

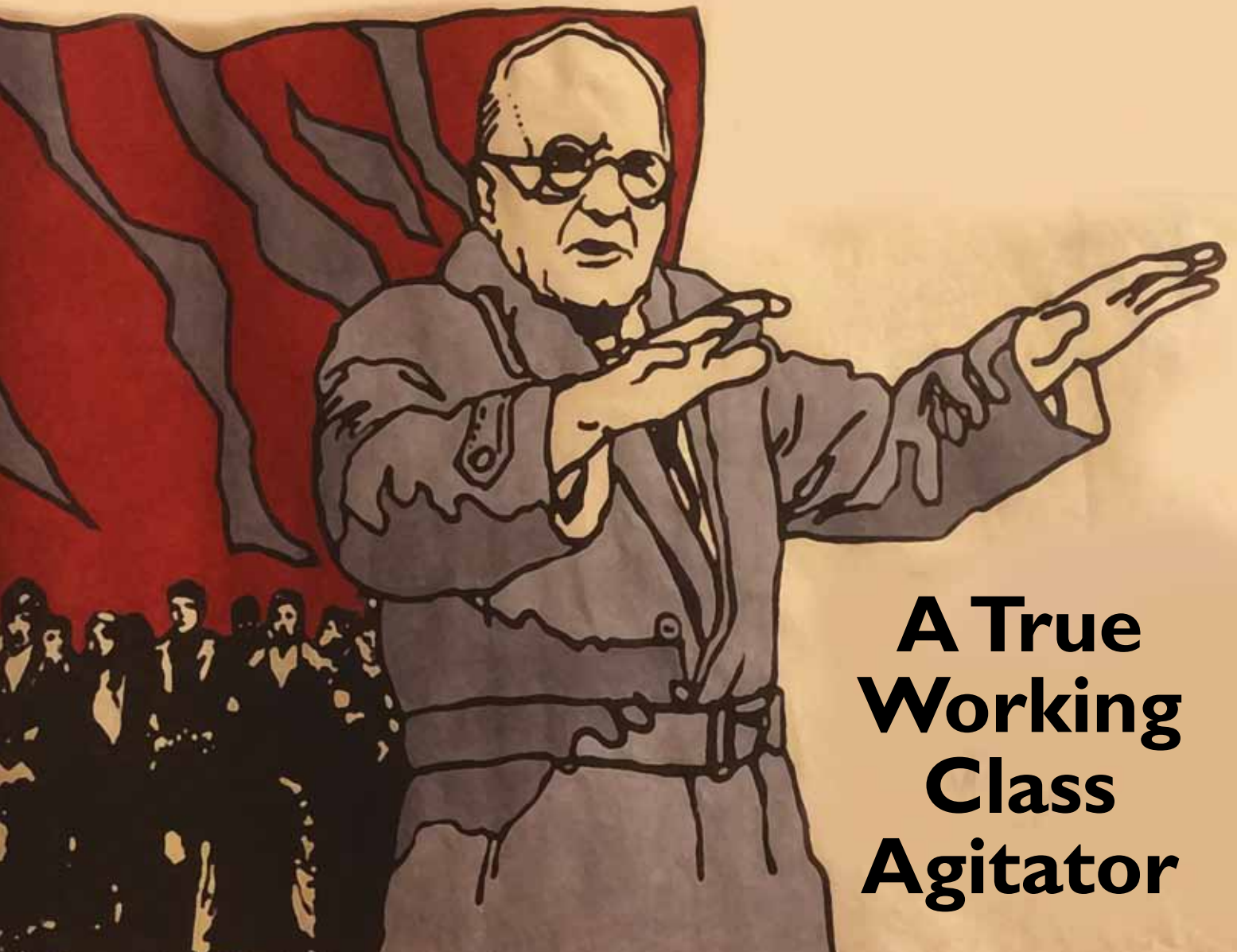


COMMUNIST REVIEW

- **Hugh MacDiarmid, Wal Hannington and Abe Moffat** Essays honouring Willie Gallacher
- **World Peace Council** Greetings to the re-launched British Peace Assembly
- **Stavros Tassos** Fight for socialism-communism
- **Hans Heinz Holz** discussion: "Revisionists are always Kantians"
- plus discussion, poetry and Soul Food: 'Pens of Truth'



WILLIAM GALLACHER 1881-1965



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Class
Agitator**

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Cover image of Willie Gallacher from
the banner of the Scottish Committee
of the Communist Party

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contributors

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editorial



By Martin Levy

FORMER LABOUR prime minister Harold Wilson once observed that “A week is a long time in politics.” Maybe he had in mind the more extensive statement, attributed to Lenin, that “There are decades where nothing happens; and there are weeks where decades happen.”

Or maybe not. Wilson was, for his time, a right-wing social democrat, although significantly to the left of Tony Blair and Gordon Brown. Nonetheless both quotations are apposite assessments of the changed political scene in Britain over the recent period.

Jeremy Corbyn’s campaign for the Labour leadership, on a clear left-wing programme, energised thousands of people who had become disillusioned with politics, while his election has transformed the direction of the political debate. For perhaps the first time since Keir Hardie, the Labour Party has a leader who takes a principled working class and anti-imperialist position on many issues, one who stands shoulder to shoulder with the trade union movement and working class people in struggle generally. It is an enormous step forward in building opposition to the ruling class onslaught being driven by Cameron’s Tory government. Taken together with the development of the People’s Assembly Against Austerity, it opens up the prospect, articulated in the Communist Party’s programme *Britain’s Road to Socialism*, of the Alternative Economic and Political Strategy - the building of a popular democratic anti-monopoly alliance around a Left-Wing Programme for government. There is a dialectical relationship between mass struggle for the building of such an alliance and the development of political leadership around such a Programme.

However, some words of caution are essential. Corbyn’s victory, stunning as it was, took place against the background of low levels of both trade union mobilisation and educated class consciousness. Yes, tens of thousands of people have joined or rejoined the Labour Party, and the TUC conference gave three standing ovations to Jeremy, but only a

small fraction of the trade union-affiliated Labour Party membership took part in the leadership ballot - even if all actual members are counted in.

This disconnect between political activists and the mass of the working population is clearly recognised by the ruling class, as the virulent media campaign against Corbyn demonstrates. Furthermore, given the right-wing domination of the Parliamentary Labour Party, Jeremy’s team has inevitably had to make compromises on both policy and spokespeople. For the Left, two consequences flow from this: firstly, the need to avoid raising expectations too highly - even Jeremy’s approach is, after all, a reformist social-democratic one, albeit left-wing; and, secondly, the crucial necessity of mass campaigning now by Labour and trade union activists to win support for the new direction. It will be essential for Labour to make gains at next year’s local, Scottish and Welsh elections, and in particular for Left candidates to be among those.

The European Union and NATO are two areas where early compromises have been made. Given the current political balance within the Parliamentary Labour Party, these retreats are not so surprising; but they in turn reflect the lack of understanding within the labour movement and the wider public about the nature of imperialism, and the EU as part of that. Likewise, there is the widespread, but erroneous, view that the state is neutral. It will not be possible for a Labour government to make significant progress on a socialist course without facing up to these issues.

All this points to the need for a stronger Communist Party, rooted in the labour movement, not only to provide Marxist analysis and perspective, but also to give working class leadership at the level of the workplace and the community. In this issue we salute the memory of an outstanding communist leader, who was, in his own words, a “working class agitator”, before, during and after the time when he was an MP - William Gallacher, who died 50 years ago in August 1965. The three articles

presented here were tributes to Gallacher from his contemporaries, for a collection published in 1966. They demonstrate the essential link between class struggle, political struggle and Marxist perspective. Jeremy Corbyn and other Left Labour MPs have certainly been “working class agitators”, but the building of an alliance around a Left Wing Programme would be enormously strengthened if there were Communist MPs in Parliament as well.

The crucial importance of combatting imperialism was recognised by the re-founding of the British Peace Assembly (BPA) in July this year. The BPA is not intended to supplant other peace organisations in Britain; rather, as an affiliate of the World Peace Council (WPC), it exists to provide a comprehensive anti-imperialist perspective, linking the struggle for peace with international solidarity and opposing colonialism, neocolonialism and all forms of discrimination. The WPC’s greetings to the BPA are reproduced in this issue of *CR*.

The anti-working class nature of the European Union has been demonstrated by the Greek crisis. There, the people elected the anti-austerity SYRIZA government, but the EU was having nothing of it - the profits of the banks were sacrosanct. As Stavros Tassos from the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) shows here, SYRIZA sowed illusions that the crisis could be solved by the capitalist road within the EU - and then capitulated. SYRIZA’s victory in the September 2015 general election means that the harsh austerity policies will continue. Socialism is the only alternative.

Continuing the anti-imperialist theme, we include here the first English translation of T E Nicholas’s tribute to James Keir Hardie, to mark the centenary of the latter’s death; while Soul Food includes an analysis, by Magdalena Thompson, of the anti-war sentiments of Byron’s poem, *The Eve of Waterloo*. A 2011 interview with German philosopher Hans Heinz Holz, a letter to the editor and two discussion contributions complete this edition.

50 YEARS ON: TRIBUTES TO WILLIE GALLACHER 25.12.1881-12.08.1965

A Sprig of White Heather in the Future's Lapel

By Hugh MacDiarmid†

“Jesus, he's got it.
He's got whatever
that thing called charisma is. He's sure.
He's confident. He's got presence.”

For Willie Gallacher's eightieth birthday celebrations arranged by the Scottish Committee of the Communist Party of Great Britain in St Andrew's Halls, Glasgow, on Sunday, 24 December, 1961, I wrote a poem entitled *Scottish Universal*. That title was the name of the combined business enterprises of a Glasgow millionaire, Sir Hugh Fraser, but I made it clear at once that I was not writing about these, but about something truly entitled to the name, the life-work of Willie Gallacher. And in the poem I said of him:

One of the few decent politicians in Britain today!
That does not prevent a man having enemies.
On the contrary, the more unswervingly upright
The more powerful the hatred he arouses,
The deadlier the enmity combining against him.

So we have had it here – a man indefatigable
In his attention to affairs, serving his constituents
With sustained ability and scrupulous devotion,
A genial man, exemplary citizen, and loving husband.
Not many men tested in the acrid fires
Of public life come through so intact and unsullied,
Pure gold thrice refined. I remember as a boy
Searching a wide Border moor, acres of purple
heather,
Looking for white heather – and suddenly
I saw it, hundreds of yards away,
Unmistakable — so in the hosts of men I've known
Willie Gallacher shines out, single of purpose,
Lovely in his integrity, exemplifying
All that is best in public service – distinct,

Clear-headed and clean-hearted,
A great humanist, true comrade and friend,
Without variableness or shadow of turning;
Eighty years young in his sterling spirit
And the immaculate courage of his convictions.
A sprig of white heather in the future's lapel,
A wave and cheerful handshake for all mankind!
But surely he has some fault? Yes, of course,
The worst of all; the unforgivable knack of being
always right.

I have had the pleasure and privilege of knowing most of the pioneers and most of their prominent successors in the Labour, Socialist, Trade-Union, and Co-operative movement in Scotland, which provided the spear-head for the subsequent development of the causes in Great Britain. I knew Keir Hardie, Robert Smillie, James Maxton, John Wheatley, David Kirkwood, and all the others, including the one outstanding veteran who survives today – Gallacher's comrade and friend, Abe Moffat, the leader until recently of the Scottish Miners, who in his autobiography pays due tribute to Gallacher, for so long Communist Member of Parliament for the great coal-mining constituency of West Fife.

But it is none of these men I would bracket with Gallacher, and certainly none of Scotland's present Labour MPs and trade-union leaders, poor *epigoni* all of them of the stalwarts they have succeeded.

No. The only comparable figure to associate with Gallacher is John Maclean who died in 1923. Maclean was in many respects the greatest proletarian leader Scotland has yet produced.

In his autobiography, *Revolt on the Clyde* (1936), Gallacher says of Maclean:

“His whole life centred in the fight for revolutionary Socialism All over Scotland he went, rousing the



Willie Gallacher with his wife Jean at a party given to him in Paisley on his eightieth birthday.

workers for the war against capitalism. Of medium height and sturdy build, he was a living dynamo of energy, driving, always driving towards his goal – the revolutionary struggle for power – the realisation of the Socialist Commonwealth.”

What Gallacher says of Maclean must now be said *a fortiori* of Gallacher himself, and indeed what I wrote in a poem on Maclean is equally true of Gallacher:

Scotland has had few men whose names
Matter – or should matter – to intelligent people,
But of these Maclean, next to Burns, was the greatest
And it should be of him, with every Scotsman and
Scotswoman
To the end of time, as it was of Lenin in Russia
When you might talk to a woman who had been
A young girl in 1917 and find
That the name of Stalin lit no fires,
But when you asked her if she had seen Lenin
Her eyes lighted up and her reply
Was the Russian word which means
Both beautiful and red.
Lenin, she said, was ‘krassivy, krassivy’.
John Maclean too was ‘krassivy, krassivy’,
A description no other Scot has ever deserved.

Gallacher certainly deserves it.

I remember when we organised a great rally in Glasgow on 4 December, 1948, in commemoration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the death of Maclean, how although he had died as long ago as 1923 and the younger people did not know even his name, we found all over Scotland and even away in the Shetland Isles people who remembered him and had had their Marxist teaching from him, and they came to the rally in their hundreds to testify to his undying influence and their abiding gratitude to him. So it will be with Gallacher. He remained wonderfully spry

until towards the end when serious illness beset him. He always had a wonderful resilience, freshness, and even gaiety of manner – a quiet but irrepressible gaiety. Maclean, although he had a vein of humour too, was on the contrary an austere and even sombre figure. Gallacher had more friends, a greater popularity, than Maclean ever had, but created fewer disciples with the concentrated and enduring passion Maclean inculcated in his.

But what a long life-time of indeflectible devotion Gallacher has had. It is only in the last few years his bright spirit was dimmed – since the death of his wife Jean. That was a wonderful marriage. They were perfect comrades. In 1962, when my own seventieth birthday was celebrated, I remember how on a reference to her Gallacher broke down – and I could hardly continue what I was saying, being choked with emotion. For I had loved them both, and knew only too well how terrible, how irreparable, a loss Jean’s death had been to him. But when a man is over eighty his life-work may well be accounted done. Gallacher had run a great race with time, and all who have any regard for social justice may well cry: “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.”

It is a matter of satisfaction to the present writer – as it was to Gallacher himself – that the question which towards the end of Maclean’s life was a cause of division between Gallacher and Maclean (as it has been a cause of division between me also and many of my comrades), the cause of Scotland, has been resolved.

As I have said in a recent essay elsewhere:

“In the early days of the Labour and Socialist movement all the Scottish pioneers, like Keir Hardie, Willie Adamson, Willie Stewart, were strong Scottish Nationalists and Scottish Home Rule was a constant plank in their platform, but Labour went back on that during the inter-war period In these circumstances I welcome (though I regard as dangerously belated) the *Communist Policy for Scotland* issued by the Scottish Committee of the Communist Party at the General Election in 1964. This is what John Maclean contended for”

This healing of the breach on the Scottish issue between Maclean’s position and Gallacher’s in the official policy of the CPGB falls like a tardy but invaluable tribute today on the life-work and personalities of these two great working-class leaders, and augurs well for the future.

In conclusion, let me summarise Gallacher’s life-story. Born in a working-class family in Paisley on Christmas Day 1881, Gallacher was already working part-time at ten and full-time at twelve as a shop boy until he was old enough to begin his engineering apprenticeship.

Up to the founding of the Communist Party of Great Britain in 1920, he was a propagandist for the Social Democratic Federation and the British Socialist Party, a staunch colleague and comrade-in-arms of John Maclean in the great revolutionary agitation on the Clydeside and in the Fife and Lanarkshire coalfields.

Having served his apprenticeship he went to work in the Albion Motor Works at Scotstoun, Glasgow, and quickly won recognition as the leader of the workers in that factory. In the years 1914 to 1918 he became the leader of the great mass movements which swept Clydeside: the Rent Strike, Munitions Strike, Forty-hours Strike, and unemployed demonstrations.

He was imprisoned, batoned, and imprisoned a second time during these years. It was during this time he helped to found the shop stewards’ movement.

Upholder of working-class internationalism, he was among





Gallacher at the head of the May Day demonstration, Glasgow 1963. Hugh MacDiarmid with the push-chair.

the first to welcome the Russian Revolution, and was a delegate from the Clyde shop stewards to the Second Congress of the Communist International. There he met Lenin, who was quick to recognise and appreciate his peerless qualities as a working-class leader, and in the course of their talks gave Gallacher the benefit of the experiences of the Russian workers.

Gallacher's internationalism found expression too in his staunch defence of Republican Spain from the earliest days of the struggle against fascism, his consistent stand for the freedom and independence of Ireland, his unrelenting fight against colonial oppression wherever it existed.

In 1935 he was elected MP for West Fife and the fifteen years' battle in Parliament that followed is a legend in itself. In 1938, when Labour, Liberal and ILP were wishing Chamberlain "God Speed", Gallacher's voice alone rang out above the din of cheering, opposing Chamberlain's mission of betrayal and warning of the consequences.

Here was a Communist Member of Parliament in action, displaying lion-hearted courage to expose the danger of appeasement of Hitler. History has brought its tragic confirmation of the correctness of his stand. In Parliament he gave unstinting service to his constituents, to thousands outside his constituency whose cases he took up, and to the old-age pensioners whose battle he fought continually. He showed himself a working-class Member of Parliament in the fullest sense of the term, on every question and at all times defending the interests of the working class.

He was a life-long active member of his trade union and until recently was the active chairman of his branch of the Amalgamated Engineering Union, while his championship of

the Co-operative movement is well-known to all active co-operators.

While in contrast to the Labour Party Gallacher always recognised and stressed the need for a revolutionary working-class party – the one thing that was lacking in the war years 1914-1919 – and, as R Page Arnot has said, that "marked him out as a leader of the working class who can be trusted, not only to lead the mass struggle as he did on the Clyde, but to lead it in such a way, now and in the future, as to ensure the victory of Socialism in Britain" – in the absence now in Scotland at least of any other man of Gallacher's calibre, it is clear that this great lesson of his life-work is fully appreciated by many and there are not lacking signs of able younger men (and women), kindred in spirit, who have profited by his experience and example, and who in due course will follow on where perforce he has left off – and never without gratitude to him for the wonderful way in which he "blazed the trail".

It is a cheerful, debonair little figure who passes into the future – a dauntless fighter who in the vicissitudes of his life, and in the appalling circumstances of two great wars and unparalleled unemployment and destitution of the Scottish working class – must often have felt (in the words of the old Scottish song) "O, were not my heart light I would die".

Scotland – or, for that matter, Great Britain – has had no better celebrant this century of the "old simple celebration of life tuned to the highest pitch".

■ *First published in Essays in Honour of William Gallagher, P M Kemp-Ashraf and J Mitchell, eds, Humbolt University, Berlin, 1966, pp 16-25.*

50 YEARS ON: TRIBUTES TO WILLIE GALLACHER 25.12.1881-12.08.1965

We Were in Prison Together

By Wal Hannington†

More than half a century has passed since the name of William Gallacher first aroused animated discussion amongst engineering trade unionists in Britain. It was in the early months of the First World War, when he was working at the 'Albion', a large engineering works in Glasgow, Scotland.

In November 1914 a wages dispute arose between the engineering unions and the Glasgow and Clydeside employers. The employers refused to meet a wage claim of the unions, long overdue, and dragged out the negotiations with paltry offers which the unions rejected. Several engineering unions were involved and, in order to co-ordinate their efforts in negotiation, a body known as the Allied Trades Committee had been formed, and Bill Gallacher was a member of this committee.

In January 1915 Bill realised that some of the full-time trade-union officials on this committee intended to reach a compromise settlement with the employers against the wishes of the vast majority of union members, and he had no hesitation in exposing this manoeuvre at mass meetings of the workers. For this he aroused the enmity of the right-wing trade union officials but the praise of the workers whose interests he loyally served.

The showdown came with the employers in the following month (February), when all the important

engineering factories and shipyards on Clydeside came out on strike under the leadership of the shop stewards and some reliable district union officers, but not the executives of the unions. Bill Gallacher became the outstanding leader in this strike. Despite the threats of arrests and imprisonment for striking in wartime the unofficial strike continued for two weeks and terminated by decision of the strike committee in an organised manner with the workers' ranks unbroken.

This struggle marked the beginning of a most important development in trade union organisation which was to play a decisive part in defending the conditions of the workers throughout the war years and beyond.

The executives of all the principal trade unions, with the exception of the miners, entered into an agreement with the Government in March 1915 to surrender the right to strike for the duration of the war, and to give up many protective practices in industry which the unions had established only after hard struggles in the past. The engineering employers in particular were quick to take advantage of this agreement between the Government and the union executives and began to disregard the interests of the workers and impose arbitrary conditions upon them. Workers who refused to obey the orders of the employer were arrested and imprisoned under a special Act of Parliament, known as the 'Munitions Act', which set up punitive tribunals with

judicial powers. The protective power of the official trade union machinery had been surrendered by the executives and it soon became clear that some new power must be devised in the industry for the defence of the workers.

That power was to be found on the workshop floor with shop stewards in the position of leadership. Before the 1914 war most of the trade unions in the engineering industry made no provision in their rules for the election of shop stewards; and those that did limited the functions of shop stewards to the simple duty of inspecting the cards of trade unionists in the factory at monthly intervals to see that they were not running into arrears with their union contributions, and also reporting employment vacancies and conditions of employment in the factory to the union district office. Shop stewards were not recognised by the employers and had no negotiating rights under any agreement between the employers and the unions. But the unofficial strike of the Clydeside workers led by William Gallacher in February 1915 had shown the way forward when the official leadership of the unions had surrendered their right to lead the workers in action by the agreement which they had signed with the Government.

The lesson of the February strike was quickly understood and acted upon by the setting up of a joint shop stewards' organisation embracing all the organised factories on Clydeside and known as



the Clyde Workers' Committee, with William Gallacher as its chairman. News of the effective activities of this Clydeside shop stewards' organisation reached the other main engineering centres throughout Great Britain and inspired them to follow the example by setting up their own joint shop stewards' organisations on the pattern of the Clyde Workers' Committee. It was then that the name of Bill Gallacher became prominently known beyond the Scottish border amongst all militant trade unionists throughout Great Britain. They saw in him the fearless and loyal fighter that he was, and were ready to follow his lead.

The next stage of development was the linking up of the district organisations of shop stewards by the formation of the National Shop Stewards' and Workers' Committee Movement. It was this movement, through its district and divisional sections, which coordinated and directed all the struggles of the engineering workers during the war years when the official leaderships of the unions were committed to a policy of no militant action.

Many great strikes were fought and won by the shop stewards' movement. The power of this movement rapidly developed and compelled the employers everywhere to negotiate directly with the factory committee of shop stewards about wages and working conditions. The Clyde Workers' Committee, under the chairmanship of Bill Gallacher, was outstanding for its militancy, and the Glasgow area became popularly known amongst the engineering workers as the 'Red Clyde'.

I was a shop steward working as a toolmaker in a London engineering factory and I followed with great interest and admiration the activities of Bill Gallacher in Glasgow. Our affinity lay not only in the fact that we were both engineering shop stewards. We also shared the same political views as members of the British Socialist Party, the party which in 1920 constituted the chief organisation for the establishment of the Communist Party of Great Britain.

Although the development of the National Shop Stewards' and Workers' Committee Movement during the 1914-1918 war brought about mass recruitment to the trade unions, there were many right-wing trade union officials who resented this movement and declared it 'unconstitutional'. They were too bigoted to understand that this movement was the inevitable outcome of their own weak attitude in sacrificing

trade union rights to the warmongering Government in the agreement which they had entered into in March 1915. They were too narrow-minded to understand that when the workers are debarred from defending themselves officially against the employers, they will devise other means for doing so unofficially, as they did in these circumstances by the building of this powerful rank-and-file movement.

The NSSWCM was not a counter-organisation to the trade unions. It was, in fact, a powerful workshop force for the building of the trade union membership and the upholding of trade union principles. I was a member of the Toolmakers' Society but I also held a membership card of the National Shop Stewards' Movement which specified in its rules that nobody could hold a card in that movement unless they belonged to their appropriate trade union. Some right-wing trade union leaders declared that the Shop Stewards' Movement was attempting to 'usurp' the functions of the trade unions. On the contrary, the members of this movement untiringly gave unpaid service in the routine administrative work of the union branches and district committees. Bill Gallacher was actually an unpaid member of the executive council of the United Brassfounders' Association and I was on the London district committee of the Toolmakers' Society and president of my branch. And there were thousands of other members of the National Shop Stewards' Movement who held various unpaid offices in their unions.

The NSSWCM had created a new organisational power for the trade unions right on the workshop floor by the formation of strong factory committees for the first time throughout the whole engineering industry. That form of organisation has persisted to the present time and has become firmly established as an official part of trade union structure with full negotiating rights for shop stewards. Bill Gallacher was one of the outstanding pioneers of this important historical development which has so greatly benefited the workers in industry by providing the machinery for prompt action in remedying their grievances.

The militant activities of Bill Gallacher during the 1914-1918 war made him a target for Government persecution and he was arrested and imprisoned for a long period in an effort to remove his influence amongst the workers on the Clyde. In January 1919 – two months after the termination of the war – when the normal working

week was fifty-four hours, the Clyde Workers' Committee raised the demand for the forty-hour working week. It received the support of the Glasgow Trades Council and a number of local trade union officials. So a joint committee was formed which declared that unless the employers met this claim by the end of the month all engineering and shipbuilding workers in Glasgow and Clydeside would cease work. Bill Gallacher was appointed as the chief organiser for the strike, and with his indefatigable energy he addressed many factory gate meetings and held discussions with dozens of factory committees in preparation for the strike. His efforts were well rewarded at the end of the month by a complete response to the strike call.

On the fifth day of the strike a huge demonstration of strikers marched to the Glasgow City Council Chambers in George Square, where a deputation from the strike committee were to interview the Lord Provost of Glasgow. Although the demonstration was quite peaceful there was a very strong mobilisation of mounted and foot police in the vicinity of the square, and whilst Bill Gallacher was addressing the workers in front of the Council Chambers the police drew their truncheons and launched a savage attack on the demonstration. The workers fought back and a bloody battle ensued with heavy casualties on both sides. Bill Gallacher was clubbed to the ground by the police and, with blood streaming from a gash in his head, he was dragged across the square and placed under arrest.

This brutal attack by the police on a peaceful demonstration failed to break the spirit of the strikers, and the strike continued as solid as when it started. Edinburgh and Belfast had joined the strike and there were hopes that it would spread to other areas and become a national strike. But opposition by the reactionary national officials of the unions prevented this, and in face of this situation the Clyde strike committee decided to terminate the strike at the end of the second week. After the strike Bill Gallacher, with six other members of the strike committee, was brought to trial in the High Court at Edinburgh and sentenced to three months imprisonment.

The Communist Party of Great Britain was formed in August 1920 at a conference held in London consisting mainly of delegates from the British Socialist Party with groups from a number of smaller socialist societies. But in Scotland there was a strong section

Gallacher as a young man. A rare photo.



of the Socialist Labour Party and others who were opposed to unity because they believed mainly in industrial action and were anti-parliamentarian. They were opposed to becoming part of a united Communist Party which sought affiliation to the British Labour Party. At that time Bill Gallacher was associated with this section, mainly because he had a deep-rooted contempt for those leaders of the Labour Party who had behaved so treacherously in regard to socialist principles during the war.

However, he had been invited to Moscow in July 1920 to attend the Second Congress of the Communist International as a delegate from the Clyde shop stewards. There he had discussions with Lenin about the formation of a united Communist Party in Britain, and Lenin convinced him that his attitude was one of left sectarianism, and that when he returned to Britain he ought to endeavour to persuade his Scottish comrades that they should unite with the newly-formed Communist Party.

On returning to Scotland he found that, during his absence, a conference had been held in Glasgow where the question of forming a separate Scottish Communist Party had been discussed. A further conference was due to be held a few days after his return to elect an executive committee. Bill Gallacher attended this conference and reported on his talks with Lenin. He strongly opposed the formation of a Scottish party, and recommended that the conference should elect a provisional committee to open unity negotiations with the Communist Party which had been formed at the London conference. He won the overwhelming majority of the delegates for his proposal. The provisional committee was formed and unity discussions took place at another national conference of the party held in Leeds in January 1921, which resulted in the Scottish section agreeing to come into the CPGB.

Bill Gallacher had won the day and thereby prevented a split in the communist camp in the early formative months of the party. In April 1921 another national conference was held in Manchester to agree finally on the constitution and rules of the party as a section of the Communist International. I attended this conference as a delegate from London, and Bill was there as a delegate from Glasgow. Up to that time I had never met Bill Gallacher personally but I had closely followed the news of his activities and therefore knew





Communist leaders released from prison. Front row from left: Albert Inkpin, Wal Hannington, Willie Gallacher, Harry Pollitt.

him by repute and held him in high esteem. We then became personally acquainted at the conference, and this contact marked the beginning of many years of joint co-operation in party activity and a sincere personal friendship which I greatly value.

In the summer of 1923 we were in Moscow together attending an enlarged plenum of the Communist International. Bill had been in Moscow before, but this was my first visit, and whilst we were awaiting the opening date of the conference, which was to be held in the Kremlin, he kindly offered to show me the places of interest in Moscow. I remember him taking me down the Pushkin Boulevard to show me a battle-scarred building where the reactionary Cadets of the Tsarist regime made their last stand in Moscow against the Bolshevik revolution in November

1917. As we stood looking across the Boulevard at the battered walls of the building I remember the triumphant expression of Bill as he said to me, "Yes, that's where our lads finished them off in 1917!" He also took me to the Moscow Soviet headquarters on Gorky Street, and to the party headquarters, where, to my delight, he introduced me to several of the old Bolsheviks who were in the leadership of the Russian party.

Shortly after my return to England from Moscow in 1923 I was elected to the executive committee of the British Communist Party and this brought me into still closer association with Comrade Gallacher who was already a leading member of the executive.

It was a period of acute industrial unrest and intense activity for the party. The employers in all industries were continuing their offensive against

wages and working conditions which had started at the onset of the economic depression in 1920. There were more than two million workers unemployed and I was the National Organiser of a powerful organisation called the National Unemployed Workers' Movement. We were organising hunger marches and great demonstrations of unemployed in all parts of Britain. In June 1925 the coalminers of Great Britain were faced with another demand by the colliery owners for drastic wage reductions and a lengthening of the working week. This was an ultimatum that, unless these conditions were accepted within one month, a lockout would be declared. The Miners' Federation of Great Britain rejected this demand and was supported by the whole trade union movement which threatened a general strike if the colliery owners imposed these terms. The

conflict was avoided by the Government agreeing at the last moment to subsidise the industry to prevent the wage cuts.

The date of this victory (Friday July 31) became known as 'Red Friday'. But the Government had stipulated that the subsidy was only for a period of nine months and would expire at the beginning of May 1926. It soon became clear that the Government had merely bought a breathing space in which to prepare its organisation to defeat a general strike if it was again threatened at the end of the subsidy period. Strike-breaking organisation was being feverishly prepared and preparations were also being made to use the army against the strikers if necessary. It was a period in which the General Council of the Trade Union Congress should have been preparing its counter-action to defeat the plans of the Government and coal-owners. But, astonishingly, no such steps were taken by the national leadership of the unions. The Communist Party clearly saw the danger and called upon the workers to prepare for the struggle. The rank-and-file workers were responding to the call of the party, and great meetings and conferences were being held under the leadership of the Party and the National Minority Movement (a trade union left-wing organisation led by the Party) to prepare for a general strike in May 1926. Bill Gallacher played a leading part in this campaign and frequently we were together addressing huge meetings.

The Government became alarmed about the great response which the Party campaign was arousing amongst the workers throughout Britain, and at the beginning of October 1925 it issued police warrants for the arrest of twelve executive committee members including Comrade Gallacher and myself.

Our trial took place at the Old. Bailey and we were all found guilty on three charges: (1) sedition; (2) publishing seditious libels against Ministers of the Government; and (3) incitement to mutiny amongst the armed forces of the State. This latter charge was based upon the appeals which we had made to the soldiers not to shoot at the workers in the event of a general strike. Bill Gallacher, Harry Pollitt, Albert Inkpin, Bill Rust and myself were sentenced to one year's imprisonment on each charge, but the sentences were to run concurrently. The other seven comrades were sentenced to six months. The longer sentences of our five were because we had been in prison before for our political activities.

The General Strike did take place in

May 1926 whilst we were still serving our sentences. We were in Wandsworth Prison, London, and at week-ends huge demonstrations of London workers marched with bands and banners to the prison walls where great meetings were held demanding our release. We could hear these demonstrations whilst we were locked in our cells and such expressions of support and solidarity always stimulated our spirit and made us more than ever proud of belonging to the working class. Those demonstrations always threw the prison into a state of uproar with the warders rushing along the corridors of cells trying to quieten hundreds of prisoners.

There is no political division in the English prison system, so although we were sentenced for our political activities our treatment in prison was exactly the same as for those who were in for criminal offences. We wore the same prison uniform, received the same meagre and distasteful food, suffered the same disciplinary treatment with long periods of solitary confinement in the cells, and had to endure the same harsh treatment which the regulations compelled the warders to impose. Whilst all that was calculated, not to reform, but to break the spirit of their prisoner, it never at any time came near to breaking the spirit of anyone in our group, although we often saw other prisoners who were broken by it. But we had a firm political faith to sustain us and we all remained convinced communists throughout.

Comrade Gallacher was a splendid example of communist reliability. He even drafted a thesis on the political prospects of the General Strike and the conduct of the TUC General Council, written on small pieces of rough toilet paper which he passed surreptitiously from one to the other in our group inviting our opinions on the subject. We replied by the same secretive method and thereby conducted an interesting exchange of opinions which continued for several weeks, due to the political initiative of Comrade Gallacher.

Our twelve comrades were split into two separate groups, and for a few hours each day the five of us who were serving the long sentences worked in the large mailbag workshop. But the prison authorities, knowing of our reputation as political agitators, and that we had been convicted of sedition and incitement to mutiny, apparently decided to minimise our contact with other prisoners by keeping us together in the furthest corner of the workshop. Therefore, although a silence rule was strictly enforced by

disciplinary warders. I frequently managed to hold short ventriloquist talks with Comrade Gallacher and always found him cheerful and responsive despite the depressing circumstances of prison life.

The close confinement of prison life with its unnatural severance of free human relationship can easily produce in a prisoner a state of mental irritation which expresses itself in an angry mood, not only towards the warders – whom no prisoner likes anyway – but also towards a fellow prisoner; and if he is also reduced to the same mental state it sometimes results in violence. We saw fights between prisoners who had reached this state of nervous tension. So prison life is a hard test of human relationship, but our group of communists had a bond of comradeship which was never broken in the slightest under the stress of unnatural prison conditions. There was no firmer upholder of that bond than my good comrade Bill Gallacher. He was unshakeable in his loyalty throughout the whole period of our imprisonment.

In the 1935 parliamentary elections he was elected as a Communist Member of Parliament for the constituency of West Fife, Scotland. He held that seat for fifteen years and gave excellent service to the working class by his forceful speeches in the House of Commons and by numerous other activities amongst the people. He never lost his true working-class character despite the many deviating influences of parliamentary associations under our present capitalist system of society. He held firmly to his communist principles and became greatly admired and respected for it even amongst many who disagreed with him and tried to woo him to their side. But this is a page of history about which others will no doubt write to reveal the excellent record of Bill Gallacher as a Communist MP.¹

Throughout my personal association with him covering forty-five years I always found him to be a grand and warm-hearted comrade that any man should be proud to know.

■ *First published in Essays in Honour of William Gallagher, P M Kemp-Ashraf and J Mitchell, eds, Humbolt University, Berlin, 1966, pp 26-33. Wal Hannington passed away on 17 November 1966, shortly before publication.*

Notes and References

¹ See, for example, the following article by Abe Moffat in this issue of *CR-Ed*.

50 YEARS ON: TRIBUTES TO WILLIE GALLACHER 25.12.1881-12.08.1965

Willie Gallacher, Communist MP for West Fife from 1933 to 1950

By Abe Moffat†

MY FIRST CONTACT with Willie Gallacher was in 1921 as a young working miner in West Fife, an important part of the Scottish coalfield.

At that time, the British miners were locked out by the coal-owners to impose wage reductions during the period of mass unemployment arising from the world economic crisis. Willie Gallacher had participated in every miners' strike with the exception of 1926, when he was in jail for twelve months along with seven other communist leaders. During the 1921 strike he led many mass demonstrations of miners and their wives against the ruthless coal-owners who were prepared to use all the state forces to defeat the miners.

This strike was more bitter than any previous strike in the history of the British miners and the Government backed up the coal-owners by the use of police and armed forces to ensure victory for them. The miners held out for three months and, after being let down by the right-wing trade union leaders of the Triple Alliance, were forced to go back on wage reductions. At that time I was very proud to march along with such a stalwart as Willie Gallacher and from then on we developed a very close and

personal friendship in addition to being members of the Communist Party.

When he came to West Fife, previous to and during his fifteen years in Parliament, he lived in our home in the mining village of Lumphinnans. With this personal contact you obviously get to know a person even better, and I would say that he was one of the most humane men I have ever met in my whole life.

Willie Gallagher's Background

Like many other workers who came through extreme poverty, Willie was an agitator and socialist at a very early age. In the year 1906 he became a member of the Independent Labour Party for a short time. He was best known during this period as an engineer for his outstanding activity on the Clyde shipyard in Glasgow.

During the First World War he played a leading role in the fight against the imperialist war, along with John Maclean, and he was known all over the country for the leading part he played in the engineering strike on the Clyde which compelled the Lloyd George Government to introduce the Rent Restriction Act against the landlords who were prepared, even during

a war, to exploit the working class by imposing higher house rents. For this great struggle the name of Willie Gallacher will always be remembered, especially by the workers in Scotland.

Following the First World War he was involved in another battle in a large demonstration in George Square, when the police ran mad with their batons against the demonstrators. Gallacher, concerned about the people, went to reason with the Chief Constable to stop this brutality, and for this he was battered down by the police and sent to jail. It was this same fighting spirit and concern for the people that Gallacher developed in thousands of struggles on behalf of the oppressed, not only in his own country, but in many other countries as well.

It is also well known that Lenin eventually persuaded Willie Gallacher to join the Communist Party and convinced him of the need for communists to take part in parliamentary activity. In achieving this Lenin did a great service, not only for Gallacher, but for the whole British working class, as subsequent developments proved beyond any shadow of doubt.

One could sum up

Gallacher's work by quoting the words of Dimitrov at the Reichstag Fire Trial:

"I admit that the language I speak is hard and severe, but my struggle and my life have been hard and severe too. I am accustomed to call things by their proper names."

The constituency which Gallacher represented in the House of Commons was West Fife, which was dominated mostly by miners, as coal was the main industry. The West Fife miners had a history of glorious struggle throughout the years and they succeeded in establishing the eight-hour day in 1870 after a prolonged fight. This militancy and progressive struggle were also expressed in the present century.

It was one of the first constituencies in Britain to elect a Labour MP at the beginning of this century. Due to the treachery of Ramsay MacDonald and other right-wing Labour leaders, the Labour candidate was defeated by the Tories in the 1931 election, as were many other Labour candidates throughout the whole of Britain. In the 1935 election,



Abe Moffat and Willie Gallacher at Gallacher's 80th birthday celebrations in St Andrew's Hall, Glasgow, 24 December 1961.

we had three candidates – the sitting Tory member, the Labour candidate, and Willie Gallacher, the Communist.

On this occasion the people of West Fife decided to elect Gallacher, who was a household name in the constituency as he was all over Scotland – and still is today, no matter what has happened since. The Tory candidate was at the bottom of the poll, and it is significant that the Tories have never been near victory in any election in this constituency since their defeat in 1935. This in itself is a great tribute to Gallacher for the service he rendered to the whole Labour movement.

The election of Gallacher to Parliament made a tremendous impact throughout the country, but nowhere more than in West Fife itself. Thousands of people demonstrated in the streets all over the constituency and danced with joy, many miners taking an idle day to celebrate this victory on behalf of the British working class.

Gallacher's Important Work in Parliament

Being the agent for Gallacher in the constituency between the elections, I have a good idea of the work he did during these fifteen years. Many

people all over the country looked forward to seeing how a Communist would behave as a Member of Parliament, but Gallacher showed that his first concern was to look after the people who had returned him to Parliament.

It so happened that we had a strike in Valleyfield Colliery at the time of the General Election; it lasted thirteen weeks, resisting attacks by the coalowners. Gallacher immediately interviewed the Minister of Labour and called upon his department to investigate the cause of the strike. This was done and the miners won their case. In addition, all the miners except face workers were paid unemployment benefit, so that as miners' wages were very low at that time there was no great financial loss for them and their families as a result of the strike. The second thing he did was to carry out his pledge to the miners that if he was returned to Parliament he would use this establishment to raise the problems facing the mining industry.

In his election address he exposed the National Government and the coal-owners as not being interested in or concerned with the defence of the people. What effort had there been to defend the miners when, in

1934, one thousand four hundred workers were killed in the mining industry and almost two hundred thousand injured? He declared that the miners' demand for two shillings a day increase on the then very low level of wages, and the exposure of the terrible conditions in the pits throughout the country, had broken through all the sham and hypocrisy of the National Government and the coal-owners, with their claim to be interested in the defence of the people; he pledged himself to raise the problems facing the miners and their families.

On unemployment he exposed the appalling poverty and hardship that had been imposed on millions of our fellows – men, women and children – as sufficient to condemn the National Government and the coal-owners in the eyes of all intelligent men and women. He declared that the imposition of the criminal means test and the starvation scales of relief were the clearest proof that the National Government was not the defender but the destroyer of the people. He pledged himself, if returned to the House of Commons, to use all his strength to fight for the abolition of the means test, for increased scales of relief, for work schemes at trade-union rates or full maintenance for the unemployed.

On the fight for peace he declared that the people wanted peace, as was shown in the support for the Peace Ballot. But he again exposed the National Government who wanted to use the snap election to prepare for war. Whilst the National Government gave lip service to the League of Nations and to collective security, it sent its fleet, its warplanes and its army to the Mediterranean and Egypt. In opposition to all this, Gallacher declared that he stood for the peace policy of the Soviet Union, embracing as it did a policy of complete disarmament. He called on the

nations who were for peace to operate economic and financial sanctions for the defence of Abyssinian independence and against the wanton imperialist aggression of fascist Italy:

“The National Government spends millions every minute on weapons of destruction, but we want to spend every penny on progress and construction. We want hygienic homes at moderate rents, large well-equipped schools with efficient restaurants where adequate school feeding can be undertaken. We want rest homes in the country, maternity and child welfare centres and adequate pensions at sixty,” he declared. “We don't want big armies and navies; what we want are healthy mothers and happy children, and this should be the aim of every elector in West Fife.”

To achieve this, he said, West Fife must get rid of the representative of the National Government; but at the same time there could be no going back to what had happened before. The long traditions of West Fife, the part its people had played in winning the eight-hour day, in maintaining wage standards and in enforcing safety inspections in the pits – all demanded a change in representation that would carry with it the promise of a real fight on behalf of the working class.

He pointed out to the electors that steps in this direction had already been taken by his party comrades – men like Jimmie Stewart, John McArthur, Alex Moffat and Abe Moffat – who were all members of the local authorities and leading comrades in the miners' union movement, and who, along with others, had carried on a



fight against the owners and the economy measures of the National Government and the local authorities in Fife.

In pledging support to this real working-class and socialist policy, Gallacher declared to the electors that with the full support of his party he would devote himself to the service of the working class and to the cause of peace with which the workers' interests were so closely associated.

Here was a different policy and a different candidate, and the test now was how Gallacher would work as a Communist MP. And Gallacher showed that he was not only a man of words; he was also a man of action as he had been throughout his working life.

In his first speech in Parliament he spoke on behalf of the miners, and while it is the custom never to interrupt the maiden speech of a new Member of Parliament, this custom was broken in the case of Gallacher. The Tories could not stand a real working-class fighter using the House of Commons to speak on behalf of the miners.

In the course of his maiden speech, Gallacher said:

"On this side of the House we represent and speak for the workers of this country, the men who toil and sweat."

"So do we," the Tories shouted.

Gallacher replied, "Oh, you do speak for the workers, do you?"

(Tory Members: "Yes.")

"All right, we shall see. The leader of the miners says that the miners' occupation is the hardest, most dangerous and poorest paid in the country. Is there anybody who will deny it? The miners make a demand. They ballot for it, and the

ballot is a record, and we who speak for and on behalf of the miners demand an increase of two shillings per day for the miners. That is how we speak for the miners. Now it is your turn. Speak now. Speak, you who claim to represent the workers."

Needless to say, no one could reply effectively to Gallacher. Here we had a clear demonstration of a new kind of MP in the British House of Commons who carried out his pledge to the miners. It is also important that the miners succeeded, for the first time since the General Strike of 1926, in establishing a claim for an increase in wages. The then General Secretary of the British Miners' Union also thanked the *Daily Worker*, the communist paper, for the assistance it had rendered to the miners and their union in the fight to increase the miserable wages of eight shillings per shift that prevailed at that time.

The next important but unfortunate incident regarding mining was the terrible disaster at Valleyfield Colliery in the constituency in October 1939, when 35 miners were killed. Gallacher, the humane man that he was, went immediately to the pit to comfort the relatives and dependants. I happened to be one of the Miners' Safety Inspectors who had to go down and investigate the cause of this disaster. Gallacher, as a true and loyal comrade, gave all the assistance and guidance he could in securing the miners' safety and taking all the steps necessary to protect the interests of the victims' dependants.

But: a real test came for Gallacher in the House of Commons in 1938, arising out of Munich. As stated, he had already pledged himself to the electors in the fight for peace; and, as a man of his word, he now proved this beyond any

shadow of doubt. This was on the historic day when Prime Minister Chamberlain stood up in the House of Commons, after agreeing with Hitler and Mussolini to carve up Czechoslovakia, waving a piece of paper which, according to him, guaranteed "peace in our time". Practically every member in the House of Commons, including Tories, Liberals and Labour, stood up waving their papers and cheering the Prime Minister – with the exception of one man, Willie Gallacher. No one will deny that it took courage to get up and make a speech in an atmosphere of this kind, but courage and conviction he had, and to the credit of Willie Gallacher, he made the shortest and most important speech that had ever been made in the British House of Commons when he declared amidst uproar and shouting:

"I refuse to associate myself with this gross betrayal, it will not lead to peace, it will lead to war."

Had Gallacher's speech and warning been heeded at that time, the human race could have been saved from that terrible slaughter of 50 million lives and the millions more maimed and injured in the fight against fascism and reaction.

Here again we had a real example of the voice of the people, not only for his fellow-countrymen, but also for people all over the world. Throughout his 15 years in Parliament – and it is on record – he fought for the oppressed and for the freedom and independence of all countries, but at the same time never neglecting the people who returned him to Parliament.

Gallacher was no part-time Member of Parliament. No Member attended the House of Commons more regularly than Gallacher. During the war he was attending a function at the

Soviet Embassy where leaders of both Governments were present, including Ernest Bevin and Molotov. At such a function there were the usual toasts. One of the Russian representatives was surprised to learn that Gallacher did not drink; he approached Molotov, who then approached Gallacher, but they obviously did not know Gallacher. He was a staunch teetotaler all his life and no one could persuade or convince him to do otherwise. So he excused himself on the grounds that he would have to return to his work in Parliament.

But with all the debates and discussions in which he took part in the House of Commons, he never neglected his constituency. During the war it was no easy task for Members of Parliament, but it was even less easy for a Communist MP who had to stand up and fight against all the slanders and attacks of the enemies of the Soviet Union and the working class.

In one Parliamentary session alone during the war he took up roughly 1,128 cases with various government departments, on behalf of organisations, local government bodies, trade unions, co-operative societies etc, as well as individuals. In addition, during the same period, he took part in 25 parliamentary debates and asked 108 questions and supplementary questions on important matters. It is correct to say he created a record both by his attendance in Parliament and by his service to people all over the country. He received thousands of letters from individuals and organisations in appreciation of his services during his work in Parliament. These included letters from old-age pensioners and members of the armed forces in the fight for pensions and leave; amongst them one case of a soldier who was anxious to get his wife and child from South Africa. Gallacher

also succeeded in obtaining spectacles for lads serving in the forces in the Middle East during the war. They included letters from the National Union of Women Teachers for the support he gave to the amendment to Clause 23 of the Education Bill to secure that married women teachers should not be dismissed solely on the grounds of their marriage. These are typical of the thousands of letters he received from all sections of the community. They speak for themselves as to the valuable work done by him.

But again, never forgetting the miners, he was fortunate in the draw for a Private Member's Bill. Again people wondered what a Communist Member of Parliament would do. And once more he proved loyal to the people he represented when he submitted a Bill calling for pithead baths for all miners. At that time the vast majority of Scottish miners had no pithead baths. So it is again thanks to Willie Gallacher that this was made an issue in the House of Commons, which played an important part in eventually establishing pithead baths in the Scottish coalfield.

Gallacher's election to Parliament made no difference to the man. Unlike many other MPs that I know, he was the same outside Parliament as he was inside. He always spoke for the people and every month he would spend at least two week-ends in the constituency. He was a great believer in reporting back to his constituents and consulting them on the problems that faced them. This was one of the reasons why he could never be corrupted or sacrifice his principles. He always lived as a worker should live, whether he was in or outside Parliament.

Many MPs used to grumble about their salaries and still do so today, although they have recently had them increased to over £3,000 a year. When Gallacher went

into the House of Commons the salary was £400 a year, and when he finished in 1950 it was £600. He had also to maintain his wife Jean in Paisley, who was also a loyal companion to Willie. Despite this he could always contribute one-third of his salary towards the organisation of his constituency. He never looked for hotels to live in in London when he was attending the House of Commons. He was quite satisfied to live with some Party comrade who had room for him. His plain living enabled him to get by on much less than the ordinary Member of Parliament, including the representatives of big business who did not need to depend on their MPs' salaries.

It has often been said – and still is – by those who knew Willie that he was one of the best 'Labour MPs' that ever went to Parliament, as he always remained loyal to his class and was incorruptible.

The lesson for the British working class is quite evident. If one voice could achieve what Gallacher achieved, then a group of Communists would ensure that the Tories could never be returned to power and that the Labour Government now and in the future would be different, especially on defence, foreign policy, wages and social reforms.

Gallacher Defeated in 1950

It would be dishonest on my part, having had this long connection with Willie Gallacher and having lived in the constituency, not to say something about the cause of his defeat in the 1950 General Election. Many people in Britain and outside have raised the question with me as to how it was possible for a man with such a working-class record to be defeated in this election.

In the 1945 General Election, he registered the highest vote in the history of the constituency, polling 17,636 votes. But, as

Gallacher used to quote the Scriptures – and he was an expert in this when dealing with some of his opponents who criticised the Communists for their low votes at election time – he would quote the well-known text from John 1, v 11: "He came unto his own and his own received him not."

He would then refer to St Stephen, the first martyr to be put to death. No-one would deny the fact that St Stephen represented and served the best interests of his own people, but instead of votes he got the gnashing of teeth and stones in abundance and was put to death.

A similar position prevailed with regard to the early pioneers of the British Labour movement. Men like Keir Hardie and Bob Smillie tried on several occasions to get elected to Parliament, but they were rejected in Scotland. Both of them had to go down to England and Wales to be elected to Parliament in later years.

Although they were rejected in parliamentary elections, both of them were outstanding miners' leaders in their time and were my predecessors in the Scottish Miners' Union.

This shows that it is possible to confuse people in parliamentary elections; all kinds of confusion and false promises can be made, as they still are today, but it is not so easy to do this in the industrial field, in the mine and factory, where issues are clearer.

It is not always the case in Britain, therefore, as past experiences have shown, that leaders accepted in the industrial field always win the most votes at parliamentary and municipal elections, although they have given more loyal service to the people.

It would also be correct to say that more confusion was created in the 1950 General Election than on any previous occasion. The Cold War was at its highest. We had the serious conflict over Berlin as

a result of the policy of the western powers in dividing Germany and their refusal to carry out the Potsdam Agreement. We had the bitter attack on the British Communist Party, and the right wing played on the fears of the working people in West Fife that this constituency might determine whether or not we should have another Labour Government.

A scurrilous and personal attack was made against Gallacher by the right-wing Labour leaders in the constituency at the last minute, prior to the election, with a collection of quotations picked out hotch-potch from the time of the 'phoney war' when Chamberlain and the Tories were trying to develop the war against the Soviet Union. But it was too late to give a reply to this lying and slanderous statement.

These are some of the tricks that can come in a parliamentary election, even from people who call themselves democrats and from people who are not fit to lace the boots of a man like Gallacher who had given such valuable service to the working class.

But to crown it all, something happened in that election which had never happened at any time in the history of parliamentary elections, and I doubt if it has ever happened in any other western country.

The right-wing Labour leaders became so desperate in their efforts not to defeat the Tory candidate but the Communist MP, that they organised a meeting in the heart of the constituency with a renegade communist and nuns on the platform, calling for the electors to vote against Gallacher. Yes, it is quite true, confusion can be created in parliamentary elections which can be detrimental to the working class.

It would be equally true to say that they did not confuse a large section of the electors including Catholics,



some of whom were staunch supporters of Gallacher in that election as they had been in previous ones.

It would also be wrong not to admit that there were certain weaknesses in our own ranks which played a part in the defeat of Gallacher in that election. We underestimated the dangers of the Cold War and the anti-Soviet and anti-working-class propaganda. We tended to rely on the past reputation of Gallacher, thus creating a feeling of complacency instead of recognising the need for strong organisation, which is essential in any situation if victory is to be achieved on behalf of the working class. Despite all this confusion and weakness, Gallacher still polled 9,301 votes, which showed that he retained considerable mass support amongst the miners and their trade union branches, many of whom had contributed financially to his election fund.

The defeat did not break the spirit of Willie Gallacher, who had come through the school of class struggle. When the poll was declared, he stated when thanking the electors and especially the miners for their support:

“There has been a heavy vote, quite obviously a heavy vote against the Tories and the capitalist forces they represent. The workers have not seen our point of view that it was necessary to vote Communist in order to ensure a real fight against their enemies. That means that our job is going to be tougher even than we expected. But we Communists are tough people, and we will get ahead with the job that lies before us.”

He concluded by saying:

“I was a working-class agitator before

I went to the House of Commons. I was a working-class agitator in the House of Commons and I still remain a working-class agitator.”

Again, being a man of his word, he has carried this out. No man has addressed more meetings in Britain than Willie Gallacher, and until recently, at the age of 82, he was still addressing factory-gate meetings on his native Clyde. I am not aware of any Member of Parliament who has such a reputation both inside and outside of Parliament, always loyal to the working class to the end – and no man can do more.

Gallacher outside Parliament

Willie Gallacher not only addressed large meetings all over Britain. He never hesitated to speak at small meetings in the most remote villages. He spoke in universities and carried on debates with all kinds of people. He always had his ear to the ground, whether it was on national or international problems. I remember in 1956, when I was receiving a battering from the press as President of the Scottish Miners' Union, because of a decision the miners had taken to grant a donation of £50 for the defence of the trade unionists in Cyprus. The press even went to the mining village where I was born to tell mothers who happened to have sons in the armed forces that I was personally responsible should their sons die on the battlefields of Cyprus. But in the midst of this scurrilous and slanderous attack by the capitalist press, I received an encouraging letter from my old friend and comrade-in-arms:

“Dear Abe

I was very pleased to read your statement on the grant for the defence of Trade Unionists in Cyprus. It was a crushing

reply to the rotten campaign in the Express and other yellow journals.

But the depravity and hypocrisy of such people is beyond anything ordinary language could describe. The Express reported on a young lad eighteen years of age who was killed in Cyprus and endeavoured to associate the donations from Trade Unions with this tragic occurrence. Spurious indignation is worked up about the Trade Union donations to take attention away from the real reason for indignation. How can a miner or any worker protest about a donation to defend trade unionists and forget to protest against a boy of 18 years being drawn from home and sent to die in defence of the profits of the big oil monopolies. Who is he, this editor of the Express who now proposes to lead the Scottish miners? Has he any shares in oil? Has Lord Beaverbrook any such shares? And how many of their friends have shares? Will the miners or other workers be supplied with this information? ‘There’s blood on the coal’, yes, we are all aware of that, but the miners who got so much aid in their hardest and most difficult days from workers, not only at home but from other lands, will not forget that ‘there’s blood on the oil’ and that the profit-greedy capitalists and their press, who were the enemies of the miners in the past, are still their enemies today.

*Yours ever,
Willie Gallacher”*

Here you have Gallacher in true form about the problem facing us internationally, but at the same time rendering his support and encouragement to other comrades who were facing up to their class responsibilities whether in the national or the international field.

He not only spoke at meetings and assisted workers and other comrades in the movement. He was also a great man with the pen. He

would write out poems of his own making. He would write to the press continually and carry on correspondence in the local papers. He wrote many pamphlets in his time and several books, including *Revolt on the Clyde* and a ‘Penguin Special’, *The Case for Communism*. No student of British working-class history should be without Gallacher’s books; they are books dealing with the glorious and historic struggles of the British working class in this century.

In reading these books we get to know that he was not only a working-class agitator but had also a thorough grasp and deep understanding of Marxism that enabled him to overcome the difficulties and barriers that face the working-class movement, and at the same time to see how it is possible and practicable to link up the daily problems in the fight for peace and socialism and the emancipation of the working people.

In paying this tribute, I would say that Willie Gallacher was a true son of the national and international working class. A shining example to all of us as to how we should conduct the struggle in the days that lie ahead. A man who was incorruptible and always remained loyal to the class to which he belonged. His life could be described in the words of a young woman from Glasgow in a tribute to him on his seventieth birthday:

“Son of the people
your Party salutes you.
Vigilant always, your
great heart aflame.
Honoured and loved
by oppressed and
exploited,
Drawing your
strength from our
Communist aims.”

■ *First published in Essays in Honour of William Gallacher, P M Kemp-Ashraf and J Mitchell, eds, Humbolt University, Berlin, 1966, pp 16-25.*

Re-Launch of the British Peace Assembly, July 2015

Message of Greetings from the World Peace Council

Speech by Stavros Tassos, chairman of the Greek Committee for International Detente and Peace (EEDYE), on behalf of the World Peace Council (WPC)

Dear friends and fellow fighters for peace

Dear comrades and friends from the British Peace Assembly

It is with feelings of joy and satisfaction to share today with you here in London, in the Marx Memorial Library, the 'comeback' of the British Peace Assembly to the field of struggle for a world of peace and social justice in Britain and in the world, through the World Peace Council family.

I would like to convey on behalf of the World Peace Council but also on behalf of the Greek Peace Committee which is hosting the headquarters of the WPC in Athens, our most sincere and full-hearted solidarity and congratulations for the important decision to reactivate the historical British Peace Assembly and prestigious member of the WPC.

Your decision to re-launch the British Peace Assembly, after several years of consultations and talks within the WPC, is of historical importance. You can be sure of the warm support by all the WPC to this re-start of the BPA. Actually the last Executive Committee of the WPC, held last November in Goa, India, welcomed the presence of the British friends and the plans to re-establish the BPA.

The British peace-loving forces and people have a long tradition and firm principles in the defence of peace, against nuclear weapons, against NATO, the armed wing of imperialism, and against the involvement of the British government in dozens of aggressions and crimes against humanity in the 20th century.

The British Peace Assembly will cover an important space within the peace movement in Britain with its principled positions and internationalist solidarity.

Dear friends

This year, the World Peace Council has reached 65 of years of service to the people and to the struggle for peace, against imperialist domination and for a world of real peace and social justice. After the double Congress of April 1949 in Paris and Prague, and the creation of the World Council of Partisans for Peace, the World Peace Council was formally founded as such in 1950 in Warsaw. The founding slogans, "No more war – No more fascism", could not be more timely today, when humanity is being threatened by new imperialist wars and by the growing phenomena of neo-fascism and neo-Nazism.

The WPC has stood firm all these years on the side of the poor and the oppressed, on the side of the national liberation movements, struggling side by side for the just causes of peoples and nations. The prestige of the WPC was at highest level, its recognition by movements and governments was paramount. No peoples' or workers' liberation struggle took place that the WPC was not a part of. It stood in solidarity with the great social struggles of the working class and popular masses for the improvement in their living conditions and for social liberation.

We can, without a doubt, state that the course of the WPC constitutes a highly significant factor in the modern history of humankind after World War 2, having made an enormous contribution to the peoples' struggles.

Dear friends

This year also marks another important anniversary for the World Peace Council and the peoples of the world. The 70th anniversary of the anti-fascist victory

of the peoples was celebrated and commemorated in dozens of countries, with the active involvement of the WPC members. This anniversary, the day when the red flag, the banner of the first socialist state, the Soviet Union, was triumphantly raised over the Reichstag by the Red Army, will remain in history as one of the brightest pages in the peoples' history.

The WPC pays tribute:

- to all those who gave their lives or were disabled on the battlefields and in the underground resistance in order to smash the fascist monster, which was created by capitalism.
- to the vanguard forces all over the world which led the national liberation struggles.
- to all those who fought with weapons or with leaflets in their hands, maintained a heroic stance in the jails and in the face of the execution squads.
- to the countless numbers who died of hunger, the main victims of which were children.
- to the millions who were tortured in the horrible concentration and death camps, and in every place where unspeakable horrors were committed, where the exploitation of man by man reached its peak, with the absolute degradation of human existence.

It is very important for the workers, the peoples and especially the youth to search for the truth, the real facts and causes that led to global and local wars, to the rise and prevalence of fascism-Nazism in certain countries.

Particularly after 1990, we have witnessed an enormous effort, led by



the EU and the forces that support the capitalist system, to falsify the historical truth. They are attempting, via distortion and falsification, to turn the historical truth on its head, to conceal the fact that fascism is the creation of capitalism.

They are trying to conceal the enormous and decisive contribution of the Soviet Union, to equate the victims with the persecutors, to identify the most reactionary inhumane and appalling theory of fascism with the most human and progressive theory of communism. Even the day of victory itself, 9 May, was pronounced by the EU provocatively as the “*Day of Europe*”, to divert from and distort the historical truth of the victory over fascism.

Dear friends

Developments in the world are increasingly characterised by the growing aggressiveness of imperialism, by its internal antagonisms in the light of the deep capitalist economic crisis for more than five years now. With the cooperation of willing governments, global capital, the multinational corporations and monopolies are intensifying their attack on workers’ rights, social security and welfare, trying to shift the consequences of the crisis onto the shoulders of the working masses, the self-employed, the small peasants, the pensioners and the youth. There is growing poverty and extreme poverty in previously highly developed and industrialised capitalist countries, with the marginalisation of new masses, huge rates of unemployment and the phenomena of hunger, malnutrition and desperate suicide rates. At the same time the profits of big capital, the enterprises and monopolies are growing, albeit by smaller rates in comparison to the past.

As an example, the current Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) draft agreement shows the strong strivings of the monopolies and their governments, on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean (the EU and USA), to deal with the economic recession and crisis by coordinating efforts to shift the burden onto the peoples. It actually constitutes a type of ‘economic NATO’, safeguarding the interests of the multinational corporations and their profits.

The ongoing and increasing wars and aggressions are resulting in huge waves of refugees, particularly from the Middle East (Syria, Iraq) and from Libya and other African countries. As consequences of the imperialist plans and policies in

these regions, violent regime changes have taken place, involving invasion and occupation of territories, while civil wars and clashes are daily phenomena. The hypocrisy of the US, EU and NATO imperialists is scandalous. On the one hand they trigger and orchestrate the instability and wars; on the other they neglect and ignore the many thousands of refugees who are trying to reach the European coasts, running for their lives. Several thousands of refugees are dying in the sea; many more are victims, firstly of the ‘smugglers of human souls’, who earn millions of dollars, and secondly of the inhuman detention centers in Italy, Greece, Spain and Malta, an outcome of the reactionary Dublin agreements. This is the brutal face of imperialism, which is spreading death and terror directly with its troops and bombs, or indirectly through the armed religious fundamentalist groups, and which sends warships to face the poor refugees with the pretext of fighting the ‘smugglers of migrants’.

Dear friends

Without underestimating other ‘hot spots’ in the world, I would like to emphasise developments in the following areas.

1) The US ‘Pivot to Asia’, whereby the USA is shifting 60% of its military power to the Asia and Pacific region, and the bilateral and multilateral military agreements with many of the countries there, which are creating new threats to peace and stability in the area. We express our concern about the tensions in the area of the South China Sea and reaffirm our position that, whatever the disputes, they should be resolved by peaceful talks amongst all involved parties, based on the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, 1982. At the same time we denounce the US presence in the region, which is offering its ‘good services’ to various sides. The WPC expresses its discontent with dangerous nationalist tendencies in the region, which are not helpful for a peaceful and comprehensive solution.

2) The dangerous developments in the crisis in Ukraine. After the imperialist intervention by the USA and the EU in November 2013, and the orchestrated coup d’état in Kiev, a reactionary regime was installed in Ukraine. Political and physical persecution of political opponents, demolition of symbols of the USSR and restoration of neo-fascist symbols (even in the government) are prevailing.

The Russian-speaking minority in the country, and especially in its eastern part, is being harassed; thousands of civilians have lost their lives under heavy bombing of the Donbass region by the Kiev regime; while the communists and their party in Ukraine have been banned, their offices burned down and leaders physically attacked. NATO is increasing its troops in Poland and the Baltic States, along with plans to affiliate Ukraine into NATO. The basis for all the above is the geostrategic importance of Ukraine, in particular the energy resources in gas and its pipelines and the competition with the Russian Federation in the area. The WPC reaffirms its solidarity with the peace loving forces in Ukraine, denounces the ‘witch-hunting’ of the communists and demands the end of foreign imperialist interference in the country.

We emphasise the necessity of maintaining the efforts and struggle against NATO, the armed wing of imperialism and murderous tool of the imperialists. We do not forget the murderous bombing of Yugoslavia by NATO, which led to the creation of the NATO/EU protectorate in the Serbian province of Kosovo. The imperialist aggression of NATO in 1999 became the precedent for all later aggressions of NATO in Central Asia, the Middle East and Eastern Europe today. The recent announcement by EU officials for a permanent EU army shows the growing militarisation of the EU, the cooperation with NATO but also the ambitions of the European imperialists to play a greater role in their competition with other imperialist centres and forces.

3) But the biggest suffering still takes place in the Middle East, where people are suffering from the consequences of imperialist domination and foreign interference. In the recent WPC Regional Meeting the situation was described as:

“the most dangerous and bloody period, with the imperialist forces intervening in many countries directly with catastrophic results – killings, destruction, redrawing of borders and division of countries, aiming at the control and exploitation of the richest oil and gas reserves in the world without caring about life and peoples”.

The WPC took clear positions, from the very first moment, with regard to the imperialist plan for a ‘new Middle East’,

which has been endorsed by the USA, the EU, and its allies in the region by various means. The massive uprisings of peoples in 2011 against imperialist-friendly and reactionary regimes in Egypt, Tunisia etc, were likewise used under the 'Arab Spring' for the purpose of their plans. The Islamic fundamentalist forces, for so many years tolerated and nurtured by the imperialists themselves, assumed a new role with armed 'holy warriors' in various countries, particularly Iraq and Syria. The 'ISIS' project is the other side of the same coin of the imperialist agenda in the region. It is aiming at the control of spheres of influence and energy resources; it requires willing regimes and ignores any consequences for the peoples of the region. The hypocrisy and double morality is paramount.

The crisis and instability created by the imperialists directly, and indirectly through armed *jihadist* groups, is being used now for new military operations and invasions. The 'model' of Libya which was bombed and cut in pieces is the danger for Iraq and Syria. The WPC has never accepted NATO's or any other imperialist intervention under any pretext. There cannot be any 'humanitarian military intervention' by those who have slaughtered the same people. Special responsibility in all this falls to the Turkish government, without whom the plans in Syria could not have been applied. The millions of refugees in Turkey and other neighbouring countries is the tragic result of a plan to overthrow the regime in Damascus by multinational armed gangs entering mainly from Turkey, co-sponsored by the Gulf monarchies.

A core issue in the region remains the struggle of the Palestinian people for an end to the Israeli occupation and for the establishment of an independent state of Palestine within the borders of 4 June 1967 and with East Jerusalem as its capital. The WPC supports the efforts at the UN for the recognition of full member status for Palestine. The Israeli government, fully backed by the USA and the EU, is increasing its aggressions, harassments and apartheid policies in Palestine but also inside Israel against its own citizens, particularly Palestinians of 1948.

The recent negotiations between Iran and the West about Iran's nuclear programme have reached an accord. Although we are still studying the matter we want to state that this does not mean that the threat and danger of wider conflict does not exist any more. The antagonisms of imperialist forces in the

region, and the war in Syria and Iraq, are increasing the possibility of wider conflict, especially given the position of Israel against any agreement with Iran. In this context, the role that the Islamic Republic of Iran has been playing in recent years, to ensure and promote its regional position, must be noted. We will judge this agreement from the point of view of the interests of the Iranian people and the peoples of the region. We hope that this agreement will not be at the expense of the peoples and the countries of the region, especially if we consider the call by the US for the Iranian regime to play a 'constructive' role in the success of the US planned 'New Middle East' – in particular in relation to the future of Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, to ensure US vital interests. We are afraid to say that this accord does not reflect the rights and interests of the people of Iran along with those of the peoples of the region

We believe that Iran has the right to peaceful use of nuclear energy, and we support the UN decision to declare the Middle East as a nuclear weapons-free zone. We also express our solidarity with the progressive and peace-loving forces in Iran, in their struggle for people's rights, democratic freedoms and social justice.

Dear friends

Allow me at this point also to convey to you the greetings of the Greek Committee for International Detente and Peace (EEDYE), which hosts the WPC head office in Athens. This year, our organisation is turning 60 years old, and is the only peace organisation which has managed not only to survive, but also to stay in close touch with the aspirations and desires of the Greek people.

At its 17th Conference, held in December 2014, EEDYE continued to develop this line, examining in detail the situation as it has shaped up in the world and in the broader region. It highlighted the economic underpinnings of developments and the motives behind imperialist ambitions, thus arming the class-oriented workers' and people's movement. It set the intensification of the struggle as a target, in coordination with the workers' and people's movement, standing against any sort of participation by the country's bourgeoisie in imperialist wars and interventions, regardless of pretexts.

The decisive factor in EEDYE's progress to date and the guarantee for its reinforcement are its positions and its steadfastness and its consistency in hard times, swimming against the current.

EEDYE:

- has stood firm against the pressure to abandon anti-imperialist objectives for struggle; has not retreated; and has withstood the pressure exerted by every sort of 'global' and 'European' forum, persisting in organising the people for common action with the workers' and people's movement, fighting in a class-oriented direction.
- has not been deceived by imperialist transformations and declarations in favour of peace, steadily showing that **THERE IS BUT ONE ENEMY: IMPERIALISM.**
- has fought for popular demands and against racism and xenophobia alongside all working people, both Greeks and migrants.
- has not fallen into the trap set by NATO and the European Union with regard to 'peacekeeping operations', campaigns to prevent 'humanitarian disasters' and other imperialist pretexts.
- has decisively and consistently confronted the anti-popular policies of the New Democracy and PASOK governments, which incorporated Greece into NATO and the EU, and maintained and reinforced NATO bases, and which are to blame for the country's involvement in imperialist wars.
- continues to struggle against the policies of the co-government formed by SYRIZA and ANEL, which follows the same strategy, promoting the yet further integration of our country into imperialist organisations, keeping the bases at Souda, Kilkis and Aktion as well as the NATO Command Headquarters in Thessaloniki, the European Army headquarters in Larissa, taking part in NATO manoeuvres and using the same or new pretexts to justify new imperialist interventions in our region, and beyond, in the eyes of the people.

Therefore my closing slogan cannot be any other than:

**NO SUBMISSION TO
IMPERIALISM, CONSTANT
FIGHT FOR REAL PEACE**

■ *Speech delivered at the re-launch meeting at the Marx Memorial Library, London, 31 July 2015. Subsequently, Parliamentary elections have taken place in Greece, with little change.*

No Submission to Capitalism — Constant Fight for Socialism-Communism

Speech by Stavros Tassos, Communist Party of Greece (KKE)

Dear Comrades and Friends

I am happy and honoured to be with you here, in London, at the Red Star Festival co-organised by the Communist Party of Britain. I want to thank the CPB wholeheartedly, for its firm stance, principled position and internationalism, its great history and contribution to the communist movement, and for signing the *Joint Statement in Solidarity with KKE*¹. I would also like to convey to you the militant salute of our party, the KKE, and its Central Committee.

Friends and Comrades

In the elections of June 2012, SYRIZA, which was a small opportunist party, rapidly increased its votes. On 25 January 2015, SYRIZA won the elections and formed a government with the right-wing nationalist party ANEL.

Over this entire period, SYRIZA trapped the workers in the false ‘memorandum/anti-memorandum’ scheme, concealing the fact that the

memoranda are a part of the more general strategy of capital. It exploited the sharpening problems of the people and made false promises that it would relieve and satisfy the demands of the workers.

In this framework, it promised that it would immediately increase the minimum wage, restore collective bargaining agreements, abolish the property tax, increase the tax-free threshold, put an end to privatisations etc.

Despite the slogans it used, in practice SYRIZA formed a social-democratic strategy and made it clear from the beginning that it would manage capitalism and serve the competitiveness and profitability of the monopoly groups, and implement the strategy of the European Union (EU), which it called “our common European home”.

After the elections of January 2015, the SYRIZA-ANEL government continued

the anti-people political line of the previous governments. On 20 February, it signed an agreement with the EU, the European Central bank (ECB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (the ‘Troika’) and undertook commitments regarding the recognition and repayment of the debt that was not created by the people, the “avoidance of unilateral actions”, the non-implementation of its election promises and the promotion of capitalist restructurings.

During the negotiations SYRIZA proposed a (47+8)-pages proposal which in its anti-people provisions was almost identical with that of the Troika.

On Saturday 27 June the government brought to the Parliament a proposal for a referendum, attempting to trap the people with a YES or NO vote to the Troika’s raft of anti-people measures, refusing to table its own anti-people proposal in order to be judged by the people.

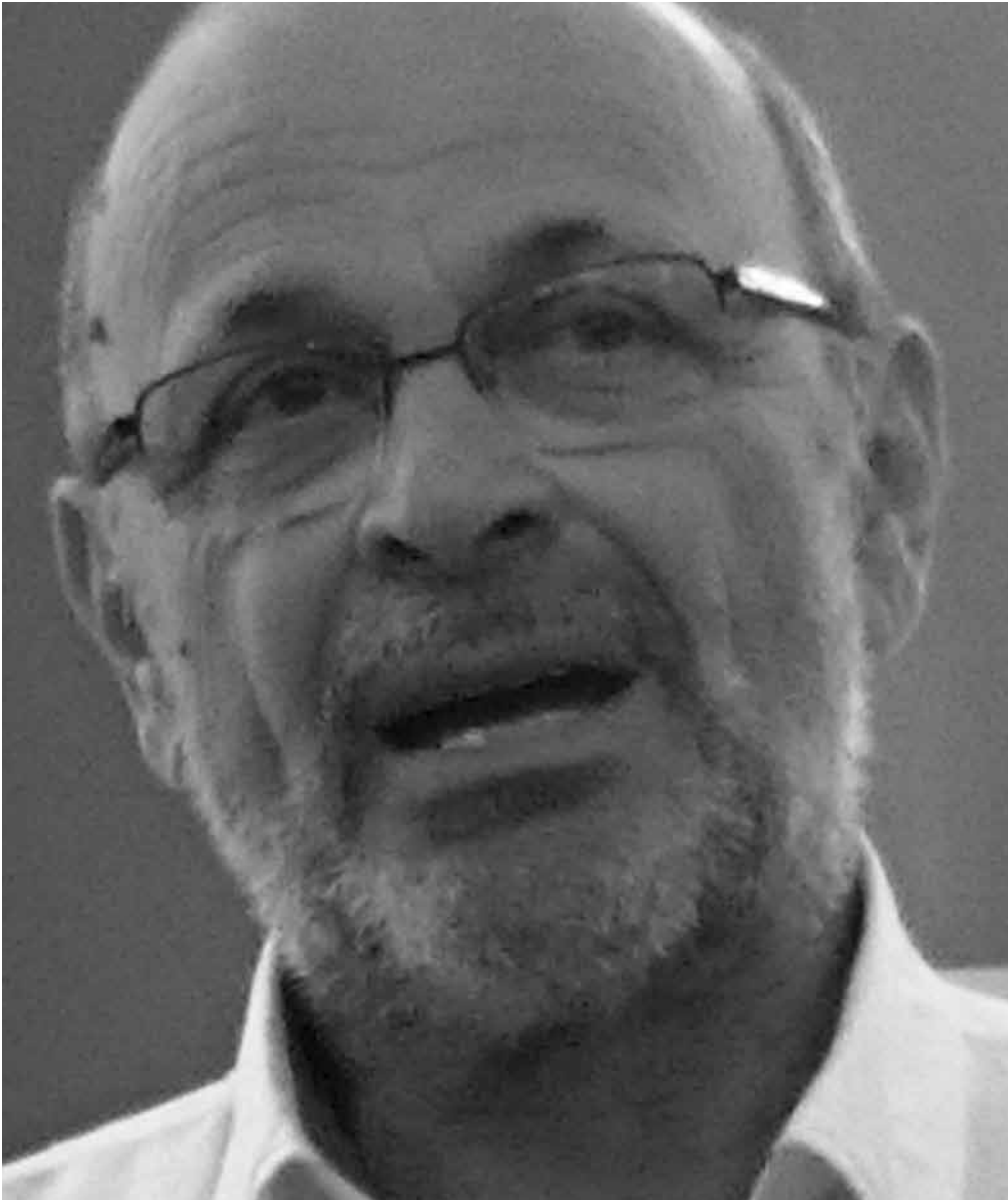
The KKE, in parliament,

demanded that the following be posed in the referendum:

- (a) the proposal of the Troika.
- (b) the proposal of the government.
- (c) The proposal of the KKE for “DISENGAGEMENT FROM THE EU, ABOLITION OF THE MEMORANDA AND ALL THE ANTI-PEOPLE APPLICATION LAWS.”

The government arbitrarily refused to put the proposal of the KKE to a vote. Its goal was to blackmail the people and exploit the people’s vote as approval for its own proposal that constituted a new memorandum.

In conditions of false dilemmas and blackmail, the KKE explained to the people that both the YES and the NO would be used to impose new anti-people measures. This decision is a great legacy for our people, so that they can continue their struggle on the basis of their own interests.



The results of the referendum were 61.3% NO, 38.7% YES, whereas a significant section, over 350,000, or ~6% of our people, resisted by casting the ballot of the KKE, of blank or spoiled ballots, and a section of working people followed the path of abstention.

On the day after the referendum, a meeting of the political leaders took place at the initiative of Prime Minister Tsipras, with the participation of the President of the Republic. This meeting made the situation even clearer.

SYRIZA, ANEL, ND, PASOK and POTAMI², ie all the bourgeois parties, signed a joint statement that mentioned amongst other things:

“The recent verdict of the Greek people does not comprise a mandate of rupture, but a mandate for continuing and strengthening the effort of achieving a socially just and economically sustainable agreement ...”,

confirming that the bourgeois parties as a whole were ready to sign an agreement/new memorandum with the Troika against the people.

The agreement/memorandum, which was finally signed by the SYRIZA-ANEL coalition government with the EU-ECB-IMF, and the savage measures included in it, will be added to the

barbaric measures of the previous, first and second, memoranda.

The new Tsipras memorandum, that bears the stamp of ND, POTAMI and PASOK, is comprised of a raft of harsh anti-people measures, which come to intensify the already unbearable burdens of the previous memoranda and the application laws that were passed by the ND-PASOK governments. The stance of a large section of the privately owned mass media is also revealing. At first they had accused SYRIZA of allegedly wanting to take Greece out of the Eurozone via the referendum, but now they are applauding its choices, praising them, because SYRIZA ‘returned’ to realism.

Comrades and friends

The KKE from the beginning argued and demonstrated that SYRIZA did not want and was not able to prepare the people for the confrontation against the memoranda and the monopolies, both Greek and European, precisely because it has no orientation for resistance and conflict. On the contrary, it did what it could to keep the people passive, so that they would sit and wait to cast their ‘protest vote’ in the elections. It deceived the people that it could pave the way for pro-people changes, inside the predatory alliance of the EU.

The **Left Platform** of SYRIZA, and all those who are trying to hide their enormous responsibilities behind their “abstention” or “present” in parliament, played a particular role in the manipulation of the movement, in the entrapment of radical people. Their enormous responsibilities lie in the fact that they agreed with the 20 February continuation of the second memorandum agreement, as well as with the (47+8)-pages governmental anti-people proposal. These forces are trying to save themselves politically and play a new role in the containment of radicalism and in the assimilation of the people into the system, preparing a new political ‘shock absorber’, the role that was played by the old Synaspismos³ party in the past.

Friends and comrades

The anti-people political line of SYRIZA is not just restricted to these issues but is also expressed in its foreign policy. The Greek government within 5 months has provided significant support to NATO, the USA and the Euro-Atlantic axis.

It has not only maintained but also made commitments to strengthen the US-NATO bases at Souda (the command centre for imperialist interventions and wars) and Aktion (radar centre) and



has also made commitments to strengthening the headquarters in Thessaloniki, Larissa etc. It announced that in consultation with the USA it would install a new NATO base in the Aegean Sea, on the island of Karpathos.

The government officially made a commitment to make its armed forces and military bases available for new imperialist wars in the region, in the name of dealing with the *ihadists* and “protecting the Christian populations”.

It participates in military exercises together with the USA and Israel and enhances its military, political and economic relations with the Israeli state, which continues the occupation of Palestine and torments the Palestinian people.

The so-called ‘multi-dimensional policy’ with Russia and China, with BRICS, is being carried out from the standpoint of advancing the interests of the monopoly groups in order to enhance their position in the field of energy, in the framework of the general imperialist competition, entangling our people in new hazards.

Comrades and friends

Especially today, certain conclusions that are valuable for the people must be drawn:

- The ‘tough’ negotiation was from the beginning a minefield for the people’s interests, as it served the aim of capital for the recovery of its profitability. Greece’s participation in the EU and the Eurozone remains the strategic choice of Greek capital and it is characterised by unequal conditions, which objectively exist in such imperialist alliances. In the framework of these alliances, the Greek state is obliged to compromise with the stronger centres, like Germany, thrusting the consequences of these unequal relations onto the workers.

- These developments constitute the clearest expression of the failure of the so-called ‘renewed left’ or ‘governmental left’, of the theory that the EU can change its monopolistic and anti-people predatory character. They highlight the collapse of the so-called ‘anti-memorandum’ line that promoted the bourgeois social-democratic aim of the reconstruction of production, without radical changes at the level of the economy and power.

- The contemporary class struggle demands overcoming the theory regarding ‘intermediate stages’ in the management of the exploitative system and the different forms for the maintenance of bourgeois democracy, defending the laws of socialist revolution and construction.

- The anti-capitalist anti-monopoly line of struggle is the line for the concentration and preparation of working class and popular forces for the overthrow of capitalism, for workers’-people’s power, for socialism, rejecting cooperation with the social-democratic party SYRIZA and any participation in ‘left-wing’ governments, or any other governments of bourgeois management.

- As a whole, after the recent developments, the processes for recomposition of the bourgeois political system are accelerating – either through a reshuffle and possible broadening of the government’s base or through elections and the creation of new parties and ‘shock absorbers’ like the Left Platform. In any case, the offensive against the KKE is the consistent choice of the system, so that the people’s indignation does

not join with the anti-capitalist anti-monopoly line of struggle. A new anti-people alliance of the ‘willing’ is being raised against the people in order to impede any spirit of resistance and emancipation. Today, the intensification of state and employer repression is rearing its head threateningly, as well as the increase of authoritarianism, in order to prevent the organisation of the labour movement and its allies and the development of the class struggle.

Friends and comrades

The fact that the exit of a country from the Eurozone, for the first time, was posed so intensely and directly is due to the sharpening of the internal contradictions and inequality of the economies of the Eurozone, to the competition between older and new imperialist centres, which emerged after the counter-revolutions in the socialist countries. These problems sharpened in the conditions of the prolonged economic crisis in Greece and elsewhere. Splitting trends have been strengthened, which are supported by bourgeois political forces that want a Eurozone of the countries with stronger economies. There is a strong trend in Germany, which is fomented by leading forces in the IMF, for their own reasons and interests, and this leads to the sharpening of the contradictions inside the Eurozone. Inter-imperialist contradictions have been expressed inside the Eurozone, chiefly between Germany and France, and also contradictions amongst the USA and Germany and other imperialist centres as regards the issue of Greece remaining in the Eurozone. The USA intervened, wishing to restrict Germany’s hegemony in Europe, without for the present desiring the dissolution of the Eurozone.

The contradictions and developments in the Eurozone, and in the EU as a whole, have not been checked by today’s temporary compromise and the ratification of the agreement between Greece and the Eurozone-IMF. The trend remains strong, leaving open the possibility of a ‘grecxit’, for the restructuring of the Eurozone, with the deepening of the mechanisms for a unified economic policy, and also with stricter rules and monitoring mechanisms regarding the positive balance between state spending and income. In any case, it is no accident that France and Italy, which resisted the choice of Greece’s exit from the Eurozone, are countries with high deficits and debts and seek a relaxation of the strict rules.

The confrontation over the issue of the debt is a result of these contradictions. The Greek government, in line with the IMF and the USA, elevated the adjustment of the debt as the ultimate goal for the people, at all costs and at the expense of the people’s interests. At the same time, it is asking for a new loan of €86 billion which will increase the debt. It wants the people to accept the anti-people measures in the name of a new management of the debt, which whenever it happened in the past was accompanied by attacks on the workers’-people’s rights. Capital will be the only beneficiary from the financing in the form of a new loan-debt or via its extension.

Comrades and friends

For a real solution in favour of the people there needs to be a real rupture-disengagement, which has no relation to the caricature of a disengagement being invoked by forces inside and outside SYRIZA that promote the capitalist Greece of the drachma as the way out. The option to exit the euro and adopt

a national currency, inside the capitalist development path, is an anti-people one supported by important sections of the bourgeois class in Germany, on the basis of the ‘Schäuble plan’, as well as in other member states of the Eurozone, and indeed by other reactionary forces. Today, sections of capital in our country are flirting with this choice, hoping for immediately greater profits.

Those that claim that Greece’s exit from the Eurozone, with a depreciated currency, will lend impetus to competitiveness and growth with positive consequences for the people are engaged in conscious deception. Whatever capitalist growth is achieved in the future will not be accompanied by the recovery of salaries, pensions and rights, and for this reason it will not benefit the people. It will lead to new sacrifices of the people on the altar of the competitiveness of the monopolies.

Capitalist Greece with a national currency does not constitute a rupture in favour of the people. The political forces that promote such a goal as a solution, or as an intermediate goal for radical changes, such as the Left Platform of SYRIZA, ANTARSYA⁴ etc, are objectively playing the game of sections of capital.

This choice will not lead to the relatively better standards of living of the 1980s and 1990s, as certain people claim. The laws of capitalist exploitation, the unrelenting monopoly competition, will reign. The EU and NATO commitments will tighten the vice. The barbaric laws of lending hold true in all the money markets, investment banks and the funds of the current or other imperialist alliances (like BRICS). In any case the anti-people policies are being implemented in countries in the euro and also in capitalist countries with national currencies, in

stronger countries like China, Britain and Russia, and in weaker ones like Bulgaria and Romania.

The slogans about alleged dignity for the “poor but proud Greece which resists the strong” are aimed at concealing the truth from the people and subjugating them to barbarity. The people cannot feel proud when the wealth they produce is stolen from them and they become bankrupt in order to save the capitalist system from the crisis, inside or outside the Eurozone.

Friends and Comrades

It is one thing for the people themselves to choose to leave the EU, consciously and actively, taking the keys of the economy and power into their hands at the same time; and another completely different thing for a country to find itself outside the Eurozone, as a result of the contradictions and competition of the capitalists. The former constitutes an alternative solution in favour of the people and is worth every sacrifice; the latter leads to the people’s bankruptcy by another path.

The KKE from the first moment asked the people of our country to organise their counter-attack so that they are not driven to complete bankruptcy. They must strengthen the labour movement, the people’s alliance, so that they can pave the way for the people to be liberated once and for all from the power of capital and the imperialist unions that are leading them to even more barbaric conditions.

The people must not allow complacency, intimidation, fatalism and the fraudulent atmosphere of ‘national unity’ to prevail, nor the false hopes being fostered by the government, the other bourgeois parties, the mass media and various other centres of the establishment, as well as the EU bodies. These forces are calling on the

people to accept the Tsipras memorandum and to feel relieved, because allegedly the worst case scenario has been avoided.

The political proposal of the KKE – social ownership, disengagement from the EU and NATO, unilateral cancellation of the debt, with workers’-people’s power – is directed towards the salaried workers and popular strata, the youth and women from the families of the working class and popular strata, the pensioners, because these forces were and are the real motor forces of society. Social prosperity can be ensured on the basis of their work, without unemployment, hunger, destitution, without exploitation. What is needed is for them to become the protagonists of the social and political developments, to act for their own interests, for their own lives, with the KKE against the power of their exploiters.

Nothing was ever granted by the exploiters and their state. Workers’-people’s power will not be granted by the bourgeois political system or by any ‘left-wing’ party, it must be conquered. The course for a real change in the correlation of forces in favour of the workers’-people’s majority requires that the people rally around the KKE and that the KKE is strengthened everywhere, above all in the workplaces and people’s neighbourhoods.

The comprehensive strengthening of the KKE, and the joining of forces

with it, are prerequisites for the regrouping of the labour movement and the formation of a strong people’s alliance, which will conduct struggles regarding all the people’s problems, demand immediate relief measures and the recovery of losses, with a stable orientation of fighting against the monopolies and capitalism.

The formation and strengthening of this alliance can from today assist the change of the negative correlation of forces, the reinforcement of the organisation, combativeness, militant spirit of the working class and the other popular strata against fatalism and submission of the people, against the old and new managers of the capitalist barbarity.

Comrades and Friends

If my closing slogan in the British Peace Assembly meeting was

**NO SUBMISSION
TO IMPERIALISM,
CONSTANT FIGHT FOR
REAL PEACE**

here it cannot be but
**NO SUBMISSION
TO CAPITALISM,
CONSTANT FIGHT
FOR SOCIALISM-
COMMUNISM**

■ *Speech given at the Red Star Festival, London, 2 August 2015. Since then a general election has taken place in Greece, with little change except the elimination of SYRIZA’s Left Platform, which had broken away but gained no seats.*

Notes and References

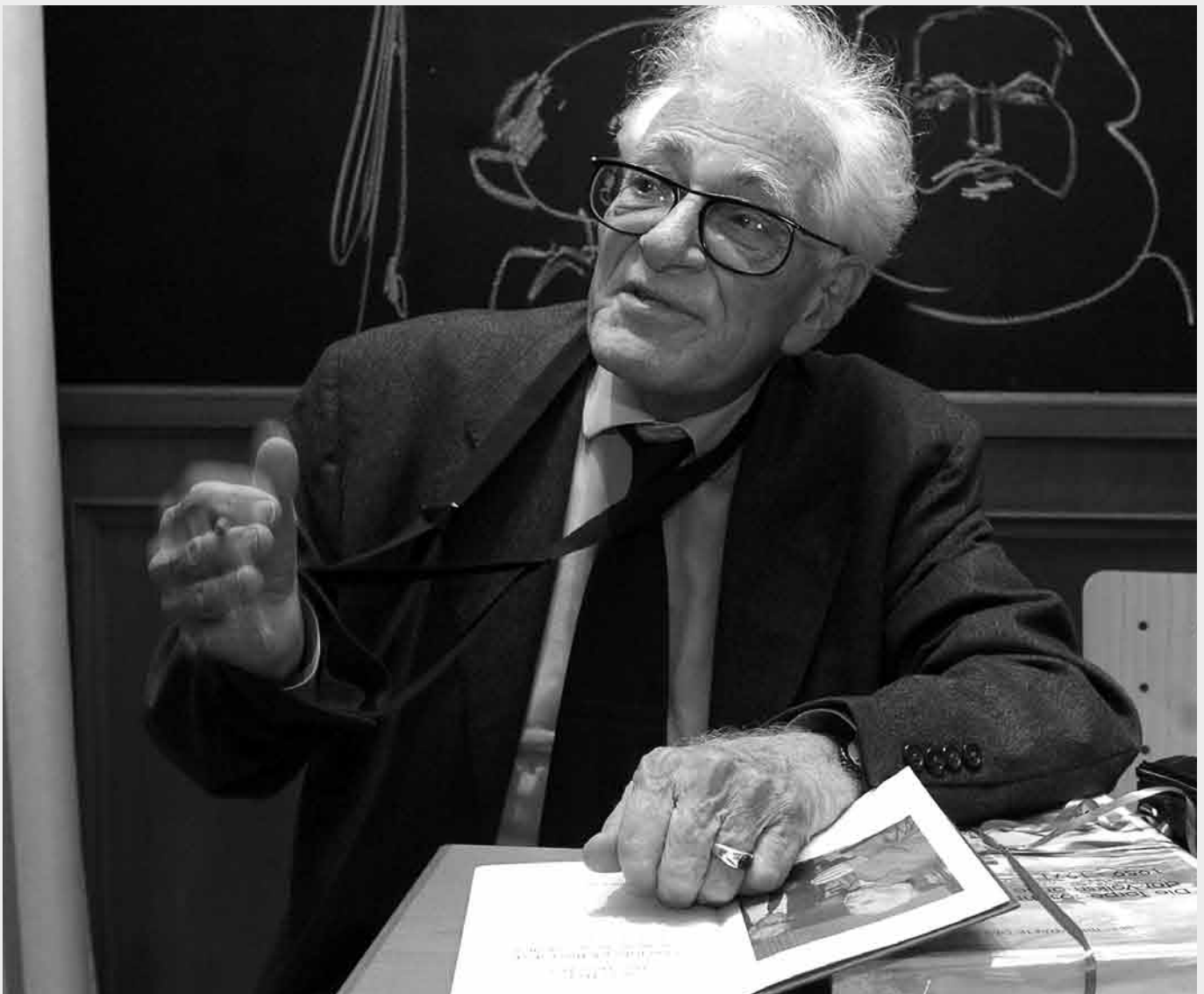
- 1 *Joint Statement in Solidarity with the KKE*, 17.07.2015, signed by 56 communist and workers’ parties; online at <http://inter.kke.gr/en/articles/Joint-Statement-in-Solidarity-with-KKE/> –Ed.
- 2 *ND* = New Democracy (right-wing, conservative, former governing party); *PASOK* = Panhellenic Socialist Movement (social-democratic, also former governing party); *Potami* = River (‘centrist’, pro-EU party, formed 2014) –Ed.
- 3 *Synaspismos*, or the Coalition of the Left, of Movements and Ecology, started in the late 1980s as an electoral coalition involving the KKE. It subsequently became a home for revisionists and was dissolved in 2013 when SYRIZA, the alliance of which it was the major group, became a political party –Ed.
- 4 *ANTARSYA* = Anticapitalist Left Cooperation for the Overthrow, formed in 2009 by the merger of several ultra-leftist organisations.

“Revisionists are always Kantians”

Marx's 11th Thesis on Feuerbach, the decay of philosophy in the late bourgeois period and ideological deficiencies in the socialist countries.

A discussion from 2011 with Hans Heinz Holz

Hans Heinz Holz, communist and philosopher, died on 11 December 2011, at the age of 84. In the spring of that year he had been visited, at his home in Ticino, Switzerland, by Arnold Schölzel (AS), editor-in-chief of the Berlin progressive daily junge Welt, and Johannes Oehme (JO) of the Eulenspiegel publishing house. Over several days AS and JO talked with Holz about his life in philosophy and politics. The recordings of these discussions are currently being prepared for publication, but junge Welt has printed the following extract, principally concerning the German philosophers Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831). The text has been edited and supplemented with notes.



AS: Can we say that Kantianism, or neo-Kantianism, is the greatest impediment to getting through to analysis and to the adequate use of [philosophical] concepts?

If we read Kant attentively and track down the places where he is no longer able to substantiate his subjectivism, and rather – I say it badly – covers it up with philosophical tricks, then we realise that there is something lacking. Those are the passages where Hegel starts off. If we read Kant and Hegel together, then Kant can impart very many insights. He is a very great thinker. I have always said: “Kant is the biggest disaster in modern philosophical history – on account of his subjectivism.” But he is naturally one of the very great thinkers, who was this disaster at a high level, otherwise he could not have been such a disaster. If one reads him together with Hegel, he can become very instructive, but read against Hegel he becomes in fact a misdirection.

AS: Can we then summarise accordingly, that it is Kant who says that we just don't have a rational use of concepts, particularly those concerning the real and universal? Can we sum it up in that way?

Correct. And Hegel put his finger exactly on that point and tried to present concepts not as rigid but as self-developing – like, as it were, one chapter of his *Phenomenology of Spirit*¹ being born out of another. An approach of this sort has such a fascinating power of conviction, since concepts do not arise here *a priori*, but rather in a development. And it is precisely in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* that the formation of concepts is presented as a historical process, because the work always refers to the respective historical situations.² (In the *Science of Logic* the formation of the concept [or, in some translations, ‘Notion’ –*Ed*] is

IMMANUEL KANT

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) was the foremost German philosopher of the Enlightenment, best known for his *Critique of Pure Reason*. Lenin, in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, Ch 4, Part I, summarises Kant's position as follows:

“The principal feature of Kant's philosophy is the reconciliation of materialism with idealism, a compromise between the two, the combination within one system of heterogeneous and contrary philosophical trends. When Kant assumes that something outside us, a thing-in-itself, corresponds to our ideas, he is a materialist. When he declares this thing-in-itself to be unknowable, transcendental, other-sided, he is an idealist. Recognising experience, sensations, as the only source of our knowledge, Kant is directing his philosophy towards sensationalism, and via sensationalism, under certain conditions, towards materialism. Recognising the apriority of space, time, causality, etc, Kant is directing his philosophy towards idealism. Both consistent materialists and consistent idealists (as well as the ‘pure’ agnostics, the Humeans) have mercilessly criticised Kant for this inconsistency. The materialists blamed Kant for his idealism, rejected the idealist features of his system, demonstrated the knowability, the this-sidedness of the thing-in-itself, the absence of a fundamental difference between the thing-in-itself and the phenomenon, the need of deducing causality, etc, not from a priori laws of thought, but from objective reality. The agnostics and idealists blamed Kant for his assumption of the thing-in-itself as a concession to materialism, ‘realism’ or ‘naïve realism’. The agnostics, moreover, rejected not only the thing-in-itself, but apriorism as well; while the idealists demanded the consistent deduction from pure thought not only of the a priori forms of perception, but of the world as a whole (by magnifying human thought to an abstract Self, or to an ‘Absolute Idea’, or to a ‘Universal Will’ etc, etc).”

(Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol 14, p 198.)



very abstract, but that work certainly constitutes the basis [of Hegel's system – *jW*]). Hence I would say: after that Kant is simply a step backwards.

But, without Kant, Hegel would not have written. He was, so to speak, pushed by the dominating Kantianism of his time to the conclusion that it [the rigid determination of the concept by Kant's transcendental analysis in the *Critique of Pure Reason* –*jW*] does not work. Fichte³ had already noticed it. The quite young Schelling⁴ is a unique

protest against Kantianism – an unripe one indeed, one would say, but after all full of brilliant ideas and thoughts. Hegel is therefore somewhat unjust, when he says that Schelling, in his writings, presents his entire educational development in public view, instead of waiting until he is at the point where he has something to say.⁵ But Schelling's work was throughout initiated through Kant with the sense that: it doesn't work like that! And the loyal Kantians like [Karl Leonhard] Reinhold⁶ and



colleagues, who were very significant in their time, have disappeared. Neo-Kantianism has also died out.

AS: Certainly it has died out as a significant stream. However, I always wonder whether the neo-Kantian system of thinking does not prevent people, without their knowing it in particular, from putting the question in the way that Leibniz, Hegel, Lenin and you yourself do.

Yes, I would certainly say that. Neo-Kantianism sets up barriers, which have been taken over quite uncritically into positivism. In that way a line of tradition has been built, one whose representatives are essentially Kantian.

AS: In this context I recall that in 1953 you wrote an article in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, about a philosophy congress. You said that in practice the use of concepts had found no place there – and thereby that the tradition of philosophy concerning itself with the burning questions of the time had been broken. It was a sign of the decay of intellectual activity. Philosophy would therefore have to regain its organon⁷. If we generalise, would that also be your charge against bourgeois philosophy after Hegel, that in it these issues essentially almost no longer occur?

After Hegel there is a decay of metaphysics. And these issues are in the final analysis of a metaphysical type. The decay of metaphysics, which sets in with natural-scientific empiricism and forces metaphysics away into the privatism of the private world-view ... there are then so many people like Schopenhauer⁸, who accordingly writes a metaphysics for the educated citizens. But in reality it no longer has the power to make a world. There is also Eduard von Hartmann⁹. These late metaphysics scholars of the 19th century, they no longer count. When all is said and done, that was the impulse out of which Nietzsche¹⁰ turned against philosophy altogether. He grasped that it has lost all its power. That goes for the whole of post-Hegelian philosophy.

That is the reason why Marx develops a starting-off point for the refounding of philosophy, which is no longer a philosophy of thought which cuts itself off. In reality, that type has been so completely dealt with by Hegel, that thereafter it can actually only become worse. With Marx, philosophy must become different. Consequently the

11th Thesis on Feuerbach says: You philosophers have only interpreted. Others still go on interpreting. However, now the main thing is to find a form of philosophy which not only interprets but rather engages, in a practical way.

In reality, that is an issue which has been open up to the present day. What form of philosophy, under what philosophical categories does the relation of practice become again a relation of reflection and not direct practice? That was also the short-coming of Marxist philosophy after Lenin: it operated as criticism of bourgeois ideology and then did not ask, what must a Marxist philosophy be now? The *11th Thesis on Feuerbach* was always interpreted as if to say that we have now reached the end of philosophy. But, in his criticism of Hegel, Marx spoke of the “transcendence [*Aufhebung*] and realisation of philosophy”: yet you can only transcend it if you make it real; and you can only make it real if you transcend it as pure theory.¹¹ This dialectics of transcendence and realisation has been neglected in Marxist theory. This failure is one of the reasons why there was the internal susceptibility of the socialist system to bourgeois ideology. If they had had their own dialectics of transcendence and realisation, then they would have been completely resistant to all bourgeois influences. However, without it specific bourgeois philosophies which have something to do with reality – like existentialism, or the ‘philosophy of praxis’ of the Yugoslavs – were able to infiltrate with elements of theory which were basically non-Marxist.

I think that that has had a most decisive ideological effect, leading to the gradual drying up of theory in the socialist states. In my view Stalin, who continually returned to theoretical questions, was the last to take up these issues, in his work on Marxism and linguistics.¹² There he not only addresses linguistics, but also the base-superstructure arrangement in society. He says accordingly that the latter is considered too simply. That is indeed quite a reasonable model for explaining specific ideological connections. But there is more on which we must ponder. And this appreciation of the problem completely disappeared after Stalin’s death. This article of his was never again discussed.

JO: Perhaps not this article. But at least in the Stalin period, did not independent philosophical stances arise? Here I am thinking of the Hungarian logician Béla Fogarasi¹³.

From him there was a logic, in which the concept of reflection was also developed out of a critique of trivial base-superstructure schemes. There was a literature which appeared before the 20th Congress of the CPSU. Therefore I thought that today we would also have to take look at what positions existed before 1956 on the base-superstructure relation – which you indeed ask.

Fogarasi was very much combatted. I think also of the Czech philosopher Jindřich Zelený¹⁴, whose distinguished works were never made use of. In the West they were partly made use of. Zelený was our eminent representative, whom we sent into the International Society for Philosophy, but no-one actually made use of his philosophy in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. We should regard it as a service by the German Democratic Republic that they published Zelený in German. Up to the present day, his Czech works have not been published, in any case not in such a way that they are fit for reception internationally.

Thus there were a few, and I have regarded Zelený as a very significant philosopher. Fogarasi’s logic is not actually my speciality, but his achievement is self-evident. However, there was already the sharp debate between Georg Klaus¹⁵ and Fogarasi. Klaus very severely refused to acknowledge Fogarasi. Their different positions had been a subject of discussion, but they were not taken up as such. They quarrelled with each other, and that was it. I think that was one of the great theoretical deficiencies in socialism in the times after 1950, that they did not continue to work on the basic questions of theory.

AS: I don’t know whether the obstacles to throwing open such basic questions were politically determined. It also included, for example, looking beyond Marx.

I would say that “beyond Marx” wasn’t the impediment, but rather the fact that people actually wanted to go back to before Lenin, that they wanted in reality to return to the Marxists of empirio-criticism. That connects with the 20th Congress and Khrushchev. With Stalin a Leninist tradition became problematic; it was certainly not subjected to attack, but it became problematic. And philosophically that resulted in the Hegelian tradition not being

further pursued. The entire dialectics was unappealing to the revisionists. Revisionists are always Kantians.

In 1981 we had a congress in Riga, on the occasion of the anniversary of [Kant's] *Critique of Pure Reason*. All the top people in Soviet philosophy converged there. That was an unparalleled Kant celebration. The only, very discreetly controlled, criticism of Kant came from me. I explored the Kantian doctrinal categories and the "analogies of experience"¹⁶ and showed that a break exists in the "analogies", and that this break also manifests itself in the differences between the first and second editions of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. People had not gone in for such philological analyses, since then they would have had to reflect on them. So one could celebrate Kant as the thinker of a revolution, which he also was, but just limited, actually limited – because Kant says that, in the final analysis, revolution is always wrong.

However, then again the outcomes of the revolution are right. I must say that that is not a philosophical position. The whole direction after 1956 went in the direction of a revisionism, which also showed a partiality for taking up the whole neopositivist philosophy. And there a man like Fogarasi was no longer appreciated, that is clear.

JO: They [the representatives of socialist philosophy at that time – jW] must nevertheless have related themselves somehow to Lenin. Did they consciously celebrate Kant against the invectives and tirades of Lenin? In his *Conspectus of Hegel's Science of Logic*, Lenin after all explains what the basic problems and deficiencies with Kant are – precisely related to the theory of knowledge.

The *Conspectus of Hegel's 'Logic'* remained practically disregarded in the whole philosophy of the socialist countries.

In the 1980s there was an omnibus volume, a Hegel commemoration, jointly published by the two academies, Moscow and Berlin. I wrote in this volume about the *Conspectus*.¹⁷ That was the only contribution on that matter. The volume was edited by Teodor I Oizerman and Manfred Buhr.¹⁸ Buhr argued strongly for the inclusion of my essay. Oizerman said: "Well, yes, one can also read Lenin in that way." That was the approach: for God's sake, away with all that! Lenin said: the editors of the journal *Under the Banner of Marxism* should all form a club of friends of Hegel's logic.¹⁹ That was completely forgotten. People also didn't like it if you cited these points. They couldn't challenge it, but they didn't want to hear it.

■ First published in German in *junge Welt* on 26 February 2015, which would have been Holz's 88th birthday. Translation and additional notes, including the box on Kant, are by the CR editor.

Notes and References

1 In the introduction to Hegel's 1807 work *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford University Press, 1977, p v), J N Findlay writes that the task of the book "is to run through, in a scientifically purged order, the stages in the mind's necessary progress from immediate self-consciousness to the position of a scientific philosophy ..." Here Hegel prefigures almost all of what he was later to develop systematically –Ed.

2 *Eg* 'Lordship and bondage', the origin of Stoicism and Scepticism, 'The Struggle of the Enlightenment with Superstition' and the origin of the 'Terror' in revolutionary France –Ed.

3 Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814) was the first of the great post-Kantian idealist philosophers. He took, as his fundamental principle, the Ego, meaning Absolute Subjectivity –Ed.

4 Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling (1775-1854) was a German philosopher, originally a disciple of Fichte, though later distancing himself from that position, in collaboration with Hegel –Ed.

5 See G W F Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Prometheus Books, 1996, Part 3, Sect 3.D, 'Schelling'; online at <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/works/hp/hpschell.htm> –Ed.

6 Karl Leonard Reinhold (1757-1823) was an Austrian philosopher, the father of Ernst Reinhold (1793-1855), also a philosopher. Both were supporters of Kant –Ed.

7 Set of principles for use in philosophical investigation –Ed.

8 Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-

1860) was a German philosopher who considered himself as the only true inheritor of Kant, but is now best known as the 'philosopher of pessimism'; he "characterised the phenomenal world, and consequently all human action, as the product of a blind, insatiable, and malignant metaphysical will (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur_Schopenhauer)" –Ed.

9 Karl Robert Eduard von Hartmann (1842-1906) was a German philosopher who tried to reconcile Schopenhauer with Hegel, Schelling and Leibniz –Ed.

10 Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) was a reactionary German philosopher, who stressed the difference between "higher types" and "the herd", proclaiming the "overman" (*Übermensch*) to be "the meaning of the earth" –Ed.

11 Here this means, alongside the *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law*, written in 1843, above all *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction*, written in 1844. The latter article formulates the programme of transcendence and realisation of philosophy [although the English standard version translates the multiple-meaning German word *aufheben* as 'abolish' rather than, in this context, the more correct 'sublate' or 'transcend' –Ed]: "Philosophy cannot be made a reality without the abolition of the proletariat; the proletariat cannot be abolished without the realisation of philosophy." The two texts are in K Marx and F Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol 3, pp 3-129 and 175-187 respectively. The

cited text is on p 187.

12 J Stalin, *Marxism and Problems of Linguistics*, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1954; online at <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1950/jun/20.htm>. [In this context see also H H Holz, *Stalin's Philosophical and Political Testament*, in CR53, Summer 2009, pp 32-37 –Ed.]

13 Béla Fogarasi lived from 1891 to 1959. In Budapest he belonged early on to, among others, the "Sunday Circle" led by Georg Lukács. From 1930 to 1945 he taught philosophy in Moscow, and was a supporter of Stalin. After 1945 he went back to Budapest. His *Marxism and Logic* appeared in 1946, *Logic* in 1950.

14 Jindřich Zelený lived from 1922 to 1997. He taught at the Charles University in Prague and belonged from 1981 to the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences. The following works of his have been translated into German: *The Science of Logic in Marx and Das Kapital* [published in English as *The Logic of Marx*, Rowman & Littlefield/Blackwell, 1980 –Ed]; *Dialectics of Rationality: Towards the Development of a Rationality Type of Materialist Dialectics*; and in 2001 *The Dialectical Ontology*.

15 Georg Klaus, 1912-1974, was a leader in the GDR in the philosophical questions of cybernetics, logic, semiotics and natural science. Numerous widely-known articles and 'dictionaries' by him appeared, particularly the *Philosophical Dictionary*, which he edited with Manfred Buhr in 1964.

16 The doctrinal categories and the "analogies of experience"

are constituent parts of the "transcendental doctrine of elements" in Kant's major work, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, 1781-1787 –Ed.

17 This concerns the collection of essays, *Vom Mute des Erkennens: Beiträge zur Philosophie G W F Hegels (From the Courage of Cognition: Contributions on the G W F Hegel's Philosophy)*, Berlin, 1981, which appeared on the 150th anniversary of the death of the dialectician. [Holz's essay, *Turning Hegel from his Head onto his Feet*, was published in CR74, Winter 2014/15, pp 16-23 –Ed.]

18 Oizerman, born 1914, was at that time head of department in the Institute for Philosophy at the Academy of Sciences of the USSR. Buhr, 1927-2008, was – as successor to Georg Klaus, head of the Central Institute for Philosophy at the Academy of Sciences in Berlin. The emphasis of his research lay in the history of classical German philosophy from Kant to Hegel.

19 In Vol 33 of Lenin's *Collected Works*, p 233, there is the following text: "In order to hold his own in this struggle and carry it to a victorious finish, the natural scientist must be a modern materialist, a conscious adherent of the materialism represented by Marx, *ie* he must be a dialectical materialist. In order to attain this aim, the contributors to *Pod Znamenem Marksizma* must arrange for the systematic study of Hegelian dialectics from a materialist standpoint, *ie* the dialectics which Marx applied practically in his *Capital* and in his historical and political works ..." (*On the Significance of Militant Materialism*).

CENTENARY OF THE DEATH OF JAMES KEIR HARDIE, 15.08.1856-26.09.1915

Keir Hardie

By T E Nicholas

[James Keir Hardie was a Scottish socialist, a founder of the Independent Labour Party and the Labour Party and the first independent Labour Member of the Westminster Parliament. He represented West Ham South, 1892-95, and Merthyr Tydfil from 1900 until his death on 26 September 1915. Hardie had opposed the imperialist Great War and been vilified by the British ruling class and the jingoists as a consequence. Communist poet T E Nicholas composed the following tribute within days of Hardie's death. The poem was first published in the Merthyr *Pioneer* weekly paper on 16 October 1915, and was included in the collection *Dros Eich Gwlad (For Your Country)* in 1920. The translation from the original Welsh is by Robert Griffiths.]

KEIR HARDIE

*Mae crechwen heno yn neuaddau gorthrwm,
A llawen ddawns sydd yn neuaddau trais;
Y mae'r offeiriad uwch ei win a'i ddegwm
Yn llon ei ysbryd ac yn iach ei lais;
Mae'r un fu'n hyrddio boltau barn at drawsion
Yn huno rhwng mynyddau pell ei fro;
Mae'r un fu'n dadleu hawliau cyfiawn dynion
Yn huno'n dawel, dawel, yn y gro.*

*Gall apostolion rhyfel godi eu pennau,
A deiliaid Mammon wneud eu gwaith mewn heddi;
Mae'r hwn a'u heriodd heno rhwng y blodau,
A chysgod y mynyddoedd dros ei feddi;
Bu farw pan oedd megnyl yn taranu,
A fflach y cledd yn llathru cyrrau'r byd;
Bu farw pan oedd mawrion gwlad yn sarnu
Delfrydau garodd yn angherddol c'ŷd.*

*Mae wyllo distaw ym mythynnod gwerin,
A galar trwm mewn llawer cartref prudd;
A nerthoedd gorthrwm sydd fel garw ddrycin
Yn torri yn ddi-aros dros y rudd;
Ond y mae llais yn galw ar werinwyr
I gerdded i'r pinaclau sydd yn wyn;
Mae'r llais yn uwch nag ingol gri y milwyr
Sy'n marw'n filoedd ar waelodion glyn.*

*Pwy etyb alwad y delfrydau llachar?
Pwy gerdd i'r frwydr fawr dros hawliau'r gwan?
Y mae dyniolaeth welw dros y ddaear
I wrando llais y proffwyd yn y man;
Mae Hardie yn fyw! yn fyw mewn symudiau,
Yn fyw mewn dynion parod iawn i waith:
Mae'r gwaith yn fyw! er croesi mil o feddau,
Ac acen buddugoliaeth yn ei iaith.*

SPECIAL ELECTION EDITION.
THE MERTHYR BOROUGH
LABOUR PIONEER.
The Official Organ of the Merthyr, Dowlais, and District
Trades and Labour Council.
No. 5. JANUARY, 1906. Gratis.

J. KEIR HARDIE,
LABOUR'S CHAMPION.

ORGANISATIONS . . .
SUPPORTING THE
LABOUR CANDIDATE.


Merthyr Borough
Labour Representation Committee
Hon. Secy: James Thomas, Chairman.
David James, Com. E. B. STEWART.

Merthyr, Dowlais, and District
Trades and Labour Council.
A. QUINNEMAN, President.
F. ARNOTT, Vice-President.
S. GILLIES, Treasurer.
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Aberdare Trades' Council.
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COUNSELLOR STEWART, Secretary.

Merthyr Vale L.R.C.
DAVID THOMAS, Chairman.
ELEANOR WILLIAMS, Secretary.

Merthyr District of Miners'
Federation.
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Merthyr, Dowlais, Aberdare,
Rounton Ash and Porthkerry
L.R.C. Branches.
And of the Local Branches associated
A.S.B.C. 1905, &c.
Co-operative and Labour,
Amalgamated Society of Carpenters,
Typographical Society,
Workmen's Union,
Tailors,
Hatters' Federation,
National Amalgamated Society of Shop
Assistants,
National Union of Teachers,
National Union of Ironmongers Agents,
Amalgamated Society of Engine-men and
Firemen,
Wagon Drivers,
Blacksmiths,
Bakers and Confectioners,
Engineers and Blacksmiths,
New Workers and Gun Labourers,
&c., &c., &c.

THE MAN FOR MERTHYR.
ELECTORS! Do not fail to give One Vote for J. KEIR HARDIE.
Polling Day, WEDNESDAY, January 17th, from 8 a.m. until 8 p.m.
POLL EARLY.

KEIR HARDIE

There's a smirk tonight in the halls of oppression,
In savagery's dens there's a happy dance;
The priest, replete with his tithes and his wine,
Is fine of voice and bolder of stance;
While he who hurled his bolts at tyranny
Sleeps near mountains in his native heath;
He who spoke for the right to be free
Slumbers soft in the gravel beneath.

The apostles of war can hold their heads high,
In peace Mammon's creatures can slave;
Now amid flowers their challenger lies
As mountains cast shadows on his grave;
He died as the cannons were thundering
And sword flashes lit up the earth;
He died as the statesmen were sundering
The values he loved for their worth.

In commoners' cottages, soft weeping
In their sombre homes, a heavy grief;
As oppression's hosts, like a storm, searing,
Break against the cheek without relief;
Yet still the voice that summons the workers
To walk towards the white peaks on high
Sounds over the cries of stricken soldiers
Who on the plains in their thousands die.

Who answers the call of gleaming ideals?
Who marches to war for the claims of the weak?
Sallow humanity on the face of the earth
Will one day heed the prophet who speaks;
Hardie's alive! in the movement he lives,
Alive in those who prepare for the grave;
The work lives on! in spite of the graveyards
And here in its prose, catch victory's rhyme.

Discussion: How to Define our Epoch?



By Lars Ulrik Tomsen

THE BREAKDOWN of socialism in Eastern Europe in the 1990s has accentuated the debate on how to define our epoch. It has caused severe disagreement in many communist parties around the world. As I pointed out in a book review in the last issue of *CR*,¹ the definition of the epoch is vital for deciding the strategy and tactics of the labour movement. There is therefore a need for clarifying the matter, based on an analysis in Marxist theory.

In his preface to Bukharin's Pamphlet, *Imperialism and the World Economy*, Lenin defines the shift of epoch from a relatively "peaceful" capitalism to the epoch of imperialist wars:

"N I Bukharin's paper has especially high scientific value because he examines the main facts of the world economy relating to imperialism as a whole, as a definite stage of development of the most highly developed capitalism. There was an epoch of relatively 'peaceful' capitalism, when it had completely defeated feudalism in the leading European countries and was free to develop with the utmost – relative – tranquillity and smoothness, expanding 'peacefully' over the vast expanses of the as yet unsettled lands and the countries not yet irrevocably drawn into the capitalist maelstrom. Of course, even in that period, roughly between 1871 and 1914, 'peaceful' capitalism created conditions of life that were a very far cry from actual 'peace', both in the military and the class sense. For nine-tenths of the population of the leading countries, for hundreds of millions in the colonies and backward countries, that epoch was not one of 'peace' but of oppression, suffering and horror, which was the more terrible, possibly, for appearing to be a 'horror without end'. This epoch is gone for good, it has given way to an epoch which is relatively much more violent, spasmodic, disastrous and conflicting, an epoch which for the mass of the population is typified not so much by a 'horror without end' as by a 'horrible end'."²

All of Lenin's works are imbued with the desire to understand how one social formation replaces another according to the laws of history, how this process is 'independent' of the individual's will and wish.

There have been several serious attempts to analyse the question of the epoch from a contemporary point of view. I referred previously to Wolf-Dieter Gudopp von Behm's *Das Mass der Epoche (The Measure of the Epoch)*, which was published for the first time in 1991.³ Another attempt is Rainer Eckert's *Revolution und Konterrevolution in*

Deutschland (Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Germany), also printed for the first time in 1991.³

Both articles are very helpful towards discussing the definition of our epoch. A third attempt has been made by Hans Heinz Holz in *Kommunisten Heute (Communists Today)*. The main difference between Holz and Gudopp is on the question of the October Revolution. Was this the start of a new epoch, transforming society from capitalism to socialism? Comrade Holz wrote:

"Though capitalism is proving itself still viable, even in its general crisis, and despite the downfall of the socialist states, I nonetheless adhere to this point, from developed basic principles: that we are in the epoch of transition from capitalism to its determinate negation, to socialism and that capitalism has been in the phase of general crisis since the First World War."⁴

Wolf-Dieter Gudopp has a different approach in *The Measure of the Epoch*. He believes that we have, until now, seen the epoch concept too narrowly, and he does not think that there was a break in 1989.¹ What fascinates me by Gudopp's work is his ability to think in more levels and clarify how they are *dialectically intertwined*:

"This is also the farewell to the very understandable and initially also plausible, however, principally questionable, view that the October Revolution (including its immediate history) meant the start of a new era, with a concept as well as the idiom of 'Leninism, the Marxism of our epoch' being understood."⁵

Rainer Eckert has the following view on how to approach the epoch in a scientific way:

"One can only theorise adequately on revolutionary processes when one understands the historical process as a whole, the concrete historical epoch in its contradictory tendencies and based on an analysis. As is known, these are today highly controversial theoretical objects that require great mental effort. The theoretical and methodological necessity must be newly re-established by its representatives."⁶

Eckert stresses that his work, based on Engels' *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Germany*⁷, is only a beginning for a much broader and comprehensive analysis of the history of the 20th and 21st centuries. Let us return to Lenin's preface to Bukharin's pamphlet:



“There is not a whit of Marxism in this urge to ignore the imperialism which is here and to escape into the realm of an ‘ultra-imperialism’ which may or may not arrive. In this formulation, Marxism is recognised in that ‘new phase of capitalism’ which its inventor himself does not warrant *can be realised*, while in the present stage (which is already here) the petty-bourgeois and profoundly reactionary desire to blunt the contradictions is substituted for Marxism. Kautsky *swore* to be a Marxist in this coming, acute and cataclysmic epoch, which he was forced to predict and recognise very definitely in his 1909 paper on this coming epoch. Now that this epoch has most definitely arrived, Kautsky once again swears to be a Marxist in the coming epoch of ultra-imperialism, which may or may not arrive! In short, any number of promises to be a Marxist in *another* epoch, not now, not under present conditions, not in this epoch! Marxism on credit, Marxism in promises, Marxism tomorrow, a petty-bourgeois, opportunist theory – and not only a theory – of blunting contradictions today. This is something like the internationalism for export which is very popular today with ardent – oh, so ardent! – internationalists and Marxists who sympathise with every manifestation of internationalism – in the enemy camp, anywhere, but not at home, not among their allies; they sympathise with democracy – when it remains an ‘allied’ promise; they sympathise with ‘the self-determination of nations’, but only *not* of those dependent on the nation which has the honour of having the sympathiser among its citizens. In a word, it is one of the 1,001 varieties of hypocrisy.”⁸

This view of Kautsky’s is the general view of the social-democratic labour parties around the world and the one we are up against. It is a return to *utopian socialism* which also dominates *The New Left* and their views.

It will be very productive to generalise the experiences made by philosophers and Marxists on the question of epoch, helping the communist parties to develop a more advanced analysis of the complicated stage of imperialism we are witnessing.

Notes and References

1 L U Thomsen, *A Valuable Book on Economics*, in *CR76*, Summer 2015, p 27.

2 V I Lenin, *Preface to N Bukharin’s Pamphlet, ‘Imperialism and the World Economy’* in *Collected Works*, Vol 22, p 104.

3 W-D Gudopp von Behm, *Das Maß der Epoche (The Measure of the Epoch)*/R Eckert, *Revolution und Konterrevolution in Deutschland (Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Germany)*, Verein Wissenschaft & Sozialismus, Frankfurt am Main, combined reprint, 1995.

4 H H Holz, *Kommunisten Heute – Die Partei und ihr Weltanschauung (Communists Today – the Party and Its World-View)* Neue Impulse Verlag, Essen, 1995, Ch 8; online at <http://www.northerncommunists.org.uk/political-education/some-thoughts-on-defining-the-political-situation>.

5 Gudopp, *op cit*, p 29.

6 Eckert, *op cit*, p 51.

7 In K Marx and F Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol 11, pp 3-96; online at <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/germany/>.

8 Lenin, *op cit*, pp 106-7.

Discussion: On ‘Oppression and Freedom in the Old Testament’

By Jimmy Jankovich

I FIND THOMAS WAGNER’S article¹ interesting but, although I in general agree with some of his conclusions, I have some super serious reservations about his reading of the Bible.

Apart from the book of Kings, the Bible is not a historical record – it is a mishmash of factual events, legends and myths drawn from a number of different sources. At one point Wagner makes the point that the Exodus is a myth. I fully agree with this, for a number of reasons,² but at several points he seems to accept it as fact. If it is, indeed, a myth and the Israelites never left Egypt under Moses, their God never did save them from any “house of bondage”. The book of Judges does, indeed, describe an early period of relatively egalitarian tribalism. However, the military and state control against which they often fought was mostly that of local Canaanite principalities, not that of Egypt.

That the Old Testament does consistently oppose authoritarian rulers, limit slavery and emphasise the need for justice is undoubtedly true. It has imprinted this culture both on many modern Jews and many reforming or radical Christian trends – from the Lollards and Hussites in the Middle Ages to Cromwell and the post-revolutionary

Dissenting chapels as well as the Quakers. Indeed, the unpopularity of the Jews in 19th and 20th Century Europe was largely due to the number of them who were identified with progressive causes. However I don’t think that the Exodus myth explains this, and much more research is needed in this field. Later on I suggest one so far little explored avenue, but there must be others to be explored by people better qualified than myself.

Wagner also seems to accept the existence of an Israelite Kingdom under David and Solomon (9th or 10th century BCE), although there is NO archaeological evidence of a kingdom of Judah until the 6th century BCE, ie after the fall of the Northern kingdom of Israel. Prior to that Jerusalem seems to have been a village or hill fort – a suitable stronghold for the bandit chief David whom the Bible describes as defying King Saul.

Wagner makes no attempt to explain why, in the early tribal period, egalitarian measures to protect widows and orphans, who had no land, also applied to Levites. It is true that the Bible specifies that the Levites were a tribe apart who did not have a territory (and therefore land) of their own. The explanation for this – that they were a

special priestly tribe (caste?) – is obviously very late, since the Book of Judges makes no reference to priests. A priestly caste is the product of an urban society, ie of the much later period of the Israelite and Judean monarchies.

It must also be said, regarding Akhenaten, that he did not deny the existence of other gods; he merely refused to worship them. It should be pointed out, in this connection, that the first of the 10 Commandments also forbids the worshipping of other gods **but does not deny their existence.** Indeed, the First Temple, if we are to believe Jeremiah, contained a statue of a sacred serpent that the king paraded round the walls to protect the city against the Babylonians – much to Jeremiah's disgust and scorn.

Indeed, while the prophetic tradition is both anti-state and essentially monotheistic, the Israelites clearly were not consistently monotheistic, much to the anger of the various prophets. This raises a point that Freud made many years ago³ – the connection between Akhenaten and his cult and that of Yahweh. He makes the point that many of the Psalms attributed to David are almost translations of Akhenaten's hymns. Although five centuries separate Akhenaten from the period (or assumed period) of David, some link does seem to exist. The presence of Levites in the book of Judges might be the link. Were they heretical Egyptian priests who sought refuge from persecution among these egalitarian tribesmen and introduced their quasi-monotheistic ideas? This could, indeed, have been during the period of Ramesside rule that followed Akhenaten's and Tutankhamun's deaths. **As part of the ruling caste** they would have been able to move out freely and have known the situation in Canaan and been able to select where

to settle in relative safety.

Although it is true that monotheistic intolerance only became really oppressive when associated with state power in the case of the Christians, neither the Maccabees nor Herod showed much toleration of opponents – religious or political. Yet the Maccabees were rebels and outlaws much of the time – which didn't make them any more tolerant of those Jews that collaborated with the Seleucids.

The Jewish uprisings before, during and after the great uprising of 70 CE (and indeed the savage infighting between the rebel factions) tend to conform the accusation that monotheism does encourage intolerance and fanaticism – as do the 30 years of religious wars in Germany following the Reformation (including those between different Protestant sects).

Yet this is not universally the case. The Quakers were a reaction against the violence of the English Civil War – and its failure to set up the New Jerusalem which many had hoped for.

Moreover, unlike Akhenaten or the 10 Commandments, Mohammed **did** deny the existence of other gods. **BUT** the religion he created is different in one important respect from Judaism or Christianity – it has NO 'established church' or priesthood, no pope or central organ for imposing orthodoxy. **Indeed, his one over-riding principle was that there was no intermediary between God and the individual believer.** Hence his opposition to idolatry – AND the multiplicity of sects and heresies in Islam.

Though neither as a rebellious heretic in Mecca, nor as head of an exile community in Medina, was Mohammed very tolerant of opposition, yet (perhaps because he had himself been persecuted) he acknowledged

the right of Jews and Christians and other "peoples of the Book"⁴ to worship in their own way and indeed to enjoy all personal rights except those of bearing arms (which would have given them power to oppose). So, forced conversions were reserved for pagans. The Egyptian Copts welcomed the Arab conquest as liberation from Byzantine persecution. It is also no accident that the majority of Sephardic Jews fleeing the Spanish Inquisition immigrated to Muslim countries, as did many Ashkenazis from the Balkans in the late 19th and early 20th centuries CE.⁵ Fanaticism in Islam was often confined to other Muslim sects – as we see today.

Although Wagner seems to reject the idea of an early matrilineal stage in Israelite society, under Jewish orthodox ruling, a Jew is the child of a Jewish mother – the father doesn't count in this.⁶ Indeed, the Hebrew word for god, "Eloh", like the Arabic **Allah**, is grammatically feminine.⁷ The now strictly monotheistic **Ka'abah** was, in Mohammed's time, a temple to **female goddesses**, the alleged 'Daughters of Allah'

(the **Allahat**, which is the feminine plural of the word **Allah**); and his main religious opponent was a woman of his paternal tribe, Hind, who was evidently their priestess. Students of early Arab and Semitic cultures consider that they were all originally matrilineal. The move towards patriarchy in Mecca was taking place during Mohammed's own lifetime. Indeed, the reason his uncles gave for disinheriting him was that he belonged to his mother's clan, not his father's, and property had to remain within the clan. So pre-Islamic poetry describes and praises the beauty of the poets' mistresses and seems to show that the women not only were not segregated (as they became under Islam) but had a considerable degree of sexual freedom – limited only by their economic dependence. During the civil wars that followed Ali's accession to the Caliphate, Mohammed's favourite wife Ayesha mobilised an army and led it into battle against Ali. The veil and segregation of the sexes was an old Persian custom which the Muslims adopted after their conquest.

Notes and References

1 T Wagner, *Oppression and Freedom in the Old Testament*, Part 1 in CR75, Spring 2015, pp 10-16; Part 2 in CR76, Summer 2015, pp 14-20.

2 The only historic exodus from Egypt was that of the Hyksos, expelled in two waves, first by Ahmose I in about 1400 BCE, then by Thutmose III about a century later. They were never slaves but had ruled the Delta and much of Middle Egypt for two centuries. Moreover, the traditional period for Moses' Exodus, which is about 1200 BCE, was a period when the Ramesside pharaohs dominated Canaan so completely that fleeing there from Egyptian rule would have been crazy. It also would have made Joshua's invasion and conquest (for which there is also no archaeological evidence) impossible.

3 S Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 1939, reprinted by Martino Fine Books, Eastford CT, USA, 2010.

4 This includes various gnostic sects, like the Manicheans, Mandeans and Shabaks, some of which still exist in Iraq. The Druse, who are also essentially gnostics, are generally accepted as Muslims despite this.

5 As the grandson of one of them, and knowing many others of my generation in Egypt, I am well aware of this. It is significant that very few Jews from Egypt went to Israel, though its creation made their lives in Egypt more difficult – as did the fact that World War 2 made many of us undesirably left-wing.

6 Much to the fury of a number of senior Zionist activists, who found that their children by non-Jewish mothers were classed as non-Jews and denied automatic citizenship.

7 Although in Genesis the form **Elohim** is often used – which is a masculine PLURAL! So much for the monotheism of its compilers.

Letter to the Editor

From Evan Pritchard

I HAVE JUST READ Roland Boer's review in *CR*76 of Domenico Losurdo's book on Stalin, which I found quite informative, and it certainly made me eager to read the book when it is published in English.

One passage in the review caused me concern and confusion however.

In point 8, there is reference to "... more recent communist revolutions: China, Cambodia and Haiti" (my emphasis).

Firstly I find the term "communist revolution" a little unscientific. Does it mean a revolution led by communists, or a revolution that establishes communism, or both?

Surely it is contrary to the basic premises of Marxism-Leninism to believe that the latter could occur? Communism is a future stage of human development that will require a number of preceding stages involving significant advances in social and economic development.

On the other hand, the former could in theory have a number of outcomes which could be understood and recognised as positive depending on the political and economic circumstances prevailing at the time, but by necessity falling far short of "communism".

Secondly, if we examine the specific cases of Cambodia (Kampuchea) and Haiti, we see that in the former a party describing itself at various times as communist did take power by armed



force. Clearly the process could be described as a revolution given that the old state apparatus was destroyed and replaced and existing property relations were also destroyed.

But would or should actual communists take the view that the so-called "Khmer Rouge" were deserving of the name?

Certainly it could be argued that they attempted to jump over several stages of development to establish a society that could be described as an horrendously brutal parody of communism (minus of course the withering away of the state).

However far as I am aware, the only parties describing themselves as "communist" who continued to defend the record of the "Khmer Rouge" government after the revelations post the Vietnamese intervention were Maoist organisations who propounded the reactionary "Three Worlds" theory

which ironically is referred to in an article on imperialism in another article in the same issue of *CR*.

Furthermore, if we leave aside the terrible cost paid by the Khmer people, we can hardly ignore the fratricidal struggle with Socialist (Communist Party-led) Vietnam and the (entirely linked) murderous national chauvinism (which was reflected in their ideology) directed towards Vietnamese people living either within Kampuchea or within the area in Vietnam that was subject to invasion (prompting the retaliation by Vietnam which led to the eventual overthrow of Pol Pot's and Khieu Samphan's government).

In the case of Haiti, certainly there was a struggle to carry out progressive policies, involving at various times both mass mobilisation and government power. But where were the communists and where was the communism?

Canut Books from China, Cuba and Vietnam in English for the first time

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- Lenin Revisited. A Post-textological Reading of Lenin's Philosophical Notebooks
- Althusser Revisited. A Textological Reading of Althusser
- A Marxist Reading of Young Baudrillard. Throughout His Ordered Masks
- A Deep Plough. Unscrambling Major Post-marxist Texts from Adorno to Zizek
- The Subjective Dimension of Marxist Historical Dialectics
- The Global Revival of Left. Socialism vs. Globalization & China's Share



SOURCEBOOK

A regular literary selection

Selected by Mike Quille – with an essay by Magdalena Thompson

PENS OF TRUTH

Broadside

by Mark Kirkbride

Can you bring down the Government
with poetry? Don't ask me that –
for this isn't verse so much as
survival. Armed with pens of truth,
we take on lying Westminster.

This opening poetic broadside is the first of a number of poems sent in by readers and supporters over the last few months, which will be presented in the first part of this column.

Then, to celebrate Jeremy Corbyn's victory in the Labour leadership election, we'll read a poem which appeared in a pro-Corbyn anthology of poets who regularly "take on lying Westminster".

We then make a journey into the past, to a critique of Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* sent in by another reader. It's a timely literary-critical example of "pens of truth", in this bicentenary of the battle of Waterloo.

Staying in the early nineteenth century, we'll read two radical political poems from Byron's contemporaries John Clare and Percy Bysshe Shelley, both of which resonate as much now as they did then. Together, the criticism and poems give a taste of the various complex strands of the Romantic tradition, and the different approaches by Romantic poets to the violent disruptions and dislocations which accompanied the emergence of agricultural and industrial capitalism.

We'll conclude with a contemporary political poem, which echoes and contrasts with those poems.

I. Poetic Pens of Truth from Readers and Supporters

To start with, two poems from Kevin Higgins, whose poetry has appeared in this column before, and has now started to appear in the *Morning Star*. Kevin has a wonderfully dark, surreal imagination that somehow manages to convey anger, fear, resistance, amusement and anxiety in a few short, surprising lines and in a succession of memorable images.

Unbecoming

by Kevin Higgins

"In a time when we have struggled for our
identity as a nation, we try now for the
new" – Dani Gill, *Welcome to Cúirt*, 2011

All we became
has left the building:
the annual increase that meant
a Polish cleaner,
or a trip to sample
the bargains of New York;
that we were free to experience
new European beers
and the government could
stay where it was. Nobody cared
what was on page fifty seven
of anybody's manifesto, or told us
"Capitalism's a nice idea,
but it'll never work." Both
God and Karl Marx left us alone
with the higher truth of
our tripe A rated financial products.
Our new white mansions made
the countryside a page crowded
with exclamation marks.

Our years these –
and they won't be back this way,
never, now we're conscripted
onto unforgiving back-to-work scheme
chairs,
on which we must learn
to be someone else.



A History of Inconvenience

by Kevin Higgins

When the housing market went further south
than the East Antarctic Ice Sheet,
my chiropodist climbed Croagh Patrick
to consider his property portfolio
and never came back down.

The toe nails on my second
left foot are not expected to grow back.

My hairdresser abandoned
me for the scalps of Alberta, Canada.

It was one bad hair month after another,
four successive quarters,
which reminded me of when
our landscaper, Seamus, got skinned
alive and driven around
in the passenger seat of a taxi
by a breakaway faction
of the UVF. The Rhododendrons were
not themselves after that.

Almost as tragic as
the night the truck pulled up
to take our family tailor, Shmuel,
to the train and
Treblinka. Trapped in the nightmare
from which we're all
trying to escape, I went about my
business as usual for
years, in desperate need of a decent suit.

Next we have two contrasting poems, from Owen
Gallagher and Alan Dunnett.

Feeding the Polar Bears

by Owen Gallagher

Let us requisition a container ship
and then invite, in a national poll,
the nomination of public figures
to walk its gangway.
There is no shortage of candidates.

We will have no appeal procedure,
first-class cabins or crew.
The ship will be remote-controlled,
its destination not disclosed.

There will be no provisions, lifeboats
or landing-rights.
There will be icebergs.
Starving polar bears
will swim towards survivors.

Instruction

by Alan Dunnett

And then I went to the elders who said,
Do not give up. It is hard but do not.
You will be tired. You will taste defeat

but you must go on. Learn from everything

that goes against you. Make your enemy
your friend although you eat dirt. Take yourself
right away from this chamber of echoes
where men are lost in complaint and entrapped.

Finally in this section, another poem from Alan Dunnett,
which is one of the most intriguing poems that have been
submitted so far. What is it about, do you think? Class and
struggle are helpful interpretive concepts here, as they are with
the previous two poems, and political concepts of Left and
Right. But might associated ideas around gender, sexuality, and
the environment also be relevant?

The Third Colour

by Alan Dunnett

I found myself in the blue streets turning
my arms and peering at my hands. People,
with faces pulled down, moved silently through

shadows and passed by. I saw you burning
at the edge with blue light, I thought. Apples
fell from blue trees and lay dark and bruised

in the gutter. I called as though forsook
but I was no longer a child. I took
myself over and walked awhile: I looked

in a window and my eyes were red.
I drank some water and my mouth was red.
I closed my hand and my knuckles were red.

I ran through the blue streets thinking the end
is also the beginning but if peace
would come in this way whether it would last.

I knew of a third colour and planned
to find it though it took a year. By ice,
by fire, let the next stone be cast.

2. Pro-Corbyn Pens of Truth

To celebrate Jeremy Corbyn's victory in the recent
leadership election, here is just one poem from an online
collection called Poets for Corbyn, which was published
during August.

Wongawongaland

by Tom Pickard

Doctor Gobbles wants to stop the jobless
quaffing from his gissy goblets
and break their backs
on the rock of his salvation.

He serves a cold buffet of hot wars
to pump-up the economy for further plunder
and squanders young lives
like bankers on a junket.

If he hung the hungry he'd hang the anger out,
 incentivise to fuck off and die
 or just have a jousting match
 of polite poetries.

Once they bled themselves for a cure
 now they only bleed the poor.

3. Critical Pens of Truth

The following piece of literary criticism was sent in by Magdalena Thompson. You can find the full text of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* at <http://www.gutenberg.org>.

Byron's Waterloo

by Magdalena Thompson



Byron's poem, *The Eve of Waterloo*, is well known and often anthologised. It describes the glittering and glamorous party attended by the officers of Wellington's army, and their ladies, the night before the famous battle.

Its opening line, "There was a sound of revelry by night", is particularly famous and often quoted. What is less well known is that this poem is simply a short excerpt from a much longer anti-war polemic; the gaiety of the ball is in deliberate juxtaposition with grotesque realities of the following day. It is perhaps salutary in this anniversary year of Waterloo, amid all the jingoistic celebrations, to re-read a vociferous contemporary voice raised against the whole campaign against Napoleon, from the Peninsular War to Waterloo itself.

Of course Byron was not a pacifist: he famously died at Missolonghi, fighting for the Greeks in their War of Independence against the Turks. Yet his polemics against the Napoleonic Wars are thorough, far reaching and multi-faceted, ranging from the political to the personal, from the ideals of republicanism to the death of his cousin. Ruskin calls Byron the first poet to be disgusted by war.

Byron's thoughts on the Battle of Waterloo form part of the Third Canto of his poem, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. This poem was immediately and wildly popular: on the day after its publication, the poet "woke up famous".

The poem is ostensibly a fictionalised Grand Tour through mainland Europe, through Spain and Portugal, Greece, Italy,

Switzerland and Belgium, the scene of the Battle of Waterloo. Each location provides Byron with the opportunity to deliver, through his eponymous hero, political opinions and social comment. Early in the poem, we learn that Harold (Byron) is far more moved by, and interested in, scenes of classical antiquity than the sites of modern battles: he "loathed the bravo's trade and laughed at martial wight" (2.40).

Standing on the battle-field of Waterloo, Harold's first thought is for the numberless dead. In a phrase that surely refers to the Biblical Golgotha, he calls it "the place of skulls" (3.18). Byron is the supreme poet of the pity of war, of its terrible human costs. As one repulsed even by bullfighting (1.68-80), Byron recoils from the hideous violence and destruction of Waterloo. He is outraged that "thousands fall to deck some single name" (1.44), that "the young, the proud, the brave (must fall) to swell one bloated Chief's unwholesome reign" (1.53).

The poet's cousin, Howard, died at the Battle of Waterloo. In verses 3.29-30, the poet stands under a newly green tree, observing the lush farmland of the Ardennes. Amid all the "works of gladness" brought by the new year, he laments and turns from "all she brought to those she could not bring".

In a technique that surely owes much to Homer, Byron singles out Howard for a detailed description and lament: "There have been tears and breaking hearts for thee" (3.30). He makes clear, however, that there were thousands of soldiers dead like Howard: "of whom each/and one as all a ghastly gap did make/In his own kind and kindred" (3.31).

Typically, and magnanimously, the poet sees no distinction between the French, the English and the Prussians. All are equally worthy of pity: friend and foe "in one red burial blent" (3.28). The dead may be famous, he continues, but this cannot slake the "thirst" and "vain longing" of their bereaved relatives. How different is his gentle, genuine and heartfelt picture of grief from the usual hymn to the "glorious dead" (3.32):

The day drags through, though storms keep out the sun;
 And thus the heart will break, yet brokenly live on.

Byron devotes some of his most beautiful and poignant lines to those, like him, bereaved by the battle. They may appear to live, to go through the motions of living, but they are as dead as the soldiers they mourn. In a series of Romantic images of ruin and decay, the poet illustrates how such people manage to maintain the semblance of life and to hide their grief. They are compared to withered trees, to mastless, sailless ships, to mouldy, collapsed roofbeams, to ruined walls and to rusty prison bars. Each image shows how a physical appearance, pretence, belies the underlying reality (3.32).

In a more ambitious, extended metaphor, the poet then compares the grief-shattered heart to a broken mirror: as each tiny shard reflects the face that was looking into the glass, making "a thousand images of one that was", so does each shattered heart carry a myriad of memories. The worse the grief, the more numerous the memories (3.33):

Even as a broken mirror, which the glass
 In every fragment multiplies; and makes
 A thousand images of one that was,
 The same, and still the more, the more it breaks;
 And thus the heart will do which not forsakes,
 Living in shattered guise; and still and cold,
 And bloodless, with its sleepless sorrow aches,
 Yet withers on till all without is old,
 Showing no visible sign, for such things are untold.



Amid all the outburst of patriotism and Wellington-fever that followed the Battle of Waterloo, grief like this dared not speak its name.

In his earlier travels through Spain, in the aftermath of the bloodiest battles of the early 19th century, Byron paints some of the most graphic and horrifying descriptions of the fields of battle. His is no whitewash to comfort the families back home, but a harrowing and realistic picture of unburied, unlamented corpses (1.88):

Flows there a tear of pity for the dead?
 Look o'er the ravage of the reeking plain;
 Look on the hands with female slaughter red;
 Then to the dogs resign the unburied slain,
 Then to the vulture let each corpse remain
 Let their bleached bones, and blood's unbleaching
 stain,
 Long mark the battle field with hideous awe.

In a shocking conclusion (1.89), Byron dares to call war "Murder" and to see the current disasters fallen on Spain as retribution for the cruelties of the Conquistadors.

Byron's main complaint against the Napoleonic Wars is that they achieved nothing. Thousands died in vain. He illustrates this sorry fact by carefully situating the fields of battle in precise geographical locations and highlighting the fact that nature herself is supremely unaffected by the upheavals. What has been achieved by winning the Battle of Waterloo? A more lush pasturage (3.17):

As the ground was before, thus let it be; –
 How that red rain hath made the harvest grow!
 And is this all the world has gained by thee,
 Thou first and last of fields! King-making Victory?

A few verses later, Byron makes exactly the same point. Once again, the constancy of nature provides a metaphor for the wastage of war. The dead will, by evening

... be trodden like the grass,
 Which now beneath them, but above shall grow
 In its next verdure, when this fiery mass
 Of living valour, rolling on the foe
 And burning with high hope shall moulder cold and
 low (3.27).

During his travels in Spain and Portugal, Harold/Byron voices a very similar response to the Peninsular Wars:

The foe, the victim, and the fond ally
 ... Are met ...
 To feed the crow on Talavera's plain
 And fertilise the field that each pretends to gain.
 (1.41)

Later (3.61), musing by the banks of the Rhine, Byron returns to the same theme. The forest, the river and the rocks will continue, "though Empires near them fall."

This idea is most fully expressed in 3.51:

A thousand battles have assail'd thy banks,
 But these and half their fame have pass'd away,
 And slaughter heap'd on high his weltering ranks;
 Their very graves are gone, and what are they?
 Thy tide wash'd down the blood of yesterday,

And all was stainless, and on thy clear stream,
 Glass'd, with its dancing light, the sunny ray;
 But o'er the blacken'd memory's blighting dream
 Thy waves would vainly roll, all sweeping as they seem.

The eternal background of unchanging nature cries aloud the folly of war. As we have seen, this is an argument used throughout *Childe Harold*, yet in one touching half-stanza, the poet undermines this theme. In a striking piece of pathetic fallacy, the poet imagines the trees themselves, wet with dew (tears) mourning the hopeless dead:

And Ardennes waves above them her green leaves,
 Dewy with nature's tear-drops as they pass,
 Grieving, if aught inanimate e'er grieves,
 Over the unreturning brave; – alas! (3.27)

Byron also considers the costs of war to the local peasantry. Amid some admittedly rather rosy descriptions of rural life, the poet worries about the disruptions war brings to the local farming communities. Like Virgil in the *Eclogues*, Byron gives voice to the voiceless, uprooted and landless in the aftermath of conflict:

so the rustic – with his trembling mate
 He lurks, nor casts his heavy eye afar,
 Lest he should view his vineyard desolate,
 Blasted below the dun hot breath of war (1.47).

Do we see here a veiled reference to Naboth, the Old Testament worthy, spoiled of his vineyard by the despotic King David? Byron was a republican, a lover of 'freedom' and 'liberty'. He dared to deliver speeches on the subject in the House of Lords.

"Liberty", "slavery", "thralldom", "dominion", "bondsmen" and "freedom" are words which pepper Byron's poetic oeuvre. In the First Canto of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, the poet voices his contempt for the Spanish soldiers, chanting "Viva el Rey!" (1.48) as they march along. The "lusty muleteer" has become a servile wretch; no longer does he sing the lays of love and chivalry, but a national anthem.

We find similar sentiments in the Second Canto, when the hero visits the site of the Battle of Actium, in the Eastern Mediterranean. This battle, between Antony and Cleopatra on the one side, and Octavian on the other, was one of the most important and decisive battles of the Ancient World. Byron's only comment is a sad indictment of the "certain slaughter" caused by those "imperial anarchs":

God! Was the globe ordain'd for such to win and
 lose? (2.45)

Republican ideals colour the poet's response to Waterloo. Although not entirely an admirer of Napoleon (he is a "bloated Chief" (1.53), a "Frank robber" (1.90)), Byron is sure that he is a far preferable ruler of France than the hateful Bourbons.

In fact, throughout the Third Canto of *Childe Harold*, there is cautious praise of Napoleon, yet Wellington is never mentioned. In verse 3.41, Napoleon is even compared to Alexander the Great. The Frenchman is "the greatest, nor the worst of men" (3.36). Moreover, one "despot" might have been deposed, but the political situation remains the same:

Fit retribution! Gaul may champ the bit
 And foam in fetters; – but is earth more free?
 Did nations combat to make One submit;
 Or league to teach all kings true sovereignty?
 What! Shall reviving thralldom again be
 The patched-up idol of enlighten'd days?
 Shall we, who struck the lion down, shall we
 Pay the wolf homage? Proffering lowly gaze
 And servile knees to thrones? (3.19)

Once more, Byron cries aloud the pointlessness of the whole of the Napoleonic Wars. The “years/of death, depopulation, bondage, fears” (3.20) were in vain; the old political regimes are still in place. “The lion” has simply been replaced by the “wolf”, one savage regime for another. The only battles worth fighting are battles for freedom, as evinced by the poet’s enlisting in the Greek War of Independence.

The supreme classical exemplum of this sort of soldier is Byron’s hero, Harmodius, the tyrant-slayer. His brave act (eventually) returned democracy to classical Athens and was therefore “glorious”. The Battle of Waterloo, by contrast, might have resulted in “one fallen despot”, but Europe is still enslaved to monarchical regimes (3.20).

Later in the same Canto, Byron compares the Battle of Waterloo with the Battles of Marathon and Morat. The latter “were Glory’s stainless victories” in so far as they were fought by democratic bands of brothers, committed to the republican cause. By horrid contrast, Waterloo’s only claim to fame is the catastrophic carnage it caused; as such it can be compared to the hideous Roman defeat at Cannae:

While Waterloo with Cannae’s carnage vies,
 Morat and Marathon twin names shall stand;
 They were true Glory’s stainless victories,
 Won by the unambitious heart and hand,
 All unbought champions in no princely cause
 Of vice-entailed corruption; they no land
 Doomed to bewail the blasphemy of laws
 Making kings’ rights divine, by some Draconic clause.
 (3.64)

In Canto 4.96, Byron bemoans the fact that, today, tyrants can be conquered “but by tyrants”, “and Freedom find no champion”. “Has earth no more such seeds” as produced George Washington? Byron laments the “eternal thrall” descended upon Europe, “which nips life’s tree, and dooms man’s first – his second fall” (4.97).

Amid, then, the anniversary celebrations of the Battle of Waterloo, let us re-read the wise and timely words of Lord Byron on the supreme folly of war and the terrible human suffering it necessarily entails. How sad it is that now, 200 years after the Battle of Waterloo, the Napoleons and Wellingtons of today seem mortally committed to repeating the same mistakes.

I conclude with the words of William Blake, another poet of peace, that they “Hear the voice of the bard/Who past and present and future sees.” The pen is indeed always mightier than the sword.

“Pens of truth” indeed! Thanks very much to Magdalena for that submission. Incidentally, readers should feel free to send us pieces of literary/political criticism like this, as well as poems.

4. Radical Pens of Truth from Clare and Shelley

Now let’s read two poems from the same historical period. I was reminded of the following beautiful poem when reading Byron’s regrets about the cost of war on rural life, mentioned by Magdalena in her piece above.

The Village Minstrel (extract)

by John Clare

There once were days, the woodman knows it well,
 When shades e’en echoed with the singing thrush;
 There once were hours, the ploughman’s tale can tell,
 When morning’s beauty wore its earliest blush,
 How woodlarks carol’d from each stumpy bush;
 Lubin himself has mark’d them soar and sing:
 The thorns are gone, the woodlark’s song is hush,
 Spring more resembles winter now than spring,
 The shades are banish’d all – the birds have took to wing.

There once were lanes in nature’s freedom dropt,
 There once were paths that every valley wound, –
 Inclosure came, and every path was stopt;
 Each tyrant fix’d his sign where paths were found,
 To hint a trespass now who cross’d the ground:
 Justice is made to speak as they command;
 The high road now must be each stinted bound:
 – Inclosure, thou’rt a curse upon the land,
 And tasteless was the wretch who thy existence plann’d.

O England! boasted land of liberty,
 With strangers still thou mayst thy title own,
 But thy poor slaves the alteration see,
 With many a loss to them the truth is known:
 Like emigrating bird thy freedom’s flown;
 While mongrel clowns, low as their rooting plough,
 Disdain thy laws to put in force their own;
 And every village owns its tyrants now,
 And parish-slaves must live as parish-kings allow.

Clare’s poem, like so many of his others, is agonised, full of psychological pain and anger, the authentic, suffering, lyrical voice of the dispossessed rural working classes.

Here’s a poem written at almost exactly the same time (between October 1819 and January 1820) but from a quite different perspective.

Song to the Men of England

by Percy Bysshe Shelley

Men of England, wherefore plough
 For the lords who lay ye low?
 Wherefore weave with toil and care
 The rich robes your tyrants wear?

Wherefore feed and clothe and save,
 From the cradle to the grave,
 Those ungrateful drones who would
 Drain your sweat – nay, drink your blood?

Wherefore, Bees of England, forge
 Many a weapon, chain, and scourge,
 That these stingless drones may spoil
 The forced produce of your toil?



Have ye leisure, comfort, calm,
Shelter, food, love's gentle balm?
Or what is it ye buy so dear
With your pain and with your fear?

The seed ye sow another reaps;
The wealth ye find another keeps;
The robes ye weave another wears;
The arms ye forge another bears.

Sow seed, – but let no tyrant reap;
Find wealth, – let no imposter heap;
Weave robes, – let not the idle wear;
Forge arms, in your defence to bear.

Shrink to your cellars, holes, and cells;
In halls ye deck another dwells.
Why shake the chains ye wrought? Ye see
The steel ye tempered glance on ye.

With plough and spade and hoe and loom,
Trace your grave, and build your tomb,
And weave your winding-sheet, till fair
England be your sepulchre!

Shelley's poem has a clear message, using simple diction, and it has a simple structure and lyrical aabb rhyme scheme. It is illustrated by the vivid, straightforward image of bees and drones, and it moves subtly from the interrogative to the suggestive. But am I alone in finding the tone and perspective in the last two verses to be somewhat peremptory, even rather condescending?

5. Some Final Penned Words of Truth

Our final poem echoes Shelley's in its sentiments, yet arguably comes more from Clare's point of view. And certainly, in its settled rhythms and clear diction and argument, displays a more confident, Marxist, class-conscious tone.

Chorus of the Masses Against the Elites by David Betteridge

We are the nothings you walk past.
Your lowest and least,
we live in the margins of your power.

Expendable, we fight your many wars.
Your triumphs we pay for,
but have none.

Unheeded and unnamed,
we make your schemes come true.

Every ton and inch and cubic yard and chisel-cut
of every building you command,
is ours.

Every furrow ploughed and filled with seed
is ours.

Your wealth-producing factories;
your cities –
ours!

Day in, day out, we do your work and will.
We pipe the water that you need from reservoir
to tap;
we stitch the clothes that cover up your
nakedness;
we bake the bread (and cake) you eat.

We are your numerous and essential kin.
Suffering most, we learn most.
Our slave-songs make symphonies;
our longings, creeds.

We dig your graves.

Poets, Sources and Acknowledgements

Mark Kirkbride lives in London, and writes both fiction and poetry; Kevin Higgins is co-organiser of Over The Edge literary events in Galway, and blogs at <http://mentioningthewar.blogspot.ie/>; Owen Gallagher is from Gorbals, Glasgow, and lives in London; Alan Dunnett is a published poet, short film maker, acting tutor and trade union activist, based in London; *Poets for Corbyn* edited by Russell Bennetts is at <http://www.berfrois.com/poets-for-corbyn/>.

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Junk food: an irregular cartoon strip

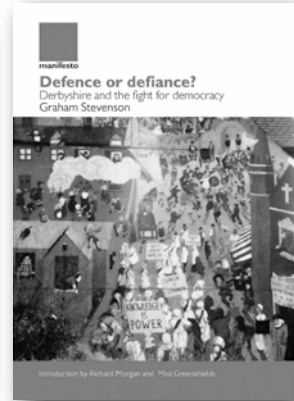
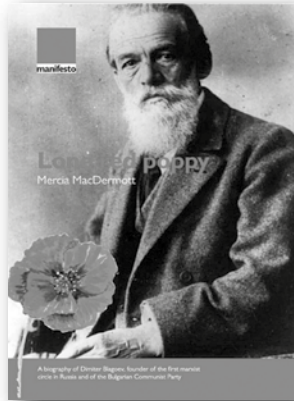
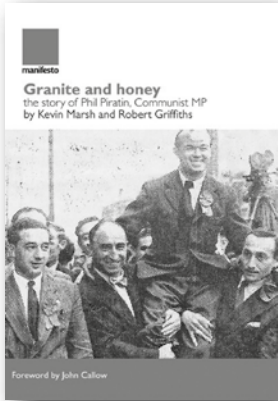




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