



Workers of all lands, unite!
November 2024

Creative Commons

Anti Apartheid Extra! Pages 3-6

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Unity!



GROUCHO LABOUR'S CONFUSIONS

RACHEL REEVES' idea to recast her first outing as chancellor – a conventional neo-liberal exercise in fiscal rectitude – as a budget for working people was quickly revealed as window dressing. The vast mass of British people – as confirmed by the most recent opinion polls – are extremely relaxed about higher taxes on rich people, on capital gains and on profits.

In this widely held expression of class consciousness working people understand something that every Labour luminary from Pat McFadden to Baron Mandelson seems to have missed with the surprising exception of Starmer himself (see page 7).

There is a world of difference between people who must work every day in order to live and those who live off profits, rents or interest.

The issue is not whether the individual turns a day's hand. Millions of small business people, shop owners and tradespeople work impossible hours and live on the edge of insecurity.

What defines a working person – polite language for members of the working class – is how they get their income.

An electrician who works for an employer or even on their own and for themselves and receives nothing other than payment for their labour is clearly a worker. But if that electrician takes on an employee and pays them less than the value of their work then they are halfway distant from being a worker pure and simple.

Continued on page 7

COMBAT CLIMATE DISASTER

Communists call for global climate justice



Judith Cazola
CLIMATE

THE COP29 SUMMIT in Azerbaijan is taking place as climate change is driving weather chaos around the world. The death toll during the storms and floods in Valencia, Spain, have risen above 200. Demonstrators there have called for the prime minister's resignation, demanding to know why rescue operations were so late and inadequate.

The people of my home province of Valencia are the latest to protest against the failure of government to combat global warming.

While the so-called 'socialist' and conservative parties were blaming each other for the disaster, people on the ground were recovering bodies and houses from the mud.

People in Spain and elsewhere contrast the civil emergency policies in many developed and developing capitalist countries with those in socialist Cuba and People's China.

Cuba – a Third World country struggling against the illegal US economic blockade – has survived Hurricane Rafael without fatalities, unlike Jamaica, Panama and Colombia. As in China, socialist state power invests heavily in civil emergency preparations and mobilises

the whole state and society in the fight against climate disasters.

Britain's Communists criticise the Labour government's recent Budget for failing to announce substantial extra investment in emergency planning to deal with floods, coastal erosion and other disasters caused or worsened by global warming.

With Trump elected the likely withdrawal of the US from the Paris Climate Agreement could sabotage progress towards cutting global emissions by 43 per cent by 2030.

As the second biggest source of greenhouse gases and one of the top emitters per head of population, the US has a special responsibility to cut its own emissions and assist developing countries in their transition to clean energy.

Big business lobbying at COP29 brings the threat of a decision in favour of carbon markets. The real need is for climate finance to allow the nations and people most affected by climate change to mitigate its effects.

Communists agree with Lise Masson of Friends of the Earth International when she said: 'Decisions at COP29 threaten to open the floodgates for a global carbon market that would have devastating impacts on communities in the Global South, on Indigenous Peoples, and on small peasant

farmers first and foremost. Carbon markets are not climate finance, and we cannot accept these neocolonial schemes to be propped up as a success of COP29'.

There are no capitalist market solutions to the climate crisis. The deceptive language of carbon capture, meaningless net zero pledges that never materialise, illusory offsets and the intensive lobbying by oil and gas profiteers threaten the credibility of the entire process.

Communist argue that combatting global warming demands decisive action by the main capitalist states with an historic obligation to mitigate the climate emergency both for the sake of the planet and to enable countries of the Global South – who did not create this crisis – to tackle its effects.

COP29 highlights the need for rich countries to commit at \$5 trillion annually to the Global South through public finance mechanisms to repair the climate debt owed to developing countries.

This means an intense campaign that will be met by a great deal of resistance from the rich and which increasingly raises the question: Is there a solution to the climate crisis under capitalism?

JUDITH CAZOLA IS THE COMMUNIST PARTY'S
NATIONAL ORGANISER

Inside John Foster reviews Andrew Murray's *The Communist Party and Empire*



ON THE UNITED FRONT

‘First it is absolutely clear to us in Britain that the main task is now to give leadership and organization to this wide, broad anti-fascist feeling. To bring in not only the working class but other sections of the population that are anti-fascist. To go ahead with this drive for local trades councils, to initiate united front conferences and demonstrations and also for the preparation of a national antifascist congress.’ Harry Pollitt writing in *The Communist International* 15 August 1933.

English local elections

Unity reporter
CAMPAIGNING

LOCAL ELECTIONS will take place across England on 1 May 2025. The Communist Party is preparing to contest as widely as resources permit.

Judith Cazorla, the party’s national organiser said: “With the working class moving away from both the Labour and Tory parties, and with the far-right mobilising under the Reform UK brand, it is essential that communists participate in these elections and present our message that there is an alternative to the failed policies of the Westminster parties and that Reform UK is a blind alley for working people.

“In the elections of 2024 and prior, we have seen that wherever we stand candidates and campaign, there is an increase in interest in our Party, which has led to new members joining us as we get our message out.”

The party has asked its local organisations to discuss their participation in these local elections and candidates to come forward by Monday, 2 December.

The party’s Elections Commission is to provide full training, support, and guidance throughout the campaign for all candidates as well as agents and other campaign role holders, interested or have any questions or concerns, should contact Judith Cazorla at organiser@communistparty.org.uk

Communists to stand in Kilpatrick

First time contestant Dylan McAllister is standing as the Communist Party’s candidate in the upcoming by-election for the Kilpatrick ward of West Dunbartonshire Council, taking place on 28 November.

Dylan is the only candidate in this contest who is genuinely committed to fighting for the working class against austerity, poverty, and the closure of public facilities. As a first-time candidate for the Party, Dylan will be attending his first hustings on 19 November.

The West Dunbartonshire Communist Party is keen to raise the party’s profile in Clydebank and encourages any comrades in neighbouring branches to support the campaign.

Rich relieved

Unity Reporter
BUDGET

Commenting on the first Budget from Chancellor Rachel Reeves Communist Party general secretary Robert Griffiths said: “Plans to spend more on the NHS, schools and housing are welcome – but they fall very far short of what a real government for workers and their families could and should do.”

“This so-called ‘investment’ barely scratches the surface after 14 years of Tory austerity.”

“Britain’s economy is one of the biggest and wealthiest in the world, yet the rich and big business will continue to enjoy vast profits – free from proper price controls – as millions of people suffer rising prices, deteriorating public services and a chronic housing shortage.”

“No wonder spivs and speculators in the City of London are celebrating the Chancellor’s Budget. They have again escaped a financial transaction tax that would fill any ‘black hole’ in weeks if not days, and can look forward to billions more in public capital investment without the threat of public ownership.”

“There is no attempt to attack or even fairly tax the power and wealth of the rich and big business.”

“It is clear that working people – as ever – will have to fight for real change and a dignified life.”

Check out the latest episodes of CommieCast, the Party’s regular podcast. These high-quality podcasts are great to share around and listen to, full of information and ideas. Comments and suggestions contact us at commiecast@communistparty.org.uk. Previous and future episodes are available at communistparty.org.uk/commiecast/

AS THE GENOCIDE in Gaza continues and Israel escalates its attacks on other countries the Stop the War Coalition is asking people to organise some kind of action in their workplace or place of study on 28 November. This can range from lunchtime rallies to badge wearing or raising money for charity.

- Make it a ‘Wear a badge or scarf for Palestine day’.
- a two minute silence at work for Palestine
- Call a walkout and a rally at lunchtime with speakers.
- Organise a stall outside work as people come in.
- Invite everyone to a Palestinian lunch or a bake sale.
- Do a collection and a petition for the movement around work.
- Get everyone to change their zoom background to the Palestinian flag

Call an organising meeting now to discuss with workmates what you think is possible in your workplace. When you have made plans, start talking to the whole of the workforce about getting involved. Put a motion to your union branch if you have one,

calling for support for the day and outlining your action.

This day of action has been backed by the Trades Union Congress, and we hope it will turn out to be one of the biggest yet. The TUC’s support shows that the trade union movement nationally is swinging behind workplace action in order to force the government to stop colluding in genocide. Take part and join the call on Keir Starmer and David Lammy to end their support for Israel as it pursues its genocide in Gaza and escalates war throughout the region.

Please let Stop the War know of your plans in advance and make sure that you take pictures and videos for social media on the day and send them in to office@stopwar.org.uk

- ★ Britain’s communists have called for the biggest ever turnout on November 30 in solidarity with the people of Palestine to end Israel’s genocidal policy and its bombing of Lebanon, Yemen, Syria and Iran.
- ★ Israeli Communist Party (Maki) member Ofer Cassif, now banned from speaking in the Knesset, has been invited to address the Communist Party’s executive committee on November 23.

Manifesto Press needs help

Manifesto Press is a publishing house and a design, print, promotion and marketing resource run on cooperative and volunteer lines. We work with a wide range of partners in the Labour and solidarity movements and especially with the *Morning Star*.

In the coming year we want to reach deeper into the working class, solidarity and liberation movements and grow the distribution of our exciting range of titles.

Specifically, we are looking for politically committed and well organised people to take on, on a volunteer basis, the sale of Manifesto Press books and merchandise in each of Britain’s major cities. This already exists in embryonic form with stalls staffed at Labour movement events, festivals and demonstrations and there is a big demand for this to grow.

Contact: chair@manifestopress.coop

We also need to find a temporary storage facility for our back catalogue while we reorganise and carry through our expansion plans. If you have an unused space, a room, or garage that would suit, preferably in the South East or London please contact chair@manifestopress.coop



FOR A NON RACIAL SOCIETY

‘We seek to create a united Democratic and non-racial society. We have a vision of South Africa in which black and white shall live and work together as equals in conditions of peace and prosperity. Using the power you derive from the discovery of the truth about racism in South Africa, you will help us to remake our part of the world into a corner of the globe on which all -- of which all of humanity can be proud.’ **Oliver Tambo** speaking at Georgetown University on January 27, 1987.



The story of the film

This issue of Unity! celebrates the close links between British communists and their South African comrades in the struggle for socialism and against apartheid. We are proud to promote the London Recruits film which is inspiring a new generation of activists. The award-winning documentary on British anti-apartheid heroes has already sparked passionate discussions — now trade unions and progressives must make it part of our training and education courses.



Roger McKenzie AGAINST APARTHEID

AFTER a decade in the making, London Recruits is on international release. The film tells the story of the heroic contribution made by activists from across Britain to the fight against apartheid in South Africa.

These activists put themselves on the line to support the fight against the racist apartheid regime. The film's world premiere took place at the Johannesburg Film Festival earlier this year, where the film won the award for the best documentary.

Further official selections at the New York African Film Festival in May and at Encounters South African International Documentary Film Festival in June have underlined the importance of this Welsh/South African co-production has been well received by African audiences, both at home and in the diaspora.

More European and British premiers of the film are planned and more importantly a wider public release.

The film has already sparked passionate discussion during audience reaction testing. The example of the London Recruits seems to inspire those watching to want to find ways to bring about real change.

They can see that change requires action and that theory demands practice. The producers have teamed up with trade unions and solidarity organisations to use the film as a catalyst for practical action for change.

A key part of the process is to use the film as an educational resource to support people to work towards a better world.

There will need to be deeper consideration of how this film can reach the parts of the community that films such as this do not reach.

A key target must be how the film can be used to reach out to the black community as well as how this can be used on trade union courses — not just to show and have a quick discussion — but also how a specific course on the London Recruits could be developed

in its own right.

The aim is to screen the film in more than 200 independent cinemas across Britain this autumn with post-screening discussions led by local trade unionists and activists.

I'm sure that there is no assumption that the trade unionists and activists leading these discussions are already equipped with the knowledge and skills to effectively guide these sessions towards action.

This suggests that a programme of training needs to be put in place to support these discussion leaders and we should be careful to make sure that this is a diverse group of activists.

The General Federation of Trade Unions, individual unions and other organisations, such as the Marx Memorial Library, will be central to taking this work forward. I am delighted that Manifesto Press, my own publisher, has also committed to supporting this work.

General Federation of Trade Unions general secretary Gawain Little said: "London Recruits is an outstanding film that shows that ordinary people can do extraordinary things."

"The story of the recruits is told in an exciting and engaging way, which will inspire a new generation of activists to take part in changing the world."

Manifesto Press said: "London Recruits is a film whose time has come."

The publishers added: "Thirty years after apartheid fell in South Africa the generations who fought against the racist state, in exile, in the townships, in the bush and on the streets of the imperial metropolis can evaluate the heroic period with the benefit of experience and with pride."

Manifesto Press has published a London Recruits educational resource, created by the National Education Union and with it an introduction by Ronnie Kasrils, the South African Communist Party guide to underground work against the apartheid regime. These resources will be invaluable to keep alive the history and lessons of the London Recruits.

The London Recruits placed themselves in serious harm's way for a set of core principles including social justice and equality and the hope of creating a socialist world.

These principles have never changed but the actions of those of us involved in working for revolutionary change have always been led by those on the ground at the sharp end of oppression.

ROGER MCKENZIE IS THE AUTHOR OF *AFRICAN UHURU*, OUT NOW, PUBLISHED BY MANIFESTO PRESS. THE BOOK IS AVAILABLE VIA THE *MORNING STAR* SHOP AND EVERY ORDER MADE GIVES A SLICE OF THE COVER PRICE TO OUR DAILY PAPER OF WORKING-CLASS POWER AND LIBERATION.

Gordon Main THE FILM

BACK IN 2014 we sipped our pints, Seb and I. The end of another week. Friday evening regulars joked at the bar.

We sat in the corner. We liked this place. It was the last of its kind. Largely unchanged since the turn of the last century, it still boasted a working boxing ring upstairs. Rumours of an imminent make over had brought us here to enjoy it while we could. Beneath the fading black and white gaze of boxers after their bouts, battered smiles in framed silver nitrate prints on every wall, we nursed bruises of our own.

Another week of pitching programme ideas to the BBC. Another week of rejection. I was running a micro Welsh TV production company in Cardiff with my mentor and friend Peter Edwards. We had recently taken on a young trade union official and friend Seb Cooke. Seb was there to turbo charge our ideas output and increase the volume and variety of programmes we were pitching for.

We had just been turned down on our pitch for a drama documentary about how Welsh miners had nearly brought Britain's World War One Royal Navy fleet to a stand-still in 1915. At that time the Welsh valleys were the energy equivalent of the Persian Gulf. Welsh steam coal still powered the Empire and the engines of Britain's vast navy. Although, as in the gulf, it turned out that the fossil fuel beneath the ground wasn't owned by locals, but by big money men from London. Disputes over poor pay and dangerous, all too often fatal, working conditions had been simmering for years. The miners — largely socialist and anti-imperialist in outlook — saw their opportunity for enhanced leverage and went on strike. Resisting the full force of the 'support our boys' and 'German sympathisers' hysteria whipped up by government and the press, they resolutely made their case for fairer pay and safer conditions.

In Welsh memories, it hadn't been long since Winston Churchill had used the army and live ammunition to suppress striking Welsh miners and dock workers. Two were killed in Llanelli. As Churchill had only just finished his term as First Lord of the Admiralty, it was also personal. The government dispatched former Chancellor of the Exchequer and Minister of Munitions, David Lloyd George, Welsh himself, to conduct negotiations with miners in Cardiff. It is said that the miners kept the room cold, withholding coal for the fires, to emphasise their point and their power. With the imperial fleet just weeks from running out of fuel, the

miners secured better pay and conditions in under a week.

The BBC had asked production companies to come up with WWI stories to mark the centenary. This seemed perfect — an almost unknown story, an opportunity to explore issues around attitudes to what was seen by many as an imperialist war, the pay and conditions of the working class at the time, and the vulnerability of the fleet's reliance on coal.

The production gate keepers at the BBC disagreed. It didn't fit the general mood of nostalgia and heroic sacrifice in the trenches. Too left wing.

Half-way down our glasses, as the door banged and the bar filled, Seb leaned forward and said he had an even better story. He told me how years ago, his mentor in the SWP, (Seb was no longer a member), had told him one evening that when he had been a lad of Seb's age, back in 1970, he had gone to apartheid South Africa undercover and detonated leaflet devices on the streets for the ANC.

GORDON MAIN IS THE DIRECTOR OF LONDON RECRUITS. AS AN AWARD-WINNING PRODUCER, DIRECTOR AND WRITER DIRECTOR HE HAS MADE OVER 40 TV DOCUMENTARY PROGRAMMES IN VARIOUS GENRES FOR HIS PRODUCTION COMPANY BAREFOOT RASCALS LTD.

Get involved in the peoples's release of London Recruits

www.londonrecruits.com

Pictured above: Ronnie Kasrils was a script writer and a film and TV director when he joined the African National Congress. A year later he was a founder member and Natal regional commander of tUmkhonto we Sizwe (MK).

He completed military training in Odessa in the Soviet Union and served the ANC for 27 years, based in London, Luanda, Maputo, Swaziland, Botswana and Lusaka as a member of MK's High Command; and, after completing a specialist course in the Soviet Union, to the rank of Brigadier as chief of MK Intelligence. He became member of the central committee of the South African Communist Party in 1986.

Ronnie Kasrils recruited and organised the London Recruits, teams of white British youth who carried out clandestine propaganda operations in South Africa

Ronnie Kasrils served on ANC's Politico-Military Council and worked underground for the ANC in South Africa on Operation Vula in 1990 /91.

He later served as South Africa's deputy minister of defence, minister for intelligence services and minister of water affairs and forestry.



COMRADES IN ARMS

‘Throughout our struggle for liberation, one of the many things that we learnt from the Communist Party was the importance of international solidarity; that no struggle could be waged effectively in isolation. In building a new country, the same holds true. It is not possible to believe that the achievement of peace, justice and reconciliation in the confines of the borders of one country will be meaningful in the long-term.’ **Nelson Mandela** on receiving the Chris Hani Peace Prize at the Tenth Congress of the SACP



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“...The true revolutionary is guided by great feelings of love”

Statement by the central committee of the South African Communist Party on the death of Nelson Mandela

6 December 2013

LAST NIGHT the millions of the people of South Africa, majority of whom the working class and poor, and the billions of the rest of the people the world over, lost a true revolutionary, President Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, Tata Madiba.

The South African Communist Party (SACP) joins the people of South Africa and the world in expressing its most sincere condolences to Ms Graca Machel and the entire Mandela family on the loss of what President Zuma correctly described as South Africa’s greatest son, Comrade Mandela. We also wish to use this opportunity to express our solidarity with the African National Congress, an organisation that produced him and that he also served with distinction, as well as all his colleagues and comrades in our broader liberation movement. As Tata Madiba said: “It is not the kings and generals that make history but the masses that make history, the workers, the peasants...”

The passing away of Cde Mandela marks an end to the life of one of the greatest revolutionaries of the 20th century, who fought for freedom and against all forms of oppression in both their countries and globally. As part of the masses that make history, Cde Mandela’s contribution in the struggle for freedom was located and steered in the collective membership and leadership of our revolutionary national liberation movement as led by the ANC – for he was not an island. In Cde Mandela we had a brave and courageous soldier, patriot and internationalist who, to borrow from Che Guevara, was a true revolutionary guided by great feelings of love for his people, an outstanding feature of all genuine people’s revolutionaries.

At his arrest in August 1962, Nelson Mandela was not only a member of the then underground South African Communist Party, but was also a member of our Party’s Central Committee. To us as South African communists, Cde Mandela shall forever symbolise the monumental contribution of the SACP in our liberation struggle. The contribution of communists in the struggle to achieve the South African freedom has very

few parallels in the history of our country. After his release from prison in 1990, Cde Madiba became a great and close friend of the communists till his last days.

The one major lesson we need to learn from Mandela and his generation of leaders was their commitment to principled unity within each of our Alliance formations as well as the unity of our Alliance as a whole and that of the entire mass democratic movement. Their generation struggled to build and cement the unity of our Alliance, and we therefore owe it to the memory of Cde Madiba to preserve the unity of our Alliance. Let those who do not understand the extent to which blood was spilt in pursuance of Alliance unity be reminded not to throw mud at the legacy and memory of the likes of Madiba by being reckless and gambling with the unity of our Alliance.

The SACP supported Madiba’s championing of national reconciliation. But national reconciliation for him never meant avoiding tackling the class and other social inequalities in our society, as some would like to make us believe today. For Madiba, national reconciliation was a platform to pursue the objective of building a more egalitarian South African society free of the scourge of racism, patriarchy and gross inequalities. And true national reconciliation shall never be achieved in a society still characterized by the yawning gap of inequalities and capitalist exploitation.

In honour of this gallant fighter the SACP will intensify the struggle against all forms of inequality, including intensifying the struggle for socialism, as the only political and economic solution to the problems facing humanity.

For the SACP the passing away of Madiba must give all those South Africans who had not fully embraced a democratic South Africa, and who still in one way or the other hanker to the era of white domination, a second chance to come to terms with a democratic South Africa founded on the principle of majority rule.

We call upon all South Africans to emulate his example of selflessness, sacrifice, commitment and service to his people.

The SACP says Hamba kahle Mkhonto!

IN ANTICIPATION OF THE FILM *LONDON RECRUITS* MANIFESTO PRESS HAS PUBLISHED IN BOOK FORM

THE DETAILED AND COMPREHENSIVE MATERIAL GATHERED IN THE IMMENSELY REWARDING *LONDON RECRUITS* EDUCATION RESOURCE.

manifesto

WHY IS APARTHEID STILL AN ISSUE?
SOUTH AFRICANS KNOW OF WHAT THEY SPEAK AND PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE HAS MADE APARTHEID TODAY'S ISSUE.
Read the London Recruits story.

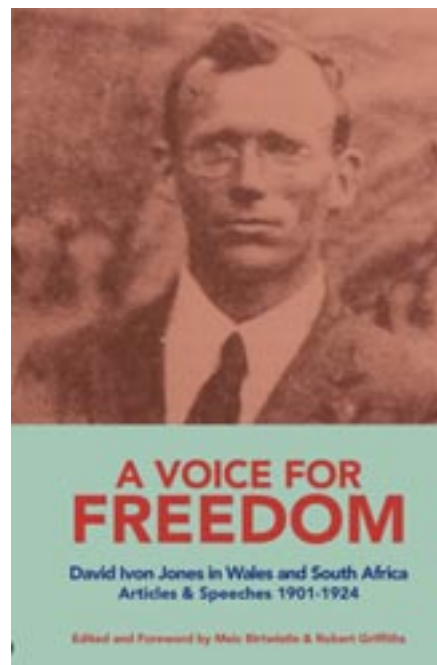
LONDON RECRUITS educational resource
Manifesto Press, 2023 (RRP: £15)

How to Master Secret Work
Manifesto Press, 2023 (RRP: £5)

How to Master Secret Work was first published underground in apartheid South Africa by the South African Communist Party and now republished by Manifesto Press

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A revolutionary life from Aberystwyth to South Africa



DAVID IVON JONES was born in Wales in 1883 and died in 1924 in the Soviet Union. In his death-bed ‘Political Testament’, Jones urged his comrades to ‘carry out the great revolutionary mission imposed on colonies in general and South Africa in particular with revolutionary devotion and dignity, concentrating on shaking the foundations of world capitalism and British imperialism’. The ‘Delegate for Africa,’ as Jones was

known in the Communist International, is now commemorated by a plaque on the Unitarian chapel in his native town of . But it is in South Africa that his legacy is particularly treasured today by the South African Communist Party and the African National Congress.

This collection of his articles and speeches, in both Welsh and English, testifies to his deep humanitarian and communist principles. They embody and express his love for his Welsh homeland, for his adopted South Africa and its native peoples and for revolutionary Russia and its working class and peasantry.

David Ivon Jones was a patriot and an internationalist, who unsparingly committed himself to the liberation of all humanity.

A Voice for Freedom

David Ivon Jones in Wales and South Africa Articles and Speeches 1901-1924

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PRAXIS PRESS

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SPEAR OF THE NATION

‘One factor helps us that no other liberation struggle in this region could count on - our liberation front is characterized by relatively highly developed class forces, tested in political struggles.’ ‘It's not difficult in South Africa for the ordinary person to see the link between capitalism and racist exploitation, and when one sees the link one immediately thinks in terms of a socialist alternative.’
Joe Slovo General Secretary of the South African Communist Party, Commander of uMkhonto weSizwe

The secret struggle against apartheid revealed



Steve Marsling MY STORY



A YEAR OR TWO after I joined the Young Communist League I was approached by its organiser. Bob Allen told me that he wanted me to meet an African National Congress member. Bob asked if I could think of anyone else trustworthy to go along with me. I immediately thought of my mate Sean Hosey, a Dubliner who had come over to England when he was ten years old. His dad worked in the Coventry Jaguar factory and was the shop stewards convenor.

We met a man called Ronnie Kasrils. We found him easy to get along with. He was witty and articulate and didn't beat about the bush. Ronnie was an experienced ANC member and a leading light in the South African Communist Party. The SACP formed an alliance with the ANC and was at the forefront of forging an affective opposition to apartheid.

Ronnie wanted Sean and I to go to South Africa on a mission. We were to learn how to set up and make leaflet bombs. They were to be placed in a false bottom suitcase and smuggled into the country. The bombs were not intended to harm anyone and never did. The bombs fired the leaflets into the air for people to find and read, then pass on to others. Remember leaflets couldn't just be handed out in the street. Any material that advocated real change was illegal.

Ronnie then explained that if we were

caught the minimum sentence we could expect was five years imprisonment. We would also undergo various tortures and ill treatment. Were we still interested? We were to go away and think about it and come back and let him know our answer.

I had never been on a plane before or outside the country. The furthest I had been was a few Millwall away games, and then no further than Brighton! Neither Sean nor I had any hesitation in saying we would do it. Ronnie had great patience as both Sean and I showed our non-DIY skills! Eventually we managed to assemble the leaflet bombs with some degree of competence and the day was set. In August 1971 we made our way into enemy territory.

Our instructions were to pose as tourists and pretend that we went along with the apartheid system. Everywhere we went you could see the signs saying, white *blankes* and non-whites *nie blankes*. On park benches, buses, cinemas, everywhere people were segregated. It was a police state and every aspect of life was dictated to by skin colour. We had to pretend to go along with it but in reality it made both of us feel sick.

Because of our anger at this inhuman system there was no way we were getting cold feet. We couldn't wait for the day when we could strike back. So we went to the races, Table Top Mountain, bars, clubs, restaurants etc. At last the day arrived, we had to go to work.

We assembled the explosive devices. The explosives were to be triggered by attaching

them to a parking meter timer. These meter timers were removable gadgets which reminded people when it was time to return to the parking meter. We discovered a problem with one of these gadgets – it seemed to have a life of its own and would often, during practice, spring back to the 'time up' position, but we decided to go ahead anyway.

We had been unlucky with the weather. Cape Town in August can often be cloudy and rainy and for most of our week it was exactly that. The plan was that we would don large raincoats and hide the small buckets, containing explosives and leaflets, underneath the coats, as we made our way to the bus and railway stations during rush hour.

Of course, as luck would have it, we woke up to find Cape Town bathed in sunshine and not a cloud in the sky! So two idiots in ankle length macs made their way past people in vests and shorts, hoping we could pass ourselves off as eccentric Englishmen! (or Irishmen in Sean's case).

The first two bombs were laid and the timing devices set. However, on the third, the dodgy timer decided to play up. As I wound the timer back and set it for twenty minutes it immediately started to go off! I managed to get my finger nail between the timer dial and the detonator. I moved it back slowly and it stayed. I looked up at Sean who had turned white. I was shaking like a leaf as I realized how close I had come to becoming a one armed socialist! (in fact it would have just given me a nasty burn – no-one was ever hurt by these leaflet bombs). We laid six bombs in total in which five went off including one outside Parliament.

We were told that once the bombs were laid we had to get out of the area. The next morning we were front page news on every newspaper. According to the reports the police were lying in wait for us as they were expecting something like this to happen on the anniversary of the Sharpeville Massacre. Missing two idiots in full length raincoats on a summer's day does not say much for the intelligence of the apartheid security forces. We also learnt that other people had planted leaflet bombs in other cities.

Due to a mix up with our flight back we had to stopover in to what was then Rhodesia. This was scary because Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) was another white minority state. We were surprised to find that our actions were head line news in the Rhodesian newspapers too.

When we arrived back Ronnie's face was a picture of happiness and he congratulated us on our success.

Some months later Ronnie got in touch.

There was an urgent mission, someone had to go back to South Africa, arrive in Durban and deliver some money and passes. Could I do it?

I was accepted into a teachers' training college in Reading. I had both exams and teaching practice coming up and it would be difficult for me to explain a week's absence. I told Sean, who was working for Granada TV and he said he would go as he was owed leave. This time the sunshine was guaranteed! Ronnie Kasrils was OK with the change.

Sean was to send me a cryptic postcard which would let me know everything was OK. It sounds daft now, but I remember feeling a bit envious of his week in the sun – after all there were no bombs involved, no dodgy technical stuff, just some money to be dropped off and a suntan to be had. I arranged to meet him in a fortnight. That turned into six years.

No postcard arrived that week. I contacted Ronnie we both feared the worst – or Ronnie knew; I cannot remember. Ronnie asked if I knew Sean's landlady. Luckily I did. I went round and cleared out any personal stuff that the South African Secret Police (BOSS) could use against Sean. Ronnie guessed they would send someone to Sean's place posing as his friend. He was right! Within a matter of hours someone posing as a student friend of Sean's came calling. The landlady said that he couldn't stay and that someone else had already been in to clear the room.

Sean had to endure months of solitary confinement before being brought to trial. In that time he was brutally tortured, yet when asked to renounce the ANC in exchange for his freedom he refused. He always had bottle. His incredible bravery was an example to us all. As for myself, leading up to Sean's trial I was followed and had a few dodgy phone calls but this all stopped when Sean was found guilty. He received a five year sentence on top of the months of solitary confinement. No remission.

I spent my time working with Sam Ramsamy in the South African Non- Racial Olympic Committee and Aziz Pahad of the ANC.

When Sean was released the family had a big party in Coventry. It was very emotional. Later Sean and I went away to St Ives in Cornwall for a week and had a good laugh.

When the apartheid regime was finally defeated it was satisfying to know that we, the London Recruits, had played a small part in the defeat of an inhuman regime.

STEVE MARSLIN IS CHAIR OF THE EAST OF ENGLAND COMMUNIST PARTY

Ken Keable UNDERGROUND



AFTER THE RIVONIA trial ended in 1964, with Nelson Mandela and other leaders jailed for life, almost all the other ANC members had to go into exile, to avoid arrest and torture.

Then they were faced with the problem: how were they to carry on their liberation struggle inside the country when they were outside?

They came up with a brilliant idea. They would recruit young, white internationalists, mainly in the London Area – people who had no personal connection with South Africa and were therefore not known to the racist regime. They could enter the country without arousing suspicion.

Some of the London Recruits were students at the London School of Economics, including several young Trotskyists. Some had no political label. However, the great majority of

the Recruits were young workers belonging to Britain's Young Communist League or, in a few cases, the Communist Party. Some Recruits received training in the Soviet Union or Cuba.

In 2005 I began researching and editing the book, *London Recruits – the secret war against apartheid* that was published in 2012. When I began the book, I knew that there were other Recruits, but I knew very little of who they were, how many there were or what they did.

Each of us only knew our own little part of the story, and even then we had kept it secret for decades because the habit of secrecy was so deeply ingrained. Besides, it seemed to belong to another era.

I was amazed at what I found. Some smuggled large quantities of weapons into South Africa. Some did reconnaissance. Some helped ANC fighters to enter the country. Some smuggled thousands of letters and packages into South Africa and put them in the post. However, the main activity was to set off leaflet bombs or other devices, along with

street broadcasts using amplified cassette players. We did that once a year every year from 1967 to 1971, each time hitting five cities simultaneously. This hit the headlines and showed that the ANC was not defeated.

I will never forget the beginning of the street broadcast that YCL comrade Pete Smith and I set up in Durban in 1970. After 15 minutes of silence - our getaway time – a voice boomed out, "This is the African National Congress. This is the African National Congress. This is the voice of freedom".

We have an excellent website, , that contains lots of material including stories from nine people which came too late for the book. Three Recruits were arrested and tortured: YCL member Sean Hosey; on his second mission he walked into a trap and served 13 months awaiting trial and then five years in prison; Alex Moumbaris, a Greek-Australian, who was arrested in 1972 while helping ANC fighters to enter South Africa by land; he was sentenced to twelve years in jail but escaped;

Marie-José Moumbaris, Alex's French wife, who was also arrested and tortured, was released after a few weeks.

When I asked Alex to describe his torture, he replied that there are different levels of torture and he wouldn't want his suffering to be compared to that of the black comrades.

The apartheid system was a crime against humanity and capitalist Britain was up to its neck in the crime. Parliament founded the Union of South Africa on a basis of institutional racism. Most British banks, City financiers and big companies invested heavily in apartheid South Africa and profited hugely from it.

Anti-racism and international solidarity are now more relevant than ever. We hope that our story will inspire people, especially young people, to fight for a better world. Solidarity forever!

KEN KEABLE WAS A LONDON RECRUIT AND EDITED LONDON RECRUITS THE SECRET WAR AGAINST APARTHEID.



CRITICISM & HISTORY

‘Sometimes a distinction is made between the tasks of a literary critic and those of a literary historian; this distinction is based not so much on an analysis of the past and present, as, for the literary historian, on an objective analysis of the origins of the work, its place in the social fabric and its influence on social life; whereas for the literary critic, it is based on an evaluation of the work from the point of view of its purely formal or social merits and faults’. **A. V. Lunacharsky** 1928 *Theses on the Problems of Marxist Criticism*



United in action against apartheid



Rob Griffiths
SOLIDARITY

FOR OVER 30 years, until Nelson Mandela was freed, the Anti-Apartheid Movement in Britain maintained a constant campaign of boycott, sanctions and disinvestment from the racist South African state. Action included consumer boycotts of apartheid products like Outspan oranges, mass action to disrupt and ban Springbok cricket and rugby tours, political pressure on successive British governments for an arms embargo and arguing the case for economic sanctions, disinvestment and a boycott. Campaigners also called for the release of political prisoner.

There was constant pressure on banks, especially Barclays, to end economic dealings with the apartheid state alongside ceaseless street campaigning, demonstrations, conferences and day-to-day pressure.

While Tory governments actively backed apartheid – Margaret Thatcher described Nelson Mandela as a terrorist and Young Conservatives called for him to be hanged – British communists played a constant and active role in the work of the movement.

For decades the Communist Party's international department maintained close and confidential relations with the African National Congress and the South African Communist Party. Close personal relations with the growing numbers of South African exiles took on a new dimension as the campaign began to develop a winning momentum.

The Anti-Apartheid Movement began to assume the character of a mass movement, able to marshal huge demonstrations, taking the BDS campaign to every high street. Communists worked in every trade union to take a stance against apartheid and develop links with the persecuted South African trade union movement and this resulted in the TUC eventually abandoning its support for the apartheid unions and giving support to the non-racial trade union movement..

The AAM strategy of alliance building was effective in creating a broad base of support among believers and the churches and a growing movement among local government councillors, which resulted in a Local Authority Action Against Apartheid network that proved to be a strong asset in developing practical solidarity with the movement in South Africa and real help for anti-apartheid exiles in Britain.

Musicians provided a steady rhythm to the campaigning and a new political consensus

began to develop as it became clear that apartheid would come to an end.

The communists active in the movement were committed to its strategic approach to develop the broadest social, political and religious base among the British people in solidarity with the strategic and tactical positions of the South African movement.

The tripartite alliance between the ANC, the Confederation of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the South African Communist Party was an uncomfortable factor for some – Amnesty International refused to have Mandela as a prisoner of conscience because he would not renounce armed struggle – but across British society a broad consensus against apartheid grew that accepted the reality that overcoming apartheid entailed different approaches including armed struggle.

From the far right and the apartheid state security forces there were constant attempts to disrupt. The London Office of the ANC was bombed and there was an arson attack on the offices of the AAM.

A different threat came from elements, easily manipulated, who wanted the AAM to abandon its mass orientation, and engage in provocative actions that would threaten the mass base of the movement. Within this spectrum of opinion there emerged a tendency that actively sought to disrupt the movement and its conferences.

It was the very mass orientation of the movement and its wide support and huge mobilisations that overcame political challenges from both right and ultra left

For British communists there was no contradiction between full solidarity with the multi-faceted strategy of the South African movement including armed struggle and the commitment to move British society into action against apartheid.

Thus, at a key stage in the struggle the long-standing head of the Communist Party's international department Jack Woddie worked with Young Communist League leaders to recruit young workers and students for clandestine work in apartheid South Africa.

The key figure was Ronnie Kasrils who trained and recruited the London Recruits whose story remained untold for years as the London Recruits maintained the silence and discipline that is the hallmark of clandestine work.

ROBERT GRIFFITHS IS GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

A fighter for the workers

SACP
CHRIS HANI

CHRIS HANI, former commander of uMkhonto weSizwe and general secretary of the South African Communist Party was assassinated by right wing Polish immigrant Janus Walus on 10 April 1993. The assassination plot involved Clive Day-Lewis, shadow minister for economic affairs for the Conservative Party of South Africa. He had lent Walus the pistol used in the attack.

The assassination was timed to derail the growing movement against apartheid. In April 1994, the ANC won the first democratic election. Walus and his accomplice were both sentenced to death after their arrests in 1993; the sentences were later commuted to life imprisonment.

In a statement the SACP said: “The assassination of our general secretary, comrade Chris Hani, shortly after 10am on 10 April, dealt a terrible blow to our party, to our movement, and to our country. Comrade Chris, as an individual, is irreplaceable. He had emerged in the past months, according even to the opinion polls of our opponents, as easily the second most popular politician in our country (after comrade Nelson Mandela, of course).

But the shots that killed comrade Chris, unwittingly mobilised a huge army of liberation across the face of our country. On Wednesday 14 and again on Monday 19 April, the day of the funeral, four million workers stayed away. These were the two largest stayaways in the history of our struggle. In addition to employed workers, millions of students and unemployed also observed the two days.

These were not just passive stayaways. An estimated 2.5 million people took part in thousands of pickets, rallies, marches and services throughout South Africa on Wednesday 14 April. The funeral itself, was the largest funeral in our country's history.

It was not just our immediate SACP and ANC-led alliance constituency that was mobilised. Tens of thousands of South Africans (and people all over the world) expressed their outrage at the killing. Church people, the Chief Rabbi, Islamic and Hindu religious figures stood up publicly to condemn the assassination, and even, on many occasions, to express their solidarity with

Chris Hani's ideals. Even the apartheid embassy in Washington flew its flag at half-mast. On death-row in Pretoria Central, prisoners pooled their meagre allowances to raise R750 to be sent to the Hani family comrade Chris was an outspoken opponent of capital punishment.

Let no-one forget that this country-wide and international outpouring of outrage and sorrow was for a fallen Communist Party leader in the year 1993.

Just three and four years ago, our opponents were confidently proclaiming the ‘final demise of communism’. In life, as in death, Chris Hani has proved them absolutely wrong.

But comrade Chris would also have been the first to insist that it was not just any communism that deserved to live.

For him, communism was not the affair of a theoretical elite. It was a cause to be fought for in the heart of a broad mass movement. Communism, for him, meant, above all, simple but noble things like:

- jobs for the jobless;
- homes for the homeless;
- a living wage for the workers;
- land for the landless;
- hope for the youth;
- a life of dignity for the old;
- free health care and relevant and free education for us all.

Communism meant an end to the exploitation of the many by the few.

As an individual, Chris Hani is irreplaceable.

Our answer to the assassination has been, and must continue to be, collective, mass-based and grass-rooted.

Long live the example of Chris Han!
Fighter for the workers and the poor!



www.sacp.org.za



THE RATE OF INTEREST

‘The rate of interest reaches its peak during crises, when money is borrowed at any cost to meet payments. Since a rise in interest implies a fall in the price of securities, this simultaneously offers a fine opportunity to people with available money-capital, to acquire at ridiculously low prices such interest-bearing securities as must, in the course of things, at least regain their average price as soon as the rate of interest falls again.’ **Karl Marx** *Capital* Vol. III Part V



Continued from page 1

Of course for millions of such people their average standard of living is not much different from the people they work alongside even if they employ them.

The same goes for the small scale landlord who has sunk savings into a buy to let. Often as a hedge against a poor pension.

Between these classes of small scale owners and their employees or tenants there is a class distinction that appears relatively minor when compared to the difference between the great majority and the one per cent very rich.

But a squeeze on profits and your friendly small business owner is resistant to a cost-of-living pay increase while the small scale landlord will want a market rent even if this is unaffordable to a worker on a normal wage.

Are MPs working class? Some started that way although many Tories and a surprisingly large number of Labour MPs are landlords while their level of pay, freebies and expenses puts them in a social category beyond most working people. But if their income derives from their job then they can be driven back into the category of wage slaves.

The reason why the working class is a potential revolutionary class is because workers are the only people individually and collectively who have no interest in exploiting another class.

Alone on the Front Bench and on the main ideological question brought forward by Labour’s convolutions over tax and working people Sir Kier Starmer, First Lord of the Treasury has got the question halfway right while his fellow ministers fall over themselves to avoid uttering anything meaningful over the question of class.

Pressed on the question of how to define class he ventured that: “a working person is somebody who ‘goes out and earns their

living, usually paid in a sort of monthly cheque’ but they did not have the ability to ‘write a cheque to get out of difficulties’.

And when asked if this would include people who get all or part of their income from assets, he said: ‘Well, they wouldn’t come within my definition’.

His language is a bit fluffy but it gets to the heart of the question by making a distinction between people who have to sell their labour power to live and those who can make a living from of rent, interest and profits.

Bending the fiscal rule

Of course the context of this discussion was the pre Budget period of purdah when the politicians engaged in thrashing out spending plans are compelled to talk about anything other than what they know about the Chancellor’s intentions.

Labour had already ruled out raising rates of income tax, employee National Insurance and VAT with Rachel Reeves really restricted to finding extra money from marginal rises in capital gains and inheritance tax.

Her solution to the difficulty Labour in government always faces – find a way to satisfy working class expectations while staying outside with the banks, big business and the bourgeoisie – is startlingly simple. She has reconceptualised government borrowing to finance infrastructure and investment into assets and distinguish such borrowing from government debt to finance day to day spending.

In contrast to the last government – headed by the richest man in parliament, thoroughly embedded in Britain’s uber-rich ruling class and with a Cabinet in which nearly two thirds were privately educated Starmer’s Cabinet is probably the most plebian in British history. Almost half were born to parents in working class occupations and only a handful had a private education.

But having a Cabinet that resembles the class composition of the British population more exactly than any previous administration is of much less significance than the direction of its politics.

The Labour Party came to office with money from big business and with the provisional support of those sections of multinational capital who had lost confidence in the Tory Party to deal with the various crises of British capitalism.

Rachel Reeves and Starmer show some signs that they understand that the crisis of the British economy is rooted, in part, in the low levels of investment, training and productivity that reveal the property owning rich and the banks as being more fixated on chasing speculative and short term profits over long term investment.

But a politically maladroitness start by attacking pensioners and people on social security combined with a self imposed scandal about ministerial gifts allied to support for the

US sponsorship of Israel’s genocidal behaviour – has eroded what lukewarm goodwill the government inherited.

Presently the government is distinguished from its predecessor only in that yet it is not held in quite the contempt Sunak’s administration was.

Even so Keir Starmer marked his first 100 days in office with a popularity rating no better than the then almost invisible Rishi Sunak.

Prospects for the government?

Without the support of an aroused and active working class backing a Labour government that is on course to deliver on the key questions that animate it – solving the housing shortage, protecting the NHS from privatisation, protecting pensions and benefits, providing a social care system that works, saving the school system from collapse and providing decent childcare – then this government will last only until the Tories, or some Tory/Reform UK lash up looks credible.

Unless wages catch up with the cost of living Labour will always be on the back foot, similarly the electoral support of whole sections of the working class and middle class opinion will not tolerate a government bound into the US-led support for Israel’s genocide or NATO’s provocations.

The lesson learnt from the near success of the 2017 Corbyn election advance when, as John McDonnell speculated, another week might have seen Labour win a majority, is that a Labour government that governs in the interests of the working class needs to prepare the working class to mobilise in its defence when challenged.

When we see how ruthlessly the rich and entitled mobilise against a threat to their wealth and power we see the a of our problem. Corbyn’s leadership was derailed and diverted by a hyped up and hypocritical campaign that erected an enormous edifice of accusations that challenging Israeli actions was tantamount to anti semitism.

That anti semitism can be found in every part of British society is undeniable but Israel’s present day actions make such accusations more difficult to mount even when sections of the left give them credence.

Just how powerful and extensive is the power of the ruling class was demonstrated when the deviant recklessness of the Liz Truss administration provoked the Establishment into swift and exemplary action to drive the Truss tendency to the margins of political life.

The task of the labour movement is to make the working class an active force in shaping the political choices that te government takes.

The highly debatable proposition that a Labour government is preferable to a Tory one only makes sense if the working class is able to compel such a government to act in its interest.

from the better off to those who are less well off, an increase from 39% in 2019 while 27% disagreed that government should redistribute income from the better off to those who are less well off, the same proportion as in 2019.

● Two-thirds (67%) agreed that ordinary working people do not get their fair share of the nation’s wealth, up ten percentage points since 2019.

In outline a more recent survey by Tax Policy Associates shows the British public in favour of higher taxes on betting, an increase in capital gains tax, VAT on private schools and banks plus environmental taxes on energy and waste, air travel and business rates.



▲ The latest issue of Communist Review, the Party’s theoretical and discussion journal, is out now and available on the Party’s online shop.

Editorial Martin Levy

IN MEMORIAM Sitaram Yechury

What Drives Economic Development, Part I Jerry Jones

The Significance of China’s Fulfilment of its Second Centenary Goal by 2049 Cheng Enfu and Chen Jian

AL Morton: A Red Intellectual

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Why Study British Marxists? David Grove
Class Politics and the Struggle for Unity, Independence and Socialism

Eugene McCartan

Reflections on the General Election 2024

Nick Matthews

Review of *The Gleam of Socialism*

Martin Levy

SOUL FOOD:

Archives of Solidarity and Resistance Fran Lock



Unmasking Reform UK

In this pamphlet, by Phil Katz and Nick Wright, the Communist Party turns the spotlight on Reform UK.

Even though Britain’s mass media give huge publicity to Reform UK policy on one issue alone – immigration – the authors warn of the dangers of seeing it as a single-issue party.

Reflecting the split in Britain’s ruling class the people who own and run Reform UK are committed to an anti working class policy agenda that would mean more privatisation, starving public services of funding and tying Britain’s economy and foreign policy to a Trumpian agenda no less subservient to US imperialism than that of Biden and Harris.

£2 from www.communistparty.org.uk

TAX THE RICH

What working class people think about taxation

Groucho

OPINION

CONTRARY to the picture the Tory media promote most people favour higher taxation and government spending, this was made clear two years ago in the British Social Attitudes survey.

And this went for both Conservative and Labour supporters.

Concern about inequality and support for distributing income from the better off to those who are less well-off increased following the pandemic but people remain relatively pro-welfare sustaining a shift in attitudes that occurred in the years before the pandemic.

● 52% said government should increase taxes and spend more on health, education and social benefits, similar to the 50% recorded in 2020 and 53% recorded in 2019.

● 46% of Conservative supporters and 61% of Labour supporters said government should increase taxes and spending.

● Around half (49%) agreed that government should redistribute income



AGITATION & LEADERSHIP

The class character of the Social-Democratic movement must not be expressed in the restriction of our tasks to the direct and immediate needs of the “labour movement pure and simple”. It must be expressed in our leadership of every aspect and every manifestation of the great struggle for liberation that is being waged by the proletariat, the only truly revolutionary class in modern society. **VI Lenin** *Iskra*, No. 16, February 1, 1902. *Political Agitation and ‘The Class Point of View’*



The Communist Party is building and growing across Britain – but we need your help. Donate to our £50,000 Big Red Appeal to help us on the next step of rebuilding the communist movement in Britain.

Your donations will help build Party staffing and infrastructure, fund future campaigning and branch building and fund strategic areas of growth.

Thanks for all the donations generously received so far. You can pay by bank transfer to Communist Party, S/C 60-83-01 A/C 50725694. Or via online at www.communistparty.org.uk/donate/

Please send cheques (marked 'CPB') to Communist Party, Ruskin House, 23 Coombe Rd, Croydon CR0 1BD.



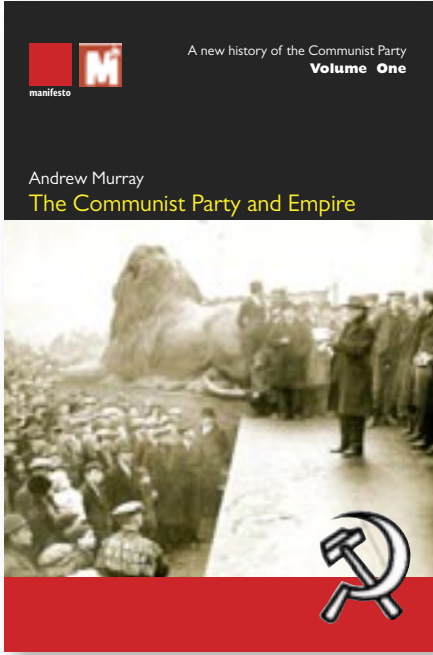
A big mobilisation is underway for the next national demonstration for Palestine organised by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Stop The War, CND and others in London scheduled for Saturday 30 November 2024. It is the last Palestine demonstration of the year so we want to build a strong Party presence in London. Coaches will be organised from different points of Britain. Bring your flags and banners and raise them high! If you are attending please contact the National Organiser ASAP via or 07845 677320.

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8



A party against the corruption of empire



John Foster reviews a new history of the Communist Party

Andrew Murray, *The Communist Party and Empire: a new history of the Communist Party, Volume 1* (Manifesto Press, 2024)

John Foster
COMMUNIST HISTORY

ANDREW MURRAY makes ‘empire’ the explanatory pivot of his new history of the Communist Party. In doing so he ensures that the book is quite different from, and in many ways more searching and profound, than its numerous predecessors, both friendly and hostile.

Its strength has two sources. The first is the way Murray interrogates nature of British society over the half century before the party’s formation. The book starts in the 1870s not in 1920. How was it, he asks, that the militant, mobilised working class described by Engels in 1844 had become passive, ‘respectable’ and, if political at all, as the ‘tail’ of the Liberal Party?

His answer focuses on Britain-as-empire: a new type of empire emerging in the mid nineteenth century, one that involved both the formal and informal subjection of the rest of the globe to the financial power of sterling. Britain’s currency dominated the world much as the dollar does today.

It was of course a power that was not simply

economic. It depended on the world’s most powerful navy. It relied on the colonial control of key material assets across the global south – of which labour was the biggest. And it was entirely enmeshed with Britain’s domestic economy from the manufacture of textiles to the export of machinery, steam ships and railways.

Yet it was also novel. Up to the 1840s Britain’s economic dominance had depended on using machinery to undercut producers elsewhere, an undercutting that also progressively impoverished workers in Britain. The new imperialism relied on capital export. This enabled the extraction of super-profit from labour across the globe that was, in part, used to create a privileged stratum of skilled workers at home and to some extent enriched all workers.

Some readers may well say: ‘we know all this. It’s what Lenin said in 1918’ – which is true.

This, however, is the second source of Murray’s novelty. He embeds Lenin’s 1918 text in half a century of analysis and debate, starting with Marx himself and continued thereafter by virtually all the theorists of the Second International.

What was it that made Britain, the first industrial nation and cradle of the organised working class, subsequently home to a passive, largely unorganised and politically subservient proletariat?

It was Marx himself who used the term ‘aristocracy’ of labour in *Capital* Volume I. In Volume III, composed in the 1870s, he identified the tendency to monopoly and the push to capital export. Marx, as Lenin noted, was the only theoretician of the time to do so.

Murray’s new history is largely unique in the way it embeds the debate on the character of the British working class and the origins of the British party in the disputes that consumed the theorists of the Second International: Kautsky, Luxemburg and Connolly as well as Lenin. The first three chapters are devoted to this. It is done for a purpose.

It compels the reader to engage with the sheer magnitude of empire and the degree to which it conditioned the thinking of all sections of Britain’s population before and after 1914 in a country that was largely unique in Europe before 1914 in having no mass socialist party. Assumptions of racial superiority and the right to rule penetrated deeply.

As Murray demonstrates, the political ‘failure’ of Britain’s working class remained a question of international importance through the 1920s and 30s and, as we know, beyond. Murray also reminds us, that these were the years that the CPGB was a contingent of, and existed politically and organisationally within, the Third International. The resulting debates throw a

new and important light on the evolution of the party.

Of the many differences between the Second and Third Internationals probably the most central was the attitude to empire. The Third stood for liberation directly by the peoples of the global south fighting as equal partners with working people in the imperialist north. The vision was not always honoured. Yet it remained critical – as much as anything because the stability of the imperialist north was seen to depend on it.

Yet where was Britain? Its rulers were central to global restablisation after 1918: in China, India, the Middle East, Africa, the Balkans, Eastern Europe and Ireland. Its soldiers were everywhere. The British party was tasked to oppose it.

But, beyond its key role in mobilising the Councils of Action to stop further intervention in eastern Europe in August 1920, it was able to do very little. It was too small. It was progressively hunted from the strategic positions it occupied in the trade union movement after 1918. The barriers of pro-empire social democracy were thrown up around a Labour Party being groomed for governmental partnership with the Conservatives. The poisoned legacy of empire remained – in some respects stronger than ever.

Murray details the valiant efforts of Saklatvala, the Communist MP for Battersea, of the party’s theoretician Rajani Palme Dutt and, no less important, of Arthur McManus in mobilising support for Sinn Fein in Ireland. But they were – not surprisingly – insufficient.

Resulting interventions at the level of the Communist International were sometimes ill-considered. They did, however, result in the ‘bolshevisation’ of the British party, a reorganisation that embedded it actively within workplaces and the unemployed workers movement. As it entered the 1930s, the party possessed a branch structure, as well as a mass-distributed agitational daily paper, that enabled it to develop an effective united front against the rise of fascism in 1933-1934. It remained, at that period, a party committed to direct working class democracy modelled on the Councils of Action as established in 1920 and 1926. It was also a party committed to providing solidarity with workers in the global south.

Murray’s two subsequent volumes will take the story on from 1935. His first volume, however, provides a fitting foundation, one correctly titled ‘empire’.

What history is for: essays in honour of John Foster is, edited by Elaine McFarland and Jim Whiston published this month.
www.manifestopress.coop



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Morning Star Ambassador