

Socialist Fight



In political
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THE STRUGGLE AGAINST FASCISM IS THE STRUGGLE FOR REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALISM! Page 15

Wladek Flakin's eyewitness photos at onesolutionrevolution.org from the fight against the Honduras coupists. The Frente Nacional Contra el Golpe Estado man carries the national flag (it is blue!). Juan Barahona, one of the main resistance leaders, reiterated that a negotiated solution must include the return of Zelaya to the office of the president and the convening of a Constituent Assembly, reports Wladek.



Activestills.org

Demonstration against deportation of migrant workers and refugees, Tel Aviv 11/07/09

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Unity is strength, L'union fait la force, Es la unidad fuerza, Η ενότητα είναι δύναμη, اتحاد قوت است. , đoàn kết là sức mạnh, Jedność jest siła, ykseys on kesto, מידתו יחדות, Midnimo iyo waa awood, hundeb ydy chryfder, Einheit ist Stärke, एकता शक्ति है, единство наша сила, vi-enybés jéga, bashkimi ben fuqine, אחדות היא כוח, unità è la resistenza, 団結は力だ, A unidade é a força, eining er styrkur, De eenheid is de sterkte, الوحدة هو القوة, Ní neart go chur le céile, pagkakaisa ay kalakasan, jednota is síla, 일성은 이다 힘 힘, Workers of the World Unite!

Class politics, electoralism and the death of the 'Fourth International'

- A vote for the Labour party is still a class vote!

Editorial

When the results of the next general election in Britain are announced in early May 2010 it is likely that a sea of blue will surround the red Labour inner city working class estates of London, South Wales, the Midlands, the North East and the North West, central Scotland, etc. Labour's vote may slip below 30% and/or 9 million votes for the first time since 1945. The working class will have suffered a defeat because their own bureaucratic leaders of the labour movement, the Labour government and trade union bureaucrats, have betrayed them and championed the interests of capitalism. This Labour government, like all previous ones, is a capitalist government but the party has an organic connection to the working class through the trade unions. It was a bourgeois-workers' party according to Lenin's famous definition in 1920 and continues to be so.

As our main theoretical article on page 24 points out at length, the orientation of revolutionary groups, no matter how small or isolated, in this situation, is clear. They employ the method of the workers' united front, placing demands on the bureaucratic misleaders in order to mobilise the rank-and-file base of these mass working class organisations to fight for their jobs and conditions of life. It is much easier to expose those who refuse to fight when a struggle is on. In countries like the USA or Argentina where the working class has not yet built bourgeois-workers parties Trotskyists advocate the Labor or workers' party tactic - reformist workers are encouraged to demand that the TU bureaucracies break with the US Democrats or break with the Peronist Justicialist Party in Argentina. In this way revolutionaries may fight within this new party for their own revolutionary programme, to convince the reformist workers that their leaders are incapable of fighting for their interests because they defend the capitalist system itself. But no genuine Trotskyist group has ever advocated this tactic in countries where bourgeois workers' party already exist - now in almost all of Europe, in many countries in Asia and a few in Latin America. Why?

A crucial development in their class consciousness

Because the existence of a bourgeois workers' party signifies that the working class has already made a crucial development in their class consciousness. This development is closely tied to the elimination of the residuum, the unemployed or casually employed underclass with little money or hope many of whom turn to crime and prostitution to exist. It is also closely tied to the existence of one trade union federation (although not in France, for example) and to a developed welfare system to protect those who fall on hard times. In Britain the highest expression is the National Health Service, in the USA the lack of even a com-

prehensive state national insurance system (and Obama's reforms will not rectify even this) is directly related to this. The condition of the Black and Latino working class in the inner cities is proof of this as the terrible story on page 10 from Detroit shows. Part of the strategy of the ruling classes internationally is to use immigrant workers as a new underclass to split and divide the workers' movement internationally by national chauvinism, as the story on the disgraceful attack by the French TU bureaucrats of the CGT on the Sans Papiers on page 13 shows. This was the reason we took such a clear and uncompromising position against the chauvinism of the British TU bureaucrats and their apologists in the Socialist Party and elsewhere - see *No support for these chauvinist, xenophobic strikes*, SF No2, page 10. We identified the advance of craft unionism and their demand for privileges against Italian workers assisted by the mass media as the chief inspiration for that strike and for that reason we did not accept the demand for trade union control of hiring, put forward by the SP as a means of collaborating with the Unite bureaucracy in ensuring B4BWs. It goes without saying that if the ruling class gets their way here the Labour party as a bourgeois workers' would be finished and it would have indeed become like the US Democrats.

Class politics marginalised by the centrist left

Class politics has become increasingly marginalised by the centrist left in Britain and internationally. For many of them it is a crime to vote for bourgeois-workers' parties. The opportunists of the SP are amongst the worst in this respect. Having told us that the Labour party would introduce socialism via an enabling act when they were entrists in the Labour party, they declared that the Labour party had ceased being a bourgeois-workers party as soon as they left. For over 10 years now the British left has attempted to launch an electoral alternative to Labour, a new, more radical reformist group along the lines of the Refundazione Comunista in Italy, or the Die Linke in Germany or now the New Anticapitalist Party in France. In all these cases these demands have allowed these groups to don a cloak of leftism to hide their capitulation to the trade union bureaucracies and the bourgeois-workers' parties in the actual class struggle itself. As we have demonstrated on pages 8 and 9 this ultra-leftist posturing hides very cowardly positions indeed. And we were over generous to the SWP, they have not, in fact decided to support Jerry Hicks for leader of the 2 million strong Unite union, but are intimating that they too may go with the bureaucrat's bureaucrat Len McCluskey. Disgracefully the AWL's Jim Denham supported McCluskey, once he had been "democratically" selected by corrupt Stalinist machinations - see SF2 Conference report back



Ahmed Hussain, SWP and Respect member joins the Tories in February 2008. He is welcomed by shadow London minister Bob Neill and Tower Hamlets group leader Peter Golds. The SWP's crass opportunist electoralism outed.

and pages 8 and 9 again for these details. But there is hope, the AWL still have a fudgish position on this. Why would self-declared revolutionaries decide to back a bureaucrat when their own organisations could only benefit from the opening up of the class struggle that even a serious struggle to get Jerry Hicks elected, let alone a victory for him, would entail in terms of building a class struggle rank-and-file movement, from which they would inevitably recruit heavily?

Because their leaderships are directing them away from class politics and into electoralism, into the false and anti-Marxist idea that votes in elections are the class struggle, not merely a reflection of the relationship between the classes at that moment. Elections do influence the class struggle; they encourage or demoralise workers, but, as the best SP and SWP militants know, victories in strikes, occupations and against the state in anti-fascist demonstrations (see page 15), etc. change that balance far more profoundly. This is what gives workers real confidences in themselves and their organisations, this is what encourages them to fight their bureaucratic misleaders, this is the heart of the class struggle itself. It is behind the Hicks/McCluskey dilemma for the SP, SWP and AWL. The son-of-No2EU was set to become such an unprincipled alliance but the reports of the split in the CPB are not correct and General Secretary Rob Griffiths has not resigned to lead the left in a united left challenge to Labour. They are to remain as capitulators in the TU bureaucracy via the Stalinist influence in unions like Unite. Apparently Unite Gen Sec Tony Woodley gave them a stark choice; back Labour and do not stand against them in any meaningful way or we won't buy any more Morning Stars. The piper-payer can call the tune when he wants.

Workers Power on building an anticapitalist party

This brings us to Workers Power's position for building an anticapitalist party in Britain and their assessment of the NPA in France. When Workers Power split in 2006 it seemed to many observers on the far left that the Permanent Revolution group (no relation to the CoReP) was the more orthodox Trotskyist and the new Workers Power were the more ultra-left almost Healyite group who saw revolutionary situations everywhere and thought the petty-bourgeois World and European Social Forums were where the forces to build the Fifth International would emerge. But the PR had

Leon Trotsky: I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International; Go Forward!

a very conservative economic analysis (stability until 2015 because only then would the "long wave" crash) and they could not oppose the SP over Bj4Bws because they were developing an opportunist relationship with them. But they took the majority of serious trade unionists in the group with them and the WP were left with a few experienced comrades and a student youth membership who do not understand class politics and have very few trade unionists who could (but do not) teach it to them. So a formal acknowledgement that the Labour party is a bourgeois-workers party is belied by a practice and an orientation to building a reformist alternative to Labour (whilst denying that this is what they are doing) on a totally false estimation of the evolution of the NPA and no real justification of why we must use the US Labor party tactic where it clearly does not apply, in France and Britain.

Many workers have grown angry and disillusioned with their parties

From June onward editorials and articles have said stuff like the following, "Nowhere is the call for a break from Labour more popular than among workers in struggle, who are fighting to defend pay, jobs and conditions. At a rally of postal workers in London an almighty cheer went up when a speaker announced the London region would ballot to stop funding Labour... So it's time for a new workers' party."

This can only mean that the Labour party is not a bourgeois-workers party. It simply "doesn't represent the working class"; the contradiction noted by Lenin has been resolved in favour of the capitalists, it is now like the US Democrats. Luke Cooper comes closest to giving some theoretical justification for building a building a new anti-capitalist party rather than a revolutionary party, "Social democracy's relationship to the working class has been in serious crisis. As the capitalists have demanded an offensive against the working classes' social gains many workers have grown angry and disillusioned with their parties. The influence of the reformist left wing – the wing closest to the workers' vanguard within and outside the party – has also declined sharply. Many workers have started to consider the idea of a new party". This is a substitute for the united front tactic in all areas of work of WP (fascism, TUs, etc.), instead of demands on Labour movement leaders, "build the Anticapitalist party". It is understandable with so few trade unionists with experience of the class struggle in their group the youth of WP might imagine that this would be the case, but older comrades must know better.

We should campaign for trade unions to withdraw their funding, they assert. In his *Writings on Britain* in 1926 Trotsky had the following to say on this matter; "If you go into the history of the origin of the Labour Party it becomes clear that from a trade union standpoint the party in a sense forms its political section. It needs a strike fund, a network of officials, a newspaper and a trusted member of parliament. The expense of voting a member into parliament is just as legitimate, necessary and obligatory as that of a secretarial apparatus." Following the election of the Tory government in May WP can expect some valuable

assistance in stripping union funds from the Labour party. Labour Research (Oct 2009) tells us that "If the Tories win there will be an even more menacing threat to the historic link between the unions and the (Labour) party. A Conservative government is to put the boot into Labour finances once and for all. Their policy is to put a cap on political donations to political parties from any individual or organisation..." Unite donated almost £4 million to Labour last year, Unison £1.7 million and the GMB £1.3. Surely the task of revolutionaries within the unions is to demand accountability, not the stupid, half-hearted Warwick 1 and 2 where the TU bureaucrats pretend to make demands on the Labour government and the Government ignores them and the bureaucrats keep on funding them (union donations made up 82% in 2001, 59% in 2008). The TU leaders pay the piper but cannot to call the tune, they would have us believe. In fact they are satisfied enough with what they get because they are as pro-capitalist as the Labour government. Ernest Bevin, first leader of the TGWU, was a vicious right wing capitalist minister in the wartime National government and for Labour post war.

Without a precise link to any theory of social revolution

The Wikipedia entry for the NPA notes that "the founding principles calls for "social revolution", but without a precise link to any particular theory of social revolution... Olivier Besancenot has said that the party will be "the left that fights, anti-capitalist, internationalist, antiracist, ecologist, feminist, opposing all forms of discrimination". The LCR's distinctive identification with Trotskyism will not be continued by the NPA". The NPA is thoroughly reformist. Nevertheless WP tells us that, "In contrast to the Left Party it (the NPA) explicitly rejected any idea of entering a coalition with the Socialist Party and supporting its policies of privatisation and cuts... The New Anticapitalist Party (NPA) in France was founded as a fighting party with a political programme for the overthrow of capitalism, not its piecemeal reform". One would need to be a particularly naïve comrade or someone very new to revolutionary politics to be fooled in this manner by the politics of the NPA. And why does this rational not apply to the International Socialist Group who have dissolved their Trotskyism, such as it was, into the eco-socialist Socialist Resistance, a slightly more radical reformism within George Galloway's reformist Respect. Surely the comrades of WP should now be opening up discussions to transform that into an instrument to overthrow capitalism? But that idea is risible, because unlike the NPA we all know them politically.

Dave Stockton in Fifth International on 30/07/2009 sets out the theoretical basis for supporting the NPA. He finds two problems which he thinks can be fixed in internal struggle. First the governmental transitional demand (if that is what it is) that says; "It is by the development and generalisation of the struggles, generalised and prolonged strikes, that we can stop the attacks and realise our demands. It is the balance of forces due to the mobilisations that can allow us to set in power a government that will impose



The LCR took a huge lurch to the right when it decided to vote for right wing bourgeois presidential candidate Jacques Chirac against the fascist Jean-Marie Le Pen.

radical measures breaking with the system and that will start a revolutionary transformation of society." That is not just a evasive centrist formulation, it is a straight reformist perspective. And there is a second problem that he has spotted; "Excellent as these proposals are in themselves (!), the NPA needs to take a clear stance against the trade union leaders constituting a privileged bureaucracy, exerting an undemocratic control over the unions. The problem of the divisions between the different federations in the workers' movement is not mentioned and no policy is outlined for trade union unity at a plant and national level. No explicit reference is made to the evil effects of the "keep politics out of the unions" position represented by the Charter of Amiens".

The problem of problems

Now you would think that that was the problem of problems. Coming after a notion that a government "will start a revolutionary transformation of society" we now find we have a movement that will not fight the TU bureaucrats (no need the government will do it for us), the most fundamental prop of bourgeois society outside of the state forces themselves. But the NPA do not even stand on these points; for the last European elections "its programme was not so different to its reformist rivals the Parti de Gauche and the PCF" (WP Oct 2009). Dave tells us that, "The LCR's left turn began over two years ago, in the six months before the 2007 presidential elections. For most of the early years of this century, the LCR had identified neoliberalism, not capitalism, as the enemy and sought to create an anti-neoliberal party with intransigently reformist forces like Attac and the French Communist Party (PCF)".

And that makes for a "sharp left turn"? To all sensible political observers the LCR took a huge lurch to the right in 2002. They got 4.3% and the Lutte Ouvrière 5.7% then but the LCR decided to defend capitalism by a "vote against Le Pen", capitulating to popular prejudices and voting for Chirac against the fascist Le Pen (80-90% of their voters did this but to their credit the LO refused to capitulate to that pressure). It continued its trajectory to the right until 2009 when it finally dissolved itself into the reformist mishmash described by our French comrades at the end of this journal. WP capitulate to those who capitulate to crass electoralism.

Saville: A new word for farce by John Mc Anulty (Socialist Democracy)

The announcement that Lord Justice Saville's report into the 1972 Bloody Sunday massacre in Derry is to be postponed shows yet again the tendency of the Irish peace process to slip over the edge of farce into new realms of absurdity. The delay came 6 years after the close of the tribunal, 12 years after it opened and 37 years after the massacre. The British remain uncertain about the events in Derry even though the massacre was carried out under the eyes of the press and television cameras and with one of the main eyewitnesses now deputy first minister in the local administration.

So why are we facing this absurdity? Part of the answer can be found in the British army's account of 'Operation Banner' - its account of the history of the current Irish troubles. According to the British, the army had to deal with an armed uprising followed by a guerrilla campaign. In fact the history of Bloody Sunday is the history of the initial, unacknowledged part of Operation Banner - the necessity of state terror to force a peaceful mass mobilization off the streets.

From this perspective the history of Bloody Sunday is relatively clear-cut. The British used military power to force the Civil Rights movement from the streets. As part of the operation they ran a fictional story about a confrontation with the IRA and planted pipe bombs on the bodies of the victims. A judicial enquiry led by Lord Justice Widgery applied a liberal coat of whitewash and the incident was buried. The Bloody Sunday operation was partly successful. Although it did not end street protests and fed into an armed resistance, they did give the capitalist politicians and the local communist party the excuse to pull back and oppose further mobilizations.

The Saville enquiry has to do with the weaknesses of the Provisional republicans. They became a mass organization immediately following the massacre on the basis of a popular understanding that the best way to call finis to Ireland's history of

Bloody Sundays, Mondays and every other day of the week was to expel the British. Unfortunately their lack of class politics and reliance on militarism made them unequal to the task. Militarism proved unequal to the task. The Provos never mounted any real challenge to Irish capitalism and, when they were pushed back, Irish nationalism and the Catholic church led them to political capitulation and acceptance of continued British rule. It became necessary to propose ways to resolve outstanding issues. The Provos, in secret negotiations, suggested that the British say sorry. The British declined, proposing the old standby of another enquiry and the morass of the Saville investigation was born. As with many other aspects of the peace process it works better floating in mid-air than when touching ground, being able to absorb endless legal fees and tons of statements and documents until faced with the necessity of reaching an outcome. This has proved difficult since the tribunal closed its doors six years ago.

The reasons are very straightforward. The Stormont administration is not composed of earnest statesmen trying to find a common future but is led by sectarian bigots whose program was that more Bloody Sundays would have quickly settled the troubles and for whom it remains the preferred method for ensuing stability today. Any Saville admission of British guilt would further destabilise a regime where DUP supporters only tolerate their leaders in government with Sinn Fein as long as Peter Robinson keeps publicly reassuring them that the arrangement is temporary and that Sinn Fein will soon be expelled. From a Sinn Fein perspective a repetition of the slanders of the original enquiry would be enormously damaging. They have been humiliated by the removal of guaranteed concessions such as the promise of an Irish language act. Their vote



The Bloody Sunday families have described the latest delay in the publication of the Saville report into the 1972 deaths as a "kick in the teeth."

has plateaued and their organization is hollowing out. From a British perspective any discussion of Bloody Sunday might mitigate against the attempt to portray the hirelings involved in the latest colonial adventure in Afghanistan, participants in atrocities much greater than Bloody Sunday, as 'heroes'.

Much better if Saville were to be delayed again, due to the imminent election, and then represent the old whitewash buried in a fog of detail.

From a socialist perspective the real concern is that the whole issue has been presented as a psychological one, centered on the needs of relatives for emotional closure. The political reality is that the peace process has not significantly changed the relationship between Britain and Ireland, has not changed the fundamental nature of the sectarian colonial statelet. In such an environment Bloody Sunday is not a relic of some dead past but a threat to future struggles for Socialism and Democracy. The way to prevent Bloody Sundays is to force Britain out of Ireland. Provo militarism has proved incapable of doing that, but it is an issue that remains to be resolved by the Irish working class.

WRP Explosion

Gerry Downing's 1990 work on the Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP) explosion can be found online by googling "WRP Explosion", it is at:

www.scribd.com/people/documents/1544314-gerald-j-downing.

Its 13 chapters (90,000 words) deal with the implosion of the WRP in 1985 and follow the developments in the Workers Press side mainly, both internal and international, up to 1990, when the Preparatory Committee collapsed, the Argentinean LIT (Workers International League) departed and the Slaughter wing linked up with Michel Varga and others to form the Stalinophobic Workers International to Refound the Fourth International.

Gerry Downing said, "I was in the Revolutionary Internationalist League/International Trotskyist Committee at the time I wrote the book, so naturally the account reflects their politics; nevertheless I have little to retract from this political document. I hope it will assist in current regroupment efforts."



Gerry Healy, Speakers' Corner, London in 1942. On Healy's death WRP leaders published an obituary. This is Gerry Downing's assessment of it from the Introduction to the WRP Explosion. "All this rings of the sneers of puerile petty bour-

geois academics at a self-educated man of humble Irish peasant origins who controlled their political lives for three decades. But the question that now poses itself point blank to any impartial reader of this piece is: what were the people who did understand Permanent Revolution and who had made theoretical contributions 'still valid today', as the obituarists claim (of themselves, no doubt), doing whilst all this was going on? And why did they kow-tow to and put up with such an appalling human being as their leader?"

Leon Trotsky: I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International; Go Forward!

The T&G story: a history of the Transport and General Workers Union 1922-2007

by Andrew Murray, Lawrence and Wishart, 2008. Review by AJ Byrne

Book Review

Andrew Murray is a leader of the Communist Party of Britain (CPB), Chair of the Stop the War Coalition and an employee of the T&G and of Unite, its successor since 2007, for the past twenty years.

As the introduction points out the T&G's influence in the workers' movement was greater than any other union's, peaking at 2,100,000 members at the end of the 1970s. A 'vast proportion of the working people of Britain held a card at some stage of their lives'... For most of its 85-year history the union was the biggest single influence within the TUC and the largest union affiliated to the Labour party'. Now its successor, Unite, is again. The introduction quotes Neil Kinnock as party leader (1983-1992) to the effect that in many ways 'the T&G is the Labour party'. This reviewer will show that Murray's history is heavily skewed towards the bureaucracy of the TGWU and is hostile to the militant aspirations of the rank-and-file. He covers up for the gross betrayals by the T&G bureaucracy of the struggles and aspiration for socialism of its members. The informed reader would expect no less from a leader of the CPB/Morning Star, which has performed this task for the entire TU bureaucracy in continuity with the practice of its predecessor, the CPGB/Daily Worker, since the adoption of the class collaborationist popular front policy of the Third Communist International (Comintern) in 1935.

Murray makes his political orientation very clear from the beginning in an attack on the first Marxist group in Britain, the Social Democratic Federation (SDF) and on its leader, H.M. Hyndman. Hyndman had denounced the settlement of the 1889 'dockers' tanner' strike and in particular the requirement that the dockers work alongside those who had scabbed on the strike and he also denounced the conduct of the dockers' leaders', which 'denunciation sets another pattern which has since become familiar' (p20). One can almost hear the exasperated sigh of the arrogant and defiant bureaucrat; people are still denouncing sell-out settlements like Gate Gourmet, appallingly. Given that, as Murray himself admits, 'a sustained offensive by the employers had reduced the new unions to a shadow of their former selves by the mid-1890s' (p24), one would think that Hyndman had a point, even if the 'ultra-left' charge against the SDF is true in general.

More fundamental difference with Hyndman

But Murray has a more fundamental difference with Hyndman than that familiar pattern. Hyndman, in line apparently with his 'ultra-left' orientation, had a view that, 'our comrades who are devoting so much time and energy to the formation of these unions of unskilled labour must never lose sight of the fact that the complete emancipation of labour from the thralldom of capitalism is the end to work for. **This end can never be achieved by mere trade unionism**' (our emphasis) (p20). Bureaucratically-minded Stalinists like Murray

have been happy with this type of vague/reformist formulation in the past but obviously the phrase 'mere trade unionism' is an insult to the T&G/Unite bureaucracy and might indicate a higher goal than serving the capitalists as the masters of life, the only possible way to organise human society as they see it. And this supposed lack of alternative is what his whole 'history' is about.

Even Murray's opposition to Ernest Bevin, that arch-right wing anti-communist reactionary dockers' leader who became the T&G's first General Secretary at its formation in 1922, is less than wholehearted. Early on Murray whitewashes the reactionary Bevin; he approvingly quotes his biographer Alan Bullock, who says Bevin had 'deep hostility to the economic and social system...he hated its exploitation, its injustice and its inequality' (p28). If so he had a funny way of showing it; his hostility was in reality to socialism and the possibility that the militancy of the organised working class might put an end to capitalism, as we shall see. Murray refers to him as "a genius" because supposedly he built an organisation which could represent those employed, adapt to change and remain true to its purpose (p215). In fact Bevin created byzantine bureaucratic internal union structures which have proved a powerful barrier to rank-and-file influence on the union leadership ever since. He established the position of General Secretary as an autocratic dictatorship, nominally accountable only to what practically amounts to a hand-picked General Executive Council and biennial Delegate Conference. General Secretaries were elected for life like the Pope until, humiliatingly, Margaret Thatcher legislated five yearly contests. Most of those structures have survived in Unite after the T&G fused with Amicus; e.g. the membership of Amicus no longer has the right to elect their officials, a serious democratic loss.

Popular bossdom

Murray quotes labour historian Alan Hutt approvingly, "this was an ingenious structure – combining a high degree of centralisation with a double division of its membership, vertically by industrial group and horizontally by areas, which enabled this powerful body to be substantially dominated by its forceful General Secretary, Earnest Bevin". This 'popular bossdom', surely based on the methods of the US AFL, supposedly permitted 'substantial regional and sectional scope as a way of overcoming regionalism and sectionalism, which without such flexibility could find expression in industrial and local breakaways' (p44-5). On the contrary this is a double bureaucratic straightjacket imposed on industrial militancy and on attempts to win national support for local disputes. This is what Murray endorses and what other left bureaucrats like the late Jack Jones have admired so much in the past; it gave them the scope to manoeuvre to head off the militancy of the membership, whilst maintaining their claims to be leftists.

The post WWI war explosion of industrial action, from 6



Bert 'Pappy' Papworth, leader of the London RFM; excellent class struggle fighter in the 30s before he was corrupted by the CP and degenerated into a mere T&G bureaucrat in the 40s.

million days 'lost' to ('won' for?) industrial action in 1918, to 35 million in 1919 to 85 million in 1921 had seen most trade union leaders feign leftism. Murray portrays this as genuine leftism, as he does even the most hypocritical utterances of T&G leaders like Bevin, "even trade union leaders now remembered as 'moderate' were in the early 1920s militant well beyond the standards of contemporary left-wingers!" (p32). The battles on the docks are a very important story and Bevin here excelled himself in opposing militancy. Murray quotes Jack Jones, 'at Bevin's instigation the three leaders of the (unofficial) ban (on overtime at Salford docks) were expelled from the union and lost their employment' (p71). He does not tell us why they lost their jobs: in fact membership of the union was a condition of employment and union officials used this to weed out militants in collaboration with the bosses.

We do not have the space here to analyse the dock struggles in the detail they deserve; Bill Hunter's account is sufficient rebuttal to Murray's defence of the bureaucracy. He concludes, "On the one side in the post-war period, there is a sorry tale of leaders whose policies revolve only around their own bureaucratic interests and who are far removed from the feelings, aspirations and traditions of trade union membership. On the other side there is a magnificent story of workers' will to fight and workers' solidarity."¹ We will instead concentrate on Murray's account of one crucial struggle, that of the London busworkers.

CP Minority Movement

The Communist Party's (CP) Minority Movement (MM) abandoned third periodism in the British TUs after 1932, chiefly because the London Rank and File Movement (RFM) had outflanked them. They moved quickly to ensure that work within the union structures meant

Support Jerry Hicks for Unite General Secretary!

Reject the bureaucracy's United Left Fraud!

Build a class struggle, democratic, rank-and-file opposition! September 19 2009

Socialist Fight calls on all genuine socialists and militant trade unionists in Unite to support Respect's Jerry Hicks and reject Len McCluskey the fraudulent United Left's candidate for Unite General Secretary. Capitalism is in collapse, the union bureaucrats have no answer other than advise the workers to accept redundancies, paycuts and defeat - carry on and accept McCluskey and more of the same! Jerry Hicks was quite correct to walk out of the Manchester farce. Our critical support for him is not on the basis that he has great politics (he has not) but he is for mobilising the membership outside of the appalling bureaucratic straightjacket that is the UL, he got 39,307 votes against Simpson and he should have the critical support of every serious leftist if he does stand again. The SP and the SWP should put the full weight of their organisations behind him and against the bureaucrats' candidates (including the right-winger Les Bayliss) and mobilise the rank-and-file by getting branch nominations, passing resolutions, holding meetings and leafleting workplaces, etc. **A real rank-and-file class struggle opposition organisation would be a real step forward, irrespective of who wins the election.**

The UL contains so many straight rightist who know that they must vote in the 'right' way for their careers. For instance at the disgraceful London United Left meeting on 18 July Steve O'Rourke, Chair of the London Convenors Committee and many other right wingers attended and voted to silence the victimised cleaners' steward Alberto Durango. O'Rourke made a very militant sounding speech at that meeting but the Unite bus driver members know it is all hot air and are leaving the union in droves to join the RMT. Steve displayed his right wing views after his company Metroline brought all their Unite shop stewards down to Eastbourne in 2007 for the annual free-food-and-booze-weekend following the two days of strike action in December 2006. (All London Unite bus stewards get this treat from their 'kindly' companies). Inspired by the generosity of the treatment, and in anticipation of yet more O'Rourke penned a paean in the company Metlife magazine:

"By now most of you will be aware of the Eastbourne conference and our aim of making Metroline a place where people will want to come to work; a place where everyone is treated with dignity and respect regardless of their grade. For too long we have all adopted a policy of 'them and us' when in fact there is only 'us'. After all we are all employees of Metroline - from the CEO right down to the new recruits.

We can change things but only by working together which is why these new Corporate Values have my support and why they should have yours as well. By working together we can make Metro-

line a better place for all", Steve O'Rourke Operating TU (Unite/TGWU) Convenor, Metroline - Metlife, Sept/October 2007

Of course we do not know if O'Rourke attended and voted in Manchester but there were surely many like him who did. The SWP must cease their attempts at collaboration with these right-wingers. They jointly produced The Busworker but when O'Rourke objected to an article by an SWP member correctly saying that the union had 'sold out' by abandoning the 22 October 2008 strike (just one out of thirteen companies had been in-juncted so the other convenors just gave up even a new workplace ballot on 5 December showed 75% still for strike action!), rather than defying these class traitors the SWP pulped all 5,000 copies of the paper. Look to the exasperated workers who are sick and tired of these fraudulent bureaucrats and break with them.

Comrades, the vote for the BNP, and their reserve votes 'banked' by the UKIP, mean that it is far too late for this organisational sectarianism and opportunist manoeuvres. Go directly to the membership in Unite; do not mediated this through the interests of left (or even right!) TU bureaucrats.

Whoever does not believe in the capacities of the working class, or in the necessity of its liberation from the yoke of exploitation; in a word, whoever does not believe in the revolution and is by that very fact against it, will certainly declare the building of the Fourth International to be 'Utopian'. On the other hand, all those who believe... that lost battles reveal lessons which enable victory to be won one day, these people know that the question of a world revolutionary organisation is posed: the International — Pierre Broué, French Trotskyist.

Hick's vote surprised everyone, showing the working class will move rapidly to the left of many so-called revolutionaries if given a leadership. This election will be an indication of the ability of these self-declared revolutionaries to learn the lesson and take advantage of an opportunity presented to us.

The SWP will support Hicks but disgracefully, in line with their right wing trajectory in supporting the No2 EU Stalinist xenophobic platform it looks like the SP will back the bureaucrat on Dave Nellist's urgings. The Socialist of 9 September said, "If McCluskey sticks to his programme, even given his position on New Labour, he could be well placed to defeat right-wing candidates. But he must not make concessions to the right to secure election, otherwise he will lose confidence amongst Unite activists." That can only be seen as a rejection of class struggle and a capitulation to electoralism, Nellist's model is Die Linke, the left German party which has managed capitalism's neo-liberal policies in Berlin and has indicated its willingness to do so on a national scale in Germany. This is a kick in the teeth to Rob William, a rejection of his



Jerry Hicks (centre) walks out of the UL hustings. His defiance was inspired by his vote against Simpson's bureaucratic machine.

position at the hustings and the way he fought his own victimisation and defended the Vestas workers and others so well in the past few months.

Support for Jerry Hicks does not mean Socialist Fight endorses the Respect policies or Hick's position on the Lindsey Oil Refinery dispute. Nor do we endorse the demagogic populist blowhole George Galloway MP, leader of Respect or his reactionary views on women's rights, gay rights and whose voting record before he left the Labour party does not bear examination. But Hicks does promise to fight the bureaucracy, to mobilise the ranks and he stands on generally leftist policies which will appeal to the membership. He promises "a General Secretary living a lifestyle nothing like that of any of our members rightly feeds members' disrespect. I would only take the average wage of a skilled worker".

He correctly observes of McCluskey, "But criticism, however strident, in whatever amounts means nothing and no change, which in my view is what Len McCluskey offers. Ask our members about the Warwick Accord/s: dead before the ink was dry... Alas poor Warwick, I knew it well". He opposes disaffiliation from the Labour Party, "Though disaffiliation being put forward by Rob Williams will appeal for sure, it will also alienate the very best of Labour members, MPs and councillors and though Rob puts this forward as a left idea, ironically it will also find support amongst those not only on the left." and he rightly attacks Unite's leaders Woodley and Simpson's antics at the Birmingham demonstration. "Who was not embarrassed and angry at the sickening sight of the unelected former head of the CBI, unelected to Labour's government, Digby Jones having star billing, the man who said 1 in 3 public sector workers were surplus. Did the union tell him it was a March for Job Losses!"

Socialist Fight endorses these sentiments against McCluskey's bogus bureaucratic 'leftism'. Break with bureaucratic methods, build a real rank-and-file class struggle opposition movement in Unite!

Leon Trotsky: I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International; Go Forward!

Can't you hear the Gulag calling?

There was uproar at the Unite London 'United Left' on Thursday night (18th July) when any discussion of the Mitie workers' dispute at Willis was blocked and the sacked Unite cleaners' rep at Schroeders, Alberto Durango, was denied the opportunity to address the meeting.

Two branch officers from the Clerkenwell and St Pancras Branch of Unite who have supported the sacked cleaners attended the meeting – the Secretary Monica Gort and the Organiser Chris Ford, and also some lay reps; they came with Alberto, a member of the Unite Cleaners Branch Committee. They attended expecting to secure solidarity from other Unite activists in London in widening support for the cleaners and to back calls for Asst. General Secretary Jack Dromey to reverse his withdrawal of support for the dispute. The complete opposite occurred." (Chris Kane, The Commune Blog; <http://thecommuine.wordpress.com>)

What a sick bunch of class traitors who would do this to a representative of the most oppressed workers in the land. But Alberto's method was to fight the bosses and mobilise the ranks of his membership; the actions of Unite officials was to broker a class compromise to achieve some union subs but leave the workers where they were – remember JJ Fast Foods, Brother Kelly? (Jim Kelly, the bureaucratic chair of the meeting had supported the JJ Fast Foods strike about a decade ago, making just this point about the T&G bureaucracy himself). As Alberto observed, "United Left? These people are just right-wingers". Of course they are and Alberto's intervention tore aside the mask of these fake leftists completely on the night. He and his supporters won the taking of a vote at the second time of asking because of the intervention of a SP steward (the No2EU rotten block surely cannot survive this 'treachery'). The 28 to 39 vote (Jim Kelly's count has been questioned) to silence Alberto (because there were six people in the meeting who did not agree with the conduct of the dispute by Alberto) revealed the truth – a cynical resignation to his fate would not have provided the basis for a campaign against this betrayal.

The meeting of about seventy was already highly charged as both the SWP and the CPB-dominated bureaucracy had mobilised for it. The United Left is fundamentally a nomenklatura organisation, a jobs-and-positions-allocating Woodleyite front. Every vote against Alberto was bought and paid for by that system. It combines the former TGWU Broad Left and the Amicus Gazette group. This was set up at the 21 February launch AGM as a 'consensus' organisation where no votes were to be taken except in extremis and even then they were to be 'weighted', i.e. bureaucrats would arrive at meetings with members' votes in their pockets to ensure no rank-and-file mass movement could swamp them. And of course a 'slate' of leadership contenders would be agreed in advance to be 'consensus-ised' at the AGM. Applause was the method of testing support, you

could fold your arms if you were a 'troublemaker' and did not approve. Both the SWP and the SP had agreed to this but events in the class struggle had ripped this consensus apart (see Socialist Fight No. 2, pp.12-14 for an analysis of these events).

In short the SP was welcomed into the No2EU CPB -Bob Crow chauvinist Europhobic 'platform' whereas the SWP was excluded because it took a 'bad' (i.e. half-good) position on Bj4Bw. So Ted Knight got hold of a leaflet at the start of the meeting containing a slate excluding himself and the SWP. He was given short shrift by Jim Kelly, the chair, when he objected to the undemocratic nature of the slate and the breakdown of consensus. In fact the SWP did not force a vote on their exclusion because they could see that the CPB/fulltime bureaucrats had mobilised heavily against them, and their slate was duly elected.

The meeting demonstrated the rise and rise of the TU bureaucracy and the snuffing out of democracy for the ranks of the membership itself. Every vote there was bought and paid for by the nomenklatura system developed by Joe Stalin himself and operated by every union bureaucracy in the world now; if you want to advance in the union structures you must comply with the system of patronage, you must vote as required, you must betray your class to advance your own career. To some of the hard-line Stalinists present this was back to the Gulag days and so was no problem. Rod Finlayson, was confident in his Stalinism and in his attacks on MPs Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell and "their supporters here", obviously beginning with the troublemaker Ted Knight. The MPs had supported Alberto and the Mitie cleaners, this was interfering in the internal affairs of Unite and so exposing the anti-working class 'partnership' methods of Unite. A TGWU RIO, Pat Mahon, made just this accusation in a letter and subsequent telephone call, on loud-speaker in the Woodberry office, from Ken Livingstone (my MP in Brent East at the time), who had just intervened to prevent my sacking in 1999 by a joint union-management effort. Your nostalgia for the good old days of the Gulag was palpable, Rod!

Jim Kelly excelled himself in his bureaucratic rail-roading of the meeting. "Are you sure" he shouted at a wayward supporter who voted to hear the victimised cleaner speak – "no seat on the regional committee for you comrade", he might as well have said as the power mad former rank-and-file supporter of the Building Workers Group (remember Brian Higgins, Jim, that super scourge of the bureaucrats in UCATT?) displayed his allegiance to Stalinism and the other side of his coat.

But surely the accolade for class traitor of the night (there were many contenders!) must go to Bronwyn Handyside. This former Trotskyist, fellow WRP CC member, editor of the Workers Press and champion of the Liverpool dockers against Bill Morris's treachery sold her soul to Stalinist bureaucracy on the TGWU Broad Left some time



Ernest Bevin, adapted Stalin's nomenklatura patronage system to the TGWU which Unite's United Left wielded so effectively against Alberto Durango.

back when she accepted their patronage to advance in the union structures. When she voted to deny the victimised cleaners' rep a voice she at least had the good grace to blush and afterwards say she wished it had not come to a vote. Never mind, Bronwyn, like the old German Social Democrats after the 4 August 1914 vote to supply the Kaiser with the war credits to enable the slaughter of WWI to proceed, a feeling of great freedom and liberation will quickly overcome those feelings of shame and sympathy for the oppressed. This is an account of their terrible dilemma post 1914:

"Taking their cue from the SPD, trade union leaders suspended strikes and established a policy of class collaboration, known as the Burgfrieden in Germany and the union sacrée in France. The party and trade union leaders ...had already travelled down the reformist road; (this) was well illustrated by a member from the left of the party, Konrad Haenisch:"

"The conflict of two souls in one breast was probably easy for none of us... This fear: will you not also betray yourself and your cause? ... [Thus it was] until suddenly...the terrible tension was resolved...until, despite all principles and wooden theories one could, for the first time in almost a quarter century, join with a full heart, a clean conscience and without a sense of treason in the sweeping, stormy song: 'Deutschland, Deutschland, Über Alles'. Issue 76 of International Socialism, Prelude to revolution: Class consciousness and the First World War, Megan Trudell

Surely the SWP and the SP must now recognise the hopelessly undemocratic nature of this full-time officer dominated group and begin to fight within it to form a new principled, anti-bureaucratic rank-and-file opposition of class struggle fighters.

Leon Trotsky: I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International; Go Forward!

Obama's America: Cobo; a scene of desperation

by Tammy Stables Attaglia and Matt Helms 8 October 2009

The economic tsunami washing over metro Detroit swept its casualties to the doors of Cobo Center on Wednesday 7 October in the form of 35,000 people so desperate for help with mortgage and utility bills that threats were made, fights broke out and people were nearly trampled. Some were treated by emergency medical workers on site.

It was one of the most dramatic signs to date of how deeply joblessness and the home foreclosure crisis have pushed people from the lower and middle ends of the economic scale to seek help wherever they can.

City officials said a total of about 65,000 people over the past few days have gotten applications -- due next Wednesday -- for a share of \$15.2 million in federal stimulus money to help people avoid foreclosure or quickly rebound from homelessness. Ultimately, as few as 3,500 people may receive the help.

Area social service agencies worry the problem will worsen because of lingering economic woes and the masses of people who could soon run out of unemployment benefits.

Kelli Phillips tries to make the numbers work: \$650 a month for rent, \$300 to \$500 a month to heat her old house, plus food for her and her boys, ages 6 and 17. The unemployed office worker does it all on \$1,000 a month, plus "borrowing, doing odd jobs," said Phillips, 42, of Detroit. "I clean houses for people."

That's why she stood in the chaos of thousands lined up outside Cobo Center on Wednesday, hoping for a chance at \$3,000 in assistance through a Detroit housing and utility payment program funded through the federal stimulus program.

The huge lines were a sobering glimpse into the deep economic trouble in metro Detroit, but they were no surprise to social service agencies struggling to provide food, clothing, utility and housing assistance to people living in the state with the nation's highest unemployment rate -- 15.2% in August -- and a city where joblessness is approaching 30%. Folks are out of work, out of money and running out of hope.

"People seem to be falling between the cracks of government programs that are supposed to help them," said Kristin Seefeldt, a research scientist for the National Poverty Center at the University of Michigan's Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy. Seefeldt, who is following 45 low-income Detroit women for a study on the recession's impact on poor people, said the group is a microcosm of what's happening across the state and country. They're losing jobs and having a hard time finding new ones. More than half owe money to utility companies, ranging from \$200 to several thousand, that they're unable to pay because groceries, rent and food come first.

"You have to go back to the 1982 recession to find unemployment levels at or above the levels we're at in 2009," said Bruce Weaver, an economic analyst for the state's Department of Energy, Labor and Economic Growth. Weaver said the state lost 330,000 nonfarm jobs between August 2008 and August 2009, a 7.9% drop. Of those, 142,000 were in manufacturing, a 25% drop in that sector.

Social service agencies say they're swamped with requests for aid. "It's probably the worst hunger crisis we've seen in our history," said Anne Schenk, spokeswoman for Detroit's Gleaners Community Food Bank, the state's largest food bank, serving five counties in southeast Michigan. Schenk said charitable groups are bracing for even more troubles as the long-term jobless run out of unemployment benefits -- as many as 50,000 in the next few months in Michigan if the federal government doesn't approve an extension.

That, we're anticipating, is going to throw a lot more families into poverty," Schenk

said. "It's going to happen three months from now, or six months from now, or within the year. We are looking at every strategy available to us to get more food and get it out" to agencies that provide food directly. Heading into 2009, Michigan was already in bad shape. According to U.S. Census

Bureau estimates for 2008, 1.4 million Michiganders lived below the poverty line, about 14% of the state's population. In Detroit, the number was 33%. The bureau puts the poverty level at about \$22,000 in yearly household income for a family of four.

Bill Sullivan, director of 211, the services hotline of United Way for South-eastern Michigan, said the region is being jolted by job losses and a culture and society that are unsustainable. Robyn Smith, community relations director for the Coalition on Temporary Shelter, said the tremendous crush of people didn't sadden her. "I'm happy because there's something available," she said as she collected filled-out applications from a doorway guarded by a Detroit police officer to keep people from slipping in. COTS provides 44,000 shelter nights a year to the city's homeless people, about 40% families and about half working poor people.

People fainted and others fought as police tried to keep people calm and cooperative in line at Cobo, with some waiting since Tuesday night. By 11:45 a.m., Detroit Mayor Dave Bing's office sent out word for people to stay away. Inside Cobo, lines led up to a crush of people outside the Riverview Ballroom, where Detroit Planning & Development employees were to hand out applications. At about 10:30 a.m., a shoving match broke out in the crowd, and many of the people bolted away. "It's a disaster here," City Council candidate Gary Brown said. Brown, a former Detroit Police assistant chief, handed out bottles of water to those in line. "This is dangerous. Very unorganized, very dangerous."

Contact MATT HELMS: 313-222-1450 or mhelms@freepress.com. Free Press data analyst Kristi Tanner contributed to this report.



Detroiters fight their way inside Cobo Center in Detroit on Wednesday to get applications for help with mortgage and utility bills. Threats were made, fights broke out and people were nearly trampled. (ANDRE J. JACKSON/Detroit Free Press)

Measurements of hardship

LIVING IN POVERTY

Percent living below the poverty level* in 2008.

33%

14%

MICHIGAN DETROIT

*An example of the poverty level is a household of four people with two children younger than 18 with an annual income of up to \$21,834.

FOOD STAMPS

Annual percent of households receiving food stamps in 2008.

32%

12%

MICHIGAN DETROIT

UNEMPLOYMENT

Rates as of August 2009

27.8%

15.2%

MICHIGAN DETROIT

JOBS LOST

In Michigan from Aug. 2008 to Aug. 2009.

300,000

FORECLOSURES

Bank repossessions for Aug. 2009.

5,161

3,176

MICHIGAN METRO AREA**

**The metro area includes Lapeer, Livingston, Macomb, Oakland, St. Clair and Wayne counties.

Sources: State of Michigan, U.S. Census Bureau, RealtyTrac Inc.

MARTHA THIERRY/
Detroit Free Press



Lisa Smith, 42, from Detroit, has waited in line since 7 a.m. Wednesday to get the application. At 11 a.m. she was by the door but still unable to get inside. (MARCIN SZCZEPAN-SKI/Detroit Free Press)

Leon Trotsky: I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International; Go Forward!

CWU: Open Letter to Unite 's United Left and Model Resolution

From Raymond Morell, Joint convenor, National shop Stewards Network

Comrades,
I believe this is a key issue for our union, the movement and consequently the United Left. Are we to tolerate organised scabbing by Unite members? Or are we going to do everything in our power to support brothers and sisters in the CWU? The outcome of the post strike will have ramifications for every public sector worker. To help build solidarity and try and stop the scabbing, can I urge comrades to move the motion below at Unite meetings?

Comradely Raymond Morell,

Joint convenor, National shop Stewards Network

Model resolution

Royal Mail Managers across Britain have been mobilised in an effort to weaken the postal workers and their CWU union in the run-up to national strikes. Managers are travelling hundreds of miles in order to do work that is proper to CWU members and to attempt to drive down the backlog of post that has built up during the regional strikes. At the beginning of October, for example, managers from Belfast were working in Bristol. Swindon Managers were in London, and Scottish Managers were clearing packets in East Anglia .

Managers are also cooperating with Royal Mail's plans to set up scab centres, on the model of Wapping during the News International strike. Managers are also bullying and harassing postal

workers, and refusing normal union facilities. The vast majority, if not all, of these duties rely on managers volunteering their services. As Unite members we are scandalised that some Unite-CMA members are volunteering for these anti-union duties. We support the following motion:

1. We stand 100 percent with the CWU against Royal Mail and will do all in our power to assist their struggle against the management and its backers in the government – including collecting money and attending picket lines and solidarity rallies.
2. We condemn Royal mail management for organising scabbing and attacking postal workers and their union.
3. We condemn the government for allowing this to happen and call on them to demand that it ceases immediately.
4. We condemn all Unite members who are volunteering for scabbing and call on them to stop immediately.
5. We condemn Unite members who intimidate and bully postal workers.
6. We call on Unite to expel CMA members who volunteer for scabbing.
7. UNITE should instruct CMA members not to perform anything but their normal duties or to work beyond their normal hours until the CWU has achieved a satisfactory deal.



Vital dispute for the entire working class

8. UNITE should defend any CMA member who refuses to participate in the scabbing operation and shows solidarity with CWU members in dispute.
9. UNITE should begin its own industrial action ballot for CMA members in Royal Mail.
10. UNITE should call an emergency meeting of the Administration, Managerial, Professional and Supervisory National Sector Committee to discuss and find ways to support the CWU.
11. We believe that the National Officer (Julia Long) should publicly condemn the scabbing.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

November 28 2009
central London
10 am - 6pm



HOPi: Hands Off the People of Iran

Date: Saturday, 28 November 2009
Time: 10:00 - 18:00
Location: Somerstown Community Centre
Street: Ossulston Street
Town/City: London, United Kingdom

The political crisis that opened up around the Iranian elections in June has revealed something that HOPi activists have constantly emphasised: the government of the Islamic Republic is deeply resented by the masses of the population - particularly Iranian youth.

But what is the way forward for revolutionary change in Iran now? After all, the bellicose rhetoric on sanctions on war coming from the US and Israel highlights how the imperialists are using this crisis - and the pretext of nuclear weapons - to impose their own, anti-democratic and foul 'regime change' agenda on Iran. The nightmares of Iraq and Afghanistan underline how genuine democrats and internationalists must stand in implacable opposition to this.

This is another thing HOPi has always emphasised: the presence of US-imperialism in the region actually serve to buttress an Iranian regime in utter disarray.

Come along to the HOPi Annual General Meeting to discuss what we can do in order to support the struggle for political alternative that is independent of the war-mongering imperialists and the Iranian theocrats.

Victory at Tower Hamlets College

From: Ken Muller [mailto:ken-muller@blueyonder.co.uk]

Sent: 25 September 2009 08:55

Subject: Victory at Tower Hamlets College

After 4 weeks of solid all out strike action, UCU members at Tower Hamlets College are returning to work today victorious: all compulsory redundancies of lecturers have been withdrawn.

Management crowed at the beginning of the strike that it would not last two days. Now they are on their knees.

Congratulations to our lecturer brothers and sisters at Tower Hamlets College!

Congratulations to everyone who contributed to their strike fund (to the tune of well over £20,000 - including £500 from Islington Teachers Association and £50 from ITUC).

Tower Hamlets strikers have shown that we don't have to pay for the greed of the fat cat bankers by accepting cuts in jobs and public services.

Please pass on the good news to your colleagues

Ken Muller

Assistant Secretary, Islington NUT

Leon Trotsky: I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International; Go Forward!

Obituary, Gerald Allan "Jerry" Cohen (1941 – 2009), By Eddie Hazel (GB,France)

Formerly Professor of Jurisprudence, UCL London and Professor of Social and Political Theory, All Souls College, Oxford

The philosopher Jerry Cohen died of a stroke on the 5th of August, at the age of 68. He was quite well-known in the English-speaking world, mainly for its sense of controversy and his sense of humour. His intellectual and political journeys are steps away from Marxism, and it is interesting in the sense that these correspond with both political break-ups and improvements in his academic career.

He was born in Canada in 1941 in a working class family. His mother went away from the Stalinist regime in 1930 at the age of 18, and she entered the Canadian proletariat. She was an active member of the Communist party of Quebec. His father was Canadian, with an "impeccably proletarian pedigree". He was a member of the United Jewish People's Order, an organization presenting itself as pro-Soviet, anti-Zionist and anti-religious. It was managing the Morris Winchewsky school in Montréal, in which the child Cohen had his primary education.

In 1952, the school was repressed by the Anti-Subversive Squad of the Province of Quebec Provincial Police, and then he had to enter a Protestant public school. He entered Mc Gill University in Montreal in 1958. From 1961 to 1963, he studied philosophy in Oxford University in England. In 1963, he became assistant lecturer, lecturer and then reader at University College London (UCL), before obtaining the Chichele Chair of Political Thought at All Souls College Oxford in 1984, when he became English. It was the first time that a self-proclaimed Marxist academics get a chair in Oxford. Since 2008, he was a Professor of Jurisprudence at UCL.

Being brought in a background close to the Communist party of Quebec, he was often disillusioned (first with Khrushchev's speech in 1956) which explains both his unstable intellectual and political paths. While he was teaching in UCL, he was close to the Communist Party of Great Britain, to which he followed and approved the collapse in face of Thatcher and of the death of Soviet Union. He then

came closer to the Labour party.

Thanks to his background he was young interested in Marx and in 1966, returning from a teaching stay in McGill University, he started studying cautiously Marx's theory of history. His academic works are then articulated around historical materialism and political philosophy. They consist of a moving research program which corresponds to a gradual denial of Marxism, in such a specific way that gives him a peculiar space within the (has been) Marxian academics. His first book, Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence, was first published in 1978, it advocates historical materialism on the basis of analytical philosophy, advocating a primacy of the productive forces over the relations of production. It was judged by Alex Callinicos as "the most important work of Marxist philosophy to have been written in English". It is the first book in Analytical Marxism. Cohen became known as the "leading Marxist philosopher of the anglophone world" (Grahame Lock). Yet this importance kept unknown in Continental Europe. He rapidly denied historical materialism between 1982 and 1984—at the time he entered Oxford—in a few articles that were included in History, Labour and Freedom (1988). He then opposed historical materialism with revolutionary Marxism: "I do not thereby commit myself to Trotskyism, but perhaps I do commit myself to the view that one must choose between denial of key historical materialist theses and affirmation of some Trotskyist ones."

He then entered the libertarian debate on the issue of self-ownership (Self-Ownership, Equality and Freedom, 1995), in which he gives a left critique of the right-wing libertarian Robert Nozick's Anarchy, state and utopia (1974), in order to put equality and liberty together. He finally concluded that self-ownership cannot be used properly, including for Marxism. He then turned definitely away from Marxism to turn to normative political philosophy (If You're an Egalitarian, How Come You're So Rich?, 1999; Rescuing Justice and Equality, 2008) in enter-

ing the debate around John Rawls's Theory of Justice (1971). His point against Rawls was that as a legal framework was insufficient to get justice, we need a social ethos for individual responsibility, and it is necessary to turn to Christian social doctrine.

As a matter of fact, his first book started with the preface of the Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, and the last sentence of It, you're an egalitarian how come are you so rich? Is taken from the Gospel: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36). His intellectual has then reached a final point, with an outcome that looks quite opposite with his initial posture: "I would indeed have been shocked to foresee, when I was, say, in my twenties, that I was to come to the point where I now am. For the three forms of egalitarian doctrine that I have distinguished [Marxian, Rawlsian, Christian] can in one dimension be so ordered that my present view falls at the opposite end to the Marxist view with which I began." His last book, Why not socialism?, will soon be published.

Cohen's journey demonstrates that, without an influential revolutionary party, even the most brilliant intellectuals cannot resist their bourgeois background which lead to deny Marxism.

and cause the collapse of whole nations with their direct intervention in the Balkans, Iraq and Afghanistan and their proxy wars in Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, etc.

We demand of all governments a world plan to combat climate change and the degradation of the biosphere which is caused by the anarchy of capitalist production for profits of transnational corporations. Ecological catastrophe is not 'as crucial as imperialism' but caused by imperialism so to combat this threat we must redouble our efforts to forward the world revolution.

We support Trotsky's Transitional Programme of 1938 in its context. We always practice the method embodied in that document because it is the Marxist method of mass work as advocated by Lenin in Left Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder in 1920. As revolutionary international socialists we support Trotsky's theory of Permanent Revolution and its applicability to the present era of globalisation.

We are for the refoundation and reconstruction of the Fourth International as the world party of socialist revolution and will fight for the fusions and splits necessary for this in our international work.



Professor GA Cohen, died of a stroke at 68. Many saw him as the leading political philosopher of the left, but his Marxism was not rich enough.

Socialist Fight: Where We Stand

We stand with Karl Marx: 'The emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves. The struggle for the emancipation of the working class means not a struggle for class privileges and monopolies but for equal rights and duties and the abolition of all class rule'.

We see democratic soviets/workers' councils as the instruments of participatory democracy which must be the basis of the successful struggle for workers' power.

We are for the nationalisation and expropriation of capitalist private property without compensation and under workers' control.

The capitalist state must be overthrown and smashed to achieve socialism.

The revolutionary process of transition to communism is based on the struggle to form an international federation of workers' states and such a federation is required in order to overcome the domination of global capital.

We defend the heritage of the Russian Revolution and critically support the revolutionary thrust of the first four Congresses of the Third Communist International

Leon Trotsky: I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International; Go Forward!

Repeal all laws against immigrants! Papers for all!

By Eddie Azel, Bolshevik Group

As in Britain, it is more and more difficult for refugees and foreign workers to enter France. They are persecuted by the police. Most French union confederations (CFDT, FO, UNSA...) do very little for migrants, especially for "illegal" ones ("sans papiers") who are supported by associations, not on an internationalist proletarian basis, but on humanist and religious grounds. The main union, the CGT, has organised limited strikes of migrant workers but has never called other workers out in solidarity. The CGT reason that, some migrants deserve to be legal, because they fulfil the conditions of Sarkozy.

The 'Coordination of Sans-Papiers 75' (CSP 75) are African migrants who have organised themselves to win the right to stay in France (with papers) for everyone who works in France. The French labour movements history (whose union federations were formed in relation to different political parties and currents) on this issue (as in Britain) is not good.

The Parti socialiste, (PS) has a long history of involvement with colonial wars and of introducing immigration controls. But the former Stalinist party's record is no better. For instance, during the 1970s, it called on us to "Buy French". In December 1980, the French Communist Party (PCF) controlled Vitry-sur-Seine council sent bulldozers to destroy a hostel for 300 workers from Mali, leaving them homeless. In February 1981, leading PCF member Robert Hue, mayor of Montigny-les-Cormeilles, led a march against Moroccan families whom he had labelled "drug traffickers". Now again in 2009 the chauvinism of France's institutional "left" has reared its ugly head in the PCF-influenced CGT. (Socialist Fight)

The sans-papiers (without papers) workers joined together in the Coordination of sans-papiers 75 (CSP 75) and occupied the Bourse du Travail in Charlot Street, in Paris, from 2nd May 2008. 1 Like millions of other workers, they ran up against the anti-labour laws of the Sarkozy /Hortefeux government which have done so much to attack workers and their families. For over one year the CSP 75 have fought for their rights and consequently denounced the direction of the policy of the CGT. CGT policy limited and divided the struggles of sans-papiers workers to one of individual rights, subordinated to the needs of French capitalism. The bureaucracy of CGT, opposed by a number of its militants (but supported by the leaders of all the other trade unions) endorsed the policy of "regularisation by work", and "selected immigration". I.E. they agree to retain the Capitalist states right to regularise and determine the duration of a workers stay on a drip feed at the behest of the employers.

The sans-papiers of the CSP 75 demanded by their occupation that all the trade-unions adopt their claim: papers for all and the repeal of all the laws against immigrants. The class collaborationist and chauvinistic bureaucracy at the head of the CGT have refused to fight against the

onslaughts of the bourgeoisie and for this reason carried out the violent expulsions of sans-papiers men, women and children on Wednesday 24 June.

The bully-boys of the Parisian CGT benefited from the absence of the majority of the occupants who had left to demonstrate in front of the Prefecture of Paris on that day. Delegates of the CSP 75 (some of whom have, for one year, misused the meetings for "mediation" with the enemy) expected "peaceful talks" and had called the demonstration far from the Paris Bourse du Travail in order to avoid "serious confrontations" (CSP, Official statement, June 27)!

Masked commandos from the CGT armed with bludgeons and teargas, hidden inside the Bourse du Travail, emerged to expel the occupiers and end the CSP 75 occupation.

In the face of stiff resistance by the occupants (soon joined by more sans papiers) 'the CGT commando's' attacked them with gas in the corridors of the Bourse du Travail, forcing them to barricade themselves in. The Parisian CGT then called upon the police force of Hortefeux to assist their operation. With the benevolent complicity of the Town hall controlled by the Parti Socialiste (who legally own the buildings) they called in several hundreds CRS (riot police). The violent expulsion succeeded, and the CGT leaders settled quietly back in their desks.

In total 8 workers sans papier were hospitalised, 10 fainted, 6 people suffered light injuries. The victims of the CGT led attack included 5 women and a child. The following day, the UD CGT added calumny to its aggression: its official statement of June 25 seeks to put the blame for the violence on the victims.

Since then hundreds of sans papier have camped night and day in front of the Bourse, encircled by the CRS and municipal police who tried to prohibit food, water, and use of the public toilets to them. It is once again the rank and file of the CSP 75 and especially the women who are most militant; "The delegates think that we are weak, but it is the opposite." The base refuses the "criteria" suggested by the Prefecture to divide the movement and prevent another occupation. "How the Prefecture opens a counter here even, without criteria or conditions!" (The Voice of the Women, June 28).

As they did at Montigny-les-Cormeilles in 1981 and Vitry-sur-Seine in 1980, the bureaucracy of CGT (supported by the other bureaucracies and their apprentices) have shown their deeply anti-working class character. They have organised a physical attack on the most fragile fraction of the proletariat, while refusing to fight the xenophobic policies of the Sarkozy government and the preceding governments. The actions of the Paris CGT on Wednesday 24th of June undermine the



CGT thugs attack the sans papiers.

unity of the Labour Movement and attacks its Internationalism.

The ruling class uses all means at its disposal to destroy or, failing this, to control the organisations of the working class. Its goal is to attack working class unity and head off defiance of its rule. The trade union bureaucrats refuse to defend the most exploited workers without papers and with. They oppose the general strike of all the workers. The traditional parties of the working class (PS, PCF) serve the interests of the bourgeoisie and have done for generations. By their sell-out programmes, those who are candidates for their succession like the Parti de Gauche and NPA are preparing to do the same.

In order to fight the capitulation's and sabotage of the trade-union leaders, the workers must organise themselves as a Rank and File to control their own struggle and to constitute a fighting faction of the class with-in the trade unions. These class struggle / rank and file tendencies need to lead in the general assemblies, elect strike committees and centralise these elected committees. Moreover, it is necessary for them to build a new party, ready to conclude the fight of exploited and oppressed, to face up to the bourgeoisie and to destroy its State.

It is with this fighting orientation that the Bolshevik Group invites all class struggle militants who believe in the right of all workers to have free movement, for all proletarians to live and work in the country of their choice, to join us in the building of a revolutionary Marxist Party.

Endnote

1. A 'Bourse du travail' was a working class organisation founded by anarchist trade unionists that encouraged mutual aid, education, and self-organisation amongst their members in the late nineteenth century. It is now a place where the different confederations unions are housed by local councils. The Bourse du Travail is managed by an Administrative Commission which includes ALL the trade unions having offices, namely CGT, CFDT, FO, CFTC, CGC, UNSA and Solidaires (SUD). All these trade-union bureaucracies are responsible for this aggression, they condemned the occupation from the beginning and unanimously expressed their relief in the official statement of CA dated 26 June.

Leon Trotsky: I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International; Go Forward!

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST FASCISM IS THE STRUGGLE FOR REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALISM!

By Steve Bagal in Birmingham

There is no question that the English Defence League (EDL) is a fascist organisation: the exact degree of links between the EDL and the BNP is unimportant as both organisations use the same brand of racist politics and scapegoatism but are obviously "two sides of the same coin". The BNP is trying to win "respectability" with its two Euro MPs and local councillors while the EDL seek to control the streets. So, how should we deal with the EDL? Socialist Fight agrees with and argues for the "traditional Labour movement response" to fascists, which is that they are afforded No Platform: they may not march, hold public meetings nor distribute their racist, xenophobic filth and we are in favour of the mobilisation of organised workers in alliance with other anti-racists and anti-fascists to ensure that the fascists have no opportunity to gain that oxygen. This is because 'No Platform' is the most effective way to 'keep our streets clean' - as has been shown this year in Birmingham with the attempts of the EDL to march and the efforts of the reformists to stop them; and because the kind of anti fascist organisation that we envisage - the most effective, widespread and thorough-going, builds the confidence of the working class along with its combativity and its ability to democratically self-organise outside of and against the constraints of the existing bureaucracy.

No Platform and its deniers

So revolutionaries need to work within Unite Against Fascism (UAF) - putting a fighting line, trying to force the bureaucrats to fight, etc. while organising separate anti fascist which is another arena to fight for revolutionary-transitional politics. So how should the EDL be dealt with? They're promising to go to Manchester on the 10th where most of the UK Left has a presence: the Communist Students signed up 170 at the University Fresher's Fayres this year in Manchester compared to 60-odd last year so that could represent an important force for opposing the fascists but unfortunately the "mother ship" of CS is the CPGB Weekly Worker who are quite opposed to No Platform and believe in discussion with fascists. Quite how this would work with the EDL thugs is not clear.

It is worth a look at the EDL website, such as the film of what is presumably 10 or 15 EDL members in balaclavas burning a Nazi flag and complaining about "extremism". The point they want to make is that they are not German Nazi fascists; they are pure-bred English fascists. Perhaps CPGB leader Conrad should attend one of their racist protests (there are no other type) and attempt to engage them there if he could find a moment when they are not terrorising veiled women with kids or elderly people or shop-keepers, or when they are not getting their heads kicked by enraged Asian youths who have shown themselves more than capable of defending the police-soaked streets of the city centre from these animals.

But no! This seasoned "Communist" wants to be invited onto BBC Question Time on 22nd October

to debate BNP leader Nick Griffin who has already been invited. Quite what Conrad would say to the growing protests at the BBC decision to allow the BNP this platform, or to the striking TV technicians is not very clear but we think it is much more important that the CPGB and CS youth who are close to them are in the thick of organising to stop the EDL!

It seems that the EDL have re-considered their attempts to march in Birmingham after three visits this year with very little actual success, so that is a victory for anti fascist! However, this victory has been won despite the cowardliness and reliance on what are definitely enemy forces of the main antifascist organisation UAF: it is backed by most trade unions which is the main reason for its predominance. Local committees of UAF may contain delegates of workers' organisations, e.g. of shop steward committees or union branches - I am a delegate of a committee of stewards' representing over 4,000 union members that work for Birmingham City Council.

However, the dominant forces in UAF are very much opposed to "militant antifascism". For weeks before we knew the EDL were going to appear on the streets of Birmingham they spent their time trying to get the City Council to "Ban the EDL" and consequently organised only to hold a public meeting in the Council House Saturday 8th August 2009. Respect Councillor Salma Yaqoob said on the radio that she "gave out thousands of leaflets" telling people **NOT** to turn out in opposition to the EDL, because Councillor Yaqoob believes that the state (that oversees capitalist society) is an ally against the fascists.

Their public meeting was banned by the Council, while the EDL were free to roam the city intimidating passers-by or shoppers or Asian shops and causing violence: if it was not for the 100-odd Asian youth who were not under the control of the UAF "generals" because a section of the anti-fascist protest were 'kettled' on New Street, including these 'leaders', where they manhandled an antifascist who was heckling the speaker talking of a victory as we were disabled from moving from that bit of New Street!

The struggle against fascism requires a political programme

The struggle against fascism requires a political programme, and the programme of socialist revolution is what is required - how else can the 'scapegoating' of immigrants be countered than by fighting for the full rights of all immigrants? Birmingham UAF demanded the City Council "ban EDL" but they found they then got banned themselves! On the City Council these same SWP members who form the backbone of UAF are going



Birmingham Asian youth force the fascists EDL off the streets AGAIN on 5th September whilst the 'law abiding' UAF were appealing to the police and the Council for protection. The EDL say they will not go back there.

along with the attacks of the Council for so many years with disastrous consequences, thereby demoralising workers and leaving them prey to the fascist anti-immigrant propaganda of the EDL and the BNP.

Some of these same people that make up the UAF in Birmingham are at work in conflict with the City Council: People like Dave Hughes and I are in dispute with the City Council - so let us look at that! The City Council have been shutting down whole Departments in Social Services: look at Adult Learning Disability (LD) services with almost all of the residential care homes shut - there were certainly at least 39 of these, gone forever with provision picked up by the private sector! This has been going on for years - perhaps for nine years but certainly for five and in any case longer than I have worked at the Council and the unions have not complained, because workers that wanted to stay could be re-located to another, similar job

Which means that the fact that these services were disappearing for ever does not matter because "the conditions of our members" is paramount: it is an "I'm alright Jack" mentality which really stinks because things are not alright! These Council care homes offer high standards of care for disabled people, and they are shutting in favour of private care where money is made out of the provision of care as well as accommodation. The workers get the lowest possible wage plus there is no shift pay, no weekend money and no sick-pay! And the care offered will be incomparably worse that it was under the City Council, which had to enforce their own standards, under the union pressure.

That is what awaits us in the private sector - just harder work for less money because there we are being directly exploited. And the unions are going along with the attack. In the April 2009 edition of "UNISON Labour Link News", UNISON leader Dave Prentis "welcomed further government support to help councils meet their equal pay obligations.... by enabling them to borrow against or sell assets". "Sell assets" = "privatisation", and it looks like the attitude of the city council unions toward the fate of the services for vulnerable people is replicated in the fight against the BNP/EDL - "let the gaffers manage it, they know best".

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Polanski, Goddard, Balogh and the Age of Consent by Angela Jane Byrne

At the end of September the famous director Roman Polanski was arrested in Switzerland for a brutal rape he had committed against a 13 year old girl in 1977 in California. The details of what he did to the girl are truly appalling; They are here; <http://www.thesmokinggun.com/archive/polanskicover1.html>. He fled whilst on bail, having reduced the charge to unlawful sex with a minor (under the age of consent laws) on a plea bargain. We can only hope that he does not escape again and is returned to serve a lengthy sentence. That being said we are absolutely opposed to the current "paedophile" witch hunt which aims to paint all gay men as paedophiles under the guise of attacking Polanski's crimes. But this crime has nothing to do with her age as such. The girl's testimony leaves no room for doubt, she rejected his advances several times and he raped her. Whether she had had sex or taken drugs before or not is totally irrelevant; we reject the reactionary "precocious Lolita" defence, only pleaded by those imbued with patriarchal antifeminist prejudices.

Helen Goddard and Pamela Balogh

Just over a week before the arrest of Polanski music teacher Helen Goddard got 15 months jail for a lesbian affair with 15-year old schoolgirl. The affair was entirely consensual on both sides, in fact the pupil initiated it and still wishes to continue it when Goddard gets out of jail, saying she is still in love with her teacher. Godard was jailed under age of consent laws, the same (plea-bargained-down) law that Polanski was charged with. Judge Pitts refused to bar Goddard from contacting the pupil, saying: 'It would be unnecessary, unkind, and cruel to the victim.' Goddard will have to sign the sex offenders' register for ten years, and is banned from teaching children for life. But the judge refused to ban her from being alone with underage girls.

In Somerville, New Jersey, USA a former girls' PE teacher, Pamela Balogh, was sentenced to 7 years for a lesbian affair with a 15 year old student of hers. She refused a plea bargain of ten years, and was found not guilty in December 2007 of first degree sexual assault, but guilty on the other, lesser counts. The pupil denounced the teacher violently; as did her parents. Their affair had continued for 9 months. If convicted on the first degree sexual assault charge Balogh could have gone to prison for up to 40 years.

The pupil said that she has suffering from post-traumatic stress syndrome and does not play any of the sports she once did. She says she feels guilty for telling the truth (she confided in two fellow pupils). She said of Balogh, "Pam, I don't care what sentence you get ... I refuse to feel bad for your going to jail. Bottom line: I was a child. I was innocent. I was whole ... Bottom line: You were wrong and you should have known better."

This age of consent language is clearly borrowed from the witch hunters.

And here we see the appalling injustices perpetrated by the age of consent laws. The age of consent varies widely from one state to another in the USA and internationally; it varies from as low as 9 years in Yemen (but you have to be married!) to 12 in some Mexican states and 13 in Spain and Japan. The age of consent in Tunisia is 20. And the age of homosexual consent is different in many cases; apart from fundamentalist countries where it is illegal and frequently punished by stoning to death and hanging it is almost always higher than the heterosexual age of consent because of homophobic prejudices about "corruption" and the "turning" of adolescents by the influence of a relationship with a more mature person. Frequently there are harsher penalties for relationships where the age difference is over three, five or ten years.

The question is not just consent but "effective", consent. In the first place there cannot be effective consent between a child and an adult in sexual relations. Before the age of sexual maturity this is a criminal matter. But there remains the question of the transitional

period between childhood and adulthood. The problem here, of course, is how we define "effective" given that there is a transition to sexual maturity corresponding to, but not always coincident with, puberty. This is a real life watershed which is different for every individual and so cannot, and should not be, covered by age of consent laws. If such a case goes to court then it should be judged on its individual merits, not some draconian imposition that sends thousands to long prison terms because of anti-youth, anti-women and anti-gay-and-lesbian bigoted attitudes.

The comparison

The comparison between the three cases brings out in a stark manner what is wrong with the age of consent laws. It was totally unjust that Polanski's brutal anal rape was plea-bargained down to the age of consent laws, when force was used. The New Jersey Attorney General attempted to "bargain-up" the case against

Balogh so she would face the risk of 40 years in jail if she refused to plea bargain and force was proved. She got 3 years less by beating that rap. Balogh was convicted of second degree, not first degree sexual assault, because no force was used. That 'assault' without force or unwanted contact is a technicality of the age of consent laws.

In Goddard's case it is undoubtedly true that the courage of her lover won for her the sympathy of the judge (he said it was "a difficult case") and so reduced her sentence. Almost certainly Balogh got that savage seven years sentence because her ex-lover collapsed under the pressure of the witch hunt. It is likely the pupil suffered from post-traumatic stress syndrome and was not playing any of the sports because she had a lesbian affair with her teacher, which was almost certainly consensual, and she was then outed as a

lesbian and a viciously homophobic witch hunt followed which exposed to the ridicule of her fellow pupils and her parents' anger.

There is nothing to be said in Polanski's defence but he may end up with only the 42 days jail already served. The teachers' careers were totally ruined; Polanski's took off in 1977 with warm establishment assistance and approval. There does remain the issue of sexual relationships between teachers and pupils, similar to doctor-patient and other relationships where a powerful position of authority exists and consent is potentially compromised by that relationship. One should have changed school; it should now be a disciplinary matter for the employing authority or professional body responsible, not for the police and courts.

Those who prey on the sexually naïve or immature must be prosecuted and receive the appropriate jail terms (most are heterosexual) and psychiatric treatment. The law cannot stay out of all bedrooms. However in a society where private property is the overwhelmingly determinant of personal relationships, where love and sex are inevitably bound up with these distorting and alienating social relationship, we must always oppose the state intervening in free and mutual effective consenting sexual relationships.

Frederick Engels was right, "full freedom of marriage can therefore only be generally established when the abolition of capitalist production and of the property relations created by it has removed all the accompanying economic considerations which still exert such a powerful influence on the choice of a marriage partner. For then there is no other motive left except mutual inclination." The defence of the nuclear family is a fundamental prop of private property, the age of consent legislation underpins the nuclear family and so props up all capitalist society.



Helen Goddard, "I can't see for the life of me what's wrong with what she has done. They were both willing participants over a long time. Society has gone mad and the do gooders are to blame for the way these so called 'incidents' are punished" - Daily Telegraph reader Dick Van Dyke .

Model Labour Movement Resolution for Leeds:

This Branch notes

*The English Defence League's march in Manchester on the 10th of October was much bigger than any of these earlier provocations, with reportedly up to 700 people.

*That the counter demonstration by the anti racists and the labour movement was small and not very well organised.

*That the counter demo to EDF's planned march in Leeds on the 31st of October so far has not been publicised or pushed within the regional labour movement.

This branch believes

*That the EDL despite its rhetoric is a dangerous racist organisation seeking to divide the working class and scapegoat Muslims.

*That the trade union movement is built on the unity of millions of workers of all races and religious backgrounds and as such the unions need to lead the opposition to groups like the EDL & BNP.

*That state bans on demonstrations can be counter productive as they can also effect the workers movement and shows too much faith being put in the police to combat racism and fascism.

This branch resolves:

* To organise the largest possible contingent of workers join the counter demo against the EDL in Leeds on the 31st of October.

*To demand the regional TUC organise a large regional mobilisation of its members against the EDL.

*To demand the regional TUC/ Unite produce their own literature countering the lies of the EDL and posing a basic working class political alternative: such as Jobs for all, homes for all etc.

Leon Trotsky: I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International; Go Forward!

Gandhi, Marx and the meaning of socialism by Patrick Martens

Discussion Article

Louis Fischer. "You are a socialist and so are they."

Gandhi. "I am, they are not. I was a socialist before many of them were born. I carried conviction to a rabid socialist in Johannesburg, but that is neither here nor there. My claim will live when their socialism is dead."

In an extract from Gandhi's interview with the American journalist, Louis Fischer (1896-1970) between 17 and 18 July 1926, we are introduced in no uncertain terms to the belief held by Gandhi that he subscribed to a particular form of socialism. Nehru commenting from his telling chapter on 'Paradoxes' in his *Autobiography*, noted that Gandhi often called himself a socialist but that '...he uses the word in a sense peculiar to himself which has little or nothing to do with the economic framework of society which usually goes by the name of socialism'. How did Gandhi view the term 'socialism?' I cited the difficulty in defining such a loose concept as socialism, I discuss Gandhi's criticism of Western attempts to legitimise questionable forms of conduct including that of material progress. I then argue that Gandhi attempted to 'flesh' out his concept of socialism by entering into a dialogue with traditional Indian concepts of 'karma' and 'bhoga' ensuring its relevancy to India by re-asserting its true aims of morally sound social conduct. I then analysed how Gandhi's form of socialism relates to Marx's utterances on the same subject matter. I argue that Marx's work was of deep interest to Gandhi particularly his concept of 'species-being' or 'Gattungswesen'.

British Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald during the course of his message to the Federation of Conservative and Unionist Associations at Edinburgh in January 1935 said: "The difficulties of the times make integration and concentration essential for every people. This is the true Socialism..."

Cited as a footnote in Nehru's *Autobiography*, Nehru comments in the main body of his text that following Gandhi's lead '...a number of prominent Congressmen have taken to the use of that word (socialism), meaning thereby a kind of muddled humanitarianism. They err in distinguished company in the use of this vague political terminology, for they are but following the example of the Prime Minister of the British National Government.'

Louis Fischer. "What do you mean by your socialism?"

Gandhi. "My socialism means 'even unto this last'. I do not want to rise on the ashes of the blind, the deaf and the dumb. In their socialism, probably these have no place. Their one aim is material progress. For instance, America aims at having a car for every citizen. I do not. I want freedom for full expression of my personality. I must be free to build a staircase to Sirius if I want to. That does not mean that I want to do any such thing. Under the other socialism, there is no individual freedom. You

own nothing, not even your body."

Gandhi's interview with Fischer in 1926 offers an insight into what Gandhi thought socialism was not as opposed to a clear and concise definition of what he thought socialism to be. From Gandhi's response we can see that he criticised what he called the 'one aim' of their socialism, being 'material progress'. Gandhi had often cited material progress as an ill associated with that of Western Civilisation. Gandhi called Western nations 'lands of bhoga' a Gujarati term used to denote an offering, to a deity, of pleasures and enjoyments. Gandhi used the term 'bhoga' to suggest that material pleasure and advancement had been attributed a spiritual dimension in the West which had infiltrated and saturated the very ideas of modernity and progress. I believe Gandhi was commenting on the need of capitalism, the defining characteristic of Western Civilisation and its notions of modernity and progress, to legitimise its conduct.

As a necessary consequence of the emphasis on material advancement, Gandhi argued that the people, including most notably socialists of the Bolshevik persuasion, 'lost all touch with the finer things of life'. By basing one's deeds solely on the goal of material progress, Gandhi recognised the adverse effects this would have on the people's 'karma'. In Gujarati the term denotes action, deed, conduct, behaviour, fate, luck, religious rite, the effects of past lives on the present, evil, immorality and sin. For example the concept of rabid competition, heavily endorsed by capitalism, could only serve to undermine the virtue of social cooperation so highly placed with his policy of 'Sarvodaya'.

Gandhi viewed the finer things in life as conducting virtuous behaviour that in turn would add to one's 'karma', a concept not wholly alien to Western Civilisation in the form of Aristotle's concept of 'Eudaimonia' or 'human flourishing and happiness'. Bad 'karma' could cause considerable distress and unhappiness in one's life by the effect of non-virtuous behaviour in a previous or present life. Gandhi believed India was a land of 'karma' where no amount of ideological persuasion and rhetorical tricks could legitimise morally questionable forms of behaviour as ultimately it would exhibit itself in one's 'karma'. By criticising the notion of material progress within certain forms of socialism, Gandhi attempted to remind Indians and Indian socialists alike that India will not and should not accept biased Western opinions of socialism, but ground it within its true aims of morally sound social conduct. For true economic equality lay not in material progress for all, as the Bolsheviks would argue, but according to Gandhi, in reducing oneself 'to the level of the poorest of the poor.' 'That is what I



Gandhi and Kasturba with Harijan children at Bhavnagar, July 3, 1934

have been trying to do for the last fifty years or more, and so I claim to be a foremost communist'.

Marx in his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* (EPM) introduces his concept of [man's alienation from his] 'species-being' as a third characteristic of alienated labour. In brief the first characteristic of alienated labour is that the product of labour stands over the worker as an alien object with considerable leverage over him due to objectification. The second characteristic of alienated labour is the self-alienation of the worker in that his own activity is alien to him and does not belong to him. According to Marx, 'His labour is therefore not voluntary but compulsory, forced labour. It is therefore not the satisfaction of a need but only a means to satisfy needs outside itself.' The third characteristic of alienated labour is that it alienates from man his species-being in that it alienates man from his own body. Marx identifies three key relationships of man. Firstly man practically obtains subsistence in the form of food, clothing, shelter and warmth etc, from the objects of nature around him. In that sense man 'makes the whole of nature into his inorganic body'. Secondly man makes plants, animals, the elements and light etc, part of his consciousness. From a theoretical perspective, man objectifies nature as his 'intellectual inorganic body'. Thirdly man as part of his generic character objectifies his production as a duplication of himself 'not only intellectually, in his mind, but also actively in reality and thus can look at his image in a world he has created.'

It is this third relationship of man to his production which Marx grounds his concept of species-being. According to Marx work, vital activity, and productive life have intrinsic value to man. That is man does not have to produce in accordance with a need but quite regularly produces in accordance with beauty. In a similar vein, according to John Ruskin whose work *Unto This Last* was by far the most influential work Gandhi had read (note Gandhi's chapter 'The Magic Spell of a Book' in his *Autobiography: My Experiments with Truth*) 'The largest quantity of work will not be done by this curious engine for pay, or under pressure, or by help of any kind of fuel which may be supplied by the cauldron. It will be done only when the motive

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force, that is to say, the will or spirit of the creature, is brought to its greatest strength by its own proper fuel: namely, by the affections.' What distinguishes man from animal is his 'conscious vital activity'. Marx writes 'It is this and this alone that makes man a species-being.' Alienated labour undermines this essence of man and 'degrades man's own free activity to a means, it turns the species-life of man into a means for his physical existence.' Within the *EPM* the concept of species-being serves as the backbone of much of Marx's economic arguments. It forms the philosophical foundation for communism in that the suppression of private property, as 'the product, result, and necessary consequence of externalised labour, of the exterior relationship of the worker to nature and to himself.' is seen as the re-assertion of the species claim to all of nature. Man no longer subservient to an artificial need to acquire and commoditize that of which he already owns in essence. By returning to our true essence under Marx's communist system, man no longer pre-supposes competition as the 'envious desire to level down'.

Gandhi claimed in his socialism he wants 'freedom for full expression of my personality. I must be free to build a staircase to Sirius if I want to. That does not mean that I want to do any such thing. Under the other socialism, there is no individual freedom. You own nothing, not even your body.' Gandhi posits that at the very least you should own your own body, which asserts a theoretical convergence of Gandhi and Marx's thoughts. Marx suggested that alienated labour alienates from man his species-being in that it alienates man from his own body. Marx asserted a program to allow man to reclaim his species-being and thereby in turn reclaim his own body. Gandhi was stressing the importance of this concept to true socialism when he criticised Bolshevism for not allowing you to own anything. Gandhi recognised Marx's attempts to ground socialism in the human collective essence or species-being. Indeed this concept may be argued to be the 'permanent value' that Ignazio Silone recognised in socialism. However Gandhi did not see Marx's claims as unique and indeed commented that 'The underlying belief of communism is good and as old as the hills.'

Gandhi, in his dialogue with socialism, placed it within the specific context of the day; namely Indian Independence and Indian socio-economic national progress. Collingwood's observation that 'you cannot find out what a man means by simply studying his spoken or written statements...In order to find out his meaning you must know what the question was (a question in his own mind, and presumed by him to be in yours) to which the thing he has said or written was meant as an answer'. I believe Gandhi had in mind one overriding question when entering into a dialogue with socialism and communism, and that was how to make it relevant to the solely Indian question of Indian Independence and Indian social improvement. Gandhi was sceptical of top down political ideologies. He 'never sought to provide a grand political theory, e.g. an ideological system. He worked out his theory—his truths-as praxis, and understood that it had to evolve constantly in relation to his and other people's experience.' Gandhi rooted his knowledge of socialism within the method of 'the dialogic – one in which knowl-

edge is seen to arise from discussion, rather than from a unified philosophical system'. He therefore saw or rather presented Marx as re-asserting the already held belief by many Indians, that man is a species-being. However, in order to Indianise it and make it more relevant, Gandhi positioned the Indian concept of 'Prakruti' as the real 'philosophical foundation to socialism', an 'underlying belief...as old as the hills.'

Gandhi saw Marx's concept of species-being as an argument for man's true nature. Gandhi's concept of 'nature' was rooted in the Indian term 'Prakruti' which means 'the original or natural form or condition of anything, original or primary substance, and the personified will of the Supreme in the creation.' In many respects it points toward the 'Truth' of something, which was always so apparent in Gandhi's thought.

Gandhi levelled the criticism against Marx that he failed to grasp fully the fundamental concept of 'Ahimsa' (to do no harm) so integral both to Gandhi's own form of socialism but Marx's as well. Marx recognised that 'That man lives from nature means that nature is his body with which he must maintain a constant interchange so as not to die. That man's physical and intellectual life depends on nature merely means that nature depends on itself, for man is a part of nature.' Any destruction at all of man or indeed nature, according Gandhi would be an act contrary and in objection to man's true essence, his species-being. Therefore one could only be a true socialist if one subscribed to the true nature of socialism, namely 'Ahimsa' that asserted the fundamental idea of man's species being common and integral to both Gandhi and Marx's ideology.

Gandhi suspected Marx's writings whether rightly or wrongly 'because of their association with violence. The very words 'class war' breathe conflict and violence and are thus repugnant to him.' According to Gandhi if the means are right, that is man's species-being is not subjected to 'Ahimsa', then the end is bound to be right. In a similar vein to Marx, Gandhi believed any genuine revolution would be a social one and that it would be a 'consciously comprehended process of its becoming.' Marx commented that 'the hand mill will give you a society with the feudal lord, the steam engine a society with the industrial capitalist'. Gandhi could not envisage a better society built on the negation of the most fundamental principal of 'Ahimsa' and Marx committed a grave fallacy, as did many others, in believing this could be so. Indeed he pointed to Marx's lack of foresight in not resolutely opposing violence and asserting 'Ahimsa' as Marx himself had recognised the bourgeois as creating a 'world after its own image.' Gandhi wanted 'to improve the individual [and thus species-being] internally, morally and spiritually, and thereby to change the external environment.' One would presume for the better.



Gandhi having his evening meal during the long conference with Lord Mountbatten, April 1947

According to Gandhi's spirit of 'Aparigraha' each who held assets, held them in 'trust for the good of society. Gandhi disagreed with violent attempts associated with socialism (particularly Bolshevism) to destroy the capitalist. Gandhi instead invited the capitalist to 'regard himself as a trustee for those on who he depends for the making, the retention and the increase of capital.' Therefore Gandhi laid the emphasis on appealing to the good or indeed 'socialist' within the capitalist to change the current system as opposed to war amongst class lines.

In short the enemy was not the capitalist, but capitalism. The capitalist was still a species-being, part of one's own nature according to his concept of 'Ahimsa'. Therefore by propagating a policy by which one appealed to a spirit of service within the community such as 'Sarvodaya' and at the same time promoting the trusteeship of possession through 'Aparigraha', Gandhi appealed to the greater good in all and at the expense of none. He held up the notion of species-being or 'Prakruti' through 'Ahimsa' as the fundamental overriding doctrine within his Constructive Programme and indeed political ideology.

In conclusion, I believe Gandhi's defining legacy to socialism was his continued attempts to exemplify the concept of species-being through his idea of 'Ahimsa'. To Gandhi it was this and this alone that defined socialism and made it as 'good and as old as the hills'. Gandhi concentrated on the philosophical foundation given to socialism by Marx (informed by Ludwig Feuerbach) and made it as relevant as possible to the question of Indian Independence and Indian socio-economic progress. Gandhi recognised and appreciated the need as any great thinker to ground political ideology in the problems of the day. He shared Nehru's concerns that 'To try and understand the complex problems of the modern world by an application of ancient methods and formulae when these problems did not exist, to use out-of-date phrases in regard to them, is to produce confusion and to invite failure.' Gandhi himself approached the notion of 'socialism' as a historian in that he realised 'that the history of political theory is not the history of different answers given to one and the same question, but the history of a problem more or less constantly changing, whose solution was changing with it.'

Gandhi, Bhagat Singh and the meaning of Revolution Ret Marut replies

In order to understand Gandhi we must understand the whole person; his philosophical, religious, social and political outlook which went to make up the man. But we must tackle them one at a time and then show the interrelationship of the separate aspects of his personality with the whole.

Gandhi's philosophy and religion

We contend that Gandhi had a "narrow, metaphysical mode of thought" in that he separated socialism from its economic base and made it a purely moral and therefore idealistic and utopian aspiration which constantly confounded his notions of Ahimsa (to do no harm) and Karma (akin to the Christian theory of "sin" and "bad conscience"). This "true aims of morally sound social conduct" was being constantly disrupted by communal rioting, for instance, and Gandhi had no idea why this occurred; he would go on hunger strike in an attempt to stop these riots, material reality for him was just an immoral, sinful intrusion into his great plan of non-violent change. How do we characterise his philosophical/religious outlook? He claims he was an agnostic for a period before he fully intellectually embraced Hinduism through studying the traditional Indian Sanskrit books, the Upanishads. But in reality his South African freethinking was not agnosticism about religion but a **spiritual** agnosticism between religions (he studied Christianity). His philosophy contained a great deal of pantheism (as Hinduism does) and was close to the outlook of Albert Einstein.

Einstein considered himself an agnostic and his spirituality was closely similar to that taught by Buddha and much later by Spinoza - not unlike the 'paramarthika' or the transcendental interpretation of the Vedanta delineated by Shankara in contrast to the Vyavaharika view held by the common man. In close parallel with the Hindu saints, especially Gautama Buddha and Shankara, he felt the futility of human desires...individual existence in pursuit of mundane materialistic goals impressed Einstein as a sort of prison and he felt a deep inner urge to experience the Universe as a significant whole." Einstein and Gandhi - the meaning of life, Ramanath Cowsik - Director of the Indian Institute of Astrophysics. <http://www.uip.edu/uip/spip.php?article447>

The word pantheism was first coined by the Irish philosopher and freethinker John Toland (1670-1722) and was a revolutionary doctrine in its time, taking its inspiration from the writings of the old Roman Titus Lucretius Carus (ca. 94 BCE- ca. 49 BCE), Giordano Bruno (1548-1600) and Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677). Gregori Plekhanov, the first Russian Marxist, and teacher of Lenin, recounts his agreement with Engels on Spinoza's contribution in the following passage.

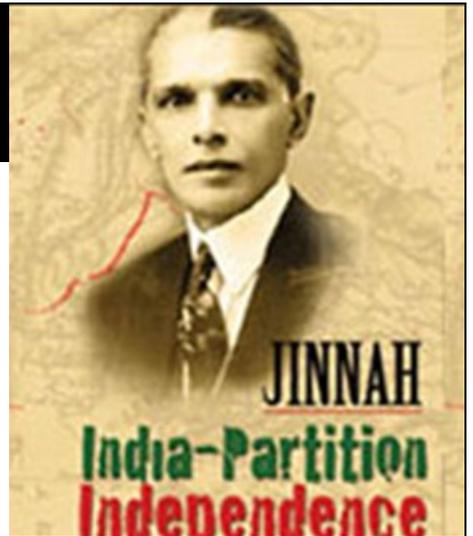
After visiting the Paris World Exhibition in 1889, I went to London to make Engels's acquaintance. For almost a whole week, I had the pleasure of having long talks with him on a variety of practical and theoretical subjects. When, on one occasion, we were discussing philosophy, Engels sharply condemned what Stern had most inaccurately called "naturphilosophische materialism". "So do you think," I asked, "old Spinoza was right when he said that thought and extent (matter) are nothing but two attributes of one and the same substance?" "Of course," Engels replied, "old Spinoza was quite right." <https://www.marx.org/archive/plekhanov/1898/07/bernsteinmat.html>

The difficulty with this is that as a revolutionary doctrine pantheism had outlived its usefulness with the advent of the materialist thinkers of the Enlightenment, in particular Baron d'Holbach (1723-1789), who first set out the materialist outlook on life; "in 1770 he published *Le Système de la Nature/The System of Nature*, in which he denied the existence of God, explained sensibility and intellect as functions of matter, and asserted that happiness is the end of mankind". (<http://encyclopedia.farlex.com/Holbach>). "The attraction of Spinoza's philosophy to late eighteenth-century Europeans was that it provided an alternative to materialism, atheism, and deism. Three of Spinoza's ideas strongly appealed to them: the unity of all that exists; the regularity of all that happens; and the identity of spirit and nature. Spinoza's "God or Nature" provided a living, natural God, in contrast to the Newtonian mechanical "First Cause" or the dead mechanism of the French "Man Machine" (great watchmaker)" http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baruch_Spinoza. That is deism and pantheism enabled science to expel superstition from its practice (the scientific method) whilst repudiating the revolutionary implications of denying the existence of God might have on the mass of oppressed humanity - the masters of life needed religion as a method of social control yet it had to be expelled from scientific thought in order to allow the material forces of production to develop for the profits of capitalism. It is surely religion as social control that Gandhi aimed for in his Ahimsa and Karma.

Gandhi's social and political outlook

The Trotskyist Tendency, a forerunner of the ITC, adopted this general position on socialism and its material basis:

"As revolutionary socialists, we Trotskyists aver with Marx and the First Workingmen's International in 1867, "the emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves, the struggle for the emancipation of the working classes means not a struggle for class privileges and monopolies, but for equal rights and duties, and the abolition of all class rule". Only the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism by



Jaswant Singh's new book on Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the leader of the Muslim section of the Congress; controversy still rages on who was to blame for the partition, in truth both sections of the bourgeoisie were to blame but Jaswant credibly argues that Gandhi and not Jinnah bore the greater responsibility.

the organised working class, led by a revolutionary socialist party based on the theoretical conquests of Marxism and Trotskyism (its modern form), can win a world planned socialised economy which will achieve full human liberation, the communist goal. This will end all human oppression manifest in alienation in all its religious and social forms. The violently oppressive capitalist state forces or those of the oppressive police/bureaucratic deformed workers' states exist ultimately to protect and reinforce these relations, which are the fundamental 'secret' of continuing capitalist rule. Only when we "change the old conditions" by revolution can we achieve the full economic and social equality of all human beings, develop our real species-essence as egalitarian co-operative co-producers of life's necessities by winning economic and political control over our own destinies. With Marx we defend "The Necessity for the Communist Revolution" as elaborated in *The German Ideology*. "Both for the production on a mass scale of this communist consciousness, and for the success of the cause itself, the alteration of men on a mass scale is necessary, an alteration which can only take place in a practical movement, a revolution; this revolution is necessary, therefore, not only because the ruling class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because the class overthrowing it can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew."

Gandhi rejected all of these, beginning with the material foundations for socialism. In fact his repudiation of western decadence and materialist outlook as sinful greed failed entirely to distinguish between social progress and capitalist values, equating the one with the other. Engels points out that,

"The solution of the social problems, which as yet lay hidden in undeveloped economic conditions, the Utopians attempted to evolve out of the

human brain. Society presented nothing but wrongs; to remove these were the task of reason. It was necessary, then, to discover a new and more perfect system of social order and to impose this upon society from without by propaganda, and, wherever it was possible, by the example of model experiments. These new social systems were foredoomed as Utopian; the more completely they were worked out in detail, the more they could not avoid drifting off into pure fantasies."

Comrade Martens says,

"Gandhi disagreed with violent attempts associated with socialism (particularly Bolshevism) to destroy the capitalist. Gandhi instead invited the capitalist to 'regard himself as a trustee for those on who he depends for the making, the retention and the increase of capital.' Therefore Gandhi laid the emphasis on appealing to the good or indeed 'socialist' within the capitalist to change the current system as opposed to war amongst class lines. In short the enemy was not the capitalist, but capitalism."

This is indeed the political outlook most associated in the English-speaking world with Robert Owen. It is naive and wrong in that it is impossible to imagine that the capitalists, as a class, will voluntarily concede their privileges and positions of power for the good of the entire community, no matter how logical the arguments for socialism are presented. And they certainly did not do it in India, they chose communal violence, resulting in the deaths of between 200,000 and one million people and the mass migrations of tens of millions, to make sure that socialist revolution would not prevail. It has never happened in history that a ruling class ceded its place without civil war and revolution, and this involved the passing of power between sections of a ruling elite. Since the Paris Commune of 1871 the abolition of all ruling elites by the communist revolution has been posed, the muck of ages can only conceivably be swept away in violent revolution.

Engels points out that the Third Estate compromised all the "workers" both capitalists and their employees in an undistinguished mass as opposed to the,

"the privileged *idle* classes, the nobles and the priests. But the victory of the third estate soon revealed itself as exclusively the victory of a smaller part of this "estate", as the conquest of political power by the socially privileged section of it – i.e., the propertied bourgeoisie... The knowledge that economic conditions are the basis of political institutions appears here only in embryo.

Yet what is here already very plainly expressed is the idea of the future conversion of political rule over men into an administration of things and a direction of processes of production – that is to say, the "abolition of the state", about which recently there has been so much noise... Fourier (François Marie Charles Fourier, 1772 - 1837) ... depicts, with equal power and charm, the swindling speculations that blossomed out upon the downfall of the Revolution, and the shopkeeping spirit prevalent in, and characteristic of, French commerce at that time."

Gandhi was not just "commenting on the need of

capitalism, the defining characteristic of western civilisation and its notions of modernity and progress, to legitimise its conduct" but was denying any other reason to seek human advancement. Besides human needs are social needs, it is impossible to ask a section of humanity not to desire an ipod or a sophisticated mobile phone, good motor car or decent accommodation. When these are denied to a large proportion of society crime and violence is the inevitable product. And if the oppressed begins to straighten their backs, if they look up and strike for the type of egalitarian society that humanity's productive forces can produce very quickly if it is organised for the satisfaction of human needs then crime and violence becomes a thing of the past AFTER the resistance of the oppressors is violently broken. And who can doubt that, faced with the loss of all their privileges the ruling class will not react extremely violently, as they have always done in the past? This is what they did in India, in collaboration with Mountbatten in 1947, when Mohammad Ali Jinnah resorted to communal violence to found Pakistan because Gandhi was such a Hindu chauvinist.

Jallianwala Bagh

Surely there was no opportunity to forcibly drive the British out of India than in the aftermath of the massacre in 1919 in the Jallianwala Bagh near the Golden Temple in Amritsar. The cold blooded massacre of some 1,500 in a mixed Hindu/Muslim/Seek demonstration was boasted about by Brigadier-General Reginald Edward Harry Dyer CB (1864 – 1927) the British Indian Army officer responsible for the Jallianwala Bagh massacre when he appeared before the Hunter Commission that same year.

He admitted, "I think it quite possible that I could have dispersed the crowd without firing but they would have come back again and laughed, and I would have made, what I consider, a fool of myself." But Gandhi and the Congress only called only for a non-violent protest movement and but the Moplah Riots broke out in 1921. According to Annie Besant: "They Moplahs murdered and plundered abundantly, and killed or drove away all Hindus who would not apostatise. Somewhere about a lakh (100,000) of people were driven from their homes with nothing but their clothes they had on, stripped of everything".

The Moplah rebellion was religious revivalism among the Muslim Moplahs, and hostility towards the landlord Hindu Nair Jenmi community and the British administration that supported the latter but this did not cause Gandhi to call of the non-violent protest. Because the leadership of the Congress made caste instead of class the question then there was no possibility of uniting Hindus and Muslims. This came about with the killing of twenty two policemen in Chauri Chaura in 1922, which Congress totally condemned but saw this as sufficient cause to call off the protest; this upset the British, communal riots only undermined the unity of India.

Gandhi's defence of the deeply reactionary caste system is legendary, yet his actual words on it continue to appal even those who have illusions in his other utopian ideals. Here are just a few of



Jallianwala Bagh memorial; Udhram Singh, "I have seen my people starving in India under the British rule. I have protested against this, it was my duty. What a greater honour could be bestowed on me than death for the sake of my motherland? "

his quotes with the year in which he wrote them, 1920: "I believe that caste has saved Hinduism from disintegration... The beauty of the caste system is that it does not base itself upon distinctions of wealth-possessions. Money, as history has proved, is the greatest disruptive force in the world.... Caste is but an extension of the principle of the family. Both are governed by blood and heredity. Western scientists are busy trying to prove that heredity is an illusion and that milieu is everything. The... experience of many lands goes against the conclusions of these scientists; but even accepting their doctrine of milieu, it is easy to prove that milieu can be conserved and developed more through caste than through class.

So ugly did he find Western-style competition that he would prohibit anyone who acquired a skill other than his "hereditary" one from earning a living by the new one:

1925: "There is no harm if a person belonging to one varna acquires the knowledge or science and art specialized in by persons belonging to other varnas. But as far as the way of earning his living his concerned, he must follow the occupation of the varna to which he belongs, which means he must follow the hereditary profession of his forefathers. The object of the varna system is to prevent competition and class struggle and class war. I believe in the varna system because it fixes the duties and occupations of persons.... Varna means the determination of a man's occupation before he is born.... In the varna system no man has any liberty to choose his occupation."

India has systematically failed to uphold its international legal obligations to ensure the fundamental human rights of Dalits, or so-called untouchables, despite laws and policies against caste discrimination, the Center for Human Rights and Global Justice and Human Rights Watch said in a recent report. More than 165 million Dalits in India are condemned to a lifetime of abuse simply because of their caste. (New York, February 13, 2007), <http://www.hrw.org/legacy/english/docs/2007/02/13/india15303.htm>

Bhagat Singh and socialism through revolution

The following presents an alternative analysis of Gandhi from an article assessing the political relevance of a revolutionary communist, executed by the British in 1931 from a Trotskyist perspective in the New Wave Blog: <http://new-wave-nw.blogspot.com/search/label/Relevance%20of%20Bhagat%20Singh>

“When Stalin was propelling his followers in India to associate themselves with Gandhi and Congress, Bhagat Singh was exposing the false preaching of Gandhi, through his writings in newspapers and leaflets. Bhagat Singh wrote “He (Gandhi) knew from the very beginning that his movement would end into some sort of compromise. We hate this lack of commitment....”. He further wrote about Congress “What is the motive of Congress? I said that the present movement will end into some sort of compromise or total failure. I have said so because in my opinion, the real revolutionary forces have not been invited to join the movement. This movement is being conducted only on the basis of few middle class shopkeepers and few capitalists. Both of these classes, specifically the capitalists cannot venture to endanger their property. The real armies of the revolution are in villages and factories, the peasants and workers. But our bourgeois leaders neither did dare to take them alongwith, nor can they do so. These sleeping tigers, once wake up from their slumber, are not going to stop even after the accomplishment of the mission of our leaders.” These words of Bhagat Singh found their endorsement when after the Bombay action of weavers, the leader of the national bourgeois, Gandhi, expressed the fear of its class, saying that “.... use of proletariat for political purpose is extremely dangerous”.

“Amazingly when the great leader of International Communist Movement, Leon Trotsky, was making severe criticism of Stalinist policy in India, making scathing attack upon Gandhi and Congress, around the same time Bhagat Singh was also making the political critique of this false leadership, on the same lines. It is not without reason that Bhagat Singh, unaware by then of the thoughts of Trotsky, was himself thinking on the same lines. He refused to collaborate with the Menshevik program of conciliation with national capitalists and till the end of his life remained consistent on this political position. Rather, he drew his source of inspiration from the action and program of Gadar party, instead of that of the CPI.

“As Bhagat Singh was thoroughly convinced of totally reactionary character of national capitalists, he did not subscribe to the views of the then Stalinist leadership of the CPI, of two stage theory of revolution- i.e. in first stage ‘alongside the capitalists’ and in second stage ‘against the capitalists’. Bhagat Singh did not believe in this farcical ‘two stage theory’ of revolution. For Bhagat Singh, the revolution was one stage episode- the socialist revolution, in which the power must fall essentially to the hands of working classes, with peasantry as its ally, of which the democratic

tasks constituted a part. Bhagat Singh, unlike the Stalinists, never dreamt of a bourgeois republic, and never allowed the possibility of sharing the power between the workers-peasants on one side and capitalists on the other. For Bhagat Singh, neither the whole nor the part of the capitalists, was progressive or revolutionary. This flew in the face of the then political line of Comintern, which preached that in backward and colonial countries like India, national capitalists were ally of revolution and genuine fighters against the Imperialism. We all know how this conciliatory policy destroyed the proletarian revolution in China and how it prevented a proletarian upsurge in India.

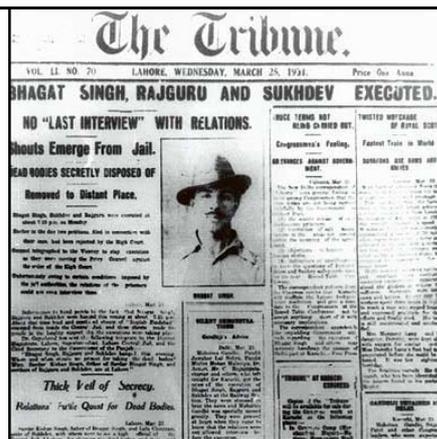
“Bhagat Singh was a staunch opponent to the doctrines of ‘non-violence’, preached by Gandhi, which was nothing but a trap to hold back the workers and peasants from taking offensive against the property and the rule of capitalists. Bhagat Singh wrote about the preaching of Gandhi “...It was the principles of non-violence and compromising policy of Gandhi, which created a breach in the united waves that arose at the time of National Movement.” He brought forward vivid explanations enriching the revolutionary theory and experience of his time, in support and justification for the use of revolutionary violence by the new classes against the old ones in history. His writings were befitting reply to the docile, timid and virtually servile positions of Gandhi and his followers inside the Congress.

“No doubt, the perspective of Bhagat Singh, was limited by various factors including his very early age, extremely short life span, politically undeveloped environment, unfortunate slipping of the leadership of Soviet Union and Comintern to the hands of Stalinist bureaucracy which abandoned the perspective of world revolution in no time, etc. etc. Though, Stalinism stood as a wall between the waves of Great October Revolution and the revolutionary movement in the East, including India, even then, the waves of October Revolution, exerted immense influence upon young Bhagat Singh. While in Jail, at the end of his life, Bhagat Singh was going through the works of Lenin and Trotsky.

“Bhagat Singh was influenced by the sacrifice of Kartar Singh Sarabha, the organiser of Gadar Party in US, who planned a revolt in armed forces through penetration and political propaganda, in order to uproot the colonial regime, but was caught and hanged at the age of 19 years on the charges of sedition and waging war against the Empire. At the age of 23½ years, Bhagat Singh himself was hanged by Colonialists, with tacit understanding with bourgeois leadership in Congress, Gandhi at their head. This collusion between colonialists and Congress leadership is evident not only by the mysterious silence of these leaders on the issue, but also that Gandhi had categorically refused to make the sentence of Bhagat Singh, an issue at the round table conference.” (end extract).

Execution of Udham Singh

In like manner Gandhi made no serious attempt to prevent the execution on 1 April 1940 of Udham Singh. He was formally charged with the



Bhagat Singh (1907 – 1931, above) went to the gallows with a defiant cry of Inkalab Zindabad! ("Long Live Revolution") on his lips. His pamphlet, *Why I am an Atheist*, is available on <http://www.marxists.org/archive/bhagat-singh/1930/10/05.htm>.

murder of Sir Michael O'Dwyer, who was responsible for the Jallianwala Bagh massacre. When produced before the Magistrate, he said 'I did the deed because Sir Michael O'Dwyer wanted to crush all our aspirations for freedom. I had been after him for full 21 years. I am happy that I have fulfilled my job. I am not afraid of death'.

Udham Singh was hanged in Pentonville Prison in London. At that time, many, including Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi, condemned the action of Udham as senseless, but he is now acknowledged as a great national hero.

Gandhi opposed all violence, but especially that of the oppressed – he was totally opposed to Bolshevism on this count. He had no concept of a global division of labour or the necessity for an integrated world economy to produce for human need, it was India and Hinduism first and the rest nowhere. He explicitly supported capitalism (in a humane form, of course!) and opposed strikes, which should, he thought, be illegal once the capitalist had agreed to arbitration. This assumed both the possibility of non-biased arbitrators and the permanence of capitalism as the optimum society. As a Hindu nationalist he supported the caste system, opposes inter-eating and inter-marrying with other religions, and, whilst opposing discrimination against the Untouchables (Dalits) did not seek to abolish their status as scavengers and removers of “night soil” (excreta). His philosophical and religious outlook underpinned this impressive series of prejudices.

the new wave

that would turn into a tide!



<http://new-wave-nw.blogspot.com/>

Sri Lanka: The Collapse of the Ethno-Nationalist Project of LTTE and the Tamil Question

by Rajesh Tyagi 28 May, 2009

Socialist Fight is pleased to reprint this article from the Indian Trotskyist group New Wave. It is a sharp and incisive Marxist analysis of the situation in Sri Lanka that led up to the defeat of the Tamil Tigers, particularly the heavy responsibility borne by the former Trotskyists of the LSSP, who betrayals, directed by the Fourth International's Pablo and Mandel after 1953, enabled the Sinhala bourgeoisie to foster the national chauvinism against the Tamils and divide the working class. However we would point out that the International Committee of Gerry Healy, Pierre Lambert and James Cannon after 1953 posed no serious revolutionary alternative to that, they infamously fought Pablo with Pabloism and liquidated into Social Democracy whilst Pablo and Mandel were liquidating into the Stalinism of Tito and later Castro and Ho Chi Minh. Healy ended up as an apologist for Khomeini and Gorbachev.

Nor do we think the national question can be solved simply by propaganda or that 'in the countries with a belated development, the slogan of national state has become obsolete, losing all its political significance' as the article says. We believe that a nation's right to self determination a transitional democratic demand where extreme oppression had developed a national consciousness and a profound determination that they be treated equally as a nationality. Only when they win that right can the unity of the Tamil and Sinhala workers be reforged and the class struggle resumed on a comradesly basis.

Nor can the TU bureaucracy's and bourgeois-workers parties' ideological hold over the organised working class be broken by the same method of denunciation and building alternative structures like factory committees. This task requires the development of a transitional programme and an application of a transitional method to these organisations. The United Front of workers' organisations, as outlined in the Third Congress of the Comintern in 1920, as developed by Lenin in *Left Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder* and by Trotsky in *A Programme of Action for France* (1934) and the founding document of the Fourth International, *The Transitional Programme* (1938) supply the method of approach in developing such a programme for India, Sri Lanka and the whole of South Asia as part of the world revolution, we believe.

The ruthless suppression of the armed secessionist movement led by the LTTE, at the hands of Rajapakse government of Sri Lanka, has put to an end the 26 years old civil war on the island ongoing since 1983, between Tamil nationalists and the Sri Lankan establishment. The entire top brass of LTTE has been wiped out by the Sri Lankan security forces in cold blood under a pre-plan, simultaneously inflicting enormous sufferings upon the civil population. With this, the project for a separate Tamil homeland, proposed by LTTE in the northern and eastern parts of the island, has also lost the ground, almost completely.

The ethnic conflict took a toll upon around 80,000 human lives, before leaving the question of ethnic repression of Tamils, unresolved. The recent offensive undertaken by the Sri Lankan government to uproot LTTE, has resulted in one of the biggest human tragedies in South Asia, over several decades. Apart from the cadres of LTTE perished in the war, stepped up since January 2009,

which is largest on the globe in proportion to the size of population of the country. It already had an army of 1,20,000 soldierie, by 2007, which it had replenished with induction of 80,000 more young recruits, mostly Sinhalese, in 2008 alone. To recruit the Sinhalese youth, it had kept its military plans for a major conflict in complete secrecy. In addition, very low level of youth employment i.e. 22.4 percent of the total youth on the island, facilitated the project of this mass recruitment to the Army. Without this fresh recruitment, the war itself and success achieved in it by the Colombo establishment was improbable. By keeping the war plans a secret, the Sri Lankan Government succeeded to lure the Sinhalese youth for recruitment in the Army and then used it as cannon fodder to win the war against LTTE. Even during the war the Rajapakse Government has banned all reporting of conflict from the war zone, while denying access, both to foreign and local media in the zone, with express motive to prevent a public outrage on the quantum of such huge casualties of human lives.



More than 300,000 Tamils are currently detained in UN funded Concentration camps by Mahinda Rajapaksa administration —of these more than 36,000 are children—UNICEF has organised to vaccinate them against measles and to give them vitamin A and de-worming tablets.

7000 civilians have been killed and 16,781 are wounded. Sri Lankan Army has lost 6,261 soldiers, with 29,551 injured and 2,556 permanently disabled. According to an estimate of UN, more than three lakh (300,000) Tamil civilians are trapped in the relief camps, virtual detention camps being run by the Sri Lankan Army. The 32 such camps in Vavuniya alone are home for more than 1,60,000 Tamil refugees. The government, during the military operation, is stated to have blocked even supplies of life saving drugs to the population trapped in areas dominated by the LTTE.

Sri Lankan bourgeois, in order to defend its rule, has raised an army

After wiping out the LTTE, the Sri Lankan government has unfolded its plans to further reinforce the already colossal armed force, by raising its strength to a soldierie of three lakhs, which would mean one and a half times of its present size. It is clear that the Colombo rulers are preparing themselves for the future challenges to their regime from their eternal and the real enemy -the working class, emerging from all ethnicities on the island. It is the working class which would be made to bear the burden not only of the recent war, but also of the future plans of the bourgeois rulers to accentuate their rule through the strength of a colossal armed force at their disposal.

Sri Lankan island is inhabited by around 20 million people, out of which 16% are Tamils, spread over the northern and eastern part of the highland, 8% Moslems who are mostly Tamil speaking and rest of the 75% Sinhalese, who occupy the larger south of the island. After occupation of the island, British colonialists had transported Tamils from India to Sri Lanka, mostly to work as plantation labour in tea gardens. While the working class in Ceylon (as Sri Lanka was then known) was one of the most radical section of the world proletariat and had played immense role in the anti-colonial national liberation movement, through its party Lanka Sama Samaj Party (LSSP) and later Bolshevik Leninist Party of India (BLPI) whose members gave immense sacrifices, was illegalised in 1940 for opposing the war and fighting in the front ranks of the liberation movement, the Sri Lankan bourgeois did not play any role at all in the liberation movement. It remained an auxiliary to the British colonialism. Till 1946, Sri Lankan bourgeois did not have a party of its own. The bourgeois elite organised the United National Party only in 1946 on the advice of British colonialists, who bestowed upon it the political power handing over the establishment of island to it in 1948, to look after their interests in absentia. Native bourgeois

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took power in Colombo, not as a leader of the oppressed nation or in a fight against colonialism, but as direct agent of Imperialism. Only demand Sri Lankan bourgeois raised was to dismember the Island from the Indian State so as to prevent the integration between the working class of Sri Lanka and India. It borrowed the readymade project of national development, like other decolonised countries, from world capitalism and thus failed to resolve even a single basic problem, including that of the nationality, ethnicity etc. Entrenched in the social crisis, and threatened by the revolutionary proletariat, it resorted to most reactionary elements, traditions and forces of the past for reliance and support to its regime. Its fragile regime, however, could stabilise itself again and again, in the face of uninterrupted crisis, for the betrayals by the leadership of the working class.

The strength of the LSSP, at the eve of transfer of power to native bourgeois by the colonialists, can be gauged by the fact that it emerged as the largest opposition to the government in 1948, where on its call, 50,000 people had gathered for demonstration against the transfer of power. The biggest challenge before the Sri Lankan government was thus to weaken the labour movement under the leadership of Trotskyist LSSP, which could be done only by dividing the working class on ethnic lines. The bourgeois has learnt this lesson from colonial legacy of divide and rule. Immediately after taking power at Colombo, the government of rightist UNP thus got passed the most controversial enactment- 'The Citizenship Act, 1948' whereby the Tamil Plantation workers of the highland were deprived of the right to franchise and citizenship.

While Tamil traders collaborated in that, the BLPI opposed the move. There were demonstrations against the unjust discrimination meted out to the Tamil workers. The government, however, answered them through organising a spate of most violent pogroms against Tamil civilians, through Sinhalese chauvinist groups. This Act has virtually sown the seeds of ethnic conflicts of the future

between Sinhalese and Tamils.

In 1953, the rightist elite government of UNP, adopted an economic policy aimed at benefitting the rich, which led to a steep price hike. The LSSP mobilised the working class against it and called for a general strike. Working class actions in cities found an unprecedented support among the rural poor and consequently the entire country came to a grinding halt. The government soon took account of the really grim situation. The cabinet met in emergency on a British warship then anchoring in Colombo harbour and reversed the economic policy without delay.

The proletarian action of 1953, had profound political implications. The bourgeois elite, feared of the strength of working class, sought refuge in the outdated Buddhist legacy, in order to woo the petty bourgeois peasantry, with religious appeal. The Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) was thus organised under the leadership of S.W. Bhandarnaik, draped in Buddhist cloak, which took power in 1956 elections. It passed the enactments declaring Buddhism the state religion and the Sinhalese the sole official language of Sri Lanka. This further aggravated the ethnic divide among the two communities and this was the avowed purpose of the ruling bourgeois.

These were unfortunate times as the LSSP falling to the trap to the then bogus leadership of the Fourth International (FI) to which it was affiliated, under Michael Pablo and Ernest Mandel, had lost its orientation. With the re-stabilisation of capitalism on a world scale, the then leadership of FI, adapted to it and misdirected its national sections to adapt themselves to the political situation existing in their individual countries. Pablo and Mandel did not see any need for independent movement of the working class either globally or nationally. According to them under the changed



The Tamil Tigers parade; they 'relied upon the same rabid communalism against Sinhalese working class, like the Sinhalese chauvinists did against Tamil workers'.

conditions the old parties themselves would be forced to take to radical path. With this perspective, the LSSP shared the path with Stalinist Communist Party of Sri Lanka and entered into collaboration with the SLFP, and supported its government. In 1964, the LSSP mem-

bers entered into the government itself along with the Stalinist CP, demonstrating the complete degeneration of the party. It made a United Front with Stalinists and SLFP which got landslide victory in 1970 general elections. It introduced few reforms like nationalisation of the plants, still under the control of foreigners and bringing down the drug prices, but the 1972 constitution prepared under supervision of LSSP leaders, not only restated the privileged positions of Buddhism as state religion and Sinhalese as sole official language, it introduced quota for Sinhalese in admissions in Universities and employment in Public Sector.

The working class found the leaders of LSSP sharing the political rostrum with bourgeois, their mortal enemy and acquiescing in its policies. The working class was pushed to frustration and hopelessness. The betrayal of the working class, on the part of LSSP, directly led to the emergence of communal forces like the Maoist Janata Vimukti Peramuma (JVP), and the separatist LTTE. In 1970, Rohan Wijeweera, organised JVP mainly from among the Sinhalese students and youth, with a program to bring down the coalition government of Bhandarnaik through urban armed resistance. The movement was soon crushed by the government taking toll upon the lives of more than 15,000 young activists. The JVP leaders retreated to hiding in rural areas, but were wiped out by the army. It then turned to parliamentary democracy and gradually shifted its position to Sinhalese Chauvinism rendering support to the bourgeois establishment. In 1980, three Trotskyist activists were killed by JVP.

The LSSP having illusions in bourgeois leadership, was kicked out by it from the United Front government. The 1977 general elections decimated the LSSP, with the UNP once again coming to power. UNP immediately started a wave of rabid liberalisation through economic reforms shifting burden to the shoulders of working class and savagely attacking its movement. In opposition to the policies of the UNP government, a strike of Railway workers began, which soon turned into a general strike. The government crushed this strike by jailing all labour leaders and organising lumps on large scale to attack the strikers. The failure of strike and the betrayal of the lead-



The first generation of Sri Lankan Trotskyists; Philip Gunawardena (1910-1972) the 'Lion of Boralugoda' and his sister Caroline Anthony Pillai (1908-2009), at 100, the 'Lioness of Boralugoda'. Born into Sinhalese Buddhist gentry who took the leadership of the Ceylonese struggle because the capitalists were so weak. Whilst in Britain Philip joined the British CP but was expelled for supporting Trotsky against Stalin. In 1935 the Gunawardenas played a leading role in launching the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP), but In 1964 the Trotskyist LSSP members entered into the government itself along with the Stalinist CP, demonstrating the complete degeneration of the party. The incapacity of the post-war Trotskyists to orientate to the new situation partly because of the assassinations of their most developed leaders by the Stalinists; Trotsky himself, his son Leon Sedov, Irwin Wolfe and Rudolph Clemens in the first place, led them to degenerate into centrism and pushed the LSSP, partly because of its class origins, into abandoning revolutionary politics entirely by joining the government of Mrs. Bhandarnaik. It had appalling consequences.

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ers of LSSP, created an environment of hopelessness and desperation among the working class and a defeatist mood took over for the time being, which accentuated with the stabilisation of the economy through liberalisation and reforms. Taking benefit of this general depression and disintegration of the working class the bourgeois UNP government, in order to further demoralise and weaken the working class, by widening the ethnic divide, once again resorted to anti-Tamil pogroms.

The youth leagues of LSSP however were deployed to protect the Tamils from hoodlums, but in absence of an effective resistance from the working class, the State terror became the device to widen the ethnic divide. As the Tamil parliamentary opposition remained totally ineffective, activists in youth wing of Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) the largest formation of Tamil bourgeois, organised itself into a militant wing and formed LTTE. Calling for a separate Tamil homeland LTTE engaged in armed conflicts and ambushed an army convoy on 23 July 1983, killing 13 soldiers. This resulted in new spate of anti-Tamil pogroms, where 3000 Tamils were massacred at the hands of Sinhalese chauvinist groups. Thus started the long drawn war at the island for which main responsibility lies on the shoulder of LSSP leaders, for their betrayal of the cause of proletarian revolution, which provided space for this war.

As for LTTE, since the days of its emergence, it remained a petty bourgeois organisation, with a limited and reactionary separatist program of a Tamil homeland. It attacked and killed the Sinhalese and Moslem poor at impunity and thus assisted the Colombo establishment in widening the ethnic strife among the working class of both communities. It relied upon the same rabid communalism against Sinhalese working class, like the Sinhalese chauvinists did against Tamil workers. It started form a pseudo-socialist rhetoric, but soon found itself not only in the arms of local Tamil owners of Transport and Trade, but remained dependent upon this or that big foreign power, in addition to support from wealthy Sri Lankan NRIs. At one time it counted upon support of the Indian Government under Rajiv Gandhi and agreed to the IPKF, the Indian Security force to take charge in Sri Lanka, under Indo-Sri Lanka accord.

The devastation it brought to Tamils in Sri Lanka is part of the history. Even after its abrogation, LTTE continued to curry favour with other powers. Its 2-3 million dollar annual budget continued to be financed by big powers. Out of this budget it could maintain a navy (sea tigers) and an air force in its embryo, which though was no match for the colossal power of Sri Lankan state and the Imperialism as a whole, which Rajapakse could mobilise against it. Even then, LTTE continued to appeal to the United Nations, a forum dominated by big powers in the hope to mobilise support of sections of big powers for its project of separate Tamil homeland.

However, these illusions of the LTTE, in big powers, proved fatal. The big powers, continued to play a double game, by assisting in aggravation of the crisis on the island and then seeking material benefit out of this crisis, manoeuvring between

the warring parties, solely for their own political designs. In 2008, China sold weapons to Sri Lankan government for \$ 75 million, in 2007 India had supplied arms for \$21 million, in 2006 Ukraine supplied weaponry for \$ 22 million and finally Israel had sold arms for \$16 millions in the year 2000. China assisted the Colombo government by time and again deflating the international criticism of the mass civilian casualties committed at its hands on the island and in turn got a strong strategic foothold in Sri Lanka by winning access to key Sri Lankan port, next to world's premier shipping lanes.

LTTE never raised an issue against the acute exploitation of the Tamil Tea plantation workers in the highland. The concept of Tamil Eelam tossed by it remained through and through the idea for a bourgeois statelet on the island. This was the idea favouring the aspirant Tamil bourgeois who wanted to establish direct links to the world capitalism through its political power over the independent Tamil Eelam, bye-passing the bourgeois establishment at Colombo under Sinhalese domination. Many times it has repeated that the ideal for the Tamil Eelam are the 'Asian Tigers' i.e. the capitalist states, like South Korea and Japan.

The whole idea of this dreamland of Tamil Eelam was to take hold of the statelet and then offer the cheap labour of its workers and peasants to the world capital. LTTE never proved itself distinct from the Colombo establishment, as far as its class and political character goes. In the region under its domination, it treated the Sinhalese minority in the same way as Tamil minority was treated in the south. Its dreamland of Tamil Eelam even if realised, would not have been different in any manner to the Sri Lankan State. More recently, it had taken resort even to a Hindu religious stance, making religious appeals to Hindu supremacists in India by saying that the Sri Lankan security forces were destroying Hindu temples.

It was for its limited nationalist perspective, that LTTE failed to muster any support among the Sinhalese working class, or even among the Tamils in Tamilnadu. Instead of appealing to the world proletariat it continued to appeal to the bourgeois states. However, the big powers-bourgeois states, on whose support it counted for its success, betrayed it at the crucial moment. Even the conscious sections of Tamil working class had turned their back upon its campaign for separate Tamil homeland, realising that it means nothing but another capitalist state. The limited support it could mobilise among the Tamil youth, cannot validate its otherwise essentially invalid program of establishing a capitalist Tamil statelet.

The support behind it was in essence the result of failure of the working class leadership and its political crisis. Even this support base among the poor specifically among the working class was gradually eroding because of the proximity of the



Tamil Eelam; 'in the countries with a belated development, the slogan of national state has become obsolete, losing all its political significance'.

leaders of LTTE to the rich and the policies it adopted, in the areas under its control, favouring the rich while shifting the entire burden of the war upon the shoulders of the working class. As reports from the war zone show, LTTE leaders have ordered firing upon the fleeing Tamil civilians from the war zone.

In our epoch, there being no scope for any combined national project of working class and bourgeois, much less in the countries with a belated development, the slogan of national state has become obsolete, losing all its political significance. The struggle against national oppression and for national liberation, so far as it has meaning and relevance for the working class, is integral part and subordinate to its historic task of social liberation.

Segregated from the task of social liberation, the national question has no meaning at all for the working class. Only the rightist and centrist advocates of petty bourgeois, still chant the sermons for dogma of nation-states, when the same has lost all revolutionary significance. For us Leninists, the theoretical meaning of the 'right to self-determination of the nation', even up to cessation' has never gone beyond a formal recognition of this right and a political resolve on our part against the national oppression of minorities. We are strategic opponents of the demand of cessation and division of states in statelet. These divisions, run counter to the interests of working class and are the agenda of aspirant native bourgeois.

Doubtlessly, the cadres of LTTE have displayed utmost sacrifice and courage in this war against the Sinhalese chauvinist Colombo establishment, responsible for handing out ethnic discrimination and injustice to the Tamil minority. But this note of appreciation for the cadre, must not deter us from evaluating, from the standpoint of working class, the shortcomings of the politics of LTTE leadership and from calling into question the correctness of their perspective, under which this war was prepared and fought.

Bourgeois-workers' parties: behind the mask of pseudo-revolutionary intransigence by Ret Marut and Philippe Couthon

Methodology

This is an extract from an unfinished polemic jointly drafted by Gerry Downing of the International Trotskyist Committee (ITC, UK) and Philippe Couthon of the Groupe Bolchevik (GB, France) against the political positions and methods of the Leninist Trotskyist Fraction (LTF).

The ITC has applied for fraternal relations with the International grouping, the Permanent Revolution Collective, (Collectif Révolution Permanente, Colectivo Revolución Permanente, CoReP), of which the GB is the French section. The Gruppe Klassenkampf (GKK, Austria) contains CoReP supporters. The methodological polemic also applies to Workers Power (UK), and others who advocate a New Anticapitalist Party and we polemicise against these elsewhere in this journal.

Socialist Fight must defend our position and that of our comrades in the CoReP in the recent European Parliament elections. It was not right to abstain in this election as it is not right to abstain in most other bourgeois election for the reasons Lenin spelled out in *Left Wing Communism*; many workers exercise this democratic right because it is one of the few ways they can influence political decision making, their voters are sought by all candidates and so they discuss politics and are at as heightened political level at election times because of that. And the outcome did matter for good or ill, the EU institutions produces many "directives" (laws) and other decisions that affect workers of Europe and other countries.

It was a blow to the working class—and specially migrant workers—that far right and fascist groups like the FPÖ (Austria), Vlaams Blok (Belgium), ATAKA (Bulgaria), DF (Denmark), Perussuomalaiset (Finland), BNP (Great Britain), LAOS (Greece), Jobbik (Hungary), Northern Leagues (Italy), PVV (Nederland), PRM (Romania), SNS (Slovakia) got so many votes, enough to elect many MEPs. Electoral victories of fascistic and racist parties signify great dangers if a revolutionary party is not built against the reformist parties and union bureaucracies whose treachery paralyse the working class and gave a chance to fascist demagoguery and aggressive bands. The task of

serious revolutionaries is not to prettify these events – even less to disperse the vanguard with political absurdities and calumnies - but to build this party, using every contradiction, every occasion.

In April 2009 there was no revolution in any European state, no workers' councils that would allow us to consider a boycott. Trotsky wrote in 1936, "As for the legislative elections in France, I don't think that we can accept a boycott. Propagandize for Committees of Action, yes. Oppose the future Committees of Action to the present electoral action, no! One can only boycott parliament when one is strong enough to replace it by direct revolutionary action". 1

On the other hand, we were not strong enough to have SF lists, GKK lists or GB lists. When communists can have candidates, it is on the basis of their program, so they cannot participate in a coalition with centrists or reformists. Does the ultra intransigent secretariat of the LTF justify the electoral bloc they had in Argentina in July 2003 between the LOI and rightwing Morenoite LSR?

When communists are, unfortunately, not able to participate in an electoral competition, they are not neutral: most of the time, they must tactically support the candidates of workers' organisations against the candidates of political bourgeois parties. Correctly, the Communist Workers Group used this tactic many times in New Zealand (See Class Struggle No. 80, Sept-Oct 2008, <http://www.geocities.com/communistworker/cs80.html>). So, we certainly were not opposed to centrists like the LCR-PSL (Belgium), LO (France), Antarsya (Greece), SP (Ireland), IA (Spain), etc. standing in the last European Parliament elections. We criticize them for their program, not their participation. However British Labour, the French PS or PCF, the Italian PRC, the Spanish PSOE, the Australian and New Zealand Labour parties, the Brazilian PT, the Chilean PCC or PSC, the Indian CP and CP(M), etc. are still bourgeois-workers parties when in power, even if their links with the working class are not the same.

Revolutionists do not support any bourgeois government, included with reformists inside, who are necessarily betraying the working class. It is right -and useful- to ask the bourgeois-workers parties to break with the bourgeoisie; it is wrong to ask a bourgeois government to choose peoples interest and socialist politics, as LCR (now NPA), PCI (now POI), LO and late PO (sister organisation of Workers Power) did to popular front governments in the 1980s and 1990s in France.

Because there can be no bourgeois workers' government. A state - and its head, the government - is either capitalist or socialist. And if Dave Brown looks to Trotsky for an analysis of any government of a reformist party (or several re-

formist parties) as a bourgeois government, he will succeed and we will agree. What he will not be able to prove is a radical opposition, for Trotsky, between a vote for a reformist party in power and a vote for a reformist party in parliamentary opposition, as Robertson has been unable to prove a radical opposition, for Trotsky, between a vote for a reformist party within a formal bourgeois alliance and a vote for a reformist party without one.

The participation in referendums is politically different, but this does not mean systematic abstention either. When communists want to signify the question is purely divorced from real class struggle or the question leads to choose between two reactionary answers, casting a null vote or abstaining is the correct tactic. For instance, in the case of a referendum on the Lisbon treaty, a Yes vote would mean endorsing the capitalist nature of the EU, the domination of the imperialist countries on the former workers' states and the anti-working class nature of the EU proposals and a No vote would signify a nationalist hostility to EU and a division of the European working class, because of the xenophobic (against



James P Cannon (left) the father of American Trotskyism; the 'Spartacist family', ICL, IBT and IG, idealise him, airbrushing away his major political weaknesses, particularly his American exceptionalism.

workers from East European countries members and Turkey) content of No2EU.

Let us look at the usual reasons given for rejecting any vote for the bourgeois-workers' parties by centrists organisations and sects claiming to be "Trotskyists" and "Leninists" such as those the Pabloites, the Morenoites, the Lambertists, the Healyites, the Hardystes (Lutte Ouvrière), the Robertsonists, etc). And even when some of them they did advocate a vote for these parties it was mainly on the basis of deep-entryism where they spread the illusion that they could be transformed into instruments to introduce socialism.

First let us examine the letter of the Humanists for Revolutionary Socialism (HRS) and Dov Win-

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ter' letter requesting fraternal relations with the Leninist Trotskyist Fraction (LTF) of 31 May 2009. This is the only theoretical piece we have on the subject of voting for bourgeois-workers parties and as it has already been used by the LOI to force a retreat on the matter from Dave Brown of the CWG. It is a document based on the common attitudes of the left wing of US "Trotskyism" e.g. the Stalinophile Jim Robertson's Spartacist League (SL) and Stalinophobe Sy Landy's League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP) (the right wing "Trotskyists" court the union bureaucrats and often votes for... bourgeois candidates). So the SL has proposed a novel idea that a revolutionary organisation cannot vote for a reformist one if the latter is in some form of alliance with the bourgeoisie. Confronted to the evidence that the Belgian section and the French section called workers to vote for the social-democrat and Stalinist candidates in 1936, the SL ripped that is was the proof of the superiority of American Trotskyism over European Trotskyism. Well, we are not interested in "superiority" of one section because we look for international cooperation. We see this more this as a proof of the superiority of Trotsky's tactics on Robertson's sectarianism. In practice, to look radical, SL and other ICL sections has never called to vote for reformist candidates.

American sectarianism

American sectarianism may be based on another element of wounded national pride; Lenin and Trotsky claimed that the British, European and Antipodean working class had the advantage over the US working class of having formed bourgeois-workers' parties and were therefore at a higher level of political consciousness; the US working class alone of the advanced countries had failed to make this separation of the classes, albeit on a reformist basis. The battles around the "new Unionism" of the late 1880s and early 1890s had



Trotsky proposed a workers united front between the KPD and the SPD not just to defeat fascism but because this is the only communist tactic of revolutionaries towards bourgeois-workers parties.

resulted in the unifying of the whole working class in Britain (still on a reformist basis) and Europe (here the path to reformist-workerism differed but the outcome was the same), the US working class were defeated in their contemporaneous class battles at the Carnegie Homestead strike, the Pullman strike and elsewhere, they failed to unify their class despite their most heroic efforts and in the battles immediately post WWII and even in the 1930 and 1950s. Gompers' AFL retains its reactionary craft unionism/patriotic alliance with the labour aristocracy to this day.

The stock US centrism reply is "well that was then, this is now, and even if this was true back then, (which many obviously doubt), it is not true still, these parties have become simply bourgeois parties like the US Democrats, you are as bad if not worse than us now". We contend this is a false methodology, a failure to understand the method proposed by Lenin in *Left Wing Communism*, and Dov Winter completely fails to do so in his piece and draws the wrong conclusions from his wrong understanding.

In the letter, having described how the communists must approach the ranks of the reformist parties (but not place demands on their leaders), he characterises the Workers United Front (WUF) thus "This tactic may be termed a united front from below to bypass the traitorous leaders". **Of course the 'traitorous leaders' cannot be 'bypassed'; they must be fought, exposed, unmasked and defeated in order for the revolutionary socialist party to be built.** 'Bypassing' was certainly how the Anarchists, Bukharin and the rest of the ultra-lefts understood the UF at the time but this misunderstanding was fought by Lenin in *Left Wing Communism*, by Trotsky in his address to the 1922 Fourth Congress of the Comintern and by the best Bolsheviks at the time.

We may make a limited comparison (because we are not yet facing a major fascist threat) with the situation in Germany in the early 1930 and see how Trotsky dealt with that. In 1932 the KPD got almost six million votes – we suggest this indicated a far greater implantation in the German working class than the supposed "direct or indirect influence over 50% of the working class in Argentina" which you proposed back in the crisis of 2002 without any proof in electoral terms. We further suggest that the SPD had committed crimes at least as serious against the German working class as the British Labour party or French Socialist Party has ever committed against the British or French workers.

Yet still the 3rd International Left Opposition and the IKD understood the real balance of class forces in Germany and the KPD did not. In 1932 the bulk of the membership and the votes of the KPD came from the youth and the unemployed, the falling seven million plus votes the SPD won came mainly from the older, more conservative (because of some many relatively recent defeats) workers in employment, but fearful for their jobs and future in that raging economic and political crisis. This was the crucial and indispensable section of the working class, the industrial workers, which had to be won to the cause of the revolution in alliance with the youth for it to succeed



Maurice Thorez, (1900 – 1964, French CP leader from 1930) in a Soviet stamp. He spanned the ultra-leftist third period and the rightist popular front orientation, demonstrating in one political personality that an ultra-leftist is one frightened of their own opportunism.

and it had to be a central focus of all Transitional demands by serious revolutionaries.

Workers' United Front

Trotsky proposed a Workers United Front (WUF) between the KPD and the SPD, specifically rejecting the Stalinist notion of a "UF from below" but proposing one which was directed at BOTH the SPD leaders (in the party and the trade unions) AND the rank-and-file. The UF placed demands on these misleaders to fight capitalism and the fascists, which would expose them in action before their ranks as betrayers and sell-outs by means of this engagement. In other words, Trotsky was convinced the SPD, as part of the German labour movement, was a central roadblock to the fight against fascism and for the revolution and the task was to set its ranks against its leadership. Simply denouncing them amounted to a demand that their ranks desert them and join us, merely a futile propagandist gesture which could only lead to increasing ultra-leftist frustration. We know that the KPD contemptuously dismissed Trotsky's advice; the SPD were "social-fascists", we suggest that your characterisation of the bourgeois-workers' parties as solely "bourgeois-imperialists" plays the same role and uses the same mistaken tactic of the "united front from below".

Just in case you do not believe us on this matter, here is Trotsky in 1932 quoting from and defending his 1922 resolution to the Fourth Congress of the Comintern:

"Is the united front to be extended so as to include only the working masses, or so as to include also opportunistic leaders? The very manner in which this question is posed is the outgrowth of a misconception. Were we able to simply unite the working masses around our banner ... by eliminating the reformist party, or

trade union organizations – that, of course, would be the best way. But, in that case, the very question of the united front, in its present form, would be non-existent. In the question of the united front, as it is raised, we observe a passive and wishy-washy tendency masked by verbal intransigence. At once, the following paradox hits one in the eye: the Right wing elements of the party, with their centrist and pacifist tendencies... step forward as the most irreconcilable opponents of the united front. And on the other hand, those elements, which, during the most difficult moments held their position entirely on the grounds of the 3rd International, now step forward for the tactic of the united front. What is actually the case is that the supporters of the temporizing and passive tactic are now stepping forward behind the mask of pseudo-revolutionary intransigence.”

Doesn't it seem as if these lines were written today against Stalin-Manuilsky-Thälmann-Neumann? (or against the LTF today!) Actually, they were written ten years ago, against Frossard, Cachin, Charles Rappaport, Daniel Renault and other French opportunists disguising themselves with ultra-leftism. We put this question point blank to the Stalinist bureaucracy: Were the theses we quoted “counter-revolutionary” even during that time when they expressed the policies of the Russian Politbureau, with Lenin at its head, and when they defined the policy of the Comintern? **We warn them duly not to attempt in answer to reply that conditions have changed since that period (as Dave Brown and Dov Winter do!): the matter does not concern questions of conjuncture; but, as the text itself puts it, of the ABC of Marxism. 2**

And the Stalinist version

The French Communist Party in 1932, for example, declared that:

“The tactic of class against class... tested in France during four years of economic or political struggles will be firmly applied by the whole of the Party during the course of this electoral campaign. The responsible organisms of the Party, from the cells up to the Political Bureau, will be on the alert so that there nowhere re-occur the defections and compromises with the Socialist, or even the Radical Party, as occurred in certain regions in 1928...”

During its electoral campaign our Party must be on the alert so as not to fall into the error where right opportunism allies itself with the most narrow-minded sectarianism... It must once again be repeated that far from being a sectarian tactic, our tactic of class against class, which prohibits any electoral bloc in any form with the Socialist Party, supposes and signifies **a united front at the base with Socialist workers...**

The objective current conditions are very favourable for convincing Socialist workers to fight in common with their Communist brothers against the bourgeoisie and its principal supporter, the Socialist Party... The objective situation has never before so pushed the Socialist chiefs down the openly reactionary path at the same time as it pushes the Socialist workers onto the path of revolutionary struggle. This is the material, objec-

tive basis for our entire tactic of a class against class united front.” (Cahiers)

Of course Trotsky also used the term “class against class” in What Next? (January 1932) but he clearly demarcated it from the sectarianism of the Stalinists who used it in the sense that they alone represented the working class. This is Trotsky's position in 1931:

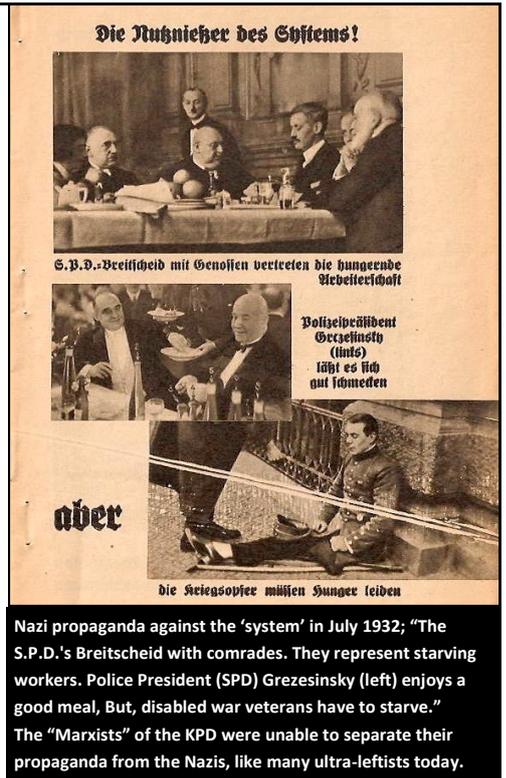
“No common platform with the Social Democracy, or with the leaders of the German trade unions, no common publications, banners, placards! March separately, but strike together! Agree only how to strike, whom to strike, and when to strike! Such an agreement can be concluded even with the devil himself, with his grandmother, and even with Noske and Grezesinsky. On one condition, not to bind one's hands.” 3

This might sound similar but it is crucially based on the United front from above; placing demands on the reformist leaders to fight and fighting alongside them when they do – no diplomatic ‘non-aggression pacts’ before, after or, when necessary, during united front engagements and below; engaging with the ranks of the reformist workers to show them that we are the real force that demand the unity of the working class against fascism and reaction and their leaders are unwilling to pursue any struggle to the end because they are covert defenders of capitalism like the reactionaries who were open defenders. And this requires an open party with independent programme and press, the “march separately” part.

WUF: the indispensable orientation for all revolutionaries to all mass reformist parties

So to recap the WUF was never simply the tactic for mass parties; it was and is the indispensable orientation for all revolutionaries to all mass reformist parties and other parties based on the working class until the revolution itself conquers, i.e. the essence of all their political struggles, the ABC of communism. The ultra-lefts were well-meaning revolutionists who thought that the straight-to-the-masses-approach would bypass political struggle to raise the consciousness of the workers (or that consciousness would suddenly “leap” without this orientation). 4 This is never right and, having rejected the TM and its orientation to bourgeois-workers' parties implicitly for Dov Winter and his co-thinkers straight-to-the-masses is the only correct revolutionary practice, although he does not spell out any alternative at all to the TM. But the “International Action and Coordination Secretariat of the Leninist Trotskyist Fraction” official reply to the International Trotskyist Committee of June 10 2009 does spell out a detailed position and suggest an alternative to voting.

“Those who support publicly and politically a bourgeois government, be it a left bourgeois one, a popular front, a bourgeois nationalist, a bourgeois-worker government, a social democratic one, etc. – is refusing to prepare the throwing out



Nazi propaganda against the ‘system’ in July 1932; “The S.P.D.’s Breitscheid with comrades. They represent enjoying workers. Police President (SPD) Grezesinsky (left) enjoys a good meal, But, disabled war veterans have to starve.” The “Marxists” of the KPD were unable to separate their propaganda from the Nazis, like many ultra-leftists today.

of that government and are selling their souls to the Devil. And you have called publicly to vote critically –that is, you gave a political support, albeit “critically”- for a bourgeois imperialist government as that of the British Labour... to be the representative of the British working class to the European Parliament! This is worse than supporting the reactionary strikes of the British labor aristocracy and bureaucracy. It means recognizing the European Parliament, which equals to recognizing the UNO, the OAS, and the rest of the imperialistic institutions with which imperialism establishes its regime of domination over the planet.

“It is a falsification of the tactics of proletarian United Front, that should never be used when the treacherous bourgeois-worker party is in the government, save for one exception (and even then, one should not give it the least political support): when it may be defeated by a Bonapartist/fascist coup, as when Kerensky was supported by the Bolsheviks “in the same way that the rope supports the hanging man” in front of the Korniloviad.

“This policy of United Front with the bourgeois-worker parties in power was carried by Lambert and the French OCI, and with it this party betrayed the workers in France and submitted itself to the Popular Front and the government of Mitterrand in the ‘80s; you and the GB are today continuators of this policy. You didn’t counterpoise to the elections to the European Parliament the Marxist apothegm: “Proletarians of all countries, Unite!”5

So many political errors

This extract contains so many political errors that it is difficult to know where to begin. Here are but some of them. “And you have called publicly to vote critically – that is, you gave a political sup-

port, albeit "critically"- for a bourgeois imperialist government as that of the British Labour". And as you reject any "critical vote" for any of your list of governments above so it is clear you reject any critical support at all because this must mean political support with a vote. You can see below that Lenin equates a critical vote with a type of support, because that is how the British working class will see it. See what Lenin had to say on this matter, comrades, before you rush to your ultra-left conclusions:

"At present, British Communists very often find it hard even to approach the masses, and even to get a hearing from them. If I come out as a Communist and call upon them to vote for Henderson and against Lloyd George, they will certainly give me a hearing. And I shall be able to explain in a popular manner, not only why the Soviets are better than a parliament and why the dictatorship of the proletariat is better than the dictatorship of Churchill (disguised with the signboard of bourgeois "democracy"), but also that, **with my vote, I want to support Henderson** in the same way as the rope supports a hanged man—that the impending establishment of a government of the Hendersons will prove that I am right, will bring the masses over to my side, and will hasten the political death of the Hendersons and the Snowdens just as was the case with their kindred spirits in Russia and Germany". 6

In the first place this dismissal of Lenin rests on Dave Brown's assertion that there is a fundamental political difference between voting for a bourgeois-workers' party out of power and voting for a bourgeois-workers' party in power, between voting in British elections and in elections for the European parliament. As Jim Roberson before -whose 1977 assertion became a credo for SL, ICL, IBT and IG (the 'family of Sparticism') - he does not prove this in any way nor is he able to produce a quote from Lenin or Trotsky that this was their position.

In any case this flimsy defence is not needed by the LTF in their official reply because their reference is to all bourgeois-workers' and social democratic governments and parties as well as all colonial and/or semi-colonial ones in conflict with imperialism. But the reply to the ITC does assist us in our dilemma as to what we are to do in the elections after these become governments. We are to "counterpoise (sic) to the elections to the European Parliament the Marxist apothegm: "Proletarians of all countries, Unite!"

We must assume this also applies to national elections if we are not to ignore politics entirely during the period of heightened political excitement during the election. "Don't vote, organise" is a false counterposition used by sectarians and anarchists, never by serious Marxists. Lenin ridicules just this position in his *Left Wing Communism*.

So should we have participated in the European elections, should we have advocated a vote for the mass bourgeois-workers' parties, centrists etc? Absolutely not, says the LOI, "It means recognizing the European Parliament, which equals to recognizing the UNO, the OAS, and the rest of the imperialistic institutions with which imperialism establishes its regime of domination over the

planet". Here is Lenin again in *Left Wing Communism*:

"We Bolsheviks participated in the most counterrevolutionary parliaments, and experience has shown that this participation was not only useful but indispensable to the party of the revolutionary proletariat, after the first bourgeois revolution in Russia (1905), so as to pave the way for the second bourgeois revolution (February 1917), and then for the socialist revolution (October 1917). In the second place, this sentence is amazingly illogical. If a parliament becomes an organ and a "centre" (in reality it never has been and never can be a "centre", but that is by the way) of counter-revolution, while the workers are building up the instruments of their power in the form of the Soviets, then it follows that the workers must prepare—ideologically, politically and technically—for the struggle of the Soviets against parliament, for the dispersal of parliament by the Soviets.

But it does not at all follow that this dispersal is hindered, or is not facilitated, by the presence of a Soviet opposition within the counter-revolutionary parliament. In the course of our victorious struggle against Denikin and Kolchak, we never found that the existence of a Soviet and proletarian opposition in their camp was immaterial to our victories. We know perfectly well that the dispersal of the Constituent Assembly on January 5, 1918 was not hampered but was actually facilitated by the fact that, within the counter-revolutionary Constituent Assembly which was about to be dispersed, there was a consistent Bolshevik, as well as an inconsistent, Left Socialist-Revolutionary Soviet opposition". 7

He quotes from the German ultra lefts in the same work:

"All reversion to parliamentary forms of struggle, which have become historically and politically obsolete, must be emphatically rejected" This is said with ridiculous pretentiousness (says Lenin), and is patently wrong. "Reversion" to parliamentarianism, forsooth! Perhaps there is already a Soviet republic in Germany? It does not look like it! How, then, can one speak of "reversion"? Is this not an empty phrase? 8

The Constituent Assembly

Trotsky gives this example of this wrong ultra-left method:

"The only salvation of the workers and peasants of China is to struggle independently against the two armies, against the Chinese army in the same manner as against the Japanese army" (say his ultra-left opponents). And Trotsky explains "to participate actively and consciously in the



Nahuel Moreno (1924-87, father of Argentinean Trotskyism and master of centrist manoeuvres and zig-zags. Nonsense about WWII being a 'great democratic revolution' was interspersed with calls for Constituent Assemblies everywhere and always and capitulation to the Peronist TU bureaucracy.

war does not mean 'to serve Chiang Kai-shek' but to serve the independence of a colonial country in spite of Chiang Kai-shek. And the words directed against the Kuomintang are the means of educating the masses for the overthrow of Chiang Kai-shek. In participating in the military struggle under the orders of Chiang Kai-shek, since unfortunately it is he who has the command in the war for independence—is to prepare politically the overthrow of Chiang Kai-shek . . . that is the only revolutionary policy". 9

So here is Trotsky in 1927 elaborating a policy not only of critical (but not political) support for left bourgeois nationalist government of Chiang Kai-shek by participation in his army in the war against Japanese imperialism. Trotsky here and Lenin in *Left Wing Communism* would be the greatest of class traitors if it is true as you propose that "you have called publicly to vote critically—that is, you gave a political support, albeit "critically"- for a bourgeois imperialist government as that of the British Labour". Such a "critical vote" is **NOT** political support for us just as it was not for Lenin; if you want to say we politically support the imperialist programme of the British Labour party or the French Socialist party you must prove it by something other than illogical deductions and baseless assertions like this. You then correctly identify the critical vote with the united front method and then contemptuously reject that also except in the very limited circumstances of a fascist-type coup as Kornilov attempted in 1917 and, "even then, one should not give it the least political support". But again the whole method of the united front is **NEVER** to give political support to the programme of the bourgeois-workers' party or government, or to the anti-imperialist bourgeoisie or petit bourgeoisie, to support, as Lenin says, "as the rope support the hanged man". You must think Lenin was very wrong in his famous book. We hope you have read it, if so you certainly have not understood it.

Moreno's zigzags

Moreno was well known for his zigzags. How are your polemics today compatible with your real practice, the joint LOI-LSR slate - on a not so radical platform - in Argentinean elections of 2003? We guess no more than your systematic condemnation today of democratic slogan at any time is compatible with the LOI opportunist call

for a Constituent Assembly in December 2001, in a country where political parties were allowed, elections took place, at a time the masses drove out an elected president.

In *International Workers Organiser* NO. 1, p. 84, you say:

“We do not accept that to mobilise the forces for revolution that the main demand should be to call for a Constituent Assembly which is a form of bourgeois regime that recognises the right of the bourgeoisie to have an equal vote with workers. This is a Menshevik concession to Stalinist stagism and a vote of no-confidence in the revolutionary capacity of the working class and its vanguard. In isolation of workers self-organisation the Constituent Assembly entraps workers and poor peasants inside a bourgeois regime”.¹⁰

Here is a situation showing that democratic demands on bourgeois governments may be relevant to all periods of a revolutionary upsurge from CWG website by Jose Villa. The author has become a renegade from Trotskyism now, but the work stands as the best Marxist analysis of the 1952 lost revolution in Bolivia:

“Neither did the POR raise the main slogan for a thorough-going bourgeois democracy: the sovereign Constituent Assembly, where all those over the age of 18 (or 16) would have the right to vote and to be elected. New elections on as democratic and as broad a basis as possible, and the creation of a new Constituent Assembly where the main national problems could be debated, would have let the revolutionary party more easily unmask the nature of the MNR and of parliamentarianism. The POR envisaged something else which flung dust in the workers’ eyes: to restore the reactionary constitution which put Paz into the Presidential Palace.”¹¹

Take the following Trotsky quote:

“In Brazil there now reigns a semi-fascist regime that every revolutionary can only view with hatred. Let us assume, however, that on the morrow England enters into a military conflict with Brazil. I ask you on whose side of the conflict will the working class be? I will answer for myself personally—in this case I will be on the side of ‘fascist’ Brazil against ‘democratic’ Great Britain. Why? Because in the conflict between them it will not be a question of democracy or fascism. If England should be victorious, she will put another fascist in Rio de Janeiro and will place double chains on Brazil”.¹²

That sounds like Trotsky supporting a ‘fascist’ Brazilian government to me. And further should we not have ‘supported’ Argentina’s government against Britain in 1982? Of course this ‘support’ could not be uncritical so that it becomes politically against the working class, which is what Moreno did in 1982 to hide his opportunist relationship with the Peronist CGT, but it did have to be critical and militarily against imperialism. And neither Brazil in 1938 nor Argentina in 1982 had anything approaching a ‘left-bourgeois’ government which we must never support according to the LTF. But Trotsky could even support ‘semi-fascist’ Brazil against Britain and even semi-feudal Abyssinia against Italy. What a class traitor you must think he was!

A baby’s rattle

Trotsky did not think a demand for a Constituent Assembly was necessarily “a Menshevik concession to Stalinist stagism and a vote of no-confidence in the revolutionary capacity of the working class and its vanguard”. It was precisely the lack of “workers’ self-organisation” that demanded this tactic:

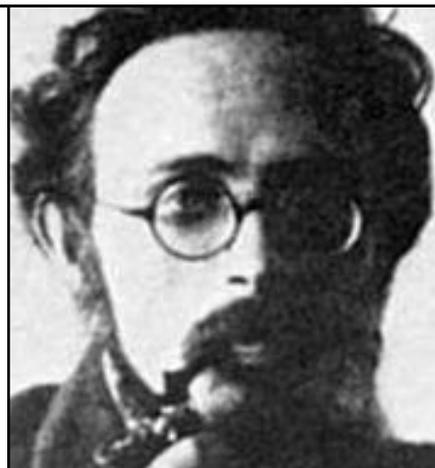
“To the adventurist resolution of the February Plenum of the ECCI (1928) I already then counterposed a course towards the mobilization of the Chinese workers under democratic slogans, including the slogan of a Constituent Assembly for China. But here the ill-starred trio fell into ultra-leftism; that was cheap and committed them to nothing. Democratic slogans? Never. “This is a gross mistake on Trotsky’s part”. Only soviets for China – not a farthing less! It is hard to conceive of anything more senseless than this – by your leave – position. **The slogan of soviets for an epoch of bourgeois reaction is a baby’s rattle**, i.e., a mockery of soviets. But even in the epoch of revolution, that is, in the epoch of the direct building of soviets, we did not withdraw the democratic slogans. We did not withdraw them until the real soviets, which had already conquered power, clashed before the eyes of the masses with the real institutions of democracy. This signifies in the language of Lenin (and not of the philistine Stalin and his parrots): not skipping over the democratic stage in the development of the country.

“Without the democratic programme – constituent assembly, eight-hour day, confiscation of the land, national independence of China, right of self-determination for the peoples living within it – without this democratic programme, the Communist Party of China is bound hand and foot and is compelled to surrender the field passively to the Chinese Social-Democrats who may, with the aid of Stalin, Radek and company, assume the place of the Communist Party.”¹³

Trotsky was at one with this method of Lenin’s:

“Without hiding or mitigating our opinion of the Social Democratic leaders in the slightest, we may and we must say to the Social Democratic workers, “Since, on the one hand, you are willing to fight together with us; and since, on the other, you are still unwilling to break with your leaders, here is what we suggest: force your leaders to join us in a common struggle for such and such practical aims, in such and such a manner; as for us, we Communists are ready.” Can anything be more plain, more palpable, more convincing?

The official party, itself, violates its stillborn policy at every step. In its appeals for the “Red United Front” (with its own self), it invariably puts forward the demand for “the unconditional freedom of the proletarian press and the right to demonstrate, meet, and organize.” This slogan is clear-cut through and through. But when the Communist Party speaks of proletarian and not only of Communist papers, meetings, etc., it thereby, in fact, puts forward the slogan of the united front with that very Social Democracy that publishes workers’ papers, calls meetings, etc. To put forward political slogans that in themselves include the idea of the united front with the



Karl Radek (1885-1939) — another old Bolshevik leader who attempted to hide his retreat to the right behind ultra-leftist verbiage.

Social Democracy, and to reject the making of practical agreements to fight for these slogans – that is the height of absurdity”.¹⁴

Endnotes

1. Trotsky, *Lettre à Fred Zeller*, 1936, *Œuvres* t. 9, EDI, p. 56.
2. Trotsky, *What Next?, Vital Questions for the German Proletariat*, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/germany/1932-ger/next02.htm>
3. Trotsky, *For a Workers’ United Front Against Fascism*, 1931, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/germany/1931/311208.h>
4. Many have postulated that this “leap” happened in 1917 in Russia and in Spain in 1936. This ignores the previous twenty years of work of the Bolsheviks in Russia and the decades of work by the anarchists and others in Spain for decades before the revolution 1936.
5. Point 10 of the TF letter leaves us in no doubt: “This is not a letter as the one we sent before, which was informal, so you could know our elaborations on our positions. This is the official position of the International Action and Coordination Secretariat of the LTF”.
6. Lenin, *Left-Wing Communism: an Infantile Disorder*, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1920/lwc/>
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*
9. Trotsky, *On the Sino-Japanese war, September 23, 1937*, <http://www.zhongguo.org/trotsky/revbetrayed/images/China/58.htm>
10. *International Workers Organiser*, periodical of the Leninist Trotskyist Fraction (LTF), Issue No. 1, September 2008, <http://www.geocities.com/communistworker/>
11. Villa, Jose. *The 1952 Revolution: How the 4th International and the POR betrayed the revolution which could have carried Trotskyism to Power* <http://www.geocities.com/communistworker/bolivia.html>
12. Trotsky, *Anti-Imperialist Struggle is Key to Liberation, An Interview with Mateo Fossa*, (September 1938) <http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1938/09/liberation.htm>
13. *Ibid.*
14. Trotsky, *What Next? Vital Questions for the German Proletariat Part I* <http://marxists.catbull.com/archive/trotsky/germany/1932-ger/next01.htm>

Leon Trotsky: I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International; Go Forward!

NPA, from back cover

USFI, who had comfortable academic careers (Mandel, Maitan, Weber, Bensaïd, Habel, Löwy...), send hundreds of activists to jail where they were often tortured by soldiers that were taught by the French army and sent to their deaths by this mistaken tactic. They could have become revolutionary cadres leading the working class in Latin America. Like Castro, Mandel and his assistants support all the Popular fronts, as well in Chile (Unidad Popular, see Révolution Socialiste N° 14) as in France (Union de la gauche).

Revisionist of Trotskyism, protectors of the PCF and of the corrupt bureaucracies, its French organization, which called for voting Chirac in 2002, always espoused fashions and the lesser resistance line, sticking with the "left" petty-bourgeoisie. Stalinophile, Titoist, Castroist, third-worldist, guerillierist, Left Unity, ecologists... always reformist.

"Socialism for the 21st millennium"

The leaders of the LCR launched their "anti-capitalist party" because they judged that space had opened up for them because of the good results that Besancenot got in the last presidential election: the Parti socialiste (PS) have lost twice now and have very loose connections to workers and the youth, because of the bourgeois policy that it always pursues both in the government and in opposition; the Parti communiste français (PCF) is in its death throes, its election results are dismal and it pursues ridiculous campaigns like distributing false banknotes. Thousands of workers who had hoped in vain that Lutte Ouvrière (LO) would have another use than getting their ballot paper every five years have become demoralised. And the windbag groups like Attac-France (reformist, anti-globalisation, Tobin Tax advocates), Social Forums, anti-globalists which were the milieu that the former LCR moved in have shrivelled in recent years.

Besancenot and co. decided to fill that space, in building, not a revolutionary workers' party, but a new look reformist party, more marketable than the PS or the PCF, towards the youth, towards the workers who had only experienced their repeated betrayals. It is a non proletarian party which will not train its activists in Marxism, in the theory to promote the struggles of the revolutionary proletariat. Here a few instances of crass ignorance and Besancenotian rewriting of Capital. "Globalization, which has shown an attack of the ruling classes against the workers and the people in order to increase their profits, leads to a deep and structural crisis of the capitalist mode of production itself". (Founding principles, Chapter 1)

In attacking the value of the labour force (intensification of work, extension of its length, stagnation or fall in the wages, mass unemployment, fall in health cover, in retirement pensions, refusal of residence permits, anti-strike and anti-union laws...), the capitalist class does not shoot itself in the foot; unlike the stupidity written above, it struggles for securing its rate of profit. It tries to overcome a major contradiction within the capitalist mode of production: the tendency to develop the production forces in order to keep up with world competition, to the detriment of the living labour, the labour of the workers, the only source of surplus value. The crisis does not stem from the "attack of

the ruling classes against the workers"... rather it was delayed by this attack, but could not be prevented, which gives an idea of the state of deterioration of the capitalist mode of production.

"Globalization", which is the tendency to internationalise of the productive forces, is not new. Comparing to previous modes of production, capitalism was a huge improvement on that matter, indeed this is what poses the possibility of world socialism. As the *Communist Manifesto* says:

"The bourgeoisie has, through its exploitation and development of the world market, given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country. To the great chagrin of reactionaries, it has drawn from under the feet of industry the national ground on which it stood. All old-established national industries have been destroyed or are daily being destroyed. They are dislodged by new industries, whose introduction becomes a life and death question for all civilised nations, by industries that no longer work up indigenous raw material, but raw material drawn from the remotest zones; industries whose products are consumed, not only at home, but in every quarter of the globe. In place of the old wants, satisfied by the production of the country, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the products of distant lands and climes. In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal inter-dependence of nations. And as in material, so also in intellectual production. The intellectual creations of individual nations become common property. National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures, there arises a world literature". (*Communist Manifesto*, 1848)

A good recovery policy

Like all reformists, the NPA proposes that a good recovery policy will solve the crisis. "The current collapse of capitalism is the logical consequence of a bankrupt system. It is the outcome of the contradiction between an unlimited development of credit, the economy based on debt and the market which is limited in such a way that the ruling classes, in search of maximal return, support mass unemployment and job insecurity, freeze the wages..." (Founding principles, Chapter 1)

Higher wages, more consumers, and the machinery starts up again! In brief, it would be enough to regulate supply and demand. They state that the roots of the capitalist market lie in the market area, not in the production. At this point too, they are not Marxist, they cheat the proletarians since they pretend that the needs of the masses can be fulfilled within capitalism.

The NPA is really a reformist party talking of socialism like the priests talk of heaven, but they work out with capitalism. "We take part to struggles for immediate reforms and our political answers start from the reality of the ground, from what everyone lives daily". (Founding principles, Chapter 4)

Words are not used randomly, it is not an intense fight to fulfil the demands, but "a policy of gradual reforms within the system", to achieve which "even the PS gave up" (Founding principles, Chapter 4)



Pablo (right) with Ben Bella, first FLN President of Algeria (1963-65) to whom he was an advisor, in Greece in 1993. 'The illusions were transferred to the FLN (Ben Bella) in Algeria and to the M26J (Castro) in Cuba'.

The NPA conforms to the old separation between minimal program and maximal program, to which the Transitional program, written by Trotsky and adopted by the founding conference of the Fourth International in 1938, gave a straight blow:

"The strategic task of the next period – prerevolutionary period of agitation, propaganda and organization – consists in overcoming the contradiction between the maturity of the objective revolutionary conditions and the immaturity of the proletariat and its vanguard (the confusion and disappointment of the older generation, the inexperience of the younger generation. It is necessary to help the masses in the process of the daily struggle to find the bridge between present demand and the socialist program of the revolution. This bridge should include a system of transitional demands, stemming from today's conditions and from today's consciousness of wide layers of the working class and ultimately leading to one final conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat.

Classical Social Democracy, functioning in an epoch of progressive capitalism, divided its program into two parts independent of each other: the minimum program which limited itself to reforms within the framework of bourgeois society, and the maximum program which promised substitution of socialism for capitalism in the indefinite future. Between the minimum and the maximum program no bridge existed. And indeed Social Democracy has no need of such a bridge, since the word socialism is used only for holiday speechifying.

The Comintern has set out to follow the path of Social Democracy in an epoch of decaying capitalism: when, in general, there can be no discussion of systematic social reforms and the raising of the masses' living standards; when every serious demand of the proletariat and even every serious demand of the petty bourgeoisie inevitably reaches beyond the limits of capitalist property relations and of the bourgeois state.

The strategic task of the Fourth International lies not in reforming capitalism but in its overthrow. Its political aim is the conquest of power by the proletariat for the purpose of expropriating the bourgeoisie. However, the achievement of this strategic task is unthinkable without the most considered attention to all, even small and partial, questions of tactics. All sections of the proletariat, all its layers, occupations and groups should be drawn into the revolutionary movement. The present epoch is distinguished not for the fact that it frees the revolutionary party from day-to-day work but because it

permits this work to be carried on indissolubly with the actual tasks of the revolution.

The Fourth International does not discard the program of the old "minimal" demands to the degree to which these have preserved at least part of their vital forcefulness. Indefatigably, it defends the democratic rights and social conquests of the workers. But it carries on this day-to-day work within the framework of the correct actual, that is, revolutionary perspective. Insofar as the old, partial, "minimal" demands of the masses clash with the destructive and degrading tendencies of decadent capitalism – and this occurs at each step – the Fourth International advances a system of transitional demands, the essence of which is contained in the fact that ever more openly and decisively they will be directed against the very bases of the bourgeois regime. The old "minimal program" is superseded by the transitional program, the task of which lies in systematic mobilization of the masses for the proletarian revolution." (Trotsky, *The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International*, 1938)

Support for days of action

Since its program, despite its "radical left" dressing, is similar to those of the PS, of the PCF, of the PG, since it shares the same refusal of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the LCR, while building the NPA, made coalitions with the "plural left" in the last local elections. Their common initiatives, in support of the leadership of the unions, come as a confirmation that the gap is not that large between the various reformist organizations. The founding congress of the NPA was delayed one week, and the official reason was to freely contribute to the success of the day of action on the 29th of January... A few days later, the newly appointed leadership signed a statement, together with the PS, the PCF, the Left party (Mélénchon), the MRC (Chevènement), LO, the Alternatives and some other Alter-Ekolos (network of ecologists for another Europe founded in 2004), which deserves a quotation:

"Left parties and organizations that met Tuesday 3rd of February in Paris are glad about the important success of the social mobilization on the 29th of January... Unlike what the Prime minister just claimed, the day of fight on the 29th of January clearly requests a shift in course, especially on the issues of wages, jobs and public services. Nicolas Sarkozy and the government cannot hide from these requirements and ignore the main lines of the interunion platform."

Within "the left", not being disturbed by the presence of the social liberal and of the sovereigntists (supporters of the independence of France from the European Union), the NPA expects that Sarkozy will shift his politics, that he will adopt the interunion platform (which has proved to be far from the real workers' demands, in terms of wage increase or of maintenance of the jobs)! Besides, the signatories have set a next meeting "after the presidential TV appearance on the 5th of February": in case Sarkozy should cease his political stance of defending the interests of the bourgeoisie? In other words, the NPA is spreading harmful illusions that it is not necessary to mobilise against the government, to force it to capitulate, to defeat it and to throw it out

of office. In the same statement, the NPA and its partners do not call for the surrender of the government in the face of general strike of the working population in Guadeloupe, or the fulfilment of all their claims. No, they draw back from the idea of the general strike, rename it a "social movement", and they "ask the government to start real negotiations as soon as possible, on the expressed demands, especially on the issue of the purchasing power".

Whereas 2.5 million workers were on strike and demonstrated on the 29th of January against the policy of the government, the leaderships of the unions, who leave the general strike in Guadeloupe isolated, organize, in unity their powerlessness against Sarkozy.

They refuse to endorse on a national basis the defence of thousands of redundant workers, forced to short-time working: instead of calling for a central demonstration in Paris, demanding no job cuts and the expropriation of the ones who fire, they keep the workers isolated in each firm, from board of directors to commercial court. Whereas the hospital workers, the academics, the students fight against the plans of Sarkozy and his ministers, the unions' leaderships keep on discussing with the government. They called again for a 24-hour "journée d'action" (day of action) on the 19th of March, which threatens in no way the government and which is used as a valve for the legitimate anger of the workers.

On the 12th of March, the NPA signed again, with the same organizations except LO, a call "for achieving on the 19th of March a great day of protest and of proposal, even stronger than the 29th of January". Still enthusiasm for the days of action, on the 23rd of March, its executive Committee gives a statement the following title: "After the 19th of March, soon a new day of strikes and demonstrations". The NPA's role is to sell the deadly tactic of the strikes, in the plural, to cover the leaderships of the unions that they sometimes criticize... the calendar is too loose between two upheaves.

Selected extracts

The name of a journal always provides a sign for considering the publishing organization. The leadership of the NPA chose *Tout est à nous!* [Everything is ours!] Who? The redundant workers? The families who were evicted from their accommodation?

The reading of this "let's pretend that", needless to say, confirms the reformist policy of the NPA. The first issue, published on the 26th March 2009, has as a subtitle: "After the 19th of March, head for the general strike". As for general strike, its line was to renew the limited days of action, to accumulate isolated actions in each sector, and dream of the snowball effect.

Demonstrations [in higher education] gathering tens of thousands people, "hard-hitting" actions like the recent sit-in in Sciences-Po by students and teachers in Paris 8, public readings of *La Princesse de Clèves* (the book was decried by Sarkozy), lectures "out of the walls", leaflets distribution on markets, in front of schools, secondary school and high schools... will lead to spreading the action, to calling days of action, "from kindergarten to university" Now there is no solution other than preparing the renewable



Despite their ideological and political grovel to capitalism the NPA's vote collapsed to 4.9% in the EU election; the radical workers liked them better when they spoke a little of revolution and Trotskyism.

strike through rank-and-file mobilisation in firms, in towns, tending as soon as possible to the convergence of struggles. (*Tout est à nous!*, 26th of March 2009)

The NPA calls for "the creation, in unity, of mobilizing committees in order to define the unifying demands for the whole working world and to prepare the next steps for mobilization". It first means that the general strike is not on the agenda, that it has to be "built", according to the expression they share with the union bureaucrats; then, a "unifying platform" has to be invented. They pretend to be ignorant of the fact that the main obstacle to a general strike is the relentless refusal of the treacherous leaderships, first of the unions, to confront the government, to break up any cooperation with it, to call for the general strike. Not saying that, not keeping repeating it, necessarily amounts to project onto the workers the responsibility for inaction or defeat.

Still, "let us pretend that", for a while, the living conditions that are imposed on the proletariat and the youth by Sarkozy, by its politics, by its government, by the bosses he works for, by the legitimate anger they create, are the means of pressure which are able to raise the proletariat and the youth, and let's seriously go through the "unifying platform" and the "urgent social, ecological, democratic emergency plan" defended by the NPA, and through the "Anticapitalist European left conference"

"Really fighting against the crisis, defining "new regulations", requires attacking the hardcore of capitalism, to impose a new distribution of wealth and to take real measures of incursion in the capitalist ownership". (*Tout est à nous!* 9th of April 2009)

Regulating means reforming

Regulating means reforming capitalism, aiming to amend its flaws. Distributing wealth is a way for this new regulation. All of it is dupery of cowards who will never expropriate a single "CAC40 capitalist (top 40 capitalist firms in France)". Trotsky observed;

"At what rate must the so-called deep transformations proceed? Is the issue only to transform a part of private capitalism into state capitalism? Or do we want to replace the whole capitalism with another social system? Do we want to replace capitalism with socialism, with communism or with Proudhonian anarchy? When I need to move for one or two stations, I need to know where the train goes. Even

for emergency measures, we need a general direction". (Trotsky, Du plan de la CGT à la conquête du pouvoir, 1935, Le Mouvement communiste en France, Minuit, p. 487) These comments perfectly fit with the centrepiece of the NPA's emergency measures, namely "banning redundancies". Since Besancenot's train does not go to socialism, he leads a campaign which claims that this request can be integrated in capitalism, that "it is possible, it is all an issue of the balance of power".

"During the 1970s, redundant wage-earners got 90% of their wage during a year. Until 1987, the state had to give its consent for collective redundancies... Imposing the ban is possible, as well as the workers imposed eight-hour day, forty-hour week, paid leaves, ban on children's work." (Tout est à nous! 2nd of April 2009)

These arguments, that are supposed to boost fighting spirit, mainly show that no lasting protection can obtain by the workers since the bosses, their governments, their states keep the power. They prove that nothing is ours; they retake what they had to drop. Is it true that the workers in steel industry, in textile industry, were protected against collective redundancies "until 1987"? Even in sticking to France, are the eight-hour day and forty-hour week unanimously respected? Under the heading "Applying the right to employment" and "make the bosses aware of their responsibilities" (!), the plea for the banning of redundancies tears the last anti-capitalist feathers to the reformist woodcock

"Since the capitalists are monopolizing the ownership of the firms and the produced wealth, since they are obliging the workers to rent their labour force, these bosses must bear the outcome of that situation and guarantee the contracts of employment." (Tout est à nous! 2nd of April 2009)

That's it, too bad for them! Everything is theirs, they keep it, but in exchange, the bosses "must guarantee the contracts of employment". What happens if the bosses are not dutiful? Who will guarantee that the capitalists guarantee? Sarkozy government? The bourgeois state and its laws? The NPA? The necessary conclusion is that the NPA's program is about working out the existing order.

"A part of the bourgeoisie is desirous of redressing social grievances in order to secure the continued existence of bourgeois society. To this section belong economists, philanthropists, humanitarians, improvers of the condition of the working class, organisers of charity, members of societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals, temperance fanatics, hole-and-corner reformers of every imaginable kind". (Communist Manifesto, 1848)

Building a workers' revolutionary party is an urgent and crucial task

The wage-earning workers need a party that represents their class interests, against the capitalist class, a party which is delimited by its program, the program of the proletarian revolution, by its full independence from the union and political bureaucracies, the old workers-bourgeois parties. They need a party which acts in order to impose the demands of those who produce all the wealth, those who ensure the living conditions of the whole population. This party, in order to go forward, will not fear to advance towards socialism.

For one century and a half, our class has been fighting against capitalism; it has learned its lessons accumulated a substantial amount of knowledge which is concentrated in four workers' internationals. In order to fight back, the proletariat, assisted by the youth, needs a world party that resumes this



Daniel Bensaïd, former LCR and now NPA leader, "In order to convince people of that idea you can live with propagandistic ambiguity. The balance of forces can change. That's the problem with Trotskyists, they think too much about these sorts of things!" AWL interview Feb. 2009. An opponent of Trotskyism. But the AWL, the CPGB and Workers Power think he has moved to the left!

tasks. "Whoever dares not utter aloud the revolutionary tasks will never find the courage to solve them... The initiative of a conscious minority, a scientific program, bold and ceaseless agitation in the name of clearly formulated aims, merciless criticism of all ambiguity those are some of the most important factors for the victory of the proletariat. Without a fused and steeled revolutionary party a socialist revolution is inconceivable". (Trotsky, Open Letter for the Fourth International, New Militant, 3 August 1935)

1. Bohos are also rendered Bobos—short for Bourgeois Bohemians, a confounding mingle of 1960s rebellion with 1980s ambition. Some ISG Ecosocialists come to mind—ED.

The Press of the Permanent Revolution Collective and its sympathising organisations. More information of the CoReP can be obtained at, www.revolution-socialiste.info/CoReP.htm



Leon Trotsky: I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International; Go Forward!

The foundation of the NPA

Reformism of the 21st century, neither communist, nor revolutionary by the Bolshevik Group (France)

Political analysis

The fact that the New Anticapitalist party (NPA) denies being either communist or revolutionary summarises the choices before the founding congress on 6th, 7th and 8th of February 2009 which buried the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR). This NPA is an outcome of the period in which the proletariat retreated in the face of the attacks of the world bourgeoisie. In this period, capitalism was restored in Russia, in Eastern Europe and in China, and the organizations that claimed to be the Fourth International rejected the teachings of the October Revolution and the necessity of building revolutionary workers' parties.

As soon as it was born the NPA became part of the process of the decay of the working class movement, since it does not explain to the workers and the youth that only a proletarian revolution, an insurrection which would put an end to the bourgeois state and impose a revolutionary government, could solve the innumerable miseries that the capitalist class impose on us. Plenty of paragraphs appear as "founding principles of the NPA", but none of them clearly states that, in order to win the class war, the proletariat must take the power, have its own state, based on workers' councils, the committees that it is necessary to build during the mobilization in order to break the resistance of the bourgeoisie. Since its task will be to fulfil the huge needs of the working population which will control it, this government, this workers' state will seize means of production from the capitalists; transport and commercial exchange; it must expropriate and collectivise and implement a plan to feed, house, provide health care, teach and liberate the oppressed. Such is the program of a party which really wants to change the world, that is to liquidate the mode of production and to build socialism, for a classless society, without oppression.

This political orientation, learnt from Marx, Engels, Lenin, Luxemburg, Trotsky, it entails the fight for the class independence of the proletariat and for the building of revolutionary workers' parties nationally and internationally. The NPA rejects the experience acquired from a century and a half of workers' struggles. To the young students, to the workers, to the unemployed, to the wage-earners that are disgusted by the policies of the social-democrat and former Stalinist parties, it only proposes a reformist program and non Marxist political references.

An indigestible recipe

Democrats, ecologists, bohos (new petty bourgeois with ecological concerns), former LO activists, feminists, Pabloists, trade unionists, libertarians (among others), all the constituents of the NPA have agreed, with a great deal of amendments, on a document which gives a summary of their political views. 1 It looks like a dog's dinner with something for everybody. Whether you look for revolution or for status quo, you will be told, either through craftiness or

through naivety: "sure, that is in the programme" ... and often, their mountains ("the radical requirements") have brought forth a mouse (opposition when the state goes too far) ("The mountain was in labour, and Jove was afraid, but it brought forth a mouse". Shakespeare)

"Our program also has democratic requests in order to oppose the excesses and drifts of the repressive institutions (police, justice, prisons, army...)".

(Founding principles, Chapter 3). Another mountain: "We present an emergency social plan in order to attribute the costs of the crisis to the capitalists that are responsible". (General resolution, I2A). The mouse is 5 lines down: "In case a firm gets into real trouble, the funding will be provided by a banking public service, with a special contribution paid by all the shareholders. Thanks to this contribution, the wage is secured at the same level in case of short time working". So clearly a public bank will refund and pay the workers' wages. If funding is necessary, why not expropriating? Is it too Bolshevik? All the trends in the NPA share the same repulsion for the 1917 Russian Revolution, which is never alluded in the founding document. They are talking of "socialism of the 21st century". This expression is used by Venezuelan president Chavez and by Ecuadoran president Correa so they will not be identified with the defenders of the first successful proletarian revolution.

Whilst 900 million people starve in the world, they unanimously denounce productivism, as "an insidious and manipulative model based on consumption", as if the majority of humanity desire only to take what is superfluous, not what they need to live! They spread the belief that when the exploited and the oppressed begin to mobilise, the bourgeoisie, its police and its army will not react, but GM-free daisies will flower on the pavements. When they talk of "ecosocialism", their intention is to rest on the petty-bourgeoisie who never identify what is really responsible for plundering and degrading the environment; the capitalist mode of production. All its references to "democracy" to "self-management", with its "citizens", its "neoliberalism", its "market economy", its "anti-globalism", the Founding Principles of the NPA obscure class boundaries. And so the NPA has no problem supporting the leader of an indigenous peasant party in Bolivia (Morales), a former seminary leading a Popular front coalition in Ecuador (Correa), a former colonel, and still bourgeois nationalist in Venezuela (Chavez); "We are watching



CGT French trade union representative Xavier Mathieu (left) and French Anti-capitalist Party (NPA) leader Olivier Besancenot; the former "Trotskyists" of the centrist French LCR formally collapsed to the right into reformism following their popular front vote for Chirac against Jean-Marie Le Pen of the Front National in the 2002 Presidential election.

with a particular attention and much hope the ongoing processes in Bolivia, Ecuador and Venezuela". (General Resolution, III2)

A new label for an old commodity

Today a supporter of Chavez, the real leadership of the NPA widely comes from the former LCR, which itself is the outcome of a minority split in the French section of the Fourth International in 1952. In 1951 the leaders of the Fourth International became both sceptical of the prospects for the proletarian revolution and impatient with the lack of success of their own organization, and they started looking for shortcuts. Pablo and Mandel then revised the program and entrusted to the Stalinist bureaucracy the responsibility for making the revolution. In giving up an independent orientation towards the working class, in giving up the struggle for building a party which could break the political rule of the bureaucracy, they began to see their role as councillors to the petty bourgeois nationalists and of the Stalinists, trying to influence and to push them on the left. In the advanced countries, the Trotskyist groups were told to enter the Stalinist or social-democrat parties. In the backward countries, "Pabloism" advocated the "anti-imperialist united front", namely integration into the nationalist movement. In 1952 they expelled the French section that was opposing this line, and then they destroyed the Fourth International, which never recovered.

Such a programmatic line immediately shown to be wrong, first during the failed revolution in Bolivia in 1952, and during the failed revolution in East Germany in 1953. However its leaders did not learn from these experiences and return to orthodoxy. The illusions were transferred to the FLN in Algeria and to the M26J in Cuba. The International Secretariat (IS), renamed United Secretariat (USFI) in 1964 suddenly became supporters of Castro and then guerillaists. The European leaders of the

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