steklov's resolution [Yuri Steklov's resolution

had been chosen by conference as the alternative to the one being supported by Kamenev - JC] the point dealing with support is absolutely unacceptable. It is impermissible to have any expression of support, even to hint at it. We cannot support the government because it is an imperialist government, because, despite its own declaration, it remains in an alliance with the Anglo-French bourgeoisie.

In the *Communist manifesto* there is a statement to the effect that we give support to the liberal bourgeoisie, but only in the event of its being attacked. But from Steklov's report it is obvious that it is not they who are being attacked, but rather it is they themselves who are attacking the soviet of workers' deputies.

In yesterday's amendments to the resolution we stated that support at the present time is impossible. In view of the dual power, the will of the revolutionary people is embodied not in the Provisional government, but in the Soviets of Workers' Deputies [as we have seen, a proposition that needs qualifying]; and also that the latter must be strengthened and that they must come to a clash with the Provisional government. Our task is to point out that the only organ worthy of our support is the soviet of workers' deputies. The task of the Congress [of the soviets] is to proclaim to all Russia that the sole expresser of the will of the revolutionary people is the soviet of workers' and soldiers' deputies, and that we must strengthen and support them and not the provisional government.⁵⁰

What of Stalin? Opening the debate at the March 1917 conference, he began by speaking on behalf of the central committee, but then, in closing, expressed himself as being more inclined towards the resolution of the Krasnoyarsk Soviet of Workers', Soldiers' and Cossacks' Deputies: "Support the Provisional government in its activities only in so far as it follows a course of satisfying the demands of the working class and the revolutionary peasantry in the revolution that is taking place." Suffice to say, the Provisional government showed not the least sign of "satisfying the demands of the working class and the revolutionary peasantry". As Kamenev himself tellingly stated: the "full satisfaction of their demands [those of the workers and peasants] is possible only when full and complete power is in their own hands".

Of course, what Lenin objected to was that such attempts to expose the Provisional government would, in fact, foster illusions in the Provisional government. That was a matter of political judgement, not political principle, of course. So, on the question of the attitude towards the Provisional government, there is certainly a difference of emphasis, even temperament, but not of substance. Kamenev-Stalin were advocating flexibility, appearing reasonable and patient; Lenin hostility, intransigence and eagerness to fight.

It should, however, be pointed out that there was a very small rightwing Bolshevik faction at the March conference that came together over the question of defencism. Having been provided with the time needed to present their position, they lost the vote ... and seven delegates then walked out. True, Kamenev had written of soldiers staying at their posts - but that was a perfectly orthodox Bolshevik formulation, which only a fool would use as evidence of him going over to social chauvinism. Lenin himself spoke out against soldiers deserting and heading off back to their villages. In fact, of course, Kamenev wanted to engage with the 'honest' revolutionary defencist's in the army and unite with other socialists who *militantly* opposed the war. This can, once again, be seen from the March conference (during the joint session with the Mensheviks). Kamenev says this:

To pose here the question of defencism and anti-defencism is to repeat the discussion which we have already had. We have come to the conclusion that it is impermissible to vote for the [social-pacifistic] resolution of the executive committee [of the SR-Menshevik-dominated Petrograd soviet]. It is not a socialist resolution. The executive committee assumes in it the viewpoint of Henderson and Thomas [the Labour Party's war ministers in Britain]. It is impossible to vote for a resolution which says nothing about peace, about the abrogation of the secret treaties left over from tsarism. Another resolution must be counterposed to it. Our task is to fuse the socialist-internationalists around the resolution.

Here we come to the unity of the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. Firstly, it should be appreciated that

in the provinces the majority of party committees were joint committees - a situation that lasted beyond the October revolution in the remoter places. No less to the point, what Kamenev had his sights on was *not* unity with right Mensheviks such as Irakli Tsereteli (as alleged by Trotsky). No, the aim was to unite with left Mensheviks on the basis of the Zimmerwald-Kienthal conferences. In short a Bolshevik-Menshevik Internationalist unification. However, not surprisingly, Lenin would have none of it. He had already organised a distinct Zimmerwald left (with a view to establishing a Third International). Martov and the Menshevik Internationalists wanted peace, but also continued unity with the right Mensheviks. That was their price for unity with the Bolsheviks. Therefore, what Lenin rejected was not winning the Menshevik Internationalists to unity with the Bolsheviks, but moving the Bolsheviks in the direction of the Menshevik Internationalists. Here was an issue of real substance.

We now come to the question of peasant limits and the possibilities of socialism. Kamenev feared that Lenin, because of his exile in Switzerland, had failed to fully grasp the actual state of play in Russia. Hence in *Pravda* Kamenev responded to the April thesis thus:

As for comrade Lenin's general scheme, it appears unacceptable, inasmuch as it proceeds from the assumption that the bourgeois democratic revolution is *completed*, and builds on the immediate transformation of this revolution into a socialist revolution.⁵¹

Clearly, Kamenev was upholding the necessity of winning the peasants and thus preparing the conditions for a second revolution. The peasants could not be "skipped". The idea of playing at the seizure of power by the workers' party *without the support of the peasantry* was not Marxism, he said, but Blanquism. Power had to be exercised by the majority. And Lenin, in the April theses and some of his latest writings, seemed to be implying that the peasantry had gone over to social chauvinism and defence of the fatherland (not 'honest' revolutionary defencism). Therefore, perhaps, he had concluded that the peasantry had become a lost cause.

While Kamenev feared that Lenin was demanding an immediate transition to a socialist revolution, Lenin pointed out that he had explicitly warned against such a perspective: "It is *not* our *immediate* task to 'introduce' socialism ..."⁵² Obviously there were misconceptions on both sides, but - and this is surely what counts - unity was quickly re cemented. In the case of the peasantry, Kamenev was clearly right and Lenin wrong. Subsequently, Lenin talks of the differences being "not very great", because Kamenev had come round to his viewpoint. Unfair - if anything, Lenin had come round to Kamenev's viewpoint, at least on the peasantry. At the very least he clarified statements that were hastily written or perhaps wrongly informed. He also joins with Kamenev in opposing the leftist slogan of 'Down with the provisional government', as raised by the Petrograd committee of the RSDLP. The situation was not yet ready for the overthrow of the Provisional government in April-May 1917. Hence, together with Kamenev, Lenin insisted that the "correct slogan" was "Long live the soviet of workers' and soldiers' deputies".⁵³

Things were, though, exceedingly complex. Firstly, while state power had been transferred, that did not by any means meet the immediate programmatic aims of the Bolsheviks. The Romanovs had been overthrown. To that extent, argued Lenin, the programme had been fulfilled. But the 'revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants' in the form of the SR-Menshevik majority in the soviets had voluntarily ceded power to the bourgeoisie. Instead of coming to power, the dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry existed side by side with, and had subordinated itself to, a weak government of the bourgeoisie and landlords (ie, the Provisional government). Only once the Bolsheviks had won a majority could they finish with dual power and complete the revolution.

The dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry had therefore become interwoven with the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and landlords. The Russian Revolution had gone further than the classical bourgeois revolutions of England 1645 or France 1789, but, in Lenin's words, it "has not yet reached a 'pure' dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry"⁵⁴ ●

Notes

1. Of course, as shown by Lars T Lih, in August 1917 Trotsky

was singing a very different tune. Eg, his article, 'The character of the Russian Revolution', stands in stark contrast to what he wrote in 1924. See LT Lih, 'Trotsky 1917 vs Trotsky 1924' *Weekly Worker* November 2 2017.

2. L Trotsky *The Challenge of the Left Opposition* (1923-25) New York 1980, p207.

3. *Ibid*.

4. *Ibid* p205.

5. T Cliff *Lenin* Vol 2, London 1975, p124.

6. N Davidson *How revolutionary were the bourgeois revolutions?* Chicago 2012, p228.

7. P Le Blanc, 'The Bolsheviks and socialist revolution' *Weekly Worker* October 26 2017. Paul Le Blanc is quoting Lenin's *Two tactics of social democracy*, but he does so in a manner that, in my view, misrepresents both Lenin and the Bolsheviks (see *CW* Vol 9, Moscow 1972, pp49, 83).

8. L Trotsky *The Challenge of the Left Opposition* (1923-25) New York 1980, p211.

9. *Ibid* p209.

10. Mary Davis, 'Why was there a revolution in Russia in 1917?' *Morning Star* November 4-5 2017. The reason for quoting this Stalinite here is to illustrate just how influential Trotsky's version of 1917 has become.

11. Between 1924 and 1927, 12 volumes of Trotsky's *Collected works* were published in Moscow and/or Leningrad by the State Publishing House. Volume 3, issued in two parts, contained his writings and speeches for the year 1917 (see https://archive.org/details/Trotsky_CollectedWorks).

12. L Schapiro *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union* London 1964, p162.

13. Quoted in SF Cohen *Bukharin and the Bolshevik revolution* Oxford 1980, p269.

14. VI Lenin *CW* Vol 17, Moscow 1977, p23.

15. L Kamenev, 'Trotskyism or Leninism?', quoted in F Corney (ed) *Trotsky's challenge: the "literary discussion" of 1924 and the fight for the Bolshevik revolution* Leiden 2016, p217.

16. Quoted in *ibid* p21.

17. J Reed *Ten days that shook the world* Harmondsworth 1970, p59.

18. VI Lenin *CW* Vol 26, Moscow 1972, p216.

19. *Ibid* p303.

20. *Ibid* p385.

21. S Grainger, 'The Russian Revolution' *The Clarion* November 2017.

22. For the role of the army high command see R Service *The last of the tsars* chapter 4, London 2017.

23. SH Baron *Plekhanov in Russian history and Soviet historiography* London 1995, p148.

24. Figures from *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks)* Moscow 1939, p183.

25. See the *Weekly Worker* series translated and introduced by John Riddell and Barbara Allen, beginning with the Petrograd Mezhrayonka leaflet of January 1917.

26. T Cliff *Lenin* Vol 2, London 1975, p127.

27. *Ibid* p124.

28. VI Lenin *CW* Vol 9, Moscow 1977, p32.

29. *Ibid* pp28-29.

30. <https://community.dur.ac.uk/a.k.harrington/srprog.html>.

31. Quoted in T Dan *The origins of Bolshevism* New York 1964, pp211-12.

32. VI Lenin *CW* Vol 9, Moscow 1977, p128.

33. See LT Lih, 'Democratic revolution in permanenz' *Science and Society* October 2012.

34. See J Creegan, 'April in Petrograd' *Weekly Worker* April 16 2015.

35. The idea that the Bolsheviks only adopted the perspective of sparking the socialist revolution in the west with the April theses is therefore an obvious absurdity. That does not stop Rex Dunn putting this passage into Lenin's mouth: "A commune state in Russia will lay the foundation for a socialist revolution. But, given the betrayal by German social democracy and the Second International in 1914, 'our' revolution now becomes the stimulus for the socialist revolution in the west, not the other way round." More hopeless muddle follows. Eg, Lenin's hegemony strategy "is derived from an article written by Kautsky in 1906"⁵¹ The same author then goes on to denounce "Kautsky's strategy for the German and Russian revolutions" because it "amounts to what would later be called a popular front: ie, a recipe for the defeat of the socialist revolution". So presumably this assessment would apply to Lenin's 1905 strategy. Comrade Dunn concludes by damning the work of Lars T Lih as providing an "apologia for reformism" because his "continuity" theory is not based on the methodology of Marxism. "Therefore all the new evidence he has gathered from the archives is wasted" (R Dunn, 'Rearming the April theses' *Weekly Worker* September 14 2017). How showing the great value Lenin placed on Kautsky's pre-1914 writings - ie, when he was a Marxist - constitutes an "apologia for reformism" is a strange proposition puzzling. Marxists should experience not the least problem in learning from non-Marxist historians, philosophers, scientists, etc.

36. VI Lenin *CW* Vol 9, Moscow 1977, p128.

37. *Ibid* p82.

38. See *ibid* pp15-130.

39. *Ibid* p114.

40. "Kautsky describes the policy of the *sans-culottes* in 1793-94 as one of 'Revolution in Permanenz'" - quoted in RB Day and D Gaido (eds) *Witnesses to permanent revolution* Leiden 2009, p537.

41. H Draper *Karl Marx's theory of revolution* Vol 2, New York 1978, p204.

42. *Ibid* p201. Marx's most famous use of 'permanent revolution' can be found in his 1850 'Address of the Central Authority of the Communist League', (K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 10, New York 1978, pp277-87). A document which Lenin not only knew by heart, but "used to delight in quoting" (AH Nimtz *Lenin's electoral strategy from 1907 to the October Revolution of 1917: the ballot, the streets - or both* New York 2014, p146).

43. VI Lenin *CW* Vol 9, Moscow 1977, p237.

44. L Trotsky *The permanent revolution* New York 1978, pp33-34.

45. L Trotsky *The permanent revolution* New York 1978, p166.

46. *Ibid* p168.

47. *Ibid* p198.

48. VI Lenin *CW* Vol 24, Moscow 1977, p38.

49. LT Lih, 'Bolshevism was fully armed' *Weekly Worker* February 26 2015.

50. Trotsky included the surviving minutes of the March conference in his *The Stalin school of falsification* London 1974, pp181-237. Provisional government thugs ransacked the Bolshevik HQ in July 1917. Though fragmentary, they make fascinating reading.

51. Quoted in VI Lenin *CW* Vol 24, Moscow 1977, p50.

52. *Ibid* p52.

53. *Ibid* p244-45.

54. *Ibid* p61.

process - develop into a full-blown dictatorship of the proletariat in its own right. In his journalistic writings of 1850, Marx explicitly connected this strategy to the name of Blanqui. Misunderstanding Blanqui as a simple supporter of the revolutionary *coup d'état*, Hal Draper is rather embarrassed by this connection, and spends much of his book on the *Dictatorship of the proletariat* excessively downplaying the Marx-Blanqui nexus.

When Marx and Engels arrived in London as revolutionary exiles in 1850, they supported an effective alliance between their Communist League and the French Blanquist exiles. They jointly proposed a 'dictatorship of the proletariat', which would 'dictate' the most thoroughgoing revolutionary measures to a petty bourgeois government, and which would in due course become itself a revolutionary government.

The 'revolution in permanence' and the 'dictatorship of the proletariat', therefore, was in reality a joint product of the Marx party and the Blanquists. It was not just, or perhaps even mainly, a future form of government appropriate for the building of socialism, but rather a means by which to sustain militant proletarian pressure on a bourgeois or petty bourgeois revolutionary government. In turn, this was borrowed from the example of the plebeian *sans culottes*, organised in the sections of Paris, who had applied pressure from the left during the key radical years of the French Revolution.

After some months, Marx effectively broke from the Blanquist party in exile - though he was always loath to criticise the imprisoned Blanqui himself. He even broke from the Communist League, criticising its new leader, August Willich, for his willingness to see a revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat as an instrument for the immediate introduction of communism. Marx now began to emphasise the self-organisation of the proletariat outside the pressure cooker of revolution in permanence. When he returned to the notion of the dictatorship of the proletariat, it was in the context of the Paris Commune. He did not see this as a socialist experiment, but rather the model by which the proletariat could hold a republican revolution to the most exacting standards, build up its own strength, and begin to work out its own means of social salvation.

The Russian Marxists were enormously influenced by all of this. In particular, they paid a great deal of attention to the 1850 circular of the central committee of the Communist League, written by Marx, which encapsulated many of these ideas. Working on the assumption that their own bourgeois revolution had yet to come, they hoped to see a dictatorship of the proletariat emerging in the course of a Russian bourgeois revolution - leaning upon any revolutionary government, demanding the most democratic standards and facilitating the rapid organisation and training of the proletariat for its future socialist offensive against bourgeois power.

A trend of opinion within Russian Marxism known as the economists feared the consequence of the proletariat seeking a domineering political role in a bourgeois revolution. It made more sense, they believed, to leave the politics of bourgeois revolution to the bourgeoisie, while the proletariat organised as best it could under the conditions of tsarist autocracy its social consciousness and institutions, such as trade unions. A premature bid for proletarian political hegemony would only frighten the bourgeoisie into the camp of counterrevolution and encourage utopian socialist illusions in the proletariat.

As is well known, Lenin was a vigorous opponent of economism. In common with other Marxists, he insisted upon the proletariat adopting a leading role in the coming bourgeois revolution

against autocracy. The Russian Marxists, led at first by Plekhanov, insisted that a dictatorship of the proletariat would be appropriate in the Russian Revolution, dictating to the bourgeoisie the proletarian price for its leading role in overthrowing autocracy: maximal civil liberties, democratic rights, scope for trade union and cooperative organisation - even nationalisation of certain sectors of the economy within the overall capitalist framework. The Russian Social Democratic Labour Party was the only national organisation of the Second International to include the demand for the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' within the party programme. Plekhanov, at a party congress, openly speculated that such a dictatorship could even prevent, for a prolonged period, the convocation of a Constituent Assembly, such as had marginalised the working class left wing in the French Revolution of 1848.

In defending the idea of a proletariat dictating to the bourgeoisie in the Russian bourgeois revolution, Lenin was certainly within the Marxist mainstream. Nonetheless, this polemical contribution to the debate is often seen as the beginning of a divergent genus within Marxism in the form of Bolshevism. It is certainly true that the meaning ascribed to *What is to be done?* is much overstated. It was not a denial of the common Second International presumption that wage workers had an inclination toward socialism, even if it required a socialist party and usually bourgeois socialist theoreticians to develop and articulate the doctrine. It would be odd indeed for the Bolsheviks to stress a theory of proletarian incapacity for absorbing socialist ideas, at least by the time of the 1905 revolution. In the 1906 Duma elections, the Social Democrats combined (Bolsheviks and Mensheviks) won 80% of the vote in the workers category of the electorate. Socialism had an astonishing hold on the Russian masses.

The context for Lenin's discussion was the assumption that the coming revolution would be bourgeois, by which was meant constitutional-democratic rather than anti-capitalist. The Mensheviks believed that the instinctive socialism of workers would allow them to ally with the bourgeoisie in pursuit of bourgeois aims - capitalist democracy - while retaining their class independence and formulating progressive demands that would strengthen the proletariat for its future struggle with the bourgeoisie. Lenin was more doubtful about this. While he thought that the bourgeoisie was weak *vis-à-vis* the tsarist autocracy, it would be ideologically strong *vis-à-vis* the proletariat, and likely to dominate it.

The role of Bolshevik Social Democracy, therefore, was twofold. On the one hand, it would seek to exclude the bourgeoisie altogether from any significant role in the constitutional-liberal revolution, placing it in the hands of the proletariat. The role of the party was to remorselessly undermine the authority of the oppositional bourgeois organisations and to outbid them by promoting organised insurrection as the only appropriate mechanism of revolution.

Problematic

A bourgeois revolution led by the proletariat was evidently a rather problematic concept: what would prevent the proletariat from attempting to push on to a socialism quite unfeasible, given the underdevelopment of Russian capitalism? Surely a proletarian dictatorship would collapse in bloodshed?

This led the Bolsheviks to the second half of their scheme. The proletariat would have a social ally that would restrict its ambitions to the politically possible. This would not be the urban middle classes, but rather the turbulent peasantry and urban petty bourgeoisie. As Lenin wrote in 1905, "the course of events in a democratic overturn will bind us to such a mass of allies from the petty bourgeoisie and the peasantry ...

that the fears of too swift a transition to the maximum programme are simply ridiculous".⁵ Such a configuration of forces, the Bolsheviks hoped, would lead to an insurrectionary revolution that would make a clean sweep of tsarism and produce a capitalist-democratic regime based upon an overwhelmingly peasant democracy, leavened by a confident proletariat - which, as an urban class constituted in an effective political party, would be hegemonic.

The Mensheviks pointed out that the peasantry as a diffuse social class, unable to sustain institutions of its own political representation, were the natural basis of autocracy rather than (essentially urban) democracy, and that the proletariat was insufficiently mature to sustain democratic constitutionalism against the pressure of the great mass of the Russian population. Until capitalism had developed and civil liberties given a period in which the proletariat could exercise its political muscles, bourgeois civil society was simply unavoidable for the constitutional modernisation of Russia.

What characterised Bolshevism, therefore, was an intense disdain for constitutionalist liberals, combined with an unremitting focus on conspiratorialism in preparation for an insurrection. The endpoint was supposed to be a constitutionalist and liberal capitalist society, but one under the control, or dictation, of the insurgent proletariat and peasantry. This, rather than a concern that the proletariat was not inherently socialist, explains the centralist, hierarchical traditions bred in the bone and blood of Bolshevism. It had a great deal in common with the revolutionary traditions of Auguste Blanqui in the mid-19th century.

The Mensheviks were concerned that such ultra-revolutionism risked driving the bourgeoisie into the hands of the autocracy. The proletariat, they argued, was powerful enough to impose demands on the bourgeois revolution, but not to take it over. A tendency within Menshevism wished to shut down the underground conspiratorial apparatus altogether; they were known as 'liquidationists'. They rapidly developed in a reformist direction. The Menshevik exile leadership generally rejected the liquidationist tendency, but emphasised that Bolshevik hostility to bourgeois liberalism would prevent any practical cooperation between the working and middle classes in the event of revolution, and would likely frighten the bourgeoisie into the camp of counterrevolution.

The outbreak of war in 1914 only reinforced in Lenin's view the bankrupt nature of bourgeois liberalism. He was the first amongst the Marxists to entirely accept the notion that the bourgeoisie had ceased to be liberal in any meaningful sense, or progressive even relative to feudal reaction. By his theory of imperialism, Lenin attempted to prove that the bourgeoisie had become entirely integrated with statist militarism and authoritarianism. Particularly in his 1917 work, *State and revolution*, Lenin went back to Marx and excavated his definition of proletarian revolution as the smashing of the state apparatus through social revolution as civil war.

As it happened, the February revolution of 1917 showed clearly enough that the Russian urban bourgeoisie was, in fact, still inclined to constitutional-liberalism. Nor indeed was the February revolution and insurrection organised by a revolutionary cadre, as the Bolsheviks had anticipated.

Nonetheless, the Mensheviks also found that their slogan of proletarian self-organisation threatened to fatally undermine the tenacity of bourgeois liberalism, given the socialist, even millenarian temper of the Russian working class. For the dying Plekhanov, the Russian proletariat was simply too advanced politically, too backward socially: "Did we not begin the propaganda of Marxism too early in backward, semi-Asiatic Russia?"⁶

Lenin argued, in contrast, that the

bourgeois revolution organised by insurrection, and under the aegis of a proletarian-peasant dictatorship, was still the order of the day. This was how Lenin understood the October revolution of 1917: not as a socialist revolution, but as a *sui generis* bourgeois revolution, in which the bourgeoisie would be dictated to by the masses, both proletarian and peasant, in such a way that the ideal conditions for socialism would be achieved in the shortest possible time. Lenin himself described the social formation thus instituted as "state capitalism". Workers' control in the factories and manufacturers would reduce the bourgeoisie to a kind of service class, politically and militarily subordinated - even partly enslaved - to the proletariat and peasantry. By the time the civil war broke out, the bourgeoisie was conscripted to do the menial work of the army (June 1918). The ration system operated on a class basis: a ratio of 4:3:2:1 - the smallest category for those living on income from capital, houses, business enterprises or hired labour, as well as clergy and professionals. The bourgeoisie was soon caught between starvation and illegal activities.

The Mensheviks had by now come to place great importance on the sovereignty of the Constituent Assembly. The Bolsheviks, however, saw it as a legalistic restraint on the dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry in the bourgeois revolution, which would take institutional form through the soviets, and, as is well known, dispersed the assembly. It is worth noting that socialists of all description won an astonishingly huge majority in the Constituent Assembly: something like 80%. I should imagine there was no historical precedent for this. The Bolshevik seizure of power was not so much about establishing socialist government as establishing a dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry.

Socialism

Somewhat to the embarrassment of other Bolsheviks, Lenin continued to insist that the October seizure of power was a moment of the bourgeois revolution, not the socialist revolution. He only argued that it had moved onto the plane of socialist revolution once class struggle was initiated within the peasantry, with the establishment of Committees of Poor Peasants in June 1918. As he wrote,

Having completed the bourgeois-democratic revolution in alliance with the peasants as a whole, the Russian proletariat finally passed onto the socialist revolution, when it succeeded in splitting the rural population, in winning over the rural proletarians and semi-proletarians, and in uniting them against the kulaks and the bourgeoisie, including the peasant bourgeoisie.⁷

In fact, these Committees of Poor Peasants failed - they were ended in December - as did workers' control over the industrial and commercial bourgeoisie (with the partial failure of the railways). The Bolsheviks introduced one-man control of the factories, whilst at the same time taking virtually all of industry, which had become more or less universally war industry, into state ownership. This was war communism. Even with the introduction of the New Economic Policy in 1921, Lenin continued to describe the system as "state capitalism" (at the fourth Congress of Comintern, for example), by which he meant not the petty capitalism of NEP, but the continuing state ownership of strategic industries.

Not long before his death, Lenin wrote an interesting article on cooperation. He admitted that the Marxist tradition had been dismissive of cooperatives. But now he had come to think that it was the basis for building socialism:

All we actually need under NEP is to organise the population of Russia in cooperative societies on a sufficiently large scale, for we have now found the degree of combination of private interest ... with state supervision and control of this interest, that degree of its

subordination to the common interests which was formerly the stumbling block for very many socialists ... Is this not all that is necessary to build a complete socialist society?⁸

The problem with this, however, was: had it all been worth it? Social revolution had been identified with a proletarian seizure of power, while the Russian proletariat were very far from being able to construct a socialist order. With the collapse of the soviets - which in many respects were reflections of proletarian immaturity rather than audacity, being *ad hoc* organisations in the absence of established mass organisations of the class, none of which had been allowed to develop under tsarism - the regime in Russia became a one-party state. A one-party state plus a largely market economy, such as characterised NEP, was rather less than inspiring.

We can look upon the Stalinist revolution of collectivisation and industrialisation as an attempt to vindicate the October revolution. Stalin made the point that Russia must show that it can build socialism in one country if it was to vindicate itself against social democratic criticism. As he said in a speech in 1926,

How did Messrs the Social Democrats try to scare the workers away from us? By preaching that 'the Russians will not get anywhere' ... Is it not obvious, then, that whoever disseminates disbelief in our successes in building socialism thereby indirectly helps the Social Democrats?⁹

For Stalin, and for many others, the building of state socialism seemed the quickest route to vindicating the revolution. Collectivisation of agriculture and state-led industrialisation was a forced-march route to building socialism. The human costs, of course, were catastrophic: "Many ... ideas of mine have been ... put into practice," wrote Kautsky, the champion of statist socialism, in 1931, "but I am not always pleased about it."¹⁰

Leninism was in effect a theory of proletarian dictatorship; it never developed any theory, still less a practice, of the associated producers. This is not surprising: such theory barely existed in the socialist movement in total. Nonetheless, the revolution did produce something like socialism, and the command economy was not without significant merits, as Robert C Allen has shown. It was not the outright economic failure often depicted these days, though it was much more efficient at moving labour from backward agriculture to more productive industry than it was in generalising innovation.

Nor, I think, is it terribly useful to think of it as something other than a form of socialism. The 'no true Scotsman' argument, used a lot by Trotskyists, is really something of a cop-out. Russia did develop a mode of socialism, and as such does show significant problems with the socialist project: the overextension of state power, and the atomisation of civil society. A planning state is surely inextricably involved in any post-capitalist economics. But, in developing an economic sociology of state subordination to civil society, something beyond platitudes about workers' democracy is required ●

Notes

1. F Engels, letter to Bebel, January 20-23 1886.
2. www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-cl/ch06.htm.
3. www.marxists.org/archive/kautsky/1902/socrev/pt1-2.htm.
4. J Guesde *Collectivism: a speech delivered to the French Chamber of Deputies* London 1895, pp3-11.
5. Quoted in T Dan *The origins of Bolshevism* New York 1964, p328.
6. Quoted in MJ Lasky *Utopia and revolution* London 1976, p112.
7. www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1918/prrk/subservience.htm.
8. www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1923/jan/06.htm.
9. www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1926/01/25.htm.
10. K Kautsky *Bolshevism at a deadlock* Oxford 2014, p30.

SWP

Shutting out reality

The SWP has been dragged into the sexual harassment scandal. Paul Demarty revisits the case

Among the cacophony of voices raised in condemnation of the sexual skulduggery of Westminster, one especially shrill shriek is identifiable as that of the Socialist Workers Party.

This week's *Socialist Worker* front page screams: "Sexists, thieves and liars: let's drive them all out" (last week's was basically identical, with "Rich sexist scum: Tory MPs harass women").¹ There is an obvious partiality here - after all, it is hardly exclusively Tories who have been subject to allegations in recent weeks, but it is only Tories *Socialist Worker* wants us to talk about. Why so reticent about accusations flying around on our side, however broadly conceived?

One explanation - which is, all told, probably the largest part of it - is that *Socialist Worker* is contemptuous of its readership, whom it imagines is unable to read a paragraph lasting longer than one short sentence. It hardly trusts the 'ideal idiot' reading its pages to navigate such a complex domain as the sexual harassment (and worse) of women (and a few men): he or she might start *thinking* and that would be a disastrous distraction from 'driving out' the Tories - or racists, or whoever it is this week.

One alternative explanation, of course, trips rather neatly off the tongue. So obvious is it, indeed, that it even occurred to the *Sunday Express*, which used the occasion of the present scandal to refer readers to the story of "how rape claims nearly destroyed the Socialist Workers Party".² This is not the first time the SWP's dodgy record has come up this year. Last month, the National Union of Students executive passed a motion supporting its affiliated unions in excluding the SWP from campus for the same reason;³ earlier this year, Owen Jones got a lot of attention when he accused the organisation of being "a cult which covered up rape".⁴

Unsurprisingly, no mention is made of the *Express* hit-piece in this week's *Socialist Worker* - far too confusing for ordinary workers with Tories and racists to drive out! It does, however, have plenty of room to rake over Michael Fallon's misbehaviour:

Fallon left after several sexual harassment claims were made against him. He gave a mealy-mouthed apology, saying his behaviour had "fallen below the high standards of those in the armed forces". But then he also defended himself, saying his actions would have been acceptable a decade ago. This isn't true, and MPs shouldn't use the historic nature of the allegations as a defence.⁵

The SWP is singularly ill-advised to talk about 'historic allegations' of this nature; but it has never allowed anything



Martin Smith: found innocent by mates

so vulgar as the real world to intrude on its determination to bury a certain issue.

Own scandal

The scandal referred to by the *Sunday Express* and Owen Jones began a while ago now. Towards the end of 2010, anonymous rumours began circulating around the left that Martin Smith, then the SWP's national secretary, had engaged in sexual harassment and other abusive practices against a young woman comrade in Birmingham. At the time, Smith was being edged out as secretary by the power behind the throne, Alex Callinicos, so it seemed possible that a messy break-up had made its way into palace-coup politics, but in the end nothing seemed to come of it. At the SWP's annual conference the following January, it was apparently brought up in such vague terms that few had a clue what was going on. Smith made an 'I'm no angel' sort of speech and the matter was dismissed (we were told at the time by slightly bemused witnesses) with a rousing and pseudo-spontaneous round of "The workers united will never be defeated".

Problem solved - for a couple of years. But then the 2012 pre-conference season arrived, and midway through it, there was a flurry of suspensions of members accused of forming a "secret faction", which it later transpired was centred on Smith's actions. The allegations now included that of rape, and the parties internal disputes committee had effectively found him innocent. When this emerged at conference, the whole thing exploded; transcripts of the key sessions were leaked to the *Weekly Worker*, the *Socialist Unity* blog and elsewhere. Dissidents went public. By the end of 2013, the SWP had lost a third to half of its active membership, and something like 95% of its student organisation. When a further rape accusation emerged against Smith, it found he had a case to answer and suspended him.

Throughout this whole procedure, the SWP's core leadership adopted a bizarrely intransigent attitude. The main issue arising out of the 2013 conference was that the proceedings had been leaked. The main issue arising out of the 2013 conference was not the monstrous failure of the leadership and disputes committee to deal with the case before it, whatever it happened to be about, but that the proceedings had been leaked ... according to the wise men and women of the SWP's central committee. The

opposition were first of all rejecting 'Leninism'. Then, at a later stage, the real issue was their 'lack of faith in the working class'.

The grain of truth is that rape and sexual harassment are symptoms rather than causes, however one looks at the matter - the fundamental cause being class society, or male domination of society, or porn, etc. In that sense, the SWP's rape crisis could not fundamentally be 'about' rape, because even rape is not about rape. In this case, it seems pertinent at least that the question is not a new one on the far left. The most egregious previous offender was, of course, Gerry Healy, the thuggish Trotskyist leader who progressively transformed his organisation into a bizarre obedience cult - obedience including the duty of younger female comrades to act as comfort women to the degraded socialist Ubu Roi at the top.

The revelation of Healy's behaviour occasioned the total fragmentation of the Workers Revolutionary Party, but he was never without his defenders - foremost among them were Corin and Vanessa Redgrave, the thespians, who stuck with him until he was committed to the cold embrace of the earth in 1990. "If this is the work of a rapist," Corin is supposed to have declared at some tempestuous meeting in the mid-80s, "let's recruit more rapists."

The SWP is not so very like the WRP in its fine detail, although it has become more so since the Martin Smith debacle. There is no personality cult around a single leader. It does not pretend constantly that a military coup is imminent. It does not present a turgid lump of incomprehensible 'dialectical philosophy' as the price of admission - indeed, there is barely any intellectual requirement placed on lay members at all. Yet it resembles it above all in its siege mentality - in the assumption that any internal criticism is a reflection of external forces, be it merely a matter of 'ideological pressure' or deliberate treachery.

In the end, this is a matter of what it has in common not only with the WRP, but also the pests of Westminster, Hollywood and beyond. The SWP's operative theory comes down to the idea that through the most energetic efforts to build the 'real' struggle of the working class ('real' meaning strikes and street demonstrations), a small revolutionary ginger group can bring about a mass

confrontation with the powers that be, which will then require revolutionary leadership for victory. The trick is to select the correct terrain of struggle, the right line on the right issue, and act decisively on it. Rank-and-file members will be under the conservative pressures of routine trade unionism and so on - it is up to the leadership to campaign decisively among the members for the correct line.

Command and control

What that means in practice is a rigorous command and control structure, in which the CC tells the full-timers (who are in its gift) what to do, and the full-timers tell the average member. At the top of the full-timer tree is the national organiser, who once upon a time was Smith (and before him Chris Bambery, whose violent temper was such that lay members nicknamed him Bilko). In such

a situation, it is hardly surprising that a CC member should extort sex from people, for what is set up is a *worse* hierarchy than you would find at an average capitalist firm.

The SWP crisis is a standing rebuke to the old cliché that every cloud has a silver lining. The subsequent split saw all sides degenerate. The most radical among the opposition collapsed into identitarian idiocy, split amongst themselves over a work of sculpture, and no longer exist as an organised trend. The more 'moderate' clung far too long to the fantasy that they could win fair and square, and - defeated - decided that Alex Callinicos was right when he said that Leninism was at stake in the dispute, and retreated into the sort of revolutionism equivalent to the Christianity of borderline-atheist Anglican vicars. The SWP itself became more restricted merely to activities in which its motives were seen to be unimpeachable, with the result that its politics seem nowadays to consist entirely of shrieking about racism - as if that was remotely subversive to an establishment that agrees entirely.

The whole farrago set us all back, by shifting the balance of forces within the left towards the principled opponents of working class socialism - the supporters of identity politics, the prophets of the new post-industrial age and what have you. All of this could have been avoided if nobody had had the absurd idea that the SWP's disputes committee was competent to investigate rape; some of it might have been avoided if all leaders involved had accepted responsibility and resigned, rather than blaming those who rightly objected. That was the path not taken, and so we are still paying for the SWP's failures, four years on ●

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Notes

1. *Socialist Worker* November 7, October 31.
2. *Sunday Express* November 5.
3. <http://mancunion.com/2017/10/09/legal-action-threatened-swp-nus-ban>.
4. <https://twitter.com/OwenJones84/status/827500089430175746>.
5. *Socialist Worker* November 7.

Fighting fund

Of course we can!

"The *Weekly Worker* projects the case for a Bolshevism of the 21st century, including the need for a mass Communist Party," writes comrade AN in the note accompanying his PayPal donation for no less than £100. He mentions in particular the contributions of Lars T Lih, which he describes as "incredibly powerful and significant in reclaiming the essence of Bolshevism".

The comrade ends his note by saying, "Thank you for all that you do" - a sentiment that is shared by many of our readers - there were 3,099 of the online version last week - including regular US PayPal donor PM, who came up with his monthly £15. On top of that, there were 11 standing orders totalling £258 - thank you, SD, AC, CG and HN (£30 each), BK, GD and BL (£25), DV (£20), NR (£18), SWS (£15) and SM (£10).

On top of that, two comrades showed their appreciation at last weekend's Palestine demonstration

in London - PB, who gave £40, and a comrade who didn't give his name, but paid for his *Weekly Worker* with a £20 note and decided he didn't want any change - an extra £19 towards November's fighting fund! Finally we received two handy cheques - TF added £10 to her subscription, while LP contributed an excellent £50.

Thanks to all those comrades, the total for the week came to £492 - which, added to the £102 already received, gives us £594 towards our monthly £1,750 target. Not too bad after just eight days, but can we keep it up? 'Of course we can,' I hear you saying!

I don't want to nag though, but there's still the small matter of the accumulated deficit of £392 over the first 10 months of the year. Let's see if we can get rid of that too!

Robbie Rix

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

Defeating the witch-hunt

Sunday November 12, 5pm:
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Calthorpe Arms, 252 Grays Inn Road, London WC1

Moshé Machover
on his expulsion from the Labour Party and subsequent reinstatement

Organised by CPGB:
www.cpgb.org.uk
and Labour Party Marxists:
www.labourpartymarxists.org.uk

MIDDLE EAST

Dangerous times

The United States and Saudi Arabia seem to be readying for war against Iran, writes **Yassamine Mather**

Anyone following recent developments in the Middle East will be aware that the war of words between Iran and Saudi Arabia has entered a new stage that could lead to a perilous situation.

Some have argued that the chain of events started with US secretary of state Rex Tillerson's visit to Riyadh, when he told Saudi leaders to clean up their act, distance themselves from traditional allies, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, and show themselves to be 'more progressive' Islamists than their arch-rivals, Iran's Islamic Republic. This appeared to spur on the Saudi kingdom to take bolder and more aggressive steps against Iran.

What we are now witnessing might be the consequences. First came the 'instructions' to liberalise restrictions on women. Even before Tillerson's visit Saudi authorities had announced in late September that it would allow women to drive. There were clear economic reasons behind this decision, but it was also motivated by crown prince Mohammed bin Salman's attempt to appear as a 'reformist'. Soon after the secretary of state's visit came the announcement that Saudi authorities will ease the restrictions on women spectators in sports stadiums. This posed a direct challenge to Iran, where there is an ongoing campaign - at times led by the daughter of former president Ali Akbar Rafsanjani, Faezeh Hashemi - calling on the authorities to allow women to watch football and other sports.

No-one knows how all this 'liberalisation' will go down with Saudi or Sunni clerics in the region, who, after all, are the source of inspiration of many jihadist groups, including the Muslim Brotherhood, al Qa'eda, Islamic State and al Nusra - the unpredictable reaction of conservatives in Saudi Arabia always provokes concern about 'stability' in the region.

However, none of this matched the sensation caused when Lebanese prime minister Saad Hariri resigned on November 4 during a trip to Saudi Arabia, claiming his life was in danger. This created a leadership vacuum in an already politically fractured country.

Hariri accused Iran of meddling in the region, causing "devastation and chaos", adding: "Iran controls the region and the decision-making in both Syria and Iraq. I want to tell Iran and its followers that it will lose in its interventions in the internal affairs of Arab countries." On November 5 Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah claimed that this was not the Hariri he knew - he had been "taken hostage" by the Saudis and forced to make the statement.

Lebanon's Christian president Michel Aoun said he would not accept Hariri's resignation until he returned to Lebanon and explained his reasons. Clearly he is as surprised as anyone else with this sudden turn of events. According to the notorious Saudi web gossip known as 'Mujtahidd', writing on Twitter,

The main reason for summoning [Hariri] back to Riyadh is to hold him captive with the rest of the detained princes and businessmen, to blackmail him and force him to bring back the funds he has abroad, particularly those not linked to Lebanon.

The statement he read was written for him. He was not convinced about it, neither in terms of content nor in



Mohammed bin Salman: meeting the troops

terms of submitting his resignation from Riyadh. For how is it possible for a political leader to announce his resignation from another country's capital?¹

A good part of Hariri's wealth came from the ownership of a Riyadh construction company, Saudi Oger, and he actually holds a Saudi passport despite his top post in Lebanon. In July this year the firm closed down and there are rumours that the family is now bankrupt.

Their financial backers, the Saudi royals, were not happy with Hariri's recent political moves, such as assigning a Lebanese ambassador to Syria, which was seen as legitimising the Assad regime; and a few days before his appearance on Saudi TV to announce his resignation, Hariri had met a certain Ali Akbar Velayati in Beirut. Velayati is a top advisor to Iran supreme leader Ali Khamenei. It is believed that the Saudis summoned Hariri to Riyadh - some say they even sent a plane to collect him.

The resignation was to provoke a constitutional crisis in Lebanon. There will now be new elections, which some hope will see the end of Hezbollah as a partner in the government, freeing the hand of Donald Trump to impose sanctions on the party's leaders.

No coincidence

The timing of all this cannot be pure coincidence. Only a few days earlier, Israeli prime minister Binyamin Netanyahu, who was in Britain for the celebrations of the 100th anniversary of the Balfour declaration, had used a Chatham House speech to quote former US secretary of state Henry Kissinger, who said that Iran was "a cause, not a country". It was "devouring one nation after another either directly or by proxy." Iran had "come into the Syrian war to 'Lebanonise' Syria economically and militarily".²

The existence of a US-sponsored Israeli-Saudi alliance for regime change in Iran had been crystal-clear since Trump's visit to the Middle East in May, but the process seems to have gathered momentum in the last two weeks. One thing that could have provoked a reaction on the part of Trump and the Saudis was Putin's visit to Tehran last week. The Russian president signed a €30 billion deal - part of a strategic energy agreement - with Iran, met the supreme leader and reassured him and president Hassan Rouhani that he would continue to support Iran in the Syrian conflict, including 'economic reconstruction'.

All this prompted the Saudis to up their efforts, along with the US and Israel, to impose regime change on Iran. Soon after Hariri's 'resignation', a rocket was fired from Yemen (probably by pro-Iran forces, although not necessarily with Tehran's approval), prompting yet another crisis, with both Saudi and US officials blaming Tehran for the attack. The same day came the news of the major shake-up among Saudi royals.

Apparently during his visit to the Middle East, Tillerson had warned the Saudis about their association with a plethora of jihadist groups. Apparently he told them that the supporters of regime change in Iran ought not to be seen as more backward than Iran's Shia clerics when it came to the social position of women. That would explain both the recent 'reforms' and the surprising - some would say dangerous - events now taking place.

On November 3 the Saudis arrested 11 princes on suspicion of corruption. What they have in common are alleged connections with Qatar (a country Saudi Arabia claims is a sponsor of 'terrorist groups' - truly a case of the kettle calling the pot black). One of those arrested (and currently being held in a five-star hotel) is prince al-Waleed bin Talal, whose investments include stakes in News Corp, Citigroup, Apple, Time Warner and Twitter. However, the multi-billionaire is not a fan of Donald Trump. Back in December 2015 he tweeted: "You are a disgrace not only to the GOP, but to all America. Withdraw from the US presidential race, as you will never win." There is speculation that he is now paying the price for that tweet, but a more credible reason is that, as one of the world's richest men, he was in a position to finance a rebellion against king Salman al Saud and prince Abdullah.

Senior ministers were also arrested on November 5, including prince Mitaab bin Abdullah, the head of the National Guard,³ and Adel Faqih, the economy minister. Another prince, Mansour bin Muqrin, the deputy governor of Asir province, was killed when his aircraft came down near Abha late on Sunday. The removal of Mitaab bin Abdullah, the favourite son of the late king Abdullah, was yet another move intended to strengthen the position of crown prince Mohammed bin Salman.

Trump tweeted that he approved of these "anti-corruption measures", reinforcing the idea that Saudi operations were initiated by Tillerson with the backing of the president. But a comment by Daniel Shapiro in the

Israeli daily *Ha'aretz*, headed 'Is Saudi Arabia pushing Israel into war with Hezbollah and Iran?', sums up concerns in sections of Israeli political circles:

What connects Lebanese PM Saad Hariri's sudden resignation and Hezbollah's assassination threat with Saudi Arabia and Israel? It's all about Iran. But Israel must not be manoeuvred by an impatient Riyadh into a premature confrontation.

Irrespective of who is pushing whom, the situation is deteriorating day by day. According to Jake Novak, writing on the CNBC website on November 6:

Since the crackdown began on Saturday, the Saudis have considerably ramped up their accusatory rhetoric towards their neighbours. First, the kingdom squarely blamed Iran for a missile attack on Riyadh from Yemen that was thwarted by the US-made Patriot anti-missile system. The Saudis called that attack "direct military aggression by the Iranian regime" that may be considered an act of war. Second, the Saudis accused Lebanon of - figuratively at least - declaring "war" against it because of aggression from Hezbollah. That statement spurred even Saudi ally and Egyptian president Abdel Fattah al-Sisi to publicly urge for calm.⁴

What the Saudi royals, Trump and Netanyahu fail to realise is that all these threats are actually strengthening the position of the Islamic regime. Tehran's Shia rulers thrive on crises - they love to appear as victims of world conspiracies and this time sections of the Israeli and US media appear to agree that there is some coordination in what on the surface appear to be unrelated events. For those of us who want the overthrow of the Islamic Republic to be undertaken by the peoples of Iran themselves, these are hardly progressive developments ●

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Notes

1. www.middleeasteye.net/columns/things-go-bump-night-riyadh-1511882449.
2. www.theguardian.com/world/2017/nov/03/netanyahu-says-he-will-not-let-iran-take-strategic-control-inside-syria.
3. The National Guard was originally designed to be a counter-coup force to defend the royal family from revolutionary plots in the regular army. It is deployed in the capital and holy cities, as well as along the borders.
4. www.cnbc.com/2017/11/07/trump-may-have-pushed-saudi-arabia-and-iran-closer-to-war-commentary.html.

What we fight for

■ 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

**Society is
a health
problem in its
own right**

Offering a real cure

Ending the current chronic underfunding would be just the first step in overcoming the NHS mental-healthcare crisis, writes **James Linney**

The increasing incidence of mental-health conditions is probably evident to most readers, either because they have experienced it themselves or they know friends or family members who have suffered.

Unlike other illnesses - diabetes, for example, where we can easily diagnose and measure the condition according to physiological parameters - mental-health conditions have always been much more difficult to characterise and treat. Despite modern psychiatry's best attempts, even some of the most commonly recognised conditions remain difficult to define. This is in part a consequence of the human brain's infinitely more complex nature in comparison to our other organs. Don't get me wrong: the kidney's ability to filter out toxins, retain useful chemicals and help regulate our internal environment is in its own way genius; but, unlike the brain, the kidney's contribution to human culture has been somewhat disappointing (so far).

In this article I will discuss the increasing incidence of mental-health problems, with an emphasis on the impact on young people in the UK and how the Tory-sponsored national health service crisis is having a devastating impact on their wellbeing.

Analysis of global trends seems to confirm an increase in prevalence of mental-health conditions in all areas of the world, particularly the poorest. Of the numerous recognised types of such illnesses, depression and anxiety are by far the most common and it is these that have seen the largest increase. In its 2017 report¹ the World Health Organisation estimated that there had been an increase of 18.4% in worldwide cases of depression between 2005 and 2015, equating to over 322 million sufferers globally. Given the stigma attached to mental health - especially in less economically developed countries, where such conditions often go unreported and there is little or no treatment available - this number can only be a huge underestimation. Yet even this modest estimate means that depression is the leading cause of ill health and disability worldwide.

This increase is apparent in the UK too and is proportionally affecting young people more. A recent study in the *BMJ* (originally known as the *British Medical Journal*) found that the prevalence of self-harm rates in teenagers has risen by 70% in the past five years.² It also concluded that children and adolescents who self-harm have a ninefold increased risk of suicide - which has actually now overtaken accidents as the leading cause of death in young people. Data gathered by *NHS Digital* has reported that the number of under-18s attending accident and emergency departments for psychiatric conditions doubled between 2010 and 2015.³

These statistics take on an even more worrying character when we take into consideration the Conservative government's (mis)treatment of the NHS since 2010. The 2008 economic crisis opened the door of



Mental illness: on the rise

opportunity for the Tories to accelerate privatisation. What became the Health and Social Care Act 2012, as predicted, was the medium through which cuts and workforce demoralisation ran parallel to the selling off of services to private health firms (or 'Any Qualified Provider', to give them their true dystopian title). Not even children's mental-health services have been spared this attack.

This is a service that had traditionally already been hugely underfunded, only receiving about 6% of the total NHS budget. But between 2010 and 2015 mental-health trusts faced real-term cuts of 8.5%, losing the equivalent of £598 million from their budgets each year. Hence the findings of the government's own Care Quality Commission report last month on under-18s' access to mental-health services came as no surprise. The report found that children face vastly uneven services across the country and that waiting times for counselling or to see a specialist were in most areas much longer than the 18-week national target.⁴ In some instances, children had to wait up to 18 months to be seen by a specialist. As well as totally unacceptable waiting times, there is also a critical lack of beds: more than 20% fewer than in 2010. Hence many children are having to be admitted into chaotic general medical wards or adult psychiatric wards, whilst others are transferred to hospitals hundreds of miles away from their home.⁵

Despite their best efforts mental-

health workers are finding it increasingly difficult to provide basic care. Since the Tories came into power, nurses have had to contend with falling wages, the loss of their training bursary and an increasing workload. Nurse numbers, particularly those in mental health, have been severely reduced - the Royal College of Nursing has reported a drop of 15% in mental-health nurses since 2010.⁶ Lack of access to specialist support results in a greater number of mental-health sufferers getting to crisis point, leading to more unpredictable behaviour. This, coupled with chronic understaffing, puts both the staff and patients on mental-health wards at risk. Hence a 42% increase in mental health workers experiencing a violent attack or abuse over the past year.⁷

Alternative

A demoralised, depleted workforce and the sufferings of the nation's most vulnerable under-18-year-olds is just one part of the legacy of seven years of Tory NHS policy. Just this week a King's Fund report estimated that, based on current spending, the NHS will face a £20 billion funding gap by 2022.⁸

Jeremy Corbyn's pledge that a Labour government would find £35 billion in extra funds by 2022 is a start, but nowhere near sufficient. Even the *British Medical Journal* recognised that this would not be enough to repair the NHS in the short term.⁹ But the left must recognise that being healthy, whether physically or mentally, relies upon more than just

having an adequately funded health service. For young people that means fighting for their empowerment: this means a real living wage for all, the right to vote from the age of 16 years and free education for all up to and including postgraduate courses.

As well as our minimal demands, we must be clear in our belief in the fundamental role that capitalism has in the ill health of the working class. It would obviously be an oversimplification to state that 'capitalism causes mental-health problems': mental-health illnesses involve a complex interaction between both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Polygenetic as well as environment factors interact to different degrees for each individual and each type of illness. Conditions such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, for example, seem to have a greater genetic component. It would also be utopian to believe that a communist world would be free of all depression and anxiety.

But what is clearly true is that, for the vast majority of sufferers, depression and anxiety are a direct result of the conditions in which they are forced to live. In the UK, in the past 10 years, the state has responded to the crisis of capitalism in the most predictable way: by shifting the burden onto the working class. Among other things, this has meant children being exposed to more poverty, having fewer opportunities for education and less secure employment. It is no major leap to link this to the increasing rates of depression and

anxiety. In fact, there is a large body of evidence that already links inequality to mental-health conditions. To quote one of the leading researchers in this area, Michael Marmot, "health inequalities and the social determinants of health are not a footnote to the determinants of health. They are the main issue."¹⁰

And this only goes part of the way in understanding the role of capitalism in depression and anxiety in our society; unfortunately (or fortunately for me) discussion of Marx's theory of alienation and its relationship to our mental health is beyond the scope of this article. But these are ills that modern psychiatry can never cure.

Let me be clear: I am not saying people with mental-health illnesses should not receive treatment that best available evidence supports, whether medications or psychological support, - full and timely access to this is the very least we should be demanding. Antidepressants, mood stabilisers and antipsychotic medication allow millions of people to control their symptoms and they save lives. Yet these medications, and anti-depressants in particular, are massively overused. This is partly due to doctors wanting to help, but having limited tools to do so; and partly a result of big pharma's role in drug development and promotion (this is especially true in America).

However, as long as we *only* focus on individual pathological/chemical imbalances or thinking, we ignore the greater pathology within our society - where the accumulation of capital takes preference over all else and the health (both physical and mental) of the working class is offered as a daily sacrifice to this goal ●

Notes

1. <http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/254610/1/WHO-MSD-MER-2017.2-eng.pdf>.
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6. www.theguardian.com/society/2016/nov/01/number-mental-health-nurses-nhs-drops-sixth-tories.
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