



weekly
worker



Why do comrades on the left insist on repeating evident falsehoods about Lenin?

- Commercialised pride
- Marikana whitewash
- Fictitious capital
- Renzi's travails

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Towards a Communist Party of the European Union

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Blood sacrifice
on the altar of
austerity

BANK
OF
GREECE

LETTERS



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

Borderline

On June 18 two open-borderist comrades replied to my argument that the relaxation of border controls is pro-capitalist (Letters, June 11). Their common thread is that refusing to demand abolition of all border controls and cessation of all deportations reads migrant workers out of the working class. As I'll show, the critique of open borderism hasn't that implication.

Both letters correctly call for ending guest worker programmes, but the comrades apparently don't see how contradictory their position is. Do they foresee organising migrant workers around the elimination of their jobs? Guest worker programmes must be abolished because they are inimical to the labour movement as a whole. Justification doesn't require Alan Johnstone's rationale - tortured and paternalistic - that migrant workers might be better off if the jobs weren't available to them.

What the comrades deny is the permissibility, by the working class movement within its own ranks, of some forms of discrimination. The classic Marxist rebuttal is the 1880 French communist programme, whose measures regarding foreign workers were explicitly discriminatory. Perhaps comrades aren't familiar with the demand contained in *The programme of the Parti Ouvrier*, drafted by Marx and Guesde and praised by Engels: "Legal prohibition of bosses employing foreign workers at a wage less than that of French workers." This isn't a minimum wage, which is demanded separately. It is express protection against wage undercutting by migrant workers.

For the sake of clarity, another example of properly discriminatory measures, child labour laws, should be recognised for what they are: a worthy prohibition of the employment of underage undercutters to benefit labour. The children (workers, too) didn't always benefit from the ban on their employment. (Border controls are indeed different from these measures because they're basic to statehood, and the working class - short of dual power - has no means of implementing state policy without allying with the capitalist state apparatus.)

To deflect the argument that open-borderists support the plutocracy, Alan distinguishes open borders from relaxation of controls. But supporting the mere relaxation of controls is implicit in the demand for open borders - itself neither realisable under modern capitalism nor the first priority under socialism.

Stephen Diamond
USA

Sloganising

Open borders are a necessary objective of the international socialist revolution. But to advocate open borders in the abstract without the necessary context of fundamentally changing the capitalist system is to advocate utopian reformism - which might take place in a few partial cases, where it has the permission of capitalism. But 'partial' open borders to select races is not open borders.

While the 'open borders' slogan is correct, we have to explain at the same time that the imperialist countries owe a debt to the countries of Africa and Latin America and must be willing to pay reparations, so that revolutionary governments in the imperialist countries would rapidly improve the standard of living of those in exploited countries. Most emigrants I have met do not want leave their own countries, but feel they have no alternative, because capitalism has failed them. There will be few emigrants when the people of Africa and Latin America have a decent diet and housing.

Marxists often advocate transitional slogans because they are 'catchy' and we want to be listened to. But then the

connection between these slogans and the revolution (not a popular idea at the moment) is obscured by the failure to make revolution a real option. What is objectively necessary will not happen - there is no solution without revolution.

Earl Gilman
email

Stoned again

In response to Tony Roberts (Letters, June 25) supposedly in relation to my article on the Rolling Stones ('Stoned and dethroned', June 18), can I first of all apologise for being born in a village. I'll try harder next time to be born somewhere much better.

I can certainly agree with Tony that pushing "well-written communist propaganda" through letterboxes has really shaken up the establishment in the past and I know there have been a number of questions asked in parliament about the practice. You see, as these leaflets drop down on doormats, they get added to all those free local papers and takeaway menus, and become a real fire risk. Naughty!

The one time in my life that I write about something genuinely popular - a rock group that has moved millions of so-called ordinary people (for better or for worse) over the course of many years - I get upbraided by some lefty who, judging by the immense charm and intellect on show in his letter, will have been lucky to have moved tens of people. Funny old world!

On the more serious letter from Maciej Zurowski, I agree with most of what he has written, but ultimately what he has got his knickers in a twist over are really only passing comments in the published piece. I think the song, 'Salt of the earth', from *Beggars' banquet* is banal and the worse of the album. That is why I said it was "somewhat trite" - I was quoting the lyrics not in an approving sense, but as an example of silliness and inability to comprehend. "Say a prayer for the common foot soldier/Spare a thought for his back-breaking work" is obviously an example of profound distance. 'Factory girl' is much more ambiguous, as I think are 'Street fighting man' and 'Jigsaw puzzle'. I actually made all this clearer in my original draft and went through the contradictions of the songs at much more length, but I trimmed this back so that the writing became more angular.

The real point I wanted to make in the broader scheme of the article is that some conception of the social world made an appearance with the Stones in the mid-1960s, but had faded out by the early 1970s, to be replaced by simple hedonism. I'm interested in the Stones in this regard because social commentary obviously wasn't their thing at all, but there was a magnetic pull towards it that ends up in snide carping. It's a great dialectic.

I actually couldn't give a stuff about the lefty morality tale (which I kind of sense from Maciej), whether or not Jagger and Richards (or Ray Davies or whoever) looked down on the proles from a great height, etc. I've got great faith in people and I think they can take being mocked and insulted. I think it's all profoundly entertaining and I much prefer the Dylan who implies everyone was grotesque, stupid and fucked up to the one who pats people on the head with trite old left nursery rhymes.

Having said that, I think it's pretty obvious from the article that I'm no fan of what the Stones became after Brian Jones had died.

Howard Phillips
email

Devastating

Hatfield Main has just announced it will close - the last pit to do so. It is devastating. Every miner in Britain had felt that at least we still have one working mine, and our race isn't run yet - the fat lady hasn't sung and maybe somehow someone will see the folly of closing down all our mines and basing the whole

energy policy on nuclear and bliddy wind.

The government at the end of March doubled the tax on coal - so that it now accounts for something like two-thirds of the price - as a direct stick to hit the coal power station producers with. They responded by refusing to sign any contract with Hatfield, which wanted £55 per tonne for its coal. Drax power station will only pay the price per day, as it lands at the ports and so Hatfield could only have a contract if it guaranteed to be always lower than the price of the imports. With 12 million tonnes of Russian coal coming to Britain at below production costs in the search for foreign currency, and millions more coming from the USA (also at below the cost of production because of a massive energy glut over there), there is no way any British mine, no matter how efficient, could compete unsubsidised.

The government had offered £18 million to close the mine, but not a cent to keep it in production. So we're stuffed for entirely political reasons: it was a policy based upon class strategy initially, but now it is pure class hatred and vindictiveness. North Sea oil will be saved with tax relief and production grants, the frackers will get £1 billion in development aid and 60% tax exemption, nuclear power will be guaranteed a price of £92 per MGH (coal costs £24 per MGH without fossil fuel tax) and wind can write its own cheque. But coal? Class memories run deep and the Tories will never let us survive, even as the cheapest, longest-standing energy source.

Even after everything we've witnessed before and seen our mates go down one by one, this is still a very bitter and emotional blow, deeply felt by coal communities across Britain.

On another matter, let me correct your ad for the Durham Miners' Gala on Saturday July 11. You need to be there for 8am (not 10am) to see all the bands and banners coming in. They start arriving at 8.15 and the best place to watch is down at the County Hotel, where all the labour movement big wigs will be on the balcony. If *Weekly Worker* readers want to parade with the Follonsby miners lodge banner - probably the most radical union banner in 100 years - meet us at Durham railway station between 8am, when we set up, and 8.30, when we move off. We are down the steps from the main entrance, across the road. We will be there with our band.

David Douglass
South Shields

Unite for Corbyn

Dave Kirk of 'Unite for Corbyn' has sent this important circular to Unite members. I think it should be given the widest publicity.

"We are members of Unite who believe that our union should give its full backing to Jeremy Corbyn in the current contest for leader of the Labour Party. Jeremy is the only consistently pro-union, anti-austerity candidate and has a long track record of supporting workers in struggle. Many of his political positions match, or are close to, those of our union.

"We believe that, whatever the final result, a strong Corbyn campaign can help pull the national debate to the left, and help popularise pro-union and socialist politics inside the Labour Party and in society generally. We call on the executive council to endorse and agree for Unite to nominate Corbyn. It would be a serious mistake to support any other candidate, or to support no candidate.

"Surely it is time for us, as the largest Labour-affiliated union, to come out unambiguously in support of a candidate who has supported us time and time again, and whose politics most closely reflect the political aims of the trade union movement."

Stan Keable
Labour Party Marxists

Curious face

The publication of almost identical reports in much of the national and

international media around June 23 that a photograph taken by Nasa's Curiosity Rover is that of an almost perfectly formed and symmetrical pyramid on Mars is rather extraordinary and could be very significant.

Ever since the Viking orbiters in 1976 took pictures of what appeared to be anomalous and potentially artificial structures in the Cydonia region of Mars and what appeared to be a large 'face' staring out into space from the surface, there has been considerable controversy and speculation about what these may be.

Although some claim they have seen pyramidal structures in these photographs, the old photographic technology, weather conditions on the surface and some odd treatments of the published pictures released by Nasa have meant the evidence has been very far from conclusive, and a lot of the speculation has been hijacked and massively inflated by new age conspiracy theorists.

It was virtually impossible to tell if what looked like heavily eroded and denuded pyramids were in fact perfectly natural mountains or other geological features. People have suggested the pictures of 'the face', a mile-long structure on the surface of Mars, are tricks of the light and shadow, or of the brain, or just natural geology. The more recent pictures do look very obscure and really could be anything.

But they do not explain the startling earlier images of 'the face', in which some have chosen to see Sphinx-like, Pharaohic or leonine features. To me, the enhanced versions, frames 35A72 and 70A13, appear to be of a simian-helmeted warrior, aggressive and hostile with bared teeth. Readers can take a look and judge and decide for themselves.

However, the latest Curiosity pictures of a pyramid seem remarkably clear, sharp, definitive and unambiguous and it is odd there are apparently no other pictures taken or released by Nasa. Although the feature is relatively small, it is possible it is just the tip of a much larger structure hidden in the sands, which might explain the protected perfect symmetry of the newly exposed structure.

I have been interested for a number of years in the thinking and speculation around Mars, and I hope I have kept as open-minded, objective and critical as possible. However, when I saw the Curiosity picture, I just thought, 'Oh Jesus Christ - it all, or at least a lot of it, seems to be bloody true. How the hell have they managed to keep this quiet for so long?'

I was also aware the Russians have long had a special interest in Mars and in what Nasa was up to and what it may have discovered.

I am reminded of the dramatic announcement by Nasa on August 7 1996 that evidence of microorganisms on Mars had been found in a 4.5 billion-year-old meteorite in Antarctica, which had originated from Mars. Later that day, President Clinton hailed the event as historic and pledged Nasa "would search for answers and for knowledge which is as old as humanity itself, but essential to our people's future". Rather dramatic and odd language even then, given the largest microfossil was just 200 billionths of a metre in length. It seemed to be conveying a subtext to those in the know, but was baffling to the rest of us.

Curiously, the story seemed to simply fade away with no further announced developments, although the Catholic church was shaken for a while, as apparently life elsewhere than on Earth is counter to their entire belief system.

The *Weekly Worker* is a paper promoting Marxism and the concept of a mass Communist Party as the means through which the world's working class will emancipate itself and the whole of humanity, so does the Mars story have any relevance to Marxism? Surely we need to have some understanding of our origin and our past, if we are to understand the present and to then shape and influence our future?

If indeed it does turn out there is evidence of a past civilisation on Mars, and which seems to share some common features and cultural history with some of our own ancient civilisations, the implications are breathtaking. Not least, a civilisation far in advance of our own today - a close, intimate connection with the human race on Earth itself, sharing lions, sphinxes and pyramids, and presumably therefore capable of interplanetary travel and communication.

This certainly would challenge the very basis of the Marxian materialist conception of history, and how it explains and describes the emergence and history of the human race and of human civilisation as we know it.

The *Weekly Worker* more than most left papers and groups also champions the need for the working class to understand who holds power and how they use it to maintain their own rule and privileges, and for the working class to learn and prepare to become a new ruling class, as a central part of the process through which it will emancipate itself and establish a classless, communist society.

The way the world's dominant imperialist power, and home to the richest and most powerful members of the world's capitalist and ruling classes, chooses to expend billions of dollars - wealth created by the world's working classes - in space and planetary exploration, yet appears to be highly controlling and secretive in informing people of the real purpose of this enterprise, and in keeping secret some really extraordinary and potentially enlightening information about our origins, is a key aspect of their class rule.

Another aspect of that rule is the way selective facts and rumours are introduced into general circulation, and are then picked up and whipped up by conspiracy theorists, often with close but hidden links with secret state and permanent government institutions, which simultaneously filtrate key ideas, concepts and facts into the general subconsciousness, discredit them through feverish and outlandish speculation and conspiracy theories - exhausting and excluding the general working population, who have neither the time nor the inclination or information to sift through the vast volumes of verbiage and to try and work out what might be factual and what is guff.

I don't know if the release of the latest pyramid picture was deliberate or accidental, but the reaction of the world's media is instructive. There is the usual whipping up and discrediting of the theories and speculation of various obsessive internet-addicted fringe elements, yet a world weariness that the pictures are no great surprise, given all the softening up which has taken place over the past 40-50 years.

I hope I am not one of those mad conspiracy theorists falling for a line. I personally think at least 99% of the conspiracy theories in circulation are bunkum. On the source of the most famous, for example, I am very happy to believe that Lee Harvey Oswald was perfectly capable and probably did single-handedly assassinate president John F Kennedy in Dallas.

However, something in my bones, in my very being - and looking at the various pictures of 'the face' on Mars, and despite all the new age nonsense - tells me there is something very significant about the history of our very near neighbour, which is of profound importance to understanding the origin and future of the human race on Earth today.

Marxism is science applied to politics, economics and history, and based on facts and evidence. It should be open, challenging, creative and critical, capable of absorbing new information and discoveries, and integrating this into a modern understanding of the world today and providing a guide for action to change it.

Andrew Northall
KetteringIncorporation and

PRIDE

Incorporation and commercialisation

The annual Pride march was symptomatic of a divided LGBT movement, reports Daniel Harvey

Each year, when the Pride march comes around, the claims that it has become commercialised and separated from its roots get stronger. This year was no different, with the movement becoming more splintered than ever - the divisions are clearer between its traditional left support and the newer, corporate-sponsored wing. There has been a concerted effort over the last decade to incorporate some forms of gay identity, but that process is partial, and incomplete, because, despite everything that has changed, the LGBT 'community' is hardly homogenous.

That was certainly in evidence on the June 27 march, and in the arguments that swirled around it. There was an altercation with the Pride board over the UK Independence Party's gay section, LGBT Ukip. Pride originally invited the group to attend, only to retract the offer because of "health and safety concerns" when there were so many complaints. Whilst the Ukip leadership is formally for gay equality, so many of its members have come out with homophobic statements that the idea of a Ukip LGBT section faintly seems ridiculous. And, of course, Ukip has such horribly reactionary policies on a whole range of issues, not least immigration.

The darker side of the incorporation of gay identity into the mainstream has been the small but real rise of what has been dubbed 'homonationalism': that is to say, the use of gay symbols and tolerance of LGBT people to promote nationalist and Islamophobic politics. Israel has been a very strong promoter of this, counterposing its own 'liberalism' to the intolerance of Hamas, etc. So it is not that surprising that Ukip now has an LGBT section - even English Defence League members have been seen waving rainbow flags on EDL marches.

Dubious

The Pride board itself is a deeply dubious organisation. The leader is Michael Salter, until May 2015 head of political broadcasting at Downing Street, and most of the others are from business. The "campaigning and political rep" is actually from LGBTories. The TUC, which has been a major sponsor of Pride, is only allowed a non-voting observer status. This situation resulted from a shift that took place in 2004, which turned the Gay Pride protest march into a parade, a party to celebrate gay identity. This demanded a lot more money, which had to be raised from somewhere. The then London mayor, Ken Livingstone, was able to deliver some funding, but mostly the organisation came to rely on corporate sponsors.

Boris Johnson did not hesitate to use his financial leverage to threaten Pride if it refused to allow Ukip to take part. This left the board trapped between two equal and opposing forms of spinelessness, making claims and counterclaims. In the end a group of Ukip supporters did turn up, but they were told to stay well clear of the African LGBT section on 'safe space' grounds. However, after meeting with not a little hostility from other marchers, the contingent decided to leave.

Despite the corporate sponsors, the board originally wanted Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners to lead the Pride march this year. LGSM was originally formed during the Great Strike of 1984-85, and has since been immortalised in the wonderful film *Pride*. It is unlikely that this decision was taken out of any sympathy whatsoever with the cause that the group espoused: much more to do with the star appeal of the actors



The new normal

involved in the film. Even so, it could not hurt the appeal of the march and help some of the other more mercantile groups involved to be led by a leftwing presence. When the line-up was announced in March, it was revealed that LGSM would have a delegation of about 50 at the front of block A, which it would share with Barclays, HSBC, Citigroup and Starbucks, amongst others. All the unions and working class campaign groups were to be in block C, which would mean they would be so far back that when LGSM arrived in Trafalgar Square they would not even have set off.

But LGSM was unwilling to collaborate in this sham that would make a mockery of everything the group stood for and thankfully insisted the unions were brought up the pecking order - or else LGSM would relegate itself to block C. The board could not countenance the demotion of the business sponsors, so it reluctantly accepted the demotion of LGSM. As a result, it felt as though block C was almost a separate Pride because of the size and range of groups and unions involved. It felt like a spill-over from the anti-austerity march a week earlier, with a lot of the same chants and placards.

The LGSM grouping marched alongside the Tredegar Town Brass Band - a delegation from the Welsh former mining town. This added to the cathartic feeling - it was good to be able to celebrate the history of our movement and have some time off being furious at the present state of things. With the near universal enthusiasm from the crowds for the miners, it felt as though everyone knew where the real Pride march started - and that was with us.

A group called RIP Pride evaded stewards and carried a black coffin in front of the Barclays logo before being pulled away. It was an appropriate gesture, since a lot of gay and lesbian people are indeed in mourning for the state of the LGBT movement. There was also an 'alternative picnic', run mostly by black and minority LGBT+ people, who understandably felt they just could not participate in the actual march, given Pride's current trajectory. This represented a protest against misogyny and racism - which can exist among gay people as much as anywhere else sadly. The main problem with black gay people, as well as other minority sexual and gender orientations - the transgendered, intersexed and asexual - is unfortunately just invisibility a lot of the time.

We cannot challenge that marginalisation by splintering

into different competing identity positions, but will have to reach back to the universal message of solidarity that was present in the original Gay Liberation Front - the GLF was opposed to the system of capitalist profit-seeking, whose representatives now head the Pride march.

Roots

Gay Pride, as it was formerly known, has always offered gay and lesbian people solidarity in their struggle for rights and against stigmatisation from hetero-normative society. For most of the original marchers, represented as the "veterans of 1972" on the day, the assumption was simply that capitalist society could not accept gay liberation because of the threat it posed to the nuclear family, the essential 'atom' for the social reproduction of the working class.

This has turned out not to be the case. However, as women have made gains, ie, to control reproduction, to work independently, this has created openings for the gay and transgender movement to also make gains. As capitalism has become recomposed in its neoliberal form, it has incorporated new identities - at the cost of atomisation and the weakening of trade union organisations.

For the LGBT movement this has meant a qualitative shift: weakening the aspects that were based on solidarity and social networks, but retaining an alternative form of community and the optimistic vision of the 1970s and early 80s. In London a lot of LGBT projects and centres have either closed or are under serious threat of closure, with as many as 25% disappearing since the beginning of the recession in 2008. A lot of commentators have spoken nostalgically about the Joiners Arms in Hackney, which has shut down, along with Madame Jojo's in Soho and Camden's Black Cap. The Vauxhall Tavern is under serious threat of closure and a campaign to try and save it is in full swing. Soho itself is threatened by developers and gentrification. These sorts of venues which were not just gay bars, but social spaces where some form of mutual aid was taken for granted - built up in a time when property in London was much cheaper and when there was space in the city for venues that were not just commercial.

Nowadays gay life more and more seems to resemble the straight equivalent, but is dominated by big clubs and the internet, which some mistakenly see as an alternative in itself. This has given rise to what a lot of gay people see as quite an alienated form of sexual freedom, which, despite the ever greater levels of superficial acceptance and presence in the mainstream, has actually led to gay people living increasingly separate lives.

Organisations which are supposed to defend gay rights, like Stonewall, have become increasingly corporate, paying six-figure salaries to directors.² Such organisations are now often focused on consultancy for big business, despite their nominal commitment to outreach and charitable work for gay causes, particularly around homelessness, discrimination and HIV prevention. As the gay and lesbian movement has broken through into the mainstream, the appearance of support for gay rights has become essential for commercial companies ●

Notes

1. www.theguardian.com/society/2015/feb/04/closing-time-gay-pubs-lgbt-venues-property-prices.
2. This list from the United States is indicative: www.washingtonblade.com/2015/02/19/much-lgbt-organization-leaders-make.

ACTION

CPGB podcasts

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

London Communist Forum

Sunday July 5, 5pm: Weekly political report from CPGB Provisional Central Committee, followed by open discussion reading group. Calthorpe Arms, 252 Grays Inn Road, London WC1. This meeting: Vol 2, chapter 3: 'The circuit of commodity capital'. Organised by CPGB: www.cpgb.org.uk.

Radical Anthropology Group

Introduction to anthropology
Tuesday July 7, 6.30pm: Annual general meeting. Cock Tavern, 23 Phoenix Road, London NW1. Talks are free, but small donations welcome. Organised by Radical Anthropology Group: <http://radicalanthropologygroup.org>.

Justice for Paps

Wednesday July 3, 5pm: Vigil, High Wycombe police station, Queen Victoria Road, High Wycombe, Bucks. Remember Habib 'Paps' Ullah, who died in 2008 while under arrest. Organised by Justice4Paps: www.justice4paps.wordpress.com.

Housing for people, not profit

Thursday July 3, 7.30pm: Meeting, Chestnuts Arts and Community Centre, 280 St Ann's Road, London N15. Speaker: Felicity Dowling. Organised by Haringey Left Unity: www.facebook.com/HaringeyLeftUnity.

Uniting against Islamophobia

Saturday July 4, 12.30pm: Demonstration against rally by EDL splinter group, North East Infidels. Assemble old town hall, High Street, Stockton-on-Tees TS18. Organised by Teesside People's Assembly: www.facebook.com/TeessidePA.

National Shop Stewards Network

Saturday July 5 11am to 5pm: Conference, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, Holborn, London WC1. Speakers include: Ronnie Draper (BFAWU), Steve Gillan (POA), Janice Godrich (PCS), Peter Pinkney (RMT). Delegate/visitor fee: £6. Organised by NSSN: www.shopstewards.net.

Block the death factory

Monday July 6, 7am, all day: Mass action against Israeli arms company Elbit Systems, UAV (Elbit) Systems factory, Lynn Lane, Shenstone, Lichfield, WS14. Organised by Block the Factory: www.blockthefactory.org.

No to austerity

Tuesday July 7, 6.30pm: Comedy benefit gig for the People's Assembly, Hammersmith Apollo, 45 Queen Caroline Street, London W6. Tickets: £20-£30. Confirmed acts include: Jo Brand, Jeremy Hardy, Mark Steel and Robin Ince. Organised by People's Assembly: www.thepeoplesassembly.org.uk.

Protest Osborne's budget

Wednesday July 8, all day: People's Assembly national day of action against the Tory government's so-called emergency budget. Actions at various locations. For details see www.thepeoplesassembly.org.uk/protest_osborne_s_emergency_budget.

Gaza one year on

Friday July 10, 5.30pm: Vigil to mark the anniversary of the last major Israeli offensive, Richmond Terrace, London SW1. Organised by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign: www.palestinecampaign.org.

Durham Miners' Gala

Saturday July 11, 10am to 5pm: Annual labour movement event. Main assembly: Market Place, Durham DH1. Organised by Durham Miners' Gala: www.durhamminers.org.

Against the arms fair

Wednesday July 15, 7pm: Meeting for anti-arms-trade activists, Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1. Organised by Stop the Arms Fair: www.stopthearmsfair.org.uk.

Why do we need Left Unity?

Thursday July 16, 7.15pm: Launch meeting, Teesside Left Unity, St Mary's Centre, Corporation Road, Middlesbrough TS1. Guest speaker: Terry Conway, LU national nominating officer. Organised by Teesside LU: www.facebook.com/events/1015241495166664.

The Chartists and the democratic deficit

Saturday July 18, 1pm: Meeting, Red Shed, Vicarage Street, Wakefield. Speakers include: Ken Rowley (former vice-president, NUM), Shaun Cohen (Ford Maguire Society). Free admission, including buffet. Organised by Wakefield Socialist History Group: www.theredshed.org.uk/SocialHist.html.

Ska against war

Thursday July 23, 7pm: Anti-war fundraiser, Passing Clouds, 1 Richmond Road, London E8. Performers include Captain SKA. Vegetarian Egyptian food on offer. Organised by North London Stop the War: www.stopwar.org.uk.

CPGB wills

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

GREECE



Bank doors closed

Euro leaders seek regime change

Syriza is now reaping the consequences of having taken office, writes **Eddie Ford**

In the end, Brussels and the 'institutions' did not blink - nor were they ever going to. On June 30 Athens, surprising absolutely no-one, defaulted on its €1.5 billion payment to the International Monetary Fund. On the same day, the current bailout programme officially ended after euro zone finance ministers rejected a desperate last-minute appeal by Alexis Tsipras for a *third* bailout of €29.1 billion that would supposedly cover Greece's needs for the next two years.

But the very next day it was revealed that Tsipras had written to the institutions accepting nearly all of the creditors' conditions that only a few days before he had described as a "humiliation" and "extortion". He wanted just a handful of minor changes, such as maintaining a VAT discount for Greek islands and delaying the raising of the retirement age until October rather than introducing it immediately. But German finance minister Wolfgang Schäuble rejected the Tsipras letter, saying they just muddied the waters further, while chancellor Angela Merkel ruled out any more negotiations until after the July 5 referendum.

As readers will know, Tsipras had stunned EU leaders a few days earlier by calling for a popular vote on the proposals put forward by the institutions, which included further vicious attacks. Parliament voted in favour of the referendum, to be held on July 5, and Tsipras said he was recommending a 'no' vote.

Pasok, New Democracy and To Potami (The River) said the referendum would be "unconstitutional", as the constitution apparently does not allow for referendums on "fiscal matters", only "crucial national matters". In response, Syriza argued quite logically that the present parlous situation more than easily complies with that. Interestingly, the 'official' Communist Party of Greece (KKE) declared it was against the referendum, as "both answers lead to a yes to the EU and capitalist barbarity" - which contains a certain truth.

Various European leaders and officials made their position on the referendum more than clear: a 'no' vote on July 5 would be a vote to leave the euro. For example, Mariano Rajoy, Spain's prime minister, bluntly said that if Tsipras wins the referendum then Greece "has no alternative other than to leave the euro". By the same measure, he remarked, if the Greek prime minister was defeated in the plebiscite that would be "good for Greece", as it would pave the way for talks with "another government." David Cameron made similar comments.

Jean-Claude Juncker, the EC president - who feels "deeply betrayed" by Tsipras - told a news conference that the Greeks must vote 'yes', before adding: "I will say to the Greeks who I love deeply: you mustn't commit suicide because you are afraid of death." Unsurprisingly, this comment raised heckles in a country that has seen a 35% increase in the suicide rate since the onset of the financial crisis.

At the same time it was announced that the banks would be closed and capital controls would be imposed until July 6 - maybe longer. Individuals are only allowed to take out €60 (£42) a day using ATMs, although they can bank online more freely. They cannot move money to accounts abroad. Credit and bank cards issued abroad can be used at cash machines freely, subject to queues and the amount of cash left in them (thus keeping the vital tourist industry going). Unsurprisingly, some ATMs ran out of cash. Fears are mounting that the capital controls announced by Syriza may not be sufficient to prevent financial meltdown. Panic could set in soon.

There are horrendously tough times ahead for the Greek people. The country's financial system is on the brink of total collapse. Without further emergency loans to sustain Greek banks, some of the country's major financial institutions could topple. It has been predicted that the banks will only remain solvent for up to five days following a default.

EU officials have long acknowledged that Greece would need a third bailout once the current programme expired. But in order to qualify Athens would need to have "successfully completed" the previous rescue programme. Naturally, any putative agreement on more loans for Greece would need to pass through several euro zone parliaments, including the Bundestag - where, to put it mildly, it would get a very rough ride. With absolute predictability, Syriza's options have dwindled to virtually nothing.

Game playing

In the pages of this paper last week, comrade Arthur Bough argued that it is in the interests of capital to wipe out the debts that exist in Greece, Italy and other countries, as they amount to "fictitious capital" (ie, to claims on future revenues) and hence act as a "drag on real, productive capital" (Letters, June 25). Therefore "in terms of a Marxist economic analysis," writes the comrade, there is "absolutely no reason why the wiping away of the debts of Italy is in any way impossible, even within the rationale of capitalism, or why

it would have anything other than a beneficial effect".

Yes, what the comrade says is quite true. If you wanted to begin a new round of capital accumulation, that is exactly what you would do. *But who the hell is going to actually do it?* Germany will not, nor will the United States. There is no *hegemon* capable of imposing such a plan or refashion the world in that way.

Now, we all know that Yanis Varoufakis - the finance minister and so-called "erratic Marxist" - has a PhD in economics and is the author of several books on game theory: a field that addresses various 'zero-sum' scenarios, where it is posited or imagined that one person's gains exactly equal net losses of the other participant or participants. This background helped to fuel near endless speculation that the Syriza leadership had a cunning plan B up their sleeve when it came to the negotiations - a killer move that would force the 'intuitions' to concede defeat. But there was never any plan B - or even a plan A worth talking about. Instead they have spent the last six months engaged in constant brinkmanship and robbing just about every institution within Greece (such as local municipalities) in a frantic effort to scramble together every last damned euro. *But to do what?* Just to hand the money over to the IMF, ECB and EU.

The referendum never did make sense economically (after Tsipras's declaration of capitulation that is doubly the case). OK, you get your 'no' vote - and bring back the drachma? The new currency would just go through the floor in terms of value, your life savings vanishing before your eyes. Combined with runaway inflation, and severe shortages of food and medicine, there will be a huge drop in living standards for pensioners and workers. Yes, the value of internal debts will also go down - but *external* debts in euros will not go away. Politically, however, the referendum made some sense. Tsipras could further shift the blame onto the institutions and Berlin, and away from the government in Athens. But, now that he has offered to surrender, where does that leave the referendum?

What next?

Frankly, the situation is bleak. When the Greek central bank recently talked about the necessity of removing "once and for all" the risk of a "credit event", it sounded almost like a call for a coup against Syriza. There can be no doubt that the imperialist core will be sponsoring and channelling discontent against the Syriza-led government, attempting to frame a narrative - after

all, how *does* business function when the banks are closed and strict capital controls have been introduced?

There have been relatively large demonstrations from the richer parts of Athens under the slogan of 'Europe!' - with more planned. All disturbingly reminiscent, in some respects, of Chile 1973 and the run-up to the coup, which saw CIA-backed protests by middle class housewives and petty bourgeois elements. It is not too difficult to imagine the same happening in Greece. *Efimerida ton Syntakton* has also reported that some workers in Athens were pushed into attending a 'yes' rally by their employers on June 30, citing a labour minister who had received many complaints. We now hear that Thorbjorn Jagland, the head of the Council of Europe, has said that the July 5 referendum would "fall short" of "international standards" - which holds that you need least two weeks' notice, with a "clear question" put to the people and "international observers" monitoring the vote.

True, it is very unlikely that there will be a coup right now - but it would be criminally complacent to think that it could never happen, whether it comes from the army, ministry of defence, high court, Council of Europe, or extra-state formations like Golden Dawn.

Just like the 'official communists' and the Salvador Allende government in Chile, Syriza has left the army completely intact - are you asking to be slaughtered, comrades? Though it does make you wonder what planet

some sections of the British left come from, it has to be said that for the past six months too many have been simply heaping praise on Syriza for managing to form a government - but it cannot even carry out its own reformist programme, let alone the minimum programme of Marxism. It was doomed to become either an agent of austerity and oppression or take part in a suicide mission. But who will suffer the most? Not the privileged Syriza MPs, that is for sure, who most like will have the option to fly abroad to safety. No, it will be ordinary Greek people and their *organisations* that will be sacrificed.

If the people vote overwhelmingly on July 5 against austerity and the dictat of the institutions, then that would be positive, but only in a very limited sense. They will have rejected the status quo - true. But what is the alternative? The truth is, there can be no solutions within the confines of tiny Greece - or indeed any other single country.

Syriza should have avoided the temptation of office, and that was a serious option - whatever the left might dogmatically insist. It could have refused the 50-seat top-up, working to constitute itself as an extreme party of opposition and strengthen its position within society as a whole. Most of all, the Greek left needs to work with others across Europe to bring nearer the day when we can challenge for power across the whole continent ●

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SOUTH AFRICA

Loyalists defend whitewash

Peter Manson reports on the willingness of 'official communists' to excuse the slaughter of workers

Finally, president Jacob Zuma has released the report on the police massacre of platinum miners on August 16 2012. Thirty-four miners were killed and a further 78 were injured in what was an unprovoked attack.

As expected, the report completely exonerates the African National Congress government and its officials. It parcels out the blame virtually in equal measure between the police, British-owned mining company Lonmin and the two rival unions: the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and the breakaway Association of Mining and Construction Union (Amcu).

Let us be clear: what happened in Marikana was cold-blooded murder. Police penned in and then gunned down workers who had gathered for ongoing protests - as they were attempting to flee. Sporadic shooting continued for more than half an hour, as police on horseback or in helicopters hunted down individuals desperately trying to get away, shooting several in the back. At least a dozen were picked off in this way, including many as they were trying to surrender.

Survivors tell of being hunted down by officers yelling, "Ja, you cop killers, you cop killers. You are in the shit. We are going to kill you here." Individual police officers were seeking vengeance for the deaths of two of their colleagues, in a battle which saw police tear-gas the strikers and shoot dead three of them. On the day of the slaughter the police's own photographs showed dead miners who were clearly unarmed, but later images of the same bodies had had weapons placed next to them in an attempt to maintain the pretence that the strikers had launched a violent attack.

The South African Broadcasting Company televised an interview with a police spokesperson just a few hours before the murderous assault began. Provincial police commissioner Nosiziso Mbombo announced her intention to "disarm" the miners and make them leave the "illegal gathering" on a nearby hill, even though it was common ground with no connection to Lonmin. Mbombo declared: "Today we are ending this matter." She did not reveal that 4,000 rounds of ammunition had been delivered to the police at 6am that morning - they had already been armed with lethal automatic rifles. Without a trace of irony Mbombo declared to a gathering of police officers on August 17 that the previous day's action had represented "the best of responsible policing".

Many of the strikers were supporters of a newly formed breakaway from what had been the country's largest trade union, the NUM. Those who flocked to join Amcu were disgusted by the unwillingness of the NUM to fight for a substantial rise in their poverty wages and improvements in their working conditions. The NUM, at that time completely under the control of the South African Communist Party, is a key affiliate of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu), which, along with the SACP itself, forms the tripartite alliance in support of the ruling ANC.

When the strike started on August 10, a turning point occurred when miners marched on the local NUM office demanding support. Officials came out with makeshift weapons and at least one had a firearm. Several shots were fired. It was after this that the strikers themselves started to carry traditional spears and sticks. But workers are not permitted to defend themselves, of course, and an official decision was taken to force the miners

to disarm.

On the fateful morning, Amcu president Joseph Mathunjwa, having got wind of police plans, pleaded with the strikers to lay down their arms and leave the hill - about 1,000 did so. It was after a further attempt by strike leaders to warn the men that they were now in severe danger that all those who had remained rose and began heading together for their shacks. The police claimed that this movement represented a deadly attack and the order to fire was given.

There is footage readily available showing the moment the police opened fire. Contrary to official reports at the time, the strikers were not attacking the police, but attempting to escape. The footage shows the workers moving from right to left, in a direction that is at right angles to police lines.

Apologetics

Afterwards Zuma expressed profound regret at the loss of life and announced the setting up of an enquiry - the standard means of ruling classes everywhere of deflecting criticism and riding out a crisis: "This is not a day to apportion blame," he said. "It is a day to mourn together." And the reaction of the SACP and Cosatu was totally abhorrent, confirming yet again that they are totally subservient to the bourgeois ANC. Cosatu president Sidumo Dlamini declared: "We will refuse to play the blame game and we will patiently await the outcomes of the judicial commission of enquiry." The idea that we should refuse to "blame" those who murdered members of our class engaged in struggle is truly nauseating.

The SACP leadership issued a statement "expressing condolences to all those who have lost family members and colleagues" and "our well wishes to those who have been injured - workers and police". It too welcomed the announcement of a commission of enquiry and urged it to "consider the pattern of violence associated with the pseudo-trade union, Amcu".

Clearly for the SACP and Cosatu the shooting dead of 34 workers and wounding of scores of others pales into insignificance when compared with the crime of splitting from the NUM and leading workers away from SACP influence. Of course, it is very rarely correct to walk away from one union - however, rightwing, corrupt and incompetent its leaders - in order to set up a rival. The fight must be fought within existing bodies. But, at the end of the day, Amcu is a working class body, not a tool of the class enemy, as the SACP and Cosatu pretend.

Then there was this disgraceful sentence from the central committee: "SACP members from the area confirm newspaper reports today that the armed workers who gathered on the hill were misled into believing they would be invulnerable to police bullets because they had used [the 'herbal medicine'] *intelezi*..."

These could be the words of an apartheid-era racist - it is disturbing enough that such stories can still be spread by the press, let alone by so-called workers' leaders. No doubt some of the strikers believe in 'tribal remedies', but does the SACP seriously think that they considered themselves "invulnerable to police bullets"? Why then were they trying to escape those bullets? But the SACP wants us to believe that these workers, who were indeed carrying spears and sticks, left the police with no choice but to open fire in self-defence.

Subsequently the authorities arrested hundreds of miners (those



Cold-blooded murder

who were still alive, of course), and threatened to charge them with the deaths of their own comrades under the South African legal system's doctrine of 'common purpose'. But that was too much even for the SACP and Cosatu, and the charges were quickly dropped.

As I say, a commission of enquiry was announced under retired judge Ian Farlam, and the publicly broadcast evidence made it abundantly clear that events had unfolded along the lines I have just described. Particularly telling was the revelation of an email exchange between ANC heavyweight and Lonmin shareholder Cyril Ramaphosa and a senior manager of the company the day before the slaughter. Ramaphosa declared that it was essential to get the minister of police to "act in a more pointed way". The strike was "not a labour dispute", he wrote. The mineworkers' behaviour was "dastardly criminal and must be characterised as such". So there must be "concomitant action to address the situation".

It is difficult to find the words to describe Ramaphosa. Once a militant anti-apartheid activist and workers' leader - ironically he was the NUM's first general secretary - he is now one of South Africa's richest men. He had made good use of the connections arising from the senior ANC posts he has held to acquire top positions in several major companies. Despite his known link to Marikana, he was elected ANC deputy president in December 2012 and after the 2014 general election was sworn in as the country's deputy president.

Recommendations

Zuma was handed the report on the massacre on March 31, but simply refused to release it. Six weeks later, in response to the growing clamour for its publication, the president declared:

The commission has made some serious recommendations that require careful consideration. Therefore, it is important to apply my mind carefully, so that our response ensures that the events that took place in Marikana are

not allowed to happen again in our country.³

I will come to those recommendations that required such "careful consideration" in a moment. First, however, let me quote from Zuma's summing up of the commission's criticisms in his June 25 TV broadcast.

Lonmin failed to "use its best endeavours to resolve the disputes" and to "respond appropriately to the ... outbreak of violence". As for Amcu, its officials "did not exercise effective control" over their members and supporters to ensure that their conduct was "lawful and did not endanger the lives of others". For example, would you believe that miners "sang provocative songs and made inflammatory remarks, which tended to aggravate an already volatile situation"? The NUM also "failed to exercise effective control over its membership in ensuring that their conduct was lawful and did not endanger the lives of others".

What about leading ANC figures and senior government appointees? Well, "it cannot be said that Mr Ramaphosa was the cause of the massacre, and the accusations against him are groundless", was Zuma's summary. In connection with police minister Nathi Mthethwa, he "played no role in the decision of the police to implement the tactical option on August 16 2012 if the strikers did not lay down their arms, which led to the deaths of the 34 persons". And to complete the exoneration, "no findings were made against" minister of mining Susan Shabangu.

Zuma explained that originally the police had drawn up "an operational plan which entailed the encirclement of a relatively small group of strikers". The idea was to erect barbed wire around them and provide only one exit point, "through which they would need to move, while handing over their weapons". But this was replaced at the last moment by a "tactical option" to enforce the strikers disarmament on the hill, which was "defective in a number of respects". The decision was taken by the North West police commissioner, and was

endorsed by the South African Police Service nationally. Zuma wants us to believe that none of his ministers were involved in any of this.

In this way the blame for all the "defective" decisions was placed entirely on individual police officers, including their commanders, since there was "a complete lack of command and control at scene two" - the location where fleeing miners were hunted down one by one and shot as they fled or tried to surrender. There was also "a delay of about an hour in getting medical assistance to the strikers who were injured at scene one" - Zuma asserted that "at least one striker might have survived if he had been treated timeously".

But not to worry: the commission has recommended that a "panel of experts" be appointed to review public order policing; that all police officers should be "trained in basic first aid"; that the director of public prosecutions should investigate possible "criminal liability" on the part of all members of the police involved; and that there should be an inquiry into the "fitness to hold office" of Riah Phiyega, the national police commissioner, as well as the provincial police commissioner. Meanwhile, from now on there will be strict enforcement of the laws that prohibit "the carrying of sharp instruments and firearms". After all, "Violence has no place in our democracy," concluded Zuma.

You can see why Zuma needed so much time to consider such far-reaching recommendations. And, of course, he most certainly was not negotiating behind the scenes to get the most embarrassing findings 'amended', was he?

Although the whitewash had been expected, that did not diminish the anger felt by bereaved families and the various rank-and-file campaigns. For example, the commission refused to make any recommendations on compensation for the victims' dependants.

Not that this has outraged the ANC loyalists in the workers' movement. Incredibly, as I write, the SACP has still not issued any statement,⁴ while it took Cosatu four days to "welcome" the report. The confederation urged "all parties to play their meaningful roles to ensure that in future labour disputes should never reach such a stage again". It assured readers that "Cosatu will enhance workers' education of various issues - amongst others, on the danger of coercing workers to participate in 'unprotected strikes'".⁵

And then there is the *Morning Star's* editorial. It concluded that "anger and sadness at the scale of this atrocity should not be misused to direct undeserved accusations against the ANC government, its leaders or the South African revolution".⁶ No, the ongoing "national democratic revolution", which the SACP contends is the "most direct route to socialism", is far too precious not just to all the platinum miners and others on starvation wages, but to the millions of unemployed and shack-dwellers ●

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Notes

1. <http://dailymaverick.co.za/article/2012-09-10-marikana-murders-the-world-now-believes>.
2. www.sacp.org.za/main.php?ID=3723.
3. Statement from the presidency, May 10 2015.
4. Although the day before the release of the report the SACP issued a press statement headed: "The right to life is sacrosanct". But this had nothing to do with Marikana: the party felt it had to make a stand against a township protest that had allegedly caused the temporary closure of a hospital (www.sacp.org.za/main.php?ID=4803).
5. www.cosatu.org.za/show.php?ID=10597 June 29.
6. *Morning Star* June 27-28.

LENIN

Truth, not myths, serve our cause

Why do comrades on the left insist on repeating evident falsehoods about Lenin and the Bolsheviks, not least when it comes to 1917? **Jack Conrad** replies to Jim Creegan

Jim Creegan has used this paper on a number of occasions to present his criticisms of Lars T Lih and myself when it comes to the programme and strategy of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (Majority).¹ In other words, overthrowing the tsarist autocracy through a national uprising in alliance with the peasant masses, establishing the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship (majority rule) of the proletariat and peasantry and through a process of “uninterrupted revolution” triggering the socialist revolution in Europe and thus opening the road in Russia to specifically socialist tasks. A perspective comprehensively mapped out by Vladimir Lenin during the first revolution of 1905 and then applied in the second and third revolutions of 1917.

Comrade Creegan says that, while Lars T Lih and myself “present significantly different arguments”, what unites us is our mutual “determination to discredit Trotsky’s account” of the Russian Revolution. I know Lars T Lih and rate him highly as a historian of the Russian Revolution. So, on this subject, it hardly needs saying, he is more than capable of speaking for himself. As for this writer, I am not in the least determined to “discredit” Leon Trotsky - if by that one means misrepresenting or defaming him.

No, what I am determined to do is to defend Lenin’s programme, his strategy, his party and his close comrades. To equate that with some sort of pathological anti-Trotskyism or evidence of congenital Stalinism does nothing for the reputation of Trotsky nor the reputation of those who describe themselves as Trotskyists. It was cold war academics such as Karl Popper, Leonard Schapiro and Richard Pipes who made a comfortable living by elaborating upon the utterly bogus narrative of Stalinism being essentially a continuation of Leninism. A claim which, of course, originates with none other than Joseph Stalin and his school of falsification.

Comrade Creegan assures us that he stands alongside those “Marxist historians” who argue that not only did Trotsky predict the course of the Russian Revolution “more accurately” than Lenin. He stands with those “Marxist historians” who argue that Lenin had by April 1917 “abandoned” the old Bolshevik programme and strategy and had to all intents and purposes gone over to Trotskyism: ie, the perspectives formulated by Trotsky in 1906. Note, his *Results and prospects* was written at a time when the author “adhered neither to one nor the other of the main trends in the Russian labour movement”.² Put another way, Trotsky spoke on behalf of the “centre”.³

It is certainly true that comrade Creegan can find abundant confirmation for his version of history in the writings of Tony Cliff, John Molyneux, Joseph Seymour, Ted Grant, Lynn Walsh and Ernest Mandel. Another school of falsification. When it comes to Bolshevism, these sect champions are without exception self-serving, often misinformed and frequently downright dishonest. After subjecting *What is to be done?* to a forensic historical and textual examination, Lars T Lih has proved this beyond any reasonable doubt.⁴ Cliff, Molyneux, Seymour, Grant, Walsh, Mandel *et al* basically accept at face value the Lenin invented by the cold war academics - with one crucial difference. Whereas the first camp comes to damn, the other camp seeks to emulate. An undemocratic Lenin, an inconsistent Lenin, a lying

Lenin, a manipulative Lenin is a gift for those whose overriding aim is to build a tightly controlled, semi-secret, confessional sect and whose attitude towards the working class owes more to Mikhail Bakunin and precious little to Karl Marx. But, needless to say, with both camps it is a radically false Lenin.

I believe the same is true with *Two tactics* and the Lenin who supposedly abandons his programme and strategy *in practice*, all the while proclaiming in public that he had done no such thing. Here is a story, which, while it might well be intended to elevate Trotsky, actually serves to violently diminish the Bolsheviks. Instead of learning from the programmatic and strategic continuity of the Bolsheviks, the likes of Cliff, Molyneux, Seymour, Walsh, Mandel *et al* hold out the prospect of their own particular small group of followers being catapulted into the giddy heights of state power merely through riding this or that spontaneous mass movement. If, that is, they, the true believers, maintain their faith in the sect. So all such “Marxist historians” tell the story of the Russian Revolution in a manner which ignores, downplays or sidelines inconvenient truths about the Bolsheviks: their minimum-maximum programme, their open polemics, their unremitting attacks on economism, their success in becoming a truly mass party from 1905 onwards, their positive experience in *duma* elections, their hugely popular press, their indisputable emergence as the majority party of the working class in 1912, their tried and tested leadership, etc.

Stages of abandonment

According to comrade Creegan, prior to 1917 “Lenin had not completely broken with the Menshevik theory of stages”. Thankfully, though, *in practice*, Lenin and “eventually through him” the Bolsheviks, “abandoned their earlier concept of the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry, and - once again *in practice*, if not in word - embraced the theory of permanent revolution elaborated by Trotsky in 1906”. A couple of sentences which are worth a little probing.

Lenin stands accused not only of being dishonest - after all, he did not admit his debt to Trotsky in any publication, speech, letter or telegram (something he was never shy of doing when it came to the “renegade” Karl Kautsky). Worse, not least given our current leftwing lexicon, he is accused of being a semi-Menshevik from 1903, when the Bolshevik-Menshevik split happened, till presumably 1917, when he wrote his *Letters from afar* (March 1917).

Yet the fact of the matter is that it was Trotsky who was a semi-Menshevik between 1903 and 1917. Having sided with the Mensheviks in 1903, he split from them in 1904, but remained on friendly terms. Indeed he breezily dismissed the Bolshevik-Menshevik split as a superficial phenomenon. In that semi-Menshevik spirit he became an inveterate unity-monger. Indeed in 1912 Trotsky brought together a motley crew of Bundists, Menshevik liquidators and Bolshevik boycottists - the August bloc - in a direct attempt to sabotage the 6th (Prague) Conference of the RSDLP. A move which Lenin furiously denounced as an attempt to “destroy the party”.⁵ Needless to say, it was the “uncultured”, “barbaric”, “sectarian”, “Asiatic” Bolsheviks whom Trotsky considered the biggest



Lenin: consistent

obstacle to the unprincipled unity he was desperately seeking.⁶

All Marxists in Russia envisaged the coming Russian Revolution as having two stages (Trotsky being no exception here⁷). The first was the “bourgeois” or “democratic” stage; the second was the “socialist stage”.⁸ However, there was a fundamental difference between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks.

The Mensheviks wanted to avoid the *danger* of participating in a revolutionary government during the first stage of the revolution. Why? If the working class succumbed to the temptation of power, it would cause the bourgeoisie to “recoil from the revolution and thus diminish its sweep”.⁹ 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 substantial improvements in living standards and overall conditions would inevitably produce demoralisation, confusion and disorganisation. So encourage, push the bourgeoisie, help it overthrow tsarism - absolutely. The “bourgeois stage” had to be crowned with bourgeoisie power and a parliamentary democracy. Only that would put Russia on the road of ‘normal’ European development. However, 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. Then alone does socialism become feasible.

The Bolsheviks, by contrast, were both willing and eager to play a *leading* role in a provisional revolutionary government. And, far

from this being a mere prelude to the bourgeoisie assuming power, as claimed by comrade Creegan, the party of the working class had every interest in spreading the flame of revolution to Europe. 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”.¹⁰ 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. Because the tasks of the provisional government included uprooting every last vestige of tsarism, enacting sweeping land reform, putting in place extensive democratic rights, defeating bourgeois counterrevolution ... and maybe even fighting a revolutionary war across Europe, I have suggested that the provisional government might have been expected to last not a few brief months, but years. A proposition dismissed out of hand by comrade Creegan. However, my main argument is that the Bolsheviks were not committed to handing political power to the bourgeoisie, as comrade Creegan contends.

Permanent

Comrade Creegan gave his second article a rather strange title - ‘Democratic dictatorship vs permanent revolution’. Anyone who has seriously read Lenin will understand that the Bolshevik perspective of forming a provisional government - a government embodying the class alliance of workers and peasants - is *in itself* an example of permanent revolution. After all, the anti-tsarist

bourgeois revolution was to be crowned by the political domination not of the bourgeoisie, but the working class.

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.”¹¹ From there it spread far and wide, becoming a common “programmatic slogan” of European radicals, socialists and communists, including Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels.¹² 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.”¹³

Bearing this in mind, consider Lenin’s “uninterrupted revolution”. A typical example from 1905. Lenin declares: “We stand for uninterrupted revolution. We shall not stop half-way.”¹⁴ 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 till August 1914. Almost an honorary Bolshevik. Here is Trotsky’s own - albeit rather jaundiced and self-serving - description of Kautsky’s approach “when he was a Marxist”:

At that time [1905-06] 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.¹⁵

I do not deny in the least that Bolshevik ideas, perspectives and expectations went unchanged from 1905 to 1917. Far from it. It seems clear to me that with the outbreak of World War I Lenin and other Bolsheviks, maybe inspired by none other than Kautsky¹⁶, began to envisage steps towards socialism in the immediate aftermath of the anti-tsarist revolution (Lenin's writings on this subject were later culled by the Stalin and Bukharin duumvirate in order to scholastically justify their theory of socialism in one country). No, what I insist on is programmatic continuity. Eg, a river will be added to by tributaries, will broaden, but it continues to flow towards the sea. There is no abandonment, no break.

Both comrade Creegan and myself are native English speakers and words have socially established meanings. I realise that a dictionary will not overcome our differences, but it might help bring some clarity. So here is how my *Chambers 20th century dictionary* defines 'abandon':

abandon *vt*: to give up; to desert; to yield (oneself) without restraint; to give up all claims; to banish.

What about 'break'?

break *vt*: to divide, part or sever, wholly or partially, by applying a strain; to rupture; to shatter; to crush; to make by breaking; to destroy the continuity or integrity of; to interrupt.

Corresponding forms

If one takes comrade Creegan's reading of *Two tactics* as correct, as accurate, then it is undoubtedly the case that in *practice* Lenin abandoned his old approach in 1917. Remember, strategically comrade Creegan paints Lenin and the Bolsheviks as basically advocating the *Menshevik* theory of stages. In his account the victorious workers' party sweeps away tsarism, introduces basic reforms and then, after a short space of time, organises elections, then graciously retires to the wings, as the bourgeoisie triumphantly forms a government.

He argues - again he is putting forward what he *thinks* Lenin thinks - the only possible outcome in Russia would be the "social-economic dominance of the bourgeoisie and the political forms corresponding to it" (comrade Creegan's italics). Hence, far from an RSDLP-led, worker-peasant regime lasting years and carrying out a programme of uninterrupted revolution, as I see the plan, comrade Creegan is convinced that the revolutionary dictatorship of

the proletariat and peasantry would be nothing more than a fleeting moment that is preordained to make way for the rule of the capitalist class.

Well, let us track through *Two tactics* (after all, comrade Creegan objected that I did not supply enough quotes in my article).

I say that the Bolsheviks were determined that the anti-tsarist revolution would see the fulfilment of the party's *entire* minimum programme. And we do indeed find Lenin approvingly quoting the RSDLP's 3rd Congress resolution to that effect: in a provisional revolutionary government "the proletariat will demand the realisation of all the immediate political and economic demands of our programme (the minimum programme)".¹⁷ Completely fulfilling this programme being a requisite for the "next step forward, for the achievement of socialism".¹⁸

Does the democratic revolution (yes, bourgeois in its social and economic essence) have to take place in a way that is mainly advantageous to capitalism? No, not at all. The revolution can both clear the way for further capitalist development, not least in the countryside, and take forward the interests of the broad masses. Lenin wants not "*political forms corresponding*" to capitalism. Putting an equals sign between the two categories is a mechanical, not a Marxist, approach. No, even in the French Revolution some form of domination by the *sans-culottes* was achieved over the years 1789-94. Lenin held out the prospect of a "republican-revolutionary democracy" with the working class leading the peasant masses.¹⁹ What was briefly possible in 18th century France could be more than matched in 20th century Russia. The revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry would not only usher in far-reaching domestic changes ... but, as already noted, "carry the revolutionary conflagration into Europe".²⁰ This will not immediately transform Russia's democratic revolution into a socialist revolution. However, it does lay the foundation for, provide the shortest route to the victory of socialism.

Hence Lenin roundly castigated his Menshevik opponents, who spoke about the "limited historical scope of the Russian Revolution". This, Lenin thundered, "merely serves to cover up their limited understanding of the aims of this democratic revolution, and of the proletariat's leading role in it!"²¹

Lenin tells us that the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry has a "past and a future". Its past is the struggle against autocracy, serfdom, monarchy and privilege. What is its future? "Its future is the struggle against private property, the struggle of the wage-worker against the employer, the struggle for socialism."²² These stages are distinct, but, given the balance of class forces, particular struggles and demands overlap, interweave or race ahead. However, the revolution must be conceived as an uninterrupted process. Hence, if the democratic revolution achieved a "complete victory", that would mark the "beginning of a determined struggle for a socialist revolution".²³ Therefore, meeting peasant demands for land, crushing counterrevolution, achieving the freest democratic republic will mark the *real* beginning of the proletariat's struggle for socialism.

It is certainly the case that amongst the aims of the *provisional* revolutionary government would be convening a constituent assembly elected by universal suffrage. For his own reasons comrade Creegan assumes that under such circumstances the bourgeois parties would gain a majority and would thus form an unambiguously bourgeois government. But it is perfectly clear that Lenin held a different view. A

constituent assembly dominated by big capitalists and landlords would be "a miscarriage".²⁴ Instead Lenin looks forward to a situation where the "peasant and proletarian element predominates".²⁵ In other words, the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry shifts in form. From being a revolutionary *provisional* government it becomes a revolutionary government.

Depending on the momentum of the anti-tsarist revolution and the balance of class forces, there was every reason to believe that the RSDLP could rally behind it not only the entire working class, but semi-proletarians, poor peasants and all manner of petty bourgeois forces. There was then the distinct possibility of a coalition government that aligned the party or parties of the revolutionary peasantry with the RSDLP. Of course, what alone makes this *temporary* arrangement principled for a Marxist is the explicit commitment of any such a government to carry out the *full* minimum programme of the RSDLP.

Inevitably, there would, within Russia, be a differentiation between the proletarianised rural masses and the emerging class of capitalist farmers. But *not* necessarily, as argued by comrade Creegan, 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 regime level*. Democratic and socialist tasks are categorically distinct, premised on different economic, social and political conditions. But 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 a salient of state power. The revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry could thereby *peacefully grow 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 come to the fore.

Events

Of course, actual events in 1917 proceeded in a completely unexpected fashion. Instead of tsarism being overthrown by a national rising, it ignominiously collapsed. There was a hastily put together provisional government, but this was not a government of the revolution: it was a government of *bourgeois counterrevolution*. Though Alexander Kerensky's ministry, formed in July, contained many who had previously been hunted by the tsarist secret police - Skobeliev, Tseretelli, Chernov, Avksentiev, Savinkov, Nikitin, etc - no Marxist will find such designation at all strange. Programme, policy and current practice determines class content.

Hence the provisional government continued Russia's involvement in the imperialist slaughter of World War I, prevaricated over peasant demands for land redistribution and fearfully delayed convening a constituent assembly. And, making matters even more complex, this government was supported by the Menshevik and Socialist Revolutionary majority in the soviets, which had been created by workers, peasants and soldiers. The dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry had become subordinated to and entangled with the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.

How did Lenin react under these circumstances? Did he abandon or desert his long-established strategy? Did he break with the old perspectives of the Bolsheviks? Emphatically not.

Let me repeat my argument ... and supply all the necessary references.

After firing off five short articles which went under the title *Letters from afar*, Lenin finally managed to return to Russia. He travelled, along with his second-in-command, Grigory Zinoviev, and a whole bevy of other political exiles, in the famous sealed train provided by imperial Germany. Having finally arrived at the Finland station, Lenin began an on-the-spot campaign to bring the Bolsheviks into line with his *April theses*. A text which he slowly read out twice - first to a meeting of Bolsheviks and then to a joint meeting of Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. Lenin caused outrage with the Mensheviks, but even met objections from some old Bolsheviks, most notably Lev Kamenev.

What was Kamenev saying in February-April 1917? He was not urging support for the provisional government. No, he was placing demands on the provisional government with a aim of exposing it and thus prepare the conditions for another revolution. Basically, though, he was insisting that the bourgeois democratic revolution remained to be completed.

Lenin dismissed this "old Bolshevik formula" and went on to argue that, while the bourgeois democratic revolution of the "usual type" had been "completed", alongside the "real government" there existed a "parallel government, which represents the "revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry". This "second government" has though ceded power to the bourgeoisie.²⁶ An exceedingly complex example of dual power.

Did Lenin junk the old Bolshevik slogan demanding the overthrow of tsarism and replacing it with "revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry"? Obviously the answer is 'yes and no'. Of course, he no longer called for the overthrow of tsarism. Russia had become a republic. In the same way it could be said, to employ comrade Creegan's peculiar terminology, that Trotsky *abandoned* his 'Not a tsar's government, but a government of the people', and the followers of Parvus *broke* from his 'Not a tsar's government, but a workers' government'.

However, for Lenin, life itself had given concrete form to the "revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry". The soviets of workers, peasants and soldiers represented the future and the immediate task of the Bolsheviks was to combat "honest" popular illusions in the provisional government and win a majority by agitating for the seizure of landlord estates, the abolition of the police, the army and the bureaucracy, 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".²⁷

Do these formulations and the perspective of a workers' and peasants' republic 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 for an answer.

In the article, 'The dual power', he writes 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.²⁸

Kamenev feared that due to his isolation in Switzerland Lenin was ignoring the vital importance of the peasantry and wanted an immediate bid for socialist revolution. The peasant movement could not be "skipped", writes Kamenev. 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 some of his writings, seemed to be implying that the peasantry had gone over to social chauvinism and defence of the fatherland. Therefore, perhaps he had concluded that the peasantry had become a hopeless cause.

Lenin, however, insisted that he was "not" proposing the "immediate task" of introducing socialism (as contended by comrade Creegan).²⁹ Lenin is quite clear. On the peasantry, however, it is certainly the case that Lenin began to change his stress. State power was to be placed in the "hands of the proletariat and the poorest sections of the peasants".³⁰ Nevertheless, party unity was quickly recemented. Subsequently, Lenin talks of the differences between himself and Kamenev being "not very great". He also joins with Kamenev in opposing the leftist slogan of 'Down with the provisional government', as raised by the Petrograd committee of the party. A slogan to which comrade Creegan seems sympathetic. 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".³¹

The Russian Revolution had gone further than the classical bourgeois revolutions of England 1645 or France 1789, but "has not yet reached a 'pure' dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry".³²

This final quote is from Lenin's 'The tasks of the proletariat in our revolution', a draft platform dated April 10 1917. I see development, concrete application, yes. But, no "abandonment", no "break" with the old slogan for a "revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry" ●

Notes

1. Letters, March 5, March 25; J Creegan, 'April in Petrograd' *Weekly Worker* April 16 2015; and J Creegan, 'Democratic dictatorship vs permanent revolution' *Weekly Worker* May 21 2015.
2. L Trotsky *The permanent revolution* New York 1978, p30.
3. VI Lenin *CW* Vol 12, Moscow 1977, p451.
4. See LT Lih *Lenin rediscovered* Chicago 2008.
5. VI Lenin *CW* Vol 17, Moscow 1977, p23.
6. www.marxists.org/archive/kamenev/1924/11/trotskyism.htm#1912.
7. See L Trotsky *The permanent revolution* New York 1978, p168.
8. VI Lenin *CW* Vol 9, Moscow 1977, p32.
9. Quoted in *ibid* p245.
10. *Ibid* p128.
11. "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.
12. H Draper *Karl Marx's theory of revolution* Vol 2, New York 1978, p204.
13. *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.
14. VI Lenin *CW* Vol 9, Moscow 1977, p237.
15. L Trotsky *The permanent revolution* New York 1978, pp33-34.
16. See 'Kautsky, Lenin and the "April theses"' *Weekly Worker* January 14 2010.
17. VI Lenin *CW* Vol 9, Moscow 1977, p24.
18. *Ibid* p28.
19. *Ibid* pp52-53.
20. *Ibid* p57.
21. *Ibid* p84.
22. *Ibid* pp84-85.
23. *Ibid* p130.
24. *Ibid* p47.
25. *Ibid* p47.
26. VI Lenin *CW* Vol 24 Moscow 1977, p50.
27. *Ibid* p38.
28. *Ibid* p38.
29. *Ibid* p244-45.
30. *Ibid* p22.
31. *Ibid* p244-45.
32. *Ibid* p61.

ECONOMY**Fictitious capital and the rate of profit**

Arthur Bough takes issue with Chris Gray

There are a number of fundamental errors in Chris Gray's article concerning fictitious capital and the current economic situation ('Vanquishing the demons', June 25).

First of all, this is not a recession - the economy in the UK, US, China and Japan is growing, the core EU countries are likely to return to growth in the coming months and the world economy itself is expanding. If you want to understand the situation, it is first necessary to actually tell yourself the truth about the conditions you are analysing. In fact, the fundamental errors contained in Chris's article amount to a repetition of the very fallacies perpetrated by the bourgeois economists that Marx was criticising.

Chris's description of fictitious capital from the beginning seems to equate it with gambling and speculation, but that is to fundamentally misunderstand its nature. Fictitious capital, as indicated by the quote Chris gives from Marx, certainly does become the "object of gambling on the stock exchange", but it is not at all this fact that distinguishes it as fictitious capital, as Marx and Engels set out in their detailed analysis of fictitious capital in *Capital* Vol 3. I have given a summary of that analysis elsewhere.¹

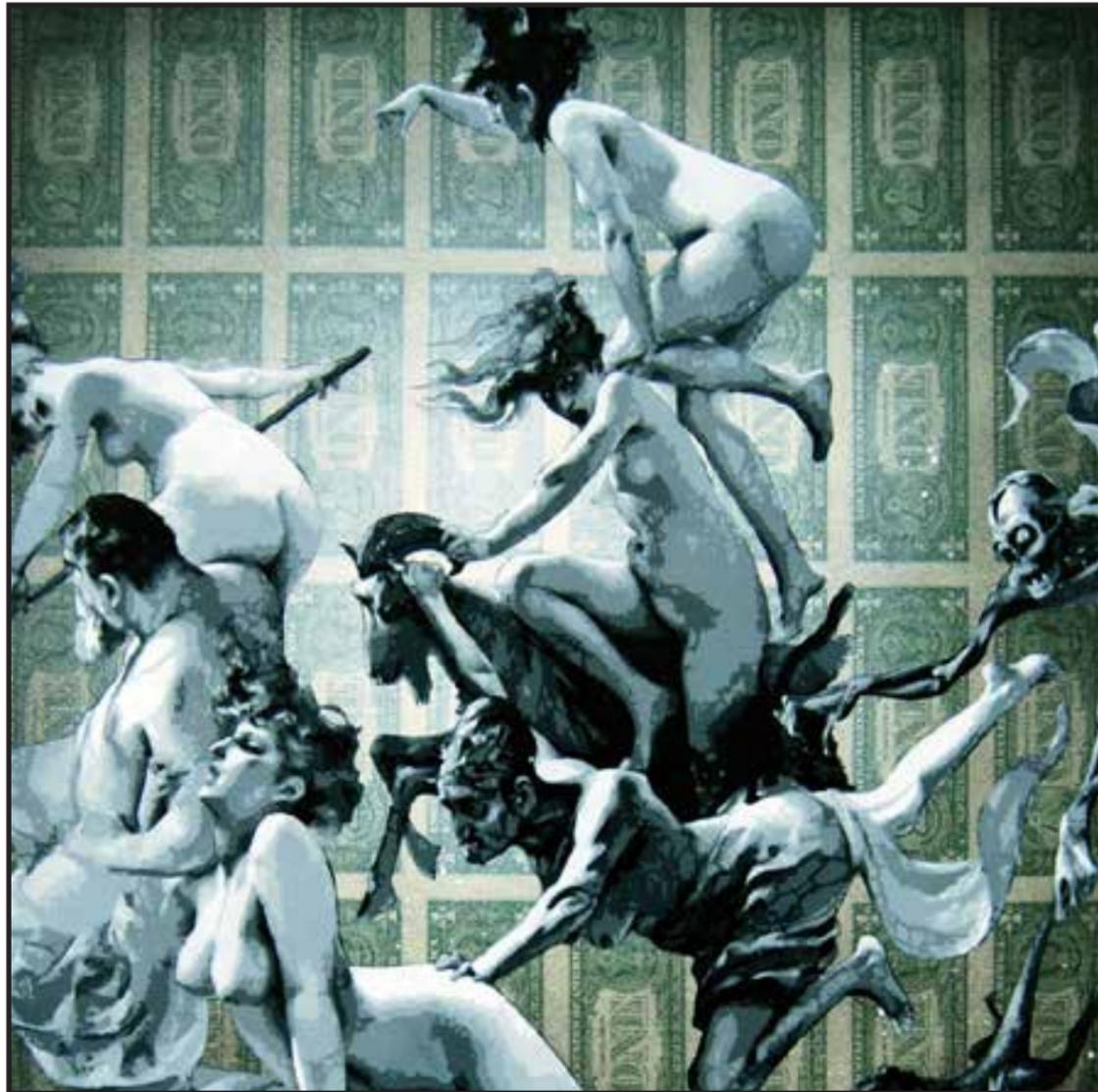
Fictitious capital is any asset that appears to have the property of capital as self-expanding value, but in fact is only able to expand by attracting the payment of interest. In other words, it is only able to expand because it has a claim on the surplus value produced elsewhere by productive capital. So a loan made by a bank to a firm to buy a machine is fictitious capital, in the shape of the loan agreement held by the bank.

There is nothing any more speculative in the nature of this fictitious capital, in the shape of the loan, than there is in the investment of the actual productive capital. Payment of interest on the loan is a function of the success of the productive capital in realising a surplus value. The nature of the loan as fictitious capital resides not in the fact that it is speculative, but in the fact that the loan itself is not self-expanding value, is not capital, but represents only a claim on the surplus value produced by the real capital.

Chris refers to the state debt in this respect, but in *Capital* Vol 3 Marx makes clear that, in fact, the state debt is not just fictitious capital, but doubly fictitious. In other words, a government bond, held by a bank, company or individual, is fictitious capital for the reason set out above - that is that it is not real capital, it does not self-expand in value, but only attracts interest. However, unlike a bond, a share or a loan, used by a firm to buy real, productive capital, which does produce surplus value, from which the interest can be paid, the purpose to which the money obtained by the government from the sale of the bond is put does not constitute capital either!

In this respect, it is like a mortgage. The mortgage held by the bank is fictitious capital. It has no potential to be self-expanding value. It only attracts interest from the borrower. But the purpose to which the borrower puts the borrowed money is not capital either. The money used in buying a house goes simply to fund consumption - it constitutes revenue, not capital. The house has no potential to be self-expanding value. The buyer of the house is only able to pay this interest by obtaining revenue to do so from elsewhere, and one way or another that amounts to a deduction from surplus value. For example, a worker, in order to pay the interest on their mortgage, must have that cost reflected in the value of labour-power/wages - and if wages rise surplus value falls.

Similarly, the government obtains no surplus value from the roads and other purposes to which the state puts the

**The culture of financialisation**

borrowed money. It is only able to pay the interest on these bonds by levying taxes, which themselves are a deduction from surplus value.

A share issued by a company is no different, in this sense, to a loan undertaken by the company. In all these cases, the lenders of the money-capital - be it the bank, the shareholder or bondholder - stand as creditors in relation to the company. This is the difference between the socialised capital of the joint stock company and the monopoly of private capital that preceded it, as Marx describes, again in *Capital* Vol 3. The owner of the productive capital is the company itself. The individual shareholder is no more able to go to the company and stake their claim to this or that machine or piece of material than the sovereign bondholder is able to go and take possession of a road! The shareholder or bondholder is merely a provider of money-capital, and as such is entitled to interest on the money-capital they loan out.

It is not speculation that determines the nature of fictitious capital, but, for the reasons Marx and Engels describe, fictitious capital lends itself to being used for speculation. The owners of shares and bonds are thereby able to gamble that the market prices of these assets may rise or fall, providing the owner of the asset not with a profit, but with a capital gain. Moreover, as Engels describes in *Capital* Vol 3, in his and Marx's analysis of fictitious capital, once loanable money-capital takes the form of shares and other financial assets, these too can become the basis of other financial assets. Not only does the fictitious capital owned by a bank in the form of shares and bonds form part of the bank capital, upon which further loans and further fictitious capital is erected, but, as Engels describes, unit trusts and other such funds are developed, in which the shares and bonds of a range

of companies are aggregated, and these funds are then divided into units, which act like shares and are then traded in financial markets. In the last 20 years, this development of derivative products, whereby one layer of fictitious capital becomes the basis of further layers built on top of it, has grown in mammoth proportions, but the genesis of it was discussed by Engels in *Capital* Vol 3.

Confusion

Chris also makes a further fundamental error by confusing money and capital, and credit and debt. In doing so, he repeats the fallacies of bourgeois economists like Lord Overstone and Thomas Tooke, against whom Marx was polemicising in *Capital* Vol 3 in his analysis of credit and money. Marx points out that, because banks come to play a central role, the bankers themselves mistakenly come to see all the money they advance as capital. But it is not capital.

I find it hard to understand why Chris believes that "Marx does not explore the relationship between the credit system and economic cycles in general". Firstly, Chris seems to confuse here credit with the loaning of money-capital. Secondly, a huge amount of the analysis undertaken by Marx and Engels in chapters 24-34 of Vol 3 is precisely about the role of credit in the business cycle, and the interaction of credit with the demand for money and money-capital on the interest rate cycle.

So, for example, Marx sets out that when the economy is enjoying a period of prosperity, businesses are prepared to extend commercial credit. Firm A, which sells to firm B £1,000 of commodities, agrees to accept payment in three months time and a bill of exchange is accordingly drawn up. But, as Marx and Engels describe, this bill of exchange is not fictitious capital, in the way that a loan from a bank to a firm to buy a

machine is. The bill of exchange, as commercial credit, acts merely as money. Its exchange-value, just as with a bank note, or a precious metal coin, is the equivalent form of value to the £1,000 of commodities that A has sold to B. It acts merely as a means of circulation.

In fact, when there is this kind of prosperity, the very fact that such credit is given on an extended scale acts to cut interest rates, because it reduces the demand for actual money in circulation. If B sells later £1,000 of commodities to A, drawing up a bill of exchange accordingly, then these two will cancel each other out, so that no money is required either in circulation or as means of payment. But, as Marx and Engels describe, even where these various credit claims do not totally cancel each other out, the only money that needs to be used for payment is that which is left over as the balance. Not only does less money have to be in general circulation, but the amount of cash that firms need to retain in their bank accounts is thereby reduced, at least in proportion to the volume of trade, and so, as Marx sets out, during such periods the rate of interest tends to fall.

The banks and institutions that discount the bills of exchange are able to obtain a lower commission because firms then have less pressure to have their bills discounted. But it is partly the fact that the banks provide money to businesses by discounting the bills, and obtaining a commission in doing so, which deludes them into a belief that what they have provided to the firm is money-capital, when, in fact, all they have done is to swap exchange value in the shape of the bill of exchange for exchange value in the shape of money. This is not, says Marx, an advance, but a straightforward sale.

The same is true, according to Engels, when a bank lends money to a firm in return for collateral. In that case the firm already had capital, and all that the bank

has done is to exchange possession of capital in one form - money-capital - for possession of capital in another form: the collateral. Debt as fictitious capital only arises where money-capital itself is loaned out, without collateral being provided in exchange: in other words, where the lender does not obtain temporary possession of capital of an equal value, but obtains only a claim to a share of future revenue - for example, interest on a loan, coupon on a bond, or dividends on shares. Debt in this form represents an advance of money-capital, whereas credit represents only an exchange of money for commodities.

Contrary to what Chris says, Marx and Engels, particularly in chapter 25, give a lengthy and detailed analysis of the role of credit in the trade cycle, and its role in crises. They set out the way various frauds were perpetrated, so that businesses both in England and India were able to obtain advances of money against shipments, which was then used for speculative purposes, particularly to buy railway shares, as part of the speculative frenzy. In fact, as I have pointed out in my book (*Marx and Engels' Theories of Crisis*), there are striking similarities between the financial crisis of 1847, analysed by Marx and Engels, and the financial crisis of 2008.

Rate of profit

Chris writes:

That requires extra capital invested in machinery and plant over labour. This rising proportion (that Marx called the organic composition of capital) begins to drive the rate of profit down, just as the mass or overall total of profit rises.

But this is again fundamentally wrong, although he is not the only one to put forward this fallacy. The rising organic composition of capital that leads to a tendency for the rate of profit to fall is not equivalent to a rise in the quantity or value of fixed capital (machinery) compared to labour-power. Quite the contrary: Marx makes clear that the tendency is for the value of both the fixed capital and labour-power to decline as a proportion of the value of the total product.

The reason for the rising organic composition of capital is rather due to the much higher mass of material that this fixed capital and labour-power processes, and which is itself the manifestation of the higher productivity that the new machinery has brought about. The higher productivity arises precisely because each new machine replaces several older machines, and thereby reduces the mass and value of the fixed capital relative to the value of output.

Chris then says: "Eventually, the falling rate of profit will exert enough influence to stop the mass of profit rising." But, not only does Marx not say this: he says the exact opposite. This is actually the claim made by Ricardo, which led him to worry about the potential future collapse of capitalism. It is also the view put forward by Malthus. But, Marx spends considerable time polemicising against this view. He describes in *Capital* Vol 3 how a concomitant of the falling rate of profit is precisely an increase in the mass of profit. In chapter 17 of *Theories of surplus value* Marx further demolishes this idea put forward by Ricardo about the ultimate decline of the mass of profit!

There are other aspects of Chris's article with which I would want to take issue, but for now I have confined myself to the actual misstatements of Marx's theory contained within it ●

Notes

1. <http://bofbyblog.blogspot.co.uk/2014/12/fictitious-capital-part-1.html>

ISLAMOPHOBIA

Destabilisation and failed states

IS terrorism has little to do with Islam, argues Yassamine Mather

In the aftermath of the horrific terrorist attacks of June 26 in Sousse, Lyon and Kuwait, David Cameron said: "We must be more intolerant of intolerance." He called for a rejection of "anyone whose views condone the Islamist extremist narrative". This was in line with comments made a week earlier when he condemned those British Muslims who he said "quietly condoned" the actions of groups like Islamic State.

Sections of the left, including *Socialist Worker*, have responded by attacking the government's Islamophobia:

The Tories are certainly off the leash - as prime minister David Cameron's Muslim-bashing speech to a security conference in Slovakia last week demonstrated. Heralding a new battery of repressive measures contained in the new Counter-Terrorism and Security Act, Cameron pointed the finger at Britain's Muslims.¹

Both Cameron and the SWP are wrong. IS's terrorism has little to do with Islam and it is a mistake to accept the premise of the prime minister's arguments. These terrible events have everything to do with politics and wars in the Middle East. While we should condemn the death of 30 innocent tourists in Sousse, we should not forget that they are the latest victims of bloody wars in Iraq, Yemen, Syria, Libya and Afghanistan, and new wars in Kuwait and Tunisia.

Kuwait is now saying it is engulfed in a major battle against Islamist fundamentalists and there are unconfirmed reports that Turkey is planning to invade Syria:

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has authorised a change in the rules of engagement agreed by the Turkish parliament to allow the army to strike at Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (Isil), as well as the Assad regime, according to local newspapers. The aim is to establish a buffer zone for refugees and against Isil, but Mr Erdoğan has also suggested that the main target of the intervention, if it goes ahead, will be to prevent the emergence of a Kurdish state on Turkey's doorstep.²

For far too long, western governments have ignored these conflicts and the death and destruction they have caused; the only time we see any concern is when the victims of these atrocities are western visitors or tourists. As Robert Fisk wrote on June 28,

It's 'us' and 'them' again. It started just after news of the three Islamist attacks broke. David Cameron initially talked about the French and Tunisian killings. He left out the Kuwaiti mosque massacre - only picking up on it later.³

Proxy war

Confrontation between IS or Al Nusra, both offshoots of al Qa'eda, with the Syrian dictator, Assad, and the Shia government in Iraq, the bombing of Shia mosques in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia - these have little to do with Islam. The tens of thousands of civilians killed in these Middle East wars in the last few years have been mainly Muslims, irrespective of whether they are Shia, Sunni, Druze, Alavi, Houthi, Kurds, Arabs or Afghans.

The language of a Shia-Sunni conflict

may be used, but that is only a diversion. What is happening in the Middle East is part of a proxy war between two regional powers: Iran and Saudi Arabia. No amount of preaching and deceiving by Cameron, Hollande and other 'world leaders', calls for sending in British troops or for other types of intervention can solve the problem. The colonial policies of 'divide and rule', plus historic and recent military interventions, including the invasion of Iraq in 2003, collectively constitute the cause of the problem.

Someone should tell Cameron that there is no point threatening Muslims in the UK. They did not create al Qa'eda: Saudi Arabia did. No-one is excusing IS, but the reality remains that, in order to defeat it, we have to deal with the root causes of this phenomenon. It was those imperialist allies, Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf states, who have supported and financed jihadist groups and continue to turn a blind eye to IS financial transactions in bank accounts held in such states. In addition Saudi Arabia and Turkey are currently arming and funding Al Nusra (another offshoot of al Qa'eda) in the hope of toppling the Assad regime. We know from the experience of the last few years that some of these arms end up in the hands of IS fighters - and no-one should have any illusions about Al Nusra: a vicious Wahabi jihadi group.

The British prime minister wants to cover up the fact that the United States and its allies are culpable in the creation of IS, not only by creating the conditions for its existence, but by failing to curtail the Saudi princes and other financial backers in the Emirates or Persian Gulf states.

The US, France, the UK and other western countries do not want to draw attention to the fact that the failed states they have helped create in the region - Iraq, Syria, Libya - are the breeding ground for the jihadists. The Tunisian gunman who mowed down the British tourists was trained in Libya, where regime change from above went disastrously wrong, but let us not talk about whose bombs paved the way for jihadists taking over most of the country. In the rest of the Middle East's dictators supported by the west for decades have imprisoned, exiled or killed liberal, secular and leftwing oppositionists. Cameron wants us to forget that the Islamic groups the US and Britain supported as opponents of communism have become monsters they cannot control. The Iraq war of 2003 in particular created the conditions for unprecedented regional influence for the Islamic Republic in Iran, helping to ferment the Saudi phobia about its growing power. The Saudi princes are fearful of a larger, more populated neighbour and it is precisely this fear that has paved the way for their unlimited support for jihadi groups.

Robert Fisk, who is researching the history of the current conflicts, going back to the 1980s and 90s, says:

I've uncovered a world of almost inexpressible anger - yes, and talk of revenge - despite the Arab dictators who worked for us at the time and tried to smother this frustration, even when Iraqis were dying by the thousandfold. No, it didn't create the Islamists who kill us today. But it helped lay the foundation for their cults of death - and for the world they grew up in. We had a hand in that. Cliché, of course. But it all goes back to justice.⁴

Iran

The current situation in the Middle East is a mess, but to complicate



'Islamic' terrorism: politics posing as faith

matters this week's negotiations between the P5+1 powers and Iran might lead to an even more volatile situation. A landmark agreement is in the pipeline, one that can dramatically change the political map - or at least that is what the two main US allies in the region, Saudi Arabia and Israel, calculate. If a deal is signed, Iran, a country of 80 million and with relatively advanced levels of industrial development, will no longer be considered a rogue state. If efforts to derail the current nuclear negotiations do not succeed, we will see renewed Saudi and Turkish efforts to overthrow Assad, as well as Israeli moves to start another confrontation with Hezbollah. All part of their plans to weaken Iran.

Two years after the talks began, the prospect of success is far from clear, even if a deal is signed. In addition both Iran and the US are adamant that any agreement will only relate to the nuclear issue. However, for both Saudi Arabia and Israel the prospects of an Iran free from sanctions is a nightmare. That is why we can expect that forces connected to Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf states will intensify attacks against Shias, Kurds, Druze and Alavis, in order to 'encourage' an Iranian military response. There will be those in Tehran who would welcome such an opportunity. The Iranian regime has survived because of crises, and the likely end of the stand-off over nuclear weapons is already causing deep concern amongst the Revolutionary Guards and conservative factions of the regime. Their very survival might be in danger if sanctions and the threat of foreign intervention are lifted.

This week it became clear that nuclear talks would be extended beyond the end of June deadline. Two days before, the Iranian foreign minister returned from Vienna for consultations - clearly the Iranian team did not believe the Austrian

authorities' reassurances that their hotels were free of bugs. On his return, the deadline was extended by seven days. A number of thorny issues remain unresolved.

According to the Geneva deal, Fordow, Iran's fortified enrichment facility, will not be destroyed, but it will be decommissioned. The heavy water reactor at Arak will have its core removed, so that it will no longer produce such large quantities of plutonium as a by-product of its operations.

The P5+1 insist sanctions will be lifted gradually. That is if and when the decommissioning takes place. Naturally, Iran's supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, wants them to be removed immediately. So the question of how and when sanctions will be lifted remains unresolved. There are obvious reasons for these red lines. Everyone knows that the sanctions were designed to help facilitate 'regime change'. They had little to do with the country's nuclear programme.

In these last days and hours of the negotiations Iranian hardliners and Khamenei have made clear what the country's other 'red lines' are: no inspections of military bases, no interviews with Iranian nuclear scientists. The inspection of military bases is potentially a more serious threat than sanctions, having nothing to do with the non-proliferation treaty. It represents an insult to Iran and can only have one purpose: the identification of military bases with a view to aerial bombing at a future date. This would have only one aim: regime change. The majority of Iranian people want to see the back of the current regime, but they have seen the consequences of regime change from above in Iraq and Libya. They certainly know what the attempt to impose regime change has done to Syria. Contrary to the wishes of Saudi Arabia, Israel and the plethora of Iranian 'regime change' opposition groups, all such efforts only lead to the consolidation of the Islamic Republic, convincing the Iranian people

to settle for the bad for fear of something far worse.

In the recent negotiations, France consistently represented the views of Saudi Arabia and Israel. So it was no surprise that at the start of the latest round French foreign minister Laurent Fabius was intransigent. He was insistent that Iran has to agree limits to its research and development capacity and accept rigorous inspections of sites, including military sites. There is the threat of an automatic return to the entire sanction regime if Iran fails to comply.

What the 'socialist' minister failed to mention is that last week France discussed aeronautical and nuclear projects worth billions of euros with Saudi Arabia. Recent deals with the kingdom, and earlier in the year with Qatar, have been very beneficial for France's balance of payment. So its lack of enthusiasm for a deal with Iran is hardly surprising.

A week is a long time in politics and even longer in Middle Eastern politics. The nuclear negotiations might fail, paving the way for further sanctions and a US military intervention. However, the threat of war and the current conflicts will persist even if the talks succeed. Saudi Arabia, the Gulf states, Turkey and Israel are in an unholy alliance aimed at preventing Iran's regional dominance. The consequence will be yet more wars, atrocities and massacre ●

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Notes

1. <http://socialistworker.co.uk/art/40782/Tories+ar+treating+Muslims+like+sheep>.
2. www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/turkey/11706383/Turkey-planning-to-invade-Syria.html.
3. www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/tunisia-hotel-attack-backdrop-to-this-slaughter-is-a-history-of-violence-against-muslims-10351413.html.
4. www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/tunisia-hotel-attack-backdrop-to-this-slaughter-is-a-history-of-violence-against-muslims-10351413.html.

ITALY

Renzi's support plummets

The rightwing offensive on immigration and gay partnerships, combined with the corruption of local administrations, has left the PD struggling, writes Toby Abse

This year's local and regional elections have left Italian prime minister Matteo Renzi in a far weaker position than he was in at the height of his popularity in the immediate aftermath of last year's European election, in which his centre-left Partito Democratico (PD) scored an unprecedented 40.8% of the vote¹.

The loss of the Ligurian region was followed a fortnight later in the second-round run-off ballots for the municipal elections by the loss of Venice - a traditionally leftwing city in the otherwise rightwing region of the Veneto - and of the Tuscan city of Arezzo, where Maria Elena Boschi, the 34-year-old minister of constitutional reforms, one of Renzi's closest political associates, was believed to be in a position to impose her choice of mayor without any difficulty.

The premier may still get favourable coverage in the American press as the "demolition man"², but his position at home has been undermined by a number of factors - particularly the escalating immigration crisis and major corruption scandals that have discredited the PD in Rome and elsewhere. Whilst it is more likely than not that Renzi's PD-led coalition will manage to survive until the general election scheduled for early 2018, any idea that he could push through any changes that he wanted without any compromise and at a frenetic pace seems to have gone.

It is more probable that, like many an Italian premier before him, he will be at the mercy of quarrelsome factions within his heterogeneous parliamentary majority and sometimes become reliant on votes from sections of a fragmented opposition.³ Even his plan to move away from controversial economic questions, where his neoliberalism annoyed the vestigial left wing of the PD, to the apparently safer ground of introducing legislation on civil partnerships for gays and lesbians is now coming under fire from his coalition partners in the Nuovo Centro Destra (NCD - New Centre Right).

Some prominent members of the NCD took part in an enormous demonstration on Saturday June 20 in Rome's Piazza San Giovanni⁴ - traditionally the site of mass mobilisations by the Partito Comunista Italiano and the trade unions - against civil partnerships and, rather less predictably, gender theory, which seems to be seen as a major threat to the heterosexual identity of the younger generation.

The Irish referendum has made Italy the Vatican's last redoubt in western Europe against any notion of gay civil partnerships, let alone gay marriage, so that the more bigoted elements of the Catholic laity and parish clergy organised a "Family Day"⁵ on an unprecedented scale, even if the figure of one million attendees broadcast by the instigators was probably an exaggeration. The pope and the bulk of the Italian bishops diplomatically kept some degree of distance, but it is hard to imagine that something on this scale could be attempted without implicit endorsement

Jewish sabbath, he sent a letter of support and the Sunni imam of Centocelle, Ben Mohammed, thundered against "the mad project that wants to destroy humanity and pollute the brains of our children", adding: "It is an evil path for humanity. With our force we can defeat it."⁶

Although the alleged connection between civil partnerships and adoption by gay couples - something which Renzi has never proposed and is extremely unlikely to ever contemplate⁷ - echoed the tactics of Catholic propagandists in the Irish referendum earlier this year, the emphasis on gender theory was odd, to say the least. Most participants had probably never heard of the term before it became central to chants in the square ("*Siamo contro la teoria del gender!*"⁸) - occasional attempts by teachers in a few Italian schools to counteract homophobic bullying against children cannot be equated with the advocacy of the more extreme forms of queer theory fashionable on some American campuses or in Goldsmiths Students Union.

Immigration

However, whilst this unusual mass display of homophobic bigotry demonstrated that militant Catholic reaction on the French model is becoming more prominent in Italy,⁹ despite its declining church attendance, the growth of anti-immigrant racism is a more constant feature of Italian political and social life, even if in this instance we cannot possibly blame the Catholic church, since Pope Francis has repeatedly called on the Italians to adopt a more welcoming attitude to migrants.

As I have suggested in previous articles dealing with Beppe Grillo and the Lega Nord, immigration has become a major issue in Italian politics, playing a key role in the resurgence of the Lega Nord under the leadership of Matteo Salvini, who has sought and obtained an alliance with the Front National at the European level - just as Grillo's rightwing populist Movimento Cinque Stelle (M5S - Five Star Movement) has joined Nigel Farage's group in the European parliament. Given the astonishing willingness of *New Left Review* to equate M5S with Podemos as a new leftwing party, it seems worthwhile to highlight Grillo's appalling racist tweet of June 17 - "Elections for Rome as soon as possible! Before the city becomes submerged by rats, rubbish and illegal immigrants."¹⁰

Whilst an opinion poll carried out on June 23-24¹⁰ still put the economic crisis top of the list of threats facing Italy, with 40% of respondents giving it pride of place, 25% now saw immigration as the most serious issue facing the country. This is a marked shift from December 2014, when 67% had highlighted the economic crisis and only 13% opted to place their emphasis on

conflicts, whilst 17% go so far as to support military measures against illegal immigrants and 22% prefer deportation. Only 2% believe that immigration is a resource for Italy¹¹ and even the rather more neutral view that immigration is an inevitable phenomenon that has to be managed obtained a mere 28%. A clear majority has a very hostile attitude to migrants - 38% see immigration as linked to terrorism and a further 29% see it as posing other grave threats to the country.

Whilst Islamic State has made threats against Italy - and its foothold in Libya from which most of the current wave of migrants are arriving gives such threats plausibility - it should be obvious that the vast majority of migrants are either fleeing violent conflicts or seeking to escape from desperate poverty and have no interest in waging a jihad.¹² Renzi's response to Italian anti-immigrant sentiment - essentially to try to push the rest of the EU to play a larger role in accepting asylum-seekers to alleviate Italy's burden - has not placated the xenophobes.¹³ Reportedly Renzi did not mince his words when addressing the leaders of the eastern European countries who destroyed the European

Commission plan for compulsory quotas in relation to a relatively small number - 40,000 over two years - of migrants who had arrived in Italy or Greece. Allegedly he said:

If this is your idea of Europe, you can keep it. Either there is solidarity or we are wasting our time ... If you want a voluntary agreement, you can cancel the whole thing; we'll do it by ourselves. If you don't agree with 40,000 refugees, you don't deserve to be called Europe.¹⁴

Only 2% of the sample saw Renzi as defending Italian interests on immigration in the best possible way. 25% were prepared to acknowledge that at least Italy had the merit of raising the question at the European level, but once again the majority had a negative view of Renzi's initiatives - 34% believed that the government was not looking after the national interest. It seems unlikely that the voluntary quotas agreed at the recent EU summit will make any difference to the popular assessment of the situation.

Rather paradoxically, the desire to stop immigration into Italy is so overwhelming that it seems to breed resentment towards other countries that have taken harsh measures against immigration. Hungary's construction of a border wall - as usual the euphemistic term 'fence' is employed - on its Serbian frontier is regarded as a mistaken policy by 57% of the sample, even if 17% have what might be seen as an ideologically consistent racist position, believing that the wall is a "correct choice" because "it is absolutely necessary to stop the arrival of migrants".

Corruption

The fact that the wave of corruption scandals about public works contracts that has surfaced in the last few months has concerned the building of immigrant reception centres, whether in Rome or Sicily, has done nothing to lessen popular hostility to migrants. However, those scandals would in any event have boosted the fortunes of rightwing, populist, anti-system parties like the Lega Nord and M5S, both of which are given to anti-migrant rhetoric.

The Venetian scandal centred round the Mose scheme - an expensive and much criticised plan, which its proponents claimed would deal with the flooding of the city by rising water levels in the surrounding lagoon. Regardless of the plan's technical merits or lack of them, large sums were misappropriated by leading PD politicians as well as entrepreneurs, and the discovery of these fraudulent transactions precipitated an early municipal election in Venice. Whilst Renzi did his best to blame the PD's defeat in the June municipal election on the Venetian PD's choice of mayoral candidate - Felice Casson, a former magistrate on the party's left wing, who had opposed, or abstained on, a number of Renzi's more controversial measures in parliamentary votes - in reality this squeaky-clean outsider could not escape the popular reaction against his predecessors, who probably did nothing to help him anyway.

The most spectacular scandal is not the Venetian, but the Roman one, which involves not just mundane corruption and clientelism - all too familiar in Italian local government over the decades - but a network whose employment of systematic blackmail and intimidation reminiscent of organised crime in Sicily, Naples and Calabria has led to it being branded 'Mafia Capitale'. Mafia Capitale appears to be an autonomous Roman creation, not a mere local branch of Cosa Nostra or the Ndrangheta, of the type that has periodically surfaced in Milan and other northern cities.

The leading figure in this criminal association is Massimo Carminati, whose extremely violent criminal career¹⁵ goes back to the 1970s. At that time he was involved in both the particularly murderous neo-fascist terrorist group, the Nuclei Armati Rivoluzionari (NAR) - other members of which, including Carminati's close associate, Valerio Fioravanti, planted the bomb at the Bologna railway station in August 1980, killing 85 people - and the Banda della Magliana, the dominant force in the Roman criminal underworld throughout the 1970s.

Carminati's entourage first began to dominate the awarding of outsourced public works contracts in Rome during the mayoralty of Gianni Alemanno (April 2008-June 2013). Alemanno was not only on the very extreme fringes of the mainstream fascist Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI) in his youth, upholding 'third position' views that brought him into contact with various NAR members,¹⁶ but decades later remained close enough to the neo-fascist skinhead hard core to be greeted by a crowd of fans chanting "Duce! Duce!" and publicly giving the fascist salute in the very centre of Rome on his election in 2008. This was an episode which went viral and was seen all over the world, but appeared to do him no harm in Rome.

Alemanno's tenure in Rome was marked by a series of minor

from the church hierarchy. Nor was this a purely Catholic event - the more hard-line representatives of all the Abrahamic faiths were as one in their homophobia. Whilst Riccardo Di Segni, the chief rabbi, could not attend on the

immigration. Needless to say, this growing public anxiety about immigration is reflected in a rapid increase in racist sentiments. Only 16% believe that Italy must welcome the refugees who are fleeing from



Matteo Renzi: travails

What we fight for

scandals about former NAR terrorists without relevant qualifications being placed in secure and well-paid local government employment, but no journalist or magistrate appeared to notice Carminati's rather more influential role in local political life. However, his web of influence extended far beyond councillors with a background in the former MSI. Carminati was shrewd enough to see the merits of buying off the opposition on the council, both to stop them asking any awkward questions about the awarding of contracts and to try and ensure that his system would survive any alternation in office between his far-right contacts and the PD and its allies.

A large section of the Roman PD hierarchy was drawn into Mafia Capitale's sphere of influence via cooperatives controlled by Salvatore Buzzi, an allegedly rehabilitated ex-offender who had graduated in jail¹⁷ and whose Cooperativa 29 Giugno gave employment to other ex-cons, whom he was supposedly reintegrating into mainstream society. Given the level of Mafia-style threats and intimidation used by the Carminati-Buzzi gang, which seems to have had a side line in smuggling hard drugs via the Roman port of Ostia, most of the evidence against it comes from telephone taps carried out by investigating magistrates. The victims were too frightened to refuse their requests (and suspected there was no point in complaining since it was likely that the gang had bought off local police and carabinieri). There were no super-grasses within its own ranks, where a code of silence - *omerta* - borrowed from the Sicilian Mafia was practised, although the prolonged detention on remand of Carminati, Buzzi and other prominent members of the organisation may well lead some of them to talk in the hope of reducing their sentences by plea bargaining. Needless to say, most of the PD officials and councillors under investigation deny all wrongdoing, with some patently absurd explanations of seemingly incriminating wiretapped conversations being offered to the press.

Blame Marino

This scandal, which has given rise to successive waves of mass arrests with extensive press coverage over the last few months, clearly had a negative impact on the PD vote elsewhere in Italy, so it is in no way surprising that Renzi should seek to lance the Roman boil. However, the form taken by Renzi's reaction to the episode does him little credit. He seems anxious to load the blame for all Rome's undeniable municipal problems on to the current PD mayor, Ignazio Marino.

Marino, a former surgeon rather than a career politician, won the Roman PD's mayoral primary to the considerable annoyance of the self-evidently corrupt PD machine in the city. Widespread allegations of vastly inflated membership figures and other undemocratic practices in Rome's PD circles preceded the arrests in relation to Mafia Capitale, and the national leadership of the PD has in effect suspended the local officials in favour of a nationally appointed commissioner, whilst an attempt is made to start again with a clean slate.

In view of Marino's outsider status, it is perfectly plausible that he knew little or nothing of what was going on in the murkier recesses of the municipal administration - his corrupt opponents within the Roman PD would have had every reason to conceal their antics from a disapproving reformer. Renzi and his associates have in effect endorsed longstanding local claims that Marino had shown little competence as mayor, even if they have never dared to cast any doubt on his honesty or integrity.

Given the extent to which municipal funds were for years being diverted from the purposes for which they had been officially assigned and given the irrelevance of considerations of efficiency in the tendering process (in

so far as there was any competitive tendering at all under the Carminati-Buzzi regime), it is not surprising that many Roman services were not delivered and that the municipality was incapable of balancing its books. That has now led to increasingly desperate requests by the council for central government funding to cope with the forthcoming Papal Jubilee and Rome's latest Olympic bid.

Whilst it could be argued that an elected executive mayor has to take responsibility for all the failings of his administration, it does look as if Marino is being made a scapegoat for the crimes and errors of others. The episode for which the beleaguered mayor has been forced to make a humiliating apology is in fact his finest hour - a speech he made at the *Festa dell'Unità* on June 21. Marino said:

If I wrote a book in 2023 about what I have seen, I would have to start with a phrase from *Blade runner*. I have seen things that you humans have never seen. Because those are the ruins left to us by the right, which now raises itself to be the moral bulwark of this society. But have they no shame? Why don't they return to the sewers from which they came? And these heirs of Nazi fascism should stop giving us lessons on rigour and democracy.

This was understood by all to be a reference to the 1970s leftwing slogan, '*Fascisti carogne, tornare nelle fogne!*' ('Fascist rats, get back to the sewers!').¹⁸ Of course, the PD leadership are happy to go along with the pretence that people like Alemanno have ceased to be fascists, regardless of the fact that the former mayor has now returned to the ranks of overt neo-fascists in the form of the Fratelli d'Italia rather than sticking with Berlusconi's Forza Italia.

Moreover increasing pressure is being exerted on Marino to engage in bipartisan dealings with the rightwing opposition on the council in order to promote the Jubilee and the Olympic bid, the latter of which will clearly have no benefits for the mass of Roman citizens, as the experience of Athens and London has amply demonstrated. Whilst Marino is not particularly leftwing, his distaste for fascists and criminals is clearly seen as a liability and he looks likely to be dumped by the national party in the near future.

Of course, this short-sighted desire by Renzi to shoot the messenger will only increase the chances of M5S taking over

the capital, whenever the next municipal elections are called.¹⁹ ●

Notes

1. According to some Ipsos PA opinion polls cited in the *Corriere della Sera* (June 29), Renzi had a 61% confidence rating when he became prime minister. This reached 70% in the immediate aftermath of the European election, slipped to 47% in January 2015 and is now down to 36% - exactly the same level as the Lega Nord's Matteo Salvini, who was on 27% when he became leader of the Lega and 34% at the start of this year. Beppe Grillo has risen to 30% from 23% in January 2015.
2. *The New Yorker* June 29 2015.
3. In the Senate he currently has a majority of only nine, even if the coalition's position in the Chamber of Deputies is more secure.
4. It is worth noting the contrast with the actions elsewhere in western Europe on the same day - not only the People's Assembly march against austerity in London, but demonstrations in solidarity with Greece's fight against austerity in Paris and Berlin.
5. This English phrase was used on this occasion, as it had been for similar demonstrations in the past, some of which were attended by Berlusconi. That was before his involvement in a succession of scandals involving prostitutes and underage girls made his presence too embarrassing even for the hardened cynics of the Curia. Previously they had turned a blind eye to his status as a divorced man, who had remarried and had another family by his second wife, which made it impossible for him to take communion.
6. This ecumenical homophobia is not unique to Italy. Recently in the 26 counties the Catholic hard-liners made common cause with conservative Protestants amongst the migrant communities against gay marriage and, whilst Sinn Féin's latter-day liberalism has spoilt things for the church in the Six Counties, traditionally a very similar united front between Ian Paisley and the Catholic hierarchy could be mounted on this type of issue - even if republicans objected to the first word in the famous slogan, 'Ulster says no to sodomy'.
7. Unless in relation to a child who is the biological offspring of one of the partners - the German legislation on which Renzi's proposal is based has this provision.
8. The English word 'gender', not its Italian equivalent, *genere*, was used.
9. However, there does not seem to be the same direct links with the far right to be found in similar French movements against equal marriage - *Manif Pour Tous* in particular - in which the Front National, under first Jean-Marie and then Marin Le Pen, has played a leading role, even if the old man has implied that his daughter is not homophobic enough. Although the relatively moderate NCD was not the only right-of-centre party present, it was the most conspicuous.
10. Ipsos PA opinion poll for RAI News, cited in *Corriere della Sera* June 16 2015.
11. Presumably arguments about the aging population and low birth rate amongst Italian citizens make little impact, given the high level of unemployment, particularly amongst the young.
12. A disproportionate amount of publicity was given to an incident in which a group of Muslims threw their Christian fellow passengers into the sea; this may have owed as much to quarrels over very limited supplies of food and water as to genuine religious fanaticism. Less emphasis has been given to the large number of Eritreans fleeing from a brutal secular-nationalist dictatorship in a former Italian colony, a group amongst which jihadi factions do not appear to have made converts - perhaps unsurprisingly, since many young male Eritreans are seeking to escape compulsory lifelong military service reminiscent of tsarist Russia.
13. It has to be conceded that many reception centres in Lampedusa, Sicily and the south have genuinely become overcrowded. However, the unwillingness of the generally more prosperous northern Italian regions to accept more migrants does not help Renzi's attempt to get northern and eastern European countries to accept a larger quota of the new arrivals. Giovanni Toti, the newly elected Forza Italia president of Liguria, has joined his Lega Nord counterparts in Lombardy and the Veneto in threatening to cut the financial resources of municipalities in their regions that take more migrants - the fact that such threats may be both illegal and impractical does not diminish their contribution to inciting racial hatred.
14. Quotations taken from the *Evening Standard* June 26 2015 - roughly similar remarks appeared in other British newspapers. Arguably only a former Christian Democrat PD leader would have had the courage to address the virulent racism of the eastern Europeans towards darker-skinned refugees from Africa or Asia; an Italian former communist would have been too wracked by a misplaced sense of guilt about Stalinism to dare to confront their shameless xenophobia. Moreover, one assumes that Renzi as a regular churchgoer is very conscious of pope Francis's position on the question, as well as of the widespread Polish hostility to what is perceived as the excessive liberalism of the Argentinian.
15. Carminati has been acquitted in two murder cases. One concerned the murder of two leftwingers - Fausto Tinelli and Lorenzo Ianucci - in Milan in March 1978. The more notorious case was the murder of the journalist, Mino Pecorelli. Carminati was acquitted of this, along with his co-defendant, former prime minister Giulio Andreotti, at their first trial. They were then found guilty at an appeal court trial, after the prosecution appealed against their acquittal. Finally, they appealed to the Cassazione (supreme court), where they were acquitted in 2003. Carminati lost an eye in a gunfight with border guards in 1981, while attempting to illicitly cross into Switzerland. Although he has been tried and acquitted for a variety of offences apart from the murders mentioned above, he has only ever been convicted for his complicity in a raid on the Bank of Rome strong room deposit boxes, for which he served four years in gaol. It is widely believed that the deposit boxes contained documents which he was able to use to blackmail various important people.
16. Alemanno was arrested, charged and acquitted in relation to three violent incidents in the 1980s, ranging from a fascist street gang attack on a leftist in 1981, via throwing molotovs at the Soviet embassy, to a violent altercation with the police at a protest against president Bush's visit to Rome in 1989.
17. Buzzi, unlike Carminati, had been found guilty of a murder. In June 1980 he had killed Giovanni Gargano, who had been his accomplice in stealing cheques from a bank where Buzzi worked, but had started to blackmail him. It was a particularly frenzied killing, in which Buzzi stabbed his victim 34 times. Buzzi was initially sentenced to 20 years, but in 1994 he was pardoned by president Oscar Luigi Scalfaro, as a seemingly ideal example of somebody who had abandoned his criminal past.
18. This healthy chant of militant anti-fascists has long since been demystified by the mainstream Italian media, which equates it with terrorism - itself now always equated in official discourse with the Brigate Rosse rather than the kind of groups with which Carminati was associated.
19. Even if the international scandal of the possible dissolution of the Roman municipality on the grounds of Mafia infiltration - a legal measure that has been implemented in many southern cities and towns with this degree of Mafia involvement - is avoided, it looks increasingly likely there will be early elections in Rome next year.

Summer Offensive Wildcard winnings

This past week has seen £2,690 of new money added to our annual fundraising campaign - the Summer Offensive - pushing the running total up to £9,074. Many thanks to comrades JT (£75), TB (£30), ML (£380), GT (£15), MM (£200) and many others who have made sure that we are on course to hit (and hopefully smash) our collective target of £30,000 for this, our 30th SO.

Of course, £30k may be an ambitious target for an organisation like ours and it undoubtedly stretches us individually and collectively - although we should make efforts to ensure that fundraising doesn't become a rather grim chore for comrades. We retain a sense of perspective, however. The point to bear in mind is that revolutionary communist groups generally subsist on peanuts (unless, like the Workers Revolutionary Party of yesteryear, you are lucky enough to recruit thespian royalty, such as the Redgraves and their groupie periphery, and/or develop some 'interesting' international relations).

This unfortunate financial fact

popped into my mind, as I listened to a report about Liam Broady, the latest 'plucky Brit' to be lauded by the press after an unlikely first-round victory at Wimbledon, who had been comfortably despatched in the second by Belgium's David Goffin. I'm not particular riveted by the drama of tennis *per se* - the raucous and slightly forlorn pro-Brit din of the crowd generally sees me lunge for the remote. No, what piqued my interest was the information that the wildcard, Broady - ranked a lowly 182 in the world and living a rather itinerant life before his SW19 heroics, to be fair - would pick up a cheque for £43,000 after his exit at this early stage of the championship.

So our £30k would be viewed as small beer by those at this year's gig at the All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club (the winner will trouser something in the order of £1,760,000). But it is an absolutely vital fillip for our annual income that allows us to plan our activity over the coming year and set aside funds for special projects. For instance, the online profile of our

party and paper *urgently* need to be developed qualitatively. (We have also had to suffer a long delay in the launch of the new CPGB site and make do with an extremely inadequate interim substitute.) In this field, as in others, we rely on the voluntary labour of dedicated amateurs who teach themselves 'on the job', as it were. A little financial flexibility would allow us to buy in some expertise to speed the tempo of the work, send comrades on courses rather than have them learn by trial and error, upgrade outmoded technology that is slowing everything down, etc.

So, if we can't look forward to any Wimbledon participants donating a chunk of their winnings this year, how about some readers out there organising some Wimbledon parties for July 12, the final day of the championship? Strawberries and Pimms, comrades ... ?

Mark Fischer

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

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

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

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

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

■ The working class must be organised globally. Without a global Communist Party, a Communist International, the struggle against capital is weakened and lacks coordination. ■ Communists have no interest apart from the working class as a whole. They differ only in recognising the importance of Marxism as a guide to practice. That theory is no dogma, but must be constantly added to and enriched.

■ Capitalism in its ceaseless search for profit puts the future of humanity at risk. Capitalism is synonymous with war, pollution, exploitation and crisis. As a global system capitalism can only be superseded globally. ■ The capitalist class will never willingly allow their wealth and power to be taken away by a parliamentary vote.

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

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

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

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

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

weekly worker

**Corbyn's
leadership bid
wrong-foots
some**

Stop digging, Peter

How has SPEW responded to the Labour leadership contest? Incompetently, Paul Demarty discovers

Say what you like about the Socialist Party in England and Wales: it is nothing if not persistent.

In its glory days as the Militant Tendency, it became the largest Trotskyist group in Britain simply by sticking to Labour Party entry for several consecutive decades, whereas its competitors had a habit of flipping back and forth on the matter. However, since the early 1990s, the majority of Militant and now SPEW - led by Peter Taaffe - has eschewed Labour entirely, declaring its bourgeois transformation complete and irreversible, and has stuck to that line more or less as doggedly as it previously insisted on entryism.

We read with interest, then, a rather incoherent article in *The Socialist* (June 19) by Taaffe himself on the matter of Jeremy Corbyn's candidacy for the Labour leadership. After all, the SPEW position gets most of its plausibility from the total dominance of the Labour right wing since the mid-1980s, and most glaringly during the Blair-Brown New Labour governments. Corbyn's candidacy is a reminder that the Labour left still exists, and can put together a high-profile challenge every once in a while.

Taaffe states his position at the outset: "We wish Jeremy well - we hope that he gets the maximum number of votes and, in the unlikely event that he wins, we would welcome that," he writes. "But we do not believe that he will succeed in reclaiming Labour as a political weapon for the workers' movement. Any attempt to foster illusions that his challenge could do this is a dead end."

We note, first of all, that despite kind words about Corbyn, Taaffe does *not* call upon anyone to vote for him. Indeed, he seems somewhat annoyed that Corbyn is even on the ballot:

Corbyn only managed to get on the ballot paper because of a 'nail-biting', last-minute decision of some on the so-called Labour 'centre right' to 'lend their votes' to him for their own cynical political reasons ... The danger of accepting this 'charity' could yet be further delay in workers drawing the obvious conclusion ... that it is now an urgent task for the unions and the working class to take the necessary steps towards a new mass workers' party.

This is the central conundrum for Taaffe and his organisation, after all. On the basis of their analysis of Labour, something like Corbyn's challenge *should not be possible*, and the fact that it has nonetheless come to pass is ruddy inconvenient for them. So much of Taaffe's article consists in *delegitimizing* the leadership contest as such.

The 'charitable' actions of Labour rightwingers in getting Corbyn on the ballot thus are read, crudely, as an attempt to hoodwink people into believing there is still a Labour left - when there *cannot* be by definition. (Is it so desperately implausible that lay members of the party, or even constituents, might have applied some pressure?) Likewise, Taaffe (correctly) criticises the drift towards US-style primaries in the post-Collins report Labour leadership procedures:



When you're wrong...

So anybody, literally anybody, who can text and pay a measly £3 can decide who is to become the leader of the Labour Party ... This is a perfectly fashioned weapon - for instance, of the most venal capitalist paper, *The Sun*, who described Jeremy Corbyn as a "terrorist-loving lefty" - to literally select the leadership of the Labour Party; not indirectly, as they did in the past, but more directly, through urging support, with massive publicity, for their preferred candidate. This is akin to the buying of votes!

The trouble is, of course, that Labour has haemorrhaged support primarily to forces *posing* to its left (most strikingly the Scottish National Party, but also the Greens or even, in the Iraq war era, the Liberal Democrats); it is just as easy for these people - well-meaning lefties in the main - to pay their three quid as a stereotypical *Sun* reader. Time will tell who does best out of the 'registered supporters' vote, but it would not be terrifically surprising to see Corbyn pick up a good few. Tens of thousands of people have already taken out *full*

membership of Labour in the last month or two (a similar bounce occurred in 2010). Does Taaffe really imagine they are all Kendallites?

Put another way: if *The Sun* can exhort its readers to vote for a rightwing candidate, then *The Socialist* can equally exhort its readers to register for Corbyn. SPEW, as a disciplined Trotskyist group, can even make sure its thousand or so members do so, and that they encourage their trade union contacts and so on to do likewise.

We have, to use a Taaffe cliché, 'no illusions' as regards the relative influence of the Murdoch empire and SPEW. Yet this refusal to seriously mobilise in favour of a good vote for Corbyn cannot be explained other than as a fatuous attempt to save SPEW's woefully theorised line on the Labour Party.

Illusory

Its error consists, first of all, in the fact that SPEW's view of the Labour Party *as was* is illusory. Labour has, from its inception, played the same role as it does now: politically representing the organised working class in a manner favourable to capital and British

imperialism, through the medium of the labour bureaucracy. There was no 'golden age', when it was "a political weapon for the workers' movement".

The total dominance of the right in the Labour Party this last quarter-century is not the result of a fundamental change *within Labour*, but of the circumstances in which it does its job. Put simply, we have had decades of near continuous defeats. The left has shrivelled (outside Labour as well as inside - at its height, Militant was many times larger than today's SPEW). Union membership is down. The cold war is over.

Misrecognising a shift in the world situation as a shift within Labour, Taaffe is left only with fantastical prescriptions for the movement today. We note, first of all, a piece of advice from Taaffe to Corbyn:

Corbyn should make a direct appeal to all Labour councillors to resist the cuts that are coming from Osborne and Cameron, not just by a show of hands in councils, but to throw down the gauntlet to the government by adopting no-cuts 'needs' budgets.

This is the 'strategy' of municipal resistance most frequently recommended by SPEW under the slogan, 'Take the Liverpool road!' We are offered *as a model* the Militant Tendency's control of Liverpool city council in the 1980s, and indeed one of the most bizarre characteristics of SPEW today is its insistence that this infamous episode was not a failure.

For the uninitiated, the Militant and its broader periphery carried out exactly the manoeuvre recommended here: they refused to set a legal budget, and initially succeeded, inasmuch as central government made up the shortfall in 1984-85. In that context, however, this amounted to little more than a (successful) attempt on the part of the Tories to keep the striking miners isolated. With the Great Strike defeated, Thatcher brushed Militant aside, forcing Liverpool council to issue redundancy notices to all its employees and giving Neil Kinnock his golden opportunity to purge Militant.

For the sake of argument, however, let us accept SPEW's view of these events: that the Liverpool 47's successful construction of a few thousand rabbit-hutch council houses was a glorious and unprecedented achievement; that all it would have taken to topple Thatcher was two or three more such rebellions in Labour municipalities, and so on. The fact that it got as far as it did is fundamentally

an index of the bitter struggles taking place in that era. It is simply implausible that, were SPEW to recruit all of Liverpool council tomorrow, they would not be isolated and crushed very quickly indeed - especially given three further decades of assaults on local democracy.

A fortiori, the same is true of the main prong of SPEW's strategy today: viz, convincing "the unions and the working class to take the necessary steps towards a new mass workers' party". The current incarnation of this strategy is the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, which unites SPEW, the Socialist Workers Party, the Independent Socialist Network and (notionally) the Rail, Maritime and Transport union in pursuit of electoral humiliation. Besides that, SPEW calls on Labour-affiliated unions to sever their ties, and commit themselves instead to "a new mass workers' party".

The difficulty is that the Labour Party remains the political expression of the labour bureaucracy: it was the strength of the unions that put Ed Miliband into the leadership last time around and, Collins report notwithstanding, we can expect them to be influential this time around too. It was union votes, likewise, that pushed through the replacement of clause four, that elected Tony Blair ...

The union bosses' political choices are currently characterised by the pursuit of an 'electable' alternative to Tory rule, which leads them mainly into the camp of Andy Burnham. This is partly because being on the defensive turns people's minds towards lesser evilism, and partly because a period of defeats has left the bureaucrats under little in the way of rank-and-file pressure. Either which way, it is utterly fantastical to imagine that Tusc offers an attractive alternative to the Labour link either for left bureaucrats or for rank-and-file militants, things being as they are.

If you are in a hole, it is a good idea to stop digging. Thus Taaffe should drop the spade and accept that the Labour Party is still what it always was: *a site of struggle*, against some of the most pernicious would-be (and will-be, if the wider left abrogates its duties in the manner recommended by Taaffe) misleaders of the British working class. The Labour left may be weak, but again so are we all. A strong challenge from Corbyn would rattle a few cages, *because* he is a member of the Labour Party - which matters (unlike Tusc, which does not).

A good result for the Labour left in September would be a step towards transforming Labour (not 'reclaiming' it), and a step forward for all of us ●

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