Austerity Britain: Starving school kids and obscene privilege
Not One Nation but two irreconcilably opposed social classes

Mirror Teacher Poll Results:
Have you seen an increase of any of the following happening in your schools in the last two academic years?

- Children coming to school hungry
  YES: 85.51%

- Increase in uptake of free school meals
  YES: 79.8%

- Children unable to afford school trips
  YES: 83.45%

- Parents seeking advice from the school on education grants/allowances
  YES: 74.87%

- Parents unable to afford school uniforms
  YES: 76.98%

- Children with unexplained absences from school
  YES: 83.28%

- Children unable to concentrate in class
  YES: 88.21%

- Children leaving school because they can no longer afford to live in the area
  YES: 61.81%

- Children travelling long distances to school because they have moved away from the area
  YES: 74.77%

What impact do you think the benefit cuts will have on your school?

- A large negative impact: 43.83%
- Some negative impact: 47.9%
- No impact: 2.44%
- Some positive impact: 0.68%
- A large positive impact: 0.27%
- Don’t know: 4.88%
Where We Stand

1. 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’ (The International Workingmen’s Association 1864, General Rules).

2. The capitalist state consists, in the last analysis, of ruling-class laws within a judicial system and detention centres overseen by the armed bodies of police/army who are under the direction and are controlled in acts of defence of capitalist property rights against the interests of the majority of civil society. The working class must overthrow the capitalist state and replace it with a workers’ state based on democratic soviets/workers’ councils to suppress the inevitable counter-revolution of private capitalist profit against planned production for the satisfaction of socialised human need.

3. We recognise the necessity for revolutionary carriers to carry out serious ideological and political struggle as direct participants in the trade unions (always) and in the mass reformist parties despite their pro-capitalist participation when conditions are favourable. Because we see the trade union bureaucracy and their allies in the Labour party leadership as the most fundamental obstacle to the struggle for power of the working class, outside of the state forces and their direct agencies themselves, we must fight and defeat and replace them with a revolutionary leadership by mobilising the base against the pro-capitalist bureaucratic misleaders to open the way forward for the struggle for workers’ power.

4. We are fully in support of all mass mobilisations against the onslaught of this reactionary Con-Lib Dem coalition. However, whilst participating in this struggle we will oppose all policies which subordinate the working class to the political agenda of the petty-bourgeois reformist leaders of the Labour party and trade unions.

5. We support the fight of all the specially oppressed; Black and Asian, women, lesbians and gay men, bisexuals and transgender people against discrimination in all its forms and their right to organise separately in that fight in society as a whole. In particular we defend their right to organise inside trade unions and in working class political parties.

6. We recognise that class society, and capitalism as the last form of class society, is by its nature patriarchal. In that sense the oppression of women is different from all other forms of oppression and discrimination. Because this social oppression is inevitably tied to private property, and its inheritance, to achieve full sexual, social and economic freedom and equality for all we need to overthrow class society itself.

7. We fight racism and fascism. We support the right of people to fight back against racist and fascist attacks by any means necessary. Self-defence is no offence! We support ‘No Platform’ for all fascists but never call on the capitalist state to ban fascist marches or parties; these laws would inevitably primarily be used against workers’ organisations, as history has shown.

8. We oppose all immigration controls. International finance capital roams the planet in search of profit and Imperialist governments disrupts the lives of workers 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. Workers have the right to sell their labour internationally wherever they get the best price. Only union membership and pay rates can counter employers who seek to exploit immigrant workers as cheap labour to undermine the gains of past struggles.
## Contents

- Editorial: One Nation paternalism ……Page 4
- LRC: After Miliband is forced left ………Page 5
- Zero hour contracts ……………………..Page 6
- London construction rank and file ……Page 8
- 2013 TUC congress ……………………..Page 9
- Motion on Syria to the LRC …………..Page 10
- AFN statement on EDL demo …………Page 11
- Golden Dawn and Savas Michael ………Page 12
- Greek Trotskyism and the state ………..Page 13
- Cosatu under attack …………………….Page 14
- The Past and Marikana ………………..Page 17
- Gerrard Winstanley: Life and Legacy …Page 18
- The Mitchell Principles …………………Page 13
- List of Irish Republican Prisoners ……Page 24
- Address by Michael Holden to the 1913 Dublin lock-out …………..Page 24
- IRPSG motion on Irish Republican POWs for the LRC AGM …………..Page 25
- On horses who live on the wind ………Page 26
- For the military victory of Syria ………Page 27
- The Veil and the rise of Islamophobia …Page 32

### London Chapter of the Free Leonard Peltier Campaign formed

A meeting in the Cock Tavern, Euston on 5 October set up the London Chapter of the Free Leonard Peltier Campaign. Officers elected were Convenor, Cinead D., Secretary Emma L, Treasurer Carol F and Committee Gerry D and Austin H. Various activities were agreed, the production of a banner planned and a showing of the film: Incident at Oglala. This is a 1992 documentary by Michael Apted, narrated by Robert Redford. The film documents the murder of two Federal Bureau of Investigation agents, Jack R. Coler and Ronald A. Williams, on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in the summer of 1975. It examines the legal case surrounding the subsequent trials of Robert Robideau and Darrell Butler, and later the separate trial of Leonard Peltier, who had to be extradited from Canada. Robideau and Butler were acquitted at their trial, but Peltier was convicted of murder in 1976. Many supporters, including the International Indian Treaty Council, believe Peltier is innocent of the crimes.

**CONTACT**

londonchaptertofreeleonardpeltier@riseup.net, PO Box 59188, London, NW2 9LJ

**QUICK FACTS CASE OF LEONARD PELTIER**

http://www.freeleonard.org/case/

---

### Unite the Resistance conference 19 October: Organising to win

Speakers include: **Billy Hayes** (general secretary CWU), **Liz Lawrence** (vice-president UCU), **Ronnie Draper** (general secretary BFAWU bakers’ union), **Jeremy Corbyn** MP, **Jane Aitchison PCS**, **Phil Jackson** (EIS Scottish teachers’ and lecturers’ union national president), **Frank Morris** (Crossrail dispute) Sean Vernell (Unite the Resistance), and speakers from **Hovis**, **One Housing**, **Glasgow social workers’ unofficial walk out**, **Barclays Bike**, **Whipps Cross health worker** and **Lewisham hospital campaign**, **ISS East Coast Mainline cleaners** and many, more…

---

Leon Trotsky: I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International; Go Forward! Page 3
Benjamin Disraeli published *Sybil, or The Two Nations* in 1845, the same year as Friedrich Engels's *The Condition of the Working Class in England*. The Tory grandee of Jewish origins (the first ‘self-made’, non- aristocratic ‘Tory man of the Ted Heath genre) had been terrified by revolutionary Chartism and the 1839 Newport uprising and feared, like Cecil Rhodes, that unless the horrific conditions of the working class were alleviated there would be revolution in Britain. Disraeli’s and Rhodes’ solution was to grant minor concessions to workers and step up the extraction of super-profits from the colonies, particularly from India and Africa. Queen Victoria was crowned the Empress of India in 1976, the “jewel in the crown”. To get a flavour of those days look at that appalling Imperialist monstrosity, the Albert Memorial, opposite the Royal Albert Hall.

In this tradition Ed Miliband seeks to ensconce himself. Disraeli’s and Miliband’s One Nation come from *noblesse oblige*, a feudal obligation on the aristocracy to be paternalistic to the poor in the interests of maintaining their own privileges. Thus Disraeli outmanoeuvred the landed aristocracy represented by the two times Whig/Liberal prime minister Earl Russell. One Nation is promoted to take class out of politics and portray the enemy as the heartless new right Tories aristocratic elite of the millionaire Bullingdon Club of the likes of Cameron, Osborne and Johnson and not capitalism itself. But the resistance of the Syrian National Army has temporarily thwarted Imperialism’s war aims for the extraction of more super-profits from the semi-colonial masses—so even more must be extracted from the metropolitan working class.

Austerity in Britain has shown that there are two irreconcilably classes facing each other, the working class and the ruling class and not the ‘One Nation’ Ed Miliband aspires to. In recent months Ed Miliband has made much of this ‘One Nation’ theme speaking at the TUC Congress in Bournemouth and the Labour party Conference in Brighton. Of course he forgets the history of the Labour party and pleads with Cameron that if only they took up his idea of ‘One Nation’ Toryism everything would be much better under capitalism.

But the developing capitalist crisis is reflected in the continuing attacks on the working class, as a class, whether it be over the bedroom tax, the benefit cap or zero hour contracts. The working class in Britain is showing its revolutionary capacity to fight against these attacks. The national demonstration in defence of the NHS in Manchester outside the Tory conference on 29 September attracted 55,000 workers and their families, with a high proportion of women who make up the majority of NHS workers. This demonstration was organised by the TUC and had very little political content, as the TUC and Miliband indicated they wished in line with One Nationism. There were very few political banners on the demonstration, as the far left entered into the spirit of the day. The only political banners on show were the Green party, one from the Ipswich Socialist Workers party, one hanging from railings from the Socialist party and a couple from local Labour parties.

It was a Grand Old Duke of York march which led us round Manchester to listen to a few speeches from trade union bureaucrats and Andy Burnham, Shadow Secretary of State for Health. Socialist Fight comrades were remiss in not having a banner. It is necessary in this period to be conscious if we are to fight for revolutionary leadership in the working class.

Miliband saw the opposition to bombing Syria and knew this was an opportunity to shaft Cameron, which he did, with dire repercussions for Obama also in the US. This further enhanced that mood and encouraged Miliband to make those promises at the Labour party conference. Inadequate and minimal as they were, they outraged *The Daily Mail* (Trotsky dubbed it “one of the most villainous papers in the world”) who went for him. This presented Miliband with a further opportunity to attack the Mail, which he did and drew widespread support across the political spectrum, including liberal Tories. The Mail has clearly suffered a bloody nose in this confrontation. This further enhanced his electoral prospects for 2015.

That is why his election as leader was so strongly opposed and why the right wing press like The Mail have been gunning for him. Miliband has sacked the most odious of Blairites, Liam Byrne and Stephen Twigg, from his shadow cabinet and demoting Jim Murphy whilst promoting former Brownite MPs in another indication of his determination to win the election by taking risks. In 2012 Len McCluskey demanded he sack all three or they would “consign the party to the dustbin of history”.

Miliband knows that he must raise workers’ expectations somewhat to get elected. But this is a dangerous game. If expectations are raised too far then the backlash of disappointed workers in strike struggles and riots may be unmanageable. Tony Blair knew this in 1997. Centrally located to lead this backlash down the diversionary path of Europhobia and British Jobs for British Workers is Bob Crow and the RMT’s political front No to EU with its backers in the Socialist party. The 400-odd dead of the Lampedusa tragedy on 3 October are an indication of where all that is going in the hands of the capitalist state and the far right. Bob plays a dangerous game with his “UKIP of the left” here too.

Both Miliband and Ed Balls, the Shadow Chancellor, are seasoned capitalist politicians and remains reformist in character. They have stated that zero hour contracts and abolishing the Bedroom Tax will only be achieved if the economy can afford it under a Labour Government. Ed Balls has said that he would change very little in trying to balance the books in a future Labour administration. Comrades who do not follow the dialectical development of how or why Miliband is moving slightly to the left will be unable to grasp these minute but important developments.

Miliband remains an upholder of capitalism but the crisis of capitalism and the movement of the working class will force him into actions that he does not want to take. He is still determined to break the link between the trade unions and the Labour party and is aided in this process by Len McCluskey, the most opportunists of trade union leaders today. Trotsky defined the technical division of social democracy between ‘The Labour party leadership and the trade union bureaucracy’.

These developments must be studied closely by Marxists. Socialist Fight will continue to fight for in the Labour Representation Committee and everywhere else for a revolutionary alternative to reformism. We will continue to recruit and train the best cadres to Trotskyism.
Afer three years of virtual silence by Labour leader Ed Miliband, 2013 has seen extraordinary developments in the Labour Party. For the first time since Harold Wilson was unable to commit British troops to the Vietnam War in 1965, the Labour leadership has voted against a US imperialist intervention in the vote against bombing Syria. The British Parliamentary majority of odds and sobs against the intervention was a severe blow to imperialism, leaving the US, France and Israel temporarily isolated.

Of course Miliband and other Labour leaders have sought to retreat from this position since, promising a revote if UN inspectors can show the Assad regime launched a chemical attack. As events have moved on the defeat for imperialism gives socialists in the party the opportunity to explain why anti-imperialists must resist the offensive against Syria and discuss the reasons why US imperialism must always be opposed in its bloodthirsty campaigns.

The row over Ralph Miliband has also shown his son taking on, in his limited way, the Tory media I had the pleasure of being an undergraduate when Ralph Miliband taught politics at Leeds University in the 1970s – Ralph tried to build a workers ‘Marxist’ education centre across Yorkshire. Whilst Ralph was a generous and inspiring teacher, neither then nor now is it accurate to describe Ralph as a Marxist. He had no understanding of the need to build an alternative working-class state power and was mainly critical of Labour Parliamentary socialists for failing to be radical enough. As if measures of nationalisation and workers control would be allowed to be implemented through a Parliamentary vote. I remember vividly that even the brutal massacre of trade unionists and socialists in Chile in 1973 failed to damage Ralph Miliband’s belief in parliamentary means.

Ed Miliband has used the ‘hate Britain’ charge by the Daily Mail to prepare voters for the millions of words which will be deployed by the Tory press against his election campaign. But without explaining why many aspects of British history are disgusting episodes supporting slavery and colonial exploitation he concedes the key Daily Hate position that Britain is an essentially ‘civilising’ nation. The left in the Labour Party has a duty to explain why there is a need to debate what is wrong with Britain, both domestically and internationally, which needs to be changed.

The hysterical reaction of the Tory media to Ed Miliband’s pledge to freeze energy bills for 18 months and abolish the Bedroom Tax is a sample of how any proposal, however weak, will lead to capitalist media attacks. Only a determination to confront the power of international capital in the interests of the working-class will suffice to counter these attacks. Thus a Labour leadership could advise anyone seeking to purchase privatised Royal Mail shares that these will be declared null and void if a Labour Government is elected. Similar pledges on the railways and other public services would be both popular and demonstrate that Labour is on the side of One Nation Britain but of the overwhelming mass of the working-class.

Instead Miliband and his sidekick Balls have pledged that the next Labour Government is committed to the spending plans of the current class-hating Tory/Lib Dem coalition. So whilst the Bedroom Tax will be abolished, the welfare cuts will continue. Rip off companies running major services, from GS4 to Virgin Health, will continue to implement zero hours contracts and extract profit for wealthy shareholders from public provision.

Although Miliband was forced to placate his trade union critics by driving some radical sounding policies, the backdrop to the Labour Conference was the determination of Miliband to break the trade union link. Replacing the collective voice of trade unions with an individual levy is a policy aimed at determining that the organised working-class movement can never again determine any aspect of Labour policy.

Miliband aims to deliver a further capitalist friendly Blair/Mandelson type Labour government which opposes workers rights and does not disturb the interests of corporate capitalism. Sadly rumours abound that, despite fine words, trade union leaders such as Len McCluskey, are determined to swallow the diminution of the trade union collective voice in the Labour Party.

These contradictions offer a great opportunity to the left of the Labour Party. Particularly the Labour Representation Committee as it meets for its annual conference in November. Fresh from a successful rally at the Brighton conference and boasting some new branches the LRC must renew its activity and fight for Labour nationally to adopt a socialist programme of workers control of industry and a social programme of defence and investment in the NHS and vital public services.

The LRC needs to continue to develop an analysis of US and world imperialism which allows it a sure touch in siding against imperialist interventions and in defence of regimes attacked by imperialism. The LRC needs to avoid hysterical support for tentative steps of Labour lefts such as Diane Abbott to mount limited opposition to specific interventions. A more measured approach seeking to win Labour to an alternative anti-imperialist foreign policy is an opportunity for the LRC to establish new supporters to an alternative world view.

In relation to trade unions the LRC has correctly launched a vigorous support for defending the historic link with the trade unions but the LRC itself, through Labour Briefing, organised a disgraceful campaign to support Len McCluskey in his battle with militant left-winger, Jerry Hicks, for leadership of UNITE. In the trade unions the LRC needs to demonstrate that it represents the most advanced workers who are challenging trade union bureaucrats like McCluskey who are preparing to sell the trade union power in the Labour Party.

Finally the LRC is currently held back as a credible force on the left by the disastrous support it shows to one Labour austerity council in the small London borough of Islington. Providing a smokescreen for one council sacking workers and smashing services is not acceptable. The Labour Councillors Against the Cuts, though small, is an important initiative linking small numbers of Labour councillors who have defied Labour cuts orthodoxy.

LRC Conference needs to abandon the ‘sooner or later against cuts’ position and challenge all Labour councillors to fight cuts now.
T
here is a mass movement developing in Britain. There are major disputes on Zero Hour Contracts which the Coalition government is hoping will sort out their economic problems together with attacks on Firefighters Pension arrangements and attacks on Teachers in both the NUT and NASUWT.

The BFAWU (Bakers Union) members at Wigan are striking against Zero Hour Contracts. There have been mass pickets on August 28th, September 4th, 11th, 18th, 25th and October 2nd. Following a dispute with the company over Zero Hour Contracts and the use of Agency staff who were brought in to replace former workers who were made redundant, there have been mass pickets by the workers at Wigan. There has been an immediate response to the situation at Wigan to repel the vicious attack by Hovis and many workers from different trade unions have joined the mass picket.

There have been Marches and demonstrations in support of the Wigan workers “On Saturday, September 14th over 300 people marched from Wigan town centre to nearby Whelley Labour Club in support of BFAWU members taking strike action against Hovis (Premier foods) exploitation of Zero hours contracts and Agency Labour. The lively march ran out to chants of ‘the workers will never be defeated. the mood was angry and vibrant and the strikers showed their determination to stay out until they win. BFAWU members at Hovis, Wigan have already stopped the company directly employing people on Zero hour contracts, but they are staying out until the company addresses its use of agency labour. BFAWU members at Hovis believe that all staff should be given the same rights and rates of pay as those that work alongside of them” [1].

Mike Abbot, a Unite member and retired Construction worker who has tirelessly campaigned on behalf of the Justice for Shrewsbury campaign which aims to highlight the injustice to Shrewsbury Building workers who had a historic strike in 1972 which led to the jailing of Des Warren and Ricky Tomlinson. He said “the Hovis strikers they are very militant at recent actions included quite a few women, (referring to the mass picket). There had been much pushing and shoving last night but no arrests. There were about 80 pickets all night. We blocked the road with arms and they only got 8 vans past us by 6 am. This could be the chance for Wigan to show the way against no contracts agency labour provided they get support from the TUC. Nine other Hovis sites are ready to follow suit with a ballot soon” [2].

The North West National Shop Stewards Network issued a statement about the dispute. “We call on all trade unionists to support these workers in their struggle against Zero Hour Contracts. Three of them (pickets) were arrested on the picket line in to help break the blockade and 3 arrests were made, however it was reported that half the company’s URTU (United Road Transport Union) member drivers had decided to take the day off in response to the action of the BFAWU pickets”. [4].

Ed Miliband recently at the TUC Congress pledged a future Labour government to outlaw Zero Hour Contracts but the fact is that action needs to be taken now. Miliband has done nothing about Labour Authorities and Councils who have adopted Zero hour contracts. Here is a list of Councils who have a number of employees on Zero Hour contracts and this is in the public sector. Barking and Dagenham (304) Blackpool (315) Cambridgeshire (1138) Derby (564) Gateshead (1291) and North Yorkshire (3590).

In a NSSN statement it was reported that 24 workers at the Bakery employed on Zero Hour Contracts have now been given fulltime normal contracts.

The decision by the Government to change the pension arrangements for Firefighters means that Firefighters will have to work up and beyond the age of 60 Keith Hands comb from East Anglia FBU said “responding to terrorist attacks, flash floods, rescuing people and their families from car, train and plane crashes and of course fighting fires inside very hot, smoke filled burning buildings is a dangerous, dirty and physically demanding job and as the Government’s own expert evidence shows, it’s not a job fire-fighters can perform at the high fitness levels required up at the age of 60”. [5].

In a statement from the FBU for the reasons for the strike, there were messages of support on their one day strike on September 25th. there were messages of support from the PCS, NU, and URTU.

Commenting on the strike Matt Wrack general secretary of the FBU said “This was solidly supported strike action by fire fighters across England and Wales. it has demonstrated their anger and determination This strike was the last resort after the government refused to negotiate- and a warning shot that firefighters are serious about keeping a fair, safe and workable pensions scheme” [6].

Teachers from the NUT and NASUWT are also taking action in their determination to defend their pay conditions and pensions. in a statement the NUT said “ Why we are striking on...
Zero hour contracts, Hovis, Wigan, FBU, Firefighters, Pensions and Privatisation

1st October No dismantling of the ay system, no to attacks on conditions, no to working longer, paying more and getting less. Get ready to take action 1st October Eastern Midlands Yorkshire and Humberside 17th October North east, Cumbria, London, South East and South west “. [7].

Together with the Government’s decision to privatise the Post Office which has led CWU members to ballot for Industrial action with Unite members in the Post Office who are employed as managers also threatening strike action over Pensions. What response has there been from the TUC and the official trade union leadership not even a murmur or a response, although a motion was passed that the practicalities of a general strike was proposed it is certain as night follows day that the trade union bureaucracy will not be organising any sort of general strike. It is terrified of the issue. They still remain the servants of the capitalist class. Many of them want to protect their sizeable incomes and their lifestyles. The question as always is the question of revolutionary leadership in the Working class and ensures that all these separate struggles by workers in separate actions are coordinated into one struggle and that is to remove the capitalist system which is the source of the crisis. All of these disputes and struggles must be supported, but we cannot wait for a Labour government as most of these leaders promise. What is required is an indefinite general strike to co-ordinate all these actions and ensure this success. That can only be achieved through a struggle to remove this reactionary trade union leadership who remains prostrate before the capitalist Class. Grass Roots Left and Socialist Fight is fighting to establish this leadership. We have a Blog at www.socialistfight.com and we would ask you to read and send us your thoughts and opinions on our perspectives and to support our platform and concrete demands at this time.

From p. 9 The Blacklist Support Group gave this statement “Blacklisting is no longer an industrial relations issue, it is a conspiracy between multinational construction firms, the police and security services. Only a full public enquiry with a wide enough remit to unravel all the institutions responsible for blacklisting is going to get to the truth of this on-going human rights scandal”.

Socialist Fight while agreeing with all the sentiments expressed by the campaigners involved in Blacklisting is also aware that we live in a class society. capitalism in this period is under extreme crisis and it has been known for some time the role of political policing and ‘the state within the state’. Frederick Engels wrote about the nature of class society as “bodies of armed men” protecting its interests and defending class exploitation and class rule, By asking capitalism to investigate itself will ultimately lead to a cover up. What is required is for the Working class to overthrow capitalism and install Socialism. A workers militia should exist in a situation where there is a struggle for power. The programme of Socialist Fight calls for a series of these Transitional demands. This is the only way to end this rotten system, clear out its corrupt police force and quasi-military advisers from the security services. Public enquiries have never resolved any issue. It is necessary for an unrelenting campaign against capitalism, its state forces and those it represents the class interests of the bourgeoisie.

The BFAWU has won major concessions from Hovis in a settlement on 23 September. Geoff Atkinson, BFAWU spokesperson said, in part:

The BFAWU would like to thank Hovis (Premier Foods) for finally sitting down with us in order to find a solution to what was becoming a very bitter dispute over the use of zero hours contracts and agency labour at the Wigan bakery. We applaud both union and company representatives for reaching a settlement that is satisfactory for all concerned. …Having already brought about the end of zero hours contracts leading to twenty-four new permanent jobs, the action taken by those workers has ensured that zero hours contracts will not be provided by a third party. It also means that attempts to use the Swedish Derogation model have been scrapped, with manning levels being reviewed and the possibility of recruitment should the need to use agency arise. This landmark action by two hundred and ten members of a modest sized union along with meaningful negotiations with the company has brought about significant change that could potentially have a positive knock-on effect throughout the entire labour movement. The leadership shown by BFAWU full-time officials and shop stewards in addition to the immense support received from fellow unions, Trades Councils and Members of Parliament along with the general public and other activist/political organisations, has helped to achieve a settlement that has fully justified the direct action taken by those concerned.

Notes
[1] www.BFAWU.org
[2] Email from Mike Abbot.
[4] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.

Frank Morris (2nd right) and other campaign members met US trade union leaders in Chicago on 13 August. The Spanish transport giant, Ferrovial – which is part of the London Crossrail consortium – is bidding for the contract to operate the privatisation of Chicago Midway Airport. The 5-month international campaign by Unite targeted the Crossrail companies (Bam, Ferrovial and Kier) and their clients.

See more at: http://union-news.co.uk/2013/08/anti-blacklisting-campaign-flies-into-chicago-over-1bn-airport-privatisation/#sthash.SijS7OYC.dpuf

Leon Trotsky: I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International; Go Forward! Page 7
The meeting was called to continue the campaign to fight the tactics of Constructions companies in their black-mail campaign. Frank Morris the leading shop steward at the Westbourne Park site of Cross Rail BFK at the time of the meeting was still blacklisted off the site by the employer. There was union restriction of lay officials and also victimisation of our comrades in UCATT. Gail Cartmell Deputy general secretary of Unite explained that the campaign against Blacklisting was now in Ireland, France, Iceland and Canada. There was an organising team which was involved in hundreds of actions to put an end to blacklisting. Cross Rail, Kier Construction and the role of the consulting association. She explained that the Scottish affairs committee were investigating Blacklisting in the construction industry. The leverage campaign must continue to, “employ blacklisted workers who are doing the right thing”. The meeting heard from construction workers who were seething and angry about the situation. How can companies refuse to employ blacklisted workers? Steve Kelly from Unite and Chair said that we want their jobs back; it is never going to be a quick fix. Ian Bradley spoke about the electrical industry and asked where are the rank and file, what is the Unite leadership doing apart from Crossrail. When Gail Cartmell left the meeting there was discussion on a situation in the North West Construction sector committee where some Unite officers have been disciplined. Comments from the floor that there was no democracy in Unite and that several comments on how the RISK was organised was blatantly ignored. John Sheridan from the North West area said that construction members in Unite were waiting for a reply from the general secretary.

Peter Farrell a UCATT member and active in the Justice for Shrewsbury campaign asked why they had never seen a full time UCATT official at these meetings. He advocated joint united action between UNITE, UCATT and GMB members in construction. One construction worker who I agreed with advocated shutting the job down that’s the only way to defeat Blacklisting on these sites and make sure that all the blacklisted construction workers are back on the site. John Sheridan said that we had to gain access to these sites we have to stick together. On the question of the situation in the North West RISK two regional industrial organisers have resigned and are no longer employed Bernard McCauley the National Officer is on a final written warning. A resolution was moved that a proper investigation take place but the chair ruled that as this Rank and File committee was not a constitutional committee that a resolution that “Bernard McCauley be removed from office” cannot be moved here. It was agreed that it be dealt with through the Constitutional Committees.

The meeting ended at 4pm. Since the TUC Congress met in Bournemouth there is a great victory Frank Morris has won his job back and starts work on the Cross Rail BFK site at Westbourne Park again. As the agreement between Unite and Cross Rail states no one is allowed to talk about the issue and there is a gagging order. This is a great victory for Unite and Frank Morris. The decision to launch the Leverage campaign has proved to be a great success but Frank Morris is only one Construction member who has been Blacklisted until all the Blacklisted workers are reinstated and there is proper union recognition on all these sites ensuring that there is proper Health and safety provision, an end to casualisation and Agency staff and no more deaths on construction sites this will turn out to be a hollow victory. A motion moved at the TUC Congress has decided to have one day of Action over Blacklisting on November 20th. There have been further developments in the

Continued on p. 8
The TUC Congress opened in Bournemouth on the eve of threatened Imperialist war against Syria. Not all of the delegates were Bureaucrats and full time officials. Some union delegations were composed of Rank and File delegates. The Congress was lobbied on the Sunday by the National Shop Stewards Movement, which is heavily influenced by the Socialist Party of England and Wales. It is calling for a 24 Hour general strike.

The NSSN has allied itself with a section of the Left Bureaucracy. A number of Left Bureaucrats spoke at their rally including Bob Crowe of the RMT, Steve Gilman of the POA Ronnie Draper of the BFAWU and Martin Powell Davies from the NUT Executive. The demand for the practicability of a general strike passed at last year’s TUC Congress in Brighton is to be again debated at this year’s Congress without analysing why no action was taken. Of course in the true sense of the word it is not a general strike but just a protest, general strikes are Insurrections and a challenge for power and for the overthrow of capitalism. None of these Bureaucrats Left or right has any intention of carrying out any insurrectionary movement.

The NSSN has built up a very opportunist relationship with these Lefts on the General Council. 450 Workers attended the rally and the SPEW still has influence amongst a section of workers who are looking for a serious fight in defence of jobs, conditions and attacks by this Con/Dem Government. Actions by Teachers and Civil Servants in November are the spark that the NSSN hopes will lead to a generalised action but the whole direction of the movement is governed by the Bureaucracy.

On the Sunday evening the Congress debated the Practicality of a general strike. The motion moved by the RMT and seconded by the POA was passed by a big majority. The smaller right wing unions of Community, USDAW, ATL and PROSPect opposed the motion.

Frances O’Grady, the new general secretary of the TUC, gave her address on Monday morning. She started by saying that the TUC needed to recover the balance and asked what this Government has done. She called for more discussions with Ministers on how to reflate and expand the economy in a corporatist approach. She asked for more Investment in basic Industries and to appreciate the role of the TUC and pleaded for Employers to get around the table and discuss common problems. She advocated economic democracy and said there must be a massive council house building programme. “That’s why we need new wages councils so unions and employers get around the table and negotiate” [1].

The speech from O’Grady was in essence reformist bluster with no perspective to understand the nature of the capitalist crisis that is driving the coalition government to smash and break up the productive forces (working class) and its organisations, O’Grady like all bureaucrats is striving to get the crumbs from the masters table. Trotsky established this point of view very succinctly. “This position is in complete harmony with the social position of the Labour aristocracy and the Labour bureaucracy who fight for a crumb in the share of the super profits of Imperialist capitalism” [2].

Reformism is at an end. capitalism is in terminal crisis. O’Grady made no mention of the Anti-union Laws which have been put on the statute book by both Tory and Labour governments. O’Grady made no mention of the general strike motion passed on Sunday. It is clear that she and other sections of the trade union bureaucracy will continue to act as loyal servants of capitalism. Trotsky in the Transitional Programme identified the crisis of leadership. “The world political situation as a whole is characterised by a historical crisis of the leadership of the proletariat” [3]. That remains true today as when it was written in 1938.

In the afternoon I attended an LRC Fringe meeting to defend the Link between the trade unions and the Labour party which Miliband is seeking to sever as the Labour party is driven closer and closer to coalition government. Manuel Cortes from the TSSA and Billy Hays from the CWU spoke about defending the link but have completely underestimated the role of Miliband and his review of the trade unions and the Labour Party. I told the meeting that the Miliband leadership is being driven toward coalition government by Cameron and the Tories. Cameron is forcing Miliband in these reforms to remove the working classes influence in the Labour party, so that the Labour Party is fit for coalition government. A number of trade union leaders are doing deals with Miliband over the issue. Len McCluskey of Unite is already in negotiations. This above all shows the opportunistic relationship between the Bureaucracy and the Labour leadership.

On Tuesday morning Ed Miliband delivered his speech at the TUC. He started by saying that in 1867 the Earl of Derby was a one nation Conservative followed by Benjamin Disraeli. Miliband put forward the Tories as an example completely ignoring the History of the Labour party and how it was founded and built. His criticism of Cameron is that he is not a One Nation Tory. Miliband stressed the importance of One Nation. He said that there had to be a different relationship with the trade
unions. It is necessary to make changes. He said that 3 million TU members were affiliated to the Labour Party and the vast majority play no part; Miliband forgot to mention that he wants this change so that he can draw closer and closer to the Tories. He pledged a future Labour Government
1) Young People back to work
2) Capital Investment
3) Building Homes and put construction workers back to work
4) Unions working with the Employers Corporatism tying the TU Bureaucracy closer and closer to the state
5) Labour banning Zero Hours contracts.
Miliband in a question and answer session did qualify his remarks by saying that these pledges may not be carried out and if a deficit is inherited by a future Labour government then it will be necessary to manage the capitalist economy.
O’Grady on Wednesday presented a General Council statement on the conflict in Syria where she paid tribute to the Humanitarian effort. She called for the International Criminal court to prosecute anyone for wrongdoing. Support the role of the UN Inspectors and with diplomacy and dialogue support all the United Nations efforts for a peaceful solution. Once again the trade union Bureaucracy has shown that it serves the aims and wishes of Imperialism. TUC Bureaucrats sit on the fence lecturing Workers and fighters in the Syrian Army about peaceful dialogue when they should be calling for the defeat of Imperialism and their proxies in the resistance and salvation front.
Socialist Fight is fighting to create an alternative revolutionary leadership in the working class. It calls for an unremitting campaign and struggle against this rotten and opportunist bureaucracy and replace it with an alternative revolutionary leadership accountable to the masses. To this end we call for the following demands.
1) An indefinite General strike to bring down this Con/Dem Coalition Government.
2) Build Grass Roots left as a Rank and File Organisation in the trade unions
3) Democratise the unions Election of all trade union Officials
4) Defeat and Smash the Anti-union Laws
5) For a National Housing campaign to fight for decent Housing Defeat the Bedroom Tax, No Evictions Social Housing for all. Follow the example of the Counihan-Sanchez campaign.
6) Nationalise the Banks and Major Industries under Workers Control No Compensation Open the Books.
7) Defend the NHS No to privatisation
8) Rebuild the Revolutionary International the Trotskyist Fourth International.

NOTES
[3] The Transitional Programme and the Tasks of the Fourth International

Socialist Fight Motion on Syria to the Labour Representation Committee AGM on 23 November

Negotiations with Russia and Iran disarm Syria of its chemical weapons and Iran from developing nuclear weapons and so prepare for a future attack against weaker enemies. They have been forced into a partial retreat because of:
1. The loss of the HoC vote on 29 August.
2. The likely defeat of Obama by Congress.

Public opinion did not buy the obvious lie that the ‘war on terror’ must defeat Al-Qaeda but Assad had to go by arming Al-Qaeda. The Sarin gas atrocity came at an obviously convenient moment. Western Imperialism’s war aims in Syria are:
1. Increase its rate of profit by more direct economic control.
2. Defeat Hezbollah to protect its client Israel.
3. Prepare for a joint attack on Iran with Israel.

Eleven jihadist rebels allied on 25 September to reject both the Western-backed NC and the FSA. Islamist militias manipulated by Western intelligence have been the battering ram for Western Imperialist foreign policy increasingly since the 1980s. There would be no mass civil war in Syria without Islamists imported by Saudi, Qatar, Jordan, Turkey, and ultimately the US, UK, and France.

Despite previous brutal pro-Imperialist tyranny by Assad defending Syria’s national sovereignty demands the victory of the Syrian National Army over US-sponsored forces. The LRC fights in the labour movement for the defeat of all Imperialist-sponsored forces. The defeat of this utterly bogus “revolution” will defend a relatively secular administration, strengthen the Syrian working class against Assad and dent chauvinism in US, Britain and France.

On 12 May a video shows Khalid al Hamad, aka Abu Sakkar (above), founder of Homs’ Farouq Brigade taking a knife and hacking open a man’s torso, then removing two organs before holding them up to the camera and declaring: “I swear to God we will eat your hearts and your livers, you soldiers of Bashar the dog.” He then raises one to his mouth and takes a bite. Al Hamad, who is Sunni and has a sectarian hatred for Alawite Muslims, insists the video captures the first time he had ever attempted to eat an enemy’s liver.

http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2324406/Syria-heart-eating-video-Our-slogan-eye-eye-tooth-tooth.html

Clearly the majority are now jihadists like Abu Sakkar, who are sponsored by the USA, Britain and France via its Gulf allies of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and also Turkey.
Anti-Fascist Network statement on EDL demo of 7 September

The Metropolitan Police arrested over 280 anti-fascist activists, local community members, and passersby in East London on 7 September, as up to 700 English Defence League supporters were allowed to march over Tower Bridge and rally at Aldgate without encountering any mass opposition.

A large community demonstration was restricted to Al-tab Ali Park, well out of sight of the EDL’s march route and rally point. A bloc of around 600 within the demonstration, coordinated by the Anti-Fascist Network (AFN), attempted to hold a march to get within sight of the EDL’s route and present a visible opposition, which was then blocked and kettled by police. Despite police attacks the front of the AFN bloc did manage to get within sight of the EDL march, meaning the only political opposition the racists saw on the day was a direct result of the AFN mobilisation.

Sarah Smith from London Anti-Fascists said: “The number of people who joined the Anti-Fascist Network bloc on the day shows that there is a real mood for forms of anti-fascism that go beyond static rallies where mainstream politicians and religious leaders spout liberal platitudes. The 600 people who attempted to march with AFN on Saturday shows that a moderate, ‘respectable’ anti-fascism based on deference to the state and the political status quo is no longer the only show in town.”

Antifascists, independent legal observers, and people who were just passing by were detained on the street for over six hours before the police announced their intention to make mass arrests. Arrestees were taken to police stations on the outer extremities of London — including Colindale, Sutton, and elsewhere — mostly under the pretext that they had committed an offence under the Public Order Act. Their alleged ‘crime’ was to march down a street the police didn’t want them to march down.

Some arrestees were held for up to 15 hours in total. We are concerned that these buses may have been driven by Unite members and that this may become the pattern in future protests against fascist mobilisations. Through your good offices as a former Political Director in Unite and a well know anti-fascist activist could you seek to get Unite nationally to instruct its members that they have a right to refuse to drive these buses and to participate in these attacks on civil rights.

Val Swain of the Network for Police Monitoring (NetPol), added: “Carrying out mass arrests on any demonstration is an excessive and draconian measure. In this case it was clearly not necessary to prevent disorder – many, if not most of the arrests were carried out after the EDL had left the area.” In this case the police have taken 286 sets of names, addresses, fingerprints and dna. It has been a highly effective data gathering exercise. They have also imposed bail conditions preventing all of those arrested from participating in future protests – even though they have not been charged, let alone convicted of any offence. The police have had a successful operation to disrupt, deter and prevent anti-fascist protest.”

Notes The Anti-Fascist Network is a network of independent anti-fascists and anti-racist groups from across Britain, fighting the far right on the basis of direct action and working-class politics. http://antifascistnetwork.wordpress.com/

Brent Trades Union Council requests Unite to assist in getting their bus driver members to refuse to drive for Police arrests of anti-fascists

Dear Brother Hart,

You will be aware that 286 people mainly anti fascist activists but including passersby and six Legal Observers (the first time these latter have been arrested) were arrested in East London on 7 September when the English Defence League attempted to march in Tower Hamlets.

This is a major attack on the democratic right to protest and oppose the provocative fascist and racist mobilization of some 700 who were protected by the police. Furthermore the 286 were all fingerprinted and DNA samples were taken and all are to be charged. Draconian police bail conditions mean that these activists are no longer allowed to protest against the fascists until their trial.

The mass arrests followed kettling for many hours and were facilitated by bus companies Arriva and Stagecoach who provided the vehicles to transport the arrestees to various police stations where they were held, processed and charged.

We are concerned that these buses may have been driven by Unite members and that this may become the pattern in future protests against fascist mobilisations. Through your good offices as a former Political Director in Unite and a well know anti-fascist activist could you seek to get Unite nationally to instruct its members that they have a right to refuse to drive these buses and to participate in these attacks on civil rights, which eventually may involve the rights of unions themselves if the fascist get what they are fundamentally after, which is to smash up the organisations of the working class and allow the unhindered exploitation of the entire working class by capitalism.

In Solidarity, Roger Cox,
Secretary, Brent Trades Union Council

Steve Hart made a very positive reply to this letter and promised what assistance he could in the matter of Unite members driving such buses for these police operations.
The Golden Dawn and Savas Michael Matsas

“No one should doubt that this is a huge victory. The trial of Savas Michael marked the first time in decades that anyone was called upon to defend themselves in a European court against charges brought on by fascists.”

Ad Hoc Organising Committee for Savas Michael-Matsas and Constantinos Moutzouris
PO Box 59188, London, NW2 9LJ
Mobile: 07792 966 910
31 August 2013

The Ambassador
H.E. Mr. Anastase Scopelitis
Greek Embassy in London
1A Holland Park,
Dear Mr. Anastase Scopelitis,

We, the undersigned, are protesting today against the trial of Savas Michael-Matsas a Greek Jewish Marxist intellectual and general secretary of the Workers Revolutionary Party (EEK) of Greece and Constantino Moutzouris, the former rector of the University of Athens, on 3 September 2013.

Savas Matsas is accused of “defamation” against the Greek openly Nazi party, the infamous Golden Dawn, for “instigation of violence and chaos” and “disruption of the civil peace” because, four years ago, in May 2009, the EEK had issued a leaflet calling for participation into an antifascist demonstration of protest against a murderous attack by the Nazis against the immigrant communities in Athens covered by the Greek police.

...Simultaneously with this preposterous “legal” action, the Nazis have intensified a non-stop, vicious anti-Semitic and anti-communist campaign against the Secretary of the EEK, accusing him of being “an instrument of the World Jewish Conspiracy to foment civil war among Greeks to impose a Judeo-Bolshevik regime in Greece”. Pictures of Savas Michael are presented combined with anti-Semitic insults and open death threats: “Crush the Jewish vermin!”

We wish to express our total opposition to the Greek state and government collaboration with the Nazi Golden Dawn in bringing these persecutions.

We wish to express our outrage at the collaboration of the Greek state and government in failing to oppose and thereby collaborating with the vile anti-Semitic campaign against Savas Michael-Matsas and thereby against all Jews.

We demand that the charges against Savas Michael-Matsas and Constantino Moutzouris be dropped immediately and that the Greek state and government protect the immigrant community against the fascist assaults of the Golden Dawn and cease prosecuting their defenders.

Signed

Organisation

Steve Hedley on behalf of the Rail and Maritime Union (UK)
Weyman Bennett on behalf of Unite Against Fascism (UAF, UK)
D.R. Rayner Lysaght on behalf of Socialist Democracy (Ireland)
David Yaffe on behalf of the Revolutionary Communist Group (UK)
Michael Holden on behalf of the Irish Republican Prisoners Support Group (London, UK)
Michael Pröbsting on behalf of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency
Michael Holden on behalf of the Irish Republican Prisoners Support Group (London, UK)
Michael Pröbsting on behalf of the Revolutionary Communist Group (RMG, South Africa)
Martin Thomas on behalf of the Alliance for Workers Liberty (AWL, UK)
Marcus Halaby on behalf of Workers Power (WP, UK)
John Byrne on behalf of the Anti Fascist Network (UK)
Mark Fischer on behalf of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB, Weekly Worker)
Antônio Júnior on behalf of Vanguarda Metalúrgica (Brazil)
Humberto Rodrigues on behalf of the Communist League / Liaison Committee for the Fourth International (LCFI, Brazil)
León Carlos on behalf of the Tendencia Mili-tante Bolchevique (LCFI, Argentina)
Gerry Downing on behalf of Socialist Fight, (LCFI, UK)

Yours Sincerely

Gerry Downing,
On behalf of the Ad Hoc Committee

Charges against Savas Michael Matsas thrown out in Athens

By Alex Steiner, 5 September 2013

The trial of Savas Michael Matsas ended abruptly on Sept. 4, just one day after it began, when the judge threw out all three charges against him in the lawsuit filed by the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn. Charges against the other defendant in the trial, Constantinos Moutzouris, a former rector of Athens’ Polytechnic University, were also dismissed. The trial attracted hundreds of demonstrators inside and outside the court house expressing their solidarity with Savas Michael and the struggle against fascism in Greece.

Only three supporters of the Golden Dawn fascists dared to show their face and none of them appeared at the trial to testify. According to an eyewitness account from the court house, when Savas Michael finished giving his speech he received such a huge round of applause that the judge began to scream in a desperate attempt to restore the “dignity” of the court. No one should doubt that this is a huge victory. The trial of Savas Michael marked the first time in decades that anyone was called upon to defend themselves in a European court against charges brought on by fascists. The trial would never have gone forward without the backing of the right wing coalition government led by Antonis Samaras, a coalition government led by the same government that administers the European court against charges brought on by fascists. The trial would never have gone forward without the backing of the right wing coalition government led by Antonis Samaras, a coalition government that administers the austerity measures imposed on the Greek working class and middle class dictated by the European troika.

Undoubtedly the publicity the trial began to receive on the international stage, all of it supportive of Savas Michael, proved embarrassing to the Greek government, exposing its corrupt judiciary system and the hollow shell that stands in for democracy in Greece. A notable example of press coverage that forced the government to change course is the remarkable account that appeared a couple of days before the trial in the Guardian.

While the dismissal of the charges against Savas Michael Matsas and Constantinos Moutzouris is undoubtedly a big setback for the Golden Dawn fascists, no one should think that the struggle against fascism in Greece can be restricted to the judicial arena. That would be a huge mistake. Rather the lessons of the trial and its aftermath should be employed as an educational tool as part of the political struggle against fascism. And that political struggle is in turn intimately tied to the struggle for a socialist alternative to the austerity measures that are crippling Greece.

Permanent Revolution:
Greek Trotskyism and the state

By Gerry Downing

Let no one doubt that there is a clear connection between the acquittal of Savvas Michael Matsas on 4 September and the arrest of eighteen leaders of the Golden Dawn, including three MPs, over the weekend of 28-29 September. They were charged with forming a criminal association. On 18 September Pavlos Fyssas, a popular anti-fascist rapper, was murdered by a self-citation. On 18 September Pavlos Fyssas, a popular anti-fascist rapper, was murdered by a self-confessed member of Golden Dawn. The investigation quickly led to the top leadership and arrests followed not only of the 18 leaders but of 30 other members. In a raid on the house of the party chair, Nikos Michaloliakos, firearms were confiscated, and €40,000 in cash.

As we have quoted from the PR blog, “the trial of Savvas Michael marked the first time in decades that anyone was called upon to defend themselves in a European court against charges brought on by fascists”. It is great to see these contradictions within the state emerging. And let us acknowledge that without the Greek and international campaign for Savvas Michael this would never have happened. He and others like him would be in prison and the Golden Dawn would be pressuring home their victory. Following the murder on the 18th there was a 50,000 strong march and picket of the Golden Dawn HQ.

The worst of all responses to these arrests would be to hail them as a great victory and to sow illusions that the Greek state will protect the working class, the left and the immigrants. But that is the very thing that some are now doing. On 28 September the Central Committee of the Socialist Workers Party (SEK) released a statement, the first two points of which were:

1. The apprehension of Michaloliakos, Kasidiaris and other leaders of Golden Dawn is a victory for the magnificent anti-fascist movement that took to the streets after the murder of Pavlos Fyssas. It finally breaks the provocative immunity of neo-Nazi murderers and those who protect them are forced to pretend to be late-coming persecutors. We celebrate this development and we organize the next steps.
2. Our first demand is to extend the damming across the width and depth of the murderous apparatus. The killers and their masterminds are not only 34 [?]. In every neighbourhood, in every place where offices of the Golden Dawn operated, we demand the unravelling of these networks in all their extent. This anti-fascist cleansing must include officers of Hellenic Police who generously gave their cooperation, prosecutors who violated their duties and their funders who provide the means for the operation of these murderous gangs.

This is the totally wrong and popular frontist approach, sowing illusions in the neutrality of the Greek state and disarming the working class and its organisations to the tasks ahead; independent mobilisations, the formation of workers militias and reliance in their own independent organisations and strength. Demanding the arrest of pro-Golden Dawn police is all very well but again it is the ‘rotten apple’ theory; as if ALL state forces were not used against the workers and students and they could be reformed to represent their interests. The reformist essence of the SWP’s politics comes out clearly in such statements. Both the police and the army of the capitalist state must be defeated and disbanded and replaced by a workers’ militia to make a revolution. This is the task which is facing the Greek working class, students and youth in the immediate future.

And the Greek working class has a great revolutionary tradition. The singing out of Savvas Michael as the only political leader to have been brought to court by the state on behalf of the fascists is an indication that the Greek state sees his group as a threat to them. We acknowledge this despite clear political differences and historically unresolved questions over issues like the Iranian revolution and the role of Ayatollah Khomeini and Libya and Syria today.

That revolutionary history is full of lessons on the absolute impossibility of separating the powers of the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary in any real or meaningful sense when the class struggle reached this acuteness in Greece. On Savvas Michael, Pavlos Fyssas and Nikos Michaloliakos the entire state apparatus has acted in unison, dodging and weaving but always keeping their goal of counter-revolution clearly in sight, as they did in the Civil War of 1946-9 and during the Colonels’ dictatorship of 1967-74. Talks of “victory” and cleaning out the police and state forces is so much waffle.

From the early 1930. Greek Trotskyism has affirmed its revolutionary defence of the Russian Revolutionary tradition against Stalinism and the Greek state. We supply this quote as proof:

(The adherents of Trotsky’s „Left Opposition” group was the largest section of the International Trotskyist movement until 1934… They on their part warmly returned his feelings, greatly heartening his journey to Copenhagen by lining the docks (to speak to the students in 1932) at Pi-naceus and the length of the Corinth Canal with cheering workers shouting “Long Live Trotsky!” and “Long Live the Commune!”

With the adherence of the Archeiomarxists to the Trotskyist movement, the Left Opposition in Greece underwent an unprecedented development in the early 1930s. Committed militants vigorously distributed the ideas and pamphlets of Trotsky in every corner of the country. The Communist Organisation of Bolshevik-Leninists (KOMLEA), as it was called, spread everywhere in Greece, and even reached out to Albania. Its newspaper, Palton Taxis (Class Struggle) was sold in thousands of copies, and from publishing fortnightly became first a weekly, then twice a week, then three times a week, and for a short period during the 1933 elections it even came out daily – the first Trotskyist daily paper, to our knowledge, in the world. [1]

And we recall the famous exchange between Churchill and CP MP Willie Gallacher in the House of Commons in 1946 where Gallacher condemned the attack on the Greek communists and Churchill could point to Stalin’s complicity and said they were more like Trotskyists, equally hated in Moscow and London. Today there are many groups in Greece claiming the name of Trotskyism, as there are internationally. As in the Russian Revolution who will eventually win the leadership of the class will determine the fate of the coming Greek Revolution.

It is clear that those who compromise the class independence of the working class like the SWP do with their popular frontist policies and sowing illusions in the state and its armed forces will never do so. But equally it is clear that those who might have many correct policies and analyses of the relationship of class forces must find the road to the masses via the correct operation of the United Front and the Transitional Programme and method contained in it.

The tradition of the British WRP and the International Committee of the Fourth International, from which the Greek EEK descends, has a very inadequate understanding of this, refusing in most occasions to operate any united fronts at all. But revolutions are great opportunities for learning how to apply theory to practice. Lenin’s theory was inadequate prior to 1917, yet such was his commitment to revolution that he made the necessary adjustments in the April Theses to make the revolution. And so we know it can be done.

Note

For the past year Cosatu has been under attack from the ANC. The main focus of the attack has been the general secretary, Zwelenzima Vavi. He has been the most influential and popular Cosatu leader in recent times. This has in part been due to Vavi being an outspoken critic of the ANC government for several years and he has been prepared to lead important campaigns such as the living wage and to oppose the existence of labour brokers. In recent times the ANC has been especially unhappy about Cosatu’s campaign against motorway e-tolling. The latest battle is brewing around the ruling party’s economic programme, the National Development Plan, with Vavi and Numsa general secretary, Irvin Jim being the most outspoken against it.

The clear-cut victory by the Jacob Zuma wing of the ANC at the Mangaung Conference set the scene for the concerted attack directed at Cosatu. The government is caught in a vice as it tries to promote economic growth for the country during the continuing global economic crisis. Capitalists’ profits are under pressure due to the crisis and the continued demands from the working class for a decent life. Trade unions continue to defend workers’ conditions and thwart many of the government’s plans for restoring capitalism to higher levels of profitability. It is for these reasons that the ANC is determined to turn Cosatu into a sweetheart federation that is a meek and supportive junior partner in the governance of the country.

Hands off Cosatu – No to Cosatu Becoming the ANC’s Sweetheart Union!

Due to the ANC leadership’s intervention the majority of Cosatu unions’ leaders suddenly backed off from expelling Vavi and the Cling Vavi and the Cosatu CEC of 27 – 28 May 2013 declared:

Cosatu leadership at the CEC is acutely aware of the dangers of fighting silly small battles against one another when workers continue to face massive economic challenges, mainly as continued dominance of the mining-finance-energy complex that is organised through monopoly companies.

So the CEC meeting focussed on the need to strengthen the unity and cohesion within the Federation and decided to urgently convene its Political Commission (to include all unions Presidents and General Secretaries) to meet on 6 June. This meeting was mandated to prepare for the bilateral meeting with the SACP, the Alliance Economic Summit on 4 – 7 July and the Alliance Summit planned for October.

Very importantly, this special Political Commission was mandated to assess the outcomes of the ANC Mangaung Conference, Cosatu’s position on the NDP and take forward the Section 77 notice on economic transformation.

Vavi has played into the hands of the Cosatu sweetheart union leaders by having an affair with a subordinate at Cosatu head office. They have now suspended him and the plans are to use this incident to dismiss him. We agree that disciplinary measures against Vavi are appropriate but it does not warrant his dismissal.

The attack on Zwelinzima Vavi is indeed an undisguised political attack by the ANC and SAPC. This attack, which was planned for the 11th National Cosatu Congress, was staved off then because of the rank-and-file Cosatu shop stewards support for Vavi and a showdown would have isolated the majority of union leaders who act as the agents of the ruling party within Cosatu. Now in the aftermath of the post-Congress and post-Mangaung period, the reactionary union leaders thought it timely to launch their attack. As the agents of the bourgeois ANC it is clear that they can’t accept any criticism of the ANC’s neo-liberal policies and so Vavi must be removed.

This campaign against Vavi is led by the leadership of the majority of Cosatu unions, particularly the NUM, Nehawu, Popcru and Sadtu. The leadership of these unions are actively and directly promoting the ANC’s neo-liberal capitalist interests within Cosatu put up any resistance to the threat to the federation’s political and organisational independence at Cosatu’s CEC where the charges against Vavi emerged. A commission of enquiry was established to investigate the charges. The Cosatu CEC in May this year was planned to be the meeting where Vavi was to get the chop.

However the ANC leadership intervened and convinced the Cosatu leaders to hold off and put up a show of unity. They knew that hostilities at the Cosatu CEC and kicking Vavi out could have precipitated a backlash from Cosatu members and even a split within the federation. The ANC could not afford a weakened and divided Cosatu with less than a year to go for the next national and provincial elections.

The unions who have led the charges are themselves pits of corruption and misuse of workers’ money. Part of their determination to get rid of Vavi is to prevent him from investigating and exposing their corrupt leadership. The Mail & Guardian has exposed how many senior officials have fathered children with subordinate staff. It’s clear that the charges are not made out of concern for the proper running of Cosatu but emerges as an opportunistic attempt to remove a political rival from Cosatu’s leadership. This is very similar to the removal of Julius Malema from the ANC youth league, who was acceptable to the ANC leadership for as long as he towed the line.

Vavi & Cosatu under attack

Cosatu’s CEC Political Commission Opposes the NDP but will Engage Constructively at the Alliance Economic Summit

The Commission resolved that “While we want to unite...
Cosatu under attack

behind the Second Phase of the Transition, we will resist problematic proposals…”And ……wants to ensure that the ANC government’s NDP; fundamentally transforms the structure of the economy, promotes a new growth path to industrialise our economy, place the creation of decent work for all at the centre of economic policy and place redistribution and combating inequality and poverty as a fundamental pillar of economic development.

This agreement by the Political Commission must have pleased Vavi and the leadership of Numsa and Fawu and appears to lay the political basis for unity within the federation. However, it was simply a delaying tactic and will not have any influence over the ANC government’s economic policy. This conciliatory approach of vague, seemingly progressive positions contained in resolutions has been tried and tested before for over twenty years – from Cosatu’s Macro Economic Research Group (MERG) during the early 1990s, to several alternative economic policy proposals by Cosatu to the ANC and the Alliance such as Social Equity and Job Creation during the mid-1990s and most recently being its Growth Path to Full Employment (2010).

Numsa general secretary Irvin Jim. Deputy general secretary Karl Gloete said “We are more certain that the intelligence community is centrally involved in the battles in Cosatu. We also have it on good authority that after dealing with Vavi, the next person would be Numsa general secretary. The other person would be the Numsa president (Cedric Gina)”, Numsa suspended Cosatu second deputy president Zingiswa Losi on 25 September. She was a full-time shop steward at the Ford Motor Company in Port Elizabeth. She is widely seen as close to Cosatu president S’dumo Dlamini and part of the anti-Vavi heave. But the opposition have no principles either: “Vavi and Numsa’s Irvin Jim even went to the extent of mobilising in support of the corrupt Jacob Zuma and the ANC leadership

Vavi, Jim & Co are Responsibility for the Current Situation

Despite these alternative economic policy proposals of Cosatu hardly being radical or socialist and Cosatu’s desperate attempts to influence the alliance and the ANC government, it has achieved nothing but vague promises. To achieve this influence, the Cosatu leadership, including Vavi and Numsa’s Irvin Jim, even went to the extent of mobilising in support of the corrupt Jacob Zuma and the current ANC leadership who are even more right-wing than the Mbeki regime.

What Vavi, Jim and the union leaders on the left need to realise is that the current situation is the logical outcome of NDR and also of their own making. NDR is the Stalinist theory that justifies the unconditional support of the black bourgeoisie during the “democratic phase”. Revolutionary socialists have long warned of the perils of NDR and the multi-class, popular front Tripartite Alliance – that it can only be sustained on the basis of trade unions and workers compromising their own interests in support of the black bourgeoisie and its government.

This has never been and never will be a “revolutionary alliance” that serves the interest of the working class and poor since the ANC, its leading party is a capitalist party. Leaders like Vavi and Jim have for several years aided in selling this lie to the Cosatu members and the working class. Even now that they are fighting for their political survival in Cosatu, they have still not broken from the politics of the ANC/SACP. This is their biggest weakness.

Once again the Cosatu leaders are not turning to the two million members of Cosatu to force the ANC government to adopt more radical economic policies and implement them. This is once again a way of duping Cosatu members into believing that the Alliance and the ANC is willing to change and be more “working class biased”. However, the reality of the Alliance and the ANC in government for twenty years has shown that the ANC is a capitalist political party and actually anti-working class.

It has implemented economic policies that favour white monopoly capital and the new black capitalists. This has resulted in the majority of black South Africans getting poorer and suffering economic hardship – having to pay high prices for everything from housing, transport, food, electricity, water to education for our children. Yet millions of workers have lost their jobs over the last twenty years and millions still working have seen their working conditions and wages worsen – having to rely on expensive loans to survive.

The Mineworkers of Marikana have shown the Way

Last year the Lonmin mineworkers (rock-drill operators) decided that enough is enough and embarked on a wild-cat strike against their bosses (including ANC leader Cyril Ramaphosa) for a living wage. The ANC government’s response was brutal and massacred 34 miners in cold blood.

This tragic episode in our class struggle exposed the ANC and the Alliance for what it is – an organisation for the suppression of working class interests and to support capitalism under ANC rule. The SACP general secretary, Blade Nzimande, like the police commissioner, Ria Phiyega, openly endorsed the massacre of the mineworkers and the crushing of the strike. Likewise, the leaders of NUM collaborated with the bosses and called for police action against their own members in defence of the two-year wage agreement.

Regrettably approximately 100,000 mineworkers have since resigned from the NUM and joined other unions, especially AMCU. These militant mineworkers presented a real opportunity to create a rank and file movement within the NUM to democratis and kick out the reactionary right-wing ANC/SACP leaders of the union. Instead hostile divisions have been created between mineworkers - between those belonging to AMCU up against those who remained within the NUM. The only ones who benefit from this division and hostility are the mine bosses.
Cosatu under attack

The Way Forward
We cannot put any faith in the Cosatu leadership! It’s only workers who can protect the federation from being undermined and completely dominated by the corrupt bourgeois ANC’s domination. We must reject the ANC Task Team of Sydney Mafumadi and Alec Irwin. These are the members of Mbeki’s Cabinet who introduced and managed Gear! How can they possibly be interested in the welfare of workers? We say “Hands off Cosatu!” We call for a return to the traditions of the early Cosatu. We must demand rank-and-file democracy and proper workers’ control over the Federation. We must demand that the attack on Vavi is properly discussed in all the structures of the affiliates as well as in Cosatu locals. The charges against the GS cannot be kept from the members who elected him.

The workers demand a living wage because the life they lead is more like dying than living. They demand a decent life, so even the ANC’s idle promise of a ‘better life’ is not good enough. They know that their lives are worth nothing in the eyes of the capitalist bosses and the ANC political bosses. They create the wealth but only the bosses profit from it. They know that the privileges of the bosses and their agents are as a result of their blood, sweat and tears!

The struggle for a Living Wage is much more than just the wages paid each month by the bosses. It’s also about the state providing the necessary conditions in which a decent life can be lived. So we have to demand decent housing for all and the necessary services like electricity, water and sanitation, roads, sports fields, parks, libraries, etc. that provide for the needs of a community. Furthermore, there needs to be free quality education for all students. Similarly, free quality health care for the working class has to be made available.

These are the issues that Cosatu must vigorously and robustly take up and lead fighting campaigns for by the entire working class. There is no doubt that the capitalist ANC will oppose the granting of these demands. It is only by fighting for these demands that Cosatu will truly represent its members and the broader working class. Cosatu has to play a leading role in bringing together all working class formations that are determined to resist the attacks that capitalism launches.

We have to link this campaign to a Living Income Grant for the unemployed, capitalism throws off the workers it doesn’t need and leaves them to rot in poverty in the townships and locations scattered across the country. This is exactly what is happening in the mining industry, despite the record profits that the bosses made out of mineworkers’ sweat and blood over the past 5 years.

The unemployed are then used to undercut the wages that trade unions have fought for as we can see with the Extended Public Works Programme (EPWP) and the National Youth Wage Subsidy Scheme that is promoted by both the ANC and the DA. A Living Income Grant ensures that the unemployed are able to live a decent life and can enter employment at the wages workers have bargained for.

Break the Alliance, Don’t Support the ANC!

The ANC government declared war on the mineworkers last year, slaughtering 34 miners in cold blood and declared a de facto state of emergency in working class townships around Rustenburg. It will not hesitate to use the repressive apparatus of the capitalist state to smash working class communities who protest or workers who strike. In 2011 it was Andries Tatane killed in Ficksburg, previously it was Samwu shop-steward, Petros Msiza - who will be killed next when we strike for a living wage?

The Alliance is premised on the theory and strategy of National Democratic Revolution. This theory and strategy binds Cosatu in practice to class-collaborationism and reformism that promotes the false belief that the working class and its enemies – the capitalists and the bourgeois state have common interests.

We must decide once and for all to break the Alliance with the ANC and treacherous SACP.

Away with undemocratic and class collaborationist leaders!

The traditions of workers democracy have been severely eroded and replaced by class collaboration with our enemies the bosses and the capitalist ANC government. This class collaboration has taken many guises: reconciliation, nation-building, ‘Proudly South Africa’, social partnership, the Tripartite Alliance, etc.

The latest is the “Mining Accord” facilitated by Deputy President, Kgalema Motlanthe, to ensure labour peace (and to keep up the rate of profit) during this year’s wage negotiations and beyond. In the public service many of the Cosatu unions have betrayed their membership by agreeing to the Public Service Charter, which undermines the bargaining rights of members.

We cannot seriously fight for a living wage, for decent work, for decent housing, for quality education and health care or quality services, for socialism on the basis of class collaboration. It undermines our class resistance and struggle by partnership with our enemies, the bosses and the government.

Only the emergence of a rank-and-file movement can oust the rotten Cosatu leadership and replace it with genuine class fighters. If our strategic aim is socialism, then the task is to ensure that the working class through a consistent struggle is prepared ideologically, politically and organisationally to take power and establish itself as a new ruling class.

- Break the class-collaborationist Alliance!
- Break from the class collaborationist perspective of the NDR!
- Launch a debate and a struggle for a mass workers’ party, based on the trade unions that can genuinely champion the immediate and historic interests of the working class.

The latest is the “Mining Accord” facilitated by Deputy President, Kgalema Motlanthe (above), to ensure labour peace (and to keep up the rate of profit) during this year’s wage negotiations and beyond. In the public service many of the Cosatu unions have betrayed their membership by agreeing to the Public Service Charter, which undermines the bargaining rights of members.

We cannot seriously fight for a living wage, for decent work, for decent housing, for quality education and health care or quality services, for socialism on the basis of class collaboration. It undermines our class resistance and struggle by partnership with our enemies, the bosses and the government.

Only the emergence of a rank-and-file movement can oust the rotten Cosatu leadership and replace it with genuine class fighters. If our strategic aim is socialism, then the task is to ensure that the working class through a consistent struggle is prepared ideologically, politically and organisationally to take power and establish itself as a new ruling class.

- Break the class-collaborationist Alliance!
- Break from the class collaborationist perspective of the NDR!
- Launch a debate and a struggle for a mass workers’ party, based on the trade unions that can genuinely champion the immediate and historic interests of the working class.
The Past and Marikana – Imperialism and the continued Rape of Africa

By Ailish Dease

The Native people in Africa have mined gold and extracted metals since ancient times using traditional methods until the continent was invaded and occupied by European Colonisers who introduced machines. [1] [2] Since then these predators have been consuming the resources of the land with an intensity that is unrivalled in history.

The European’s first obsession in Africa was gold then ivory and then humans (slavery). The exploitation of African minerals for making steel alloys and the invention of the sub machine gun tipped the military balance in Europe’s favour. Colonialisation gave Europe the technological edge.

Walter Rodney explains Africa’s contribution to European capitalist development:

European countries... decided on the role to be played by the African economy; and on the other hand, Africa formed an extension to the European capitalist market. [3]

Rodney shows how the exploitation of African resources during colonialism and since have continued that underdevelopment. The slave trade was pivotal to the development of capitalism in Europe and the US but only to a certain level, then it was no longer useful for the higher stage of industrialisation necessary for capitalism to expand, so slavery was abolished.

While Africans had mined gold for centuries in a traditional manner, Europeans started mining gold in South Africa since 1886. Their main trading partners were Europe and the US whose currencies were then backed by gold. Initially the gold was easily accessible but gradually it has become more dangerous as they have had to go deeper below the earth’s surface and so it’s much more expensive. South Africa has some of the deepest mines in the world.

It was difficult for the Europeans to get labour due to the dangerous working conditions and the low wages, so by 1880 they devised a way to destroy African Kingdoms by exploiting internal grievances and setting African nations against one another, the old Imperialist divide and rule tactic. Once they had stolen the land they were able to force Africans to work in the mines since they had no other way to survive. The mining industry destroyed independent African farming as a way of life and changed the political system in South Africa. The oppressive British and Boer governments imposed taxes on Africans: a ‘hut’ tax and ‘poll tax’ to be paid in cash, forcing people to work for the predators. Apartheid was built on a two tiered labour economy. "the wealth of Reef gold mines lies not in the richness of the strike but in the low costs of production kept down by cheap labour" [4]

From the beginning the mining industry in South Africa had a poor safety and high casualty rate, this is in addition to disease brought about by the dangerous minerals being mined. [5] Rodney’s book reveals how the South African mining industry, aided by the racist state, bid a pandemic of silicosis for almost a century and allowed workers infected with tuberculosis to spread the potentially fatal disease to rural communities. (Reminds us of Lord Jeffery Amherst’s letter on how “to Exterminate this Execrable Race.” in the Ohio Valley, 1763) [6]

Mining is a particularly odious industrial process and because of the location of these mines, the capitalists can produce at much lower costs because they can suspend standard environmental safeguards.

Wherever uranium/platinum is extracted it is at a terrible social economic and environmental cost to workers. It is a granular substance, which is windblown and the tailings and the water runoff contaminate large areas of the land. Even when the mines are closed the health hazards remain. Inhaling the dust causes lung cancer and leukaemia (cancer of the bone marrow) etc. It causes birth defects and psychological disorders. One of the dangers posed by the evaporation ponds is that it seeps into the ground water.

In 1922 the whites only Mineworkers Union went on strike against Management’s proposal to employ cheaper Black Labour into skilled positions. They were supported in this racist activity by the Communist Party of South Africa which joined them under the slogan “Workers of the world, unite and fight for a white South Africa!”. The government did what was necessary to ensure a cheap, divided and compliant labour force - it crushed the strike leaving over two hundred people dead. [7]

In 1941 African workers formed the AMWU at a time when Black miners earned R70 and white miners earned R848. The existence of the union was a threat to the cheap Labour system so the state passed a law forbidding any meeting of more than 20 people on mine property. In spite of the difficulties they faced organising the workers, the union persisted and in 1946 they presented a claim for higher wages to the Chamber of Commerce which was duly ignored.

On the 12th August 1946 tens of thousands of miners went on strike and the state brutally crushed the strike. Workers were treated with utter barbarism, live ammunition rounds were used to force workers back down the mines, the official number killed outright was 12. The strike lasted four bloody days and at the end the union leaders, the ANC leaders and the Central Committee of the Communist Party were arrested and tried for treason and sedition. State repression increased significantly after the elections in 1948.

The strike and the physical and political repression which followed it brought about a sea change in the consciousness of African workers. Dr. A.B. Xuma the president of the ANC demanded “recognition for African trade unions and adequate wages for African workers including miners” [8] Several significant political organisations emerged as a result of the 1946 strike and the militancy of those workers, e.g. the Anti-Apartheid movement, and the defiance campaign of the sixties.

Since the end of Apartheid, extreme exploitation and op-
The Past and Marikana

pression continues for Black workers. The conditions of miners and others have improved in many secondary respects. The system of racist regimented pass control and the compound system is no longer there and workers have freedom of movement. In many of the older mines the single-sex hostel system has been ended and living conditions upgraded. Workers' rights have been improved in legislation and wages have also improved for some. However the aggregate living conditions of the working class in South Africa is in fact worse now due to the impact of neo-liberalism and the gap between rich and poor has increased, only now the rich include those former ANC/Cosatu leaders like Cyril Ramaphosa who have joined the ruling class via the Black Empowerment Programme (BEE). The platinum mining sector is relatively new and developed in the context of limited regulation during the period of the ANC-led neo-liberal onslaught that was intended to impress foreign investors and ensure high returns on their investment. The ANC changed the form of exploitation the better to increase the rate of exploitation. This has resulted in a social catastrophe in the communities surrounding the platinum mines that sprung up. 85% of the land is still owned by the colonisers. Every day there are protests in the streets regarding the lack of service delivery, no electricity, no water etc.

Lonmin is one of the largest producers of platinum in the world, and most of its tonnage comes from the Marikana mine. The company reported revenues of $1.9 billion in 2011, an increase of 25.7%, most of which would come from the Marikana mine. [9] The price of Platinum has increased fivefold since 2011 and production at Lonmin by 60%. Direct export of minerals and metals account for 60% of all export revenue

The miners had several grievances about wages, conditions, mass dismissals of workers and more importantly the number of fatalities at Lonmin which has DOUBLED since January 2011. Miners risk their lives every day to make profits for Capitalists like Lonmin and when they ask for a living wage the state guns them down. [10]

In addition to the appalling conditions, almost a third of Lonmin's workforce is employed through third party contractors 'Labour brokers' a system in place since the 19th century which the ANC has refused to ban. In regard to state violence, two weeks before the Marikana massacre five workers on a protest were killed by the police at a shaft outside Rustenburg. Their murders were not reported except for a mere paragraph in the business pages.

Since the massacre at least twelve people have been killed at Marikana and eight of those were prominent Union leaders. As of this writing the assassinations of workers' leaders continue. At the inquiry set up to determine what happened on 12/08/12 evidence is gradually emerging that the assault on workers was planned. “The South African police lied about events in last year's Marikana miners' strike in which police fired on thousands of workers, an investigating commission said” Thursday September 19, 2013...CNN

The wage dispute at Marikana was exacerbated by a turf war between the NUM and the Association for Mineworkers and Construction (AMCU). The NUM having been formed during Apartheid has a long history at the mines. But it had become complacent as an ANC ally and failed to represent the workers' interests so their Rep at Lonmin was rejected by his own members. The AMCU has now displaced NUM as the largest union at Marikana.

After the massacre at Marikana the world was shocked and outraged at this slaughter of workers but the NUM, ANC, SACP and Cosatu endorsed the police actions and condemned the miners. The unholy alliance of the ANC/SACP/Cosatu had to support what they felt was necessary to ensure a cheap and compliant workforce for capital. Although Cosatu had, through its general secretary (Z. Vavi) spoken in favour of pro-poor policies and had even dared to criticize the ANC government, they succumbed to reaction and supported the Alliance position.

There has been in the past and there is now bitter infighting within the constituent members of the Alliance but the leaders were all singing from the same hymn sheet. Except for Vavi who raised the alarm re the escalating rate of inequality there was no one else to speak for the poor. The Alliance was and remains a means to enrich oneself and to hell with the producers of the wealth. Speaking truth to power had caused Vavi to acquire enemies in high places and Vavi played right into their hands by becoming embroiled in a scandal in which serious charges have been laid against him. These are charges for which Vavi must be censured. His enemies are hoping to get rid of him from the political scene, but with elections coming next year the ANC cannot afford to dump him, not with his popularity among the masses and the trade unions needing a change in policy as corruption has become institutionalised.

Cosatu should not have jumped into bed with the ANC/SACP in the first place. Just as no state can represent the interests of all the people, so no grouping of workers and rulers can function for the benefit of the ruled. Cosatu failed in its duty to fight for workers' rights and interests which could never be the same as the interests of the ANC. As for the SACP their actions historically and currently is what gives communists a bad name. Cosatu has failed to organise and educate workers, to coordinate the actions of all the disgruntled workers and unemployed. They failed to provide a plan of action for workers to take power.

There is a real need to rekindle a popular mobilisation that could regain the political initiative in this situation. There needs to be active outreach to the people involved in the service protests etc. to link up all the opposition to the government and the capitalist class. The capitalists are all-

Continued on p. 20

Miners from Marikana, along with their families and supporters, march to the Union Buildings in Pretoria, to protest the government's lack of legal funding for the Marikana commission of inquiry, Sept. 12, 2013
John Gurney an academic from Newcastle University offers a biographical sketch of Gerrard Winstanley the 17th Century revolutionary and utopian communist. In the introduction Gurney attempts to place Winstanley in an Anarchist or Marxist tradition which is an idealist formulation. As I stated in Socialist Fight no 11 Winstanley was a utopian communist “Their communism was based on utopian ideals particularly the bible” [1]. Marxism and anarchism would emerge later in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Gurney starts the biographical sketch by tracing Winstanley’s life. He was born in Wigan and subsequently moved to London. Winstanley was a small trader earning his living as a cloth maker. He had also studied the bible and much of his writings are religious in context and tone. This is only natural as the 17th Century revolution in Britain used the saints and the second coming of Christ as the outward appearance of the underlying social forces in conflict.

The economic climate in the 1640s was very severe and Winstanley had to seek alternative forms of work. “It was long thought that Winstanley was reduced to destitution after his move from London and that in Cobham he was forced to take work as a labourer”. [2]. Working in Cobham, Surrey Winstanley would be aware of the many tracts of land that lay unused or only had sheep and cattle grazing whilst many poor Labourers were left to starve. There were many conflicts as well between the Landlord squires and the poor tenant farmer. “Landlord tenant conflict was exacerbated by the War” [3].

Winstanley used the Digger programme as a communist solution so that woods and forest and tracts of land could be tilled and dug and a community of workers could establish a ‘Communist Community’. The economic climate had pauperised huge sections of the population and Winstanley hoped through his revolutionary programme of Digging and tilling the land would prevent starvation and misery. “Gentry overstock the commons with sheep and cattle so that inferior tenants and poor Labourers can hardly keep a cow but half starve her” [4]. Gurney shows how Winstanley’s ‘Law of Righteousness’ encapsulates the whole Digger and communist experience. “Winstanley’s denunciation of Inequality and its causes and his determination to see the downfall of poverty and oppression” [5]. Winstanley declared in his programme “worke together” “Eat bread together”. “How he will have us that are called common people to manure upon the common lands” [6].

During the political crisis of 1649, Winstanley decided that the cure was to abolish private property and establish communal property together “communism”. This began on the wastes of St Georges Hill in Surrey. “Work began on Sunday April 1st 1649 when a small group of women and men started digging and sowing vegetables on the wastes of St Georges Hill”. [7]. The whole programme of Digg ing was announced in The True Levellers Standard Advanced; Or, The State of Community Opened, and Presented to the Sons of Men (1649). At the same time as Winstanley was announcing his communist programme, the Levellers who were organised in the Army had mutinied at Burford in Oxfordshire. “Loyal units of the Army under Fairfax and Cromwell (Army Grandees LH) and overwhelmed around 900 mutineers at Burford in Oxfordshire” [8].

The distinction between the Levellers led by John Lilburne and William Walwyn and the True Levellers or Diggers was important. The Levellers were a middle class movement fighting for democratic rights. They were mainly small farmers, Merchants, Tradesmen and minor gentry. They were fervent supporters of private property. Lilburne had protested to Ireton (Army Grandee and Cromwell’s son-in-law LH) at Putney when they were discussing grievances from the Army that they were opposed to levelling people’s estates or property. Winstanley and his small band of supporters were communists who opposed private property and were also pacifists. “The Leveller leaders repeatedly insisted that they had no intention of abolishing propriety, levelling men’s estates or making all things common” [9].

The Digger communities spread to Wellingborough in Northamptonshire, St Iver in Buckinghamshire. Winstanley in the second Digger Manifesto “Spelt out plans to cut and sell wood on the Commons in order to raise funds for purchasing food and corn” [10]. Although Gurney refuses to use the word communism, his description of Winstanley’s digging is communism in practice whereas Gurney uses the word community. “Winstanley chose to emphasise the social and practical benefits of establishing community” [11].

The major fault with Gurney’s analysis is his thoroughgoing idealist formulation of Winstanley’s thoughts on historical materialist and scientific communism. The conditions for historical materialism and Marxism had not yet ripened. There was no organised working class and trade unions had not yet been formed. Winstanley was a utopian communist with limitations on how to achieve communism. This would only ripen during the 18th and 19th Centuries with the writings of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. Hostile opposition to the Diggers and their communities by the landlords, squires and propertied classes overwhelmed the landless peasants and wage labourers. As paci-
Gerrard Winstanley

fists, they had no answer to military might from the state. They believed that through word of mouth and persuasion, people would see that Winstanley's vision was the right one. It would be left to Marx and Engels to map out the conditions for the overthrow of the capitalist state through construction of a trained and disciplined Party like the Bolsheviks, tempered and led by Lenin and Trotsky. Cromwell and Fairfax ensured that the communist experiment failed and with the Military Coup in 1650 Cromwell would assume total power as Lord Protector. In the final chapter “Winstanley’s Legacy” Gurney reveals his middle class liberal prejudice to communism. He tries to subsume Winstanley amongst a plethora of left wing, radical and anarchist traditions. Gurney makes reference to Christopher Hill, the foremost Marxist historian of the 17th Century. There is no doubt that Hill’s writings on the English revolution are a major source of Marxism. “With their distinction of having put forward a communist programme Winstanley and his fellow diggers had a secure place in the history of the people’s century’s long struggle against oppression”. [12]. Gurney accuses Brian Manning, another Marxist historian of being ambivalent to the Diggers and more sympathetic to the Levellers. Gurney is wrong. Manning was quite clear on the relationship. “The diggers got no support from the Army apart from sympathetic noises from a few individual soldiers and they got no support from the Levellers”.[13]. Gurney has provided the reader with much useful information on Winstanley’s life and legacy, but by blurring the distinction between the Diggers programme and the Levellers programme there is a weakness in his analysis. His refusal to accept the Diggers programme as a “Utopian Communist Programme” means that all we are left with are generalities and confusion. It will be left to other serious Marxist historians to map out the importance of Winstanley’s communism.

Notes
[1] Socialist Fight No. 11 p. 33
[2] Gurney, J. Gerrard Winstanley P. 19
[3] Ibid p. 20
[4] Ibid p. 22
[5] Ibid p. 42
[6] Ibid p. 43
[7] Ibid p. 47
[8] Ibid p. 61
[10] Gurney, J. Gerrard Winstanley p. 64
[12] Ibid p. 118

Marikana From page 18

Marikana: ready hedging their bets by encouraging new political parties. There is Malema’s party, the Economic Freedom Fighters, although the ANC is trying to get him back in the fold. Then there is the party of a former director of the World Bank. Africa already has one of these people leading a country to disaster. World Bank/IMF policies have devastated Africa. These parties are not a threat to the ANC because they represent more of the same, the people would rather go with the devil they know or stay away and not vote. None of these parties have anything to offer the working class. The ANC represents an absolutely corrupt political class, with no credibility. Since the ANC came to power the looting of the economy by multi-nationals has continued unabated and the ANC has attempted to secure the profits of mining capital through violence as at Marikana.

The massacre was a message from the state that it intends to repress resistance so virulently that no one will want to resist. Unfortunately for the state, history has shown time and again that repression breeds resistance and the heroic South African working class, vanguard of the global working class, will continue to resist and the ANC cannot forever repress their just aspirations to live in dignity with basic rights.

Notes
[6] Sir Jeffery Amherst, commander of British forces in North America, wrote July 7, 1763, probably unaware of the events at Fort Pitt: “Could it not be contrived to Send the Small Pox among those Disaffected Tribes of Indians? We must, on this occasion, Use every Stratagem in our power to Reduce them.” He ordered the extermination of the Indians and said no prisoners should be taken. About a week later, he wrote to Bouquet: “You will Do well to try to Innoculate the Indians by means of Blankets as well as to try Every other method that can serve to Extirpate this Execrable Race.” Colonial Germ Warfare by Harold B. Gill Jr.http://www.history.org/FOUNDATION/journal/spring04/warfare.cfm
[7] Charles Feinstein, An Economic History of South Africa, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, 211. The SACP denies it supported the racist slogan and campaign but the right wing Fortune Magazine points out: “one of the strike’s leaders was W. H. “Comrade Bill” Andrews, later to become secretary of the South African Communist Party. Marching through the streets of Johannesburg waving red flags the strikers chanted, “Workers of the world, fight and unite for a white South Africa.” Lester Maddox, meet Karl Marx.”. He was clearly a racist but sought to hide this in the CPSA and was opposed there strongly in his attitude to Blacks by Sidney Bunting and others in 1925.
The Mitchell Principles – a fair basis for conflict resolution or undemocratic and pro-Imperialist?

By Diarmuid Breathnach (Diarmuid has asked us to make it clear that he is not a supporter or member of any particular political group)

Preamble

The discussions prior to the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, in what is often termed “the Irish peace process”, were based on six principles and the Agreement itself is also said to be based on them. The Mitchell Principles are named after George Mitchell, a US Senator and mediator in the Irish talks and earlier in the Palestinian talks of 1993.

The Good Friday Agreement was signed in 1998 between representatives of Provisional Sinn Féin (and arguably, at the very least by proxy, Provisional IRA also) on the one hand and by representatives of the British Government on the other. Subsequently a referendum in the Irish state gave a big majority for the removal of Articles 2 and 3 of Bunreacht na hÉireann, the Constitution of the Irish state, articles which had claimed dominion over the whole of Ireland, and this was taken as a popular endorsement of the Good Friday Agreement.

An election in the Northern Ireland statelet gave a narrower majority to parties who endorsed the Good Friday Agreement and this too was taken as an endorsement of the Agreement.

The Mitchell Principles are often hailed by commentators as fair and democratic and as a sound basis for peace talks. This short article sets out to test this claim, to analyse the six Principles from a democratic and anti-Imperialist point of view.

1. “The parties agree to democratic and exclusively peaceful means of resolving political issues.”

The terms of the first stipulation of the Mitchell Principles, in the circumstances in which the British had imposed a division on the country, in one part of which they had constructed a statelet within which their supporters, the Unionists [1], had an inbuilt majority, were not only unfair but intrinsically undemocratic.

Ireland had been considered one entity by the English conquerors at least since the 15th Century. Its partition was not even imagined until the early 20th Century and then only as a response to the Nationalist demand for autonomy under Home Rule[2], conceded in principle by the British in 1914; allegedly partition was in response to militant Unionists rebelling [3] against Nationalist Home Rule.

The partition of Ireland, in one part of which the Unionists would have a voting majority, had first been conceived to keep the historic province of Ulster for the Unionists, while the Nationalists could have the other three provinces. However, it was soon realised that Nationalists and Republicans would between them outvote the Unionists and so the boundary was re-drawn to exclude three counties [4] of Ulster’s nine from the proposed Loyalist state. Even within these Six Counties, the Unionists were obliged, in order to ensure political control of local authorities, to draw election constituency boundaries in such a way as to ensure that many areas with a Nationalist-Republican majority in their population nevertheless returned Unionist candidates. [5]

Entitlement to vote based on home occupation and property ownership, coupled with wide-scale housing discrimination against potential Nationalist voters (i.e. Catholics) kept local authorities in Unionist hands until a fierce campaign for civil rights and a guerrilla war forced the removal of these franchise restrictions, after which some local authorities came under Nationalist-republican control. However, within the Six Counties overall, demographics continued to ensure a Unionist majority.

The wish of the majority of Ireland had been for independence of the whole country and that had been demonstrated not only by centuries of struggle and uprisings but by the guerrilla war of 1919–1921 and also by the bourgeois elections of 1919 under British rule, the democratic expression of which the British had firstly ignored and later assaulted by their proscribing the First Dáil (parliament) and the jailing of elected members.

The First Mitchell Principle’s stipulation that the division of the country could only be overcome if a majority of the voters in the Six Counties voted for that proposition is profoundly unfair, in that its effect is that decolonisation and national unification can only be permitted by a majority vote in that part of the country which had artificially been divided from the rest precisely on the basis that the majority of the population there was known to vote Unionist, i.e. for remaining a British colony. [6]

Furthermore, the acceptance of such a principle internationally would be disastrous – it would mean that any state could legitimately invade another, annex a part of it by force of arms, ensure through colonisation and other means that a majority voted to remain its colony and then prohibit the colonised from liberating the colony and reuniting the country.

2. “The parties agree to the disarmament of all paramilitary organisations.”

This second stipulation might appear at a hurried first glance as fair but in fact it is completely the opposite. It leaves totally out of the equation the largest and most heavily-armed party to the dispute – the British state, with over 177,000 personnel in their armed forces [7] and over 7,200 armed police in the Six Counties, along with their intelligence services. It was in fact the violence of the armed and sectarian colonial police force which
The Mitchell Principles

had sparked off the uprising in Derry and Belfast in 1969 and it was in their support that the British armed forces had been sent to the statelet.

The main armed struggle had subsequently been between the Republican organisations and the British Army, with the armed colonial police in second place. The Loyalist paramilitaries were only third in level of struggle with the Republican armed organisations; in addition irrefutable evidence has emerged over the years of collusion between the Loyalist paramilitaries and the colonial police and British Army and indeed points to their actual direction by British intelligence services.

The British state’s armed forces do not even receive a mention in the Mitchell Principles and are left at the disposal of the state unhindered to use in any circumstances as it deems fit. Indeed, the possibility exists that the state would prevent the decolonisation and unification of the country even in the extremely unlikely eventuality that such a proposal received a majority of the votes in the Six Counties; the Mitchell Principles have nothing to say about that.

3. The 3rd Principle, “To agree that such disarmament must be verifiable to the satisfaction of an independent commission” underlines the First Principle and sketches the structure through which the unfair Second Principle is to be given effect.

4. “To renounce for themselves, and to oppose any effort by others, to use force, or threaten to use force, to influence the course or the outcome of all-party negotiations.”

This Fourth principle not only strengthens the unfair Second Principle but leaves the Republicans with no means of bringing about independence and unity beyond a majority vote in favour within the Six Counties where, as observed earlier, an artificial majority militates against this possibility.

The British state, on the other hand, can and does use force and the threat of it to influence not only negotiations but its continued control over its colony of the Six Counties. It used force to achieve the colonisation of the whole country for hundreds of years and when it could no longer continue to do so, it used force to partition the country and to maintain that partition for what is now approaching a century.

The section which calls upon the parties “to oppose any effort by others, to use force” is understood by all not to refer to opposing the use of force by the British state. But not only that, in “opposing any effort by others”, i.e. those who might not be signatories, it commits the signatories to at least morally condemn those who may continue armed activities and possibly even to collaborating with forces of the state against them.

That this stipulation in theory falls equally upon the armed sections of the Loyalists as it does upon the Republicans is immaterial, since as we have seen the Loyalist paramilitaries are not the most significant armed opposition to the Republicans and in fact may be seen mainly as auxiliaries of the British State, its armed forces and its colonial administration.

It is the Republicans who are clearly the target of this section and it requires those among them who have signed up to the Principles to denounce armed activities of other Republicans who do not feel bound by the Principles and perhaps even to supply the British state and its armed forces with information about them.

Martin McGuinness: On 7/3/2009 two off-duty British soldiers were shot dead outside Massereene Barracks in Antrim town. McGuinness said three days later of those who carried out the attack: “these people, they are traitors to the island of Ireland”. A story in the Belfast Telegraph by John Bingham on 17/6/2010 reported that “the sub-machinegun allegedly carried by Martin McGuinness on Bloody Sunday may have been used to murder two policemen days before, evidence in the Saville Inquiry report suggests.” McGuinness’ voice shook with the weight of hypocrisy when he made his statement on the Massereene shootings.

Certainly since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, which we are repeatedly informed are based upon the Mitchell Principles, the Republican parties to the Agreement, Sinn Fein and the Provisional IRA have publicly condemned other Republicans (“dissidents”) for their continued resistance, have threatened them and at times administered physical punishment [8]. In addition, one of the Provisionals’ most senior figures, Martin McGuinness, on a number of occasions has publicly called for people to inform on them to the British authorities.

As we have seen, the “democratic” methods available apply only to an area with boundaries so drawn as to leave the Republicans always outvoted by Unionists; they do not apply to a vote in all 32 Counties of the country (nor even by the population in Britain, which has shown in repeated censuses their wish for the British to withdraw from Ireland). The “peaceful methods” are required of the Republicans but not of the British state. The Principles deny the Republicans, in effect, both democratic and military means to achieve decolonisation and reunification.

The state has means of ensuring compliance with its requirements – maintaining its social order, control of property and security. It uses fines, threats of and periods of actual imprisonment as punishments with the intention of ensuring compliance. It administers these through courts, police and prison service, using physical force to carry out court sentences. Unof-
The Mitchell Principles

officially, it also administers beatings, both when attacking demonstra-
tions and on prisoners in their police stations.

Whatever one may think of punishment beatings, they were the equivalent control mechanisms of the Republican armed groups. They did not have recourse to fines and imprisonment.

With regard to “punishment killings”, these were usually carried out, it seems, against people who were proven or thought to be informers to British state forces. Looked at another way, in the absence of the possibility of jailing for espionage harming their security, i.e. the standard punishment of the state, the Republican armed organisations were either beating or killing those assumed to be endangering their security – upon which their very lives depended.

The Sixth Principle in effect prohibits the use of any force in order for the Republicans to ensure compliance and their organisation’s security, whilst at the same time permitting the state all of its own panoply in that regard, including the antidemocratic special “anti-terror” laws of the Six Counties.

Notes
[1] That is those who wished to continue in union with England, as part of the United Kingdom.
[2] “Home Rule” proposed a kind of autonomy within the British Empire. The country could have its government which could promulgate laws and impose taxes but could not separate from the Empire.
[3] The Unionists began to recruit a militia, the Ulster Volunteer Force, led by some politicians and capitalists of the colonial bourgeoisie and of Protestant religion, descendants of British colonists, with the support of the Conservative Party in Britain and of a substantial number of officers of the British Army in Ireland.
[4] Dún na nGall (Donegal), an Chábhán (Cavan), Muineacháin (Monaghan)
[5] After the War of Independence in Ireland (1919-1921), the British decided to divide the country, one part for the Nationalists and the other for the Unionists.

Originally, the plan was to give the Unionists the province of Ulster but they realised that the Catholics would be the majority within the province. For that reason, the borders of the Unionist statelet were drawn up to include only six of the nine counties of Ulster (that is the reason that Republicans call the statelet “The Six Counties” and neither “Ulster” nor “Northern Ireland”, as the northernmost part of Ireland is in County Donegal, one of the three Ulster counties that remained with the Irish state after the Treaty of 1921 (to see it, enter “image counties of Ireland” or similar into an Internet search).

But even so, they were obliged to change the electoral boundaries: wherever there would be a “Nationalist” majority in votes, they chopped up the districts, placing part of the community within one electoral district containing many Unionist votes, and the other part in a similar electoral district. This practice is called “gerrymandering”, after the practice of a US politician. For example, the city of Derry, which is nearly totally “Nationalist” or “Catholic”, for many years had a Unionist majority.

[6] “Catholics” and “Protestants” were labels of convenience given to the different communities within the colonial British state of the Six Counties, based on the majority religions within each community. The division has little to do with religion nowadays and even historically had more to do with economics and politics. The terms “Nationalist” and “Unionist” were employed by the Republicans during the 1971-1998 war in order to avoid the representation of the conflict as a religious one, as this had been an important aspect of the propaganda of the British state. Obviously, not all in the “Nationalist community” were Nationalists – some were socialists, communists, anarchists or social democrats. I prefer these terms to the religious one, as this had been an important aspect of the propaganda of the minority community.

[7] Figures at the time of writing – the numbers in the British armed forces were even higher at the time the Mitchell Principles were proposed.

[8] Including the murder of “Real IRA” member Joseph O’Connor in 2000.

Leon Trotsky: I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International; Go Forward!
We all know that in every war - in every conflict - there are inevitably prisoners - prisoners-of-war, prisoners of conscience, political prisoners, and resulting from these wars, these conflicts, there are also inevitably prisoners support groups in one form or another.

I would like to first of all tell you a little about my own organisation - the Irish Republican Prisoners Support Group. The IRPSG was founded here in London just over four years ago by political activists, Communists, Socialists, Trotskyists and the purpose of founding the group was to highlight the treatment and conditions of political prisoners, and resulting from these wars, inevitably prisoners of conscience, political prisoners, and from every conflict - not only in Ireland but also in Lithuania, Greece, Palestine and the Basque Country.

We are not aligned to any political party or political organisation. We are however prepared to work with others who are of like mind to ourselves. Since our foundation in 2009 we have held several public meeting here in Conway Hall with speakers from the RNU (Republican Network for Unity) in Derry, Republican Sinn Fein in Dublin - and several others including the Counihan-Sanchez Campaign.

The Counihan-Sanchez family were made homeless - a family of seven - told by Glenda Jackson and Brent council to upsticks and go and live in Wales - and by Rose McIntosh to go live in a caravan in a field in Ireland. We also campaign against the assertion that 'selective internment' - arrest and detention of (in many cases) former political prisoners who have served their sentences in the north of Ireland and who are re-arrested and held without charge INDEFINITELY!

Martin Corey has been held in detention now for over THREE years and is likely to remain a political prisoner held without charge for years to come - and there are others like Martin Corey.

There’s Stephen Murney - a political activist - a member of ÉIRIGI - a legally registered Republican Socialist organisation. Stephen Murney was arrested last November 2012 and charged with several ‘offences’ - “distributing information that may be useful to terrorists.” He had been handing out leaflets condemned by Glenda Jackson and Brent council to upsticks and go and live in a caravan in a field in Ireland. We also campaign against what is now known as ‘selective internment’ - arrest and detention of (in many cases) former political prisoners who have served their sentences in the north of Ireland and - where like Martin Corey - they are re-arrested and held without charge INDEFINITELY!

Martin Corey has been held in detention now for over THREE years and is likely to remain a political prisoner held without charge for years to come - and there are others like Martin Corey.

There’s Stephen Murney - a political activist - a member of ÉIRIGI - a legally registered Republican Socialist organisation. Stephen Murney was arrested last November 2012 and charged with several ‘offences’ - “distributing information that may be useful to terrorists.” He had been handing out leaflets condemned the dawn raids by the RUC/PSNI on homes on his estate - just like many are doing here today in Conway Hall. He was also charged with possessing items which could be used for
Address by Michael Holden

“terrorist purposes” - two flute-band uniforms! He was granted bail but the bail conditions were such that his human rights would be so curtailed they were unacceptable. To comply he would have to live five miles apart from his wife and family, not attend any political meetings or events, agree to be tagged - and report DAILY to the RUC/PSNI Barracks - a further 12 miles away in a Loyalist area! He refused to accept these bail conditions so was remanded to Maghaberry Gaol. In the words of Pat McNamee - “Newspeak is the term used by George Orwell in his book ‘1984’ to describe the language employed to oppress people in what was a victorious totalitarian state. That state is not so fictitious now.”

We also know of the Marian Price-McGlinchey case. This former republican prisoner spent two years in Maghaberry MEN’S prison on remand and then in Hydebank Prison in solitary confinement on very dubious charges. She was only released on bail because of poor and deteriorating health fairly recently.

Last year Gerry Downing and myself met with Irish (Leinster House) embassy officials and raised the question of ‘extraordinary rendition’, and the issuing of Irish passports in Dublin to a rogue state in the Middle East - who then used said passports to travel to Europe and carry out assassinations of leading Palestinians living outside Palestine. On the subject of Extraordinary Rendition we knew flights coming from Poland, Romania, Iraq and Afghanistan were landing regularly at Shannon Airport in the west of Ireland with cargoes of kidnapped political prisoners which - we believe - were destined for either the USA or Guantanamo Bay. When we raised these issues with embassy official Deirdre Lyster we were told answers to the Extraordinary Rendition issue and the granting of Irish passports to non-nationals would be raised with the Irish Foreign Ministry in Dublin and we would in due course be given explanations at a follow-up meeting at a time to be agreed. Needless to say there was no follow-meeting and we were never given any explanation.

More recently - and only a few days ago - we know the partner of American journalist Glenn Greenwald was arrested under so-called ‘anti-terror’ legislation. David Miranda was held and questioned for 9 hours - not about himself - but about his partner Glenn Greenwald. Greenwald had written about British Surveillance Programmes in operation in UK and USA, based on information leaked by Edward Snowden currently in hiding in Moscow. It can rightly be said that David Miranda was, for those 9 hours in detention, a political prisoner.

Any one of us could be victims of dubious and oppressive legislation if those in power are unhappy about what we say - or in the case of Stephen Murney - be unhappy with what we write, or the flute-band uniform we might have in our home, or in the case of David Miranda don’t like the company we keep. We can be detained just like Martin Corey, or be framed like Michael McKevitt.

Comrades and friends, there are two alternatives! ONE, we can surrender and accept what is happening - or TWO, we follow the example of the Counihan-Sanchez family and their supporters who refused to lie down to threats and intimidation - in fact showing us the way forward.

Irish Republican Prisoners Support Group motion on Irish Republican POWs for the Labour Representation Committee AGM on 23 November

This AGM reaffirms its stance on Irish and international anti-Imperialist political prisoners and continues to oppose all forms of Islamophobia which is used to erode the civil liberties of all opponents of capitalism and prepares its use against all working class organisation as the crisis deepens.

We pledge to fight the continued use of forcible strip searching in the north of Ireland both in Maghaberry and in Hydebank. We are particularly concerned with its return for female prisoners, which amount to brutal sexual assaults. On 14 August Sharon Rafferty was forcibly strip-searched in Hydebank gaol prior to a court appearance and again on return. This recalls the brutal victimisation of the pregnant Róisín McAliskey, the daughter of former Mid Ulster MP Bernadette McAliskey, strip searched more than 70 times before she gave birth. Amnesty International described her treatment as “cruel, inhuman and degrading”.

There is absolutely no need for such barbarism as is practised in these prisons by members of the POA. The BOSS chair is available for all body scans and is acceptable to the prisons authorities in Texas, the most draconian of all prison regimes in the US.

We demand:
1. Immediate implementation of the Maghaberry Agreement of August 2010 conceding freedom of movement and an end to all strip searching.
2. Release of Martin Corey and all held using the excuse of revoking the GFA license – this amounts to political censorship and a reintroduction of internment in another name.

Leon Trotsky: I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International; Go Forward!
Egypt: On horses who live on the wind and revolutions which are simultaneously counter-revolutions by Gerry Downing

When I was a child in rural West Cork my father told me a story of a man who had a horse and no fodder for him as winter came on. So he devised a plan to save him. He would teach his horse to live on the wind. All winter long he trained his horse in this technique until spring arrived. The horse was now fully trained but suddenly and inexplicably died.

This tale popped into my head when I read the story as related by several of the left and self-proclaimed revolutionary left of the “revolution” in Egypt that was going so excellently well that it overthrew the dictator Morsi but then suddenly went so disastrously and inexplicably wrong, like the poor horse in West Cork.

General Abdul Fattah al Sisi “stole” the “revolution”, the generals “hijacked” it etc. The Workers Revolutionary Party’s Marxist Review had a front page featuring those fireworks celebrations that were put on by the army supporters paid for, of course, by the Coptic Christian billionaire Naguib Sawiris who organised the coup and mass mobilisations in collaboration with the Tamarrod, the CIA and the army.

The mass movement created a huge crisis for the bourgeoisie and forced the army to step in and, after failing to reach any compromise with the Muslim Brotherhood, launch a coup to topple the Morsi presidency and replace it with as fake ‘interim’ government as a fig leaf for army rule.

Today there is much nonsense talked today of revolutions in the Arab Spring. Political idiots like the IMT’s Alan Wood could hail a reactionary populist uprising of 17 million against Morsi in Egypt as a revolution and then be left with the awful task of explaining how a “revolution” could produce such terrible counter-revolutionary results. The WRP News Line came to the same conclusion “the revolution forced the army to overthrow Morsi” says Dave Wiltshire, lost in contradictions about his revolution that overthrew Morsi and then went immediately wrong – if the coup was the revolution then the coup was also the counter-revolution that restored the army dictatorship, they are the same act yet we must believe the self-same coup was simultaneously both a revolution and a counter-revolution!

Wiltshire then gives up completely and adopts the ‘plague on both your houses’ Effelite position [1], refusing to defend the working class and poor who support the MB who are now joined by every progressive fighter in Egypt: On horses who live on the wind and revolutions which are simultaneously counter-revolutions.

Wiltshire goes on to attack its opponents, Morsi succeeded in its aims. And it then immediately mobilisation of middleclass army supporters who obliged them to concede a measure of democracy with a counter-revolutionary mobilisation of middleclass army supporters who demanded that the army topple Morsi. The army, of course, obliged because it had already ideologically won the mass movement to its side. This was a populist counter-revolution which set out to restore army rule and it succeeded in its aims. And it then immediately went on to attack its opponents, Morsi supporters in the beginning but now the whole of progressive Egypt.

It is best we leave the final word to the Revolutionary Socialist of Egypt, the SWP’s Egypt section from a report in WSWS:

Ahmed Shawki, editor of the International Socialist Review, declared, “The Tamarrod movement broke the dam by providing a vehicle by which the mass of the Egyptian population were able to make Morsi pay a political price for his actions.” He posed the question, “Military coups usually herald the defeat of the revolutionary process—they are often the more extreme representation of the counter-revolution. Does the military’s intervention to remove Morsi, appoint a new president and promise new elections represent the victory of counterrevolution?” He replied: “Absolutely not!”

Shawki described the army’s intervention as merely an effort to: “contain the movement… So while the military is in the streets and has overstepped the constitutional limits to its power, I believe that it will seek some means to quickly return power to a civilian authority. I don’t think it wants to hold state power”.

It is clear all these forces backed a horse that is already alive and well, though he has suffered a serious defeat in this race won by the Egyptian army and its US allies. And that is the Egyptian working class. But surely it must develop a better revolutionary leadership than these idiots above who cannot distinguish genuine revolution from populist reactionary counter-revolution.

**Notes**


We oppose unconditionally the proposed Imperialist attack on Syria and are for its defeat. The fundamental task of the hour for all serious socialists and anti-Imperialists internationally is to defend the national sovereignty of Syria against this Imperialist attack which is launched with Zionist assistance (a big Israeli military delegation is in Washington right now discussing with Susan Rice) in order to assist their allies, the Free Syrian Army and the various al Qaeda rebels of the Al-Nusra Front etc. There are no revolutionary socialists or anti-Imperialists fighting Assad in Syria, talk of what might have been is to support a phantom revolutionary army in the face of the very obvious reality of this Imperialist war of aggression.

We have every reason to suspect that Sarin and mustard gas (the same as used by the U.S. in Vietnam) which killed hundreds of people was more the work of Imperialist terrorism in the region. Obama and the Imperialist mass media are seeking to ascribe the blame to the Syrian government and are using this to justify the attack. And the same pro-Imperialist forces, this time the KLA, fabricated a bogus tale of the Račak Massacre in Kosovo in 1999 (all the dead were KLA fighters) [1] to justify the bombing of Yugoslavia, just exactly as they are probably doing now with their Sarin gas “red line” and the Weapons of Mass Destruction lies used to justify invading Iraq in 2003 and the Gulf of Tonkin incident in 1964 used to justify the war in Vietnam. [2] It is also reminiscent of the Gleiwitz incident, a staged attack by Nazi forces posing as Poles on 31 August 1939, against the German radio station Sender Gleiwitz in Gleiwitz, Upper Silesia, Germany (since 1945: Gliwice, Poland) on the eve of World War II in Europe. This was used to justify the invasion of Poland in 1939. [3]

It has always been thus; the spiral of Imperialist barbarism tries to hide a crime by committing another, greater, crime. The Imperialist terror attack using chemical weapons against hundreds of children and adults in Syria occurred immediately in the wake of a blatant coup in Egypt, followed by a bloody massacre of hundreds of the Egyptian oppositionists by the new pro-Imperialist coup government. Now, to cover the second crime, Imperialism threatens to bomb Syria, accusing it in a great hulabaloo of massacring their own people, when we know that since 2011 the U.S. itself has been supplying arms and other assistance to the terrorist mercenaries in Syria. The U.S. government has enlisted allies in the West and the Middle East and has transported huge killing machines by sea and air to commit genocide against the Arab peoples. They have used lies and media manipulation to accomplish this as in previous operations in Kosovo, Iraq, Afghanistan and more recently in Libya.

We offer the traditional Marxist position of unconditional but critical support to Syria in this assault and in the war against the Imperialist-sponsored rebels. We must follow the tactic of Lenin and Trotsky to the threat of Kornilov in Russia in 1917. We are for crushing the mercenaries of the FSA and the Al-Nusra Front. We are for an Anti-Imperialist United Front (AIUF) with Assad. We demand that Assad arms the working class and call for the enlisting of all the people in the army against the mercenaries and Imperialism. But we do not support Assad. This is a matter of principle. The Leninist-Trotskyists have not supported in the past, do not support in the present nor will in the future support any capital government. As Lenin said:

“Even now we must not support Kerensky’s government. This is unprincipled. We may be asked: aren’t we going to fight against Kornilov? Of course we must! But this is not the same thing: there is a dividing line here, which is being stepped over by some Bolsheviks who fall into compromise and allow themselves to be carried away by the course of events. We shall fight, we are fighting against Kornilov, just as Kerensky’s troops do, but we do not support Kerensky. On the contrary, we expose his weakness. There is the difference. It is rather a subtle difference, but it is highly essential and must not be forgotten.” [4]

We reject the abject notion that Imperialism is sponsoring any type of a revolution in Syria, no more than it did in sponsoring and militarily assisting the overthrow of Gaddafi in Libya or in covertly supporting the army coup in Egypt. Those who point to the subsequent slaying of the American Ambassador in Libya a year ago or the US support for the Muslim Brotherhood and Morsi when he was in office forget that Imperialism has no permanent friends or enemies, only economic and geo-political interests. The Fundamentalists it supported in Afghanistan in the 1980s and 90s fought it later in Iraq and Afghanistan itself, those it sponsored in Libya turned against it in Mali, those it is now sponsoring in Syria via its client states in the Gulf, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, will later fight it in a new arena. But if the US overthrow Assad and defeat Hezbollah at the same time it will have gained its most important strategic geo-political war aim in the region: it will have removed the threat to Israel posed by Hezbollah, the best guerrilla fighting force in the region, and it will have prepared the next attack for regime change on Iran. That it will have facilitated the imposition of barbaric regimes who may confront Israel later is very much a secondary question for Imperialism; the CIA celebrated the fall of Kabul to the Taliban and the lynching of former President Mohammad Najibullah in Afghanistan in September 1996.

The United Nations is effectively a nursery talking shop whereby the Imperialists allow the assembled nations of the world to adjourn in order to discuss matters of no concern to the popular masses.
For the military victory of Syria

world to play with the toys of diplomacy on secondary questions whilst it gets on with its own business regardless of what they think. Western Imperialism bombed Yugoslavia in 1999 despite the fact that the UN Security Council did not sanction it. US Imperialism considers the UN its own thing, because it is the majority funder and provides its HQ. It is nothing but a back office of the Pentagon when it decides to act for world order under US terms. The split on the top table, the Security Council, is unavoidable and can no longer be postponed if Imperialism is not to relinquish its all-encompassing global predatory role - economically, politically and militarily. This must mean war against Russia and China in the medium term. The social consequences on every continent are nothing but collateral damage for this “alliance of robbers” as Lenin described the League of Nations in 1920.

We reject any characterisation of this attack or the war in Syria since 2011 as any type of an inter-Imperialist proxy war between US-led Western Imperialism and Chinese-Russian Eastern Imperialism. The US and its allies in the UK, France, Germany and Japan control the overwhelming majority of the economic and military resources of the planet and are as bellicose now as the Imperialist powers were before WWI and WWII. They are going to war because capitalism’s falling rate of profit means this is the only way to restore a higher rate of profit for their trans-national corporations and finance houses in Wall Street, the City of London, Paris, Hamburg and Tokyo.

Just the announcement of the attack on Syria has boosted oil prices. The commodity hegemony of the “Seven Sisters” oil barons controlled by the U.S. and Britain (Exxon, Mobil, Gulf, Socal, Texaco, Shell, BP), whose main partners in the Middle East, not by chance, are Saudi Arabia, Qatar and UAE, the major direct funders of the Syrian mercenaries. “In New York, the price of a barrel of crude oil for October delivery rose $ 3.23 to $112.24 a barrel, the highest since May 3, 2011. Already in London, the price of Brent crude oil for delivery in October, reached a maximum of six months, rising 26% to $ 117.34 a barrel. The United States, France and the UK are close to a military intervention in Syria, after the alleged use of chemical weapons in the country.” [5]

This war could well be the opening volleys of WWII in what is essentially a global war for markets between the NATO bloc and the central opposition around Russia and China. The Chinese and Russian bourgeoisies are not strong enough to prevail in the fight for their own areas of influence. We see this in the successive retreats forced on China in Africa, first in Libya, then in Mali and more recently in the Central African Republic.

Compared to Western Imperialism the resources of Russia and China combined are puny indeed. This is a Western Imperialist-sponsored war and a counter-revolution which is currently engaged in ethnically cleansing the Kurds in northern Syria in order to declare an Islamic state based on Sharia law with all the terrible consequences for women, gays and lesbians and all minorities who are not sufficiently of the Sunni Muslim faith. The sponsoring of Sunni Muslim terrorism has been the main strategic orientation for the US via the CIA since the fall of Saddam made Shi’a Iran the main objective opponent in the region. The Special Activities Division of the CIA has carried out much Covert Action and “Special Activities” such as bombings of Shi’a civilians in Iraqi marketplaces to promote communal violence for its own ends. That is the reason for the obviously growing popularity of the Assad government not only among all the ethnic minority communities but also among the urban Sunni Muslims who wish to defend at least the level of secular rights and freedoms they have under Assad.

We therefore reject absolutely that this is, or is degenerating into, a sectarian Sunni/Shi’a conflict no more than the conflict in the north of Ireland was/is a religious Catholic/Protestant sectarian conflict. Clearly the source and aggressive perpetrators are the Sunni-based Al Nusra Front, assisted by Imperialist secret agents and the main victims are the Shi’a and all other minorities, despite some instances of sectarian atrocities on the government side. This too parallels the course of the conflict in the north of Ireland; the pro-Imperialist Loyalists are the source of sectarian divisions and the main perpetrators of atrocities. Religion is always an ideological cloak beneath which people fight out their real material economic, social and political interests. The dividing lines in both conflicts, as in the entire semi-colonial world, are between the forces of Imperialism and the forces of anti-Imperialism. Revolutionaries are always unequivocally anti-Imperialist, just as Trotskyists were and still are unyielding defenders of the deformed and degenerate workers states. Indeed anti-Imperialism was at the heart of that defence. Those who cannot seek the defeat of their own Imperialist war-mongers in this attack have fallen at the first hurdle and are of no use to the working class whatsoever. The kindest thing that we can say about them is that they are confusing the concepts of unconditional and uncritical support. Their main motivation in defending the bogus “Syrian Revolution” is to gain acceptance from the trade union bureaucracy, the social-Imperialist layer which is the main pillar of capitalism in the ranks of the working class.

We salute the heroism of the brave soldiers of the Syrian National Army who have suffered terrible casualties (up to 50% of the war dead) in defence of their country’s right to self-
For the military victory of Syria
determination against this Imperialist-sponsored assault. They have every right to get their arms and other assistance from Iran and Russia; Imperialist Special Forces have been on the ground in Syria since 2011. From the ranks of these anti-Imperialist working class fighters may come the forces for the future revolu-
tionary socialist party which will in its turn deal with Assad and his reactionary bourgeois nationalists whose economic pol-
icy was as anti-working class and as neo-liberal as any Imperial-
ist country. We are confident that the pro-Imperialist rebels and their supporters will be consigned to the dustbin of history by these anti-Imperialist forces.

Of course principled revolutionary socialists and anti-
Imperialists do not defend the record and practice of reaction-
ary bourgeois nationalist governments like those of the “Superm\e Leader” of Iran, Ali Khamenei, Saddam Hussein, Muammar Gaddafi or Bashar al-Assad. These were and are all brutal tyrants and as pro-Imperialist as domestic political condi-
tions allow them to be. We can never forget the favour Assad’s father Hafez al-Assad did for the Zionists and Western Imperialism in procuring the terrible massacre of the Palestinian in the Tel al-Zaatar refugee camp during the Lebanese Civil War on August 12, 1976. And they have brutally oppressed their own working class, outlawing strikes and executing and imprisoning trade union leaders and imposing corporate state trade unions to oppress the workers. But there are oppressed and oppressor nations; Imperialist nations and semi-colonial nations. This is the essence of Imperialism according to Lenin. These humanitarian liberal social patriots who point to the terrible deeds of the semi-
-colonial tyrants and equate their crimes with those of Imperialism itself deserve universal contempt. They stand in the tradi-
tion of the “third campists” like Max Shachtman when pro-
claiming “neither Imperialism nor Assad but the working class”. This tendency now compromises the vast majority of self-
proclaimed Trotskyist groups internationally. Very few indeed continue to look on the reactionary rebels as revolutionaries or see a revolution hiding in the tail of that particular comet. We cannot fight for socialism in our own Imperialist country and accept the booty of empire extracted from the brutal oppression of semi-colonial workers and peasants as its source.

We stand unequivocally with Lenin on this question:

“That is why the focal point in the Social-Democratic programme must be that division of nations into oppressor and oppressed which forms the essence of Imperialism, and is deceitfully evaded by the social-chauvinists and Kautsky. This division is not signifi-
cant from the angle of bourgeoisie pacifism or the philistine Utopia of peaceful competition among independent nations under capital-
ism, but it is most significant from the angle of the revolutionary struggle against Imperialism” [6]

If the bourgeois governments of Russia, China and Iran do not capitulate again before Imperialism, and Imperialism is consis-
tent with their own interests, we may have a third world war. In this conflict revolutionaries did not seek out an ideal and comfort-
able third camp, they cannot be mistaken as mere pacifists. Neither do we have illusions in the bourgeoisies of Russia, China, Iran or Syria. The outcome for humanity will be barba-
rism if we do not prevail in the struggle to defeat the U.S. and its allies. We put our faith in the victory of the oppressed na-
tions and the reconstruction of the Fourth International, the world party of socialist revolution.

- Defend Syria’s right to self-determination, For the military victory of Syria against any Imperialist attack!
- Defeat the Imperialists-sponsored rebels of the Free Syrian Army and the Al-Nusra Front!
- Arm the entire working class and poor of the cities to fight Imperialism and its mercenary rebel proxy army!
- Build Revolutionary Committees in all work-places, colleges and regions against Imperialist intervention!
- For a Revolutionary Constituent Assembly based on these committees!
- In defence of the right to establish trade unions and the right to strike!
- For workers’ control of the work places and oil fields, for subsidies on food and essential goods, minimum living wage, full employment, expropriation of all enterprises and Imperialist capital!
- For a Workers and Peasants Government as part of a Socialist Federation of the Middle East!

By late August 2013 nearly 40,000 more Syrian Kurds have come to northern Iraq, bringing the total in the area close to 200,000. There is little coverage of the genocidal war waged by the ji-
hadists against them on behalf of the US, Britain and France.

Notes
[2]  In 2005 the National Security Agency concluded that the Maddox had engaged the North Vietnamese Navy on August 2, but that there were no North Vietnamese Naval vessels present during the incident of August 4. The August 1964 Gulf of Tonkin incident, where U.S. warships were allegedly attacked by North Vietnamese PT Boats, was cited by President Lyndon B. Johnson as a legitimate provocation man-
dating U.S. escalation in Vietnam, yet Tonkin was a staged charade that never took place. This is an exact repeat of what Bill Clinton did in 1999, Bush and Blair did to attack Afghanistan and Iraq in 2001 and 2003 and we can be sure Obama is now doing in Syria. http://
[6]  Lenin, V.I., The Revolutionary Proletariat and the Right of Nations to Self-
Determination.
The Veil and the rise of Islamophobia

From back page (32)

For example, there has been endless discussion about whether Muslim witnesses should have to show their faces in court and whether face coverings can lead to cases of identity fraud.

But many of these arguments are an irrelevance, a distraction from the real issue. After all, despite the earnest talk about the need for judges and juries to see the faces of those in the dock, this is not a major problem. For courts often allow vulnerable witnesses to give evidence from behind screens or by video links. Equally, there would rightly be outrage if a blind person were barred from serving on a jury. [5]

The “real issue” for Bindel is that the niqāb is an expression of female oppression, imposed on Muslim women by “Islamic hardliners” of the male gender whose aim is “cultural totalitarianism”. When Muslim women who wear the niqāb say they do so of their own volition, having made a conscious decision about what they believe to be the requirements of their faith, they don’t know what they’re talking about and are merely acting under the domination of manipulative men, according to Bindel. I think this argument, unlike the spurious one about the need to see witnesses’ faces in court, does at least have the merit of honesty.

Matthew Thompson supplied a link to Cathy Nugent’s piece in Workers Liberty (AWL). [6] I wrote;

I agree with a lot of it including the statement that wearing the veil is a symptom of women’s oppression. Here I disagree with Bob Pitt, who takes a libertarian defence of the status quo in Muslim lands. This ignores the very powerful revolt by women against wearing it in those lands which have a well developed civil society like Iran, Egypt, Turkey, and Iraq, as was. But what has happened is those countries under Imperialist assault is that reactionary clerics have falsely tied in anti Imperialism with oppression of women. Here I disagree with Bob Pitt, who accepts a state imposed ban under certain conditions, which has no other solution than Matthew or Bob. Hensman supports both the French law banning the veil and the judge’s ruling, because he can only envisage the capitalist state and the ‘civilising role’ of world Imperialism as the liberatory force, like the AWL and his mentor, Gilbert Achcar.

He correctly points out that the origins of the custom cannot be traced back to the Koran or Muhammad. But why it became the custom is beyond him and he makes no attempt at an explanation. The rise of Islam and the Arab Empire was due to the development of a vast trading nation after the seventh century, with its hubs in the great cities of Baghdad, Basra, Damascus, and Cordoba. The needs of the mercantile class were for a meritocracy; it was necessary to have the best thinkers and most industrious people as leaders. And half of these were, of course, women. So there was far less discrimination against women than now and some famous female Islamic philosophers. As Clare McLaughlin and Jana Sivakumar report:

Many Arab governing principles revolved around equal treatment and opportunities for followers of Islam. Unlike the principles of many other cultures, the Quran gave women many legal and economic rights. In Islamic society, women enjoyed the freedoms of property inheritance and property control. Female artists, doctors and religious scholars had a big influence on the society and government of the Arab Empire. [8]

But today Islam is a rural ideology, rooted in the land and tends to defend the landowners and privileged Mullahs. We must look not to liberal Imperialism for solutions but to Marxism, particularly that aspect of Marxism as developed by Lenin and the Zhenotdel - the Department of working women and peasant women until the beginnings of its Stalinisation after 1924.
The Veil and the rise of Islamophobia

Dale Ross (D. L. Reissner), the first editor of the Spartacus League’s (the ICL) *Women and Revolution*, explained that method and history well in her article *Early Bolshevik Work among Women of the Soviet East*:

The Bolsheviks viewed the extreme oppression of women as an indicator of the primitive level of the whole society, but their approach was based on materialism, not moralism. They understood that the fact that women were veiled and caged, bought and sold, was but the surface of the problem. Kalym was not some sinister plot against womankind, but the institution which was central to the organisation of production, integrally connected to land and water rights. Payment of Kalym, often by the whole clan over a long period of time, committed those involved to an elaborate system of debt, duties and loyalties which ultimately led to participation in the private armies of the local beys (landowners and wholesale merchants). All commitments were thus backed up with the threat of feuds and blood vengeance.

... Lenin warned against prematurely confronting respected native institutions, even when these clearly violated communist principles and Soviet law. Instead he proposed to use the Soviet state power to systematically undermine them while simultaneously demonstrating the superiority of Soviet institutions, a policy which had worked well against the powerful Russian Orthodox Church. [9]

So the conclusion is that women must be free to wear the veil and we must oppose all state bans like the French and Belgian as well as the judge’s ruling on forcing the woman to take off the veil to give evidence. But we are in no doubt that the veil is a symbol of women’s oppression and we absolutely solidarise with all those women who refuse to wear it, either in the Muslim lands or in metropolitan countries.

...Then on 8 March 1927, in celebration of International Women’s Day, mass meetings were held at which thousands of frenzied participants, chanting ‘down with the paranja!’ tore off their veils which were drenched in paraffin and burned. Poems were recited and plays with names such as ‘Away with the Veil’ and ‘Never again Kalym’ were performed. Zhenotdel agitators led marches of unveiled women through the streets, instigating the forced desegregation of public quarters and sanctified religious sites’

The consequences of these brutal Stalinist methods were the same in 1927, 28 and 29 as they were in Afghanistan sixty years later:

Women suing for divorce became the targets of murderous vigilante squads, and lynching of party cadres annihilated the ranks of the Zhenotdel. The Party was forced to mobilise the militia, then the Komsomols and finally the general party membership and the Red Army to protect the women, but it refused to alter its suicidal policies. The debacle of International Woman’s Day was repeated in 1928 and 1929 with the same disastrous consequences, exacting an extremely high toll on party cadre.’ [10]

The best results against fundamentalism were achieved by women revolutionaries of the Zhenotdel using the transitional method of Bolshevism, as Dale Ross describes and as this author analysed in 1997. [11]. And wearing the veil? For revolutionaries the paranja if politically necessary (The French far left,
By Gerry Downing

A British judge, Peter Murphy, ruled on September 16 that a Muslim woman must remove her veil when she takes the witness stand so that judge, jurors and lawyers can see her face to evaluate her testimony. The judgement reignited the furious controversy over the niqāb with the Islamophobes having such a field day that both Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg and Home Secretary Theresa May were forced to intervene to say that the government should not tell women what they should be wearing.

In France the wearing of the veil in public is legally banned, as it is in Belgium. Wikipedia reports that:

The French ban on face covering (French: Loi interdisant la dissimulation du visage dans l'espace public, “Act prohibiting concealment of the face in public space”) is an act of parliament passed by the Senate of France on 14 September 2010, resulting in the ban on the wearing of face-covering headgear, including masks, helmelets, hajaclava, niqābs and other veils covering the face in public places, except under specified circumstances. The ban also applies to the burqa, a full-body covering, if it covers the face. The bill had previously been passed by the National Assembly of France on 13 July 2010.

It has had dire consequences for race relations in France. Kenza Drider, a Muslim woman protester against the law, said she lives in fear of attack. “I’m insulted about three to four times a day. Most say, ‘Go home’; some say, ‘We’ll kill you.’ One said: ‘We’ll do to you what we did to the Jews.’... I feel that I now know what Jewish women went through before the Nazi roundups in France. When they went out in the street they were identified, singled out, they were vilified. Now that’s happening to us.” [2]

This is how right wing French philosopher Bernard-Henri Lévy is reported in The Jewish Chronicle of 14 October 2006

HL becomes the most animated I have seen him when I ask him about Jack Straw’s intervention on Muslim women and the veil. Jack Straw’, he says, leaning close to me, ‘made a great point. He did not say that he was against the veil. He said it is much easier, much more comfortable, respectful, to speak with a woman with a naked face. And without knowing, he quoted Levinas, who is the philosopher of the face. Levinas says that [having seen] the naked face of your interlocutor, you cannot kill him or her, you cannot rape him, you cannot violate him. So when the Muslims say that the veil is to protect women, it is the contrary. The veil is an invitation to rape’. [3]

This was in response to the controversy caused in October 2006 when then Labour Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs Jack Straw wrote in the The Lancashire Evening Telegraph, he preferred talking to women who did not wear a niqāb as he could see their face, and asked women who were wearing such items to remove them when they spoke to him.

The other big controversy arose in 2006 when Aishah Azmi was sacked from a Church of England school after refusing to remove her niqāb in front of the small children she had been hired to teach. Prime Minister Tony Blair, Phil Woolas (who was suspended from the Labour party and had his election as an MP overturned for Islamophobic attacks on his opponent. His election agent Joseph Fitzpatrick emailed: “If we don’t get the white vote angry he’s gone.”) and other bigots in the right wing mass media made public statements supporting the school’s decisions before the case went to an Employment Tribunal, just to be sure she could not get reinstated. Birmingham Metropolitan College abandoned its ban on Muslim face veils on 12 September this year after major protests and a planned demonstration.

Outside of socially necessary constraints like crash helmets and seat belts etc. women can wear, cover up or reveal what they choose. Society has no right to dictate style or dress. The veil may be an expression of women’s oppression but so too, we could argue, are short shirts and makeup. The point is that imposed moral or dress standards outside of what women want themselves IS oppression, widely acknowledged as such and totally rejected by liberal and progressive society. Women who reject the veil in Iran are truly heroic women but some women in Iran have actually adopted the veil in response to “promises” of Western liberal Imperialists to come in and “free” them from the veil. Similarly with women who would never dress revealingly to “turn men’s heads” or wear makeup. If you told them they could not they would be the first to do just that. Liberation is a subjective thing and not amenable to standards set by authorities, particularly male authorities who seek to dictate to women. [4]

It provoked a furious controversy. The arguments came from AWL supporter Matthew Thompson who supported the judge, arguing that:

There are situations - teaching, health care, giving evidence in court - where facial expression is more important than what the individual woman wants. You can be against a ban on the niqāb (as I am, both on the general principle that women should be able to wear it if they want - debatable I know whether it’s always a free choice - and because I think it would have an exclusionary effect) while recognising it as a reactionary religious practice and not, as the SWP does, hailing its acceptance by colleges, workplaces or whatever as a victory.

He was opposed by Bob Pitt, of Islamophobia Watch, who quoted Julie Bindel (writing in the Daily Mai) in opposition to the niqāb:

So far, the debate about the niqāb has tended to revolve around the logistics of security and the rule of law.