Oppose all immigration controls: No One is Illegal!

Every industrial and commercial centre in England now possesses a working class divided into two hostile camps, English proletarians and Irish proletarians.

The ordinary English worker hates the Irish worker as a competitor who lowers his standard of life.

In relation to the Irish worker he regards himself as a member of the ruling nation and consequently he becomes a tool of the English aristocrats and capitalists against Ireland, thus strengthening their domination over himself.

He cherishes religious, social, and national prejudices against the Irish worker.

His attitude towards him is much the same as that of the “poor whites” to the Negroes in the former slave states of the U.S.A.

The Irishman pays him back with interest in his own money.

He sees in the English worker both the accomplice and the stupid tool of the English rulers in Ireland.

Karl Marx London, April 9, 1870
Socialist fight Where We Stand

Socialist Fight is a member of the Liaison Committee for the Fourth International with the Liga Comunista of Brazil and the Tendencia Militante Bolchevique of Argentina. The Editorial Board is: Gerry Downing, Laurence Humphries, Carl Zacharia, Alish Dease, Chris Williams, Clara Rosen and Aggie McCallum. 

Contact:
Socialist Fight: PO Box 59188, London, NW2 9LJ, Socialist_Fight@yahoo.co.uk. Liga Comunista, Brazil: http://lcligacomunitaria.blogspot.co.uk/

Voice of Anti-Capitalism in Guildford:
http://suacs.wordpress.com/

Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of the SF EB

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”

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 revolutionaries to carry out serious ideological and political struggle as direct participants in the trade unions (always) and in the mass reformist social democratic bourgeois workers’ parties despite their pro-capitalist leadership 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 caucus inside trade unions and in working class political parties.

6. 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.

7. We oppose all immigration controls. International finance capital roams the planet in search of profit and Imperialist governments disrupt 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.

8. We defend the heritage of the Russian Revolution and the struggle for the world revolution and critically support the revolutionary thrust of the first four Congresses of the Third Communist International before the victory of counter-revolutionary Stalinism when the theory of socialism in a single country was imposed in 1924. In particular we defend the revolutionary integrity of its two great central leaders, Lenin and Trotsky, in making and defending that revolution and fighting for the world revolution at all times.

9. We are for the refoundation and reconstruction of the Fourth International as the World Party of Socialist Revolution and will fight for the fusions and splits necessary for this in our international work.
US/EU backed gang of counter-revolutionary fascist and far right thugs have overthrown the democratically elected government of President Viktor Yanukovych in the Ukraine. For the first time since the fall of the Third Reich fascists control the streets of the capital and several cities of a European country. We make no political defence of the reactionary oligarch Yanukovych but we do recognise the main enemy behind all the Imperialist propaganda; global finance capital directed by the great finance houses of Wall Street and the City of London. Here a united front without political support is obligatory against fascism.

Western media, reverting to the worst days of cold war propaganda, have hailed another “Democratic Revolution”. Such a characterisation by Imperialist politicians like the Tory, Liberal Democrats and Labour leadership is to be expected; the vast majority of the far left have taken the cowardly third campist position of “neither Berlin nor Moscow but the working class”. But the voice of the Labour left, Labour Briefing, publication of the Labour Representation Committee, is also hailing a great Democratic Revolution with its masters: Graham Bash and Mike Phipps are delighted also hailing a great Democratic Revolution with its masters: Graham Bash and Mike Phipps are delighted with developments on behalf of British Imperialism. Such social chauvinist has no right to call itself socialist.

Let us be in no doubt the nature of this uprising; whatever the intentions of the local fascists (the "storm troopers of finance capital", as Trotsky called them), their job is to secure markets and investment opportunities for Imperialism. If we want to understand what Imperialism is read William Blum’s Killing Hope.

Seymour Hersh is an investigative journalist who gained worldwide recognition in 1969 for exposing the My Lai Massacre and its cover-up during the Vietnam War, for which he received the 1970 Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting. His 2004 reports on the US military’s mistreatment of detainees at Abu Ghraib prison gained much attention. In the London Review of Books on 8 December his article WHOSE SARIN? exposes the lies of Obama:

In the months before the attack, the American intelligence agencies produced a series of highly classified reports, culminating in a formal Operations Order – a planning document that precedes a ground invasion – citing evidence that the al-Nusra Front, a jihadist group affiliated with al-Qaeda, had mastered the mechanics of creating Sarin and was capable of manufacturing it in quantity. When the attack occurred al-Nusra should have been a suspect, but the administration cherry-picked intelligence to justify a strike against Assad. [1]

Our comrade Laurence Humphries was almost howled down when he tried to make these elementary leftist points at the LRC conference last November by the same resurgent reaction who will now swear blind that they “know” that the snipers on the roofs of Kiev were sent by Yanukovych and the CIA are innocent of the crimes which William Blum has spent over half his life exposing in numerous books and articles. But pathetic playthings of Imperialist propaganda like the LRC’s Susan Press don’t want to know that kind of stuff. Note

[1] Seymour Hersh WHOSE SARIN? http://www.lrb.co.uk/v35/n24/seymour-m-hersh/whose-sarin
A n opinion poll by Ipsos MORI in June last year on Immigration and Ethnicity found that:

the public think that 31% of the population are immigrants, when the official figures are 13%. Even estimates that attempt to account for illegal immigration suggest a figure closer to 15%. There are similar misperceptions on ethnicity: the average estimate is that Black and Asian people make up 30% of the population, when it is actually 11% (or 14% if we include mixed and other non-white ethnic groups).

The article by London Anti-Fascists opposes makes these points very well. UKIP bigot Nigel Farage claims that the “basic principle” of Enoch Powell’s 1968 River of Blood speech is “right”. And the Labour party also plays the immigrant game; Ed Miliband said in the 2013 Labour party conference in Brighton, “In our first year in office we will legislate for an immigration bill which has secure control of our borders, cracks down on exploitation of workers coming here undercutting workers already here.”

The mass hysteria about Romanian and Bulgarian immigrants about to flood Britain came to nought but the serious business of splitting and dividing the working class so that it turns inward and fights amongst itself and does not challenge the capitalist system itself is the concern of all capitalist political parties and of the Labour leaders and the trade union bureaucracies as the prime defenders of capitalist system within the workers movement.

The British jobs for British workers campaign waged by the mass media in 2009 got the enthusiastic support of Derek Simpson of Unite and subsequent campaigns to save the jobs at Bombardier, the Derby train manufacturing factory, was fought on this basis also by the RMT’s Bob Crow and others. This inevitably fuelled the rise of the BNP and EDL, no matter how much the “old guard” of the workers movement.

But in imperialist countries the main enemy is ALWAYS at home. Against the vile dictators Gaddafi and Assad whose crimes become so much worse in the Imperialism mass media the more anxious they are to seize their oil fields and entire economies.

And now the vilest and most loathsome homophbic dictator of all is Putin of Russia, so Peter Thatcheff assures us, and we just cannot let him have the Ukraine and use that for his evil plots against us. The anger of the US at Russia is understandable; following the defeats suffered by Russia and China interests in Libya they have learned something and Russia has managed to inflict three successive defeats on US foreign policy; Putin gave shelter to Snowdon and allowed him to expose the vast and illegal spying on governments and citizens carried out by the NSA and the British GCHQ, he has prevented the US bombing Syria and propped up Assad, their regime change target, and now he has thwarted the plans of Germany and US to impose draconian austerity on the Ukraine. What a bastard!!

Of course there is a middle ground between outright support for your own Imperialists and seeking its defeat. That was discovered by one Max Shachtman in around 1940 in his conflict with Leon Trotsky over defence of the Soviet Union in war. Central to that retreat was the notion that we could be neutral on our own ruling class wars if the enemy was loathsome enough. Shachtman summed up his third campism in his famous slogan; “Neither Washington nor Moscow but International socialism”, subsequently adopted by Tony Cliff and the UK SWP as the central defence of their theory that the USSR was state capitalist.

Conscious now that excessive closeness to the war aims of their own ruling class is reactionary (it never seemed to bother them before) the Socialist Party (CWI) adopted that line in Libya and Syria; they just could not unequivocally endorse their own ruling class war aims like Workers Power, the SWP, the LIT and the Mandelites but they could refuse to call for its defeat; the main enemy was not yet at home but neither was he in Damascus, as the rest were claiming, he was in Moscow, Peking (and maybe Tehran). But in imperialist countries the main enemy is ALWAYS at home comrades!
How anti-immigrant myths serve the bosses
By London Anti-Fascists 26 01 2014

The relentless diet of anti-migrant hysteria served by the mainstream press for the past few months has been staggering, even by their standards. The Daily Express in particular outdid itself, promising a “crusade” against Bulgarian and Romanian immigration.

But as a study in The Guardian showed, there’s rarely much of a correlation between the headlines and the reality. The study showed that headlines about migrants have increase out of all proportion to the actual levels of immigration, which have tended to rise only slowly, and with the occasional dip.

A study by academics at the University of London showed that migrants contribute vastly more in tax than they claim in benefits. Up to 2011, migrants from the EU contributed 34% more in tax than they claimed in benefits. Migrants from outside the EU contributed 2% more. “Benefits tourism” is a right-wing, anti-migrant myth.

The idea that Britain is “full up” is also somewhat complicated by the fact that, according to the government’s own figures, more than 700,000 homes in Britain stand empty, including nearly 300,000 which have been empty for more than six months.

Data collected by the Ipsos MORI polling organisation in December 2013 found that “race relations/immigration” was the second most important issue for respondents, with 37% citing it as their main concern (“the economy” topped the poll at 39%). Of course — polls aren’t entirely reliable, and their outcomes can be manipulated or distorted depending on how a question is phrased. But, those qualifiers aside, it doesn’t take a statistical genius to conclude that the disproportional, and disproportionately negative, focus on immigration in the media is contributing to people’s concerns.

Perception is not reality
The media, whose owners make up part of the bosses class, help set the agenda for their friends in political parties to make increasing severe policies more palatable. And its not just immigrants that face these attacks. Channel 4’s “Benefit Street” is one such programme that apparently attempts to portray the struggles of those on benefits in the face of adversity in a positive light, whilst systematically reinforcing the most vicious stereotypes of unemployed people, the result being another moral panic that reinforces the dominant policy of all major parties for the need to tackle the growing benefits costs and to call an end to “entitlement culture” that is apparently the cause of it.

The media shapes public opinion, even if that opinion is formed by our own experiences, it is manipulated into worst case scenario knee jerk soundbites, constant and pervasive, until what we think on an issue is so influenced by the arguments we are spoon fed, that a process of de-indoctrination is needed just to gain some clarity on what is actually happening. A recent study, again by Ipsos MORI, illustrates how our perceptions do not match reality. It is precisely this that politicians and their far-right cheerleaders utilise to distort and mis-inform large parts of the populations into believing, accepting and supporting government policies.

Bosses, not migrants, are running the show
Working-class people in Britain are right to be concerned about the lack of affordable housing, low wages, and the strain faced by our public services. But migrants (on whose labour our essential public services often rely) are not to blame for those problems as migrants are not in control of rents, wages or public sector spending. Employers, landlords and the government which represents their interests are. Therefore it is where any struggle that hopes to challenge this situation needs to target – not migrants, not minorities, not Muslims, Romanians or Bulgarians but those that are actually in control.

Politicians of all three mainstream parties compete to see who can best pand-er to anti-migrant sentiment. Their rhetoric is cynical vote-grabbing; savvy Tories, Lib Dems, and New Labourites know that stopping immigration is neither desirable nor possible. Even on capitalist terms, Britain’s economy needs immigrants. But politicians play up to, and help reinforce, fears about immigration in order to bolster their support and to keep working-class voters from turning on the real enemy: the capitalist parties and their policies.

The link for London Anti-Fascists is: www.ldn-afn.org

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

One particularly important barometer of the housing crisis, as it is of the seriousness of the economic crisis for the poorest in general, is the rise in the number of rough sleepers. We take the figures for London from Crisis, the national charity for single homeless people (formerly Crisis at Christmas):

Rough sleeping, as with homelessness in general, is a particular problem in London. In 2008, as a result of campaigning by Crisis and others, the Mayor of London committed to ending rough sleeping by 2012. However, despite the support of the Coalition Government, this target has not been met. When an individual is contacted by outreach teams or other services working with rough sleepers in London, their details are entered onto a database (CHAIN). According to CHAIN, 6,437 people slept rough at some point in London during 2012/13, an increase of 13 per cent on the previous year's total of 5,678 and a 62 per cent increase.

These are truly shocking statistics and individual tales of terrible immiseration. The website tells us that: “People who sleep rough are 35 times more likely to commit suicide than the general population.”

We suggest that the risks of offending the sensibilities of local Labour councillors or TU bureaucrats this should be judiciously weighed against these horrendous problems that they are not even attempting to tackle in any meaningful way.

We assume we all have no problem with denouncing the Tories or LibDems. Christian morality of pity for the poor we will leave to the more obsequious religious minded individuals in the labour movement. It was summed up by Engels in 1872:

It is the essence of bourgeois socialism to want to maintain the basis of all the evils of present-day society and at the same time to want to abolish the evils themselves. As already pointed out in The Communist Manifesto, the bourgeois socialist “is desirous of redressing social grievances in order to secure the continued existence of bourgeois society.”, he wants “a bourgeois without a proletariat”.

Unfortunately for the defenders of capitalism in the Labour party leadership the Right to Buy only works for the minority of workers by massive sums that the poorest are forced to pay through their taxes to subsidise the mortgage interests of the skilled workers and middle classes (tax reliefs etc).

No serious socialist should tolerate this policy of robbing the poorest to enrich the more fortunate sections of the working class. We can never unite against capitalism if we cannot take a principled stance on these issues. 

Mark Duggan

The so-called riots of August 2011 took place in several London boroughs and in cities and towns across England.

They began on 6 August, after a protest in Tottenham following the police murder of Mark Duggan on the 4 August. The police did not tell the family of Mark’s death and lied that he had fired on them:

“It seems possible that we may have verbally led journalists to [wrongly] believe that shots were exchanged”, they were forced to admit later.

The group of family and friends were further incensed when the police assaulted a sixteen-year-old girl. The uprising began in Tottenham Hale Retail Park and nearby Wood Green. Then on the 7th it spread to Hackney, Brixton, Chingford, Walthamstow, Peckham, Enfield, Battersea, Croydon, Ealing, Barking, Woolwich, Lewisham and east Ham.

Then it kicked off in Birmingham, Bristol, Manchester and several other large towns from the 8th to the 11th.

Such a widespread and spontaneous uprising had deep social causes; although they began over the murder of a black man that uprising involved all the oppressed youth of every colour and nationality who face an appalling future under this system and who could take no more.

On January 8th last an inquest jury found by 2 to 1 that the police had “lawfully killed” Mark despite the fact that they also found that he did not have a gun when he was shot by the officer. The jury denied justice to Mark’s family, the youth, the working class and oppressed because they believed the lies of the establishment and mass media.

For well over forty years now, the number of deaths in police custody has averaged one a week. Yet no police officer has been found guilty of murder or has even been charged.

Although the spark for the uprising on the 6th was the murder of Mark Duggan, and the police assault on the 16 year old girl, it is the government’s social and economic policies that led to this explosion of violence.

Hal the borough’s children live in poverty. Youth project funding has been slashed by 75% this year, eight of the borough’s 13 youth clubs have shut. There were uprisings here, (as well as in other communities) in 1981 and in 1985 decades of unemployment, poverty and “Stop and Search” (of Black and Muslim men) has caused these desperately oppressed and brave young people to unite against the criminals in the regime in Whitehall.

No justice, no peace!

E15 Mums

We are a mix of mothers and mothers-to-be who have lived in the E15 hostel from a few months to 3 years. Having been told this would only be temporary accommodation, we are no closer to finding permanent housing and now Newham council has stopped funding the mother’s and baby unit and those of us who have been in the hostel for over six months have been served with a possession order with a date of 20 October.

We have been told we will not be offered council housing but that we will be offered private rented accommodation from accredited landlords outside of London in places like Hastings, Birmingham and Manchester. If we refuse this offer, we will be classed as making ourselves intentionally homeless and face temporary accommodation with little protection from eviction and no guarantee of a long-term solution from the council.

Also if we chose to rent privately we are not entitled to get sufficient help with deposits which we cannot afford ourselves. We want secure and suitable housing for mothers in east London!

This life is stressful. We understand why people take their lives. Even more stressful if we’re young. We want to work or study, we’re not lazy, we don’t want to be on benefits forever, and we want to raise our children ourselves.

Children need stability, moving is traumatic, for anyone, especially children.” “Our children need to know their grandparent’s, their cousins, their families.”

“I have stopped looking for places as I have been rejected so many times. You’re not tearing us apart from our families...we are fighters.

Kate Belgrave blogged on 3 February:

This is the problem and future that all renters face – short-term tenancies, skyrocketing rents and no sure place for families to live for more than a few months at a time. That is why the Focus E15 campaign for secure social housing is so important to us all. The Newham quick-fire, private rental solution does not solve a single problem for anyone who must rely on the private rental sector for housing. It does not force the council to build more social housing for all, or to commit to opening up the many boarded-up homes on places like the Carpenter’s Estate. This short-term solution simply breaks up a campaign and shuts down a debate, which is surely the council’s aim.

For more information about the campaign contact us on 020 7837 1688, Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/pages/Focus-E15-Mothers/602860129757343
Comrades,

We are the Socialist Fight Group, British section of the Liaison Committee for the Fourth International. The SF/LCFI has differences with both the SDM/CWI and the RCIT. Workers Power Britain/LFI (WPB) expelled the comrades who went on to form the RCIT in 2011; They are basically correct when they criticise the rightism of the WPB.

This happens because of the adaptation from the leadership of the LFI towards the petty-bourgeois milieu. In the united front/Anticapitalist initiatives projects which WPB joined they don’t have a sharp revolutionary profile and are very soft in criticising centrist forces or don’t criticise them at all in public. They are even talking about the “revolutionary left” when they mean the centrist left.

The SF/LCFI was assessed the politics of the CWI in our document The CWI and IMT: Right Centrists heirs of Ted Grant and agrees with the RCIT (and its parent group WPB) that the DSM/CWI have semi-reformist positions on the state; it is terribly wrong for the DSM/CWI to characterise the police and army as “workers in uniform” - was it the working class that massacred the Marikana miners or the counterrevolutionary murderous thugs of the capitalist state led by the ANC and supported by the leaders of the NUM/Cosatu and the SACP? As Trotsky says a worker who dons a police uniform is no longer a worker but a bourgeois cop.

We have quoted approvingly from WPB on this in our own document. It is an outrageously reformist position of defence of the capitalist state against the organised working class for revolutionaries to take and the comrades of the DSM and WASP should repudiate it immediately.

This reflects the historic weakness of the CWI on the state and on Imperialism in general. We go on the expose its position of support for the Loyalists and the British state in the north of Ireland in that long historic struggle, their support for the British task force in the Malvinas war of 1982 – as we quote them their position was: “A Labour government could not just abandon the Falklanders and let Galtieri get on with it. But it would continue the war on socialist lines” – a clear social imperialist position. Likewise their position on Israel/Palestine and their position on the Imperialist-sponsored “revolutions” in Libya and Syria, refusing to call for the defeat of the proxy-armies sponsored by Obama, Cameron and Sarkozy/Holland. We lampooned their line on Libya when they said:

“A victory for the Libyan people was also a success for Imperialism.” We know that was what they said on the TV comedies but it was a lie. You cannot advance Imperialism’s victory and the victory of the working class at the same time, they are mutually exclusive; one must advance at the expense of the other, a “zero sum” rather than a “win-win” situation we would suggest.

On the issue of the Imperialist-sponsored wars in Libya and Syria the WPB/RCIT are clearly to the RIGHT of the CWI as our second document For the Political Regeneration and Reconstruction of the Fourth International reveals. They are far more uncritical of the “rebels” refusing to listen to all the evidence that they were sponsored by the CIA/Saudi Arabia/Qatar/Turkey etc. No, they were all genuine “revolutionaries”, a position that the SF/LCFI and CWI can easily expose as nonsense. WPB gave us this analysis by Pater Main on 19/3/2011:

Victory to the Libyan Revolution! The rebellion against Gaddafi’s dictatorship deserves unconditional support and that is not altered by the UN decision. Those who oppose powerful states have the right to get hold of arms wherever they can and to take advantage of any weaknesses in their oppressors’ situation. That remains true even where the weaknesses are the result of Imperialist action. If, under cover of the no-fly zone, Libyan insurgents and revolutionaries can retake positions, undermine the morale or the loyalty of Gaddafi’s troops and even advance on the capital, Tripoli, that is a step forward for the Libyan revolution and should be welcomed.

We all know what happened to the “revolution”; were we all supposed to cheer along with Cameron and Sarkozy when they went to Tripoli to celebrate the victory of their “revolution” and must we forget about all the black immigrant workers the “rebels” lynch as soon as their “revolution” began in Benghazi. [1]

So Michael Pröbsting’s claim that the CWI refuses to defend semi-colonial countries against imperialism (e.g. Argentina vs. Britain, Afghanistan and Iraq vs. US/UK, Gaza vs. Israel etc.) while the RCIT calls for the military victory of the semi-colonial countries against imperialism without giving political support for non-revolutionary leaderships” rings more than a bit hollow when we take a whole list of countries where the WPB/RCIT refused to take this position themselves, as our documents expose.

However the CWI tradition does tend to recruit workers and to listen to them closely and to try to formulate policies that will get their ear whereas the RCIT/WPB are petty bourgeois groups. In 1994 the Workers List got 0.02% of the vote, the ANC got almost 63% and almost 90% of the black
masses (Buthelezi got about 10%). Without withdrawing any of our criticisms of the positions of the DSM are at least half right when they say that “the historic 1994 elections symbolised the triumph of the national liberation struggle”.

That was certainly how the black masses saw the election and we had to have some way or getting the ear of those masses. This did not involve politically apologising for the ANC but it did involve the United Front tactic as outlined by Lenin in *Left Wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder* (a phrase we suggest applies strongly to the RCIT even more that to WPB today).

Lenin advocated a vote for the British Labour party then and Trotsky continued to advocate this until his assassination in 1940. If the call for a vote for the ANC in the 1994 election ALONE was “even particular criminal” as Michael Pröbsting says then stand up those equally guilty “criminals” Lenin and Trotsky who could separate a vote for a party in solidarity with its working class base from political support for the policies of leadership of that party – Lenin’s “hanged man” argument:

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

What WAS wrong was to politically capitulate to and give more or less uncritical support to the ANC after the 1994 election, which the DSM did, as they did when try-sists in the British Labour party as our document exposes.

As we quote in our document:

Trotskyists have to fight to break the workers and the masses from the ANC. In the elections it was essential to fight for independent working class organisation and action, including defence to expose the treachery of the ANC, and to call for the unions and mass organisations to build a Workers Party, all of which was the position taken by the ITC. But this fight had to be taken into the living experience of the masses, who saw a vote for the ANC as constituting themselves as a nation, voting for social change and defending “their” elections against sabotage. That is why we understood that on that basis and as part of that strategy (and not for any other reasons) consistent Trotskyists had to be in favour of a vote for the ANC.

Of course the WASP are right to work with the and recruit from Marikana miners and to orientate to Maluma’s EFF and the Vavi and Jim and the NUMSA split – these are mobilising the fighting masses revolutionary Trotskyists must back them despite all we know of the history and politics of the leadership. It is impossible to imagine that the 100,000 miners who have left the NUM can now go back into a union whose leadership participated in massacring them.

We must expose Vavi and Jim and their past support for the ANC and selling out strikes as the left bureaucrats they are. But unequivocally with them against Zuma and Blade etc. Thus we can set the base against the leadership and mobilise to build a Workers’ Party and from that struggle a real mass revolutionary Trotskyist party. It all follows logically from the United Front tactic and Trotsky’s 1938 Transnational Programme and the method of that programme.

The documents referred to in this piece can be found on our blog at [http://socialistfight.com/](http://socialistfight.com/)

**Notes**

In analysing the fiascos that are Grangemouth and the privatisation of Royal Mail without a fight as Communists we must place them in the context of the current global debt crisis of capitalism that burst upon the world with the sub-prime mortgage crisis in the US in late 2007 and the collapse of Lehman Brothers in 2008. That in turn raises the question of the crisis of working class leadership and the tasks of revolutionaries in building the party that can solve that crisis. The Trotsky quote above is our guiding principle in tackling these questions. In an article on 31 October in the Oil and Gas website, Oil and Gas Refining overcapacity hits oil majors, they point out the following:

Squeezed margins in the global refining industry are hurting the world’s largest oil companies, as Royal Dutch Shell, Total and Exxon Mobil all blamed poor quarterly earnings on a decline in their downstream businesses. Results from Shell were the most disappointing Thursday, as its profit dropped almost a third to $4.3bn. Exxon Mobil’s profit fell 18 per cent to $7.87bn, while Total’s declined almost a fifth to €2.72bn. All the majors have been hit by refinery overcapacity and weak demand for petrol and diesel in slowing western economies, which has hit earnings in their downstream — refining and marketing — divisions.

The problem is most striking in Europe, despite refinery closures that have taken some 1.7m barrels a day of capacity out of the system since 2008. Figures from the International Energy Agency show European demand for refined products will average 13.5m b/d, almost 2m b/d less than in 2008. This weakening demand has coincided with the construction of a new wave of giant refineries in Asia and the Middle East that are putting pressure on older and less sophisticated plants in more mature markets. The IEA says global crude oil distillation capacity is set to rise from 86m b/d in 2005 to 101m b/d by 2017 once all the planned new capacity comes on stream.

Once we have grasped this global economic picture then it is clear that Len McCluskey’s capitulation and betrayal at Grangemouth has only “saved the jobs” of these workers in the short term. And, as Rob Sewell observes, the sell-out at Grangemouth was foreshadowed by McCluskey’s earlier betrayals; the deal at Vauxhall on Merseyside, where the workers were forced to accept big changes to their terms and conditions particularly for new starters in return for keeping their jobs, was an obvious example. Similarly with the defeat of Unite over the British Airways dispute, where again the workers were forced to grant significant working changes to keep their jobs.

Politically we must look at the whole Labour movement and how the machinations of the existing leadership of the working class, both the trade union bureaucracy and the Labour party leadership, have conspired together to land these blows on the working class. As Trotsky observed later in that same article: “The Labour Party, the trade unions — these are not two principles, they are only a technical division of labor. Together they are the fundamental support of the domination of the English bourgeoisie.”

These betrayals were procured by Ed Miliband and the Labour party leaders who could have instantly saved the Royal Mail by promising re-nationalisation. An occupation of Grangemouth under workers’ control might well have forced Miliband and Alex Salmond to promise nationalisation also.

Grangemouth has only “saved the jobs” of these workers in the short term. The new deal would see wages would freeze and bonuses would be scrapped entirely and Exxon Mobil all blamed poor quarterly earnings on a decline in their downstream businesses. Results from Shell were the most disappointing Thursday, as its profit dropped almost a third to $4.3bn. Exxon Mobil’s profit fell 18 per cent to $7.87bn, while Total’s declined almost a fifth to €2.72bn. All the majors have been hit by refinery overcapacity and weak demand for petrol and diesel in slowing western economies, which has hit earnings in their downstream — refining and marketing — divisions.

The problem is most striking in Europe, despite refinery closures that have taken some 1.7m barrels a day of capacity out of the system since 2008. Figures from the International Energy Agency show European demand for refined products will average 13.5m b/d, almost 2m b/d less than in 2008. This weakening demand has coincided with the construction of a new wave of giant refineries in Asia and the Middle East that are putting pressure on older and less sophisticated plants in more mature markets. The IEA says global crude oil distillation capacity is set to rise from 86m b/d in 2005 to 101m b/d by 2017 once all the planned new capacity comes on stream.

Once we have grasped this global economic picture then it is clear that Len McCluskey’s capitulation and betrayal at Grangemouth has only “saved the jobs” of these workers in the short term. And, as Rob Sewell observes, the sell-out at Grangemouth was foreshadowed by McCluskey’s earlier betrayals; the deal at Vauxhall on Merseyside, where the workers were forced to accept big changes to their terms and conditions particularly for new starters in return for keeping their jobs, was an obvious example. Similarly with the defeat of Unite over the British Airways dispute, where again the workers were forced to grant significant working changes to keep their jobs.

Politically we must look at the whole Labour movement and how the machinations of the existing leadership of the working class, both the trade union bureaucracy and the Labour party leadership, have conspired together to land these blows on the working class. As Trotsky observed later in that same article: “The Labour Party, the trade unions — these are not two principles, they are only a technical division of labor. Together they are the fundamental support of the domination of the English bourgeoisie.”

These betrayals were procured by Ed Miliband and the Labour party leaders who could have instantly saved the Royal Mail by promising re-nationalisation. An occupation of Grangemouth under workers’ control might well have forced Miliband and Alex Salmond to promise nationalisation also.

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

There was huge pressure on the shop stewards at Grangemouth following the closure announcement on Wednesday 23 October. More than half of the permanent workforce at the whole Grangemouth site had been told their jobs were gone. The oil refinery was closed. According to Ineos it would remain so, unless the union agreed to huge cuts in workers’ terms and conditions. The possibility of closure enduring was a real one. In addition, the Unite Scottish secretary, Pat Rafferty, supported by the Unite general secretary Len McCluskey, was at that point urging that the union sign up to the company’s demands.

Of course they can attack the Labour party leaders and Militant for starting the whole affair but that is because, unlike the Socialist Appeal, they are no longer in the Labour party. But essentially their politics are the same. So the SA can be fighting syndicalist and the SP can be fighting anti-Labour and still end up in the same place. They bow, like Rob Sewell, to Stalinist class traitor Jimmy Reid also. And of course there is no mention of their voting for McCluskey against Jerry Hicks in the election and no mention of a rank and file movement to defeat and replace the bureaucracy. However they did mention elsewhere the fact that Jerry Hicks got 80,000 votes as evidence of the strength of the left in Unite (which obviously excludes themselves as leftists in Unite). Even “sadder”, they thought, were the actions of Billy Hayes, another sponsor of the NSSN with Bob Crow, who likewise expects and gets no criticism in return:

The sell-off of the remaining publicly owned parts of Royal Mail was completed over the last week. This represents the sad passing of the last remaining form of publicly owned communications

Genuine revolutionary socialists, trade union militants and fighters for the class are not “sad” at these betrayals at all but hopping mad and even more determined to expose these class traitors and replace them with a genuine revolutionary and fighting leadership.

Syndicalism: SA, WP and the SWP

Syndicalists are those who seek a reformist road to socialism with revolutionary verbiage. The first is Socialist Appeal who with revolutionary verbiage. The first is Socialist Appeal who still pursue Ted Grant’s and Militant’s goal of transforming Labour and achieving socialism via the passage of an Enabling Act in parliament; the old CPGB and current CPB parliamentary road to socialism programme. This is reflected in the piece by Socialist Appeal’s Rob Sewell on 29 October, The lessons of Grangemouth: labour movement needs fighting leadership! which sounds like a fighting, militant approach and does not excuse McCluskey:

The Ineos bosses had thrown down the gauntlet. However, instead of calling a mass meeting and organise a mass campaign to resist the closure, starting with an occupation of the plant and sending pickets to other plants, the Unite union hoisted the white flag and accepted the Ratcliffe terms. Len McCluskey went to Grangemouth to sign the deal “warts and all” to keep the plant open and save the jobs…. Despite the fighting words, it represents a capitulation without a fight, the worse kind of capitulation, which the bosses will use to drive home their advantage. You should not make a bluff without being prepared to carry it through. The “agreement” represents a defeat for the workers at Grangemouth and for workers elsewhere. It will mean a blow to the confidence and morale of workers, at least in the short term.

However it is a syndicalist article which does not see any crisis of the capitalist system itself apart from formally. For instance it does not refer to the overcapacity of oil refineries in Europe and globally. Because they are Labour party entryists it does not criticise the Labour party leadership and its role in the victimisation of Steve Deans and giving the “in” to Ratcliffe. There is no call for a rank and file movement to replace these leaders and they advocated a vote for Len McCluskey against Jerry Hicks in the last Unite G5 election.

The second pure syndicalist article is from Workers Power’s Jeremy Dewar. Since the 2006 split Workers Power have moved from supporting the Socialist Party’s Campaign for a New Workers’ Party to the Anti-capitalist Initiative via apologia for the French New Anti-capitalist Party as radical reformist alternatives to Labour and in the end has rejected them all. They are currently for a non-existent (even in embryo) “mass anticapitalist political alternative to the Labour Party” (but have since found Left Unity). This abandonment of consistent class politics has involved tactic alliances with the Tories and right wing mass media (and Miliband and McCluskey now) in seeking to break the Labour party trade union link. This is syndicalism. And the chickens have come home to roost in Jeremy’s article:

Rank and file alternative: Jerry Hicks, who gained 36 per cent of the vote against Len McCluskey in the Unite general secretary election earlier this year, was quoted by the Financial Times as saying, this was “botched from the very beginning” and “ended in surrender”. He is absolutely right. Unite could have altered the whole history of the dispute by organising the immediate occupation of the plant as soon as the lock out was threatened in mid-October. Its members would have been called on to close down the refinery; with union backing they could have refused and the workforce could have seized control of the equipment and the dispute.

There is no assessment of the role of the Labour party leadership and Miliband in bring about this crisis, there is no estimation of the global crisis of capitalism and its effects on Grangemouth and there is no political estimation of the effects of the lack of revolutionary leadership. Trotsky’s quote at the start of the article was written against just this type of article. The SWP leader Alex Callinicos has penned a forthright but syndicalist attack on McCluskey’s conduct, Grangemouth was no test of strength on 30 October:

Trade union leaders, whatever their political stripe, make up a distinct social group whose role consists of seeking to reconcile
the interests of capital and labour. This means that they don't have the same interests as the rank and file workers who end up paying the price of their deals, like the workers at Grangemouth did. The real difference between McCluskey and Scanlon and Jones is that the latter had to tame the powerful shop stewards’ organisation that threatened the future of British capitalism. More than anything else, the resulting decline of rank and file power made possible the defeat of the miners, and of many other groups of workers. This decline has also allowed McCluskey to posture as a lion, only to turn into a mouse when the bosses cut up nasty. Rebuilding rank and file organisation is essential if we are not to remain dependent on trade union leaders who almost without fail disappoint us.

Like Rob Sewell's and Jeremy Dewar's articles it has no mention of Miliband's treachery, no mention of the global crisis of capitalism and the global over capacity in the oil refinery industry. Although it identifies, like the other two, the central problem as the betrayals of the TU bureaucracy and the lack of a rank and file movement but significantly it does not call for the ousting of the TU bureaucracy; pressure from below to force them to fight is the traditional SWP objective. And, of course, like the other two it does not identify the need for the revolutionary party, making it too in contravention of Trotsky advice: “The correctly understood task of the Communist Party does not consist solely of gaining influence over the trade unions, such as they are, but in winning, through the trade unions, an influence over the majority of the working class”.

But the three groups have put forward fighting syndicalist orientations to the trade unions and the need for building a rank and file movement in the unions. United front co-operation is implied in all these cases. And the SWP's Unite the Resistance Conference on 19 October this year still had CWU general secretary Billy Hayes as a speaker after his betrayal.

**Conclusion**

An occupation under workers' control immediately raises the question of who owns, or rather who should own the plant and what is production for? Is it for the profit of capitalism or for the production fuel for transport and heating oil and gas needed by workers, the middle classes and their families this winter?

An occupation would have raised the political level of the entire class struggle. Every trade union militant and socialist activist would have rallied vast sections of the working class movement behind it. Of course a trade union bureaucracy will never take such revolutionary action unless severely pressured from below by a rank and file movement seeking to oust them and replace them with more militant and revolutionary leaders who are prepared to take such actions with them if possible but without them if necessary.

McCluskey at Grangemouth and Billy Hayes at the Royal Mail in conjunction with Ed Miliband have struck a treacherous blow at the only force that can solve this crisis; the organised strength of the international working class led by a reforged Fourth International. As Trotskyists we do not therefore collapse before this global crisis but turn towards that class with renewed and urgent struggles to build that leadership that will take forward the struggle to build the rank and file Grass Roots movement in Unite and every other union to oust this treacherous bureaucracy and replace them with more militant and revolutionary leaders who will face up to the central task of overturning capitalist property relations themselves on a global scale.

---

**Grass Roots Rank and File Launch Conference**

Saturday 12 April 2014

Comfort Inn, Station Street, B5 4DY.

Opposite New St Station, 12 to 4pm

Following the successful meeting of the Grass Roots Left National Committee in Birmingham on 18 January the launch conference of the new Grass Roots Rank and File now looks to be on a far healthier basis than was feared when Socialist Fight supporters had been reduced to a minority of two in defence of the Constitution and Platform of the GRL as the basis for the new organisation at the AGM of 9 November.

Between the two meetings the SWP had split at its December conference and the new organisation, now called the Revolutionary Socialists of the 21st Century, took the majority of the Unite the union faction who had supported Jerry Hicks for general secretary twice.

Both the SWP and the SR21C attended the GRL NC and as they were now rivals they sought to accentuate their leftism. It seems now that the new joint Rank and File organisation will be open and democratic and be based on a platform and constitution at least similar to the old GRL one. Both Workers Power and Socialist Resistance had to reverse themselves and now say that standing on Jerry Hicks election points really was minimalist and not enough and they abandoned their charges of ultra leftism against SF. The SWP, of course, continues its opportunist tailending of all the other TU bureaucracies as Laurence Humphries’ report on the Unite the Resistance conference on page 30 makes clear.

In the meantime we hear that fusion discussions between Unite and the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS), whose Executive is dominated by the SP/CWI, are going to succeed because the government will withdraw check-off facilities from the PCS and so probably bankrupt it. The SP has already approached the United Left, the Unite bureaucracy’s mouthpiece, to ensure that they become ensconced as that bureaucracy’s footstools as well as for the RMT’s Bob Crow.
Irish Republican Prisoners Portraits

Prison, Portraits, County Laois, Ireland

Anthony Lee
Aiden Hulme
Bernard Dempsey
Bobby Donohue
Brian Walsh
Brion Breathnach
(Brian Walsh)
Cork
Buddy Nolan
Charles Anthony
Deery
Ciaran Burke
Cormac Fitzpatrick
Dalton McKevitt
Darren Mooney
Darren Mulholand
David Jordan
Dean Evans
Dean Fitzpatrick
Declan Phelan
Declan Rafferty
Desmond Christie
Eamonn Cassidy
Edward McGrath
Eugene Kelly
Finton O’Farrell
Fra Carlton
Gareth Byrne
Gary Adams
Gerard Carroll
Gerard McGrigile
James Brennan
Jim Mc Cormack
Joe Conlon
Joe Obrien
John Brock
Joseph Kirwan
Ken O’Reilly
Kevin Brane
Liam Grogan
Mathew Perry
Michael Barr
Michael Martin
Hugh
Michael McDonnell

Michael McKe-
Niall Farrell
Nick Kendell
Nick McNicoll
Niel Myles
Noel Callan
Noel Mooney
Paddy Larkin
Paddy Wall
Patrick Tierney
Robert Hulme
Seán Connolly
Seán Farrell
Scain Ryan
Sharif Kelly
Stephen Fogarty
Stephen Henrickds
Stephen McGowan.
Steven Vborah
Tarlach Mac Dhomhnaill
Tony Hyland
Vincent Banks
Maghaberry Gaol, Old Road, Ballinderry Upper Lisburn, Ireland

BT28 2PT
Aidan Coney
Anthony Mc Donnell
Austin Creggan
Brendan McConville
Brian Cavan
Brian Sheridan
Cathal Kerr
Ciaran Collins
Colm Colm
Damin Harkin
Damen
McKenna
Damen
McLaughlin
Dee Duffy
Dermott McFadden
Dessie Hamill
Dominic Dymes
Eamon Cassidy
Francis Carleton
Francisco
McAtammy
Gabriel Mackle
Gary Toman
Gavin Coney
Gavin Coyle
Gerard Flannigan
Gerard McMans
Jason Ceulemans
Joe Allen
John Paul Wooton
Kevin Concannon
Kevin Vernon
Kieran McLaughlin
Mark McGuigan
Martin Connolly
Martin McGilloway
Nathan Hastings
Neil Hegarty
Patrick Larkin
Phil O’Donnell
Seamus
Sean Kelly
Sean McConvile
Shane Duffy
Steven Mackin
Tá McWilliams
Thomas Hamill
Thomas Maguire
Tony Friel
Tony Taylor
Wille Wong

Special Supervision Unit - Isolation
Liam Campbell
Hydebank Women’s Prison
Hydebank Wood
Hospital Road
BELFAST BT8 8NA
Christine Connor
Sharon Rafferty
Mountjoy Prison
North Circular Road
Dublin 7
Pat Barry

Eirígí's Stephen Murney back in Newry with his sister and brother. He was cleared of all charges on 24 January.

Stephen Murney's arrest, detention for 14 months and trial are an attack on all political activists and left organisations in Britain and Ireland.

Stephen Murney was arrested on 1 December 2012 and the BBC then reported: “Stephen Martin Murney, from Derrybeg Terrace in the city, was charged with collecting and distributing information likely to be of use to terrorists. The 29-year-old was also charged with having articles likely to be of use to terrorists.”

Now, after almost fourteen months held in remand in Maghaberry his trial can only be described as a legal farce. Where were the staunch defenders of civil liberties in far flung China or Putin's Russia? For Pussy Riot they will chain themselves to railings but for this far more immediate and terrible threat to everyone's civil liberties they are silent?

Where are the fearless champions of distant oppression? The lefty lawyers and QCs, Mansfield, Bill Bowring etc can only be described as a legal farce. The hypocrisy of the two-tier justice system, the one for the “mainland” and the other for the opponents of British rule in the north of Ireland must be challenged now. Because “they came for the Jews but I wasn’t a Jew...” will get us all.

Stephen said on his release:

My imprisonment for the past 14 months was as a direct result of my political views and my membership of Eirígí – an open and legitimate political party. Those charges, of which I have been found to be innocent, were brought against me by the PSNI who objected to fact that I recorded, documented and publicised PSNI personnel abusing the human and civil rights of citizens in the Newry area. Even though it was clear from the very outset that these charges were completely without substance, both the PSNI and prosecution service have persisted with a legalised charade which resulted in my imprisonment from December 2012. There is no other way of describing that charade except as ‘interment by remand’. “I intend to continue with my activism on behalf of Eirígí”.

You can find out more about Stephen's case at www.eirigi.org/campaigns/stephen_murney.htm

Leon Trotsky: I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International; Go Forward!
A Tour of Wounded Knee: Why It Matters, Why It Hurts: 22/8/12 And Bobby Onco, Wounded Knee Warrior, Walks On 10/2/14, Account of the massacre and Obituary by Gale Courdy Toensing

Since 1970, when historian Dee Brown published his book _Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee_ about the site where the U.S. government’s 7th Cavalry slaughtered hundreds of unarmed men, women and children, Wounded Knee has become the iconic site representing the U.S. government’s genocide against all the indigenous peoples of Turtle Island.

On Sunday, August 19, I was with around 35 other volunteers from Remember, an independent, nonprofit organization that works with the Oglala Lakota Nation on Pine Ridge, visiting the Wounded Knee memorial site. It was the first day of a week of volunteer work that included building bunkbeds and out-houses for Lakota families whose homes still lack indoor plumbing and electricity.

Dakota High Hawk and members of his tiospaye—his extended family—spend days at the site of the Wounded Knee Massacre talking to visitors and selling their crafts. The High Hawk family made the shade and the high counter where they display and sell their finely crafted necklaces of beads and buffalo bones, and the intricately woven dream catchers.

According to contemporaneous reports of the 1890 massacre, there was a three-day blizzard following the slaughter, in which between 150 and 300 Lakota men, women and children were shot and butchered.

The U.S. military hired people to find and bury the Lakota dead—the frozen bodies were collected and buried in a mass grave on a hill overlooking the flat part of the Wounded Knee memorial site below where the 7th Cavalry was encamped and where High Hawk’s Héhaka Tiospaye is now located. There are other, more recent burials at the top of the hill as well, including several Lakota veterans of America’s wars.

Dakota says he has two uncles buried up on the hill. It’s a sad place, he says. “Sometimes it’s very difficult to go by it. Sometimes my uncle tells me when we talk about the history and what happened [here] he says to bring sage because sage is used as a purification, so just burn it and the pain will go away.”

The National Park Service and officials on the tribal council have tried to make the Wounded Knee memorial site a national park. “And a couple of times they got pretty close to it, but a lot of people here disagree with that. It would be a slap in the face,” Dakota says.

Among the obstacles is the fact that 20 of the soldiers who participated in the slaughter were awarded Medals of Honor by the U.S. Army. Native American activists call them “Medals of Dishonor” and demand their revocation. According to Lakota tribesman William Thunder Hawk, “The Medal of Honor is meant to reward soldiers who act heroically. But at Wounded Knee, they didn’t show heroism; they showed cruelty.”

In 2001, the National Congress of American Indians passed two resolutions condemning the awards and called on the U.S. government to rescind them. The local people, many of whom are descendants of the massacre, told the officials who wanted to turn the site into a National Park the same thing, Dakota says.

Robert Charles Onco: Obituary

Robert Charles Onco, a member of the Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma and an American Indian Movement activist, passed into the spirit world on January 31 after a long battle with lung cancer. He was 63 years old.

Bobby Onco, as he was known, was immortalized in a photo that became a symbol the 1973 uprising at Wounded Knee. The photo shows Onco holding a raised AK-47 and smiling broadly. It became famous worldwide as a poster with the words “Remember Wounded Knee” and is archived in the Library of Congress.

The uprising at Wounded Knee—the site of the 1890 massacre of hundreds of men, women and children by the U.S. cavalry—began on February 27, 1973, by Oglala Lakota and AIM activists when approximately 200 Indians seized and occupied the town of Wounded Knee on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. The activists were demanding that the U.S. government make good on broken treaties from the 19th and early 20th centuries. It was the beginning of a 71-day occupation and armed conflict with the United States Marshals Service, FBI agents and other law enforcement agencies, who cordoned off the area. The civil rights direct action inspired Indians from all over the country, attracted worldwide media coverage and widespread public sympathy.

Dennis Banks, one of the leaders of the occupation, recalled Onco’s weapon and the relative military strength of the AIM members and the federal government in Ojibwa Warrior: Dennis Banks and the Rise of the American Indian Movement.

“One of our men, Bobby Onco… had a AK-47 with a banana clip a souvenir from Vietnam. I don’t think he had any ammo for it; he used it to impress the media and the marshals,” Banks wrote. “Later during the siege we set up a stovepipe, which caused a panic among the feds. ‘Oh my God! Those Indians have a rocket launcher!’ We certainly didn’t have any rockets and almost no ammunition. It was a puny force that faced the mightiest government in the world with its huge arsenal of weapons!”

Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2014/02/10/bobby-onco-wounded-knee-warrior-walks>
Mumia Abu-Jamal: The Ugly Campaign To Punish A Civil Rights Lawyer Because He Helped Save A Man From Execution

By Ian Millhiser 10/2/ 2014

In 1982, a Pennsylvania jury sentenced a man to die shortly after convicting him for murdering a Philadelphia police officer. Yet, as a federal appeals court determined years later, this sentence violated the Constitution.

The trial judge gave the jury a confusing form and confusing jury instructions which could be read to effectively require a sentence of death unless every single member of the jury agreed that mitigating factors were present justifying a life sentence. Thus, even if nearly every member of a jury agreed that the death penalty was not warranted, these confusing instructions could have led to a death sentence if only one juror supported it.

As a matter of law, the appeals court’s decision to overturn this death sentence was not controversial. Two of the judges who reached this decision were Reagan appointees, and they followed a Supreme Court decision which warned that the possibility that a single juror could “require the jury to impose the death penalty, is one we dare not risk.” But the politics of this case were particularly fraught.

The death row inmate at issue in the case was Mumia Abu-Jamal, a radio journalist and co-founder of Philadelphia’s Black Panther Party whose name will be familiar to anyone who’s followed American leftist politics over the last decade. Moreover, Abu-Jamal was not simply convicted of murder, he was convicted of murdering a police officer.

And now, those politics threaten the career of one of America’s leading civil rights attorneys.

President Obama’s nominee to lead the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division is Debo Adegbile, a former acting head of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund (“LDF”) and an expert on voting rights who twice appeared before the Supreme Court in efforts to save the Voting Rights Act. During his time at LDF, Adegbile also was one of several lawyers that urged the courts to toss out Abu-Jamal’s unconstitutional death sentence — prompting this response from the Fraternal Order of Police:

Under this nominee’s leadership, the Legal Defense Fund (LDF) of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People volunteered their services to represent Wesley Cook, better known to the world as Mumia Abu-Jamal — our country’s most notorious cop-killer. There is no disputing that Philadelphia Police Officer Daniel Faulkner was murdered by this thug. His just sentence – death – was undone by your nominee and others like him who turned the justice system on its head with unfounded and unjustified allegations of racism.

It is easy to understand why a law enforcement organization might react this way to the court’s decision. Police do a dangerous job. And, while, in reality, there is little evidence that the death penalty deters people from committing future crimes, rank-and-file police officers may feel safer knowing that the threat of society’s ultimate sanction hangs over anyone who harms them.

But the issue facing the courts was not whether Abu-Jamal was a “thug.” Or if his death sentence was “just.” Or even whether Abu-Jamal was guilty of the crime he was convicted of committing.

The issue was whether Pennsylvania complied with the Constitution when it sentenced Abu-Jamal. The implicit message of the Fraternal Order of Police’s criticism of Adegbile is that the Constitution can be suspended when it comes into contact with particularly reviled individuals.

But that is not how our Constitution works. It provides that no state may “deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law.” “Any person” includes thugs, murderers and even “notorious cop killers.”

Senate Republicans are latching onto this attack against President Obama’s nominee. Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-IA), the top Republican on the Judiciary Committee, referred to the Fraternal Order of Police letter as a source of “concern” during Adegbile’s confirmation hearing. Sens. Pat Toomey (R-PA) and John Cornyn (R-TX) both attacked Adegbile’s work in the Abu-Jamal case.

Every single Republican on the Judiciary Committee voted against allowing Adegbile’s nomination to advance to the full Senate.

Because Democrats still control the Senate, and because Adegbile can now be confirmed by a simple majority vote, these objections are unlikely to derail Adegbile’s nomination.

But the campaign against Adegbile also sends a very clear message to ambitious lawyers who hope that they might be up for a Senate-confirmed job someday: if you take a principled stand against the death penalty, or even if you object to a state’s unconstitutional sentencing practices, then you are limiting your career options. Adegbile would be uncontrollable in a differently constituted Senate.

In the long run, this will lead to fewer attorneys willing to take on these kinds of cases — and more sentences being upheld for reasons that have nothing to do with the law.

Whatever else Mumia Abu-Jamal may be, he is also a man who was sentenced to die in violation of the Constitution. That should not happen in a nation that treasures the rule of law.
find myself wondering how many of our present day leaders, President Obama in particular, are aware of what happened in Palestine that became Israel on 10 March 66 years ago. On that day in 1948, two months before Israel’s unilateral declaration of independence in defiance of the will of the organized international community, as it then was, at the UN, Zionism’s in-Palestine political and military leaders met in Tel Aviv to formally adopt PLAN DALET, the blueprint with operational military orders for the ethnic cleansing of Palestine.

They did not and never would refer to the crime they authorised as ethnic cleansing. Their euphemism for it was “transfer”. As noted in an excellent anniversary briefing paper by IMEU (the American-founded Institute for Middle East Understanding), from the earliest days of modern political Zionism its advocates grappled with the problem of creating a Jewish majority state in a part of the world where Palestinian Arabs were the overwhelming majority of the population.

By August 1937 “transfer” was a discreet but hot topic for discussion at the 20th Zionist Congress in Zurich, Switzerland. All in attendance were aware that the process of dispossessing the Palestinian peasants (the fellahin) mainly by purchasing land from absentee owners had been underway for years. Referring to this David Ben-Gurion, who would become Israel’s first prime minister, said:

“You are no doubt aware of the (Jewish National Fund’s) activity in this respect. Now a transfer of a completely different scope will have to be carried out. In many parts of the country new settlement will not be possible without transferring the Arab fellahin… Jewish power (in Palestine), which grows steadily, will also increase our possibilities to carry out this transfer on a large scale.”

A year later Ben-Gurion told a meeting of Plan Dalet called for: “Mounting operations against enemy population centres located inside or near our defensive system in order to prevent them from being used as bases by an active armed force. These operations can be divided into the following categories:

“Destruction of villages – setting fire to, blowing up, and planting mines in the debris – especially those population centres which are difficult to control continuously.

“Mounting search and control operations according to the following guidelines: encirclement of the village and conducting a search inside it. In the event of resistance, the armed force must be destroyed and the population must be expelled outside the borders of the state.”

Before the Zionist state declared itself to be in existence on 14 May 1948, more than 200 Palestinian villages had already been emptied and about 175,000 Palestinians were already refugees. Some had fled in fear; others were expelled by Zionist forces.

The prime fear factor was the slaughter by Zionist terrorists of more than 100 Palestinian men, women and children at Deir Yassin near Jerusalem. As Arthur Koestler was to write, the “bloodbath” at Deir Yassin was “the psychologically decisive factor in the spectacular exodus of the Arabs from the Holy Land and the creation of the Palestinian refugee problem.”

It was, however, Menachem Begin, Zionism’s terror master and subsequently prime minister, who provided the most vivid description of how well the slaughter at Deir Yassin served Zionism’s cause.

In his book The Revolt, he wrote: “Panic overwhelmed the Arabs of Eretz Israel. Kolonia village, which had previously repulsed every attack of the Haganah (the underground Jewish military organization that became the Israeli Army), was evacuated overnight and fell without further fighting. Beit-Hesa was also evacuated. These two places overlooked the road and their fall, together with the capture of Kastel by the Haganah, made it possible to keep open the road to Jerusalem. In the rest of the country, too, the Arabs began to flee in terror, even before they clashed with Jewish forces… The legend of Deir Yassin helped us in particular in the saving of Tiberias and the conquest of Haifa… All the Jewish forces proceeded to advance through Haifa like a knife through butter. The Arabs began fleeing in panic, shouting “Deir Yassin!”

Three decades later, in an article for...
NGOs and their role in former colonial countries

By Ailish Dease

Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) are often religious based entities doing undeniably “good” work mainly in less developed countries. It is hard to argue against groups trying to provide healthcare etc. to poor people … But the NGOs dependence on funding from their governments and global corporations, which has interests in mining and sweatshop development in these countries means that they actually perpetuate the cycle of underdevelopment and contributes to the peoples” suffering.

The way that NGOs are structured and the bureaucracy and paperwork involved plus the expectations of the donors makes it almost impossible for them to work with poor working class people in these countries.

NGOs tend to work with the educated elite who know what to say to please the donors and how to put things to get funding [1]. Most NGOs ship in their own workers to the country they claim they are trying to “help” instead of using the workers already there. Tens of thousands of people are delivering “aid” in these developing countries performing functions which should be done by the native people themselves.

The NGO view of “development” is a series of projects for the poor not a struggle for justice and rights. The fact that poverty is structural and is produced by unequal social relations in society and in relations between rich and poor countries is ignored.

NGOs do not challenge the mining companies which displace peasants from their land in order to steal their land and destroy the environment and poison the water. They don’t challenge the companies hiring police to mete out repression to anyone who resists this theft.

If we look at Haiti which seized Independence in 1804, (in the only successful slave rebellion in history) having been severely oppressed and underdeveloped due to the horrifying experiences of slavery colonialism and neo-colonialism.

Haiti has more NGOs per capita than any other country in the world (10,000) [2]. Yet the people do not have access to a reliable supply of clean water. (70 percent of NGO funding comes from the U.S. state)

In his book Travesty in Haiti 2010 Tim Schwartz [3] explains how the dynamics of food aid and charity aid really work in Haiti (he tried twenty five publishers before he got it published) Schwartz shows that if you track food aid that’s dumped in some parts of Haiti and look at when it was given and how it was given, it was mainly in times when Haiti’s production was strong. There might have been a drought, a temporary drop in local production, but “aid” comes a year or so later when production has bounced back.

Haiti could be completely self sufficient in food with collectivization of resources and national investment. But US surplus rice subsidized at 40% of its value is dumped in Haiti, and Haitian rice farmers are not allowed to protect their own crops; this has virtually destroyed the rural economy. The same fate was to befall the Haitian sugar and coffee industry.

Destroying food sovereignty in the global South is a common practice used by the North through International bodies like the World Bank and IMF.

The aim is to keep the South dependent on the North and create a market for exports deceptively labelled “food aid” in order to conceal the real intent which is “dumping”. The neo liberal policy has been to impoverish people in the countryside, force them into the slums (in a variation of primitive accumulation) where they will be desperate enough to work in absurd conditions for a few dollars a day.

In 1990 there was a massive popular political mobilisation in Haiti which formed a party with a clear agenda which was strong enough to win the presidency but was a threat not only to the establishment in Haiti but throughout the region. This Movement came into being without a clear political organisation, without a military wing, with no money and no international connections. It faced two serious problems, one political and one military.

Firstly, the political problem was how to get some political unity in the parliamentary system so they could pass the legislation they had a mandate to pass.
NGOs and their role in former colonial countries

Secondly was the military problem, if they were able to make progress on the political front, what to do about the army, which the US had reconstructed in 1915 (when it occupied Haiti for 20 years) and which has functioned as a power broker for the local elite ever since.

In 1991 there was a political impasse which prepared the ground for a vote of no confidence in the government.

The army was waiting to move in, and did so in September 1991. Aristide was overthrown, over 5000 people were killed. (mainly the best grassroots activists) Aristide was forced to leave and the political organisation became fragmented. The Movement was still strong enough to be able to solve the military problem when, Aristide, in a complicated compromise, decided, when it was clear there was no alternative, to go back to Haiti with the support of US soldiers, in a move that was extremely ambiguous (and which has many pros and cons) to get rid of the Haitian army.

In the bitter sweep of Haitian history this was a major accomplishment, but whether it was worth the price of having to go back with American support …? This is still the most divisive question on the Haitian left.

So this has been the fundamental feature of Haitian politics since then, there is no Haitian army to pacify the people directly. One of the key features of the right wing is to re-invent the army or to find an alternative army, whether that is a UN Occupation force or a US force.

In 1999 international donors officially withdrew all funds from the Haitian state as well as from the UN Mission and placed the funds with the NGOs, Zanotti, L., (2010), [4]

Donors such as the World Bank have promoted the Reverse Aid Agenda (Hoogvelt 2001 p192) [5] this redirects aid to private “civil” organisations such as NGOs and away from the national government.

The NGOs are actually operating a parallel government which undermines the Haitian state. They decide how and what funds should be spent.

The popular Movement solved the political problem by creating a new political organisation, that had a national presence.

In 2000 when Aristide won 75% of the vote at every level of government there was a massive political international campaign to discredit the government, demonise the leader, to divide the people and to create a situation which would justify the restoration of the Haitian army or failing that the restoration of an international army. Starting in 2001 a low level military insurgency coupled with a concerted political and economic blockade of the country starved it of money, cut government revenue by half, all international aid was suspended to prepare the ground for foreign intervention.

In 2004 an international coup d’etat led by the US (key benefactor and supporter of the 29 year brutal Duvalier dictatorship) overthrew the democratically elected government of Jean Bertrand Aristide and forced him into exile and foreign troops occupied the country. The people are faced with a combination of foreign and local businesses buttressed by a massive international army of some tens of thousands of troops there for the long term, plus 15,000 private security guards and a profusion of other security forces. So the majority of the people are on one side and variations of the army are on the other.

On 12 January 2010 the worst national disaster in the history of the western hemisphere, a seismic tremor of 7.0 magnitude shook Haiti and in 35 seconds over 230,000 people were dead and a million and a half were homeless. Earthquakes in Chile and Japan measured higher on the Richter scale but took far fewer lives because they had adequate shelter due to high standards of building regulation.

In the aftermath of the quake the US sent troops to Haiti unlike the Cubans and Venezuelans who sent doctors and health workers in an attempt to save as many lives as possible.

The disaster merely laid the ground for international intervention, for foreign companies to exploit the situation for their own profit in collaboration with powerful local interests.

US troops were sent to Haiti after the earthquake primarily to secure the use of cheap Haitian labour for the multinational capitalist companies and to support those companies to exploit Haiti’s national resources.

Troops are there so that multi-national corporations can plunder Haiti’s riches, its uranium 238 and 235, gold, silver, marble, strategic metals, iodium, coal, copper, and the oil cache that some geologists claim is larger than that in Venezuela. (see http://smarteconomy.typepad.com/) [6]

The World Bank has now volunteered to help rewrite the Haitian Constitution to enable easier access for foreign mining companies

By imposing a weak and unpopular government which can be dismissed as corrupt, the US ensures that Haiti serves the world as a disaster training ground for NGOs and international troops, while transnational reconstruction companies (disaster capitalists) make a killing from the lavish contracts.

Ordinary people from all over the world donated to NGOs to help the Haitian people. The Red Cross (the biggest NGO in Haiti) raised $500 million in donations while CARE raised $50 million (both have spent only 10- 15%) and other charities received considerable donations. Very little of the money donated has been spent on needy Haitians, a lot of the money has been spent on building 5
NGOs and their role in former colonial countries

star luxury hotels in Haiti.

There has been a huge gap between the generous assistance promised by the international community and the pledges honoured up to now. The billions of dollars in aid further marginalised the state and social organisations. The government only got one percent of the funds. What happened was a massive appropriation of Haitian sovereignty. The Haitian people were not allowed to collectively determine the priorities for the next phase. 80% of Haitians are small farmers yet less than 3% of the money pledged is to go to agriculture.

The Centre For Economic and Policy Research July 2, 2013 (5) analysed the $1.15 billion pledged after the January 2010 earthquake and found that the “vast majority of the money” it could follow “went straight to US companies or organisations, more than half in the Washington area alone.”

Most of the NGOs in Haiti have failed to oppose or expose institutions creating the conditions of impoverishment in the developing world. They fail to challenge political decisions made in the west that are fuelling this poverty.

Some NGOs like Haiti Grassroots Watch are doing good work, while others such as Batay Ouvriere are mere stooges for imperialism (7). Representatives of this union group were brought to Europe where they met with Caribbean Labour Solidarity and other trade union groups, they were the most reactionary group of workers we had ever met. These workers believed in wage slavery and American exceptionalism. At points in the meeting there was total silence because we were stunned by their pro-imperialist positions.

Davis 2006 p75-76 (8) has said NGOs are “soft imperialism” explaining how NGOs are now a functional part of the World Bank network becoming “captive to the agenda of International donors”.

Notes

[7] See Jeb Sprague’s Coup payoff in Haiti: BO’s smoking gun – the $100,000 NED grant. He exposes BO relationship to the “democracy promotion” programmes of the USA in Haiti that served as a launching platform for the coup. He states that BO has received a grant of US$100,000 from the NED, and that is why BO has failed to denounce effectively the repression of Lavalas militants in the slums. http://argentina.indymedia.org/news/2006/01/365224.php

Batay Ouvriye’s Smoking Gun:
The $100,000 NED grant January 4 – 10, 2006 by Jeb Sprague

Socialist Fight is republishing this 2006 article by Jeb Sprague because Batay Ouvriye’s role in Haiti continues to be controversial. It is still supported by the LIT (Morenois) Conlutas trade union federation and promoted world wide as a legitimate representative of the Haitian working class. We observed in Socialist Fight No 14 that a similar position had developed in Egypt after the 2011 “Spring”:

We are also aware that the US has long had a dual approach in Egypt, that it has employed the AFL/CIO and various NGOs to prevent the emergence of potentially revolutionary oppositions in the trade unions by bribery and corruption. We quoted from Michael Barker:

“Efforts to “promote democracy” in foreign states should not however be seen as a replacement of traditional diplomatic, economic and military forms of statecraft, but instead they should be merely seen as supplemental measures (albeit important ones). Such “democratic” inventions combine relentless propaganda offensives (directed from without and within) with strategically dispersed political aid: aid which is provided to friendly political organizations, and in some instances is used to help local actors create new political bodies. Such “democracy promotion” activities are undertaken by all Western governments, but in the United States they are coordinated by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) — a group that was created in 1983 within “the highest echelons of the US national security state, as part of the same project that led to the illegal operations of the Iran-Contra scandal.” It should come as no surprise, that: “In structure, organization, and operation, it is closer to clandestine and national security organs such as the CIA than apolitical or humanitarian endeavors as its name would suggest.”

Barker, Michael, Questioning Labor Imperialism in Egypt: A Critique of the Solidarity Centre’s “Justice for All” Report, Posted on May 1, 2013 by OneStruggle, http://onestuggle.net/2013/05/01/questioning-
Batay Ouvriye’s Smoking Gun

BO| to train workers to organize and educate fellow workers.”

The NED, which is funded through the U.S. State Department, provided the grant to ACILS, also known as the Solidarity Center. The grant money is then to be used by the Solidarity Center to fund and aid Batay Ouvriye’s labor organizing activities for 2005-2006.

Statements made by both Batay Ouvriye and Solidarity Center officials suggest that there is further funding of the former by the latter. In a recent telephone interview with Canadian freelance journalist Anthony Fenton, a Batay Ouvriye leader Paul Philmé admitted that his organization had received US $20,000 from the Solidarity Center. A Solidarity Center official also recently said at a Dec. 22 public meeting in San Francisco that ACILS provided approximately US $13,000 to the Batay Ouvriye this past year. This funding appears to be in addition to the NED grant, since Solidarity Center officials have stated that the NED grant will not be spent until 2006.

Batay Ouvriye has been waging a successful campaign to gain high-level support from labor federations like the AFL-CIO, which shuns trade unionists who supported Haiti’s constitutional democracy and are today arrested, persecuted, and harassed. The NED grant explains that NGOs and trade unions from the U.S. and Canada will meet with Batay Ouvriye to discuss working conditions in Haiti.

The Solidarity Center-administered NED support for Batay Ouvriye fits neatly into the U.S. State Department’s “democracy promotion” strategy of undermining and destabilizing Haitian self-determination. Instead of supporting unions which did not call for the overthrow of the elected government of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the AFL-CIO, along with mainstream international labor centers, such as the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and its Latin American regional affiliate the Organización Regional Interamericana de Trabajadores (ORIT), has sought to strengthen marginal groups like Batay Ouvriye and the Coordination Syndicale HaVtienne (CSH), which taxed the Aristide government as “anti-worker” and “criminal.”

Workers affiliated with public sector unions, often seen as supporters of the elected government, have been fired and persecuted by the thousands. In a recent radio interview, Isabel Macdonald, a Canadian journalist conducting interviews in Port-au-Prince, explained that between 2,000 and 3,000 unionized workers of the state telephone company TELECO have been laid off since the 2004 coup, with many of those fired placed arbitrarily on the Haitian National Police’s “Wanted” lists (Listen to the Interview with Isabel Macdonald at http://www.wakeupwithcoop.org).

When questioned why the AFL-CIO was not supporting or funding unions whose membership supported the overthrown government, a high level Solidarity Center official, in June 2005, referred to pro-Lavalas trade unionists as “revolutionary ideologues.”

Batay Ouvriye, like other organizations heavily dependent on foreign “democracy promotion” funding, has failed to stand up and organize against the massacres being carried out by the Haitian National Police and the United Nations MINUSTAH force. The Pacifica Radio network’s Flashpoints News correspondent Kevin Pina writes: “Is it not patently obvious that, for Batay [Ouvriye] and their supporters, the killing, jailing, and forced exile of thousands since Feb. 29, 2004 are not acknowledged nor condemned by them? Can their politics be so sectarian and insular as to pretend none of this ever happened?... Members of Batay [Ouvriye] are not under fire in their communities nor the objects of this campaign of repression for the simple reason that they are not seen as a threat by the US-installed government.”

Pina goes on to write: “We can get trapped into a false dialogue with pretty words like bourgeois, proletariat and vanguard, but it will never excuse their silence in the wake of this human tragedy.”

Pierre Labossiere of the Haiti Action Committee sees the U.S. government grants to Batay Ouvriye as a “pay-off for their voicing no opposition to the 2004 coup.”

Channeling “democracy promotion” funds through labor unions is just one of the ways that the U.S. government has sought to subvert popular democracy in Haiti. “Democracy promotion” has facilitated, what William Robinson, the author of Promoting Polyarchy: Globalization, US intervention, and Hegemony, calls a “consensual mechanism of transnational social control,” by which a small minority elite can manipulate civil society and government. Through co-opting labor unions, human rights groups and political organizations, “democracy promotion” casts a wide net of social and political influence.

In December 2005, the Solidarity Center updated its website on Haiti (see http://www.solidaritycenter.org/content.asp?contentid=531). “With funds provided by the AFL-CIO, the Solidarity Centre immediately forwarded $3,500 to Ouanaminthe, where the ESPM-BO and the [subsidiary union] SOKOWA Executive Board distributed these funds,” the site reports, but once again it does not reveal the much larger funding of Batay Ouvriye. The Solidarity Centre continues to refuse to open its books to show its full funding relationship with Batay Ouvriye.

Jeb Sprague is a researcher, freelance journalist, and a graduate student at California State University of Long Beach. To read more on the AFL-CIO’s support for anti-democracy labor in Haiti, see his article Supporting a Leftist Opposition to Lavalas: Contact him at Jebsprague@mac.com or visit his blog at h t t p: / / w w w .f r e e h a i t i .n e t .


Leon Trotsky: I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International; Go Forward!
Mike McNair's *Rethinking Imperialism* (Weekly Worker 980) [1] is third campist and his long historical analogies are ahistorical. Like his AWL opponents in the original debate he reports on in 2004 his task is to deny what is specific about modern imperialism as analysed by Lenin and to elevate the secondary features to make bogus comparisons. What is different today is the domination of finance capital and its alliance with trans-national corporations and their domination of the entire planet.

There is no historical precedent for this which begun with the Great Depression of 1873 and was completed by the early 20th century. His description of Lenin's position is wrong, in order to allow him to equate it with its opposite, the Stalinist opportunist popular front alliances with the nationalist bourgeoisie (China 1927) and the trade Union bureaucracy (British General Strike of 1926) to the detriment of the working class in the oppressed nation and also in the oppressor countries.

Of course Lenin insisted on the split between oppressed and oppressor nations but the whole point here was that the oppressor nations were the home of finance capital and the monopolies and the oppressed nations were victims, including the national bourgeoisie, a "semi-oppressed, semi-oppressing" class in his marvellously dialectical phrase.

Of course Lenin understood the concept of the Aristocracy of Labour, and of course it is true that more than just a narrow layer in the Imperialist countries benefits from the booty of empire. Nonetheless what is essential is the ideological domination of Imperialism over the whole working class and the opportunities that crises like the current one gives to revolutionaries to challenge that domination exercised today by the TU bureaucracies, from Len McCluskey to Bob Crow.

But it is absolutely untrue that "the logic of Lenin's analysis is the alliance with the national bourgeoisie in the exploited countries; and in the imperialist countries the broad democratic alliance, including the petty bourgeoisie, against "monopoly capital".

This describes unprincipled Popular Frontism and Lenin and the early Comintern were very careful to draw very sharp distinction between the operation of both the Workers' United Front and the Anti Imperialist United Front tactic and Menshevik-type class collaboration as practiced by Stalin and the degenerated Comintern post 1924. "No mixing of the red and the blue" was Trotsky line in China in the early 1930 as in the domestic class struggle, particularly after Dimitrov announced the changed line to the rightist populist frontist position in the last (seventh) Congress of the Comintern in 1935. [2]

Stalin mixed the red and the blue and drowned revolutions in blood in China 1927 (through centrist opportunism) and Menshevik-type class collaboration as practiced by Stalin and the degenerated Comintern post 1924. "No mixing of the red and the blue" was Trotsky line in China in the early 1930 as in the domestic class struggle, particularly after Dimitrov announced the changed line to the rightist populist frontist position in the last (seventh) Congress of the Comintern in 1935. [2]

Stalin mixed the red and the blue and drowned revolutions in blood in China 1927 (through centrist opportunism) and Menshevik-type class collaboration as practiced by Stalin and the degenerated Comintern post 1924. "No mixing of the red and the blue" was Trotsky line in China in the early 1930 as in the domestic class struggle, particularly after Dimitrov announced the changed line to the rightist populist frontist position in the last (seventh) Congress of the Comintern in 1935. [2]

Stalin mixed the red and the blue and drowned revolutions in blood in China 1927 (through centrist opportunism) and Menshevik-type class collaboration as practiced by Stalin and the degenerated Comintern post 1924. "No mixing of the red and the blue" was Trotsky line in China in the early 1930 as in the domestic class struggle, particularly after Dimitrov announced the changed line to the rightist populist frontist position in the last (seventh) Congress of the Comintern in 1935. [2]

...Trotsky opposed the Popular Front strategy because it subordinated the working class was subordinated to the liberals capitalists here, thereby excluding a revolutionary strategy, the only fascists could ultimately be defeated. The French Popular Front of 1936 and the Spanish Popular Fronts of 1936-39 the only ones claimed by their supporters as successes were, in fact, disastrous and led to massive defeats for the working class.

[3] This how Trotsky explains his famous concept: "The Perspective of permanent revolution may be summarized in the following way: the complete victory of the democratic revolution in Russia is conceivable only in the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat, leaning on the peasantry. The dictatorship of the proletariat, which would inevitably place on the order of the day not only democratic but socialist tasks as well, would at the same time give a powerful impetus to the international socialist revolution. Only the victory of the proletariat in the west could protect Russia from bourgeois restoration and assure it the possibility of rounding out the establishment of socialism." [4]

The fight by Ukraine to defeat the EU and the US accentuates the decline of “Pax Americana”

Statement by the Liaison Committee for the Fourth International

Russia’s agreement with Ukraine temporarily dispelled tensions that have created the “EuroMaidan”, demonstrations in favour of the recolonisation of Ukraine by the European Union (EU) on “Maidan” Square (Independence Square) in the centre of the capital Kiev. But the current might not last months and can come back in the form of open civil war in the near future or already a conflict of global proportions, paving the way for a World War III.

A new diplomatic offensive by the European Union against Ukraine is scheduled for April. The furore was a response to the refusal of the current Ukrainian Government to accept the conditions of the country in November for the Summit in Lithuania, on the eastern flank of the EU, which wanted to celebrate the integration of six former Soviet republics in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus: Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan to 28 EU Nations block.

The Ukraine was the highest prize of the agreement, with their nuclear power plants, factories, farms and pipelines. The failure of the Summit dragged in Lithuania on the side of Russia and also Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus. Desperate, Angela Merkel, Putin warned: “we should overcome the mentality of we or they, the cold war is over” (AFP, 11/28/2013).

The dispute goes in the opposite direction to the false plea of the German Chancellor and will warm up even more and become more intense the more we approach the elections by the Ukrainian Government in 2015. The current battle was only the beginning of the election campaign where the Ukrainian parties represent different interests the world bourgeoisie.

It is worth remembering that the “Orange Revolution”, a precursor to the current wave of protests, was unleashed just when European and American imperialism were rejecting the election results that led to the victory of the current President Viktor Yanukovych in 2004, overthrew him and imposed the victory of one candidate pro-imperialist Viktor Yushchenko. It is worth noting that the economic situation in which Ukraine has arrived is the product of the country’s EU integration by all Governments after the capitalist restoration, including Yanukovych.

“Vasyl Gouli, a businessman from 49 years of Ternopil (west) blamed Europe which, according to him, was not firm enough after the episodes of police brutality against demonstrators in Kiev in November. “Europe could have pressed the Government, but she abandoned the Ukraine”, he lamented. “The opposition must act more actively. They should tell you how to get the impeachment of President Viktor Yanukovych” declared 23 year old AFP Pantchuk Lessia, who comes from the region of Chernivtsi in the west.

The signing in Moscow of economic agreements providing for a credit of $15 billion to Ukraine and the decrease by a third in the price of Russian gas, while the country is on the verge of bankruptcy, appears to have destabilized the leaders of the defence, unprecedented since the post-Orange Revolution in 2004. After the Moscow agreements, “attempts to form a “technical” Government to sign an association agreement with the EU are no longer valid. The revolt of the oligarchs was drowned out by the cheap gas”, former Interior Minister Yuriy Lutsenko said recently and he made an appeal in favour of the expansion of the defence forces which are stronger today than in 2004, when he was overthrown by the Orange Revolution, says Volodymyr Fesenko. (AFP, 12/22/2013)

Result of 2013 this battle of the new “cold war”

In the battle for the Ukraine, US and EU imperialism has suffered its third major defeat of 2013 for the composite block by Russia and China. The first defeat was in Syria, when Russia stopped the bombing was announced by a US-led military coalition and France against Damascus. The second defeat for the information war, with the asylum given by Moscow to Snowden, former CIA/NSA spy. It is a war of positions. The Western hegemonic imperialism has been losing ground to the Eurasian pre-imperialist block. 2013 marked a trend which reversed the imperialist offensive of 2011. The core Sino-Russian counteroffensive began after the bloody occupation of Libya and they saw the eminent risk of repetition of the same defeat in Syria, with warmongering escalating in the Pacific Ocean, particularly on the Korean peninsula and retreat in favour of reconciliation between Venezuela and Iran with the United States. But by mid February Venezuela was back in the firing line and the western imperialist counter offensive had resumed in Ukraine.

Before the three losses, the White House acted quickly to crush the anti-Western coup in South Sudan, the newest nation on the planet, arising from the division of Sudan by imperialism. All this accentuates the decline of world forces correlation established for the entire period of the Pax Americana. Decline that is leveraged by the rise of new block of pre-imperialist bourgeois in Russia and China, a kind of late imperialism which must be taken advantage of by the world proletariat in its favour against the whole world bourgeoisie.

What is at stake in Ukraine?

After Russia, Ukraine is the richest and militarily powerful of the 14 former Soviet republics. The Ukraine depends on Russian natural gas, although it is self-sufficient in terms of electrical production, due to nuclear power plants and hydroelectric dams. In 2005, was the sev-
The fight by Ukraine to defeat the EU and the US

enth largest steel producer in the world. The Ukraine has a huge high-tech industrial base; they inherited much of this from the USSR. It includes electronics, armaments and space articles, most of which are still under state control. In the manufacturing sector the country produces metallurgical equipment, diesel locomotives, tractors and automobiles.

The Ukraine is one of the European countries with the highest consumption of energy, in proportion to its GDP. Ukraine consumes twice the amount of energy consumed in Germany. 45% of the energy produced in the country is through its nuclear power plants. The largest nuclear plant in Europe, the Nuclear power plant of Zaporizhia, is located in Ukraine.

The issue of Russian gas

25% of the natural gas consumed in the country is produced in Ukraine, but about 35% comes from Russia and the remaining 40% of Central Asia through transit routes controlled by Russia.

85% of Russian gas is delivered to Western Europe via Ukraine. There is one of the core issues which divides the country and the capitalists between west and east. The great economic importance of Ukraine to European imperialism lies in the fact that it’s through Ukrainian pipelines almost all Russian gas supplies to Europe pass.

It was precisely to prevent the installation of more NATO military bases in Ukraine and in exchange for control of the Ukrainian pipelines that Russia has agreed to invest $15 billion in debt securities of the Government of Ukraine and reduce by about one-third the price that Naftogaz, Ukraine’s national energy company, pays for gas from Russian State-owned Gazprom, the largest exporter of natural gas on the planet. While the IMF and the European Union require a 40% increase in the price of gas and the devaluation of the Ukrainian currency, the Grivna.

With the Russian-Ukrainian agreement the EU will be more directly dependent on the Russian blue fuel without being able to use Ukrainian pipelines that distribute Russian gas to many nations, as a bargaining chip against Moscow.

The economic crisis and the austerity policies of the imperialists pushed the Ukrainian bourgeoisie into the arms of Russia. Until the Lithuania Summit in November, Yanukovych seemed sincerely focused on closer ties with the EU. The turnaround came when he realized that the Ukraine, in the hands of the “Big Three” would go through an intermediate crisis like that suffered by Greece and Spain.

Yanukovych said he needed 160 billion dollars over three years to compensate for the reduction of trade with Russia and Ukraine to help defuse the pain of austerity reforms required by the EU. The EU had little room for manoeuvre, because they couldn’t follow a different road, requiring compliance with the austerity plans by other members of the block and throwing a lifeline to Ukraine.

That’s why the EU refused to give the amount required by the Ukrainian Government, offering only half of it.

The Ukraine doesn’t want to follow the path of Greece, Ireland, Italy, Poland and Spain. The “reforms” required by the EU include the currency devaluation, the increase in energy prices for consumers, and cuts in salaries and pensions. The opening of its economy to competition from the west would break many industries Ukraine, especially in the east of the country.

The Ukraine is strongly divided between east and west. In the east is the Soviet-era heavy industry, industries that are threatened with going bankrupt if the wolves of imperialism are let loose on the Ukrainian economy. The New York Times reports: “this is how it works in Ukraine: the east makes money, and the west eats it”. This demonstrates the division; the WWS reports: “A survey conducted by pro-EU ‘European Centre for a Modern Ukraine’ recorded that only 13% of the population in the east of the country are supporting the protests against the Government, compared to 84% in the west. Yanukovych’s decision not to sign an association agreement with the EU, which was the impetus for the demonstrations, is rejected by most in the west, but supported by 70% in the east”.

Many of the protesters were wrong in the current economic crisis, induced to think that the EU would resolve their crisis, driven by the support given to them by Germany and the US in particular. It serves the economic interests of a few oligarchs who dominate politically Parliament and politics in Ukraine today. However, a sufficient number of them fear Personal ruin if they accept the terms of the EU and remain in the opposition.

The role of imperialism-vassal of Germany

The greatest imperialist economy in Western Europe, Germany, is a power exporter of capital to the rest of the planet, but militarily, even after the annexation of Eastern Germany, the country remains, since the end of World War II, a US military colony that hosts no less than 227 military bases and 50 thousand soldiers.

36% of the gas consumed in the country comes from Russia passing through Ukraine and the recolonisation of the latter by the EU would represent the liquidation of the Ukrainian industrial base and the dismissal of thousands of workers, destroying the main point of resistance to recolonisation of Ukraine.

The bourgeois interests of Germany are the spearhead of economic recolonisation of Ukraine. Also, the expansion of NATO to the east requires of imperialism take ownership of all the nuclear power, energy and Ukrainian space. In turn, a defeat of the imperialist interests in Ukraine can awaken the anti-imperialist democratic and anti-fascist struggle throughout the region and in particular in Poland and Austria.

Another openly pro-imperialist “revolution”

What we see today in Ukraine is a fraudulent pro-imperialist “revolution” like dozens of other contrived by the CIA during the cold war, in the processes of capitalist restoration of 1989-1991 and the “Arab spring”. The main claim of the “revolution” was the requirement that the country’s Government to sign a recolonisation agreement of “free trade” with the European Union.

Leon Trotsky: I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International; Go Forward!
The fight by Ukraine to defeat the EU and the US

The “popular movement” was triggered after the failure of the pressure exerted directly by the heads of the so-called “Big Three”, Merkel, Hollande and Cameron and the US threat to impose sanctions on the country if US “revolutions” directed by the CIA, the US Embassy, CEOs of multinational companies, NGOs, churches and neo-Nazi parties as the Svoboda (Freedom) which held the emblematic destruction of the monument to Lenin during the recent wave of protests Ukrainian pro-EU [1].

While among organizations that claim to be revolutionary, the study of historical experience of proletarian revolutions of the 20th century is still something predominately amateur, within the intelligence services and military academies in the pay of big business tactics and the revolutionary strategy are subject to meticulous analysis. So much so that since the cold war imperialism has been improving its know-how in coups camouflaged as “revolutionary”.

The first “pro-imperialist revolution” was orchestrated by the intelligence services of England and USA was in 1953 in Iran [2], with the overthrow of the democratically elected Government of Iranian Prime Minister Mohammed Mosadegh who had thwarted the imperialist interests of the multinational British Petroleum by nationalising it.

The behind-the-scenes description of the successful “Operation Ajax” is made by journalist Stephen Kinzer for the New York Times, in his book All the Shah's men: An American coup and the roots of terror in the Middle East, he shows that “the CIA engineered a scenario that gives the impression of a popular revolt when in fact it is a covert operation. The highlight of the show was a demonstration in Tehran with eight thousand extras paid by the Agency in order to provide convincing photos the Western press,” (All the Shah’s Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror, 2003).

Anti-imperialist tactic and long term strategy for the Ukraine

The Ukrainian industrial proletariat is the main bulwark against the recolonisation of the country in favour of a “Green Europe” with the spoils of the bureaucratised workers states, with Germany as the control tower of the interests of American imperialism.

How many times in history has capitalist economic crises put the issue of Ukrainian national aspirations on the agenda? The question returns again and again to play an important role on the arena of global class struggle. Here are combined elements of imperialist domination, anti worker and fascism, the anti-Communist eminence of a new imperialist war and a historical reckoning with the Stalinist anti worker policy disaster. On this last question, the greatest of all Ukrainian revolutionaries declared:

“Toward the sections of the Ukraine now outside its frontiers, the Kremlin’s attitude today is the same as it is toward all oppressed nationalities, all colonies, and semi-colonies, i.e., small change in its international combinations with imperialist governments. (Leon Trotsky, the Ukrainian question, 2/4/1939).

Although the negotiation Putin-Yanukovych has benefited enormously the Ukraine with a reduction in the price of gas in relation to the Greek panorama which proposed the EU, the current Russian bourgeois Government uses much more to Ukraine as a bargaining chip than did the Stalinist bureaucracy in the past. And the current Ukrainian bourgeois Government, representative of regional oligarchies, appropriates part of the advantage of reducing the energy costs that could benefit the people.

Even for democratic demagoguery of Putin in Russia, winter pre-Olympiads the defeat of imperialism in this battle, cheered the struggle for democratic rights in Russia. However, the struggle for democratic rights in Russia, as it had been for a long time in the USSR, is not addressed by the Communist proletarian vanguard, is almost entirely deformed and influenced the politics of democratic reaction of Western imperialism. The first by-product of this new situation was the release of the members of the rock band Pussy Riot, activists from Greenpeace and the Russian oil Tycoon Mikhail Khodorkovsky, an ally of Western imperialism against Putin.

In this battle and the civil war that temporarily ebbed but that accentuate in the coming months, the Liaison Committee for the Fourth International (CLQI) believes that the only option for Ukraine is the struggle which combines the tactics of the Anti-Imperialist Front (AIUF) and the strategy of Permanent Revolution. So, join the methods and goals of permanent revolution in the struggle for national independence, i.e. Ukrainian self-determination against the European Union.

This fight is not about to align itself with the lesser of two evils, in the case with the Russian bourgeoisie, but to fight the greater evil, hegemonic imperialism across the globe. Therefore, tactically we’re with the proletariat of Eastern Ukraine in a Anti-imperialist Front with the Yanukovych Government against the EU and its mercenaries and fascist agents.

But we denounce the Government of Yanukovych as bourgeois oligarch for having led the country to this situation by betting on a gradual plan of privatization and capitalist restoration. We demand the Government defends and restore the Soviet monuments, the statues of Lenin and the monuments that symbolize the victory of the proletariat over fascism, which now serve as inspiration against the imperialist resettlement already suffered by our Greeks, Irish, Italian, Polish and Spanish brothers and sisters.

The LCFI struggle for the construction of a Bolshevik-type party and internationalist in Ukraine that has as its goals a new social revolution against the bourgeois oligarchies both pro-imperialist and pro-Russian. We fight for workers’ control and the Sovietisation of all the country’s economy, in particular the nuclear plants and alongside the tankers Ukrainians fought for control of exploration, gas production and distribution by the workers themselves, as well as the gas pipelines that the Government wants to deliver to the realm of Gazprom as part of the agreement with Putin.

Under the guidance of the most revo-

Leon Trotsky: I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International; Go Forward!
The fight by Ukraine to defeat the EU and the US

lutionary of all Ukrainians, Leon Trotsky, we must fight the Ukrainian worker population to overcome all prejudices built up historically against communism thanks to bureaucratic centralization of Stalin on his country and that today are used by the fascist nationalism to seduce the masses in favour of imperialism. We are aware that in the words of Trotsky,

but for the rape of Soviet Ukraine by the Stalinist bureaucracy there would be no Hitlerite Ukrainian policy… The Fourth International must clearly understand the enormous importance of the Ukrainian question in the fate not only of South-eastern and Eastern Europe but also of Europe as a whole. We are dealing with a people that has proved its viability, that is numerically equal to the population of France and occupies an exceptionally rich territory which, moreover, is of the highest strategic importance. The question of the fate of the Ukraine has been posed in its full scope. A clear and definite slogan is necessary that corresponds to the new situation. In my opinion there can be at the present time only one such slogan: A united, free and independent workers’ and peasants’ Soviet Ukraine. [3]

For us, the LCFI the program of independence of Ukraine at the time of imperialism (and the imperialist aspirations of Eurasian block) is directly and inextricably linked to the programme of the proletarian revolution. The liberation of Ukraine from webs of bourgeois domination assumes the complete independ-ence of the country in relation to the Rus-sian bourgeoisie and the domestic fronts oligarchies of some large corporations block II.

The real Ukrainian national independ-ence can only be achieved through the fight for a Socialist and Soviet Ukraine as part of the struggle for a new Federation of Socialists and Soviet republics.

Notes

[1] In an interview reproduced on the site, a Ukrainian anarchist Freedom Journal describes how the Svoboda:

Today, the main political force in the pan-o-rama of the extreme right in Ukraine is, unde-niably, the Svoboda. If I had to provide some comparison, compare them with other right-wing parties present in Eastern Europe, as the Hungarian Jobbik party, with which I think the American listeners may be aware. There was a great scandal when a couple of years ago they received many votes in Hungary.

Svoboda is pretty much the same thing, is a political party that has its own design of a so-called “national” Constitution, which would bring a lot of horrible things, such as the death penalty for what they call “anti-Ukrainian” activities, without defini-tions of what are these “activities”. Basically, anything contrary to the spirit of that party could be considered “anti-Ukrainian”.

Today, in EuroMaidan, they are urging a po-litical strike, but, in fact, what most people do not realize is that in their proposed the new Constitution Svoboda politics would make striking a criminal offense.

The paradox is that they have become ex-tremely popular among the educated liberal middle class of urban areas, especially in Kiev. So, today Kiev votes Svoboda, as the western regions of Ukraine make, why don’t they just say, “well, I don’t know what your program. I have not read anything about it, but they seem so hard, they’re good guys, and I’m sure that at least they would break the necks of the corrupt who are now in the ruling party.

This is of course a great reminiscence of historical situations in other countries in the 21st century.

I don’t want to seem too panicked, but there are some similar features, because the middle class bourgeois people don’t see anything wrong with this. And, to some extent, they’re right, because, if the extreme right WINS across the country, these people will not feel any great difficulties in their lives.

The main difficulties would be to the extreme left, against all the leftist parties and move-ments, and to ethnic minorities and to racial minoritics.

But normal people don’t feel anything, at least for some time, and that’s the problem.

Also another interesting fact about the Svoboda: they went through a rebranding and now they call themselves “freedom”. This is a generic word for the European right, but until 2005 or 2004, they called themselves Socialist National Party of Ukraine.


Comment By Gerry Downing

In the Ukraine the EU and the US are sponsoring an uprising against the elected government to seize its assets and sack its economy (not without tensions as assistant US secretary of state Victoria Nuland’s “fuck the EU” reveals). The LCFI advocates an anti-Imperialist united front with President Viktor Yanukovych and defends his alliance with Putin to save the Ukrainian economy from devastation. Workers Power/LFI and the RCIT take a “no sides” line and wheel out the old Max Shachtman formulations: “Neither Brussels nor Moscow! For an independent Workers’ Republic!” headlined the RCIT on 18/12/13, “Ukraine: neither Moscow nor Berlin, but workers” internationalism” screamed Workers Power at the same time, a stance that some cynics might infer is a result of the close liaison being developed with the ex-SWP state capitalists in Left Unity. But the fascist Svoboda leads this “uprising” so there are problems in how we deal with this. It seems. A subsequent article by Martin Suchanek, from the German LFI section Gruppe Arbeitermacht clarified the position:

For a chauvinistic force like Svoboda, which presents itself as anti-Russian, it is virtually impossible to gain a mass base in the eastern and southern Ukraine. However, if it continues to strengthen itself, it could well lead to the formation of similar forces in the east of the country. The social breeding ground for it is there: the mass impoverishment of the rural petty-bourgeoisie as well as of the “middle class” in the cities and the majority of workers.

For the purpose of this comment Svoboda have become “a chauvinistic force”, although the article admits several times that they are in fact fascists. And then, in order not to have a clear stance against fascism and the side backed by your own Imperialist ruling class, now being fought on the ground heroically by workers in Ukraine, he outrageously speculates that a similar force (chauvinist or fascist?) MIGHT develop on the other side because, “the social breeding ground for it is there: the mass impoverishment of the rural petty-bourgeoisie as well as of the “middle class” in the cities and the majority of workers.” You must not be for the defeat of the actual fascists by workers and the elected government because it MIGHT HAPPEN that a fascist force MIGHT EMERGE on the other side!!

So Workers Power, a so-called Trotskyist movement led by a Ukrainian Jew in Britain, cannot oppose Ukrainian fascists unequivocally - i.e. cannot seek their military defeat although it is not too wild a guess that members of his own family were among the 900,000 Jews who were exterminated by the Ukrainian fascists in alliance with Hitler. But there was a real battle against the without-equivocation-fascist Svoboda, flying their war time Nazi-allied fascist flag, who suffer a major defeat at the hands of heroic anti-fascist fighters. Here is the report:

Most Nazi-activists/militants were mainly taken by buses and trains from west Ukraine and “Nazi-maidan” in Kiev. That’s why they enjoyed very little local support in east and south-Ukrainian, Russian-speaking regions. In Kharkov the local MMA-fighting club “Oplot” has organized “Popular Resistance” to the possible attacks by west-Ukrainian Nazis of the local authorities in Kharkov - that’s why there were no even such attempts in Kharkov.

(The Nazis got afraid of Kharkov very militant Resistance Movement). In Dnepropetrovsk and in Zaporozhye the Nazi-attacks were successfully defeated by local Police/Special Forces and “Popular anti-Nazi Resistance” in the cities. However not all Workers Power seem to take this line. We get this from KD Taft on Bosnia, seemingly oblivious to past support for this “revolution” in 1995 that turned out so badly, as did the ones in Kosovo, Libya, and now Syria:

Spring has come early to Bosnia! As if they needed any further lessons in the cynical policy of the European ruling class, they need only observe Ukraine, where Germany supports the Euromaidan movement, despite its violence and fascist components, but insists that in BiH order must prevail. Indeed, the first response of the Austrian High Representative was to threaten the protesters with the use of foreign soldiers to restore order if the government and police could not.

Now let us learn some internationalist lessons from the current uprising that has erupted in Bosnia. The RCIT has produced a statement on 9/2/14 entitled Victory to the Bosnian Revolution! It consists of a historical overview of how we got where we are and what to do now in this ex-Yugoslav “rebublic” which is little more than a EU colony as Kosovo next door is almost a UN colony. These regions acquired this lamentable status because NATO bombed and troops invaded to assist “the revolution” with the support of the majority of the British and international “far left”.

I was a member of the International Socialist Group (British section of the Mandelite Trotskyist Fourth International) at the time but more in political sympathy with both the International Trotskyist Organisation (led by Peter Solenberger in the US and Franco Grisoli in Italy) and the Workers International League, British section of the Leninist Trotskyist Committee (led by Richard Price). They all took pro-Imperialist positions then, though the ITO tended to be better. The position of Joe Villa, an oppositionist in Workers Power and his Latin American comrades in the Liaison Committee of Militants for a Revolutionary Communist International, was the correct position and it was to that I gravitated when I began to re-evaluate my own position following the break-up of the WIL and LTT.

The RCIT article explains the breakup of Yugoslavia as if it was a natural disaster and in no way the work of international finance capital, i.e. mainly US and German Imperialism. And it opposed NATO thus:

We denounced the US and EU imperialists who strangled the Bosnian resistance with an arms embargo and whose UN troops collaborated with the Serbian chauvinists when the butcher General Mladic organised the mass murder of 8,000 Muslim men in Srebrenica in July 1995... We called for arms and international volunteer brigades for the Bosnian resistance and denounced the NATO bombing campaign in summer 1995 which stopped the Bosnian national liberation forces when they were starting to advance and to take back the areas which they had lost in the first war years. However the biggest crime of ethnic cleansing since WW2 was that of the Serbs from the Croatian Krajina. Between 250,000 and 300,000 were driven from their ancestral homes in August 1995 with the help of US supplied arms and other logistical assistance. I had fought against the support the majority in the ISG gave to that crime. Krajina

Serb refugees listed the names of 2,650 civilian Serbs who were killed, some because the tried to remain. This was a crime which the pro-imperialist left totally ignored because it was supported by the US and other Imperialists and their mass media. Amnesty International reported in the following terms:

In May and August 1995, the Croatian Army and police forces recapTUREd Western Slavonia and the Krajina region... In the aftermath of the operations members of the Croatian Army and police murdered, tortured, and forcibly
expelled Croatian Serb civilians who had remained in the area as well as members of the withdrawing Croatian Serb armed forces.

In effect, the RCIT denounce Imperialism for failing to be Imperialistic enough and for not REALLY being for “the revolution”, just as they and their co-thinkers complain about the performance of Imperialism in Syria who are just not bellicose enough in their attacks on the semi-colonial dictators and are not supplying enough arms of the right kind to their hired mercenary army.

Wiki’s report on the 1995 bombing to which Workers Power/RCIT continue to justify in their own hypocritical way (“we are against the bombing but if the forces of liberation take advantage of it we will not say no”) sounds as if it did not stop the “Bosnian national liberation forces” at all but on the contrary even assisted the pro-imperialist armies of Alija Izetbegovic of Bosnia and the Croatian army of Franjo Tudman then in a joint offensive against Radko Mladic’s Army of the Republika Srpska called Operation Mladić.

The operation was carried out between 30 August and 20 September 1995, involving 400 aircraft and 5,000 personnel from 15 nations. Commanded by Admiral Leighton Smith, the campaign struck 338 Bosnian Serb targets, many of which were destroyed. Overall, 1,026 bombs were dropped during the operation, 708 of which were precision guided.

And then we get to the real irony of the article. Now it seems that the regime that they assisted to put in power by portraying Milošević as the main enemy is ripping the heart and soul out of the economy by privatizations and asset stripping on behalf of international finance capital and we must make a revolution against this! Since then the country has been plundered and impoverished by native and foreign capitalists who were actively helped by corrupt politicians. Today more than 44% of the Bosnians are without a job. About 100,000 old people don’t receive their pensions – including for war veterans who risked their life in the liberation war. The average income for Bosnian workers is 420 Euro per month which is the level of Albania. The average 3 workers risked their life in the liberation war. The average income for Bosnian workers is 420 Euro per month which is the level of Albania. The average income for Bosnian workers is 420 Euro per month which is the level of Albania. The average income for Bosnian workers is 420 Euro per month which is the level of Albania.

In Kosovo the RCIT contexts to be made?

The Genocide Myth: Uses and Abuses of the Srebrenica Massacre

The Wikipedia report of the Srebrenica massacre is adamant on the number 8,000: As of July 2012, 6,838 genocide victims have been identified through DNA analysis of body parts recovered from mass graves and 6,066 (July 2015) have been buried at the Potocari. Serbian President Tomislav Nikolič officially apologized for the massacre, although he stopped short of calling it genocide.


However the proof is supplied by the International Commission on Missing Persons which “was established at the initiative of U.S. President Clinton in 1996 at the G-7 Summit in Lyon, France.” We are entitled to take the findings of a US-sponsored NGO with a pinch of salt. We suspect that funding would immediately dry up if “findings” were not to the liking of the persons who paid the piper. Its “Commissioners” include, Ambassador Rolf Ekeus, Her Majesty Queen Noor of Jordan, Ambassador Carola Barco, Ambassador Knut Vollebekk... Moreover the blog Serbianna gives us the story from the Serbian side and it also gives the wider political context: “The trouble is that the event known to the bill’s sponsors as the “Srebrenica genocide” was no such thing. The contention that as many as 8,000 Muslims were killed has no basis in available evidence; it is not an “estimate” but a political exaggeration. The number of casualties at Srebrenica and the context of events have been routinely misrepresented in official reports by the pro-Muslim governments, quasi-governmental institutions, and the media. French General Philippe Morillon, the UNPROFOR commander who first called international attention to the Srebrenica enclave, is adamant that the crimes committed by those Muslim soldiers made the Serbs’ desire for revenge inevitable. He testified at The Hague Tribunal on February 12, 2004, that the Muslim commander in Srebrenica, Naser Orić, “engaged in attacks during Orthodox holidays and destroyed villages, massacring all the inhabitants. This created a degree of hatred that was quite extraordinary in the Balkans.”

Two prominent Muslim allies of the late Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic, his Srebrenica party chairman Ian Mustafic and police commander Hakija Mehlojic, have subsequently accused Izetbegovic of deliberately sacrificing the enclave in order to trigger NATO intervention. Mehlojic is explicit in his presence, Izetbegovic quoted Bill Clinton as saying that 5,000 dead Muslims would be sufficient to provide the political basis for an American-led intervention on the side of the Muslims, which both of them wanted.”

Self-determination and Socialist Federation: Scotland, Wales, Ireland, the Basque Country and Catalonia

Socialism Fight has been asked, what is our position on the Scottish Referendum due on 18 September 2014? We say vote no but argue for a socialist federation. Let us be clear on what Alex Salmond is demanding. It is NOT a republic, the Queen remains head of state and its degree of independence would be considerably less than granted to Ireland in 1922. It is NOT socialism or even a mild form of social democracy, neo-liberal capitalism will still rule in Scotland. The good Professor Gregor Gall, who frequents the left circuit as a speaker, lifts our revolutionary spirits by his vision of a “radical change” in Labour Briefing of November 2013 in an article which defies irony:

So out of this moment comes the possibility (!) of taking the opportunity to assert—and then implement—that the touchstone of society in Scotland should be social justice, reduction in inequalities (!) and a socialised economy (whatever that is—SF). This is not socialism (indeed no—SF) but a society where the market does not so fully determine citizens’ life chances and standards of living (!!!), and where equalities of outcome supercede equalities of opportunity (!!!)

And further, the highlighted bit to really get us going: “The chance of betterment through independence needs to be expressed as a possibility (FFS-SF)”

The national question in Spain, Britain and Ireland

Ireland and Spain are very different; Ireland remains a semi-colonial country and Spain is an Imperialist country. Both Catalonia and the Basque country are economically very advanced parts of Spain, Ireland, particularly the south, was a super exploited part of the British Empire, forcibly maintained in economic backwardness for the benefit of Whig and Tory landlords during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The north of Ireland was allowed to develop economically in the linen and shipbuilding industries as part of the markets controlled by the British Empire because of it majority Loyalist population. John Bull used the difference to divide and rule and imposed the Orange state in 1920 to continue and deepen that tactic. Marxists demand full political and economic separation of the whole of Ireland from Britain and national unity, which must involve the defeat of reactionary Loyalism and the destruction of the Orange state.

It would be economically and politically disastrous for the Spanish working class if Catalonia and the Basque country totally separated; there are clear reactionary forces in the political ascendency in Catalonia right now. There is a better situation politically in the Basque country with more leftist implantation in the national movement but reaction is clearly very much to the fore in that land also.

Recognising the right to self-determination and that these are historic nations does not oblige us to advocate full separation. We should advocate the Hispanic Socialist Federation (including Portugal). Full separation would leave these nations as pawns of other Imperialist powers (the right wing nationalists in both the Basque Country and Catalonia make no bones about that) and would tend to weaken class solidarity with workers in Castile, Andalucía, Galicia, etc.

On the other hand not recognising the right to self-determination would appear to workers like supporting the repressive central apparatus of the reactionary central Madrid state against them.

The Basque country of northern Spain and southern France has a stronger claim to separation, or at least far more autonomy, given its history of severe repression under the dictator Franco and the continuing struggles of its liberation movement ETA and the numbers of political prisoners held in Spain and France. It has about 600 of these and January 2014 saw a huge demonstration in Bilbao in support of them and calling for “reinsertion” of the prisoners who are imprisoned as far from home as possible. The Wikipedia article on ETA explains:

During this period (1988–9), the Spanish government had a policy referred to as “reinsertion”, under which imprisoned ETA members whom the government believed had genuinely abandoned violence could be freed and allowed to rejoin society. Claiming a need to prevent ETA from coercively impeding this reinsertion, the PSOE government decided that imprisoned ETA members, who previously had all been imprisoned within the Basque Country, would instead be dispersed to prisons throughout Spain, some as far from their families as in the Salto del Negro prison in the Canary Islands.

In that sense the Basque country is more like Ireland than Scotland or Catalonia and there has been strong links between Irish Republicans and the Basques because of the common state oppression suffered by both groups and the major infringements of their civil liberties. But it is not an economically oppressed nation like Ireland was and now obviously still is with the onset of the recession and austerity to pay the debts of foreign and native bankers. Both demands for separation therefore have an overtone of a rebellion against subsidising the poorer and more oppressed regions of Spain and keeping more of their wealth for “themselves”. This is a con game, in reality the ruling classes in Catalonia and the Basque Country wish to ally with the US and other European Imperialists the better to exploit their own working class and poor. And similar profit motives rule in the Scottish and Welsh bourgeoisie’s desire for independence.

We would liken the situation in Spain to Scotland within the UK. As a nation it has the right to self-determination but we should oppose total separation and counterpose a Socialist Federation of Britain – excluding the north of Ireland which is legitimately part of the Irish nation. There is a British nation, is there not? There can never be a “British Isles” nation because of the history of national oppression in Ireland and its reflection in the consciousness of the Irish working class and poor farmers. This is a fate not shared in the same degree at all by either Scotland or Wales, despite the obvious discrimination imposed on Scotland by the Thatcher administration, via the Poll tax (first try it out on the Scots). Historically these unions (Wales in 1536 and Scotland in 1707) were voluntary acts of the ruling elites in the main, despite some opposition in Wales and considerably more in Scotland.

Wales had been ruled by England since the defeat of Owain Glyndŵr’s uprising (1400 – 1415). The union was a consequence of the victory of the Lancastrian, Henry VII, in the Wars of the Roses (1455-87). Wales had been divided into the northern Principality which was Lancastrian and the southern border Marches which were more dominated by England and were Yorkists. Henry VIII, a descendant of both houses, passed the act of union in 1536 as part of the battle against papal and therefore feudal landlord and ecclesiastical control of the region and in England (dissolution of the Monasteries 1536-41, etc.)

Leon Trotsky: I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International; Go Forward!
Self-determination and Socialist Federation

The Scottish union in 1707 was from a very different and later historical period. It was facilitated by the failure of the colonial ambitions of Scotland in the Darien Scheme. This colonial adventure in Central America bankrupted a whole section of the Scottish ruling class and demonstrated that Scotland on its own was incapable of becoming a colonial power. The union was very unpopular with the ordinary people; riots broke out and there was almost universal condemnation of the loss of sovereignty.

Daniel Defoe, who was hired to spy for the English, claimed that “A Scots rabbie is the worst of its kind,” but admitted that, “for every Scot in favour there is 99 against”. Robert Burns referred to the union thus: “We’re bought and sold for English Gold, / Sic a Parcel of Rogues in a Nation.”

The Union may have been forced on the majority in Scotland but the opposition was diverse. There was a growing influence of the Jacobites who wanted to return to feudal times and values – as the reactionary Walter Scott later rumbled in *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805):

> Old times were changed, old manners gone, / A stranger filled the Stuarts’ throne; / The bigots of the iron time/ had called his harmless art a crime. / A wandering harper, scorned and poor, / He begged his bread from door to door; / And tuned, to please a peasant’s ear, / The harp, a King had loved to hear.

Economically both nations benefited greatly from their connection with the Empire; the south of Ireland suffered the opposite fate, disastrously declining in the nineteenth century as seen particularly in the decline of Dublin from the second city of the Empire in 1801 when the Act of Union became law to appalling poverty-stricken Dublin of the 1913 Lockout. The industrial devastation imposed on Scotland and Wales via the defeat of the miners’ strike etc was similarly endured in the North east, Yorkshire, South Wales, Kent etc. We do not want to weaken that class solidarity by full separation as opposed to a Socialist Federation. We will therefore call for a “no” vote in the referendum in 2014 and argue for a Socialist Federation.

The solution advocated by Trotsky for Spain does seem to us still to be the correct Marxist position and does take into account all the factors at play in 1931. We would say that the essential class structures remain the same in Spain today, despite the enormous numerical and economic advance of the working class. The recession will bring these questions to the fore once more, and in the immediate future, we are sure.

Finally a large part of our opposition to total Scottish separation is based on an assessment of the dangers of the rise of English nationalism. We are totally opposed to an English parliament for this reason. England is at the heart of an Imperialist nation, English nationalism is a very nasty beast indeed if taken to its logical conclusion as the fascist groups like the BNP and the EDL do. It is constrained within a British parliament, despite the west Lothian question. [1] In trade union matters leaders from the ‘Celtic fringe’ Ireland, Wales and Scotland, tend to be more militant leaders of trade unions. Scottish-based union branches and regional bodies frequently give a lead to the whole British working class.

This is part of Trotsky’s message on Spain: Leon Trotsky: The national question in Catalonia, July 13, 1931

Once more on the subject of the timely questions of the Spanish revolution.

1) …To permit petty-bourgeois nationalism to disguise itself under the banner of Communism means, at the same time, to deliver a treacherous blow to the proletarian vanguard and to destroy the progressive significance of petty-bourgeois nationalism.

2) What does the program of separatism mean? – the economic and political dismemberment of Spain, or in other words, the transformation of the Iberian Peninsula into a sort of Balkan Peninsula, with independent states divided by customs barriers, and with independent armies conducting independent Hispanic wars. Of course, the sage Maurín will say that he does not want this. But programs have their own logic, something Maurín doesn’t have.

3) Are the workers and peasants of the various parties of Spain interested in the economic dismemberment of Spain? Not at all. That is why to identify the decisive struggle for the right to self-determination with propaganda for separatism means to accomplish a fatal task. Our program is for Hispanic federation with the indispensable maintenance of economic unity. We have no intention of imposing this program upon the oppressed nationalities of Spain with the aid of the arms of the bourgeoisie. In this sense, we are sincerely for the right to self-determination. If Catalonia separates, the Communist minority of Catalonia, as well as of Spain, will have to conduct a struggle for federation.

4) In the Balkans, the old pre-war Social Democracy already put forward the slogan of the democratic Balkan federation as the way out of the madhouse created by the separated states. Today, the Communist slogan in the Balkans is the Balkan Soviet Federation (by the way, the Comintern adopted the slogan of the Balkan Soviet Federation, but at the same time it rejected this slogan for Europe!). How can we, under these conditions, adopt the slogan of the Balkanization of the Spanish peninsula? Isn’t it monstrous?

The full document can be found here: http://socialistfight.com/2013/04/24/leon-trotsky-the-national-question-in-catalonia/

Notes

[1] The west Lothian question refers to the debate in the United Kingdom over why members of parliament from outside of England – from Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales – can vote on matters that affect England only.

[2] Tories, from the Irish Gaelic word tóraidhe meaning “the pursued”, i.e. outlaws.

Leon Trotsky: I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International; Go Forward!
The Conference opened with a statement from John McDonnell who said that we must fight to have the next Labour Government with a socialist programme and that the LRC must be a link for those who are outside the Labour party fighting for the same policies, he said we must unite the disability movement and we must oppose kerfing, a tactic used by the police to prevent lawful protest. He said the LRC must be a bridge for social movements and trade union struggle. McDonnell for all his good intentions is still an invertebrate reformist who had nothing to say about the role of this trade union bureaucracy which at the time of Grangemouth had just betrayed a whole sector of workers in Falkirk.

None of the aspirations of hundreds of workers and their families can be resolved under capitalism and these strata of bureaucrats whose main role is to try and police the working class. They are the fifth column in the working class movement and as Lenin said in Left Wing Communism “The victory of the revolutionary proletariat is impossible unless this evil is combated, unless the opportunist, social traitor leaders are exposed, discredited and expelled” [1]. Lenin wrote those words in 1920 as advice to workers in struggles just prior to the great General Strike of 1926. The role of the bureaucrats has not changed in all that time. They represent a section of the capitalist class in the leadership of the working class. McDonnell is part of this milieu.

Mark Serwotka general secretary of PCS was the next speaker. Serwotka is paraded at these events as a Left; he is very close politically to the Socialist Party of England and Wales, a left centrist current in the working class. He started by saying that we need an action plan to fight austerity. He then launched a vicious attack on the working class, accusing them of low mobilisation compared to the working class movement in Greece and other places. He then asserted why we have failed to have a serious fight back. There is no serious plan being proposed.

He said that the call for a general strike or coordinated action is not going to happen. He then said a Labour government even if it has liberal policies was preferable to the Tories. Nationalisation of companies was the politics of the left “Can we build a movement that is led by the working class movement and as Lenin said in Left Wing Communism “The victory of the revolutionary proletariat is impossible unless this evil is combated, unless the opportunist, social traitor leaders are exposed, discredited and expelled” [1]. Lenin wrote those words in 1920 as advice to workers in struggles just prior to the great General Strike of 1926. The role of the bureaucrats has not changed in all that time. They represent a section of the capitalist class in the leadership of the working class. McDonnell is part of this milieu.

Mark Serwotka general secretary of PCS was the next speaker. Serwotka is paraded at these events as a Left; he is very close politically to the Socialist Party of England and Wales, a left centrist current in the working class. He started by saying that we need an action plan to fight austerity. He then launched a vicious attack on the working class, accusing them of low mobilisation compared to the working class movement in Greece and other places. He then asserted why we have failed to have a serious fight back. There is no serious plan being proposed.

He said that the call for a general strike or coordinated action is not going to happen. He then said a Labour government even if it has liberal policies was preferable to the Tories. Nationalisation of companies was the politics of the left “Can we build a movement that is led by the working class movement and as Lenin said in Left Wing Communism “The victory of the revolutionary proletariat is impossible unless this evil is combated, unless the opportunist, social traitor leaders are exposed, discredited and expelled” [1]. Lenin wrote those words in 1920 as advice to workers in struggles just prior to the great General Strike of 1926. The role of the bureaucrats has not changed in all that time. They represent a section of the capitalist class in the leadership of the working class. McDonnell is part of this milieu.

Mark Serwotka general secretary of PCS was the next speaker. Serwotka is paraded at these events as a Left; he is very close politically to the Socialist Party of England and Wales, a left centrist current in the working class. He started by saying that we need an action plan to fight austerity. He then launched a vicious attack on the working class, accusing them of low mobilisation compared to the working class movement in Greece and other places. He then asserted why we have failed to have a serious fight back. There is no serious plan being proposed.

He said that the call for a general strike or coordinated action is not going to happen. He then said a Labour government even if it has liberal policies was preferable to the Tories. Nationalisation of companies was the politics of the left “Can we build a movement that is led by the working class movement and as Lenin said in Left Wing Communism “The victory of the revolutionary proletariat is impossible unless this evil is combated, unless the opportunist, social traitor leaders are exposed, discredited and expelled” [1]. Lenin wrote those words in 1920 as advice to workers in struggles just prior to the great General Strike of 1926. The role of the bureaucrats has not changed in all that time. They represent a section of the capitalist class in the leadership of the working class. McDonnell is part of this milieu.

Mark Serwotka general secretary of PCS was the next speaker. Serwotka is paraded at these events as a Left; he is very close politically to the Socialist Party of England and Wales, a left centrist current in the working class. He started by saying that we need an action plan to fight austerity. He then launched a vicious attack on the working class, accusing them of low mobilisation compared to the working class movement in Greece and other places. He then asserted why we have failed to have a serious fight back. There is no serious plan being proposed.

He said that the call for a general strike or coordinated action is not going to happen. He then said a Labour government even if it has liberal policies was preferable to the Tories. Nationalisation of companies was the politics of the left “Can we build a movement that is led by the working class movement and as Lenin said in Left Wing Communism “The victory of the revolutionary proletariat is impossible unless this evil is combated, unless the opportunist, social traitor leaders are exposed, discredited and expelled” [1]. Lenin wrote those words in 1920 as advice to workers in struggles just prior to the great General Strike of 1926. The role of the bureaucrats has not changed in all that time. They represent a section of the capitalist class in the leadership of the working class. McDonnell is part of this milieu.
Unite the Resistance conference
Saturday 19 October; An assessment by Laurence Humphries

Unite the Resistance is the industrial arm of the Socialist Workers Party. Ian Hodson from the Bakers Union was in the Chair. Sean Vennell from the UCU gave the main report. He started by attacking the Tories and saying that they should be put in the sewer where they belong. He referred to the forthcoming NHS Demonstration marching against the Tories in Manchester. He said this was a unique opportunity to deliver a blow against the coalition government.

There are a series of strikes coming together for the trade unions to organise. He maintained that many of these struggles were sold short by our leaders. We need here to have an honest debate and discussion. The Blacklisting campaign had shown that if workers stick together we can win and unite with others. Disputes with the teachers and other workers who are in struggle. He introduced Billy Hays general secretary of the Communication Workers Union. The CWU is in a massive battle in the Post Office against plans for Privatisation.

Hays who is a left reformist told the Conference that his members had voted 4-1 for strike action and the counters staff has also voted for action, but all of Hays bluster has come to nothing. Both he and his deputy, Ward, have been in negotiations with the Coalition government. This trade union bureaucracy is absolutely frightened of the Anti-Union laws and the attack on their privileges. They know that the Tories will not hesitate to issue injunctions and the law to prevent any action. They will penalise the union by siege and since the Miners’ Strike of 1985 no trade union official has taken action to defend their member’s interests.

This bureaucratic apparatus is part of the capitalist state and since its formation in the 1900s its role has been to police the working class by pleading with the capitalist class for a few crumbs from the master’s table, but what these bureaucrats don’t understand is that capitalism is in mortal crisis and is constantly striving to exact more profits to enable their system to survive.

Hays and other bureaucrats have sold out and betrayed the working class. What the centrists of the SWP do not understand is the role of these Bureaucrats and the necessity to properly fight and organise a principled Rank and File movement to fight for an alternative leadership and remove these bureaucrats. It is refreshing to note that the SWP did support a Rank and File candidate Jerry Hicks in the Unite general secretary election and those members who were in the SWP before the SWP December conference took a principled decision to support Grass Roots Left the Rank and File organisation in Unite.

Hays carried on with his bluster and misinformation to the conference by telling everyone that “the dispute could be won and you can be guaranteed Victory” and that a motion was going to the Labour Party conference. In fact the CWU leadership caved in without any plans for a fight against privatisation. Both Hays and Ward have proved to be faithful servants of the capitalist class and the fact is the Post Office will soon be in the hands of a large global company with no proper conditions and no doubt pay cuts and sackings. That is what Hays and Ward have achieved for their members.

Matt Wrack, general secretary of the FBU, another left being a supporter of The Socialist Party of England and Wales has called off any Industrial action and Like Hays and Ward he is in negotiations with the Coalition government.

The NUT has called a series of one day stoppages according to Alex Kenny from the NUT Executive; he said that 15,000 teachers have been involved in industrial action he said we have united the opposition in the teaching profession with the NUT and the NASUWT working together. Here was another bureaucrat pleading with the government to work together with us on pay and conditions.

The capitalist class have the measure of these people they are dealing with. For the capitalist class the trade union bureaucracy serves a purpose and that is to mislead, betray and all costs prevent the struggle of the working class to Unite and challenge capitalism. Kenny turned on a member of the audience who had the audacity to challenge; “Don’t tell me what to do” he said.

There was mention of the Grangemouth dispute which as we know was betrayed in a cowardly fashion by the Unite bureaucracy under McCluskey. The Unite leadership when given an opportunity to organise an occupation and put forward proposals to nationalise the oil refinery under workers control, completely recommended acceptance and defeat. This has led to the removal of the convenor Stevie Deans and a three year no strike deal. This deal by the biggest trade union in Britain is the worst defeat the working class has suffered in 30 years.

The SWP’s conference has met and over 140 of their members have left their organisation. This centrist organisation is in a terminal crisis and the numbers attending this conference was much half that of last year. The SWP has to decide what sort of organisation Unite the Resistance is. Is it an organisation that is going to organise the Rank and File to fight for an alternative leadership or is an organisation that is having a very opportunistic relationship with the bureaucracy.

As Trotsky observed in Trade Unions in the epoch of Imperialist decay “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 super profits of Imperialist capitalism” [1]. This shows that the bureaucracy is a strata of the ruling class. It is intrinsically bound to the capitalist class. Its aims and the aims of the working class are completely different.

The working class which is a revolutionary class is for the liberation of their exploitation. It is the duty of Trotskyists to fight to overthrow capitalism and that means direct participation in trade unions for the removal of this parasitic bureaucracy and fight for an alternative rank and file leadership. This is clearly what the Unite the Resistance conference has failed to do. Until it realises that the task is to liberate workers from their exploitation and oppression and to sever their connections with the trade union bureaucracy, they will never pose an alternative to overthrow capitalism and fight for a Socialist Society.

Notes
Trotsky, I. Trade Unions in the epoch of Imperialist decay. www.marxists.org.

Leon Trotsky; I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International; Go Forward!
Mira Schendel, exhibition Tate Modern
Reviewer: Laurence Humphries

Mira Schendel is a Brazilian Artist who was born in 1919 and died in 1988. Schendell was born in Milan, Italy in 1919 but because of her Jewish ancestry she had to flee Italy and travelled as a refugee to Austria, Switzerland and Yugoslavia. In 1949 she emigrated to Brazil and became a Brazilian citizen and now lives in Sao Paulo where most of her painting and art works are displayed.

In many ways Schendel is an enigma for most twentieth century art historians as she cannot be bracketed into any school of modern art. Schendel studied philosophy and used psychology and philosophy to explore her art. As a Jewish person with Italian nationality she questions the central point of human existence. This is displayed in her art which has gone through several phases.

When Schendel arrived in Sao Paulo she derived her artistic influences from George de Chirico and Paul Klee two well-known twentieth century artists. Schendel started using geometric shapes and a flat picture plane, this was very reminiscent of El Lissitsky the great Soviet artist who had exhibited his famous painting using squares and diagonals in his Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge 1920 [1]. Her 1963 untitled composition is typical of Lissitsky’s work at this time Untitled 1963 oil on canvas Tate [2].

The use of linear shapes and geometric design shows the influence of Neo-plasticism associated with Theo van Doesburg and Piet Mondrian striving for a pure art which in turn had been influenced by cubism. The objective was always to contract and reduce the picture plane. In Brazil Schendel met Theo Spaudis an art critic and the Philosopher Vilem Flusser, this development created a change in Schendel’s work. “Schendel's paintings of the 1960s are characterised by a move towards geometry revealing the influence of concrete painting, a form of abstraction where the composition, free of figurative or symbolic references stresses the artwork as an independent object” [3].

In 1964 the military staged a coup and it became difficult to work as an abstract artist, many artists denounced the coup and pledged themselves to fight for the return of democracy. Schendel is not one of them. Schendel states the following “Those things (practical objects) didn’t function as objects because all that matters was light and shadow” [4]. Schendel changes into another phase of art work still using geometric shapes but adding words and letters.

One of her artworks depicts the mythological character of Achilles. The Return of Achilles, 1964, Oil on canvas [5]. As you look at the painting you can see a white background with wheels and black lines inscribed in a diagonal fashion “Now that I am back”.

This shows Schendell using configuration of letters to denote some meaning to the painting. She referred to this as “symbol of eternity”. This reference to Achilles shows that Schendell is obviously referring to Homer’s Iliad and that it must signify some form of existentialism.

As she developed her unique form of art Schendel stopped using oils and starting using rice paper and pencils and ink. She experimented with ink on wet paper trying to blur the effects. Schendel started exploring themes in mystical and eastern religion. Other forms she used was tracing paper inscribing noughts and crosses and developing the use of calligraphy, as her art developed she contacted Max Bense in trying to understand the use of graphic objects an example is Graphic Object 1967 transfer lettering and Oil on rice paper [6].

Schendel had now foregone painting and was using objects suspended in space. They were drawings using rice paper. On some of her work she alternated between letters, scribbling incoherent words with mathematical equations. It was her use of spatial objects using transferable acrylic paper and tubes. One example is her Untitled from the series Monotypes 1965 oil on paper [7].

Other examples are explained in the Booklet “These works were a development in Schendel's delicate drawings on rice paper combined with clear acrylic aiming in their form to create a sense of visual, temporal and spatial transparency” [8].

Schendel is relying on religious and empiricist philosophy as practised by the school of philosophy involving Ludwig Wittgenstein, empiricist and subjective idealist. Schendel was also influenced by religious thinker foremost amongst them was John Henry Newman (1801-1890). “Schendel’s interest in Newman is related to her reading of Ludwig Wittgenstein an Austrian born British philosopher who examined the philosophy of mind and language” [9].

As Schendel continued her search for a different art form she started using notebooks with typed writings using circles and algebraic equations. She was questioning the language systems and investigating letters and signs. “The 1970s saw Schendel continue to investigate themes of transparency and language, but also mathematics, communication information and game theory” [10]. Also in the 1970s Schendel used spray painting to effect different images in her drawings. Homage –to God father of the west 1975 [11]. Further examples of Schendel’s work in the 1970s is her series the Mandalas using concentric circles with different bright red, yellow and green revolving in a wider circle and rotating in a symmetrical fashion. Untitled from the series Mandalas 1974 ink and watercolour on paper [12].

Between 1986-7 Brazil was in a political crisis. There was no evidence that Schendel was as active as other artists were in their struggle against the military. Schendel is an important artist who contributed significantly to the challenges presented to artists in the twentieth century, her turn to philosophy and the use of mathematical and geometric equations is to be welcomed and her search to understand philosophy is understandable, but she still remains trapped in idealist assumptions about philosophy and life.

Her turn inwards to religion is a retrograde step and negates much of her other work which develops new concepts in artistic practices. She remains at the end trapped in subjective ideological thinking. Her failure to act in a principled way during the military coup lessens her importance to me. Her rejection of materialism is her weakness and her art although challenging is negated by her fundamental subjective idealism.

Notes

[1] King. D. Russian Revolutionary Posters 2011 Tate publishing
[3] Mira Schendel: booklet Tate
[4] Mira Schendel: Booklet Tate
[5] Tate Modern: On Display
[7] Tate Modern: On Display
[8] Mira Schendel: Booklet Tate
[9] Mira Schendel: Booklet Tate
[10] Mira Schendel : Booklet Tate
[12] Tate Modern: On Display
Leonard Stephen Lowry was born in Stretford in Manchester 1887 and died in Glossop, Derbyshire in 1976. Lowry experienced a very desolate and lonely childhood with a father and mother who did not give him the loving attention he deserved. In spite of this Lowry was to harness a great talent painting and drawing. As well as painting in oils Lowry was adept at drawing in pencil. The exhibition organised by the Tate of retrospective paintings and prints that Lowry painted are mainly confined to the industrial area of Manchester. Lowry paints scenes reminiscent of the poverty, degradation and exploitation so vividly recounted by Frederick Engels in his book *The Condition of the Working class in England* written by Engels in 1845.

As I walked around the Exhibition what struck me was that Lowry had painted scenes of working class Life in Britain. Lowry himself who attended the Manchester School of Art was influenced by the French impressionist painting foremost amongst them was Edouard Manet. The impressionists had demonstrated the ability to paint what is called the modern life, but the major difference is that Manet and the impressionists mostly painted the Bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie at work and play whereas Lowry painted the working class showing their oppression and exploitation in very drab surroundings. These scenes are discussed in detail by Engels. Much of the scenes that Engels describes in his *Condition of the English working class* were to be replicated by Lowry painting in the 1950s and 1960s.

As I walked from room to room it was obvious that Lowry was interested in crowd scenes. Many of the scenes are of the working class either at play or work. “Lowry was a painter of the working class. I have a one track mind. I only deal with poverty” [1]. Examples on show at the Tate are “Street Hawkers (aka the Hawkers’ cart) 1929” [2]. Most of the paintings on show depict the depression and the slump of the 1930s. His ability to use three dimensional effects in his paintings is evident. The picture space is tightly crowded with workers and their families, the colours and tones are drab and common place. Lowry was taught to portray scenes with a composition of black and browns but what is most effective is the sense of degradation and despair. The buildings dwarf the people. The painting itself shows the total effect of depth and precision in the way the scene recreates a working class district of Manchester. The perspective, viewpoint and meaning are there for everyone to see. “As a child before the first war I hardly knew a weekend free from the sight of brawling adults and inter-family dispute. It was then one saw demonstrated how deeply many manual workers and their wives were possessed with ideas about class. As well as crowd scenes there were also scenes of landscapes, but Lowry's landscapes were of gloom and despair exhibiting smoke from chimneys and dark satanic mills which was the lot of the working class being ground down by scenes of absolute hopelessness. One important painting that Lowry painted in 1942 was the aftermath of war “Blitzed Site 1942.” [3]. This is evidence of catastrophe and disaster as it is painted in very dark and menacing colours. The scene is replete with broken and smashed buildings with several people homeless and looking on with no future.

After the Second World War with the election of a Labour government Lowry turned to painting the social life of Labour Britain. Lowry responded profoundly to the new development of a Labour government. The style of painting became different, there were clownish and comic scenes as depicted in the painting “Aancoats Hospital outpatients Hall 1952” [4]. Lowry was very dismissive about the end of the working class, although you had a Labour government you still had the class system and capitalism as a system remained. Lowry commented “I don’t think they look much better than they used to in the old days” [5].

In one of the rooms at the Tate there are paintings devoted to Industrial Landscapes. Lowry’s painting had changed with the election of the post war Labour government, the creation of the NHS under Beveridge and a new social security system which the present Cameron government is trying to dismantle. Lowry welcomed all these developments and they are evident in much of his painting. His last great work to be displayed was the celebration of the Festival of Britain in 1951. In a sense Lowry with this scene “Hillside in Wales 1962” [6] is the passing of the industrial landscape from old industrial buildings of grim and dark forebodings signifying extreme deprivation under capitalism to a portrayal of a future without having to work in buildings which oppress and have no beauty. John Berger perfectly captures the significance of Lowry’s work “These paintings are about what has been happening to the British economy since 1918, and their logic implies the collapse still to come this is what happened to the workshop of the world. Here is the so called production crisis: the obsolete industrial plants: The lack of capital investment at home and the disastrous reliance on colonial and neo-colonial overseas investments: the shift of power from industrial capital to international finance capital” [7].

Although the exhibition has ended I would still recommend a visit to Tate Britain which still has 23 paintings or drawings either on show or by appointment. They are all worth viewing showing the talent of Lowry who was able to capture crowd scenes and industrial landscapes showing the working class from the period of the slump of the 1930s to the first Labour government of 1945, although they depict the working class in all of its facets, the main task remains the overthrow of capitalism and the construction of a socialist society.

Notes
[1] Lowry and the Painting of Modern Life Booklet [Tate Britain]
[2] Private collection on loan to the Lowry Collection Salford
[3] The Lowry Collection, Salford
[5] Lowry and the Painting of Modern Life Booklet [Tate Britain]