

## ConDems decimate the Welfare State



The British Medical Journal:

“On 1 April 2013 the regulations are coming into place to show that everything has to be put out to competitive markets by CCGs [clinical commissioning groups] and the national commissioning board. That will create rights for private providers to supply which will not only allow them to take quite a lot of the share of the NHS budget for their business right now, it also potentially makes the privatisation irreversible in the future.”

The three main “reforms” introduced in April are:

- The replacement of council tax benefit by council tax support, estimated to cost 2.4 million families in England an average of £2.60 per week. The coalition says the council tax benefit bill rose by 50% under the last government.
- An under-occupation penalty (bedroom tax) is expected to cost 660,000 families an average of £14 per week. The government says 1.8 million people are on council house waiting lists.
- An overall household benefit cap, set at £500 for a family with children, is expected to affect 56,000 households with an average cut of £93 per week.

# Socialist Fight Where We Stand

Socialist Fight is a member of the Liaison Committee for the Fourth International with the Liga Comunista of Brazil and the Tendencia Militante Bolchevique of Argentina.

The Editorial Board is:

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

These are just 8 of the 26 points of the political programme of the Socialist Fight Group which can be found here:

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/120298542/Socialist-Fight-Where-We-Stand>

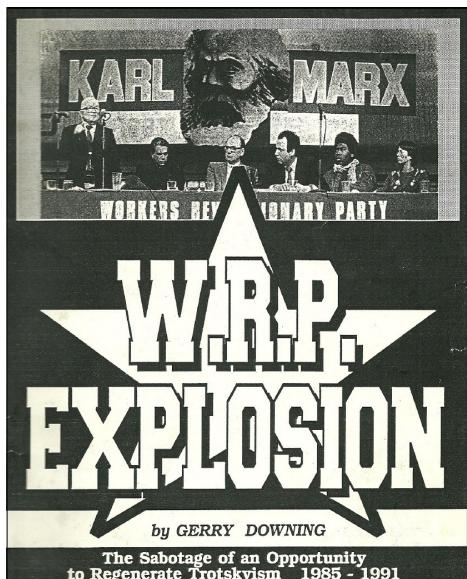
Gerry Downing has resigned from the EB of SF. He has been replaced by Tony Fox

1. WE STAND WITH KARL MARX: 'The emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves. The struggle for the emancipation of the working class means not a struggle for class privileges and monopolies but for equal rights and duties and the abolition of all class rule' (The International Working-men's Association 1864, General Rules).
2. The capitalist state consists, in the last analysis of ruling-class laws within a judicial system and detention centres overseen by the armed bodies of police/army who are under the direction and are controlled in acts of defence of capitalist property rights against the interests of the majority of civil society. The working class must overthrow the capitalist state and replace it with a workers' state based on democratic soviets/workers' councils to suppress the inevitable counter-revolution of private capitalist profit against planned production for the satisfaction of socialised human need.
3. We recognise the necessity for revolutionaries to carry out serious ideological and political struggle as direct participants in the trade unions (always) and in the mass reformist social democratic bourgeois workers' parties despite their pro-capitalist leaderships when conditions are favourable. Because we see the trade union bureaucracy and their allies in the Labour party leadership as the most fundamental obstacle to the struggle for power of the working class, outside of the state forces and their direct agencies themselves, we must fight and defeat and replace them with a revolutionary leadership by mobilising the base against the pro-capitalist bureaucratic misleaders to open the way forward for the struggle for workers' power.
4. We are full in support of all mass mobilisations against the onslaught of this reactionary Con-Lib Dem coalition. However, whilst participating in this struggle we will oppose all policies which subordinate the working class to the political agenda of the petty-bourgeois reformist leaders of the Labour party and trade unions
5. We support the fight of all the specially oppressed; Black and Asians, women, lesbians and gay men, bisexuals and transgender people against discrimination in all its forms and their right to organise separately in that fight in society as a whole. In particular we defend their right to caucus inside trade unions and in working class political parties.
6. We recognise that class society, and capitalism as the last form of class society, is by its nature patriarchal. In that sense the oppression of women is different from all other forms of oppression and discrimination. Because this social oppression is inextricably tied to private property and its inheritance to achieve full sexual, social and economic freedom and equality for all we need to overthrow class society itself.
7. We fight racism and fascism. We support the right of people to fight back against racist and fascist attacks by any means necessary. Self-defence is no offence! We support 'No Platform' for all fascists but never call on the capitalist state to ban fascist marches or parties; these laws would inevitably primarily be used against workers' organisations, as history has shown.
8. We oppose all immigration controls. International finance capital roams the planet in search of profit and Imperialist governments disrupts the lives of workers and cause the collapse of whole nations with their direct intervention in the Balkans, Iraq and Afghanistan and their proxy wars in Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, etc. Workers have the right to sell their labour internationally wherever they get the best price. Only union membership and pay rates can counter employers who seek to exploit immigrant workers as cheap labour to undermine the gains of past struggles.

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

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This is the only comprehensive political assessment of the WRP/Workers Press section of the 1985 WRP split. It may be of use to those in the SWP contemplating a similar Explosion. If there is one lesson I learned from all that it is that most existing leaders will have long since lost the spark of revolution from their political souls and almost none will be serious about regenerating the group politically. You must learn to do that yourself.

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/88358031/WRP-Explosion-By-Gerry-Downing>

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



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# Jim Kelly, Andy Newman and Sean McGovern witchhunt the Left in Unite By Gerry Downing



This is a shockingly reactionary witch hunting series of postings, attacking Jerry Hicks, the SWP and Chris Ford. But the attack on Gerry Downing is by far the worst. Sean McGovern denies Brianthedog is Jim Kelly but there really is no doubt he is. He could try suing the Socialist Fight to protect his anonymity! [1]

**Note: the names on top of some posts are quotes from previous posts. The poster is beneath each post.**

31. "Unite is a general workers' union, where many of our members earn anything from around £25,000 to £60,000+ for senior grades in some sectors"

OK, so a small minority of members might earn over £26,000 (and how many of them will be working many hours of overtime or working very unsocial hours to get this sort of money), but far more will be like me- I'm a bus driver working for the UKs largest bus operator and I earn just less than £18000. And when I talk to my workmates about the GS wage they are astounded and shocked - its just wrong and to argue that just because the job involves a lot of responsibility the pay should be enormous, is no different to the argument used by bankers, company directors, etc.

Posted by *Four Goals* [16 March](#).

**Andy Newman follows up the witchhunt on Jerry Hicks, the SWP and Chris Ford by launching the following vile witchhunt on Gerry Downing:**

61. **Brianthedog:** The rape scandal SWP and Chris Ford- Don't forget Gerry Downing's support. Recently pursued for libel by UNITE official Wayne King (I find that name hard to believe too, what were his parent thinking?), and then I understand recently sacked from his job on the buses for verbally abusing a passenger travelling with a mentally distressed child.

It is the fucking A team

Posted by [Andy Newman](#) [18 March, 2013 at 10:09 pm](#)

65. **Andy Newman:** Don't forget Gerry Downing's support. Recently pursued for libel by UNITE official Wayne King (I find that name hard to believe too, what were his parent thinking?), and then I understand recently sacked from his job on the buses for verbally abusing a passenger travelling with a mentally distressed child.

It is the fucking A team

Libel? It is an anti-free speech law for the rich! Also, judge and jury on Gerry Downing, kicking people when they're down, says a lot about you. Instinctively side with the manager/privileged class, says a lot about your class loyalties.

Posted by *Darren Cahil*

67. #65 Calling for a trade unionist to be sacked whilst knowingly spreading all over the place nasty lies (HR at a logistics company unrelated to Downing even reprinted his lies and spread them around the workplace during a dispute in an effort to undermine the members and Mr King) that you know will severely damage their reputation, career and cause grievous upset to them, their family and their union is not the preserve of the rich it's the preserve of a coward and someone who thinks they are accountable to no one. It's just the characteristics you do not need for a trade union but no wonder Downing is Hick's right hand man.

Mr Cahill can stay in the cesspit and try and defend this filth but we would rather not.

Posted by *Brianthedog*

68. **Darren Cahil:** Libel? It is an anti-free speech law for the rich! Also, judge and jury on Gerry Downing, kicking people when they're down, says a lot about you. Instinctively side with the manager/privileged class, says a lot about your class loyalties.

What about siding with people with mental illness, or does a working class hero like Downing trump a disabled person from our class?

69. #68 ..... Or calling for a decent working class

trade unionist to be sacked on the basis of a complete pack of lies – its f\*\*king vile.

I know where my class loyalties are its Mr Cahil who is confused here but he can carry on supporting and defending the deceitful liar that is Downing.

Posted by *Brianthedog*

### **Having condemned Gerry Downing out of hand, Andy now is forced to examine the evidence and he half backtracks**

89. [Andy Newman](#): I don't think we lack evidence, given that Gerry Downing has effectively conceded the facts of the case in his own press statement.

Do you have a link?

Posted by *Vanya*

*Gerry Downing's press release on his sacking is posted: [2]*

105. [Manzil](#): doesn't appear to show this Downing bloke having conceded that he'd been abusive. He quotes himself as "confronting" a passenger.

It is a statement of undisputed fact that he was dismissed for being abusive to a passenger; and Mr Downing accepts that he "confronted" that same passenger, and discusses how stressed he was.

Substantially therefore, the facts of the case were not really in dispute; had I been representing Mr Downing, then I would have argued that the situation was outside the normal parameters that a driver is expected to deal with, and that the particular stressful circumstances that he had in his private life should be taken in mitigation; I would argue that it was an unfortunate coincidence of exceptional circumstances that are unlikely to reoccur, and that are not relevant to the driver's ability to do the job in more normal or reasonably foreseeable circumstances. As such dismissal would be disproportionate.

For what it is worth, I think from Mr Downing's account the decision to sack him was harsh, given the stressfulness of the situation recounted, and his own personal circumstances at the time. However, it would also seem to be within the reasonable range of responses in such a situation that an employer might lawfully take.

There is always the problem for militant shop stewards that if the give management a pretext to sack them, then sacked they will be.

Posted by [Andy Newman](#)

### **Sean McGovern backtrack fully also having seen Jim Kelly is a liar:**

110. #108 If, as I suspect it is, concerns about child protection are an issue in this case, it is not wise for comrades to suggest management were right to discipline GD. Child protection is the responsibility of everyone in relation to their job roles – not just the professionals. Are bus drivers given any training? Are there any company policies which

cover potential child protection situations?

I guess we will have to wait for the evidence brought out at the appeal.

Posted by *Lurker*

### **113. #100**

Thanks for putting this piece up. Gerry Downing's actions and his concern for the child's wellbeing are laudable – whether or not he read the situation correctly he attempted to do the right thing. Travelling on public transport with children can be a fraught experience in itself. I suspect travelling with a child who has, possibly, severe mental health issues on a London bus must be difficult for all concerned.

Actions of carers of disabled people can be misconstrued. What we see as heavy handedness could indeed be the best way of dealing with a situation. Then again, it could be that the carer is using too much force.

These are difficult judgements to make at the best of times, and I would veer away from making them at the distance of space and time that the Internet offers.

Gerry isn't Mr Popular. But then, in the 15 years or so I've known him, he has never put himself forward to win any popularity competitions. But, if we're going to continue having a pop at him, let's leave the situation of his dismissal out of the scenario.

Posted by *BombasticSpastic*

### **The reactionary Jim Kelly is unrepentant even after his lying scam is exposed:**

#### **124. # 122**

I agree with you Andy that this is what the known liar Downing is insinuating and he should substantiate it or withdraw his statement. Unfortunately this kind of behaviour is a hallmark of Downing.

When you peel away the thin veneer of Trotskyism, Anti Good Friday armchair Irish Republicanism and faux trade union militant all you are left with is a very nasty and pathetic man.

"Well to make sure this is not more empty rhetoric from Mr Hicks he has two choices about his right hand man from his grassroots left group. Use his influence to immediately get Mr Downing to make a full and unequivocal apology to Mr King and also substantiate or withdraw his press release that his dismissal is politically motivated or publicly put out a statement distancing himself from Gerry Downing and call on him to resign as secretary of his group." Jerry Hicks and Gerry Downing we are still waiting and your silence is deafening (sic!).

Posted by *Brianthedog* [21 March, 2013 at 12:43 pm](#)

#### **Notes**

[1] <http://socialistunity.com/unite-gs-election-jerry-hicks-wrong-era-wrong-politics/#comments>

[2] <http://www.indymedia.ie/article/103413>

# Justice Deferred: a critical guide to the Coalition's employment tribunal reforms

Reprint from Morning Star 5 April 2013

By Adrian Weir, Assistant Chief of Staff, Unite The Enterprise And Regulatory Reform and the Growth And Infrastructure Bills, both currently near the end of their parliamentary passage, represent "the biggest change to employment law since the introduction of the right to claim unfair dismissal more than 40 years ago," say barristers David Renton and Anna Macey in this new booklet.

When elected in 2010 the government announced a parliament-long review of employment rights which was initially conducted by the disgraced Thatcher era peer Lord Young, who pronounced both on unfair dismissal and health and safety at work.

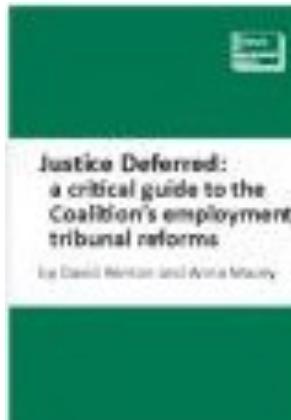
Thus far the review has mainly concentrated on weakening individual workers' rights at work and deregulating health and safety at work under the guise of the Lofstedt report.

Although there is strong pressure from the Tory right wing the coalition government has not, as yet, brought forward proposals on trade union law.

The overarching principle behind the employment rights review is to change the law and associated procedures so that employers may move to dismissal more quickly and that there will be less or no legal redress available to the worker.

In Mediterranean countries like Greece, Spain and Portugal that have been subject to an IMF/ECB/EU "bailout," employment law has been changed in a similar way as an integral part of the imposed package of structural adjustment. Britain seems to be the only country that is making these changes voluntarily.

Although originally dismissed as "bonkers" by Vince Cable's people what Renton and Macey show is how many of Adrian "Mr Wonga"



Beecroft's proposals have found their way onto the statute book.

These include an increase from one to two years in the qualifying period a worker must have been with an employer before being eligible to claim unfair dismissal at the tribunal.

And the introduction of fees to take your employer to the tribunal means that even if you have the two years' service you could have to pay up to £1,200 to have your case heard. The worker and employer representatives on the Tribunal panel have been dispensed with meaning our labour courts are now mainly presided over by a judge sitting alone.

These measures were only a taster as the authors show there is more of the same coming down the tracks, including a possible re-run of the disastrous statutory dispute resolution procedure and the abolition of the worker and employer representatives at employment appeal tribunals.

The unfair dismissal award will see the cap on compensatory damages massively reduced and while there are financial penalties for employers there is no enforcement mechanism and they are not linked to payment of damages to workers.

Compromise agreements are renamed "settlement agreements" and may be compensated "no-fault" dismissal by the back door.

There are proposals to repeal the statutory procedure for obtaining information to support discrimination proceedings and to abolish the requirement for equal pay audits if an employer loses an equal pay case at the tribunal.

With all of this and more to come, the key lesson of this timely booklet is that if you seek workplace justice, join a union because the law won't help.

## Construction Rank and File meeting Conway Hall

By Alan Hunter, 25/3/2013

This meeting was called to consider the issue of the sacking of FRANK MORRIS as Senior Steward at the Cross Rail site where there is evidence of 18 companies blacklisted and all the CONSULTING ASSOCIATIONS LIST OF BLACKLISTED EMPLOYERS.

Sharon Graham from the UNITE's Organising department presented a report on the campaign by Unite to target the Blacklisted listed in the Report. The report which is a leverage report on Crossrail -BFK. She explained that a campaign would be started to target Shareholders and contact all companies involved as a Crossrail BFK .

The objectives of the Leverage campaign would be to

- 1) Reinstatement of all Unite Activists sacked from the EIS Contract
- 2) Tangible enabling agreement for access to build member led organisation on Crossrail.
- 3) Use Crossrail Leverage to assist the Blacklist Support group campaign through increased exposure of 'Blacklist Companies' and individuals, together with the reemployment of Unite Activists.

In simple terms this means getting all Unite Members sacked or prevented from getting work and getting on the site.

Peter Farrell, a UCATT member and member of the Justice for Shrewsbury campaign asked what UCATT is doing, i.e. is there any involvement from the UCATT Leadership. Steve Kelly's response was "It is not for us to ask Steve Murphy UCATT General Secretary what he is doing". Kevin Williamson said it was vital that membership and union organisation was put back on the sites like Crossrail-BFK. We must put all our resources to ensure that Unite activists are back working on these sites.

Frank Morris speaking from the Platform said it is for the Unite Stewards to get their confidence back, if Blacklisters are on the site we have to get over this Hurdle. We have to get blacklisted activists back on the site.

John Sheridan a Unite EC Member said that we had to have a Leverage strategy that worked. Steve Atcheson a Unite Activist and a Blacklisted worker who recently won a court case over his own blacklisting said that Blacklisting was an organised attack on the working class and Labour movement, this is an attack on the whole Labour movement and we have to send the project down. Other speakers said we need direct action to get our members back on the site and what is the TUC doing about Blacklisting.

It was pointed out that this was different from BESNA. Sharon Graham explained that Unite had organised 101 organisers on this project alone and that from 15<sup>th</sup> April Direct Action would be organised around the Crossrail-BFK project.

Peter Farrell said it was important to target these sites and Polish workers are employed on these sites mainly as Building Labourers and we have to recruit them into the battle. Irish workers who are killed on these sites don't know what their rights are.

It is important to recognise that the two tier workforce is in action in Britain and Globally and that Skilled Electricians, Plasterers, pipe fitters and others need to unite with Building labourers who are normally in UCATT or not unionised at all, the separation between skilled workers and Labourers has to stop and there needs to be a joint campaign involving both UCATT and UNITE. We ignore this problem at our peril.

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

# MARIKANA MINERS SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN (UK)

## Campaigning Demands:

- (1) Set up and international non-State Inquiry into the massacre. This must establish what the State President knew about the planed shooting before it occurred. End harassment of witnesses to the current Inquiry
- (2) Sack the Minister for Police and the Commissioner for Police and the Prosecutor who brought the 'common purpose' charges.
- (3) Charge responsible senior police officer & minister with murder
- (4) Release all Jailed Miners and Drop All Charges
- (5) Justice and compensation for the families of those killed and injured
- (6) End Police Violence in South Africa. No more tear gas and rubber bullets for those who produce all the country's wealth.
- (7) Put LONMIN CEO on trial for theft of National Resources
- (8) Nationalise (without compensation/expropriate) the mines.

### Further Information:

Sign on-line petition at:

<http://www.ipetitions.com/my/account>

E-mail: [marikanaminerscampaig-nuk@gmail.com](mailto:marikanaminerscampaig-nuk@gmail.com)

Telephone:  
07850 415892 and 07597 078221

**SUPPORT THE PICKET AT SOUTH AFRICA  
HOUSE, LONDON – EVERY THURSDAY  
5-7PM**

On the 16<sup>th</sup> August 2012 miners at the Marikana Mine, Azania (South Africa) on strike for higher wages were corralled into a razor wired space, and armoured vehicles brought up. The South Afrikan police (SAPS) then fired on the miners, using live rounds from automatic pistols, powerful shotguns and assault rifles. 34 were killed instantly and 78 seriously injured: the death toll has since risen. There is evidence that many miners were shot in the back and on the ground. A police 'mopping-up' operation was carried out using horses and helicopter/s. Medical help was denied for one and half hours.

The rulers of South Afrika were teaching working people a lesson: that opposing the status quo – even by demanding higher wages – involves the risk of death. These murders confirm the ruling Alliance as a neo-colonial clique in league with and doing the brutal bidding of international capital.

The UK is a willing party to this massacre, given Britain's major long-term role in the shameless rip-off of Southern Afrikan minerals and precious metals. The Marikana Mine is owned by LONMIN, the UK-based (with Chinese capi-

tal) - former LONROW once led by the late notorious Tiny Rowland. LONMIN worked closely with the South Afrikan police in disturbing ways before and after the massacre.

The neo-colonial South Afrikan ANC regime is also acting in the interest of South Afrika's new internal oppressor class - created by the *Black/African Empowerment* programme. This class includes well known ANC, NUM and COSATU individuals as well as members of the Mandela Family. Cyril Ramaphosa - key to this group - has since become State Vice President to Zuma.

The state prosecutors dared to charge 270 arrested and brutalized miners with the Apartheid-era "common purpose" murder of those the state itself had gunned down in front of the world's media. Those charges are now 'suspended' pending the outcome of a Zuma-created *Inquiry*. Arrests and intimidation of miners, their families and inquiry witnesses continue. That *Inquiry* carries no credibility. Government minister and others (Mines Minister Susan Shabangu, Labour Minister Mildred Oliphant, State President Zuma himself) tried to demonise striking and murdered miners; to co-opt the deaths into traditional South Afrikan mourning rituals; to designate the death a 'tragedy' rather than the repressive act for which they bear full responsibility.

Meanwhile, gatherings of more than six/6 people need police permission. And how dare a state led by Jacob Zuma (declared by a judge on the basis of evidence to be involved in a deeply corrupt dealings) bring charges of corruption against Julius Malema who is vocally opposing neo-colonialism. The ANC state is also using violence against so called squatters - actually land-seekers – and other oppressed groups. South Afrika combines great wealth with shocking inequality: the richest 10% account for almost half of the nation's consumption, and a quarter of the population lives on less than \$2 a day. A quarter of the labour force is unemployed.

The resistance of the South Afrikan working people is rising: driven by demands for land (84% of S. Afrikan Land remains in the hands of 12% of the population) and a living wage. The objective must be for Afrikan workers to "Repossess what's rightfully theirs."

The failure of the *National Union of Mineworkers (NUM)* to fight for its members has led to the creation of the *Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU)* committed to class and social struggle. The *AMCU*, representing most of the LONMIN strikers (and those killed), accused police of the massacre while the NUM and *COSATU* defended the police action, and tried to organize a return to work on 17<sup>th</sup> August, the day after the massacre. Some Marikana miners accepted pay rises (between 9% to 22%) and have returned to work. But this is not victory, just minor high cost success on the bitter road to justice. The struggle continues: millions are striking and engaged in other forms of resistance with mass sackings the main tool of worker intimidation in use by LONMIN and other capitalist firms.

# Why Socialist Appeal, the Socialist Party and the AWL supports McCluskey in the Unite General Secretary election

By Laurence Humphries

The British section of the International Marxist Tendency, is Socialist Appeal an opportunist centrist organisation deeply embedded in the Labour Party. In issue 215 of their paper *Socialist Appeal* they report on a recent speech Len McCluskey, General Secretary of Unite, gave at the London School of Economics. They state “Len McCluskey has moved to the left in response to pressures from below” [1]. Nothing could be further from the truth; McCluskey is a bureaucrat who at times sounds left in response to pressure from his membership. He has no intention of carrying out the policies he advocates at these gatherings. Bureaucrats are forced to feign left on occasions. They further assert, “his main demand on a Labour Government would be to re-establish freedoms for Trade Unions to organise decide and take action” [2].

Miliband and the leadership of the present Labour party are no different from the Blair and Brown governments. Miliband and Balls are determined to carry out the diktats of capitalism. Most Labour councils are cutting services, and making large sections of workers redundant. Not one Labour council has set an illegal budget or sought to defend council tenants, who are being evicted and refused housing benefits. McCluskey is part of this charade.

In passing Socialist Appeal makes reference to the General Secretary Election in Unite, but fails to mention the real reason why they are supporting McCluskey. There is no mention of Jerry Hicks, the Rank and File candidate, who is standing against McCluskey in this election. The difference in the candidates’ policies are there for everyone to see. “Rank and File fighter Jerry Hicks who calls for All officials to be elected not appointed, a fight to repeal the anti-union laws in the UK and the EU and left bureaucrat Len McCluskey who plays at revolution whilst endorsing the austerity programme of the bankers friends Balls and Miliband and earned £122,435 last year”. [3]

Socialist Appeal, which has pretensions to be a Trotskyist organisation, covers up for the role of bureaucratic non-elected apparatus in Unite. Socialist Appeal mentions “Community Membership” [4]. I have answered this subject in my reply to the United Left in SF 12. Community membership is a device by McCluskey and the leadership to dupe Unite member who are Unemployed Students and others who are not in work that they have a real say in the decisions that Unite makes. That is false community membership is a second tier of membership in Unite with



**Ted Grant: political father of both the SP and SA: They are still characterised by the same capitulation to the TU bureaucracy so they both support McCluskey against the R+F candidate Jerry Hicks.**

no rights under rule and are treated as second class members.

Further on in the article Socialist Appeal makes reference to McCluskey’s call for a general strike. This nothing more than posturing by McCluskey which most of the left bureaucrats support. It is hot air and is mainly done to give the impression to his members that he is going to lead a general strike movement. In fact the opposite is true. Socialist Appeal makes comments on the recent construction workers dispute “the wave of

militant strike action across the private sector including the BESNA Sparks dispute of construction workers” [5]. This dispute was led by rank and file construction workers including Steve Kelly and Jerry Hicks. It defeated the original aims of BESNA

and the main Construction Employers who were determined to attack the conditions and pay in the construction industry. McCluskey and his officials only became interested when they felt the dispute was not under their control.

Socialist Appeal attempts to give McCluskey some credibility “In this respect, McCluskey is far ahead of his peers and has de-facto became the leader of the left in the recent period” [6]. McCluskey together with Bob Crowe of the RMT, Mark Serwotka of PCS and Matt Wrack of the FBU are bureaucrats and they are not leading anything. Blacklisting, sackings and the anti-union laws remain. McCluskey’s talk is all hot air, because in practice he intends to do nothing. Thatcher’s and Blair’s use of the anti-union laws means that all of these Trade Union leaders are terrified of sequestration and other financial penalties and do not have the stomach or the will to conduct a serious struggle against the bosses and capitalism.

These centrists then state “Len McCluskey’s speech presented a militant stand against austerity and the coalition government. This support for McCluskey and the bureaucracy is against everything that Trotsky stood for and fought for “The bureaucracy of the Trade Unions is the backbone of British Imperialism, The trade Union bureaucracy is the chief instrument for your oppression by the bourgeois state” (our emphasis) [7].

Socialist Appeal can trace its origins back to Trotskyism after the Second World War. Ted Grant, one of their erstwhile leaders, was a member of the Revolutionary Communist Party. In the 1950s and 60s they performed a role for the right wing in the Labour Party. When principled Trotskyists were being expelled they refused to support

## Socialist Appeal, the Socialist Party and the AWL

them. When their members who were now part of the 'Militant Tendency' were witch-hunted and expelled from the Labour Party by Kinnock and Blair the 'Militant' split into two sections over their attitude to the Labour Party. The majority, led by Peter Taffe, became the Socialist Party and abandoned work in the Labour party. Ted Grant, Alan Woods and Rob Sewell formed Socialist Appeal and remained in the Labour Party where they faithfully defend and support the bureaucratic apparatus in the trade unions and the Labour Party. They cannot be called Trotskyist; they are a centrist and opportunist organisation who have decided to support McCluskey in his election campaign. Both the Socialist Party and the Alliance for Workers Liberty

have adopted the same positions as Socialist Appeal and have supported McCluskey in the Unite General Secretary Election.

The Socialist Party insists in its statement on its website of the 11<sup>th</sup> January that it will be giving "critical support" to McCluskey whatever that means and then proceeds to argue that supporting a bureaucrat against a rank and file candidate is the correct policy to follow and will 'aid the left', as I have argued in SF 12 in reply to 'The United Left'. McCluskey's politics are based on rhetoric and speech making, nowhere is there evidence that he has encouraged his Unite members to oppose the anti-union laws.

Instead it has been left to rank and file shop stewards amongst electricians, Honda workers, British Airway workers to fight in the teeth of immense opposition from the bureaucracy. Lenin and Trotsky were right when they referred to the role of bureaucrats as "getting the crumbs from the masters table". Their role is based on class compromise. Betrayals are the order of the day. Socialist Fight is very clear on how we see the role of the trade union bureaucracy, left or right: "Because we see the trade union bureaucracy and their allies in the Labour party leadership as the most fundamental obstacle to the struggle for power of the working class". The Socialist party, Socialist Appeal and the Alliance for Workers Liberty make great play about their support for rank and file workers, but in practice end up supporting the bureaucracy, the main arm of the capitalist state in the workers movement. Their role which is to police and control the trade unions for capital-



**Sean Matgamna, guru of the AWL. a self-proclaimed Zionist (real name John O'Mahoney from Co. Clare!). His capitulation to Imperialism outpaced Militant and Ted Grant in the early 80s—the common purpose of the grovel in both organisations is to appease the TU bureaucracy to get some *Lebensraum* for the cadres.**

ism remains very much the same as it was when Ernest Bevin was General Secretary of the TGWU.

The Socialist Party has a trade union arm or rank and file organisation called the National Shop Stewards Network. It is heavily influenced by the RMT and its General Secretary Bob Crowe. It will admit to you that its role is to accommodate a section of the so called "left wing trade union leaderships" in the RMT, the PCS, the POA and the FBU. It is not a rank and file body but the

voice of these left wing trade union leaders. When push comes to shove, these so called lefts line up together with right wing trade union leaders as was shown in the recent Pensions debacle when the leaderships of Unite, Unison and PCS failed to give any proper leadership and capitulated. There is

much talk of a General Strike but nothing in practice.

In fact McCluskey is supporting Wayne King a Regional Industrial Organiser in Unite in a libel action against Comrade Gerry Downing a Unite Bus driver and Chair of Grass Roots Left, a rank and file organisation. McCluskey has instructed Thompsons Unite's solicitors to use the capitalist courts to proceed against Cde Downing. McCluskey has given notice that any worker who criticises any of his officials will find themselves in court, a very dangerous precedent to concede to a trade union leader.

As Gerry Downing has commented recently, "Obviously it is not just my democratic rights that are under threat but those of every TU militant who fights against the bosses and their defenders the TU Bureaucracy" The task now is for a concerted campaign to expose this so called 'leftism' in the bureaucracy. I will leave the final word to Trotsky. "The irreconcilable and relentless struggle against the left lackeys of Imperialism, both in the Trade Unions and in the Labour Party, is becoming especially urgent now" [8].

### Notes

- [1] Socialist Appeal No. 215 p. 14
- [2] Ibid. p/ 14
- [3] Socialist Fight No. 12 p. 1
- [4] Socialist Appeal No 215 p. 14
- [5] Ibid. p. 14
- [6] Ibid. p. 14
- [7] Trotsky, *The Errors in Principle of Syndicalism*, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1931/unions/4-1.htm>

# The Socialist Party and the General Strike **By Alan Hunter**

**A**t last year's TUC Congress in Brighton a motion was moved and passed by the Prison Officers association and supported by others to examine the "practicality of a general strike". This policy was promoted and supported by the National Shop Stewards Movement, the industrial arm of the Socialist Party. They favour a 24 Public Sector general strike. This motion is now to be discussed at the General Council of the TUC on April 25<sup>th</sup>, at which the NSSN intends to lobby.

The TUC is inviting two Labour lawyers John Hendy and Keith Ewing to bring proposals on how "Legal general strike" can be organised. Both the NSSN and the SPW are centrist organisations who have full confidence in the abilities of certain Left wing trade Union Leaders like Len McCluskey of Unite, Bob Crowe of the RMT , Mark Serwotka of PCS and Matt Wrack of the FBU.

In fact this is not a serious strike movement at all. In recent times there has been many strike actions and large demonstrations organised by the TUC, UNITE , PCS , NUT and others over pensions, but these protests have not amounted to anything and all of them have been abandoned except for the recent PCS strike which was staged just by one Union.

There is no sense in which a one day 24 general strike legal or otherwise can be organised under these conditions. We as Trotskyist must be very clear on the nature of a general strike. In the Transitional Programme Trotsky states "the whole political situation as a whole is chiefly characterised by a Historical crisis of the leadership of the proletariat" [1]. The leadership of the working class in Britain is led by a bureaucratic and reformist leadership who have a history of class betrayal. The purpose of a general strike is allied with the struggle for the conquest of power and the overthrow of capitalism. The centrists in the SPEW are only interested in left reformism and adaptation to the left bureaucracy. McCluskey one of the so called lefts and a member of the Labour party is only interested in the return of a capitalist labour government.

If you look at the history of previous general Strikes starting from 1926 you will see that if they are led by bureaucrats they are doomed and ultimately betrayed. The recent 1984-5 Miners strike like the 1926 general strike led to the defeat of the miners. In 1974 when the NUM successfully defeated the Heath government together with the dockers and other workers the result was the return of another Bourgeois Labour Government.

Trotsky in his writings on Britain analysed that a general strike was not a mere protest as practised by the NSSN. "A general strike if it not be a mere protest signifies an extreme upheaval of society and in any event places at stake the fate of the political regime and the reputation of the strength of the revolutionary regime" [2].

This is not the situation because this proposal for a general strike is just another half-hearted protest. The issue here is that we are dealing with centrism and reformism. Trotsky understood both these tendencies in the working class very well: "The main feature of Socialist centrism is its reticence, its mediocre half –and-half nature. It keeps going as long as it does not draw the ultimate conclusions" [3]. Further on Trotsky draws the analogy between a general strike and armed struggle "A general strike is the sharpest form of class struggle; it is only one step from the general strike to the armed insurrection" [4].

Trotsky perfectly analyses the role of trade union leaders and centrists whose role is to belittle, confuse and ultimately betray a general strike and ensure it leads to defeat. "An implacable struggle against every act of treachery or attempted treachery and the ruthless exposure of the reformists are the main elements in the work of the genuine revolutionary participants in the general strike" [5]. The question of state power and its acquisition is posed during a general strike. "The fundamental importance of the general strike is that it poses the question of power point blank" [6].

Rob Williams chair of the NSSN and a member of the SPEW answers a readers letter in the March issue of Socialism Today about the general strike tactic. "But the movement was stalled and defeated by the sell-out of the TUC and Union Leaders like those in UNISON and the GMB" [7]. This is not correct; The SPEW chooses not to single out the lefts who were also responsible for the sell-out and betrayal. Unite was an important factor with the GMB and UNISON in the pension struggle, but the SPEW does not criticise McCluskey or the others because the SPEW are currying favour and are allied with these lefts. Further on comrade Williams directly puts the blame of the crisis onto the working class "Undoubtedly in the public sector where the cuts have bitten deeply confidence has been hit and consciousness has retreated from that heady days of N30" [8]. He further lets the Lefts off the hook by stating "The relative lull in the movement to resist austerity inevitably gives rise to a review of our approach" [9].

This perspective seeks to blame the working class for the crisis and not their leaders. This is a question of leadership and not whether the working class will fight. The working class is a revolutionary class and in this period it will test this leadership out, if it has no confidence in one day protests it will wait and see. That does mean that workers will not fight it means that that they do not trust a rotten corrupt and reformist leadership which has a history of defeats behind it. Most of these protests have only been organised to show that the TUC and bureaucratic leaders are fighting. Both the right and left trade union

# The SP and the General Strike

leaders will betray and the SPEW has attached itself to the coattails of this left bureaucracy, hoping that they will fight and defeat this Con-Liberal Coalition. They are very much mistaken, as I have shown class betrayal, cowardice and class compromise are the hallmarks of this bureaucracy.

Genuine Trotskyists must work to win sections of workers to understand the true significance of general strike and work to create and fight for an alternative revolutionary leadership in the working class.

The bureaucracy right and left must be challenged and exposed. We must show those elements in the NSSN who want to seriously fight the bureaucracy and help to overthrow capitalism in a struggle for state power that they need to adopt a revolutionary perspective. Socialist Fight and the Liaison Committee for the Fourth International are fighting for this perspective.

## Notes

- 1) Leon Trotsky: *the Transitional Programme and the Tasks of the Fourth International*
- 2) Leon Trotsky: *Writings on Britain* vol. 2 p. 62



**1926 General Strike: Trotsky:** “A general strike if it not be a mere protest signifies an extreme upheaval of society and in any event places at stake the fate of the political regime and the reputation of the strength of the revolutionary regime.”

- 3) Ibid. p. 112
- 4) Ibid. p. 144
- 5) Ibid. p. 146
- 6) Ibid. p. 146
- 7) Socialism Today No, 166 March 2013 letters p. 31
- 8) Ibid. p. 32
- 9) Ibid. p. 32.



## List of Irish Republican Prisoners

<b>PORTLAOISE PRISON Portlaoise, County Laois, Ireland</b>	Belfast	Michael McDonald 30 Years Fermanagh	20. Gerry McGeough - Co Tyrone	<b>Hydebank Wood Hospital Road BELFAST BT8 8NA</b>
<b>E-3</b>	Declan John Rafferty 30 Years Co. Louth	Dermott McFadden n/a Derry	21. Francis Carleton - Belfast	Marian Price-McGlinchey
John Brock 6 Years Dublin	Liam Grogan 22 Years Kildare	Michael McKeivitt 20 Years Dundalk	22. Packy Carter - Co Tyrone	
Anthony Crowley 10 Years Cork	Darren Mulholland 22 Years Dundalk	Phillip McKeivitt n/a Louth	23. Michael Johnston - North Belfast	<b>MAGILLIGAN PRISON</b>
Bernard Dempsey LIFE Dublin	<b>E-2</b>	Darren Mooney n/a Dublin	24. Dominic Dynes - Castleblayney,	Point Road
Aidan Hulme 20 Years Co. Louth	Anthony Deery n/a Derry	Conan Murphy n/a Louth	25. Brian Cavlan - Dungannon	Limvady Co. Derry
Robert Hulme 20 Years Co. Louth	Cormac Fitzpatrick 9 Years Monaghan	Liam Rainey n/a Antrim	26. Brian Sheridan - Blackwater Town	BT 49 OLR
Jim McCormick 22 Years Co. Louth	Tony Hyland 25 Years Dublin	<b>Maghaberry Gaol, Roe 3, Old Road, Ballinderry Upper Lisburn, Ireland</b>	27. Raymond Whitehouse - Derry	Noel Maguire
Thomas Morris 6 Years Dublin	Tom Hanlon n/a Cork	<b>BT28 2PT</b>	28. Raymond Wootton - Belfast	Liam Hannaway
Fintan Paul O'Farrell 30 Years Co. Louth	David Jordan n/a Tyrone	1. Brian Shivers - Magherafelt	29. Thomas Maguire - Belfast	<b>The Grove Castlerea Gaol Castlerea, Co Roscommon, Ireland</b>
Matthew Perry n/a n/a	Tarlach MacDhómhnaill n/a Co. Louth	2. Harry Fitzsimons - Belfast	30. Mark Kerr - Derry	(IRSP) Eddie McGarigle
Barry Petticre 5 Years		3. Sean McConville	31. Tony Taylor - Derry	Johnny McCrossan
			32. Kevin Murphy - Coalisland	<b>Pravieniskiy Pataisos Namai-stviro'j Kolantja, 2-O'jl Valdyba, Pravieniskiy # K, Kaisiadoriu r, LT-56552, Lituania</b>
			33. Kevin Vernon - Belfast	
			34. Martin McCloone - Derry	
			35. Mark McGuigan - Omagh	
			36. Phil O'Donnell - Derry	
			37. Liam Campbell	
			38. Gavin Coyle	

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

# Joint IRPSG/Brent LRC meeting

By Laurence Humphries.

**T**his Meeting was in Conway Hall in London on 28 February. It called to:

- Free all Irish, Basque, Palestinian, Kurdish, Tamil, Naxalite and all Anti Imperialist Political Prisoners.
- Political Status for all Irish Republican Prisoners
- Implement the August 2010 Agreement
- Free Marian Price, Martin Corey and Stephen Murney

Gerry Downing Secretary of the IRSP opened the meeting to a lively audience of over 50 people. He stressed that the fight of the IRSP was to free all Irish Republican prisoners and to seek political status in their fight against Imperialism. The victimisation of the Birmingham 6 and Guildford 4 was used to terrify the Irish community in Britain and to isolate them from supporters in the British labour movement. It was clear that they were innocent from the start, the Guildford 4 were not even republicans but the framing of clearly innocent people had an even more terrifying effect. That is the case with Marian, Price, Martin Corey and Stephen Murney.

Yasmine Cass next spoke on the campaign to free her father Mohammed Hamid and she explained that the campaign had woken up the community and the injustice and imprisonment against Mohammed Hamid. Yasmine made reference to the attacks on the Counihan-Sanchez family in Brent. She said she had often got more support from 'the Irish' than she had got from the Muslim community. —see below.

Diarmuid Mac Dubhglais the Ard-Cisteoir of Republican Sinn Fein, next spoke—see below.

Graham Durham the Labour Representation Committee London Organiser who is a member of Brent LRC which also sponsor the meeting. He told how, as a Brent Labour Councillor in the early 80s he had supported the hunger strikers and had gone to picket the Labour ministers who refused to support Bobby Sands.

Michael Holden Chair of the IRSP spoke about the arrest of Marian Price in April 2010 and how the activities of Sinn Fein leaders Adams and McGuinness had collaborated with the British state. Michael said that Martin Corey still remained a political prisoner. Stephen Murney was arrested last year. The IRSP has

been active in campaigning on behalf of Republican political prisoners and has supported the Counihan-Sanchez campaign in Brent.

Isabel Counihan from the Counihan-Sanchez family explained that they had been made homeless by Brent Borough Council and they had been engaged in a fight for Housing Benefit in which they had won. It had been very hard on her children who have been disrupted by the whole affair. Isabel has an Autistic son in a school in England and Brent Council's advice was to go and live in temporary Housing in Ireland which was not practicable as all her children are in schooling in Brent. Isabel herself was having hip surgery and it had been a very distressing time and no cooperation nor sympathy from the Labour controlled authority of Brent. She stressed that they are fighting for other families in Brent, particularly when the Con Dems are attacking the welfare state and Housing authorities like Brent who don't care are just evicting families left right and centre.

Senake Rodrigo from the Frontline Socialist Party from Sri Lanka spoke about solidarity and the struggle to free Irish prisoners of war and the human rights issue. The Sri Lankan government runs Sri Lanka like a dictatorship and their attitude to the Tamil population is very bad. Prisoners are locked up for 48 hours. Tamils are still in custody, families are not allowed to visit them. No names are provided, in Sri Lanka there are no court appearances or charges against the detainees, many prisoners are tortured and hospitalised. I would like to draw your attention to this situation. This is a leftist movement for the oppressed in Sri Lanka. It is barbaric action against the Tamil minority; no one knows the number of prisoners incarcerated by the regime.

Martin Óg Meehan of the RNU, was unable to attend because of the serious illness of a close relation but he sent a message of support (see below). There was a very lively contribution from everyone in the room and a very successful Collection to aid the fight of the IRSP and others to fight for political status and the rights of prisoners all over the World. The call must go out to free all anti-imperialist prisoners.

## Speech by Diarmuid Mac Dubhglais RSF:

A Chairde

Firstly may I say thanks for the invitation to come here and speak on behalf of our Republican POW's, who are incarcerated because of the part they have taken in the ongoing struggle against the occupation of my country. These people would never have seen the inside of a prison cell had it not for this occupation and their opposition to that occupation. I will divide my time between 3 main headings.

Firstly let me bring to your attention the case of Martin Corey; Martin is a 62 year old man from Co. Armagh, he was convicted in 1973 for his part in the killing of two RUC men. He was sentenced to life imprisonment and served 19 years before being released. The British government say he was released on licence although he never signed any documents to this effect. In April 2010, Martin was re-arrested and told his license was revoked on the authority of the secretary of state for northern Ireland. He remains in Maghaberry prison to date

despite several appeals for his release. Of these appeals, the one on July 9th 2010 would be most significant as it was in front of the highly renowned human rights judge; Justice Treacy. At this hearing Justice Treacy ruled that Martin's human rights were infringed under article 5 of the Human Rights Act of 1998; Article 5; Deprivation of liberty, and ordered his release, he Justice Treacy also pointed out that the so called "closed evidence", i.e. the evidence that could not be shown to the defence but is normally shown to the Judge was a book of blank pages with the words, "the Secretary of State confirms that this evidence exists".

Martin, his supporters and his legal team were understandably elated with this result and preparations were made for his return. It wasn't until late that afternoon while Martin was sitting at the gate, with all his belongings that he was informed that the Sec. of State overruled the courts decision and ordered his continued internment. At present Martin and his supporters are awaiting a date for the Supreme court in London to appeal the Secretary of State's decision.

# IRPSG/Brent LRC meeting



Last year Martin's brother died suddenly. Martin looked for compassionate parole to attend the removal and burial. His request was pushed from the prison governor to the courts and back. Eventually Martin was allowed out but only for 3 hours and only as long as he was escorted by 2 members of Provisional Sinn Féin ...

Marion Price is another internee, her continued detention defies all logic and natural justice. This seriously ill woman poses no physical threat to the British state but they insist on keeping her interned. The so-called British justice system have gone as far as to keep her handcuffed to a hospital bed with both male and female screws constantly beside her 24 hours a day, even during examinations. This past week a prominent priest from the U.S. visited her and here is a quote from his report

"My heart was broken and my soul outraged by how this heroic Irishwoman has been treated. This seriously ill, lovely, soft-spoken woman should not be in prison. Her persecution – yes, persecution – makes a mockery of the Irish peace-process, questions the whole judicial system, and raises doubt as to whether there has, indeed, been a "new beginning" to policing in Northern Ireland"

There are of course other internees; some interned by remand on trumped-up charge, Liam Campbell, who only last week the courts refused to extradite to Lithuania because he would be held in inhuman and degrading conditions is still in jail despite having no charges preferred against him in the 6 counties is another who's plight needs attention.

Next I will speak about the Republican POW's. Political Status was attained by all republican POW's after the 1981 Hunger Strike. The deaths of 10 brave men to attain that status is well known to all here I am sure. Many others, men and women, had their health ruined and lives shortened as a result of this particular phase of the struggle. Sadly this hard won victory was sold out by P.S.F. (Provisional Sinn Fein) when their last prisoner was released after the "Good Friday Agreement" We now have Republican Prisoners struggling for the very same recognition; that is, to be recognition as political prisoners. They have four simple demands;

1/ an end to the brutal and degrading strip searching. 2/ free association. 3/ an end to controlled movement. 4/ a right to education.

In August 2010 an agreement was reached between the POW's and the NIO brokered by independent facilitators. Its fundamental Principles were as follows;

1. Arrangements are predicated on mutual respect;
2. Prisoner and staff safety must not be put at risk;
3. Arrangements should comply with human rights and equality requirements;
4. Revised arrangements and procedures should be achievable and sustainable;
5. Staff should be able to carry out their work professionally, free from harm, intimidation or threat;
6. The security of the establishment should not be diluted; and
7. The arrangements must strengthen public confidence in NIPS

The agreement set out in full, the steps to be taken by both the POW's and the prison staff so as to resolve the deterioration in

prison conditions and the health of the POW's. Sadly but predictably once the POW's came off their protest the screws reneged on all aspects of their side of the agreement and the POW's were left with no alternative but to return to the dirty protest. Up to November 2012 the POW's were still on protest. They were living in maggot infested cells with no washing facilities, their own excrement covering walls/doors and floors.

They were locked up for 23 hours a day and only allowed out one at a time. During their one hour out of the cell they had to try; shower, make phone calls, buy something from the tuck shop and perform and other tasks necessary. They were beaten up and strip searched on the way to and from court appearances; The constant strip searching is brutal in the extreme and is done as a form of torture, the POW's have had no human contact other than the screws and particularly while during court cases. In November 2012 the POW's took the lead and suspended their protest when it looked like a body scanner was to be installed in the prison. This type of scanner has been proven to work in airports/prisons and various other secure areas all over the world). Once again the NIPS back tracked, the screws have said that the scanners supplied allowed certain items through unnoticed. It has to be pointed out though that the scanners supplied were tested in other prisons and found to work perfectly well ... In a case similar to that of Martin Corey, a POW whose father died suddenly was refused bail altogether, this to spite the fact that republican POW's have consistently returned from compassionate leave. This was just another vindictive act on behalf of the prison ...

Finally to the international struggle against imperialism and solidarity;- Because there the majority of so-called independent media are in fact aligned to different political parties, it is important that those involved in various struggles, whether for independence or against imperialism to co-operate in highlighting just causes. Governments across the globe are trying to stifle the independent voice of the oppressed. The likes of the Irish, Basque and Palestinian struggle are well known but it is getting harder for us to get the word out there that oppression continues and injustice is an everyday fact of life. The case of Mohammed Hamid is known to us in Sinn Féin Poblachtach, in 2011 the CPS attempted to use his case as a precedent against one member who was interviewed by Channel 4. The fact that people going out paint-ball can be used to infer guilt of terrorist training is very worrying. This in stark contrast to a statement made in Dec 2011 where Jeremy Clarkson said he would have Public Service workers shot for striking. Comrades we need to build a strong anti-imperialist movement where the plight of ordinary men and women are put ahead of the rich and powerful. From here today we should agree to highlight each other's ongoing struggle; as long as this does not impinge on our own principles.

# IRPSG/Brent LRC meeting

## Message from Martin Óg Meehan, Republican Network for Unity:

Firstly though, I'd like to briefly outline who RNU are; We were established in 2007, we are a revolutionary republican organisation, committed to building a capable revolutionary alternative to the failed politics of constitutional nationalism and with a view to securing National Liberation & Socialism for Ireland. We hope to carry out this task in the spirit of International solidarity with other like-minded struggles, recognising that true freedom cannot exist in one country alone.

The Republican Network for Unity are committed to seven core principles, which I will outline below.....

RNU believe in the right of Ireland to National Self-Determination is absolute, as recognised by the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 1514. We believe in the struggle for National Liberation, Territorial, Social and Economic Freedom are elements of equal importance. Therefore, the National & Class Struggles are intertwined and inseparable. Our Struggle is also international. We advocate acting in solidarity with other Anti-Imperialist and Socialist Campaigns World-wide.

It is the duty of the Irish Socialist Republic to provide Social, Solidarity, Co-Operation and Care , from the cradle to the grave. We must participate in the everyday struggles of the Working-Class regardless of ethnic, cultural, sexual or religious differences. Fundamental to RNU's struggle is the liberation of the Working-Class by the Working-Class and the key to that process is self-empowerment through struggle.

RNU's POW Department is called Cogús, an Irish word which means conscience. Our Network view Political Prisoners held in Maghaberry and Portlaoise Gaols as our conscience. We help support those prisoners in every way we can, by highlighting the injustices they suffer. Cogús played a central role in negotiations which led to the 2010 Agreement



## Martin Óg Meehan: Message of support.

that the British destroyed and left POWs' with no choice but to engage in an 18 month-long Dirty-Protest. Throughout this period, Cogús continued to campaign on behalf of Political Prisoners with Marches, Pickets and Direct-Action against the so-called Justice Minister in the North. The oppressive Prison Regime includes forced Strip-Searching, Beatings, Sectarian Intimidation and Harassment. Regardless of whatever Regime Irish Political Prisoners are held in Cogús will continue to support them and their families on the outside and we are proud to do so!

RNU and Cogús demand the immediate release of Interned Prisoners, Marian Price and Martin Corey both of who have already served lengthy terms of imprisonment at the behest of the British Government. We also call for an end to Internment by Remand, where scores of Republican Prisoners are held for over three years, continuously refused Bail, before appearing at a Diplock Trial. These Trials are still without Juries, are named after the Law Lord Diplock who introduced them in 1973. These draconian and unjust Trials must also end as they abuse the most basic of Human Rights.

## Why We Must Fight to Free Mohamed Hamid By Tony Fox

Mohammed Hamid's daughter Yasmin Cass was one of the speakers at IRPSG/Brent LRC meeting on 28th February 28 at Conway Hall.

He is one of the many victims of Britain's 'war on terror' languishing in prison. He was arrested, along with fourteen other men, in the wake of the 2005 London bombings and charged with 'providing terrorist training'. On 26th February 2008 Hamid was found guilty of 'providing terrorist training' and 'soliciting murder' and sentenced to an 'indeterminate sentence for public protection' with a tariff (minimum term) of seven years, after which he will only be released if the Parole Board declares he is sufficiently low risk to be freed. The trial was based on the same 'principle' that now has Stephen Murney in jail – both have never committed any crime and are not

charged with committing a crime – it was all based a speculation on what his listeners took from what he said.

These two are in essence charged with *political sympathy for the AIMS of those who have adopted methods of individual terrorism*. That is they, like us, are in political sympathy with all those who are anti-Imperialist, including those who adopt these methods to fight imperialism with which we may strongly disagree but nevertheless we are all anti-Imperialist as so we must defend everyone's civil rights in order to maintain our own rights to fight Imperialism with our own methods of mass revolutionary mobilisation.

The Birmingham 6 were all Republicans (unlike the Guildford 4) and it was on the basis of their politics they were wrongly convicted on what was never a miscarriage of justice but as political hostages to frighten the rest of

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

## Free Mohamed Hamid

the Irish community – their innocence was clear to all Irish republican sympathisers and the Irish community in general – jailing innocent people on a political campaign whipped up by the pro-Imperialist mass media had the intended effect of terrorising and making illegal political support for a united Ireland and getting Britain out of the occupied six north-eastern counties. The big demonstrations in support of the struggle in Ireland stopped immediately after the 1974 bombings in England.

The case of the Guildford 4 was in some ways worse – both groups spent 16 years in jail for crimes of which they were wholly innocent – but the Birmingham 6 were ‘guilty’ of Republicanism – the Guildford 4 were not even Republicans, they just came from the wrong place and they *knew Republicans* – you could scarcely come from the nationalist six counties without knowing Republicans. No, convicting random victims – and it was important to the British state that the whole Irish community knew both groups to be innocent – had the effect of spreading even greater terror in the whole community than the case of Birmingham.

It was the same method the Nazis used in Lidice, that small village in Czechoslovakia 1942 in reprisal for the assassination of Reich Protector Reinhard Heydrich in the late spring of 1942. It was on orders from Adolf Hitler and Reichsführer- SS Heinrich Himmler that it was completely destroyed by German forces. On 10 June 1942, all 173 men over 16 years of age from the village were executed, all the rest of the men were executed when found ... After the war ended, only 153 women and 17 children returned. This is the BBC’s account of the Mohamed Hamid’s trial:

Hamid was not himself part of Muktar Ibrahim’s 21/7 bomb plot. But investigators say he played a critical role in the radicalisation of the men who carried the devices. The pair and another man were arrested in October 2004 in a row over their preaching stall in Oxford Street. Hamid allegedly told the arresting officer that his name was “Osama bin London” and “I’ve got a bomb and I’m going to blow you all up”.

David Farrell QC, prosecuting, told the court the true intention behind Hamid’s camps and talks were clear. They were nothing short of “*a grooming mechanism for disaffected Muslim men, slowly and sometimes subtly, preparing them and radicalising for jihad.*”

So to take the analogy a bit further, all those who are Irish Republicans or who support the aims of Irish Republicans are *politically* as guilty as Stephen Murney and Mohamed Hamid and, if the political situation requires, could expect a knock on the door in the middle of the night with charges with “having material that supports terrorism”, i.e. the political aims of expelling Imperialism from Ireland or the Middle East or anywhere else and

# FREE MOHAMMED HAMID



**PAINTBALLING IS NOT A CRIME**  
**[freehamid.blogspot.com](http://freehamid.blogspot.com)**

**PAINTBALLING = WEAPONS TRAINING**  
**CUTTING A WATERMELON = TERRORISM**  
**TRAINING**  
**PROPAGATING ISLAM = TERROR RECRUITMENT**  
**PLEASE HELP US STOP THIS INJUSTICE NOW!**  
Petition: <http://www.petitiononline.com/Hamid/petition.html>,  
The Free Muhammed Hamid Facebook group has 4,361 members including MPs, Councillors and public figures.  
[freemuhammed@groups.facebook.com](mailto:freemuhammed@groups.facebook.com),  
[Freemohammed@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:Freemohammed@hotmail.co.uk)

defeating their war aims of subordinating all economies and all our lives to the neo-liberal needs of Wall Street and the City of London and their allied multi-national companies.

And to take the analogy to its clear conclusion – civil liberties and political and democratic rights are indivisible, we cannot demand it for ourselves whilst at the same time denying it to those who are opposed to British Imperialism in Ireland or the Middle East or anywhere else. In the immortal words of Pastor Martin Niemöller:

*First they came for the communists,  
and I didn't speak out because I wasn't a communist.  
Then they came for the socialists,  
and I didn't speak out because I wasn't a socialist.  
Then they came for the trade unionists,  
and I didn't speak out because I wasn't a trade unionist.  
Then they came for the Jews,  
and I didn't speak out because I wasn't a Jew.  
Then they came for the Catholics,  
and I didn't speak out because I wasn't a Catholic.  
Then they came for me,  
and there was no one left to speak for me*

# Thomas Spence, agrarian socialism, communism and the working class

By Laurence Humphries

Thomas Spence, an Agrarian Socialist was born in Newcastle upon Tyne in 1750. This period was a ferment of Revolutionary activity influenced by the Revolutionary developments in France. Spence moved to London and became a bookseller and land reformer. He was influenced by the Utopian Socialist ideals of Robert Owen.

Britain in the 1790s was decisive for Revolutionary Politics in Britain. Many middle class radicals like Cobden, Bright, and Place were active for parliamentary reform. The great Reform Act of 1832 was a long way off. Many of these Middle class Radicals were active in the Corresponding Societies which were the germ of future Trade Unionism in Britain.

Spence was part of the continuation of Communist politics that had emerged in the 1640s under Everard, Winstanley and the 'Diggers'. "Like Winstanley and the Diggers Spence and his followers took radical ideology into the world of Socialism" [1]. The Corresponding societies were the embryo of future working class organisations and Trade Unions. Edward Thompson in the 'Making of the English Working Class' has shown how the Corresponding Societies were to have a great influence on Working class organisations. "There is some evidence that by the end of 1816 the Spenceans had reorganised their work, in sections and divisions, on the old plan of the London Corresponding Society [2].

Spence a member of the London Corresponding society agitated for Land reform, the abolition of private property and Communism. He formed a group of like-minded followers. They were called Spenceans. They included, Artisans, small producers and journeymen. Working class activity against poverty basic rights and a living wage had led to several insurrectionary movements being formed. The most prominent of these were "The Luddites" amongst textile workers in Lancashire and Yorkshire. They saw their livelihoods threatened with the introduction of the Power Looms and the use of modern machinery. There was very little Poor law relief and these workers would be left to starve together with their Families. The Luddites armed into small bands organised raids to smash the Power looms and even attack the Capitalists in their own homes. Many Workers were shot, arrested



and hanged.

The capitalist state used spies, infiltrators and paid agents to infiltrate, behead and destroy the movement. This was the climate that Spence and his followers flourished in. Spence advocated a plan called 'Spensonnia' where there would be common ownership and land distribution. "Such land would be taken into common ownership" [3]. "Right to equal share of the land is seen first and foremost as a means to give everyone access to productive capital in which they can work for themselves" [4]. These policies were far removed from the reformist ideas of Robert Owen and his

Spence advocated a Utopian Communist society of little farmers and little Master men with parishes of self-government. Spence's views coincided with many of the Chartist demands advocated by Fergus O' Connor, Bronterre O'Brien and Julian Harney, Chartist leaders who led the great Working class movement that would emerge after Spence's death. Both Karl Marx and Frederick Engels paid great attention to the Chartist movement and worked closely with many of their leaders.

"A National assembly would be elected annually by the individuals in each Parish" [5]. Spence in his writings sought to lay out a concise plan on how his Communist society would be renewed again and again. "Spence envisaged a process of permanent revolutionary upheaval until society had been restructured on the right principles" [6]. Spence was also influenced by the Bourgeois Revolutions of America and France of 1789 and 1777. Spence's parish system of self-government could be compared to the Parish Commune on which Marx refers to in his essay "The Civil war in France". The noticeable difference is that the Paris Commune is more advanced than Spence's ideal of parish government.

"He may have contemplated a Babeuf type dictatorship as a means of bringing about revolution in society" [7]. The Spensonnia document further lists his constitutional aims and policies.

"These rights are equality, Liberty safety and property"

"All human beings are equal by nature and have a continual and inalienable property in the earth and its natural resources"

# Thomas Spence

“Landed property always was originally acquired either by conquest or encroachment on the common property of mankind” [8].

“Hence it is plain that the land or the earth belongs at all times to the living inhabitants of the said country or neighbourhood in one equal manner” [9].

EP Thompson in his Making of the English working class makes several references to ‘Spenceans’ and their aims of a revolutionary Communist Government. “Spence took up Paine’s argument against hereditary Aristocracy and carried them to their conclusion. We must destroy not only personal and hereditary Lordship, but the cause of theirs which is private property in Land” [10].

Spence and his followers supported the insurrectionary movement that was put down with much savagery by the Capitalist state. One of his leading followers, Thomas Evans, was active in the London Corresponding society and advocated insurrection, arming their supporters through drilling and other activities, but there is no evidence that Spence himself supported it. “Whether Spence himself was directly implicated in insurrectionary conspiracy is not clear but he certainly believed in the methods of the underground, the secret press, the anonymous handbill and the Tavern Club” [11].

This working class movement was composed of Jacobin Emigrés, Scottish weavers, English Jacobins and United Irishmen. There were naval mutinies in 1797.

“The Spencean advocates had won much support amongst the Trades Clubs especially among the shoemakers. Their policy that all feudalism or Lordship in the soil be abolished and the territory declared to be the peoples common farm” [12].

Spence and His “Spenceans” like their predecessor Winstanley and the “Diggers” were utopian Communists and Land reformers. Unlike Winstanley Spence never in practice started a commune like the “Diggers”.

Spence was arrested many times for his views and prevented from putting his “Spensonnia” into practice. His followers had influence in the London Corresponding Society and amongst sections of the working class.

Informers and paid agents infiltrated many of the Trades Clubs in London and many of the insurrectionary movements like “The Plug Riots” and “The Luddite Movement” was defeated and their leaders hanged or shot. Many working class radicals suffered the fate of the noose because of these informers. In the 1790s Trade Union organisation was illegal, many workers met in secret with an underground press and secret oaths with a special pass words. There would be guards on the doors and you would have to know the password to gain entry. They also armed themselves for protection.

Spence’s revolutionary plan never came to fruition. His



Spence token, ‘T. Spence. 7 MONTHS IMPRISONMENT FOR HIGH TREASON. 1794

idea of common ownership and Utopian Communism was never realised. Scientific Socialism and Marxism would be developed by Marx and Engels. Both Marx and Engels were active in the First International. Marx together with Chartists like Ernest Jones and Julian Harney would develop the ideas of Scientific Socialism during the middle part of the Nineteenth century. Thomas pence like all Utopian Communists believed that Communism would emerge without the need for a disciplined and Centralised Revolutionary party dedicated to the overthrow of Communism. As yet Communism was just developing and without an organised and material and scientific basis ‘The working class’ and its organisations Trade Unions it would be difficult , but none the less Spence and other Utopians made a great contribution to Communist thought and action through his writings ‘Pigs Meat’. Like Winstanley he believed that by written word and the use of the Bible this would be enough to convert Workers, Artisans and Journeyman to his vision of Communism, although unlike Winstanley he was no pacifist “ Both the State and the Land were to be seized by the people and reconstituted under their ownership and control”[13].

## Notes

1. Spence, Thomas Pig’s Meat Selected Writings p. 12
2. Thompson EP, The Making of the English Working Class p. 613
3. Spence, Thomas Ibid. p. 23
4. Spence, Thomas Ibid. p. 23
5. Spence, Thomas Ibid. p. 35
6. Spence, Ibid. p. 42
7. Spence, Thomas Ibid. p. 46
8. Spence, Thomas Ibid. p. 92
9. Spence, Thomas Ibid. p. 60
10. Thompson EP, Ibid. p. 161
11. Spence, Thomas , Ibid. p. 62
12. Thompson EP. Ibid. p. 614
13. Spence, Thomas Ibid. p. 50.

# Review: Shostakovich Socialism, Stalin & Symphonies by Simon Behrman Bookmarks /Redwords by Laurence Humphries

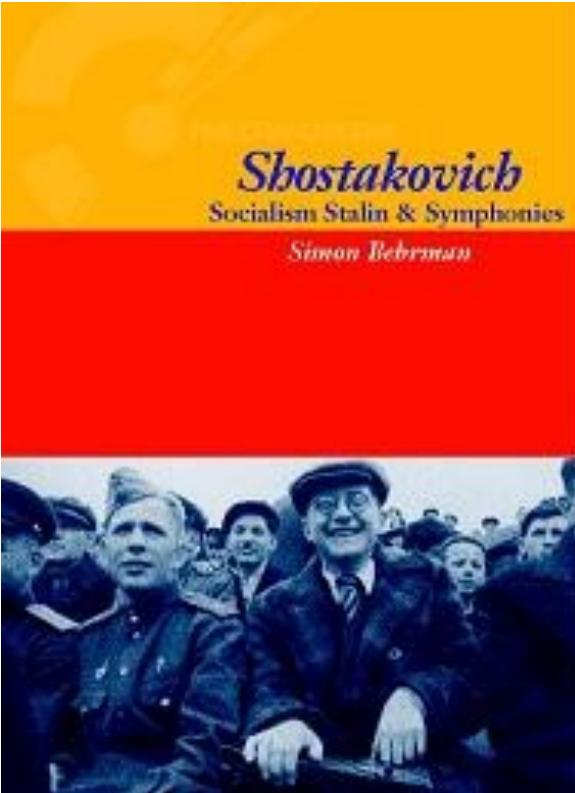
Behrman has written a fairly useful commentary on Dmitry Shostakovich the most influential Soviet composer from 1925-1972 and his relationship with Stalinism and the cultural theory referred to as 'Social Realism'. Behrman who supports the 'State Capitalist theory advanced by the Socialist Workers Party shows some weaknesses in his analysis of Shostakovich.

His negative approach is revealed in the introduction when he writes off the Soviet working class. "It was the creation of a revolution led and supported by ordinary people yet within 20 years it had become one of the twentieth centuries bloodiest dictatorships" [1].

Dmitry Shostakovich {1906-1975} was the foremost soviet composer and musical giant of the twentieth century. He epitomised the revolutionary period after the Bolshevik revolution of 1917. Behrman recognises this fact. "No other Soviet artist was the whole history of the Soviet Union from 1917 to the Stalinist counter revolution" [2]. Shostakovich unlike some Soviet Composers remained lived and worked in the Soviet Union during his lifetime. He used his music to combat and answer Stalinism and its formal attitude to music. During this period there were fresh developments in all of the arts, innovations which Shostakovich accepted and tried new forms frequently.

Behrman tries to separate Shostakovich's music from the political developments that took place in Soviet Russia. Robert Stradling in his essay 'Shostakovich and the Soviet System 1925-1975' points out the fundamental connection and importance of Shostakovich's music with the politics of the day. "The list reads like a syllabus for a course in modern political and social problems: war, revolutionary change, individual freedom, anti-Semitism, the role of women in society, dictatorship and disillusionment" [3].

Dmitry Shostakovich was born in 1906 in Leningrad. He showed incredible talent and had a musical background, his mother an accomplished pianist taught him to play the piano when he was only nine. Behrman comments "and by the age of just 16 he was already producing works of extraordinary quality" [4].



Shostakovich's symphonic music fitted in with the revolutionary situation in Russia. "Shostakovich's life and music were shaped by the historic events of 1917" [5]. His first symphony composed in 1925 while he was still a student at the Leningrad Conservatoire shows Shostakovich's breadth celebrating the Bolshevik Revolution. Shostakovich was to compose 15 symphonies, concertos, chamber music, ballet scores, operas and film music during his Lifetime.

Shostakovich's music had a recognisable style all of its own as Behrman states "What is undoubtedly the case is that he was able to communicate clearly to his audience about the turbulent social and political times in which he lived" [6].

Shostakovich's 2<sup>nd</sup> Symphony subtitled {October} and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Symphony {The first of May} show how interconnected Shostakovich's music was with the revolutionary period of the time. The 2<sup>nd</sup> symphony has a factory claxon used in the symphony the one and only time that was used in a symphonic work. "So few composers have had the direct experience of Revolution even fewer the talent to express it as vividly as Shostakovich does in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Symphony" [7].

Musician writers and poets all worked together to express this new Avant garde in soviet cultural life Mayakovsky,

Meyerhold and Shostakovich all worked together in films, ballet scores and operas.

Behrman continually belittles Shostakovich's belief in Communism and tries to portray him as a lone individual questioning his communist beliefs. "Whatever may have been the case later on his life, during the late 1920's and early 1930's Shostakovich was clearly a believer in the communist ideal" [8].

Shostakovich did embrace Communism throughout his whole life and used his music to combat and fight the narrow strictures of Stalinism represented by 'Social realism'. Leon Trotsky in his pamphlet *Art and Revolution* argued that it was not possible to have a party line on art and culture "Trotsky argued that as, with philosophy and industrial techniques, so too the very best of what bourgeois society had produced should be appropriated for all" [9].

# Shostakovich

Behrman even admits that the emergence of Stalin as General Secretary of the Bolshevik Party in the 1930s and the struggle conducted for inner party democracy against the bureaucratic caste by Trotsky and the Left Opposition found an echo in Shostakovich's music. This led Shostakovich to denounce certain aspects of Social realism "Shostakovich criticized Socialist Realist artists for writing inorganic works that offered trite and crude messages" [10].

Shostakovich's opera *The Lady Macbeth of Mtensk district* (1932) was identified by Stalinism as not suitable and denounced by 'Social realists' as unsuitable. So began the attack by Stalin and his henchmen on Shostakovich and other composers including Kathchurian and Prokoviev. They singled out Shostakovich for special treatment. Shostakovich was dismissed from his position at the Leningrad Conservatoire and immediately withdrew the opera and his 4<sup>th</sup> Symphony. This was Shostakovich's way of dealing with Stalinism. Shostakovich's 5<sup>th</sup> Symphony was subtitled 'A soviet artists reply to just criticism'.

Stalinism and its method of terror and counter revolution used a series of show trials witch-hunts and accusations of Trotskyists being Nazi or Fascist agents. Shostakovich was very careful in his response and used a signature in his music D-S-C-H (E flat, C and B) to answer and criticise Stalinism and its methods. It is true to say that Shostakovich's music retains its Revolutionary content. All around him Comrades were being arrested, shot and imprisoned.

It was a very difficult times for Shostakovich and his family "Shostakovich's brother in law, the Phycist Vsevolod Fredericks was arrested and sent to Slave Labour camp. Shostakovich's elder sister was sent into her exile, while his mother in law was arrested and sent to the camps" [11].

In 1941 when the Nazi's invaded the Soviet Union Shostakovich composed his 7<sup>th</sup> Symphony (The Leningrad) in 7 days, artillery fire and bombs were falling as he was composing the music which was an account of the heroic defence of the Leningrad working class against the Fascist terror. Shostakovich's 7<sup>th</sup> Symphony is heroic in its composition detailing the fight and the battle to repel the fascists. "The image of Shostakovich as an emblem of Soviet resistance was cemented with his 7<sup>th</sup> Symphony" [12].

In 1953 when Stalin died and Khrushchev became General Secretary, immediately with the revelations about the Stalinist lies and double talk a political thaw developed and Shostakovich was allowed to compose his music relatively safe from state interference. His 13<sup>th</sup> symphony (Babi Yar) composed of poems from Yevtushenko details the role of anti-Semitism practised by Stalinism.



A Russian stamp in Dmitri Shostakovich's memory in 2000

The 13<sup>th</sup> Symphony together with the 11<sup>th</sup> Symphony (1905) and the 12<sup>th</sup> symphony (1917) dedicated to Lenin are three historical symphonies portraying 1905, the unfinished Revolution, 1917 the successful Bolshevik Revolution and Anti-Semitism represented by the Stalinist betrayal.

Behrman's major weakness in his book is an inability to see the real struggle that Shostakovich conducted against Social realism and the cultural backwardness of Stalinism. "It is safe to say that no composer since Beethoven has been so central to the history of the time, or has consistently sought to express the sufferings and aspirations shared by millions of his contemporaries" [13].

## Notes

- 1) Behrman S, *Shostakovich, Stalin, Socialism and Symphonies*. p.9
- 2) Ibid. p. 10
- 3) Stradling R Shostakovich and the Soviet System 1925-1975 in *Shostakovich: the man and his music*. p.190
- 4) Behrman S *Shostakovich, Stalin, Socialism and Symphonies* p.23
- 5) Ibid. p.26
- 6) Ibid. p.42
- 7) Ibid. p.45
- 8) Ibid. p.51
- 9) Ibid. p.33
- 10) Ibid. p.57
- 11) Ibid. p.70
- 12) Ibid. p.74
- 13) Stradling R, Shostakovich and the Soviet System 1925-1975 in *Shostakovich, the man and his music*. P.190

# Review: Broken On All Sides: Race, Mass Incarceration, & New Visions for Criminal Justice in the US

by John Leslie in Philadelphia

**B**roken On All Sides, a film by Philadelphia community activist Matthew Pillischer, is a powerful indictment of the prison industrial complex. The United States has 5 percent of the world's population and incarcerates 25 percent of the world's prisoners. But why is this?

Institutionalized racism is at the root of the mass incarceration of millions in this country. Pillischer used interviews with academics, activists, religious communities, a former prisoner and a former Mayor of Philadelphia, John Street, to illustrate the origins of this set-up and how it operates.

The so-called war on drugs, which was conceived by the Reagan administration, is responsible for the huge increase in prisoner population over the last 30 years. While there has been no significant increase in the crime rate, the number of prisoners has ballooned to more than 2 million. This is more a symptom of racial politics than of any real threat to society.

African-Americans make up 12.4 percent of the US population but are more than 38 percent of the total prison population. Incarceration rates are out of proportion for Latins as well. Michelle Alexander, author of the book, the New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness, says in an interview in the film:

People who are living in ghetto communities today experience tremendous frustration, because not only are they being targeted in clearly biased ways by law enforcement, in countless ways they experience the discrimination, and often brutality of our criminal justice system.

*More than 60 percent of the more than 700,000 prisoners serving time in local jails in the United States have not been convicted of a crime.* They are awaiting trial and are not able to make bail because of poverty. This is on top of the more than 2.2 million (2010) prisoners in state and federal prisons and the 4,933,667 adults (2009) either on probation or parole. In all, *more than 7 million adults are under some form of incarceration or correctional control* (prison, jail, probation or parole) in the US. There were an additional 70,792 youth in "juvenile detention" in 2010.

Seventy five percent of these prisoners are charged with property crimes, drug offenses or other nonviolent crimes. Prisoners are kept in dirty, overcrowded, conditions and separated from their families. Prisoners often face the loss of their jobs while awaiting trial. Families are damaged because of the financial strain placed on them. Additionally, there is a huge bur-



**Director Matthew Pillischer  
Philadelphia's Ken Loach**

den placed on the taxpayer; jails cost local governments more than \$9 Billion annually. Some New Jersey counties have percentages of prisoners awaiting trial in local jails that are above the national average. In Philadelphia, the percentage of prisoners in the county system, who are considered "pre-trial," is about 57 percent. The Black and Hispanic prisoner population in Philadelphia County is more than 80 percent.

The New Jim Crow is a conscious policy by a white racist ruling class to criminalize African-Americans, while preserving the fiction that racial discrimination died with the end of formal segregation. The "war on drugs" and the "tough on crime" rhetoric of politicians keeps racial politics alive by appealing to the racist attitudes and prejudices of whites, all the while the pretence of a colour-blind society. According to the *Bureau of Justice Statistics*, *more than 70 percent of prisoners in the US are non-white. The obvious racial bias of the system- from racial profiling at the street level to bail disparities in court – helps to fuel a system of mass incarceration of people of colour.*

From the film:

We as a nation become blind, not so much to race, but to the existence of racial caste. We have become blind to the existence of a group of people who have become locked into a second-class status and become indifferent to their suffering.

Ex-offenders are plagued by high recidivism rates, which are reinforced by patterns of racial discrimination and lack of educational opportunities both in the community and in prison. States have cut vocational training in prison systems just as they have cut school budgets.

According to Michelle Alexander, "So many of the old forms of discrimination that we supposedly left behind during the Jim Crow era are suddenly legal again once you have been branded a felon." Ex-prisoners also quite often lose their right to vote, again reinforcing their second class status.

Addressing the problem of the prison industrial complex is an urgent task for progressive activists in the US. We can't simply rely on moral appeals to politicians or lawsuits. The only way to break this system down is to build a mass social movement that links together communities, churches, organized labor and students around a program demanding justice, jobs, education funding and an immediate end to the war on drugs.

A true defence of public education cannot be achieved

# Review: Broken On All Sides: Race

without understanding that the prison system, a multi-billion dollar business, is draining the resources we need to rebuild our schools and educate youth.

The defence of our unions, and the living standards of working class people, cannot be waged without understanding the roots of the prison industrial complex in a predatory capitalist system that is incapable of creating living wage jobs and locks millions of unemployed workers away in a for-profit prison system. Stop and frisk and other racial profiling must be ended. Police must be held accountable for targeting communities of colour. The call for an end to mass incarceration, linked to a call for jobs at union wages for all workers, is a crucial demand for working people.

Good political documentaries don't exist merely to inform us; They exist to move us to action. *Broken On All Sides* is just such a film. It's difficult for me to say just how much I enjoyed this excellent, well constructed, film without giving too much of it away. I urge the reader to buy a copy of this film and use it as an organizing tool. Organize a showing in your church, school or union hall. If your community organization, school or union has the resources, host the filmmaker and organize a discussion of what can be done to end the New Jim Crow.

Copies of *Broken On All Sides: Race, Mass Incarceration, & New Visions for Criminal Justice in the US* can be bought from the web site, <http://brokenonallsides.com/> The web site also has ideas and suggestions on how to organize in your community. Contact the director, Matthew Pillischer, at [brokenonallsides@gmail.com](mailto:brokenonallsides@gmail.com)

## Director's Biography

**M**atthew Pillischer graduated in 2000 from Bennington College with a degree in film-making. In 2010 he graduated from Temple University Beasley School of Law and is now a licensed attorney in PA and NJ. Matt worked as a staff attorney at Community Legal Services in Philadelphia, helping people with problems due to their criminal records. In the 10 years between college and law school, Matt worked in various jobs as a restaurant and retail worker, a farm-hand, and a social worker. An artist at heart, Matt always created movies, plays, paintings, music, and other art on the side. During the lead-up to the 2003 invasion of Iraq and witnessing the poverty, police brutality, and racism living in Cincinnati, OH, Matt became deeply politicized by the events going on around him. He became an activist and worked with various groups and individuals against racism and poverty, for workers' rights, women's and LGBT rights, and against military conquest.

Matt entered law school with an eye towards understanding the legal systems that perpetuate the unjust status quo, and also hoped to use law as a way to help liberate poor and working people. Matt continued making music and movies throughout law school, participated in activism in Philly and beyond, and during his last year of law school he began work on a movie about the Philadelphia Prisons.

Through an internship with the civil rights firm, Kairys, Rudovsky, Messing & Feinberg, Matt worked on a law-suit against the Philadelphia Prison System for over-crowding conditions. He interviewed inmates and investigated some of the conditions in the prisons. The summer before, he had worked with PA Institutional Law Project, a non-profit that serves the institutionalized populations in PA, advocating for prisoners' rights. These experiences, along with history and political theory he had learned as an activist, focused his life's work on problems within the prison and criminal justice systems.

Matt was lucky enough to meet other students at University of Pennsylvania Law School who were interested in the issue and collaborated on the movie at various stages. What started as a 15 minute video on local over-crowding issues has become a feature documentary that takes on the entire criminal justice system. It would not have been possible without all the wonderful people who helped along the way, particularly co-producers, Neal Swisher, Agatha Koprowski, and Karly O'Krent, and the movie's interviewees. <http://brokenonallsides.com/contact.php>

# The ISL breaks with the US LRP and prepares marriage to the RCIT dazzled by the ‘Arab Spring’

Response by the Liaison Committee for the Fourth International to the ISL of Palestine 28-3-2013

The LCFI is committed to principled revolutionary regroupment of those forces fighting to re-establish Trotsky's Fourth International programmatically based on the first four congresses of the Communist International and the Trotskyist Fourth International, in particular the Transitional Programme and the Communist method of the Workers United Front and the Anti-Imperialist United Front that produced that document. We seek to do that by splits and fusions leading to political, programmatic and ideological agreement in the first place with those claiming the name of Trotskyism. We understand within a few years of Trotsky's assassination by Stalin's agent, Ramón Mercader in Coyoacan, Mexico, in August 20 1940 the Fourth International began its political degeneration and decent into centrism, decimated by US isolationism and the terrible toll in cadres murdered by the Nazis, the Stalinists (often in collaboration) and the infiltration of its ranks by the CIA and GPU to send US Trotskyists sailors to their deaths on the Atlantic convoys and to murder the leading youth leaders, Trotsky's son Leon Sedov, his secretaries Erwin Wolf and Rudolf Klement and Ignace Reiss, the defector to Trotsky from the Stalinist bureaucracy. Nonetheless there have been serious struggles to re-establish the Fourth International on the above basis post WWII and we intend to defend those theoretical and political gains and to build on them.

The current regroupment process between the International Socialist League (ISL) of Palestine and the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT) is not based on these principles. The RCIT rejects the whole of Trotskyism since soon after the assassination of Trotsky, hence its Fifth International orientation, and Yossi Schwartz, a central leader of the ISL, has dipped into and joined almost every Trotskyist current in the planet without embracing any principles that cannot be juked at the next liaison. Hence the marriage proposal involves the sectarianism of the RCIT/Workers Power tradition and the opportunism of Yossi's political career and his group.

This is the response of the LCFI to the ISL and its centrist pro-Imperialist positions after the Liga Comunista of Brazil received a letter from Yossi which was clearly influenced by the bourgeois positions of Hamas and the elements of the ‘Arab Spring’. Dazzled by the apparent success of the Arab Spring both groups have failed to identify the hand of Imperialism taking control of the opposition groups in both Libya and Syria. Crucially they have failed to defend the Anti-Imperialist United Front against the proxy forces of Imperialism, foolishly parroting Imperialist propaganda that these are genuine ‘revolutions’. Paradoxically their political capitulation to Hamas in Gaza has brought them close to the position of Israel and Zionism on the Syrian civil war.

## Yossi's Summersaults

After a six year relationship the ISL has severed ties with the left Shachtmanite League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP) and seems to be gearing itself up to leap into bed with the RCIT, whose main section is the Revolutionary Communist Organisation for Liberation (RKOB) of Austria, former affiliates of the League for the Fifth International, whose British section is Workers Power. [1] It will be a difficult courtship but Yossi has accomplished some half a dozen similar manoeuvres in the past and we do not doubt his capacity to pull this one off as well. Accepting the ‘Fifth International’ will be a stumbling block (unprincipled bloc?) but having embraced Shachtmanism for six years it should not prove insurmountable. If his followers can stomach it, that is. Yossi has flipped-flopped so many times that pulling quotes from his political history (unfortunately for him all too readily available online) to refute his current positions is very simple indeed. The Sparts (International Communist League) delight in this. And the RCIT has similar reactionary positions to the ISL on Libya and Syria.

Yossi was a leader of the Trotskyist League, the Canadian section of the Sparts (ICL) for many years, having joined from the Israeli Communist party. In about 1995 he suddenly contacted RP of the Leninist Trotskyist Tendency (LTT). The British section was the Workers International League which LCFI leader Gerry had joined a few years previously. He declared his unconditional agreement with the main thrust of its programme and they in turn began to make political statements on Quebec and its right to self-determination. He claimed to have altered the line of the Sparts over Palestine; he had attacked its refusal to take sides in the 1948 war that led to the formation of Israel. He joined with his partner as the Canadian section of the LTT. He assisted RP in changing the position of the LTT on Israel/Palestine from the ‘secular democratic state of Palestine’ to one ‘bi-national state’, recognising Israel as a nation and therefore its right to self-determination and orienting to the working class, including the Jewish workers. Yossi and Gerry have always opposed all two-state positions. He convinced Gerry of this position at the time, the ‘secular democratic state’ position was just too obviously a capitulation to Yasser Arafat, the PLO and the Arab bourgeoisie, whose slogan it was. We will return to this vital point later.

The only conflict Gerry had with Yossi then was in 1996 when Gerry produced a document on Guerrilla war tactics for the LTT journal *In defence of Marxism* (same name as the IMT journal) and Yossi, supported by RP, objected to characterising Mao and the Chinese Communist party as part of the workers’ movement. [2] Gerry was reluctantly forced to change the article, but he never

## The ISL breaks with the US LRP

agreed. He felt it cast too many doubts over the theory of the deformed workers state in China and did not take into account the international character of Stalinism. The fact that Trotsky said the Chinese CP “tore itself away from its class” when it adopted guerrilla tactics did not prove the matter for him. But it did indicate Yossi’s turn towards Shachtmanism we can now see with the benefit of hindsight.

The LTT broke up in 1999 and, according to a Wiki article, by 2002 Yossi was back in Palestine; he is a Palestinian Jew. The Wiki piece (very likely written by Yossi himself) says:

The SWL (Socialist Workers League, 2002-4) was built as a result of a split initiated by Trotskyists who were part of the *Israeli Committee for One Democratic Republic of Palestine*. The Trotskyists, led by Schwartz, believed that only a program that struggles for a socialist Palestinian republic can unite the Palestinian Arab workers and peasants of the region. With two comrades, Schwartz founded a faction named *Militants for the Fourth International*. The MFI contained only 5-6 comrades. [3]

It is noteworthy here that Yossi had evidently changed his position and that of his followers and was now rejecting the right of Israel to self determination and denying it was a nation. The SWL immediately contacted the Partido Obrero, (Argentina) and became a section of its International, the *Co-ordinating Committee for the Refoundation of the Fourth International*, with whom this position gelled. The popular frontist orientation of PO veteran leader Georg Altamira apparently posed no problems for the SWL.

And now for the third summersault on this vital question. Wiki again:

During 2002 and the beginning of 2003, the SWL attempted to launch a movement for one and democratic republic with Abnaa el-Balad movement. The failure to build it, led the minority faction to conclude that it must ally with the Communist Party of Israel and call for voting to its political front, Hadash. The majority, led by the PO comrades, claimed that the 2003 elections should be boycotted. As a result of the factional struggle, the SWL (Minority) changed its views and accepted the right of the Israeli people for self-determination, along the perspective of socialist federation of the Middle East with full cultural and national rights to all minorities. In June 2003, the SWL (Minority) decided to become political supporter of the *International Marxist Tendency* (IMT) led by Alan Woods and the late Trotskyist politician Ted Grant. It changed its name to *In Defense of Marxism Circle* (IDMC), starting entry work within the Communist Party of Israel and later on within the Labor Party (Israel). The SWL was dissolved and does not exist anymore. [4]

So now Yossi and his comrades are again accepting Israel as a nation and are defending its right to self determination; the ‘bi-national state’ position once more. But a

fourth summersault was soon called for to seduce a new lover, Wiki again:

In July 2007 Yossi and his comrades left the *International Marxist Tendency* because they correctly took issue with the IMT’s

refusal to defend Hamas against the Is-

raeli-US-sponsored assault by Arafat on it following its electoral victory in Gaza in 2006. Now Yossi re-adopted “some of the politics of the SWL again but upholding the state capitalism analysis of the USSR and changing their name to the Internationalist Socialist League.

Back again to the ‘one democratic state’ position. To justify this we find that in 2007 he discovered big historical problems with Grant, Woods and the IMT:

Further, the ISL comrades understood that behind the IMT’s refusal to defend Hamas against Fatah’s imperialist-backed attacks stood an overall accommodation by the IMT to imperialism. For example, in the case of the Malvinas (Falklands) war of 1982, the IMT refused to defend Argentina, an oppressed neo-colonial country, against British imperialism. Similarly, in the struggles in Northern Ireland, the IMT had refused to side with the Irish Republican Army fighting against British imperialism. And beyond the IMT, the ISL comrades saw that all the major groupings claiming the banner of Trotskyism had at some time or other similarly betrayed the principle of unwavering defence of the oppressed against imperialist attack. [5]

The group’s newly-discovered state capitalist principles then led him to approach the British SWP’s international, the International Socialist Tendency (IST) and he had a number of articles published in International Socialist (still online). The British SWP has a relatively good anti-Zionist position, but in line with its opportunist anti-Imperialism, does tend to capitulate to its Muslim fundamentalist opponents, the Hamas in Gaza and the Islamic Republic of Iran. Yossi accepted that but apparently soon dug a bit deeper:

But a quick review (!) of the IST’s political record revealed a pattern of opportunist positions no better than those of the ‘orthodox Trotskyist’ milieu they had broken from. In particular, the SWP was certainly anti-Zionist but it habitually capitulated to the nationalist and Islamist leaderships of Muslims both in Britain and in the Middle Eastern countries occupied by the imperialists. The ISL had a brief cor-



Alan Woods, IMT leader, one of Yossi’s close comrades less than a decade ago.



**Max Shachtman: the struggle against Shachtman and his followers in 1939-40 was not just some obscure debate about how exactly revolutionists should characterise the USSR.**

respondence with the IST, which also revealed the IST's stunningly cynical attitude toward the prospects for working-class revolutionary struggle in the Middle East: the IST advised the ISL to give up their efforts and move to Britain! [6]

This really is too much. Yossi has been active as a Trotskyist for several decades and then, in 2007 and 2008, he suddenly discovered these blindingly obvious truths that any serious Trotskyist should know about the politics and methods of two of the biggest far left groups internationally, the IMT and the IST. The IMT are more obviously directly soft on Imperialism, the IST softness on its fundamentalist Muslim opponents led both groups to a similar position in Libya and Syria – for the IST any fighting anti-regime fundamentalist Muslim zealots are anti-Imperialists which is why they supported the Afghan Mujahideen against the USSR in the 80s. [7] Yossi certainly knew all these details back in 1995-9 when the LTT discussed these matters, but Yossi has an amazing capacity to 'forget' all uncomfortable political positions when the next lash-up approaches.

**The ISL's opportunism on deformed workers' states**  
In the liaison between the ISL and the LRP the repudiation of Trotskyism on the question of the degenerated and deformed workers states could not be more explicit:

The core faith of the orthodox milieu is that the Stalinist states were workers' states. That view was refuted by the fact that the working class barely lifted a finger to defend 'their' states from collapsing and in many cases had been a key force in anti-Stalinist mass struggles. But if the Stalinist states were not workers' states, what was their class nature? The ISL comrades correctly concluded that if the working

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class had been oppressed and exploited by those states, then the Stalinist bureaucracy that ruled them must have functioned as a capitalist ruling class. [8]

But the bride to-be is now furiously proclaiming her political virginity despite her large flock of offspring:

It is therefore important to understand the difference between state capitalism with a Bonapartist regime as Syria still is, and a deformed workers state as Cuba or North Korea still are. State capitalism is an economy where the ruling class is the capitalist class and the nationalization of the economy serves the interests of this class. In Cuba the capitalist class was eliminated as a class and escaped to Miami. However the Stalinist state apparatus blocks the road to socialism and unless this block is removed by a political revolution the capitalist class growing out (of) the Stalinist bureaucracy will take over the economy and the state and turn Cuba once again (in)to a capitalist state. We saw such a process already in China that by now is an imperialist state. [9]

Anthropologists have discovered that the myth of 'Mary's virgin birth' arose because of a mistranslation from Aramaic to Greek – the original proclaimed that a 'young woman' had given birth, a miraculous event for the parents surely but really rather a commonplace and unremarkable occurrence for humanity as a whole. [10]

We are again obliged to assert that what was involved in the struggle against Shachtman and his followers in 1939-40 was not just some obscure debate about how exactly revolutionists should characterise the USSR but what programme was necessary to steel the revolutionary vanguard of the class to lead the masses to overthrow the US ruling class. That is why we must always seek the defeat of 'our own' Imperialist ruling class in conflict with semi-colonial nations or deformed workers' states as Trotsky defended the USSR under Stalin and China under Chang Kai-shek. We note the defence of semi-colonial nations against Imperialist assault is missing from Yossi's rediscovered 'orthodoxy' above.

### **Yossi, the ISL and the Jewish working class**

The quotes in the IMT's IDOM from Yossi are still online where he defends Israel's right to exist:

These liberals argue that because of these human rights abuses, Israel cannot be a 'real' democracy like the Western states. This however, is a very weak argument. The crimes of the Israeli ruling class are not fundamentally different from those of the 'Democratic' Imperialist states. If the radical liberals who insist that Israel is not a Western democracy use the same criteria to classify the imperialist 'democratic' states themselves, then they will have to conclude that democracy in any of these countries is a fiction. The actions of Israel in Gaza and the West Bank are no different from those of the US in Iraq. Does that mean there is no form of democracy in the US as well? Further-

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more, attention must be drawn to the fact that Israel was not the only capitalist state that created a massive refugee problem in 1947... Israel is not different from any of this. Israel is an imperialist and capitalist state, ruled by the big corporations. [11]

Now all that has had to be junked and:

This development is explained by the unique nature of Israel as a colonial settler state. It is a basic truth that the great majority of the world's workers have "nothing to lose but their chains" and therefore have a fundamental interest in overthrowing the capitalist system. The same cannot be said of Israel's Jewish workers. Like other labor-aristocratic layers in imperialist countries, they enjoy certain material privileges based on the imperialist status of their ruling class. But unlike even other labor-aristocratic workers, their gains are enjoyed at the direct expense of the Palestinian masses and they live on land stolen from the Palestinians. Thus they see the aggressive actions of the Israeli state as the guarantor of their privileged existence. While the IMT, like most socialist groups, stubbornly closes its eyes to these facts, the future ISLers soon realized that they could not afford to do the same if they were to advance a genuine perspective for the struggle for Palestinian liberation and for socialist revolution in the Middle East. [12]

And here is the nub of the problem, from which springs all other problems. The Israeli working class, as a class, uniquely on the planet, are apparently beyond the pale. And this springs from the fact that they are a unique form of labour aristocracy because the "their gains are enjoyed at the direct expense of the Palestinian masses and they live on land stolen from the Palestinians. Thus they see the aggressive actions of the Israeli state as the guarantor of their privileged existence".

We cannot accept this uniqueness. Yossi admits that the Israeli Jews now constitute a nation and we agree. He further says that this nation has no right to self-determination because, historically and today, it can only be exercised at the expense of the Palestinian nation. We agree with this also; the Zionist state must be overthrown but the Israeli Zionist state is not the same as the Israeli nation. As we agree on the right of return of all Palestinians expelled from 1948 onwards we must also assert that it surely would not be beyond the wit of a revolutionary Palestinian workers' state to house, feed and provide for health care and education of all Jews and Palestinians in the region in a Multi-Ethnic state. Personal property, house and land disputes could be settled amicably in arbitration courts without ethnic cleansing.

The bi-national state slogan adopted by the LTT on Yossi's urgings and then by the International Trotskyist Current (forerunner of the Socialist Fight group) is incorrect we all agree now. It does imply Israel's right to self-determination at the expense of the Palestinians. And we know that no isolated revolution in any state in the region



US Secretary of State John Kerry, centre, British Foreign Secretary William Hague, left, and Italy's Foreign Minister Giulio Terzi meet with the "Friends of the Syrian People Ministerial" group. Yossi: "Thus it is clear that at least until now the Western imperialists have not armed the rebels."

or on the planet could survive on its own for long so the perspective of a Socialist Federation of the Middle East is the correct one.

But we must be far more rigorous in how we apply these slogans as they reflect our perspectives. As Trotskyists we not only believe that 'bourgeois' revolutions must be led by the working class but they must also go on to tackle the tasks of the socialist revolution for that revolution to be permanent. So we advance the slogan of a workers' and peasants' government as a transitional demand leading to the strategic goal of a Multi-Ethnic workers' state of Palestine as a part of the Socialist Federation of the Middle East.

## **Yossi on the leadership of 'the revolution' in Syria**

Yossi now finds himself to the right of his former IMT comrades on the question of the leadership of this 'revolution'. In an article on 14th March 2013 *What the Assad regime was and what it has become – Part Three*, the IMT's Fred Weston says:

... the situation is now far more complicated. Many revolutionary youth are still fighting to remove the hated dictator and all his hangers on. *But what determines the real nature of the opposition as a whole is its leadership and its programme* (our emphasis).

It is true that some sections of the Free Syrian Army have clashed with the fundamentalists that they see as having hijacked their revolution, but what is their alternative? The programme is fundamentally one of bourgeois democracy at best and Islamic fundamentalist reaction at worst. We must speak the truth and explain honestly what has happened. We are for the downfall of Assad, but we are also against imperialist intervention and the manoeuvres of the reactionary regimes in the region. [13]

Yossi's article, *Victory to Revolution in Syria* assesses the opposition to Assad thus:

The ability of the Bashar al-Assad regime to survive so far is largely due to the lack of working class independent mobilization at the head of the opposition. There are many local committees that could become Soviets and which are continuing to provide services. But they lack coordination

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and a revolutionary strategy. Equally, the resistance is still made up of countless formations of loosely connected armed militants, with no credible unified revolutionary command. The fractured character of this armed resistance is a result not only of the social segmentation and isolation policies enforced for decades by Damascus but also because of the class nature of the opposition at the moment.

The middle class leaders of the uprising are blaming each other for the failure. The seculars blame the Islamists while the Islamist are blaming the secularists. The simple truth is that the middle class organizations – whether they are secularists or Islamists – do not have the program, strategy or tactics to mobilize the masses workers and peasants to overthrow the bloody regime. If the leaders of the opposition hate Assad they are at the same time afraid of working class revolution. If there is a clear lesson to learn it is that without the working class, women and men leading the masses including the lower middle class and without a revolutionary leadership of the working class the stalemate can continue for a longer period. [14]

This is all “if your aunt was a man she’d be your uncle” stuff: “There are no working class independent mobilization at the head of the opposition” – because it is an imperialist sponsored counter-revolutionary opposition. “There are many local committees that could become Soviets”. But they are pigs’ ears and not silk purses. “But they lack coordination and a revolutionary strategy” because they are counter-revolutionary. There is a problem with “the class nature of the opposition at the moment” – it is a reactionary, imperialist-sponsored bourgeois movement. If only, if only, if only it was not what it is it would be something else. At least Fred Weston can acknowledge the bitter truth: “*But what determines the real nature of the opposition as a whole is its leadership and its programme*”.

But Fred ignores Imperialist sponsorship so the unstoppable Arab Spring still dazzles him into support; Yossi ignore these problems and plumbs for the Sunni Muslims.

## The ISL and Muslim fundamentalists

The correct attack by the ISL on the IMT for refusing to defend Hamas against Arafat’s Zionist-US-sponsored thugs has now morphed into a strategic alliance with the fundamentalist Muslims. “Palestine united and free from the river to the sea” is a Hamas slogan used by the ISL and makes difficult any alliance with Israeli workers. This turn away from the working class is far clearer in Yossi’s *Victory to the Revolution in Syria* statement. In the split debate the ISL charged the LRP with failure to defend the fundamentalist against French Imperialism. We have looked at the LRP statement and the subsequent notes in reply to readers and can find no substance in this charge at all. Despite big differences with the LRP over Libya and Syria the LRP statements on Mali seem principled and



This image shows the Free Syrian Army about to kill captured opponents. Of course the Assad government are guilty too.

correct to us. Moreover the LRP counter charged the ISL with a failure to criticise the fascistic barbarism of the fundamentalist in Mali and assert that as the source of the disagreement that caused the split. We feel there is substance to this charge. In Yossi’s statement on Syria he explicitly defends his position on ‘Islamism’:

Thus it is clear that at least until now the Western imperialists have not armed the rebels and the reason they have not armed the rebels is because they do not trust them as many of them are Islamists. The problem the imperialists have in Syria is the relative strength of the Islamists in the mass movement. [15]

Of course Imperialism has armed the rebels, both on their own accord and via Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar. They have not supplied them with heavy weapons or air cover; apparently Syria’s air defences are very sophisticated. And it is true that they are nervous about what the fundamentalist might do to Israel and the reaction of Russia, China and Iran. Yossi’s criticism amounts to a demand that Imperialism arm the FSA now; he may get his wish soon. But the next statement brings out his capitulation very clearly:

At this conjuncture of history in Afghanistan, in Palestine, in Mali the imperialists are on one side and the Islamists on the other. This of course can be changed and this would not be the first time in the history of the last 100 years that the Islamists would serve the imperialists. *But today the Islamists are fighting against the imperialists and today Revolutionary Marxists are on the same side as the Islamists in the conflict against Assad’s tyranny* without giving the petit bourgeois or bourgeois secular or religious forces any political support. (our emphasis)[17]

We do not have to go back 100 years to find ‘Islamists’ in the service of Imperialism. The CIA sponsored Bin Laden and armed the Afghan Mujahideen against the USSR in the 80s. The CIA sponsored the fundamentalist Muslim zealots in Libya against Gaddafi. And at this very moment they are sponsoring another wing of the same movement that now dominates the Syrian opposition, the Muslim Brotherhood, in Egypt to smash that revolutionary struggle in which the working class has played and is playing such a vital part. Imperialist-sponsored fundamentalists are leading the attacks on the working class in Tunisia. The Turkish AKP government have accepted Israel’s

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Obama-dictated apology over the murders of their nine citizens on the Mavi Marmara by Israel the better to co-ordinate their assault on Assad. And the very same Hamas, in which Yossi places such faith, has made clear that it will cut a deal with Israel if possible to betray the Palestinians, just as Arafat did before them and Abbas is doing now. It has rejected its traditional alliance with Shi'a-dominated Syria and Iran and now proclaims itself Sunni Muslims in alliance with the Sunni/Whabbi reactionary Imperialists stooges in Egypt and Saudi. On 28 March 2013 the *Times of Israel* approvingly reported that the FSA had: "retaliated against what it claimed were Hezbollah hostilities and bombarded the group's interests inside Lebanon". The Hezbollah are Shi'a Muslims and the third target of the US and Israel.

The unwanted outcome of the Iraq war for Imperialism was to strengthen Shi'a Iran in the region. US imperialism has now adopted a tactic of allying with former Sunni supporters of Saddam in Iraq and Sunnis through the region to bring down Assad and Iran and seize control of the whole area in alliance with the Sunni/Whabbi Muslims. Sure the US would prefer its own secular stooges, they want Ghassan Hitto, "a pro-imperialist Syrian-American capitalist who has been resident in the United States for decades, as prime minister for rebel-held areas of Syria" as Yossi says. But as in 1996 when the Taliban took Kabul and lynched the former President Najibullah the CIA will celebrate in its Langley, Virginia HQ if Assad falls to the FSA. Israel will too, despite some trepidation.

Yossi attacks his opponents on the left who gave uncritical support to Assad, like the Workers World Party, George Galloway, the Maoists and the CPGB (ML). His 'demolition' of these groups consists in quoting what they have to say and leaving it to the reader to imagine what is wrong with it. In fact most of what he quotes is principled anti-Imperialist stuff – he could surely find many unprincipled sections uncritically supporting the reactionary Assad if he tried. But he is anxious to employ the traditional amalgam tactic of lumping them all together to direct his attack at the Liaison Committee for the Fourth International. Again there is no refutation of the LCFI quote apart from the assertion what we think all these counter-revolutions were CIA plots.

Of course there were many sincere but politically naïve anti-Imperialist and anti-Gaddafi-Assad revolutionists in Libya and Syria when the uprisings broke out; they supplied the forces for the first uprisings. But reactionary leaders and Imperialist sponsorship quickly swept them into political oblivion. The CIA surely plotted furiously in Libya, but it was the Saudis and the Qataris who did that in Syria – right from the outset they had armed forces in the ground who opened fire on the army and police dur-



Mohammad Najibullah Ahmadzai (right) President of Afghanistan 1987 - 1992. The CIA celebrated when he was tortured, mutilated and lynched by the Taliban on 27 September 1996.

ing legitimate peaceful demonstrations, drawing the fire of the security forces. These were clearly pre-planned operations to bring on the conflict that they knew was brewing because of the legitimate opposition of many to the brutal Assad regime. Also many Sunni sheikhs and mullahs were seeking revenge for the appalling Hama massacre in 1982.

But the masses in the cities, petty bourgeois and working class, backed Assad and still do, because they know he is their only hope of retaining a secular state where they have a modicum of civil rights for their trade unions and religious freedom compared to the threatening imposition of Sharia law by the more backward, rural fundamentalists that Yossi supports, despite ritual disclaimers.

And then he goes on to prove at length what a fake anti-Imperialist Assad is, as if we did not know. The point is the Assad government is fighting Imperialism now and so we are obliged to form an Anti-Imperialist United Front with him against the Muslim fundamentalist reactionaries and bourgeois secular agents of US imperialism. Must we quote Trotsky's 1937 letter to Diego Rivera again to show it is current conflicts that counts? That Spain in 1936-39 was an Imperialist country and China in 1937 was a semi-colonial country as is Syria in 2013? Didn't Trotsky know about Chiang Kai-shek's massacre of the Shanghai Soviet in 1927 when he advocated such a bloc in 1937? Or what Haile Selassie was in 1935 or Vargas in Brazil in 1938? And still Trotsky was for the defeat of the Imperialist forces, even by these reactionaries. In China Trotsky and the early Comintern always advocated an Anti-Imperialist United Front with Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek during the civil wars against the northern warlords who were agents of Imperialism, very like Syria today.

## The ISL, Mali and the LRP

But let us finish with the LRP quote where they cogently state the correct Marxist position on Mali (despite their errors in Libya and Syria):

So let us be perfectly clear: when we said that we stand in defence of all those facing imperialist attack, we meant it.

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Yes, since we stand against the French invasion of Mali, identify the imperialists and their allies as the main enemy and call for their defeat, of course we stand in defence of even the most reactionary Islamist groups being attacked in Mali such as Ansar Dine, the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa and Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).

As our statement noted, we take this stand with full knowledge of the crimes these groups perpetrated against the people of Mali's North during their time in power. Just how terrible was the rule of Islamist groups in the North?

So bad that apparently even Al-Qaeda criticized their version of 'Sharia' for being too extreme! On February 14 the Associated Press reported the discovery in Timbuktu of documents authored by Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) leader Abu Musab Abdul Wadud (a.k.a. Abdemalek Droukdel) that were left behind when the Islamist forces abandoned the city. Those documents criticized local Islamist forces for going too far, too fast, in imposing their conception of religious rule. They reportedly singled out for criticism the stoning-to-death of adulterers and the whipping of people for other supposed crimes, attacks on Sufi Muslim sites of worship "and the fact that you prevented women from going out, and prevented children from playing, and searched the houses of the population."

Because the terribly oppressive nature of the Islamist groups' rule in northern Mali's was already well known (as was the brutal role of the nationalists who at first shared power with them), our statement made clear that while we stand in defence of the Islamists against the imperialists' attacks, we do not think that the masses should sacrifice their struggle against any of those forces that oppress them:

At the same time, our opposition to the imperialists does not mean that we call for the oppressed to necessarily pause their struggle against local oppressors, forgo an opportunity to overthrow them or to in any way compromise their ability to defend themselves by necessarily rushing to the defence of those who were, before the imperialist attack, acting as local rulers and oppressors themselves. Indeed, despite the imperialist attack, in concrete instances armed Islamist or nationalist groups may prove a more immediate threat to the masses; under such circumstances necessity dictates that the oppressed must defend themselves against whoever is the most immediate and grave threat. [18]

If you substitute Gaddafi and Assad for the 'Islamists' that was the policy of the LCFI for Libya and is for Syria today. It is, in fact, a clear elucidation of the principles of the Anti-Imperialist United Front. Except the LRP have great problems with proxy forces acting on behalf of Imperialism. Their Shachtmanite origins oblige them to defend the political cowardice of Burnham, Shachtman, Carter and their middle class milieu which Trotsky and the revolutionary US SWP fought as recorded in *In Defence of Marxism*. Their traditional softness on Imperialism on the



Lenin speaks before the delegates to the Third Congress of the Comintern, 1921. The revolutionary Comintern opposed the opportunist adaption of the Anti-Imperialist United Front by which Stalinism and others later capitulated to bourgeois nationalism.

former USSR compromises their position on the struggles of oppressed nations today.

## Notes

- [1] ISL's Resignation Letter to the LRP (March 2013), <http://www.the-isleague.com/isl-lrp-split/>.
- [2] Idom, Theoretical journal of the LTT, No 4 (May 1996), *Guerrilla warfare*, <http://www.marxists.org/history/etol/document/ltt/ltt-idom4d.htm>.
- [3] Wiki article, Socialist Workers League, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socialist\\_Workers\\_League](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socialist_Workers_League).
- [4] Ibid.
- [5] Joint ISL.LRP statement, [http://lrp-cofi.org/statements/lrp-isl\\_100809.html](http://lrp-cofi.org/statements/lrp-isl_100809.html).
- [6] Ibid.
- [7] We do not use the pejorative terms 'Islamacist' and 'Islamist' that lumps together all Muslims. <http://www.publiceye.org/frontpage/911/islamacist.html>.
- [8] Joint ISL.LRP statement.
- [9] Victory to the Revolution in Syria! by Yossi Schwartz, <http://www.the-isleague.com/syria-15-3-2013/>.
- [10] Behind The Bible Fraud—By Robert Adams, New Dawn Magazine.com, <http://rense.com/general66/hide.htm>.
- [11] IMT, Is Israel a Democracy? Interview with Yossi Schwartz IDOM 2005, <http://www.marxist.com/israel-democracy140105.htm>.
- [12] Joint ISL.LRP statement.
- [13] What the Assad regime was and what it has become – Part Three, by Fred Weston, IDOM, <http://www.marxist.com/what-the-assad-regime-was-and-what-it-has-become-3.htm>.
- [14] Victory to the Revolution in Syria! by Yossi Schwartz
- [15] Ibid.
- [16] Ibid.
- [17] Ibid.
- [18] LRP/Cofi, February 17, 2013, In Response to Questions from Readers, [http://lrp-cofi.org/statements/mali\\_response\\_021713.html](http://lrp-cofi.org/statements/mali_response_021713.html).