



COMMUNIST REVIEW

- **Jimmy Jancovich** The Egyptian Revolution and the National Bourgeoisie
- **Shiraz Durrani** Mau Mau, the Revolutionary Force Part 2
- **Eugene McCartan** Capitalist Crisis and Tasks of the Communists
- **Gordon MacLeod** Disintegration of Care in Capitalism
- Plus discussion and Soul Food



The Egyptian Revolution and the National Bourgeoisie



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THE EGYPTIAN REVOLUTION AND THE NATIONAL BOURGEOISIE

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editorial



By Martin Levy

FOLLOWING THE RECENT shocking murder of Woolwich soldier Lee Rigby, sensationally reported in the bourgeois media, there has been a spate of Islamophobic attacks in Britain, and a new assertiveness by the fascist English Defence League, including their disgraceful effrontery in laying wreaths at memorials to those who gave their lives fighting fascism.

Nothing can excuse the killing, though one might have wished that the media had given just a fraction of the prominence to reporting and excoriating the racially motivated murder on April 29 of Mohammed Saleem, stabbed on his way home from the mosque in Small Heath, Birmingham. This is not just double standards, but arguably institutionalised racism and Islamophobia.

We should hardly be surprised about that. Double standards are very much the stock-in-trade of bourgeois media; and the stereotyping of minority communities – blacks, Asians, Moslems, the disabled, the unemployed, the elderly, migrants from Eastern Europe – is particularly useful at times of economic crisis, as at present, since these are easy targets and a diversion from the real causes of the situation.

The very term ‘Islamophobia’ is part of the problem. It embraces all Moslems, failing to distinguish that the various terrorist groups claiming adherence to Islam, like Al Qaida, are actually right-wing creations by the USA and Saudi Arabia, and are based on the extreme backward Wahabist Islamic trend of the latter country. That is one of the points made by Jimmy Jancovich in his article in this issue, *The Egyptian Revolution and the National Bourgeoisie*.

In some depth, Jimmy analyses the peculiarity of the history of Egypt, and the nature and contradictions of the national bourgeoisie, as a means to

understanding the direction of current developments in the revolution there. Along the way he provides insight into the role of the Moslem Brotherhood, not only in Egypt but also in the current crisis in Syria. We are dealing here with rapidly moving situations with the potential, certainly in Syria, to spill over into wider conflagrations. Accompanying Jimmy’s article we therefore report recent statements by the Egyptian Communist Party and – on the Syrian crisis – by the CPUSA. The decision by the European Union, at British and French instigation, to lift the arms embargo to the Syrian ‘rebels’, gives added urgency to the CPUSA’s call for a ceasefire and an end to outside interference in Syria.

The feature article in our last issue was Part 1 of Shiraz Durrani’s *Mau Mau, the Revolutionary Force from Kenya*. In this edition we carry Part 2, which deals with Mau Mau as both a military and political organisation, describing its deep roots and democratic basis, and the achievements of both the armed struggle and the linked mass struggle in cities such as Nairobi. This history deserves to be more widely known, particularly in Britain. The final part will follow in CR69.

The third major article in this issue is a reprint from a previous *Communist Review* – the original series, back in 1931. The author, Ralph Fox, was well known as a communist activist, a writer and a journalist on the *Sunday Worker* and the *Daily Worker*. Tragically, he was killed in Spain at the age of 37, but leaving behind him several written gems, not least *The Novel and the People* (Cobbett Press, first published in 1937). The article reproduced here, *Marx, Engels, and Lenin on the British Workers’ Movement*, was written at a time when articles by these great thinkers were much less available than now, but nonetheless provides valuable insights into our labour movement

history, and strategic approaches valid even today.

Turning again to contemporary issues, we continue with a contribution from Eugene McCartan, general secretary of the Communist Party of Ireland, on *The Development of the Capitalist Crisis and the Tasks of the Communists*; and then a report from the Communist Party of Greece, the KKE, on *The Situation in Greece and the Activity of the KKE*. Geographically, Ireland and Greece are about as far apart as you can go in the European Union, but face similar draconian economic regimes, with labour movements whose leaderships have not faced up to the real nature of the assault on the working class. As Eugene says in his article, “The policies imposed on the peoples of the peripheral countries are now being used in the core countries.” The scale of the revolt is very different in Ireland and Greece, but there is still much we can learn.

We do need to learn soon, and start taking action, before the fabric of society falls apart around us. In his article *(Dis)Integration of Care in a Capitalist Society*, Gordon MacLeod looks at what is happening to elderly social care, which is supposed to be getting integrated with health care, but is now being regarded in ruling circles as a ‘burden’ of which society needs to divest itself as soon as possible. He quotes the Japanese Finance Minister as saying, of elderly people, that “The problem won’t be solved unless you let them hurry up and die”!

This issue of CR concludes with a book review, three discussion articles and finally *Soul Food* – this time with a fitting tribute in verse on *Thatcher: A Scarring Legacy*. The cover price is worth it for those poems alone. Unfortunately, Thatcher’s legacy is very much still with us. But read the poems, be inspired by them, and let us start to tear down that legacy once and for all.

The Egyptian Revolution and the National Bourgeoisie



By Jimmy Jancovich

I: The Early 19th Century Blossoming

Analysis of the current situation in Egypt requires an understanding of two basic factors. One is the nature and contradictions of the national bourgeoisie, not only in Egypt but in general. The other is the peculiarity of the history of Egypt which, unlike any other Third World country, has been virtually independent for over 1000 years, *even though part of the larger empires of the region throughout that time*.

This second factor is the reason that Napoleon chose to invade Egypt rather than anywhere else – an event that had dramatic consequences. Mohammed Ali, Second Commander of the Ottoman forces that were sent to re-occupy Egypt, was so impressed by the organisation and discipline of the French army, not to mention its high cultural level (it even included historians and artists who immediately started

studying ancient Egyptian monuments¹), that he decided to imitate it if ever he had the power to do so.

Since Ottoman suzerainty over Egypt had been purely nominal for centuries, Ali set about consolidating his *de facto* authority. Firstly he reorganised the Ottoman garrison army, by conscripting Egyptian peasants and training them with a handful of French officers and men left behind. He then went on, by 1810, to wipe out the remnants of the former ruling caste, the Mamelukes² (Napoleon's crushing victory over them had made that relatively easy). After Waterloo he started recruiting³ French army and navy officers, engineers and schoolteachers.

One of the consequences of this is that Egypt underwent a process of industrialisation and modernisation, both civil and military, in the 1820s – a century ahead of any other Middle or Near Eastern

country. This included a modern (for its time) textile industry, which, however, was created by the state, no local capitalist class having yet developed. Egypt thus became more advanced than most contemporary European countries – the Cairo-Alexandria railway, built by Robert Stephenson in 1851-2, was one of the first outside Britain. Yet, for all that, it remained socially and politically pre-capitalist.

It must be borne in mind that the *national* bourgeoisie has always and everywhere been very much the junior partner of the bourgeoisie in Third World countries. The dominant bourgeoisie has always been what the Chinese call the *comprador* bourgeoisie – that part of the bourgeoisie that developed to service the imperialist power, at first as importers of manufactured goods (in competition with the local produce) and later as producers and exporters of the raw materials required by the

imperial powers (or facilitators of such plunder).

The national bourgeoisie, as in Europe, grew out of the class of individual craftsmen – the village blacksmith or carpenter, the peddler who brought the villagers goods that required skills or materials not available there. When it moved on to larger scale production it was essentially to *supply goods and services to the local population*. This is why revolutionary national liberation movements in Third World countries are essentially peasant based.

However, in Egypt's case, the early industrial revolution was not a naturally developed one, created by these people. It was initiated by the state as part of Mohammed Ali's modernisation programme, with the assistance of hired engineers and technicians which he recruited in France, and so *was not the basis of a local capitalist class*. As noted above, he also recruited army and navy officers – and

Muhammad Ali Pasha (1769-1849), self-declared khedive of Egypt and Sudan



also schoolteachers. Egypt thus became the dominant military and naval power in the Eastern Mediterranean – which was, indeed, Ali's reason for modernising the economy in the first place! He was even strong enough, by 1838, to try to overthrow the Ottoman dynasty, but was stopped by a combined British-Austrian force landing on the Lebanese coast, and cutting off his supplies.

An urban petty bourgeoisie did of course exist, and grew as the economy as a whole grew. It consisted of craftsmen and small shopkeepers providing goods and services to the local population, including of course the resident foreigners brought in to run the new industries and armed forces. This would have included tailoring, (including for army uniforms) using locally produced cloth, as well as furniture-making – but still on a fairly small scale. In addition, Egypt has had a population of indigenous

Greeks and Jews, as far back as Pharaonic times, who formed a substantial part of the urban petty bourgeoisie. It should be noted that both of these minorities were Arabic speakers, 'Greek' being often a religious rather than ethnic or linguistic label. The original Greeks and Judeans⁴ (more accurate than Jewish as the Jewish religion did not really exist before the destruction of the Second Temple) arrived partly as mercenary troops and partly as traders.

In addition there are the descendants of the ancient Egyptians. These, today, are represented by the Copts (which is the indigenous Egyptian version of the Greek name 'egyptos', from which we have derived Egyptian). Indeed, the overwhelming majority of the population consists of Egyptians converted to Islam, not Arabs or Mamelukes. Nasser's face alone is proof – it is typically Pharaonic. The conversion process was, in fact, very

slow – in the 16th Century half the population was still Coptic Christian. Unlike the Greeks and Jews, the Copts covered all strata of Egyptian society, from peasants to large landowners, which meant that there was an economic base there for capitalist expansion.

Alongside, but separate from, these were members of the Ottoman hierarchy, who undoubtedly formed an important part of the local clientele for new products. Since Mohammed Ali himself was not an Egyptian, but an officer of the Ottoman garrison in Egypt, his success undoubtedly attracted others like him. As he was an Albanian from Janina,⁵ which is a Greek town, these new arrivals would have been Greeks, who no doubt swelled the ranks of the petty bourgeoisie, and Albanians, who would have entered government service as bureaucrats or court hangers-on. There were also Sephardic Jews – former

refugees from the Spanish Inquisition, large numbers of whom settled in the Ottoman Empire. Salonika, near Janina, was almost half-Jewish in population until the Nazi occupation. Many of the Salonika Jews emigrated to Egypt but formed a different and separate community from the Arabic-speaking Egyptian Jews. They, too, formed part of the local petty bourgeoisie from which the national bourgeoisie was emerging.

The administrative separation of society into semi-autonomous ethno-religious 'communities' was an essential part of Ottoman rule, and was maintained in Egypt until well into the 20th century. While it did not prevent classes from forming, it did slow down their consolidation.

Until the 1850s there was little room for the bourgeoisie to develop much further. With Mohammed Ali's death in 1849, however, the strict control he had exercised weakened. His grandson,



Ismail, after visiting Paris, tried to make Cairo a second Paris – at great expense. This was partly offset, at first, by his granting to French capitalists permission to build the Suez Canal, by encouraging a tourist industry, and possibly by selling off some of the textile mills. All this created a demand for imported luxuries and a stronger base for the comprador bourgeoisie. It also led to the indebtedness that gave the European powers the opportunity to take over the country's finances – and Orabi Pasha's⁶ revolt against this, which was crushed by the British Army, thus leading to almost 60 years of occupation.

Moreover, during the American Civil War, European cotton mills were forced to buy Egyptian raw cotton – and discovered that it was far superior to the American variety. This led the big Egyptian landowners to start large-scale planting of cotton for export, at the expense of food production, thus becoming an important part of the comprador bourgeoisie. This had a disastrous effect on the local textile industry: the price of raw cotton soared and the local textile industry was further crushed by competition from the European textile industry, thus weakening the nascent national bourgeoisie.

It must be stressed that this landowner class was not feudal, even though many have used that term – they were already becoming bourgeois, like the 18th century Whig aristocracy in Britain. Being Egyptian, not Turkish or Albanian, they became exponents of political reform and, after the British occupation, of national independence as well.

II: The British Protectorate 1884-1936

Meanwhile, the growth of privately owned local industries (textiles, clothing, furniture, sugar, wine and spirits, building), despite European competition, did

allow the development of a small local bourgeoisie that was producing essentially for the local market. However, this national bourgeoisie was, from the very first, very heterogeneous. In addition to Egyptians (themselves divided and organised on religious lines), there were the long established indigenous Greeks and Jews and the more recent arrivals from mainland Greece and from Italy, as well as Jews, Christians and Moslems from Syria and the Lebanon – all attracted by the opportunities offered by the *only developing country in the region*.

From the 1890s onwards, Jews from Eastern and Central Europe started arriving, to escape persecution, and formed yet another separate community. It is worthy of note that many of those from the Balkans deliberately chose to migrate eastwards rather than westwards. The Ottomans were oppressive – but indiscriminately so! Anti-Semitism was considered a Christian characteristic by many Balkan Jews – hence the choice to remain under Moslem rule.

All these communities, at once competing and cooperating, meant that there was a contradiction in the character of the national bourgeoisie into which they gradually coalesced, although, despite its national social function, it was not ethnically or legally national – indeed, until independence in 1936 there was no such thing as Egyptian citizenship.

Thus, side-by-side with the purely power-seeking nationalism of the comprador landowning class, there developed more radical bourgeois-democratic trends that included ethnic Egyptians (Coptic and Moslem and Jewish and Greek Orthodox) and 'resident foreigners', many of whom had brought more radical ideas from their homelands. By the middle of the 20th century most of the latter had been settled there for several generations.

It should be mentioned that some of these radical trends were quite early. Jamal Ad-Din Al-Afghani (1838/9-1897), expelled from India by the British Raj, campaigned for the Eastern empires (Ottoman and Persian) to reform and modernise to avoid being completely subjugated as India had been. Expelled again from Egypt by the British High Commissioner, he went to France where he continued publishing. His proposals, unlike the purely administrative Ottoman reforms, called for constitutional monarchies with elected parliaments and universal education on the European model.⁷ This was taking Mohammed Ali's modernisation several steps further than that old autocrat would have wanted or imagined. One of Al-Afghani's disciples, Mohammad Abduh (c 1849-1905), as Mufti of Al Azhar, proposed to modernise Islam by reasoned interpretation and not just mediaeval tradition. This was a return to the cultural tradition of early Islamic science and philosophy – condemned and banned by the ruling castes from the 12th century onwards.⁸

As a result, an Egyptian national movement developed that not only opposed British occupation but also was increasingly critical of the Khedival⁹ establishment. In the years before the First World War it was not only developing democratic ideas but also egalitarian ones regarding the status of women. This was accompanied by Mohammad Abduh's attempts to develop a more rational approach to religion.¹⁰

The critical turning point occurred when a delegation of Egyptian nationalists went to the Versailles Peace Conference in 1919 to appeal for full independence. This delegation included women – in itself a novelty, and indicative of the extent to which Egypt had advanced politically and culturally,

Gamal Abdel Nasser, president of Egypt from June 1956 until his death in September 1970

much further than other Arabic-speaking countries.¹¹

Two results of the delegation's return are of critical importance:

- Firstly, the refusal of the Versailles Conference to endorse Egyptian independence but, on the contrary, to confirm the Protectorate by making Egypt a Mandated Territory, provoked a spontaneous, unorganised and unsuccessful wave of demonstrations and near-rebellion. A popular movement of this kind was unprecedented for Egypt¹² and for the Arab world. It was put down by the British Army, opening fire on demonstrations and physically occupying the popular quarters of Cairo.



But it did take place and had its consequences in public awareness.

- Secondly, when the delegation arrived by train at Cairo Station, its two women members, in front of the crowd of supporters and journalists waiting to greet them, took off their veils¹³ and trampled them underfoot. This was four years before Soviet women organised a mass veil-burning ceremony in Tajikistan. It encouraged many middle class women, both Egyptian and 'resident foreigners' to learn typing and go and get office jobs, in itself a revolution at the time!

In the wake of these events, the first attempts at

working-class organisation also took place, with trade unions and a communist party being formed. Needless to say, both were repressed, but only to spring up again in the 1930s.

It was in this context of repression of the democratic and egalitarian national movement that the Moslem Brotherhood (Ikhwan el-Muslimeen in Arabic) was formed as part of the reactionary backlash. For all its anti-British rhetoric, it was part of the repression of the national movement. Even its Moslem pretensions are fake. In fact, the Ikhwan's ideology developed into a copy of Wahabism, to such an extent that, in the mid 1930s, its leader Sheikh Hassan al-Banna was so severely criticised that he stopped preaching religion and concentrated on

campaigning on the Palestine issue in support of Hussein, the pro-Nazi leader of the revolt there.

The Wahabi sect, created in what is now Saudi Arabia, was (and is) so retrograde that, from the outset, it was condemned as heretical by all other Moslem trends (and there are a lot of them), be they Sunni or Shi'ite. It only became respectable when its main disciples, the Saudi Arabian and Qatari ruling clans, became rich enough, thanks to oil and US backing, to buy friends and influence people. The financing of the Moslem Brothers began via purely charitable associations in the 1960s and became more openly political in the 1970s.

This is why I object to the use of the term Islamist or Jihadist to describe these

various extreme right-wing terrorist groups. They should be called *Wahabists*, thus placing the blame where it belongs – at the door of America and its main ally in the region, Saudi Arabia. Al Qaida et al were from the start US creations.¹⁴ To call them Islamists is to play their game of pretending that they are the true interpreters of the Islamic religion – and to feed Islamophobia in our own country.

In any case, the *Ikhwan* was just an extreme right-wing group with a taste for gratuitous violence and assassination, and a habit of doing the monarchy's dirty work for it while pretending to be ultra-nationalist.¹⁵ It was their attempt to assassinate Nasser in 1954 that almost led to the sect's extinction and made its leaders flee to Switzerland for asylum (you have to be pretty rich to get accepted as a foreign resident in Switzerland!). From there they continue to play their old game in Europe while trying to give it a 'modern intellectual' image – for European consumption only.

III: Egypt after Independence

Despite the repression in the 1920s the Egyptian nationalist movement could not be destroyed, since too large a part of society was involved: the Whig-type landowner class, the urban bourgeoisie, the urban and rural petty bourgeoisie and the still largely unorganised mass of workers and peasants. Since the Arabic word for delegation is *Wafd*, the national movement organised itself politically to form the Wafd Party – a more or less democratic bourgeois-liberal party with, inevitably, a radical wing.

Thus, when Mussolini invaded and conquered Ethiopia, the British government, feeling its position in Egypt and the Sudan threatened, decided that an independent ally was better than a resentful



and potentially rebellious protectorate – so it negotiated a treaty with the Wafd that ensured its support against Mussolini and the continued presence of the British Army to ‘defend Egypt’ in the event of war ... which inevitably occurred.

This is no place to deal with the war years except to point out that it gave an impetus to both the national bourgeoisie and the radical left and working class, at three levels:

- Economically, the fact that shipping was all requisitioned for the war effort meant that raw cotton could not be exported nor could manufactured cotton goods be imported. This gave a big boost to the local textile industry. The same went for the engineering industry – the army needed an array of materials that were inevitably made locally since they could only be imported with difficulty and with high losses.

- Politically, with Rommel at the gates in 1942, the British Army was obliged to stage a coup d’état and force King Farouk to dismiss his pro-Axis government and recall to office Nahas Pasha, the

moderately radical leader of the Wafd Party.

- Ideologically, the fact that this was a war against fascism and for democracy had a profound influence on public opinion, especially the ‘resident foreign’ communities – Greek and Jewish in particular, but also the French and British.¹⁶ This was especially so for the younger generations who had been born and brought up in Egypt and could see the contradictions between the war aims and the social and economic reality all round them.

However, the heterogeneous character of both the national bourgeoisie, and of the radical left that emerged from it, made it vulnerable. In the years that followed the end of the Second World War, both were to suffer repeated blows.

In the period 1945/6, the wartime boom collapsed, with the renewal of exports of raw cotton (which increased its price) and imports of finished cotton goods from Europe. This resulted in mass radicalisation of both workers and the locally based bourgeoisie; there were demonstrations for the evacuation of the British

Army and a wave of strikes, especially in the cotton industry. This gave the left an opportunity to emerge as a more serious political force than ever before. The mass demonstrations of 1946 and the setting up of the Student-Worker Joint Committee (Egypt’s first revolutionary crisis) frightened the government and the British Embassy (that still largely ran the show) with fear of revolution. Lack of unity and clear perspectives, however, enabled the government violently to repress this movement.

Nevertheless the struggle against British occupation did not die. It was resumed in 1950, after the end of the Palestine war, in the form of attempts at armed sniping at British forces in the Canal Zone – which ultimately led to the Army coup d’état in 1952.

The 1948 war in Palestine allowed mass arrests of most of the left activists, Egyptian workers as well as the ethnically mixed intellectuals and middle class youth (and even some of the extreme right-wing Moslem Brotherhood, whose social basis was more petty bourgeois). At the same time it imposed economic hardships on all classes, which further weakened the national bourgeoisie

by undercutting the local market, and provoking nationwide riots and strikes. This disturbed and chaotic state, and attempts to ‘establish order’ lasted until the 1952 revolution, with both the left and the national bourgeoisie being badly battered in the process. The left survived, though greatly weakened by the incarceration of so many of its activists, but much of the local economic and social fabric was seriously damaged.

The tripartite invasion in 1956 disrupted Egypt’s main currency-earner, the Suez Canal, and thus still further weakened the whole economy. It also led to mass expulsion of ‘resident foreigners’ – not only Jews but resident British and French middle-class people, many of whom were born there and were running small- to medium-sized local businesses serving the local market.¹⁷ Many Syrians and Lebanese, who were classed as French for that purpose, were also expelled, all of which further disrupted the still fragile national bourgeoisie. The wave of nationalisations in the 1960s, when the regime swung left, did not help either. Many of the firms nationalised, whether owned by ‘resident foreigners’ or Egyptians, were still relatively small and unsuited to bureaucratic management on

The Moslem Brotherhood and Syria

WHILE THE ARMED GANGS in Algeria and now in Mali do not seem to have any direct links with the Brotherhood – though born of similar Saudi-inspired reactionary politics – the *Ikhwan* did have some real influence and an officially acknowledged branch in Syria.

The demonstrations there against the Baathist regime, which had become an essentially family or clan dictatorship, had at first been peaceful political demonstrations, which the regime tried to head off with a classical mixture of repression

and some concessions. It turned into a violent civil war when the Syrian *Ikhwan*, with Qatari-supplied arms and money, started to form the ‘Free Syrian Army’.

This was not their first attempt. In 1980-82, when the Baathist regime still had some allies and some pretensions to being a ‘democratic socialist’ regime, the *Ikhwan* started an uprising in their traditional bastion, Homs – ostensibly in solidarity with Iraq, which was fighting a war against Iran (on America’s behalf and with full NATO backing). The fact that the

Syrian Baath refused to line up with Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries in what was becoming a sectarian war (but also a proxy attempt to avenge America’s humiliation by the Iranians) was the excuse for the *Ikhwan*’s uprising. The consequences were disastrous for the Homs population – the city became a battlefield, as it is becoming now, and was nearly destroyed. However, as in Egypt, nationalist and pseudo-religious rhetoric was – and is being – used to cover up essentially pro-imperialist actions.

an 'old army pals' basis.

This also led to another exodus – this time of Greeks (who had saved the nationalised Canal Company in 1956) and Italians. Although this provided more opportunities for ethnic Egyptians, it weakened the class as a whole, since a network of complementary skills and experiences is necessary for a class to consolidate itself, even under capitalist competition. Although this period did provide some room for the left to operate (within the new 'Socialist' party and the unions), it also provided more opportunity for corruption and demagoguery within the regime – scourges that peaked in 1967, when Nasser was overruled by the Army and the country was led into a disastrous war.

While Nasser accepted responsibility for having allowed the war and resigned, the people rose in revolt at the idea of the corrupt bunch really responsible for the disaster taking over from him. The result was a wave of demonstrations, similar to those today but with a population about half its present size, demanding that Nasser return to office and purge the administration – Egypt's second revolutionary crisis.

Unfortunately Nasser died less than three years later and Sadat took over and did an about-turn. The comprador bourgeoisie took over; Egypt saw its national economy sacrificed to serve the interests of imperialism and the enrichment of its corrupt rulers; Nasser's land reforms were, in practice, reversed; and Egypt was reduced to the being the Ireland of the Middle East – a country that depended on the emigration of some its most competent and active people. This was not a fertile soil for the development and consolidation of a national bourgeoisie.

It is thus not surprising that the present uprising – *the third since independence* in 1936 – was not led by any of the officially recognised (*ie* legal) parties or by bourgeois organisations but was initiated by the frustrated unemployed and underemployed youth, seeking new ways out of the mess. The expansion of Egypt's educational system in the Nasser period, *without adequate economic and industrial development*, meant the creation of a large stratum of unemployed

qualified youth who had either to emigrate or do unskilled casual work locally. During the 2008 strike of textile workers, many of these young people participated in a broad movement of organised solidarity (the April 6 Movement), which laid the basis for the 2011 events. It was, in a way, a repetition of the 1946 student-worker alliance – at a higher political and organisational level. This time even the most backward sections of the petty bourgeoisie joined them,

forcing conservative forces like the *Ikhwan* to participate, despite initially trying to sit on the fence.

However, the real character of the Brotherhood was not long in coming to the surface. Once elected, the *Ikhwan* president started to try exercising the same dictatorial powers as the regime which the movement had overthrown, thus sparking off a new wave of demonstrations and protests – and violence by the *Ikhwan* membership.

Notes and References

1 It was one of the French soldiers who found what we now call the Rosetta Stone

2 *Mameluke* = *Mamluk*, an Arabic term for slave, was the name given to the military caste in independent medieval Egypt. They rose from the ranks of slave soldiers who came from a variety of origins: Kipchak Turkish, Circassian, Georgian, Albanian, Greek and Balkan Slavic.

3 It is interesting to note that Ali's instructions to the recruiting mission was to recruit "Bonapartists and Jacobins", as they were being purged by the restored monarchist government and so were more likely to accept jobs in Egypt. This illustrates that, although his reasons were opportunist rather than republican, he admired the efficiency, discipline and culture of his former enemies and modelled his programme on them.

4 There is an altar to Yahweh in an Egyptian Temple on Elephantine Island used by a Judean garrison there dating to the period of the Persian occupation.

5 Janina = Ioannina, city in north-west Greece. Although, according to some sources, Ali never learnt to speak Arabic or even Turkish, this background probably explains his awareness of cultural differences and his adaptability.

6 Ahmed Orabi or Urabi (1841-1911), general in the Egyptian army, who led a revolt from 1879 to 1882 against increasing European influence in Egypt.

7 Although by then dead (probably assassinated by the Ottomans), Al-Afghani was to a great extent the inspirer of the 1906 bourgeois revolution in Iran.

8 At its height in the Middle Ages, Moslem culture led the Western world in science and philosophy. Ibn Sina (Avicenna in the Latinised form of his name) laid the basis of medicine;

Omar Khayyam invented algebra and was an outstanding astronomer; while Ibn Roshd (Averroes), who had some of

his books burned by more conservative Moslem teachers, was one of the inspirers of the medieval renaissance in Europe. It was in the libraries of Moslem Toledo and Cordova that the European literati discovered Arabic translations of Greek and Latin writings (Pythagoras, Aristotle etc) and started the hunt for the Greek and Latin originals that sparked off the 15th and 16th century Renaissance.

9 *Khedive* = lord, master; the title adopted by Mohammed Ali and his successors.

10 Islam has no priesthood or religious hierarchy, consequently no central religious authority or Papacy – only educated *interpreters* of the Qur'an and its laws. Here, as everywhere, the law is, and always has been, subject to *interpretation*.

A central point of Mohammad's teaching was that there were *no intermediaries* between the individual Moslem and his God. So, in principle, any educated Moslem is free to interpret the Qur'an in his own way. The problem is that the Qur'an is in Arabic, and a very archaic Arabic at that; while most Moslems are not Arabs and do not know the language. Furthermore, in view of the high illiteracy rate in many of these countries, most Moslems in practice believe what their local preacher – not necessarily a very educated man – tells them. Moreover, as Islam spread, it acquired a whole host of local, tribal, and ethnic customs that had no Qur'anic basis at all.

11 When the leaders of the delegation were arrested and exiled to Malta to 'avoid disorder', the delegation leader's wife, Safiyah, virtually ran the Wafd Party and its campaign of demonstrations – in the Cairo region at any rate – and mobilised hundreds of women, as well as men, to go out on the streets.

12 The Orabi revolt of 1880 was essentially a coup d'état by the Army's Commander in Chief and the Prime Minister, progressive members of the ruling class.

13 There is, in fact, no Qur'anic basis for the veil. The Qur'an urges women to be modest and cover their *breasts*; the veil and the segregation of women was an old Persian custom going back to Archaemenid times, 550-330 BC. After the Arab conquest of the Persian Empire, Moslem leaders married Persian upper-class women and gradually took over these customs.

14 Al-Qaida was created by the United States to mobilise reactionary forces internationally to overthrow the Afghan Republic. The Algerian Armed Islamic Groups (GIA) were, to a large extent, returned and unemployed Afghan fighters. The fact that al-Qaida later bit the hand that fed it just shows the danger of playing with fire

15 Apart from the *Ikhwan's* violence against critics and opponents at local level, it assassinated Prime Minister Nokrashi Pasha, a moderate conservative suspected of links to the more liberal-democratic Wafd Party. It also organised the Cairo fires in 1952, which provided King Farouk with the excuse he needed to dismiss the Wafdist government and replace it by a more conservative one.

16 The existence of an organised left in the British Army, around the Cairo Forces Parliament, and its cooperation with both the Egyptian communist groups and the Greek democrats, is also an important factor. The Egyptian Movement for National Liberation maintained a semi-clandestine bookshop where you could buy Left Book Club books, and a range of British CP literature. A few joint actions took place at the time of the Greek forces mutiny.

17 Legally only French, British and 'stateless' Jews, not Egyptian Jews, were expelled. Nevertheless some Jewish communists of foreign origin, who had obtained Egyptian citizenship, were illegally stripped of their nationality and deported, although they were third or fourth generation residents.

Egyptian Workers Continuing the Struggle against Exploitation and Fascist Authority

From the Egyptian Communist Party

A FASCIST regime is controlling and holding power in our country, as a subordinate capitalist regime, representing only an extension of the ex-regime of corruption, which our revolution was intended to topple. This regime, which stole the revolution and thought it had firmly established itself on the country's throne, is insisting on following the same policies of privatisation, and is continuing the exploitative approach of sucking the workers' and toilers' blood. It is seeking help from the International Monetary Fund and accepts its inhumane conditions: selling out the public sector, privatisation, elimination of subsidies for the poor and the working class, unfair taxation, privatisation of health insurance and the imposition of economic agreements that destroy our industry and destroy our national dignity (such as the Qualified Industrial Zones Agreement). It is throwing itself into the arms of US imperialism, the foremost enemy of peoples' freedom, social justice and world peace. As the regime commits all these crimes against the masses of workers and toilers, it violently and severely cracks down on all the institutions of civil society, trying to destroy and *Ikhwanise* them and run them for the benefit of its own group and the supporters of its fascist agenda, in favour of its obscurantist reactionary project against freedom and progress – as has happened with the judiciary, satellite channel media organisations and independent newspapers.

However, the Egyptian workers, whose historic continued struggle to break the barrier of fear among the masses of Egyptian people, with their protests and strikes throughout Egypt, are determined to continue the struggle in order to achieve their fair economic and social demands. This is not only for their own benefit, but for the benefit of all the toilers of the sons of this proud revolutionary



people. We will not be intimidated by arrest, detention or terrorism.

While celebrating International Labour May Day this year, we also celebrate the thirty-eighth anniversary of the re-establishment of our Party on 1 May 1975.

The Egyptian Communist Party announces its solidarity with the heroic struggle waged by the workers, protesting valiantly and claiming their right to life; and also with Egypt's venerable judges and honourable media people. We call upon the masses of the Egyptian people and the working class to unite and build solidarity and common struggle. We also call on all civil, trade union and partisan forces concerned with the Egyptian working class to support and endorse the workers' struggle for their following legitimate rights:

- 1 The enacting of a law for a minimum wage of 1500 Egyptian pounds, and a maximum no more than 15 times the minimum, with wages linked to prices.
- 2 The development of an urgent plan to eliminate unemployment, and the disbursing of an unemployment allowance, to achieve a decent standard of living.
- 3 The issuing of the trade union freedom law that guarantees workers' freedom of association, and non-interference in trade union affairs.
- 4 The fair allocation of all temporary employment, the stopping of abuse

against workers and trade unionists for exercising their trade union activity and the abolition of all prison sentences against workers for exercising their right to strike.

- 5 The modification of all social legislation from the Mubarak era, such as the Labour Law and the Social Insurance Law.
- 6 The dropping of all laws criminalising sit-ins, strikes and demonstrations.
- 7 The enforcement of the judicial verdict for the return to the public sector of the corruptly privatised companies, and the injection of investment into them.
- 8 Rejection of the International Monetary Fund loan and any other loans that set conditions against the interests of the Egyptian people.
- 9 Working towards the redistribution of the state budget so as to ensure the interests of the majority of the working masses.
- 10 Enabling the workers to run those factories closed by their business owners and the cancellation of any debts due to them.

Long live the struggle of the working class!

Long live the struggle of the Egyptian people!

■ Issued on 1 May and published at <http://www.solidnet.org> on 2 May 2013.

A Call for Ceasefire and Negotiations in Syria

From the Communist Party, USA

THE SITUATION in Syria is threatening to set the whole of the Middle East ablaze. The Communist Party of the USA reiterates, with eleventh hour urgency, its call for an end to the fighting, and a peaceful negotiated solution, in which all decisions about the future of Syria are placed solely in the hands of the Syrian people.

Since our last statement, *Hands Off Syria*, issued on March 2 of 2012, the situation in Syria and between Syria and its neighbours has degenerated sharply. At least 70,000 lives have been lost and the number of refugees and displaced persons within and outside of Syria is now estimated at about four million, overwhelming the resources of neighbouring countries and international organisations. Important infrastructure and cultural treasures have been destroyed in the fighting.

Within Syria, sectarian tensions have been exacerbated as Sunnis, Shias, Alawites, Christians and others have lined up either with the government or the rebels. Massacres have been carried out by both sides, and more are threatened. There is a real danger, also, that the Syria situation could re-start the internal war in Iraq as well as destabilising the neighbouring countries of Jordan and Lebanon.

Within the rebel forces, there is a fear that extremist Islamist groups are playing an increasingly important role. The Al Nusra Front, believed to be connected with Al Qaeda in Iraq, is seen as an especially strong force. Other rebel factions have a more secular orientation, but it is not clear how strong they are.

The main source of direct aid to the rebels has been the group of reactionary wealthy states of the Arabian Peninsula: Saudi Arabia, Qatar etc. Major support is coming from Turkey also. The United States has said it is not ready to provide direct military help to the rebels, but there is plenty of evidence of other important US support. Major political groupings in the United States are pressuring the Obama administration to intervene directly by arming the rebels and establishing a no-fly zone. The argument is that if the United States does not arm the rebels, the radical Islamist forces in their ranks will gain greater power. But there is also an argument that arms the United States sends to the rebels will end up in the hands of the extremists of Al Nusra. Calls for the establishment of a no fly zone should also be resisted; the example of Libya shows that such a move would greatly ratchet up US involvement and intensify the conflict.

The latest developments include conflicting claims that either the rebels or the Assad government or both are resorting to the use of chemical weapons. And perhaps the most ominous development is that in the space of 48 hours, the Israeli military has carried out air strikes against Syria. The first strike hit vehicles which Israel claimed were transporting rockets to be delivered to the Lebanese organisation Hezbollah, which is supporting Assad. The second strike, on Sunday May 5, was directed against a military research center in Damascus, and produced a huge fireball and scores of deaths. The reason Israel gave for the attacks was to prevent Syria from providing advanced arms, its own or Iranian, to Hezbollah, which both Syria and Iran deny.

It is easy to see how the current bloody stalemate could be transformed into a regional conflagration involving not only Syria but also Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel and even Iran. It is hard to see how anything positive could come out of that; certainly it is not in the interests of the people of Syria. Aid to the rebels will only prolong the conflict and make any kind of a peaceful settlement even more difficult.

The push for US intervention ultimately

comes from the drive by international monopoly capital and especially the great oil and gas extraction transnationals to control the resources of the Middle East and West-Central Asia. Leaders of the US government and of both the Republican and Democratic parties are abetting this, against the interests of the people of the region and also of the US working class.

The Communist Party USA calls for an 11th hour international effort to stop the fighting and to move the conflict toward a peaceful resolution. This means:

- an end to outside interference including US help to the rebels, Israeli bombings etc.
- joint international action, coordinated through the United Nations, toward a ceasefire.
- support for peaceful negotiations among the Syrian factions, toward a settlement that will be for the Syrian people alone to determine.

We call for the Obama administration to work cooperatively with the UN, Russia, China and others to this end.

■ Issued on 9 May 2013 and first published at <http://www.cpusa.org>

MAU MAU

The Revolutionary Force from Kenya



By Shiraz Durrani

PART 2: MAU MAU AS A MILITARY AND POLITICAL ORGANISATION

In the first part of this article¹ I described the long tradition of resistance to British colonialism in Kenya, situating the Mau Mau armed struggle for land and freedom within that context. In this second part I want to deal with the political, as well as military, structure of the Movement, showing how well organised and democratic it was, and how it established deep roots within Kenyan society.

AFTER ABOUT EIGHT months of armed warfare, during which Mau Mau gained valuable military and guerrilla warfare experience, it was decided to call a representative meeting of the various units. The meeting was held in August 1953 near the Mwathe River and came to be known as the Mwathe Conference. After an exchange of ideas and long discussions, it was decided to form the Kenya Defence Council as the highest military and political organ of the armed struggle. In keeping with the needs of the armed struggle, the Kenya Defence Council resolved the contradictions between a central authority and the need for local units to have a certain amount of autonomy so as to become more effective in the war situation. Thus, as Donald Barnett and Karaji Njama say, while the Kenya Defence Council had the “power to formulate overall strategy and policy, enact rules and regulations and sit as the highest judicial body, the authority to implement and enforce its rulings rested largely with the individual leaders or section and camp heads.”²

The other important task of the Mwathe Conference was the election of the leadership of the Kenya Defence Council and the organisation of the total fighting forces of Mau Mau into eight armies. Dedan Kimaathi Waciura was elected president of the Council, with General Macaria Kimemia as vice-president, General Kahiu Itina as the Treasurer and Brigadier Gathitu as Secretary. Because of the particular needs of combining military and political aspects of the struggle, there was a considerable overlap between the military and political leadership. Thus Kimaathi was not only the president of the Kenya Defence Council; he was also the highest military authority as Field Marshal of Mau Mau. The leadership was thus charged with the overall planning, organisation and execution of both aspects of the struggle, military and political.

The fighting force was divided into eight armies as follows:

- 1 The Ituma Ndemi Army, operating in the Nyeri District, commanded by General Stanley Mathenge.
- 2 The Gikuyu Iregi Army, operating in the Murang'a District, commanded by General Macaria Kimemia.
- 3 The Kenya Inoro Army, operating in the Kiambu District, commanded by General Waruingi.
- 4 The Mei Mathathi Army, operating in the Mt Kenya area, commanded by General China.
- 5 The Mburu Ngebo Army, operating in the Rift Valley, commanded by General Kimbo.
- 6 The Townwatch Battalions, operating in all the urban areas. The fighters carried on normal civilian lives by day, but undertook active armed struggles at night or whenever necessary. Commanders varied from town to town and from time to time, in keeping with needs of warfare and security.
- 7 The Gikuyu na Mumbi Trinity Army. This operated throughout the country and consisted of all sympathisers of the Kenya Land and Freedom Army, and also those who were passive supporters of the struggle. It was this Army that helped with supplies and information on enemy activities. The actual participation of members varied.



A female Mau Mau lieutenant is captured by a British soldier

- 8 The Kenya Levellation Army, a complementary army to the Townwatch Army, operating in the rural areas. The name implies the ideology of the freedom fighters, equality for all in society achieved through an armed struggle.

The importance of the Mwathe Conference is easy to see. Not only did it put the armed forces on an organised war footing; it created a new united organisation which became the central governing and policy-making body with responsibilities

covering the whole country, both over military and political matters. This was particularly important as the colonial regime had sought to kill the armed struggle by striking at the leadership and through them at the whole organisation, without which the movement, they had hoped, would just wither away.

By the formation of the Kenya Defence Council, Mau Mau created a new democratic level political and military authority which provided a focus for all the freedom fighters, their supporters and sympathisers.



The Kimaathi Charter

Soon after its formation, the Kenya Defence Council assessed the political situation and took action to provide more active support for the people's struggle. There had been a lot of adverse enemy propaganda condemning the freedom struggle as a backward movement. In order to give the correct picture and to achieve a greater unity among the freedom fighters and the supporters, the Defence Council drew up a Charter which set out Mau Mau's demands and aims. Prepared by Kimaathi, and widely circulated within the movement, it became known as the Kimaathi Charter. When published in October 1953 in the Nairobi weekly, *Citizen*, the Charter openly showed what Mau Mau and the people of Kenya were fighting for (see box).³

The circulation of the Kimaathi Charter by the Kenya Defence Council proved of immense importance in mobilising the patriotic forces to continue their anti-imperialist struggle. Thousands of workers and peasants had taken up arms against exploitation of their labour and land and the Kimaathi Charter articulated their demands.

Here it is important to realise that the military struggle was just one aspect of Mau Mau strategy. At a national level, it carried on economic and political struggles as well, with

one reinforcing the other. Thus, the publication of the Kimaathi Charter was timed to coincide with an important mass struggle waged by Mau Mau at that time. This was the bus boycott which was a protest against various aspects of imperialist control over the lives of people, and aimed at mobilising popular support to advance and promote the armed struggle. Makhani Singh⁴ sums up the importance of the Kimaathi Charter and the bus boycott:

“The Charter gave great encouragement to the people of Kenya. It also gave impetus to the great demonstration of national unity and national struggle that was taking place at that time in Nairobi. This was the Bus Boycott which started on 23 September 1953. Initiated by the Mau Mau freedom fighters, the Bus Boycott involved all the patriotic people. It was a national protest against the oppressive Emergency Regulations including: the introduction of History of Employment Cards (Green Cards); keeping African buses out of many locations in Nairobi; closer control over all Africans by forcing them into ‘villages’ [detention camps] surrounded

by barbed wire with a police post in each ‘village’; cancellation of [many] drivers’ passes in the Rift Valley areas; restrictions on travelling; painting of names on bicycles; the order for yellow band ‘marked’ taxis.

Above all, it was a protest against the imprisonment and detention of tens of thousands of patriots; against [the colonial] government's refusal to release the imprisoned and detained national leaders; and against the policies of the European Settlers' Organisation and the Electors Union, the main point of which was to ‘build a strong and prosperous state which will be a bulwark of the Commonwealth in British Africa maintaining British traditions of loyalty to the Crown.’ The Bus Boycott continued for many months.”

Thus, by the use of such means, the Kenya Defence Council carried the struggle in the military field as well as at the popular mass level to new heights. These led to many victories which forced the colonialists to make token offers of reform, hoping thereby to divert the direction of the struggle. This, of course, did not happen and the struggle continued.

The Kimaathi Charter of 1953

- 1 We demand African self-government in Kenya.
- 2 We demand an African Magistrate's Court in full authority which will judge lawfully and righteously. We demand to know who hands over the money for land from settlers and where the money goes.
- 3 We demand authorities of gold, markets, roads, co-operative societies, and auctions to be in the hands of Africans.
- 4 We claim the full authority of making firearms and various kinds of weapons.
- 5 We demand that the European foreigners, rascals, troops and police should be withdrawn from the Kenya African Reserves.
- 6 We reject imprisonment over Mau Mau.
- 7 We reject criminal or death cases to be judged by foreigners.
- 8 We condemn the dropping of poisons from the air as the colonialists in Kenya are doing to the African population.
- 9 We reject the foreign laws in Kenya, for they were not made for Kenya and are not righteous.
- 10 We reject being called terrorists when demanding our people's rights.
- 11 We demand a stop to the raping by foreigners of our wives and daughters; also female imprisonment and carrying of passes.
- 12 We reject the foreign Attorney-General in Kenya, for he deals with appearance rather than righteousness. We reject the colonisation of Kenya, for in that state we are turned into slaves and beggars.



Dedan Kimathi Waciuri
leader of the Mau Mau

The Establishment of Liberated Territories⁵

The years that followed the declaration of Emergency by the colonial government saw dramatic changes in the political and military situation in the country. Barnett and Njama sum up the position by the first half of 1954:

“It was certainly true that after almost a year and a half of fighting, and with vastly superior weapons, the [colonial] Government seemed no closer to defeating the insurgent forces. In fact, guerrilla strength seemed to be growing, with Kenya Levellation Army units more active than ever in the reserve, a Nairobi Land and Freedom Army formed and very active, supplies flowing from the city into the forests, and Government apparently unable to launch a winning offensive against the guerrilla armies of Nyandarwa and Mt Kenya.”⁶

A report in the *Manchester Guardian* revealed the extent of Mau Mau control:

“In June 1953 things were going badly in Kenya. Parts of Kikuyuland were virtually Mau Mau republics, and the great majority of the Kikuyu were passive supporters of Mau Mau. The gangs in the forests of the Aberdares and Mount Kenya were living fairly comfortably. They were well supplied with food and clothing, with stolen arms and ammunitions, with women to tend for them, and with information of the movements of the security forces. They had effective communications by couriers with Nairobi. They were able to raid, murder and to pillage over most of Kikuyuland and into the surrounding settled areas. Nairobi was a hot-bed of Mau Mau. The greater part of the population of the city was intimidated, living in terror of the gangsters. Mau Mau were able to enforce a boycott of the buses, and on the smoking of cigarettes, and the drinking of beer.”

So successful had the Mau Mau movement been that large areas of land and people had been liberated from colonial rule. These included not only the liberated forest bases in Nyandarwa

and Mt Kenya – “The forests were virtually impregnable to the [British] army for about eighteen months”, says Oginga Odinga.⁷ In addition, there were semi-liberated rural areas in the settler farms and in the so called ‘reserves’. There were liberated and semi-liberated areas in Nairobi itself, which was the centre of colonial rule in Kenya. Large parts of the city of Nairobi were under the rule of the guerrilla forces; others were controlled by the colonial army by day but were taken over by the Mau Mau by night.

The full extent of Mau Mau control in Nairobi became known to the colonial authorities towards the end of 1954:

“A severe blow was struck at the Mau Mau movement by the destruction of their base in Nairobi during ‘Operation Anvil’. Since then, Mau Mau leaders and organisers had been unable to send the recruits, the money, the food, the weapons and ammunition, and the messages to the forest gangs and to those who belonged to the elaborate organisation in African Reserves and farming areas At times a large roving gang could still strike a severe blow.”⁸

“Reports so far received [as part of Operation Hammer] [reveal] the significant feature of the first phase has been the large number of hideouts found [in the Aberdare forests], some of considerable size and many were skilfully constructed. One consisted of four huts capable of holding 80 men and with a piped water supply from a waterfall 30 yards away.”⁹

The guerrilla forces established their own government in these liberated areas, controlled law and order in the interest of the struggling Kenyan people, ran an effective administration with its own legal system and a policy for financial control with its own taxes to finance the war effort. It was this tax levied in liberated and semi-liberated areas in the enemy territory that bought guns, ammunition, food and other supplies for the guerrilla army. Mau Mau established hospitals as well as factories for the manufacture of armaments and other necessities such as clothing. The *Kenya Committee Press Extracts* summarises reports from contemporary papers about the destruction of Mau Mau hospitals by the British forces:

“An army patrol following in the tracks of freedom fighters discovered a 40-bed Mau Mau hospital with complete medical kits. A Government communiqué said the hospital was 5 miles east of Mt Kinangop.”¹⁰

“On the outskirts of Nairobi, Kikuyu guards and men of the Kenya Regiment killed four freedom fighters, destroyed a Mau Mau hospital furnished with a supply of medicine and food, and arrested six women food carriers.”¹¹

“Security Forces searching the Aberdare Forests found a deserted hospital which had apparently been evacuated a few days before, also a Council Chamber with accommodation for about 150.”¹²

There are various accounts of Mau Mau gun factories; and guns made in Mau Mau factories are still available. Maina wa Kinyatti says:

“The Shauri Moyo and Pumwani bases played a special role as KLFA¹³ gun factories. Karura Forest was the main KLFA gun factory in Nairobi. It was also a KLFA major hospital.”¹⁴

There were many South Asian skilled craftsmen who helped in the establishment of such factories and in training Mau Mau cadres in gun making. One such was Jaswant Singh, who was sentenced to death for illegally possessing two rounds of ammunition. As the *Times* noted, “this was the first time that the supreme penalty has been imposed on a non-African under the emergency regulations.”¹⁵ Kinyatti provides some details:

“Jaswant Singh not only supplied the movement with firearms. His house was also a safe haven for the KLFA guerrillas. ... In 1954, [he was arrested and] tried for possession of firearms and sentenced to hang.”¹⁶

Nazmi Ramji Durrani provides further information:

“Jaswant Singh lived in Molo. By profession he was a carpenter, mason, plumber, electrician, builder, radio and motor mechanic, welder, lorry driver, tractor driver and gun maker (a ‘karigar’). He secretly supplied



material to manufacture weapons, guns and ammunition to Mau Mau fighters active in the Rift Valley area.”¹⁷

A number of reports on Mau Mau gun factories, conference facilities, as well as housing and water supply systems in liberated areas were carried in contemporary newspaper reports:

“East African Command headquarters announced today that a patrol of guards and police from the Meru [nationality] led by Officer Harry Hinde discovered and destroyed a Mau Mau ‘arms factory’ in the Meru forest.”¹⁸

“Police today discovered a Mau Mau gun shop and store in a part of Nairobi where the city’s two hundred street sweepers live.”¹⁹

“In early days the terrorist camps were well built. The sites were laid out with solidly constructed huts of split bamboo, with kitchens and stores, quarters for women and children and signboards indicating the commander of the camp [F]rom these camps, arms and ammunition, food, clothing and valuable documents have been recovered.”²⁰

Mau Mau forces had liberated large areas even before the declaration of the State of Emergency; in fact this was one of the reasons why the colonial administration was forced to make the declaration. The success of the liberation forces was documented in the 1960 Corfield Report.²¹ It admitted that, by August 1952, in large parts of Central Province, which was the primary battleground in that period leading up to independence, colonial law and law courts “had virtually ceased to exist”. Their function had been taken over by the emerging Mau Mau administration, which established a revolutionary legal system and carried out sentences against colonial officers, saboteurs and other anti-people elements. Thus, between May and October 1952 (before the declaration of the Emergency), 59 ‘home guards’,²² including the colonial chief Waruhiu, had been sentenced by the liberation courts and the sentences were carried out by the armed forces of the people.

With the advance of the armed struggle after 1952, there was also an increase in the areas that were liberated by the Mau Mau movement forces. They

set up a large administrative machinery which had jurisdiction over vast areas with hundreds of thousands of people, for whose economy, welfare, education, health and security they were responsible. The Colonial Office Parliamentary Delegation to Kenya admitted the fact of Mau Mau control:

“It is our view, based upon all the evidence available to us, both from official and responsible unofficial sources, that the influence of Mau Mau in the Kikuyu area [*ie* the whole of Central Province and parts of Rift Valley and the Highlands], except in certain localities, has not declined; it has, on the contrary, increased; in this respect the situation has deteriorated and the danger of infection outside the Kikuyu area is now greater, not less, than it was at the beginning of the State of Emergency In Nairobi, the situation is both grave and acute. Mau Mau orders are carried out in the heart of the city, Mau Mau courts sit in judgement and their sentences are carried out. There is evidence that the revenues collected by [Mau Mau], which may be considerable, are used for the purposes of bribery as well as for purchasing Mau Mau supplies.

... There is also a passive resistance movement among Africans, an example of which is a bus boycott under which Africans have for several months boycotted European-owned buses.”²³

The Mau Mau organisation, support structures and influence had reached outside the borders of Kenya. Thus the colonial Tanganyika (now Tanzania) government declared a state of emergency in North Tanganyika, and Kenyans from North Tanganyika and Zanzibar were returned in increasing numbers for fear of spreading liberation ideas in these areas, and in order to cut off the supply structures to Kenyan liberation forces. The Tanganyika government set up a detention centre at Urembo for Kenyan detainees.²⁴ Some other details follow:

“The Tanganyika government arrested and expelled Kenyans living in the Kilimanjaro area on the Kenya border.”²⁵

“Over 1500 Kikuyus arrested in northern Tanganyika – a Kenyan officer taking part in the arrests

had already been sentenced for the torture of captured Kikuyu.”²⁶

“Tanganyika Government announces that all Kikuyu women and children in the Northern Province – about 5000 in all – would be sent to new restricted areas in the colony.”²⁷

“The Tanganyika Government declares a state of emergency in the Northern Province.”²⁷

“44 Wakamba were arrested in Tanganyika and returned to Kenya during a police round up in the Northern Province.”²⁸

“There were Mau Mau cells in Mombasa, Pemba, Zanzibar, and other coastal regions. In Tanzania, the movement succeeded in winning over hundreds of Kenyan migrant workers, particularly the GEM²⁹ workers. Mau Mau centres were established mainly in northern and Tanga regions where the bulk of the Kenyan migrant labourers worked and resided. To prevent the spread of anti-imperialist resistance in Uganda and Tanzania, the colonial authorities in both countries banned the Mau Mau organisation and severe punishments were meted out to those who were suspected of being members. In Tanzania, a state of emergency was declared in the northern and Tanga regions and police and army units were ordered to round up GEM workers and put them in concentration camps. Thousands were arrested, tortured and then deported to Kenya where they were further brutalised and then sent to Manyani concentration camp. In Uganda, all the GEM students attending Makerere University were arrested, interrogated and then deported to Kenya. The GEM traders who had established business in Uganda and Tanzania were also subjected to the same brutality. Both colonies worked with the colonial regime in Kenya to fight the KLFA forces. They supplied colonial Kenya with intelligence, men and war material.”³⁰

“The Ethiopian intelligence is aware of what is going on in Kenya. Mau Mau and its causes

are subjects about which they frequently ask questions. On the face of it there seems a parallel with their own mountain rebels, the Shiftas.”³¹

Mau Mau influence reached South Africa as well, as shown by a letter from one A J Simpson who wrote:

“I am on holiday in S Africa where it is considered there is an underground movement by the natives to overthrow established Government throughout Africa and this is certainly the idea of Mau Mau.”³²

These facts, although well documented, remain outside general perception about Mau Mau.

The Kenya Parliament Takes Control – Kimaathi is Prime Minister

As the armed conflict intensified, Mau Mau faced new contradictions, both antagonistic ones against the enemy, and non-antagonistic ones among their own armed forces. Certain weaknesses of the Kenya Defence Council also emerged. It was found that, in an attempt to make the Kenya Defence Council more democratic and representative, it had become too large to be able to function efficiently in a war situation. Other contradictions that needed to be addressed were that between the military and political aspects of the struggle and that between democracy and centralism in the organisation as a whole.

In order to overcome these shortcomings, the Kenya Parliament was formed in February 1954. This was a change of fundamental importance. The Kenya Parliament was the first legitimate African Government of Kenya. Its aims were to separate political and military aspects of the struggle, making the former paramount, to emphasise the national character of the freedom movement, to ensure the representation of all Kenyan nationalities, and to assume political authority over liberated and semi-liberated areas and people. Militarily, it established its authority over all fighting units and prepared a new military offensive. It also formulated a foreign policy and sent representatives to foreign governments.

Twelve members were elected to the Kenya Parliament, and Kimaathi was elected the first Prime Minister. Their first loyalty was to the Kenya Parliament and not to their former armies. A new Field Marshal was elected – Macharia Kimemia. Kimaathi was now free to devote his full attention to the political sphere and to the affairs of Kenya Parliament. In addition, there were represented in the Kenya Parliament all the thirty-three districts of Kenya, thus making it a national body.

The decision to set up the Kenya Parliament was taken following discussions by about eight hundred representatives of Mau Mau. One of the delegates sums up the argument for the formation of the Kenya Parliament and sees its potential role:

“[T]he thing we lack is a Kenya central [political] organisation which should be the Government. I think

it is high time we elected our Kenya Parliament members and let them run the [country] [T]he little we would have done [by this action] would be of great importance in Kenya’s history, which will [record] that the Kenya Parliament was formed and maintained by warriors in Nyandarwa for so many years. As the Kenya Parliament shall govern Kenya, the founders’ names shall live as long as the Kenya independent Government shall live.”³³

It is indeed ironic, that far from the independent Kenyan governments ensuring that “the founders’ names live”, the successive Kenya African National Union governments under Kenyatta and Moi overturned every aim of Mau Mau and openly sided with imperialism. They used the power they got as a result of Mau Mau’s sacrifices to enrich themselves and never addressed the all-important land issue. Indeed, so worried was Moi about the hidden power of Mau Mau and its vision and activists that he banned the use of the term ‘Mau Mau’.

In the final part of this article I shall deal with Mau Mau’s legacy, in particular its anti-imperialism and its analysis of neo-colonialism.

■ *This series is a revised version of a talk given at a public meeting organised by the Mau Mau Justice Network (MMNJ) in June 2012 in London. It is based on the author’s book, Kimaathi, Mau Mau’s First Prime Minister of Kenya (Vita Books, London, 2009; first published 1986).*

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 4 *Ibid*, pp 49-50. Bicycles and taxis were used by the forces of the Townwatch Battalions, who maintained highly mobile armed bicycle-mounted troops for lightning attacks on enemy targets. They also passed on revolutionary information to people around the country and kept the Mau Mau High Command informed about developments throughout the country.
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Marx, Engels and Lenin on the British Workers' Movement



by
Ralph
Fox

Marx and Engels on Chartism

We speak loosely of the Chartist 'movement', but few of us look on Chartism as a movement; that is, as a developing class struggle having definite origins, having relations to the changing class conditions of the England of that day, having definite aims. Yet this was precisely how Marx and Engels regarded Chartism.

They themselves were 'Chartists'. Their own political tactics they based largely on the experience of the Chartists. They studied every development of Chartism, had opinions on every Chartist leader. Yet no one has ever troubled to find out what were the ideas of the founders of revolutionary communism upon revolutionary Chartism and its leaders. Indeed, in our press, in our literature we find ideas which are absolutely the opposite of those of Marx and Engels on Chartism.

Engels, who from the end of 1842 was closely connected with the Chartists, saw the movement in its beginning as a revolutionary democratic movement, the natural development of the Radical movement of 1793 to 1799,

which developed on a mass scale at the close of the war with France in 1815.

The English working class was the best organised, the most advanced in Europe. If the six demands of its Charter were those of the democratic revolution and not of the social revolution, the workers were not long in making it clear that they were fighting for the democratic revolution, not in order to pull chestnuts out of the fire for a cowardly bourgeoisie, but in order to establish themselves, the workers, as the ruling class in order to start the social revolution. The day had passed when the democratic revolution could be realised in England without leading directly to the emancipation of the proletariat.

"The entire struggle of the workers against the manufacturers over the last eighty years", writes Engels in 1848, "a struggle which, beginning with machine wrecking, has developed through associations, through isolated attacks on the person and property of the manufacturers and on the few workers who were loyal to them, through bigger and smaller rebellions, through the

insurrections of 1839 and 1842, has become the most advanced class struggle the world has seen. The class war of the Chartists, the organised party of the proletariat, against the organised political power of the bourgeoisie ... [is a] social civil war."¹

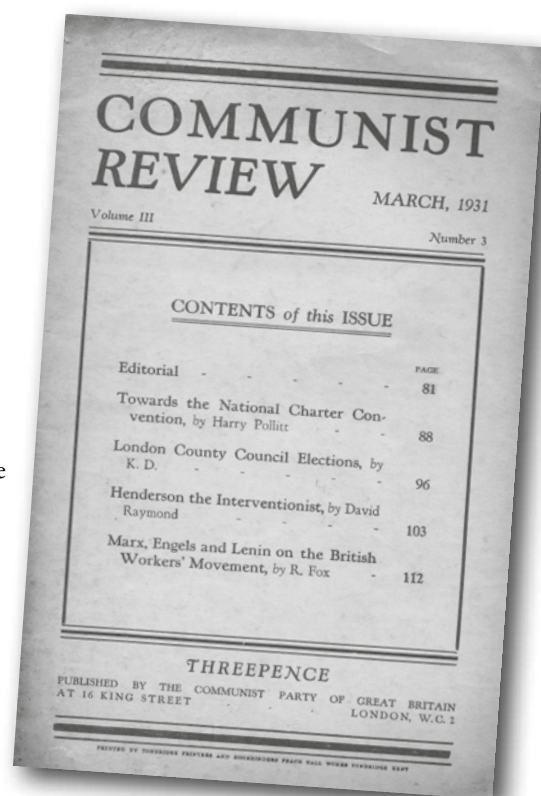
A little earlier Marx had written that in the Chartists the workers had formed a political party whose fighting slogan could in no case merely be "monarchy or republic?" but "rule of the working class or the rule of the bourgeoisie?"²

At this time all the political efforts of the bourgeoisie were concentrated on winning free trade through the repeal of the Corn Laws. The Chartists, the real banner-bearers of the democratic revolution, were never for a moment deceived by the efforts of their class enemies to draw them into this 'fight for freedom'. They fought equally hard on two fronts against both the free trade exploiters

and the protectionist exploiters.

The Chartists forced the Corn Law Leaguers to hold their meetings by ticket in guarded halls, drove them off the streets and out of their press. They ironically compared their liberal words with their reactionary practice. "Everyone knows", Marx said, "that in England the struggle between Liberals and Democrats takes the name of the struggle between Free Traders and Chartists."³

What were the personal relations of Marx and Engels to the leaders of Chartism? Max Beer⁴ and Rothstein⁵ would have us believe they were quite uncritical, or that where they criticised they were



wrong. Groves⁶ follows them in making idols of Harney and Jones,⁷ while J P Lilburne⁸ accepts the Beer-Rothstein estimate of O'Brien.⁹

O'Connor¹⁰ they rightly considered a brilliant agitator and journalist, but his political role was reactionary:

“[A] true representative of old England His whole nature is conservative and he most emphatically hates both industrial progress and revolution. All his ideas are patriarchal petty-bourgeois to the core.”¹¹

O'Connor in many ways resembled Cobbett.¹² He represented the revolt of the dying hand-weaver, or pre-industrial revolution England against the triumph of the new industrial bourgeoisie.

O'Brien, the other petty-bourgeois Chartist leader, Marx and Engels always considered the least talented of the Chartists. Engels told Belfort Bax that O'Brien's *Rise, Progress and Phases of Human Slavery* was the least valuable production of the whole movement.¹³ As a politician O'Brien was beneath contempt, moved by personal spites and intrigues and even in his best period, that of the first Convention, having no fixed policy. He was a Roman Catholic, a currency crank and land reformer. His followers in the First International, who believed in land nationalisation, were sometimes used by Marx as a counter to the trade union element. Some O'Brienites survived into the SDF, and Hyndman¹⁴ praised them extravagantly. His ideas on the class struggle were only those of the Chartist movement in general and had no particular influence on Marx and Engels.

Harney, who was a real revolutionary and a close collaborator of Marx and Engels, was also judged by

them very critically. Once even they called him, not without reason, “a lousy little fellow”.¹⁵ Harney was something of a phraseur. He never took the leading part in the Chartist movement his abilities entitled him to, and he lacked political sense. After 1848 he became a worshipper of Louis Blanc, and in a few years had become a petty-bourgeois radical. He sent a subscription to the First International, but never worked for it.

Ernest Jones was a man of more serious calibre. In 1848 and later Marx and Engels saw in him the leader of the English workers. When ten years later he gave up the struggle Marx wrote to Weidmeyer, “Imagine an army whose general goes over to the enemy camp on the eve of battle.”¹⁶ He never wrote with such bitterness of Harney, for Harney's desertion was of less importance. Even after Jones in 1859 became a Radical Engels continued [as] his friend. He refused to join the International but asked for its support in his election at Manchester. “Another of the old gang!”, Engels¹⁷ wrote sadly on his death. “After all his bourgeois phrases were only hypocrisy, and here in Manchester there is nobody who can replace him with the workers [H]e was the only *educated* Englishman among the politicians who was, *au fond*, completely on our side.”¹⁸

Jones, they knew, “was no Harney”.¹⁹ He was the greatest leader the English workers produced in the nineteenth century, and it is not without significance that he was also the most revolutionary, the most Marxist. He was broken by circumstance and by his own ambition, but to the end remained an honest man, respected even by those he had betrayed. Marx would not speak at the memorial meeting arranged by the Reform League in 1869 in Trafalgar Square, but he nevertheless

bitterly regretted the loss of Jones.

There are many lessons to be learned today from a Marxist estimate of the Chartist movement of the past, its class relationships, its mistakes, its triumphs. There is nothing to be gained by concealing the Marxist viewpoint, either on the movement as a whole or its different leaders.

Engels and the Modern English Labour Movement

In 1881 the London Trades Council began to publish a weekly paper, *The Labour Standard*, edited by George Shipton. For many weeks the leading articles were written by Frederick Engels, and they are the first open summons to the organisation of a new independent class political party of the workers since the days of Chartism. Even before Hyndman, before the Democratic Federation, Engels was using the workers' press to try to organise a mass political party.

The old trade unionism, with its slogan ‘A fair day's wage for a fair day's work, was useless, wrote Engels.²⁰ Economic struggle

“is a vicious circle from which there is no issue. The working class remains what it was, and what our Chartist forefathers were not afraid to call it, a class of wages slaves.

“[T]he position of Trades Unions must change considerably. They will no longer enjoy the privilege of being the only organisations of the working class. At the side of, or above, the Unions of special trades there must spring up a general Union, a political organisation of the working class as a whole. ... In a political struggle of class against

class, organisation is the most important weapon.”

The articles were premature. Engels broke with Shipton, but he had foreseen the future development of the English proletariat and given it the necessary guidance for when the hour should strike. England's industrial monopoly was then on the wane. Engels hoped it would break the last link binding the English working class to the English middle class, “the common working of a national monopoly.”²¹ The monopoly went, but another, unforeseen, had taken its place – the common working of the colonial monopoly. Only today, when the second monopoly is becoming a brake on the development of the workers, is forcing large sections of them into poverty and unemployment, has the final stage of their organisation as a class, the mass Communist Party, been reached.

But out of the crisis in English capitalism in the eighties and nineties arose the second great English workers' movement. The break-up of the Tory and Liberal parties, the pressure of the Irish revolutionary movement, the class struggle at home, all pointed to the present coming on the scene of English politics of a third political force, that of the proletariat.

In 1881 Henry Mayers Hyndman joined in a general move to form “a proletarian radical party”, and succeeded in capturing the movement and turning it into the ‘Democratic Federation’, with a Radical programme and socialist leanings. Hyndman fancied himself [as] the British Lassalle.²² As Lassalle flirted with Bismarck he flirted with Beaconsfield and Lord Randolph Churchill, the leaders of Tory democracy. Churchill promised to adopt his programme, the radical Joseph Chamberlain refused. Marx, whom Hyndman knew



at this time, considered him “a weak vessel”²³ with a “political mission which might be regarded as problematical”.²⁴

Ambition was Hyndman’s chief characteristic. He turned his society into the Social-Democratic Federation (SDF) and began to plan an ‘independent’ role in politics, putting forward candidates with Tory money. When this happened in 1884, on Engels’ advice the honest socialist elements left the SDF and formed the Socialist League (Eleanor Marx, Aveling, William Morris, Bax, etc). Hyndman began to organise ‘stunts’ with the unemployed, which had a certain temporary success but which Engels roundly condemned as substitutes for serious mass work.²⁵ Engels proved right, for the SDF, after the unemployed agitation died down, were left without influence or contact with the workers.

The Socialist League proved no more successful than the SDF, and Engels refused to identify himself with it. Sectarianism and fractionalism he hated. He was always urging the serious elements in all the sects, the Avelings, Burns, Tom Mann, to get down to the organisation of the masses and the daily struggle.

Hyndman and the SDF never ceased to attack Engels bitterly. Their own tactics remained half those of Tory Chartism, half those of the French Possibilists, the reactionary reformist wing of French socialism of that day. At the same time they used lavishly Marxian and revolutionary phrases. Meanwhile the movement became more and more sectarian. Champion left the SDF and set up a real Tory-Socialist group around the Labour Elector, which had mass contacts and aimed at forming a Labour Party under Tory dominance to draw the workers away from Liberalism.

The Fabians were formed by the intellectuals in the

movement, Shaw, Webb, Bland, etc. They started a paper, *The People’s Press*, and attempted to slip into the workers’ organisations, but failed. “The Fabians are a bunch of careerists”, wrote Engels. “Fear of the revolution is their guiding principle.”²⁶ Either they must remain “officers without soldiers”, or else permit themselves to be absorbed in the growing mass movement by pressure of their working-class members.²⁷ The first, as Engels desired and foresaw, happened and the workers left the Fabians.

All these sects sickened Engels. He urged his own friends, Eleanor Marx, the most brilliant and devoted personage in the movement, and her husband, Edward Aveling, to go direct to the masses. They went to the Radical clubs of London, particularly of the East End, and by their agitation there laid the foundation for the first mass independent movement of the workers. They took part in the strikes and struggles of the workers which signalled the rise of the new unionism. Aveling wrote the Gasworkers’ Constitution, in which socialism was for the first time mentioned as the ultimate aim of trade unionism. Eleanor was on the union executive and an active organiser and strike leader. Both together joined in the great dockers’ fight of 1889, when the SDF officially stood aloof because the dockers would not “fight under the Red Flag”.

Engels encouraged the formation by Aveling of the Eight Hours League, to organise the strong desire among all sections of the workers to win the eight-hour day. Tom Mann took a leading part in the work of the League, which soon had immense influence, especially in London. It mobilised over 100,000 workers to its May Day demonstrations and was, with its affiliated socialist parties and trade unions, the

forerunner of the Labour Party. It was Engels’ hope that it would become a Labour Party with a revolutionary Marxist leadership, but Aveling’s personal weaknesses, though counterbalanced by the devotion and ability of Eleanor Marx, prevented the fulfilment of this tremendous task. Had Eleanor lived to rally and educate a leadership British Labour would have had a more glorious story.

In 1893 the mass movement for a workers’ party had advanced to such an extent that the various currents met at Bradford and united in the Independent Labour Party (ILP). The Fabians and SDF remained aloof. Aveling joined and Engels hoped the Marxians might succeed in curbing ambitious opportunists like Keir Hardie by using the masses against them. He was critical of the new party, but hoped that the healthy proletarian elements in its ranks might prove strong enough under proper leadership to keep it on the right lines; that is, as a really independent class political party of the workers. Engels hoped these honest elements would either “teach the leaders decency or throw them overboard.”²⁷ But the leaders proved too strong.

Lenin and the British Workers’ Movement

Marx and Engels did not live to see the epoch of imperialism, but Lenin, who applied Marxism to the study of the problems of imperialism, the last stage of capitalism, very carefully studied all they had written about the English workers. The indications given by Marx and Engels as to the development of the English proletarian under monopoly conditions, the buying over of the upper section of “Labour aristocracy”, the creation of “a bourgeois Labour Party”²⁸ (the old trade union movement of Burt, MacDonald, Shipton, etc), gave Lenin valuable ideas as to the development of

the working class as a whole in conditions of monopoly capitalism, of imperialism.

More than this, between 1908 and 1914, when the war finally split the Labour movement in Europe, Lenin closely followed the development of the English workers, noting every sign of a revolt against opportunism. Engels’ struggle with Hyndman he approved to the last word, noting after Engels’ death how the SDF continued by its policy to justify Engels’ position.

The crime of the SDF and of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the British Socialist Party (BSP), which followed it, was that they made of Marxism a dogma instead of a guide to action, to practical activity; that they did not know how to “link themselves with the unconscious but powerful class instinct of the trade unions.”²⁹ The creation of the Labour Party, with which the SDF refused to affiliate, was a great step forward in the mass organisation of the English workers. At the same time Lenin points out it would have been a mistake to consider the Labour Party as independent of the bourgeois parties, as carrying on the class struggle, as socialist, etc.

The SDF committed typical left-sectarian mistakes in their policy towards the Labour Party, while the ILP, on the other hand, behaved in a typically right-opportunist fashion in trying (and succeeding) to make the workers believe the Labour Party was a party of struggle, a socialist party.

This brilliant characterisation of the two wings of British social democracy Lenin gave in 1908. Three years later he was already able to notice a reflection of the growing class struggle in England in a revolt against the leadership of both parties.

At the Coventry Conference of the SDP the Hackney Branch had a resolution condemning Hyndman’s jingo “Big Navy”

articles. Although the whole Executive defended Hyndman the resolution was only defeated by forcing a group vote in place of individual voting. At the Birmingham Conference of the ILP a strong move was also made against the dependence of the Labour Party in Parliament on the Liberals.

Lenin here for the first time made his ironical comment on the ILP, that it is “independent of socialism, but dependent on the Liberals”,³⁰ and pointed out the tremendous importance a workers’ daily might have for fighting opportunism. Next year the *Daily Herald* was started, but its opportunism was almost at once evident.

The *Daily Herald* hastened to declare in a leader that “we stand for absolute freedom of thought and action, freedom from any kind of party ties. ... A socialist newspaper”, Lenin comments bitterly, “that repudiates all party ties best of all characterises the deplorable condition of political organisation of the working class in England.”³¹

But 1911 saw the great railway strike; 1912 the great miners’ strike. The workers were learning to fight independently of all so-called leaders. A syndicalist movement – not very strong – began. In fright the bourgeoisie, led by Lloyd George, began to grant concessions they had never given to the Labour Party’s ‘peaceful persuasion’: a minimum wage for the miners, a plan for agrarian reform. It is true the concessions were worthless, but Lloyd George was a master showman and deceiver of the masses.

As a result of these great class movements changes again took place in the social democratic parties. At the Merthyr Congress of the ILP in 1912 a demand was again made to break with the Liberals in Parliament. Keir Hardie and Snowden had the greatest difficulty in getting the resolution defeated. In

the BSP, the rank and file delegates at the Blackpool Conference in 1913 succeeded in decisively defeating Hyndman and the Executive Council on the Big Navy question. Only two of the old members were re-elected. This ability to throw overboard an ‘old-guard’ leadership which had proved thoroughly opportunist in practice Lenin counted “a big plus for the English movement.”³²

There is no need to deal with Lenin’s relation to the English movement during and after the war. These things are well known, particularly his decisive part at the Second Congress of the Comintern in formulating the tactics of the newly-formed British Communist Party. But it is important to remember that Lenin’s tactic for the British workers was not something accidental; it was the development of views held for many years, firmly based on the teaching of Marx and Engels in regard to the English movement and developed to correspond to the conditions of imperialism. That movement Lenin had watched very carefully, knew thoroughly.

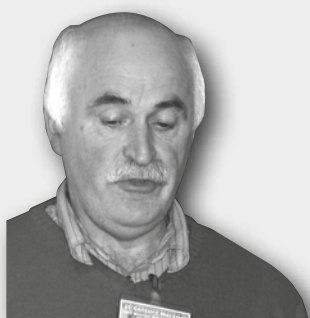
The British Communist Party is in no sense the ‘heir’ of the old SDF, as some comrades would have us believe. It is in a much more true sense the heir of the Chartists, with almost a century of working-class experience to aid it in avoiding the mistakes of the Chartists, and having the advice and teaching of the three greatest teachers of the international working class to guide it, a teaching which developed continuously from 1843 to Lenin’s death in 1924 in continuous living contact with the realities of the British situation.

■ Originally published in *Communist Review*, March 1931. Edited and annotated here to provide currently accepted translations for quotations, their sources and also background information.

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The Development of the Capitalist Crisis and the Tasks of the Communists



By Eugene McCartan



THE PRESENT economic crisis, which erupted in 2008, continues to deepen. It is part of the general crisis within the capitalist system, which is systemic in nature. The contradictions within the system are only intensifying. Each proclaimed solution aggravates other contradictions, forcing them out into the open: the solution to one set of problems gives rise to new problems. This is most clearly seen in the crisis centred on the euro.

We believe that the crisis has confirmed the Communist Party of Ireland's analysis of the imperialist character of the European Union: that it is an institution established to defend and enhance the interests of monopoly capitalism and to shackle workers ideologically to the interests of monopoly capital. The crisis has exposed the predatory nature of this political structure and shows that it cannot be reformed, or transformed, but must be politically defeated.

All countries are experiencing this crisis of the system; but, because of the uneven development of capitalism, certain features manifest themselves differently. In Ireland the crisis has exposed a number of important features that our party has been attempting to analyse.

The Irish bourgeoisie have long abandoned any aspiration to independent development and have accepted a subordinate and subservient position in relation to the imperialist centres of power. They are happy to join in the offensive against the working class, as ordered. In this the formerly social-democratic parties, including the Irish Labour Party, play an essential role.

The Irish capitalist class, while not an imperialist class, is part of the imperialist system. The Republic is just a peripheral state and not a core one; but the Irish ruling class facilitates and supports imperialism. The economic strategy pursued by this class over the last six decades has been one of facilitating the interests of monopoly capitalism, and this class is thus in a relationship of dependence.

The North of Ireland is directly connected to the British state, which is an imperialist state. Its political institutions have little if any independent role, resulting in the people of the North of Ireland being triply marginalised. The British and Irish states and the European Union take very little interest in them, leaving them without influence over the policies that affect their lives. The 'austerity' attacks on the working class, in spite of the differing political

circumstances, are essentially the same.

The Irish people as a whole, north and south, have to contend with three sets of imperialist interests – Britain, the United States, and the European Union – which means that the ability of the Irish ruling class to manoeuvre is very limited.

Our people are dominated and exploited by British imperialism, particularly in the North of Ireland. There the people directly experience the crisis of British state monopoly capital, while the southern state is dominated by both the European Union and the United States.

As the crisis has developed, this dependent relationship has exposed the ruling class's facile and subservient approach towards European and US imperialism. They have been vocal in defence of their low rate of corporation tax, and speculative capital flows in and out of the country, but this benefits only the monopolies, foreign direct investment, and money-laundering. Meanwhile they are unable to defend the interests of small and medium-sized businesses. This will increasingly affect their political base.

The ruling class have positioned the southern economy as a platform, particularly for American monopolies, for access to the European Union. The

other part of their strategy has been to provide a base for mobile capital passing through the International Financial Services Centre in Dublin, which is a tax-avoidance destination for foreign capital. It bloats the GDP while doing little or nothing for the Irish economy.

The solutions being imposed on the Irish people derive from a coalescence of interests at both the national and the international level. The 'Programme for Ireland' agreed between the 'troika' of the EU, European Central Bank (ECB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF), on the one hand, and the internal troika of the three main bourgeois parties, on the other, has facilitated a growing assault on the Irish working class and all working people. The strategy has been one of shifting the burden of the crisis onto workers and working people and away from capital, through cuts in pay, redundancies, and the socialisation of corporate debt.

Austerity is capitalism's response to the crisis: to recover growth through increased exploitation and to provide state-sponsored guarantees to private investment.

The policies imposed on the peoples of the peripheral countries are now being used in the core countries. The ruling classes are using the crisis in the periphery to spread the assault against workers throughout the European Union. These policies have been tried and tested for decades on the working people of the underdeveloped capitalist world by the very same political and economic institutions. The neocolonial strategy developed by the EU in its external economic relations has now been internalised.

What the EU-ECB-IMF programmes are designed to do is to reinforce subservience, to impose conditions that facilitate giving priority to paying the debt above everything else. Within the peripheral countries monopoly finance is to have permanent first call on capital generated, before the people's needs. Could it even be that imposing conditions amounting to debt bondage is more important to them than getting their money back?

The actions of the institutions of the EU are not only a matter of their policies of the moment but derive, in our opinion, from the very nature and structure of the European Union itself. Thus we can see a growing contradiction within the process: they need to boost consumption by working people while at the same time they are impoverishing them.

The balance of forces at this time favours capital throughout the EU. Its rulers have grown in confidence, as resistance by the organised working class has in general been weak, and this has fuelled their arrogance. They are relying on fear rather than persuasion to hold the line. Another significant feature of the present period is the growing authoritarian tendency among the ruling elite.

The EU is increasingly discredited among wider sections of our working people. This can only have a positive effect, as it weakens the central political alliance of the Irish ruling class. Is this a feature in other countries of the European Union?

We believe that the workers' movement needs to identify and direct its struggle against the central weakness of our enemy at this time: the euro. Its defeat would be a major strategic defeat for monopoly capitalism and would weaken its united approach. It would allow us to channel the growing disillusionment with the EU from a radical-democratic base, rather than allowing the hard right to capture that disillusionment so as further to strengthen reaction and imperialism.

In Ireland the ruling class is using the crisis to pursue a strategy of rolling back the advances made by the working class over many decades. Over the last 30 years the Irish workers' movement has been emasculated, being drawn into a relationship with the state in what was called 'social partnership' to bring about state-led control of working people to meet the needs of capital: control of pay, shifting the tax burden to labour, pro-capital legislation, the creation of a flexible work force, the individualisation of workers, and the breaking down of social solidarity, with everyone looking after themselves.

Since the crisis erupted, the state has been using it to force through major changes in the working conditions of public-sector workers and the commercialisation of public services, under an agreement entered into with the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. On the pretext of a growing budget deficit the state has signed a second such agreement with public-sector unions (now being voted on within the unions), with a controlled reduction in pay that will then be carried over to the private sector in the interests of the monopolies, plus the shifting of state expenditure away from labour and the public to meet the debt of private capital, and further job insecurity in the public service so as to generate

maximum insecurity and 'flexibility' (*ie* precarious work) in the private sector.

Essentially, this new agreement, if accepted, is one for restructuring the Irish working class into a low-wage, highly precarious zone for monopoly capital – particularly American exports into the eurozone. They are attempting to make permanent full-time work a thing of the past, to be replaced by a precarious 'flexible' work force, where the working week can be whatever the employers need it to be.

The Communist Party of Ireland has characterised this agreement between the government and public-sector trade unions as a dead end, as handcuffs and leg-irons for public-sector workers. There is nothing in this agreement for workers other than longer working hours, pay cuts, and a worsening of their terms and conditions.

We now have a working class with a very weak level of political class-consciousness, contending with three sets of oppressive imperialist relationships and a completely dependent bourgeois class. In these conditions the Communist Party of Ireland is exploring and developing the concept of a "transformative strategy", a radical strategy that would begin the process of shifting the balance of forces in favour of labour and away from capital. We have presented a series of demands that on the surface may appear reformist but that strike at the very heart of the relationship between the ruling-class forces, their strategic economic and political interests, and their alliance with EU imperialism. They include:

- the public democratic control of capital
- public democratic control of natural resources
- a national development corporation to plan economic and social development democratically
- the radical democratising of all political institutions
- withdrawal from the euro
- withdrawal from the European Union.
- repudiation of the odious socialised corporate debt.

This is a strategy for working-class struggle, for building the unity of the working class and class-consciousness as a necessary condition for the advance towards socialism.

On the Economic and Socio-Political Situation in Greece and the Activity of the KKE

By the International Relations Section of the Communist Party of Greece (KKE)

As you will be aware, Greece has for 5 consecutive years been in the grip of the capitalist crisis and the workers are experiencing the impasses of the capitalist development path. Unemployment according to official data is now 27%, and 60% for young people.

The three-party government of the right-wing ND (New Democracy), the social-democratic PASOK (All-Greek Socialist Movement) and the 'left-wing' DIMAR (Democratic Left), in the name of avoiding bankruptcy and maintaining the country in the Eurozone and the EU, continues to take anti-people measures, with the aim of transferring the burden of the capitalist crisis onto the workers and reducing the price of labour power. In this direction, the minimum wage has been reduced to 490 euros, and 420 euros after social security contributions for young people under the age of 25.

At the same time, the government is legislating a new tax on the people's housing, while it will immediately proceed with 15,000 dismissals in the public sector and is trying to sell off a number of state enterprises, buildings and other public property.

In the framework of the cuts, hospitals and schools are already operating with major shortages in human personnel and necessary materials.

The reactionary anti-worker measures of the three-party government are being pushed forward via the memoranda which the

Greek government signed with the Troika of the creditors (European Union, International Monetary Fund, European Central Bank). Their implementation is a precondition for the payment of the financial installments by the creditors. The overwhelming majority of this money will service the debt. We should note that the public debt on 31.12.2009 was €298.5 billion; on 01.03.2012 (after the 'haircut') it was calculated at €280.3 billion; while on 31.12.2012, it had risen to €305 billion – *ie*, after three memoranda, after the 'haircuts' of the debt, and all the anti-worker measures, the public debt is even higher. Nevertheless, the bourgeois class has achieved its basic goal. It has reduced the price of labour power significantly through the 'massacre' of salaries and pensions and social services. And what is even more, due to the increase of unemployment, it has created an 'army' of destitute people that can be utilised.

If the three parties which are in the government operate using the fear of impending bankruptcy as the basic instrument for maintaining their position, at the same time a series of other political forces of the bourgeois political system are fostering the illusion of better management within the framework of capitalism and the EU. Such forces are SYRIZA (Coalition of the Radical Left), which is a party that has former communists,

former ultra-leftists and social-democrats; the ANEL party (Independent Greeks), which is a party that comes from the right-wing ND; and the fascist Golden Dawn.

Despite their differences, these political forces seek to sow confusion concerning the causes of the capitalist crisis, arguing that another type of capitalist management will lead to a way out of the crisis, always within the framework of the exploitative system and the EU. A new political organisation (Plan B), which is led by the former head of SYRIZA, is also sowing confusion, focusing on the currency (the Euro) and seeking Greece's exit from the Eurozone.

The Recomposition of the Political Scene and the KKE

These developments are evidence of the efforts by the bourgeois class at reforming the political scene. The main features of this are the recomposition of (a) the social-democratic terrain, where the basic role is being taken on by SYRIZA, which characterises itself as 'radical left', and (b) the terrain of the right, where new political parties are being created, amongst them the fascist Golden Dawn.

A component of this reformation is the attack against the KKE. The bourgeoisie is attempting both to exert opportunist pressure on our party, so that it will give up on its policies of socialisation of the monopolies and unilateral cancellation of the debt with working class

revolutionary strategy, and to reduce the electoral strength of the KKE so that its voice and political intervention are weakened. The proposal for our participation in a 'left government' was used as a 'tool' for this goal in the last elections. The KKE maintained a principled position. It rejected this proposal and highlighted its position for a pro-people way out of the crisis, with disengagement from the EU, socialisation of the monopolies and unilateral cancellation of the debt with working class-people's power governance – a position which assists the struggle of the KKE after the elections as well.

The impact of the rationale of the 'lesser evil' led to a reduction of our electoral strength. In the parliamentary elections of May 2012, the party received 8.5%. The repeat elections of June 2012, under the petty-bourgeois pressure of an 'immediate governmental solution' in the framework of capitalism and the EU, which our party ruled out, witnessed a reduction of our electoral strength to 4.5%. Despite this, we consider that the stance maintained by our party was correct and prevented our party from sliding into a historic mistake, *ie* of supporting the management of capitalism and its crisis.

The Intervention of the KKE

After the two parliamentary elections our party, with its political activity and

Participants in the KKE rally on the occasion of the 46th anniversary of the military coup of 21 April
(below) KKE general secretary Dimitris Koutsoumpas speaking at the rally



through its activity in the workers' and other people's organisations and the trade unions, has been at the front line of the struggle of the working class for collective bargaining agreements, against the commercialisation of education and healthcare, against taxes, against the abolition of social rights, for measures that relieve the unemployed, against dismissals in the public and private sector, in the struggles of the poor farmers etc. At the same time, on the occasion of the pre-congress discussion for the 19th Congress, our party carried out many activities in order to reach out to the working people and explain to them the political proposal of the KKE, which is summed up in the slogan: "People's Alliance – the people in power. Socialism is necessary and timely".

Of course the reserves of the bourgeois system continue to be strong, as well as the illusions fostered by bourgeois and opportunist parties about the character of the crisis, the way out from it. Nevertheless, there are also positive and encouraging examples from the participation of the working people in popular mobilisations, in mass activities of the party organisations of the KKE



and KNE (communist youth league), from the elections for the national committees of the trade union organisations. At the Congress of the Confederation of the Trade Unions in the Private Sector (GSEE), about two months ago, the lists of the communists were strengthened, receiving 22.2% of the votes. In addition, about a month ago, the lists supported by KNE in the student elections also witnessed an increase, receiving 16% in universities and 18.4% of the votes in the technical educational institutes.

The 19th Congress of the KKE

The 19th Congress of the KKE took place on 11-14 April in Athens after a

fruitful 4-month inner-party and public discussion about the Theses of the Central Committee, the draft of the new Programme and the Statutes of the KKE. The 19th Congress unanimously approved the Congress documents – the Political Resolution, the Programme and the Statutes – thus confirming the ideological-political unity of the Party.

These basic party documents have been translated and are currently being proof-read. They will soon be uploaded on our websites.

The main idea that permeates our programmatic documents is the fact that the impending revolution in Greece will be a socialist one. Our party assesses, as in its previous programme, that

there are no intermediate stages between capitalism and socialism, as there are no intermediate types of power. We propose to the working class, to the poor popular strata, to the youth and the women of the popular strata, the formation of a People's Alliance that will consist of social forces whose interest is to struggle in an anti-monopoly anti-capitalist direction, having as their basic slogans the socialisation of the monopolies and the agricultural producer cooperatives, the unilateral cancellation of the debt, the non-participation in military-political interventions, in wars, the disengagement from the EU and NATO, the working class people's power.

The Congress elected a new central committee of 63 members, and this in turn elected a political bureau of 11 members and comrade Dimitris Koutsoumpas as general secretary.

■ *This report was delivered by Elisseos Vagenas, KKE central committee member responsible for its international section, to the Working Group of Communist and Workers' parties in Lisbon on 1 May 2013, and published on Solidnet on 16 May.*

(Dis)Integration of Care in



By Gordon MacLeod

The current political drive in Scotland is to integrate health and social care services, to help secure what is termed a *seamless* service to the benefit of the user. A policy of merging NHS and social care budgets in England is also being advocated by the Labour Party, to provide what they term as “whole-person care”.¹

These political developments come at a time when Britain has faced a double-dip recession, which may even become triple-dip; and these policies can be seen in a Scottish context, when the Scottish Government’s Economic Adviser suggested that £42 billion would be taken out of public sector services in Scotland over the next 16 years. When faced with such staggering cuts in public finances, it may be appropriate to talk of staring down into a canyon, and of wondering if we shall ever be able to climb back out of it.

For older people, who were promised universal health care, and a retirement pension, it now appears that successive governments will try to move the goal posts. The rhetoric seems to reflect the “prevalent post war belief that older people are a burden on the rest of us.”² This has been restated in a variety of ways, with the Swiss UBS Analyst, Lord Sefton, arguing³ that “young people should be angry” at the way they are

subsidising older people. It seems to have been forgotten that it is the older people who have spent the better part of 40 years or more subsidising everyone and everything else.

In the face of cuts, many councils across Scotland have been doing budget-planning exercises involving public consultation, in which the question has been asked whether or not they should continue to run care homes and day centres for older people in the forthcoming financial years. Presumably other important social work and council services are not so ‘burdensome’. In England, much of the social care provision that is provided to older people has already been contracted out, and this is an ongoing trend across the country.

Governments seem to consider it more worthwhile to spend an estimated £90 billion on replacement of the Trident nuclear ‘deterrent’ – which does no such deterring in the face of the modern warfare of terrorism – than to spend that money on a care system that has so far failed to plan adequately for the increasing number of older people, about which issue governments have known for over a generation now.

Some councils have been frustrated politically over a period of many years when they tried to hive off care provision for older people, so it should come as

no surprise that they have looked at an alternative way of divesting themselves of those services.

Before 2 April 2012 I worked for the NHS in Scotland, and was then transferred to local authority employment as part of the integration of health and adult social care services. Prior to that integration my new local authority employer had estimated that by 2033 there would be a 122% increase in the number of people aged over 75 in its area. Yet somehow agencies have managed to use figures like that as a basis for *cutting* service levels, such as for domiciliary care provision, where people get visits of 10 minutes at a time. Cuts in day-care transport provision, with a resulting fall in attendance figures, have likewise been used as evidence of a reducing demand for day-care services, to justify arguments for closure, or for the ‘reconfiguration’ or ‘redesign’ of services, as it is often termed. Indeed, across my previous employing authority’s area, there has been a fall in the number of care homes for older people.

That is not to say that care homes for older people should remain stagnant and that they need not change. Indeed, in 1998 I wrote that “it is time that this institution received a long and overdue radical overhaul.”⁴ In that

a Capitalist Society



article I was advocating inspections in local authority care homes, by an agency that was separate from the local authority. In time, the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001 gave rise to the Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care, which took on that responsibility. Regrettably what was a welcome development became largely, to my mind at least, overshadowed by the introduction in 2008 of a grading system, which made evaluations based on purely subjective judgements and lacked any objective basis due to the lack of an assessment tool.

In 2010, the English regulatory equivalent, the Commission for Social Care Inspection, dropped its rating system; in Scotland, they persisted in administering a system that rated superficial aspects of care to the detriment of the substantive quality indicators. In April 2011 the Scottish Social Work Inspection Agency and the Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care merged to form Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (SCSWIS), now known as the Care Inspectorate. While this does serve as an example of the much lauded integration

of public services, the Inspectorate persists with its flawed inspection system, with a lack of scrutiny of those who undertake inspections of care services and of their assessments.

All these changes are related, and there are many changes afoot in social work and social care in Scotland. I do not know who it was that first said it, but it is a well quoted phrase in social work, that the only one constant is change itself. Probably never a truer word has been spoken.

It is still early days as to whether or not the user of services will benefit



from the merger, or if in fact it will be used as another pretext for the ‘reconfiguration and redesign’ of services, which takes them away from the most vulnerable under a guise of modernisation. The early signs are not promising, with navel-gazing by senior management, seeking to increase the number of district managers, as well as to create a further tier of ‘integrated team managers’, when in fact what is needed is an increase in staff at the front line, providing the personal care directly to the older person. But that is not a popular message at a time of cutbacks.

Indeed it was shameful that, one year after integration, when those social care services had been calling for additional staffing resources for nearly a decade, the first action of the new integrated Partnership body between the NHS and the local authority was to create extra managers and advisory positions. This was more about providing a buffer zone around a senior management who were devoid of knowledge about, and expertise in, running social care service provision for older people, than about improving the service experience for those older people.

There is a danger of history repeating itself, where reform of health and social care may mean little more than “a re-ordering of boundaries and responsibilities for existing services”,⁵ as happened following the introduction of the National Assistance Act of 1948.

The obsession has been in looking at processes and systems, or ‘workstreams’ as they are called in modern jargon, at the expense of principled practice that enshrines human rights into the provision of care, and ensures that people are treated with compassion and dignity.

That is why finding resources for endless internal restructuring and for managers’ posts, while continuing to deny adequate staffing to those providing the direct care, in fact leads to the “warehouses” that the shadow Health Secretary fears hospitals are at risk of becoming,¹ rather than preventing those consequences from arising. But, although ‘warehousing’ already exists in care homes as a consequence of inadequate staffing levels, it is a return to the ‘workhouse’ model of welfare that should be of more concern to older people.

Lord Bichard, the former Head of the Benefits Agency, exemplifies this very real threat, when he was quoted as saying that older people should stop

being a “negative burden” on the state, while he helpfully added by way of explanation that

“We are now prepared to say to people who are not looking for work, if you do not look for work you don’t get benefits. So if you are old and you are not contributing in some way or another, maybe there should be a penalty attached to that.”³

All such statements are however symptomatic of a far more serious malaise, which over that last quarter-century has influenced central government policy and the practice of public organisations towards older people, whom they have viewed as burdensome, while they propagated the myth, as James Petras eloquently put it, “that the maturation of capitalism . . . would be accompanied by greater welfare”.⁶

It is abundantly clear that, since the coalition government took office, one of its prime objectives has been to reduce welfare and move towards eradicating universal benefits. We have seen, *inter alia*:

- the capping of housing benefit
- the introduction of a ‘bedroom tax’
- benefit claimants subjected to council tax for the first time
- student tuition fees rising to £9000 pa
- the introduction of the ‘universal credit’
- a three-year cap of 1% on the uplifting of benefit payments.

The last-mentioned point contrasts sharply with the 5% reduction in income tax for the wealthiest, and the agreements by HM Revenue and Customs with the wealthiest corporations to limit their tax liabilities. We are after all, to reiterate the well-trodden phrase, ‘in it together’.

The true face of capitalism is gradually being unmasked at this time of economic crisis – and it seems to be only a matter of time before this system looks at new ways to divest itself of those, such as older people, whom it views as no longer economically productive. We may already have a sense of where this is leading, when the Japanese Finance Minister was recently reported as saying older people are an unnecessary drain on its country’s finances and that “The problem won’t be solved unless you let them hurry up and die.”⁷

I have already stated here several times that, in our cultured western society, older people are seen as burdensome. Thus their classification as “the problem” by the Japanese minister, as surprising as it might appear to the reader, gives us nothing new; but the significant words in that statement for me are not even the repugnant sentiment that older people should “hurry up and die”, but the words “let them”. It seems to give us an insight into the true meaning of capitalism, when it dresses up its immorality and greed under a guise of compassion.

I am not aware of a clamour of older people expressing any such desire to die. Indeed, age is a relative concept, and many older people would not see themselves in those terms. This government minister’s rhetoric is in fact only one small step away from advocating euthanasia for older people on compassionate grounds, when driven by a capitalist perspective on how to treat older people and the most vulnerable in our society, whom it abhors as not being ‘wealth producing’.

One older person commented recently that “It is important for all of us to recognise that it is not being older that is a problem, but being older in our current society.”⁸ Until that society places some form of restriction on the excesses of capitalism, then this sentiment will be representative of the experience of vulnerable people in capitalist societies across the whole wide world.

It may however quite simply be that “the logic of capitalism as a productive and social system is irreconcilable with meeting the needs of elderly people”,⁹ and it is the capitalist system itself that needs changing.

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Visions of a Better Future

Review by Steve Johnson

This very readable book is a collection of essays from various contributors which looks at how visions of utopia have inspired people holding to a vision of a better future. What it does not offer (perhaps deliberately) is any idea or strategy of how a better society might be achieved. After all, if you start implementing a programme, you might end up with something that is less than perfect.

For Marxists, talk of utopias tends to bring to mind Marx and Engels' critique of 'Utopian Socialism', to which Mike Marqusee draws attention in the opening essay. Yet their criticism was not based on any lack of vision on their part of what a future society would look like. Rather their critique was of a belief that socialism could be imposed from above by altruistic benefactors, as well as that it failed to recognise the need to replace the system as a whole. But Marx still left a fundamental guideline of what to aim for, in "from each according to his/her ability, to each according to his/her need." The right-wing has used anti-utopianism to attack any attempt to change society, both during the Cold War and more recently with the proclaimed 'end of history'.

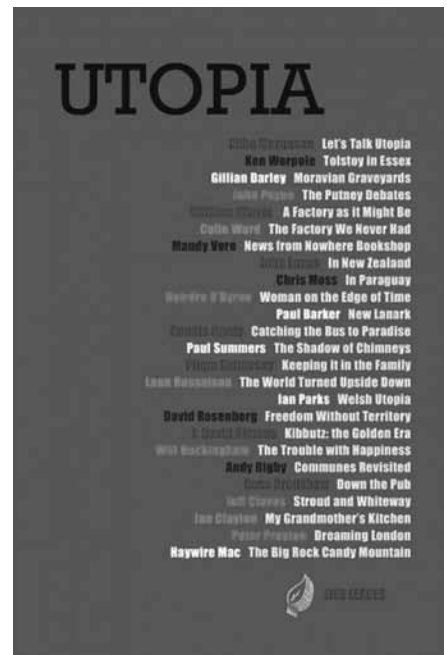
A common theme throughout the book is that, without a vision of what to aim for, movements for social change are necessarily limited; and there is much here of historical interest, including William Morris's *A Factory as it Might Be*, as well as essays on the Putney Debates and forgotten experiments in communal living, such as the religiously inspired English Moravian settlements of the 18th century. There are also references to the Levellers and the Diggers and, for lovers of left-wing folk music, printed lyrics of songs by Leon Rosselson and Haywire

Mac's utopia for tramps, *Big Rock Candy Mountain*.

But Marqusee in his opening essay also draws attention to the fact that some strands of utopian thinking were linked to ideas of Western colonialism, and the belief that a new Eden could be imposed in 'empty' lands. This is highlighted in John Lucas's essay *New Zealand and Utopianism in the 19th Century*. Colonial settlement in the idyllic surroundings of New Zealand provided the inspiration for Samuel Butler's largely forgotten novel *Erewhon*, offering an alternative vision of work and industry to that of Victorian England. But did the Maoris feature anywhere in this utopia?

A more modern example of this attitude is the flocking of many western alternative backpacker types, to go to, live and work in Israeli kibbutzim in the 1960s and 1970s, many wanting to experience 'democratic socialism' as opposed to the 'forced' socialism of the USSR. David Simons in *The Golden Era of Kibbutz* gives an account of an idyllic communal living situation, when he went to Israel to stay on a kibbutz in 1972, inspired by his involvement in the 'socialist Zionist' organisation Habonim. He does say that when he set off it never occurred to him that the Palestinians were an oppressed people. He clearly realises this now but the rest of the essay makes no attempt to deal with the inherent contradiction of building a 'utopian socialist' community on dispossessed people's land.

Many of the contributors in the book are from what could loosely be called the 'libertarian left', preferring small-scale experiments in communal living or co-operative working, as described in Mandy Vere's essay on the News from Nowhere bookshop



Utopia

Edited by ROSS BRADSHAW
(Five Leaves Publications, Nottingham, 2012, 240 pp, pbk, £9.99. ISBN: 978-1907869501)

in Liverpool. It is indeed extremely positive that the bookshop has survived against the odds, but it is just one bookshop. The rejection of 'hierarchies and leaderships' also has echoes in the Occupy movement. Yet the book could perhaps have included an essay exploring the fact that much of the language and ideas propagated by the 'libertarian left' of the 1970s, with its talk of 'free schools and alternative education', 'autonomy from the state' and 'empowerment', are now being used by the right to promote the 'Big Society' and to attack the NHS and state education. Clearly anti-statism outside a wider political strategy can have deeply reactionary consequences.

Yet perhaps a book about utopia can't be expected to give a Marxist critique. That is why we need a theoretical scientific socialist journal like *Communist Review*. That said, there is much that CR readers can find to enjoy in this book, the last page of which ends with a poster from the *Country Standard*, whose writers always kept in mind a vision of what a different kind of countryside would be like.

Discussion: More on Dickens

by David Grove

In his lively defence of Dickens¹ against Ken Fuller's attack², Doug McLeod gives several examples of the novelist's essential humanism. I think there are a few more points that can usefully be made. In his thoughtful and provocative analysis, Ken Fuller exposes some exaggerated claims in T A Jackson's pioneering Marxist study³ of Dickens. He leaves Jackson flat on his back (though, having known Tommy, I'm sure he'd soon be on his feet again). But where does he leave Dickens?

Towards the end of the second part of his article Ken states: "Much of Dickens may be read with profit and pleasure". That seems rather faint praise for a writer widely recognised as one of the world's greatest novelists. He is certainly the most widely read, and has retained his popularity with ordinary non-literary readers for over a century. Is there perhaps some quality in Dickens's work that Ken has overlooked?

It seems to me surprising that Ken, though he quotes freely from the social democrats Orwell and Foot, never refers to the work of recent Marxist critics who took a more nuanced view of Dickens than Jackson did, in particular Arnold Kettle⁴ and Jack Mitchell⁵.

Nobody will deny that Dickens's outlook was petty bourgeois, with all the facing-both-ways inconsistencies

of that class. So it's easy enough to find extracts that support almost any point of view. But it's striking that most of Ken's quotations are from non-fictional writings, not from the novels. They express Dickens's views and opinions at the time he wrote. But Dickens was neither a political theorist nor a historian; he was a novelist, an artist. And while an artist's views and opinions must be significant when assessing the whole person, they are not necessarily relevant to a critical analysis of their works. Dickens's novels, like any others, must surely be judged in the light of their total impact on the reader. Ken's failure to do this is why many Marxists will find his conclusions inadequate.

Kettle wrote: "The important thing about an artist is not his opinions but his *sensibility*, his all-round apprehension and comprehension of things"⁶. He suggests that Thackeray, Gaskell and Eliot, though highly critical of some aspects of capitalist society, had a middle-class sensibility, whereas Dickens's sensibility is *popular*. Taking up this point, Mitchell agrees that Dickens did not have a working class sensibility but suggests that

"he reflects the popular humanism of the 'archaic' London plebeian

masses – a still largely pre-industrial conglomeration of semi-proletarian elements, small traders, shopkeepers, artisans, seamen and others. This is what gives his London novels their positiveness and vitality. His sensibility, therefore, reflects a way of life ... with recognisable roots and traditions going deep into the past of the people's life and struggle."⁷

Mitchell places Dickens as the latest in a line of popular novelists from Bunyan through Defoe, Fielding and Smollett. It leads on directly from Dickens to Robert Tressell's *The Ragged Trousersed Philanthropists*, two generations later. In Mitchell's view, this first great proletarian novel couldn't have been written any earlier because it required a level of class consciousness that came only with the onset of monopoly and imperialism, and the great working class struggles of the later nineteenth century. So it would be unrealistic to expect a novelist of Dickens's time to write with working class sensibility.

Ken Fuller asserts that Dickens was unable to deal with the world of work. Doug Macleod gives several





examples of Dickens's engagement with the work of clerks and domestic servants. And in *Our Mutual Friend*, as Mitchell points out,

“almost all the characters congregate around two poles according to the work they do and their attitude to it. At the negative pole we have ... financial speculators and ruling class wide-boys Those at the positive pole – all from the common people – have a true pride in the product of their hands.”⁸

Venus, the bone articulator, refuses to give up his trade, bizarre though it is, to please his wife: “I am proud of my calling.”

The strengths and weaknesses of Dickens's popular sensibility are apparent in his most overtly anti-capitalist novel *Hard Times*. Ken Fuller rightly points out that it shows no understanding of working class life and struggle. But it has a positive humanist quality that has been most strongly emphasised, perhaps surprisingly, by F R Leavis.⁹ The antithesis to Gradgrind's capitalist outlook is not the worker nor the trade union official, both unconvincingly described, but the men and women of the circus. They are not proletarians but

they are most definitely of the People. Innocent of contamination by the utilitarian philosophy, it is they who express the vitality, the solidarity, the compassion, and the pride in their skill of ordinary folk. This is indeed a *moral* condemnation of the prevailing system – and none the worse for that. It is the circus folk who demonstrate through their feelings and actions that another world is possible. No other Victorian novelist attempted such a demonstration. This adds weight to my main point: that a novel must be judged by its total impact. This is something Ken Fuller does not attempt.

Of course Dickens's sympathy for the poor was rooted in self-pity for his own early experience. But it is wise not to give such psychological explanations too much weight. A man may become a communist because he hates his father (like Ao Ling in Richard Hughes' novel *In Hazard*) but that neither undermines the truth of his beliefs nor devalues his contribution to the cause. Nothing in Dickens's background can detract from the sincerity of his outlook as a novelist.

Ken doesn't quote Dickens's famous words at Birmingham in 1869: “My faith in the people governing, is, on the whole, infinitesimal; my faith in the People governed, is, on

the whole, illimitable.” The initial capital for the second “People” is Dickens's own; it emphasises his standpoint. His later novels, with their all-round condemnation of capitalist society, point to the need for revolution. But there was no objective possibility of a socialist revolution in the 1850s and 1860s, the golden age of capitalism. Hence Dickens's growing pessimism, reflected perhaps in his alleged hatred of the mob and fear of mass action. But such views, of which Ken Fuller seeks to make a whole case against Dickens, hardly detract from the popular sensibility that has ensured him a lasting place as one of the most progressive novelists of all time.

Notes and References

- 1 D McLeod, *What the Dickens...?* in *CR66*, Winter 2012/13, p 28.
- 2 K Fuller, *Charles Dickens: the Masses, Race and Empire, Part I* in *CR65*, Autumn 2012, pp 2-8, *Part II* in *CR66*, Winter 2012/13, pp 8-12.
- 3 T A Jackson, *Charles Dickens: The Progress of a Radical*, International Publishers, New York, 1987.
- 4 A Kettle, *Literature and Liberation: Selected Essays*, Manchester University Press, 1988.
- 5 J Mitchell, *Robert Tressell and the Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, Lawrence & Wishart, 1969.
- 6 Kettle, *op cit*, p 142.
- 7 Mitchell, *op cit*, p 26.
- 8 *Ibid*, p 147.
- 9 F R Leavis, *The Great Tradition*, Peregrine Books, 1962, pp 249-274.

Discussion: Stalin and Khrushchev – Riding Two Horses with One Ass

By Kumar Sarkar

Taking Andrew Northall's advice¹ I have just re-read, once again, Khrushchev's so-called 'secret speech' at the 20th Congress of the CPSU, which I first read in 1956 at the age of 18.

Archival Revelations

Northall cynically treats some archival revelations that Stalin sometimes was in a minority in the leading bodies of the Party as "science fiction". Let me refer to such a document included in bourgeois historian Arch Getty's book, *The Road to Terror*, Document 143:²

From the *Protocol of the meeting of the Commission of the Central Committee on the matter of Bukharin and Rykov*, 27 February 1937 (photograph of the original document in Russian language is provided in the book):

Chairman: Mikoyan

Yezhov proposed "to expel Bukharin and Rykov as candidate members of the Central Committee and members of the VKP(b)³ and to transfer them to the military tribunal with application of the death penalty."

On this proposal, three positions emerged (numbers in parentheses indicate the order of speakers):

Same as the proposal – supported by Budenny (2), Manuilsky (4), Shvernik (10), Kosarev (15) and Yakir (16).

Same as the proposal but without the death penalty – supported by Postyshev (2), Shkiriakov (5), Antipov (6), **Khrushchev** (7), Nikolaeva (8), Kosior (11), Petrovsky (12) and Litvinov (13).

To expel but not sending them to court but to transfer the case to the NKVD for further investigations. This was proposed by **Stalin** (3), followed

by Ulianova (9), Krupskaya (14), Vareikis (17), Molotov (18), and Voroshilov (19).

So, at the meeting Stalin was supported initially by only 5 members of the 19 who spoke at the meeting. However, at the end, Stalin's proposal was agreed unanimously! And that speaks volumes.

Continuing with the issue of Bukharin, Getty⁴ writes with the following startling revelations:

"Following Bukharin's exoneration in September 1936 and Stalin's move to delay proceedings against him at the December 1936 plenum, this was the third time that Stalin had personally intervened to avoid unambiguously condemning Bukharin. It was the second time Bukharin had pointedly refused to play his scapegoat role in the Central Committee ritual."

We can now finally rule out the notion, so often found in the literature, that Stalin in this period was backing down before an antiterror 'liberal' coalition of senior Bolsheviks. Of those often mentioned in such a role (Kuibyshev, Kirov, Ordzbonikidze, and others) none was alive at the time of the plenum. On the contrary; according to the documents, once again, **only Stalin was resisting application of either a prison or death sentence.** Why?" *[Emphasis added – KS]*

More recently Reuters' reported from Moscow on 5 March 2013:⁵

"A conference held under the auspices of the Russian Orthodox Church is perhaps the last place you might expect to hear a good word said about Josef Stalin. ... 'Stalin was no saint, but he was not

a monster", said Russian Orthodox priest Alexander Shumsky, accusing Stalin's critics of exaggerating the scale of his crimes. **He described assertions that Stalin had been in complete control a myth created by liberals and said the former leader had wanted to stop the process of repression.**" *[Emphasis added – KS]*

Kirov's murder

In the 1956 speech, Khrushchev, amongst other vicious charges against Stalin, implied that Stalin was behind Kirov's murder. In this respect, Arch Getty writes:⁶

"Many Russian scholars are less convinced of Stalin's involvement than they once were. The leading authors on opposition to Stalin in the 1930s no longer offer a judgment on the matter, and the memoirs of V M Molotov (perhaps unsurprisingly) observe that Kirov was never a challenger to Stalin's position. The most recent scholarly work on the Kirov assassination from a Russian scholar, based on Leningrad party and police archives, concludes that Stalin had nothing to do with the killing. It seems safe to say that the question is still open."

Northall wants us to believe that it is quite compatible to assess Stalin's contributions as "even greater than that of Marx and Lenin" and, at the same time, assess Khrushchev, who depicted Stalin as one of the worst despots in history, as "an extraordinary individual who epitomised the best of what a Communist Party can make one"! Northall says he enjoys science



fiction. It seems he also enjoys riding two horses with one ass.

“Stalin was necessary and right. ... But the Stalin period had to be overcome and superseded”. To save the bewildered readers from guessing what the missing link was, Northall argues that the “methods of the 1930s” were not commensurate with the requirements of the “forthcoming scientific and technological revolution, ... in order to be a world civilisation able to compete with the imperialist powers.” Northall needs to be reminded that the history of the Sputnik project started in December 1954, shortly after Stalin’s death in March 1953, when Sergei Korolev proposed, to the then Soviet Minister of Defence Industries, the development of an Earth-orbiting satellite!

Unless Andrew Northall undertakes writing another article to elaborate on his apparently strange hypothesis, his *motivation* seems to be to appease the ‘pro-Stalin’ communists to win their support for the devastating anti-communist stance of the 20th Congress of the CPSU.

Notes and References

- 1 A Northall, *Stalin and Khrushchev*, in CR67, Spring 2013, pp 27-8.
- 2 J A Getty and O V Naumov, *The Road to Terror*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1999, p 412.
- 3 VKP(b) = All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) –Ed.
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- 5 <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/03/05/us-russia-stalin-idUSBRE9240O120130305>.
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- 7 Getty and Naumov, *op cit*, p 146.

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Discussion: Contradictions in Developing Socialism

By Joe Clark



I thought Yuri Emelianov's articles on 'Stalin's Purges'¹ were terrible – though I lack the scholarship to sift the literature for a counter. I liked Andrew Northall's rejoinder,² though it too has its weaknesses, *ie* it engages in the "who said this ..." and "who said what ..." stage – important in so far as it is necessary to counter those who can see only culpable individuals but who can't see processes in society, and who would therefore repeat old errors if in a position to be able to do so. However it is time there was a deeper analysis of Soviet society. What follows is a short summary of some of the ideas I wrote some 6 years ago, in response to a discussion in the *Morning Star* at the time, though it was not published then.

I write as someone who has a fairly unique experience. I have been involved professionally in the British engineering industry for 40 years, in which time I gained considerable experience of Soviet industry – in particular, their machine tools. I know their advantages and drawbacks, and I know the slow pace of change which was characteristic of those 4 decades. I have also been involved politically in solidarity with the Soviet Union since 1956.

The discussion in the *Morning Star* appeared to be posed between those sympathetic to Gorbachev, and those who were reluctant to join the anti-Stalin chorus. The evidence adduced was from policies advanced or from consequences which resulted. This is an idealistic basis to study developments in the Soviet Union. It is necessary to consider the social/technical developments which the Soviet Union went through, and to see the development of society as a process of change. This is necessary to define the points at which change should be implemented, and more particularly, when a new change, one more appropriate to the newly created situation, should supersede it.

Stalin certainly gave leadership which ensured rapid industrialisation, considerable mechanisation of

agriculture, and which finally tore the guts out of the Nazi Eastern Front, the biggest Nazi army. It would be farcical to expect him to have gone beyond what was technically possible at that time.

His industrial leap was best illustrated by the city of Magnitogorsk, a huge industrial city which mushroomed from the outback. It was a huge technical achievement. It provided the materials for tractors for peace and for tanks for repulsing the Nazis. Without it no amount of heroism in Leningrad or Stalingrad could have saved the day. The very thing which made Magnitogorsk so invulnerable later proved its undoing. Because it was isolated, it had to be self-sufficient to a degree by which no living British engineer has ever been constrained – though the massive company towns which sprang up in the 18th century around coal and iron deposits, in Durham, Merthyr and Sheffield, had similar characteristics. Self-sufficiency to that degree can only be achieved by simplification of engineering design and economic organisation. This was the appropriate form for the early stages of industry – when peasants had left the land, but weren't yet skilled industrial workers. That simplification becomes stultifying when new sophistications are required.

It was appropriate then because the need was for huge numbers of simple tractors which could be repaired in a field with a hammer and a wrench – by peasants whose fathers had ploughed by hand.

In the post-war period, the Soviet economy made many advances, especially in elite sectors – space, aeronautics, and nuclear engineering – but these increasingly became the exceptions. The rest of the economy also continued to expand well into the 70s but, worryingly, by lateral widening rather than by intensifying production. As peasants were released from the land, they were deployed in factories, but those factories were not 'revolutionising production'. The factories grew bigger, but with more of the same technology,

without increase in productivity per worker. More Magnitogorsks but unfortunately not *revolutionised* Magnitogorsks.

This was forcibly brought home to me in discussion with a Soviet fitter. We had bought a Soviet lathe in 1964. In 1977, although we had passed that technological stage, we needed a simple lathe of robust proportions, so we bought another – essentially to the same design. When I met the fitter in 1990 he told me that they were still making thousands of these lathes – twenty-five years with little development! They sold for peanuts in the UK, but no-one bought them, why? Because new Japanese lathes at 10 times the price had such high productivity and accuracy that we could not afford to use Soviet lathes in main production roles, even if they had been given away.

Meanwhile, in the capitalist world the electronics revolution was ruthlessly pushed into all sectors, causing radical new designs across industry.

Forty years on, the Magnitogorsks, towering jacks-of-all-trades, proved to have feet of clay in the struggle to achieve step changes in quality and productivity. The new requirement was for tractors of fifty times the productivity. These would not be capable of being mended outside of a technical station. Therefore, because of the new sophistication, every component incorporated in their assembly had to become so reliable that such repairs were no longer necessary. That was the cross on which the Soviet economy foundered.

A parallel, which British readers will appreciate, is the well-known delay in the development in computing. Early computers were made capable of more sophisticated computing tasks by assembling larger ones. These were expanded laterally, by assembling multiples of banks of thousands of radio valves. Unfortunately, the reliability of radio valves was low. With a few hundred such valves, one might be lucky and complete the computation

before one of the valves failed. With thousands of valves, and no possibility of improving their reliability, computing reached a dead end: too many computing runs were aborted by failure of one valve or other – it only needed one to fail. A dead end, only broken out of by the advent of transistors which were inherently more reliable.

Stalin died before these contradictions had become critical. Brezhnev lived through it, saw it, but could do nothing to arrest it. This isn't necessarily a condemnation of the CPSU in that era. It was the time when Soviet security from military threat was established in the face of US nuclear blackmail. But part of that success was achieved by limiting the spread of scientific and technological knowledge. This was considered to be necessary to protect the military, but it impeded advance elsewhere in the economy.

There are those who consider that the Soviet Union contained the seeds of its own destruction because of a lack of (western) democracy. Almost certainly an over-simplification – any free interchange of people, ideas, information, goods, between a powerful capitalist country and a weaker socialist or third world country opens the weaker to control by the stronger. Constraints designed to counter this tendency can in turn become a restraint on development of socialism. The scientific and technological revolution cannot be developed in isolated compartments of the economy.

Andropov and Gorbachev arrived when the contradictions could no longer be ignored.

We may deplore Gorbachev's apparent naïvety against Reagan. We may condemn his opening of the economy to self-enrichment. What is

impermissible is to condemn *glasnost* and *perestroika* for the consequences, without showing how else the economic impasse in the Soviet Union could have been broken. We mustn't forget that the problem – an economy with hardening arteries – pre-dated *glasnost* and *perestroika*, which were instituted to deal with it. It is a tantalising speculation to consider whether things could have been different if *glasnost* and *perestroika* had been implemented before the CPSU had become so ossified into a tool of management – so ossified that the membership was transfixed by Yeltsin's coup.

Back to reality.

It is likely that it was the arms race which succeeded in breaking the Soviet economy – which of course is what the US intended. At Reykjavik, Reagan was able to say that 'Star Wars' would proceed, and Gorbachev knew that the Soviet economy had too little industrial clout to be able to counter to it.

So whether we regard Stalin as primarily a war hero or as a despot, whether we judge Brezhnev a safe pair of hands or a dangerously complacent caretaker, or whether we regard Gorbachev as a technocrat who'd forgotten his politics or as a communist trapped in a dilemma created by history, the fact remains that this was a life and death struggle between imperialism and socialism. Whilst we recognise that imperialism had to show a human face some times because of the existence of a world system of socialism, we need to recognise that socialism showed some ugly facets precisely because it was continuously under attack and subversion by imperialism. And of course the direction of society under any of these leaders cannot be simply written off as wholly progressive or wholly

reactionary.

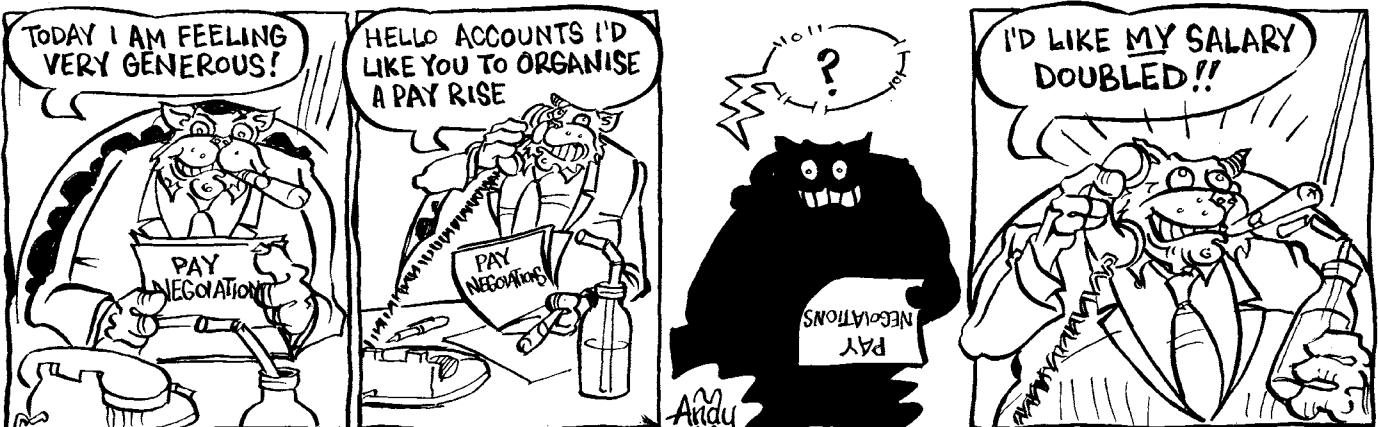
Historians will debate whether socialism could have been built in one country. Certainly imperialism strives to reduce the options either to a socialism of poverty or total submission to the world trading authority. Socialism existed so long, despite its own contradictions, because of the contradictions of imperialism. In 1917 imperialism was wracked by inter-imperialist wars and world communications were primitive, so it was then possible for the Bolsheviks to seize power and hang on to it. Now that imperialism has shaken down to one dominant power, with challengers limited to lesser roles striving for crumbs, and the resources of the greater part of the world being distorted to creating a military monolith, the tussle between socialism and imperialism tips adversely against us. The contradictions of imperialism will not go away, they will intensify, especially around the consequences of the environmental catastrophe we are creating for ourselves. New forms of social organisation will be tried and found valid. They may not initially be in advanced industrial societies, but they will learn from the successes and the later drawbacks of Soviet socialism.

A deeper study of the social/technical processes at work during the era of 'existing' socialism would be particularly valuable.

Notes and References

- 1 Y Emelianov, 'Stalin's Purges' of 1937-8: What Really Happened? Part 1, CR63, Spring 2012, pp 2-9; Part 2, CR64, Summer 2012, pp 16-23; Part 3, CR65, Autumn 2012, pp 9-16.
- 2 A Northall, *Stalin and Khrushchev*, in CR67, Spring 2013, pp 27-8.

Junk food: an irregular cartoon strip





SOURCEBOOK

A regular literary selection

Selected by Mike Quille

THATCHER A SCARRING LEGACY

Greetings, readers. I have some great poems to share with you, a couple from a new poetry book sent in for review, and some sent in by writers on the subject of Thatcher's legacy.

First, the two poems from a new collection out from Ian Parks.¹ Ian's style is spare, direct, and seems to have a kind of Scandinavian noirish mysticism about it. Or have I been watching too much *Wallander* recently?

Orgreave

By Ian Parks

Like this at Wakefield, Towton,
Marston Moor
or any place where men have
come together
to settle a dispute by force of
arms:

helmets in the sunlight, push of
pike,
a trampling down by horses in
the mire.

Except this was high summer
and the middle of the strike,
the shields not steel but perspex
driving back the miners
to their wavering picket line;
my father bringing home a
bloody nose
to show he'd not been slacking
in the fight.



The Wheel

By Ian Parks

The pithead used to dominate
the town.
My dead forefathers came and
went,
Were buried in the shadow cast
by it.
Passing on my way to school,
I heard its revolutions in the night.
If the pit head was the place's
heart

the great wheel was its soul.
And then there was the slow
dismantling.
The slag heap was grassed over:
it became
an innocent green mound where
cattle graze.
They hauled the winding gear
away
and sold the chain for scrap
then took the giant wheel and
clamped it down.
They did this to remind us

where we came from,
 what we did and who we
 were –
 a monument of rusting metal
 spokes
 that radiate from hub to rim
 for kids to climb on, point at
 questioning.
 Some day we'll come with picks
 and dynamite,
 dislodge it from its concrete
 plinth.
 We'll drag it from the valley
 floor,
 aim it at the cities of the south,
 set the wheel in motion, watch
 it roll.

These themes, of the destruction of
 the mining industry, and the north-south
 divide, became topical again recently,
 when Margaret Thatcher died. The next
 few poems I'm going to present here
 are all about Thatcher and her "scarring
 legacy", as one of the poems puts it.
 Think of them as a procession of protest,
 led off by a very moving poem from Pru
 Kitching's second collection:²

Johnny Rook

By Pru Kitching

as the caracara flies it's a long
 way home for you
 over tussock grass and diddle-
 dee; past
 rockhopper, magellanic,
 macaroni, gentoo

did you admire the black-
 browed albatross; were you
 watched
 by rock cormorants as you
 scaled these cliffs; did turkey
 vultures
 oversee your miserable fox-hole,
 wait for you to starve

Johnny, José, Juan – was that
 your name? – rookie
 your plimsolled feet, modest
 requests for Kit-Kat and
 Cadbury
 museum-displayed for those
 who will to see

silent cairns on rocky headlands
 tell where
 Tommy Taffy Jock Paddy Argie
 fell at Fitzroy
 Goose Green Darwin Cove
 San Carlos Bay

Alan Morrison, editor of *The Robin
 Hood Book*,³ has written several fine

poems on this subject. *Carrots for
 Donkeys* was in the *Morning Star* so you
 will probably have read it there: if not
 it will still be on the website. Here is
 a longer one, giving him the space to
 aim and fire all the guns – anger, irony,
 indignation, disgust – on his poetic
 battleship:

Thatcher's Statue

By Alan Morrison

*Marking the scarring legacy of
 Margaret Thatcher following her
 death on 8 April 2013*

The mystique City of London
 Portcullis Cult
 Erected a statue of Thatcher in
 sculpted marble,
 Set it in a Romanesque recess in
 its Aladdin's Hall:
 A Roman goddess with a
 handbag – a posthumous
 Addition to the monetarist
 pantheon, one
 Of the more controversial
 vestals of the Novensides
 And in the tradition of
 conscientious iconoclasm,
 The statue was decapitated, by
 Kelleher,
 With the pressure of a metal
 rope support stanchion
 And the swing of a Slazenger
 V600 cricket bat –
 So off rolled the hard white
 head with its adamantine
 Marble-mane. The offending
 Ostrogoth was sent down
 Promptly, in spite of his act
 being the ultimate
 Tribute to a successful autocrat;
 Kelleher struck
 A symbolic blow, ritual
 deconstruction of a porous
 Myth hardening into fact,
 moulded into hand-bagged
 Hagiography, marbling
 'Magiography',
 Grabbing bogus glory, a snatch
 at lasting narrative –
 Her graven image had to be
 traumatised, chipped
 Away at – in that, he was merely
 curtailing
 A rhetorical prophecy as to
 Thatcher's future
 Sanctification being cast in stone:
 "there is a tremendous
 Danger in believing that
 'Thatcherism' is somehow
 Now invincible, that it has
 established a new consensus
 And that all the rest of us can

do is debate alternatives
 Within its framework. It is
 essential to demythologise
 'Thatcherism'." Thus Spake
 Blairathustra
 Back in 1987 – the rest, as his
 apparatchiks
 Say, was 'the Third Way'....
 Today, in the witching
 Wake of Thatcher's last
 departure, opinion is
 Divided as to whether the Iron
 Lady's effigy
 Should be inaugurated in
 Grantham, the Lincolnshire
 Town which grew her from the
 seeds of Samuel Smiles'
 Self-Help and selective cuttings
 of individualist
 Victoriana curated by her
 Methodist petit bourgeois
 Shopkeeper father; while the
 beneficiaries of 'Right
 To Buy' Basildon are bidding for
 her marble
 Beatification in their bought-off
 borough

But Thatcher's statue is already
 on display in every
 Town and city, has been for
 more than thirty years,
 In a variety of shapes: the
 pawnbrokers, the CASH
 FOR GOLD exchange, the
 scooped-out Woolworths
 Department store asset-
 stripped TO LET, the betting
 Shop the gastropub, the temping
 agency,
 The Janus-faced A4e and
 Jobcentreplus,
 The Atos sickness-cannery, the
 food bank, the soup
 Kitchen, the alfresco buffet of
 tins and cans in
 Every abandoned alleyway, the
 'scroungerology'
 Hollering from every red-top,
 the obsolete hope
 In the porchway wino's
 bloodshot eye, the
 scaffolding
 Stacked round derelict human
 buildings of never-
 Finished characters, paying their
 mute tributes
 To her scarring legacy – and so
 passionate are these
 Pauperised supplicants, they
 kneel on cardboard
 Prayer mats on scum-caked
 pavements, glazed
 In grime, palms cupped for
 donations to her memory

That swells through their
 obscurity and destitution
 Trampled in the footnotes of
 dialectical materialism
 Until the inks ebb away; they pay
 the daily price
 For her giant leap to Finchley,
 through one long sacrificial
 Graze in the shadow of her
 sovereignty – many are statues
 Themselves – though not the
 type that gather garlands,
 Only copper coins, squibs of
 verbal abuse,
 Or bruised bouquets courtesy
 of drubbing glances or
 Pubescent boots – stone-struck
 cast-offs from her
 Sculpting swage, petrified Mr
 Tumnuses,
 Gnarled ornaments grown in
 sunken gardens of Gorgons,
 Arranged as serried signals
 under her marble gaze

*quoted from an article *Blair's
 Thatcher, Thatcher's Blair* by Thomas
 Jones, in the *London Review of Books*
 blog, 8 April 2013.

Next in our procession comes Terry
 Jones, who also displays a wonderfully
 volcanic, endless sense of outrage and
 anger:

Thatcher in the Underworld
 By Terry Jones

The poem is based on Dante's Inferno. Guided into the underworld (of Death) by Virgil, he describes how corrupt politicians (amongst others) find themselves after death. The worse the crime, the deeper the circle of Hell. I've set Thatcher in the deepest.

Deep on the path into the
 centre of the earth,
 its chaos of crystals hung like
 unlit chandeliers,
 as I waited for the ferry to cross
 the black river,
 the depths that glooped and
 spat like blood,
 I met one I recognised amongst
 the crowd there.
 A self-important harridan, in life
 she delighted in cunning,
 forever wearing different masks
 for her purposes,
 spreading illusion and malice
 where she went.
 Here, she held her heart in her
 hands, so it beat there
 perpetually between her fingers,
 veins and arteries

exposed to the poisonous fog of
 the air about us.
 But this was no normal heart:
 on each cycle
 of systole and diastole, the
 opening to each chamber
 became a mouth full of razor
 sharp fangs
 snapping and biting at her
 fingers like enemies,
 as if her grip were the grip of
 predator on predator,
 and this heart, cornered, fought
 for its very life.
 In desperation, she juggled and
 caressed the thing,
 even bending to speak soothing
 words to its fury,
 but nothing availed, so again and
 again she was bit,
 sometimes with painful flesh
 wounds that opened
 and pooled with blood like
 artesian wells;
 other times with bone-deep,
 maiming savagery
 so the very joints and whites of
 her bones were shown.
 In a tremble of terror and wonder
 I watched her approach
 and as she drew level, I rose and
 spoke to her.
 "You there, the woman who tosses
 her heart like a hot coal,
 always compelled to catch it
 again in cringing pain:
 I knew you well in life: you are
 the government woman,
 the one with the home-making
 name. Vicious and insensitive,
 duplicitous and ingenuous,
 deceptive and malevolent,
 you were nicknamed by many
 The Snatcher, indication
 of the hidden savagery of your
 dark heart's purpose."
 "You name me as you knew
 me", she replied.
 "In life my purpose was to be a
 teacher and cultivator;
 the work of the sciences, the
 glorious vision,
 the ennobled idea of human
 perfectibility and knowledge,
 but seduced by power and
 grabbing greed, my dark anima,

 I climbed the bloody pole of
 executive power,
 steadily ascending and hanging at
 each vantage point,
 taking the opportunity to shit
 on those beneath me;
 forever sounding for new means
 of self-advancement,

I rejoiced with the mantle of a
 saint at my election.
 Where there was harmony, I
 brought discord;
 where truth, error; where bright
 faith, dark doubt;
 wherever hope, I worked to
 bring despair and isolation.
 In life I thought I had achieved
 the final freedom:
 freedom of the wolf, freedom of
 the hung buzzard,
 of the snake bright as a flag that
 hunts the nest,
 of commitment to nothing but a
 clotted 'Me';
 in death, I have learned how
 hollow and self-divided."
 With these words, she opened
 her soiled coat to the chest:
 there, where her own heart
 should have been hidden,
 tied to its true purpose of
 circulation and animation,
 was a great cavity, more cave-
 like than biological,
 and as I stared in disbelief, new
 horror overcame me:
 from the gaping wound in her
 chest a bat flew out,
 one tiny, black and vicious. It
 circled her head twice,
 then with a grin of malevolence
 on its mouse-like face,
 flew off into the gloom and
 shadows of the abyss.

Next is a poem from the Cheshire-
 based poet Jan Dean. Her work is pithy
 and memorable, as you will quickly
 appreciate from this example:

North West Passage
 By Jan Dean

Rae found Franklin's men
 all dead, of course
 and clear evidence
 that in extremis
 they had turned cannibal
 Franklin's widow
 demonised John Rae
 he never got the credit
 for the part he played
 paving the ice
 for Amundsen
 politics
 stories that don't suit
 melted refrozen
 in a safer shape
 you could be forgiven
 for mistaking Margaret's funeral
 for a send-off for a saint
 though there was clear evidence
 of cannibalism



Obituary: Mrs T
By Alistair Findlay

To recap then

she was a bore, a bully, friendless
joyless, loveless, demanding
controlling, snobbish, racist
mean ... even to her own dad

Rest in peace

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to all the poets who contributed to this column. Thanks to Jan Dean, Alistair Findlay, Terry Jones, Pru Kitching, Alexis Lykiard and Alan Morrison. Please continue sending your poems to artseditor@communistreview.org.uk.

Thanks also to Waterloo Press for permission to publish the two poems by Ian Parks from his latest collection.

Notes and References

- 1 I Parks, *The Exile's House*, Waterloo Press, 2012.
- 2 This poem was first published in Pru Kitching, *The Krakow Egg*, Arrowhead Press, 2009.
- 3 *The Robin Hood Book: Verse Versus Austerity*, A Morrison and A Topping, eds, Caparison Press, downloadable for £2.99.

The pithiest form of poetry, though, is the haiku. Here are three haikus from Alexis Lykiard:

EPITAPHS FOR THE BLESSED MARGARET

By Alexis Lykiard

Graffito for a Grave

Writ large on a wall
somewhere in Brixton: IRON
LADY? RUST IN PEACE

Shopping for the Nation

Her greed-grocer mind
spelled *Upward Mobility*
whatever the price

Early Learner in the Class Struggle

Young 'Snobby Roberts'
reinvented herself, moved
on, waging worse wars

Finally, bringing up the rear of our procession, a piece of 'found poetry' from the Scottish poet Alistair Findlay. It is taken from Sam Wollaston's TV review column in the Guardian, 29 April 2013:

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