

weekly **worker**



Cannabis crisis: Alan Johnston is being fatuous, dangerous and utterly irresponsible. Legalise drugs

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Towards a Communist Party of the European Union

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Solidarity vital from other sections of working class



LETTERS



Letters may have been shortened because of space. Some names may have been changed

Voting and BNP

I am no more enthusiastic about the 'alternative vote' electoral system being proposed by New Labour than Dave Womersley, but he provides no evidence at all to support his assertion that AV would give "undue advantage to the British National Party" (Letters, October 22).

AV is based on single-member constituencies, with voters indicating their order of preference for the candidates on the ballot paper. If no candidate achieves more than half of the total first-preference votes, the candidates with the fewest votes are eliminated and their supporters' later preferences are redistributed to other candidates until one emerges with more than 50%. So majority support is required to be elected.

By contrast, the multi-member, constituency-based 'single transferable vote' system favoured by Dave Womersley sets a much lower threshold for electoral success. If the practices established in Ireland were followed, it is likely that three to five-member constituencies would be used for UK parliamentary elections conducted under STV. Constituencies of this size would require candidates to achieve between 17% and 25% of the votes in order to be elected - a much lower proportion than needed under AV and therefore a much easier target for the BNP.

Moreover, it is reasonable to anticipate that, as AV removes the fear of splitting the vote by allowing people to transfer allegiance to their second and third favourite candidates, many voters would order their preferences to prioritise anti-fascist candidates, making it far more difficult for a BNP representative to be elected than under the current first-past-the-post system. Under AV, they'd need 50% support in the face of an electorate able to transfer its votes to the strongest anti-fascist candidate, whereas under FPTP they only need to win more votes than any individual rival and there is no possibility of their opponents pooling support.

So I think it's pretty obvious that AV, whatever its other faults may be, offers no advantage to the BNP at all. Unless it was already in a position to command majority support, in which case the mechanics of the electoral system wouldn't matter all that much anyway, AV has to be the BNP's least favourite electoral system.

All the same, I too would prefer STV over AV or FPTP because it's a proportional system that enables voters to influence not only the party political balance, but also the nature of the candidate slates being put forward within parties.

I would, however, question why Dave Womersley appears to believe that thwarting the BNP should be a primary objective when designing an electoral system. Surely the main purpose of elections should be to ensure that the political views of the electorate are reflected in the elected body and the best means of achieving that would be a proportional system that doesn't set artificial thresholds to exclude minority currents of opinion. A system - like AV or FPTP - that keeps out the far right is just as likely to exclude the left and I don't see how having a parliament almost entirely free of socialists, as we have now, can be beneficial to the cause of anti-fascism. We have a parliament full of people who, instead of challenging its central arguments, believe that the only way to fight the BNP is to pander to prejudice and echo its sentiments, with the mainstream parties constantly boasting about how

tough they are on 'illegal immigrants', 'bogus asylum-seekers' and suchlike.

The BNP may not be represented in parliament, but much of its agenda has already been adopted by the so-called mainstream parties. Who in parliament today is able to speak for those who oppose immigration controls? Better to give the BNP the parliamentary presence warranted by its support, but also make it possible to elect leftwing MPs who will offer a genuine Marxist perspective and speak out against the racists' agenda instead of trying to court it, as the larger parties have done.

Steve Cooke
Stockton-on-Tees

Not proportional

Dave Womersley's point that AV might give "undue advantage to the British National Party" is actually the opposite of the truth - New Labour politicians have justified it on the grounds that it would make it more difficult for the BNP. AV is designed to favour moderate parties and the left would, of course, suffer too. Though sometimes called a form of proportional representation, it is not at all proportional and one study showed that Labour would have had an even bigger landslide in 1997 if that general election had been conducted using AV!

Like me, Dave favours "the much better 'single transferable vote' system proposed by the Electoral Reform Society". As well as being fairer, it gives voters the opportunity to choose between candidates of the same party, removing power from party machines. No need for the 'primaries' that the Tories have started introducing.

Under STV, Joe Higgins was elected in the Irish Republic, twice to the Dáil and this year to the European parliament, despite being in a fairly small party (the Socialist Party), and other candidates to the left of the mainstream parties achieved victories in local elections across Ireland this year too. Keeping the left out is surely a motivation of New Labour politicians rather than just the BNP.

Eddie Ford ("Second-rate response to second-rate fuhrrer", October 29) pointed out that "a *Daily Telegraph* poll suggested that 22% of the electorate would 'seriously consider' voting BNP" in the wake of leader Nick Griffin's appearance on *Question time*. While Eddie is correct to be concerned about this, let's keep a sense of proportion. The same poll showed that only 3% would vote BNP if there was an election tomorrow! Media bias can of course give a boost to fascism, and the ITV news the day after Griffin's appearance only gave the large figure.

Due to the advantage a genuine form of PR such as STV gives to both extremes, left and right, it looks very unlikely that the capitalist parties will introduce it. Although STV remains a policy of the Liberal Democrats, leader Nick Clegg has indicated he would not insist on PR as a condition of entering a coalition government. I advocate STV more as a policy we should introduce after a socialist revolution (alongside participatory democracy and internet referenda) than a demand we can expect to win under capitalism.

Part of our strategy to defeat the BNP has to be countering their arguments on immigration. Unfortunately, the left has usually only made points without justifying them (like the SWP slogan, 'Asylum-seekers welcome here') or used moral arguments (like 'Capital can move anywhere in the world so why shouldn't workers?') - good up to a point, but we need to think strategically about how to achieve our goals as well.

It would be electoral suicide to call for 'open borders' on an election leaflet without justifying such a position, and I would suggest that people com-

ing to the UK from all over the world with their wealth of experiences helps radicalise people - and, after helping us foment revolution here, they can return and overthrow their leaders back home! Once again, capitalist politicians are not going to implement such a policy, so perhaps we should focus discussion and arguments on what a socialist government should do in a mainly capitalist world or a mainly or fully socialist world.

Steve Wallis
Manchester

Stand

I would like to make some points regarding the CPGB's recent aggregate ('Looking to 2010', October 29).

Firstly, I must disagree with John Bridge's comments. Anyone with an ear to the ground knows that New Labour will be wiped out in the 2010 general election, just as it was in 1931.

Secondly, I agree with Anne McShane: the CPGB must stand candidates in 2010. Not being able to use 'Communist Party of Great Britain' on the ballot paper is a red herring. I suggest that the CPGB registers 'Communist Alternative' as a description with the electoral commission as soon as possible. If that is not possible, then the CPGB should re-register the description it used in the 1999 European elections - ie, 'Weekly Worker'.

Finally, whatever the description on the ballot paper, I suggest that the CPGB stands candidates in its three student strongholds of Manchester, Oxford and London.

John Smith
Cambridgeshire

Inspiration

In last week's paper I asked you to get your fingers out and stand some candidates in the next general election (Letters, October 29).

In the same edition, you reported that one of your elders, John Bridge, explained to Communist Students present at a CPGB aggregate that, "due to the failure of the student left, it was often not possible for CS to direct its work through the rest of the left in the way the CPGB aims to" ('Looking to 2010', October 29).

Which I presume answers my question. The "rest of the left" have not failed and you can "work through" them. It's just a matter of a few months working out how and who to work through, or over, or on.

You certainly know how to fire up and inspire new comrades!

Vivian Bolus
The Rotten Elements

Free speech

"Comrades should learn the lessons - denying the far right a platform is a tactic, which may be appropriate under certain circumstances," says James Turley ('Timely questioning of no-platform fetish', October 29).

The Socialist Party of Great Britain is wholeheartedly in favour of the fullest freedom of speech. This is because we hold that out of full and free discussion of today's social problems only one valid conclusion can emerge and that is that socialism alone will provide the framework within which they can be solved. Full free speech means exactly what it says - that any and every view should be allowed expression so they can be examined and shown to be wrong.

People who deny the validity of our position of combating racism by calm, open argument are in effect denying that workers are capable of being convinced rationally of the error of racism. The ultimate basis of all arguments for censorship (and the call for the BNP to be prevented from expressing its

views is a call for censorship) is the assumption that people are too stupid or irresponsible or immature to make up their own minds and that some superior body must therefore decide for them. Some argue that there may be little difference between those who describe themselves as the 'vanguard' and those who prefer to call themselves the 'spearhead' when it comes to political democracy.

Suffering from bad housing, poor hospital services, poor schools or whatever, and having seen the immigration of black or brown people into their areas, some workers mistakenly link the two together and conclude that it is immigrants who are causing their problems. So workers with racist ideas are workers who, in their search for an explanation and solution to their problems, have reached a mistaken conclusion. The BNP are also the product of all the reformist parties' failure to make capitalism a fit society to live in. When capitalism fails to deliver, when despondency and shattered hopes arise from failed promises and expectations, is it any wonder that workers fall for the scapegoating lies of the BNP and the quick fix they offer?

Mere anti-racist propaganda on its own can't be effective. It offers no solution to the problems and frustrations which drive some workers to embrace racism. It leaves unchallenged the cause (capitalism), while trying to deal with the effect (racism). The only effective way to combat racism, then, is to propagate socialism.

Alan Johnstone
email

Next step

It has been well argued in the *Weekly Worker* that 'no platform for the BNP' is a tactic which can backfire on the left; that any demonstrations against free speech for fascists will eventually appear as part of the problem, and the left will be seen to be acting against democracy.

So where do we go from here? I suggested in my previous letter (October 29) that the most obvious solution is to defeat the BNP at its electoral base.

Tony Travers' article, 'How Labour lost the white working class' (*Evening Standard* October 30) is required reading for the left and its allies because of its strategy for defeating neo-fascism. Prof Travers notes that mass migration needs to be properly managed and explained, and that the white working class often feels marginalised, abandoned and then condemned as 'racist' in facing housing and job shortages. The activist base of the Labour Party has shrunk, leaving a vacuum in specific areas for the BNP to exploit, win over and mislead the most vulnerable people.

So the next step for the left and its anti-fascist allies is to pool resources and focus on getting candidates elected, using tactical voting if necessary, to defeat the BNP in all those areas of the country where it has met success. This is an opportunity for the left to show that it has the ability to lead the campaign to defeat the BNP. And if it can succeed by demonstrating the required strategy and the needed degree of unity and leadership, it can then go on to convince the electorate that it has the best programme to solve the crucial social, economic, political and ecological problems of our day.

Palmiro Mansi
London

Prejudiced

In Eddie Ford's article on the rightwing English Defence League, racists and nationalists were put in the same category as 'lumpen' elements, with the latter described as "intoxicated football hooligans and semi-criminal riff-raff"

('A symptom of capitalist decay, not the main enemy', October 15).

Is this not engaging in your own form of snobbery? For one thing, I have noticed that with the Leninist left (such a mentality does not seem to be shared by anarchists) these terms are often used as a put-down and as terms of abuse. Perhaps in Marx's day the term 'lumpenproletariat' had more of a meaning, but bear in mind the kind of background he himself came from and the class prejudices he likely carried.

Note that this letter is not a personal attack on Eddie Ford - I've seen the same mentality expressed not only in your paper, but among your milieu in general. I also recall the term 'semi-lumpen' being used in an article by another left group to describe people in low-paid jobs with little or no security. Snobbery is at its most pompous and patronising when it is dressed in red rather than the traditional grey or black.

A 'lumpenproletarian' is a working class person who is unemployed and poor. How does this equate with being an intoxicated hooligan who gets off on fighting during a ball game or being a "semi-criminal"? Not all men who engage in soccer violence are poor or unemployed, so the term would be inadequate there. As for "semi-criminal", it depends on your definition, as not all who engage in part-time crime - petty or large - are lacking a day job.

'Petty criminal' is a term I've often heard, but 'semi-criminal' is a rarer term that seems to be confined to your jargon. I think it translates into everyday use as 'petty criminal', because, of course, organised criminals are not poor! Would such a criminal be considered worthy of your respect because they are either bourgeois or middle class?

There is more petty crime in the midst of a recession because there is more unemployment and people have less spare cash. Desperate people do what they can to get by. Most people who engage in petty crime work pretty hard and don't do it for the love of it. And they run a higher risk of getting caught than do your 'Mr Bigs', as well as making less money.

But, hell, go on and throw scorn at people who are poor and desperate. The poorer and more marginalised you are, the easier a target you become for the politics of both right and left. You'll find that most people who are poor express a hatred for all politicians. Is it any wonder when every day they are assailed by the media and there is no break from that even in your small-circulation paper?

Sorry, but I take offence at any form of prejudice, and that includes yours as much as the EDL's. Thanks for reminding me yet again that you are not on the side of the poor.

Elizabeth Hoskings
email

Your call

While the Socialist Party's Campaign for a New Workers' Party and the CPGB's Campaign for a Marxist Party are defunct, a new campaign has started up under the name, Call for a New Anti-capitalist Party.

The name gives a hint to the goal - creating a party similar to the New Anti-capitalist Party in France. The Workers Power group (affiliated with the League for the Fifth International) is mostly behind the effort. However, I wonder whether the goal is really to create a new anti-capitalist party or to create a new 'old Labour'. The intention apparently is to get trade unions on board. But if you let the trade union bureaucracy decide your politics - as with the RMT's 'No to the EU, Yes to Democracy' project - then you end up with a very watered-down, barely left message.

Communists must take the reins of the party and direct it. The left has more to gain from a merger of communist parties than a political coalition of trade unions. A new anti-capitalist party, like the NPA in France, must not be a coalition of trade unions but a broad party of the anti-capitalist left.

The talk of 'left unity' from Workers Power might leave one sceptical, since the Permanent Revolution group came to existence after they were expelled from Workers Power because they did not share WP's opinion that capitalism was in a period of stagnation and that the world was in a pre-revolutionary period (a position taken not during the current recession, but in 2003 at the League for a Fifth International conference).

The CPGB should take this opportunity to participate and try to influence the project. However, it should point out that, just because a political party or electoral coalition has a trade union behind it (like the RMT), that doesn't mean it has more anti-capitalist or proletarian credentials. What matters is that the party's membership is proletarian and devoted to the cause of anti-capitalism. Getting the support of trade unions should be secondary.

Stancel Spencer
email

Open letter to IST

As you might be aware, the International Socialist Organisation of Zimbabwe held its elective annual members' conference (NMC) on November 2 2008. Our South Africa and Botswana comrades were the returning officers.

The election ushered in a new leadership, which was purely proletarian. However, within days, some aggrieved elements opposed to the active participation of the organisation in workers' struggles - who had been deposed from leading roles - launched a counterrevolutionary tactic to reverse the democratic expression of the members' conference.

Our working rules entitle the national coordinator to be full-time in charge of the day-to-day coordination from the national office. But this never happened, as the old technocrats refused the newly elected coordinator access. Munyaradzi Gwisai went on to personalise the password to the organisation's email address.

Gwisai was found guilty of misconduct and expelled from the organisation. The case against him was democratically handled in accordance with our constitution, in which there is a provision of appeal.

After several unsuccessful attempts to resolve the impasse the membership took it upon themselves to force their entry into the ISO offices and take back their assets - according to the working rules, the national coordinator and treasurer are the custodians of the organisation's assets.

Despite his expulsion Gwisai convened a faction meeting of members of the ISO to provide a cover for him to be elected as chair of the Zimbabwe chapter of the World Social Forum. Gwisai is also the deputy chair of the land commission of the imperialist-backed bourgeois process to rewrite Zimbabwe's constitution.

In response to our working class action and probably after he was convinced that the membership of the organisation was totally against him, he resorted to the use of the state machinery - the police and the central intelligence department. We were never tempted to seek help from the state machinery, although the laws of Zimbabwe were and are in our favour. We choose to remain faithful to the fundamental principle that we only respect proletarian justice.

Gwisai fabricated a story that the newly elected members of the organisation had forcibly entered into the premises of his private law firm (Zimbabwe Labour Centre), and stole its

assets and huge amounts of money. Thus a docket for unlawful entry and theft was opened against Adonia Mutero (national coordinator), Fortune Rera (treasurer) and Lovemore Manjongo (youth coordinator). The leadership spent four days in prison under difficult conditions.

Several consultative meetings have been held to try and come up with the best way consistent with our practices to deal with the case. A resolution was not easy to arrive at, as there were those amongst our membership who misunderstood the principled way of resolving conflicts in a revolutionary organisation like ours. However, after several months of debate and consultation with other comrades within and without the International Socialist Tendency we have finally arrived at the following conclusions that we strongly feel are consistent with our principles.

We have resolved:

(a) that the court case is a case between a revolutionary working class organisation (ISO) and the oppressive state of Zimbabwe, with Gwisai - who has for years been posing as one of us - leading the state evidence;

(b) that the actions of Mr Gwisai and his clique are aimed at liquidating revolutionary voices in Zimbabwe and the entire region;

(c) that we are not in favour of bourgeois courts resolving the dispute;

(d) that even in the worst scenario that the case proceeds to the bourgeois courts, the accused comrades will not lead any evidence against Gwisai;

(e) that we will not lay any criminal charges against Gwisai in the bourgeois courts;

(f) that an assembly of ISO members is best positioned to deal with the matter;

(g) that even if Gwisai succeeds in his endeavour to incarcerate the leading members of the ISO, the assembly of working class members shall proceed to determine the issue;

(h) that we will agree to anything that will result in the assets of the organisation being removed from the hands of the state. Thus we have no problem in surrendering the assets to Gwisai;

(i) that we will inform our fraternal organisations of this decision and will seek their continued support.

(j) that we call on the International Socialist Tendency in particular and the world working class in general to condemn the actions of Gwisai. What disturbs us is that the IST is keeping quiet, although they are fully aware of the use of the bourgeois courts against us. (k) that the national coordinating committee has the full right to convene an international tribunal to judge the actions of Gwisai and whomsoever in the International Socialist Tendency supports him.

ISO National Coordinating Committee
Zimbabwe

Shaky

Tony Clark is on very shaky ground when he tries to defend the Stalinist theory of 'socialism in one country' by quoting Lenin's *On cooperation* (Letters, October 28).

Lenin says: "Indeed, the power of the state over all large-scale means of production, political power in the hands of the proletariat, the alliance of this proletariat with the many millions of small and very small peasants, the assured proletarian leadership of the peasantry, etc - is this not all that is necessary to build a complete socialist society out of cooperatives, out of cooperatives alone ...? Is this not all that is necessary to build a complete socialist society? It is still not the building of socialist society, but it is all that is necessary and sufficient for it. ..."

In the *Communist manifesto*, Marx and Engels, having set out the contradictory forces that result in class war, state categorically that "Social-

ism is inevitable". But are we to take these words at face value? No, of course not. Socialism is only inevitable if workers engage in class struggle, achieve the necessary level of class-consciousness and overthrow the existing social relations.

But the same is true of Lenin's comments here. He makes sure to point out that state power and cooperatives are necessary and *sufficient* for building socialism, but that "It is still not the building of socialist society." Why is it not? For the same reason that simply building cooperatives as individual units within a capitalist society cannot simply lead to the peaceful replacement of capitalist with socialist relations. The bosses will resist by whatever means are necessary, particularly when their rule is actually threatened.

If the USSR were simply left in peace for a century or so, then, given the conditions that Lenin sets out, there is no reason why it could not have arrived at socialism. But it is precisely because as Marxists we are not utopians that we recognise that this fundamental condition could never apply. A grown lion can see off a pack of hounds. But that is why the hounds will attack the lion cub, not the full-grown lion. The question was how a revolutionary leadership should deal with that reality.

Lenin was quite clear that the threat of intervention could only be defeated by international revolution, not by 'peaceful co-existence' or doing deals with imperialism in order to avoid it engaging in such attacks.

Stalin's approach was the exact opposite. Tony refers to the betrayals of workers in China, Britain, Germany, Spain and so on, and he argues that none of these could be put down to Stalin seeking to do such deals with imperialism. There is actually a lot of documentary evidence to show they were precisely that. Either way, there is no disputing that that is exactly what the Hitler-Stalin pact was: a complete abandonment of the German working class in order to do a deal with Nazism to avoid an attack on the USSR. There is no doubt that that is what the Comintern's directive to the French Communist Party to join with the French fascists was. Similarly, the instruction to the CPGB to oppose strikes in 1941 and the various agreements between Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill at Potsdam, Yalta, etc. These were precisely to sell out the international revolution in order to avoid imperialist attacks on the USSR, even though it was predictable to everyone other than Stalin that the pact with Hitler would not succeed anyway.

Lenin's statement about state power and cooperatives can only be viewed if understood within those limits. Moreover, it assumes that this process of development takes place while capitalism stands still - something that Lenin could view as possible, as he thought it had reached its limits - whereas, in fact, capitalism was able not only to enjoy a further spurt of growth but to outgrow the USSR. It also assumed that state power actually resided under the political control of the workers, but, of course, it did not. It fell under the political control of former tsarists and a usurping bureaucracy. In other words, all of the 'slips between cup and lip' that have to be taken into consideration in understanding Marx's statements about the 'inevitability' of socialism apply here.

Tony Clark, unfortunately, in failing to take those things into consideration, stands in part on the ground of the utopian socialists, who believed that we would be left in peace to develop our little Icaria, and in part on the ground of Bernstein, who took Marx at his word about the inevitability of socialism and concluded it was simply a process of evolution.

Arthur Bough
email

ACTION

Communist Forums

London: Sundays, 5pm. Study topic, plus weekly political report from Provisional Central Committee. Ring 07950 416922 for details.

November 8: August H Nimtz Jr *Marx, Tocqueville and race in America*. Subject: 'Conclusion'.

November 15: John Bellamy Foster, *The Ecological Revolution: Making Peace with the Planet*. Subject: 'Introduction'.

Oxford: Study group, every Saturday, 2pm, studying David Harvey's *Limits to capital*. Details: oxfordcommunists@googlemail.com.

South Wales: Call Bob for details: 07816 480679.

CPGB podcasts

Every Monday, we upload a podcast of commentary on the current political situation. In addition, the site will feature voice files of public meetings and other events:
<http://cpgb.podbean.com>.

Communist Students meetings

London: Every Wednesday, 7.30pm: Introduction to Marxism series, Institute of Education, 20 Bedford Way WC1 (Russell Square tube).

November 11: Religion and alienation. ben@communiststudents.org.uk; 07792 282830.

Manchester: Every Tuesday, 7pm, University of Manchester Students Union, Oxford Road, Manchester M13.

November 10: Marx's teachings on the Paris Commune.

November 17, 6pm: The French resistance and communists. Speaker: Matthew Cobb.

www.comuniststudents.org.uk.

Oxford: oxfordcommunists@googlemail.com.

Sheffield: Every Sunday, 7pm. 07730 682193; sheffield@communiststudents.org.uk

Radical Anthropology Group

Tuesdays, until December 15, 6.45pm: Evening course, 'Introduction to anthropology: the human revolution', St Martin's Community Centre, 43 Carol Street, London NW1.

November 10: "Beauty Magic": cosmetics and the origins of culture. Speaker: Camilla Power.

www.radicalanthropologygroup.org.

Shraddha

Ends Sunday November 21, 7.30pm: New play, 'You are what's in your heart', Soho Theatre, 21 Dean Street, London W1. Director: Lisa Goldman. 020 7478 0100

Socialism 2009

Saturday November 7, Sunday November 8: Socialist Party school, University of London Union, Malet Street, London WC1. Saturday: 2pm to 4.30pm; Sunday: 10am to 3pm. Rally: Saturday, 6pm, Friends Meeting House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1.

Organised by Socialist Party in England and Wales:

www.socialistparty.org.uk/events/Socialism_2009/6274.

For working class political representation

Saturday November 7, 11am to 3pm: Conference, Camden Centre, Bidborough Street, London WC1. Registration: info@rmt.org.uk; RMT, Unity House, 39 Chalton Street, London NW1 1JD.

Organised by RMT: info@rmt.org.uk.

London Socialist Film Co-op

Second Sunday of the month, 10.30am for 11am start: Renoir Cinema, Brunswick Square, London WC1 (Russell Square tube). Admission £9/£7 concessions (no advance booking, no card payments).

Sunday November 8: *Hidden (Caché)*; director Michael Haneke (2005). Followed by discussion with Catherine Wheatley and Jon Cruddas MP. www.socialistfilm.blogspot.com; 020 7278 5764.

London Stop the War

Tuesday November 10, 6pm: Activists' meeting, Indian YMCA, 41 Fitzroy Square, London W1. Nearest tube: Warren Street.

Organised by Stop the War Coalition: www.stopwar.org.uk.

Postal workers' benefit

Thursday November 12, 7pm. Benefit - with folk, blues and shanty music. Blackheath Working Men's Club, 22 Charlton Road, London SE3. Organised by Blackheath Working Men's Club.

Labour Representation Committee

Saturday November 14, 10am to 5pm: Conference and AGM, Institute of Education, Bedford Way, London WC1 (Russell Square tube).

Details and registration:

<http://php.l-r-c.org.uk/events/detail/lrc-conference-agm>.

Anti-capitalism 2009

Saturday November 14, Sunday November 15: Weekend school, Caxton House, St Johns Way, London, N19. Including rally - 'Call for a new anti-capitalist party', Saturday, 5.45pm.

Organised by Workers Power: www.workerspower.com.

Yurukoglu Memorial Lecture 2009

Saturday November 21, 1.30pm: Meeting, Marx Memorial Library, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London EC1 - 'The Paris Commune and democracy'. Speaker: Claudine Rey. Organised by Union of Turkish Progressives in Britain: yml.2009@yahoo.com.

CPGB wills

Remember the CPGB and keep the struggle going. Put our party's name and address, together with the amount you wish to leave, in your will. If you need further help, do not hesitate to contact us.

POST WORKERS

Solidarity vital from other sections of working class

Not surprisingly there is a clear sentiment for disaffiliation from the Labour Party. However, argues **Jim Moody**, postal workers need a positive political strategy if they are going to win their dispute with Royal Mail



Making a profit from postal services is proving to be more than a little difficult. This is mainly because it is impossible if a universal service is to be continued. But not least it is because postal workers are refusing to bear the brunt of a combined government and Royal Mail assault on their jobs and conditions of employment in the name of modernisation.

Whereas previous walkouts saw different sections of postal workers striking on separate, consecutive days, in the coming round the whole 121,000 Communications Workers Union membership in Royal Mail will be out for two complete days. Not before time CWU leaders have begun to escalate the action, with Royal Mail clearly stringing them along.

The two 24-hour strikes beginning at 3am on Friday November 6 and Monday November 9 mean that postal workers will lose one day's pay in each pay week, rather than two in one week - slightly preferable from the workers' point of view. But these are two adjacent weekdays nevertheless - and Saturdays usually see significantly less post handled in any case.

Closed negotiations between the CWU and Royal Mail were continuing once again as we go to press, but the strikes look likely to go ahead after the debacle of the previous week. The CWU's longstanding concerns over staffing levels and speed-ups have been spotlighted by recent disclosures of secret Royal Mail plans to break the union and force through so-called modernisation. This has stiffened the resolve of CWU members to fight.

In some ways Royal Mail has already derecognised the CWU in practical terms. Management is refusing to seriously negotiate about anything and is provocatively disregarding a whole raft of well established procedures. For example, agreed facility time and provision of meeting spaces is now being refused. Militants see this as 'derecognition by the back door'.

What worries many postal workers is that Royal Mail's strategy seems to be one of keeping the dispute bubbling on a relatively low level, putting up with one or two days of strikes and using casual labour to clear some of the backlog. Ensuring that nothing is settled before Christmas. While there might have been thoughts of provoking an all-out indefinite strike a month or so back, it is probably now too near the pre-Christmas rush for this to be favoured. This scenario would see management delaying any further blatant provocations until January, when an all-out strike would be less effective.

Militants are therefore demanding a rapid escalation of the dispute. They want more strikes and more strikers. They also demand strong picket lines and non-cooperation with scabs.

Rank and file members worry that CWU negotiators might settle for too little, though it appears more likely that Royal Mail might not allow them even that. If there is no movement after these two new strike days, the national leadership will be forced to step up the pressure. That or accept a humili-

ating climbdown - it knows it cannot keep calling one strike a week indefinitely, since that would be a sure way of lowering morale and would quickly see support dwindle. So the leadership has to decide how to escalate. But the problem is, as one union militant told me, "They haven't got an industrial strategy or a political one."

The CWU leadership is dominated by the Broad Left of mainly formerrank and file militants, including those like general secretary Billy Hayes who are now fully committed to Labour, even New Labour, as the lesser evil. When it comes to the revolutionary left, it hardly exists in the higher echelons of the CWU. That said, the union's vice-president is Jane Loftus, a member of the Socialist Workers Party, who chairs the CWU's postal executive. On the telecoms side the far left is slightly stronger. The Socialist Party in England and Wales has won a few positions and NEC member Maria Exall is a former supporter of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty.

Conveniently for the bureaucracy, the CWU is organisationally divided between these two major components. Members of the national executive who come from the telecoms side are not privy to postal matters and are not expected to involve themselves in its disputes. Moreover, none of the 28 voting members of the NEC is allowed to participate in the current negotiations. Ditto voting members of the CWU's postal executive. Full-time officials keep that prerogative firmly to themselves.

There have been persistent if sporadic demands for the union to adopt a more political approach, in view of the fact that the government has

been backing Royal Mail to the hilt throughout the dispute. While Gordon Brown has recently dithered over the issue of negotiations, Peter Mandelson, the business secretary, is determined to show the City and big capital in general that New Labour is more trustworthy than David Cameron's untried Tories. That it is quite prepared to break the industrial power even of one of its important affiliates. A high-risk strategy.

The attempt to beat the CWU will cause more and more strains within the Labour Party. Indeed it is possible that the CWU dispute has the seeds of a huge crisis for Labour of 1931 proportions - demanding huge cuts in public spending, prime minister Ramsay MacDonald and his rightwing cabinet colleagues formed a national government in August 1931 along with the Tories and a section of the Liberal Party. The subsequent general election in October saw the Labour Party trounced and reduced to a small rump.

If Brown and Mandelson continue to egg on Royal Mail's union-busting campaign, other trade union affiliates are bound to express unease and even come into direct conflict. They know that their unions may well be treated in the same arrogant fashion and soon. Public spending in Britain is expected to be under constant negative pressure for at least the next decade, according to the IMF and that means not only wage cuts and tax rises, but more and more industrial disputes. So civil war could easily erupt within the Labour Party, with either unions walking out because of rank and file anger, or perhaps the right wing doing a Ramsay MacDonald and aligning themselves with the

Labour signatories of early day motion 2035

Diane Abbott, Nick Ainger, Graham Allen, David Anderson, Janet Anderson, Gordon Banks, Anne Begg, Joe Benton, Roger Berry, David Borrow, Richard Burden, Colin Burgon, Ronnie Campbell, Martin Caton, Colin Challen, David Chaytor, Michael Clapham, Katy Clark, Tom Clarke, David Clelland, Ann Clwyd, Harry Cohen, Michael Connarty, Frank Cook, Jeremy Corbyn, Jim Cousins, David Crausby, Jon Cruddas, Ann Cryer, John Cummings, Jim Cunningham, Ian Davidson, Janet Dean, Jim Devine, Parmjit Dhanda, Andrew Dismore, Jim Dobbin, Frank Dobson, Frank Doran, David Drew, Louise Ellman, Bill Etherington, Frank Field, Mark Fisher, Paul Flynn, Hywel Francis, Mike Gapes, Neil Gerrard, Roger Godsiff, John Grogan, David Hamilton, Dai Havard, Stephen Hepburn, Stephen Hesford, David Heyes, Kate Hoey, Kelvin Hopkins, George Howarth, Lindsay Hoyle, Joan Humble, Brian Iddon, Eric Illsley, Glenda Jackson, Sian James, Brian Jenkins, Lynne Jones, Martyn Jones, Gerald Kaufman, Fraser Kemp, Peter Kilfoyle, Ashok Kumar, Bob Laxton, Mark Lazarowicz, David Lepper, Tom Levitt, Tony Lloyd, Andrew Mackinlay, John Mann, Gordon Marsden, Robert Marshall-Andrews, Eric Martlew, Chris McCafferty, John McDonnell, Jim McGovern, Shona McIsaac, Michael Meacher, Alan Meale, Andrew Miller, Austin Mitchell, Anne Moffat, Laura Moffatt, Julie Morgan, Chris Mullin, Denis Murphy, Doug Naysmith, Edward O'Hara, Bill Olnor, Sandra Osborne, Albert Owen, Stephen Pound, Gordon Prentice, Gwyn Prosser, Ken Purchase, Andy Reed, Linda Riordan, John Robertson, Terry Rooney, Lindsay Roy, Mohammad Sarwar, Jim Sheridan, Alan Simpson, Marsha Singh, Dennis Skinner, Andy Slaughter, Geraldine Smith, Peter Soulsby, Ian Stewart, Howard Stoute, Gavin Strang, Graham Stringer, Dari Taylor, David Taylor, Emily Thornberry, Paul Truswell, Desmond Turner, Rudi Vis, Joan Walley, Robert Wareing, Malcolm Wicks, Betty Williams, David Winnick, Mike Wood, Anthony Wright ●

Tories in the 'national interest'. Either way, it would mean the end of the Labour Party in anything like its present form.

The clear sentiment amongst the CWU's membership is for an end to the Labour link. A big majority of postal workers are quite understandably furious with a party whose government is backing, not its affiliate, but rather the union-bashing employers. Few therefore support continuing to pay the political levy to Labour or the union's annual affiliation fee. Unfortunately this is not complemented by any kind of coherent political alternative - not even a Labour Party mark two. So there exists frustration, incomprehension, nihilism, but no positive proposal that has gained any significant purchase with postal workers. CWU disaffiliation from the Labour Party looks increasingly likely, whatever the result of the current strike action.

In these circumstances the danger is that disaffiliation will lead to depoliticisation. So what is urgently needed is a concerted fight within all affiliated unions to force a wider rebellion among Labour MPs. It is to be welcomed that, at the last count, 133 Labour MPs have supported early day motion 2035. However meek and mild, it implies support for the CWU and criticism of the government: "That this house welcomes the proposals put forward by the Communication Workers Union seeking to find a resolution to the current postal dispute, in particular their offer to explore the possibility of third party mediation; and calls on the government to do all in its power to ensure that Royal Mail responds positively to the union's proposal."

But there are 349 Labour MPs, which means that a clear majority - 216 of them - are implicitly backing Royal Mail's assault. They need to be pursued vigorously. Postal workers, along with the support groups that are beginning to be formed, ought to lobby them at the House of Commons and *en masse* at their constituency surgeries. The demand is simple: sign EDM 2035.

Some on the moderate left of the Labour Party might not like this approach, given their essentially dependent relationship with the Labour right. Similarly, it may not go down too well with the likes of SPEW or the SWP, whose leaders have already written off the chances of any kind of left fightback in the Labour Party and have based their perspectives on hopes of a Labour Party mark two.

However, driving a wedge between the left and the right in the Labour Party would not only bring more forces to the side of the postal workers: it would also produce an environment in which the kind of party working people need is more widely discussed. For our part we advocate a Communist Party, not a Labour Party mark two.

Postal workers have every reason to reach out to other sections of the working class. Unions which organise lower-grade management must be won to pledge that none of their members will cross picket lines or organise strike-breaking. With or without the help of the TUC there must be the closest cooperation with other unions. Especially those in the public sector. Joint days of action with PSC, GMB, NUT and Unison, for example. This can be pushed forward from above and from below. International solidarity from unions in Europe can and must be won.

The formation of a nationwide network of support groups is an urgent matter. There is a widespread pool of public sympathy for the postal workers that can be transformed into active solidarity. There is also the possibility of standing candidates or backing socialist and left wing candidates in the forthcoming general election. And not only those in the Labour Party. All this points to class politics ●



Close the scab hubs

The Eastern Region Shop Stewards Network and Cambridge Post Workers Support Group jointly hosted a meeting on Tuesday November 3 addressed by Jane Loftus, Communication Workers Union president and member of the Socialist Workers Party.

The meeting was well attended, with activists and trade unionists from across the region present, although most were from the Cambridge area. PCS, Unite, Unison, NUT and NUS were represented, along with a local Labour councillor, in an event called to show solidarity with striking CWU members and plan local action to raise money, solidarity and public support. Local left activists from the SWP, Socialist Party, Socialist Appeal and the Labour Representation Committee were present offering support.

Comrade Loftus opened the meeting by giving an outline of the current situation. She highlighted the strength of the CWU in delivering a 76% 'yes' vote in the ballot for strike action. Most large workplaces have reps and Royal Mail should be negotiating with them, rather than trying to force through change without consultation. She stressed the importance of solidarity from other unions, as Royal Mail colludes with the government to try and smash the CWU and use this as a platform to go on an offensive against other public sector unions. If the CWU is defeated, it will lay the groundwork for this government and the next to carry out its goal of privatising schools, hospitals and other public services and attacking members' terms and conditions, cutting jobs and slashing pensions. She pointed to action taken by workers at Vestas and Visteon, showing that the attacks are not just happening in the public sector and there is a general willingness to fight.

Practical steps were necessary to ensure that the strike is not defeated because workers are suffering poverty. The CWU does not give strike pay. Cambridge TUC sponsored the Cambridge v Kidderminster football match to raise money for the strike fund and leaflet supporters to raise awareness of the reason for CWU members taking action. She said other simple actions such as opening the door to your post deliverer and offering support are helpful in raising confidence. Comrade Loftus said that what happens in the strike will have a knock-on effect for other workers and unions. While billions have been used to bail out the bankers, both Labour and the Tories are hell-bent on cutting public servic-

es. Victory in this strike would mean, said comrade Loftus, that strikers could return to work proud, with an agreement in place that rewards them, and that the union will still be there.

Paul Moffat of Eastern Region CWU spoke about the politics of the dispute. He squarely laid the blame for the dispute on Royal Mail and the government, with Mandelson pulling the strings after his humiliation over privatisation. Now, along with plans to smash the union, management and the government are planning to run the 'business' down to make it more attractive to the private sector. He attacked Gordon Brown for saying that he did not want to interfere in the dispute, saying that, as the government is the major shareholder, that is a disgrace. This is a fight for the life of the postal service.

Comrade Moffat spoke about the support from other unions locally, including the NUT and FBU. He said that the current dispute does not be compared to the miners' strike, although in a way it is similar, as the government and Royal Mail have prepared in advance and are set to try and smash a militant union. Other unions have been quick to respond and ordinary union members have been able to recognise what the strike is about. It is essential that the rank and file put pressure on the leadership who often lack the courage to take action in solidarity with other workers against a Labour government.

One of the main issues highlighted by both speakers has been the establishment of 'scab hub' warehouses. These are being used to sort and prepare mail in order to try and beat the strike and avoid picket lines. One of these 'scab hubs' is based in the region and is being staffed by agency workers. One of the first and most vital activities being carried out by the group and supporters is a mass leaflet of the warehouse to inform workers that they are being used to break a strike and that the fight against Royal Mail will benefit them if victory is achieved.

Other plans include city centre leaflet and collection stalls, a bonfire night collection, writing to local student unions and PCS branches regarding students and unemployed workers taking jobs when the strike is on and another 'party on the picket' planned for this Friday and Monday's all-out strike days.

The Cambridge Post Workers Support Group will be meeting every week while the dispute continues ●

Steve Sweeney

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DRUGS

Fatuous, dangerous, utterly irresponsible

Few issues generate so much irrationality as the question of drugs. Rather we get tabloid-driven, moralistic sound and fury, where small things like facts and evidence are blindly ignored - indeed, themselves become objects of righteous condemnation. Naturally, the government - and, of course, the Tory government-in-waiting - is compelled to join the 'anti-drugs' mob, locked as it is into the unwinnable 'war on drugs', a prisoner of its own myths and desperate rhetoric.

Hence on becoming prime minister, Gordon Brown promptly - and stupidly - declared that cannabis was "lethal" and, following a media frenzy about the supposed dangers of 'skunk', insisted that cannabis be reclassified from its then current official governmental status as a class C drug back to the more 'dangerous' class B it had been prior to David Blunkett's 2004 regrading (or downgrading). While the 'anti-drugs' *Daily Mail* was cock-a-hoop at this development, this Alice-in-Wonderland comment set the tone for the Brown administration's thoroughly backward and reactionary approach to the whole issue - which, in just about every respect, has been more irrational than the one pursued by Blair or the previous Tory government (yes, including Margaret Thatcher).

So we get the sacking last week of the government's chief drugs adviser, professor David Nutt, from his unpaid position as chairman of the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs. Not only that: home secretary Alan Johnson - rounding up the usual tabloid posse - has conducted a furious, high-profile media vendetta against Nutt, denouncing him for "interfering" in the policy-making process and "campaigning against government decisions".

Indeed, some of Johnson's allies have suggested that the professor - one of the UK's leading NHS psychiatrists and pharmacologists, it should be noted - is a bit of a crank, so whatever he says should not be taken too seriously. Thus, right on a rabid cue, Melanie Phillips of the *Daily Mail* launched, cutlass in hand, right into David Nutt, underneath the gloriously frothy headline: "Fatuous, dangerous, utterly irresponsible - the Nutty professor who's distorting the truth about drugs". According to Phillips (or 'mad Mel', as she is affectionately known), the "entire *bien-pensant* world appears to have decided that Nutt is a martyr to free speech" - when, in reality, he was "playing politics", with the professor's remarks helping to "create a culture of social acceptability for illegal drug-taking", which can only lead to more young people getting "sucked onto the drug escalator".

In fact, Phillips darkly argues, the ACMD itself is "part of a trillion-dollar global campaign to legalise drugs", which has seen "virtually the whole of the drug-related voluntary sector succumbing to the siren song of the legalisers": with their insidious "discourse" about "harm reduction", being for Phillips a mere "camouflage for legalisation" - and for years the home office has "supinely gone along with" this permissive tide. But at last, Phillips concludes, the home office has



Factory: make it legal

"fought back" and for this "small chink of sanity" the home secretary "deserves praise" - though, she warns, with the ACMD and its supporters "piling on the pressure", Alan Johnson and the government as a whole "must hold his nerve".¹

But what exactly was Nutt's terrible crime, deserving of a public scalping by the government and new-found Johnson-groupies like Phillips? The professor committed the near unforgivable sin of *telling the truth* - that is, he pointed out the simple fact that cannabis and ecstasy cause far less harm than those perfectly legal and easily available drugs, tobacco and alcohol. To this effect, a few days before being fired as ACMD chairman, Nutt gave a lecture at King's College, London, where he attacked the "artificial separation" of alcohol and tobacco from illegal drugs.

Therefore, for Nutt, the government's entire approach to those substances that are presently illegal is disastrously mistaken - as perfectly evidenced by Brown's imperial dismissal of the ACMD's recommendations on cannabis, which, of course, was that it remain a class C drug (nor did it give any credence to the 'skunk scare'). Tellingly, this was the first time since the ACMD was formed in 1971 that its propositions have been brushed aside or that a drug - cannabis - has had its status shifted from a less to more dangerous category.

In other words, as Nutt - quite correctly, of course - never misses an opportunity to highlight, the government's attitude towards drugs policy is not "evidence-based" but rather irrationally "politicised". Or, as communists would put it, the UK government has absolutely no regard whatsoever for any notion of scientific objectivity or genuine 'harm reduction' with regards to drugs but instead adopts a narrowly ideological stance - driven as it by naked short-term expediency and the mortal fear of alienating 'popular opinion' (ie, the fickle prejudices and bigotry of 'middle England').

No wonder then that professor Nutt has openly castigated government ministers for "devaluing and distorting evidence", and described his sacking as a "serious challenge to the value of science in relation to the government". Furthermore, Nutt refuses to "mislead" the public about the ef-

fects of drugs in order to merely convey a "moral message" - as opposed to a scientific or rational one - on behalf of the government, nor will he desist from outlining the mountain of evidence which amply shows that there is only a "relatively small risk" of developing a psychotic illness from smoking cannabis.

As Nutt writes in *The Guardian*, the current evidence "suggests a probable, but weak, causal link between psychotic illness and cannabis use", so cannabis smokers "are about 2.6 times more likely to have a psychotic-like experience than non-smokers". However, as Nutt goes on to say, you need to consider that statistic in perspective - it is essentially the same as saying that "you are 20 times more likely to get lung cancer if you smoke tobacco than if you don't". But then tobacco smoking is perfectly legal, isn't it? (Interestingly enough, in the same article, Nutt also claims - maybe paradoxically to some - that schizophrenia "seems to be disappearing", even though cannabis use has "increased markedly in the last 30 years".)²

Of course, Nutt is a repeat offender as far as the government is concerned. Hence in January the professor - in a lengthy paper for a scientific journal - made his now famous comparison between ecstasy-taking and the practice of horse-riding. Entitled 'Equasy, an overlooked addiction with implications for the current debate on drug harms', the article examined how society assesses - or not - various risks and perceived risks. Quite logically, Nutt explained that the harm from illegal drugs has to be compared, or 'equalled', to the harm that can be potentially inflicted when engaging in other legal or non-drug-related pursuits - hence his invented term "equasy", or "equine addiction syndrome".

On this basis, Nutt's paper argued, "equasy" is responsible for 10 deaths a year and over 100 traffic accidents - more or less equivalent to the amount of death and damage caused every year by ecstasy, in so far as these things can be quantified in such a manner. When asked by *The Daily Telegraph* to expound on his thesis, professor Nutt stated that there was "not much difference" between the harm caused by riding and that by

ecstasy - thereby demonstrating that society did not always "adequately balance" all of the nearly endless risks posed just by being alive. After all, he told the newspaper, "making riding illegal would completely prevent all these harms" - so why does not society, or the government, go ahead and do so? The refusal to prohibit horse-riding, ventured Nutt, immediately "raises the critical question of why society tolerates - indeed encourages - certain forms of potentially harmful behaviour but not others, such as drug use".³ Needless to say, the then home secretary, Jacqui Smith, was outraged by Nutt's eminently reasonable argumentation and demanded that he apologise. He did not.

Much to the government's embarrassment, Nutt's dismissal sparked off a rebellion by other members of the ACMD. So both Dr Les King - senior chemist and a previous head of the Drugs Intelligence Unit in the Forensic Science Service - and Marion Walker - clinical director of Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust's substance misuse service and the Royal Pharmaceutical Society's representative on ACMD - resigned in solidarity. Indeed, King told the BBC that the very existence of the ACMD itself was in grave danger - given that the government now treats the council purely as a "rubber stamp" organisation, coming as it does with a "predetermined agenda about drug classification". Even more damaging for the government, its chief science adviser, professor John Beddington, has come out in explicit support of Nutt's position - declaring that the "scientific evidence is absolutely clear-cut" as to the damage caused by cannabis/ecstasy *vis-à-vis* alcohol and tobacco misuse.

Yes, communists too share this disgust at the "devaluing" of scientific evidence, if not science in general - especially as we subscribe to Engels's dictum: "The more ruthlessly and disinterestedly science proceeds, the more it finds itself in harmony with the interests of the workers."⁴ Just for a minute ponder upon that fully legal and easily available *drug* - ie, alcohol. I expect many readers will have consumed some of the stuff over the last few days and in all likelihood will do so again over the next few. Now, if ever there was a candidate for a drug being "lethal" - or at least responsible for inflicting the greatest amount of harm and damage to society out of the current crop of drugs - than surely it is this one.

So peruse the NHS statistics for "drinking-related ill-health and mortality" - or drugs overdosing, to put it more bluntly. Hence in 2007 in England there were 112,267 prescription items for the treatment of alcohol dependency prescribed in primary care settings - an increase of 20% since 2003, when there was 93,241 prescription items. In 2006-07, there were 57,142 NHS hospital admissions with a "primary" diagnosis specifically related to alcohol - and this number has risen by 52% since 1995-96. Of these admissions, 4,888 (9%) involved patients under 18 years of age.⁵ By any yardstick, that legal drug, alcohol, has the potential to inflict great damage upon society - and would surely deserve to

be categorised as a 'class A' drug if it were judged and evaluated in a similar manner to those such as cannabis/ecstasy. Self-evidently, any attempt at consistency when it comes to the application of drug laws has totally gone to pot.

Clearly then the government's 'anti-drugs' strategy - if you can call it that - is in total disarray, lacking any moral or scientific legitimacy. After 40 years of waging war on drugs, all we have seen is abject failure - to the extent that in the late 1960s, when the ACMD was being set up, there were some 2,000 registered drug addicts, plus maybe a similar number of unregistered addicts. Now there are 360,000 'problem' drug-users, who are vulnerable to dangerously adulterated substances selling at massively inflated prices - making global entrepreneurs out of the ruthless drugs cartels and barons, who every year make an absolute killing.

Here then we have the bitter fruits of the pointless 'war on drugs' - enriching gangsters and monstrously criminalising large swathes of society along the way. Just like with prohibition, the 'noble experiment' in the US between 1919 and 1933. Not to mention, of course, being a supreme exercise in *hypocrisy* - we all know that the majority of government ministers, as well as Tory shadow cabinet members, have in their callow youthful past indulged in the "lethal" habit of cannabis smoking (and more besides), yet all miraculously remain alive.

Therefore, do communists call for the 'equalisation' of legal and illegal drugs? Yes, but not by calling for a demented consistency - as once expressed by Arthur Scargill and not a few others on the puritanical left over the years - that looks forward to the outlawing of the currently legal drugs such as alcohol. Obviously, that way would lead to authoritarian madness - if not the breakdown of society, with virtually everyone becoming criminals overnight (even *Daily Mail* readers). No, rather, we in the CPGB unequivocally call for the immediate legalisation of *all* drugs - not just cannabis or ecstasy. Openness, legality and full, uninhibited, debate provide the best conditions for the assessment of the relative dangers of this or that drug, habit, practice or pastime - and, where necessary, what would constitute the most effective course of treatment and rehabilitation: not stigmatisation or punitive measures.

Drinking a pint of beer or smoking a joint poses no inherent dangers - either to yourself or society as a whole. Any more than horse-riding or kite-flying. Hence for communists the crucial struggle is for the *socialisation* of drug-taking - whether it be alcohol, cannabis or ecstasy. In that way, 'drugs' can help us to live a full, rounded, joyful life - as opposed to diminishing or even destroying us ●

Eddie Ford

Notes

1. *Daily Mail* November 2.
2. *The Guardian* November 3.
3. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/8334948.stm>.
4. F Engels *Ludwig Feuerbach and the end of classical German philosophy*: www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1886/ludwig-feuerbach/ch04.htm.
5. www.ic.nhs.uk/pubs/alcohol08.

EDL

Football fan nationalism and 'anti-fascist' theatre

Fascists tend to be characterised by a love of militarism, artistic displays of historical distortions, control of modern media techniques and, in a revolutionary or pre-revolutionary situation, heavy financing by a declining capitalist class. The October 31 English Defence League rally in Leeds revealed very little of these vile attributes - what we had was a sort of dozy, confused, ignorant football mob looking for a fight.

Although the Public Order Act was used to ban city centre marches, both the EDL and United Against Fascism were allowed their separate rallies 250 metres apart - out of each other's sight and hearing. The EDL event was in City Square, while UAF gathered outside the art gallery on the Headrow. A solid circle of crash barriers and a tight cordon of police in a circular area about 70 metres in diameter penned in the EDL. The city council's precautionary measures included covering up street furniture and statues, while the Christmas tree put up just a day or so earlier was taken down again. About 200 police surrounded City Square, including 20 mounted officers.

It seems the organisers of both rallies agreed to a kind of voluntary 'kettling' - both areas were fenced off, with the police staying outside the barriers and controlling the flow of people wanting to leave. Perhaps in answer to previous criticisms in the mainstream media, portable toilets were thoughtfully provided at both venues. In City Square, the only thing resembling order took the form of a double queue of a hundred or so men waiting to relieve themselves.

The behaviour of the EDL was curious. They just seemed to wander around doing nothing. There were no leaflets or papers on offer to explain what was happening. The meandering mob inside the pen was overwhelmingly male. I counted around 1,200 at one time, although the police report said there were only 200 - but perhaps they made their count after a large group of Leeds United football fans were allowed to leave for the match against Yeovil. A crowd of shoppers, observers and hordes of people with cameras surrounded the pen, like visitors at a zoo, but most people soon got bored with the show.

After all, there was not a great deal to watch or listen to - there were a few failed attempts at speeches over a hand-held tannoy, but they were so indistinct that they were quickly abandoned each time. Audible comments included: "No more mosques in Britain until there is a church in Mecca", while the allegation that UAF "crave sharia law" was a further example of the slightly deranged Islamophobia on offer. By way of contrast to this anti-Muslim nationalism, an ex-soldier said that one of his inspirations was John Lennon (who, it may be recalled, imagined a world of no countries and no religion).

Some youths had St George cross football flags over their shoulders and many were displaying all sorts of football regalia. But to add to the confusion there were one or two Israeli flags. Large bouncer types patrolled the 'kettle' perimeter, talking on their mobiles. They wore the black EDL sports tops which are advertised on the EDL website, and most of them had lettering on the back announcing the wearer's locality: ie, "EDL Doncaster Division" or "EDL Blackburn Division".



Looking for a punch up

You can also purchase EDL 'burqas' via its website, but only two of these were sported and the police made the wearers take them off. It is a very strange garment indeed - a Templar cross on a white shield being featured on the forehead.

For a while there were only two placards on display - one misspelled and the other too small to read. Then, suddenly, a large banner about 10 metres long was unfurled. There was a moment of tense anticipation, as spectators and press waited to see what message it would carry. In letters almost a metre high there were three words: "Pride - passion - belief". What did it mean? Was this a misappropriation (and misinterpretation) of the pre-match pep talks of legendary Leeds United manager Don Revie? But the sight of the banner seemed to lift the EDL mob. They cheered wildly and started chanting a mixture of "Ingerland, Ingerland" and a range of well known United football chants: "We're all going mental, fucking, fucking mental, da, da, da, Leeds"; and the equally profound "Time to go, time to go, time to go, oh, oh, oh, oh, fuck off". A very concise political message, which must have inspired many outside the pen to join the EDL.

Some more youths arrived and others left in ones and twos. But the corralled crowd was becoming more aggressive and their chanting more frequent and intense. Several rushes were made at the barriers and the police raised batons in response, using them once. Six new, professionally crafted placards now appeared, attacking militant Islam, sharia law and the Muslim treatment of women. The raising of these placards provoked more chanting and some salutes - I saw two of the fascist variety, but, most strangely, many more clenched fists.

Outside the pen it became clear that EDL supporters were circulating in small groups amongst the onlookers and several times very hard characters tried to pick fights with individual students who had drifted down from the UAF rally. I was questioned in a casual and disarming way by milder specimens planted in the crowd - they tried to engage me in discussion about immigrants and so on. Both these activities seem designed and planned. There was a tense atmosphere, with the police intervening to stop provocations.

At the allotted time the police cleared the square and the EDL dispersed rowdily in mobs running down the streets and into the railway station. More like Millwall going home from an away match than fascists leaving a Nazi rally.

Meanwhile, back at the art gallery the speeches were continuing interminably. Under the slogan "Celebrate and defend one society, many cultures", the UAF rally was a celebration of multiculturalism - despite the presence on the platform of striking refuse workers, there was no call for united working class resistance against attacks from the ruling class (of which groups like the EDL are to some extent a reaction). One speaker commented that there is nothing wrong with the burqa, but the EDL want to ban it. However, I suspect that many UAFers would support the police's own ban on the 'burqas' seen in City Square.

As well as the binmen, there were speakers from the trades council and local union branches, together with a number of local politicians. Amongst them was a Liberal Democrat councillor - the Lib Dems are in coalition with the Conservatives on the council that is so enthusiastically slashing the

wages of refuse workers. But at least we should be grateful there were no Tories on the platform - the Conservatives had directed their members not to attend.

Although there were Muslim speakers, only a very small number from the large Leeds Muslim community attended. There had been a concerted attempt by both the police and the mosque to persuade Muslim youth to stay away. A police statement had urged "particularly young members of the Asian community" not to get drawn into "things they really shouldn't do". The police hoped Muslim youth would just "get involved in something else and leave us to deal with the matter" (www.westyorkshire.police.uk/section-item.asp?sid=12&iid=8669). Prominent 'community leaders' also warned Muslims to steer clear of potential confrontation. Indeed they helpfully provided them with "something else" to do by organising a trip to Alton Towers.

In order to counter all this UAF had stressed the peaceful nature of its own event - a message that was repeatedly emphasised over the PA - together with the fact that the police had refused permission for a UAF march. It did not seem to occur to the speakers, including those of the Socialist Workers Party, that their demand for the EDL event to be banned completely did not exactly help their case - the police were just being even-handed, weren't they?

In fact the whole event involved direct and detailed collaboration between the UAF and the police - UAF joint secretary and SWP central committee member Weyman Bennett kept popping over to talk to senior officers. Clearly UAF had complied with the police insistence on a "static dem-

onstration" by negotiating the terms of the kettling - the provision of portaloos and the arrangement whereby the police only stepped into the pen to pick up 'troublemakers'. On one occasion a demonstrator was handed over to the police by stewards - he was told to leave the city centre for 48 hours. Standing near the platform, he had allegedly made anti-migrant comments. Fingers were pointed at him from the platform, but it was comrades from Revolution, Workers Power's youth front, who snaked through the crowd, bearing their red flags on bamboo sticks, to confront this enemy of the people. To chants of "Whose streets? Our streets" - initiated by the rally chair, the SWP's Sally Kincaid - he was ejected.

Demonstrators also reacted with fury to a lone heckler jeering from outside the pen behind the police vans. There were several attempts to rush police lines in order to attack him, causing people to scatter, including a woman with a pram.

This incident provided the first hint of the particular problem the SWP has in relation to the UAF 'united front' - how to marry the character of UAF as a broad, respectable coalition against the far right with the SWP's own dogma that 'fascism' can only be defeated by force. For example, on Saturday young SWPers who believe the macho talk soon became impatient with the tame, pro-establishment speeches and steel-fence confinement. Many joined in the constant "We want to march" and "Smash the fash" chants (not to mention "Whose streets? Our streets") coming from an alliance of anarchists and Workers Power/Revolution. At times these chants drowned out the poor-quality PA system, but neither comrade Bennett nor Kincaid appeared to hear them at this stage.

The Revo youngsters occasionally lit red flares - dropped dangerously in the rally area as well as the streets outside. Most had arrived on one of the feeder marches (which had been allowed) from the university. After a prolonged period of disruption they eventually managed to breach the steel fence and police cordon surrounding the rally area and set off for City Square. They were bent on taking up the offer of a punch-up from the EDL fascist hard core, but neither side had their wish and instead several would-be street fighters were arrested.

After something approaching four hours of speeches (and a short musical interlude), the crowd had dwindled to just three or four hundred. It was then that comrade Bennett took the microphone and proposed a march to City Square to "reclaim" it from "the fash" (most of whom had by now left, of course). Showing his democratic credentials, he put the proposal to a vote, which he declared to be carried unanimously with no abstentions. This produced a flurry of movement from the police, who immediately tightened their cordon and prevented anyone from leaving at all.

Not to be deterred, the organisers displayed their militancy by defiantly marching *within* the kettle, from one side to the other and back again. This 10-metre march was pure theatre. But at least the portaloos were put to good use until the police finally relented and agreed to release the remaining anti-fascists ●

Melvin Dawson

HISTORY

Zionist collaborators with Nazism revealed

Tony Greenstein reviews two books by Francis Nicosia: *The Third Reich and the Palestine question* London 1985, pp320, £25.50; and *Zionism and anti-Semitism in Nazi Germany* Cambridge 2008, pp344, £50

When in trouble, the first line of defence is to accuse your critics of anti-Semitism. Even if they are Jewish Zionists! Israeli finance minister Yuval Steinitz is right that it is possible to be a Jewish anti-Semite, even if the particular accusation against Richard Goldstone, head of the United Nations commission which accused Israel of war crimes, is patently absurd.¹ The history of Zionism is full of such examples.

The past 20 years have seen the rise of the 'new historians'. Although politically they differ enormously - from Benny Morris, a supporter of ethnic cleansing, who provided the first comprehensive account of the expulsion of the Palestinians,² to Ilan Pappé, who described how the massacre and expulsion of the Palestinians in 1948 was carefully planned³ - they do have one thing in common. A desire to sweep aside Zionism's invented history, where propaganda and political necessity masqueraded as history. A history that was subordinated politically to the Zionist movement.

No question is more sensitive than that of the relationship between Zionism and the Nazis. Popular history holds that the Zionists led Jewish resistance to the Nazis, including the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, and that Israel was established as a refuge from anti-Semitism. The Kasztner trial in Israel (1953-58), concerning Zionist collaboration with the Nazis in Hungary, has almost been erased from popular memory, even though it led to the fall of the Sharrett government in June 1955. The Haavara transfer agreement between Nazi Germany and the Zionist Organisation - an agreement which led to Palestine being swamped with German goods between 1933 and 1939, with the Zionists operating as overseas salesmen for German companies - has also been largely forgotten.

Yet the question of Zionism's true record during the holocaust has haunted Zionist writers, despite the best attempts of historians such as Yehuda Bauer at Yad Vashem, Israel's holocaust museum, to rewrite what happened from a Zionist perspective.⁴ The first to tackle the subject was Ben Hecht who, in 1962, issued *Perfidy*, an account of the Kasztner trial. This was followed by Hanna Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem* in 1963. In 1977 S Beit-Zvi, in *Post-Ugandan Zionism in the crucible of the holocaust*,⁵ documented how the Zionist leadership prioritised building a Jewish state over rescuing Jewish people, whilst in 1984 Edwin Black provided a comprehensive account of Haavara, the economic pact between Nazi Germany and the Zionist movement.⁶ Lenni Brenner's *Zionism in the age of the dictators* offered, from an anti-Zionist perspective, the most complete account of Zionist collaboration with Nazism.⁷

Francis Nicosia has documented both the relationship of the German Zionists with the Nazi government and the diplomatic factors that led to the Nazis adopting a pro-Zionist foreign policy externally. His problem was how



Adolf Hitler: used Zionism

to reconcile this with support for Zionism. He argues that the Zionists had no option but to deal with the Nazis, but he fails to ask what kind of deals were struck, what their motives were, whether Palestine was prioritised to the exclusion of all other destinations and whether the Zionists were indifferent to the Nazi attacks on German Jews when they deliberately undermined the boycott of Germany.

At odds

Nicosia is an author at war with his own evidence, and like Benny Morris his conclusions are at odds with the facts he uncovers. This is especially true of his second book *Zionism and anti-Semitism in Nazi Germany*. The result is a series of apologetics for the record of the German Zionist Federation (Zionistische Vereinigung für Deutschland - ZVfD).

Nicosia's first book, *The Third Reich and Palestine* (TRP), detailed the relationship of the Nazi government and its different factions to Arab nationalism, Zionism and the British. It is far more lucid and coherent than his second and more recent work, *Zionism and anti-Semitism in Nazi Germany* (ZANG), whose attempts to place Nazism in the context of both medieval and post-emancipation anti-Semitism is unconvincing. His argument that "a deeply rooted antipathy toward Jews had been and remained at the core of European life for centuries, a reality from which modern anti-Semitism... developed in the modern period" is both meaningless and ahistorical (ZANG p17).

In TRP Nicosia shows clearly that both the 'pro-Zionist' and 'anti-Zionist' foreign policy of the Nazis had little or nothing to do with domestic

considerations, but were a consequence of its relationship with British imperialism. In fact anti-Semitism played little part in the coming to power of the Nazis. Between 1930 and 1933 they played it down (ZANG p74). There was "a reluctance" on Hitler's part to address the Jewish question between 1925 and 1933 because of "a general lack of voter appeal in anti-Semitism" (footnote, TRP p231).

Nicosia concludes that the rise of the Nazis to power in 1933 "left German Zionism with little option but to seek cooperation with a regime that ultimately would attempt to physically annihilate all the Jews of Europe" (ZANG p11). What he fails to explain is the ideological and political symmetry between the Nazis and Zionism. Nicosia accepts that Zionism was itself a 'volkish' form of Jewish nationalism, influenced by the same *Blut und Boden* mythology as its non-Jewish counterparts (ZANG p2).⁸

What marked out Zionism from all other Jewish movements was not only the fact that ideologically it was a mirror image of anti-Semitism, but that some of the most rabid Jew-haters sought legitimisation in it. Nicosia is aware of the ideological symmetry between Zionism and Nazism, but fails to ask what effect this had on Zionist tactics and strategy - for example, the writing off of the vast majority of German Jews in favour of the Zionist elite: "As one of the developing volkish nationalisms of central and eastern Europe in the 19th century... Zionism has accepted the premise that the Jewish people, for racial, religious, cultural or historical reasons, should not be assimilated" (TRP p17).

The Zionist rejection of 'assimilation' was "firmly rooted in the conviction

that the Jews constituted a unique race" (TRP p18). This reached its apotheosis with the visit in 1933 of Arthur Ruppin, the father of Jewish land settlement in Palestine, to Germany's leading race scientist and Himmler's mentor, Hans Günther of Jena University, to share ideas. Ruppin recorded with satisfaction that the professor was extremely friendly.⁹ Amos Morris-Reich, who tries to gloss over Ruppin's belief in the racial sciences, nonetheless asks, "Why did Ruppin not express his reservations of Günther in the privacy of his diary, but, on the contrary, describe the conversation as a pleasant encounter?"¹⁰ Although the meeting with Günther is mentioned in the German edition of Ruppin's diaries, it was erased in the English and Hebrew editions edited by Alex Bein.

Nicosia observes that, although today criticism of Zionism "is often dismissed as motivated by a deeper anti-Semitism, in [Theodor] Herzl's day an opposite non-Jewish reaction, one of support for the Zionist idea, might have resulted in a similar reaction" (TRP p7). But then "before the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, active anti-Zionism... was largely a Jewish phenomenon..." (TRP p13).

The diary of Victor Klemperer, a Christian Jew who survived only because he had married an Aryan, was an important chronicle in understanding the harrowing experience that the Christian Jews, *Mischlinge* (mixed race) and those married to Aryans went through. Klemperer described a meeting with the former leader of German Zionism, Kurt Blumenfeld, in 1935: "The Blumenfelds were here on Friday; I disagree violently with him about Zionism, which he defends and praises, which I call betrayal and Hitlerism" (TRP p13). Nicosia fails even to ask why Klemperer saw Zionism as a Hitlerite betrayal.

Nicosia engages in sophistry, arguing that Herzl, the founder of Zionism, was merely responding to the "threat of modern anti-Semitism and its rejection of Jewish emancipation and assimilation". Apart from the fact that Zionism started from a rejection of the enlightenment and emancipation, it is a strange way to respond to a threat by welcoming it! As Herzl's biographer notes, "Anti-semites approved of Herzl for authenticating their own accusations against the Jews."¹¹

When Herzl's *Der Judenstaat* was published in 1896, Herzl "badgered" Edouard Drumont, editor of the anti-Semitic daily *La Libre Parole*, into reviewing his pamphlet, which he did on January 16 1897. "Drumont praised Herzl for agreeing to so many of the charges made against the Jews by their opponents."¹² As emperor Franz Josef noted regarding Herzl's argument that civic equality for Jews was a "misfortune because it led to assimilation and intermarriage", "What would have become of this Herzl if there were no equality of rights?"¹³

Nicosia's treatment of Zionist Moses Hess is likewise disingenuous: "Hess argued that gentiles rejected

Jews on the basis of their perceived race rather than the traditional measure of religion" (my emphasis). Yet despite quoting from the same paragraph in Hess's *Rome and Jerusalem*, Nicosia omits the following:

"... the tendency of some Jews to deny their racial descent is equally foredoomed to failure. Jewish noses cannot be reformed and the black, wavy hair of the Jews will not be changed into blond by conversion or straightened out by constant combing. The Jewish race is one of the primary races of mankind... The Jewish type has conserved its purity through the centuries."¹⁴

There was clearly nothing "perceived" about Hess's belief in a Jewish race. Hess, who can lay claim to being the first political Zionist, also believed that "Race struggle is primary; class struggle is secondary."¹⁵

Nicosia demonstrates little understanding of Zionism, past or present, still less how its racial theories were applied in Palestine. For example, he describes the Jewish National Fund, the key organisation involved in settling the land, as having been established in 1920, whereas the JNF was first formed in 1901 (ZANG p155).

Alfred Rosenberg, the Nazis' minister for the eastern territories, was Hitler's favourite theoretician (TRP p25). Rosenberg argued that "Zionism must be vigorously supported in order to encourage a significant number of German Jews to leave for Palestine or other destinations" (TRP p25). He was fond of citing the Zionists' own arguments that the Jews were a separate people. Rosenberg took this as "a clear affirmation that all Jews were aliens in Germany" (ZANG p70). "Rosenberg's argument that the Zionist movement could be utilised to promote the political, social and cultural segregation of Jews in Germany, as well as their emigration, was eventually transformed into policy by the Hitler regime after 1933."¹⁶

Golden opportunity

The German Zionists used the advent of Hitler in order to oust their 'assimilationist' opponents from the leadership of the Jewish community. The Zionists went as far as denouncing and even disrupting the meetings of the *Centralverein*, the Central Association of German Citizens of the Jewish Faith (ZANG p167).

The rise of the Nazis was seen as a golden opportunity: "So positive was its assessment of the situation that, as early as April 1933, the ZVfD announced its determination to take advantage of the crisis to win over a traditionally assimilationist German Jewry to Zionism" (ZANG p146). Likewise Berl Katznelson, a founder of the Israeli Labour Party, Mapai, and editor of *Davar*, paper of the Histadrut, saw the rise of Hitler as "an opportunity to build and flourish like none we have ever had or ever will have" (ZANG p91).

Nicosia concedes that German Zionism "retreated for the most part into its ideological comfort zone, from

which they generally dismissed the idea of Jewish self-defence against anti-Semitism ...” (ZANG p286). Indeed an understanding of National Socialism and how to respond “seemed to elude the entire Zionist movement, including the Yishuv, until well into the Second World War” (ZANG p289). Yet he draws no conclusions from how this impinged on the role of the Zionist movement, within and without Germany between 1933 and 1939.

Assimilation, not anti-Semitism, was German Zionism’s main enemy. As Kurt Blumenfeld, secretary of the ZVfD (1924-33) and of the (World) Zionist Organisation (1910-14) wrote in a letter to Walter Rathenau, the Jewish minister assassinated in 1922, “Under no circumstances does a Jew have the right to represent the affairs of another people.”¹⁷ This was over a decade before the Nazis took power. In September 1932, with the Nazi having achieved a vote of 13 million in the July elections, “Blumenfeld identified the political left in Germany as the immediate danger, especially to Jewish youth.” (ZANG p60). Thus at the very time that Hitlerism was gaining ascendancy, the Zionist movement identified the main opponents of Nazism as the main danger to Jews!

Hitler described Zionism as a “great movement” which had resolved his “indecision” as to whether or not the Jews were a separate people.¹⁸ Hitler certainly doubted Zionism’s ability and motives in wishing to build a Jewish state in Palestine, but he supported those who saw “the utility of Zionism in a future National Socialist state” (ZANG p72). In January 1938 Hitler ruled that “Jewish emigration from Germany should continue to be promoted with all possible means, and it should be directed in the first instance to Palestine” (TRP p141). In the debates over Haavara, Hitler consistently supported its continuance against growing opposition from the interior and foreign ministries.

The main concern of the SD (SS security/intelligence service) was the danger for Jewish emigration posed by Britain’s restrictive immigration policy in Palestine rather than the formation of an independent Jewish state (ZANG p140). As late as July 1939 Hitler was still firmly supportive of Haavara and Jewish emigration to Palestine (ZANG p142). General Gerhard Engel, an adjutant of Hitler, described how the fuhrer had come to favour the concentration of Jews over their dispersion (ZANG p143). Hitler and the SS were also the last to abandon emigration as a solution to the Jewish question, in particular to Palestine, even after 1939 (ZANG p264).

Hitler made his position clear in respect of the British empire and its role in the Middle East, giving short shrift to those who would form an alliance with the oppressed nations:

“I as a German would far rather see India under British domination than under that of any other nation ... A coalition of cripples cannot attack a powerful state which is determined, if necessary, to shed the last drop of its blood to maintain its existence. To me, as a nationalist who appreciates the worth of the racial basis of humanity, I must recognise the racial inferiority of the so-called ‘oppressed nations’, and that is enough to prevent me from linking the destiny of my people with the destiny of those inferior races.”¹⁹

Nazi support for Arab nationalism and the Palestine revolt of 1936-39 was never forthcoming (TRP p83). “Hitler’s hopes for an understanding with Britain precluded even the mildest form of moral support for an Arab nationalism aimed at loosening Britain’s grip on its share of the Levant” (TRP p181). Germany’s consul-general in Palestine, Walter Döhle, reported in January 1938 that because of its promotion of Jewish emigration, sympathy among Arabs for the Nazis was

declining (TRP p191).

Even though German foreign minister Konstantin Neurath had issued, on June 1 1937, policy guidelines raising for the first time the question of using the Arabs as a counterweight to Zionism, the foreign office sought to keep as much distance as possible between the Nazis and Arab nationalism (TRP p111). When the Iraqi prime minister sought German support for opposition to the Peel commission’s recommendation for partition, Neurath was firmly opposed (TRP p123).

The Zionists’ relationship with the Nazis included the collaboration of Feivel Polkes, an agent of the Jewish paramilitary organisation in Palestine, Haganah, who offered information about the communist resistance to the Gestapo. Polkes “declared himself ready to gather information for Germany that did not conflict with his own political ends ... he would vigorously support German foreign policy interests in the Middle East.”

In the summer of 1933, Baron Leopold von Mildenstein, head of the SD’s Jewish department, went on a six-month visit to Palestine. This was followed, a year later, by a series of 12 articles in Goebbels’ paper *Der Angriff*,²⁰ in which Mildenstein waxed lyrical about the “new Jew” and Zionist settlement in Palestine.²¹

Haavara

The transfer agreement (Haavara) between the Zionists and Nazis was agreed in August 1933. German Jews leaving for Palestine could convert their assets into frozen marks (Spermarks), held in an account in Germany, which would purchase German goods for export to Palestine. The emigrants would receive payment of about 15% from an account held by Haavara Ltd in Tel Aviv.

Haavara was supported by the Nazis for one simple reason. It would fatally undermine that which they feared most - an anti-Nazi boycott. Germany’s economy was export-dependent and “the volume of German goods sold abroad was already dangerously low. Germany simply could not stand further reductions”;²² “The Reich chancellery expressed alarm over the growing boycott movement” (ZANG p83). From a high of 26.9 billion RM in 1929, foreign trade had dropped to 10.4 billion RM in 1932 (TRP p30). A report for Hitler of May 1935 on the prospects for future German foreign trade painted a bleak picture because of protectionism, but also because of the small but growing international boycott of German goods (ZANG p83).

There were particular worries concerning the participation of non-Jewish businesses in the boycott: “The foreign office was flooded with letters from German firms with branches abroad, expressing alarm over the intensity of anti-German feeling and propaganda over alleged atrocities against Jews in Germany.” Yet at the very time that Nazis leaders were fretting over the boycott, the Zionists did their best to destroy it, despite the fact that it had “forced the Third Reich to vigilantly restrain anti-Jewish violence in Germany.”²³ As Nicosia admits, “Clearly the boycott generated considerable fear in Berlin about its potential for severely disrupting the government’s economic policies” (ZANG p83-84).

Such was the Nazis’ panic that Germany’s Jewish leaders were ordered to a meeting with Goring on March 25 1933. There they were told to go to London and then New York to try to have the American Jewish Congress boycott rally, due to take place on March 27 in New York’s Madison Square Gardens, called off.²⁴

The boycott was extremely popular internationally. It has been adopted by the labour movement in the United States and the Nazis were terrified of what it could do to their ex-

ports: “Reich leaders realised that boycott agitation was accelerating, especially in Great Britain. Placards proclaiming ‘Boycott German goods’ spread infectiously throughout London, and were now in the windows of the most exclusive West End shops.”²⁵ Even in Palestine German consul-general Heinrich Wolff warned that the momentum for a boycott of German goods was growing (TRP p38).

What better way to undermine all this than to proclaim that the Jews, of all people, were profiting most from trade with Germany? Wolff “was particularly assertive in his view that Palestine was the weapon with which Germany could wreck the boycott movement” (TRP p41).

The Zionists’ role as scab agents for trade with Nazi Germany sealed the fate of the boycott. Haavara resulted in Germany becoming the biggest exporter to Palestine, accounting for 16.1% of all its imports. Some 60% of investment in Jewish Palestine from 1933-39 was from Nazi Germany!²⁶ Haavara officials even sought out other markets for German goods in the Middle East (TRP p48).

In 1933 the 18th Zionist Congress in Prague avoided voting on resolutions supporting Haavara. Initially Berl Locker for the Zionist Executive denied all knowledge of it (TRP p53). In 1935, however, the 19th Zionist Congress at Lucerne rejected boycott and endorsed Haavara.

As if realising the weakness of his own argument, Nicosia differentiates between the “reluctant” collaboration of the mainstream Zionists and the enthusiastic collaboration of Zionist Organisation president Georg Kareski, who saw in Hitler’s ascendancy “a positive rather than a negative reality” (TRP p198). But if collaboration was necessary in order to save Germany’s Jews, then what does it matter if it was reluctant or enthusiastic? In fact the evidence suggests that the mainstream Zionists were equally eager to collaborate and volunteered their services. Kurt Blumenfeld went out of his way to lobby Nazi leaders to secure an invitation to the meeting with Jewish organisations on March 25 1933.

Nicosia tries to justify the Zionist role in Nazi Germany by arguing that they “were not spared the treatment meted out to non-Zionist Jewish organisations” (ZANG pp100-01). But this is irrelevant. A distinction has to be made between Zionism as a political movement and Zionists as individuals. And it was not even true. Even on an individual level, the Zionists received preferential treatment. In November 1938, in Berlin and Vienna, “the SS ordered the release from jail of all Jews arrested during the Kristallnacht pogrom who were in any way connected with the Palastinaamt [Palestine office]” (ZANG pp140, 177-78; TRP p160).

In fact non-Zionist or anti-Zionist Jewish organisations “were specifically targeted and closely scrutinised for any indication that they might seek to promote assimilationist or *deutschnationale* [German national] agendas”, whereas police reports on Zionist events “usually mentioned with satisfaction that assimilationist tendencies were not in evidence” (ZANG p118).

In a memo of May 24 1934, Reinhard Heydrich of the SD argued that the Zionist organisations should receive “preferential treatment” compared to the assimilationists. The SD proposed that “the severest measures be taken against all assimilationist efforts among the Jews, and that the strongest support be given to all Zionist organizations” (ZANG p136). On January 28 1935 Heydrich issued a directive stipulating that Zionist organisations “are not to be treated with that strictness that it is necessary to apply to the members of the so-called German-Jewish organisations (assimilationists)”. As Lucy Dawidowicz noted, “The Zionists and proponents of emigration

to Palestine were less badgered in their activities by the police and the SD than the non-Zionists.”²⁷ With the banning of all Jewish assimilationist groups later in 1935, “Zionist groups were the only ones of a political nature that were allowed to continue functioning” (TRP p57). The revisionist Zionist National Youth Herzlia was even allowed to wear its own uniforms (ZANG p122; TRP p56).

Jewish ‘expert’ Bernard Lohse, who drafted the Nuremberg laws and the definition of “who is a Jew”,²⁸ wrote in the introduction to the Nuremberg laws that “Among convinced Zionists one finds the least amount of opposition to the basic ideas of the Nuremberg laws because they know immediately that they offer the only feasible solution for the Jewish people as well ... the Jewish people has existed for millennia and has remained strong because it has maintained the purity of its blood ...” (ZANG p108; TRP p53).²⁹

German Zionist leader rabbi Joachim Prinz explained: “It was morally disturbing to seem to be considered as the favoured children of the Nazi government, particularly when it dissolved the anti-Zionist youth groups, and seemed in other ways to prefer the Zionists. The Nazis asked for a ‘more Zionist behaviour’.”³⁰

Nicosia is therefore right when he asserts that after 1933, “the Zionist movement became a vehicle through which German exports were promoted ...” (TRP p37).

One feature of Zionist policy has always been opposition to Jewish emigration to countries other than Israel. Nicosia glosses over the fact that under the Nazis the Zionist movement pursued this policy rigorously (ZANG p125): “... the CV criticised what it believed to be the efforts of the ZVfD to direct Jewish emigration exclusively to Palestine at the expense of other suitable destinations” (ZANG p168, citing *CV-Zeitung* October 13 1935). This gives the lie to the argument that Haavara was designed to rescue Jews.

On 16 January 1937 the German interior ministry informed the foreign office that “it intended to promote Jewish emigration by all possible means, but without specifically favouring Palestine as had been done in the past” (my emphasis TRP pp114-15). In a memo of June 17 1937 the SD’s Jewish department spelled out what the Zionist demands were: “Pressure will be exerted on the Reichsverretung der Juden in Deutschland [the umbrella group for German Jewish organisations] to oblige Jews who emigrate from Germany to go exclusively to Palestine and not to other countries. A measure such as this is certainly in the German interest ...” (TRP p63).

Nicosia concludes, with the benefit of hindsight, that, since the Jews were doomed, the emigration of some 53,000 German Jews to Palestine justified the Zionists’ role.

With the exception of 1939, in no year had German Jews, or those from the Greater Reich, formed a majority of Palestinian immigrants (ZANG p270). Between 1933 and 1935 over 6,000 immigration certificates went to American, British, Turkish and other Jews who were in no danger.³¹ Of the more than a quarter million Jews from greater Germany who escaped between the beginning of 1938 and September 1939, less than 40,000 went to Palestine (ZANG p274). Yet the German Zionists had sought to block escape to any other country, despite the admission of Arthur Ruppin that Palestine was unable to absorb more than a thousand families.³² Between 1933 and 1941, of the more than half a million Jews who managed to escape from greater Germany, some 16% went to Palestine (ZANG p283). The irrelevance of Zionism is best understood when one considers that between 750,000 and 1.5 million Jews are believed to have survived the Nazi holocaust in the Ukraine and Poland by

fleeing into Russia.³³

In 1937 trade between Palestine and Germany peaked at over 31 million RM, yet the number of Jews migrating from Germany was at an all-time low of 3,700 (TRP pp212-13). The influence of Haavara on the number of immigrants was marginal, but its benefits for the Zionist economy were immense. Conversely, the number of German Jewish immigrants to Palestine increased sharply in 1938 and 1939, yet the amount of Jewish capital transferred to Palestine via Haavara decreased considerably (note 109 TRP p262).

Nicosia confirms that Zionism was a movement of collaboration. It sought to gain maximal sectarian advantage for its own project, regardless of the effect on Germany’s Jews. In Poland, where over three million Jews lived, they had largely abandoned Zionism, which “was furnishing weapons to the anti-Semites by its theories of the objective necessity of Jewish emigration.”³⁴ As Isaac Deutscher observed, “... the most fanatical enemies of Zionism were precisely the workers, those who spoke Yiddish ... To them anti-Semitism seemed to triumph in Zionism, which recognised the legitimacy and the validity of the old cry, ‘Jews get out!’ The Zionists were agreeing to get out.”³⁵

Nicosia’s books contain much useful and interesting information. However, his analysis of what he has found has been subordinated to his Zionist politics ●

Notes

1. ‘Israel finance minister: Goldstone is “anti-Semite”’: www.thejewishweek.com/viewArticle/c40_a16771/News/Israel.html.
2. B Morris *Birth of the Palestinian refugee problem* Cambridge 1987.
3. I Pappé *The ethnic cleansing of Palestine* Oxford 2006.
4. Even the name of Yad Vashem betrays its ideological foundations. It was a failure to write the history of the Nazi extermination from a Zionist viewpoint that led to its refusal to publish Raul Hilberg’s *Destruction of the European Jews* (1961), the most authoritative account of the Nazi extermination. Hilberg’s crime was that he did not focus on resistance, but instead described the machinery of murder and relied on the German documents and archives. As the late professor Israel Shahak, a childhood survivor of Belsen and the Warsaw Ghetto wrote, “Of the Yad Vashem ... theatre, I do not wish to speak at all. It, and its vile exploits, such as honouring South Africa collaborators with the Nazis [the visit of John Vorster to Israel - TG] are truly beneath contempt.” (*Kol Ha’ir* May 19 1989).
5. For English translation see www.vho.org/aaargh/fra/nlvres4/Beitzvi.pdf.
6. E Black *The transfer agreement* London 1984.
7. London 1983.
8. See also L Brenner *Zionism in the age of the dictators* London 1983, pp18-26.
9. T Segev *The seventh million* New York 1993, p19.
10. A Morris-Reich, ‘Arthur Ruppin’s concept of race’ *Israel Studies* 11.3, p2.
11. D Stewart *Theodor Herzl - artist and politician* p251, New York 1974.
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*
14. A Hertzberg *The Zionist idea*, New York 1981, pp120-21.
15. M Hess *Rome and Jerusalem* New York 1958, p10.
16. *Ibid.*
17. N Weinstock *Zionism: a false messiah* London 1979, p135.
18. A Hitler *Mein Kampf* London 1942, p41.
19. *Ibid* p363.
20. J Boas, ‘A Nazi travels to Palestine’ *History Today* January 1980, p35.
21. *Ibid* p37.
22. E Black *The transfer agreement* London 1984, citing the *New York Times*.
23. *Ibid* p372.
24. *Ibid* p36.
25. *Ibid* p34.
26. D Rosenthal, ‘Chaim Arlosoroff 65 years after his assassination’ *Jewish Frontier* May-June 1998, p28.
27. L Dawidowicz *War against the Jews* London 1975, pp118-19.
28. See Raul Hilberg *Destruction of the European Jews* Vol 1, London 2003, pp68-69.
29. See also M Machover, M Offenberg, ‘Zionism and its scarecrows’ *Khamsin* 6, 1968, p38.
30. ‘Zionism under the Nazi government’ *The New Palestine* September 17 1973; cited in L Brenner *51 documents: Zionist collaboration with the Nazis* p101, New Jersey 2002.
31. L Brenner *Zionism in the age of the dictators* London 1983, p145.
32. E Black *The transfer agreement* London 1984, p306.
33. See G Reitlinger, *The final solution* New York 1953.
34. A Leon *The Jewish question - a Marxist interpretation* New York 1950, p255.
35. I Deutscher ‘The non-Jewish Jew’ and other essays Oxford 1968, pp66-67.

REVIEW

Uncanny detective story

China Miéville *The city and the city* London 2009, pp312, £17.99

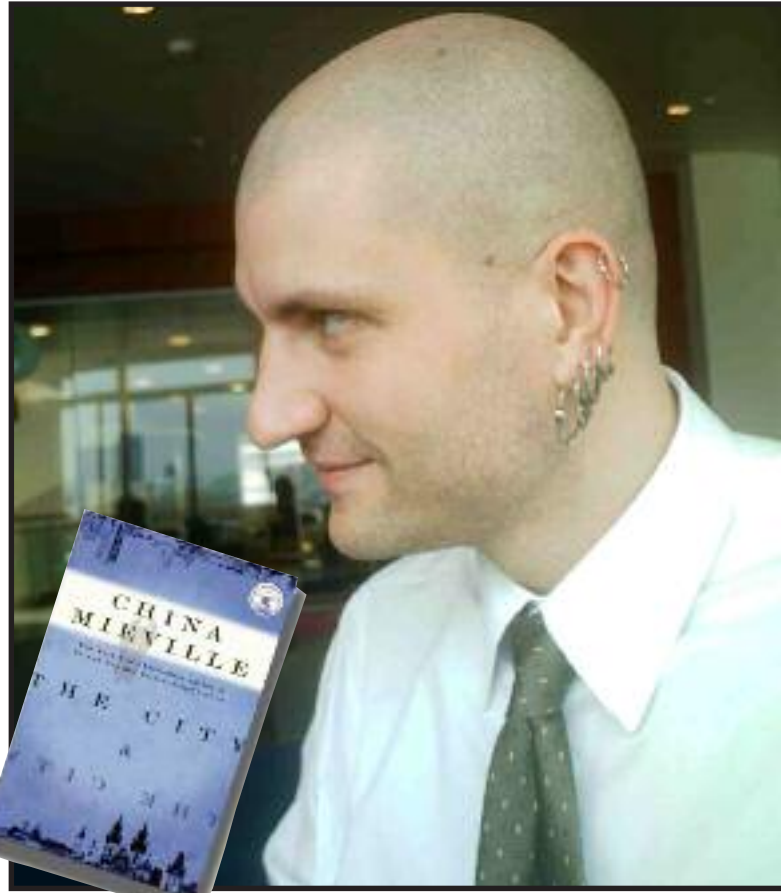
China Miéville is one of the foremost writers in contemporary genre fiction. He is somewhat unique in that, unlike many others, his crossover success has not involved disavowing the generic in favour of the more conventionally 'literary' - on the contrary, he is perhaps genre fiction's most articulate exponent. He is also a member of the Socialist Workers Party, a modestly significant organisation of Trotskyist extraction, and well-versed in Marxist theory.

His breakthrough novels - *Perdido Street station* (2000), *The scar* (2002) and *Iron council* (2004) - are all stand-alone stories set in the same secondary world, Bas-Lag. This world is unabashedly revisionist with regard to its antecedents in fantasy literature - the metropolis at its narrative centre, New Crobuzon, is ripe with oppression and exploitation, and simmers with racial tensions; the periphery is home to monstrous and incomprehensible horrors picking up on Lovecraft and Clive Barker, as well as unlikely and properly fantastic social spaces.

On one axis, then, the novels represent an antithesis to the Toryish inclinations of a Tolkien or Robert Jordan - unsurprisingly, given the author's plebeian sympathies, Middle Earth it ain't. Yet on the level of narrative, Miéville is almost conventional. For him, the total 'surrender to spectacle' has ruined science fiction and fantasy films; the consequent denigration of narrative is actually an attempt to delete the traces of history on the film. The Bas-Lag novels are densely plotted; they borrow everything from fantasy quest-narratives to western set pieces. They are unashamedly (and, in a period with more than enough contrived pastiche novels, unironically) historical.

Miéville's latest book is *The city and the city* - his second since parking Bas-Lag with *Iron council*. It, too, is unabashedly a genre novel, as is obvious from the opening, in which the narrator relates his arrival at a crime scene. A young woman has been murdered, and the core of the plot is in the whodunit mould. The narrator is Tyador Borlú, a literate and deadpan police inspector clearly indebted to the *noir* gumshoe - he lives in an eastern European city-state, Beszel, which happens to occupy the exact same location as a second city, Ul-Qoma. Some areas are entirely in one city or the other; others are in both, called "crosshatched", and still others are in neither. Citizens of one city are trained and expected to carefully ignore those of the other. Violations of this code are punished harshly by an enigmatic apparatus called Breach. The murder soon appears to have been committed in Ul-Qoma - yet someone is obviously keen to stop the case being handed over to Breach, and so Borlú has to cross the border to solve the crime.

Miéville has apparently strayed far from his previous work - but many of the most interesting aspects of the book are contiguous with the rest of his oeuvre. Perhaps the central category to Miéville's reflections on fantasy and science fiction is 'the uncanny', a concept first elaborated in this sense by Sigmund Freud (following cues from an earlier psychologist, Ernst Jentsch). The German word he uses - *unheimlich* - literally translates as 'unhomely' or 'unfamiliar', and is a simple negation of *heimlich* (homely). The latter, however, has two major related meanings in German - firstly the conventional one, denoting familiarity, comfort, safety and the rest; and secondly, denoting something hid-



China Miéville: probably his best

den away, secret, suspicious. Freud uses this quirk of German to describe experiences in which a phenomenon is both familiar and unfamiliar, and the emergence of the terrifying unknown out of the mundane.¹

The relevance of this category has to be particularly emphasised in the case of 'pure' secondary-world novels, of the Bas-Lag type. It is often assumed that, as opposed to mainstream literary fiction as well as science fiction, fantasy novels are the work of 'pure' imagination - the realist mode of writing implies reference to the world outside the text, and science fiction implies an extrapolation from the really existing universe, but fantasy is simply 'made up'. Concomitant with this prejudice is the widely held view that fantasy is simply inferior, a canon of mere 'escapism', or a 'literature of mystification'. Yet it is not true on either side.

In the first place, fantasy novels do not and cannot oppose themselves completely to the real world - if they did, they would simply be unintelligible to any imaginable readership, whose points of reference are necessarily from the 'outside'. However bizarre the secondary world, there are invariably large communities of fairly ordinary humans in it. The fantasy effect is a product of the opposition between the familiar and the alien, dramatised within the text itself. Conversely, the science in most science fiction is precisely fictional, no more compatible with our universe than elves and unicorns; and the narrative spaces of contemporary literary fiction are overwhelmingly focused on an abstracted middle class milieu (the literary and SF author Iain Banks calls such works "Hampstead novels"), whose partiality excludes any real correspondence with social reality. The distinction between the three is not some kind of epistemological privilege, but down to the complex interactions that produce different genres, establishing a series of codes through which this epistemological tension between narrative and history can be differently approached.

The category of 'the uncanny' is

narrative system is, as the cliché goes, 'streetwise' - he knows the clientele of every bar and the burgers in every drive-in. He instinctively understands and negotiates the murky dealings of the criminal underworld and police force (and, in the case of *The long goodbye*, the *haute bourgeoisie*). He is able to solve the mystery because he knows how the world 'really works' (a very different sort of knowledge to a Sherlock Holmes or Dupin, of course).

Tyador Borlú does not have an easy ride in this regard. Every casual hint at erudition (namedrops for Slavoj Žižek, dates with urbane historians), every cynical remark about Beszel's political class is undermined by the great chasm in his quotidian existence - Ul-Qoma, the city which he and all his compatriots are forbidden to notice. The detective is an observer (in Chandler and Hammett, the private eye). The obstacles to the resolution of the mystery amount to attempts by other agents in the narrative to *conceal* the traces of the crime, which must then be uncovered.

Borlú, however, and every other cop in Beszel, has another agent frustrating his quest - himself. One of the first visits to 'crosshatched' parts of the cities is typical of such encounters: "Most of those around us were in Beszel, so we saw them ... Of the exceptions, some we realised when we glanced were elsewhere, so unsaw" (p18). By an increasingly elaborate series of subconscious clues - particular shades of colour and designs of car - the citizens of each city are carefully trained to delete the traces of the other on sight. The obvious reference here is Michel Foucault, in particular his use of Bentham's Panopticon prison design as a figure for the internalised repression of contemporary society.⁴

Yet it is not that simple. Miéville insists on this 'deletion' - the very clunkiness of the neologism 'unsee' actually testifies to the incompleteness of the process, a dialectic in which the unseen appears as the shadow of the seen.⁵ The alien intrudes into the familiar. This flickering at the edges of the familiar is, of course, outdone in the most dramatic fashion when Borlú, inevitably, encounters Breach, in a passage worth quoting at length:

"Breach."

"Breach."

"I thought it was the shocked declaration by those who had witnessed the crime. But unclear figures emerged where there had been no purposeful motion instants before, only the milling of no-ones, the aimless and confused, and those suddenly appeared newcomers with faces so motionless

I hardly recognised them as faces were saying the word ... a grim-faced something gripped me so that there was no way I could break out had I wanted to. I glimpsed dark shapes draped over the body of the killer I had killed. A voice close to my ear. 'Breach.' A force shoving me effortlessly out of my place, fast, fast past candles of Beszel and the neon of Ul-Qoma, in directions that made sense in neither city" (pp237-38).

What I want to say about the uncanny-effect here is that it underwrites the political content of the novel. Miéville is at pains to distinguish his own view of 'political fiction' from the narrowly didactic. He argues, following the Hegelian tradition in Marxism, that "the lived reality of capitalism is commodity fetishism ... 'Real' life under capitalism is a fantasy".⁶ Beszel and Ul-Qoma are different cities as much as they are the same - Ul-Qoma appears to be the main beneficiary of western patronage, and is lit in the above passage in neon in contrast to Beszel's candles. It is Breach which organises the internal and external antagonisms of two societies such that their interactions can be controlled and diffused through labyrinthine official political and bureaucratic structures - it makes the ridiculous seem 'natural'. Breach is obviously a repressive apparatus within the narrative - but the use of the uncanny register gives it metaphorical resonance in terms of the ideological (whether we conceive of this as fetishism or something else).

I have treated this work as a 'test specimen' from the point of view of Marxist literary theory - yet I feel obliged to indicate *The city and the city* is probably Miéville's best book yet. Its combination of different generic tropes is subtle, and never tips into pastiche - in this respect it is comparable to the excellent 2006 neo-noir film *Brick*, which spliced the gumshoe narrative into an affluent American high school in similar fashion. It is certainly worth a read for any Marxist as an imaginative approach to politically engaged fiction. ●

James Turley

Notes

1. See A Dickson (ed), 'The uncanny' *Art and Literature* London 1985, pp342-47.
2. In R Chandler *The big sleep and other novels* London 2000, p369.
3. *Ibid* p375.
4. See C Gordon (ed), 'The eye of power' *Power/Knowledge* New York 1980.
5. It is also worth noting that substantial parts of Freud's essay on the uncanny are dedicated to a reading of 'The sandman' by ETA Hoffman, which places special stress on mutilation of the eyes as an analogue for castration: *op cit* pp348-55.
6. 'Editorial introduction' *Historical Materialism* 10.4, pp41-42.

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ETON

Culture fit for a ruling class

Mark Fischer describes the experience of addressing the students of Britain's most renowned public school



Training the ruling class: left can learn

I was told by members of the George Orwell Politics Society in Eton college that they had read some criticism on the web of the last Marxist who came to speak to them. Alan Woods of Socialist Appeal was apparently taken to task by some left lard-heads for 'consorting with the enemy' after he spoke to these scions of the British establishment.

Indeed, I have had some Trot friends and acquaintances come over a little sniffy when I have mentioned that on October 13 - at the invitation of the aforementioned

society - I spoke to a packed house in Eton college on the subject of 'Why you should be a Marxist'.

I will not go into the details of what I actually said - other than the fact that I assured the audience that the whole point of Marxists' identification with the working class was its universalism. We are not out for petty class revenge on members of the present-day ruling elite, still less their children. The Marxist project was one for general human liberation - including, I assured him, for the likes of Lord William Walde-

grave of North Hill (former army major, government minister under Margaret Thatcher and now provost of Eton), who sat in the front row and whom I spotted once or twice smiling and nodding at something I had said. Disconcertingly.

I must say something about the culture I encountered in this august institution. In a conversation with Mr Waldegrave before the meeting, he commented that one of the joys of the job was to be daily surrounded by these bright, charming and inquisitive young people - a sentiment I could readily empathise with by the end of the evening. The question and answer session that followed my opening was one of the liveliest and most challenging I have faced for years. A small forest hands went up when I had stopped speaking and, even at the post-discussion drinks, I had to field questions about the utopian socialists, classical English political economy and the labour theory of value, the nature of New Labour and so on. Frankly, I was knackered by the time I ran for the final train back to Waterloo.

However, I want to make a broader point about culture (and certainly broader than the punk workerism that leads some otherwise good comrades to talk about communism to potential future members of the ruling elite). It is this. Comrades from around the country report that the Socialist Workers Party's turn to rebuilding its dramatically depleted organisation has produced a corresponding rise in the hostility levels its members radiate towards others on the left. Its youth in particular are again being instilled with the notion that 'Bolshevik' hardness demands a refusal to engage with ideas of other Marxist trends in the movement, even to pretend that their members do not actually exist - as if we are invisible and inhabit a different physical universe.

The contrast could not be more stark, unfortunately. Whatever my own limitations as a speaker or politician, the ideas of Marx himself are the most trenchant, wide-ranging and inspiring critique of the very system many of these Eton lads are earmarked to be running one day. Their teachers and the college authorities want these young men to be *au fait* with that dangerously subversive alternative. So they allow a Marxist to speak to their charges and - more importantly - to direct them to the writings of Marx himself.

They try to inculcate a culture of a politically sophisticated *ruling class*, in other words. A class that is accustomed to thinking in terms of centuries and continents, a ruling layer that has an understanding (on some level, at least) of the alternatives to that rule.

Much of the left, on the other hand, are determined to inculcate narrowness in their members, a surly refusal to think and engage as an expression of organisational loyalty. Implicit in this is an attitude to these rank and file members and, beyond them, to the wider class itself. *Contempt*, to be specific. From their practice in the here and now, the leaderships of the sects clearly have no real vision of the working class as a politically erudite ruling class, able to master all questions of high politics and theory. Not a chance.

We have a long way to go, comrades ●

Fighting fund

Keep you posted!

The success of the last few months' fighting funds looks set to continue in November. I can announce a brilliant start, with no less than £387 already in the kitty.

Of course, a good slice of this takes the form of start-of-the-month standing order donations (17 of them, totalling £262, in fact). But there will be rather less of those for the next few weeks. In addition I've just received TR's usual monthly £60 cheque - it's so regular (even with the postal strikes) that it's as good as a standing order.

Finally, we got four handy contributions via our website - £20 each from JS and PJ, £15 added to his subscription to the paper from MZ, plus a tenner from MP. PJ tells me: "I've been meaning to make this donation for a while, but have been at the mercy of the capitalists." I know the feeling, comrade. For his part, JS specifies that his is a "donation towards the new hardware". I'll be down

PC World over the weekend, comrade.

Further good news comes with another increase in our internet readership - we had 16,249 visitors last week. This figure has been increasing steadily since our old website was hit early in the year, but, with the new site gradually being filled out, more and more web readers are now returning.

Most of our archives will be back up hopefully within the next week or so, but unfortunately there is a period of about 18 months that will be missing at first. Their restoration will require a period of 'grunt work' from a team of comrades.

Perhaps I shouldn't say this during the current CWU dispute, but I'll keep you posted! ●

Robbie Rix

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What we fight for

■ Our central aim is the organisation of communists, revolutionary socialists and all politically advanced workers into a Communist Party. Without organisation the working class is nothing with the highest form of organisation it is everything.

■ The Provisional Central Committee organises members of the Communist Party, but there exists no real Communist Party today. There are many so-called 'parties' on the left. In reality they are confessional sects. Members who disagree with the prescribed 'line' are expected to gag themselves in public. Either that or face expulsion.

■ Communists operate according to the principles of democratic centralism. Through ongoing debate we seek to achieve unity in action and a common world outlook. As long as they support agreed actions, members have the right to speak openly and form temporary or permanent factions.

■ Communists oppose the US-UK occupation of Iraq and stand against all imperialist wars but constantly strive to bring to the fore the fundamental question - ending war is bound up with ending capitalism.

■ Communists are internationalists. Everywhere we strive for the closest unity and agreement of working class and progressive parties of all countries. We oppose every manifestation of national sectionalism. It is an internationalist duty to uphold the principle, 'One state, one party'. To the extent that the European Union becomes a state then that necessitates EU-wide trade unions and a Communist Party of the EU.

■ The working class must be organised globally. Without a global Communist Party, a Communist International, the struggle against capital is weakened and lacks coordination.

■ Communists have no interest apart from the working class as a whole. They differ only in recognising the importance of Marxism as a guide to practice. That theory is no dogma, but must be constantly added to and enriched.

■ Capitalism in its ceaseless search for profit puts the future of humanity at risk. Capitalism is synonymous with war, pollution, exploitation and crisis. As a global system capitalism can only be superseded globally. All forms of nationalist socialism are reactionary and anti-working class.

■ The capitalist class will never willingly allow their wealth and power to be taken away by a parliamentary vote. They will resist using every means at their disposal. Communists favour using parliament and winning the biggest possible working class representation. But workers must be ready to make revolution - peacefully if we can, forcibly if we must.

■ Communists fight for extreme democracy in all spheres of society. Democracy must be given a social content.

■ We will use the most militant methods objective circumstances allow to achieve a federal republic of England, Scotland and Wales, a united, federal Ireland and a United States of Europe.

■ Communists favour industrial unions. Bureaucracy and class compromise must be fought and the trade unions transformed into schools for communism.

■ Communists are champions of the oppressed. Women's oppression, combating racism and chauvinism, and the struggle for peace and ecological sustainability are just as much working class questions as pay, trade union rights and demands for high-quality health, housing and education.

■ Socialism represents victory in the battle for democracy. It is the rule of the working class. Socialism is either democratic or, as with Stalin's Soviet Union, it turns into its opposite.

■ Socialism is the first stage of the worldwide transition to communism - a system which knows neither wars, exploitation, money, classes, states nor nations. Communism is general freedom and the real beginning of human history.

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weekly Worker

No end to economic crisis

Whatever happened to those green shoots?

Once again, says **James Turley**, it has not been a good couple of weeks for Alastair Darling and Gordon Brown

On October 23, to widespread surprise and consternation among the British ruling class, the first figures for third-quarter GDP growth were released by the office for national statistics. Expectations were high that the UK had pulled out of recession; however, GDP shrank between July and September by 0.4%. This is the sixth successive quarter of recession, making it the longest since records began (records beginning, in this case, in the 1950s).¹

Meanwhile the US announced figures that confirmed its own period of recession was over - for the time being.² Gordon Brown's claim that Britain was "better placed" to weather the global crisis now looks remarkable ill-advised, as it is the only imperialist power still in recession - at least according to official statistics.

Of course, those US figures are not all peaches and cream either: it is widely believed that GDP and consumer spending numbers have been artificially inflated by well-targeted government initiatives, notably the car-scrap scheme that subsidises the purchase of new vehicles. On the same day, it was revealed that consumer spending had actually fallen by 0.5% in September (the car scrap scheme ended in August), boding ill for the important Christmas period - a trend likely to be exacerbated by a continuing rise in unemployment, now at around 9.9% in the States. Stock markets were shaken by the news, particularly in France and Germany, where there were one-day losses of around 3% on the Cac40 and Dax stock indexes.³

The FTSE 100 got off relatively lightly, with a 1.8% drop, but it was again under fire on November 2. The context this time was the announcement in parliament of the immediate future of Lloyds TSB and Royal Bank of Scotland, both currently part-nationalised. Significant parts of both are to be sold off. This is likely to hit RBS hardest, as it could well lose several profitable insurance companies. The government was touting it as a way to get money back for the taxpayer - until it turned out that another £29-37 billion is to be pumped into the ailing institutions.

The not so hidden hand here is the European Union - its various rules regarding the financial sector and anti-trust regulations demand that significant restructuring be imposed on banks in receipt of large-scale public investment. At the bottom of the food-chain, 900 branches are to be sold off - equivalent to 10% of the country's high-street banking outlets. The union Unite warned that 25,000 jobs could be at risk. *The Guardian* specifically blames EU competition commissioner Neelie Kroes, an "activist official" intent on meddling in the rescue package

es⁴ - but the truth is that it maps onto an older division between the continental European powers and the Anglo-American alliance, a division which has surfaced repeatedly during this crisis.

Coupled to this is something in the way of an attack on bonuses. Lloyds and RBS are now prohibited from awarding cash bonuses to anyone on a salary over £39,000, with 'moral pressure' being applied to other banks to match that commitment. If the government can sell it right, this prohibition may yet reflect well on them - not only is it an attack on the 'fat cat' bankers so abhorred by seemingly everyone apart from their good selves: it also makes a show of ring-fencing the lower-paid retail employees' £2,000 Christmas cash injection. It is slightly undermined, however, by the fact that many of these workers are likely to be made redundant in any case in the branch sell-offs; and in the absence of any serious attempt to enforce some kind of bonus moratorium on the banking sector as a whole, 'moral pressure' is worse than useless, and simply amounts to open season for HSBC and the rest to poach any Lloyds/RBS staff they want.

From a naive point of view, it is simply astonishing that the government is so timid on bonuses. Labour is in a real mess, after all, badly trailing the Tories in poll after poll - and bashing bankers is easy money, politically speaking. The problem is that big bonuses are not simply a ludicrous extravagance on the part of a narcissistic financial sector. They amount to an immense recycling operation: finance capital tends to hypertrophy periodically, producing a great volume of fictitious money values. By paying

out billions in bonuses, investment banks can count on much of that going back into stocks and financial products; the rest is absorbed safely in luxury commodities. Capital, even fictitious capital, only functions in motion.

We are not, of course, now in boom times; yet the truth is that the rescue packages of the major imperialist countries have had the principal effect of suspending the 'natural' tendency for all this fictitious capital simply to be wiped out - understandably, given the social chaos this typically unleashes. It is still the case that an awful lot of derivatives are changing hands, making money that does not really exist - it is still the case that this money needs to go *somewhere*.

Seriously to tackle the 'bonus culture', then, requires bourgeois politics to commit itself to far more radical re-organisations of the economy - not just a reactive flip into rescue packages, but a full reorientation away from the various neoliberal models of capitalism to something like Keynesianism. Whether this is possible in the current conjuncture is another matter, and in the last analysis a *political* question - but hitting bonuses across the sector is apt to trigger a domino effect that would preclude, for a start, any reprivatisation of RBS and Lloyds for many years.

Some ideas about more lasting changes to high finance are knocking around - most prominently the arguments for reviving some form of the Glass-Steagall Act, a New Deal-era American law, still in force until its repeal under Clinton, that forbade any business to operate both as a retail and an investment bank. The context of its enactment first time round was the great depression, in

which waves of bank failures wiped out the savings of millions, which had been invested into dodgy stocks. The Glass-Steagall Act played the role of partially ring-fencing the assets of private citizens from the predatory stock market.

It should not be imagined that this is some kind of panacea, however. Glass-Steagall did not prevent the stock market crash of 1987, for instance, and did not prevent its effects filtering out of the high-finance ziggurat into society at large. The first seven years of Reaganomics had done more than enough to make its strictures a dead letter.

And the broader political omens are not good. We know that, in Britain, all the main parties tout the notion that the huge public debt is a problem that needs to be solved *immediately* by cutting public expenditure; the Tories cut the most threatening figure in the axe-wielding stakes, but Labour and the Liberal Democrats have also done their share of hand-wringing over the issue. Taken completely seriously, this amounts to the Hoover response to 1929 - ie, knuckle down and wait for business to 'sort itself out'.

Yet it is unlikely that significant support can be withdrawn from the banks in the immediate future; this accounts for a much larger proportion of the public debt than can be recouped from the cuts to public services we are currently seeing and are being proposed. The potential revenues from carving up Lloyds and RBS are, as we have seen, cancelled out by another cash injection. There is also the small matter of a rather resource-hungry military engagement in Afghanistan.

The consequences are double-edged - on the one hand, the suicidal

character of retreating from certain aspects of massive public investment makes a new 1929-type crash somewhat less likely. On the other hand, public service cuts will hit tax takings for as much as they save, and will dent consumer spending power. Many more will be thrown out of work. Any 'recovery' under these circumstances will be faltering.

The necessary political background to this is the absence of any kind of working class political formation capable of forcing significant concessions - a power that comes with taking on the basic tasks of class organisation. In Britain the Labour Party has intermittently played this role, and the 'official' Communist Party did so more consistently until its slow suicide was formally concluded in 1991. The rise of labour bureaucratic politics as a necessary 'corrective' in the functioning of capitalism was one of the earliest features of capitalist decline. The marginalisation of this aspect of bourgeois politics, however, has not produced some kind of return to rude capitalist health - rather it amounts to a further stage in that decay.

It is the duty of the workers' movement to break from the defunct politics of Labourism, and organise to overthrow the system rather than tweak it with banking regulations. In the meantime, the present course of bourgeois politics will leave us with no shortage of work simply in organising and supporting defensive struggles ●

Notes

1. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8321970.stm>.
2. *The Independent* October 30.
3. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/8334930.stm>.
4. *The Guardian* November 4.

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