Protestors at Syntagma Square on July 15. 229 MPs voted yes (Nai), 64 voted no (Oxi), and 6 abstained in the sell-out deal. Anti-austerity protesters hurled petrol bombs as riot and police responded with tear gas against dozens of hooded protesters. The Greek people had voted No in the referendum by over 61% on 5 July. On 14 August 222 voted to accept the €85bn cuts and 64 voted no (43 Syriza), with 11 abstentions. Syriza has split and the government is certain to fall.

Jeremy Corbyn, who just squeezed his 35th nomination with two minutes to spare, has won the backing of several trade unions, including Unite, the largest. His anti-austerity message has won a huge response. He now looks certain to win in the three sections of the electorate, Labour members, trade union affiliate members and even the illegitimate £3 public US primary-style voters.
Aims of the Socialist Fight Magazine

Revolutionary socialism
1. We stand with Karl Marx: ‘The emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves. The struggle for the emancipation of the working class means not a struggle for class privileges and monopolies but for equal rights and duties and the abolition of all class rule’ (The International Workmen’s Association 1864, General Rules). The working class “cannot emancipate itself without emancipating itself from all other spheres of society and thereby emancipating all other spheres of society” (Marx, A Contribution to a Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right, 1843).

2. In the class struggle we shall fight to develop every struggle of the working class and oppress us in the direction of democratic workers’ councils as the instruments of participatory democracy which must be the basis of the successful struggle for workers’ power.

Revolutionary strategy and tactics
3. We recognise the necessity for 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 leaderships when conditions are favourable. In fighting the attacks of this Tory government it is now necessary to work within the Labour party as well as within other proto-parties such as Left Unity and RESPECT that seek to present socialist and anti-imperialist politics in opposition to the neo-liberalism that is now deeply embedded within the Labour Party. We support all genuine left developments within Labour, such as the Corbyn for leader campaign. We seek to cleanse the Labour Party of neo-liberalism as part of the broader struggle to transcend reformism, but recognise that the Labour party is a reformist party which can never be won to the cause of revolutionary socialism but we recognise it may well be forced to defend the working class in future periods of developing class struggle as it has in the past. Work within the Labour party is a tactical and not a strategic issue in the struggle to cohere a revolutionary nucleus to build the revolutionary party. Whether or not to work within Labour depends on our assessment of the opportunities, whether we still regard it as a bourgeois-workers’ party and if sufficient internal democracy allows us to function within it. Comrades on the EB may have different assessments on this.

4. We strongly support campaigns to democratis the trade unions’ traditional link to the Labour party. We are for funding only those MPs who agree to and have a record of fighting for union policies. We demand an end the farcical Warwick Assocation within it. Comrades on the EB may have sufficient internal democracy allows us to function within the Labour party, in particular we demand an end to the farcical Warwick Assessment within it. Comrades on the EB may have sufficient internal democracy allows us to function within the Labour party.

5. We fight for rank-and-file organisations in the trade unions within which we will fight for consciously revolutionary socialist leadership in line with Trotsky’s Transitional Programme statement: “Therefore, the sections of the Fourth Interna- tional should always strive not only to renew the top leadership of the trade unions, boldly and resolutely in critical moments advancing new militant leaders in place of routine functionaries and careerests, but also to create in all possible instances independent militant organizations corresponding more closely to the masses of struggle against bourgeois society; and, if necessary, not flinching even in the face of a direct break with the conservative apparatus of the trade unions. If it be criminal to turn one's back on mass organizations for the sake of fostering sectarian factions, it is no less so passively to tolerate subordination of the revolutionary mass movement to the control of openly reactionary or disguised conservative (‘progressive’) bureaucratic cliques. Trade unions are not ends in themselves; they are but means along the road to proletarian revolution.”

6. We totally oppose all economic nationalist campaigns like for ‘British jobs for British workers’ that means capitulation to national chauvinism and so to the political and economic interests of the ruling class itself. We are therefore unre- servedly for a Socialist United States of Europe.

7. Representatives of all political parties are wel- come to participate in blocs to organise and support specific, concrete struggles for quantifiable demands that are in the interest of the working class. Those whose class interests are counter- posed to such struggles will be excluded themselves. That is the tactic of the united front. But a line must be drawn against anything that even seems to imply a common programme for government, at national or local level, with non-proletarian forces. Such blocs that go beyond practical united fronts for action, with representatives of non-working class parties such as the Greens, Lib Dems or SNP by definition rule out ever fighting to forward the world revolution.

8. We support the rights of sex workers and oppose all laws which criminalise them or tend to endanger their lives and health. Whilst recognising sex work as a commercial activity driven by deprivation is a product of the oppression of women and the deformation of sexuality under capitalism and knowing that this will disappear with the ending of the patriarchal-dominated private property structure of class society we raise the demands to protect their rights now such as free and regular health checks under the NHS and a safe working environment for all sex work- ers.

9. We fight racism and fascism. We support the right of people to fight back against racism and fascist attacks by any means necessary, Self- defence is no offence, we support it. Two people might make racism ‘fair game’ but it is challenging them one might turn out a hard-ened racist/fascist and the other might be mind- lessly repeating the Sun editorial. It is necessary to distinguish. It is a legitimate act of self-defence for the working class to ‘No Platform’ fascists but we never call on the capitalist state to ban fascist marches or parties; these laws would inev-itably primarily be used against workers’ organisa- tions, as history has shown.

10. We oppose all immigration controls. Interna- tional finance capital roams the planet in search of all the anti-trade union laws and strongly op- posed the new ones promised.

11. We are completely opposed to man-made climate change and the degradation of the bio- sphere which is caused by the anarchy of capitalist production for profits of transnational corpo- rations. Ecological catastrophe is not ‘as crucial as imperialism’ but caused by imperialism so to combat this threat we must redouble our efforts to forward the world revolution.

Special Oppression and Racism
12. We recognise that class society, and capitalism as the last form of class society, is by its nature patriarchal. In that sense the oppression of wom- en is different from all other forms of oppression and discrimination. Sexism and the oppression of women is inextricably tied to the ownership and the inheritance of private property. To achieve sexual and individual freedom women need to fight in the class struggle in general to overthrow class society itself. We cannot leave the struggle against women’s oppression until the revolution but must recognise it as one of the most funda- mental aspects of the revolutionary struggle itself or we will never make that revolution. We there- fore reject the reactionary ‘intersectional’ theory as hostile to Marxism, to the class struggle and to revolutionary socialism.

13. We also support the fight of all other specially oppressed including lesbians and gay men, bisexuals and transgender people and the disabled 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 caucuses inside trade unions and in working class political parties. While supporting the latter right, we do not always advocate its exercise as in some forms it can reinforce illusions in identity politics and obscure the need for class unity.

14. We support the rights of sex workers and oppose all laws which criminalise them or tend to endanger their lives and health. Whilst recognising sex work as a commercial activity driven by deprivation is a product of the oppression of women and the deformation of sexuality under capitalism and knowing that this will disappear with the ending of the patriarchal-dominated private property structure of class society we raise the demands to protect their rights now such as free and regular health checks under the NHS and a safe working environment for all sex work- ers.

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16. We oppose all immigration controls. Interna- tional finance capital roams the planet in search

2 Leon Trotsky: I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International. Go Forward!
of profit and imperialist governments disrupts the lives of workers and cause the collapse of whole nations with their direct intervention in the Balkans, Iraq and Afghanistan and their proxy wars in Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Workers have the right to sell their labour internationally wherever they get the best price.

**Revolutionary internationalism**

15. We defend the Leninist position on the differences between imperialist and semi-colonial countries. As Trotsky observed in 1937: "...the difference between England and India, Japan and China, the United States and Mexico is so big that we strictly differentiate between oppressor and oppressed bourgeois countries and we consider it our duty to support the latter against the former. The bourgeoisie of colonial and semi-colonial countries is a semi-ruling, semi-oppressed class." Leon Trotsky *Not a Workers’ and Not a Bourgeois State* (November 1937).

16. We were and are for the immediate withdrawal and/or defeat of imperialist armies in wars like Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria and Ukraine. Whilst giving no political support to the Taliban in Afghanistan, the Sunni and Shia militias in Iraq, Hamas or Fatah in Palestine, Gaddafi (as was) in Libya, Assad in Syria, the ‘Islamic State’ in Syria and Iraq, the theocratic regime in Iran or the Donbass leadership in Eastern Ukraine we recognise US-led world imperialism as the main enemy of humanity and so advocate critical support and tactical military assistance from the working class to all those fighting for the defeat of imperialism as part of the perspective of Permanent Revolution.

17. We defend the ‘Islamic State’ in Syria and Iraq against the bombing of US imperialism but do not ally with them against the Kurdish defenders of Kobane and Rojava (Western Kurdistan). We support the Kurdish nation’s right to self-determination and to their own nation state, even though they are scattered over four other nations now. The Islamic State is a reactionary utopia and has no legitimate right to self-determination. We do not object if the Kurds take advantage of air-strikes against ISIS to defend their own territory in a process of nation-building but we reject any strategic alliance with US-friendly forces on the ground, like the Free Syrian Army. The Kurds have every right to accept arms from Assad.

18. We are for the overthrow of the Zionist state of Israel and for a Multi-Ethnic workers’ state of Palestine as part of the Socialist Federation of the Middle East.

19. As socialists living in Britain we take our responsibilities to support the struggle against British imperialism’s occupation of the six northeastern counties of Ireland very seriously. For this reason we have assisted in founding the Irish Republican Prisoners Support Group and we will campaign for political status these Irish prisoners of war and for a 32-county united Socialist Ireland. We reject ‘two nations in Ireland’ theories.

20. We recognise that many socialists and working class militants may agree with much of the above statement of principles, but still have differences with parts of it. Therefore, the basis of adherence to our trend is acceptance of the above as the basis for current activity, not necessarily agreement with all of it. We are seeking to create a revolutionary party in which Marxism can be developed through open debate of the many complex developments that exist in the real world. This means members must be free to disagree and debate with each other, forms faction and tendencies, and publish their views by whatever means is available, provided they do not disrupt agreed actions of the collective while they are being carried out. This is the real meaning of ‘democratic centralism’.

21. We are for the re-creation of a World Party of Socialist Revolution, a revolutionary international, based on the best traditions of the previous revolutionary internationals, critically understood, particularly the early Third and Fourth Internationals, with their determination to combat and overcome both reformism and centrism. It is by orienting to the ranks of workers in struggle, struggles against imperialism, struggles of oppressed minorities against varied all forms of social oppression, as well as political ferment among intellectual layers radicalised through these struggles, that we will lay the basis for regroupments with forces internationally breaking with reformism, centrism and various forms of radical populism/nationalism, and seeking to build a new revolutionary Marxist international party.

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**Editorial: The Corbyn Campaign**

**CORBYN Leadership Challenge**

**Corbyn, Populism and Labour Pains**

**The Independent Labour Party**

**National Gallery All Out Strike**

**TTIP**

**Maintenance Grants**

**Tory anti-Trade Union Bill**

**Blacklisted: The Secret War**

**Free Steve Kaczynski**

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**Socialist Fight Relaunch**

Socialist Fight has politically broadened its editorial board and revamped its Where We Stand platform, opposite. Not all members of the editorial board are members of the Socialist Fight Group, whose website reflects its political positions. We welcome comrade Ian Donovan onto the EB, whose website, Communitist Explorations, is advertised below. We will continue to carry international statements from the Liaison Committee for the Fourth International.

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

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Leon Trotsky: I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International. Go Forward! 3
Jeremy Corbyn’s challenge for the leadership of the Labour Party has spooked the neo-liberal political elite that have dominated Labour since the days of Neil Kinnock. For the last two months Corbyn and his supporters have been patronised and ridiculed by all manner of Blairite and Brownite luminaries. Now the latest opinion poll has shown that he has the potential to win the leadership election outright with over 50% of the first preference votes, massively defeating Andy Burnham and Yvette Cooper. The crypto-Tory, overtly Blairite candidate Liz Kendall is forecast to come last with a humiliating tally.

Labour’s neo-liberals are desperately trying to stave off humiliation by witchhunting those relatively few organised leftists formally outside Labour who have signed up to vote. But there is nothing they can do about the many tens of thousands of newly energised left-wingers joining Labour either as members or supporters who do not have any such affiliations. This is not terrorism; this is a mass movement that Miliband and Collins did not expect when they abolished the special voting privileges of MPs and invited the public to sign up as supporters.

The Corbyn campaign is a working class revolt against neo-liberalism taking place in the British context, within existing institutions, through the party that workers in this country still regard as theirs. Indeed that is the whole point of the Corbyn campaign and why it has taken off so spectacularly. For the narrow victory of Cameron in May was the lowest point in the history of the social-democratic-led working class movement in Britain since at least the 1930s.

Capitalist Crisis

Capitalism went into a deep crisis as a result of the 2007 financial collapse, which came close to destroying the financial systems of the imperialist world. This came as the culmination of decades of a strategy of imperialist capital known today as neo-liberalism, which involves a wholesale attack on the working class through privatisation, deregulation, the weakening of trade unions through repressive laws, and the transfer of formerly reasonably paid jobs in manufacturing to countries in the developing world where repression of trade unions and meagre standards of living allow ultra-low wage costs which go to some way to counteracting the long-term decline of the rate of profit that is endemic to capitalism in the state of extreme decay it has currently reached.

The deindustrialisation of much of the advanced capitalist world has led to the deliberate promotion, by the ruling classes of the imperialist countries, of speculative activity and asset bubbles as the only way to produce a semblance of economic dynamism, and hence provide some pretence that capitalism can provide rising incomes for part of its population. In previous periods of capitalist instability, bubbles in the stock market played a similar role. Now the housing market has been added to this economic device for manufacturing consent. The securitisation of sub-prime mortgages that played such a huge role in the 2008 crunch is typical.

But the fact that the system depends on asset bubbles to keep it going, when everyone knows that such bubbles tend to eventually pop with tremendous destructiveness to capitalist economies themselves, merely shows that the capitalist system itself is not viable. So does the internationalisation of cheap labour that goes by the name of globalisation. The wellsprings of capitalist profit are rapidly drying up, and can only be refreshed periodically by practices that used to be regarded by mainstream capitalist economic doctrine as disreputable and even insane. But such practices are the main ethos of capitalism in its current form.

Ex-reformists salvage neoliberalism

The previous generation of reformists hit this social and economic reality like it was a brick wall. And they capitulated wholesale to the offensive of the ruling class against the workers to put this system in place. They did this because at bottom, reformists, all of them, believe that the capitalist system cannot be done way with through revolution, but has to be made to work in some way in the interests of the working class. So when ruling class ideologues put the case that in order for the capitalist system to survive, working class gains have to be thrown wholesale onto the bonfire to provide the system with more fuel to sustain it, the dominant trends within reformism concocted the ideology of social liberalism to provide a ‘left’ justification for such attacks. In Britain this is known as Blairism. This is the import of Thatcher’s moralising that was responsible for the crash. It is utter rubbish, as the dogs in the street knew New Labour were just as keen as the Tories on finding new ways to involve private capital in making profits out of every conceivable public service: health, education, you name it.

The dominant trends in the Labour/trade union bureaucracy never dared to challenge this mendacious narrative, even though they had been compelled to give some ground to working class discontent against the overtly anti-working class record of New Labour, by installing the soft-left Ed Miliband as leader after 2010. His weak leadership spoke out of both sides of its mouth at the same time, distancing itself from the Iraq war and some of New Labour’s most egregious positions, such as its embrace of the Murdoch Press.

But it was half-hearted – Miliband’s Labour cringed before the austerity agenda of the Tory/Lib Dem coalition. One strand of its ‘distancing’ from New Labour’s ‘free

Jeremy Corbyn has sparked a left movement.

Popular discontent at this austerity has rumbled along for the past few years, and various bourgeois and soft-lefts have attempted to give a ‘safe’ expression to this without harming a hair of the head of the system itself. Barack Obama came to power in the US as a result of this sentiment; his administration has enforced what some might call ‘austerity with a human face’, benefiting in partisan terms from the fact that the Republican right were in office when the credit crisis struck.

In Britain, however, the Blair/Brown governments were in power for this whole period. The Tories have benefitted from this by constructing an absurd narrative that it was the supposedly left-wing, extravagant social programmes of Labour in power that was responsible for the crash. It is utter rubbish, as the dogs in the street knew that New Labour were just as keen as the Tories on finding new ways to involve private capital in making profits out of every conceivable public service: health, education, you name it.

The editors of the Labour Party have spooked the liberal political elite that have dominated Labour since the days of Neil Kinnock. But it was half-hearted – Miliband’s Labour cringed before the austerity agenda of the Tory/Lib Dem coalition. One strand of its ‘distancing’ from New Labour’s ‘free...
market’ practice was to join in UKIP/Tory propaganda blaming migrants for the decline in working class living standards. Hence the dreadful ‘immigration controls’ campaign mug.

Although there was some lip-service paid to working class interests at times, it was chronically weak, particularly in the face of the centrifugal forces unleashed within the UK by the Scottish independence referendum, when Labour campaigned for a No vote in a joint campaign with the Tories to preserve the anti-working class status quo, instead of the correct tactic of opposing separation in favour of a united working class to crush the UK-wide class enemy.

The referendum was narrowly won by the Coalition-Labour bloc, but the political fallout was the effective wipe-out of Labour in Scotland by the left-talking, anti-austerity-poseing SNP under Nicola Sturgeon. This then combined with the growth of UKIP at Labour’s expense in the North, which was partly indicative of working class discontent with New Labour’s neo-liberalism and abandonment of the working class. It was misdirected into a backlash against migrants, but opinion surveys also show that this layer overwhelmingly supports public ownership, and is viscerally opposed to privatisation and the like. However, under Miliband’s weak leadership, there is no way the obvious potential to undercut these anti-migration sentiments with class struggle politics could be manifested.

This produced a perfect storm of nationalist-polarisation that undermined the Labour election campaign and allowed the Tories to sail through the middle and achieve a narrow parliamentary majority with only a tiny increased vote from 2010, gained mainly at the expense of their coalition partners and lackeys, the hapless Liberal Democrats under Nick Clegg.

The Tory victory, on the basis of barely more votes than they got in 2010, was a result of the arbitrary and undemocratic nature of the electoral system. Yet suddenly, because of this system, the working class in this country was faced with: a new tranche of anti-union laws, abolition of ‘Human Rights’ laws that have provided some legal redress against government authoritarian decrees and laws, massive new austerity-driven cuts in benefits to the poor and disabled, acceleration of the planned run-down of the NHS, ready for its deliberate disintegration so that private healthcare can ‘fill the gap’; a massive augmentation of racist anti-Muslim bigotry and the repression against migrants that previous Labour and coalition governments have already pumped up. This is purely the result of the failings of the so-called working class party, Labour, and the divisions in our class that its betrayals have engendered.

Immediately after the election there was a mass sentiment from below, from the would-be victims of this government; that this cannot be allowed to stand. On the Saturday after the election, there was a large, militant and angry demonstration, starting outside the Tory election headquarters a stone’s throw from Parliament, which gave voice to the inchoate movement that was developing. It had no organisation, as was obvious on the day, having been called by a coalition of mainly youthful anarchist and community protest groups, the most prominent being London Black Revolutionaries.

This was then given more organised expression by the call by the People’s Assembly meetings for a mass anti-austerity demonstration on June 20th. This was on the scale of the early stages of the movement against the Iraq War, and in size, was comparable to anti-austerity demonstrations under the previous Con-Dem coalition government. Jeremy Corbyn had already won a place on the ballot for the Labour leadership at this point, providing the kind of overtly class-based political focus that was missing under the previous government’s attacks. Corbyn was the keynote speaker at the rally, and his campaign has now become synonymous with a full-blown political anti-austerity movement, which was absent under the Cameron/Clegg government.

Since then Corbyn’s campaign has taken off like a rocket. He is now the bookies’ favourite to win the Labour leadership. He has spoken around the country to crowds of a size that have not been seen at public

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

Endangered

Is Ken Livingstone destined to guide the left again? He is a key backer of the Corbyn campaign as are Simon Fletcher and Kat Fletcher (unrelated), both close supporters.

Critical support

In this context, the necessity obviously exists for genuine socialists, that is, revolutionary Marxists or those who aspire to that, as an act of elementary solidarity with the class political thrust driving both Corbyn himself and his base of support, to support Corbyn’s election as Labour leader and call on everyone we influence in the labour movement to do the same.

At the same time, we must make clear the limits of this support and those shortcomings of Corbyn’s political programme that are potential obstacles to the class aspirations that drive the movement, and which may limit its scope and depth. We offer such a critical view as part of the movement, not in counterposition to it, and urge all class-conscious workers and activists to get involved in the Corbyn campaign, to fight hard to push Labour further to the left and open up the space for a genuinely revolu-
tionary position particularly if he wins.

The latest furore against Corbyn came when he suggested that one thing he might do if elected leader would be to reinstate the old Clause IV of the Labour Party constitution, or something like it, the one about securing “for the workers” a society built on “common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange”. This clause was a key index of Labour’s claim to be a socialist party going back to 1918, at the time that the Labour Party instituted individual membership. It was always a sop, being written by Sidney Webb, one of the luminaries of the ultra-reformist Fabian Society who intended that it would remain a dead letter. It was aimed at providing Labour with a ‘socialist’ camouflage to fight against the influence of Communism and the Russian Revolution.

In today’s context however, such a restoration of formal socialism would be a supportable and important leftward shift in Labour and a complete repudiation of Blairism. However, really trying to implement it would bring out all the latent contradictions of Labourism. After all, the reason for its abandonment was not because it had become an electoral liability, as the Blairite/Thatcherite narrative had it. What is electorally possible can fluctuate wildly at the behest of wider political trends.

It was rather abandoned because the bureaucracy that runs both the trade unions and the Labour Party are, in the phrase of the American socialist leader Daniel DeLeon, ‘labour lieutenants of the capitalist class’. That is, they are political servants who do the bidding of the ruling class. And the ruling class in Britain and numerous other countries had decided, under the political banner of neo-liberalism as a strategy to restore the profitability of a capitalist system in decline, they could not countenance a significant degree of public ownership. The overwhelming bourgeois trend was privatisation, deregulation, and the destruction of all kinds of partial working class gains. The core of the pro-capitalist labour bureaucracy absorbed this strategy because they were ordered to by their political masters.

Contradictions of left reformism

Even aspiring to begin implementing a new ‘Clause 4’ would require first of all a break with the entire ethos of the pro-capitalist bureaucracy of the unions and the Labour Party. For instance, though the gains made by the working class by the celebrated Labour government of 1945-51 are not to be scoffed at, they nevertheless were much less than they could have been. Though the National Health Service was instituted by this government, private medicine remained intact as the government allowed pay beds to exist in NHS institutions, even as it nationalised the hospitals and created the NHS. This was done to ‘get on board’ the Consultants, who were the richer stratum of the Medical Profession and indicative of the application to the healthcare sphere of the whole ethos of Labourism: public ownership with the consent of the privileged, and most notably, the ruling class itself. This has marked the NHS to this day.

The issue of compensation then raises its head. The 1945 Labour government nationalised Coal, Iron and Steel, Gas and Electricity, Civil Aviation, Cable and Wireless, Transport (Railways, London Underground, Buses, etc.), and even some elements of the Hotel industry. As the TUC’s own history resource put it about this period:

“By then roughly 20% of the national economy was controlled by the state employing a workforce of over two million people. However, only decaying and unprofitable sectors were taken into state control in order, as Herbert Morrison put it, to ‘make possible the organisation of a more efficient industry’ in the interests of the nation as a whole. This and the fact that astronomical sums in compensation payments were given to the former owners (many of whom became leading figures on the Boards of Directors of their respective public corporations), helps explain why there was so little opposition to nationalisation (except in the case of iron and steel)” (http://unionhistory.info/timeline/1945_1960.php)

The fact that the nationalised industries generally consisted of unprofitable segments of capital, and huge amounts of compensation were paid out for them, meant that the working class bore much of the burden of maintaining the post war nationalisations. Taxation was high to provide subsidies to all kinds of often outdated and second-rate industrial concerns, and the working class tended to pay most of it.

Though marginal tax rates on higher incomes, as well as corporation taxes, were considerably higher than they are than they are now, the most radical taxation plans of the reformists did not touch actual wealth and ownership of capital. Even the Bennite ‘wealth tax’ that was mooted at one point was guaranteed to enrage capital, without actually relieving it of the source of its social power: its property. The high tax burden on the working class was bound, in the long run, to erode popular support for the social democratic form of nationalisation once the ruling class decided on a different strategy for capital. Which it duly did with neo-liberalism, and tax cutting and other populist bribes were a key weapon of politicians like Thatcher (and Reagan in the US) in building up their own reactionary coalition.

Which class rules?

The key question involving nationalisation is not just one of formal government/state ownership, but: which class holds power in the state? In its most essential aspect, to which questions of bureaucratic administration are subordinate, it is: which class, and whose property, does the state machine exist to defend? Presently we are speaking of the state in economic terms and not dealing with its military core.

It is clear that, for all the nationalisations enacted by social democratic governments in 1945 and since, fundamentally this was about the state keeping afloat vital but unprofitable parts of the capitalist economy while freeing the bulk of capital to make augmented profits in those sectors that were profitable, then providing a basis to make a killing from privatisation and asset stripping at a later point. In effect, that it is a ported history of British social democracy and public ownership.

So, in order to put forward a viable strategy for public ownership, it is necessary to take aim, not at unprofitable sections of the capitalist economy, but at the core, profitable sections. That certainly includes highly profitable formerly nationalised monopolies such as the energy companies, BT, the water industry, the Railways and other transport, all of whose prices have been racked up to extortionate levels and make huge profits from fleecing the public. (It also must include the banks, the City Of London, as well as the remainder of British manufacturing).

The same is true of private rented housing, which, as a consequence of the selloff of council housing due to the ‘right to buy’, has led to the ‘buy to let’ phenomenon of large numbers of petty landlords, as well as the bigger ones, making a mint from extorting enormous ‘market’ rents from the renting public, which are then often topped up from general taxation. The ‘Tories’ solution to this drain on public funds is to attack the tenants and ‘cap’ their housing benefit payments through ‘benefit caps’ and the like – without doing anything about the cost of housing itself.

The Labour Party went into the last election refusing to oppose benefit caps and only proposing to cap rent increases to inflation during a tenancy – long after the horse of ‘market rents’ had bolted. This was an indication of how servile Labour was even it...
responded to working class discontent. Since the election, under the ‘caretaker’ leadership of Harriet Harman, Labour has deepened this capitulation, with her order to MPs not to oppose the government’s appalling benefit-slashing Welfare Bill. This produced a revolt among Labour at the grassroots, but only Corbyn of the leadership candidates had the backbone to vote against Cameron and Harman. The other election candidates, Burnham, Cooper and Kendall, abstained – on immiserating huge numbers of working class people.

Corbyn’s principled stance on this is obvious intimately linked to his opposition to all the anti-union laws passed since the days of Thatcher and Tebbit, as opposed to the scabs and neo-liberal traitors since Kinnock’s day – let alone Blair – who have ‘pragmatically’ accepted these attacks on the rights of workers to organise to defend their rights and living standards.

On the housing/landlord issue, Corbyn has some laudable social reforms in his proposals including “lift the housing revenue account cap to allow councils to build council and social housing”, a manifesto pledge also endorsed by Andy Burnham, “longer tenancies, private landlord registration, rent regulation and private rents linked to average local earnings” as well as an end to the “right to buy” council housing. At the level of tackling the housing crisis, these positions are to be welcomed as they would make a major difference to the lives of millions of people and improve their lives considerably.

But on the wider economic level, and the consequences for state power that flow from this, Corbyn has real weaknesses in his programme, which flow from his left-reformist politics. His economic plan involves ‘people’s quantitative easing’, an adaptation of the strategy adopted by the Bank of England to stave off a ruinous deflation after the financial crash, and revive economic growth, by simply using its currency-issuing power to create money and give it to the banks to lend to customers.

Keynes solutions

Corbyn proposes to do the same, but this time circulate the money through the wider economy, to give workers a decent pay rise, increase benefits, abolish student loans/tuition fees and restore grants, reverse many of the austerity cuts and generally give a boost to consumer spending to kick-start economic growth. At the same time, he proposes to borrow money on the international markets to invest in state-funded infrastructure projects.

The problem with this is that while every gain for the working class is welcome, it may not revive the still capitalist UK economy as effectively as he and his followers think it will. This is an updated form of Keynesianism, and it should be recalled that the original Keynesian schemes, of state sponsored increases of income and job creation not mandated by the dictates of market economics, had only limited impact in the 1930s with the New Deal and similar schemes. It was not actually Keynesian economics that pulled the US and Britain out of depression in the late 1930s and 1940s, but rearmament and world war. It was not Keynesian economics that created the long boom in the 1950s and 1960s, but the massive expansion of American world economic power, the collapse of the former European colonial empires into the US ‘Free trade’ sphere, and not least another round of re-armament for the Cold War against the USSR.

Keynesian economics was an ideological form that permeated the bourgeoisie for this historical period, because it appeared to have saved capitalism from its worst nightmare of collapse and revolution; but the steady decline of profitability of capital that was evident by the 1970s led the ruling classes to abandon it in favour of neo-liberalism and a new offensive against the working class.

So Corbyn’s scheme is not obviously something that socialists can simply endorse uncritically. It is right to warn that it will not deal with the underlying cause of capitalist depression, which is not underconsumption, but rather fundamental contradictions in the sphere of production, underlying the tendency of profit rates to fall and therefore for investment to dry up and migrate to low-wage zones elsewhere.

Nationalisation and expropriation

Austerity is merely a brutal attempt to impose such conditions to the imperialist heartlands and shore up the rate of profit this way. Without a full scale assault on capitalist property itself, this challenge to austerity will bring resistance from capital, capital flight, and other forms of sabotage, without dealing with the problem itself.

This is even more so with Corbyn’s plans for the nationalisation of energy companies, railways, public services like BT, water companies, etc. These are all highly profitable sectors of capital today, though that is mainly due to rigged markets. One can be sure that capital will demand a very high price for them, particularly as Corbyn has mooted the idea that nationalisation would take place by simply buying holdings of shares.

There are different ways this could be done, of course, depending on whether the ‘market’ is allowed to set the price of the shares, or whether the government is prepared to draw up its own assessment of a ‘fair price’ for them based on a moral judgement of what the price really should be based on the evidently dubious way many of these assets were privatised in the first place.

If it were to do the former, the government would be financially crippled by extortionate compensation demands from profiteers demanding their own idea of a ‘market’ rate, as was done in the opposite sense when state owned industries – most recently the Royal Mail – were sold off on the cheap. If the government were to try to do the former, however, let us be clear that if it were to offer a purely nominal price for these shareholdings, with exceptions only for cases of proven hardship to small investors, that would be a huge attack on capitalist property rights.

One way to get round the problem of the interlocking of shares in utilities in private pension funds and the like would be to nationalise the pension funds also. However, this would lead to much further complexity as pension funds themselves are interpenetrated with all kinds of other elements of capital, both financial and industrial, and derive much of their fund growth from such investments. Nationalising them would therefore involve encroaching on significant wider elements of capital also. This would not be cheap, if a buy-out took place at market rate.

The only way to avoid crippling the government financially is to attack capitalist property rights, and to de-facto expropriate key sectors of capital. Capital will resist such measures tooth and nail. It is very fitting that as Corbyn’s campaign for the Labour leadership has snowballed, Chris Mullin’s 1982 novel A Very British Coup has been recalled by many in the media. This fictionalises the rise of a left Labour Prime Minister to power with a mandate to reverse the legacy of Thatcher, and the efforts of the ruling class to overthrow it, culminating (in the TV version, though not the novel) in an actual military coup.

It is also public knowledge that when Harold Wilson’s Labour government came to power in 1974, after Heath’s government lost its “who runs the country” election during the miners’ strike, there was considerable musing in the ruling class about the possibility of a coup, and some actual plotting, involving Lord Mountbatten and a number of senior military figures.

If Corbyn’s Labour came to power with a programme based on a buyout of key, parasitic, profiteering sections of British capital at a nominal price, and not a price that would involve crippling the working class
with further taxation to pay compensation, would capital accept that? It is enough to look at what has happened in Greece to a government that came to power promising to do much less. The ruling classes have no attachment whatsoever to democracy; if it becomes inconvenient to them, if a challenge to their power germinates within the framework of existing democratic institutions, it will be dispersed with.

Reformism and pacifism
This is where Corbyn’s pacificist view of international politics comes in. For his honourable anti-war activism, his long-time support of the Stop the War Coalition, his opposition to the war in Iraq, his defence of the democratically elected government of Venezuela against those within his own party who were involved with the CIA in attempt to organise a coup to overthrow it, his support for the Palestinians and his engagement with movements fighting Zionist oppression and aggression, such as Hamas and Hezbollah, all the things he has been attacked for by the imperialist and Zionist media and their lackeys on the left; for all these things, he remains a left-reformist and social pacifist.

His social-pacifist outlook is epitomised by the following humane, but deeply utopian quote:

“The consequences of war are refugees. The consequences of war are children losing their childhood. The consequences are people dying at sea. We need to think a bit more carefully before we start bombing … Every war ends with a political agreement. Why not start with a political agreement and cut out the middle part?”

How on earth is the working class going to liberate itself from a capitalism that is armed to the teeth against it, and quite prepared to destroy the lives of millions, and not just in underdeveloped countries but also in the imperialist centres such as Britain and America, if this is the strategy we adopt?

Of course war brings all these and many more terrible things. But simply resolving to ‘cut out’ war does not have a snowball’s chance in hell of stopping it. Elected office does not solve the question of the state, whose core function is to defend the interests of the ruling class minority who wage these wars. The only way to stop war is to take power out of the hands of capital, by removing their property. But before that can be done, they have to be deprived of the means to stop us doing that.

If this is not done, the ruling class will use the weapons that it uses to wage wars abroad, to crush the working class and stop us expropriating their property at home. So

HMS Vanguard, one of Britain’s Trident nuclear submarines: “Huge bourgeois material interests are bound up with these weapons; it will take a revolution to remove them from the hands of the ruling class.”

the working class will have to create its own armed formations; guards or militias to defend working class organisations and potentially, to defend a government led by Corbyn or others of the same disposition against reactionary attacks from fascists or even the kind of coup that took place in Chile, inspired by Milton Friedman and other neoliberal ideologues. We have to break up and destroy the armed forces of the capitalist state.

Likewise his laudable demand for a war crimes trial to indict Tony Blair, is just not going to happen without the destruction of the military machine of imperialism, whose willing instrument Blair was in that conflict. The bourgeoisie will not allow its most class-conscious representatives to be subject to punishment by the oppressed in this way without it being crushed as a class. Corbyn’s opposition to the renewal of Trident is laudable, but the demand for unilateral nuclear disarmament also presupposes that these weapons can be junked by a mere legislative act.

Britain’s nuclear weapons exist as part of a quid-pro-quo with the ruling class of the USA: Britain acts as a nuclear-armed unsinkable aircraft carrier for the US, while the US uses its wider global force to protect Britain’s economic interests in many former colonies, which are still the economic basis of much of the British ruling class’s economic clout (so called ‘invisible earnings’). Huge bourgeois material interests are bound up with these weapons; it will take a revolution to remove them from the hands of the ruling class.

Bourgeois politics or transitional programme
While socialists should support Corbyn taking the leadership of the Labour Party, because such a victory would be a major reassertion of working class politics within this bourgeois workers’ party, nevertheless even his victory would not represent the complete victory of working class politics.

Even under Corbyn, a kind of bourgeois politics would still hold sway in the British working class movement. The ideology that sees the British state as ‘ours’ and that seeks to bend it to a programme of peaceful interactions with the outside world and a benevolent economy that benefits working class people through nationally based public ownership, is still bourgeois politics in the last analysis.

To go beyond this most left-wing form of bourgeois politics, the labour movement needs to overcome entirely the outlook of the pro-capitalist labour bureaucracy, which fundamentally exists to negotiate over the terms of exploitation of the working class with the bosses. This is the essence of why even the most left-wing reformist politics is still bourgeois. Overcoming reformism can never happen entirely within the framework of Labour, the organised expression of bourgeois politics within the working class movement. The artificial barrier between the ‘political’ and ‘economic’ needs to be broken down; both the unions and the ‘political wing’ need to be fused together politically by a programme that aims at working class state power, not in Britain in isolation, but on an international basis.

Partial elements of what is needed exist in some aspects of the outlook of the most left-wing reformists, the Corbys and the Galloways, such as expressing solidarity with those resisting imperialism, or demanding that the capitalist state go against the interest of capital and provide major wage rises and full employment through such novel ideas as ‘people’s qualitative easing’. But this cannot be resolved through even the most left-wing parliamentary strategy and methods. If things stop there, they can only go backward and the possibility of a new cycle of reformist betrayals and future retreats becomes objectively possible.

Only by arming the mass organisations of the working class with a qualitatively more consistent expression of such demands and strategies: a transitional programme, demanding what the working class needs in terms of both its domestic and international interests irrespective of capitalism’s supposed ability to concede, can the full potential of the revival of working class left-wing politics that the Corbyn campaign represents be realised. It would be foolish to prejudge who may or may not be won to this perspective, the key thing is for conscious elements to fight for it.

Only though being prepared to mobilise the enormous social power of many millions of workers in mass, militant class struggles, in general strikes, battles with the state all the way to creating a genuine working class government, can real solutions be offered to the decay of capitalism, which threatens to destroy humanity through more barbaric wars, through economic collapse and starvation, linked also to the danger of ecological catastrophe.
CORBYN Leadership Challenge – Our Great Opportunity

Graham Durham – Labour Representation Committee London Organiser and UNITE shop steward

Within the space of two summer months, the left in Britain has been transformed by the mounting challenge of Jeremy Corbyn for the Labour Leadership. Writing as the ballot papers are sent out to over 600,000 Labour members and affiliates, including thousands of new and affiliated Labour members eligible to vote, the right wing pro Iraq war Labour leaders are in panic with Tony Blair, Peter Mandelson, Alan Johnson, Harriet Harman, Chris Leslie, Alastair Campbell and many others pouring scorn on an allegedly unelectable Corbyn.

Many of us across the left of the Labour Party have run street stalls, phone banks, secured CLP nominations and attended overflowing meetings in all parts of Britain to secure support for an anti-austerity candidate. The strong potential of a Corbyn win provides unprecedented opportunities for socialists.

It is worth remembering that for weeks after the General Election defeat many on the left, including leading left MPs, were undecided about running for election as Burnham, Cooper and Kendall declared using the code of ‘aspiration’ to try and drive Labour policy rightwards. Pressure from below led to Jeremy Corbyn deciding to stand and the persuasive tactics to secure 35 MP nominations has led to a momentum generated which has far exceeded the expectations of even those of us who argued for such a challenge.

Angered by the further attacks of the Tories and seeking to resist, over 60,000 new members have joined Labour. This disproves the argument of many on the left, especially in the Labour left, that the working-class was in a sustained period of defeat in which agitation and organisation was at best wasteful and at worst pointless. Instead a whole new alliance of workers and unemployed, students, disabled and many others have been inspired by a simple message of the possibility of restoring the welfare state, nationalising the railways, restoring free education and renewing a public NHS.

The most spectacular manifestation of this new fighting spirit of our class has emerged inside the largest trade unions. None of the ‘big three’ unions – GMB, UNITE and UNISON- have declared for any of the three ‘austerity lite’ candidates. Although the GMB has not nominated Corbyn, it is clear that sustained rank and file pressure following the GMB conference hustings appearances has made it impossible for Sir Paul Kenny to impose an austerity-lite candidate on the membership. In UNITE, there was similar pressure and Len McCluskey was unable to secure his preference for Burnham over Corbyn. Perhaps most astonishingly of all UNISON backed Corbyn too – again the combination of rank and file pressure and the forthcoming election for General Secretary led to a left turn in this formerly staunch backer of right-wing Labour.

The prospect of socialist militants in the trade unions – including CWU and non-affiliated unions like the RMT – united behind the Corbyn campaign and working alongside the left of the party to secure a Corbyn win opens up huge possibilities of a militant and united response to the attacks by the Tories across a wide field of action. The growth of socialist rank and file movements in each trade union is an essential part of our response.

A huge gap has opened between the major- ity of the Parliamentary Labour Party, a large number of whom are former Blairite policy wonks ushered into safe seats, and party members across the country. If we succeed in getting Corbyn elected a first task will be to demand silence from those siren right-wing voices – with MPs Simon Danczuk, Barry Sheerman and John Mann to the fore – who are seeking to undermine the current election process. We must loudly remind these MPs that it was their idea to open the election to a wider membership in an attempt to weaken trade union influence. We expect them to respect the decision and unite around the new Leader.

Jeremy Corbyn has promised significant changes to policy making with the engagement of Party members across Britain and this is to be welcomed. There is nothing the Tories fear more than thousands of working class people debating the sort of socialist measures we need.

All socialists should rejoin the Labour Par- ty immediately to ensure that there is sufficient weight in the Party to ensure the right wing of the Parliamentary Labour Party do not attempt a coup against a Corbyn leadership. This means hard choices for some – especially those who have founded self-declared socialist parties - such as TUSC, Socialist Workers Party and Left Unity and others. The surge of support for Corbyn has shown one thing above all that the united front of socialists with the working-class party and their reformist leaders is the surest way to defeat and reach advanced workers with the ideas of an internationalist socialist movement. Parties outside of Labour and seeking to compete with them for workers’ votes should be closed and all advanced mili- tants urged to join Labour.

Locally Labour Parties needs transforming into active socialist presence, supporting housing and trade union struggles, in which the ideas of UKIP and the Tories are chal- lenged in every town. In Scotland and Wales, Labour needs to become the anti-austerity alternative arguing for working-class unity and control of the economy from the financiers and the World Bank. Instead of staying silent on Labour Council cuts in his own area, we must demand a Corbyn leadership demands that Labour councillors refuse to implement any more of the cuts.

A Corbyn win would electrify debate and action in the labour movement. Socialists will need to challenge, within the movement, some of the weaknesses in the political pro- gramme of Corbyn and his advisers. On the economy, a wide programme of nationalisation under workers’ control is required, not just as Corbyn and his left Keynesian advisers suggest the railways and some mild form of energy ownership. There is an international- al crisis in late capitalism which the mild quantitative easing programme of Corbyn will not solve.

The Tories will be preparing an assault on Corbyn and the Trident issue and refusal to support Israel’s occupations. It is essential that we respond with clear proposals to halt Britain’s involvement in neo-liberal political projects around the world, not just refusing to re-arm but leaving NATO altogether and refusing to take part in military support for repressive regimes either through military attack or through arms sales. Jeremy Corbyn, usually outspoken against US led imperialism, has stayed silent on the right of the workers of the Donbass to resist the austerity programme of the Ukrainian oligarchs ushered in by the Maidan protests. This must change and it will need socialists with a clear understand- ing of US imperialism to argue strongly within the Party for this.

Above all, it is young people who have flocked to Corbyn seeking an end to what the system offers them- no housing, no jobs and no hope. This is the fighting force that is being won to socialist ideas and can ensure the Labour Party becomes a party to chal- lenge the hold of capitalism and war not just in Britain but across the world.

Leon Trotsky: I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International. Go Forward!
Jeremy Corbyn, Populism and Labour Pains
Comment by Gerry Downing

The rise of Jeremy Corbyn might yet prove to be the most important political event of the year in global terms. I mean for the raising of the class consciousness of the world working class and driving it in a revolutionary direction. This rising of the working class, the poor and oppressed begun in Tunisia with the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi on 17 December 2010 and moved on to Egypt. Both had a very significant organised militant working class. But the political leaders of the class were reformist and centrist. The CIA, via the AFL/CIO and their NGOs moved quickly to recruit and compromise the new independent TUs in Egypt in particular to isolate them from revolutionary influence. The political gyrations of the SWP’s group, the Revolutionary Socialists, with their ambulance chasing; vote for Morsi, support the army led ‘revolution’ to overthrow him etc. led only to absolute confusion.

The CIA, in open collaboration with Islamic fundamentalists, seized control of the Arab Spring in Libya from the beginning and Syria after a few weeks, they crushed the uprising in Bahrain with Saudi troops and are now seeking to crush the Yemen. Turkey are assisting ISIS, despite bombing them in Syria. Of course their real target is the PKK in northern Iraq and Syria, which they bombed at the same time.

But the problems for US and EU imperialism in Ukraine are deeper, their methods of supporting open fascist forces far more problematic and these fascists may yet overthrow the pro US Kiev regime, making support for them even more difficult. And reports from the Donbass clearly confirm that following the victory at Debaltseve Putin and the right oligarchs in control of NovoRússia are faced with an increasing class confident working class. Hence the increasing desperate defence of the right nationalist Putin as some sort of a substitute for Joe Stalin in some of today’s Stalinist circles.

The crisis unleashed by the economic collapse of 2007-8 saw the rise in Europe and the USA of the short-lived Occupy movement, a reflection of the crisis facing huge sections of the middle class, whose methods and social attitudes were contemptuous of the organised working class under the guise of contempt for bureaucracy. In reality it was contempt for the class itself. And this movement parented the rise of left populism, a cross class anti austerity programme linked to nationalism.

These left populist movements are the Scottish National Party, Sinn Fein in Ireland, Podemos in Spain and Syriza in Greece. In France and Britain right populist have captured that ground and both the New Anti-Capitalist Party in France and Left Unity in Britain have therefore been stymied by Marine le Pen and Nigel Farage. Marina Prentoulis, the British spokes- woman for Syriza, made this clear last February. These populist nationalist movements were “neither of the left nor the right”.

A notable article by Marina Prentoulis and Lasse Thomassen on 27 January 2015, acknowledges that they are in the same political category as the right populists Joerg Haider (Austria, died 2008), Marine Le Pen in France and Nigel Farage projects:

“A spectre is haunting Europe: the spectre of populism. This time it is not the far right populism of Haider, Le Pen and Farage, but a new left populism challenging not just the parties of the right but also the social-democratic parties and the traditional parties on the left.”

They have more in common with the Scottish National Party and Sinn Fein in Ireland – left petty bourgeois nationalist political formation with no connection with the organised working class and therefore no pressure from below apart from electoral considerations. Therefore having mobilised for elections and won as in Scotland and Greece the overwhelming pressure comes from finance capital and their Troika.

We acknowledge that all the above movements are a product of the crisis and an expression of the deep felt needs of the oppressed working-class and poor but also vast sections of the middle class (defined subjectively and politically not objectively) to fight austerity. That was the motivation for the rejection of Labour in Scotland, that is the reason for the election of Syriza and the rise of Sinn Fein in the south of Ireland and Podemos in Spain. But the contempt for the organised working class seen in the Occupy movement persisted, now politically expressed as populism.

Until those right Labour MPs like Frank Field and Margaret Beckett made the terrible error in nominating Jeremy Corbyn in what they thought was a patronising gesture to the working class and its leftist champions before they were finally finished off by Liz Kendall, today’s Blair Mark2.

Never was there a more spectacular miscalculation, the Geni is out of the bottle, the Frankenstein monster is loose and the organised working class is back.

How gratifying it was to see Andy Burnham make a complete fool out of himself by abstaining on the Welfare Bill that he said he opposed in order to unite the Labour party to defeat the Bill. Labour could have defeated the Bill then and there by the simple tactic of voting against it as some 30 Tories abstained. The impeccable logic of this nonsense has cost him the leadership caused by the cheering for Corbyn in the Dublin Conference on 7-11 June and the hooting and jeering for Kendall, Cooper and Burnham thwarted ‘Sir’ Paul Kenny and forced a ‘no nomination’ position for fear of open warfare.

And this makes Jeremy Corbyn a working class leader, albeit a left reformist economic Keynesian one (see editorial) that seeks to reform unformable capitalism. And therefore there is an obligation of all serious class fighters, all socialists, communists and Trotskyists to support him critically but unequivocally in this election.

We insist that even though the same crisis and desire to fight austerity that has motivated forces like Alexis Tsipras in Greece, Pablo Iglesias in Spain, Nicola Sturgeon in Scotland and Ireland’s Gerry Adams, even though they may be leftists they are not of our class. They are left populist nationalists, like Chavez in Venezuela and Morales in Bolivia and many others. Corbyn is of our class, his programme draws the class lines, the others blur and confuse it. We can turn the whole class to the left and towards revolutionary politics internationally if we handle this struggle correctly.

Joint the Labour party to fight now, even if he doesn’t win the lines are drawn. This is the biggest opportunity in a generation to turn the neoliberal tide. Political battles will, of course, be severe amongst those who want a radical reform and those who want a revolution and all the possibilities of this is not only for the British working class but for the entire global class from Beijing to Tokyo to all of Africa, Europe and South America to the belly of the beast itself, the US of A. We cannot build socialism in a single country, Revolutionary internationalism, Trotskyism, is back.

Note


10 Leon Trotsky: I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International. Go Forward!
Once Again: The Independent Labour Party
An Interview with Leon Trotsky (1936)
https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1936/xx/ilp.htm

This is an abridged version of the online edition to clarify some points in the debate now raging amongst Trotskyists in Britain about how to handle the Jeremy Corbyn phenomenon. This is the online note:

We reproduce here a series of questions put by a member of the Independent Labour Party of England to Leon Trotsky, and then distributed for the information of ILP members. In his commentary, the author writes:

"Being recently in Norway, I availed myself of the opportunity which comrade C.A. Smith once utilized, of securing an interview with Leon Trotsky. The following is an attempt to epitomize some of his conversations as it might bear upon the politics and perspectives of the ILP. My questions were based upon the recent article of Trotsky's (published in The New International and in Controversy [the internal discussion bulletin of the ILP]) and upon recent policies and events as reflected in the New Leader and the world press." — E. ROBERTSON

QUESTION — Was the ILP correct in running as many candidates as possible in the recent General Elections, even at the risk of splitting the vote?
ANSWER — Yes. It would have been foolish for the ILP to have sacrificed its political program in the interests of so-called unity, to allow the Labour Party to monopolize the platform, as the Communist party did. We do not know our strength unless we test it. There is always a risk of splitting, and of losing deposits but such risks must be taken. Otherwise we boycott ourselves.

QUESTION — Was the ILP correct in refusing critical support to Labour Party candidates who advocated military sanctions?
ANSWER — No. Economic sanctions, if real, lead to military sanctions, to war. The ILP itself has been saying this. It should have given critical support to all Labour party candidates i.e., where the ILP itself was not contesting. In the New Leader I read that your London Division agreed to support only anti-sanctionist Labour Party candidates. This too is incorrect. The Labour Party should have been critically supported not because it was for or against sanctions but because it represented the working class masses.

The basic error which was made by some ILPers who withdrew critical support was to assume that the war danger necessitated a change in our appreciation of reformism. But as Clausewitz said, and Lenin often repeated, war is the continuation of politics by other means. If this is true, it applies not only to capitalist parties but to social democratic parties. The war crisis does not alter the fact that the Labour Party is a workers’ party, which the governmental party is not. Nor does it alter the fact that the Labour Party leadership cannot fulfil their promises, that they will betray the confidence which the masses place in them. In peace-time the workers will, if they trust in social democracy, die of hunger; in war, for the same reason, they will die from bullets. Revolutionists never give critical support to reformism on the assumption that reformism, in power, could satisfy the fundamental needs of the workers. It is possible, of course, that a Labour government could introduce a few mild temporary reforms. It is also possible that the League could postpone a military conflict about secondary issues – just as a cartel can eliminate secondary economic crises only to reproduce them on a larger scale. So the League can eliminate small episodic conflicts only to generalize them into world war.

Thus, both economic and military crises will only return with an added explosive force so long as capitalism remains. And we know that social democracy cannot abolish capitalism.

No, in war as in peace, the ILP must say to the workers:

“The Labour Party will deceive you and betray you, but you do not believe us. Very well, we will go through your experiences with you but in no case do we identify ourselves with the Labour Party program.”

Morrison, Clynes, etc., represent certain prejudices of the workers. When the ILP seeks to boycott Clynes it helps not only Baldwin but Clynes himself. If successful in its tactic, the ILP prevents the election of Clynes, of the Labour government, and so prevents their exposure before the masses. The workers will say: “If only we had Clynes and Morrison in power, things would have been better.”

It is true, of course, that the mental content of Clynes and Baldwin is much the same except, perhaps, that Baldwin is a little more “progressive” and more courageous. But the class content of the support for Clynes is very different.

It is argued that the Labour Party already stands exposed by its past deeds in power and its present reactionary platform. For example, by its decision at Brighton. For us – yes! But not for the masses, the eight millions who voted Labour. It is a great danger for revolutionists to attach too much importance to conference decisions. We use such

Caupo from France says on Corbyn and Populism (opposite):

I can hardly understand why the French NPA is taken as a populist movement like Syriza or Podemos. NPA is a sinking boat made of every kind of “Trotskyist” tendency and others which go from crisis to crisis and has been since the Libyan crisis, almost direct support for US imperialism. They are just marginal to the class struggle in France, both electorally and in the working class struggle where they are almost non-existent and going down.

In France there is nothing at all similar to those Greek and Spanish middle class movements such as Syriza and Podemos. The nearest but not the same is “Front de Gauche” (Left Front) which is more of a “bourgeois-working class front” than a populist one. The Communist party is their main component with one sort of populist leader (but somewhat different) leading his “Parti de Gauche” (left party) which has gathered every demoralised, old, tired “gauchistes” (leftists) and other social democrats or “Keynesians”.

Not a party but followers of Melenchon. Melenchon has made of his support of Syriza and Podemos its “Battlerhorse” but, with the last treason of Tsipras, he has taken his distances with him... and shut his mouth for a time. Just the customary manoeuvre of every politician: to make himself forgotten for a while and then come back fresher.

Every try, coming from people who are willing to mount a similar movement as Podemos has failed miserably. And is not from lack of petit-bourgeois in France being Le Monde Diplomatique one of their most influential newspapers between that milieu.

This perhaps is because the crisis in France is not as strong as in Spain or Greece, but also because the working class here in France won’t let it embark on Populism, not even the Marine LePen one, a sort of more radical right wing policies with some hopes to win election because the ones who vote Left (and are deeply disappointed) just do not go to cast a vote.

In France there is nothing like Podemos or Syriza and the NPA is whatever you want (rotten in my opinion) but not a populist movement, more likely the rotten remains of a Pablitex degeneracy.

Leon Trotsky: I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International. Go Forward!
evidence in our propaganda – but it cannot be presented beyond the power of our own press. One cannot shout louder than the strength of his own throat.

Let us suppose that the ILP had been successful in a boycott tactic, had won a million workers to follow it, and that it was the absence of this million votes which lost the election for the Labour Party. What would happen when the war came? The masses would in their disillusionment turn not to the Labour Party, not to us. If Soviets were formed during the war the soldiers would elect Labour Party people to them, not us. Workers would still say that we handicapped Labour. But if we gave critical support and by that means helped the Labour Party to power, at the same time telling the workers that the Labour Party would function as a capitalist government, and would direct a capitalist war – then, when war came, workers would see that we predicted rightly, at the same time that we marched with them. We would be elected to the Soviets and the Soviets would not betray.

As a general principle, a revolutionary party has the right to boycott parliament only when it has the capacity to overthrow it, that is, when it can replace parliamentary action by general strike and insurrection, by direct struggle for power. In Britain the masses have yet no confidence in the ILP. The ILP is therefore too weak to break the parliamentary machine and must continue to use it. As for a partial boycott, such as the ILP sought to operate, it was unreal. At this stage of British politics it would be interpreted by the working class as a certain contempt for them; this is particularly true in Britain where parliamentary traditions are still so strong.

…Because of this, the ILP should have more sharply differentiated itself from the CP at the elections than it did. It should have critically supported the Labour Party against Pollitt and Gallagher. It should have been declared openly that the CP has all the deficiencies of the Labour Party without any of its advantages. It should have, above all, shown in practise what true critical support means. By accompanying support with the sharpest and widest criticism, by patiently explaining that such support is only for the purpose of exposing the treachery of the Labour Party leadership, the ILP would have completely exposed, also, the spurious “critical” support of the Stalinists themselves, a support which was actually whole-hearted and uncritical, and based on an agreement in principle with the Labour Party leadership.

**QUESTION** – Should the ILP seek entry into the Labour Party?

**ANSWER** – At the moment the question is not posed this way. What the ILP must do, if it is to become a revolutionary party, is to turn its back on the CP and face the mass organizations. It must put 99% of its energies into building of fractions in the trade union movement. At the moment I understand that much of the fractional work can be done openly by ILPers in their capacity of trade union and cooperative members.

But the ILP should never rest content; it must build its influence in the mass organizations with the utmost speed and energy. For the time may come when, in order to reach the masses, it must enter the Labour Party, and it must have tracks laid for the occasion. Only the experience that comes from such fractional work can inform the ILP if and when it must enter the Labour Party. But for all its activity an agreement in principle with the Labour Party leadership can prevent this disaster.

**QUESTION** – Is Stalinism the chief danger?

**ANSWER** – Of all the radical phrase mongers, the ones who offer the greatest danger in this respect are the Stalinists. The members of the CPGB are now on their bellies before the Labour Party – but this makes it all the easier for them to cheat inside. They will make every concession demanded of them, but once within – they will still be able to pose as the Left wing because the workers still retain some illusions about the revolutionary nature of the Comintern – illusions which the ILP in the past has helped to retain. They will utilize this illusion to corrupt the militants with their own social-patriotic policy. They will sow seeds from which only weeds can sprout. Only a clear and courageous policy on the part of the ILP can prevent this disaster.

**QUESTION** – Would you recommend the same perspective for the ILP Guild of Youth as the adult party?

**ANSWER** – Even more. Since the ILP youth seem to be few and scattered, while the Labour Youth is the mass youth organization. I would say: “Do not only build fractions – seek to enter”. For here the danger of Stalinist devastation is extreme. The youth are all-important. Unlike the older generation they have little actual experience of war; it will be easier for the Stalinists and the other pseudo-revolutionary patriots to confuse the youth on the war issues than to confuse those who survived the last war.

On the other hand, the willingness of the Stalinists to drive these same youth into another actual war will make the young workers properly suspicious. They will listen more easily to us than to them. No time must be lost. Out of the new generation comes the new International, the only hope for the world revolution. The British section will recruit its first cadres from the 30,000 young workers in the Labour League of Youth. Their more advanced comrades in the ILP youth must not allow themselves to be isolated from them, especially now at the very moment when war is a real danger.
Members of the PCS at the National Gallery have begun all-out strike action on 11 August. This is a rare phenomenon nowadays and a very welcome development of the action which has been ongoing since January.

Only four voted against the proposed privatisation of 400 of the 600 jobs. Union Rep and SWP supporter Candy Udwin has been victimised and sacked in May and this is also central to the dispute now. Bosses suspended Candy in January and sacked her in May. Socialist Worker report that a court hearing in June granted Candy interim relief, which means that the gallery must continue to pay her until a full employment tribunal. The judge ruled that a full tribunal would likely rule that Candy was acting legitimately as a trade union rep. They report her as saying:

“I’ve been overwhelmed by the support I’ve had from the people that I work with. I want to thank all the people from outside the gallery who’ve supported us. That’s what’s kept us going. It shows how people can stand together. When people stand up and fight, people want to support that.”

The PCS report:
PCS members, who have already taken 52 days of strike action in opposition to the privatisation and to demand the reinstatement of unjustly sacked PCS rep Candy Udwin, are striking again between 4-6 August.

The Union, which has repeatedly urged management to work with PCS and the conciliation service ACAS to resolve the dispute, views the decision to announce the private sector provider now as a deliberately inflammatory move by Gallery management. Consequently PCS have now served notice on the Gallery that the Union plans to commence all-out continuous strike action from 11 August.

Urgent appeal
With all-out strike action looming, the Gallery strikers are making a fresh appeal for financial support; You can help the campaign in a number of ways:
- By organising a collection at your workplace (a collection sheet can be downloaded from this page)
- By donating to Sort Code 08-60-01; Account No. 20169002
- By sending cheques to PCS Culture Media and Sport Association, c/o PCS North West Region, Jack Jones House, 1 Islington, Liverpool L3 8EG
- By donating via PayPal

You can also show your support by visiting the picket lines, which will be mounted outside the Gallery between 9:00-11:00am every strike day (Friday 5-6.30pm).

For info on how to invite a National Gallery striker to your union meeting, go to ngnotforsale.wordpress.com
Sign the petition against the privatisation at bit.ly/1kELiGx
Sign the petition to reinstate Candy at bit.ly/1CvsMh3

Once we stood united but that seems long ago
All transport unions together and no tubes they did show
And TFL were frightened as we firmly stood our ground
Once we were united but ASLEF let us down.

Once I felt so happy on the picket line
At 0430 in the morning thinking this is victory time
The bosses and their rosters they cant push us around
So its goodbye to night tube but ASLEF let us down.

Once our futures were assured our futures they were great
But if we accept these rosters we’ll be dead at 48
But we must stay firm comrades cause they’re not top dogs in town
And we are still determined though ASLEF have let us down.

So let’s assemble comrades at the picket line
And you can bring your banners and comrade I will bring mine
Some ASLEF won’t cross our pickets I think it will be found
For they are ASLEF workers whose leaders let them down.

Carol Foster on the London Underground Strikes
By Belinda Edney

The recent Tory budget dealt another blow to the education sector by the scrapping of Maintenance Grants. From 2016 student Maintenance Grants will be scrapped thus affecting the poorest students. Also university tuition fees are also going up beyond 9000 a year. The maintenance grants are £3387 a year and are available for students of families earning less than £25,000 a year. The government says will save £1.5 billion but this is only 10% of what the government could earn if they fully enforced the Corporation Tax on the transnational corporations.

The government are proposing a new Maintenance Loan £8000, putting the student more in debt. They will have to begin repayments once they earn over £21,000 pa. Many potential students will not go into higher education due to the cost; they will not want to incur debts of over £30,000. Grants were available for those who have been in care as they were classed as an independent person and their parents finances could not be processed. They will now lose out as they will just want to find employment. Grants will be dropped for single parents; with the ever increasing cost of child care this will stifle their ambitions of ever going to universities.

Much of the fees paid to universities are not going towards future research but in the Vice Chancellors’ back pocket. The average wage of the vice chancellor 2013-14 was £240,794 year.[1] This is the equivalent to 26.6 students paying £9,000 a year. The average for professors was £76,944 in the UK which was about a third of what the vice chancellor receives.[2]

The Tories’ scrapping of Maintenance Grants will burden poor students with £10,000+ more debt and thus stop these students going to university in the first place. Students will leave with £53,000 worth of debt. There will be protests against the education cuts outside Tory Party Conference in October[3]

Megan Dunn, the president of the National Union of Students, said:

“Cutting maintenance grants would be detrimental to hundreds of thousands of our poorest students who currently rely on it, and could risk putting many people off applying to university.[4]

Tuition fees are also going up to above £9000 a year. The tuition fees were brought in by the Labour government in 1998, but a report issued sees the fees going up to £10,000 a year by 2020.

Since the introduction of increased tuition fees, the number of applications have trebled however this does not include the data on part time students. These further cuts will destroy potential students dreams before they have even started.

Many Further Education Colleges are dropping subject due to insufficient funds; these colleges are considered private companies therefore they are not allowed VAT exceptions, so cannot afford to run less popular subjects.[5] There is a threat to losing the interest of subjects losing the best academic minds due to risk of debt. It is also possible that many will not be able to go due to the underfunding of colleges and not allowing subjects to run. There is a petition to save the maintenance grants by 38 Degrees.

Education is a fundamental part of freedom, the freedom to learn and to have opportunity to do so. It should be free; universities should not be run as a business, but to quench the thirst for knowledge, a hub of intellectual discussion and debate. Although the government have said that loans will still be available but poorer students will be denied loans because they are so poor and will not be able to pay it back.

Notes

They owe us £355 million! Government savings by sanctioning is just outrageous!

By Argotina Schmurgle

I was doing a bit of research of sanctions recently. Over the past 5 or 6 years, sanctions have got more and more draconian, as you know.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Amount Sanctioned £m</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009/10</td>
<td>11m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010/11</td>
<td>43m</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011/12</td>
<td>45m</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012/13</td>
<td>60m</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

As you can see from this table, over the years leading up to October 2012 the amount that was taken from claimants by sanctioning increased from £11m to £60m.

But after the new sanctions regime was introduced in October 2012, claimants have been hammered more and more. During the period 2013/14 an astonishing £355 million has been taken away from claimants by sanctioning.

It is just outrageous. It links in with the other information that we know about job centres having targets to sanction claimants. The Government saves more money by sanctioning than it does from individual cuts to the welfare budget. Just one example – taking Housing Benefit away from young people on JSA is estimated to save £100m.
The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership

By Belinda Edney

The transatlantic trade and investment partnership (TTIP) is being discussed in the European Parliament. This is an agreement between the European Union and the United States of America. There are various reasons why it should not be passed. First it will allow companies to sue the governments when they feel it impinges on their profits. This will seal the deal that companies are above the law, undermining key tenants of the UK’s constitution. There are various other deals going through at the moment, including the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and the Trade In Services Agreement (TISA) which are similar to TTIP.

There is a lack of transparency within these agreements. Talks for this agreement have been behind closed door, nobody is exactly sure what the finalities of the agreement are. WikiLeaks have offered €100,000 to anybody who can find out. MEPs have not been allowed to make notes and they have to call the USA to make an appointment to read agreement for two hours, in secure reading room.

TTIP will undo all the regulation brought in due to the financial collapse. The centre for economic research has argued that there will be a loss of 1.3 million jobs in the EU and a further 750,000 lost jobs in America. Even the European Commission is aware of the potential jobs lost due to TTIP. The investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) clause will also force governments to allow fracking, even though it is harmful to the environment, to stop being sued by the companies. So profit will come before all health and safety and environmental concerns. There are justified fears that TTIP will allow the privatisation of the NHS as it will push through legislation to allow companies to profit, this solidifies the fears that the NHS puts profit before patients. As Unite General Secretary Len McCluskey observed:

“Lord Livingston tried to claim that the NHS won’t be affected, in that case why is the NHS included in the deal and why can’t the government just take the NHS out of TTIP? The government needs to stop trying to pull the wool over our eyes and veto the inclusion of the NHS in TTIP now.” (Huffington post 1/9/14)

Compensation from the government to the company will only be allowed if the country is renationalising a service from foreign investor through the using of the Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) as a type of court, this can be seen in notes made from a meeting in July 2014.[3]

According to a letter to Lord Livingston on 15.1.2015 Cecilia Malmstöm, a member of the European Commission, tries to assuage fears over TTIP:

“ISDS can only be used in limited circumstances to address unfair or discriminatory treatment towards foreign investors: for example, if a foreign investor is subject to a denial of justice, or manifestly arbitrary treatment, or, as noted, if their property is expropriated without compensation in a host nation.”[4]

But how many big companies are not from the UK this and will put foreign interests above our own? And how many of our own big companies will put their patients above their own profits? The use of ISDS courts, another secret court which is not scrutinized by a higher power the ISDS clause is not a court of law but the London court of international arbitration (LCIA) established in 1891 in the city of London. TTIP will give the corporate court power over any government.

Glenis Wilmot, Labour MEP for the East Midlands, emailed me with regards to Labour’s position he feels that there is more leverage if they do not absolutely oppose TTIP but stay at the table to negotiate it. “Many people have asked me why Labour has not just opposed TTIP right from the start, so I’d like to explain. It’s likely to be years before an agreement is reached and when MEPs are asked to vote on TTIP, there’s no guarantee that we would have enough support to reject the deal even if we wanted to. I believe we are in a stronger position if we stay at the negotiating table and make it clear what we would and would not want to see in the agreement in order for us to support it.”[5]

There will be protests against the TTIP agreement on 22nd August up and down the country there is one happening in London, Post Office Peascod Street, Windsor, United Kingdom at 11.00 am. Although we are told these agreements are in the early stages, we should be worried; this will influence government policy and give far more power to big corporations.

Notes

[5] EMAIL 17/7/15

Leon Trotsky: I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International. Go Forward! 15
The history of anti-union laws

Trade unions were illegal in Britain from 1799 to 1824 under the Combination Acts, passed in fear of revolution in Britain, at war with revolutionary France. From 1824 they operated under severe restriction (viz. the Tolpuddle Martyrs of 1834) until the Trade Union Act 1871 which was repealed in the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act 1974. If we look at the provisions of the 1871 Act we see that it provides that:

- the purposes of trade unions should not, although possibly deemed to be in restraint of trade, be deemed unlawful to make any member liable for criminal prosecution.
- the restraint of trade doctrine should not make any trade union agreements or trusts void or voidable.
- that any trade union agreements were not directly enforceable or subject to claims for damages for breach. This was designed to ensure that courts did not interfere in union affairs.

The Criminal Law Amendment Act 1871, which was passed at the same time, made picketing illegal but it was repealed in the Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act 1875. So from 1875 until 1901 trade union law was far more liberal than under Margaret Thatcher, let alone what it will look like if the present Bill is enacted.

The closest historical analogy is that faced by the British working class after the Law Lords' Taff Vale judgement in 1901 when they upheld the Taff Vale Railway Company's suit against the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants (ASRS). The ASRS were held liable for damages caused by the actions of their officials in the strike and fined £2,300. That in effect ended the right to strike in Britain until it was repealed by Liberal government's Trade Disputes Act of 1906, under pressure from the 29 Labour MPs.

TUS the labour aristocracy and Labour

In the Osborne judgement in 1909 the Law Lords ruled that it was unlawful for trade unions to collect and spend a levy of members for political objects. Walter Osborne was branch secretary of the same ASRS and was a Liberal with the same social values as today's Blairites. The ASRS levied its members one shilling a year to strengthen the hand of the trade union bureaucracy against the rank and file which the TUC was fearful of the reaction she might encounter. The Special TUC conference in Wembley in 1982 saw leading trade union bureaucrats pledging to break the law in defiance of the bills. Very few of them ever did.

A 'Kill the Bill' campaign has started involving the TUC and the trade unions during the rise of Jeremy Corbyn in the Labour party leadership campaign. This may well provide a different context to 1982. Today's TUC bureaucrats are no better than those back in 1982 but any serious examination of the history of the trade unions and the Labour party in Britain shows that serious gains have always been made only when there was a mass movement from below forcing the bureaucrats forward combined with a political threat from the left either within the Labour party or outside or both. Revolutionaries were always a vital element in those challenges.

Notes

[1] In his 'Writings on Britain' (1926) Trotsky had this to say about Thomas: "The not altogether unknown labour leader, Thomas, secretary of the National Union of Railwaymen and former Colonial Secretary, participated with the prime minister, Baldwin, in a banquet given by the directors of the Great Western Railway Company. Baldwin had once been a director of this company, and Thomas had worked for him as a freeman. Mr Baldwin spoke with magnificent condescension about his friend Jimmy Thomas, while Thomas proposed a toast to the directors of the 'Great Western' and their chairman, Lord Churchill. Thomas spoke with great kindness Mr Baldwin who—just think of it!—had walked all his life in the footsteps of his venerable father. He himself (Thomas)—said this absolutely unprecedented lackey—would of course be accused of being a traitor to his class for banquetting and mixing with Baldwin but he, Thomas, did not belong to any class, for truth is not the property of a particular class."


We knew without knowing that there was something totally wrong. I applied for one very big job in Wales through the agency. I was told the jobs now filled, and there's no vacancies. And, following my conversation, 300 more electricians went on site. So that shocked me. Plus the amount of times I've been thrown off site, it's unbelievable. Or I've been given a job over the phone, an hour later it's gone. My phone doesn't ring at all now, never.' -Blacklisted electrician Graham Bowker.

Such was the experience of thousands of people who found themselves blacklisted by the Consulting Association (TCA), a shady organisation which under the guidance of Ian Kerr systematically denied work to anyone suspected of being a 'troublemaker' (i.e. someone who would raise health and safety concerns). This book tells of the marginalisation of working-class voices in the construction industry, how lives were methodically ruined by the TCA, of injury and death at work, of family breakdowns, people having to leave the country to find a job outside of its nationwide reach, and even suicides.

As the work of a blacklisted worker, Dave Smith, it is fitting that this book is relentlessly victim-focused, and as befits the work of an investigative journalist, Phil Chamberlain, it has all the trappings of a le Carré novel. On the one hand those silenced by the TCA are here and now given a voice, quoted throughout the book and finally heard. On the other, the scope of the TCA is fully described with all its terrifying McCarthyite and Machiavellian dimensions.

We trace the history of the TCA to the Economic League, the 'direct antecedent of the TCA' which employed serving and retired metropolitan police. The key figure here is Ned Walsh, a spy whose job it was 'to infiltrate trade unions, charities, research groups...' etc., according to journalist Mark Hollingsworth. TCA bought files from the League at its inception where it was decided the construction industry would be its particular area of expertise. We can trace the League back to the National Propaganda, set up in 1919 expressly as a reaction to the growing political consciousness of workers internationally, that is as a response to the Russian Revolution.

On reading the book you realise the subtitle, 'The Secret War between Big Business and Union Activists', is no anathema. It is a war waged by big business in league with the TCA, with the help it is heavily suspected of police and Special Branch, against a host of workers engaging in legitimate union activity. When the story broke on March 6th 2009, academics, journalists, environmental and anti-racists activists alike found themselves on the TCA's lengthy list of those who would not be employed. Despite the destruction of a substantial amount of files, a full 3,213 names were found on the database.

The crux of the matter in this book is health and safety. Not concerned with workers' rights, especially those considering taking collective bargaining, a powerful tool in negotiating not only better terms and wages, but in addressing health and safety concerns. John Hendy QC expounded this opinion when addressing victimised workers, 'they are blacklisting people...because they are scared stiff of collective bargaining'.

The real outrage exposed in Blacklisted+ however is the involvement of the unions. When the blacklist files came out it was to the horror of many workers that they found 'a trade union or union official as the source of the information'. Albert Williams, the leader of UCATT (Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians), was a source of derogatory remarks about his colleagues, elected convenor for labourers and blacklisted worker Chris Murphy. It seems the unions EETPU (Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunications and Plumbing Union) and AEEU (Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union) were also conspiring, with at least one official from EETPU having reported a name to the TCA. Frank Western, sometime Amicus official, is picked out as an informant to the TCA also, and it is claimed that at the very least he provided information to them on electrician Michael Anderson. The book also notes that many trade union officials have gone on to work as 'industrial-relations' advisers for various construction companies. Make of that what you will.

The chapter entitled 'How much did the unions know?' could have been expanded, and although due attention is given to the reactionary conduct of some union leadership, it could have made more of the nature of union bureaucracy itself and its fractious, often repressive, relationship to radical workers. It is noted however that the Parliamentary Select Committee which looked into blacklisting stated that 'certain aspects of the scandal were not going to be covered', that is, specifically, 'collusion with unions'. No doubt various theories will arise amongst the left as to why that should be.

Regardless, this book is a body blow to what comedian and activist Mark Thomas calls 'corporate sycophancy'. It also makes links to union disputes throughout the last century, the Shrewsbury Pickets, Miner's Strike and Wapping are all tied in, and is worth reading because it stands in the tradition of those struggles. Many blacklisted workers have died before they could achieve justice. Of those still alive many have had it denied them on technicalities of employment law, and now seek redress in either the European Court of Human Rights or a promised Labour Party inquiry, now unfortunately at least five years away.

This book seeks to inform both/either, is a must read for anyone concerned with workers' rights, especially those considering taking up work on a building site.
Free Steve Kaczynski

On 2 April, members of the Turkish police and army raided the İdil Culture Centre (İdil KültürMerkezi) in Istanbul. Workers and GrupYorum members were arrested then detained after being dragged from the premises and later tortured. They were later released but British national Steve Shaw Kaczynski was detained at this time and remains without charge held in severe isolation conditions.

Steve is well known on the British left and has been a member of the International Socialist Group (now Socialist Resistance), the CPCB (Workers Worker) and the Scottish Socialist Party. We therefore reject with contempt the efforts of the Turkish government to slander him as a British ‘agent’ (why would the British state want to undermine their ally, Turkey?) and the even more outrageous parroting of this charge by Andy Newman on the Socialist Unity website.

Steve was on hunger strike from 25 June until 11 August when his lawyers announced that he had succeeded in his demands and had begun eating again. He is no longer held in solitary confinement and he is allowed to have access to his books and letters that were held from him now.

If you knew Steve or can assist in any way, please attend the weekly pickets of the Turkish embassy every Wednesday, 12 noon to 1pm, at 43 Belgrave Square, London SW1X 8PA.

You can also help by sending a fax to the ministry of justice in Ankara and phoning to ask why Stephen Kaczynski has been unfairly arrested. Telephone: +90 312 417 7770; fax: +90 312 419 3370; email: info@adilet.gov.tr; address: 06659 Kızılay/Ankara. Please also support Steve by writing letters and cards to: Maltepe 3 No.1a Hapishanesi, Yakancılık Mahallesi, İzin Mahallesi, 06659 Kızılay, Ankara State. You can also write a letter to: Maltepe 3, No.1a Hapishanesi, Yakancılık Mahallesi, İzin Mahallesi, 06659 Kızılay, Ankara State.

Steve was released, or deported at the first court appearance but that is looking like happening in the autumn. Imprisonment is also possible though from what I have been able to gather from lawyers and others, less likely. I will have spent about six months inside anyway if the trial happens in the autumn, and I am then released. I will just have to deal with whatever happens. Ultimately it is the judge who decides (no juries here).

If your campaign for Irish prisoners produces a newsletter or publication I would like to receive a copy. Reading matter is valuable in prison and I am interested in the subject anyway.

Please write to me and help to support Steve by joining the Irish Republican Prisoners Support Group.

Stephen Kaczynski
Maltepe L-3 Prison, Istanbul, TURKEY.

LETTER FROM STEVE

to Irish Republican Prisoners Support Group member Michael Holden: 4 JULY.

Dear Michael,

I think I do remember meeting you - I believe at one of our Symposia Against Isolation. I have certainly heard of you. I have also met Cinaed more recently. He came to an Istanbul Symposium last year.

I am currently on hunger strike - today is the 9th day, and in fact the third month of my imprisonment in Turkey. The hunger strike is triggered by a prison ‘education councils’ refusal to hand over books and magazines sent to me from outside that they perceive to be ‘harmful.’ I used an appeals procedure but my appeals were rejected. So on June 25 I started a hunger-strike. Yesterday there was a visit by a number of lawyers to me, and who also sought an interview with the director. Having campaigned against prison isolation myself, being personally subjected to it was bound to produce a reaction from me.

I also understand there is to be a protest in central Istanbul today, if it didn’t happen yesterday. Police tend to attack such protests. I have received a large number of letters and post cards - yours is one of the first from the UK. I am still waiting for the indictment. Normally you go to trial about a month after the indictment as been presented. I might be released, or deported at the first court appearance but that is looking like happening in the autumn. Imprisonment is also possible though from what I have been able to gather from lawyers and others, less likely.

I will have spent about six months inside anyway if the trial happens in the autumn, and I am then released. I will just have to deal with whatever happens. Ultimately it is the judge who decides (no juries here).

If your campaign for Irish prisoners produces a newsletter or publication I would like to receive a copy. Reading matter is valuable in prison and I am interested in the subject anyway.

Vinceremos, Tiocfaidh ár lá.

Stephen Kaczynski
Maltepe L-3 Prison, Istanbul, TURKEY.

The repression of the left and Kurdish fighters escalates in Turkey

Report by Anadolu Newsblog, 24th July

The AKP government in Turkey again ordered massive police raids on several houses of revolutionaries and democratic, socialist institutions all over the country on 24 July. Hundreds of people were arrested. To our knowledge this operation is especially directed against revolutionaries from the People’s Front as well as this operation is especially directed against revolutionaries and democratic, socialist institutions all over the country on 24 July. Hundreds of people were arrested. To our knowledge this operation is especially directed against revolutionaries from the People’s Front as well as revolutionaries and opposition forces to all kinds of violations of human rights solely because they engage in democratic protest ISIL members are like ISIL with arms and give medical treatment while the same government equip terrorist gangs.

The operational early this morning was launched with five thousand police, two thousand anti-riot forces and special operation teams, accompanied by helicopters in 26 counties of Turkey.

During the raids the police assassinated People’s Front member Günay Özarslan in a house in Istanbul/Bağcılar.

The lawyers of the assassinated are not allowed to enter the scene while investigations continue and they are also excluded from the autopsy at the Forensic Medical Institution. This indicates very clearly that the state wants to hide the evidence of its murder and conspire against us. The lawyers of the People’s Law Office started a sit-in protest demanding justice.

The Turkish media talk about an “operation against PKK, DHKP-C and ISIL,” trying to obscure the fact that the AKP government’s operation was solely aimed at revolutionaries, while the same government equip terrorist gangs like ISIL, with arms and give medical treatment to injured gang members. Just remember the massacre in Suruc left 32 left dead victims (the Turkish state covertly assisted the suicide bombing against the pro-Kurdish youth).

Water canons and tear gas were used at the scene and ambulances were hindered. It was the same scene in Diyarbakır during the HDP election campaign meeting people were killed in a bomb attack and the injured couldn’t get first aid before being attacked again by the police with tear gas and water canons.

Anyone who has any knowledge of the harsh methods the AKP police use against its opposition knows that criticism to the government is mostly answered with violence.

The British citizen Stephen Kaczynski was arrested by the police solely because he was present at the Cultural Center of Grup Yorum in Istanbul during a police raid on 2nd April 2015. He is not allowed to receive any book, newspaper or magazine which criticise the state.

Stephen is on hunger strike for exactly 30 days now to fight this violation of his rights and solitary confinement. His health and life is already under serious threat.

While the state tortures, execute and subjects revolutionaries and opposition forces to all kinds of violations of human rights solely because they engage in democratic protest ISIL members are arrested only as a formality and not even handcuffed during their arrest.

Therefore the address of the murderers in Suruc, in Syria, Reyhanlı, Kobane and Diyarbakır is the same as of the murderers of Günay Özarslan.
Statement from Roe 4 Republican Prisoners Maghaberry 12/08/15

The Maghaberry Jail Administration has sought to further tighten the screw on Republican Political Prisoners. In spite of its commitment to treat Republican Roe House as a single space it is now attempting to forcibly divide Republican Prisoners from each other.

On 10th August 2015, Security Officer, John Moore, under the direction of Security Governors Brian Armour and David Savage announced this further restrictive addition to their futile controlled movement policy. The same individual sought to elevate tensions the previous day when he restricted Republican Prisoners access to the Roe 4 kitchen, engineered a bogus alarm incident and then ordered the wing into lockdown which resulted in two RPPs being charged for supposedly calling him a “clown”.

On Monday night, 10th August 2015, the hated Maghaberry Jail Riot Squad complete with batons, riot shields and dogs swamped Republican Roe House, culminating in an unprovoked attack on the same two Roe 4 Republican Prisoners, Nathan Hastings (22) and Conal Corbett (18). This deliberate attack and forced cell shift of Roe 4 aligned Republican Prisoners, who were handcuffed before being trailied off the Roe 3 landing, is the latest malign action from the Jail Administration in an effort to weaken all Republican Political Prisoners by a de facto return to the old split wing set up. This attack and further tightening of controlled movement is the most recent reaction by the loyalist ultras to any perceived progress by Republican Prisoners in obtaining adequate living conditions.

For the past 18 months Roe 4 Republican Prisoners have prepared, took apart and analysed, every document, Jail Administration and Om-budsman correspondence along with every prison rule relating to the Jail’s peer system and its equivalent PREP scheme around all 6 county Jails. Roe 4 Republican Prisoners lodged hundreds of individual and specific internal complaints and requests in order to tease out every available piece of information and criteria. All of the documented material was then properly formulated and presented to solicitors and barristers so as to begin Judicial Review proceedings.

From the opening of Roe House over 11 years ago the Jail was able to hold the line in regards to preventing Republican Prisoners from obtaining tier 2 through compulsory drug tests and other such criminalising demands. Republican Prisoners refused these compulsory conditions and instead broke the system down brick by brick. On the morning of the Judicial Review, 12th June 2015, the Jail Administration, being faced with such overwhelming strategically compiled evidence, conceded defeat.

Roe 4, Republican Prisoners have had recent similar success forcing all Jail staff in the 6 Counties to wear identifiers. This was more detrimental to the Jail in terms of financial cost and in exposing the hypocrisy which lies at the heart of the Administration’s treatment of Republican Prisoners. It is forecast to cost hundreds of thousands if not millions of pounds. Such legal resource proved necessary after a number of cases in which Republican Prisoners were severely beaten by jailers who had up until now evaded identification and scrutiny. The Jails tier system which determines the conditions and provisions available to prisoners had from the establishment of the Republican Wing in 2004 until yesterday already restricted Republican Prisoners to a tier 1 regime without the possibility of being elevated.

Rather than act progressively and simply address the issue NIPS reactionary insisted on resisting change and progress. The Judicial Review proceedings were only conceded at the eleventh hour by the Jail Administration after considerable legal costs. It is of note that this supposedly cash strapped institution can always afford to finance its continued resistance to its own human rights obligations. Despite Roe 4 Republican Prisoners winning this modest victory (for all Republican Prisoners and indeed Loyalist Prisoners) at the beginning of June the Jail Administration continued to resist inevitable change preferring to defy a court ruling and commence a review to delay change and refusing to implement that change for as long as possible.

Since Roe 4 Republican Political Prisoners increased the tempo of their legal challenges they have been subject to efforts by the Jail Security Department to thwart access to legal representatives. The sole purpose of this interference by Brian Armour and David Savage is to sabotage legal challenges. All of this is also being documented and is currently being forwarded to bodies and organisations, such as, the Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ) International Red Cross Committee (IRCC) along with a list of Jail oversight bodies and politicians from Ireland, both North and South as well as a number of high profile legal firms.
Funeral of Peggy O’Hara: INLA pay tribute to Derry hunger striker’s mother

The Irish National Liberation Army paid tribute to Peggy O’Hara at her funeral in Derry this morning, Mrs O’Hara, the mother of INLA member Patsy O’Hara – one of 10 hunger strikers who died in Long Kesh in 1981 – passed away suddenly during the week.

Forty-five masked men and women took part in her funeral procession in the Bishop and Brandonwell areas of the city. They marched behind Mrs O’Hara’s remains as they were carried in a horse-drawn carriage along the 1.2 mile route to the City Cemetery, following Requiem Mass in St Columba’s Church in the Long Tower.

The cortège, accompanied by around 100 men wearing white shirts and black ties, paused shortly (pictures) to pay silent tribute at an INLA memorial close to where the O’Hara family used to live in Bishop Street. Earlier, six masked women and a masked man, accompanied Mrs O’Hara’s remains for several hundred yards as they were taken from her home in Templegrove (off Buncrana Road).

On arriving at the graveside, Irish Tricolour and Starry Plough flags, which had draped Mrs O’Hara’s silver casket, were removed and presented to family members. Speaking at the graveside, Martin McMonagle, of the Irish Republic Socialist Party (IRSP), told those present the O’Hara family had asked him to “thank the INLA for the magnificent show today in bringing Peggy to her resting place.”

In an oration, Tommy McCourt, who was introduced as “a former political and militant activist in the Republican Socialist Movement,” said Mrs O’Hara was “an honest, decent Derry woman with a strong honest attitude. He said Mrs O’Hara was the mother of a republican family who had played “a strong and central role in the struggle we just have come through.”

He added Mrs O’Hara was left broken hearten by the death of her son, Patsy. He said: “Peggy, on the night of Patsy’s death, struggled between what many people were trying to get the mothers of the hunger strikers to do at that time - to intervene to try and break the hunger strike - and Peggy, with the love of her son in one hand and the love of her country in another, staggered between whether to intervene or whether not to intervene, and Peggy to this day would tell you that that in itself broke her heart which I feel never ever healed.”

Also at the graveside, family members released three white doves in memory of Mrs O’Hara, her husband Jim and son Patsy. Police, who had been called on by unionists to prevent a paramilitary funeral after a masked gunman fired a volley of shots over Mrs O’Hara’s coffin outside her home on Wednesday night, kept a discreet distance throughout the funeral.

From Derry Now journal, 18 July 2015

CONFLICT AND NÉGLIGE IN MAGHABERRY GAOL

By Michael Holden

Reports coming out of HM Prison Maghaberry of medical neglect and continuing conflict are now a real cause for concern. In a letter to the Irish Republican Prisoners Support Group from a remand prisoner in Portlaoise Prison in the 26 Counties and produced as “a former political and militant activist in the Republican Socialist Movement,” said Mrs O’Hara was “an honest, decent Derry woman with a strong honest attitude. He said Mrs O’Hara was the mother of a republican family who had played “a strong and central role in the struggle we just have come through.”

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Below we publish two sections from the United Front’s response to an attack on them by the Mail & Guardian newspaper on 17 July. It can be gleaned from its contents that the UF is a Counterfire-type organisation which gives expression to the rising class consciousness of the masses and reflects its increasing alienation and disgust with the appalling corruption and subservience to imperialism of the alliance of the ANC/ SACP and COSATU. It is paralleled by similar populist movements in Europe, indicating a growing movement to the left in South Africa.

POLITICAL APPROACH OF THE UNITED FRONT

The United Front is not waiting for the emergence of a new workers’ political party for a new transformation of South Africa. The United Front is already acting under its own name and right as a broad coalition of workers, youth, women, the unemployed, cievs, social movements, rural people, progressive activists, progressive academics and other mass organisations. There is broad consensus about the non-party political nature of the United Front. There is ongoing consideration and debate on how the UF should relate to the Numsa process for a Movement for Socialism and the ongoing political struggles in COSATU. In six national meetings, the UF has debated these questions and has now commissioned a discussion paper on these issues as part of preparations for its Founding Conference.

De Wet’s article also claims that delegates at the United Front’s Preparatory Assembly found little to agree on except that the ANC was to blame for almost all the woes of workers and the country as a whole. This is just a downright lie which the M&G had already told in an earlier article in December 2014 (‘Numsa’s Front: United only in opposition’). In repeating this lie, the M&G ignores a publicly available 26-page report of agreements achieved at the Assembly (available on https://unitedfrontsa.wordpress.com/). The overwhelming consensus achieved at the Assembly laid the basis for what the United Front has done in the last 6 months. This is far from the United Front having very little to agree on. That there are questions of ongoing debate within the United Front has been public knowledge from the beginning. These are about the political orientation of the United Front to socialism and the Freedom Charter, how to approach the 2016 municipal elections, and whether political parties and individuals should join the Front. These were publicly stated and explained in the report of the Assembly. The debate on these continues.

The M&G article also wrongly claims that the UF will support candidates of an as-yet non-existent workers’ party. Is there even a need to reply to this absurdity? The UF will decide on its approach to the 2016 municipal elections, and whether political parties and individuals should join the Front. These were publicly stated and explained in the report of the Assembly. The debate on these continues.

UNITED FRONT CAMPAIGNS

According to the M&G article, the United Front has not done anything other than a protest in March outside the United States consulate in Sandton and a call in June for citizens to “jam the presidential hotline, fax, email address and post box with the message: ‘President Zuma – Pay Back the Money you owe us for your private home. Listen to us as the People!’”. This is bad journalism at its worst. The very same press statement of the UF of an as-existent workers’ party. Is there even a need to reply to this absurdity? The UF will decide on its approach to the 2016 municipal elections, and whether political parties and individuals should join the Front. These were publicly stated and explained in the report of the Assembly. The debate on these continues.

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Under capitalism, corruption becomes ‘normal’ – and only can we stop it!

Beginning in August, the United Front will join with many others around the country in demanding an end to political corruption and management of public services.

- Demand accountability for all public officials who abuse their positions of public trust for personal benefit (Zuma and his government must go!)
- Demand action against corrupt business practices, tax evasion and abusive profligating at the expense of workers and our communities! (Corrupt business leaders must pay!)
- Demand respect and support for the Public Protector’s Office and other Chapter 9 institutions.

If you have never joined a protest action before, now is the time! Stop waiting for others to lead! Join and recruit others for these actions, or organise your own: 1. 9th August – Picket of the National Assembly, Cape Town: Join our picket of the National Assembly in Cape Town during parliamentary debate on the Nhloko report, which found that President Zuma does not need to pay back any money for Nhloko upgrades. If you are not in Cape Town, follow the action online and support it through social media.

- People’s March Against Corruption, Everywhere: Actions will take place in Pretoria, Cape Town and many other cities and towns across the country. Join a planned protest on this day, or organise your own! Whatever you do, start now to organise a march or demonstration. You know who is corrupt in your school, community or workplace. Organise against it!

We’ve Had Enough! #AntiCorruption!

United Against Corruption: Web: unitaacorruption.co.za | Facbook: United Against Corruption | Twitter: @UAAC_now | Email: media@unitaacorruption.co.za

United Front: Web: unitedfrontsa.wordpress.com | Facebook: UnitedFrontSA | Twitter: @united_front | Instagram: united_front | Phone: Kwand暶we Mardedeaux, Tel/Co-Conv: 083 617 0039 | Matthew Zwa, Paid Secretariat: 089 967 9633 | Dirige Silvahwe, Secretariat Coordinator: 076 457 9805 | John Appelo, Natl Campaigns Coordinator: 073 408 2714

Leon Trotsky: I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International. Go Forward! 21

Unite Against Corruption

Corruption in South Africa has become epidemic. As always, it is workers and the poor who are most affected. The United Front calls on you to join us in standing up against it! Workers know that corruption generates many forms of corruption. We see it in government, business, trade unions, civil society and even churches – in the fusing of broad prices, construction of stadia, and the rigging of tenders. We see it in the toxic collusion of government and business that led to the police murder of 34 striking miners at Marikana.

The United Front is not easy, but the process has started, is exciting and inspiring. The article suggests that there are “various important negotiations under way” in which the United Front is involved. This is a myth. De Wet will have to say what these negotiations are about.

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We see it in politicians lining their pockets while we go hungry and cold, without access to decent education, healthcare, transportation – even water, electricity and toilets! We see it in illegal capital flight of billions of Rand into foreign bank accounts and in the massive tax dodging that even the government has been compelled to condemn.

The overwhelming consensus achieved at the Assembly laid the basis for what the United Front has done in the last 6 months. This is far from the United Front having very little to agree on. That there are questions of ongoing debate within the United Front has been public knowledge from the beginning. These are about the political orientation of the United Front to socialism and the Freedom Charter, how to approach the 2016 municipal elections, and whether political parties and individuals should join the Front. These were publicly stated and explained in the report of the Assembly. The debate on these continues.

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Hillary Clinton isn’t a champion of women’s rights. She’s the embodiment of corporate feminism

By Kevin Young & Diana C. Sierra Becerra

Assuming Hillary Clinton runs for president in 2016, much of her popular support will be based on her image as an advocate of women’s rights. During her 2008 candidacy, the National Organization of Women (NOW) endorsed Clinton based on her “long history of support for women’s empowerment.”

A group of 250 academics and activists calling themselves “Feminists for Clinton” praised her “powerful, inspiring advocacy of the human rights of women” and her “enormous contributions” as a policymaker.

Since then, NOW and other mainstream women’s organizations have been eagerly anticipating her 2016 candidacy. Clinton and supporters have recently stepped up efforts to portray her as a champion of both women’s and LGBT rights.

Such depictions have little basis in Clinton’s past performance. While she has indeed spoken about gender and sexual rights with considerable frequency, and while she may not share the overtly misogynistic and anti-LGBT views of most Republican politicians, as a policymaker she has consistently favoured policies devasting to women and LGBT persons.

Why, then, does she continue to enjoy such support from self-identified feminists? Part of the answer surely lies in the barrage of sexist attacks that have targeted her and the understandable desire of many feminists to see a woman in the Oval Office.

But that’s not the whole story. We suggest that feminist enthusiasm for Hillary Clinton is reflective of a profound crisis of US liberal feminism, which has long embraced or accepted capitalism, racism, empire, and even heterosexism and transphobia.

Making Profit and War

All issues of wealth, power, and violence are also women’s and LGBT rights issues. For instance, neoliberal economic policies of austerity and privatization disproportionately hurt women and LGBT individuals, who are often the lowest paid and the first workers to be fired, the most likely to bear the burdens of family maintenance, and the most affected by the involuntary migration, domestic violence, homelessness, and mental illness that are intensified by poverty.

Clinton’s record on such issues is hardly encouraging. Her decades of service on corporate boards and in major policy roles as first lady, senator, and secretary of state give a clear indication of where she stands.

One of Clinton’s first high-profile public positions was at Walmart, where she served on the board from 1986 to 1992. She “remained silent” in board meetings as her company waged a major campaign against labor unions seeking to represent store workers, as an ABC review of video recordings later noted.

Clinton recounts in her 2003 book Living History that Walmart CEO Sam Walton “taught me a great deal about corporate integrity and success.” Though she later began trying to shed her public identification with the company in order to attract labor support for her Senate and presidential candidacies, Walmart executives have continued to look favourably on her, with Alice Walton donating the maximum amount to the “Ready for Hillary!” Super PAC in 2013. Walton’s $25,000 donation was considerably higher than the average annual salary for Walmart’s hourly employees, two-thirds of whom are women.

After leaving Walmart, Clinton became perhaps the most active first lady in history. While it would be unfair to hold her responsible for all of her husband’s policies, she did play a significant role in shaping and justifying many of them. In Living History she boasts of her role in gutting US welfare: “By the time Bill and I left the White House, welfare rolls had dropped 60 percent” — and not because poverty had dropped.

Women and children, the main recipients of welfare, have been the primary victims. Jeffrey St Clair at Counterpunch notes that prior to welfare reform, “more than 70 percent of poor families with children received some kind of cash assistance. By 2010, less than 30 percent got any kind of cash aid and the amount of the benefit had declined by more than 50 percent from pre-reform levels.”

Clinton also lobbied Congress to pass her husband’s deeply racist crime bill, which, Michelle Alexander observes in The New Jim Crow, “escalated the drug war beyond what conservatives had imagined possible,” expanding mass incarceration and the death penalty.

Arguably the two most defining features of Clinton’s tenures as senator (2001–2009) and secretary of state (2009–2013) were her promotion of US corporate profit-making and her aggressive assertion of the US government’s right to intervene in foreign countries.

Reflecting on this performance as Clinton left her secretary post in January 2013, Bloomberg Businessweek commented that “Clinton turned the State Department into a machine for promoting U.S. business.” She sought “to install herself as the government’s highest-ranking business lobbyist,” directly negotiating overseas contracts for US corporations like Boeing, Lockheed, and General Electric. Not surprisingly, “Clinton’s corporate cheerleading has won praise from business groups.”

Clinton herself has been very honest about this aim, albeit not when speaking in front of progressives. Her 2011 Foreign Policy essay on “America’s Pacific Century” speaks at length about the objective of “opening new markets for American businesses,” containing no fewer than ten uses of the phrases “open markets,” “open trade,” and permutations thereof.

A major focus of this effort is the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which involves twelve Pacific countries and is being secretly negotiated by the Obama administration with the assistance of over six hundred corporate advisers.

Like Bill Clinton’s North American Free Trade Agreement, the deal is intended to further empower multinational corporations at the expense of workers, consumers, and the environment in all countries involved. Lower wages and increased rates of displacement, detention, and physical violence for female and LGBT populations are among the likely consequences, given the results of existing “free trade” agreements.

Clinton’s Foreign Policy article also elaborates on the role of US military power in advancing these economic goals. The past “growth” of eastern Asia has depended on “the security and stability that has long been guaranteed by the U.S. military,” and “a more broadly distributed military presence across the region will provide vital advantages” in the future.

Clinton thus reaffirms the bipartisan consensus regarding the US’s
right to use military force abroad in pursuit of economic interest — echoing, for instance, her husband’s secretary of defense, William Cohen, who in 1999 reserved the right to “the unilateral use of military power” in the name of “ensuring uninhibited access to key markets, energy supplies, and strategic resources.”

In the Middle East and Central Asia, Clinton has likewise defended the US’s right to violate international law and human rights. As senator she not only voted in favour of the 2003 invasion of Iraq — a monstrous crime that has killed hundreds of thousands of people while sowing terror and sectarianism across the region — she was an outspoken advocate of the invasion and a fierce critic of resistance within the United Nations (UN).

Since then she has only partially disavowed that position (out of political expediency) while speaking in paternalistic and racist terms about Iraqis. Senator Clinton was also an especially staunch supporter — even by the standards of the US Congress — of Israel’s illegal military actions and settlement activity in the occupied territories.

As Barack Obama’s secretary of state, she presided over the expansion of illegal drone attacks that by conservative estimates have killed many hundreds of civilians, while reaffirming US alliances with vicious dictatorships. As she recounts in her 2014 memoir Hard Choices, “In addition to our work with the Israelis, the Obama Administration also increased America’s own sea and air presence in the Persian Gulf and deepened our ties to the Gulf monarchies.”

Clinton herself is widely recognized to have been one of the administration’s most forceful advocates of attacking or expanding military operations in Afghanistan, Libya, and Syria and of strengthening US ties to dictatorships in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, Morocco, and elsewhere. Maybe the women and girls of these countries, including those whose lives have been destroyed by US bombs, can take comfort in knowing that a “feminist” helped craft US policy.

Secretary Clinton and her team worked to ensure that any challenges to US-Israeli domination of the Middle East were met with brute force and various forms of collective punishment. On Iran, she often echoes the bipartisan line that “all options must remain on the table” — a flagrant violation of the UN Charter’s prohibition of “the threat or use of force” in international relations — and brags in Hard Choices that her team “successfully campaigned around the world to impose crippling sanctions” on the country.

She ensured that Palestine’s UN statehood bid “went nowhere in the Security Council.” Though out of office by the time Israel launched its savage 2014 assault on Gaza, she ardently defended it in interviews. This context helps explain her recent praise for Henry Kissinger, renowned for bombing civilians and supporting governments that killed and tortured hundreds of thousands of suspected dissidents. She writes in the Washington Post that she “relied on his counsel when I served as secretary of state.”

**Militarization and its benefits**

In another domain of traditional US ownership, Latin America, Clinton also seems to have followed Kissinger’s example. As confirmed in her 2014 book, she effectively supported the 2009 military overthrow of left-of-center Honduran President Manuel Zelaya — a “cartoon of a Central American strongman” — by pushing for a “compromise” solution that endorsed his illegal ouster.

She has advocated the application of the Colombia model — highly militarized “anti-drug” initiatives coupled with neoliberal economic policies — to other countries in the region, and is full of praise for the devastating militarization of Mexico over the past decade. That militarization has resulted in eighty thousand or more deaths since 2006, including the forty-three Mexican student activists disappeared (and presumably massacred) in September 2014.

In the Caribbean, the US model of choice is Haiti, where Clinton and her husband have relentlessly promoted the sweatshop model of production since the 1990s. WikiLeaks documents show that in 2009 her State Department collaborated with subcontractors for Hanes, Levi’s, and Fruit of the Loom to oppose a minimum-wage increase for Haitian workers. After the January 2010 earthquake she helped spearhead the highly militarized US response.

Militarization has plentiful benefits, as Clinton understands. It can facilitate corporate investment, such as the “gold rush” that the US ambassador described following the Haiti earthquake. It can keep in check nonviolent dissidents, such as hungry Haitian workers or leftist students in Mexico. And it can help combat the influence of countries like Venezuela that have challenged neoliberalism and US geopolitical control.

These goals have long motivated US hostility toward Cuba, and thus Clinton’s recent call for ending the US embargo against Cuba was pragmatic, not principled: “It wasn’t achieving its goals” of overthrowing the government, as she says in her recent book. The goal there, as in Venezuela, is to compel the country to “restore private property and return to a free market economy,” as she demanded of Venezuela in 2010.

A reasonable synopsis of Clinton’s record around the world comes from neoconservative policy adviser Robert Kagan, who, like Clinton, played an important role in advocating the 2003 Iraq invasion. “I feel comfortable with her on foreign policy,” Kagan told the New York Times last June. Asked what to expect from a Hillary Clinton presidency, Kagan predicted that “if she pursues a policy which we think she will pursue, it’s something that might have been called necon.” But, he added, “clearly her supporters are not going to call it that; they are going to call it something else.”

In a review of her work as secretary of state, Middle East scholar Stephen Zunes concludes that while “Hillary Clinton has been more outspoken than any previous Secretary of State regarding the rights of women and sexual minorities,” this position is “more rhetoric than reality.”

As one example he points to the US-backed monarchy in Morocco, which has long occupied Western Sahara with US support. Two weeks after Secretary Clinton publicly praised the dictatorship for having “protected and expanded” women’s rights, a teenage girl named Amina Filali committed suicide by taking rat poison. Filali had been raped at age fifteen and then “forced to marry her rapist, who subsequently battered and abused her.”

Although Clinton’s liberal supporters are likely to lament such details as exceptions within an impressive overall record (“She’s still much better than a Republican!”), it is quite possible that her actions have harmed feminist movements worldwide. As Zunes argues:

> Given Clinton’s backing of neo-liberal economic policies and war-making by the United States and its allies, her advocacy of women’s rights overseas... may have actually set back indigenous feminist movements in the same way that the Bush administration’s “democracy-promotion” agenda was a serious setback to popular struggles for freedom and democracy...Hillary Clinton’s call for greater respect for women’s rights in Muslim countries never had much credibility while US-manufactured ordinance is blowing up women in Lebanon, Gaza, Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Kevin Young & Diana C. Sierra Becerra

Kevin Young is an independent historian and journalist based in El Salvador. Diana C. Sierra Becerra is a doctoral candidate in history and women’s studies at the University of Michigan. This article was extracted from the Jacobin Website: https://www.jacobinmag.com/author/diana-c-sierra-becerra-and-kevin-young/
A previously unpublished manuscript by Victor Serge, written in 1940, polemicising against Trotsky's *Their Morals and Ours*, has just appeared. This is an abridged version of the full article, which is published in *Socialist Fight* website: http://socialistfight.com/2015/06/26/victor-serge-1940-polemics-against-trotskys-their-morals-and-ours-1938/

Victor Serge polemises against Trotsky's *Their Morals and Ours (1938)*

By Gerry Downing

Victor Serge reverted to his pre-1917 anarchism.

Serge's ideological and political agnosticism

The central feature of the article is its ideological and political agnosticism in the face of definite, clear-cut positions taken by Trotsky, whose ideology is coherent and consistent; the integrated world outlook that is revolutionary Marxism. Victor Serge is repelled by his “domineering tone of Bolshevism” of the great years, along with his echoes of the imperious and uncompromising style of Karl Marx the polemicist.” Victor Serge’s certainty is “unjustified” because, says Serge: “The truth is never fixed, it is constantly in the process of becoming and no absolute border sets it apart from error, and the intransigence of those Marxists who fail to see this is quickly transformed into snuggumess. The feeling of possessing the truth goes hand in hand with a certain contempt for man, of the other man, in any case, he who errs and doesn’t know how to think since he is ignorant of the truth and even allows himself to resist it. This sentiment implies a denial of freedom, freedom being, on the intellectual level, the right of others to think differently, the right to be wrong. The germ of an entire totalitarian mentality can be found in this intolerance.”

Victor Serge was no theoretician, he acknowledged himself, but sometimes even the most ‘practical’ of people are obliged to make a theoretical justification of what they are about to say. What follows from this attack on the ‘truth’ by Serge is that Trotsky was a very nasty and sectarian man in attacking the POUM (United Workers Marxist Party, former Trotskyists) and the Anarcho-Syndicalists in Spain, the ultra-lefts in Holland, etc. If he was nice to people, understood the limitations of truth a bit better like Victor himself he would not have ended up with so many enemies and so few friends (Serge did not fare much better, we might observe).

But ‘the truth’ comrades, how do we deal with this bugbear if it is constantly changing so much so that we can never arrive at any determination at all? How do we sort the truth from the lie? It is well known that all the functionaries in the Stalinised Comintern, and the leaders of all CPs internationally after they were ‘Bolshevised’ by Zinoviev from 1924 were chosen for their low theoretical abilities and their ability to lie convincingly in parroting the ever changing line from the Kremlin. The first thing to say about truth is that it is concrete. It is not the sum totals of abstractions. Material reality is never made up of abstractions. That is a fundamental law of Marxist dialectics. And it is in the abstractions that Victor Serge gets lost.

In the Russian Revolution there was no room for abstract, liberal sentimentality. The Tsar and all his family were shot by the Bolsheviks at Ekaterinburg because they were the rallying point for a possible invasion by the White armies from Finland which would have overthrown the revolution. Revolutionary violence is entirely justified, the slave has a right to use cunning and violence to free himself or herself. The violence of the slave owner is reactionary and illegitimate for all serious revolutionists.

Victor Serge and the POUM

Victor Serge became a member of the POUM and here defends it against Trotsky’s strictures. Trotsky broke relations with the POUM and Andrés Nin, its leader, because of a thing so minor in his estimation it is bracketed here: “But in Spain he (Nin) refused to follow some of Trotsky’s advice (on the entry of the left communists into the Socialist Party and on not joining the Popular Front). A break ensued.”

But these were the two issues on which Nin lost the possibility of leading and winning the Spanish Revolution. He refused to enter the very left wing Socialist Party youth movement (remember Largo Caballero, Stalin was far to the left of the Spanish Stalinists then) and instead fused with the right communists Bukharinistes of Joaquin Maurin, he lost the possibility of winning the most class conscious revolutionary youth. The Stalinist, with guns and money from the USSR, won them instead.

A concrete mistake of monumental proportions. Worse was to follow. Instead of seeking to deepen the revolution in Catalonia by defending the collectivised land and factories and appealing to the anarchists ranks and youth Nin entered the Popular Front government in Barcelona, assisting in resorting capitalist property relations shattered by the revolutionary upsurge of 1936 that denied Franco’s fascists control of a vast section of Spain by storming barracks under the murderous hail of bullets.

But Serge defends these leaders even after the May Days in Barcelona itself when the Guardia Civil laid siege to them by storming barracks under the murderous hail of bullets.

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Well but get it so badly wrong (because they have not read and assimilated Trotsky’s *Their Morals and Ours* perhaps)? We must fight them politically, we inflict political blows on them and try to make them see the error of their ways. If their responsibility as leaders is great and the consequences of their errors is the loss of a revolution we are uncompromising in our critique of them. Trotsky got it just right on Nin.

But Serge cannot make the difference between admiration for personal courage and devotion to the revolution and political errors of such magnitude that they cost a revolution. Of course one can never separate the political and the personal totally in struggle but when the struggle finished with the Stalinist murder of Nin and Trotsky can no longer hope to change his political orientation he is free to give him his attribution as a courageous revolutionary. Victor Serge merits this attribution also for his revolutionary courage but not the political agnosticism he demanded from Trotsky and from Trotskyism because he recognised Nin in himself.

Lastly perhaps the greatest lie is the equation of Bolshevism and Trotskyism with Stalinism that Serge makes and which a large part of Trotsky’s *Their Morals and Ours* refutes so ably. The whole story of the zombie that is Stalinism appearing once more from the grave in the West via the good efforts of Grover Furr, Yuri Emelianov and left Stalinism is a product of the low level of the class struggle internationally and the consequent ideological and theoretical backwardness of the middle class intellectuals which we could expect to attract to Trotskyism in a period of an upswing. This will be the subject of a further essay. Suffice to say for now that, despite their best intentions, Victor Serge and the anarchists assisted and assist this ghoulish project despite their best intentions to the contrary. And that is surely dialectical.

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Heidegger the Nazi: Reply to John Minahane

By Gerry Downing

This is the second in the series on Marxist Philosophy in Socialist Fight. The first, in issue 19, finished thus:

“Heidegger’s philosophical outlook found its logical expression in the death camps. His ‘philosophy’ contributed to human understanding of its relationship to itself and to nature in general. What the Holocaust contributed to human progress. It poisoned European leftist with bourgeois individualism, the reactionary outlook of ‘existentialism’ so beloved by Jean-Paul Sartre and others ever since.”

This brought a response from the Editor of the Heidegger Review:

JOHN MINAHANE, To GERALD DOWNING

To the Editor,

Gerry Downing misrepresents the philosophy of Martin Heidegger by saying that it “found its logical expression in the death camps” (SF 19). I have shown that this idea is a misrepresentation in Heidegger Review No. 1. What found its logical expression in the death camps was high technology linked to the modern ideology of conquest, exemplified by Great Britain, which was Hitler’s model. (See Mein Kampf, where he repeatedly makes clear his desire for an agreed division of spoils between the two great predators, Germany in the Euro-Russian zone and Britain in India/China/Africa etc.)

Heidegger’s thinking did not cultivate aggression. There is no logic in connecting him with death camps. It would be more logical to make that connection with John Locke, whom Downing cites favourably, since he was an important ideologist of colonial plunder.

John Minahane, Editor, Heidegger Review.

Heidegger as a Nazi

It is first necessary to establish that Heidegger was a Nazi, a full-blown enthusiast for Hitlerism. He remained a member of the Nazi party from 1933 to 1945 and never disowned (but did falsely blow) his anti-Semitism. This is just one instance of him saying, for instance, that he never used the ‘Sieg Heil’ salutation. That a Nazi can be hailed thus reflects on the ‘philosophy’ of those who make this outrageous claim rather than conflicting any authenticity on Heidegger. Alex Steiner reveals that Heidegger said in a lecture on 1 December 1949:

“Agriculture is now a motorised food-industry—

in essence, the same as the manufacturing of corpses in the gas chambers and the extermination camps, the same as the blockade and starvation of the countryside, the same as the production of the hydrogen bombs.”[2]

This shows an appalling contempt for the victims of Hitler’s death camps. Steiner then goes on to show that his differences with Hitler were on the question of the use of technology, as if we could all retreat back to the Bavarian Alps or the Slabb Luachra mountains in north Cork:

“A decisive question for me today is: how can a political system accommodate itself to the technological age, and which political system would this be? I have no answer to this question. I am not convinced that it is democracy.”[3]

Having set up an ahistorical notion of technology as an absolute bane to the existence of mankind, Heidegger then explains how he conceived of the Nazi solution to this problem:

“...I see the task in thought to consist in general, within the limits allotted to thought, to achieve an adequate relationship to the essence of technology. National Socialism, to be sure, moved in this direction. But those people were far too limited in their thinking to acquire an explicit relationship to what is really happening today and has been under way for three centuries.”[4]

It is thus beyond dispute that at the time of his death Heidegger thought of Nazism as a political movement that was moving in the right direction. If it failed then this was because its leaders did not seek to play it down by saying it was simply a youthful aberration and that his philosophy is, in any case, a totally different thing, even if he was a Nazi for a short period. The oft repeated claim that he was the greatest philosopher of the 20th century, that a Nazi can be hailed thus reflects on the ‘philosophy’ of those who make this outrageous claim rather than conflicting any authenticity on Heidegger. Alex Steiner reveals that Heidegger said in a lecture on 1 December 1949:

“...I see the task in thought to consist in general, within the limits allotted to thought, to achieve an adequate relationship to the essence of technology. National Socialism, to be sure, moved in this direction. But those people were far too limited in their thinking to acquire an explicit relationship to what is really happening today and has been under way for three centuries.”[4]

It is thus beyond dispute that at the time of his death Heidegger thought of Nazism as a political movement that was moving in the right direction. If it failed then this was because its leaders did not think radically enough about the essence of technology. [5]

It seems to me that to fulfil Heidegger’s prescription for National Socialism a great deal more people would have to be offended than the Holocaust did because the whole of humanity cannot now be sustained in the countryside, as Poélix found out. I don’t know how John Minahane has squared that circle.

Steiner’s works in the WSW of April and November 2000 supply a great deal more proof than this to leave the issue of Heidegger’s Nazism beyond doubt. But perhaps his defenders are correct and there is no connection between his politics, which developed from right wing Catholic populism to fascism, and his philosophy? These include the existentialist Jean Paul Sartre the structuralists, post-structuralist and deconstructionists, Claude Levi-Strauss, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida. And the postmodernists Jean-Francois Lyotard and Jean Baudrillard. Not to mention his Jewish student lover Hannah Arendt before the war (she was dismissed from her post at the university of Freiburg where Heidegger was the Nazi-appointed Rector in 1933, and had to flee Germany with Husserl, his predecessor as Rector, and other Jewish academic associates of his with no protest Heidegger). She resumed her relationship with him after the war and wrote a sycophantic essay, “Heidegger at Eighty”, defending him and excusing his Nazism in 1971.

In 1987 a book Heidegger and Nazism, by Victor Farias, was published in France (one of the major sources of Steiner’s work), and the game of defending Heidegger was up for any serious scholar. Amazon’s review of Heidegger and Nazism, by Victor Farias: “Farias’ evidence shows him to be the only major philosopher who freely embraced Nazism ...”

“...Heidegger and Nazism” transforms the setting in which Heidegger’s standing will henceforth be assessed. From his earliest intellectual and emotional influences to the last posthumously published interview with Der Spiegel, Heidegger’s connection to National Socialism is shown to be a matter of conviction rather than necessary compromise as apologists still contend.”

Of course Arendt was no Nazi herself and neither were/are the above mentioned, nor is John Minahane so why the defence of the Nazi monster’s philosophy? It is simply an attempt to find a substitute for Marxism from those petty bourgeois intellectuals who have lost faith in the working class to make revolution and so need to rationalise their own and humanity’s oppression by global finance capital and its agents throughout society. It must be galloping for them to discover that their efforts are built on sand and Farias can demolish them so comprehensively in this great scholarly work.

So what was Heidegger’s philosophy?

Let me correct a false impression I may have given in the reference to René Descartes (1596-1650) in SF 19: “Spinoza opposed Descartes’s mind-body dualism and famously postulated the

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monist idea that thought and its extension (nature) are one substance". Readers may think that Descartes' philosophy was therefore a big mistake and wrongly conclude that his famous dictum 'Cogito ergo sum' (I think, therefore I am) is simply the ravings of a crude idealistic philosopher. And many then and since have charged him with just this, and there is a grain of truth in the charge.

But the phrase does not mean that he exists because he thinks. It means that reason is the essence of humanity, a very bold and revolutionary postulate whilst the fires of the Inquisition still burned, impossible anywhere except in liberal Holland (and Ireland for very different reasons) and even there very dangerous. Descartes is correctly regarded as one of the great progressive philosophers of the Enlightenment, the individual who first began to drive out scholasticism and metaphysics from their stultifying position in Church-dominant Western thought. Alex Steiner defends the mechanical sciences thus:

"We must view the mechanical science launched by Copernicus, Galileo, Descartes and Newton as a necessary moment in the history of rational thought about the world. Heidegger views the advent of modern science merely as a negative, as a procedure that takes us away from the immediate certainty of the intuitive. Here once more is the heart of the problem with Heidegger's intention of returning to the primordial. He identifies the certainty of immediate intuition with truth. But Hegel already pointed out a long time ago that there is no such thing as a purely immediate intuition, i.e., one that is uncontaminated with mediation: 'The arbitrariness between an independent immediacy of the content or of knowing, and, on the other side, an equally independent mediating that is irreconcilable with it, must be put aside, first of all because it is a mere presupposition and an arbitrary assurance.'"[6]

We see here the irrationalism of Heideggerian thought, an essential feature of Nazism. He illustrates further this reactionary position with an attack on Galileo; Alex Steiner again quoting Heidegger:

"It becomes a decisive insight of Galileo that all bodies fall equally fast, and that the differences in the time of fall derive only from the resistance of the air, not from the different inner natures of the bodies or from their outer corresponding relation to their particular place. Galileo did his experiment at the leaning tower in the town of Pisa, where he was professor of mathematics, in order to prove his statement. In bodies of different weights did not arrive at precisely the same time after having fallen from the tower, but the difference in time was slight. In spite of these differences and therefore really against the evidence of experience, Galileo upheld his proposition. The witnesses to this experiment, however, became really perplexed by the experiment and Galileo's upholding his views. They persisted the more obstinately in their view. By reason of this experiment the opposition toward Galileo increased to such an extent that he had to give up his professorship and leave Pisa. Both Galileo and his opponents saw the same fact.’ But they interpreted the same fact differently and made the same happening visible to themselves in different ways.’[7]

You will recall, John, that we had a science teacher in our secondary school, Farrantferris in Cork, whom we affectionately dubbed 'Picnic'. One day in the science lab during a Galileo lesson he conducted an experiment. He produced a glass vacuum tube about eighteen inches long with a feather at the bottom. He ran a little motor to evacuate the tube of its air and then sealed it. Then he inverted it and, to our amazement, the feather fell from top to bottom like a stone. Galileo was absolutely correct, even though our previous 'intuition' told us that a feather could not fall as fast as a stone, now our 'intuition' was graphically revealed to us to be a prejudice. I was pleased at the passing of that particular prejudice, Heidegger regrets it.

Heidegger had a different view than Adolph of what Nazism should be, he was closer to Ernst Röhm, leader of the Sturm Abteilung (SA, 'Storm Battalion', the Brownshirt anti-Semitic, anti-communist street thugs), Ernst Jünger, Gregor and Otto Strasser, Joseph Goebbels, Gottfried Feder and Walther Darré, who were radical Nazis who wanted a second revolution to implement some of the 'socialism', in the Nazi name, for their 'workers'.

But Hitler now almost had the state in his grasp. President Hindenburg was dying and the second revolutionaries alienated the army (the Reichswehr) and also the big capitalists who definitely needed those who accepted order and acknowledged the primacy of the law of gravity and science to maintain a modern state. So Heidegger was attacking Hitler from the romantic and irrational right, he realised the danger of the coming confrontation with the second revolution of the rampen proletariat and resigned his post in April, just in time to escape assassination himself in the 'Night of the Long Knives', June 30 to July 2, 1934. Goebbels had already jumped ship and was present at the arrest of Röhm.

This is one more illustration of how reactionary was the mysticism of the famous 'Dasein' (being, self) [8], supposedly lodged in the distant past of the Cicero, Dante, or even Socrates and Plato. But apparently in Nazi mysticism some traditional ideas came to life. The fact that other Nazis celebrated as inspirational the burning of the Cathar books, the massacres and destruction of a great progressive revolutionary civilisation (women were treated equally with men) by Pope Innocent 3rd and the northern French barbarians led by Simon de Montfort, the father of the progressive hero who fell at the Battle of Evesham in 1265, simply emphasises just what a world of reactionary fantasy in ideological and philosophical terms the Nazism was which Heidegger admired so much.

And that emphasises what a dead-end the 'greatest philosopher of the twentieth century' has led modern philosophy, existentialism, structuralism, post-structuralism, deconstructionism and postmodernism, all petty bourgeois opponents of Marxism and dialectical materialism, developed to keep the middle classes on the side of finance capital against the global working class in its revolutionary mission to overthrow capitalism and forge a communist future.

We will pursue this theme in future issues, beginning with an examination of the politics and philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre.

Notes
[8] Wiki, Dasein: Dasein is a German word which means "being there" or "presence" often translated in English with the word "existence". https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dasein
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26 Leon Trotsky: I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International. Go Forward!
Bill Hunter, Trotskyist, 1920-2015

Obituary by Gerry Downing

This obituary seeks to follow the Marxist tradition, it does not try to gloss over differences but only to tell the truth about Bill as I knew and understood him. It is therefore a partisan political document and I make no apologies for that. But I think you cannot pay tribute to a serious Trotskyist like Bill Hunter without assessing his weakness as well as his strengths. GD

Bill Hunter died on 9 July, following a fall in his Liverpool home. The introduction to his autobiography, *Lifelong Apprenticeship – Life and Times of a Revolutionary* gives the following biographical details:

“This is a political autobiography with a difference. Born into the Durham working class six years before the 1926 General Strike, Bill Hunter has stayed loyal to his class and dedicated his adult life to the fight against capitalism, and against capitalism’s apologists in the Labour Party and Communist Party. A Trotskyist from the age of 18, a factory shop steward at 21 and a borough councillor at 32, Bill Hunter has taken some hard knocks – including bureaucratic expulsion from the Labour Party in 1954. Here he recalls these battles with humour, anecdote and documentary evidence.

These pages are crowded with thumbnail sketches of Trotskyist and working class fighters of the period before, during and after the Second World War: Harry Wicks, Hugo Dewar, Reg Groves, Gerry Healy, Ted Grant, Tony Cliff, John Lawrence and the stalwart dockers’ champion Harry Constable. There is an affectionate portrait of Bill’s lifelong companion Rae. The book’s heroes are the rank-and-file dockers, engineering workers, and miners in whose struggles Bill played a part, either directly as shop steward or as editor of the lively left-wing journal Socialist Outlook (1948-54).” [1]

The Trotskyists of the 1940s

The earlier Socialist Appeal (1941-46) was an excellent Trotskyist newspaper. I have in front of me the Supplement of Mid-July 1943 where they battled against the Stalinists and fully supported the strike wave sweeping Britain then, the Durham miners, Tyne welders, etc. Bill reported on those strikes in *Lifelong Apprentice*.

“Working days lost by strikes, which fell to 940,000 in 1940, rose to 1,530,000 in 1942, 1,810,000 in 1943 and 3,710,000 in 1944. By the beginning of 1944 the government was faced with the prospect of a general strike throughout the coalfields. In the last months of 1943 there had been a wave of strikes, most of them in defence of young workers who had been conscripted for underground work.”

The Trotskyist waged a bitter battle against state and the Stalinists, who were scabs and strike-breakers in those days.

Ted Crawford remarked, in relation to the material he posted online from those days:

“After a lapse nearly sixty years it has acquired a rich ripe comic flavour. But readers will appreciate that this was not always so funny. The injunction that “They should be treated as you would treat a Nazi” or “Treat him as you would treat an open Nazi” could only be considered in the desperate war year of 1942, when many people had lost loved ones or had their homes destroyed, to be an incitement to murder any Trotskyist or indeed any ILPer.” [2]

Four of them, Jock Haston, Roy Tarse, Heaton Lee and Ann Keen were jailed in 1944 for “furthering an illegal strike” with the full support of the Stalinists.

The article on page 4, *From support of British Imperialism to justification of Hitler* exposes the politics of the Daily Worker during the pact with Hitler. But the Daily Workers was slow to understand the political significance of that Hitler-Stalin pact of 23 August 1939 and continued to support British imperialism’s war on fascism. Not until 7 October did the diktats of the Kremlin seep through and then the tale was spread the leaders Pollitt and Campbell had been overturned by the EC majority, none of whom had indicated a single line of opposition up to then.

The new line was elaborated on 7 October and in a poster they issued:

“The continuance of the war is not in the interests of Britain, of France, of Germany. End this war before it has brought death and destruction on millions and millions of people, before the flower of our youth is slaughtered.” [3]

Socialist Appeal indicated its agreement with this but not with the line that peace should be established on Hitler’s terms rather that the British working class should fight to overthrow capitalism in Britain and then go to the assistance of the German and Soviet workers. Not so the Daily Worker.

In the Daily Worker, preparing the change of line, they headlined on 2 and 3 October, “it’s not too late” – Moscow view of peace offer to Europe”, and “Opinion Grows in Favour of ‘Serious Consideration’."

The advice of George Bernard Shaw and Sir Stafford Cripps were canvassed on 14 October and Willie Gallacher opined that, “We must face up to whatever peace terms there are”. Then the articles concludes with the infamous Daily Worker editorial of 1 February 1940, commenting on Hitler’s speech a few weeks before:

“Hitler repeated once again his claim that the war was thrust
upon him by Britain. Against the historical fact there can be no reply. Britain declared war attempts were made to end the war. But the Soviet German peace overtures were rejected by Britain. All through these months the British and French Governments have had the power to end the war. They have chosen to extend it… War should never have been declared on September 3, there should have been negotiations and peace talks!” (our emphasis).

This article boils over with anger at the class treachery of the Stalinist in the midst of the war, it alone stands as a great tribute to that courageous generation of Trotskyists militants with Bill at the forefront who were jailing in Britain and the USA, executed by Stalinists and Nazis in continental Europe and the USSR and still fought with everything they had for the revolutionary socialist future they absolutely believed in.

Trotskyism post-WWII

In 1946 Jock Haston and Bill, representing the British RCP, tried to amend the resolutions of a conference of the Fourth International in Paris because they recognised that Stalinism had emerged from the war strengthened and that an economic crisis was unlikely in the near future. But Ernest Mandel and Michel Pablo, backed by the SWP in the USA, defeated these correct amendments and the catastrophic imminence of revolutionary crises and the third world war prevailed.

Following the internal struggles in the RCP Gerry Healy emerged the winner with the franchise of the FI granted by J P Cannon and Bill went along with him. The split in 1953 between the British, French and US sections and the majority led by Pablo and Mandel was confused. This is my assessment of it in IFRP Explosion:

“Whilst it is true the IC opposition to Pablo was not an orthodox Trotskyist ‘alternative’ nevertheless the nature of the struggle forced the IC to advocate an opposition to liquidationism as Bill Hunter’s document, Under a Stolen Flag shows albeit only when an ultra-Pabloite opposition (advocating total capitulation to Stalinism) emerged in both the UK, France and the US (Cochran/Clarke in America Lawrence in Britain, the Lyon opposition in France). However it did contain many elements of a struggle for the Trotskyist Transitional Programme, despite the political degeneration of its central leaders, Cannon, Healy, Moreno and Lambert.

It did assert the need for independent revolutionary parties based on that programme to lead successful socialist revolutions to open up the path to world revolution embarked on by Lenin, Trotsky and the Bolsheviks in 1917. And whilst it is true that neither side “represents, in any way, a continuum of authentic Trotskyism” nonetheless some within the IC as a whole did represent a left centrist opposition to Pablo which informed and inspired future generations of Trotskyists in their struggles against centrist leaderships who were of the same opportunists/sectarian variety.

Remember the date; Bill Hunter’s Under a Stolen Flag was written in 1957. We have the evidence of the Socialist Labour League’s internal regime at the time from the 1959 resignation letter of Peter Fryer. It is outrageous to propose that the following extract could describe a party or regime which represented the continuity of Trotskyism:

“We who came into the Trotskyist movement from the Communist Party, hard on the heels of the experience of Hungary and our struggle with the Stalinist bureaucracy in Britain, were assured that in the Trotskyist movement we would find a genuine communist movement, where democracy flourished, where dissenters were encouraged to express their dissent, and where relationships between comrades were in all respects better, more brother and more human than in the party we had come from. Instead we have found at the top of the Trotskyist movement, despite the sacrifices and hard work of the rank and file, a repetition of Communist Party methods of work, methods of leadership, and methods of dealing with persons who are not prepared to kowtow to the superior wisdom of the “strong man”.” [4]

Jock Haston, close comrade of Bill, in the days of Socialist Appeal (1948-54)

Personal contacts with Bill

My personal contacts with Bill were in the internal party struggle after the expulsion of Gerry Healy in 1985. In the initial period, from about October 1985 to January 1987 an open party regime obtained, we were free to discuss and dissent and examine whilst the Workers Press was under the editorialship of Dave Bruce and international work was largely guided by Chris Bailey and Simon Pirani encourage me and other to begin serious work in the trade unions and Ireland. However the old central leaders with their old methods and prejudices gradually re-established themselves during that period. Bill played a great progressive role during that period until, having expressed misgivings about the relations being established with Nahuel Moreno and his Lit party in Argentina, he was sent on a trip to Buenos Aires to discover the truth. And he found it and came back with it, totally convinced. Simon Pirani now became a totally convinced Morenoise and Cliff Slaughter was also on board. But I, and some other, recognised that replacing Healy with a new guru, Moreno, was simply re-adopting the political methods of the past and closing down the period of openness we had had since the expulsion.

I therefore sought out the details of the politics of Moreno and his group and there were plenty political organisations willing to supply the details. When I presented these to the Central Committee and conferences I was howled down. Once during a heated meeting in late January 1987 I arose and stridently denounced the politics of Moreno and the Lit to a largely hostile audience. As I was speaking someone entered the room and whispered in Bill Hunter’s ear. Bill rose and addressed the meeting in a solemn tone; “comrades, I have sad news to tell you. Nahuel Moreno is dead…” A big section of the meeting turned to look accusingly at me as if I had contributed to his death by my denunciations.

But perseverance meant that it was impossible to ignore these problems, particularly one that sticks in my mind is their characterisation of WWII as a “great democratic revolution”, a more Stalinist formulation you could not hope to find. And this at a time when we were also trying to ally with Michel Varga, from the explicitly Stalinophobic Lambert tradition in France. Something had to give and it did, as I explain in the following passage from my book IFRP Explosion. It contains some harsh judgements, but such were the political battles of the time:

“But nothing was to prepare us for what happened at the next
meeting of the CC. This opened in high drama. Cyril Smith was in tears. He said he had resigned from the WRP the previous night but now retracted that. He would fight on! He sobbed: “Geoff Pilling, you pulled a dirty centrist trick on me”. What had happened was, to accommodate Smith’s objections, Pilling had co-authored a resolution with him, basically proposing to hold a series of meeting on the politics of the LIT and, having agreed to the politics, then to fuse with them. Then this ‘dirty centrist trickster’ got rid of Smith on the pretext of sending him to speak at an RCP meeting and called in Perez who inserted a section which said ‘let’s declare that we will fuse with the LIT after the discussions’. The positions seemed very close, one saying ‘let’s pretend to discuss the politics of the LIT and then join’ the other saying ‘let’s cut the crap and declare the outcome of the discussions before they take place’. Four warring ‘factions’ now emerged on the CC. On the right were Pirani, Hunter, Simmance, Martin Ralph, Frank Fitzmaurice and the honorary CC member Perez, who opined at this meeting that quantity engenders quality. Hunter obviously believed this and proceeded to produce even more defences of Moreno. This group knew no real discussion of the politics of the LIT was possible so were opposed to it. On the centre right were Dot Gibson, Bob Archer and Pilling who basically agreed with the right but thought they would not get away with it. On the centre left were Cyril Smith, Charlie Pottins, Keith Scoocher, Phil Penn and Mike Howgate. They were responding to the disquiet in the membership over the issues raised by the oppositionists in the WRP and on the Preparatory Committee. They knew they were politically ruined if they prostituted themselves in the manner demanded by Pirani. The future IF with Richard Goldstein were on the left. I should say there was a fifth, silent ‘faction’. Slaughter and his trade union bureaucrats were in none of the three factions. In revolutionary terms a political cipher Slaughter awaited the bounce of the ball, the only thing he thought this I can only observe going for Pirani. The future IF with Richard Goldstein were on the left. I should say there was a fifth, silent ‘faction’. Slaughter and his trade union bureaucrats were in none of the three factions. In revolutionary terms a political cipher Slaughter awaited the bounce of the ball, the outcome of the extremely hostile confrontation that was now taking place between the two centre ‘factions’, before he decided what to do. The Pilling ‘faction’ feared that the actions of Smith would ruin their chance of international glory, the Smith ‘faction’ feared that the actions of Pilling would give the game away. The Hunter/Pirani ‘faction’ longed for International glory also but without the home base of the WRP it was not enough for Pirani and Simmance. The inability of any of them to proceed on the basis of their own professed political beliefs and principles marked them all as inveterate centrists. The only thing that united the IF on the left was their scorn of this type of dissimilation at this point.

Slaughter proposed a resolution, which basically supported Smith and this, was carried. The split with the LIT was now inevitable because the discussion on the politics of the LIT was to go ahead. Pirani had lost his bid for the Party leadership on the basis of the LIT franchise and so deserted the sinking ship. As ever, Pirani abandoned his supporters as soon as he saw that he was in a minority. Having ratted on the left he was now about to re-rat on the right.” [5]

I met with Bill later in his home in Liverpool in 2007 or 2008 when I was in the CPGB Campaign for a Marxist Party and he told us he had fought the LIT line of welcoming the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and had reversed the position within the International group. Whilst accepting this I can only observe it is possible to reverse some positions which relate to the past but reverse the methodology of the LIT he did not as is evidence by their appalling support for the imperialist-sponsored attacks on Libya, Syria and Ukraine. However these positions did cause a split in the LIT British group, the ISL. These comrades did say that they had talked to Bill and that he had supported their position. But he was not really compos mentis in his latter years so it is not possible to confirm that, but I think it must be true.

Conclusion

So in conclusion Bill Hunter certainly represented the best of his generation as a revolutionary Trotskyist since the age of 18 and as a principled fighter in the war years and after. His 1957 Under a Stolen Flag is a principled defence of Trotskyism against Pablo but it also contained the weakness I have analysed elsewhere, for instance it is weak on what was wrong with Pablo before he explicitly capitulated to Stalinism, thereby indicating his own accommodation to Gerry Healy. His rank and file work amongst the dockers is legendary and all serious Trotskyists should study the Merseyside Dockers, and Women of the Waterfront. Women of the Waterfront Dockers’ Wives – Sue Mitchell and Doreen McNally. The introduction is a masterpiece of Marxist analysis of the class struggle and the interview shows two courageous women class fighters, the real working class fighters, the real working class heroes in Bill estimation and in that of all serious Trotskyists. [6]

Books by Bill Hunter


Lifelong Apprenticeship – Life and Times of a Revolutionary Forgotten Hero – The Life and Times of Edward Rushton. Liverpool’s Blind Poet, Revolutionary Republican & Anti-Slavery Fighter

Harry Constable – an introduction to his ‘Memoirs’. This is book one of two under the title of ‘History As Told by Those Who Made It’.

Notes


Leon Trotsky: I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International. Go Forward! 29
Sand And Atzmon – Israel’s Complementary Heretics
By Ian Donovan
(The following is an abridged version of a much longer review of Shlomo Sand’s 2014 book. See http://commexplor.com/2014/11/09/sand-and-atzmon-israels-complementary-heretics/)

Shlomo Sand’s book, How I Stopped Being a Jew (Verso, 2014), an extended essay of just over 100 pages, may come to be seen as very significant in years, even decades to come. This Israeli writer and academic is someone of considerable courage who has braved death threats and opprobrium in Israel, not just for support for the rights of the Palestinian people, but also for his attempts to analyse the history and myths that provide the ideological, and insofar as those ideologies grip people and social classes, material basis for the oppression of the Palestinians.

The importance of this book is that it is a part of the crystallisation of a trend among radical intellectuals of Jewish and often Israeli origin that offers the potential to provide an opening where-by the Israel-Palestine conflict can be resolved in a democratic manner.

This means as a matter of democratic principle that it has to be resolved through the restoration of the full rights of the Palestinians. Sand represents a part of this broad trend, with some differences, whose most prominent representative up to now has been the Jazz musician Gilad Atzmon, representing people of Jewish origin who have come to recognise that the secular Jewish identity, the basis of the Zionist movement that created Israel, and which is still the mainstay of Israel’s ruling class, is empty and self-contradictory, and insofar as it has a political manifestation, harmful.

Third Category
The title of Sand’s book seems impossible – no one can ‘stop being’ a person of Jewish origin, any more than someone can stop being black, European, Chinese, or of any other ethnic background. But for Sand, it is not his ethnic origin that he is renouncing, but something else. One weakness of his book is that it is not entirely clear what, if it is not an ethnic origin, Sand is renouncing and ceasing to be.

Fortunately, the theoretical basis of this has already been worked out by Gilad Atzmon in his writings, both before and in his 2011 work The Wandering Who, where he divided people of Jewish origin into three non-mutually exclusive ‘categories’: Religious Jews (Category 1), those of Jewish origin who regard themselves as no different to others of whatever origin (Category 2), and finally those who regard their Jewish traits as being more important than any other of their traits (Category 3).

Individuals in these categories may overlap, but nevertheless it is only the third category that is directly political, and which has the capacity to behave in an oppressive manner to non-Jews, as most obviously demonstrated in Israel. Though Sand does not explicitly say this, obviously what he has ‘stopped being’ in his own concept is a ‘third category’ Jew.

Another way of looking at this, from the point of view of Marxism, is in terms of chauvinism. Someone who has a chauvinistic attachment to a particular identity, particularly a national or communal identity, and considers that entity either superior, or in another sense more important, than others, is a national or communal chauvinist.

This feature, or symptom, would seem to be as characteristic of those who proudly, in this day and age, proclaim themselves ‘Jewish’, as e.g. English chauvinism is of those who proudly proclaim themselves to be of ‘English’ identity.

The problem is that with the former, guilt about some of the terrible crimes that have been committed against people of Jewish origin means that Jewish chauvinists get a much easier ride than the latter kind of chauvinists particularly on the Western left, and the more subtle varieties of such chauvinism are often not noticed at all, or are even the object of deference. However, Atzmon’s distinctions have value because in dealing with the secular Jewish identity we are not dealing with a national identity, but with something slightly more problematic and difficult to define.

Sand’s elaborations have a different emphasis to Atzmon’s in several ways. Indeed, both he and Atzmon have complementary strengths and weaknesses over some of the most controversial aspects of this subject matter. Sand’s insights, combined with Atzmon’s clearest material, throw new light on the nature of the Jewish secular identity.

For Sand, the derivation of the Jewish identity from the Jewish religion (it has no origin independent of this) means the creation of a unique kind of identity. Those who fail to maintain their core beliefs of other religions do not tend to identify strongly with those religions - they simply become atheists and ex-Christians, Muslims, etc.

The secular Jewish identity is something that Zionists flatly claim is a key part of a national identity, or even arguably the whole of it. Other Jews, including some militant ‘anti-Zionists’, do not make this claim, but nevertheless cling tenaciously to this identity and express extreme Antagonism to any ‘traitorous’ people of Jewish origin who renounce and denounce it. Sand points out the extremely exclusive nature of this secular identity:

“You can, for example, become an American, British, French or Israeli citizen, just as you can cease to be one. You can become an activist in a socialist movement, leader of a liberal current, or member of a conservative party; you can also resign from any one of these. All churches welcome proselytes. Anyone can become a fervent Muslim or Jew.

“But how can you become a secular Jew if you are not born of parents considered to be Jewish? That was the question that struck me, and that I could not manage to resolve. Is there any way of joining secular Jewry through a voluntary act, in the form of a free choice, or is this instead a closed club whose members are selected as a function of their origin? In other words, are we not dealing with a prestigious club that, by accident but not by chance, sees itself as comprising the descendants of an ancient tribe?” (p90).

Sand explains, for a foreign-born Jew:

“It is enough to make a short visit to Israel, readily obtain an identity card, and acquire a second residence there before returning immediately to their national culture and their mother tongue, while remaining in perpetuity a co-proprietor of the Jewish state - and all this for simply having been lucky enough to be born of a Jewish mother.

“The Arab inhabitants of Israel, on the other hand, if they marry a Palestinian of the opposite sex in the occupied territories, do not have the right to bring their spouses to live in Israel, for fear that they will become citizens and thereby increase the number of non-Jews in the promised land[...]. If an immigrant identified as Jewish arrives from Russia or the United States along with his non-Jewish wife, the latter will have the right to citizenship. However, even if the spouse and her children are never considered Jews, the fact that they are not Arab will prevail over their not being Jewish...” (p84-85)

And he draws his conclusion thus:

“How, in these conditions, can individuals who are not religious believers but simply humanists, democrats and liberals, and endowed with a minimum of honesty, continue to define themselves as Jews? In those conditions, can the descendants of the persecuted let themselves be embraced in the tribe of new secular Jews who see Israel as their exclusive property? Is not the very act of defining yourself as a Jew an act of affiliation to a privileged caste which creates intolerable injustices around it?” (p87)

Holocaust - rights and wrongs
In his review of Sand’s book, Gilad Atzmon, asks the question “Shlomo Sand decides to stop being a Jew – but has he succeeded?” and raises a number of criticisms, summarised in the view that Sand’s book is:

“saturated with endless caveats inserted to disassociate the author from any possible affiliation with anyone who may be viewed as an opponent of Jewish power, critical of Jewish identity politics or a challenger of the mainstream historicity of the Holocaust.” (http://www.gilad.co.uk/writings/how-sand-sand-ceased-to-be-a-jew-or-did-he-1.html)

30 Leon Trotsky: I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International. Go Forward!
Actually Sand is stronger than Atzmon on the question of the Nazi genocide, Holocaust or Shoah (I generally use the term ‘Nazi Genocide’ because of the abuses of history that are associated with those other terms). Sand explains precisely how the workings of the Israeli Holocaust cult, and does not fall into a great big elephant trap that the Zionists’ cynical misuse of this historical event has created for principled opponents such as Atzmon, breaking from Zionism and political Jewish-ness. Sand lays out the mechanism of the cult pretty well:

“From the final quarter of the twentieth century onwards, the memory of almost all the victims not designated by the Nazis as Semites has disappeared. The industrialised crime has become an exclusively Jewish tragedy. Western memory of the Nazi concentration camps and exterminations has been more or less emptied of other victims: Roma, resisters and other opponents, Communists and socialists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Polish intellectuals, Soviet commissars and officers, and so on. With the relative exception of homosexuals, all those exterminated by the Nazis, in parallel with the systematic assassination of Jews and their descendants, have also been wiped from the hegemonic network of memory.”

He notes that in Western culture generally, and also in Israel, for the first two decades after the Second World War, the Nazi Genocide was if anything underplayed, and relegated to a marginal position in history. The turning point came with the 1967 war, the victory of Israel against the Arab states, and the conquest of more Palestinian and other Arab territory.

“The marginal position that the Judeocides had occupied until then in the memory of Judeo-Christian civilisation was clearly intolerable.”

... it was not enough that the memory of the victims should be engraved in the consciousness of the West. What was demanded was the specificity, exclusiveness and total national ownership of suffering.

... All other victims were therefore dismissed, and the genocide became an exclusively Jewish matter. Any comparison with the extermination of another people was now forbidden.”

... Hitler’s desire to exclude Jews from the ranks of ordinary humanity has found a perverse form of expression in the memorial policy adopted by Israel and its supporters across the Western world; Zionist rhetoric, in fact, has increasingly insisted on the eternal specificity of the victim rather than the executioner, of the Jew and not of the Nazi. In other words, there are hosts of murderers like Hitler, while there have never been and will never be victims like the Jews. Gamal Abdul Nasser was the first to be called the ‘New Hitler’... In this view of the world... the singularity of the European continent’s history, from the Enlightenment on, does not lead to the Nazi organiser of the death industry but solely to the dead and persecuted of Jewish origin.” (p962-3)

This is the concrete form that is taken today by the cult of the Holocaust. It is a systematic distortion of a real historical event, designed to make it exclusively a Jewish affair, to provide the justification for the confiscation of Arab land to create Israel, and all that followed from it.

However, the great big elephant trap that I was speaking of is the understandable assumption, because this historic event is used in a mendacious manner in the here and now to justify racist crimes, that there must be something exaggerated about it, or even something fundamentally false. People who are too young to have direct experience of the events of the 1940s, and been exposed to concentrated indoctrination in the Israeli holocaust cult, are prone to draw angry but not necessarily historically lucid conclusions from the existence of this cult.

**Cult of victimhood**

Atzmon’s material on the ‘Holocaust religion’ is not entirely wrong, however. In particular, his analysis of the *Book of Esther*, the biblical basis for the Jewish festival of Purim, in the *Wandering Who*, is insightful. He notes the significance of this fictional account of a supposed attempt at genocide of the Jews in Persia, which points to the fact that the exploitation of Jewish suffering, whether alleged or real, did not begin with the Nazi Genocide but goes back possibly thousands of years. It also points to a practice that many Zionists, in particular, take pride in: the perspective of seeking to maximise Jewish influence in the corridors of power and thus get others to do their bidding.

Though we should be opposed to all restrictions on political debate of matters such as the Nazi Genocide, a position of hostility to those who support the programme of fascism and Nazism, and thus deny the facts of the genocide in order to defend a programme of genocide, is completely justified, just as much as hostility to apologists for Zionist crimes.

More to the point is that confused criticisms of the Zionist Holocaust cult, are an inevitable and natural consequence of the existence of that cult. Free discussion of questions relating to this is a legitimate part of defeating Zionism politically. Attempts by Zionists and other purveyors of Jewish identity politics to target and witch-hunt those raising questions about, or even making errors concerning, the Zionist cult are chaoticist acts in themselves, and should be firmly opposed.
ISIs, like Saddam, Gaddafi, Assad and the Talibans, were tools of imperialism in the past and, apart from the murdered Saddam and Gaddafi, they may become again. But ISIS is different to the rest. It was the creation of US imperialism via the CIA, the Gulf States and Turkey and, more covertly, Israel as Al Qaeda was in the 1980s. And like Al Qaeda it now controls territory. Saddam, Gaddafi and Assad led or led nations, the Talibans were a product of the Afghanistan civil war and has become, in a certain sense, a national liberation movement in Afghanistan, albeit a very reactionary one, and so must be supported against US imperialism its allies and stooges unconditionally.

What ISIS are creating cannot be described as a nation or indeed any modern version of a state; the Islamic State is a vile reactionary utopia and has no legitimate right to self-determination. And the US proxy nations, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey and even Israel still support and supply them, because, though the US is at war with them now, they are an insurance policy for US imperialism and they may come in useful later in depositing Assad and even the Iranian regime. Both regimes in Syria and Iran still reflects the anti-imperialism of the Syrian and Iranian masses, the working class and poor peasants, in however distorted a way. Regime change in Syria, Iran and then Russia and China remains the geo-political strategic goals of US imperialism and its European and Japanese allies, whatever temporary diversions may occur and however reluctant these allies might be at times.

Therefore we must oppose the US bombing of ISIS but we cannot blame the Kurds for taking advantage of the bombing to defend Kobane and other territories that are a legitimate part of a real nation without a state, in fact the largest such entity in the whole world, Kurdistan. Moreover the Iraqi Kurds, both Barzani’s Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Talabani’s Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), are puppets of the US/Israel. Also even Abdullah Öcalan, leader of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) who were the most leftist opponents of Barzani in the 1994-97 civil war have been attempting to accommodate with Turkey and imperialism at the expense of the Kurdish nation. He now pushes forward as his models Gerry Adams and Nelson Mandela, who have succeeded in betraying their own followers and nations and has abandoned the majority of the anti-imperialism of his Marxism-Leninism and has become a type of anarchist, advocating local autonomy as if imperialism didn’t exist at all. But the war in Syria has strengthened the hand of the PKK enormously against Barzani. The PKK have been the most consistent advocate of a Kurdish nation, despite Öcalan’s frequent disclaimers and fought on the same side as Talabani’s PUK in the civil war of the mid-90s and so their fighters are closer to them. Therefore we support the proposal of Öcalan in March of this year to hold a Kurdish national conference in the near future. It looks as though both Talabani and Barzani will be obliged to go along with this, such is the sympathy that the Syrian YPG, allies of the PKK, have won in the ranks of the Iraqi Peshmerga fighters that had entered Kobane and Rojava to fight ISIS [1].


Sand, from p 31

Draft Theses on the Jews and Modern Imperialism,], and are derived from some of the early insights of Karl Marx on the Jewish question, as well as later Marxists such as Abram Leon.

Sand is at this point a heroic, but liberal figure, though with something of a Marxist past, which he now appears to regret. However, the advent of a social movement that can weaken the hold of Israeli racism to the point of allowing a democratic solution to the Israel problem will take a widespread ferment among the most far-seeing intellectuals. Serious social change is often preceded by such ferment. As part of my conclusion, I quote Gilad Atzmon on why the opportunity now exists for such a development to take place:

“Departing from Jewish-ness, Jerusalem and any other form of Judic tribalism, and leaving ‘Chosen-ness’ behind. This is probably the only type of secular Jewish resistance to Zionism one can take seriously... Nowadays, biological determinism is - hopefully - behind us, and people are free to escape their so-called ‘fate’. Nowadays, hardly anyone thinks in terms of blood - except Zionists, Israelis and, embarrassingly enough, some of the so-called Jewish ‘socialists’.” (The Wandering Who, p 87)

While I would not concur with Gilad Atzmon that the alternative to this tribalism is ordinary nationalism and ties to ‘the land’ - that seems to me replacing one form of exclusivism with another - I would concur with the above sentiments.

What Sand’s evolution, following on from Atzmon’s and others of the same trend, portends is a crystallisation of hope, that the conflicts in the Middle East can be resolved in a progressive manner, that a break can be made by significant sections of the Israeli Jewish population with all kinds of Jewish exclusivism, and that they can make common cause with the Palestinian people to restore them to their homeland on the basis of equality between Jew and Arab in a genuine melting pot, a single democratic polity.

This requires genuine universalism, not the phoney, tainted ‘internationalism’ of the Jewish-Zionist bourgeoisie, in Israel and elsewhere, but genuine internationalism, which is most of all represented by the programme of Marxism and communism, with the demand for ‘Workers of the World Unite’. That is the real logic of Sand’s rejection of the secular Jewish identity, not the mere liberal humanism he espouses, which does not have the tools to do the job he wants to do.

The most treasured aspirations of Sand, and those who will no doubt follow him, can only be achieved by an internationalist, communist programme that attacks capitalism and imperialism itself, in which the Jewish-Zionist bourgeoisie plays a key political role. Socialists must engage with this progressive trend among intellectuals and radicals of Jewish origin in a sustained and fraternal manner to be able to influence them to deepen their critique. We have things to learn from this process, as well as positive things to contribute.
Jacques Doriot, William Wainwright and Denver Walker
By Gerry Downing 10/6/2015

Recently I have encountered those who defend the record of the wartime Stalinists in Britain, particularly the charge that the British wartime Trotskyists were Hitler's agents because they supported striking Kent coalminers and striking apprentices in the Northeast, etc. in the great strike wave of 1942-44.

In the first page, fifth paragraph the Introduction to his 1985 book *Quite Right, Mr Trotsky*, the late Denver Walker of the New Communist party says the following:

"Nor shall I suggest guilt by association with the leading French Trotskyist Doriot, who became an active collaborator with the Nazis and led a detachment against the Soviet Union from them, ..."

This is an outright lie. Jacques Doriot was never a Trotskyist, in fact all his life he was a virulent anti-Trotskyist. The reason he was dubbed 'a Trotskyite' was because, as recounted by Ted Grant below, he called for a 'united front' against the fascists. This was against the lunacy that was the Third Period politics (1928-34, where everyone was a fascist except the Communist party; Tory-fascists, Liberal-fascists, Trotsky-fascists, etc.). Thus on 6 February 1934 in France they allied with real fascists against the liberal government of Édouard Daladier, Prime Minister and leader of the Radical-Socialists, as they did in Germany the previous year against the Social Democrats. Wikipedia recounts the sorry tale:

"And showing the complexity of the situation and the general exasperation of the population, the Association républicaine des anciens combattants (ARAC), the unofficial French Communist Party (PCF) veterans' association, also called for its troops to demonstrate on 6 February, though with clearly different aims." [1]

The Wiki journalist clearly has no idea just what were the "different aims" or what the 'politics' of the PCF were. It is clear that Walker accepted without questioning this information from the 1942 pamphlet, *Clear Out Hitler's Agents! An exposure of Trotskyist disruption being organised in Britain*, By W. Wainwright.

I first encountered this allegation about Doriot from Bob Doyle in about 1987 in the Green Man in Harlesden. Doriot was Trotsky's Secretary who was shot as a fascist agent in Spain, Bob claimed, an obvious confusion with the abduction, brutal murder and dismembration by the Stalinists in Spain in 1938 of Trotsky's international secretary Erwin Wolff.

Bob was the famed Irishman in the International Brigade, who clearly used the same source. So it's a longstanding lie. Wainwright asserted, as one of his lies against the Trotskyists, which included trying to murder both Lenin and Stalin, the following:

"Accepted Nazi funds. Trotskyist leader Doriot now openly helping Nazis in France."

The reply by the Workers International League (1942) was: "*Factory Workers BE ON YOUR GUARD, Clear Out the Bosses' Agents!*"

This flyer concluded with the following challenge, never met of course:

"£10 Reward: To any Member of the Communist Party who can prove that the so-called Quotations from Trotskyist Publications in their Pamphlet "Clear Out Hitler's Agents!" are not Forgeries. - OR - To any Member of the CP who can show any page of this Pamphlet which does not contain a minimum of five lies." [2]

Ted Grant replied in more detail to the Doriot lie in Socialist Appeal, vol. 5 no. 3 (December 1942):

"William Wainwright, modestly signing himself W.W., has written an article in World News and Views of November 21st 1942, the pretended purpose of which is to expose Jacques Doriot, leader of the fascist Popular Party in France.

In reality, following the time worn methods of the "Communist" Party, the real aim is to slander and vilify the Trotskyists.

First Wainwright pretends to believe that Doriot is a Trotskyist. He is as much a Trotskyist as Wainwright himself could be described a Trotskyist. Both have the same credentials, i.e. Doriot at the service of Stalin slandered and lied about Trotsky's policies; now Wainwright jumps into the vacat space left by Doriot to fulfil the same purpose.

In order to understand this, it is only necessary to examine the biography of Doriot. He was one of the leaders of the French Communist Party from its earliest days. When the split came in Russia between Stalin and Trotsky, judging that Stalin would win, he supported him in the struggle and came out as a violent opponent against Trotskyism ...

… Doriot was expelled in 1934, after the "Communist" Party had demonstrated, together with the fascists, for the overthrow of the Liberal Government on February 6th. He was expelled from the C.P. for proposing a united front against the fascist hands! But Doriot never joined the Trotskyists. Just the contrary. He continued his attacks against Trotsky and the Trotskyists.

He had been corrupted too well by the cynical school of Stalinism. It was but a short step for him to go over to fascism and offer his services to the capitalist class. It is significant that on the road to fascism he tarried for a while in the Popular Front in France. For the whole of his political life Doriot fought against Trotsky and Trotskyism." [3]

In fact Doriot was expelled by Thorez on 27 June 1934, the very day that the PCF adopted the 'United Front', the policy that he was expelled for advocating! In fact it was not a real United Front of working class forces, as advocated by the Revolutionary Comintern (up to 1922) and Trotsky until his assassination by the Stalinists in 1940, it was clearly by 1935 a cross-class Popular Front with liberal capitalists and bishops who decreed the end of the class struggle!

But his crime was not being pragmatic about the threat of fascism, it was not parroting every lie supplied by Stalin and Thorez.

Notes
Greece and Puerto Rico: Imperialism's Debt Colonies

By Ailesh Dease

Imperialism is finance capital allied to transnational corporations whose hegemonic centre remains Wall Street. It imposes its will on the planet occasionally, but increasingly, by use of the US military. But it extracts its surplus by the use of debt, its 'bailouts', structural adjustments' and its draconian terms to rip the heart and soul out of their economies, close their schools, destroy their health care systems, decimate their welfare state, etc. It uses its financial fronts, the World Bank, the IMF etc. where necessary but where it had direct control (PR is a US colony which cannot even trade with any other country) simply allows the wolves of the free market via their corporations to do the plundering directly. That is the difference between Greece and Puerto Rico but the end result is the same, as Ailesh Dease explains.

The recent majority vote by the Greek people against EU/ECB/IMF imposed austerity and increasing impoverishment has been interpreted by the Syriza leadership as a resounding YES to even more hardship and suffering for workers and the poor.

Syriza now signed up to even more draconian terms than the Greek people rejected. Syriza and the EU are terrified of what the Greek vote might encourage in other countries.

EU austerity measures have almost destroyed the Greek economy and increased the amount of debt the EU is demanding that Greeks repay. Germany was let off most of their debt after WWII, yet they are demanding that Greece pay up. The Greek people have to pay for the criminal bankers and politicians who bankrupted the country.

Contrary to the lies spread by the imperialist media, the 'bailout' that was given to Greece after the global financial crisis, was NOT made available to the working class, but was given to the European banks, which had caused the crisis in the first place.

The criminal Troika banking cartel (EU/ECB/IMF) force poor countries to use public funds to repay unjust debts to the rich imperialist powers.

The last few years of recession and budget cuts has meant that poverty has more than doubled in Greece since 2007. The years of recession has brought about prolonged mass unemployment. The latest bailout calls for 50 billion euro privatisation of valuable state assets.

This all started with bank fraud in the US, the thieving bankers and corrupt governments make sure that they continue to collect six figure salaries and gold plated pensions whilst the majority suffer extreme deprivation.

The Greek elite are eagerly awaiting the privatisation of public assets as they hope to profit hugely from such a sale. The elite move their money offshore to secure currencies, and then when the privatization sales are on, they are able to buy up valuable assets at fire sale prices.

We have seen this pattern of privatisation before in Argentina, Bolivia, Poland and Russia where austerity programmes were imposed.

When ordinary workers mess up on their jobs they are held accountable, not so with economists. The historical record shows that economists record of predictive failure is extremely high: e.g., in 2008 Ben Bernanke said “The economy looks great”...In 2009 Alan Greenspan said “We did not see this coming” and Jeffrey Sachs (Quetelet Professor of Sustainable Development at Columbia’s School of International and Public Affairs) disastrous “advice” to the Yeltsin government six months after the coup in Russia in 1991 ushered in capitalist restoration in Russia with massive privatisation and removal of all price controls and the destruction of social benefits. With the restoration of capitalism came high unemployment and according to the Left Business Observer (#111 August 2005): "the...living standards fell and the population shrank, an almost unprecedented event in a country not at war.”

There were millions of deaths as the GOP of post-Soviet Russia was slashed in half, poverty increased tenfold, health care services were devastated, mortality rates for workers shot up by 75% (from 800 working age adults per 100,000 in 1989 to 1400 in 1994) and life expectancy for Russian men fell from 67 years in 1989 to 60 years two decades later.

There is very little Greece can do on its own to tax or raise taxes on those who are most able to pay taxes, because they have mobility of capital. They can move their registrations to other locations or move their corporations offshore. The shipping industry, tourism, pharmaceuticals, etc. have their money in offshore tax havens or arrange for sales to be booked in Switzerland rather than in the manufacturing facilities where the products are made. Greece is unable effectively to collect taxes without the help of the EU and the Swiss as they have hosted foreign assets for years. The IMF, EU, ECB want ordinary people to pay higher taxes in the interest of the banks and private industry.

Neo-Colonialism in Puerto Rico

Neo-colonialism is all about debt. Imperialism doesn’t need to go to war in order to colonise a country, they just wait for another loan to be accepted on their terms.

Greece and Puerto Rico: Imperialism's Debt Colonies

Puerto Rico: Neo-colonialism is all about debt. Imperialism doesn't need to go to war in order to colonise a country, they just wait for another loan to be accepted on their terms.

Imperialism is finance capital allied to transnational corporations whose hegemonic centre remains Wall Street. It imposes its will on the planet occasionally, but increasingly, by use of the US military. But it extracts its surplus by the use of debt, its ‘bailouts’, structural adjustments’ and its draconian terms to rip the heart and soul out of their economies, close their schools, destroy their health care systems, decimate their welfare state, etc. It uses its financial fronts, the World Bank, the IMF etc. where necessary but where it had direct control (PR is a US colony which cannot even trade with any other country) simply allows the wolves of the free market via their corporations to do the plundering directly. That is the difference between Greece and Puerto Rico but the end result is the same, as Ailesh Dease explains.

The latest bailout calls for 50 billion euros to be spent. Both Greece and Puerto Rico have debts that are not going to be paid off any time soon. The Greek debt is mostly held by public lenders (IMF, ECB) PR’s debt is mostly held by private investors (e.g. Hedge Funds, mutual funds, individuals) while Greece’s economic issues put the Eurozone at risk, the US hasn’t got a major stake in PR’s problems.

The 34 Hedge Funds hired former IMF economists to work out the solution to PR’s debt crisis. These vulture capitalists who have made money out of the crises in Argentina, Lehman Brothers, Greece etc. told the government in PR to lay off teachers and close schools in order to pay them back. Already PR has closed 100 schools. The Vulture Capitalists also demand that PR sell off $4 billion of public buildings and cut public spending. Both Greece and Puerto Rico (PR) should say no to Financial Terrorism and declare bankruptcy since their debt was created by the rich so they should pay it. PR is a US territory, but not a state, this means they can’t default legally on anything but they have no right to any assistance from the US. By forcing already desperate people into poverty, they hope to have workers who are so frightened that they will not fight back.

The desire for independence in PR has been largely suppressed by a variety of financial initiatives to stave off the extreme poverty which could have led to mass unrest. c.g. the opportunity for the malcontents to legally emigrate to the US has helped to keep the island dependent. The massive loans, which are now unpayable were part of this strategy to make the independence movement irrelevant.

The political leadership in both Greece and PR lacks the courage to create an alternative to the brutality of austerity. Mass poverty and the exploitation of workers are inherent in the capitalist system. People need sustainable jobs, a living wage and an alternative to this debt money system.
Lost in the left
The victory of reformism and the reactionary character of Greek Marxism
by Antony Kolokotsis, Pasok, Athens, truthoftimes.com

In the days after the referendum the final chapter of SYRIZA’s political history began to be written. With the sense of political liberation the referendum had provided, the leadership of the party moved away from the left reformist wing of SYRIZA’s parliamentary group, at first by establishing that very night a parliamentary alliance with the opposition parties, and afterwards, in the days that followed, with the unconditional acceptance of a new deal by the European political establishment.

The referendum set the stage for a political catharsis to take place and created a means for political activism and participation. That was the overwhelming Greek society, to become defused through the illusion of individual democratic power. Every question that materialized throughout the last period in relation to the economic and political crisis Greek society was facing culminating to the day of the referendum, became enclosed within a meaningless expression of social patriotism; with the result of that expression baring no responsibility to address let alone answer those questions.

The leadership of SYRIZA had passed on to the Greek people the responsibility of addressing the crisis and through the narrow and superfluous narratives of the referendum the Greek people returned the responsibility in the manner of political exoneration. Not only did SYRIZA’s leadership receive a mandate from the referendum to become the party of preservation of the economic and political status quo, effectively by being politically in a position to translate the result to suit its own political needs and aspirations, but also in effect to complete what started two years ago with the party’s inaugural conference i.e. the marginalization of SYRIZA’s parliamentary ‘left reformist’ wing and liquidation of the party’s factional structure.

The story of SYRIZA is the story of reformism in Greece triumphantly managing to masquerade itself and inconspicuously move the political stage from the streets into parliament. Convincing the masses of the irrelevance of political activism and participation, that the revolution can indeed take place within the closed doors of the Greek parliament not by the working class but certainly for the working class. It is also the story of Marxism in Greece failing to offer theoretical protection against the deceitful nature of reformism and its political agenda of class collaboration and political appeasement of the working class.

The principal political enemy of the working class has and will always be reformism in all its political manifestations, and the role of Marxism has and always will be to combat it on a day to day basis within the labour movement and more importantly within the core area of its expression i.e. the social democratic parties. The failure to address this issue within PASOK in the period before the economic crisis having abandoned it to the hands of political careerists and reformism returned to haunt the Greek labour movement and Greek Marxism when the reformist wing of PASOK having lost its parliamentary voice and fearful of its future existence took its place at the head of SYRIZA in becoming the party’s main parliamentary force.

The organizational fragmentation that characterized SYRIZA’s structural form was overshadowed by the surge of parliamentary movement of the collapsing PASOK creating at the same time the electoral movement that propelled the party from the margins of parliamentary existence to electoral prominence, thus concealing the lack of working class participation in its base. In its new home reformism adopted the socialist and revolutionary rhetoric needed to express to sustain the alliance until it would be time to shed the political weight it was feeling to its left, that would prevent it from achieving prominence not just within Greek bourgeois parliament but within the European bourgeois political establishment; driven at all times by the petty bourgeois need to finally take its natural place in serving their true masters.

And so the left wing of parliamentary PASOK became the right wing of SYRIZA; now ready to complete their own circle having themselves been baptized in the bloody waters of European capitalism and the ‘necessary’ reality of memorandums. The past always held this future for this parliamentary alliance that will start to look towards its traditional home knowingly that its electoral strength will soon start to migrate towards that way.

And so the reason why PASOK is still in existence and will once again become the battleground for the political consciousness of the Greek working class is because of the political nature of SYRIZA, and it becoming a transnational vessel for reformism in search of political space to promote its program. The creation of a new party did not defeat the political enemy it merely concealed that enemy from the working class convincing it that did not exist in the first place and in effect that there was no battle to be fought.

And so Greek Marxism instead of leading events and showing the way ahead, protecting the masses from the politics of petty bourgeois adventurism, uncertain of itself and its role in the modern era of bourgeois democracy, substantiated the existence of those politics taking its reactionary place within the Greek political establishment. The unconditional support for the populist government was given in return for a possible path to state power falling deep into the political realms of economism and in essence uniting fully with reformism since the manner through which this share of power could provide change was through reforms that could only materialize, provided there were favorable capitalist conditions, in the form of concessions.

These would have been reforms that the working class being absent from political participation could not defend. And indeed this was precisely the nature of the first few months of SYRIZA’s government where the initial concessions that were announced were swiftly taken back and brutally replaced by further austerity. This is the difference between reforms and the working class leaving its political and cultural imprint on society. It is where Marxism today needs to orientate politically and theoretically towards in order to unify itself the class whose political reality made Marxism’s existence a political necessity.

Leon Trotsky: I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International. Go Forward! 35
Greek Solidarity: Demand Total End to Debt/Austerity, or Torpedo the Euro!

By Ian Donovan 9 July, 2015

The outcome of the Greek referendum considerably exceeded the expectations of the SYRIZA-led coalition government that called it, as well as most observers. They were painted into a corner by their own conciliation of the neo-liberal leaders of Europe, faced with their humiliating ‘offer’ of a bailout in demand for further massive cuts in pensions and social benefits. The SYRIZA government was faced with what in effect was an attempt to force a recently-elected government out of office; Alexis Tsipras turned to the Greek working-class masses and asked for their backing.

Their courage in resisting the demands of the Troika far exceeds that of their left-reformist leadership.

This was shown by the immediate aftermath of the 61% landslide victory of the ‘OXI’ (no) side, despite the NAI (yes) side having the backing of the entire privately-owned news media, with an avalanche of mendacious propaganda and disinformation. The no vote took place in the context of international blackmail and the squeezing of Greek finances which has led to the closure of banks and a limit of €60 per day on withdrawals from ATMs, on top of the years of ‘financial waterboarding’ austerity and the severe impoverishment of much of the Greek population. This heroic defiance takes place in economic siege conditions whose clear aim is ‘regime change’. But in this case it backfired.

The result is a significant political defeat for the leading bourgeois/imperialist powers of Europe, and puts them on the defensive over the question of democracy versus neo-liberal ‘shock treatment’ – at least for a short while. This needs to be acted on by the working class in the rest of Europe and internationally – we must break the lying imperialist-neoliberal propaganda that seeks to counterpose the peoples of the rest of Europe to the Greek population in a manner that is actually flagrantly racist. We need to smash austerity everywhere, and expressing international solidarity with the Greek working class is a crucial expression of this objective.

Left Reformism in Office – appeasement of the Troika
SYRIZA should not have needed a renewed mandate from the voters to do what it was elected to do barely six months earlier – stand up to the core EU imperialists and fight austerity. The timidity and reformism of Tsipras and co on this occasion was counteracted by the heroism of the Greek masses in defying the Troika, but it is an ongoing problem within the anti-austerity camp that could still lead to unnecessary defeats.

In this vein, immediately after the referendum victory the ‘Marxist’ finance minister, Yanis Varoufakis, resigned, apparently at the behest of Tsipras, because his presence and left-reformist combative attitude was judged to be inimical to ‘negotiations’ with the Troika. This is not the first time Varoufakis has been sidelined in the context of international blackmail, and the squeezes of Greek finances which has led to the closure of banks and a limit of €60 per day on withdrawals from ATMs, on top of the years of ‘financial waterboarding’ austerity and the severe impoverishment of much of the Greek population. This heroic defiance takes place in economic siege conditions whose clear aim is ‘regime change’. But in this case it backfired.

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Despite his reformist project to ‘save’ capitalism from its neo-liberal manifestation that in his eyes threatens to destroy the system itself and usher in not socialism but a new barbarism, nevertheless he is an intelligent and hard-nosed reformist cadre whom SYRIZA’s bourgeois opponents feared. His removal from the front line is not a tactical move of finesse, but an act of appeasement of the Troika by Tsipras, and another sign that the leadership of SYRIZA is not to be trusted.

The most immediate issue of the crisis manifested by the referendum victory is the fate of Greek participation in the Euro, and indeed the fate of the Euro itself. Greece has already failed to make one payment of €1.5 billion as part of its bailout package. This partial default, based on the fact that Greece simply could not afford to pay it, led to the restriction of liquidity from the European Central Bank, the creditors’ ultimatum to the SYRIZA/ANEL government, and thereby to the referendum on yes or no to the ultimatum. If the flow of liquidity is not restored soon, the Greek banking system will collapse.

There are two ways to restore it; one is by a deal with the creditors and the ECB to restore the flow of Euros; the other is by printing a new currency as legal tender in place of the Euro. Whatever that may be called, Drachma, Greek Euro or whatever, it would mean a break with the single European currency, and could indeed be the beginning of the end of the Euro. It would set a precedent that could soon spread to other weaker countries in the Eurozone, such as Spain, Portugal or conceivably even Italy. The latter is a middle-ranking imperialist nation that has already suffered the indignity of having had a government of ‘technocrats’ imposed on it by the ECB and its financial consultants, the US-based Goldman Sachs merchant bank.

A break of Greece with the Euro, through a catastrophic default on its debt, while it would produce a great deal of further hardship and austerity for Greece in the short term, would mean that Greece had its own national currency again, which could float freely against other currencies and find its own economic level. Once that happened, at least in purely monetary terms, Greece would be on equal terms to the outside world and the result of breaking with the Euro, which is a massively overvalued currency from the standpoint of Greece, would amount to a massive, delayed devaluation of the Greek currency. Such a devaluation would also amount to a massive stimulus to the Greek economy, far greater, for instance than the stimulus to the British economy when Sterling fell out of the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) in September 1992. So while Grexit would produce further hardship for Greece, it would also undoubtedly have its compensations. However, from the point of view of the historic interests of the working class, this would not be the best outcome.
Bourgeois pseudo-internationalism

The Euro is a project of bourgeois pseudo-internationalism. The imperialist bourgeoisies cannot genuinely transcend their national economic bases and embrace a bourgeois version of internationalism – thus Kautsky’s theory of ‘ultra-imperialism’ was wrong. Rather, the contradiction between the fact that the productive forces of modern capitalism have long outgrown the confines of the national state, and the complete inability of the bourgeois state to abolish the national state, is a deadly contradiction at the heart of the capitalist system itself. One way of attempting to resolve this was the way Hitler tried; to unite Europe by its conquest by a single imperialist power.

But that proved unviable, not least because neither the European workers nor rival world imperialists such as Britain and the USA would tolerate such a thing, as history demonstrated. Indeed, the very attempt could have led to the destruction of the capitalist system itself if the advanced sections of the working class had not at the time been subjected to the stranglehold of Stalinist counterrevolution.

The Euro is another such attempt by the bourgeoisie to transcend national narrowness without overcoming the nation-state. Not by methods of blitzkrieg, but by an incomplete unification of some aspects of capitalist economy that removed some of the obstacles to the productive forces freely developing across national boundaries without removing the imperialist nation state and all the exploitative material relations that go with it. This expression of bourgeois pseudo-internationalism is not a step forward, as some reformists fondly imagine, but can even produce worse irrationalities than traditionally national-based forms of capitalism. The Euro illustrates that concretely, with Greece at the sharp end.

The role of Goldman Sachs

The involvement of the Jewish-Zionist ‘vampire squid’ Goldman Sachs merchant bank in the Greek debacle, in the broader context of the Eurozone crisis of the last 8 years, not to mention in putting together the Euro itself, is also indicative of how such pseudo-internationalism works. As was noted in a perceptive article in the Independent (18 Nov 2011) at the time of the effective appointment of an Italian Prime Minister by the European Central Bank with Goldman Sachs’ ‘guidance’:

“The ascension of Mario Monti to the Italian prime ministership is remarkable for more reasons than it is possible to count. By replacing the scandal-surfing Silvio Berlusconi, Italy has dislodged the undischarged leader. By imposing rule by unelected technocrats, it has suspended the normal rules of democracy, and maybe democracy itself. And by putting a senior adviser at Goldman Sachs in charge of a Western nation, it has taken to new heights the political power of an investment bank that you might have thought was prohibitively politically toxic. “This is the most remarkable thing of all: a giant leap forward for, or perhaps even the successful culmination of, the Goldman Sachs Project. “It is not just Mr Monti. The European Central Bank, another crucial player in the sovereign debt drama, is under ex-Goldman management, and the investment bank’s alumni hold sway in the corridors of power in almost every European nation, as they have done in the US throughout the financial crisis. Until Wednesday, the International Monetary Fund’s European division was also run by a Goldman man, Antonio Borges, who just resigned for personal reasons. “Even before the upheaval in Italy, there was no sign of Goldman Sachs living down its nickname as “the Vampire Squid”, and now that its tentacles reach to the top of the eurozone, sceptical voices are raising questions over its influence. The political decisions taken in the coming weeks will determine if the eurozone can and will pay its debts – and Goldman’s interests are intricately tied up with the answer to that question.”

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The American left-wing commentator James Petras, in an essay written in 2007, just at the beginning of the financial crisis, made the following observation about Goldman Sachs’ role in what is often called the ‘Israel lobby’ within the United States, in particular with regard to the Iraq War:

“Where finance capital has not been able to fashion a coherent economic strategy is with regard to Washington’s Middle East wars. Because of the pull of the Zionist Lobby on many of leading lights of Wall Street – including its unofficial mouthpieces – the Wall Street Journal and the NY Times – Paulson has failed to formulate a strategy. He [does] not even pay lip service to the Baker Iraq Study Group report’s proposal to gradually draw down troops for fear of alienating some key senior executives of Goldman Sachs, Stern, Lehman Brothers et al who follow the ‘Israel First’ line. “ (http://petras.lahaine.org/?p=1689)

The point of this being to illustrate that Goldman Sachs is a representative par-excellence of the phenomenon I analysed in my Draft Theses on the Jews and Modern Imperialism (Sept 2014), of the vanguard role played by the Jewish-Zionist bourgeoisie in helping the traditional imperialists to partially transcend the national narrowness that led to inter-imperialist conflicts in the early to mid-20th Century, and to embrace bourgeois forms of pseudo-internationalism:

“It is therefore both a powerful imperialist formation, and deeply unstable. In this epoch of declining capitalism, it plays the role of a kind of ‘vanguard of the bourgeoisie’ – not quite the mirror-image of Marxism but with aspirations along those lines. It has been instrumental in pushing the nationally limited imperialist bourgeoisies to partially transcend their own national particularisms. Hence the ‘traditional’ imperialist bourgeoisie, based on the nation-state, having overcome their previous fear of the supposedly proletarian-internationalist role of the Jews as a result of the outcome of WWII, now regards Jewish
‘cosmopolitanism’ and bourgeois semi-internationalism as a good thing, and to a considerable degree defers and follows the leadership of the Jewish/Zionist bourgeoisie.”

The unusual role of Goldman Sachs in the Eurozone crisis, not to mention its role in inducting Greece into the Euro in the first place, with the apparent widespread falsification of economic data to give the illusion that Greece satisfied the criteria for membership, is certainly a manifestation of this vanguard role in pushing bourgeois pseudo-internationalist political-economic initiatives such as the Euro. Which have proven ruinous for the working class.

**Contradictions of single currency**

Without a fiscal union and the flows of funding to equalise economic conditions that implies, a monetary union means that the currency’s value tends to gravitate towards the average value of the (hypothetical) currencies of the nations that make up the monetary union. This therefore means that the strongest component of the monetary union, in this case Germany, has in effect an undervalued currency, making them ultra-competitive on world markets, while the economically weakest components, such as Greece, have a perennially overvalued currency, which is economically crippling. A currency union without a fiscal union is therefore an enhanced mechanism to transfer wealth from the poorer, semi-colonial countries in the union, to the wealthier, imperialist countries.

The Euro is a united currency, one of the hallmarks of state power, without a fiscal union to back it up. The reason for this is very simple; a fiscal union means the sharing of debts, and an economic union that transcends the nation-state. It would mean that Greek debts become German debts, and vice versa. The same would have to be true for all the other weaker and indebted countries in the Eurozone.

Since the bourgeois state is the ‘executive committee of the bourgeoisie’ (Marx) of the respective countries concerned, and public debt is mixed up with corporate and private debt which is also often guaranteed by the state, such a transfer of debt would in effect amount to a massive shift of bourgeois property rights to the detriment of the strongest imperialist bourgeoisies of Europe, the German bourgeoisie, but also to a slightly lesser extent the French. This is anathema to the imperialist masters of Europe.

The contradiction however, is that the German and French bourgeoisies, and some of their smaller client imperialists, such as Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria etc., realise that their individual national currencies as was were no way viable as world currencies, and could not remotely compete with the US dollar, or perhaps in future the Chinese Remnimbi. Thus the Euro project is very important to them. And in natural terms, Europe is (or rather obviously should be) an economic unit, comparable to the United States or Russia.

The fragmentation into petty states appears irrational, and the greater the area of the zone of Europe proper covered by the single currency, arguably the greater the prestige and power of the currency. These are the contradictions of how these things are viewed in bourgeois terms. The Euro is very important to the core imperialists of Europe. If only the Greek government had the programme and understanding to take advantage of this, it could move mountains.

**Cancel all the debts, or torpedo the Euro!**

The demand of the Greeks regarding the Euro should be for total debt relief, not just for themselves, but for all the poorer, indebted countries of the Eurozone. That means the collectivisation of their debts on a European scale. Since the debt, when compared to the total assets of Germany and the other imperialist countries of the Eurozone, is quite small, this would eliminate the debt at a stroke. It would also amount to a fiscal union, especially when combined with demands for a complete end to austerity, and the reversal of all the anti-working-class attacks made as part of the previous years of financial waterboarding.

In effect, this amounts to a demand for either a complete fiscal union, with the pooling of all European debt, or the dissolution of the Euro. That should be the ultimatum of the working class, and the immediate demand of SYRIZA in the negotiations: either you concede a full fiscal union with full European collectivisation/writeoff of debts, or we use every lever to torpedo the Euro and call on the rest of the European working class to fight for the same.

SYRIZA, which grew out of the Eurocommunist wing of the old Greek Communist Party, and merged with various other leftist and environmental trends, is not a genuine workers’ party, but a new bourgeois workers’ party that has grown out of the Greek working class struggle against austerity. It does not have the programme to push forward the European class struggle onto the level at which such questions can be posed.

Its coalition with the right-wing anti-European Independent Greeks is also inimical to such an internationalist perspective. As well as being the bourgeois component of a popular front, and hence a danger to the Greek working class in that sense, it is an obstacle to the necessary genuine internationalist perspective that a government of the left needs to get the proper handle on the crisis. It is therefore doubly essential for the Greek working class to demand that SYRIZA break the coalition with ANEL.

The demand for all-European write off should overarch all other demands of an economic nature, such as a complete end to austerity, the rolling back of all attacks, etc. The demand for fiscal union and the collectivisation of national (and indeed private) debts is, as elaborated earlier, an attack on bourgeois property rights in a way, since bourgeois states are in practice the collective property of the bourgeoisie of particularly imperialist nations.

In its logic, it points to a United States of Europe. But for the reasons mentioned above, it is highly improbable that such a thing could ever come about under capitalism. The pseudo-international schemes of the bourgeoisie, and their Jewish-Zionist mentors and handmaidens, do not amount to a genuine transcendence of the imperialist nation state. Therefore this points directly to the need for the working class to take power, overthrowing the bourgeoisie across Europe, to the need for a Socialist United States of Europe.
From back page

Leon Trotsky: I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International. Go Forward! 39

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The feverish shifts of the situation and the rapid acceleration of the confrontation between irreconcilable class forces. What we have experienced over the last month (and it is still continuing) is a total class war, ferociously waged by the imperialist EU, the ECB and the IMF against the impoverished Greek popular masses, as the first battle against peoples all over Europe, east and west.

This political-financial coup d'État manifests clearly the imperialistic nature of the European Union and deepens the process of disintegration of the EU itself as well as of the declining bourgeois democracy.

Even the protagonist of this European counter-revolution, imperialist Germany, with the demonstration of all its extreme political and social sadism cannot be satisfied by or feel secure as a result of its Pyrrhic victory. Crushing a weak Greek prime minister ready to surrender is not the same as breaking the potential of social resistance or the fighting spirit of an oppressed but still proud, defiant and brave people, who quite recently humiliated the troika and the ruling classes in Greece and in Europe.

The head of the European Council Donald Tusk has summarized perfectly all the fears of the German and European bourgeoisie:

“The febrile rhetoric from far-left leaders, coupled with high youth unemployment in several countries, could be an explosive combination. “For me, the atmosphere is a little similar to the time after 1968 in Europe,” he said. “I can feel, maybe not a revolutionary mood, but something like widespread impatience. When impatience becomes not an individual but a social experience of feeling, this is the introduction for revolutions.” (Financial Times 17/July 2015)

Signing a treaty of capitulation by Tsipras, characterized even by the German magazine Der Spiegel as “a list of horrors” cannot be celebrated as the “end of history”, particularly as we live now the end of the late “end of History” proclaimed by imperialism in 1991. New and unexpected surprises are on the road.

The German bourgeoisie fully supported by Social Democracy “succeeded” to sharpen all the inter-imperialist rivalries within and outside Europe.

Outside Europe, it was expressed by, but not limited to the sharp conflict between the IMF and the EU -- actually between the US and Germany -- on the unsustainable Greek debt and the need for “debt relief”, although the IMF was, and is, even more than the EU, demanding the most draconian austerity in Greece. The Obama Administration has not hidden its fears for the “global systemic risk” (Jack Lew, US Secretary of the Treasury) involved in a Grexit, particularly with a US economy still struggling with the most draconian austerity in Greece. The updated report of the IMF, on July 14, after the forced “agreement” reached in Brussels, blowing it up actually by rejecting it as likely to increase the Greek debt to 200 per cent of GDP in 2018 and demanding a “30-year moratorium of payments to make it sustainable”, is a tremendous manifestation of the sharp conflict between Europe and America.

Within Europe, the hypocritical protests by Matteo Renzi in the Euro-Summit manifest the anxiety of over-indebted capitalist Italy to be the next target of Berlin.

The same applies, in a different form, to imperialist France. The old French-German axis of European capitalist integration based on the Maastricht Treaty of 1991, was broken long ago by the post-2008 crisis, as France has plunged into over-indebtedness, de-industrialization, and generalized social discontent. Although François Hollande and his (anti) “socialist” neoliberal government have functioned as another instrument of imperialist pressure and blackmail on Greece.

The Euro as a common currency was from the beginning a project advanced by the French bourgeoisie and Germany accepted it only reluctantly on the basis of its re-unification, taking advantage of a free-trade zone absolutely necessary to a basically export economy. Now, the French saw Schäuble advancing aggressively a “Grexit” as a first step to the dismantling of the monetary union itself, while keeping the EU as a free trade zone. Apparently, under the shocks of the world crisis and a new wave of world recession, Germany is going back to Schäuble’s old plan for “a Europe of multiple speeds” around a hard core on the north of the Alps – a German Europe unacceptable to its imperialist rivals. In such conditions, French government...