A paper of Marxist polemic and Marxist unity

Left Unity: a more sober and realistic attitude towards immediate expectations

- October's strikes
- Economic downturn
- Revolutionary strategy
- Miners 1984-85

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Towards a Communist Party of the European Union

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Ebola: threat of social breakdown
October 16 2014 1030 worker

Secretive

It is fine being the critical organisation of the left, but when, oh, when will the CPGB implement the democratic reforms necessary for prolonged analysis?

We learn from Wikipedia that the CPGB is possibly 50-strong and falling. If this is wrong, let the CPGB procure the information so that a full demographic analysis can be done.

It is not my business to tell those who pursue such an alternative identity to be secretive. They are entirely up to them. Even nostalgia is a legitimate sentiment (although, alas, it is no longer what it used to be). And a progressive Jewish identity deployed against Zionism properly plays a positive role.

But I believe that diacritical Jewish secular identity does not have a long-term future, because it lacks an objective basis.

Moshé Machover email

Threefold

In reply to Steve Northall, I would contend that the Weekly Worker of course wishes to promote the likes of Karl Kautsky was a reactionary. In my opinion, this is a constant thorn in the side of the Labour movement. The Lênch-Haenich-Cunow group of the social democrats is, how do people join?

First, to actually try and provide more of a rounded historical context to the debates and controversies which the CPGB follows and the workers' movement over the Nature of War I and the tactics of socialists. By understanding their heritage, such as Rolf Lensch, Konrad Haenisch, Heinrich Cunow and Abraham Reiss - all of whom were significant figures in social democracy - framed their arguments on imperialism, capitalist development, the nation-state, and democracy and so on, we gain a much greater sense of the ideas of their erstwhile comrades, Rosaura Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, as well as others from different trends in the movement.

This context has unfortunately been lost, because this line of thought was curtailed due to a lack of work with in isolation, which has led to some strange assertions (ie, Karl Kautsky is a reactionary). To better understand somebody's ideas it is also useful to look at those of their opponents. How, then, do we know that the CPGB is not a proto-Nazi organisation in Austria-Hungary that organised ethnic conflicts - all blot the left today (one need only think of the situation in Ukraine). Secondly, with a view to deepen our understanding of them.

Moreover, it is a little bit of a thing for Steve Northall to have found me from the CPGB and for me to then for him to proceed to write a letter setting out a sound Marxist analysis against the CPGB's analysis and reactions to the material. Maybe it was not so pointless, after all.

Red-brown Trots

My July article on Polish nationalism has been met with an insightful, response ('Christ of Nations in London Weekly Worker October 9) from myself and a few others. It appears from this piece that I am dubbed a "loquacious Pole" by some contributors. My intention was to 'outlook the proper insight'. Against this, in a Usenet discussion I am in no position to say whether there is no such thing as the CPGB like the Masons? That is, how do people join?

"... the likes of ... Moshé Machover email

Is the CPGB is like the Masons? That is, how do people join?

You have a "Provisional Central Committee"? Workers are not making it clear, so, to make my real position clear, please feel free to contribute to the translation work slightly pointless and maybe give us an idea about the popularity of this project, and whether it has a future.

Simon Wells

Minimum wage

It's October, so it must be time that year when I do my annual analysis of the minimum wage, and the number of female advertisers on www.weeklyworker.co.uk. The latter was 800. In comparison with potential clients. Surprisingly, the number of women with profits over £100,000 has increased from just over 23,000 a year ago to around 24,000 this year.

There are four things to note. First, there are fewer adverts from women than was the case last year, but more adverts from women working as escorts part-time. This might reflect the fall in male disposable income since 2007 and the increase in the number of women trying to supplement their income through the tax-free income available to the working poor.

Second, the number of adverts from women working part time outside of London is now around 12,500. The number aged 11 to 50 is around 6,300. The number aged 40 and over is around 700. In all age groups, these women are probably unable to get a full-time job or are non-participants in zero-hours contract jobs.

I am in no position to say whether this serves as a fig leaf for the otherwise unisex nature of "The 50:50 Project". The fact that it stands as the last entry in his blog - the final word on Marxism and migration, so to speak - is encouraging.

Maciej Żurowski

London

Sales room

At the recent Hackney Left Unity AGM Marxism was broadly agreed with the exclusion of Killjoy TV from the room actually thought.

Daily Worker Londres

Proud

I wanted to say thank you for such a wonderful evening (and inspiring), September 25).

Mark Ashton and I went to Cambridge, but we also escaped Northern Ireland to a better venue, where the presence of Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners. I’m so proud that his legacy continues and where we can hear him squealing with delight as the room is packed full to the rafters.
A threat of social breakdown

Deadly, but preventable

The time of writing there have been 12,000 reported Ebola deaths in west Africa - 40% of which have been in Sierra Leone, according to the World Health Organisation. The WHO has estimated that there could currently be 20,000 infections, and the US Centers for Disease Control says that as a worst-case scenario there could be as many as 1.4 million people infected by the end of January. The main countries affected are, of course, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, three of the 12 least developed countries in the world and home to over 22 million people. There is a real risk of total economic and social collapse.

Medical Sans Frontières (MSF), the humanitarian charity, has been at the forefront of tackling the virus for the past six months, with around 3,000 staff on the ground. However, it is struggling to cope with the numbers of people infected, including around 200 clinicians. It has now effectively admitted defeat and has called on military forces to help combat the spread of the disease. Peter Piot, the Belgian director of the London School of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene, said that the WHO had “failed to respond. Without the international community becoming involved, the outcome would be disastrous.”

Trials of drugs and vaccines are not expected to be ready before December, when the results of tests are known. And it will be six months after that before we know whether those drugs and vaccines are actually effective. Even then there are not the facilities to produce the vaccines in the quantities required. Given the limited supply, there is also the question of prioritisation: which groups of people and areas should be tackled first?

It is not as though the ‘international community’ has not known about the outbreak, which began in spring of this year. MSF has criticised the WHO for being slow to respond. However, WHO’s funding from individual states for being slow to respond. However, WHO’s funding from individual states has stagnated in the past quarter of a year. Added to that are voluntary donations have tumbled. As such the WHO was not best placed to lead from the front. Added to that are other crises - Iraq, Syria, Palestine and elsewhere.

In truth, this terrible disease could have been tackled when first discovered in 1976, and a potential disaster averted. Since then there has been an unceasing number of unconnected outbreaks across equatorial Africa, with mortality rates amongst those infected rising from 60% to 70% in the present crisis. However, private drug companies were never going to commit to the necessary large-scale investment needed to defeat the virus, given the previous relative infrequency of the disease and the poverty of those populations now most in need.

The latest outbreak of Ebola cannot be attributed to one cause, but several exacerbating factors - a so-called “perfect storm”, as Peter Piot puts it, of interconnected factors, such as political, socioeconomic and environmental failings. A major host for the virus, tropical fruit bats, have migrated, in view of climate change and forest logging. Driven into heavily populated areas, the bats are ending up in greater numbers as bushmeat, thus spreading their infection to humans.

The natural inclination is for family members or friends of those affected to care for them, which results in the further spread of the infection. The simple and basic medical equipment needed to handle infected people is criminally lacking. And when the person dies, traditional burial practices have to be bypassed in order to dispose of the body safely, but that may not always be the case.

Finally there are the three countries where the infection is currently raging, all three poverty-stricken. Guinea is ruled by a military junta, while both Liberia and Sierra Leone have recently emerged from bloody civil wars. Furthermore they have to cope with Lassa fever, yellow fever, malaria and other diseases within chronically underfunded healthcare systems. Per capita spending on health and doctor-patient ratios are a fraction of those in western Europe.

Awareness of the dangers from Ebola has been very late in coming. The latest outbreak was only seriously noted by the international media in July, when two American volunteers contracted the disease. Only in August did the WHO declare a “public health emergency of international concern”.

And this is when the developed capitalists world started to think about self-protection. However, the response so far has consisted of mere tinkering. For example, health officials have decided to lower the temperature tests for incoming passengers are next to useless. Ebola can be suspected if a traveller declares they have arrived from an infected area. However, there are many febrile diseases including malaria, typhus and yellow fever. And, given that the incubation period is two to 21 days, symptoms (including a high temperature) will not manifest themselves immediately.

To see what sort of healthcare system we need, we should go back to the founding of MSF in 1971, when a group of young doctors were thrown out of the international committee of the Red Cross for criticising the atrocities they saw during the Bhutan war. One of those founders was Bernard Kouchner, who had been expelled from the French Communist Party in 1966 for criticising the Stalinist leadership.

These volunteers sought to treat those in need without the prior authorisation of the Nigerian government, which was ruthlessly suppressing the attempted secession of Biafra. Medecins Sans Frontieres - which, of course, means ‘Doctors Without Borders’ - aimed to bring medical supplies to those at the sharp end of such brutal conflicts, whereas the official medical agencies refused to enter war zones or even seriously criticise the relevant authorities. While it is staffed by volunteers, who put their lives at risk in areas where medical services and structures have collapsed, it cannot be said that MSF is an ideal organisation. It is first and foremost a charity, driven by various forms of reformist and liberal politics.

Everyone knows that what is required is not only the necessary funding for healthcare, but a massive development of the infrastructure of the affected countries, plus education, training and relief from poverty for the overwhelming majority. If such a situation existed, the risk involved in treating Ebola-infected patients would be much reduced and it would be very likely that the spread of the disease would be halted.

Simon Wells
Show of defiance

Peter Manson calls for fresh thinking to reinvigorate the unions

A reader will know, there were only two, not three, days of strike action this week. The October 14 walkout by local government unions (see opposite) and RMT tube workers were called off, while the Association of Colleges obtained an injunction against the University and College Union, which prevented it from striking on the same day.

Nevertheless, the action called for October 13 (by NHS workers) and October 15 (civil service PCS members) went ahead in a show of defiance. The more effective of the two - certainly in terms of public support - was the four-hour strike called by nine unions in the NHS on the Monday. These included not just the largest and best known unions like Unison, Unite and the GMB, but the Royal College of Midwives - the first time the RCM had ever called a strike, of course. Then there were the British Association of Occupational Therapists, and the Hospital Consultants and Specialists Association - and even Managers in Partnership ("the UK's only trade union organisation specifically for managers in health services").

All the unions involved were responding to the overtly provocative action of the government and its responding to the overtly provocative action of the government and its trade union organisation specifically for managers in health services). But more than half of all staff that was recommended by the TUC for national industrial action by clinical staff is, in the words of cabinet office minister Francis Maude, just "irresponsible". The excuse given to justify this real-term pay-cutting is that NHS spending must be "brought under control" - otherwise we will have to keep pouring more and more money into it indefinitely. For example, the extra one percent increase paid to everyone would have cost an extra £600 million and, according to Hunt, such a sum would "force hospitals to lay off 14,000 nurses".

But within the existing "balance of the books" austerity consensus, this is pathetically - £600 million is a truly paltry sum (the NHS already spends that amount on private management consultants, while senior managers on over £100,000 account for a further £800 million). But the NHS is supposed to be finding £20 billion in "efficiency savings" by 2015.

So, in parallel with this frontal assault on wages, there is the forthcoming attempt to stop workers showing their disgust by walking out, even in the form of a token four-hour strike. After all, such action by clinical staff is, in the words of cabinet office minister Francis Maude, just "irresponsible". Maude promised that it will also be "illegal" under Conservative plans to ban clinical strike action - and thus curtail the degree of influence that workers in the private sector, but, thankfully, the "gap has been far less dramatically than in the public sector.

For the bourgeoisie, it is important that salaries paid by the state - which is obviously the largest and most important employer - do not exceed the going rate for capitalistic companies by too much (if at all). That might have a knock-on effect for workers in the private sector - especially those with particular skills, who might be tempted to the 'greener pastures' of the NHS, etc.

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It will certainly be the position of the Labour left, including the Labour Representation Committee, whose November 8 annual conference is expected to recommend an unconditional vote for Labour next May. The argument being that at least we will be able to exert some pressure on Labour and dilute its attacks. But this is totally illusory. If we cannot make Miliband moderate his stance now - not the grave threat to the health service that it is. If the current turnout in such ballots are any guide - this action by clinical staff is, in the words of cabinet office minister Francis Maude, just "irresponsible". The excuse given to justify this real-term pay-cutting is that NHS spending must be "brought under control" - otherwise we will have to keep pouring more and more money into it indefinitely. For example, the extra one percent increase paid to everyone would have cost an extra £600 million and, according to Hunt, such a sum would "force hospitals to lay off 14,000 nurses".

By contrast, we believe that there should be no blank cheque for Labour candidates. They will earn our vote only if they undertake to enact a minimum platform of pro-working-class demands. And we should positively support a Labour government only if it attempts to enact a socialist programme. Such conditions on our support are essential in the fight to win the Labour Party for the working class.

The Daily Telegraph commented in an editorial: "We can sympathise with the workers who object to such parsimony, when MPs are set to receive a nine percent increase" (October 14). However, the editorial points out that private-sector pay had previously been falling much more dramatically than in the public sector, but, thankfully, the "gap has subsequently started to close", thanks to the efforts of the coalition government to bring down public-sector pay. For the bourgeoisie, it is important that salaries paid by the state - which is obviously the largest and most important employer - do not exceed the going rate for capitalistic companies by too much (if at all). That might have a knock-on effect for workers in the private sector - especially those with particular skills, who might be tempted to the 'greener pastures' of the NHS, etc.

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As the employers stood firm in the local government dispute, not unexpectedly the union leaders buckled. But the left has no answers, writes Will Pragnell.

Proposals that fit entirely with the employers’ workforce strategy, but grant the unions something they desperately want: their feet under the negotiating table. There have been accusations of deliberate misformation on the part of Union of Heathcare Wakefield in the 1990s, and there were claims that Unite had failed to pull out of the October 14 action, while the GMB was wavering, and it was thought that delegates at Union regional briefings would be presented with a motion to suspend the strike. However, at the October 9 London briefing the Wakefield statement was withdrawn and delegates were informed that Unite and GMB were definitely on board and so all three unions would be out. A majority of London delegates wanted the strike to go ahead and thought they could deliver some kind of successful action in the capital, even if some thought it would be weaker than the July 10 strike. It seems that, even whilst the London meeting was taking place, a postponement of the strike was being discussed with the employers. Later that same day it was announced that the strike was off.

Despite our own weak position and only the remote prospect of achieving any movement on pay, I felt that the Tuesday action should have gone ahead. It was part of a coordinated campaign across large sections of the public service that culminates with the TUC demonstration on October 18. It would also have acted as a morale boost for NHS strikers, including members of unions calling industrial action for the first time, who had taken part in a four-hour action on the Monday.

As things stand, the employers have completely outmanoeuvred the unions and are clearly confident of achieving everything they want - for no more than they originally offered and probably less than they budgeted for. They look to be on target for a win, win, win. However, as usual, the left seems incapable of acknowledging the strength of the employers and their strategic and tactical superiority. Neither do they acknowledge the parlous state of our organisations and the widespread belief that we are not in a position to defend past gains. Instead the left just seems to hope that workers’ lack of confidence will be overcome if only we got a fighting lead from the union tops.

Eschewing a proper analysis that might reveal the employers’ strengths and our own weaknesses, it blames it all on the bureaucracy. The offensive against the working class has progressed over the last 25 years without let-up. Objectively the conditions for a fightback ought to be good, but the strike-fee left routinely and repetitively commits the same errors and is consequently ignored by the vast majority of workers. They just do not buy the aimless, ultra-enthusiastic posturing that proffers a fantasy rather than a sober assessment of what is and is not possible, given both the subjective and objective conditions. Workers want and need the truth, not the patronising nonsense.

The left, as epitomised by the two largest organisations, the SWP and SPEW, have an excuse for a strategy. It is this: enthuse and embolden the workers with good-news stories about action - any action, but preferably a strike - because they will then learn to struggle and come to accept the leadership of the ‘revolutionaries’. This elitist approach leads these organisations to vastly exaggerate and put a gloss on everything, effectively to trick the workers into taking action and, hopefully, recruiting some of them. The bulletin has been thoroughly internalised so that many rank-and-file members of the SWP and SPEW actually believe the crap that they come out with.

I remember a disastrous local strike action a few years back, when 90% of workers crossed the picket line. An unmitigated disaster, yet it was described by one leftwing blogger as “well supported”, “fantastic” and “a great success”. She even posted a photo of about 12 forlorn demonstrators standing outside the town hall as proof positive that we had all done very well indeed. In a subsequent ‘assessment’ of that strike SWP and SPEW members were unable to keep up the pretence when confronted with undeniable facts, but they quickly resorted to that other excuse: “We recruited 50 members of the union,” they proudly said - only to be told that we also lost an equal number as a direct consequence of the foolish action. Did they learn anything? Unfortunately no. We still get the same over-enthusiastic, unrealistic, purple nonsense.

Facts may be uncomfortable, but you need them to plan anything useful. There is a disconnect between the unions and their members. You can see it in ballots, inquorate and poorly attended meetings, insufficient stewards and health and safety reps, and in a host of other areas. Representative democracy barely exists and the left is entrenched within a hollowed-out shell of an organisation. They take the easy road, accommodating to that weakness and lack of democracy which substitutes for workers’ self-organisation, whilst extorting the union tops to do better and blaming them when they don’t.

It is important to understand the nature of the current situation. We are under relentless attack from all angles, in every area of life. All the forces of the state and most of the employers are determined to weaken, sideline and neutralise the unions. On our side the unions have resorted to the provision of largely useless ‘services’ and quick fixes through amalgamations, while a declining, ever fragmenting left seems incapable of learning anything. There will be a turn-around, but only if we make it happen. We are not yet sufficiently organised and equipped to mount a counteroffensive. Notwithstanding the odd, isolated victory here and there, the current strategy has to be defensive: maintaining, organising and cohering forces, so that we are able to mount a counteroffensive when we are ready. We have to overcome the disconnect and that means being honest and forthright.

**Notes**

1. www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/19481
2. Socialist Worker October 14
3. The proposal is available at www.union.org.uk/sgp-14-51
As Germany slides toward recession, writes Eddie Ford, indefinite stagnation seems to be on the cards for the euro zone - which is bad news for George Osborne

With the media’s attention focused on the Middle East and elsewhere, you could almost overlook the fact that the euro zone is still in crisis and seems in danger of entering a deflationary spiral. This has fuelled increasing speculation over the fate of the euro zone economy: wobbling in and out of recession and an inflation rate that registers below zero. And therefore an incentive not to buy.

No wonder then that the October 10-12 International Monetary Fund-World Bank meeting was dominated by gloomy talk of a generalised economic slowdown. Yet again, both bodies lowered their forecasts for 2014 and 2015. In particular, while Blanchard, the IMF’s chief economist, said the recovery was “weak and uneven” and predicted 3.3% growth - 0.4 points lower than anticipated in the spring. In fact, the IMF is feeling especially downbeat - saying in its latest economic outlook that the euro zone will start the year in four days, with a “war game” to test the robustness of the British economy. On October 13, the IMF “pledged” to publicise the results - we will see.

However, the IMF’s fears run even deeper. Blanchard admitted it was “entirely possible” that the developed countries will never return to their pre-crisis growth levels: a big chunk of economic production has been permanently lost. We are now entering a period of secular stagnation - i.e., there has been a structural decline in potential output rates. Consequently, the achievement of even lower rates of expansion - one of the more optimistic scenarios - would require interest rates to be maintained at historically low levels over a lengthy period, and that brings its own problems, of course.

Yes, rock-bottom interest rates, combined with quantitative easing, has reduced borrowing costs to levels makes it cheap money. But it does not have what was intended, which was to reverse capital flight into higher yields and hence encourage investment - that in turn would power economic growth. Rather, deluged speculative has had casino chips stuffed into their hands.

In the eurozone, to take the most public example, the French economy to “deteriorate” beyond 2014 (leaving only Germany and Luxembourg for the time being for the prism of a triple-A score).

Showing the turbulent state of the markets, the Vix volatility index “fear gauge”, jumped 8% to its highest level since December 2012. As a result of such statistics, US investors took fright - nothing they hate more than uncertainty - and started liquidating their European holdings at a fast rate. Indeed, last week was the biggest weekly outflow in two months. According to Lipper data, total European assets dropped from nearly $50 billion in June to $40 billion - a significant wipe-out. Accordingly, as sure as night follows day, US investors have been moving slud to fresh lows - reflecting this growing investor unease over signs of a deepening slowdown in Europe (yields fall as prices rise). Nor is it just the euro zone slowly going down the tube, of course. The Brazil, Russia, India, China and, laughably, South Africa are visibly slowing down, even though we were constantly told by sly commentators that they represented our future - if not salvation.

For instance, Brazil has entered a severe slump, its central bank now predicting GDP growth of only 0.7% this year; and Russia is being hammered by the continuing fall in oil prices. Things were already bad enough for the Russian economy, given that in April S&P slashed Russia’s rating to just one notch above “junk” status, as investors - quite sensibly - from their own viewpoint - continued to take money out of the country amid tensions over the situation in Ukraine: the Russian economy is now expected to grow at no more than 0.5% during 2014.
Bodo Ramelow: ‘responsible’

Die Linke is planning even more support for parties and organisations, writes Ben Lewis

The twists and turns, the international alliances and intrigues in the Islamic State’s barbaric siege of Kobane pose many challenges to both bourgeois and working class political ideas. Hence we have the spectacle of US bombing in support of People’s Democratic Party-Kurdistan (YPG) or officially a ‘terrorist organisation’, supplying arms to and urging Turkey to intervene. Of course, the FSA has been selling arms to ISIS and it is hard to understand why this army would attack the Kurds. This is showing the all signs of strategic incoherence.

The Morning Star’s Communist Party of Britain is now calling for the ‘den of thieves’ that is the United Nations to provide aid, including military aid, to the Kurds. The CPB paper has reported: “12 MPs from the Danish Rød-Greens Alliance, some of whom are comrades from the Fourth International (Socialist Resistance on this side of the iron curtain)” are in favour of sending a Danish airforce Hercules to Iraq. And there is one formation, still much beloved by beards and bandanas, which is to all intents and purposes gone over to drum-beating pro-imperialism: the German Left Party, Die Linke.

More Intervention!

A shocking statement heading “Save Kobane” recently issued by the Die Linke leading Left party members. 12 of them belong to the parliamentary left faction and one happens to be a certain Stefan Dieck, Die Linke’s representative on the parliamentary foreign affairs committee. The statement is not directed at the forces of the world working class movement to generate solidarity, but at the German government for not sufficiently lining up behind the US-led intervention: after all, the German government is only sending weapons to the Peshmerga (something that left the Kurdish people to fight on their own and off the mark to agitate for), but is not getting involved in the bombing raids. The statement demands that “Die Linke demand for an expansion of humanitarian assistance to the victims and those already facing the threat; expansion of the EU budget in support of a ‘humanitarian’ mission to Iraq” and “an EU assembly of which the Left Party supports, is not even called into the meeting”. Interestingly, the CPB and Die Linke’s youth movement in particular, see ‘Not KOBANE, BALKANS!’ as a sign reading, “Solidarity with the resistance in Kobane” and opposing imperialist intervention, she was accused of being an “insider” and other organisations that have previously been regarded as politically hostile. But, we must say, in many cases and organisations which have previously been regarded as politically hostile. This included allying with or even merging with the electorally insignificant, but very active, new left organisations - often based on a Trotskyist political orientation - which had expanded dramatically after 1963. Such groups participated in Spain’s Left, merged with the left wing of the Italian Communist Party to found the Party of Communist Refoundation, were included in the electoral lists of Germany’s Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) and eventually joined its successor party, Die Linke, and were invited to participate in common actions and debates initiated by the French Communist Party.

Would commead Hudson still, in 2014, argue that Die Linke is exhibiting a “Գարնիզոն”, the red-blue coalition or “an anti-capitalist perspective” of the left parties in particular the German, French and Austrian, United Nations intervention and by administering capitalism at a local state. Left Unity aspires to “doing politics differently” and is indeed organising a speaker tour alongside the new Spanish left organization, Portugal, to get this basic point across. There might already be a sense in which Die Linke is not exactly the same thing, but the move to something different, then we must start framing the left as the political opposition. For the German left organisations - often based on a considerable capacity for open organisation, often working with left forces, often working with right-wing anti-war politics or even merging with the electorally insignificant, but very active, new left organisations - often based on a Trotskyist political orientation - which had expanded dramatically after 1963. Such groups participated in Spain’s Left, merged with the left wing of the Italian Communist Party to found the Party of Communist Refoundation, were included in the electoral lists of Germany’s Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) and eventually joined its successor party, Die Linke, and were invited to participate in common actions and debates initiated by the French Communist Party.

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Notes

2. ‘Going soft on the intervention’ and the law - workersonline.co.uk/a-2367-Riyadh-roots-of-humanitarian-misadventure-67356276-2659748292876259812.html
3. See ‘Trying to justify the war’ and the law’ Weekly Worker October 2 2014.
4. ‘Trying to justify the war’ Weekly Worker October 2 2014.
5. ‘Trying to justify the war’ Weekly Worker October 2 2014.
6. Comrade Mike Macnair has argued that a ‘law’ of World War II that “fundamentally misunderstands the nature of nationalism, and the goals of anti-Imperialist forces, in the world of war’s, and our attitude towards the capitalist world order’ based on the UN charter. This was an attempt to participate in common actions and debates initiated by the French Communist Party.
7. There are a few exceptions. Showing the aim of reforming capitalism). This is not exactly insignificant matter of principle first: particularly when it comes to participate in common actions and debates initiated by the French Communist Party.
8. See Mark Saunders ‘An interview with Mike Macnair’ Weekly Worker October 2 2014.
9. There are a few exceptions. Showing the aim of reforming capitalism). This is not exactly insignificant matter of principle first: particularly when it comes to participate in common actions and debates initiated by the French Communist Party.
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M
ike Macnair’s Revolutionary strategy (London 2008) is a wide-ranging, comprehensive and very well argued exploration of the problem of revolutionary politics and the struggle for socialism. His focus is the question of what a function of the political party may be one that we ‘philosophical’ issues might point to a ‘theory’ might go beyond today’s be the expression of a trap in which its politics in capitalism.

The greater economic and political as one of the nation-state within its leave of such a “party state” (which and that revolutionary politics takes these phases to the development of the question: from the 16th, 17th and political party and the state.

Macnair observes that there are at least two principal phases of the party question: from the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries, and beginning in the middle of the 19th century. He relates these phases to the problem of the state. He offers that constitutional government involves the state and that revolutionary politics takes its leave of such a “party state” (which includes multiple parties all supporting the constitutional regime). Furthermore, Marx in his view was one of the nation-state within the greater economic and political system of capitalism. By relating the issue of government with “rule of law”, however, Macnair mistakes the contradiction of the modern state and its politics in capitalism.

Macnair has critiqued sectarian Marxism for “theoretical overkill” in a “philosophy trap.” But he might be correct in the case of ‘philosophical’ questions might be the expression of a trap in which one is nonetheless caught: and Marxism’s ‘theory’ might go beyond today’s practical political concerns. It may very well not be the trap in which we are caught, but rather an expression of our attitudes towards the theory and out of it. The mismatch of Marxism today at the level of ‘theoretical’ or ‘philosophical’ issues might point to a historical disparity or inadequacy: we may be dealing with a question of new historical conditions.

What is meant by a ‘democratic republic’? Chris Cutrone critiques Mike Macnair’s Revolutionary strategy

addresses this through the struggle for democracy. But this does not pursue the contradiction far enough. If we view the party as a form of capital: it is ‘variable’ as opposed to ‘constant capital’. So the problem of socialist revolution extends only to Marx, is not addressed adequately as a matter of the relation of labour to capital, but rather the social dependence on and domination by capital. And capital for the private property in the means of production belonging to the capitalists, but rather the social relations of the resources for the reproduction of labour-power (including the ‘means of consumption’) to society as a whole. This is what makes it a political matter — a matter of political society - rather than merely the struggle of one group against another.

Macnair characterises the theory of Marxism specifically as one that recognises the necessity of those dependent upon the wage fund per se to overcome capitalist relations; he characterises the struggle as the struggle for democracy, with the adequate horizon of this as a ‘globalisation’ at scale - and this would affect any struggle to transform politics. The question is the political tasks of proletarian socialism. It was a phenomenon of the contradiction of capitalism in a particular way - as were all political parties from a Marxist perspective.

Conflict and contradiction can the history of Marxism help us address this?

The key to this issue can be found in Macnair’s own distinction of the new phenomenon of party politics in the late 19th century, after the revolutions of 1848 and in the era of what Marx called “Bonapartism” - the pattern set by Louis Bonaparte, who became Napoleon III in the French Second Empire, with its emulation by Bismarck in the Prussian empire, as well as Díaz’s Torre in the UK, among other examples. While Macnair finds some precedent for this in the 18th century UK and its political crises, as well as in the course of the Great French Revolution 1789-1815, especially regarding Napoleon Bonaparte, the difference of the late 19th century party-politics from prior historical precedence is important to specify. For Macnair it is the world system of capitalism and its undermining of democracy.

It is important to recall Marx’s formulation, in the 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, that (naively) Bonapartism was the historical condition in which the bourgeoisie could “no longer” and the proletariat “not yet” rule politically the modern society. He was revealing the symptom of this crisis of capitalism and hence of the need for socialism revealed by the unprecedented failure of revolution in 1848 - by contrast with 1830, as well as 1789 and 1792, and the Dutch Revolt and English civil war of the 17th century. The bourgeoisie’s ‘ruling’ character was not a legal-constitutional condition of government descended from the 17th century political and social revolutions in Holland and England so much as it was a form of civil society: a revolutionary system of bourgeois social relations that was supposed to subordinate the state. What requires explanation is the 19th century slipping of the state from adequate social control, and its ‘rising above’ the contending political groups and social classes, as a power in itself. Even if Bonapartism in Marx’s late 19th century sense was the expression of a potential inherent in the forms of bourgeois politics emerging much earlier, there is still the question of why it was not realised so until after 1848. There is also the matter of why Marx characterised Louis Napoleon as a “lesser” and “farcical” phenomenon of post-1848 history by contrast with Napoleon Bonaparte’s “tragedy” for the Great Revolution. It was not the mere fact of repetition, but why and how ‘history’ repeated itself - and repeated with a difference.

This was, according to Marx, the essential condition for politics later 1848 - the condition for political parties in capitalism. That condition was not only or primarily a matter of politics due to constitutional legal forms of bourgeois property and its social relations, but rather was for Marx the expression of the crisis of those forms as a function of the industrial revolution. There was for Marx an important contradiction between the democratic revolution and the proletarianisation of society in capitalism.

Macnair addresses this by specifying the ‘proletariat’ as those in society ‘dependent on the total wage fund’ - as opposed to those ‘present in society’ as ‘bourgeois’ capital’. This is clearly not a matter of economics, because distinguishing those depending on wages as opposed to capital is a political matter of differentiation: all the intermediate strata depending on both the wage fund and capital would need to be compelled to take sides in any political dispute between the prerequisites of wages versus capital. Macnair

The great merits and significant clarity to Macnair’s approach to the problem of politics in capitalism and the contradictions of this. The issue, though, is his taking as a norm the parliamentary system of government as the European model and thus neglecting the US constitutional system. For there is an important domain of disparity and antagonism between legislative and executive authority, or either the executive or the legislature (or the judicial) aspects of government. The American system of ‘checks and balances’ was meant to uphold liberal democracy and prevent the tyranny of either the executive or the legislature (or the judicial) aspects of government. There is an important domain of political struggle already between, say, the executive branch and the US Supreme Court, and this would affect any struggle to transform politics. The question is the source of antagonism. It is not merely formal. If the ‘separation of powers’ in the US constitutional system has served undemocratic ends, it is not essentially because it was intended to do so. Those cases of anti-progressive or wrongheaded and proper democratic authority in society is not reducible to the issue of purported ‘mob rule’. Any form of government could be perverted to serve capitalism. This is why the state becomes as such - the social content of or what informs any form of political authority.

‘Party of the new type’?

Macnair notes potential deficits and inadequacies in the Third (Communist) International’s endorsement of ‘soviet’ or ‘workers’ council’ government,
with its attempt to overcome the difference between legislative and executive power in order to reproduce the problem Macnair finds in parliamentary government. For Marx, the responsibility in the same way that capitalist private property eludes the law of value.

This is the source of Macnair’s conclusion that the dictatorship of the proletariat under Bonapartism, as if the problem of capitalism merely played out in terms of a struggle between political party and state. Liberal democracy should not be conceived as the constitutional limit on the power of the state over private property. The “democratic regime” under Bonapartism, or the form of parties, as Macnair asserts, is not the opposite of liberal democracy, but also liberal democracy, leading to Bonapartism, or the non-identity of various liberal parties that do not have an alternative to capitalism. It has not been merely pursued, as Macnair argues, by the dictatorship of the proletariat under Bonapartism, as if the problem of capitalism is to be grappled with as such. It must be grasped as an endogenous phenomenon, a “necessary form of appearance” of the problem of capitalism, beyond and not treated merely as an accidental and hence avoidable error. Macnair’s concept of critical investigation is the “mass strike” and related “workers’ council” or ‘soviet’ form. But history does not limit itself to the Leninist party and its version of the “permanent campaign of the working class”, the Paris Commune; the “mass’ or ‘general strike’; and ‘workers’ councils’ or soviets. Not only these: also, the parliament or congress, as well as the legislative and executive forms of political action.

One thing is certain regarding the history of the 19th and 20th centuries: since the politics of the state has gone away, neither has the question of political party. We must accept forms of revolutionary political action that are not only more capitalism, but also and especially of revolution, revolutionary change in society in the manner of Marxism.

Notes

1. ‘The philosophy trap’

2. www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/2014/10/657.html


4. Dick Howard, in ‘The specter of political ecology: a Foucauldian analysis of Marx’s original formulations on the problem of politics and capitalism’, social theory and modern democracy in the American and European political thought of the 19th and 20th centuries and specifying the problem in common between (American) “repudiation of the liberal democratic republicanism”.

5. Howard finds in both antinomical forms of modern democracy (the ‘republican democracy’ and the ‘anti-politics’, or of society chalking adumbrating the two each other in a different direction, to which either democratic authority or liberalism can lead. However, this political thinker on this problem to suggest the direction that struggle against the opposition of liberalism and socialism, Marx, in his view, would fulfill the potential that has been otherwise left behind. Indeed, it was precisely the failure of the world proletarian revolution of 1917-19 that necessitated a “retreat” and reconsideration of perspectives and political forms (other than those of bourgeois-revolutionary revolutions) of the arenas of political struggle that had come into our time. According to Lenin and Trotsky, the political party for communism remained indispensable. What did the proletariat aim to abolish itself by the October 16 2014

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"The trade unions know that public support is alienated by violence. They know that's what the Communist means" Neil Kinnock.

Kinnock's statements on the miners' use of violence have been cited as an example of the retaliatory violence of the miners against the police - the fact that this statement was made by a future leader of the Labour Party. Even after she was elected to Labour Party's NEC, Margaret Thatcher, by her words and actions, helped to encourage violence among the miners. Obviously not. The police are the sharp end of the capitalist onslaught on the democratic rights, living standards and jobs of the workers. They serve the bosses' state, of which they are an integral part.

Under 100 years ago such an assertion would have been quite uncontroversial. In his book, Hooligan: A history of respectable fear, Geoffrey Pearson shows how the police were vehemently hated and in some cases banished from working class areas in the period around the century. He quotes remarkably healthy figures, which show that around one in four of London's policemen were assaulted every year. Then, unlike now, there were few illusions about the 'neutrality' of the police if any working class neighbourhoods took active measures to ensure a united and cohesive front was presented to the police's alien presence. From Connolly's Irish Citizen's Army, to what should be our attitude today towards violence against the police?

Well, unlike Kinnock and his subsequent trade union members, communists obviously advocate working class violence against the state's apparatus to defend its workers. In the case of the miners' strike, workers have consistently been forced to take on the state's police. In contradiction to what Kinnock would like us to believe, working class violence directed against the representatives of the bourgeois state is most certainly part of the "traditions" of the working class movement and working class communities in general. So what should be our attitude today towards violence against the police?

We, unlike Kinnock and his trade union comrades, communists obviously uphold working class resistance to the state's servants. And we would like to see the miners' resistance continue.

The Leninist paper run by the pro-Moscow CPGB Board, despite police attempts to protect it. 4. In February 1972 striking miners, aided by the police, marched in military formation through the town to protect the picket. The police did not interfere against and defeat a far larger mass of numbers. If we can only get enough people on the picket lines, they tell us, then we can "intimidate", "swamp" and "conquer" the police. To prove their case they refer us to the example of the police massacre at Saltley Gates and their only operative conclusion to take the struggle forward is not in favour of setting workers up as punch bags - the surest way on to victory - but of consolidating and sharpening up in preparation for just such a strategic battle as today's.

The way to avoid violence is to prepare for it. In Lenin's words,"We can 'intimidate' scabs and swamp the police assault comes. We can 'neutralise' (it seems to have even seeped through to Straight Left). Organise workers' defence corps, to leave picket lines.

The other half of the 'dream ticket', according to Kinnock, is contrary to what Kinnock would like us to believe. It was not simply a question of police assault on the miners, it was also a question of organisation - in this case the lack of organisation of the miners. As the CPGB's paper of the time sardonically noted, it was not in favour of setting workers up as punch bags - the surest way on to victory - but of consolidating and sharpening up in preparation for just such a strategic battle as today's.

A disciplined, organised and purposeful body of people can stand against and defeat a far larger mass if that mass is lacking in discipline, organisation and purposeful leadership. We would have thought that this is a fairly obvious point to make, and the conclusions which spring from it for the miners' strike are also self-evident. Significantly, how much more effective are the organisations of groups on the British left who have actually made a point of it.

Our conclusions on violence and the miners therefore are somewhat different to those of Neil Kinnock and Straight Left. We maintain that the miners' strike is a key battle for all workers. They must be prepared to win using any means necessary. To defeat the miners is to defeat the very foundations of the British state. The miners' strike is a vital battle for all workers. We will not be defeated by the police or the state.
What we fight for

- Without organisation the working class is nothing; with the least form of organisation it is everything.

- There exists no real Communist Party nowhere. There are so-called “parties” on the left. In reality they are confessional sects. Members who disagree with the prescribed “line” are expected to gang up and expose such parties. Either that or face expulsion.

- Communists operate according to the October 11 meeting of the UK branch committee of the International of democratic centralism. Through ongoing debates we will build a genuinely united party in action and a common world outlook. As long as they support, defend and organise in such parties they 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 interest of the working class and end up with ending capitalism.

- Communists are internationalists. Everywhere we strive for the closest unity and agreement of all the similar and progressive parties of all countries. We oppose every manifestation of divisiveness, nationalism, sectarianism.

- Mark Fischer is a Communist Party, a Communist International, the struggle against capital is worldwide, from one country to another.

- Communists have no interest apart from the working class as a whole in the future. This is why we are in the vanguard of recognising the importance of Majoritarian democracy. 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. As a world party capitalism will not willingly allow its wealth and power to be removed by a parliament.

- We will use the most militant means. Organisations allow a federal republic of England, Scotland and Wales, a united Ireland and a federal, democratic and socialist United States of Europe.

- In conclusion: the struggle of the working class worldwide and its legitimisation.

- Improving access to a healthier and more sustainable environment.

- Workers’ rights, social security, income security, income redistribution, control of big money and a united, federal Ireland and a European federation of England, Scotland and Wales, a united Ireland and a federal, democratic and socialist United States of Europe.

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- The struggle against capital is a struggle for world domination and all workers and their organisations are part of that struggle. As a global system capitalism can only be superseded globally. As a world party capitalism will not willingly allow its wealth and power to be removed by a parliament.
A laughing matter

by the bourgeoisie press as evidence of Labour’s vulnerability to Ukip, distracting attention from the corrosive effect Farage’s merry crew are having on the Tory vote. We must voice a certain amount of scepticism here. Labour’s percentage of the vote, after all, rose (albeit marginally) compared to 2010; the striking feature of last week’s poll was the total collapse of the Liberal Democrats retained their deposit by 34 votes, having garnered 22.7% in 2010. The Tories likewise dropped nearly 15 percentage points. On the other hand, Labour gained by far its lowest absolute number of votes in the entire history of the seat - 11,633 on a turnout of 36% of eligible voters. When the Murdoch papers and caging Blairites complain that people got a look-in. Quite so, comrades (though, of course, Blairites in particular like to crowing Blairites complain that people that a given enemy is guilty of racism is generally agreed to be a Bad Thing, successfully convincing people that a given enemy is guilty of racism is generally agreed to be a Bad Thing, successfully convincing people that a given enemy is guilty of racism is generally agreed to be a Bad Thing, successfully convincing people that a given enemy is guilty of racism is generally agreed to be a Bad Thing, successfully convincing people that a given enemy is guilty of racism is generally agreed to be a Bad Thing, successfully convincing people that a given enemy is guilty of racism is generally agreed to be a Bad Thing, successfully convincing people that a given enemy is guilty of racism is generally agreed to be a Bad Thing, successfully convincing people that a given enemy is guilty of racism is generally agreed to be a Bad Thing, successfully convincing people that a given enemy 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