

Italian election tsunami by Balazs Nagy May 2013

There is no point simply repeating the results of the latest Italian elections. Everybody knows them. We also know the astonishment, apprehension and barely-disguised fear they caused among the bourgeoisie and its European satraps and propagandists. Even most of those who are genuinely against these were completely gobsmacked. So pretty much nobody understands what is going on. To penetrate the mystery of it all, you obviously need to go a bit further, to look behind the contestants' political badges and the voting figures. Those colours and facades are only the superficial, immediate and direct reflections of a deeper-going relationship of forces between social classes. Of course this means looking at the political actors and the votes they get. But it also means, unlike all the – sincere or partisan, merely superficial or frankly cosmetic – commentators, looking a little more closely behind the candidates' branding and costumes, especially if you hope to derive useful lessons of general interest beyond the borders of Italy.

To do that, we need first of all to clarify the historical and political conditions which have left their indelible mark on these elections.

The break-up of bourgeois democracy

Important political developments are usually explained, discussed and analysed using the generally prevailing method, i.e. in themselves, separated from their social and historical context. This short-sighted approach is characteristic of various sets of bourgeois analysts. Sadly, it also influences a number of political currents which in other respects oppose capital. But in imposing this narrow view on the Italian elections, the great mass of reports, once they had expressed their dismayed – or indeed satisfied – stupefaction, have been content merely to describe the results. They did not look for

any deeper cause of this veritable upheaval beyond pointing out that the Italian people had massively rejected the destructive bourgeois offensive, before wandering off into conjecture and subjective and even fantastic speculation. But the internal motive forces behind this readjustment of political lines remained beyond their reach.

One of the most fundamental things to bear in mind about our epoch, what makes it different from the 19th century, is that from World War I onwards capitalism visibly entered into the phase of its decline and death-agony. To avoid overloading this article, I shall spare the reader the very complete analysis Lenin provides of this imperialist stage of capital compared to the preceding phase, nor shall I polemicise against the dogmatic perception of this decline which mechanically imposes it on reality as if it were a constant uniform downward motion. On the contrary, it must be emphasised that this decadence is not a static given, an immutable element suspended like some external threat over a constant and unchanging society. Far from it, since it is bound up with this economy's and this society's organism, it is part and parcel of it, just as ageing and physical decrepitude are a result of the declining phase of a human body. And just as a human being declines, so too imperialism is declining to the point of exhaustion. Since Lenin's essential analysis of imperialism's anatomy (including the damnation of its soul) in 1916, the system has continued to trace a generally downward curve. Of course it has not been an uninterrupted linear fall, but nevertheless a flagrant, notorious and necessary descent, despite occasionally stopping or even starting to rise again, as Trotsky describes it like the brief periods of lucidity in a being in its death agony, interludes which bring neither respite nor cure.

Keeping a constant eye on this decline and refreshing our analysis of it (as indeed of other manifestations of imperialism) has been and remains an important task for the workers' movement. Understanding it is an indispensable tool for all those who struggle for working people's emancipation.

After Lenin's death, his companion in arms, Trotsky took on the responsibility for constantly improving this valuable and necessary compass, a task made all the more difficult and arduous by the way in which the Stalinist bureaucracy perverted and rendered gangrenous the USSR and the Communist Parties, altering and falsifying the teachings of Marx and Lenin and persecuting Trotsky and his comrades even to the point of assassination.

Concretely and constantly examining this decadence, in particular the incessant deterioration in the democratic system of the bourgeoisie's political regime as an intimately-linked product of it, was one of Trotsky's most important preoccupations. All his analyses of the processes involved in the decay of petty-bourgeois democracy deserve our attention, since this degradation has not only not stopped, but country by country and period by period it has got worse and assumed a variety of forms depending on the mutual positioning of the classes and the intensity of the struggle between them, and also on specific national circumstances.

One undeniable symptom of imperialist decadence is the noticeable shift in the physiognomy of economic crises. Once again it suffices, without going into details, to mention their much greater frequency and the appearance of great general crises of a new type. These are world-wide in scope, spreading from one economic sector to another (finance, production, distribution), becoming infinite in duration and, inevitably, leading to a re-modelling of political life. These crises of a new type drastically reveal the total bankruptcy of capitalism-imperialism and call imperatively for its overthrow. Thus they openly pose the question of power.

The first such crisis lasted from 1929 to 1945, since World War II was an integral part of it, both as its ineluctable outcome and as its "solution". We are currently living through the second, whose depth and duration are also starting to disturb a good number of even bourgeois economists. In France, only Hollande and his people retain, for public consumption, as it were, any illusions over the approaching end of a

“cyclical” crisis. So this “normal” president hopes for a “normal” crisis.

But at the height of the crisis of the 1930s Trotsky provided a galaxy of magisterial analyses of political upheavals that were the worm-eaten and toxic fruit of imperialist decline. The most important, he showed, arose from classical democracy’s inability to contain the violence of class contradictions produced by imperialism. Hence the bourgeoisie’s orientation towards more authoritarian political systems. This is why democracy degrades and rots and is abolished.

How Trotsky examined fascism, what he called for and proposed and what he warned against, are more or less well-known. But these have become separated from the theoretical basis of his investigation and reflections i.e. imperialist decadence and the sharpening of class contradictions, which are pushed into the background or frankly ignored. So, as Trotsky himself had occasion to comment, an examination of concrete reality has been replaced by the abstract categories of “democracy” and “fascism”.

This is how Trotsky presented this problem (just after Hitler’s tragic seizure of power).

“The Stalinist theory of fascism ... represents one of the most tragic examples of the injurious ... consequences that can follow from the substitution of the dialectical analysis of reality ... by abstract categories formulated upon the basis of a partial and insufficient historical experience ... The Stalinists adopted the idea that in the contemporary period, finance capital cannot accommodate itself to parliamentary democracy and is obliged to resort to fascism. From this idea, absolutely correct within certain limits, they draw in a purely deductive, formally logical manner the same conclusions for all the countries and for all stages of development.” (“Bonapartism and Fascism” in Writings of Leon Trotsky (1934-35), New York, 1974, p. 51)

Among the Stalinists’ generalisations, Trotsky then notes, they worryingly “forgot” that “between parliamentary democracy

and the fascist regime a series of transitional forms, one after another, inevitably interposes itself, now 'peaceably,' now by civil war". With many comrades today in danger of sliding into the schematic method of the Stalinists, this advice is irreplaceable. How important it is, is emphasised by the fact that over that decade of the 1930s, Trotsky never stopped stripping down and analysing bonapartism as one of the intermediate forms between parliamentary democracy condemned to disappear and its replacement by fascism – or the proletarian revolution.

From this rich literature, which is particularly relevant to an understanding of our present problems, we should also quote his article "Whither France?" written three months later. His words in this study resonate today even louder and with particular acuteness:

"Capitalism not only cannot give the toilers new social reforms, nor even petty alms. It is forced to take back what it once gave. All of Europe has entered an era of economic and political counter-reforms. The policy of despoiling and suffocating the masses stems not from the caprices of the reaction but from the decomposition of the capitalist system. That is the fundamental fact which must be assimilated by every worker if he is not to be duped by hollow phrases. That is precisely why the democratic reformist parties are disintegrating and losing their forces one after another throughout Europe".

(<http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1936/whitherfrance/ch00.htm>)

Just like now, as if he had just written these words today, although it was actually almost 80 years ago! And of course it raises the question: Where are we now?

The bourgeoisie's European con-trick

Trotsky's teachings and advice help us to grasp today's situation. Using this Marxist method we can get an understanding of the recent elections in Italy and bring out the main political lessons they offer. But it would be quite wrong to see the current crisis as a mere copy of the previous

one, even though they share the same formal basis – i.e. the decline of imperialism – and the current crisis does resemble its forebear in the 1930s.

The great crisis is not a simple repetition of its ancestor in the last century. In the intervening period the prolonged death-agony of capitalism-imperialism has weakened the system to the point where most, if not all, its traditional reserves are exhausted. The shift of its centre of gravity to Asia is a significant symptom of this exhaustion which in turn has made the retrogression faster and worse. Faced with continual depletion of its normal internal resources and threatened with complete exhaustion, anaemic world capitalism relies entirely on the artificial intravenous drip-feed of finance and the illusory nutrients it brings. At the same time, its most enfeebled European branch has decided to risk all on a death-defying “European” feat of acrobatics which flies in the very face of the continent’s eminently national character. And paradoxically, it has found a lifeline by developing and generalising this survival therapy.

Conveniently screened behind the claim to be “building Europe”, it has brought together and concentrated the last measures (before fascism!) for regenerating capitalism and has imposed them on every country. These stewards of European capital have gained some space to impose the bitter doses by presenting them as necessary steps towards European integration. There is no way national parliaments would have simply swallowed them without provoking severe crises and the inevitable risk of mobilising working people into tumultuous resistance. In any case, they do not have much room for moving towards the kind of bonapartist regime that Trotsky described in the 1930s as one of the intermediate regimes between parliamentary democracy and fascism. The sort of (even pretend) wheeling and dealing between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat which is a typical feature of bonapartism would be very difficult given the anaemic state the bourgeoisie is in. It is unable to offer even the shadow of a reform and is in urgent need of resurrection, which has turned out to be

impossible without tackling head-on all the gains the working class has made; there is hardly any room left for any kind of balancing act between the classes, even an illusory one. Nevertheless, bonapartism is very tempting, especially in France, where Sarkozy recently tried to put it into practice – although that too rested on the “European” fiction. That remains the basis and framework of all efforts to turn towards bonapartism, elements of which, especially the authoritarian side, are present in every country.

Nevertheless, this Europe remains indispensable for the bourgeoisie, first of all because it allows them to be sparing in the use of fascism, which is not only a costly adventure but also very risky and dangerous for them because European workers have not forgotten its horrors. However, it would be seriously wrong to dismiss it completely because it is still the bourgeoisie’s final resort. So as their declines leads to more and more problems accumulate, fascist parties are gaining strength across Europe and biding their time. This can be seen everywhere, from Greece to the Netherlands. For the time being, however, the bourgeoisie is more inclined to rely on the supposed European unification which they have shaped to their own requirements, i.e. to a considerable extent perverted.

First of all, the mongrel edifice which they and their supporters call Europe is admirably adapted to fill the space between democracy and fascism that used to be occupied by national bonapartism. It has the immense advantage of neutralising and shrugging aside democracy and its useless, “dangerous” institutions while maintaining their empty husks or rather, to be precise, degrading them into transmission belts for their own purposes. The crying lack of democracy that is a distinctive mark of the whole of this European edifice, and the obviously authoritarian and profoundly anti-democratic way it functions, are not mistakes arising from miscalculation, chance or caprice. They reveal its essence, express its nature and indicate its vocation to compel, impose and assert the will of the bourgeoisie while side-lining

democratic procedures with which it is incompatible. The sole and invariable aim of all their "recommendations" is to set up projects to save and shore up capital which is on the ropes and a bourgeoisie which is adrift without a rudder. They are handed down like decrees to docile national "parliaments". (Strangely not a single one of these measures aims to improve the lives of working people!) This being the case, those who, however sincerely, ask this Europe to apply the most elementary democratic principles, or even its own social regulations, have got the wrong address and simply make themselves look stupid. Instead of begging for these things you have to win them in struggle. The mission of this Europe is precisely to dictate what capital requires, side-lining democracy that gets in the way. The present great crisis powerfully exposes this and testifies to it in the most striking way.

The current crisis and the role of debt

This great crisis did not explode simply as a consequence of contradictions of the capitalist-imperialist system already familiar from the 1929-1945 crisis. It was fed and bloated on top of that by all the extra costs arising from the long-drawn-out decadence and deterioration of imperialism and efforts to contain it.

Public debt requires particular attention in this regard because it plays a special role and is important, concentrating within itself the whole extra weight of capitalist retrogression and the vain efforts to overcome it. I cannot deal with it fully here, but it would be wrong to leave it out entirely, since it has a central place in the world – and particularly European – bourgeoisie's arrangements.

Briefly, then: this high level of public indebtedness has its origins in the more and more marked deficiency in capitalist accumulation which from more or less the middle of the twentieth century was decreasingly able to play the role of stimulating constantly expanding extended reproduction. This inadequacy, which is the main basis and organic reason for the

capitalist-imperialist system running out of steam and falling into marked decline over a long period, inexorably drove it under the domination of its financial component. The poor returns on production – profit – was no longer enough to secure it vigorous renewal. As indicated above, it needed an artificial and total intravenous drip of finance. To put it another way, finance went from being a partner to a hegemonic position. One consequence was a serious drop in state income, already reduced by the cuts politicians like to make to the taxation of the bourgeoisie. This happened just as state expenditure was rising. This process as a whole necessarily culminated in all bourgeois states being massively in debt, especially in the economically most advanced countries.

A feature of a general crisis is that it exposes weaknesses and problems of the system for all to see, and so it was with this catastrophe. The real weight and extent of current debt far surpasses the normal and necessary role of money-capital loans in the production-cycle of capital and the classic debt-levels which go with them. Still lacking the space to deal with it properly, here, I can mention only what seems absolutely essential to understanding the situation.

As we saw above, finance capital has gained the upper hand and become a monster whose tentacles tightly embrace the whole of social life. Of course it is not the mythical monster that bourgeois politicians and journalists try to portray it as, lurking inaccessibly behind the enigmatic domination of “market forces”. It is certainly flesh and blood, sheltering in the banks and similar institutions and personified in the cohorts of shareholders, small-time speculators and other parasites.

What really is strangely new about this situation and at the same time represents a deepening of the “decay” Lenin spoke about, is the fact that this finance capital has managed to turn all the countries of Europe (not to mention others) into permanent debtors bound to yield up their regular feudal dues like medieval serfs. The most fundamental role of this thing they call Europe and its institutions is to tie these modern

serfs to their financial masters and make sure they pay the many and various exactions upon them. The previously independent national leaders and their parliaments unquestioningly carry out orders and instructions prescribing how they are to fulfil their role of collecting the cash. Their main activity is to raise, amass and guarantee the considerable sums owed to the sacrosanct "markets" as they suppress and destroy all social gains previously achieved. It is a fully-worked-out system where astronomic debt levels make any hope of final payment vain and utopian, especially since, while countries and workers bled white in this way find they are completely unable to reproduce the necessary wealth, their governments still keep turning up regularly at the banks to borrow further billions. So the debts grow and this whole edifice of abject exploitation is set to go on and on for ever.

This problem as a whole is the concrete expression of Lenin's overall characterisation of imperialism as an epoch of "wars and revolutions" or "as capitalism in transition, or, more precisely, as moribund capitalism" disintegrating under the weight of its contradictions. By 1934 Trotsky was talking about the "capitalist system decomposing". Now, the essential meaning of the current situation which the above analysis reveals is a growing inability on the part of the bourgeoisie to preserve and guarantee its domination using the old means to which it has become accustomed and its chaotic search for a way out. Lenin clearly described this as one of the necessary conditions for revolution. Despite all fairy stories, there is no doubt that we are in a period in which revolution is maturing, and in which the main job of all those who take seriously the emancipation of working people is preparing for it. The facts clearly pose the choices: workers' revolution or a descent into barbarism (of which war is one of the components).

Displacement of class forces – key to the election results

The Italian election results were unexpected and astonished everybody. They express the fact that, on the rotten basis of

capitalism-imperialism, there has been a veritable general political re-alignment in Italy, a social re-positioning that has brutally redrawn the political map. In reality we are at the end of a series of enormous whirlwinds, of dislocations and regroupings involving political parties in Italy since the 1990s. These have been years of real cataclysm which have shaken political life from top to bottom, radically changing the traditional spectrum of parties. These twenty short years have wiped the two main opposing parties off the map: the one, Stalinist and the other, bourgeois Christian Democracy.

Their collapse reflected their inability to hold back and channel workers' and peasants' struggles using their old, outdated methods and means, an impotence which was accentuated by the way these struggles intensified on the basis of the worsening decadence of capitalism and attempts to deal with it on a "European" level. Their political re-composition in a new configuration was obviously motivated by their abiding desire to shore up the rickety bourgeoisie and thus bar the way to the masses of working people. They only differed – sometimes acutely – over how to do it. The recent elections provide us with the first materials assessing the outcome of this metamorphosis, which no doubt will exert a strong influence on national – and European – political life.

The potential impact across the continent will be very deep because what was directly at stake in the political contest in Italy itself was the way the European project expressed itself in that country. It was in relation to this central axis that the political actors and their organisations defined their programmes. Their national views and topics were merely derived from these commitments. Moreover, this same transformation or mutation of purely national programmes into European stances had already marked previous elections, in Greece or France, for example.

The main issue in the Italian elections is the outstanding fact that, following their Greek brothers, the Italian proletariat inflicted a stinging defeat on the bourgeoisie's concentrated offensive. They swept aside its nefarious

objectives and measures and its anti-democratic methods, thus crushing the political line of their Italian personification and direct proxy of Brussels and Frankfurt, Mario Monti, along with the shattered remnants of bourgeois parties who clung to him. This proletarian drive was expressed directly in the votes, but also in the pressure exerted upon all other classes and their parties.

First of all, the elections exposed and set the seal on a fault line in the Italian bourgeoisie, breaking apart under the heavy burden of re-structuring its forms of rule. One significant wing realised the difficulties involved in applying in Italy the European offensive aimed at taming and subjecting the proletariat and rejected this path. It chose a different route to weakening and dominating working people, the route of adventurist demagogy and runaway nationalism. The fact that this coalition led by Silvio Berlusconi did very well at the polls underlines how important this orientation on the part of the bourgeoisie is. The two parts making it up arose not so long since out of the decomposition of the traditional political parties of the bourgeoisie. They testify to a significant political re-composition on the part of one section of it. Side by side with the adventurist party of the bourgeois wheeler-dealer Berlusconi, the Northern League expresses a clear orientation towards an authoritarian nationalist regime, thus straddling the tendency towards a rupture in national unity. The League openly espouses the desire to drive ahead with the super-exploitation of the south of the country, the famous Mezzogiorno, and even to cut all state aid to this traditional "internal colony" of the Italian bourgeoisie. Even now the average income per head of the population in the Mezzogiorno is 40 per cent less than in the north of the country. Between 2007 and 2010, gross domestic product (GDP) in the south fell by 6.1 per cent, while in the centre-north the reduction was "only" 4.1 per cent, and since 2008, 70 per cent of job losses have been in the Mezzogiorno (Le Monde, 22 February 2013).

This coalition kept afloat by Berlusconi's demagogic

adventurism and the Northern League's threadbare local patriotism clearly forms the antechamber to a second edition of fascism. Rather than unifying the country, bourgeois Europe's aggressive policy of ravaging it and imposing authoritarian centralisation have heightened the contradictions and inequalities between provinces, dividing them and pushing them towards separation. A considerable part of the "national" bourgeoisie straddle this drive – this is very clear and far-reaching in Italy – and, dragging along a good proportion of the petty bourgeoisie, adopt a no less retrograde and reactionary nationalist orientation, going so far as to repudiate the unity of the country.

(It should be noted in passing that this phenomenon is not confined to Italy. Besides the visibly nationalist parties in many countries, one can also see several movements for national dismemberment. That is concretely on the agenda not only in Italy, but also in Belgium and Spain for example. Of course such a turn on the part of a section of the bourgeoisie in this or that country cannot at all be a path to national emancipation, even in cases as legitimate as the Catalan and Basque nations in Spain. For working class activists to take this nationalist path would mean them being swallowed up in the process by which the façade of bourgeois national unity breaks apart, which would weaken the desirable unity of the country's proletariat. The nationalist turn, even under apparently positive slogans, is precisely the other variant of bourgeois politics, through which it seeks to maintain its leadership and hegemony by trying to channel the revolt against bourgeois Europe into a nationalist dead-end pointing straight at fascism. The bourgeois "independence" adventure would only add to the already immense burdens Catalan [or Basque] working people have to bear and certainly not bring any "national" advantages. Real independence for Catalonia will only be obtained in the course and within the framework of a struggle for socialism throughout the whole of Spain. Now the indispensable condition for such a struggle, and especially for a successful outcome, is the fighting unity of

all Spanish working people. The Asturian miners realised that recently when they marched to Madrid to unite their struggles with other working people against bourgeois Europe's anti-working class measures.)

The other significant section of the bourgeoisie lines up behind the so-called "left" coalition of Pier-Luigi Bersani. The dominant segment of this coalition is the Democrat Party which also, but only partly, came out of the break-up of the old political apparatus (party) of the bourgeoisie and its re-composition during the 1990s. But unlike the parties of the opposing coalition of Berlusconi, the birth of this Democrat Party follows a different fracture line and also a sticking-together of ill-matched pieces. The new bourgeois parties, particularly Berlusconi's "People of Liberty" and the Northern League, are bourgeois formations of a distinctly DIY character, but their class origins are homogenous. The Democrat Party, on the other hand, has its roots in the dissolution of the once-powerful Stalinist party of Togliatti. Since this party dissolved itself in 1990, its majority have undergone a period of decomposition punctuated by various break-aways and re-compositions. This opportunist mutation, accompanied by alliances and ruptures, culminated in the current Democrat Party founded in 2007. But it also contains the fusion of this Stalinist rump with the "left" vestiges of Christian Democracy.

It should be noted straight away that the sudden degeneration of the CP and its amalgamation with a piece of the bourgeois Christian Democrat party, although written into the DNA of Stalinism – as one saw in the USSR – was treated with obstinate silence by the European and world press, which modestly abstained from stirring the stink of this rotteness in its reports on the elections. This Democrat Party draws its strength from its implantation in the various workings of the state and municipal machinery and among the trade union bureaucracy. President of the Republic Giorgio Napolitano, formerly Togliatti's crafty opportunist henchman, was one of the bosses of this party which simply installed the government

of the bankers' agent Mario Monti in power – without elections – in 2011 because their European Union told them to.

Besides this Democrat Party, Bersani's coalition also involves two small and obscure parties which eke out an existence in the shade of this "big party" as independent "socialist" and ecological survivals of the great political upheaval.

All in all, these two coalitions are separated not only by their programmes but also by their antecedents and class backgrounds. They express the two divergent projects through which the bourgeoisie is trying to discipline and dominate the working class and get a grip on its crisis: one of them by getting together with Europe, the other by retreating into nationalism. This fracture has laid bare the perplexity this perdition-bound class is in over how to secure its domination. And that is how this conflict between the two variants in Italy led temporarily to a no-score draw.

One unusual feature of these elections and this conflict is the appearance of Giuseppe (Beppe) Grillo's formation, which played a significant role. Their high share of the vote (25.5 per cent in the elections to the lower chamber, 23.7 per cent for the Senate) reveals how far the bourgeoisie's decomposition and its contradictions have gone. This "Five Star Movement" is not even an actual structured organisation but, is described by its chief ideologue Gianroberto Casaleggio as a vague community whose members are linked by internet (according to *Le Monde*, 14 March 2013). But working class activists need to characterise this unstable and little-known nebula according its social composition and political content and orientations. (Information on this is taken from the well-documented article by Marc Wells and Peter Schwarz on *World Socialist Website*, 13 March 2013).

The spokesperson for this Movement, Beppe Grillo, is one of the richest men in Italy, with an annual income of up to 4.3 million euros in 2005. But the real head of his political network is Casaleggio, the prosperous founder of Milan ITC firm, "Casaleggio Associates". One of his close supporters, Enrico Sassou, is currently taking a back seat to disarm

possible criticism, since he is the director of the American Chamber of Commerce in Italy and editor of "Harvard Business Review Italia". But "Casaleggio Associates" itself is linked by partnerships to several powerful American and British firms.

This on its own provided a serious indication of the class nature and direction of this movement. So it was quite understandable that the millionaire Leonardo Del Vecchio, owner of a firm called "Luxottica", and the steelmaker Francesco Biasion of Vicenza supported Grillo. Explaining his support, Biasion said he wanted to encourage the Movement because "nowadays business is in the grip of the bureaucracy and the unions".

However, the Movement is far from being directly an association of well-to-do bourgeois. The great majority of its supporters, especially those who front it up and form the vast majority of its 163 new members of parliament, are young graduates and students, IT workers, accountants, teachers, surveyors and others, the same *déclassé* intellectuals pauperised by the crisis in a "casualised generation" that exists in every country. This impoverished and completely disorientated stratum shares many points in common with those who Mussolini's movement recruited, or Hitler's Nazis. Their aimless wanderings express the sad lack of a genuine revolutionary movement. What we have here really is a petty-bourgeois setup which has drawn in a great number of working-class voters because of its virulent opposition to bourgeois austerity and those who serve it.

According to the Demos Institute (quoted in *Le Monde*, 16 March 2013), the Grillo Movement received 49 per cent of working-class votes, while Bersani's Democrat Party only won 21 per cent of workers! Among the unemployed and jobless, these figures were 42 per cent for Grillo against 20 per cent for the Democrat Party. The "Five Star Movement" also garnered 40 per cent of the vote among artisans, peasants and small business-people, more than Berlusconi's party at 32.5 per cent.

So while they threw out their immediate enemy, the Monti government, working class votes were dispersed between two political blind alleys. The fact that they were politically derailed to this extent is distressing and requires fuller explanation. Further on, we will examine in a little more detail the absence of a real workers' movement and its politics, which is the main reason for this temporary loss of direction. Let us just note for the moment that the relatively low proportion of working-class votes cast for Bersani's coalition is also explained, above and beyond their distrust of this formation's politics, by its announcement that it was going to maintain Monti's anti-working class measures. Working-class revulsion over this policy, however, was not enough to eliminate all illusions in this "left". Nevertheless, it was strong enough to channel a mass of working class votes towards Grillo's petty-bourgeois Movement. But this formation's ideology and political line are not just completely foreign to the working class, they are even diametrically opposed to workers' reality-based conception of the world and, above all, their political aims. Casaleggio, considered to be the spiritual guide of this setup, is one of the illuminati, his visions motivated by virtual online information which he confuses with reality. In his video clips he predicts the imminent disappearance of social classes, ideologies, political parties and – of course – trade unions, leaving behind a "community" with "generalised participation" through the internet. This is a fantasy world which smells strongly of fascism, with its characteristic elimination of any democratic organisations acting as intermediate connections in society, replacing them with direct links between the individual and the boss. But it is the comedian Grillo who translates these crypto-fascist hallucinations into a political language laced with demands that are very often as shrill as they are demagogic.

This political position categorically denies the existence of social classes, replacing them with "two social blocs". In bloc A, Grillo places "millions of young people who have no

future" vegetating in "casual jobs", very often unemployed and "the excluded" who "themselves want to become institutions ... and create a new Italy out of the ruins". Here, too, he puts "small and medium businesspeople who ... are forced to shut up shop or kill themselves out of despair". How easily one can discern in these summary and simplistic descriptions the contours of an alliance between the upper layers of the petty-bourgeoisie and various elements of the Lumpenproletariat, essential components of the fascist shock battalions.

In bloc B, on the other hand, he places "those who are surviving the crisis" who, he says, "often have a decent current account and a good pension, or the security of a public sector job". He indulges in a demagogic amalgam by putting workers and working people in state and municipal employment alongside the parasitic bourgeoisie in one bag in his bloc B. By doing this, Grillo is trying to divide the working class and working people by setting up young and impoverished layers against older workers and those who work in the public sector.

He keeps insisting that the struggle between these two blocs has replaced the class struggle, which he hold up to public ridicule. In this way he hides what is really at stake in the struggle, carefully protecting the bourgeoisie while driving a wedge between working people, so that the sharp edge of his demagoguery tends to be directed against these working people. For example, it is not so easy to see through it when he claims that we face "a generational conflict in what is at stake is age and not class", whereas things are a lot clearer when he writes that "every month the state has to spend 19 million on pensions and 4 million on civil service salaries. This burden is no longer sustainable".

It is hardly surprising that certain bourgeois commentators are drawn towards Grillo's programme even if in general they condemn his demagoguery. In any case, the vast majority of them do not say a word about the fascist overtones in what he says, or simply treat it as vague, indefinable political adventurism. Fortunately this movement remains very instable

and its disparate elements could easily break up along class lines.

But where is the party of the working class?

These elections were marked by a noteworthy – and at first sight surprising – apparent contradiction between on the one hand the immense pressure the proletariat exerted on the majority of political actors to reject the bourgeoisie's European offense and on the other the obvious absence of any genuinely working class organisation and policy. In this sense they differ considerably from the elections in Greece and France, where coalitions like Syriza and Front de Gauche were able to embody the first and certainly limited but already effective steps towards rebuilding the working class's political weapon, its party, without falling into sterile sectarianism.

Now nothing of the sort has emerged in Italy, despite the powerful workers' movement, rich in long-standing and once-flourishing revolutionary traditions. It is also the country of Antonio Gramsci, the great Marxist organiser and educator of Italy's communist movement in the 20th century. So it is absolutely essential to understand this tragic discrepancy between the working class's history and basic instincts and the flagrant and deplorable lack of its own party. To grasp the content of this and the main reason for it, we need to broaden the scope of our analysis.

Gramsci's original theoretical heritage was already falsified and perverted by Togliatti's Stalinist party so they could use it as a theoretical cover for its opportunist move to so-called "Euro-communism", the antechamber to its own liquidation and suicide. From another side, faced with this shameless deceit, young intellectuals undertook the necessary work to theoretically cleanse this heritage. However, one fraction of these intellectuals, Antonio Negri and his ilk, chose to act on the ultra-left opposite pole to the Stalinists' right deviation (but just as alien to Gramsci's thought), falling into the black hole and blind alley of terrorism, while another group of these intellectuals turned

their backs on political action, converting this heritage into academic canons of a "political philosophy".

As for the political development of Italian communism, that too followed a twisting path. During the bourgeois transformation of the Italian Communist Party into the Democratic Party of the Left in 1989-1990 (later they even dropped the word "Left"!), a minority rejected this road, shortly afterwards setting up the "Rifondazione Comunista" (Communist Re-foundation). Now you might have thought it was going to return to its revolutionary roots, but this rebel party, which remained faithful only to the worst opportunist moments of its Stalinist hey-day, degenerated along the same class-collaborationist itinerary, while formally insisting on the name "communist" more or less in the same way that François Hollande's party clings to the word "socialist". We cannot go into the whole trajectory of this "Rifondazione" here.

Nevertheless it should be said that in 2006 it, too, entered Romano Prodi's bourgeois government (2006-2008) and with 41 MPs furnished a substantial part of its parliamentary base (having already supported the first Prodi government from 1996 onwards). It supported not only that government's attack on pensioners (also labelled a "reform") and its deep budget cuts, but also sent troops to occupy Lebanon and later Afghanistan. No surprise, then, that in the 2008 elections it lost all its MPs and the Prodi government had to give way to Berlusconi! "Rifondazione" stayed outside Bersani's coalition in the latest elections, but it linked up with a sort of alliance of various groups, including the bourgeois anti-mafia judges, which in the end got 2 per cent of the vote, which was not enough to have even a single MP!

This sombre itinerary is highly instructive, especially just now, when it is so highly important for the working class to achieve the kind of political re-grouping that is bearing the first promising fruits with Syriza in Greece and Front de Gauche in France (having already seen the appearance of Die Linke in Germany). The collapse of "Rifondazione Comunista" in

Italy forcefully reminds us that nothing is guaranteed, that even the most promising fruits can easily go bad and rot. The repellent example of "Rifondazione" is all the more edifying in that it embodies the final degradation of the Italian section of the so-called Fourth International formerly led by Michel Pablo, Ernest Mandel and Pierre Frank.

Indeed, "Rifondazione" accepted various political groups into its ranks as organised factions, including "Sinistra Critica" ("Critical Left"), the Italian section of this Pabloite pseudo-international led by Livio Maitan (who remained a wise and devoted supporter of this International right up until his death in 2004). Of course, an entry of this sort is entirely justified as long, and only as long, as you use it to help advance the independent position of the working class in preparation for its revolution. But from the outset there were serious grounds for doubting that this would happen, since Pablo and his companions have long since been severely criticised for bartering revolutionary proletarian politics against illusory hopes of a revolutionary development on the part of the Stalinist bureaucracy. So they adapted to this bureaucracy and as a consequence revised the teachings of Marxism. Maitan and his Italian friends were faithful and active supporters of this orientation.

The inevitable happened. Instead of putting forward a revolutionary opening against the politics of "Rifondazione Comunista", the "Sinistra Critica" group, motivated by its Pabloite origins and training, simply adapted to the "Rifondazione" mould to the extent of becoming its strike force in a typically popular front policy (joining up with the "progressive" wing of the bourgeoisie).

The source of this profoundly wrong and mistaken policy lay in their emollient appreciation of the situation and moderate view of the tasks that flowed from it. In those elections, as they have long since, the vestiges of the Stalinist bureaucracy swear by all that is holy that these tasks consist purely and simply in improving and correcting aspects of the capitalist system, and that that is all that it needs. In this

they join hands with the old Social Democratic reformists and they are indeed renewing co-operation with them. On the way they jointly influence a whole range of new petty bourgeois movements. Moreover, they also contaminate several of those who claim some allegiance to the working class.

But the crisis brutally exposed the fact that, confronted with complete bankruptcy when it comes to carrying out the most basic functions of its decomposing and anachronistic system, the bourgeoisie turned naturally to destroying the great advances made by humanity represented by the working class and its achievements. It is happening to everything, from the many and varied conditions for a materially and culturally decent life to democratic rights and the framework in which they operate. The bourgeois social class was once an active participant in this historic progress, if not its actual promoter, but it has become its ruthless gravedigger. The crisis reveals, brings out and accentuates these profound tendencies in the capitalist-imperialist system in its death-agony, acting as such since its formation described by Lenin. Past and recent history prove there is no magic remedy or miracle cure which can soothe the pain caused by this bedridden system or patch up its open sores. Capitalism-imperialism has to be eliminated and its power overthrown. That not only does not exclude participation in elections – it often makes it absolutely necessary.

But “Rifondazione”, including its “Critica Sociale” component, did not stand in elections in order to express this essential demand on the special terrain offered by elections, nor to open a clear path to this revolutionary solution. Far from it, they confined themselves to offering their own recipe for improving that same system of exploitation. Their insignificant results prove that, in the role of improvers of the system, they could only be a minor assistant, as it were a poor relation of proper, established bourgeois families. On the other hand, we have seen, as was only to be expected, a large number of working-class voters were misled by Grillo’s vociferous demagoguery which – in the absence of any

revolutionary opening – they took to offer such a hope. But this role of minor assistant rescuing the system which “Rifondazione” and its ilk fulfil in Italy is not new, nor specifically Italian. They have even more important fellows, not just in Europe, who urge workers to repair broken pots instead of showing them how to get rid of the noxious bosses and their malign stewards. They are the main obstacle to a revolutionary development, so it is essential to reject their false, deceptive conceptions.

Therefore a theoretical clarification is just as badly needed as the elaboration of a political line. They will both develop in an implacable struggle not only against the ideological poisons of the bourgeoisie but also against wrong ideas which divert the class struggle and park it in other sets of opposites. The restricted framework offered by this article make a detailed examination of them impossible, but it is nevertheless important to cast a glance at the some immediate effects of the Italian elections and sketch a way out of the present blind alley.

The immediate impact: Bourgeois Europe drifting rudderless

Voting patterns in the Italian election results provoked general anxiety and consternation throughout bourgeois Europe, noisily expressed by its politicians and journalists. Let us leave aside this panicky, thunderstruck moaning and their grotesque and yet significant warnings. For example, the puppet president of the Council of Europe, Van Rompuy, hopes to be “convinced that the new Italian government will continue on the path of its predecessors”. Clearly this is one towering intellect with not a clue what is going on (we shall see later how his prayers were answered). In any case, they all “discreetly did homage to the great loser, Mario Monti” (Le Monde, 28 February 2013). In other words, whatever a great European people massively and unequivocally voted for, these unblushing democrats lost not one whit of their determination to smash working people in order to save the bourgeoisie. Anybody who thinks you can budge these ferocious defenders of capital should ponder these words.

However, much as it is an unpardonable illusion to believe that elections can turn the situation around to the benefit of working people, it would also be a serious mistake to believe that they are no use at all. As for the Italian elections, they have not only radically changed the political terrain in the country, but also inflicted a perceptible shift in the European political scene. This still weak but nevertheless apparent metamorphosis is merely the visible expression of a hardening in the class struggle which, at this stage, is still largely entangled in various intermediate linkages.

What is indirectly reflected in the recent clear fissure splitting the alleged unity of bourgeois Europe is the pressure from workers amplified by the Italian election results. One part, especially in the South where they are more openly exposed to workers' fury, openly questions the so-called unilateral policy of austerity. One should not overestimate this vague desire, which is only a pale echo of the powerful proletarian rumbling. But nor should one underestimate it, but use it and push it further, which, fortunately, the Front de Gauche seems to realise.

But it is also urgent for the Front to use it to extend and consolidate its struggle to generalise it into a European working-class orientation, and within this framework to work for the formation of a political European force alongside Syriza, Die Linke in Germany and other similar organisations – possibly also Italian, so as to bring together opposition to the destructive policies of Brussels.

Now such an opposition could not be limited simply to rejecting the bourgeois offensive. Were to be content simply to say "another policy is possible", this would disarm it and render it ineffective. We need, on a European level, to back this assertion concretely with positive policies for a Europe of Working People. This practical orientation backed by demands leading up to it are what we should be putting forward. One main demand of this sort must be to propose measures to get a grip of finance and its instruments, such as banks, and the use of indebtedness. A programme of that sort

would put some backbone into the preparations for European elections in May 2014.

A rallying call of this sort for a Working Peoples' Europe, without going into detail about the demands which should accompany it, is urgently needed. It would be a genuine political expression of the intensification in working-class mobilisation and radicalisation. Already on 2 March, hundreds of thousands of Portuguese workers, following in the footsteps of their Italian brothers and sisters, organised powerful demonstrations to demand: "Troika Go Away!", and while bourgeois politicians and journalists strive to present these same workers as docile sheep you can keep shearing, they have themselves calmly disproved such self-serving fabrications. And the Portuguese Socialist Party, terrified of losing influence, immediately denounced the very austerity it used to support. Even the right-wing government has caught the spirit of revolt among those who are now openly trying to soften the intransigence of austerity in Europe.

Horse-trading over this was the only agenda item at European meetings (finance ministers on 4 March, then heads of state and heads of government on 14-15 March). At the very heart of a Europe already variously divided, cracks now appeared within the Euro-zone itself. Two opposed camps started to emerge, with France, Spain, Italy and Portugal pitted against inflexible members like Finland and Austria with Germany at the helm, the latter also having a real grip on the European bureaucracy.

The issue they are fighting over is relatively significant; they are arguing about choosing and deciding the best way to secure the bourgeoisie's power in current extremely difficult circumstances. Should they continue and even reinforce the austerity policy, or should they not – without abandoning their goals – slow down the pace and soften their demands to avoid a social explosion?

No sooner had this row started, than the finance ministers came up with their "solution" to Cyprus' debt problem. It's a pity we cannot spend more time on this point which is most

instructive from every angle. Let us just say that they took a series of dictatorial steps which flagrantly breach their own bourgeois rules protecting bank deposits. In their high-handed impatience towards a vulnerable little country left high and dry on the unfathomable mud-banks of the bourgeois offensive, they took money straight out of the Cypriots' own pockets. To "rescue" Cyprus from her debts, they "generously" robbed her of 10 billion euros, and – as if that were not enough – they simply and unblushingly slapped a tax on all bank deposits. When the leaders of the Parti de Gauche used the word "bastards" to describe the 17 finance ministers who decided on this particular act of burglary, the press squealed in scandalised outrage. But it would be difficult indeed, not to say impossible, to find another name for this shameful theft. When, under pressure from the entire population, the Cypriot parliament rejected this theft, Le Monde ("the bourgeoisie made newspaper") talked about "Europe at an impasse" (21 March).

The European puppets and their new, greenhorn, financier had to go back on a decision which was as brutally undemocratic as it was blatantly aimed at people of modest means. But the mask slipped again. Their ever-poorer and more dispossessed Europe has crossed another threshold in its slide towards inglorious general rout. There is no way to know in advance what concrete steps this disintegration will involve, but particularly since the Italian elections the warning signs have become more palpable. The growing tension in the relationship between the anti-democratic executive centre in Brussels and the rubber-stamp European Parliament in Strasburg is more obvious by the day. At the 13 March session, the MEPs by a huge majority rejected the new European budget which had taken 26 hours of painful and angry negotiations between ministers to achieve. It would be wrong to overestimate the significance of this act, which in any case left intact the total set at 960 billion, and failed to discuss the surprising fact that for the first time ever this budget was smaller than the previous one. This astonishing reduction ought itself to have as a

warning to all those who keep crowing about the progress their Europe is making.

This is not the place to go through all the other signs that bourgeois Europe is tending to fall apart gradually, but just note how in a single year (official) unemployment has risen from 10.9 per cent of the active population in the eurozone to 12 percent. It is 26.4 per cent in Greece and Spain, followed by around 12 per cent in Italy and France. And consider the disturbing conclusion of a survey which estimates that 67 per cent of young people under 30 in Spain are thinking about emigrating. This shows up not only the state bourgeois Europe is in but how destructive it is, too.

There has been a hint of a ministerial revolt against austerity in France, too, particularly in the week ending 13 March. That was when fifty or so striking PSA-Citroen workers at the closure-threatened Aulney car plant invaded the building where the National Council of the Socialist Party was meeting. These workers accused the government of betraying them, and the left wingers there, including several ministers, applauded them. An open breach was only avoided because everybody present suddenly started to "talk left". Even prime-minister Ayrault talked about the "European right not listening" and the need to "restore the balance of forces in Europe". As if! ... The paid conciliators had a real job on their hands, as very often, if not always, is the case, one is tempted to say.

It is surely no coincidence that that dyed-in-the-wool bourgeois politician and Giscard d'Estaing's former right-hand-man, François Bayrou, reacted immediately with quite a significant open letter to President Hollande. This political boss without a following – Bayrou had so clearly anticipated Sarkozy's defeat that he alone among his bourgeois colleagues voted for Hollande – saw the danger immediately. It's a shame we cannot look in more detail at this panicky warning which at the same time was a real apology for the European bourgeoisie's offensive and a profession of faith in sustaining it. That on its own constituted an unequivocal

offer to serve Hollande in a more structured way. To put it broadly, he offered his services as Prime Minister under Hollande in the place of the largely discredited Ayrault. In any case this threat had a certain impact in moderating the mood of revolt in the Socialist Party and the government, since even if it did lead a small number of critics did vote against ratifying in law the anti-working class agreements between the employers' associations and some unions, this time, again, the conflict was blurred and an actual break avoided.

But since the crisis is only going to get worse, sharpening the contradictions, this rebellion has not said its last word and a more trenchant expression of it is still brewing. That is why Mélanchon's tactic of trying to encourage criticism of bourgeois Europe inside the Socialist Party is fully justified, particularly if such criticism can be underpinned with a clear anti-bourgeois European policy that can identify its goal in a Working People's Europe.

Now the bourgeoisie is vigilant and sees the dangers which threaten its plans. Most recently its Brussels janitors opted to slacken the pressure slightly and give member states a bit more time to reduce budget deficits below 3 per cent of GDP. But we need to be vigilant, too, because this is a trick. They present this new timetable as if it were a gift, a sign of some supposed change in the rigor of their policy, whereas in reality the budget plans had turned into a fiasco they could not keep up. They are simply displacing the pressure on budgets into a determination to carry out more and greater attacks on employment rights, pensions, social security and all the rest.

For a working class and socialist opening in Italy, too!

Political life has not stood still in Italy, either. The elections were a testimony to the fact that the bourgeoisie has not been able – now its traditional tandem of Christian Democracy and Stalinist CP has broken up – to reorganise a durable political, governmental, expression of its power. The elections testified not only to this, but also to a veritable

political fault-line in the bourgeoisie over programmes and methods for re-constituting this power in some renewed form. Subsequently a series of successive setbacks in forming a government have confirmed the fact – which has dramatic implications for them – that Italy is now radically ungovernable using traditional political means. But on its own this dramatic situation for the bourgeoisie does not imply any relief, never mind a solution, for working people who cruelly lack any theoretical equipment or practice that matches their aspirations.

Under these conditions and in view of the fact that politics, too abhors a vacuum, various dangers start to take shape on the immediate horizon. One of them – and it is real – is that the bourgeoisie will take one of the authoritarian roads leading to fascism in order to overcome its crisis. It will not be held back by any democratic principles or rules, but by the fear that such an upheaval might arouse a massive revolt by working people. However that may be, while they deploy some fascist objectives and slogans, the Italian bourgeoisie, like the rest, is not yet quite ready to institute and operate fascist power.

That is the main reason why the gestation of a new government is so long and painful, and its content so explosive and in such violent contradiction to the verdict of the elections – while in the end somehow maintaining the illusion that nothing has changed. In reality the forced marriage between Berlusconi the groom getting the most out of the prenuptial agreement, and the Democrat Party as reluctant bride, is inevitably heading for a series of conjugal dramas. It will be all the more paralysed in action and unsustainable in the long run for being based on cheating the voters. To put it another way, it has thumbed its nose at the new disposition of class forces, so it has set off on the wrong foot in relation to them. Whatever promises and paltry concessions the new government made when it came in are like plasters and poultices applied to a dying man.

And yet ... condemned as it is the rack, even this government

might just, precisely in order to prolong its existence, tie in with the rising anti-establishment wave across southern Europe for a "softening" of austerity. In fact everything points to the possibility that it will add its voice to Hollande and others who are begging for a respite. Meanwhile, since this new Italian government was first installed, the European bourgeoisie and certain of its factions here and there have cherished the illusion that they might be able to avoid the split in Europe and the threatening political crisis by uniting "left" and right wings in the same governments. In precisely such a "united" government in Italy they see an opportunity to overcome the crisis and prevent an opposition from crystallising through this kind of "grand coalition". But at the moment only a very nervous "left" in the shape of the so-called "socialist" parties would take such a lure seriously and give up the prospect of forming a consistent opposition in the face of such a "threat".

Now in fact such a "grand coalition" is unviable even in Italy, where the bourgeoisie is well aware that it cannot find a satisfactory way out of the crisis, and has finally resigned itself to an improvised lash-up. The more the different components of it cling to their certainties, the more radically and swiftly the worsening social contradictions will tear apart its artificial unity. And that is where the danger of a fascist adventure by a section of the bourgeoisie becomes real. The Northern League could well be biding its time to exploit precisely that situation, using the strength of an enraged and disorientated petty-bourgeoisie and a desperate Lumpenproletariat to try such an adventure.

It is high time for really socialist and communist activists who up to now have been trapped in the bourgeois blind alleys offered by "Rifondazione Comunista" and "Critica Sinistra" to pull themselves together. Not because there might be a danger of fascism, but because the worsening contradictions make necessary a political re-grouping of the working class. In particular they should address the abovementioned organisations because we cannot agree with the American

comrades of David North's World Socialist Web Site who stigmatise them as bourgeois organisations. The more lucid and closest to the working class of their members should make an honest assesement of a conception and a political line hanging on to the extreme left of a bourgeoisie in its dotage. A renewal is possible, and its beginnings lie beyond the national soil. It will have to open up via a clarification of the socialist attitude at a European level, which nowadays is the only way to delimit oneself from every version of bourgeois politics, either nationalist or originating from Brussels.

In this respect, Marxist practice will shrug off the heavy burden of the "Rifondazione" / "Critica Sinistra" combination groaning under the weight of a Stalinist heritage, either completely ossified or somewhat amended, by following in the footsteps of Syriza and the Front de Gauche. This route is also open to Italian comrades. By struggling for a Working People's Europe, they will find a way towards living Marxist and towards the re-appearance of the Italian working class directly on the political scene, a working class long relegated to the background by a Stalinism which, although officially defrocked, never abandoned its political practices.

Balazs Nagy

May 2013

Draft Unified Programme of the Namibian Working People

DRAFT PROGRAMME

Our programme will be titled the Unified Programme of the Namibian Working People to take political power.

Our objective is to consolidate and strengthen the socialist

movement in this country through a Unified Demand of the nation engendering the following two tasks:

1. Rebuilding the working class's basic organisations, the trade unions and civic organisations, and,
2. Consolidating and strengthening the socialist movement in this country through rallying the working people around a Unified Demand of the nation.

The Unified Demand comprises the transitional demands of the working class, individual demands of the various national groupings (peasants) and the general demands of the nation. These constituent (individual) demands will be more significant, more empowering and all-embracing as they will be different facets of the same National Demand. They will be unifying and not distinctive, as separate demands tend to be.
Organisation of the Socialist Social Movement.

It was resolved in a meeting in February 2013 by Workers International members, the Forum of the Future, the NAMRIGHTS and individuals to call on the various working class groups we are working with and other groups fighting on individual issues to unite in a social movement. The necessity to form it as and call it socialist was unanimously agreed.

The groups we are working with are:

The former Goldfields South Africa (TCL) miners and mineworkers;

Members of the teachers' strike committee.

The Southern Peoples Allegiance.

Women and youth groups.

The Mboroma Camp Committee.

Housing and homeless groups.

Poor peasants in the struggle for reparations and land.

Fundamental rights groups.

The leadership of this movement will initially be comprised of representatives of each group in a national committee. This committee will begin the centralisation of the movement by propagating and organising around the Unified Demand and Programme. The leadership is formed on the principle that the

working class leadership is independent and leads the poor peasantry and articulates the land and national issues in correspondence with working class interest.

It will assist the poor peasantry to organise independently and to develop appropriate demands wherever they endeavour to do so such as in the current land struggles, land seizures and demands.

The Unified Demand

The following demands amongst others constitute a summary of demands informing the propaganda and organisational work of the SSM.

1. In general it is true that the capitalists seek to load off their intensifying woes and their falling profits onto the working class these days by labour rental and waning benefits and wages. However, in Namibia profits are maximised by the legacy of apartheid and by a new servile caste of officials which sell for example US\$80 billion worth of mineral reserves for a million dollar kick-back or give it away free through their courts to international firms. It is guessed that fishing companies make 800% profit. Banks run uncontrolled scams such as housing loan schemes. Companies, banks and mines do not go bust in Namibia. Rio Tinto Zinc declared in 1980 that it had long-term uranium contracts until 2025 and it would not be affected by periodic slumps in demand as were others. Since independence it periodically threatens to close shop due to unrealistic workers' demands and the world economic situation.

The national government does not know nor endeavour to know the extent of the extraction of mineral reserves and fish and the GNP and GDP.

Thus, the SSM demands a public inquiry into the natural and national resources of the country and the opening of books of all mines, corporations and business in general.

2. Nationalisation of oil and gas.

3. The working class seeks immediate measures for full employment with a living wage. Such a programme of allocating quotas of employment to the various branches of industry and

commerce to fill, public works, renationalisation of rail and road transport services, postal services for expansion of employment and work security, and collective and co-operative farming, shall be financed through levies on large scale mining and industry.

4. The derogation of labour rights through a corruption and derogation of labour supervisory state mechanism through the changes in labour legislation and employment of semi-literates shall be reversed by the establishment of workers councils in each town and city.

5. Education will be reviewed to remove it from the control from Cambridge and to put it under national control through the various communities.

6. The SSM encourages and assists workers to organise to remove their trade union functionaries who are stifling each struggle and assisting the derogation of rights and conditions by the capitalists. The trade union experience at Marikana should caution against short-cuts of forming new unions instead of fighting for the expulsion of corrupt and reactionary leaderships. However in mergers with the state and the old unions such as at Marikana the only way may to substitute the union for new organisations.

National question and the Contract Labour System

The SSM spearheads the conceptualisation and formalisation of demands of national groups/nations into a comprehensive coherent demand for national self-determination and in the process uniting the working class. (Recent experience has amply illustrated that the peasant leadership comprised by the tribal chiefs is unable to formulate consequential demands and create appropriate strategies in their demands and struggles for land and reparations against the incumbent regime directed and assisted by the German Government.)

7. SSM supports unconditionally the demand for War Reparations by the Herero and Nama groups. However, it puts forward a more comprehensive demand centring on the land and properties (corporeal (movable and immovable), and incorporeal) within Namibia which had been expropriated or engendered and on which

untold wealth is continued to be produced with the labour of the expropriated. Moreover, our demand is not for war reparations alone, but for restitution of property expropriated by Imperial Germany from 1884 to 1915. It forms a significant part of the land issue and is based on the demand for socialisation of land without compensation. The demand serves further as a propaganda tool to focus on Germany's imperialist role and relations in Namibia to maintain colonial bondage and to shackle all and any development tending towards the material and social emancipation and development of the Namibian nation. With it, it tends to publicly highlight imperialist relations generally as it has already achieved with sections of both the Namibian and German peoples.

8. A similar demand against South African colonialism as the above by national groups in particular the Nama, the San, the Damara and the Baster.

9. A demand for restitution of the abuse under the contract labour system which has displaced whole communities from especially Ovamboland and Kavangoland to southern Namibia where independence released the administration from the responsibility of provision of proper shelter, food, healthcare and employment. The compounds had been imploded and the masses of contract labour ejected into cities of squatter camps where they are left to their own devices for survival, and where they continue to serve the objectives of the contract labour system, but without its liabilities and responsibilities. Farm labourers both contractual and traditional are ejected from commercial farms where the latter had for generations created the wealth on these farms and had served the landlords with kith and kin in production, maintaining and serving the households. The vast majority are unemployed. The demand for provision of permanent proper shelter, free food, healthcare and permanent employment issues against the self-same mines, corporate commercial and industrial concerns, commercial farms or their successors and the State. Failure to meet the demand must be met with confiscation, compensation and socialisation.

10. The demand for return of Namibian remains from Germany killed during the wars of extermination and shipped to Germany is extended to the Angolan, Zambian and Tanzanian States and the SWAPO for the remains of Namibians killed by themselves and by the SWAPO leadership in exile until 1990.

11. The institution of a public inquiry into the period of 1962 to 1990 into the abuse and extermination of political fighters and refugees for a full report on the circumstances and causes of the treacherous period in the life of the Namibian nation.

12. A demand to the same instances for accounting of the unaccounted missing persons. This is a continuing crime against the Namibian nation whose resolution is intimately linked to the struggle against the obscenities and abuses of the imperialists and the abuses of their surrogates.

13. The high profile international publication and propaganda around the last four demands are absolutely necessary as part of a concerted effort to preclude the revisiting of the continual, extreme and punctuated tragedies perpetrated on a resistant people by imperialism.

Most of the above demands are at least partially articulated as single issues by particular groups.

Through the Unified Demand and Programme we will unify the nation.

The inaugural meeting of the SSM will be on 12 October 2013

**The people's struggle will
destroy the Memorandums and**

fascism

Speech to the second festival of the Youth Section of SYRIZA:
by Alexis Tsipras, the leader of the radical left party,
SYRIZA.

“Fury in Greece and abroad is what has lit a fire under the Greek government, which up to now seemed not to understand and was looking forward to collaborating with the neo-Nazis”, Alexis Tsipras emphasised during his speech to the SYRIZA youth section’s second festival.

“You can be quite sure that (Conservative Prime Minister) Mr. Samaras and his colleagues have not changed their minds. They were forced to change tack. And we don’t care, in fact we are glad they did and we celebrate it. It’s a big victory, a victory for democracy, a victory for the anti-fascist movement, a victory for European democracy”, the president of SYRIZA said, at the same time explaining that it would nevertheless take a lot more other measures to eliminate the fascist threat.

“There is a Chinese proverb that when your enemy retreats, you have to chase him down. Fascism will not die on its own, we have to crush it. Because alongside all young people in Greece, we know, we think and we proclaim that our future is not fascism. Our future is neither barbarism nor capitalism. And today the Memorandums are not our future. Our future is to OVERTURN them.”

Tsipras went on to denounce what Antonis Samaras had said the previous day. “Those who made the current regime have got to a point where they see national elections as an enemy, an adversary, a scarecrow for justice and liberty in the country. Mr. Samaras’ justice can put up with government by decree, with limitations on liberty and basic rights. It can put up with authoritarianism and repression, with immigrants living

in fields and with tolerating Nazis. But it cannot put up with elections. According to TV reports, elections are a threat to regularity and stability. There in two words is justice according to Mr. Samaras and the people he represents, which is the greatest, the most brutal, the most barbarous, the most abominable injustice for the majority of Greeks. Their stability is social instability, a disaster for the lives of millions of people, a blind alley for young Greeks.”

In conclusion, the President of SYRIZA emphasised that Greece cannot any longer put up with being governed by people who have led it into a catastrophe. “We are many, and we are become more every day. The people trust us, not because they have all suddenly turned left, but because we are not like the other liars, hypocrites and egoists. Because we do not look at politics as a career but as a way of changing our destiny and that of the country. Because we dream of a country dominated by liberty, social justice, democratic stability, a sense of perspective, and prestige. Because we have a long history. Our origins lie in the EPON battalions, insurgents, rebels. We are among the most resolute defenders of democracy. So don’t expect us to bend. We have a country. We have values and ideas. We have experience. And we are determined to win”.

“Fury in Greece and abroad is what has lit a fire under the Greek government, which up to now seemed not to understand and was looking forward to collaborating with the neo-Nazis”, Alexis Tsipras emphasised during his speech to the SYRIZA youth section’s second festival.

“You can be quite sure that (Conservative Prime Minister) Mr. Samaras and his colleagues have not changed their minds. They were forced to change tack. And we don’t care, in fact we are

glad they did and we celebrate it. It's a big victory, a victory for democracy, a victory for the anti-fascist movement, a victory for European democracy", the president of SYRIZA said, at the same time explaining that it would nevertheless take a lot more other measures to eliminate the fascist threat.

"There is a Chinese proverb that when your enemy retreats, you have to chase him down. Fascism will not die on its own, we have to crush it. Because alongside all young people in Greece, we know, we think and we proclaim that our future is not fascism. Our future is neither barbarism nor capitalism. And today the Memorandums are not our future. Our future is to OVERTURN them."

Tsipras went on to denounce what Antonis Samaras had said the previous day. "Those who made the current regime have got to a point where they see national elections as an enemy, an adversary, a scarecrow for justice and liberty in the country. Mr. Samaras' justice can put up with government by decree, with limitations on liberty and basic rights. It can put up with authoritarianism and repression, with immigrants living in fields and with tolerating Nazis. But it cannot put up with elections. According to TV reports, elections are a threat to regularity and stability. There in two words is justice according to Mr. Samaras and the people he represents, which is the greatest, the most brutal, the most barbarous, the most abominable injustice for the majority of Greeks. Their stability is social instability, a disaster for the lives of millions of people, a blind alley for young Greeks."

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After the assassination of P. Fyssas: Either we crush fascism or it will crush us

Statement by Kokkino (Red) after the assassination of Paul Fyssas by Golden Dawn neo-Nazis

18 September 2013

The cold-blooded killing 32-year-old Pavlos Fyssas by Golden Dawn neo-Nazis opens a completely new period in the fascists activities. Following the criminal attack on members of the Communist Party at Peramai a few days previously, the killing of the anti-fascist Pavlos Fyssas is now an open declaration of war by the fascists on the left and the workers movement. Golden Dawn members are no longer content with the logic of Kaiadasii, and targeting the weakest layers in society (migrants, gays, etc.), but are now starting to target their natural enemy: the workers movement, the youth, and the left. This sudden escalation in fascist violence is neither accidental nor spontaneous, since it emerges in a period of growing strike struggles against the Memoranda, of growth in the influence of the left, and with the government clearly facing a brick wall. In fact, Golden Dawn will clearly aim to

crush the workers movement and the left in order to show the bosses (the capitalists, bankers and Troika) how useful they can be and gain their full confidence. The army of murderous gangsters elements guided a few a few days ago at Meligaslas by Kasidiarisiii is poised to act and prove its usefulness. And its usefulness is not confined to murders and attacks on the left; they are trying over and above that to show the government that it can count on the neo-Nazis to intimidate or destabilise and overthrow a left government. That is what it means when reputable journalists nowadays write and speak about the need for conservative forces to co-operate with Golden Dawn in order to avoid a left government.

This sudden escalation should ring alarm bells and mark a decisive turning-point in the anti-fascist struggle of the left and the workers movement. We must now understand that anti-fascism is not a secondary front among others and not think that you can automatically fight the fascists simply by struggling against the Memorandums. On the contrary; there will be no turning back austerity and the Memorandums unless the anti-fascist struggle develops in parallel, since the whole basis for the rise in the fascist right is its intention to maintain the status quo and the interests of capital. First and foremost, we must put an end to any illusions about an institutional confrontation with fascism, either by a coalition of all the whole range of constitutional parties or through the state apparatus. There can be no alliance with forces which not only carry out policies of brutal austerity and racism, which therefore actually strengthens Golden Dawn, but also, many of them, support its terrorist actions against workers struggles. Similarly, the anti-fascist struggle cannot be confined to putting pressure on state institutions to get them to do something. The police have been so penetrated by fascists that relying on them for defence against fascist attacks is not just a bad joke, but a dangerous illusion with painful consequences for the movement and its members.

Meanwhile, the most vital thing is to build a united front against fascism bringing together the forces of the left (Syriza, KKE, ANTARSYA), workers organisations, youth movements and anti-fascists with the aim of developing and co-ordinating anti-fascist action everywhere. Any sectarianism, perceptions of purity, or fatalism must stop now, otherwise there is a serious risk of repeating the mistakes of the past, when the left tried to sort out its differences within the context of the struggle against fascism. Finally, it is necessary to develop self-defence groups in every area and every work-place in order to curb murderous fascist violence and ensure the safety of the movement, migrants and all the victims of neo-Nazi attacks. All such efforts should also have a central co-ordinating body able to guard and secure the main events and activities of the movement.

Kokkino,

Athens, Wednesday 18 September 2013.

- i. Shipyard area near Pireus where Golden Dawn is trying to establish trade unions.
- ii. Kaiadas was a gulf in ancient Sparta where they threw disabled babies, criminals and prisoners of war.
- iii. Golden Dawn Member of Parliament and spokesperson.

Greece and Golden Dawn: The lessons to learn



THE only way to understand fully recent events surrounding Golden Dawn and its activities in Greece is see this movement

as arising from and accurately expressing in its violent criminal nature the bankruptcy of the bourgeoisie's capitalist system as a whole.

This bankruptcy causes the economic and social crisis shaking Europe and above all Greece, where it has gone the furthest. Greece is the sharp point of their attack on the lives and conditions of working people.

This system in crisis needs and breeds bodies like Golden Dawn.

It is the bourgeois class as a whole, with its European "project", its IMF and its "Troika" which is to blame for this crisis and which both provides the conditions for [zum](#) and actively fosters the growth of such organisations.

Unless this is understood, the relations between Golden Dawn and the Greek state must remain a mystery. It is clear that the group has for a long time had extremely strong links with the right wing political establishment. It is now notorious what extensive support they have enjoyed among the police. Prompted by mass revulsion at the murder of Pavlos Fyssas and nudged by the same leading politicians and officials of the European Union who have inflicted untold misery on the Greek people, the Samaras government indulged in a great act of political drama.

Charade

First it sacked a number of police officers, many very senior, who are known to be linked to Golden Dawn. Then prudently masked "counter-terrorist" officers publicly dragged Golden Dawn's leaders into police custody and before the courts. Others raided their homes and offices, uncovering a sickening hoard of Nazi and racist memorabilia, documents and weapons.

Within an extremely short space of time the state prosecutor produced a hair-raising indictment of their activities and structure.

This was hardly the thorough legal slog it might appear: All leading figures in the Greek bourgeois establishment are perfectly aware of what Golden Dawn is and how it operates.

Then, almost as quickly, [wholesale mlb jerseys](#) the group's

leaders are released on bail, among mounting concerns that the legal authorities will manage to fumble the case and in the end let them off scot-free.

The 1920s and 1930s are replete with examples of similar adventures which befell for example Hitler's Nazi Party after the "Beer Hall" putsch in Munich in 1923, or later under the Von Papen and Brüning cabinets in the early 1930s. One minute the Nazis were banned as terrorists; the next, Göring and his brown-shirts were put in charge of the whole police-force over a broad swathe of Germany as a prelude to the Nazi takeover.

Under these circumstances, legal and constitutional steps offer no effective guarantee or protection against the kind of future Golden Dawn and their ilk want to impose. What is needed is a way out of the crisis of capitalism. Working people are faced with a choice: either they destroy capitalism and open the way to socialism, or they face a future of fascism.

That is why we reproduce in this special issue of our Bulletin the statement by Kokkinos, the left wing group within the radical left party SYRIZA. Once these political issues are understood, a look at the events which [быть](#) followed the death of Pavlos Fyssas becomes highly instructive.

Ten days in Greece

An anti-fascist rapper and engineering worker, Fyssas was stabbed to death by a large group of neo-Nazis on the night of 17/18 September in the Keratsini area of Piraeus. Police arrested a suspect associated with Golden Dawn, Giorgos Roupakias, who confessed to the killing

In the following days, tens of thousands took to the [Meistritele](#) streets in anti-fascist marches and rallies, with supporting events across Europe.

The nation-wide revulsion against the planned and deliberate stabbing of Fyssas was fed by press reports and interviews which cast some light on the internal life of Golden Dawn. One anonymous ex-member interviewed by Ethnos newspaper painted a picture of a classic fascist party with a violent, dictatorial and criminal inner core. The interview was translated into

English by Greece Solidarity Movement New York (www.akny.org/2013/09/insider-blows-open-Greek-neo-nazi-operations).

The informant became involved because the local branch in Nikaia put out a call on Facebook saying some Pakistanis were going to attack their offices. He paid 20 euros, proved he was Greek, and got a membership card and number.

However, from being a member he quickly graduated to the "nucleus" of activists who "will do everything, no matter what, without question". The "nucleus" became fashionable and grew so quickly that a further "closed" nucleus was even established within the "open" core. New members soon had to "participate in five or six actions" to win acceptance.

Although "actions" included graffiti writing and terrorising immigrants, it turned out that having "hit a Pakistani ... afterwards I would sell him protection" ... "the local chapter of Golden Dawn protects the Pakistanis. The chapter takes the clothes donated from regular people for the poor, and they sell them to Pakistanis who sell them on the street market and then give a percentage of the profit to Golden Dawn". The "closed nucleus" also pocketed much of the money raised in this way and through donations.

The unemployed leader of Golden Dawn in Nikaia, the informant reported, and his wife "live in a big, comfortable house... He pays for electricity, water, maintenance, he lives respectably ..." All this is done with the full knowledge of Golden Dawn top leaders and Members of Parliament. Members who tried to protest suffered badly: "Comrades who spoke about those things openly were beaten up. They had gone with proof and evidence and they were beaten up and kicked out of the party".

The Nikaia branch – which provides muscle for Golden Dawn activities over a wide area –has an "attack battalion" of about thirty members. They wear a "city uniform" of black-and-white camouflage clothes. But when involved in an attack, they wear black clothes and motorcycle helmets to hide their faces, and they do not carry any Golden Dawn identifying symbols.

On one occasion the local leader was rendered "totally beside

himself” when anarchists marched through the area. He ordered all his men onto the street with helmets, shields and whatever clubs they had. Weapons like that are normally kept hidden in houses and frequently moved to evade police searches.

To become a member of the “closed nucleus”, the informant reports “you have to have a really strong stomach. To accept everything. You are a zero, nothing. Do you know what it means to tell you to get down and do crunches and then they kick you on the sides in front of everyone? You’re nothing, and whatever they tell you to do you must do it. You have no opinion. It’s an order and that’s the end of it!”

He explains that while prominent public leaders of Golden Dawn may not have [Πωλε?ται](#) known of the attack being prepared on Fyssas, it could not have happened without the knowledge of the leader of the Nikaia “nucleus”. The killer, Roupakias, had earlier been appointed to the Nikaia five-member council “without elections [Legacy](#) or nothing”.

The Nikaia Attack Battalion had been involved in several attacks on migrant workers and also the attack on KKE Communist party members in Perama a short time previously.

The informant finally walked away from Golden Dawn “because of the thefts and thuggeries. Being a nationalist doesn’t mean I kill someone.” He cites occasions when police sympathetic to Golden Dawn help them when they are arrested for violence.

The informant describes how former and dissident Golden Dawn members have their Facebook sites hacked and material wiped. He states that members are indoctrinated in Nazi ideology and described the young people in the “Centaur” youth movement and “Innova” motor-scooter squads (named after the scooter brand).

Following revelations of this sort and in the middle of a growing wave of indignant protests, on Monday 23 September the Greek government announced the resignation (actually sacking) of two Police Generals, inspector-general of police for southern Greece Lieutenant General Yiannis Dikopoulos and general police director of Central Greece Apostolos Kaskanis. Seven other police officers were suspended for alleged links with Golden Dawn.

As the BBC's Mark Lowen reported: "There have long been claims of widespread support for the neo-Nazis, included figures showing that in some areas one in two police officers voted for them in last year's election."

Prime Minister Antonis Samaras vowed that he would not allow Golden Dawn to "undermine" democracy: not bad for a man who was "elected" to his position by a Greek people with a Trioka pistol at their heads!

Meanwhile Golden Dawn denied any involvement in the killing of Fyssas. On 25 September, leader Nikos Michaloliakos warned that "mud-slinging and slander" would "open the gates of hell". (This was always the public line of fascist and Nazi [cheap nba jerseys](#) parties: "We are not violent thugs and we will kill anyone who dares say we are!")

Golden Dawn claimed that the media were behind a "dirty war" to annihilate it and denounced Britain's Guardian newspaper as "the newspaper of capitalists in the City" (of London) for inciting violence against the group. Golden Dawn's online statement talked about "the role of certain embassies in the entire operation to dismantle" their organisation.

That same day, 25 September, support for Golden Dawn was reported to be plummeting by 4 percentage points, down from 10% in opinion polls. Newspapers reported that judicial authorities had indicated they would investigate whether Golden Dawn acted as a criminal neo-Nazi organisation, and reported that at least five major leaders of the group would be charged in conjunction with Fyssas' murder. Public order minister Nikos Dendias said he had sent the Supreme Court evidence of Golden Dawn involvement in more than 150 incidents of attacks on immigrants, leftists and trade unionists dating back to 1992. Human rights organisations have linked the group to over 300 attacks, mainly on migrants, in the last three years.

Heavy pressure from Brussels

The "Guardian" added to an online report on 25 September that: "Greece has come under heavy pressure from Brussels to clamp down on the openly racist party, with several Members of the

European Parliament (MEPs) and other officials expressing doubt over whether the country should be allowed to assume the rotating presidency of the EU in January if it fails to do so.”

The next day a posting appeared on a blog maintained by the “Special Forces Reserve Union” (KEED). This 26 September posting called for [cheap mlb jerseys](#) the government to resign [site](#) and for Greece to withdraw from the draconian Memoranda agreements which imposed appalling austerity measures on the country in return for “rescue” packages. It demanded that those responsible for Greece’s financial crisis should be hauled in front of “Special Courts” and that all German business, personal and state property in Greece should be impounded to pay reparations Germany owes arising from World War II.

Listing a number of acts of negligence on the part of the government, the posting called for the armed forces to assume control of the country as the only institution which could secure all the demands it made.

The reservists said a “government of national unity” should be installed, chaired by the President of the Supreme Court and to include “proven personalities with no political links”. They demanded immediate suspension of the Memorandums, the banning from office of all politicians currently in government, all [Build](#) immigrants to be immediately be shipped out of the country, and that the armed forces along with the security forces should take over Greece.

(Anger in Greece’s officer caste has been simmering. Last April GreeceReporter website reported that Greece’s military were smarting under their inability to keep up with Turkey’s armed forces.

“The military isn’t just bleeding – it’s boiling”, Hellenic Navy officer Yannis Katsaroulis said in an interview with Germany’s Deutsche Welle. ... “We recently met with the defence minister to voice our anger about the cuts and one of us, a brigadier, piped up and said we are all set on voting for Golden Dawn in the next elections”, he said. Katsaroulis

added: "Don't be surprised if tanks roll out onto the street and a military rebellion occurs. Everything is possible at this point".')

On Friday 27 September Golden Dawn was still toughing it out in the face of continually mounting opposition. Leader Nikolaos Michaloliakos warned that the party could well pull its MPs out of Parliament unless the government crackdown ceased. If they resigned, there would have to be special elections in the constituencies they represented, which could well let in opposition candidates who would overturn the government's slender majority. But Deputy Prime Minister Evangelos Venizelos was unperturbed, describing the move as "not a threat. It's a great opportunity", and prosecutors investigating Golden Dawn said they had found evidence that would help them to prove that it is a criminal organisation.

The following day, Saturday 28 September, Greek police arrested Michaloliakos on charges of forming a criminal organisation, along with party spokesperson Ilias Kasidiaris and fellow MPs Ilias Panayiotaros and Ioannis Lagos and 12 other party members. The arrests were made by masked officers of the anti-terrorism unit.

A serving police officer who reportedly acts as a bodyguard for the party had also been arrested.

Many commentators were first of all surprised by these measures on the part of the government. This is the first time since the collapse of the military dictatorship in the 1970s that a party leader has been arrested. Also the government and the state have shown amazing tolerance of Golden Dawn since it made big election gains last summer and has risen in the opinion polls.

Among the thousands and thousands of anti-fascists who have spent the last ten days organising demonstrations and rallies against Golden Dawn there is of course huge relief and a feeling of a hard-won success at this crack-down. At last the state is using some of its resources at least to bear down on a violent criminal neo-Nazi group.

But some commentators – like the Guardian's Helena Smith and

(UK) Channel Four's Paul [new](#) Mason – talk much more guardedly about Greece entering “uncharted waters”, and the arrests “fuelling” the political crisis in Greece.

None of the circumstances and conditions which have led to the growth of Golden Dawn have gone away.

The exposure of Golden Dawn's structure and methods is a double-edged sword. It can excite and attract the dispossessed and the demoralised as much as it repels those who trust the rule of law.

The government that is cracking down on them is obliged to carry out a further series of attacks on the Greek people while maintaining the misery already inflicted on them.

It may not take fascism in Greece ten years to get from dress rehearsal to premiere.

It must also be remembered that Greece's fate is totally an issue for the whole of Europe. A victory for fascism in Greece (arising out of the conditions imposed by the crisis) will strengthen reaction across Europe, just as a victory of the working class and the masses which makes big inroads into the privileges of the ruling class will assist in a continent-wide awakening of the working class and working people.

More than ever, a continent-wide movement of working people to assert their rights is an urgent necessity.

Bob Archer, October 2013

Socialist Nostrums and How to Build The International



Socialist Nostrums and How to Build The International

by Balazs Nagy June 2013

A Comrade wrote recently: the new rising tide of the international working class starting in 2011 is what is putting all groupings which claim to be Trotskyist to the test. If the working class was not defending itself as it does and was to go quietly to its doom, such groupings would have another lease of life with their glorious socialist nostrums drawn from the previous period. But as things are, it is all put in question: the understanding of the meaning of the Transitional Programme and how you build the International. That is indeed the nub of the question, and our comrade has put his finger right on it. There undoubtedly is a rising tide, even if it has peculiar features which make it rather difficult to form a clear picture of it. These peculiar features themselves echo and reflect difficult conditions which are more severe and weigh more heavily than in the past under which the working class is seeking a way forward. They deform and retard it. Let us try to sum them up (in broad outline).

* What we are dealing with is that they are coming out of a defeat, but not just any old defeat such as they might have known in the past. The liquidation of the USSR as a consequence of the fact that the bureaucracy held power, but also of the conscious action of a good part of that bureaucracy, meant an historical setback for the working class on an international scale. There is no doubt that in itself this threw the class a long way backwards. Its Soviet section was disorientated and demoralised [cheap jerseys](#) and unable to stand up for itself apart from a few sporadic ashes. For too long, the domination of Stalinism had, by crushing and eliminating its best elements, disfigured its gains and poisoned its consciousness.

* A [Flatrate](#) number of consequences in turn worsened and generalised this defeat. The Stalinist parties right-wing policies had already long since weakened the working class. Now this leaderships treachery became a sudden general collapse, with these parties shrinking considerably if not

disappearing. Stalinism exploded (not its base in the bureaucracy, and not its politics in general). The mistake we made in Workers International was to conclude from this that it opened the road for the working class to march towards revolution. That is to say that we one-sidedly welcomed a victory (the defeat of the bureaucracy) which was above all the defeat of the USSR brought about by the bureaucracy in its decrepitude.

* What this counter-revolutionary turn in events and the dislocation of the USSR brought about was to undermine the morale of communist workers and disarm them in the face of recrudescing and unbridled bourgeois propaganda (helped by many ex-Stalinists) against socialism and Marxism, a propaganda which exploited the abominable and universally abhorred practices of Stalinism. At the same time this gave a new lease of life to an, itself degenerate, social democracy. The so-called ultra-liberal offensive of the bourgeoisie was already well under way, and it was abruptly strengthened and made general. It became omnipresent, planet-wide in vigour and scope, and its sharp point was aimed at the destruction of the working class as a class. This is no exaggeration!

* The bourgeois practice of de-industrialisation centring on Europe was not simply an economic transfer to countries with much inferior wages and trade union rights, or the winding down of unprofitable industries (such as mining). It was also and above all a policy of physically destroying an important, indeed the most robust, conscious and militant, part of the working class. This destruction considerably increased the weight of the petit bourgeoisie, but not in production (since small farmers and craft workers have largely been eliminated) but in bureaucracy of every kind, in services and in intermediate layers in general.

* The way the trade unions have been domesticated, with the help of swollen trade union bureaucracies, into social partners constitutes another important facet in this destruction of the working class.

* The attacks on the gains workers have made in the social

field etc. have developed into a general offensive, described everywhere as reforms (!!), intended to make this destruction utter. On the other hand, it is necessary to locate, among the special features of the current rising tide which render it more difficult, the contradictory but for the most part negative heritage of the Fourth International. Broadly speaking it has two aspects:

a. The overwhelming majority of this heritage is negative, although its history undeniably has some positive aspects. From the start of World War II, with Trotskys assassination, the Fourth International entered a long process of degeneration. I shall omit the details, but this long first phase of its perversion ended with the big split of 1952-53, followed by an exponential rise in splits and desertions. Again omitting details, I merely state that there exists a whole galaxy of organisations and internationals; – this dispersion and proliferation in turn have been accompanied by and engendered a whole constellation of theories and ideas whose sources can be located already well before the degeneration and in my view show a lack of understanding of Marxism and above all how it was enriched by Lenin and Trotsky. (The second part of my work Marxist Considerations on the Crisis is devoted to a detailed examination of this problem during the revolutionary wave of 1942-1946).

b. I think that in Workers International we have finally got to the point of understanding the essential elements of this (to do with Marxism and its development), just as, very probably, several activists scattered around the multitude of organisations will have understood them or will be able to assimilate them. These special features, and others, make the rising tide more difficult and chaotic. They are expressed in its jerky, meandering, character, proceeding in fits and starts, retreats interspersed with sudden rebounds. It carries on all the same, because it is often provoked and pushed forward by the greed and impatience of the bourgeoisies attacks. They thus obviously and mutually reinforce each other. Driven back to the last ditch, the working class is

forced to defend itself with every means at its disposal. But we must be on guard: Spontaneity has its limits! Nevertheless, the tide is rising. It started in Africa. The revolutions which have unfolded in North Africa gave the signal. There was the massacre of the miners at Marikana which galvanised workers and activists who support them in South Africa, where the illusion in relation to the ANC is shattered, even if not finally put to rest. In Namibia, too, our comrades are conducting a large-scale and fruitful struggle at the heart of the Namibian working class which is busy organising and spreading its struggle. Since the beginning of 2012 the working class of Europe has visibly redoubled its defensive struggle. It has even forced the union leaderships to adopt a more forthright fight in defence of its interests and resisting attacks, including repeated general strikes (which sadly entail their own powerful capacity to exhaust). All this in a number of European countries. As a whole, these struggles have disrupted the tranquillity of the so-called "partnership" on the part of trade unions. – Moreover, with much difficulty, lack of clarity and mal-formation, the working class has even been able to start a long struggle to rebuild its parties. That is the profound significance of the appearance of Die Linke, Syriza and the Front de Gauche.

Party Building has Started

In the midst of and because of the difficult and raw special features mentioned before, these formations are unlike the, as it were, conventional splits in the past. This renders these formations more limited and pragmatic, but also more receptive to the rising working-class tide (despite often very big differences between them). They are not homogenous organisations but coalitions of a variety of organisations, of breakaways from social democracy and from the exhausted and shrunken communist parties, as well as those coming from this or that organisation claiming allegiance to the Fourth International, as well as some groups of petit bourgeois. For all that, they are relatively stable coalitions rather than simple ad hoc blocs. The fact that no single one of the

organisations which have joined in the coalitions is able, taken separately, to project a convincing presence reflects the weighty difficulties presented by the peculiar features of the present tide. But the other fact that they have achieved and maintain and develop their coalition attests to the existence and strength of the working-class tide. They are at the beginning of a road which can lead to the emergence of revolutionary parties of the working class – as long as certain conditions are fulfilled. This start is embodied in the independent way they position themselves in relation to the bourgeoisie, and it is concentrated in their opposition to the latter's European policy. It is a remarkable fact that in France the near majority of all organisations claiming adherence to Trotskyism (Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste, Lambertist Parti Ouvrier International, Lutte Ouvriere) are outside of and even opposed to the Front de Gauche coalition, while in Greece a far from negligible part has remained outside Syriza (to say nothing of the Stalinist KKE, and I am not sure of the situation in Die Linke in Germany). The fact remains that a terrible sectarianism, one of the as it were hereditary taints of pre-war Trotskyism, one of the factors at the root of the degeneration of the so-called Fourth International but also a fruit of this degeneration – against which Trotsky fought incessantly – condemns these organisations to stay outside this promising re-awakening of the working class. This refusal is not their only defect, but the refusal to get mixed up in the vulgar masses for fear of losing their (actually long-squandered) virginity has long ago become second nature to them. This is what breathes life into and gives concrete meaning to our comrades words when he says: the new rising tide of the international working class starting in 2011 is what is putting all groupings which claim to be Trotskyist to the test. If the working class was not defending itself as it does and was to go quietly to its doom, such groupings would have another lease of life with their glorious socialist nostrums drawn from the previous period. I shall not go into greater detail here on the Lambertists,

Lutte Ouvriere, etc. It needs doing and I am sure other comrades will do it. But we must draw the general conclusion that through these conditions a concrete path has opened for building the revolutionary parties which have for so long been lacking, while the main body of those who claim to be Trotskyists have remained outside of them. And that we can no longer remain passive in the face of this paradox. But do be careful! This is only half the truth. It is only complete if we see and integrate into our conception that we are dealing with profoundly unstable coalitions which have not even got half way towards building revolutionary parties, even if we should not underestimate what has been achieved. To look just at the Front de Gauche (the other coalitions have more or less the same characteristics) we should view it politically as a centrist formation which, given its size and position could [cheap nba jerseys](#) (and should) evolve towards a revolutionary party. Now the forces holding it back at its present stage are enormous, because none of the organisations of which it is composed have ever gone beyond this centrist stage at which they are stuck. The cause and content of their centrism is to be found in the incomplete, unfinished character of their break with the bourgeoisie. Vehement as it may be, their criticism is only directed against the so-called ultra-liberal version of bourgeois politics, against its attacks, but remains still within the limits of a kind of Keynesian policy – which is just as bourgeois. It also remains at a strictly national level. For the time being, all the organisations making up the Front de Gauche coalesce and reach mutual understanding within these two limitations. That [Workers](#) is what constitutes their shared ideology, which might differ in detail inasmuch as a left Keynesian is different from a so-called classical Keynesian. (You can play the same tune in different ways.) In this sense, the political line of Ch. [σρωπηλ??](#) Picquets Gauche Unitaire (Unified Left), which split from the NPA, or the Gond faction which also [16.05.2013](#) broke away from the same NPA, only differ very slightly, or not at all, from Mélanchon's Parti de Gauche (Left Party).

These former Trotskyists of ill repute have – rightly – joined the Front de Gauche, but in doing so they have – wrongly – completely adapted to its centrist (and in fact bourgeois) line. The French Communist Party (PCF) is entirely controlled by the ex-Stalinist bureaucracy in the trade unions and local government, which sets its seal on its policies while the shrunken working class rank-and-file is kept at the back, as indeed it always was. This partly explains why on the one hand it has not been able to break completely with Hollande's social democracy (especially in view of local elections) and on the other the fact, as comrades have noted, "Communist workers find Mélançon more popular than their own central committee."

Sectarianism and opportunism

In reality, the way in which so-called Trotskyist organisations react to a concrete opportunity opening up to forge a genuine worker's party provides a measure of how deeply they have degenerated. The vast majority of them line up on a sectarian position while a minority split away and joined the Front de Gauche, only to languish in opportunism. Probably the truth of the matter is what Trotsky said: the sectarians take that stance because they are scared that the possibilities offered by an opening will expose their opportunism. In fact we are confronted here with the same basic problem that has faced the workers movement from the outset: how are revolutionaries to relate to the class as a whole and its movement? It is no coincidence that Marx and Engels twice (!) referred to this problem in the Communist Manifesto, once in the form of a general explanation that communists are not separate in any way from other proletarians but are distinguished by two essential elements: they represent (1) the international character of the movement and (2) its more distant general goals. In the second instance they go concretely into greater detail on these principles in relation to particular parties in specific countries. Nor was it a coincidence that Trotsky devoted two chapters of the Transitional Programme to the need to struggle against both these scourges – sectarianism and opportunism. The whole of

his fight for the Fourth International was entirely marked by this struggle in theory and practice. You only need to look at his works to see this – and to arm yourself against these evils. Moreover, he never stopped guiding the members of the International right through the 1930s not just in the struggle for the united class front but also to enter the social democratic parties, not to adapt to them and get infatuated with them, but to push them to go further towards socialism and strengthen the revolutionary party so that it would come out stronger in the case of a split. It is particularly important to re-read the articles on the fusion of the French Trotskyists with [wholesale nba jerseys](#) Marcel Piverts new party which broke away from Blums social democratic party in 1938. One should think about Trotskys letters (published in Pierre Broue's *Le Mouvement communiste en France*, Minuit 1967), even if the situation is different and the problems are raised in a different context, with different questions and different actors. So recognising the centrism in todays Front de Gauche does not at all mean thinking it is the same as the centrism of the 1930s. The difference arises above all in the fundamental difference between the situation then and now. Then, the world was marching towards a coming war, and petrified centrism was condemned to explode very soon. Today, on the other hand, we are confronted with the impossibility of any return to Keynesian-type policies or any re-hash of them. The [wholesale mlb jerseys](#) bourgeoisie simply are not able to [justo](#) do it. They are even forced to cut their military expenditure and the budget of their European venture. So they are obliged to pursue their austerity policies. Two consequences appear inevitable:

- * On the one hand, the masses of workers and working people will be obliged to fight back harder
- * On the other, in the short term, all centrists will be faced with a choice: surrender or advance.

On the question of programme

In this context, the task of building the party in France, linked to rebuilding the Fourth International, will go by way

of the unstinting support of Workers International members for the opening that Front de Gauche represents, which is part of and a significant stage in this process of reconstruction. It will also allow us to get to grips with the reconstruction of the Fourth International and link up with building the party by virtue concretely of the fact that it will make it easier for us to intervene with all those who claim allegiance to the Fourth International. At the same time, and in the same way that we undertake the building of the revolutionary party in a manner closely connected to the concrete situation, i.e. as associates of the Front de Gauche, we should also in the same way approach our tasks and demands, in short the Transitional Programme. Obviously our strategic orientation remains the proletarian revolution as a precondition for building socialism. This goal is supposedly shared by all organisations claiming allegiance to Trotskyism, from the Pabloite NPA to the Lambertist POI, by way of Lutte Ouvriere, the CWI's GR and all the various factions in these organisation. But how to achieve it? That is the fundamental question and that is where all the differences emerge and stand [Bronwen](#) out to the point that they actually obscure this general orientation. Our comrade is 1,000 times right when he says that various organisations keep repeating their old nostrums for building the International and the same demands without understanding what either this work of building or the Transitional Programme actually mean. Concretely, this means that it is absolutely not enough to repeat mechanically a programme which was written in 1938 (not that that makes it outdated!). In itself it is significant that centrists of every kind, including those who claim allegiance to the Fourth International, are mostly unable to explain openly, against all the desperate efforts of various wings and strands of the bourgeoisie to find and put forward endless remedies and solutions to repair a floundering bourgeois economy, that the one and only remedy is to move on to socialism by way of the overthrow of the capitalist system of ill repute. If certain organisations like the Lambertist POI or Lutte Ouvrière do put

forward the socialist solution, it remains isolated from real living problems and remains suspended in mid-air. But even if most organisations do suggest something, it is very often a new recipe for correcting or improving the existing capitalist system, eked out at most with this or that old demand from the Transitional Programme. Even if these entirely retain their validity today, nonetheless, put there in themselves, they also become a version of a – maybe more radical – bourgeois solution, because they remain fixed and lose that essential thing, i.e. their character as a transition to socialism. I shall not refer to Trotskys many explanations on that score: how this programme acts as a bridge by mobilising the mass of the exploited to make it easier for them to understand the need to overthrow capitalism. So it is easy to understand why we insist both on its concrete content, sticking close to reality, and on its merely transitional character. So it becomes clear why we need to adapt our old programme to the living, concrete requirements of today. However, we must specify immediately that even without adapting it in that way, the main assertions of our Transitional Programme, and even most of the specific demands are still entirely valid. But here too, our task is to translate that into the language of todays problems, so that it can immediately be read and understood by all workers here and now. Everybody knows, for example, that although the USSR occupies an important position in this programme, it no longer exists. However, we should use even this obsolete part not just to formulate our demands against the weight and despotism of the workers bureaucracy, but simply in order to understand this bureaucracy and the Stalinist conceptions and reflexes which still prevail in a big part of it. As a system, Stalinism is finished, but it still lives as a theoretical and practical heritage. I believe another example is that it is no longer enough to repeat what the programme says about banks. Indeed, we need a whole series of demands over finance, in particular, debt (where the demand to cancel the debt is not enough to arouse a movement against it, but should have a transitional character aiming at this

outcome, the essential point of which is to mobilise working people). Similar problems arise over Europe, where the – still correct – call for a United Workers (or Socialist) States of Europe as such is not sufficiently rooted in the concrete and immediate questions of the day. (I have attempted to approach these problems in my articles through demands for a public investigation into the debt and a struggle for a Working Peoples Europe.) Adapting our programme properly is not a matter of scratching our heads to make up this or that demand, but of laying hold of those which have arisen in the course of the struggle, either spontaneously or brought in by some other organisation. Most demands of this kind are around already. (Let us not forget that in 1917 the Bolshevik Party, lacking a worked-out peasant policy, simply adopted that of the Left Social Revolutionaries.) So we take hold of those which are already going around as demands. Not all of them, obviously, but those which, like the Transitional Programme, have the capacity to mobilise working people. Generally speaking we do not repeat them as they exist formally, but give them the character of class mobilisers (which is the essential point about the Transitional Programme) which point the way to socialism. I think a good example is the struggle Mélanchon has launched for a Sixth Republic. Look how the revisionist fake Trotskyists reacted! A comrade called Yvan Lemaître (probably in the NPA) wrote an article criticising another article by comrade George Kaldy (Lutte Ouvriere) in which the latter announced that his organisation would not join in the demonstration called by Mélanchon. Lemaître (like the NPA) declared in favour of the demonstration, but squarely asserted in the article that, like Kaldy, we do not share the position of Mélanchon and the PCF (Parti Communiste Français) on the Sixth Republic Here you can see very well the completely negative, not to say harmful attitude these two organisations have, which very well expresses the sclerotic state they are in. Obviously you could take this slogan as it stands as a call for a return to a possibly improved Fourth Republic, which is probably what all the inveterate centrists think

(including many leaders of the PCF). Others who think Mélanchon is a bit of a pin-up figure may just see this slogan as one of his catchphrases. In my view, a Marxist ought to take up this demand and provide it with a quite different content and meaning. For us, a Sixth Republic should be and will be a workers republic crowing a victorious struggle against the bourgeoisie. In this sense it has the same algebraic quality that a workers and peasants government had for Trotsky (and still has for us). The dynamics of the struggle will provide the exact detail and content of this republic. Another example has appeared most recently in Great Britain, where the central trade union force rallying a left alliance has rightly adopted the demand for the reestablishment of the welfare state practically liquidated by the bourgeois offensive. Of course it [Obat](#) cannot be re-established, but it is up to us Marxists to explain that we think that there has to be a struggle for a real, actual welfare state, i.e. a workers and socialist one! We must keep working in this area and further enrich our arsenal of demands, bringing them together in order to point them all in the direction of the socialist revolution, as a great bridge towards it, never losing sight of their fundamental and essential content, which is to mobilise the working masses to fulfil their work of emancipation. To sum up: in every organisation listed above, their centrist politics is clearly marked by three major defects:

a. Either they repeat their ultimate aim of socialism, but without any real link (apart from empty assertions) between these distant goals and today's concrete tasks and demands.

b. Or they put forward these current and concrete demands drawn also from our Transitional Programme (but not updating it), but remain stuck at this level and do not dare argue for socialism. They forget that these demands are only a bridge which is meant to cross the river to socialism.

c. They have no opening for building / rebuilding the Fourth International. In the best case, they poach individual members one by one while squabbling with other centrist groups,

convinced that they have already built (or rebuilt) the true Fourth International. In the worst cases, they do not even have any such prospect, and some of them throw it all overboard and opt for a Fifth International (whatever that may be).

Nelson Mandela's Legacy by Bronwen Handyside



“The ANC has never at any period of its history advocated a revolutionary change in the economic structure of the country, nor has it, to the best of my recollection, ever condemned capitalist society.”

(Nelson Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom, p. 435)

How is it that UK Prime Minister David Cameron can say of Nelson Mandela: “A great light has gone out in the world. Nelson Mandela was a hero of our time”?

How is it that newspapers like the Daily Telegraph, the voice of the British ruling class, can express their regret at Mandela's passing?

Contrast this with Maggie Thatcher's opinion that Mandela and the ANC were nothing but a bunch of murdering terrorists.

Some might say the British ruling class is just jumping on a bandwagon and hoping to bask in some kind of reflected glory from the international outpouring of praise directed towards the ANC leader.

I think their approval of Mandela's history goes deeper than that. It fits in with the world bourgeoisie's global narrative of how the world's brutal inequalities should be solved, which is pumped out on a daily basis by their lackeys in the mass

media. It is also propped up by the remnants of the grip that Stalinist ideas retain on the international working class (in particular the idea of "peaceful coexistence" between capitalism and socialism, which arose out of the deal the Stalinist bureaucracy made with imperialism to divide the world between them after the Second World War. This line constantly tended to limit and hamper struggles against imperialism, including those against colonial domination, and blunted them by stifling revolutionary socialist forces and working through handpicked bureaucratic leaders. This is why uprisings of ANC militants demanding to wage the armed struggle in South Africa were violently, sometimes fatally, suppressed by the ANC's security apparatus(1).)

Brutal systems like apartheid are based on deliberate divisions created between working people across the world. Over centuries they have enabled imperialist countries and capital to exploit labour power and natural resources belonging to other nations and peoples. Apartheid stands out as a particularly anti-human system of institutionalised racism.

The soothing myth the politicians and media are peddling is that such systems do not need to be violently overthrown, but can be resolved peacefully to the benefit of the oppressed through a "negotiated settlement". It says that the protracted and deepening problems of gross inequality between different countries, and different classes within those countries do not emanate, as the siren voices of socialism say, from the capitalist system. They do not require the overthrow of the system of private property (progressing through a programme of nationalisation of the banks, industry, and land) but a process of "civilised" negotiation in which big business (aka capital) preserves the lion's share of the wealth while permitting a minority of the country's bourgeoisie to participate in the feast. The bourgeois narrative tells us that the brutal inequalities we see today (where an Indian

child of 11 can be sold into a brothel for life, while on the other side of the world boys like David Cameron and Boris Johnson are born to wealth and power) are nothing to do with the class system, where the majority who produce all the wealth through their labour are exploited by a minority who own all the industries and the land.

This narrative declares that the violence of each side during the oppressed classes' struggle for equality can be brushed over with the "bland screen of moral equivalence"(2) as it was in South Africa at the so-called "Truth and Reconciliation Commission" (a useful model the bourgeoisie rolled out across the world, notably in Northern Ireland). The just violence of the masses in their fight for the equal redistribution of wealth of their nation is declared to be the same as the reactionary violence of those preserving their right to exploit others.

It says: not only is there no necessity for class antagonisms, there are actually really no class divisions in society. It is just that some people are born clever and resourceful and naturally grow rich, while others are not. The British ruling class, on a roll with its austerity measures and full of confidence, has started articulating much more clearly what really lies at the heart of this fairy tale.

Tory London Mayor Boris Johnson, now positioning himself for the Tory leadership – treading the ground where the rest of the Tories still do not quite dare to go – says: "Like it or not, the free market economy is the only show in town. Britain is competing in an increasingly impatient and globalised economy, in which the competition is getting ever stiffer.

"No one can ignore the harshness of that competition, or the inequality that it inevitably accentuates; and I am afraid that violent economic centrifuge is operating on human beings who are already very far from equal in raw ability, if not spiritual worth."

Tory Prime Minister Cameron now calls for permanent austerity – “a leaner state” – in other words a country in which the hogging of resources by a tiny elite will plunge millions into poverty, illness, despair and degradation. He wants a world in which such inequality is simply accepted – as a kind of natural phenomenon.

Negotiated settlements such as those in South Africa are the plan B the bourgeoisie rolls out at the point where it realises it can no longer govern with the iron fist, murdering and torturing to repress dissent, and that it is under threat by a militant working class which is looking to the redistribution of wealth from the despoilers to the toilers. It needs to collaborate with a selected layer of the oppressed which it feels will do business, and [cheap MLB jerseys](#) in particular will collaborate in the suppression of the working class and its political programme of socialism.

This plan appeared in South Africa in the mid-1980s, when the country had become ungovernable, brought to its knees by a popular uprising led by an extraordinary and brand new trade union movement – which above all, and most important of all, had at its heart a conscious workingclass socialist current which produced the Workers Charter, demanding the redistribution of the wealth and the land to the masses of South Africa. “The scent of revolution was in the air”³. The Workers Charter was founded in opposition to the ANC’s 30 year old Freedom Charter (which as Nelson Mandela explains, was never a socialist document, but rather a programme for the establishment of a black bourgeoisie).

The plan appeared as it became clear to big business and [AngularJS, filter](#) the banks inside and outside of South Africa that the productivity and therefore the profitability of South [home](#) African workers had plunged into terminal decline as a result of the mass resistance against apartheid.

The suppression of the socialist Workers' Charter in favour of the reformist (i.e. aimed at reforming capitalism and not overthrowing it) Freedom Charter inside the trade union movement, after the formation of COSATU in 1985, was the signal to South African capital that the way was open to a deal with the ANC.

Talks about the possibility of such a settlement had begun in late 1984, between exiled ANC leaders (in Lusaka and in London) and representatives of South African big business.

Some may say: what's the problem? Didn't that negotiated settlement bring about the enfranchisement of the black masses, and the creation of the "rainbow nation" so highly praised throughout the world's media? But that deal between the white bourgeois exploiters of South Africa and a new and very small black bourgeoisie, together with the violent repression of the working class and its socialist programme, is precisely what is currently bearing fruit in the "new" South Africa. Its government openly pursues the worst of the neo-liberal policies (fiscal discipline, deregulation, free markets and trade liberalisation, privatisation, low taxes and secure property rights) and instructs its police force to shoot down unarmed striking miners in the back (not the first time its police force has shot down protesters against its policies). It is clear why the rhetoric of Thatcher and her political allies was different from Cameron's, because when she was making her pronouncements, the South African ruling class was still hesitating between the iron fist of repression and the necessity of a settlement.

The "new" South Africa has resulted in:

The second most unequal society in the world – more unequal now than before Mandela came to office. The greatest inequality exists between blacks and other racial groups. Black income has virtually flat-lined since the ending of apartheid, [wholesale NBA jerseys](#) in contrast to that of other racial groups, particularly white South Africans.

- 40% unemployment. Importantly, 70% of SA's unemployed are younger than 35, while the unemployment rate among people aged less than 25 is around 50%. 50% of the population living below the poverty line. More than half of black children are growing up in poverty. Average life expectancy declining from 62 years in 1990 to 52.6 years in 2012. A crisis in public services including housing. A collapse in social structures which means the highest rate of rape, gang rape and child rape in the world. The highest rate of HIV infection in the world. The slaughter of 34 striking miners at Marikana, shot for demanding a living wage, after ex-NUM and current ANC leader Cyril Ramaphosa urged both the ANC Police Minister and the mining company Lonmin to deal with them, referring to them as "criminals". The fabulous enrichment of a tiny minority, like Cyril Ramaphosa, (currently worth \$700m, which the ANC explains he made out of his business acumen – see Boris Johnson's explanation for the divisions in society), and current ANC president Jacob Zuma who recently did up his residence to the tune of 17.2m of public money

Was it for this that the black masses fought and died?

And was it for this that the millions in the international workers' movement, students and others waged their decades-long campaign against apartheid, and gave unstinting political and financial support to the exiled ANC, SACP and SACTU (the South African Congress of Trade Unions)?

Confusion

Mandela was surrounded by political forces from the 1960s to the 1980s which sowed confusion by representing him as a "communist" – including the South African and British ruling classes, and the South African Communist party (SACP) (under instructions from their international leaders). The SACP now declares that Mandela was a secret member of their Central Committee at the time of the Rivonia trial, which completely

fits with their theory of the necessity for a two-stage revolution for South Africa. First a revolution in which the native bourgeoisie would come to power, followed many, many, many years later by a socialist revolution against capitalism, bringing the working class to power.

But Nelson Mandela never pretended that the ANC was a socialist organisation, with any desire to attack capitalism. He himself said at his Rivonia trial:

“The most important political document ever adopted by the ANC is the Freedom Charter. It is by no means a blueprint for a socialist state. The ANC has never at any period of its history advocated a revolutionary change in the economic structure of the country, nor has it, to the best of my recollection, ever condemned capitalist society.”. Later, speaking about [What](#) the Freedom Charter’s demand for the nationalisation of the mines and industrial corporations, Mandela said:

“The charter strikes a fatal blow at the financial and gold mining monopolies that have for centuries plundered the country and condemned its people to servitude. The breaking up and democratisation of these monopolies will open up fresh fields for the development of a prosperous non-European bourgeois class. For the first time in the history of this country the non-European bourgeoisie will have the opportunity to own, in their own name and right, mills and factories and trade and private enterprise will boom and flourish as never before.”.

When the constitution of the “new” South Africa was negotiated (by Cyril Ramaphosa and Thabo Mbeki, ANC leader following Mandela), a clause was inserted which, according to the ANC leadership, entirely negates that section of the Freedom Charter which calls for nationalisation of the land, the mines, and the banks. Throughout his life Mandela acted completely in accordance with his principles, which were to

build a society in which a black South African bourgeoisie could partake of power and wealth along with the white owners of the banks, industry and the land.

Unfortunately that has produced a society of brutal inequality.

In 2006 Tory leader David Cameron was able to say: "The mistakes my party made in the past with respect to relations with the ANC and sanctions on South Africa make it all the more important to listen now. The fact that there is so much to celebrate in the new South Africa is not in spite of Mandela and the ANC, it is because of them – and we Conservatives should say so clearly today." Fortunately the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) and other forces in South Africa continue the battle for the working class and its socialist programme. We should lend them every possible support in their fight against the violent repression promoted by the likes of Cyril Ramaphosa and the other bourgeois rulers of South Africa.

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