

Some fascists seen off – but no cause for complacency

Saturday 29 November 2014, Greek Embassy, Holland Park, London:

Fascists had planned to picket the Greek Embassy in support of Golden Dawn – the Greek fascist organisation, several of whose MPs are currently in jail on various charges including murder, weapons offences and attacks on immigrants.

In the event about 20 turned up but they were seen off, after about an hour, by anti-fascists who had assembled some time before.

Polish fascists, who were reported to be behind the picket of the Greek embassy, are beginning to organise amongst the emigre community in the UK. They organised an attack on a music festival in Tottenham recently.

The counter demonstration was called by several groups: Greek Solidarity Campaign, Unite against Fascism and Anti Fascist Action for Greece (AAfG). Later a group of young anarchists arrived to give much appreciated support.

Speakers welcomed the necessary collaboration of groups from a variety of political backgrounds.

A National Union of Journalists (NUJ) member spoke of the increasing anti-immigrant noise coming out of the media, including the BBC, reflecting the capitulation of the main bourgeois parties in United Kingdom to the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), a right-wing nationalist and anti-immigration party which hopes to do well at the general election in May.

Greek comrades outlined the extreme social dislocation, unemployment and social hardship in Greece as a result of the EU bankers' imposed austerity measures. This is the background to the rise of Golden Dawn (GD) – a fully-fledged fascist party which openly applauds the Hitler regime and organises attacks, including murder, on immigrant populations, trade unionists, socialists and anti-fascists. They are currently the third grouping in parliament with close ties to the police and various sections of the state and the ruling class.

The fact that the Greek state has, for now, felt constrained to “crack down” on GD shouldn't for a moment convince anyone that the fight against fascism can be left to the state to take care of.

To quote an interesting leaflet distributed by Anti-Fascist Action for Greece (AAfG) on the counter-picket: “The political servants of Greek capitalism are neither ready nor willing to step aside on account of a potential coup by fascist forces, and nor is the Greek ruling class prepared to resort to a fascist solution before exhausting every parliamentary means to implement the most reactionary regressive ant-labour and anti-democratic laws in Greece's history.”

In UK we have somewhat different situation. An anti-immigrant party – UKIP – gaining support due to the bourgeois parties' programme of austerity and a widespread disaffection with “normal” politics. It's not yet a fascist organisation but such a container could easily be filled with a different content.

So long as workers and other people get no answers to basic issues like housing and unemployment from the main bourgeois parties and socialists fail to construct an alternative, the potential for a fascist movement is there. There is no room for complacency.

Nick Bailey[\threecolumns]

Sarkozy back in political activity and Beefing up the bonapartism! Warning of a real danger! by Balazs Nagy

Not long ago, Nicolas Sarkozy was unceremoniously bundled out of office. Now he's back on TV in all his pomp and glory. France's second channel (chaine 2) is supposed to be a public enterprise run by the state, or successive governments, but in any case at taxpayers' expense. Now it gives Sarkozy the red carpet treatment. The way they transformed him from a duplicitous agent of the bourgeoisie into a messianic liberator was amazing and shockingly servile. One faithful retainer, Yves Jégo, was moved to comment in astonishment, and with some justice: "It can't be right to give 45 minutes on a current affairs TV show to a Presidential contender" (*Le Monde*, 23 September 2014).

Now, it was Sarkozy who appointed the boss of this channel, and the current President, Hollande, was daft enough to keep him in the job. This man virtually prostrated himself in front of Sarkozy, and the simpering nonentity who conducted the interview like a willing stooge more or less got down on all fours. It may not make much sense, but that's the way things go in this general political climate.

Trials and tribulations of post-war Bonapartism in France

The government of the so-called Socialist Party and its associates – what a lot of people still call "the Left", is visibly on its last legs. It is too closely tied to moribund capitalism, too definitively compromised in the twilight decadence which drags all down in its gloomy wake.

But, debilitated as it is by this decline, the bourgeoisie still has to do something about the fact that its social-democratic servant is bankrupt and too weak now to face the growing perils. This is what explains the growing strength of fascist organisations and the disproportionate extension of their influence right across the old capitalist countries. But Trotsky warned that between social democracy and fascism there is a whole spectrum of intermediate regimes which the bourgeoisie can use to replace their failed social-democratic business managers without going straight over to fascism, with all the burdens and risks that brings. Fascism is an option they keep on a back burner, ready for use as a last resort, but at the moment they are hoping to get by without it, especially since the memory of the traumas it inflicted is still very much alive. But, above all, the ruling class lives in hope that the virtual vivisection that has been performed on the world working class means they can take refuge in less rigid intermediate regimes which might avoid the brutal shock of fascism. (Indeed, the changes the working class has undergone, the way it has been scattered and physically weakened, and its theoretical and political arms changed and perverted, plus a series of retreats and serious defeats, have disarmed the working class and considerably weakened it in action.)

Under these conditions the capitalists think that, for the moment, a bonapartist regime is the most appropriate political form in which they can secure their position. But even in modern France such a political system is nothing new. The French bourgeoisie originally created this type of regime. They have often had to face bold challenges to their power, and are all the more inclined to rely on this particular crutch because it can easily be used as a massive club. But the bourgeoisie had no easy job trying to dust it off after World War II. De Gaulle had everything it takes to do the job and solidly established the Fifth Republic as the prototype of modern-day bonapartism, but in the end even he got the boot in

the aftermath of the powerful 1968 general strike. While he himself paid the price for trying capital's strong-arm tactics on the working class, the Fifth Republic itself survived the onslaught of the oppressed thanks to the connivance of Stalinists and reformists.

You don't need to look very hard at France's political history since De Gaulle's humiliating fall from grace to see that French bonapartism, in the shape of the Fifth Republic, has followed a particularly chequered and contradictory path. None of the heirs to the Fifth Republic's bonapartist institutions has had anything like what De Gaulle had in terms of means, inclination and courage to destroy working-class gains in an open frontal assault. Every single one of them, without exception, has been steeped in the tepid pseudo-democracy of the Fourth Republic, imbued with the long tradition of flabby pacifism, compromise and unprincipled shilly-shallying as a way of evading or bypassing conflicts and difficulties. The majority of them are impregnated to the very marrow of their bones in the spirit of this bourgeois democracy, whose pillar and vital principle is precisely the *class collaboration* guaranteed by opportunist workers' leaders.

But above all they were terrified by very lively recollections of the 1968 general strike, especially since, as irremediably civilian bourgeois, their links with the armed forces have been ad hoc and ambiguous. Mitterrand and later others went on the attack, directly and across the board, on the gains working people have made, but it was under the influence of the general international turn to so-called neo-liberal policies, and it was done tangentially and with many reservations and in the shape of a sustained war of attrition. While what they did was already unbearable for the working class, it has still not been enough to satisfy the bourgeoisie.

So the reason why today's bourgeois politicians and ideologues bitterly reproach their predecessors for not thoroughly

dismantling all the working class's previous achievements and taming that class is explained by the figures who embodied the Fifth Republic after De Gaulle. All his Presidential successors have liked to dress in the bonapartist lion's clothes, but have turned out to be pretty toothless in practice, even though they were quite prepared to get their claws into working people.

Hollande's political incoherence makes him look like a marionette with its strings cut

None of the civilian bonapartist Presidents of France have had what it takes to carry out the mission conferred on them by virtue of their office, but the last in line, Hollande has without doubt been the least competent for the job. Of course, his limited abilities, narrow mind-set and penchant for double-talk all mean he finds it hard to take the job on properly, but he is no more stupid or short-sighted than any of the others. Events have gone completely over his head because, as head of the Fifth Republic he has had to strain every nerve to reconcile the policy of class collaboration (normal in bourgeois democracy) with that of open confrontation between the classes (function of the Fifth Republic). And all the while, the stagnation of capitalism in its twilight prevents him from granting any concessions and insistently demands confrontation with the working class.

And so the wider conflict between these two choices faced by the bourgeoisie nowadays is concentrated in the person and policies of François Hollande. The outcome is the way real concessions are turned into broken promises in a series of pseudo-reforms on the one hand, and on the other the harsh daily reality of blows struck against working people, but which the bourgeoisie do not think are harsh enough. Hence the image presented of a government hanging in mid-air and pushed about by whatever wind is blowing at any particular time, as well as an irresistible sense of things finally falling apart.

When you look at the awful state social democracy's doctrine is in, what is most astonishing is that Hollande cannot somehow shake it off. Where he should give up on trying to square the circle between two bourgeois lines, one of which, class-collaboration, has already lost the battle to contain and calm class conflict, he has merely tried to alter the form within which he attempted to reconcile them. He did this by delegating a big part of his bonapartist task to that Socialist Party mini-Napoleon, Manuel Valls, a man whose own natural inclinations have already converted him from a shamefaced social democrat into a pocket Bonaparte. But despite what a lot of activists on the so-called far left expected, the obviously lame form of bonapartism affected by the Socialist Party only served to intensify the obvious signs that the party itself is falling apart, testimony to the insurmountable difficulties involved in turning this party into a pliable instrument for a reinforced bonapartism without major internal shocks and crises. Every attempt along those lines will just drag it closer to ultimate decay.

This historic collapse of social democracy, which expresses both the increasing severity of capitalism's crisis and the bankruptcy of one of the counter-measures the bourgeoisie relied on, also gives Sarkozy a second chance. This simple fact exposes Hollande and co.'s social democracy as the midwife of fascism or, more likely, a more homogenous and resolute form of bonapartism.

Sarkozy's bid to be iron-fisted Bonaparte.

Sarkozy did not beat around the bush. He announced straight off that he was back on the scene as a serious candidate for the role of unbending Bonaparte saviour. He presented his political re-appearance as dispassionate obedience to the requirements of the situation, renouncing any personal ambition and explaining that he was responding to a higher, nay divine, call to help our suffering world. This marked reference to some quasi-mystical obligation as justification

for his re-entry into politics and the clear-cut aspiration to be a supreme saviour are sure signs of a would-be Bonaparte. The odd journalist has noticed Sarkozy's occasional bonapartist tendencies, but none have pointed out that this re-appearance basically means he intends to set up a consistent and decisive bonapartist dictatorship.

Sarkozy's declared political project also exhibits all other elements of that sort of bonapartism. All the main ingredients of a pure and harsh bonapartism are present, alongside the insistent and repeated evocation of a supreme call to duty on the part of some divine providence.

First of all comes the claim to be acting for the benefit of society as a whole, above classes. Obviously he could not use the word "class" because he has banished it from his vocabulary, but he explicitly stated he wanted to abolish party differences as outdated leftovers and unite everybody behind his flag.

A whole raft of proposals accompanied and filled out this decision to jump over whatever democratic constraints the bourgeoisie itself has been forced to impose on society in order to channel class contradictions. And, in line with his wish to banish differences between parties, Sarkozy again spoke out against organisations which come between the various classes and the authorities, above all independent trades unions. Moreover, as a consistent bonapartist, he was for regular referendums where class votes are short-circuited by plebiscitary consultations with the "whole of society".

Needless to say, two essential ingredients of properly-established bonapartism were not omitted from his political plans. One is the intensification of overt nationalism, which Sarkozy expressed in his plan to end the Schengen Agreement guaranteeing free movement around the European Union. The other is his decision to establish a political apparatus in the exclusive service of his bonapartism by radically

transforming the Union for a Popular Movement (UMP) into a homogenous and docile body under his personal control.

And this last point raises the important question: Will this clearly-formulated plan for an integrated, coherent, vigorous and determined bonapartism actually get the upper hand? To answer that, we need to look above all at the working people who are immediately threatened and targeted by this plan.

Workers disarmed in the face of this bourgeois dictatorship

Problems like this usually go straight over the heads of revolutionary and socialist organisations – because of their formalist and sectarian leaderships. To tell the truth, both their revolution and their socialism are no more than vague references to a rosy future; consequently they are quite separate from their day-to-day preoccupations and practical activities. That's why they see very little importance, or none at all, in the political and tactical changes the bourgeoisie introduce in the political form in which they try to rescue their system as the crisis worsens. Even if some of them do draw attention to the danger of bonapartism, as the Lambertist organisation did over De Gaulle's accession, their politics have never gone beyond defending traditional bourgeois democracy. So their day-by-day struggle has been limited by that framework and their commitment to socialism remained at the level of propaganda – necessary, obviously, but restricted to the realm of ideas. Later they supported Mitterrand against De Gaulle's bonapartism in the name of this democracy. But as we know and Hollande has proved most recently, this democracy is no more than the antechamber to fascism or, specifically, bonapartism.

Whether or not these organisations actually mention bonapartism today, their slogans in general do not go beyond defending democracy as a whole against the attacks upon it. But the fact that the bourgeoisie is going over to bonapartism, even in a form masked and softened by its remnants

of democracy like the Fifth Republic, means that this system is already at a complete dead-end. So the concrete threat to toughen up the current "soft" bonapartism makes it even more vitally urgent to apply a bold and appropriate programme which can open up a *practical and concrete* path to socialism. Sarkozy taking the field to stiffen and toughen up the regime is a signal, a warning of the need to formulate such a programme for a socialist alternative publicly and put it into action. It is a challenge, a veritable tocsin calling all Marxists to reply in one voice, despite and independently of whether they belong to separate organisations, overcoming their divisions and clarifying what this alternative means theoretically and practically.

The Left Front has virtually ceased to exist

Sadly, the Front de Gauche (Left Front) stands out for its complete absence from this particularly agitated political situation. What forces it had have already been dissipated by a succession of defeats in recent (municipal and European) elections, just when violent political crises have shaken the supposedly-socialist Parti Socialiste (but also the bourgeois UMP), exposing their internal contradictions and driving forward their decomposition (or explosion). The Left Front's main components, the Parti de Gauche (Left Party) and Parti Communiste (Communist Party) are following different political trajectories corresponding to each one's specific character.

Representing a petty-bourgeois layer of a workers' aristocracy ensconced in local government and the trade union leaderships, the Communist Party is throwing itself into variously-configured alliances, above all involving Hollande's disappointed elected representatives and officials. The aim of these parliamentary-style manoeuvres is to re-establish good old bourgeois democracy with "fair" class collaboration using the well-known political method of the popular front. And this at the very moment when the great majority of the bourgeoisie, in its insurmountable torments, has gone far beyond this

stage, which is both outmoded and tailor-made to shore up its power. Now this reactionary orientation on the CP's part is dangerous because, outdated though it is, it can still mislead workers (as it did in the past) and channel their anger into an obvious setback. The CP may have willy-nilly had to abjure Stalin, but it would be a serious mistake to ignore that they have not got over their Stalinist conceptions.

The Left Party, meanwhile has been disappointed by its (predictably) poor election results and seems to have backed out of political life completely, just when politics have got agitated and offer a fertile field for determined intervention by an organisation of workers. The party needs some inspiration to lift it from the demoralisation its defeats have caused, but they seem to be intimidated by how harshly reality has treated their rather broadly-drawn and inconsistent policies, and they have retreated into fantasy. Instead of a political programme, they have put forward a propagandist project for a Sixth Republic. But this demand has turned up all on its own, lacking both a head and a tail and completely detached from the concrete reality of struggles, about as appropriate in time and place as an ashtray on a motorcycle.

This demand is quite unexpected because it is on its own and, as it were, asexual. Nevertheless, at first sight it seems to be opposed both to Hollande's bastardised Fifth Republic and Sarkozy's project of consolidating this regime by reinforcing and accentuating its bonapartism. But if you look past the sentiments which animate it to what it concretely means as a demand, it turns out that this opposition is an illusory appearance, a mirage, and it does not really conflict with them at all. This Sixth Republic is not solidly located in a concrete programme for changing the whole of society; indeed, Melanchon scrupulously avoids any attempt to describe such a republic, so the vacuous nature of the project inevitably exposes it as an attempt to re-establish the old Fourth

Republic. No amount of goodwill can change what this slogan ineluctably means. If it remains as it stands, this policy is condemned to rapid failure in this time of ever-intensifying class struggle.

(One cannot here pass over in silence Jean-Luc Melançon's recent book: *L'Ère du Peuple* [The Age of the People] which marks a new stage in his theoretical and political regression. This is exposed by his explicit shift from being a declared representative of working people to the retrograde and dangerous mythology that exalts the people in general. At the same time he achieves a parallel conversion to a sort of visceral environmentalism, that petit-bourgeois substitute for social struggles and lifebelt for capital. A fuller examination would exceed the scope of this article, but in view of its significance it will be undertaken shortly).

For all that, it would be a premature to reject the Left Party out of hand as a definitively lost cause where working people are concerned. Indeed, it is hard to believe that all its members and activists will blindly follow that sort of renunciation of the class struggle. It will take an internal struggle to decide the organisation's fate. But in the meantime this party, for now, like all the other far-left organisations, has shut itself out of the current political struggle in which the immediate stakes are capital's desire to reinforce its power using consistent bonapartism. The Left Party's general and summary denunciations of capitalism and/or its Fifth Republic are certainly not enough to make good the glaring shortcomings in their activity.

So an initial response to the question posed above, about whether Sarkozy's bonapartist project can succeed, is this: given the congenital and worsening maladies besetting the political organisations currently available to workers, as summarised above, they are hardly well-placed to prevent this big political shift, unless, of course, there is some unexpected outburst. So the answer depends on the outcome of

the internal struggle currently underway between different political segments of the bourgeoisie distributed around the various bourgeois political parties (UMP, centrists, Front National, as well as the Socialist Party). They are in any case (with the temporary exception of the FN) ravaged by struggles between various factions precisely around problems relating to the profound need to transform the bourgeoisie's regime of political governance.

Bourgeois parties' deepening internal crises and conflicts

A relatively strong element in the UMP (to whom the various centrist circles can be added) is lining up behind so-called moderate leaders such as Alain Juppé or François Fillon, who express and represent a wing of the bourgeoisie. This element is still attached to the very relative tranquillity of bourgeois democracy based on class collaboration and is alarmed by the uncertainties of a open, brutal social confrontation and the unforeseeable consequences of a fascist or even just a clearly more authoritarian regime. But their weakness from the point of view of the bourgeoisie arises from the situation itself, which is more and more conflictual and intolerant of any such compromise, and which they are no more fit to deal with than the Socialist Party is.

This segment of the political bourgeoisie is on the one hand taken aback by capital's need to beef up its power (which means they are impotent in the face of fascism) and on the other disarmed when it comes to breaking the resistance of working people (in particular by smashing the unions). It is true their leaders try to outdo one another in demanding even greater social destruction on their patrons' behalf than that announced and promised by Sarkozy, but this changes nothing fundamental in their position.

This is why, in order to remain in that body and/or advance their careers, more and more UMP leaders are rallying around Sarkozy, sometimes unexpectedly (Raffarin, De Villepin,

Wauquiez, etc.). They are following or expressing the clear majority of the right both inside and outside the UMP who are massively opting for the tough solution to the crisis.

Analysis of the forces at work thus points to Sarkozy as the probable victor in a political competition already underway to provide weakening capitalism with a tougher and more stable government more able to bring it the support it needs.

But life is much richer and more varied than even the best analysis, based as it must be on the available data. Imponderables arising from the multiplicity of human activities could shift and change the picture. However, such activities themselves do not fall from the skies, since they are already rooted in objective facts. We can point to some of them, even if it is impossible to predict precisely what the future will bring.

For a start, even if the bourgeoisie would like for the moment to avoid and spare itself the extra expenses (economic, social and political) incidental to fascism, and would be content just to toughen up its bonapartist regime, it is possible that their calculations could be upset by various factors within even their own ranks which might help the Front National to come to power.

It is also possible that the break-up and decomposition underway in the Socialist Party will provide another candidate for the role of Bonaparte in the person of Manuel Valls, politically converted and personally completely up for this job.

And who can tell with any certainty what the outcome of the various judicial inquiries underway, all threatening Sarkozy, will be. There is not adequate space here to describe in detail how widespread all the corruption among politicians is and explain what it means, nor how lenient bourgeois courts can be where politicians are concerned. However, it is not

entirely out of the question that Sarkozy will be found guilty. That would smooth the path for another UMP candidate, or maybe someone from the Front National. In any case, the victor would be the one who offers the strongest guarantees to the bourgeoisie that he or she will tie working people down hand and foot and destroy the gains they have made in order to rescue exhausted capitalism in its death agony.

For the working-class solution!

Finally, and for that very reason, it is also possible that the masses of working people, including some of their political organisations, will rise in salutary fashion and come on the stage to overturn these machinations and change the situation from top to bottom. That will be much more likely if the activists in these organisations get involved in a decisive and unified struggle for the resolute defence of working people against the bourgeoisie's many-sided attacks; that would really lay the basis for a rising of that sort, which would be concentrated, and increasingly confirmed, in the struggle between the intensified attacks and resistance on the part of trade unions. Hence the vital importance of working flat out to link these organisations to the *workers' unions* and the struggles they are involved in. In any case, such a link is a major requirement of Marxism, as well as a precise measure of all these organisations' real relationship to this revolutionary theory.

This theory clearly states that they have a duty, and one moreover, which the social context itself urgently requires, to offer a way out, a political programme for this resistance by the trade unions, and to organise to get it successfully on the road. The main axis of this policy necessarily must be to bring the unions to a break with the deceptive conception and rotten practice which demeans them to the level of "social partners" with the bourgeoisie. And at the same time bring them back onto the path of struggle for the emancipation of the working class. In the absence of such an opening, embodied

in everyday practice, those organisations which claim to stand for working people and the revolution will fail in their elementary duty and, like a blunt and rusty knife, end up at the rubbish dump. That is the decisive choice today.

Balazs Nagy, November 2014

Euro-election shock by Balazs Nagy

The surprise results of the recent European elections mean all political organisations have to re-evaluate the overall situation and their own policies.

Complete bankruptcy of bourgeois Europe

Two highly revealing and significant facts stand out about these elections, as a whole and in each individual country. First, and certainly foremost, is the particularly high level of abstentions (approaching 60% in France!), concentrated, moreover, in conurbations where workers and working people live. Abstentions were clearly higher, it needs to be said, in the countries of Eastern Europe (more than 70% in the great majority of them, over 80% in Slovakia and the Czech Republic). This clearly reflects their secondary position within European “unity”.

The second is the unprecedented and ubiquitous growth of fascist or semi-fascist oppositions, a far right which actually came first in certain countries (France, UK, Denmark).

Apart from anything else, the first and most obvious conclusion is that the vast majority of Europeans are turning their backs on and definitively rejecting that monstrous construct called "European union". This central conclusion cannot be queried or challenged just by reference to the obviously broad range of views among those who abstained, or even voted for the far-right. Of course each of their various – and sadly all too often reactionary, retrograde or simply backward – motives is crucially significant in its own way. We should note, however, that many of those who voted for the far-right probably did so in protest against that Europe, rather than out of support for fascist ideology. Be that as it may, these results express an irrevocable verdict on the part of Europeans as a whole: They are absolutely opposed to the bourgeoisie's pseudo-Europe, which they massively reject and will not tolerate.

Bourgeois leaders' vicious and criminal intransigence

Late on 25 May, French TV channels ran the election results and what the various political party representatives had to say about them. The evening's viewing provided a good opportunity to assess the immediate reactions of a whole range of the country's political parties, from the conservative or social-democratic official spokespeople for the Euro-homunculus right through to the opposition, by way of the leaders of Front de Gauche (Left Front) and Front National (National Front) and everything in between. What they said made it blindingly obvious that literally not a single one of the representatives of this bankers' Europe has understood what voters are trying to tell them, clear as that message has been. Not a single one of the social democratic leaders or their traditional bourgeois partner/opponents, nor the various subordinate currents which gravitate around them, had grasped what this means. That, of course, only surprised those incorrigibly naïve people who still take them seriously.

The main leader of the reactionary brain-dead in the Union

pour un mouvement populaire (UMP) is [Jean-François Copé](#). All they could offer was the consolation that they had gained ground at the expense of Hollande's Parti socialiste (PS). Their noisy self-satisfaction, however, was tempered by regret at being overtaken by the National Front. They sadly resigned themselves to the fact that the rusty European hulk had just gone under, but had little to offer when it came to explaining why. Not that they even tried. Copé simply blamed Hollande's policies for this setback, obviously without realising that they are both in the same rather fragile European boat. Under these conditions, how could they have seen that the reason their European cockleshell foundered was design and construction defects rather than something the captain had done wrong (Even if the latter's incompetence did accentuate the more basic flaws). As a result, they were all equally baffled by the huge advances the far right made right across the continent, and just saw it as a minor passing accident.

Alain Juppé speaks for another wing of the same party, allegedly more thoughtful and moderate, but even he could not rise above the same cheap parliamentarism. Being a more serious politician than his less sophisticated colleague Copé, he at least made the effort to sketch a political line to beat the National Front. Quickly adding the 10% of votes won by the bourgeois centre parties to the 20-21 % the UMP got, he triumphantly declared that the resulting 30% of votes cast easily beat the National Front's 25%. All you needed to do was combine the UMP and centre parties' votes, and a thorny political problem tuned into a simple parliamentary manoeuvre.

These recently-merged centre parties came in fourth place just in front of the ecologists, followed in 6th place by the Left Front. So they showed loud and overflowing satisfaction and were at pains to emphasise, in their enthusiastic congratulations, that their totally but critically pro-European policy is the way out of the current deadlock.

In fact all these good people were forced to acknowledge that current policy on Europe has suffered a resounding setback. What else could they do? They even bandied words like “failings”, “convulsions” and “chaos”. Oddly, but completely in character with their bourgeois political commitments, none of them could see that what causes it is this bourgeois Europe’s destructive nature. They simply could not see that what people were rejecting was precisely this Europe.

In general, they were all self-critical, although almost all of them more or less blamed the government and Hollande personally, except for the Socialist Party – and Green – representatives. But let’s not exaggerate. Any normal person – if he or she were childishly naïve – would expect these politicians and journalists to apologise for carrying out the European policies that the voters massively rejected. Far from it! Every single one re-stated their commitment to those very same policies, then beat their breasts for not having done more to explain (!?) the setback their bourgeois Europe had suffered. But in fact this Europe has been so well explained, not only by pervasive and aggressive propaganda but also by an eloquently destructive practice, that voters rejected it precisely because they know exactly what it means.

Socialist Party leaders just as perverse

This sort of collective blindness on the part of politicians and journalists discussing the stinging rebuff their Europe had suffered is truly amazing. It presents a striking and repulsive image of the system’s so-called “elite” which absolutely captures its decadent nature. What it foreshadows – should its miserable existence be prolonged – is an uncertain future full of looming threats, convulsions, pain and repeated shocks.

But the (socialist) government promptly also went in for denial of reality. TV viewers saw a clearly shocked Prime

Minster Valls nevertheless insisting that the measures he has been taking in recent times are exactly what the voters wanted. To tell the truth, he had to blind himself to reality so absurdly just to justify staying in government. But so contemptuous a distortion of the truth was contradicted not only by the facts but also the prime minister's haggard and extremely upset appearance and his dazed and lugubrious tone, which clashed oddly with the artificial joviality he sometimes affects in his new role. He really looked like he was falling apart under the seismic impact.

We should point out immediately that the very next day Hollande stubbornly and unblushingly confirmed that they would carry on with their criminal policies which, together with their "responsibility plan", he presented as if it was what the voters said they wanted! This shameless arrogance went much, much further than even Valls' insolent effrontery. The wily old politician's practised and cool cynicism in political lying made up for the panic his rattled minister showed. Just like all their pseudo-opponents, they both attributed the voters' general rejection of the bourgeoisie to the weakness and inadequacy of the propaganda explaining what they thought and what they were doing in relation to Europe. This brutal travesty of the truth foreshadows a swift deterioration in already difficult living conditions and even greater shocks in future.

Others make headway in the absence of working-class politics

The most telling feature of these elections has been the striking absence of genuine workers' parties. More exactly: none of the various political organisations which actually fight against the bourgeoisie's policy on Europe – and to their credit they undeniably do that – have managed to free themselves from major shortcomings which show their dependence on the bourgeoisie.

For one thing, they do not go beyond a very restricted level

of simply criticising the bourgeoisie's policy on Europe. None of them has yet been able to open a concrete perspective of a working-class Europe radically opposed to the kind of Europe the bourgeoisie are concocting. For another, and bound up with this negative position, each of them has developed their criticisms over Europe firmly within the limitations of their own strictly national framework, except for a few sentimental rather than effective solidarity links and the occasional sprinkling of gatherings and resolutions left over from the past.

Altogether and in general, all these organisations are therefore captives of the given capitalist system and submit to its pressure. Here, too, they are still largely influenced, by the enduring ideology of social democracy and Stalinism, whose national, not to say nationalist, political horizon has always been a bulwark against internationalist Marxism. The few scattered allusions to the Socialist United States of Europe we get from certain organisations of Trotskyist origin do not change anything in this general picture, since these chance references are completely detached from daily reality, hanging in mid-air and placed as far in the future as religion's Kingdom of Heaven.

Under these conditions, the rout inflicted upon the bourgeoisie's policy over Europe has led to not only a spectacular resurgence of fascist and semi-fascist organisations but also the emergence and proliferation of petit-bourgeois formations in general. (We leave aside, for the moment, analysing the considerable advances by UKIP in the UK and the People's Party in Denmark, both of which came first. They campaign openly for putting the bourgeoisie back in the driving seat and, in order to do so, they make abundant use of fascist ammunition against impoverished peoples and the migrants from their ranks and for the restoration of the national state).

As for the advances made by the fascists, it is significant

that bourgeois commentators try to console themselves over the setback they have suffered with the thought that the fascists are unable to form a homogenous group in the European Parliament. Splitting hairs like this is pathetic in itself, since instead of explaining why the fascists are growing so strongly, they try to make it disappear by exploiting a problem that arises precisely from their growth. Nevertheless, it is true that there are differences, not to say considerable divergences between them. Maybe you cannot identify Nigel Farage's British UKIP with Golden Dawn in Greece modelled on Hitler's Nazi party, or even with the Front National in France. Nevertheless this UKIP, like the Danish People's Party, draws its politics from the same fascist arsenal. Their frenzied nationalism and clear orientation towards re-establishing a strong national state together with aggression against migrant workers and peoples of the former colonies and dependent states puts them in the same camp of semi-fascists and impels them in that direction.

From a different point of view, the idea that in the past all fascist parties stuck together in unity was always a myth invented by the bourgeoisie – and Stalinists. There were well-known differences and divergences, even between Hitler and Mussolini, for example and even when they were fighting on the same side, which tended to iron them out. To say nothing of the distinctions between Franco's party and Salazar's and others, or the military dictatorships drawn into Hitler's gravitational field.

This crying absence of genuine workers' politics is also what has allowed a set of straightforwardly petit-bourgeois political parties to flourish like mushrooms after rain. They, too, are distinguished from each other in various ways, but in a quite different fashion from the fascist or semi-fascist organisations whose open and resolute support for capitalism unifies them on the extreme right. At the same time there is a significant difference between the majority of the petit-

bourgeois organisations developing a critique of bourgeois politics from the left of the political chess-board and others who try to maintain a pseudo-independence. What they all have in common, for all their often quite broad political diversity, is the attempt to camouflage society's division into classes. They replace this with secondary and sometimes quite odd problems on the basis of a shared and savage hostility to the conception of class struggle and Marxism in general.

Whether these organisations are right or left, older and larger, like the ecologists, or recent and local like "Podemos" in Spain, we can for the moment postpone their examination, necessary as it may be. On the other hand, there are, in France at least, organisations which claim to speak on behalf of working people about which it has become essential to reflect seriously.

Where do Left Front and its European partners stand?

The Left Front coalition, which took off big time in a left-radical way during the presidential elections and since, has quite rightly raised many hopes. It created confidence that a big, genuine workers' party could replace the old, compromised social-democratic and Stalinist parties mired in class-collaboration. Consequently it also embodied the concrete possibility of the re-birth and development of the new, big revolutionary party the situation requires. And that is why, despite the inevitable and tenacious residues of its origins which blemish its activities and retard its development, it was necessary to encourage and support this initiative. It marked and expressed the possibility of a renewal of the revolutionary movement in the face of the opportunist decadence of the traditional workers' parties and also the sterile blind alley in which various organisations with a more and more blurred reference to Trotskyism find themselves. The fact that more or less identical movements came about and developed in Greece (Syriza) and Germany (Die Linke) indicated

that the conditions for their existence were not only present in Europe but had also matured.

However, while supporting the Left Front, we have had to intensify our criticisms around the negative character of its political line, i.e. its reduction to a simple critique of current policy and striking lack of a workers' programme for fighting the bourgeoisie. After the municipal elections, our journal *Lutte des Classes* (no 22) wrote that in the absence of such a programme "the Left Front is condemned to mark time while the National Front has made considerable progress, including among discontented workers." (English translation printed in *Workers' International Journal* no 5, June 2014). A month later, just before the European elections, we anticipated in the same journal (no 24) that "Perhaps a pathetic result at the ballot box will shake these organisations' centrist outlook and unleash a movement for their renewal. It is a hope to cling to". (English translation printed in *Workers' International Journal* no 5, June 2014).

Indeed, the Left Front's disastrous election results fully confirmed these fears and our criticisms. In view not just of the much better results they had got in the presidential elections but also the much worse current situation, their miserable 6.3% of the vote represents an obvious decline. This real collapse exposes a disparity, not to say a contradiction, between the Left Front's programme on the one hand and the steadily worsening situation working people face on the other. But sadly, the initial reactions to this resounding defeat are worse than disappointing, expressing a level of astonishment at the meagre results matched only by an inability to comprehend them.

The morning after the elections, J.-L. Mélançon presented his party cadres and the media with the plaintive and tearful commentary of a beaten chief. He more or less repeated what he had said on TV the previous night (mentioned above). He was so grief-stricken that he could hardly hold back the tears and he

drew his comments to a rapid close to avoid breaking out in sobs.

This physically awkward appearance itself revealed a man moaning on at his wits' end rather than a fighter reflecting on the lessons of a temporary defeat. Indeed, the lamentable way he presented his interpretation of the results completely matched the whining and recriminatory content of his remarks. Faced with the cresting progress of the National Front, he lost any sense of proportion and got bitterly distressed about this "end of civilisation" (?), just as over the top as a few days earlier when he had shown boundless confidence that the Left Front would amaze everyone with how well it would do. (Sadly, the phenomenon this exaggerated and one-sided judgement failed to address was the very high level of abstentions.)

He said absolutely nothing about the possibility that his own organisation's political line might be mistaken – any such idea seemed to be outlandish, not to say sacrilegious – so all that remained was for him to try to lay the blame on the situation and/or working people. Comrade Melancon avoided saying it outright, but at the end of his breast-beating he couldn't stop himself from appealing to working people to take heart again and see where their real interests lay, which was a barely-disguised way of making them responsible for the setback.

Syriza in Greece, with visibly the same politics, did manage to come out clearly on top in the elections with 26.6% of the votes, but that was solely because the situation there is different and more favourable. The bankruptcy of Pasok, the social-democratic party, already happened earlier. Together with the servile way the bourgeois New Democracy party fell into line behind Brussels and its Troika, this opened the door wide for Syriza, and this was extended even further by the openly and repellently Hitlero-fascist politics of Golden Dawn. However, these more advantageous conditions should not

make us forget that the conservatives came hard on Syriza's heels with 23.1% of the votes, while here, too, abstentions amounted to more than 40% of the electorate. In Germany die Linke also saw their share of the vote drop to 6.5%, more or less the same as Left Front, given that quite a number of voters could see no difference between this formation and the SPD (Social-Democratic Party of Germany) in "opposition".

As for Tsipras (Syriza) standing against Barroso in the election of the new President of the European Commission, this was just opportunist grandstanding. By doing this, these parties justified and legitimated this instrument of bourgeois dictatorship for grinding the working people of Europe under the iron heel of its policies. Tsipras' political line, with a tinge of anti-German feeling (such is his nationalist resentment at the supremacy of German capital within the bourgeoisie's arrangements) clearly express the content of this opportunism. What it actually indicates is that he thought – and still thinks – that he can use the same rotten and anti-democratic organs ... for policies in favour of working people. This involves bourgeois policies without austerity, a big investment programme, a New Deal, he says credulously. So it's no surprise that now, instead of Barroso, he is backing Juncker from Luxembourg, the close and fervent friend of the big bankers, the initiator and boss of the hated Troika! There's only one way to describe this kind of clowning: going backwards.

Responsibility of the traditional far left

The general decline in these promising formations (with the exception of Syriza in Greece where it is prospering due to various objective factors) is completely mirrored by the spectacular advances the far right is making. Now such symmetry is not somehow caused by the balance of nature; the pitiful retreat by the former has directly conditioned the considerable progress the latter have made. But where is the so-called Marxist far left?

If one looks in France, for example – and also at a European level – , for reasons why it has not been possible to re-discover and develop a genuine workers' programme, there is no doubt that a significant share of the responsibility rests with the three biggest organisations which have come out of Trotskyism and profess that tradition. Without of course pretending to be able to describe them completely here, some general comments are required in relation to this responsibility.

First and foremost, for all the differences of outlook between the New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA of Alain Krivine and Olivier Besancenot), Lutte Ouvriere (LO, Workers Fight, formerly of Arlette Laguiller) and the Lambertist Parti des Travailleurs (Workers Party), differences due mainly to their respective histories, all these organisations have taken a negative attitude towards the Left Front. They have regarded this newcomer with a lot of distrust and not a little jealousy: after all, they come from the suspect milieu of social democracy and Stalinism and, what's much worse, trespassed on private hunting preserves.

From the outset they carefully avoid getting "compromised" with the Communist Party and Melanchon's new party in the Left Front, which they treated with hostile suspicion. Moreover, they unanimously rejected the slightest sustained cooperation in struggle, a united front, indeed, and even any electoral alliance with these plague-carriers who had come to disturb their established daily routine. In fact, after the last big battle of clarification in Trotskyist ranks in 1952-1953, they settled down comfortably into their special role of licensed public revolutionary, a role they practice according to an arcane ritual they call Marxism. In fact it was and remains a profanation of the Marxist method, opposed to it in every way and which, to put it briefly, consists in trying to separate and fix, restrict and freeze the conditions of struggle, in particular the activity and circumference of the revolutionary

organisation.

How can you expect these organisations to apply the policy of the united front or join in this Left Front coalition or at least form an electoral alliance with it, when they have been virtually incapable of establishing such an alliance between themselves for the last 60 (!) years.

Since the 1952-1953 split, the ditch separating them has just got bigger and bigger and each on its own side has settled into the split in the Fourth International as an eternal destiny in which each one has its own special corner. They have demonstrated their complete incapacity to sort out rebuilding the Fourth International, considering the two other organisations to be enemies definitively and totally lost to that process of rebuilding. In the absence of any ability to resolve or even confront the problem at the base of the break (i.e. the problem of re-building), the split intensified further and dramatically the original cause of the separation, that is, Pabloite revisionism, systematising it into generalised opportunism via Mandel's "neo-capitalism" and finally culminating in the furtive abandonment of Marxism. But this fatalistic mutual acceptance of the break, on the other hand, also reinforced the sectarian isolation of the anti-Pabloite critics, fixed their sterile enclosure in the ivory towers of their verities singularly lacking in any perspective that offered a solution.

Where did this monumental historical deficiency arise from, a deficiency whose effects have gone on for decades and transformed what started off as a split into a veritable dislocation of the International, then into today's yawning abyss where, alongside false propositions, reaction too takes root?

Throughout their history, the French Trotskyist organisations (like the others) have been more or less intensely affected by the influence of Stalinist conceptions, often preponderant and

always corrosive. Even while Trotsky was still alive, this defect was made considerably worse by the petit-bourgeois composition of the organisation, driven to the margins of the workers' movement by the Stalinists. After Trotsky's assassination, followed by the total collapse at the end of the war and then the split, whatever organisations emerged divided again, not between the real Marxists and the others, but along the lines of the various – but all equally mistaken – strategic versions which the Stalinists applied in the course of their history. The different Trotskyist organisations followed either Stalinism's right-wing orientation, or the ultra-leftism of the "Third Period". Very often they mixed the opportunism of the one with the sectarianism of the other.

But as concerns the method of political struggle in general and building the party in particular, the former Pabloites currently in the NPA, the Lambertists in the parti des travailleurs and Lutte Ouvriere invariably shared the same outrageous sectarianism, firstly towards the other "Trotskyist" tendencies and then in relation to the workers' movement as a whole. They looked at the Left Front in the same way.

Trotsky once commented that the Stalinists regarded Rosa Luxemburg with a great deal of suspicion, unable to tell whether she was a friend or an enemy. Now the NPA, with its Pabloite origins, looks askance at the Left Front in exactly the same way (not, of course, that that makes the Left Front into any sort of Rosa Luxemburg). These hesitations have, nevertheless, already caused a number of splits in the NPA. First, a group led by Christian Picquet, then another one, split away and joined the Left Front. These breaks, however, have not led to the necessary re-awakening of the organisation as a whole. So the groups that split away have maintained their centrist character and remained unable to change anything at all in the Left Front., while the NPA has

continued its unprincipled hesitation waltz.

As for Lutte Ouvrière, it has continued imperturbably on its solitary way, marked from its very origins by hostility to the proclamation of the Fourth International and by its nationalist seclusion. It persists in its isolation with an inveterate sectarianism in which both their behaviour and the arguments they use look strangely similar to the ultra-left politics of "Third Period" Stalinism. True to form, this organisation gleefully reported the Left Front's latest electoral setback as if this justified its hostility to the Front.

One can describe Lutte Ouvrière's sectarianism as intrinsic. That of the Lambertist organisation, on the other hand, is, one might say, "tempered" by its special and occasional opportunism (in contrast to the more generalised opportunism of the NPA). The Lambertist organisation is sectarian in relation to the Front de Gauche and the CFDT trade union and even the CGT, but flatly opportunist in relation to the Force Ouvrière trade union, which has been its privileged partner since that union came into being. Apart from its opportunism towards social democracy, which it likes to identify with the working class, the Lambertist organisation's Achilles' heel is its inclination to substitute the struggle for national sovereignty for the international class struggle. And so in 2013 the congress of their "International" suddenly decided to concentrate the international mobilisation of its militants in the "defence" of Algeria against some imaginary threat of US military intervention! Obviously this "threat" never materialised, but the whole thing worked marvellously to distract the attention of activists from, for example, the problems of Europe.

So, with either an occasional or an intrinsic sectarian conception (which they claim to be Marxist) in relation to every other organisation such as the Left Front, they too took their own lonely, isolated stand in the recent European

elections. Obviously (what is more) they lacked a clear working-class policy on Europe dealing with concrete and current problems. And of course they each in their own corner garnered about 1% of the vote – actually worse than usual, while the Left Front just got weaker.

Such sectarian outlooks, and the concomitant opportunism, are the natural products of an aristocratic conception of the party (their party!), separated from the workers' movement as a whole in a water-tight compartment, whose building is reduced to the rigorous and individual selection of the few elect into a separate elite. This sect conception, detached and distant from the masses, is only applicable at most to clandestine conditions, but it is disastrous in open political struggle. Right through modern history, it has been opposed to Marxism and its application. Since the Communist Manifesto, Marxism has clearly established, against any sectarian or elitist point of view, that it is the workers' movement as a whole, all the changes it undergoes and the methods it uses, that constitute not just the terrain but the very skeleton of the revolutionary party itself.

The Manifesto unequivocally emphasised: "The Communists do not form a separate party opposed to other working-class parties. They have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole". Nor do they "set up any sectarian principles of their own, by which to shape and mould the proletarian movement". And in conclusion: "the communists everywhere support every revolutionary movement against the existing political and social order of things". Political – and theoretical – struggle unfolds within this framework as a necessary means of clarification, not as some sort of selection criterion.

Now isolated and besieged as it was, and giving way to the pressure of capital, Stalinism in the USSR perverted Marxism, including Lenin's heritage. They adapted it to the requirements of staying in power: conciliatory towards capital

and violently opposed to the workers' movement as a whole. Once Trotsky was lost, his heirs in turn succumbed to this de-natured and corrupt "Marxism".

Concretely each and every one of these "Trotskyist" formations think that in and through itself the revolutionary party already exists, and building it is simply a matter of linear and progressive growth through recruiting individuals one after another. With strictly individual recruitment of this sort – which is normal in a secret society but absolutely alien to Marxism – they can denounce all other organisations, lumping their members together with their leaderships.

These organisations are condemned to decline, although this is masked and retarded by their prolonged vegetation, punctuated by successive electoral setbacks. It is a fact which should stir their members to study past and recent experiences very carefully and draw the necessary conclusions, especially since the long decades of defeats and setbacks the international workers' movement has suffered, made particularly worse by the liquidation of the USSR and the changes in the composition of the working class, have profoundly altered the habitually-known conditions for resuming the struggle.

The essential feature in these negative changes has been the general repudiation of Marxism and socialism at the same time as the Soviet Union collapsed and was disowned. Since this workers' state was associated with the Stalinist bureaucratic regime, Marxism in turn was identified with the falsification of it at the hands of the same bureaucracy. The whole thing was greatly facilitated by the evolution and changing composition of the working class which was happening at the same time and the growth of petit-bourgeois intermediary layers. The results were not long in coming: On the one hand a shrinkage and ossification of living Marxism reduced to the level of dogma in ancient texts; on the other, a more and more flagrant contradiction between the growing size of the mass

movements and their theoretical poverty, not to say the complete absence of any theory. Under these conditions, the masses' apprenticeship in struggle needs more explanations and time, and activists' development requires much more patience.

Ramblings based on impressions replacing theory

Flagrant impotence, therefore, is sadly what characterises all the organisations on the far left who oppose bourgeois politics and its Europe. Their impotence in a situation which should actually favour their development means we must undertake a serious critique of the theoretical arsenal underlying the political dead-end they are in.

We have already glanced at the way the organisations which arose out of the dislocation and often repudiation of the Fourth International share responsibility for the Left Front's stagnation. They have been through a long death-agony and floundered, inflicting their own death-blow by repudiating or diluting the Marxism that alone could provide a theoretical, either by simply and clearly dropping it (NPA), or by letting it ossify into a collection of classical assertions ("Lutte Ouvrière" and the Lambertists).

Consequently there has been no pressure on the Left Front on sharpen up its theoretical armaments by accepting and developing creative Marxism, so that it remains captive to profoundly mistaken theoretical considerations which it peddles, like birth-marks inherited from its social-democratic and Stalinist parentage and which tie it to the existing social and political order. A recent work by the Left Party's leading economist, Jacques Généreux, provides a useful opportunity to evaluate concretely the dominant theoretical conceptions in the Left Front. *Jacques Généreux explique l'économie à tout le monde (Jacques Généreux Explains Economics for All)* is a 331-page book published quite recently (May 2014) by Seuil. It sums up rather well the theoretical nonsense the Left Front has strayed into, but which affects

all organisations on the far left to one degree or another.

This economic inspirer of the Left Front thinks that the post-war period known as the “thirty glorious years” of the economy “... which persisted until the 70s, had very little to do with capitalism in the strict sense.” (p.41), because “... the big industrial countries developed in a new system in which the holders of capital no longer had complete freedom or the powers which that confers”. (p.42) It is important to note that as far as he is concerned, this “new system” is the goal for which we must strive.

To bolster this bold and surprising conclusion he lists some of the rules he claims limited the omnipotence of capital, although he carefully avoids putting a name to this “new system” which supposedly replaced capitalism. This prudent approach enables him later to note that during the 1980s capitalism returned in strength, simply thanks to various counter measures.

We should not waste too much time on this – to put it mildly – extremely cavalier way of dealing with the change of a whole mode of production, which in principle (and in historical practice) can only be the outcome of significant social factors accompanied by political overturns. We merely need to underline that this crude and simplistic view exposes total ignorance, not just of the real reason for the “thirty glorious years”, but also of the resounding social struggles that took place during those years. In fact it is fairly easy to understand the historical movement of powerful social and political forces whose interaction engendered these so-called “thirty glorious years”.

Capitalism entered the war in order to suppress its insurmountable and prolonged economic political crisis which broke out in 1929. It came out of the war in 1944-1945 even weaker and more exhausted than at the beginning. In the course of the war the relationship of forces between it and the world

working class had shifted strongly in favour of the latter. From the beginning of 1943, the proletarian revolution was spreading in several countries in Europe and Asia, stimulated by the Soviet Union's Red Army's powerful offensive.

The bourgeois political regimes which had been vassals of fascism or had fallen victim to it collapsed one after the other. The revolution was on the march – but enemies were at work within its own ranks. Above all, it was the active collaboration of the leaderships of the workers' movement, the Stalinist parties especially and in particular, which saved the capitalist system from total collapse, a powerful rescue operation prepared and orchestrated by the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union as a resolute ally of the "democratic" bourgeoisie.

Now if this new-style Holy Alliance actually did strangle the revolution, which failed everywhere (except in Yugoslavia and China, where it was brought to an abrupt halt) it nevertheless left a deep impression on the bourgeois regimes which re-emerged after the war. In other words, the bourgeoisie's faithful servants who had sold the revolution for a mess of pottage had to be rewarded. Within a relationship of forces clearly in favour of the proletariat, this mess of pottage had to be paid for.

Such was the particular class configuration which formed the basis for the "thirty glorious years", whose backcloth was the open and direct going-over of the Stalinist bureaucracy and its agents as a whole to the active counter-revolution. To be sure, they did not perform this immense service for free and without a recompense that let them justify and retain their influence. The extent of the concessions the bourgeoisie granted in turn reflected the degree of danger that menaced capitalism. It also demonstrated the bourgeoisie's great fear, since it went very far into these compromises in its concern to preserve the system, even so far as to grant concessions which altered its very appearance, and to adjust the form of

its rule. It changed its face without altering its character. The capitalist wolf mutated into a loving grandmother who carefully retained her "big teeth".

A lot of people were fooled by this ability of the bourgeoisie to manoeuvre in order to stay in power. The whole of what they call the "Left" fell for it. The chief ideologue of the Left Party, the economist Jacques Généreux, expresses this fundamental and general error like this: "Between 1945 and 1975, many industrial countries were no longer within a real capitalist economy. What rescued the industrialised countries from the damage caused by capitalism ... is precisely the fact that they got out of the capitalist system as Marx described it. In place of this capitalism ... they substituted a mixed and highly-regulated economy in which salaried managers and civil servants had more power than the capitalists." (p.43).

Here, Jacques Généreux says openly what people on the "Left" and even many on the far left thought more quietly without daring to put it so crudely. This way of looking at things rests entirely on the firm conviction that this whole lucky mutation came from the bourgeoisie itself which, acting freely and of its own accord, decided to make capitalism more bearable out of its infinite wisdom and magnanimity.

The class struggle, indeed any sort of struggle at all, is totally conjured away in this imaginary society ruled by understanding and discernment. The theoretical crutch upon which this conception rests presents itself as an obviously wrong interpretation of Marxism, which Généreux reduces to a few formulae, missing out the essential part. This is indicated already by the simple fact that throughout the whole 331 page book the word "class" (to say nothing of "class struggle") does not even appear!

The basis for this misunderstanding and, more concretely, the idyllic transformation of capitalism into a regulated and more humane (but undefined) system is, therefore, an obvious

ignorance of capitalism itself. To be more exact, it is a total misunderstanding (or deliberate omission) of its nature and its historic evolution, as well as of their inner driving forces and content. Even more concretely, it is capitalism moving on from its classic, ascendant phase to its decline, death-agony and the manifold determinations involved which are missing in this fixed, immobile, capitalism. It is a well-known procedure frequently used by pseudo-Marxists who refer to Marx but deliberately leave out how Lenin and Trotsky developed his theory. This is how they strip Marxism precisely of its spirit as an analysis of living reality and petrify it into ancient immutable texts.

This is the method Jacques G n reux uses too when, claiming to present Marx's conception, he carefully excises Lenin's contribution. This surgical operation allows him to present the way capitalism was rescued from complete collapse by making concessions (1945-75) into proof that it had metamorphosed into a higher social order. Alchemists of old had a similar blind confidence in the miraculous ability of base lead to mutate into noble glittering gold. But in the end science taught us that that kind of transubstantiation exists in religious beliefs, but not among the natural elements, nor in social reality.

This kind of superstitious speculation abounds in Jacques G n reux's book when it comes to the desirability and possibility of a repeating the "thirty glorious years" in today's base society. They replace any serious reflection of the programme which flows from the situation itself, since they are so pervasive that they simply push aside the harsh realities of everyday life. But essentially this unbridled speculation masks and hides above all the reality of the concrete and particular historical conditions of the "thirty glorious years".

The first condition for the really significant concessions made in those post-war years was the actual strength of the

working class in the industrial countries, where revolutionary movements (and a series of revolutions) placed the capitalist order in mortal danger. But also the imperilled bourgeoisie, weakened as it was, had to be able to offer concessions, even on a temporary and cavalier basis, by digging even deeper into its own shrinking reserves. Finally, it also required that at the head of the revolutionary working class there should be degenerated and corrupt leaderships prepared to sell the revolution out cheaply in exchange for these concessions, while still able to produce arguments to justify imposing this abuse of authority.

Not a single one of these conditions is fulfilled today, or to be more precise, that are radically changed. The powerful and vigorous working class of then has suffered crucial successive defeats, and the endless retreats have merged into one general rout. Moreover, it has seen its forces drastically diminished, its make-up radically changed and its movement now only a shadow of what it was at the end of the war. Moreover, not only has it become impossible for the bourgeoisie to offer anything whatsoever to working people, its decline has grown even worse and impels it to violently and dictatorially destroy all past reforms and concessions, something it finds easier because of the weakening of the workers' movement. We should add that, following their open and brutal collaboration, the bureaucratic leaderships of the workers' movement have lost their former decisive position in the workers' movement. The historic defeat of Stalinism and social democracy's open avowed and cynical role as a direct pillar of the bourgeoisie have practically put an end to their organisational grip on the working class. (Even if the influence of their conceptions is still rife and serves to muddle the political consciousness of the majority of left and far-left activists.)

And this is how it goes with the Left Front and Left Party, one of whose most significant leaders, G n reux, in his book

not only heaps praises on the class collaboration of the "thirty glorious years" but advocates a return to these policies as the right and proper programme with which to oppose the devastation caused by austerity. But we have just seen that the very specific social and political conditions, historically determined by particular circumstances, which combined to give birth to this special form of class collaboration, have disappeared. More concretely, the quite exceptional relationship of class forces at the time, with a working class on the offensive against a bourgeoisie forced onto the defensive and retreat, has today turned into its opposite.

It is the bourgeoisie which has taken the initiative and developed a general offensive against a working class weakened and disarmed, destroying their previous gains. Trying to force the bourgeoisie to make significant concessions when it is developing an offensive against a working class in disorganised retreat, quite apart from betraying a petit-bourgeois expectation of alms from the master, is in any case a terrible nonsense which confuses two entirely different situations.

In concrete daily politics, this muddle inevitably appears as a serious mistake, as Généreux's book as a whole illustrates. The endless rambling about the possible and desirable changes in capitalism prevent him from even mentioning the current and real bourgeois offensive against all the gains that working people have made. And so fundamental problems of the day, such as the growth in unemployment, the unbearably high levels of debt, the rapid fall in wages in the face of overwhelming price rises, and the continuous dismantling of rights and benefits, to mention only a few, are completely missing from this book. So it's no surprise that one looks in vain for any sort of programme that could respond to these problems which workers face every day. All you can hope for is that something (the Holy Ghost, perhaps?) will touch the bourgeoisie and

inspire it to transform its offensive against the working class into a new version of the "thirty glorious years".

It seems little short of incredible that activists endowed with the capacity to reflect, the will to fight and solid experience should fall for such twaddle. But in the Left Front and certain other far-left organisations, it is nonsense of this kind that guides and orientates their struggles. There is, therefore, an absolute contradiction between their sincere commitment to changing the world and the skimpy, retrograde conceptions which tie them to this world. That is why the main task is to overcome this contradiction by adopting a conception and policies in total harmony with this real determination to change the world.

For a radical theoretical and political turn by the far left

Theoretical and political independence in relation to capitalism, its system and its bourgeois class, is the indispensable condition for establishing harmony between, on the one hand, sincere and ambitious aspirations and, on the other, limited objectives of the struggle. Only that sort of independence allows a concrete perspective to be defined which actually goes beyond the system. All past and recent history proves that, without independence of that kind, even the firmest determination to change capitalism is reduced to patching it up, and that in principle this can only work in the short term.

But this theoretical and political independence cannot be the fruit of disembodied speculation or mental play. It is rooted in the working class, whose existence and fate are tied to those of capital, but opposed to them in a profoundly contradictory way. Hence the indissoluble organic link between theoretical and political independence vis-à-vis capital and the struggle of the working class. Now, only Marxism expresses this cohesion and thus puts into words the necessary class independence in thought and action. *All* other theories are

tied to this system or inevitably fall back into its well-worn tracks. That is why this theory alone clearly says that, instead of trying to patch up capital's dilapidated and unhinged system, the central and immediate task is to overthrow it and move on to socialism. In conclusion, the historic task of the moment is reduced to and concentrated in a vigorous return to Marxism and its reaffirmation as the theory and guiding thread of the political activity of all organisations fighting against the grip of capital.

However, as the election results have repeatedly and relentlessly confirmed, the prospects of the Left Front and die Linke in Germany have been broadly compromised. These two coalitions, in thrall to their reformist theories, are seriously threatened with disappearing or shrivelling into political insignificance. (Syriza in Greece still has the benefit of a respite due to the specific situation in that country.)

Sadly, the Left Front obviously lacks the internal resources which could enable it on its own to make the veritable leap that is necessary if it is to turn to Marxism. From now on it is useless and in fact damaging to hang around waiting for any such "cultural revolution" on its part. Instead of that kind of turn, it is attempting to avoid the more and more obvious fate that awaits it with a confused and many-hued mixture of inconsistent scraps and reformist recipes. Its recent political evolution proves this.

Within the structure of the Left Front, the weight of those formations which, formally at least, linked it to Marxism and the workers' movement has noticeably diminished and that of those which came from other horizons grown (obviously one is not speaking here of the Communist Party, which long ago silently dropped even the caricature of Marxism to which it used to lay claim). For example there were groups which broke away from the NPA (Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste – New Anti-capitalist Party) like that led by Christian Picquet and

others, which have lost their role and significance in this coalition, whereas the frankly petit-bourgeois group "Ensemble" ("Together") of Clémentine Autain, a loose, obscure and indeterminate assemblage, is coming to the fore. This surely represents a political slide to the right on the part of the Front, despite the fact that the groups coming from the NPA have shown not the slightest aptitude to inspire anyone with Marxism. Faithful to their Pabloite heritage, they have continued their old politics of adaptation, this time not to triumphant Stalinism but the reformism pervasive in the Left Front. Nevertheless, their loss of influence has loosened even further the Left Front's already tenuous links with Marxist traditions.

Finally, like a drowning man clutching at a straw, the Left Front has clung even closer to the "enrichment" offered by the environmentalists and their doctrine. But environmentalism (and the politics of the "Greens" as a whole) is another way – different from the well-known, traditional, reformism – of asserting that it is possible to cure capitalist society, i.e. to maintain it, through ecological rather than socialist policies and measures. In this it is (if possible) more reactionary than traditional reformism: politically further to the right and intellectually inferior, since it squarely abandons the concrete social terrain to situate its struggle elsewhere, in man's (general!) relationship with nature – much to the delight of the capitalists! In line with this evasion, it turns its back on the workers' movement, in particular the trade unions, to place itself in the heart of the urban petit-bourgeoisie. And then, since unlike traditional reformism, it has been and remains utterly incapable of producing a perspective, a general theoretical vision, it does not even have a coherent political programme and makes do with negative criticisms and repeating a few nostrums.

Now the Left Front (or concretely its political motor force,

the Left Party) has turned even more closely towards these reactionary ersatz politics, decorating its wobbly political line with a few environmentalist trimmings. This highly-embroidered adventure it has baptised "eco-socialism", which strictly speaking is entirely devoid of meaning. What it does actually mean, very clearly, is that the Left Party (the Left Front), instead of drawing closer to Marxism, is moving even further away. Two very important political conclusions flow from this.

The first is that, despite everything, the Left Front's retreat and its slide to the right should not serve as an alibi for abandoning it or turning one's back on it. Despite all its growing imperfections, its petit-bourgeois and centrist character, it remains the only political formation which has not renounced its opposition to the policy of the bourgeoisie. It thus still has within it the real possibility of developing and improving that fight and the struggle for Marxism. It is the natural crucible par excellence for these battles.

The second conclusion is precisely the lesson that the initiative for a renewal of Marxism can only come from outside the Left Front, in particular those organisations linked to Marxism and the working class movement.

However, we have seen that the three political formations which claim to be Marxist are incapable, as organisations, of providing an impulse of that sort. Their Marxism, if they still profess it, is nothing but a collection of bookish and formal references to old texts, detached from current reality. The politics they carry out alongside these references flagrantly contradicts them. From that point of view their policy on Europe and their attitude to other anti-bourgeois organisations are equally eloquent.

Under these conditions, the impulse can only come from an organisation (or organisations?) which, like Workers

International to Rebuild the Fourth International, openly and publicly fight for the renewal of Marxism and for socialism cleansed of Stalinist dross. It goes without saying that such a struggle ought to rally and unite all those who, though they may be in separate organisations, wish to fight openly for genuine Marxism and revived socialism.

By *Balazs Nagy*, July 2014

On some lessons of the French municipal elections (March 2014)

By *Balazs Nagy*, April 2014

The entire French press is unanimous. Whether left or right in their traditional political colouration – the difference is actually pretty superficial – they compare the so-called socialist party's resounding discomfiture in the municipal elections to Napoleons historic disaster on the Berezina River in Russia in 1812, the prelude to his ultimate defeat. For once the accuracy of their judgement is beyond dispute. So our first response is above all to see what we can learn. Its a perfectly straightforward and normal thing to do, although our conclusions differ noticeably from everyone else's.

First of all it is important to emphasise that elections change absolutely nothing in the fundamentals of the capitalist social system or, therefore, in the overall situation. This view is sharply opposed to the popular belief carefully fostered by the usual politicians and organisations of the left. Even if elections do change that systems form or

shape, they move within the framework it imposes and are an integral part of it. Whether municipal, parliamentary or European, they are just part of how the (most democratic!) system in place functions, while remaining profoundly bound to the way it moves and works.

How true this is has been more than adequately demonstrated, and two major and opposed schools of thought on the matter were in evidence during the elections. One body of opinion – an extremely heterogeneous one (especially if you include the right wingers) – traditionally asserts that elections really can bring about effective changes in the system. It has to be said, regrettably, that even a party such as the Front de Gauche (Left Front) and its component parts – which we see as actually standing on the side of working people, and as such on our side too – remains a prisoner to these blinkered electoral (parliamentary) politics. Its leaders, in effect, leave us to suppose mistakenly, or even themselves assert, that a strong showing (and all the more so outright victory) at the polls would enable them radically to change the capitalist social system.

Abstentions are a kind of vote

In contrast to these shallow parliamentary politics, another large and growing section of the population regularly and deliberately abstain. Although municipal elections supposedly affect people more directly, these latest ones saw record abstention levels of 36.6 per cent, particularly among young people.

Most bourgeois politicians and commentators get onto their moral high horse over this. They have the nerve to impugn such peoples republican credentials, and the audacity to accuse them of helping the right wing. Here or there, the reproach is added that they make it impossible for the Left Front and/or its component parts to make consistent progress, and so change the system.

These abstentions, however, express a definite verdict on the existing capitalist system as a whole, fundamentally rejecting it and repudiating the absurd belief that voting can change the system. In this sense, they are right and we defend them against those republican paragons of (questionable) virtue, even though we think that abstaining is negative and sterile and therefore inadequate.

An accurate map showing the percentage of voters who abstained in the recent French municipal elections would clearly show another France living on the periphery of the cities in the proletarian banlieues. It is working-class France, including the unemployed, suffering under savage austerity. The bourgeois press was so bold as to reveal a tiny corner of its extent and significance. In Paris red belt there were 58.6 per cent abstentions in Ivry, 56.8 in Stains, 56.7 in Vitry-sur-Seine; then 56.7 per cent in Vaux-en-Velin in the outer suburbs of Lyon and 55.5 per cent in the disaster-stricken working-class town of Roubaix in the North. The figure is the same for Trappes in the outer suburbs of Paris, the biggest victims of galloping inequality. Bourgeois journalists and all the petit-bourgeois milieu editorialise about this in the abstract – wringing their hands over the losses suffered by the middle class! The working class and its fate simply disappear from these peoples preoccupations. This arises from a deliberate desire to minimise this dangerous class's importance, even to the point of denying its existence. So you can bet they will never draw up any such map because it would cast rather a pall over their chatter and somewhat upset their peace of mind.

On the importance of elections

Elections cannot change the capitalist system (as we can see in the daily more severe blows it inflicts on us), but political organisations would be making an unpardonable error if they concluded that there is no point in elections. In the first place, they are important because they quite faithfully

reflect each party's impact and influence, providing a pretty accurate graphic image (including abstentions) of the level and nature of the population's political consciousness.

This political thermometer marked a general defeat for Hollande and his government and, in passing, wiped out all the myth-making that had gone before about municipal elections being all about strictly local issues: all those who in 2012 had expected this government to protect them against the attacks of capital, this time around voted against his party or abstained. That message is clear. In this sense the bourgeois way the newspaper *Le Monde* explains what this vote means is deliberately misleading. They write that Holland is now paying the bill for a poor start to his tenure because it was not sustained by a clear and clearly-articulated project. (Editorial on 1 April 2014). But the obviously bourgeois nature of his project was exactly what working people did understand and voted against. Nevertheless, in its usual convoluted way, the newspaper does express the bourgeoisie's innermost concerns and its insistence that greater determination should be shown in serving that class. Their complaint expresses these requirements and their preferred response, which is to take matters directly in hand via their own traditional parties. In this they are encouraged by Hollande's own bourgeois proclivities. That explains the significance of the heightened profile of the Union for a Popular Movement (UMP), the Union of Democrats and Independents (UDI) and the Democratic Movement (MoDem), parties which express the bourgeoisie's desire to press ahead with the destruction of social gains. We can be quite sure that Hollande will do everything he can to satisfy these expectations and will (if possible) become even more hostile to what working people want.

The strength of the fascists (barely) conceals their bourgeoisie character

The considerable advance made by the National Front (FN) is

almost entirely due to its demagogic propaganda which appears to defend the interests of workers and working people. But watch out! This tactic of appearing to defend working people is a well-established and well-known trick used by all extreme-right parties. In the 1920s Hitler developed the same stratagem, presenting himself as a defender of working people. He went so far as to call his party socialist, merely adding the adjective national. As for Mussolini, he came straight out of the Italian Socialist Party. As with all fascists, social demagogy was their most important weapon, and this is what the National Front has picked up on. But how demagogic this political line is, is revealed clearly by the fact that it does not attack the whole bourgeoisie and its social system. It only sets its sights on one of its political lines, the one currently in the foreground: Europe. It advocates a different line, i.e. the withdrawal into nationalism represented by the other, minority, section of the European bourgeoisie. So the FN attacks the bourgeoisie's majority (European) policy, but not the bourgeoisie as a class which exploits other classes, nor its capitalist system. Far from it, it vigorously attacks immigrant workers, in other words the majority of the working class, and carries on alarmingly about workers' gains, denouncing various benefits. It has derived great advantages not just from this lying demagogy, which continues to conceal its avowedly bourgeois nature, but also the fact that no single party has yet unmasked it as a bourgeois party. Normally, criticisms merely affect its anti-European stance and its racist and nationalist phobias, without touching on the bourgeois basis on which they grow like excrescences.

Why is the Left Front marking time?

Elections are also an opportunity for all those united around shared political aims to rally together so as to further extend their ranks. This is particularly true of all those who wish, on the basis of a programme, to make a step forward towards freeing working people from the yoke of the capitalist

system. So the elections offered the Left Front a chance to develop. So how to explain that, despite the terrible crisis of capitalism and the fact that workers rejected this society, the Left Front did not just fall a long way back from its spectacular results in the presidential elections, but was clearly overtaken by all bourgeois parties, including the FN and the UMP?

This absurd situation is a consequence of the Left Fronts political ambiguity. While it makes it clear that it thoroughly opposes the French and European bourgeoisies recent austerity policies, it does not come out clearly against the capitalist system as such. It stays vague and enigmatic on this cardinal point which really does require some straight talking. This obscurity is revealed in the lack of a clearly working-class programme directed against capitalism as the social system at the root of all austerity. This lack of a programme and the fact they are locked into the normal bourgeois election framework have condemned them to limp along far behind the others. In short, their position does not measure up to the situation. How can you expect the Left Front to unmask the National Front as a bourgeois party if they equivocate over their own objectives? The municipal elections show that, under these conditions, the Left Front is condemned to mark time while the National Front has made considerable progress, including among discontented workers.

So the main lesson of the elections is obvious. They show ever more clearly that, instead of looking for scapegoats, the main task facing our Left Front is to make an objective assessment of its activity as a whole, above all its political programme,

Balazs Nagy, April 2014

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".

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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 Kasidiarisi 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.
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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