



red & black
Revolution
Issue 13 Winter 2007



INSIDE:
IRISH HEALTH SERVICE
LEFT COMMUNISM
"THE PRICE OF FIRE" TURKEY
COMMUNITY ORGANISING IN GLASGOW

JOURNAL OF LIBERTARIAN COMMUNISM



About the Workers Solidarity Movement

The Workers Solidarity Movement was founded in Dublin, Ireland in 1984 following discussions by a number of local anarchist groups on the need for a national anarchist organisation. At that time with unemployment and inequality on the rise, there seemed every reason to argue for anarchism and for a revolutionary change in Irish society. This has not changed.

Like most socialists we share a fundamental belief that capitalism is the problem. We believe that as a system it must be ended, that the wealth of society should be commonly owned and that its resources should be used to serve the needs of humanity as a whole and not those of a small greedy minority. But, just as importantly, we see this struggle against capitalism as also being a struggle for freedom. We believe that socialism and freedom must go together, that we cannot have one without the other. As Mikhail Bakunin, the Russian anarchist said, "*Socialism without freedom is tyranny and brutality*".

Anarchism has always stood for individual freedom. But it also stands for democracy. We believe in democratising the workplace and in workers taking control of all industry. We believe that this is the only real alternative to capitalism with its on going reliance on hierarchy and oppression and its depletion of the world's resources.

In the years since our formation, we've been involved in a wide range of struggles - our members are involved in their trade unions; we've fought for abortion rights and against the presence of the British state in Northern Ireland, and against the growth of racism in southern Ireland; we've also been involved in campaigns in support of workers from countries as far apart as Poland, Nepal, Peru and South Africa. Alongside this, we have produced over 90 issues of our paper Workers Solidarity, and a wide range of pamphlets. Over the years we have brought many anarchists from abroad to speak in Ireland. These have included militants from Chile, the Czech Republic, Canada, the USA, Israel, Greece, Italy, and a veteran of the anarchist Iron Column in the Spanish Civil War.

As anarchists we see ourselves as part of a long tradition that has fought against all forms of authoritarianism and exploitation, a tradition that strongly influenced one of the most successful and far reaching revolutions in the last century - in Spain in 1936 - 37. The value of this tradition cannot be underestimated today. With the fall of the Soviet Union there is renewed interest in our ideas and in the tradition of libertarian socialism generally. We hope to encourage this interest with Red & Black Revolution. We believe that anarchists and libertarian socialists should debate and discuss their ideas, that they should popularise their history and struggle, and help point to a new way forward.

A couple of years ago our paper, Workers Solidarity became a free news-sheet, which appears every two months. With a print-run of around 8,000, this means a huge increase in the number of people here in Ireland receiving information about anarchism and struggles for change. As more people join the WSM, we are able to do more to promote anarchism. If you like what we say and what we do, consider joining us. It's quite straight-forward. If you want to know more about this just write or email us.

We have also increased and improved our presence on the Internet. This move has been prompted by the enormous success to date of our web site and resources. The WSM site has been updated and moved to www.wsm.ie and we are adding new material all the time. A large number of people are now looking at and reading about our anarchist ideas on our site. Many of our papers, magazines, posters and some pamphlets are available in PDF format - allowing for material to be downloaded in pre-set format, to be printed and distributed right across the world.

Like most of the publications of the left, Red and Black Revolution is not a profit making venture. It exists in order to spread ideas and contribute to the process of changing the world. If you would like to help out in this work there are a couple of things you can do. One option is to subscribe to the magazine. Another is to take a number of copies of each issue to sell. We are always looking for bookshops or stalls that will sell this magazine on a commercial basis. Our time and resources are limited and at times of busy activity our publications are often delayed. So any help that you can offer would be a real help in getting our ideas out to a wider audience. If you want to help out, get in touch at the address below.

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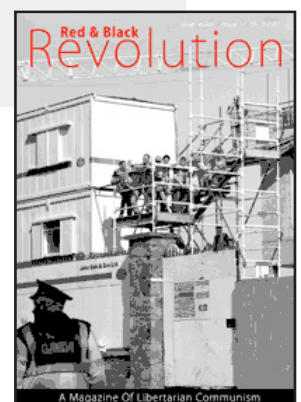
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Back copies of 'Red and Black Revolution' are available from WSM. Issue 12 features articles on sex work, the meaning of 'direct action', Rossport, anarchists and the elections, a history of the Grass-roots Gatherings, and more. Send €2.00 for a copy



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A system in need of a cure

An anarchist analysis of the Irish Healthcare System

Mark A. Nolan

The healthcare system, upon which people in Ireland depend, is an apartheid system. Simply put, some lives are worth more than others. Rare attempts at reform have been stymied by historic, chronic underspending and vested interests. This legacy has forced the vast majority of working people to take out private health insurance and has laid the foundations for a neo-liberal push towards an American-style system of private medicine.

Despite the “economic miracle” called the Celtic Tiger that has led to Ireland having a higher GNP per head of population than much of the rest of the EU, it lags behind in terms of health outcomes. At age 65 we have the lowest life expectancy in the EU for both men and women. Indeed, the gap between Irish and EU life expectancy has been widening. Infant mortality rates are above the EU average. We have above EU mortality rates for cancer and coronary heart disease. Despite Ireland’s incidence of breast cancer being among the lowest in Europe, the death rate in 2001 from breast cancer was the highest in EU15. To cap it all, we have a widening income gap, which analysis suggests will of itself worsen our health experience since greater inequality is associated with higher mortality rates.

This state of poor health of people in Ireland, especially when analysed on class lines, is a direct reflection of the unequal and inaccessible nature of the Irish healthcare system. The barriers to accessing care, in terms of availability and cost, mean that the level of health education and preventative medicine is severely low and that treatment for illness is often provided in an untimely fashion. The cost of private care means that many people must wait long periods, sometimes too long, for the treatment they require to survive.

In this analysis of the Irish healthcare system, the reasons for this lack of equality and access will be discussed. This will be followed by a review of the systemic problems in the system itself which hamper both the delivery of quality care and genuine reform. A summary of some of the current issues in the Irish Healthcare System will provide a reference point to view the system as it currently stands and to where the ruling class intend to develop it. In response to these seemingly insurmountable problems, a series of potential solutions will be put forward, both in the short-term and in the medium-term. How these reforms could and should be funded will be examined together with some ideas on how these reforms may be fought for and secured by ordinary people. Finally, a post-revolutionary health system will be envisioned drawing on the examples of the brief experience in revolutionary Spain and the more long-running experiment in Cuba.

Cost is the biggest obstacle to receiving medical care, be it just a check-up or some more necessary treatment.

Latest figures for the beginning of 2007 show that there are currently 1.2 million people with medical cards [1]. This represents 28.9% of the population. There are a further 51,000 people with “GP-Visit Cards” which qualify them for free medical consultations but no drug costs. This is a remarkably high proportion considering that any single person under 65 years of age and living alone has to earn less than €184 per week to qualify for a medical card [2]. Given that social welfare payments are now up to €185.80 per week and that even on the minimum wage of €8.30 per hour, one would only have to work 22 hours a week (the equivalent of a part-time job) to surpass the income threshold, it is surprising that any worker is entitled to a medical card.

Without the medical card, GP visits cost on average approximately €40, while being higher in urban areas (especially Dublin). These fees act as a disincentive to access medical care in two important ways. Firstly, they act as a deterrent to seeking out any sort of health education or preventative examination from a GP. It is commonly accepted that preventative medicine, such as cholesterol tests and smear tests, are fundamental in improving the life-expectancy and quality of life of a population. Secondly, they discourage people from seeking treatment when they are suffering from an ailment, instead waiting to see if the illness gets better or worse before reaching into their pocket to shell out at least €40 [3]. Not acting in a timely manner in relation to disease is a common reason for more serious complications to develop.

Given the low level of medical card entitlement in Ireland, it is not surprising that about 49% of the population purchase medical insurance each year from VHI, Vivas or Quinn Insurance (formerly BUPA). This costs between €119 and €143 per year for basic GP cover, between €360 and €422 for minimal hospital cover, and up to €1800 for specialist treatment. Despite funding the health system through the tax system, 49% of people are forced to pay these sums to access adequate care. Of course, this leaves approximately 21% of the population who are not entitled to the medical card and cannot afford health insurance. They must fork out €40 for each GP visit and €65 for every night they spend in a public hospital bed (if they can get one), not to mention the other fees accruing.

Accessing treatment in a public hospital as a public patient is usually a test of patience and endurance. Ireland has 4.85 beds per 1,000 of population while the EU average is 6.3. Ireland has 3 acute hospital beds per 1,000 while the EU average is 4.1. There is no common waiting list to access these beds. Consequently, public patients may wait years for treatments which private patients may receive within weeks in the same publicly funded hospital, irrespective of need. It is a rationing system based on ability to pay.

Ultimately, these forms of inequality and inaccessibility for

those that need care in the Irish Healthcare System is caused by an unwillingness to invest.

Primary care has never been emphasised by any government in the history of the state in terms of funding for equipment, buildings or staffing levels. For this reason, the level of health education and preventative medicine being performed is chronically low. GPs routinely refer patients onwards for procedures which are within their competence and which they could perform in a well-equipped local surgery. As a result, a disproportionate amount of medical care takes place in hospitals, putting them under undue pressure.

Likewise, Irish hospitals have been historically massively underfunded, meaning that we have a lower bed ratio per head of population than any of the EU15 countries. The Minister for Health, Mary Harney, and her colleagues in the neo-liberal Progressive Democrats Party trumpet the fact that Ireland is now spending more per head of population than other OECD countries. However, this comes on the back of 30 years of neglect. Over the 27 years from 1970 to 1996, Ireland invested on average each year 63% of the EU average (capital expenditure). As recently as 1990, Ireland was investing 38% of the average. It obviously takes more than a few years to rectify this.

These barriers to access, and discrimination between patients, is exacerbated by the balance of power in the health system. Essentially, the Department of Finance has too much power. Furthermore, the contract agreed between the State on the one hand and consultants or GPs on the other gives too much power to the doctors.

GPs are self-employed. Generally, they practice on their own premises (often a converted room or two in their house) and view their practice as a private company where they charge what they like. They tender to receive a list of patients covered by the medical card, for which they receive a "capitation", that is a set fee per patient depending on their age, gender and distance from the practice. This capitation is relatively low (approximately €120 per annum on average for people under 65) so they generally supplement this income through private practice. For this reason, GPs do not setup a practice in predominantly working-class areas with high rates of unemployment. These communities must go without a doctor and are forced either to travel to the nearest GP or to the nearest hospital.

Given that they receive far more money, proportionally, from private patients, given that they can charge per appointment

Co-Location is the policy of giving tax-breaks to the private sector to build private hospitals on the land of public hospitals.

and relative to the treatment given, they naturally have an incentive to focus their time and energy on their private patients. As they are self-employed and often exist as virtual monopolies, there are few incentives to expand their practice to include a larger range of services provided by a team of health workers using state-of-the-art equipment, something which would provide a holistic approach and optimal healthcare for patients.

In addition, in the GP contract there is no stated minimum level of service, no incentive towards maximal service, and no mention of preventative procedures. Quality of service can therefore not be expected.

Consultants' current contract allows them to earn between €143,000 and €186,000 per year for being present in a public hospital for a mere 33 hours per week. During this time they are under no obligation to treat their public patients but can treat their private patients who happen to be in the same hospital.

Consultants do not provide the majority of care in public hospitals instead delegating it to Non-Consultant Hospital Doctors (NCHDs), also known as Junior Doctors. The consultants are the specialists with the training required; yet they do not provide it in many instances. Of course, consultants provide treatment in person for private patients.

Finally, the consultant contract is such that the work balance the consultant strikes between emergency/elective, private/public, and teaching/research is none of the hospital's business. Consultants are not accountable to anyone, either administratively or clinically.

Since 2002 a cap has been placed by the Department of Health on further employment of health workers in many areas. As a replacement, hospitals have been hiring agency workers on temporary contracts. Instead of employing a health worker in a full-time position, including the benefits (pension, health insurance, etc.) that this entails, they take on temporary workers as they need them, paying a premium to the recruitment agency for the convenience.

Given the need for more staff in all areas, and given the increase in the population in Ireland in recent years, this will cause greater and greater problems and means meaningful planning for the future is impossible.

Having described some of the more glaring institutional problems in the Irish Healthcare System, a brief examination of some of the current issues is illuminating in seeing where mistakes continue to be made and where the system may be heading.

The National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) - This policy aimed at buying treatment for public patients from the private sector (either in Ireland or abroad) in order to cut waiting lists and waiting times. To a certain extent this narrow ambition has been achieved. However, this advance has come through an odd circularity in policy: private patients are given preferential treatment in public hospitals, and the public patients whom they displace may in turn be treated in private hospitals. This is neither an efficient use of public money nor an equitable way to treat patients. One particularly bizarre statistic is that 36% of all procedures carried out under the NTPF occurred in the same hospital the patient was referred from - that is to say that the consultant is getting paid an additional private fee to treat a patient s/he is supposed to be treating anyway!

Co-Location is the policy of giving tax-breaks to the private sector to build private hospitals on the land of public hospitals. Those behind this policy argue that it will create more (private) beds in the hospital system, freeing up beds in public hospitals.

This policy would be objectionable enough if it simply amounted to the giving away of public land and the waste of €500m on tax-breaks to the private sector. What makes it a more fundamental crossroads is that it will institutionalise two-tier care in the Irish Healthcare System. It is difficult to see how this system could be reversed or reformed if it goes ahead. Indeed, these private hospitals may well require a second-rate public health service

to survive - depending on treating public patients that the State is paying these private operators to treat under the National Treatment Purchase Fund.

Furthermore, private hospitals cannot offer a complete acute care service since they concentrate on elective surgery in less complex and more profitable areas and simply do not deal with chronic illness. For that reason, co-located private hospitals will not free up private beds in public hospitals for public use on anything like a one-for-one basis. In fact, there will be a net increase in private beds, for which taxpayers will pay through tax breaks for private hospitals.

Although this policy was initially opposed by many hospital boards and by the Green Party, it appears inevitable that this policy will be implemented with their consent.

In some ways, the introduction of a new consultants' contract is an attempt at much needed reform. Firstly, it brings back the public-only contract, whereby consultants may only treat public patients. Secondly, it starts the process of doubling the number of consultants in the Irish health-care system, something which has been recommended for a long time [4]. Thirdly, consultants would be expected to work in teams around the clock reducing current reliance on NCHDs.

Of course, considering the fact that the contract is upsetting the status quo, the vested interests of the consultants have been given some serious sweeteners in order to get them to accept the deal. Currently, hospital consultants are paid between €143,738 and €186,922 every year. The new deal offers a new salary of up to €240,000 - an enormous salary for a mere 31 hours a week of public hospital work. Such a salary would seem sufficient. However, the consultants have carried out industrial action and have refused to cooperate with the hiring of new consultants.

Finally, increasing consultant numbers at this salary level will be a huge drain on public finances. It is estimated that if consultant numbers were to be doubled at the proposed salary levels that it would consume one eighth of the entire health budget.

The main cause of congested A+E wards is that old people and mentally ill people are forced to stay in A+E beds because there are no facilities to transfer them to. The government has been using tax-incentivised private nursing homes as the way to create some of this extra capacity. The reason that it is such an issue in the media, in comparison to other problems in the health service, is that it is the only

place where private patients must wait in line with public patients and experience the long delays and low standards of care.

Short-Term Solutions

What follows are the most important reforms that could be carried out in the next 5 years:

- 1) The income thresholds for eligibility for the medical card should be increased so that 40% of the population are in receipt of one and this threshold should be indexed to the average industrial wage.
- 2) There should be a common waiting list in all hospitals so that treatment is provided according to need rather than ability to pay.
- 3) More students need to graduate in many areas - doctors of all types, children's nurses, dieticians, chiropodists, radiographers and radiation therapists. Funding for the creation of places on these courses should be provided.
- 4) There needs to be massive investment in the creation of capacity in public hospitals, and in nursing homes and community care to free up space in A+E wards.
- 5) The GP contract should be re-examined so that they become public sector employees, paid a set salary, with incentives to work in deprived areas. A minimum level of service should be stipulated, incentives for a maximum level of service should be provided, together with an emphasis on preventative medicine.

Medium-Term Solutions

Further reforms that may take up to ten years to achieve would be:

- 1) Medical card provision should be expanded to the entire population, providing a universal healthcare system, free at the point of access, to encourage preventative medicine.
- 2) Private practice should cease in public hospitals.
- 3) The number of patients per GP should fall under the 1,000 threshold to improve access for patients and improve the doctor/patient relationship.
- 4) Waiting lists should be phased out by moving towards a booking system as they have in France. There, all surgery is planned under a booking system in which the patient is given a date for surgery immediately it is prescribed, although this may involve a few months wait.
- 5) A modern primary care system, with GPs, practice nurses, public health nurses, physiotherapists, social workers and others working in teams from modern, well-equipped, computerised primary care centres in every community and large urban neighbourhood.

How such reforms would be funded is an important question.

The existing Irish tax-funded system could be reformed overnight in a Bevan-type manner [5] by introducing free primary care in which the state would pay GPs by salary, and by banning private practice in public hospitals and investing in public care so that the majority would opt to be treated in one-tier public hospitals by salaried consultants. This would be similar to the system in the UK or Denmark. The health insurers would revert to insuring a much smaller proportion of the population for elective care in the small number of private hospitals. Provided the state invested sufficiently in the public system, private medicine would lose its appeal. However, if the state did not invest sufficiently in the public system, there would remain a risk that patients and doctors would take flight into the private system and the chasm in Irish healthcare would deepen.

And that is the fundamental question. As tempting as it is to simply say, "Tax the rich", how do we guarantee future funding of the health service? How do we lock in future governments into such a system and prevent them running down the American privatised route? No one really wants to have to run campaigns to defend the health service every time a right wing government is voted in.

Universal Health Insurance (UHI) is an idea bandied about by diverse groups of people - Labour, Fine Gael, economists, etc. all of which have diverse ideas about how it would be implemented. In this system every citizen is obliged to be insured for their health care needs. It is a compulsory as opposed to a voluntary health insurance system.

The state may pay these premiums directly, funding them from the central exchequer, or individuals may pay their own premiums, with the state paying for those on lower incomes. A third option, the system in France and Germany, is that the individual is insured through PRSI with both employers and employees contributing through payroll taxes. The state picks up the tab for those who are not in employment or on low wages. This is a progressive route since contributions are proportionate to income and corporations are obliged to support health care as part of the social security system.

A carefully designed universal health insurance system could deliver equity and a relatively dependable flow of funding. It can be seen as an earmarked, ring-fenced form of taxation. Consequently, society would perceive the cost of its health care preferences more transparently and could

debate cost/benefit trade-offs more openly.

If each citizen is insured to receive the same medical care and hospitals and doctors have no incentive to discriminate between them, then this is an equitable system. It would end the distinction between private and public patients.

If everyone is covered by a premium then the fund for health care should rise as costs rise and in line with population growth. Health care funding should no longer be subject to the whims of the Department of Finance. These universal insurance-funded systems have consistently allocated a much higher proportion of national income and a higher per capita spend to health care than the UK's universal but tax-funded NHS.

However, it is important that such a system is not open to private insurers. Free market competition drives up costs. In the US where 13% of national income goes to health care, it has been calculated that the profits of insurance companies and medical care organisations account for one to two percentage points, one to two per cent that is of the entire income of the United States. Every television advertisement increases health care costs.

In conclusion, therefore, progressive funding options are available, provided they stick to certain principles. These funding options can introduce equity into the healthcare system and provide certain guarantees of funding into the future.

So how do we win these reforms? How do we guarantee that the health system is funded in a progressive and redistributive manner?

“The political system is one of the barriers to reform, if not the major one”. This quotation rings true. No government in the history of the Irish state has attempted genuine reform of the health service in order to create equality of access. In earlier times, the pressure of the church, who saw any sort of equivalent to the NHS in the UK as a stepping stone to “atheistic communism”, prevented governments taking such steps. Noel Browne, and the ‘Mother and Child Scheme’ [6] was about as close as Ireland has got to moving towards a universal health system. Since then, government after government have been unwilling to invest in public healthcare, taxing the rich in so doing, or to take on the vested interests of the consultants and GPs. This, unsurprisingly, despite the best “promises” of all political parties in Ireland.

The trade unions have likewise been found wanting. Despite having a report

especially written to outline the problems in the health service and to suggest solutions, it put up no fight to secure reform in the recent corporatist “social partnership” talks.

Even popular campaigns, when they have existed, have either been overly parochial in concentrating on local services, or overly naïve in being satisfied with “lobbying” the government for change.

There have been a number of such campaigns over the past number of years. They have had local success, mobilizing 10,000 in Monaghan and with active groups in Roscommon, Clare and Tipperary. Given the anger of ordinary people, this level of activity, even with small-scale organising, would suggest that more could be done.

Unfortunately, these groups have not broadened their horizons from their own local issues, to form a national campaign for genuine reform. When they have involved themselves on a national level, it has been through weak “lobby groups” such as the Public Health Alliance or Patients Together. Invariably, once an election is called they pin their hopes to a politician and vote for him/her, hoping s/he will deliver the reform they seek.

A number of such politicians, such as Paudge Connolly and Gerry Cowley were elected to the Dail in 2002. This was inevitably a dead end. Two or three independent TDs were never going to be able to demand genuine reform even if, in the unlikely event, they were chosen to support the government. Instead, the result was that it subdued the local campaigns into inaction. Putting faith in electing someone as the solution to the problem succeeded in killing the local campaigns, or at least putting them into a coma.

Given the anger of ordinary people when it comes to the Irish health system, given the fact that parliamentary politics and trade unions have been historically useless at bringing about reform for an equal and accessible system, and given the fact that some of these reforms are fundamentally simple and easy to argue for, it would seem obvious that the only way and the easiest way to win them is on the streets, in communities and in workplaces – in a truly popular campaign. It would seem that there definitely exists a role for anarchists

to try and help bring these scattered campaigns together to win the reforms that politicians are unwilling to give. This campaign could be popular and effective if organized well.

A Post-Revolutionary Health System

But how would anarchists like to see healthcare provided? Some of the elements of a post-revolutionary health system seem more obvious than others. It would be universal and free at the point of access. There would be an emphasis on primary care – on health education and preventative medicine. These primary care clinics would be owned, run by and accountable to local communities. Health workers would be no different to other workers, despite their training.

During the Spanish Revolution, for the first time many workers had the benefit of a health service - organised by the CNT Federation of Health Workers. The Federation consisted of 40,000 health workers - nurses, doctors, administrators and orderlies. The major success was in Catalonia where it ensured that all of the 2.5 million inhabitants had adequate health care.

Not only were traditional services provided but victims of the Civil War were also treated. A programme of preventative medicine was also established based on local community health centres. At their 1937 Congress these workers developed a health plan for a future anarchist Spain which could have been implemented if the revolution had been successful.

A more long lasting experiment in healthcare, with many of the properties anarchists would aspire to is in Cuba.

The health of Cubans is comparable to those of richer countries with long life expectancies. This, despite the fact that Cuba is far poorer and less able to buy equipment and medicines due to the US trade embargo. Its annual total health spend per head comes in at \$251, one tenth of that of the UK.

How have they done this? There are a number of important points:

1) Cuba has an average of one GP per 435 people. This is literally a doctor in every large city block/factory/school. The av-

“ How would anarchists like to see healthcare provided? ”

erage in Ireland is approximately 1,666. This is important because having enough trained health workers and having curative activities under control is one of the first things that needs to be tackled - before a more sustainable preventative system can come into full swing. It also allows a closer doctor/patient relationship to develop which means people are more likely to come in for check-ups and actively take part in learning about their health.

2) The system is, naturally enough, universal and free at the point of access so there are no barriers to receiving information and preventative check-ups for Cubans.

3) It is claimed that the community has ownership of a local clinic in terms of building it, funding it, making decisions, accountability to local assembly, etc. More accurate information would be useful in seeing how this plays out under the authoritarian nature of the Cuban state.

Of course, that's not to say that Cuba has got it all right or even did so in the first place. Up until the 1980's the system was still hospital centred, without sufficient integration of preventative and curative services, and with uneven, incomplete decentralisation. But since then it's moved to a primary care focused system which appears to be working well given the difficulties it is under.

The position of the doctor in the community is exemplified in the following quote:

“The family physician must be accepted into an already organised community with its networks, formal and informal organizational structures. For this to happen, the physician must “blend in”. In order not to risk the imposition of medical and class views upon non-medical issues in the community, the physician must not be a special member of society (however separated from the rest by training, but another worker, from the same class extraction as the rest of the community). It is now that a generation of physicians has emerged which was born, raised and educated within the Revolution and relatively free of the socializing trappings of capitalist medical education. A majority of today's physicians are children of peasants and workers, not the traditional children and grandchildren of doctors.”

It is analogous to the contrast made with the postperson in western capitalist society. The postperson is paid a specified wage and trusted to deliver every letter in his/her area every day. This is not the case for the doctor. S/he must be given a sweetener, in the form of a fee, for every patient s/he sees. What is that is so different between postpeople and doctors. The same unjustifiable inequalities that exist in terms of access to treatment are



repeated in the manner in which workers get paid. Such is the inconsistency at the heart of the Irish healthcare, a reflection of our capitalist system.

Footnotes

1 A medical card entitles the holder to free visits to a General Practitioner (family doctor) and free prescribed medication.

2 The figure for a married couple under 65 years is €266.50 per week although there are additional allowances for children in the family. All people over 70 years of age in Ireland receive a medical card.

3 Further costs would be added where minor surgery or prescription drugs were required. Drug costs are capped at €85 per month per patient.

4 Of course, doubling the number of consultants is ineffectual if the requisite numbers of nurses and administrative staff are not there to support the expanded capacity.

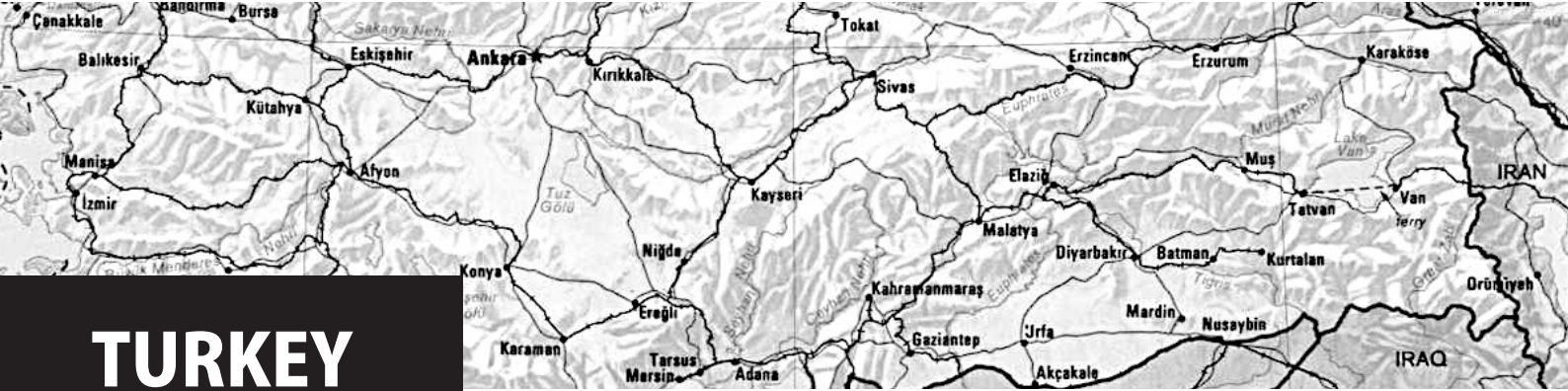
5 Aneurin Bevan was a Welsh Labour politician. He was the Secretary of State responsi-

ble for the formation of the National Health Service.

6 Noel Browne introduced the 'Mother and Child Scheme' in 1950. It proposed introducing a scheme which would provide free maternity care for all mothers and free healthcare for all children up to the age of sixteen, regardless of income. It was vigorously opposed and defeated by the Catholic Church.

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TURKEY

Modernisation, authoritarianism + political islam

**Ender Yılmaz
& José Antonio Gutiérrez D.**

Turkey has been under the spotlight this year, due to the threats of the Army against the possibility of an Islamist party taking the presidency. This move came to pose a number of questions to the European establishment, as Turkey has been negotiating its entry to the EU. The apparently uneasy two alternatives of government in Turkey are political Islam or the old fashioned authoritarian Kemalist secularism, which has the army as its vigilante sector of the ruling block. The European bourgeoisie has been quite keen to support the ruling AKP Islamist party, instead of the military, sending a clear message that they won't favour a dictatorship in the vein of that of 1980. Actually, they have compared the authoritarian tradition of Turkey to Greece, saying that entry to the EU would eventually help to democratise it.

In this context, it is necessary to understand the underlying factors that shaped Turkish society and its historical roots, in order to grasp correctly the current crisis: The nature of the current state, the nature of its crisis, its relationship to the ruling blocs, and the sui generis(1) nature of Turkish political Islam. In the broader light, we can see this crisis, as well, as natural to the re-alignment of forces after the Cold War and in the new era of the "War on Terror". In Turkish political Islam, the "West", not only has a neoliberal ally, but as well, an Islamist ally, in spite of the fact that the base of support of this tendency remains hostile to the US, and increasingly disenchanted with the EU. Turkish politics are full of contradictions and paradoxical situations. But the bottom line is that both the "democratic" political Islam as well as the "authoritarian" army are elite alternatives opposed to the basic interests of workers, that have agreed on the fundamentals and will likely keep agreeing in maintaining the repressive political structures of the Kemalist state, apart from some cosmetic change, much to the dismay of those who expect a liberal wave of renewal from political Islam.

Almost ten years after the post-modern

coup of 1997(2), in which the coalition government of Islamist Welfare Party (WP also known as Refah) and right-wing True Path Party (DYP) were forced to step down and later banned, another move by the powerful Turkish military came as a reminder of the role they keep in politics. Following the nomination of Abdullah Gül as president by Prime Minister Erdoğan in April, there was a parliamentary boycott organised by the secularist opposition of the White Turks, led by the RPP (Republican People's Party). Although there were past decisions supporting the case of the government, the Council of State favoured the opposition, but not before the military issued a warning on April 27th, resurrecting fears of military intervention and renewed repression that have plagued the last century of Turkish public life - signalling that the political might of the army is well and strong(3).

Two days later a massive demonstration as a part of a series of "Republic Meetings" was held in Istanbul. The concept was created by the pro-army Republic newspaper months before the presidential election and the participants came from secularist moderate or pro-army NGO's. These urban secularist middle and upper classes were also denoted as White Turks. The demonstrators chanted against an Islamist government, but also, against military intervention. This added a new dimension to the crisis.

The current impasse with the army came to pose blatantly one of the paradoxes of Turkish life: that of secularism as being an authoritarian force, while political Islam is left to play the democratic cards(4). But to understand the real nature of this apparent paradox it is important to dig a little bit into the history of Turkish society.

The Kemalist State and Industrialisation

Turkey was one of the first countries to develop an Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) economic model in the '30s. This was an attempt to eradicate the reliance on imported goods. The Kemalists wanted to create a native bourgeoisie out of the ruins of the Ottoman Empire, after its defeat in the First Great War. It

represented a particularly authoritarian and militaristic drive to modernization, led by Mustafa Kemal, later given the surname Atatürk which means "the father of the Turks". He was the leading general of the armed resistance against the British-sponsored Greek occupation of Western Turkey in the 1920s and founded the RPP which became the single ruling party of the country between 1923 and 1950. Though initially having a liberal free market orientation, after the 1929 crisis, an ISI model that attempted to eradicate the reliance on imported goods was put in place for this modernizing endeavour. They protected some new born industries, to industrialize the country, to make self-sufficient and to modernize it. They attempted to turn Turkey from a Sultanate into a modern western Republic(5).

Not only did it stimulate a native Sunni Muslim and Turkish bourgeoisie; it subjected religion to State authorities. The idea was not only to create a modernizing essence (a national bourgeoisie), but also an "appearance" of it through forced secularism.

After the Second World War both US directives and internal opposition from the large landowners(6) forced RPP to accept a multiparty system. In the first free elections after three decades, RPP was defeated by the Democratic Party (DP). Thus, in the '50s the focus of growth shifted from industry to agriculture, but industrial capitalists re-gained their previous role after the military coup of 1960. The banned DP continued as Justice Party (JP) and with the support of the large rural population it became a major party in the parliament during the following two decades. Because it was only with the backing of the army that they could win the 1961 elections, the RPP tried to change its image into a more popular alternative. In the late '60s it declared itself "left of the centre" and with slogans like "land belongs to those who cultivate it, water to those who use it" the RPP formed government many times in the '70s. In 1973, the industrialists formed TÜSIAD, a business association, which became a major political actor(7).

The ISI model was largely successful, but though self-sufficient to a great extent, Turkey still badly needed both oil and new technologies/machinery from foreign markets. The two oil crises in the '70s ended the stable and low energy prices regime, which was one of the bases of global US hegemony and deepened the crisis in Turkey. A huge problem was that its industry, though in a position to cope with the internal demand, was not able to compete in the foreign markets. This led to the main source of the crisis: the inability to obtain foreign currency (dollars) that was critical in order to obtain both oil and technology(8).

This led the government to borrow heavily, which caused major imbalances and a big debt crisis. This crisis, which expressed itself violently at the end of the '70s, with the clashes of the left with right-wing nationalists, found an authoritarian "solution" in the coup of 1980. Differently to the previous two military coups (1960 and 1971), this coup was a particularly brutal attempt to uproot for good the revolutionary left in the country, which had pushed massive workers' struggles and resistances during the period from 1961-1980, under the banner of the revolutionary trade union DISK, and saw a left-leaning intelligentsia and a radical students' movement emerge in the '70s; while at the same time, it made a number of structural changes in the ISI economic model.

In a vein similar to the one of Pinochet's Chile, the authoritarian framework of the State was useful in order to carry out a number of unpopular changes that would have been impossible to be carried in a democratic context. And once the changes were carried out, the physical elimination of leftist militants made sure that there would be no one, in the near future, in a capacity to challenge the new order from a revolutionary point of view. But not only did the putschists use the authoritarian framework of the State for its own ends: they exacerbated its authoritarian features, by means of a new Constitution (approved in 1982) and a new institutional figure called the National Security Council (NSC)(9).

The 1980 Coup: The Turkish State as a Counter-Insurgency State

In Latin America, as well, the NSC has been in place in many states since the counter-revolutionary period of the '70s. It is not mere coincidence that in Turkey we see the same figure emerging after the military intervention. The crucial position of Turkey as a strategic ally of US imperialism and NATO in the face of an explosive and politically unstable Middle East makes the NSC no coincidence but a

logical response from the Army and a monopolist bourgeoisie that is unable to have a hegemonic position even with the other sectors of the bourgeoisie (non-monopolist, petty bourgeoisie, etc.). There are many parallels between the Turkish State created during the coup and the counter-insurgency state prevalent in Latin America, explicitly designed to suppress revolutionary or even reformist movements and ideologically based on the National Security Doctrine. Therefore, we will resort to the Latin American theoretician Ruy Mauro Marini's description of the counter-insurgency State, not to try to forcefully look for similarities and differences, but to look for useful categories that allow us to better understand the Turkish political system from a revolutionary point of view. His structural description of these kind of States – beyond the particular political facade that they can present - is useful for the Turkish case:

"The counter-insurgency State (...) presents a hypertrophy of the Executive power (...) in relation to all others (...) with the existence of two central decision making bodies within the Executive. On the one hand, the military body, constituted by the Staff of the Armed Forces (...); the National Security Council, the supreme decision making body, where the representatives of the army entwine with the direct delegates of Capital; and the intelligence services that inform, orient and prepare the decision making process. On the other hand, we have the economic body, represented by the economic ministries, as well as by the State owned companies of credit, production and services, which have their key positions filled by civilian and military technocrats. Thus, the National Security Council becomes the space for the encounter of the two bodies, where they entwine one another, and becomes itself the top, the vital organ of the Counter-Insurgency State."(10)

It therefore represents a space where both the Monopolist capitalists and the Army share power. But it also represents, as Marini states, a peculiar form of bourgeois State that has four powers instead of the classic three (Executive, Legislative and Judicial) the fourth one being the National Security Council, which guarantees the Armed Forces the ultimate say in politics, an authoritarian "moderating" role in a political context plagued with internal contradictions.

As described by Keyder for the Turkish case, "within the NSC, military chiefs of staff met with top cabinet members and dictated the politics to be followed. The NSC was endowed with a permanent secretariat and staff, designed to pool all intelligence and to develop policy to be implemented by the relevant bureaucracy,

often bypassing the politically appointed ministers (...) Virtually everything, from foreign and military policy to the structure of civil and political rights, from secondary school curricula to energy policy, was eventually decided in the monthly meetings of the NSC, invariably along the lines formulated by its secretariat"(11)

The counter-insurgency State does not exist only under conditions of military dictatorship, but exists as well under democratic wrappings. In the Turkish case, it clearly survived the putschist junta, thanks to the 1982 Constitution, and is present in today's democracy –the main characteristics of the "democratic" counter-insurgency state being the prevalence of this Fourth Power (the NSC), the restricted character of democracy (usually, these restrictions expressing themselves in the very electoral procedures too(12)) and the existence of a number of laws of exception and a broadly interpreted anti-terrorist law.

All these authoritarian features of the State were further exacerbated with the Kurdish conflict, in the period spanning from 1984 to 1999. And with both an increasing conflict between rival factions of the bourgeoisie and a renewed wave of PKK attacks in the south east since 2003, it is quite likely that, notwithstanding some liberalisation, at least some of these features will be maintained in the long term and even reinforced at times when needed.

Neoliberalism and the New Blocks in the Ruling Classes

With the 1980 coup, deep changes took place in Turkish society, not only at the level of the State. The military junta closed all political parties and all unions except the state union Türk-İş. There was a massive wave of economic neo-liberalisation that would have been impossible to be carried out if it wasn't through manu militari i.e. under the exceptionally repressive circumstances of military rule. So, without any hassle from the labour movement, the State started a drastic set of measures to liberalise the economic model, which included privatisations, downsizing of the public sector, flexible employment and deregulation of the economy. The predictable results of such measures were the devaluation and stagnation of real wages, a forcefully reduced share of wages in the national income, the dismantling of some industries with the consequent impact on employment figures and the destruction of the labour force behind trade unions(13).

Three parties participated in the first elections after the coup, in 1983: Motherland Party (ANAP), pro-army Nationalist Democracy Party (NDP) and social-demo-

cratic Populist Party (PP). Contrary to the expectations of the military junta, NDP was defeated by ANAP and later dissolved itself. After a series of transformations and name changes PP became the current RPP.

The ISI model was replaced by IMF-dictated fiscal austerity measures and Export Oriented Industrialization (EOI). The new economic regime was not quite successful, despite the fact that it managed to 'solve' one of the biggest barriers against a stable capital accumulation: organised working class resistance. Even the modest growth levels in the '80s could only be achieved at the expense of a growing foreign debt. In contrast to the modest gains of the Istanbul industrialists, the Anatolian(14) small petty and not so petty bourgeoisie benefited enormously from the EOI. The so-called Anatolian Tigers developed industrial zones in Anatolia exploiting the lack of unions and their strong Islamic community ties. They had little state support and were alien to the life of the traditional elites i.e. the state bureaucracy and TÜSIAD. On the political arena they formed in 1983 the Islamist Welfare Party (WP) following the tradition of two parties in the late '60s and '70s(15), but not only succeeded in gathering together the Anatolian bourgeoisie, but also increasingly mobilised popular support behind them (Right-wing parties like the DP in the '50s, had strong support among the significant rural population. The immigrants in the cities continued to support these parties due to patronage networks provided by them. The RPP and the left managed to gain the support of small peasants and urban immigrants in the '70s, but this was over by the '80 coup. The vacuum in the cities was filled by Islamic NGO's in the '80s culminating with the rise of Refah).

The Turkish banking system was plagued by structural problems and corruption dur-

ing the '90s and this caused the financial crises of 1991, 1994, 1998 and the most severe of them between 2000 and 2001. The living conditions of the working class was terribly worsened in the '80s, until a wave of protests in 1989, mainly by public sector workers, caused important increases in real wages and sowed the seeds of the current public sector unions(16). This caused an increase in government spending, on top of the cost of the anti-PKK war, which the government thought could be financed through foreign capital flows. Behind these crises, however, was the liberalisation of the Capital Account in 1989 i.e. eliminating the barriers against financial in and outflows, while Turkey had a very weak legal and administrative framework to regulate the banking system and lacked macroeconomic stability. The Turkish financial capitalists made huge profit through this ill system. They bought debt from the State and granted loans at ridiculous real interest rates, sometimes of even 20%.(17)

The Anatolian bourgeoisie organised itself in MÜSIAD, the business association that was the counterpart for TÜSIAD, in the '90s and backed the uneasy WP-DYP(18) coalition government in 1996-97. Contrary to the outward orientation of the Anatolian bourgeoisie, this government had an inward orientation and tried to increase the cooperation with Middle Eastern states. This coalition was marked by the scandal behind the famous car accident in Susurluk in November 1996, where a former Deputy Chief of Istanbul Police and the leader of the fascist Nationalist Action Party's (NAP) violent youth organization died; a DYP's MP who was also the leader of a Kurdish tribe and a large group of anti-PKK village guards in Northern Kurdistan were injured. This exposed the connections between the security forces, politicians and organised crime.

The fall of the WP is denoted as a post-modern coup. It was done through a regular NSC meeting on 28 February 1997 and the army used a popular campaign(19) to mobilise people against the government, which they accused of trying to subvert the secular order. In reality, this was nothing more than another chapter in the inter-bourgeois conflict for hegemony. With Refah (WP) banned, the WP tradition then formed another party, Fazilet(20), which was also banned in 2001, with two parties emerging immediately out of this: the hard-liners of Saadet(21) and the moderates of AKP(22) who are the current governing party and have a little less than two thirds of the MPs.

New Millennium, New Intra-Elite conflicts

The devastation caused by the 2000 and 2001 economic crises had a similar impact on politics, and the November 2002 elections gave the AKP more than the absolute majority in the parliament. This hadn't happened since the DP victory in the '50s. The parties of the previous coalition government(23) got only 13% of votes.

The AKP government took a pronounced neoliberal turn and made several privatisations. This also created a huge foreign capital flow into Turkey, which financed the increasing Current Account Deficit i.e. the net difference between exports and imports. Inflation was reduced to below 10%(24) and since 2002 the Turkish economy has grown by 7.5 % annually. On the other hand, unemployment is worsening, showing that the growth was due to an increasing exploitation of the employed labour force rather than by absorbing the unemployed. The future of the economy, however, virtually depends on the perceptions and mood of global financial forces and any bad sign could provoke a crisis similar to the Asian one of 1997-98.

Supplement to the class conflicts in Turkey

The general election of 22nd July was a determining event to change the power struggles among the ruling blocs, because it was a test of legitimacy for each of them. The obvious winner was AKP government and the obvious loser is CHP (Republican People's Party) and the army. AKP got nearly half of all votes and the voter participation was about 85%. Although some Islamists and liberals presented this huge increase as "a civil memorandum" to the coup threats of the army, probably it is related to the success of AKP to fill the empty space in the centre right. Traditionally, the right wing parties got about 60-70 % of the vote and the left gets the rest.

In this election the nationalist MHP appeared too radical for most voters and also too similar to the elitist "left"-Kemalism of RPP. Also traditional centre right parties like

DYP and ANAP got incredibly discredited. Meanwhile the so-called left (RPP and DSP bloc) was so much into nationalism that it forgot to propose any socio-economic program for the working masses. Therefore, people from all classes tended to vote for stability i.e. AKP. The MHP managed to enter the parliament, but it got only 14 % compared to 18 % in 1999 elections. Since three rather than two parties managed to get more than 10 % AKP lost seats, but the new parliament is more AKP-friendly. RPP is almost isolated and even its ally DSP accepted the popular legitimacy of AKP.

One reason for the softening of anti-AKP feelings is obviously the fact that the Kurdish party, DTP, lost many votes to AKP. Technical reasons like the low literacy rate among the Kurds who recognised the party from its emblem, but cannot differentiate between the names of many independent candidates had an effect. But the social reasons are far

Over the last four years, four blocks in the rulings classes became visible: The army, TÜSIAD, MÜSIAD and the Fethullahist TUSKON. Fethullah Gulen left the traditional Nursist(25) movement and created a new empire under his rule, consisting of corporations, high schools, universities(26), etc. In 1999 the assets owned by this empire in Turkey were estimated at \$25 billion(27). Gulen had good relationships with the centre-right governments, has a strong pro-US line and in recent years his associates formed their own business organisation called TUSKON. In 1999 he was accused of trying to infiltrate the state apparatus at every level (army, police and bureaucracy) and left Turkey after that. Gulen lives in the USA but still has a great deal of influence, with the Fethullahists, probably having an active role in the last frictions between AKP and the army.

Except for MÜSIAD, all three have very close ties to US imperialism and that's its main difference with TUSKON, sharing otherwise a common political history. The army and TÜSIAD share a common cultural background and history, being the traditional ruling block for many years. All business groups, though, are critical of the role of the army and favour a more parliament-oriented bourgeois politics. Especially TÜSIAD is in the foreground of pro-EU reforms, but we should remark that TÜSIAD is controlled by a few family holdings. Therefore, their criticisms against the political role of the army may not be shared by most of the members.

The occupation of Iraq by the US crushed the political balance in Turkey. The army did not organise a campaign in favour of Turkish participation and thanks to the traditional anti-US Islamism of many of the AKP MPs(28), the parliament did not approve the use of Turkish soil for an attack(29). The anti-war movement failed to attract the masses, who felt a strong oppo-

sition to the war, into the demonstrations, but the biggest failure was to remain silent about the war in Turkish Kurdistan in order not to upset the average person. Today, a de facto Kurdish state is established in northern Iraq and the PKK ended its 4 year-long ceasefire in 2004 which began after the imprisonment of its leader Abdullah Öcalan in 1999.

After the November 2004 negotiations with EU, the army began a "psychological" campaign in spring 2005(30). Today we can say that the main aim was to channel the anti-US feelings among the Turkish population against the moderate Islamist government and against any attempt to solve the Kurdish Question peacefully. The first provocation was made in the Kurdish Newroz celebrations, on March 21st, 2005. The following day, newspapers reported that Kurdish children attempted to burn the Turkish flag. The children claimed that a man with a black suit gave them the flag, but this was never investigated. This was followed by lynching attempts against leafleting leftists who were accused of chanting pro-PKK slogans or waving the PKK flag. We cannot list all the events of this provocation campaign here, but they include bombs against Kurdish civilians in Diyarbakır, the murder of a priest in Trabzon and missionaries in Malatya and the suppression of Kurdish protests against the use of chemical weapons against PKK guerrillas in Diyarbakır, which resulted in over 15 deaths.

Meanwhile, there were police operations which further uncovered the relations between the mafia and the State; the so-called "deep State" in Turkey has a very long past(31). In 2006 the local Kurdish populace in Shemdinli in the south-eastern corner of Turkey captured members of the Turkish counter-guerrilla force(32) who threw a hand bomb into a library. The head of the army, Büyükanıt, said

about one of the officers: "I know him. He is a good boy." Their trial remains a dead end like many other state-related mafia trials.

Another major event in this campaign of provocation was the assassination of Armenian journalist Hrant Dink, member of the "libertarian socialist" Freedom and Solidarity Party (FSP). Probably due to the Fethullahists inside of the police, the murderer and minor planners were quickly captured and their relations with the counter-guerrilla networks were somewhat revealed. This did not lead to confronting the army, because as a part of the ruling classes, the Fethullahist elites do not dare an open confrontation. One gang of the ruling class is fighting against another using the body of Hrant Dink.

The left managed to react quickly and mobilised thousands of people on the day of the assassination. The FSP depoliticised his funeral by banning slogans, similar to their silence about the war in Kurdish provinces during the anti-war events, and even the mass media advertised the funeral. Despite being on a Tuesday, more than 100 thousand people walked behind the banner "We all are Hrant Dink! We all are Armenians!". The slogan became a major trump in the hands of Turkish nationalists who used it to "highlight" the non-Turkishness of the participants.

Towards the Parliamentary Elections(33)

The army successfully managed to prevent the election of a non-Kemalist president(34) for now and used for this purpose NGOs and its website - ANAP and DYP MPs did not participate in the presidential election on the 29th of April after an e-declaration of the army warning against anti-secularist and anti-nationalist currents(35), meaning obviously the AKP. Most of the people at the Republic meetings of April 29th were not in favour

more important. DTP lacks a definite program to define and solve the Kurdish national question. It also lacks a socio-economic program to satisfy the needs of the Kurdish masses. On the other hand, the Kurdish territories were bases of Islamism in the early 80s and therefore the success of AKP has deep roots in Kurdish society. An Islamist commentator noted that the biggest religious sect in Turkey i.e. Gülen sect made a very strong campaign for AKP.

The second man of AKP, Abdullah Gül, became quite peacefully the new Turkish president. The next fights among the ruling blocs will be around the new constitution. AKP will renew the constitution and proposes to delete the references to Kemalism and Atatürkism. The EU also advises to cancel the 301st article which protects "Turkishness". But all of these debates should be seen as inter-elite conflicts which do not have anything to give to the working class and working class activists. Even if these liberal changes

are made we will still have the harsh anti-terror and police laws created by the previous AKP government.

Meanwhile the attack on the working class continues. The public employees were among the leading elements of the working class in the first half of 1990s, but their bargaining process became a bureaucratic fraudulency. Right now negotiations in many private sectors are stopped due to the open attack of the bourgeoisie. Even the most bureaucratic unions cannot accept these conditions easily. The bourgeoisie imposes eventual de-unionisation and atomisation to the working class and the union bureaucracy either surrenders or "fights back" (of course for their privileges rather than the interests of the working class). Without an organised wave from the rank-and-file workers these attacks cannot be stopped. And we have seen many positive examples of such a counter-attack recently around the world and also in the history of the working class of Turkey.

of a military coup, but they perceive the army itself as the sole ultimate guardian of Turkish democracy.

Meanwhile, the centre-right has been unable to form an opposition block to the AKP, having failed in an attempt to merge ANAP and the DYP, now called DP, as the '50s party. This means that most of the bourgeois block will end up eventually supporting the AKP in the end anyway.

Today the main theme of bourgeois politics is whether the army should launch a military operation against the PKK bases in Northern Iraq: in early April, the army's big man Büyükanıt spoke in favour of it. Since then the Turkish army has been amassing troops on the South-East border with Iraq(36), though the Prime Minister says that there is no written petition for any extra-border military operation. The US does not favour a Turkish operation nor do the Kurdish elites in Iraq i.e. Talabani, the president of Iraq, and Barzani, the president of Iraqi Kurdistan, because this could threaten the unique peace found in Northern Iraq(37).

Mehmet Agar, the leader of the DYP (now DP) and an ex-counter-guerrilla chief who proudly declared in the past that he guided "a thousand operations against the PKK", became a proponent of a peaceful solution. He declared that they will call on the PKK "to make politics on the plains rather than fighting on the mountains" and proposed a common market system consisting of Turkey, Iraq, Azerbaijan and Georgia. This received a very negative reaction, although some bourgeois journalists partially backed him. The change in his mind is also attributed to his relations with the Fethullahist capitalists who, because of their links with the US, see the strategic importance of good relations with Kurdistan given the events in Iraq – they need an alliance between Israel, Turkey and the Kurds to hold a grip over the volatile region. Anyway, because of the coming elections, he wouldn't dare to speak too much on this issue.

AKP leader Erdoğan also began to use strong words against the PKK and ignore the Kurdish Question, for the army could use it as a tactic to lower the vote of AKP. The PKK officially ended its ceasefire in June 2004(38) and a bombing killing 6 civilians in the centre of Ankara created a strong reaction among the Turks. PKK leadership in Iraq and also the legal wing of the Kurdish nationalist movement, DTP (Democratic Society Party) denounced it, but it was probably done by one of them, who exploded it at the wrong time - it was probably aimed at Büyükanıt. The leadership in Europe did not denounce it and said that we should look at the socio-political reasons behind it(39). On the 12th

of June 2007, the PKK announced a new ceasefire just after Erdoğan's call for an informal "security summit" to discuss tactics against PKK.

The DTP is entering the elections together with independent candidates to jump over the 10% required nationally to be in parliament(40). While the AKP and RPP in the parliament passed new legislation to reduce the number of independent MPs, the Kurds will quite likely have to informally ally with AKP in the new parliament, which favours a political solution to the Kurdish conflict instead of a purely military one. The PKK's new ceasefire was also partially aimed to debase the criticisms against AKP concerning national security. Meanwhile the Kurdish nationalist movement is competing also with Islamist currents among the Kurds(41), which are supposedly linked to the Fethullahists.

The current anti-PKK discourse may cool down after the elections, but it may also get stronger. The RPP moved to the right by including famous right-wing candidates on its list. Meanwhile the ex-fascist NAP made a long journey from extreme right to the centre right in the last decade. A RPP-NAP coalition government could increase the repression. We should note that this requires little effort: The AKP government passed a very harsh "Anti-Terror Law", the notorious 301st article, which punishes any behaviour against "Turkishness" and over the last days new legislation enormously increased the rights of the police.

Perspectives for the Left

The left is in a period of defeat. In the last year every relatively big semi-legal left-wing organisation suffered from police operations. The left in the universities is minimised by investigations and fascist attacks. The left was not able to use the anti-war impetus as a springboard, because it lacks a program of struggle and oscillates between soft reformism and militant marginalised positions. Only few organisations managed to grow or at least keep their organisational structure. Their success is based on their programmatic strength and/or their militant insistence to create a base among the labouring masses. This success is also based on their anti-democratic centralist structure, but this will turn against them sooner or later (It has already become the source of a counter-productive sectarianism). Anarchist communists should be able to learn from the experience of every organisation whether it is Leninist or not, whether it is successful or not.

The left should be able to formulate its tactics on class lines both at the level of

“ Today the main theme of bourgeois politics is whether the army should launch a military operation against the Pkk bases ”

theory and slogans and at the level of practise. The majority of the left tried to use unifying slogans in the anti-war movement ostracising the Kurdish question. In contrast to that, it emphasised solidarity with the minorities in the funeral of Hrant Dink. In the first instance the silence about Kurds paved the way for the manipulation of anti-US feelings by the army to target the Kurds. In the second case, putting forward a moral anti-nationalist position just helped the psychological operation of the army to increase Turkish nationalism.

Most leftist organisations pointed to the false dichotomy between the old-style republicans like the army and RPP, on the one side, and neoliberal democrats like the business blocks and AKP on the other side. Both sides favour the attacks against the working class through neoliberal economic measures and repressive anti-union and anti-left legislation. Likewise both have no real opposition to the role of US imperialism in the Middle East. While the parties who sided with the army in the last events were harshly criticised and virtually ostracised by the currents in the radical left, critical support to AKP liberals by reformists(42) and the socialist parties allied with the Kurdish nationalist movement is not challenged. A futile anti-fascism is emerging among the ranks of the non-Kemalist left and this reduces it to a defence of liberal elites due to the lack of a class-centred understanding of anti-fascism. Due to this, it also ignores the fact that the foundations of more repressive measures in the future are established by the AKP government itself.

The secularist/Islamist debate provides a barrier for the prioritisation of more important issues like unemployment and the low purchasing power of the working masses(43). What it conceals is that both sides need each other. Therefore the Islamists in the state apparatuses cannot reveal all the links between the state and illegal organisations and the Kemalist elites cannot destroy the power of religious sects. The main victims of these intra-elite fric-

tions are the women whose bodies have been the battleground for the debates between moderniser males for more than a century. Tolerance to and equality among religious beliefs can only be achieved by the liquidation of class privileges and statist hierarchies. Without a social revolution every bourgeois block will try to use any religion to compete with other blocks of the ruling classes and to fight against working class resistance. The left should not fall into any of these two bourgeois categories and has to participate in the current struggles and unite them on an anti-patriarchal and anti-elite basis.

The main practical problems are the lack of contact between the left and the working masses and its sectarianism. The left could have had a more correct position in these issues, but correct positions would not help much, if one does not have ways to bring them to the people. This can be achieved only by two ways: Firstly the left should have a pivotal role in struggle for minor, but achievable, reforms and understand that the most radical demand is not necessarily the most useful one. Only then can we attract people. Unionisation struggles, extra-union associations to organise workers and community associations exist presently and they are important vehicles to reach this aim.

Secondly the cooperation among left-wing organisations should increase and it should come from below and aim for clear objectives. The present cooperation attempts are based on platforms of representatives of organisations. This cooperation structure proved to be very inefficient to do anything other than small press declarations. This structure not only excludes the people in the locality, but also the rank and file of the organisations from the decision making structures. No wonder that the state propaganda claiming that left-wing organisations are just using the innocent people is very successful to marginalise the left. Is it not the time to criticise ourselves rather than being only criticising the state?

Footnotes

1. 'sui generis' is a Latin expression, literally meaning 'of its own kind' or unique in its characteristics
2. The coup is described in Turkish society as "post-modern", a term used to describe the fact that it was a coup staged by the military but through the Courts, not through a military uprising as usual.
3. Turkey's army is the second biggest of NATO after the US Army.
4. A similar paradox existed in some of the old Arab socialist-nationalist States like Tunisia, Egypt, Syria and Algeria.
5. 'Economic Change in Twentieth Century Turkey: Is the Glass more than Half Full?'

Şevket Pamuk, Working Paper no.41, the American University of Paris. Presentation of January 22nd, 2007.

6. During the Ottoman Empire generally the state had the supreme authority on land. Only in regions like Kurdistan and Lebanon can we see more feudalism-like social structures. The last tendencies toward feudalism beginning in the 18th century were defeated in the early 19th century with the help of British imperialism who favoured a weak Ottoman Empire instead of an entrepreneurial aristocracy. Therefore big landowners in 20th century Turkey were capitalists rather than feudal lords, except for in Northern Kurdistan.
7. Though they were greatly favoured by the economic model, they understood the limits of it in the long term much better than the State bureaucracy especially, and started a propaganda campaign against ISI policies in the late '70s.
8. Çağlar Keyder, "The Turkish Bell Jar"
9. Keyder, op.cit.
10. "La cuestión del fascismo en América Latina", Cuadernos Políticos, México, Ediciones ERA, núm. 18, octubre-diciembre, 1978, pp. 21-29.
11. Keyder, op.cit.
12. In Turkey, there's a requirement that any party, to enter Parliament, needs at least 10% of the national votes. This was designed mainly to prevent the representation of radical minor parties, but after the rise of the Kurdish national liberation movement in 1984 it became an obstacle for Kurdish parties to make it to the Legislative body.
13. Keyder, op.cit. See as well, Pamuk, op.cit, pp.17-18
14. Anatolia is a region in the centre of Turkey
15. Both parties had been banned with the respective coups of 1971 and 1980.
16. These protests were called "Spring Actions".
17. Pamuk, op.cit, pp.19-20.
18. Truth Path Party, a right wing party.
19. The Susurluk accident was followed by a popular campaign called "one minute darkness for permanent brightness". The people were turning off their lights at 9 p.m. every day. When the army barracks also began to do the same, they incorporated the movement easily through the mass media.
20. Virtue
21. Contentment
22. Justice and Development Party
23. ANAP, MHP and the DSP.
24. Inflation rates averaged around 80% in the 1990s and nearly 50% in 2000.
25. Said-i Nursi was a Kurdish Muslim scholar who tried to synthesize Western modernity and Islam, which had been tried by generations of Ottoman intellectuals beginning from the 19th century. He withdrew from politics during the Kemalist rule which excluded any idea related to Islam from the political mainstream. He was a proponent of jihad through propaganda of ideas, but also a public supporter of anti-communism in the 50s during the reign of the DP.
26. He has schools not only in Turkey but

around the whole world and in the former State-Socialist countries they were probably aided by US interests.

27. <http://www.hri.org/news/turkey/anadolu/1999/99-06-22.an...ml#01>
28. Though not of its leadership, that were keen to support the invasion in spite of strong public opposition. Check Cihan Tuğal "NATO's Islamists" in the New Left Review 44, March-April 2007.
29. AKP did not include these MPs in its candidate lists for the elections on the 22nd of July.
30. "Psychological operation" is actually an official term. In 2003 a newspaper – Radikal which is the left liberal newspaper in the big Dogan media cartel which controls about 60 % of the press – published the notes of the NSC meetings. There is a secret Psychological Operation Bureau in the army
31. Probably the two main historical sources of the "deep State" are the late Ottoman secret service which also organised the massacres against Armenians and Greeks at the demise of the empire, and the anti-communist Gladio network of NATO which was revealed in European countries after the Cold War, but continues to be untouched in Turkey
32. Called Jandarma İstihbarat ve Terörle Mücadele, or JITEM.
33. This article was concluded on 18th June 2007, before the election took place. See 'Supplement' below for an update on the post-election situation.
34. Non-Kemalist is a better definition than Islamist to emphasise the transformation of the AKP leadership.
35. Recently a controversial e-declaration was made calling people to "show their mass reflexes against terrorism".
36. Recently there were rumours that the Turkish army had already invaded Northern Iraq; though later proved false, they were enough to send shivers all over the region.
37. The US is also probably waging a covert war against Iran through the Iranian Wing of the PKK, called PEJAK.
38. Though since 2003 there was a new wave of attacks.
39. Another bomb attempt was recently discovered, probably targeting the Minister of Defence.
40. In the western provinces at first they were to support the independent candidates from the left, but this ended up in nothing.
41. There was a 100,000 strong meeting in Diyarbakır protesting the publication of caricatures of the Islamic prophet in a Danish newspaper.
42. Like the FSP
43. A nation-wide survey from June 2006 concluded that these two have been the most important issues both in 2002 and in 2006. At the same time more than 65 % think that civil servants and university students can use headscarves, while only 9 % wants an Islamic state. Source: <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2006/06/14/guncel/agun.html>



Left Communism And Its Ideology

Introductory notes towards a Critique

Oisín Mac Giollamóir

Anarchism is today finally emerging out of its long held position as 'the conscience of the workers' movement', as the eternal critic of Leninism and state centred politics. It long took the side of the working class against the Party, a position Lenin mocked when he wrote: "The mere presentation of the question—"dictatorship of the party or dictatorship of the class(1); dictatorship (party) of the leaders, or dictatorship (party) of the masses?"—testifies to most incredibly and hopelessly muddled thinking....to contrast, in general, the dictatorship of the masses with a dictatorship of the leaders is ridiculously absurd, and stupid."(2) Interestingly this was not written about anarchists, but rather about the position held by a Dutch-German Marxist tendency that was part of the Comintern. This tendency and others comprise what is known as 'left-communism'.

There has long been a close relationship between anarchism and left-communism, as left-communism took up many of the positions held by anarchists. The Dutch-German left developed positions that are indistinguishable from those that have long been found within the anarchist movement. While anarchism influenced left-communism in practice(3), left-communism and Marxist tendencies closely related to it have been a major theoretical influence on anarchism, in particular over the last thirty years.

While left communist theories have indeed contributed greatly to the anarchist movement and to anarchist theory, a number of significant theoretical and tactical mistakes are evident in them. In this article I will trace the development of these theories and give an introduction to the history of the German Revolution of 1918-19 and the Biennio Rosso(4) of 1919-20 in Italy. I will also attempt to highlight the problems of these theories and insist on the need to develop an anarchist program for today based on the situation of our class today, as opposed to based on a-historical principles.

What is left communism?

Left communism is extremely difficult to define. There are various strands of left communism that emerged at different points in the period between 1917 and 1928. Aufheben(5) writes "The 'historic ultra-left'(6) refers to a number of such currents which emerged out of one of the most significant moments in the struggle against capitalism - the revolutionary wave that ended the First World War."(7) Left communism is generally divided into

two wings: the Dutch-German left and the Italian left.(8) Between the two groups there was no love lost. Gilles Dauvé, originally a Bordigist, writes: "Although both were attacked in Lenin's 'Left-Wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder', Pannekoek regarded Bordiga as a weird brand of Leninist, and Bordiga viewed Pannekoek as a distasteful mixture of marxism and anarcho-syndicalism. In fact, neither took any real interest in the other, and the "German" and "Italian" communist lefts largely ignored each other."(9)

The Dutch-German and Italian lefts were tendencies within the Comintern that ultimately broke with the Comintern and critiqued it from the left. As such left communism, or ultra leftism, is often defined by its opposition to 'leftism'.

Aufheben define leftism thus: "It can be thought of in terms of those practices which echo some of the language of communism but which in fact represent the movement of the left-wing of capital."(10) In other words leftism describes those who are nominally communist but in fact are not. According to left communists, leftists are those who supported the Soviet Union in any manner, those who support or participate in Trade Unions, those who participate in parliament, those who support national liberation movements in any manner and those who participate in any type of political coalition with non communists. Left communists on the other hand are opposed to participation or support for any of these types of struggle because they are not communist or because they are anti working class. As such, left communists often define themselves negatively. They oppose themselves to those who do not hold 'real' communist positions. They spend a lot of effort denouncing those who don't hold these communist positions of absolute and practical opposition to the USSR, the Trade Unions, parliament, national liberation movements, political coalitions etc.

In order to fully understand left communism and how and why it adopted these positions, we need to look at its development. In the revolutionary wave that followed the Russian revolution, Germany and Italy were the two places that were closest to having a successful communist revolution; they were also the two places with the largest left communist tendencies.

The Dutch-German Left

The German Revolution 1918-1919

In Germany in 1918 there was a wave of mass wildcat strikes that ultimately

led to a revolution breaking out in November which ended World War One. Sailors mutinied and workers' councils were set up across the country. The SPD (Social Democratic Party of Germany) a few years earlier was universally considered the world's greatest revolutionary Marxist party, but had in 1914 supported the drive to war. It took part in this revolution despite opposing it. Thereby, it "managed to get a majority vote at the first National Congress of Workers' and Soldiers' Councils in favour of elections to a constituent assembly and for dissolving the councils in favour of that parliament. At the same time the trade unions worked hand in hand with management to get revolutionary workers dismissed and to destroy independent council activity in the factories. Councils against parliament and trade unions became the watch word of revolutionaries."(11)

At the turn of the year the KPD (German Communist Party) was founded. On the basis of their recent experiences, the majority of workers in the KPD developed a revolutionary critique of parliamentary activism and raised the slogan 'All Power to the Workers' Councils'. However, the leaders of the party, including Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, opposed this on the basis that it was anarchist(12). The anti-parliamentarian majority were also opposed to the 'Trade Unions' on the basis of their experience of the German social democratic trade unions opposing the revolutionary movement and actively trying to crush it. On this point the leadership also opposed the majority. Ultimately, in October 1919, these disagreements led to the leadership expelling over half of the party's membership.(13)

These expelled members went on to form the left communist KAPD (German Communist Workers Party). The KAPD left the Comintern after the Third Congress in 1921 for reasons that anarchists would be very sympathetic towards. They believed that the revolution would not be made by a political party but could only be made by the working class itself organized in its own autonomous organisations. The organisation that the KAPD worked within was the AAUD(14) (General Workers Union of Germany); at its height this was an organisation of around 300,000 workers.(15) The AAUD emerged during the German Revolution in 1919. Jan Appel describes its formation: "We arrived at the conclusion that the unions were quite useless for the purposes of the revolutionary struggle, and at a conference of Revolutionary Shop Stewards, the formation of revolutionary factory organisations as the basis for Workers' Councils was decided upon."(16)

Council Communism

Based on their experiences, the left communists in Germany critiqued Lenin's arguments in 'Left-Wing Communism: an Infantile Disorder' firstly on the basis that although the Bolshevik model of organisation made sense in Russia, as Germany was more industrially developed different forms of proletarian struggle were needed.(17) They argued that through self organisation in their factories workers laid the basis for setting up workers' councils. They argued that this form of organisation was the single form of organisation suitable for a revolutionary struggle of the working class. As such, they argued against activity in Trade Unions(18), parliament and the primacy of the party.

The KAPD aimed not to represent or lead the working class, but rather to enlighten it(19), a similar project to the idea advanced by the Dyelo Truda group: "All assistance afforded to the masses in the realm of ideas must be consonant with the ideology of anarchism; otherwise it will not be anarchist assistance. 'Ideologically assist' simply means: influence from the ideas point of view, direct from the ideas point of view [a leadership of ideas]." (20) However, some left communists, such as Otto Rühle, felt even this was too much. They left the KAPD and AAUD and, objecting to the involvement of the KAPD in the AAUD, set up AAUD-E (General Workers Union of Germany – Unitary Organisation).

The majority of those who claim a legacy from the Dutch-German Left, those who call themselves council communists, tend to take the position of Rühle and the AAUD-E. For that reason they refuse to form political organisations. Dauvé explains the theory thus: "any revolutionary organisation coexisting with the organs created by the workers themselves, and trying to elaborate a coherent theory and political line, must in the end attempt to lead the workers. Therefore revolutionaries do not organise themselves outside the organs "spontaneously" created by the workers: they merely exchange and circulate information and establish contacts with other revolutionaries; they never try to define a general theory or strategy." (21)

Pannekoek wrote in 1936 "The old labor movement is organised in parties. The belief in parties is the main reason for the impotence of the working class; therefore we avoid forming a new party—not because we are too few, but because a party is an organisation that aims to lead and control the working class. In opposition to this, we maintain that the working class can rise to victory only when it independently attacks its problems and decides its own fate. The workers should not blindly accept the slogans of others, nor of our own groups but must think, act, and decide for themselves. This conception is in sharp contradiction to the tradition of the party as the most important means of educating the proletariat. Therefore many, though repudiating the Socialist and Communist parties, resist and oppose us. This is partly due to their traditional concepts; after viewing the class struggle as a struggle of parties, it becomes difficult to consider it as purely the struggle of the working class, as a class struggle." (22)



Communists of the Spartacist League fighting in the streets

While the idea of working class struggle being 'purely the struggle of the working class' is essential, it hides major theoretical and practical problems. Firstly what does it mean to take the side of the class and as opposed to a party? What does the working class without a party look like? What does it mean to reject parties? If we take Dauvé's understanding, that this rejection of partyism is a rejection of any attempt 'to elaborate a coherent theory and political line' then we face a problem(23). If any attempt to elaborate a coherent theory and political line is forbidden then how can the class develop a coherent theory and political line to guide itself through a revolution and to victory? How can the class think strategically if strategic thinking is banned lest it be oppressive or vanguardist?

In a revolution there will be a number of conflicting theories and political lines being put forward. To claim otherwise is highly naïve. If those of us who believe that 'the emancipation of the working classes must be achieved by the working classes themselves'(24) don't enter the revolution prepared with a program explaining how this can be achieved the revolution will, like all prior workers' revolutions, fail.

It was precisely the lack of a program that spelled the failure of the anti-state position in Russia and in Spain(25).

The Dyelo Truda group explains the failure in Russia:

"We have fallen into the habit of ascribing the anarchist movement's failure in Russia in 1917-1919 to the Bolshevik Party's statist repression, which is a serious error. Bolshevik repression hampered the anarchist movement's spread during the revolution, but it was only one obstacle. Rather, it was the anarchist movement's own internal ineffectuality which was one of the chief causes of that failure, an ineffectuality emanating from the vagueness and indecisiveness that characterized its main policy statements on organization and tactics.

"Anarchism had no firm, hard and fast opinion regarding the main problems facing the social revolution, an opinion needed to satisfy the masses who were carrying out the revolution. Anarchists were calling for a seizure of the factories, but had no well-defined homogeneous notion of the new production and its structures. Anarchists championed the communist device "from each according to abilities, to each according to needs," but they never bothered to apply this precept to the real world... Anarchists talked a lot about the revolutionary activity of the workers themselves, but they were unable to direct the masses, even roughly, towards the forms that such activity might assume... They incited the masses to shrug off the yoke of authority, but they did not indicate how the gains of revolution might be consolidated and defended. They had no clear cut opinion and specific action policies with regard to lots of other problems. Which is what alienated them from the activities of the masses and condemned them to social and historical impotence.

"Upwards of twenty years of experience, revolutionary activity, twenty years of efforts in anarchist ranks, and of effort that met with nothing but failures by anarchism as an organizing movement: all of this has convinced us of the necessity of a new comprehensive anarchist party organisation rooted in one homogenous theory, policy and tactic." (26)

While the German Left neglected the need for a program and denounced all parties as oppressive or at least as vanguardist, the Italian Left took a completely different angle.

The Italian Left

Bordiga and the Biennio rosso(27)

The Italian Left was in its early stages under the political tutelage of one man: Amadeo Bordiga. After joining the Youth Federation of the PSI (Italian Socialist Party) Bordiga quickly rose to prominence by aligning himself with the golden boy of that Federation; Benito Mussolini. The vitality of the Youth federation was the main reason for the PSI

growing from 20,459 in 1912 to 47,724 in 1914. Ultimately, Bordiga broke with Mussolini on the question of supporting World War One. Bordiga asserted that supporting wars was a betrayal of Marxist 'principles'. He was intransigent on points of principle and on the question of the communist program and defended a rigid textual analysis of Marx. He wrote: 'By Marxism we understand the method laid down by Marx and many others, that ... culminates in the diagnosis of the daily class struggle between bourgeoisie and proletariat, constructing a prophecy and a program with a view to the proletarian triumph' (28) Bordiga's orthodoxy set him firmly against the revisionism of the leaders of the PSI. He held that a fresh start bringing about a renewal of principle was needed within the party.

By 1918 the toll of World War One for Italy was over 680,000 dead and over a million wounded. The working class flocked to the PSI as it became more and more radicalised. By 1919 the PSI, which just 7 years previously had 20,459 members, had grown to over 200,000. In 1919 as workers returned home from the war they found themselves caught in a spiral of inflation and mass unemployment as the Italian economy struggled to adjust to the influx of returning workers.

Starting in April 1919 and continuing through to August there was widespread popular rioting. The government tried desperately to put down the insurgent workers, killing workers in Milan, Florence, Inola, Taranto, Genoa and other cities. In Turin at the end of August new shop stewards' organisations were formed in the Fiat plant. These shop stewards organisations in turn formed a factory council. This new type of grassroots workers' organisation spread quickly across the workplaces of Turin. Through the use of these factory councils on October 31st the workers adopted a program to restructure the unions turning them into organisations of

workers' democracy. This program stated its purpose was to "set in train a practical realisation of the communist society." (29) At a meeting on December 14-15, the proponents of this new factory council system were able to win the endorsement of the entire Turin labour movement. By February 1920 over 150,000 workers in the Turin area alone were organised in the new council system. At a conference of the anarcho-syndicalist union the USI (Italian Syndicalist Union) in early 1920, the USI placed itself firmly on the side of these new organisations and agitated strongly for their development outside of Turin. This saw the USI grow from 300,000 in 1919 to 800,000 at the peak of the movement in September 1920. (30)

In response to these movements, at their Bologna congress in 1919 the PSI adopted a revolutionary program (31). The following month, on the back of this program, they received 1,800,000 votes making them the biggest party in the Italian parliament. (32) However, despite this program being adopted, the PSI was divided with some in the parliamentary party, such as Filippo Turati, fully opposing the program and actively trying to sabotage it. Turati stated that the PSI must not excite "the blind passions and fatal illusions of the crowd". He claimed parliament was to workers' councils as the city was to the barbaric horde. These sentiments resulted in Bordiga pushing hard for Turati's expulsion from the party. Antonio Gramsci attacked Turati accusing him of having "the mocking skepticism of senility". (33) Even Serrati, the party's centrist leader, at this point was attacking Turati accusing his politics of being based on a 'puerile illusion'. He wrote that it was "... painful that a socialist deputy, one of those in whom the masses most believed, should dedicate more obstinacy and energy to fighting Bolshevism than to opposing all the attempts at the mystification of socialism that are coming... from the bourgeoisie." (34) However this was nothing but

words from the party leader and Bordiga attacked Serrati for not expelling Turati. Bordiga also called for an end to the parliamentary party's power (this would undercut Turati's influence) and took up an abstentionist position. He wrote: "Elections, while the bourgeoisie have power and wealth in their hands, will never do anything but confirm this privilege." (35)

The first four months of 1920 saw high levels of struggle in Italy, reaching their peak in April. At the Fiat plant in Turin a general assembly called for a sit-in strike to protest the dismissal of several shop stewards. In response the employers locked out 80,000 workers. In Piedmont, the region of Italy of which Turin is the capital, a general strike ensued involving 500,000 workers. There were also strikes around Genoa led by the USI and in Milan workers' councils like those in Turin emerged under the influence of the USI. In the rest of the country unions under anarcho-syndicalist influence, such as the independent railway unions and the maritime workers unions, came out in support. However, despite appeals from the Turin movement to the PSI and the PSI-led trade union the CGL (General Confederation of Labour) for the strike to be extended across Italy, the PSI and the CGL failed to act. Gramsci, who was working hard through his journal "l'Ordine Nuovo" (36) to support the council movement, commented bitterly on the PSI leadership: "They went on chattering about soviets and councils while in Piedmont and Turin half a million workers starved to defend the councils that already exist." (37) Ultimately the strike was defeated. Gramsci wrote: "The Turinese working class has been defeated. Among the conditions determining this defeat... was the limitedness of the minds of the leaders of the Italian working class movement. Among the second level conditions determining the defeat is thus the lack of revolutionary cohesion of the entire Italian proletariat, which cannot bring forth... a trade union hierarchy which

AAUD (General Workers Union of Germany): Network of revolutionary workplace groups, closely linked to the KAPD.

AAUD-E (General Workers Union of Germany- Unitary Organisation): Split from AAUD due to the interfering influence of the KAPD.

Aufheben: A British Libertarian Communist group who publish an annual journal of the same name.

Biennio Rosso: The 'missed' Italian revolution of 1919-1920, in English: Two Red Years

Amadeo Bordiga: The leader of the Italian Left

CGL (General Confederation of Labour): PSI led Trade Union federation.

Comintern: Third International. Attempt at international network of revolutionary groups, ultimately became led by Moscow and the Russian Communist Party.

Gilles Dauvé: Co-author of 'Eclipse and Re-Emergence of the Communist Movement' originally a Bordigist.

Dyelo Truda Group: The Dyelo Truda (Workers' Truth) Group was a group of Russian anarchist exiles based in Paris. They are best known for publishing the 'Organisational Platform of the General Union of Anarchists (Draft)', a document that gives its name to the platformist tendency in anarchism, of which the WSM, the publishers of this magazine, is a part.

Antonio Gramsci: A renowned and highly influential Italian Marxist, perhaps the most influential West European Marxist intellectual of the twentieth century. He came to prominence as editor of the journal l'Ordine Nuovo and went on to lead the Italian Communist Party after Bordiga's departure. Died in prison under Mussolini's dictatorship.

reflects its interests and its revolutionary spirit.”(38) Gramsci blamed the failure of the movement simultaneously on the ineffectuality of the leadership of the PSI and the CGL and on the inability of the movement itself to throw up a new leadership, organic intellectuals, who would act as a new hierarchy.

While Gramsci felt the councils were the institutions through which the dictatorship of the proletariat could be exercised, Serrati claimed that the councils could not be used to initiate revolutionary action.(39) He argued that “The dictatorship of the proletariat is the conscious dictatorship of the Socialist Party.”(40) On this Bordiga was firmly on the side of Serrati. He argued that through exclusive emphasis on the economic sphere and on the stimulation of consciousness Gramsci had forgotten that the state would not simply disappear in a revolution.(41) Of course on this Bordiga was right, as anarchists learnt so tragically in Spain. He wrote: “It is rumoured that factory councils, where they were in existence, functioned by taking over the management of the workshops and carrying on the work. We would not like the working masses to get hold of the idea that all they need do to take over the factories and get rid of the capitalists is set up councils. This would indeed be a dangerous illusion. The factory will be conquered by the working class - and not only by the workforce employed in it, which would be too weak and non-communist - only after the working class as a whole has seized political power. Unless it has done so, the Royal Guards, military police, etc. - in other words, the mechanism of force and oppression that the bourgeoisie has at its disposal, its political power apparatus -will see to it that all illusions are dispelled.”(42)

On this Bordiga raises two significant issues. Firstly, as noted, until the revolutionary class has seized power, thereby removing all power from the hand of the

bourgeoisie, the bourgeoisie will use its state to crush the working class, even if it has to wait almost a full year to do this as happened in Spain. Secondly communism is not simply the seizing of control of the factory or the capitalist enterprise by those that work in it. Communism is not transforming workplaces into democratic co-operatives, as Bordiga notes: “revolution is not a question of the form of organization.”(43) Communism is when wage labour and the enterprise is abolished and all capital is captured by the working class as a whole and put to work for the benefit of the human community, not for profit. As Bordiga writes elsewhere: “Socialism resides entirely in the revolutionary negation of the capitalist ENTERPRISE, not in granting the enterprise to the factory workers”.(44) It is precisely this insistence on the importance of the content of communism, the abolition of wage labour and the market economy with the incumbent division of labour, that makes Bordiga of any interest. A major problem however is in Bordiga’s understanding of how the state is destroyed and how the content of communism is realized. He writes: “Only a communist party should and would be able to carry out such an undertaking.”(45)

Since 1915 Bordiga had been insisting on the need for a theoretically pure communist party. After a second revolutionary upsurge in September 1920 he got his way.

Lynn Williams describes this revolutionary upsurge: “Between the 1st and 4th of September metal workers occupied factories throughout the Italian peninsula...the occupations rolled forward not only in the industrial heartland around Milan, Turin and Genoa but in Rome, Florence, Naples and Palermo, in a forest of red and black flags and a fanfare of workers bands... Within three days 400,000 workers were in occupation. As the movement spread to other sectors, the total rose to over half

a million. Everyone was stunned by the response.”(46) Gramsci once again threw himself into the struggle, while Turati and the reformists went as far as to advise the government to use force against the occupiers of the factories.(47) Ultimately due to the complete betrayal by the PSI and the CGL of the working class, the revolutionary opportunity was missed. After this, Bordiga took his chance to push for a split and by threatening to go it alone, brought Gramsci with him. At the Livorno Congress of the PSI in January 1921, the party split. 14,965 voted for Turati and the reformists, 58,783 voted for the Communists (Bordiga and Gramsci) and for a split and 98,028 voted for Serrati and unity. So on the 21 January, the PCI (Italian Communist Party) was founded.

Bordiga and the Party

The party failed to take off. It fact many of the 58,783 that voted for it in the PSI left. Within a year the membership had fallen to 24,638.(48)

A major reason for this was that the Biennio Rosso of 1919-20 had ended. A revolutionary opportunity was missed and many simply ceased to be engaged in revolutionary class struggle. Bizarrely this did not bother Bordiga or the PCI. Bordiga wrote: “...the centre of the doctrine...is not the concept of the class struggle but that of its development into the dictatorship of the proletariat, exercised by the latter alone, in a single organization, excluding other classes, and with energetic coercive force, thus under the guidance of the party.” In other words, for Bordiga the issue was not class struggle but the purity of the communist program and the ability of the party to seize control of the state. Loren Goldner notes: “For Bordiga, program was everything, a gate-receipt notion of numbers was nothing. The role of the party in the period of ebb was to preserve the program and to carry on the agitational and propaganda work possible

KAPD (German Communist Workers Party): Dutch-German left communist party. Split/was expelled from the KPD. Believed that the revolution would not be made by a political party but could only be made by the working class itself organised in its own autonomous organisations.

KPD (German Communist Party): Founded in 1919, split later that year. The KPD ultimately followed the line laid out by Moscow and was to become a major party. After World War II, in East Germany it merged with the Social Democratic Party of Germany to form the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED). The SED governed East Germany in an effective single party dictatorship from 1946 to 1989.

PCI (Italian Communist Party): Split from PSI in January 1921. First led by Bordiga, then Gramsci. Part of the Comintern and persistently supported the Soviet Union. Collapsed with the USSR.

PSI (Italian Socialist Party): Once revolutionary socialist party founded by Filippo Turati and former anarchists Anna Kuliscioff and Andrea Costa. Betrayed the revolutionary working class in the ‘missed’ Italian revolution of 1919-1920

Anton Pannekoek: Perhaps the leading intellectual of the Dutch-German Left.

SPD (Social Democratic Party of Germany): Prior to its support for the war drive in 1914, the SPD was universally considered the world’s greatest revolutionary Marxist party. Indeed the pre-1914 SPD is to this day the archetypal Marxist party. In the German revolution of 1918-20 it played a counter-revolutionary role.

Giacinto Menotti Serrati: leader of the PSI during the ‘missed’ Italian revolution of 1919-1920.

Filippo Turati: co-founder of PSI. Became a reformist and opposed the revolutionary working class during the Biennio Rosso.

USI (Italian Syndicalist Union): Revolutionary Anarcho-syndicalist union. Had 800,000 at its peak in September 1920.

until the next turn of the tide, not to dilute it while chasing ephemeral popularity.”(49) Bordiga wrote: “When from the invariant doctrine we draw the conclusion that the revolutionary victory of the working class can only be achieved with the class party and its dictatorship”(50) Bordiga was fully comfortable with the party being small and isolated away from class struggle. What was important for him was that it was fully communist and defended the communist program from those who would dilute it or pervert it from its course, from its realization. Jacques Camatte explained this position in early 1961 in an article published in Bordiga’s journal ‘Il programma comunista’: “The proletariat abandons its programme in periods of defeat. This programme is only defended by a weak minority. Only the programme-party always emerges reinforced by the struggle. The struggle from 1926 to today proves that fully.”(51)

In all the parties of the Italian Left you find a similar insistence of their role as defenders of the invariant communist program of the proletariat. While they differ over what exactly the invariant doctrine/program of communism is(52) the insistence on the real existence of an invariant doctrine/program runs through all of them.

However as has been pointed out by many, communism “is not fundamentally about the adoption of a set of principles, lines and positions.”(53) As Marx writes: “Communism is for us not a state of affairs which is to be established, an ideal to which reality [will] have to adjust itself. We call communism the real movement which abolishes the present state of things. The conditions of this movement result from the premises now in existence.”(54) Even Engels writes, “Communism is not a doctrine but a movement; it proceeds not from principles but from facts. The Communists do not base themselves on this or that philosophy as their point of departure but on the whole course of previous history and specifically its actual results in the civilised countries at the present time... Communism, insofar as it is a theory, is the theoretical expression of the position of the proletariat in this struggle and the theoretical summation of the conditions for the liberation of the proletariat.”(55)

Of course the simple fact that anarchism/communism is not an ideal to be realized or a set of principles but a real move-

We are interested in class struggle as it is, not as it is idealised

ment is so obvious it may seem strange to emphasize it. Anarchists have long realized this, the Dyelo Truda group writes: “Anarchism is no beautiful fantasy, no abstract notion of philosophy, but a social movement of the working masses.”(56)

But what is the ‘real movement which abolishes the present state of things’? The answer of course is class struggle.

Conclusion

While the Italian Left insisted on the communist program that was to be realised by the party for the working class, the Dutch-German Left insisted that the class did not need a party or program; indeed they would be obstacles to the working class realising communism.

In the Italian Left we find the communist program separated from the working class. In the Dutch-German Left we find the exact same. The difference is that the Italian Left insists on defending the communist program from impurity while the German Left insists on defending the working class. The solution surely is to unite the two, the working class and communism, and say ‘The working class is the communist subject’. This is the position adopted by most left communists today.

However, the first problem with this position is that the working class is not a communist subject. Communism is not always already-realised in the working class. We must remember that the working class is not communist rather it is capable of producing communism. The working class does not interest us because of what it is, it interests us because of what it can do (and obviously because we are part of it).

Secondly, as Guy Debord noted: “history has no object distinct from what takes place within it”.(57) Communism arises today as a possibility not as a future to be realised. It is not a real future towards which we work. The communist project is not teleological. In simpler terms the idea that history develops towards a fixed end, communism, is completely wrong. Com-

munist is something that emerges and develops out of struggle today. Communism is not something that can be discovered or defended rather it emerges from class struggle. Therefore, all we can do is engage in class struggle and try to push things forward, try to turn the class that has the potential to create communism into the class that does create communism.

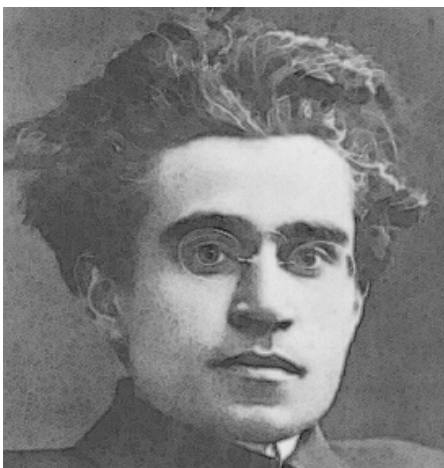
The job of communists is not to defend the ‘interests’ (i.e. the communist program) of the working class from corruption, as so many left communists seem to believe. Firstly, because there is no communist program to be defended. Secondly, because the working class does not have any interests outside of struggle, i.e. it has not permanent interests which can be defended.

The job of communists is to get stuck down into the grim and grit of real struggle as it is happening with all the contradictions that are involved in it. We must be active in class struggle pushing hard for anarchist-communism. Wherever class antagonism emerges as revolutionaries we must be there advancing the revolutionary cause.

When Marx writes that communism is ‘the real movement’ not an ideal, when Engels writes that communism is an expression of ‘the proletariat in struggle’ and not a doctrine, when the Dyelo Truda group writes that anarchism is ‘a social movement’ not a philosophy, they mean it. We are interested in class struggle as it is, not as it is idealised.

In our analysis of history we look for class struggle, but we must not look for it as an independent trend: independent, separate or autonomous from capital and capitalist ideologies. It is always only as a trend within capitalism, and previous forms of class based society, that class struggle exists and interests us.

Class struggle arises from the contradiction of capital. If capital’s effects can be found everywhere then likewise its con-



Gramsci



Bordiga



Pannkoek

traditions can be found everywhere. Or put otherwise, the revolutionary subject emerges due to the contradiction between people's needs and desires and the limits put on them under capitalism.

Our politics must begin always at this point; at the contradiction in our daily lives between our needs, our desires, what we see is possible and the constraints capital puts on us by operating according to an alien logic that forces us to abandon our needs, our desires, our dreams and work according to its dictates. Our revolutionary politics must always begin with working class resistance to this experience, it must be an intervention not to assert or defend 'communism' or 'the working class' as ideal forms against impurities, but rather to search for the quickest, speediest and most painless route from here to where we want to go.

Footnotes

1 The term dictatorship of the proletariat is used to refer essentially to the institutions through which the exploited and excluded bring about a revolutionary change in the structure of society. It does not necessarily refer to a party dictatorship.

2 Lenin, V.I. 'Left-wing Communism an Infantile Disorder'

3 See the influence of the FAUD on the Dutch-German left and the IWW on the Italian Left.

4 The 'missed' Italian revolution of 1919-1920, in English: Two Red Years

5 Aufheben say that they recognise 'the moment of truth in versions of class struggle anarchism, the German and Italian lefts and other tendencies.' <http://libcom.org/aufheben/about>

6 Ultra leftism is a derisive synonym for left communism. Although the term ultra leftism is normally used pejoratively, it is not in this case as Aufheben consider themselves to be, to some degree, part of this tendency.

7 Aufheben #11, 'Communist Theory - Beyond the Ultra-Left?' http://www.geocities.com/aufheben2/auf_11_tcreply.html

8 In most countries where there was a party aligned to the Third International there was a left communist tendency. Aside from the Dutch-German and Italian left, the most significant left communist tendencies were in Russia and Britain.

9 Dauvé, G. 'Note on Pannekoek and Bordiga' <http://libcom.org/library/eclipse-re-emergence-giles-da...uwe-4>

10 Aufheben #11, 'From Operaismo to Autonomist Marxism' http://www.geocities.com/aufheben2/auf_11_operaismo.html

11 Aufheben #8 'Left Communism and the Russian Revolution' http://www.geocities.com/aufheben2/auf_8_ussr_3.html

12 Dutch Group of International Communists (GIK), 'Origins of the Movement for Workers' Councils in Germany' <http://libcom.org/library/origins-movement-workers-councils>

13 Ibid.

14 The Dutch left communists drew a distinction between workplace organisations like the AAUD, the IWW and the British Shop Stewards movement and 'Trade Unions'.

15 It is worth noting that simultaneous to this the

anarcho-syndicalist union the FAUD (Free Workers' Union of Germany) had roughly 200,000 members. The membership of the AAUD and FAUD often overlapped. Ibid.

16 Appell, J., 'Autobiography of Jan Appel' <http://libcom.org/history/appel-jan-1890-1985>

17 Gorter, H., 'Open Letter to Comrade Lenin', Antagonism Press, pp.16-26

18 It is important to note that the Dutch-German left did not reject workplace organization but rather the reformist unions that existed in Germany. Even of these Gorter wrote that "It is only at the beginning of the revolution, when the proletariat, from a member of capitalist society, is turned into the annihilator of this society, that the Trade Union finds itself in opposition to the proletariat" -Open Letter p.28

19 Dauvé, G. 'Leninism and the Ultra Left', in 'Eclipse and Re-Emergence of the Communist Movement', p.48

20 Dyelo Truda Group, 'Reply to Anarchism's Confusionists' [hp://www.nestormakhno.info/english/confus.htm](http://www.nestormakhno.info/english/confus.htm)

21 Dauvé, G. 'Leninism and the Ultra Left', in 'Eclipse and Re-Emergence of the Communist Movement', p.48

22 Pannekoek, A., 'Party and Class' in 'Bordiga Vs. Pannekoek', Antagonism Press, p.31

23 As Pannekoek defines the party as "a grouping according to views, conceptions", Dauvé's interpretation seems fair:

24 By this we mean the working class must emancipate itself through the use of its autonomous institution of social power [soviets, councils etc.] and not through the representational process of a party seizing control of the state 'for' the working class.

25 On the failure of the Spanish revolution, see 'Towards a Fresh Revolution' by the 'Friends of Durruti' Group and 'The revolutionary message of the 'Friends of Durruti' by George Fontenis.

26 Dyelo Truda Group, 'Reply to Anarchism's Confusionists' [hp://www.nestormakhno.info/english/confus.htm](http://www.nestormakhno.info/english/confus.htm)

27 For an excellent account of the forgotten and ignored anarchist involvement in this period of Italian history see Dadà, 'A. Class War, Reaction & the Italian Anarchists, Studies for a Libertarian Alternative.'

28 Davidson, A. 'The Theory and Practice of Italian Communism: Vol. I', Merlin Press p.78

29 Wetsel, T. 'Italy 1920', Zabalaza Books, p.6

30 Wetsel, T. 'Italy 1920', p.9

31 This program among other things made the PSI a member of the Comintern.

32 Davidson p.91

33 Davidson, A. 'The Theory and Practice of Italian Communism: Vol. I', p.92

34 Ibid

35 Ibid

36 It is worth noting that despite the oft repeated claim that "l'Ordine Nuovo" was the organ of the factory council movement, this is something of a crass simplification. Consider the fact that in 1920, while "l'Ordine Nuovo" was a weekly paper with a circulation of less than 5,000 the anarchist "Umanità Nova" had a daily circulation of 50,000.

37 Wetsel, T. 'Italy 1920', p.10

38 Davidson, A. 'The Theory and Practice of Italian

Communism: Vol. I', p.95

39 Davidson, A. 'The Theory and Practice of Italian Communism: Vol. I', p.95

40 Introduction to 'Gramsci's Prison Notebooks', International Publishers, p.xxxiv

41 The anarchists of the UCAdI (Anarchist Communist Union of Italy) were also aware of this, stating in April 1919: "We must remember that the destruction of the capitalist and authoritarian society is only possible through revolutionary means and that the use of the general strike and the labour movement must not make us forget the more direct methods of struggle against state and bourgeois violence and extreme power." Quoted in 'Dadà, A. Class War, Reaction & the Italian Anarchist', p.15.

42 Bordiga, A., 'Seize power or seize the factory?' <http://www.marxists.org/archive/bordiga/works/1920/seiz...r.htm>

43 Bordiga, A., 'Party and Class' in 'Bordiga Vs. Pannekoek', Antagonism Press, p. 43

44 Bordiga, A. 'Propriété et capital'. Quoted in 'Lip and the Self-Managed Counter Revolution' by Negation, Repressed Distribution, p. 50

45 Bordiga, A., 'Seize power or seize the factory?' <http://www.marxists.org/archive/bordiga/works/1920/seiz...r.htm>

46 Quoted in Wetsel, T. 'Italy 1920', pp.11-12

47 Davidson, A. 'The Theory and Practice of Italian Communism: Vol. I', p.96

48 Davidson, A. 'The Theory and Practice of Italian Communism: Vol. I', p.103

49 Goldner, L., 'Communism is the Material Human Community: Amadeo Bordiga Today', <http://home.earthlink.net/~lrgoldner/bordiga.html>

50 Bordiga, A. 'Considerations on the party's organic activity when the general situation is historically unfavourable' <http://www.marxists.org/archive/bordiga/works/1965/cons...r.htm>

51 Camatte, J., 'Origin and Function of the Party Form' http://www.geocities.com/cordobakaf/camate_origins.html

52 In 1952 the Italian Left split with, on the one hand Bordiga and those around Il Programma Comunista, and Damen and those around Battaglia Comunista on the other. Damen opposed work in the trade unions while supporting parliamentary activity, he also opposed absolutely national liberation movements, while Bordiga took the other side of these debates. The four International Communist Parties all descend from Bordiga, while the International Communist Current and the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party descend from the Damen side.

53 Aufheben #11, 'Communist Theory - Beyond the Ultra-Left?' http://www.geocities.com/aufheben2/auf_11_tcreply.html

54 Engels, F. & Marx, K. 'German Ideology' in 'Collected Works: Vol. 5', p.49

55 Engels, F. 'The Communists and Karl Heinzen', Second Article, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1847/09/26.htm>

56 Dyelo Truda Group, 'Organizational Platform of the General Union of Anarchists (Draft)', http://www.anarkismo.net/newswire.php?story_id=1000

57 Debord, G. 'Society of the spectacle'



Community Organising In Glasgow

A theme of this and previous issues of Red & Black Revolution has been the question of how we as anarchists should orientate ourselves towards the non-revolutionary elements of our class and towards non-revolutionary social struggles. We have suggested that we cannot remain peripheral to our class defending the purity of our ideals, rather we, as anarchists, need to be at the centre of working class social struggles. It is only thus that we can create a movement capable of abolishing class society.

The recently launched Scottish platformist group 'Praxis' offers an example of this type of anarchist activism. They have been deeply involved in trying to develop working class community organisations in Glasgow. Here we ask them a few questions about what they are up to.

What are you doing in Glasgow?

Last year a number of us were working on a social centre focussed on local community organisation. This centre and the group organised around it started up three residents' associations and supported the continued organising efforts of another. The group also tried to kick start a campaign for a local youth club to address youth crime and tensions around local youth gangs. We launched a community newspaper, which is still running now and gets distributed in local chip shops, newsagents and public libraries. The centre however became difficult to sustain due to a lack of volunteers and it was becoming ancillary to much of our organising efforts.

At the moment we're trying to develop a community tendency in Maryhill to resist gentrification and to develop tenants' associations and other local bodies to start to fight back for the community's interests. We're in for a big fight though because the authorities plan to whack most of the housing in this area to make way for yuppie flats in the next ten to fifteen years. The tendency it's hoped will unite local socialists of all descriptions and community campaigners in pursuing a strategy of taking over local committees of the Glasgow Housing Association and Community Councils in addition to developing residents' associations. This should give these local citizen bodies more leverage in their campaigns for housing and facilities investment.

Citywide a number of us are working on developing a federation of residents' associations to unite pre-existing groups so that we can start to build collective representation and power for our communities across the city. We are at a very early stage in these efforts and it is unlikely that a new body will be particularly power-

ful initially, but over time it's hoped that a citywide mass organisation could start to fight for and develop our public transport, our green spaces and allotments, our city's housing and much of our amenities. In praxis we hope such a body could be utilised to put pressure on the authorities to cede new Community Land Trusts, while at the same time linking up with some aspects of our economic strategy.

Why are you doing this?

Local government in Scotland, particularly in large cities like Glasgow, has a great deal of power. There are lots of ways mass organisation in communities can put pressure on local authority structures to improve things for working people. We need to develop the kind of mass organisation that can act in that way, and put pressure on local government to gain real class victories.

To take a specific example of how such future mass organisation could work, in an ideal sense, Glasgow transport, for example, is partly run by the Strathclyde Partnership for Transport, which is a council commission essentially. It runs the subway and some of the trains. First and Arriva run the buses and First runs the intercity trains but survive entirely through government subsidies. There are regular industrial struggles against both the council/SPT and the private companies. These are rarely connected to community struggles (which tend to be over

service provision and service quality). It's a big problem when strikes and industrial disputes (which - in their own way - are also often about the quality of service being provided) cause resentment amongst the wider working class, and it's a structural failure of the labour movement, and totally unnecessary. There is no reason that strikes over pay and conditions cannot be intricately linked with passenger fare strikes over the quality of service being provided. Tied into a municipalist strategy of developing a counter-power in our communities those kinds of struggles could be unstoppable.

We are a very long way away from struggles which are so synergistic and powerful but the potential is there, and is obvious. The ruling class certainly recognise this. Community organisation in Glasgow was comprehensively crushed by the authorities over a period of decades. The ruling class aren't daft. They can see that it's easier to reconstruct 'their city' as and how they see fit, if there is no organised resistance to such changes. It's our job as revolutionaries not just to gadfly about telling the class they have to fight harder, better, faster, leaner with endless campaigns that go nowhere and build no power but to actually get involved in our own communities and workplaces and try and build that class power. Building class power in communities means trying to build residents' associations and campaigns for specific improvements and concessions, then coalitions and networks, then for-

We are a very long way away from struggles which are so synergistic and powerful but the potential is there

mal federations of those forms of citizen bodies. Coherent organisations like large federations of residents' associations can exercise real power because of their moral authority and organisational capacity and they can push local authorities into granting concessions and improvements, but they can also go further and start to become a counter power. The left understands this intrinsically when it comes to building power in the workplace, but it's rarely so hot when it comes to building power in the community, let alone building the vital bridges required for a serious proletarian movement between the community and the workplace. It's time we raised our game and really started to build dual power.

A federation of residents' associations can push for tenant management co-ops. It can take over local housing committees. It can push for stock transfer to community land trusts. It can do all that and at the same time push for start up grants for subsidised worker controlled 'social enterprises' which serve those locally controlled housing bodies. It can push for youth training schemes and apprenticeships in these worker controlled 'social enterprises'. In short local community organisation can push for an extension of the social wage while at the same time demanding ever more of a say in how that is administered, and providing an interlocation with strikes and a revolutionary economic strategy. The possibilities for community mass organisation are endless.

Who else is involved in community organising in this way?

In Glasgow the SSP have occasionally been involved in organising residents' associations. Certainly it is aimed that the SSP in Maryhill will be involved in developing a community tendency. It is however not an official policy of that party to be active in consistent class building efforts. Their practice is more usually electoral. Amongst the rest of the left there is often little awareness of community organisation. Stalinists on the whole (peculiarly) tend to be better. The CPB in Govan controls a tenants' association and a community council, and the CPB supports the Scottish Tenants Organisation which is a national tenants' body. As far as it is possible to say that anarchists can be seen to be supportive of this kind of work in Glasgow at least a number have been involved. Anarchists are quite a marginal force in Scotland though in terms of numbers. By far and away the majority of activists for residents' associations and community

representative organisations are not politicians of any kind, although historically the Labour party developed a good deal of its power base from community organisation.

For more information on praxis, see

<http://praxisglasgow.wordpress.com>



Continued From Back...

As failed neo-liberal promises bolstered anger, diverse movements around coca eradication in Chapare, land rights and basic urban services quickly transformed the political landscape to “forge a common sense of injured national identity (2).”

Unfortunately Kohl and Farthing’s work is hamstrung with the distance of academia, it sketches the imposition of neo-liberalism brilliantly but fails to illustrate “the shape that popular challenges to it will take (3)” in any grounded way.

Using a very different approach Benjamin Dangl’s ‘The Price Of Fire’ is refreshingly intimate, he too starts with a “revolution in reverse,” rolling through the tides of Bolivian revolt during a brief stay in old Potosi.

His writing style is steeped in hauntology and the psychic scars of centuries of exploitation; it’s the fruit of bar room conversations, pickets and blockades and a brief encounter with Morales. He cushions this in minor analysis and travelogue, allowing voices from social movements to provide a “human face to the looting and struggles of a continent (4).”

During a visit to the Chapare, this “bearded gringo with a notepad” rails against the use of coca eradication as a paltry excuse for US intervention in the post cold-war climate, arguing that the migration of unemployed miners to rural areas accelerated coca’s growth as the only viable cash crop under neo-liberalism.

From this dynamic the MAS emerged, capable of unifying different strands of struggle with its origins in coca growers’ unions formed by former miners. Visually this is seen in the use of the coca leaf as party insignia, once used for energy by silver miners but equally evocative of indigenous and anti-imperialist messages today.

The book continuously traces how modes of militancy spread through migration. Like Farthing and Kohl, he agrees that the water war was a momentous turning point with the practice of mass assemblies in rural areas becoming more engrained in cities through the Coordinadora.

Retaining a critical eye, he doesn’t rush to romanticise the end result of the water war. Bechtel may have left but the public water company is still controlled by a local political elite, though one more subject to street based popular power.

The question of how to use Bolivian gas further unified traditionally diverse social movements in the 2003 gas war to reverse the privatisation carried out in the mid-nineties. Protesters used “the wealth underground” as a point of correction for past lost resources and to envision a future of possible development, education and health-care.

Casting his eye to Caracas, Dangl hints at the use of oil revenue in Venezuela to empower the nation’s poor with literacy programmes, health clinics and community centres as a path for the Morales regime.

‘The Price of Fire’ takes a brief jaunt into urban geography in a chapter on the internal world of the El Alto, a city whose residents played a crucial role in the 2003 gas revolt. The same social forces that drove miners to become cocaleros in rural Chapare led to the informal settlements outside La Paz skyrocketing to a population of 800,000.

Neighbourhood organisations sufficiently ingrained to strangle the capital below in periods of struggle, sprung up based on the experience of miner and rural agitation, as well as the absence of basic state services. One of the few academics Dangl speaks with describes their strength as lying in “the basic self-organisation that fills every pore of the society and has made superfluous many forms of representation (5).”

Within these El Alto urban movements we are given glimpses of a counter-cultural response to neo-liberal hegemony in Teatro Trono, a theatre group meshing struggles against the IMF with traditional myths in popular education programmes. There’s also a growing hip-hop movement that fuses the Aymara language with sampled stateside beats into a poetics of urban resistance to poverty.

In his conclusion Dangl takes a critical look at the problem fraught Morales’ regime. He claims that images of troops entering gas fields from afar look like the stuff of radical expropriation but nationalisation really meant a series of buy outs of majority stakes sold for a pittance in the 1990s, higher taxes and a re-negotiation of over generous contracts.

Stepping aside from the flurry of rhetoric surrounding nationalisation, the YPFB in reality still remains at a capital disadvantage with international companies holding minority shares.

Rarely mentioned in discussions of Bolivian social movements is the traditional demand for a constituent assembly convoked by Morales this year. Many of the movement activists we meet through Dangl’s travels complain that the electoral nature of the assembly excludes them, forcing them to abandon their autonomy and seek

representation through the MAS party.

Simultaneously it has reinvigorated right wing parties weakened by the popular rebellions, allowing them the space to develop a dangerous language of autonomy for oligarchical strong holds like Santa Cruz.

If you are looking for long streams of statistics on Bolivia’s immiseration, then Farthing and Kohl have compiled a resource for your agitational pot-shots and filler articles - but if you want the human face of Bolivia’s social movement push, then Dangl is your only man.

Whichever you prefer, Bolivia remains a fertile soil for the rebellious imagination, full of “better worlds- some that have lasted and some no more than euphoric glimpses (6).”

(1) *Movimiento al Socialismo (Movement Towards Socialism) is the party of Evo Morales.*

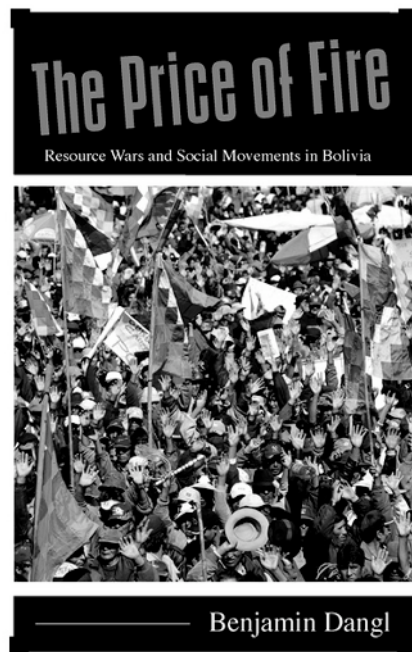
(2) Kohl, Benjamin and Linda C. Farthing. *Impasse in Bolivia: Neoliberal Hegemony and Popular Resistance* (Zed Books, 2006) p175

(3) *Ibid* p23

(4) Dangl, Benjamin. *The Price of Fire: Resource Wars and Social Movements in Bolivia* (AK Press, 2007) p11

(5) *Ibid* p151

(6) *Ibid* p9



“The question of how to use Bolivian gas further unified traditionally diverse social movements in the 2003 gas war”



Book Review

'The Price of Fire'

A few years ago the Cochabamba water war coincided perfectly with the 2000 anti-globalisation peak to solidify many of that movement's arguments about neo-liberal rule in cold hard scenarios of struggle. An exciting new round of images depicting indigenous women confronting militarised police dotted left publications, while documentaries like 'The Corporation' used the revolt as a sharp anecdote in hacking off the avaricious tentacles of multinationals.

With the success of the Movimiento al Socialismo (1), western attention moved from the social movements honed in such resource struggles to the left caudillo Morales and, despite previous excited flutters, there's now little comment on how the grassroots relate to this new moment.

Al Giordano complained in a recent book on Oaxaca, that the radical press often shares problems with the mainstream - reeling in a journalism of instant replays, full of heroic and tragic moments from the barricades, instead of cogent analysis.

Thankfully in the past six months two very different books sought to pierce through the frailty of movement reportage on social movements in Bolivia, to explore why they emerged with such force since the 1990's and how they now relate to the MAS.

The first of these is Kohl and Farthing's 'Impasse in Bolivia', a heavily wrought background to the face off between a globally prescribed neo-liberal hegemony and a local population repeatedly drawing on a five hundred year resistance narrative.

Taking the reader through a well-elucidated history from the Spanish Conquest to the early 21st Century, they track how economic restructurings affected the composition of Bolivian resistance movements prior to neo-liberalism.

The exploitation of silver deposits at Potosi by the Spanish profoundly re-organised Andean society, leading to the emergence of indigenous resistance through nested kinship structures that fuelled rebellions such as the mythic 1781 siege of La Paz from the alti-plano by tens of thousands of Aymara warriors.

The authors describe how the later drive

for an independent Bolivia stemmed from liberal criollos keen for the benefits of their own state but bent on uprooting and modernising indigenous communal land-holding systems to fundamentally exclude them as citizens.

The eventual replacement of these hacienda based elites with natural resource companies at state level set the ground for embryonic industrial agitation and ripples that reach the present.

In the thirties a rivalry between Standard Oil and Royal Dutch Shell over control of deposits in the Chaco region forced Bolivia into a proxy war with Paraguay for control of the disputed area. Defeat both drastically reduced the country's land mass and welded the social force for the 1952 Revolution among war weary drafted students, workers and campesinos.

The resultant Moviminetto Nacional Revolucionaro deposed the mining oligarchies with a regime subject to land and labour pressure from below in the form of the Confederacion Obara Bolivian. Forced to recognise land seizures and labour demands, it constructed a state in the modernist nationalist tradition with a strong central administration and control over natural resources.

This defiant union movement continued to push for a deepening of citizenship rights only to be marshalled with a military dictatorship in 1964 as Cold War realities hit home.

The imposition of neo-liberal economics in the eighties under the NEP against this historic background becomes quite central to the authors' account, seen as a serious attack both on what became known as the "State of '52" and the labour movement.

Engineered for president Estenssoro by Jeffery Sachs of the IMF, it was the first programme of its kind, leading to some



Benjamin Dangl

economic recovery in the face of hyperinflation but an ensuing human misery.

Over 20,000 miners lost their jobs, manufacturing collapsed and over two thirds of the urban population were dragged into the informal economy, dramatically paralysing the COB as the backbone to popular struggles.

With the way paved for an affirmation of neo-liberal policies, Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada's Plan de Todos in the nineties unfolded with the familiar theme of privatised state owned enterprises, gutting the country's revenue.

Yet according to the authors, the couching of this new market democracy in electoral and social reforms inadvertently opened a space for indigenous resistance in rural areas.

Continued Inside...