

THE SWP AND SCOTTISH INDEPENDENCE

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*Breaking up the British state –
Scotland, Independence & Socialism,*
editors, Bob Fotheringham, Dave Sherry and Colm Bryce

Part 2 – To party or not to party?



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Introduction

The first part of this review, *Breakin' up is so hard to do*, examined the thinking and theories which have led to the SWP adopting Scottish independence. It looked at the political reasons why the SWP is unable to devise an immediate republican, 'internationalism from below' strategy' to resist Johnston's reactionary unionists, or to provide an alternative to the constitutional nationalists' floundering attempts to bring about constitutional change.

The second part of this review, *To party or not to party?* looks into the SWP's long-standing claim that it provides THE Socialist party alternative to the constitutional parties - particularly the social democrats, be they Labour or the SNP. But it also offers an explanation as to why *ButBS* is so muted in making any such claims for the SWP today. It links this to a wider social democratic legacy, which has had such an impact on the British Left. Whilst wanting to reject British Labourism, and the SNP leadership's social neo-liberalism, *ButBS* is still mired in an acceptance of much Left social democratic thinking.

ButBS still wants the SWP to be seen as a Marxist revolutionary socialist party, adhering to what it claims to be Leninist methods of organisation. Therefore, *ButBS* embraces Vladimir Lenin (and Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Rosa Luxemburg and Leon Trotsky too). In an attempt to appear orthodox, *ButBS* uncritically invokes the Bolsheviks' 1917 *Declaration of Rights*. This declaration addressed the oppressed nations, which the new Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic inherited from the Tsarist Russian empire. However, for various reasons, this declaration has not left Socialists a legacy which we can champion today. The Bolsheviks' failure to embrace an 'internationalism from below' strategy contributed to this.

Therefore, the second part of this article concludes by advancing the case for a different sort of party - a socialist republican party. It also argues that an 'internationalism from below' strategy, developed in these islands by James Connolly and John Maclean, should form the political basis for such a party. This is not done with the intention of creating a new orthodox Connollyism or Macleanism, but in an appreciation that they, along with others (some now neglected, some now misunderstood, and some now forgotten) have pointed to another way of thinking and organising, which has increasing relevance today.

Part 2 – To party or not to party?

1. The limits of Left social democracy and constitutional nationalism

When reading *Breaking up the British state – Scotland, Independence & Socialism (ButBS)*, it is pretty evident that SWP thinking draws very much on the British Left social democratic tradition.¹ This still has a lot of influence upon those who once originally supported the Labour Party, e.g. Gerry Hassan, Robin McAlpine (Commonweal) and Kevin McKenna. Some can still come up with suggestions about how Scottish Labour could revive itself by backing Scottish independence.² Then, they argue that a renewed Labour Party could take the initiative away from an SNP, once it had finished its job after independence has been achieved.

However, similar arguments are also to be found amongst a considerable section of the non-Labour Left in Scotland, including those wanting to be known as Marxists, e.g. the SWP. They also look to the SNP (with or without Alba) to lead the constitutional struggle for Scottish independence, whilst in the meantime placing their own emphasis upon economic and social struggles to back this up. After independence, they hope the way will be opened for a Socialist party in Scotland to enter the electoral arena and promote its own economic and social agenda, backed by continued extra-parliamentary economic and social pressure.

The wider pull of social democracy, including Left Labour, can be seen in Bob Fotheringham's claim that under Corbyn, "a new invigorated Labour Party {was} putting forward a positive socialist message."³ The first problem with this is there was no new Labour Party, although there was a large increase in its membership (albeit considerably less so in Scotland where many former Labour Party members had switched their support to the SNP during IndyRef1). Corbyn may have been the official leader, but the old guard still controlled the party bureaucracy and had the support of the overwhelming majority of Labour MPs, MSPs and local councillors. Nor was there anything much socialist about Corbyn's 2017 or 2019 Westminster manifestoes - they were both based on Left social democratic politics, with some concessions to the Right. In terms of language, the 2019 manifesto drew on an updated version of the type of politics first advocated by Roosevelt's 'New Deal' Democrats – but now labelled the 'Green New Deal'. And both manifestoes were underpinned by a strong dose of British Left, social democratic, 'Spirit of 45' nostalgia.

The conclusion to Murray Armstrong's review mentioned in part 1 of this review, states that *ButBS* includes "no credit card sized list of demands although industry nationalisation and government intervention appear throughout."⁴ This

highlights the essentially Left social democrat politics found in *ButBS*. As has been shown many times in the past, the class nature of “nationalisation and government intervention” is determined both by the type of state in which it takes place, and by the politics of those who hold office. In 2008, even the stridently neo-liberal, George Bush undertook some of the biggest nationalisations in history. These were implemented to save a crisis-ridden capitalism. Today, we have Rishi Sunak’s Keynesian-style resort to government intervention to offset the impact of Covid-19 on the economy. Unless nationalisation is accompanied by socialisation, by extending democratic control, then it amounts to no more than a state capitalist measure. These days this is often a temporary expedient before renewed privatisation.

In a non-revolutionary situation, Socialists do need to give support to immediate economic and social reforms, which may well include some nationalisations and government interventions. But Socialists should be to the fore in pointing out their limitations, and not describe support for these as providing “a positive socialist message”. Socialists measure their progress, not in terms of the state’s increased power, but in the growing strength of the working class’s own autonomous and democratic organisations, the influence of Socialists within these, and the development of effective ‘internationalism from below’ organisation.⁵

There is no historical precedent for social democrats, including orthodox (i.e. state-backed) communists, or for nationalists, extending nationalisation and government intervention within their states to create a new socialist order. In every case, including soon after Clement Attlee’s post-war, 1945-51 Labour government, and of course, the later New Labour 1996-2010 governments, as well as in Mikhail Gorbachev’s USSR from 1985-91 and Xi Jinping’s China today, earlier nationalisations have been dismantled. Since the rise of neo-liberalism, government intervention has been switched to supporting private capital (in the form of direct subsidies and contracts). Public funding has often also been diverted from welfare to the more repressive elements of the state.

Nor, given the bureaucratic and national-state nature of all these states, could social democracy ever have led to socialism. Social democrats do oppose the horrors of ‘field slave’ status for capitalism’s wage slaves - being compelled to act as part of a labour reserve, drawn into precarious forms of labour as required, without rights and denied organisation. Instead, social democrats seek ‘house-slave’ status under a continuing a system of wage slavery within whatever national state they are based - with regular work contracts, decent pay and conditions, trade union bargaining and a social wage, all gained within their existing states.

And struggles by capitalism's 'field slaves' to ensure greater security and improved pay and conditions do need to be supported. But, in contrast to the claims of social democracy, socialism cannot be brought about by the incremental addition of reforms on a national basis. Capitalism is a crisis-ridden international system, that continually undermines the position even of those who have achieved 'house slave' status. Every ruling class, under the pressure of international competition, tries to offload the costs of crisis on to the exploited and oppressed within its own national state. In the process, capitalism creates its own new 'field slaves.'

Indeed, during economic crises, social democrats have often been to the fore in the process of promoting more precarious labour. This is done so capitalist profitability can be restored, after which some hope to press again for reforms. But in the face of saving capitalism from itself, social democrats become embroiled in making attacks on their previous supporters amongst the working class. The history of social democracy is a never-ending 'Labour of Sisyphus'.

Socialism, though, necessitates the ending of wage slavery and other kinds of exploitation and the oppression inherited by capitalism and transformed for its purposes - including sexual/gender and racist oppression. Socialism means their replacement by new forms of association. Socialism can only be maintained if it is extended on an international basis. Indeed, *ButBS* does come close to recognising this.

"We know that no one is safe from the {Covid-19} virus until everyone is safe. We know the same thing applies to averting climate catastrophe. Our very survival depends on an understanding of the fundamental common interests of humanity encapsulated in the idea of solidarity and internationalism. This goal cannot be achieved within the capitalist economic system, or its state structures. These use every means possible to divide us, whether it is through racism, war, economic competition, jingoism or the phoney ideology of national interest. The working class is the majority on this planet and unless it asserts its needs and demands then disaster capitalism will triumph."⁶

Apart from the omission of sexism, a major factor in capitalist divide-and-rule, this is a good statement. But it is left largely as abstract propaganda, with no real link between the immediate economic and social struggles, the independent class politics required to complement these, and the statement's call for what is, in effect, a new socialist/communist world order.

2. Tail-ending Jeremy Corbyn, Richard Leonard and Left social democracy

Another indication of *ButBS* illusions in Left social democrats are the references to Richard Leonard. This includes the statement that “the new invigorated Labour Party had the potential to undermine the SNP from the Left, particularly when Corbyn ally, Richard Leonard was elected leader of the Labour Party in Scotland.”⁷ Leonard may have been a one-time Bennite, but his later career through the GMBU trade union bureaucracy stripped him even of much of that Left social democratic legacy. Trade union full-timers, Right and ‘Left’, moved against any attempt by the mainly young new Labour members to ditch support for Trident renewal. This was possibly the most unwilling concession Corbyn, as a lifelong CND member, felt he had to make to the Right, in the hope of retaining their support. But in this he was pressured by ‘Left’ trade union officials led by Len McCluskey, but with Leonard’s additional support in Scotland.

However, Corbyn more willingly joined Leonard in going along with senior trade union officials’ other attacks on the Left, including opposition to democratising the Labour Party (mandatory reselection), the free movement of EU workers and increased asylum seeker rights and standing up to the Right’s bogus anti-semitism offensive. This was, of course, all part and parcel of Corbyn’s, Leonard’s and the Labour Left’s tactics to keep the dominant Right and Centre of the Labour Party on board for the general election.

Ironically, the Scottish, unlike the British, Labour Party, has had an anti-Trident renewal policy since 2015.⁸ The Right was quite happy to let this go through to provide some Left cover in Scotland, knowing full-well that any future British Labour government would just over-ride this policy. But Scottish Labour, including Leonard, kept very quiet about their official anti-renewal policy when support for Trident renewal was demanded by the British Labour Right and by trade union officials, Right and ‘Left’!

The SNP, although in office, continues to uphold an anti-Trident policy. And in a number of local authorities, Labour continued their ‘Better Together’ alliance with the Tories to maintain control, either openly (Aberdeen) or behind-the-scenes (North Lanarkshire and West Lothian). Therefore, there was little chance of Corbyn and Leonard “undermin{ing} the SNP from the Left”.

Scottish Labour’s inability to win back much of the ex-Labour vote in 2017, which had previously shifted to the SNP, was publicly acknowledged by Lesley Brannan, vice-chair of the Campaign for Socialism (the Labour Left in Scotland), in her analysis of that general election’s results.⁹

Elsewhere in *ButBS*, Dave Sherry and Julie Sherry do make a criticism of Leonard. They state that he “couldn’t let Corbyn’s attempt to soften the (British Labour) position towards {Scottish} independence go unchallenged... Leonard went public arguing that Labour should block another {independence} referendum from Westminster.”¹⁰ However, like Corbyn’s bowing before the Right over bogus anti-semitism charges, Leonard’s persistent anti-Scottish self-determination stance was the price he more than willingly paid for maintaining the Labour Left, Centre and Right electoral alliance. This was so central to Labour’s election strategy, north and south of the border. And on constitutional issues, in relation to Scotland, Labour’s 2019 Westminster manifesto had the same demand as Boris Johnson – no IndyRef2.¹¹

4. The SWP’s economistic and ‘national exceptionalist’ approach provides no alternative in the political arena

The first part of this review questioned Murray Armstrong’s observation that *ButBS* amounts to “a 400-page manifesto from Scottish members of the Socialist Workers Party”.¹² The SWP, ever since 1977, has liked to present itself as THE Marxist or revolutionary party on the British Left. However, it has recently undergone so many splits that *ButBS* no longer makes the case for the SWP being the leading party on the Left. Furthermore, the SWP’s earlier failure, either to replace the CPGB (its immediate aim at the time it was declared in 1977), or to provide a serious political challenge to Labour (shown in the 1979 general election), has long been apparent to the majority of the Left. And, following that general election, those of us old to enough to remember, witnessed the SWP’s political retreat into an obvious sect in the 1980s under the theoretical cover of ‘The Downturn’. This acted as a Left version of Labour’s own New Realist retreat at the time.

Political sects in many ways duplicate the old religious sects. They are built around the doctrines claimed to have been left by leaders – Marxism, Leninism, and Trotskyism or Lutheranism, Calvinism and Zwinglianism. The main purpose of such organisations is to uphold, interpret and pass on their doctrines, defend these against revisionists or heretics, and to recruit new members using a variety of methods, from testing new applicants’ knowledge of the ‘scriptures’ to mass conversion at ‘revivalist’ meetings. But most of all, the defence of the existing leadership remains central for these sects. These leaderships set down the degree of tolerance permitted within their organisations for dissidents or heretics and for taking appropriate action, whenever they feel threatened.

One of the key doctrines passed on by Tony Cliff to the SWP and highlighted in *ButBS* is the primacy of trade union struggles. It has already been shown, in the

first part of this review, that the *ButBS* explanation for the emergence of the issue of national self-determination in Ireland and Scotland on the Left is put down to major trade union defeats. Two key articles in *ButBS* are those written by Dave Sherry alone, *Red Clydeside*, and by Dave Sherry and Julie Sherry together, *The Decline of the Labour Party in Scotland*. Both highlight the centrality of trade union struggles. The first invokes Clydeside's contribution to the 1916-21/3 International Revolutionary Wave and John Maclean's role within it. The second, although longer in its historical scope than the late 1960s and on into the 1970, puts prime emphasis on the glory days of the trade union-based offensive at this time.

The working class offensive, which built up from 1972, produced every Socialist's dream. Edward Heath's Tory government was toppled in 1974 by mass workers action - that of the miners and the NUM. This forced some Labour leaders, like Jim Callaghan, to adopt left populist rhetoric, "We'll squeeze the rich until the pips squeak". But it didn't change the essentially Right nature of the Labour leadership at the time.

There was already a warning. A section of the ruling class and Enoch Powell supported the election of a Labour government in 1974. They saw this as the best way of bringing workers back under control. And in making this calculation they were proved to be right. This was one of several occasions when Labour has acted as the ruling class's 'fire-and-theft insurance' party.¹³ This is done at times when their usual party of choice, the Tories, can no longer hold the line. Sir Keir Starmer hopes Labour will perform this role do again in the not-too-distant future.

And Sherry and Sherry show that the role of the trade union bureaucrats, Right and Left, from 1974-79 and beyond, proved to be crucial to the attempt to undermine working class resistance. They also show that they were assisted in this by the CPGB. Indeed, the very declaration of the SWP in 1977 was predicated on winning the support of that section of working class which the CPGB once held, but which was now slipping away from them. After Labour was elected in 1974, Left union general secretaries, Jack Jones (TGWU) and Hugh Scanlon (AEU), backed by the CPGB, used their bureaucratic influence, strengthened under the Social Contact, to marginalise any independent action, organised in the workplace by shop stewards. This led to discontent in the trade union ranks. Sherry and Sherry quite rightly highlight this.

Under the Ted Heath, Harold Wilson and Jim Callaghan governments and the first two years of Thatcher's government, the IS/SWP placed its greatest emphasis and efforts upon supporting and promoting rank and file trade union struggles, both against the governments of the day and the CPGB supported Broad Lefts. But, by 1979 these rank and file struggles had largely been

contained. Although the working class not yet crushed, the grand hopes of building a new revolutionary party - the SWP - on this relatively narrow economic basis were shattered.

Yet this situation did not arise because the IS/SWP ignored the wider political situation in the late 1960s and 1970s. But, like today, they could not formulate any immediate political complement to challenge Labour based on the SWP's essentially economic trade union-based strategy. Instead, from 1977, the SWP concentrated its wider political attention on the rise of the National Front (NF). In response, the SWP created a new front organisation - the Anti-Nazi League (ANL) with its associated Rock against Racism - hoping to gain more recruits to the new 'party'. These SWP fronts were more successful than any of the others they have set up since. But the ANL, in focussing on the NF, made little contribution to building a political alternative to Labour, or even to the CPGB.

In many ways, the underlying politics of the ANL were the epitome of Left British social democracy. They looked to British state-backed solutions, implemented by Labour, pressured from below. Although the NF certainly had some unreconstructed German Nazi sympathisers, it represented the first serious attempt by the post-Second World War, Far Right to develop a specifically British fascism. To broaden its appeal, the NF organised around a wider Right British populism. The NF looked back to the heyday of white, male, British supremacy in the union and empire, when 'blacks' 'knew their place', and worked for their white masters in the colonies, and women prioritised work for the family at home. The NF was also keen to develop links with that very British face of fascism, that section of Loyalism found in Northern Ireland which had its own paramilitary forces.¹⁴ These Loyalists had a much grimmer record of murders, other physical attacks and promoting evictions from workplaces and homes than the NF. They also had supporters in Scotland.

The ANL response to this was to dismiss the NF's fascism as a nasty German Nazi import. The ANL conjured up an image of a plucky, 'White Cliffs of Dover', Second World War, Great Britain, to chime in with mainstream political thinking and gain wider attention and support. This was every bit as much a popular front approach as the CPGB's Scottish Peoples Assembly, which Sherry and Sherry criticise.¹⁵ And indeed, Second World War nostalgia was one arena, in which the SWP did win some tentative support from the CPGB. It also held its own illusions built around a Stalin/Churchill Popular Front alliance (lauded all the more loudly to erase the memory of the earlier Hitler-Stalin Pact!)

By conjuring up the threat of a 'Nazi' takeover, the ANL downplayed both the UK state's and the then Labour government's role in sustaining racism across the UK and sectarianism in Northern Ireland. ANL also ignored the considerably

greater threat from fascist Loyalism, which did receive active support behind-the-scenes from the UK security agencies. And ‘The Troubles’ in Northern Ireland, which had been in open rebellion since October 1968, were to continue up until the Good Friday Agreement of 1998. During this period, the struggle changed in form from the demand for Civil Rights within Northern Ireland to an Irish Republican challenge to the UK state. This proved to be harder for the British ruling class to deal with than any trade union struggles in Great Britain in the 1970s.

The knock-on effects of the successful 1972 and 1974 Miners’ Strikes, and the strike in support of the Pentonville dockers in 1972, which did indeed challenge the Tories, were to be contained by the incoming Labour government, with the help of the TUC. But none of the measures used by the UK State in Northern Ireland – the mild reforms of 1969, Stormont’s replacement by Direct Rule in 1972, the Sunningdale Agreement of 1973, Ulsterisation and Criminalisation from 1975, and the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985, all backed by both Labour and Tories, were able to derail the resistance. The level of repression used – internment, juryless courts, shoot-to-kill, death squads – was far greater than that used in Great Britain against strikers and protestors. But these methods still failed to suppress the resistance in Northern Ireland or to win wider legitimacy for the UK state there.

Although still part of the UK, Northern Ireland has remained politically semi-detached. This has contributed to the SWP’s ‘national exceptionalism’ with regard to Northern Ireland/Ireland.¹⁶ Furthermore, this was accentuated by the SWP’s view (which mirrored that of the old British Socialist Party, and many in the infant CPGB during the 1916-21/3 International Revolutionary Wave) that trade union struggles are more significant than political struggles, short of the direct seizure of power.

But in Northern Ireland, trade unions reflect the sectarian nature of the local devolved statelet. There are all-island trade unions (e.g. UNITE), all-UK unions (e.g. the FBU), all-Ireland unions, e.g. Irish National Teachers Organisation (but which only represents teachers one section of the community in Northern Ireland) and Northern Ireland unions, e.g. the Ulster Teachers Association (which represents some teachers from the other section of the community), and also the Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance. Some unions, though, do include both Unionist and Nationalist workers.

Top-down bureaucratic trade union unity has been maintained through the Irish Congress of Trade Unions Northern Ireland Committee (ICTU-NIC). Their leaders in Northern Ireland made sure their unions adopted a non-political stance towards the UK state, its local Stormont-run statelet and the Republic of Ireland

to maintain their organisational unity. This means largely confining trade union activity to 'bread and butter issues' hoping that these could provide a basis for cross-community working class unity. This has been done on the understanding that political issues relating to the British and Irish constitutions are largely taboo.¹⁷ It is only in workplaces, which draw overwhelmingly from one part of the community, that such discussions take place (although this may lead to some of them being festooned with Loyalist regalia!)

Some indications of the problem with trade unions in Northern Ireland become apparent when comparing the key strikes of the first half of the 1970s in Great Britain with Northern Ireland. Socialists can celebrate the Pentonville Dockers strike in 1972 and the Miners' strikes in 1972 and 1974 in Great Britain. But by far the biggest strike in Northern Ireland was the Ulster Workers Council (UWC) strike in 1974. This strike was mounted to overthrow the liberal unionist attempt at setting up a 'power-sharing' Sunningdale executive. This was very much a constitutional issue and therefore organised quite independently of the ICTU-NIC or its affiliated union leaderships. The unofficial strike action was led by the reactionary unionist, Ulster Workers Council, the semi-fascist Vanguard Party and the Ulster Army Council (which brought together the Loyalist paramilitaries, particularly the UDA and UVF).

In Northern Ireland's two major power stations, where the skilled workforce was overwhelmingly Loyalist (reflecting longstanding sectarian employment practice), the UWC strike enjoyed majority support. However, beyond such workplaces, Loyalist paramilitaries were able to intimidate more reticent workers, and where there was no support within the Nationalist 'ghettoes', these were bottled up. Access to Belfast and nearby town centres was controlled by Loyalist roadblocks. Most Nationalists gave these a wide berth. The Dublin and Monaghan bombings, in which 33 people were killed, were organised by the Loyalist UVF.¹⁸ This was their way of showing opposition to Irish government officials being given a role in representing the Nationalist community in British-'Ulster.'¹⁹

Now clearly there are strikes and there are strikes, even if they are organised in defiance of trade union officialdom. You wouldn't have to be a Socialist to question say the London dockers' strike and march in support of Enoch Powell's racist attacks in 1968, or the CIA backed Chilean lorry drivers' strike against the Allende's Left Popular Unity government in 1973. And the Northern Irish Committee could clearly see the Far Right nature of the UWC Strike.

However, the ICTU-NIC leaders didn't turn to the ICTU, but to the British TUC. They asked its general secretary, Len Murray to come over to Belfast to lead a return to work. Only 250 workers joined. NIC's turn to the TUC reflected the

hostility of Loyalist workers towards the ICTU. But the return-to-work's very limited impact also showed that the TUC and its affiliated union leaders were ineffective when constitutional issues were raised. But Murray, understandably somewhat unnerved by the hostility he faced from Loyalist workers, was rewarded for his efforts by being made a privy councillor in 1976!

Despite the undoubted militancy of working class strikes at the time in Great Britain, these did not lead to much questioning of the UK state, nor the role of the Labour Party as her majesty's 'opposition'. This is what would have been required to build any serious Socialist organisation. However, the wider political challenge represented by the resistance in Northern Ireland, coupled to the widespread refusal amongst Irish Nationalists to acknowledge the legitimacy of the sectarian Stormont, and the then smaller but still significant opposition from Irish Republicans to the UK state under Direct Rule, provided more fertile ground for developing a Socialist political opposition.

And the situation was indeed different in Northern Ireland/Ireland. In 1969, the Socialists of Peoples Democracy, following their militant street activity around the issue of Civil Rights, particularly in Derry and Belfast, were able to get Bernadette Devlin (later McAliskey) adopted as the Unity (Socialist, Nationalist, Republican) candidate for Mid Ulster. She won the seat with 53% of the vote in a by-election in 1969 and held it in the 1970 general election. Even, when the Irish Nationalist component of Unity, who opposed her unconventional lifestyle and her internationalist support for struggles of workers and the oppressed, put up a candidate against her (from the new SDLP) in February 1974, Bernadette still won 25% of the vote standing as an Independent Socialist.

But at no time in the heady years in Great Britain following 1968, did non-Labour Socialists make anything like that impact. Jimmy Reid, one of the leaders of the UCS Work-in, who stood for the CPGB in Central Dunbartonshire in the February 1974 general election, got 15% of the vote, which slipped back to 9% in the October 1974 general election. When the IS became the SWP in 1977, it was with the political intention, largely based on its rank and file trade union perspective, of overtaking the CPGB. Between 1977 and 1998, the SWP stood 7 candidates in Westminster by-elections.

The SWP's intention of overtaking the rapidly declining CPGB failed though. In the Garscadden by-election in 1978, when the CPGB received 1.1% of the vote²⁰, the SWP got even less at 0.5%. And perhaps even more embarrassing for the SWP, in every by-election, where it also competed with the IMG or Socialist Unity (SU),²¹ it still received less votes - Birmingham Stechford (SWP -1%, IMG -1.4%), Birmingham Ladywood (SWP -1%, SU - 3.5%), Lambeth Central (SWP - 1%, SU - 1.5%).

The post-1977 failure to save any deposits highlighted the failure of the non-Labour Left to make any political progress. These electoral forays dented the SWP's political confidence so badly that for two decades it argued that Socialists should not become involved in such bourgeois affairs! However, this did not stop the SWP from advocating a vote for every Labour candidate in the 1979 general election.

In effect, the SWP had retreated into acting as an external faction of the Labour Party. And this meant voting for a Labour Party which had bowed to the dictates of the IMF imposing wage and social service cuts; pushed its anti-trade union Concordat proposals; and promoted Callaghan's 'Great Debate' to undermine progressive education. Labour was also responsible for the implementation of the brutal Ulsterisation policy in Northern Ireland, with its deliberate promotion of a 'two tribes' approach and handing over the running of the local statelet to the security forces; and its failure to deliver Scottish and Welsh devolution. These all prepared the ground for Thatcher, and a renewed ruling class offensive, when the Tories were elected in 1979.

There can be little doubt that the ANL did contribute to the marginalisation of the NF on the streets, but the biggest factor in reversing their rise in the political arena was Margaret Thatcher's Tories. She took on large chunks of the NF's anti-Black agenda and combined this with an appeal to Winston Churchill's own Second World War, unionist, imperialist and racist political legacy. When Thatcher was elected in 1979, the SWP could take some consolation from the decline of the NF. The streets became safer for white *Socialist Worker* sellers, so the ANL was closed down in 1981.

But this was just the time when Thatcher's new Tory government launched its major offensive on Black communities, leading to growing resistance. This culminated in the Black Peoples Day of Action in London in March 1981 (in some ways a predecessor to Black Lives Matter) and in the Brixton Riots in April the same year.²² And this was also the time that the Tories further stepped up the repression in Northern Ireland. This led to the Hunger Strikes and the election of Republican political prisoner Bobby Sands as MP for Fermanagh and South Tyrone in April 1981. Peoples Democracy and the Irish Republican Socialist Party won a seat each on Belfast City Council.

5. 'Maginot Marxist' attempts to dismiss the significance of struggles against oppression

Sherry and Sherry point out that “in early 1981, the labour movement suffered a hammer blow when a mass meeting at Linwood car plant rejected a shop stewards’ recommendation to occupy the factory and prevent a closure with loss of 8,000 jobs.”²³ Linwood had been a place where the SWP had had some trade union influence. But in other arenas, the SWP had also developed its own front organisations for working in struggles against oppression and exploitation - Flame and Women’s Voice. They were viewed as a useful source of additional recruits. But by 1981, the SWP leadership saw working with others in non-industrial struggles against oppression as a political threat.²⁴ In the face of the decline in major industrial fightbacks, the struggles against Black and women’s oppression loomed larger. Because they could not easily be connected to trade union struggles, Flame and Women’s Voice were targeted for closure.

In rejecting any meaningful participation in the wider struggles of the oppressed, the SWP dismissed these because they didn’t prioritise getting support from trade unions. Otherwise, these struggles were dismissed because it was claimed they had anti-working class aims. Leading SWP theoretician at the time, Lindsay German, criticised women’s struggles, which did not focus on the workplace and trade unions. She saw many women’s campaigns as being largely informed by bourgeois feminist Patriarchy Theory.

But not all those who invoked patriarchy saw this in terms of the essentially transhistorical biological or gender-based difference claimed by some leading supporters of Patriarchy Theory. And there is a good precedent for an alternative view of patriarchy in the writings of Frederick Engels,²⁵ and also later of James Connolly.²⁶ In such thinking, the forms of patriarchy change under different modes of production, just as the forms of surplus labour change.²⁷ But patriarchy remains a feature of all class societies.

All major economic, social and political struggles are contested by those holding to different class politics. Trade union attempts to establish the working class’s place within the existing socio-economic and political order has often gone along with opposition to including others, e.g. the semi-skilled and unskilled, women and black workers. This produced the widespread sectionalism which anticipated the identity politics that later emerged as ‘glass ceiling’ feminism, Gay and BAME Inc.

But these capitalist accommodating forms of politics have also been contested by those seeking to unite workers in all their diversity through active solidarity. But whenever the significance of that diversity is downplayed, the working class is often, if sometimes unconsciously, reduced to white, male, trade unionists who accept their existing national state. At best, they may show some toleration or even accept some tokenistic representation for those who fall outside their view

of the ‘real’ working class. But in times of crisis or defeats of their working class organisations, they can also tail end the Right, and turn on the oppressed, looking for scapegoats.

Shortly after the SWP’s retreat from wider struggles against oppression, Socialist Feminists, Lisa Vogel,²⁸ Angela Davis²⁹ and others began to make major strides, showing how capitalism has historically been dependent on women’s and racial/ethnic oppression. Capitalism is not only a system of wage labour-based production but is every bit as much a system of social reproduction, dependent on domestic labour. And women’s and racial/ethnic oppression is directly linked to specific forms of exploitation. These cannot be seen as just some external epiphenomenon of capitalism, which trade unions can adequately address today, or waged labour-focussed struggles for Socialism can solve in the future.

However, after the defeats of early trade union struggles under Thatcher, even attempts to maintain rank and file trade union organisation were brought to an abrupt end by the SWP in 1982. This is not mentioned in *ButBS*, which in many ways sees the working class economic militancy of the late 1960s and 1970s, now more than half a century in the past, as being the model for workers in the UK/Great Britain/Scotland today. But for *ButBS*, a litany of ‘defeats’ has disguised the real political significance of the issue of oppression, including the challenges of Irish and Scottish self-determination. This is why *ButBS* is unable to appreciate why James Connolly and John Maclean came to adopt a republican socialist, ‘internationalism from below’ politics to express this.

If there are shortcomings which prevented Connolly’s and Maclean’s politics taking on an organised form, i.e. forming a party, then the SWP’s glib (and often shallow) recourse to the Leninist-Bolshevik party model provides no clear answers today. Those parties which emerged during the 1916-21/3 International Revolutionary Wave did look back again to the principles which informed the 1847-9 International Revolutionary Wave seventy years earlier and the Paris Commune half a century earlier. But they had to try and create new types of parties to meet the new situation. We are now living a full century after the 1916-21/3 International Revolutionary Wave.

6. The shared history of two unionist states – the USSR and the UK

The first part of this review showed that *ButBS* does not recognise Scotland’s most obvious historical parallel for national self-determination – Norway. This despite the SWP wanting to base its thinking on the Lenin’s theory. This is related to the *ButBS*’s inability to understand oppression as the denial of

democratic rights, or to recognise the nature of the UK as a “mixed nationality state”, once based on four, but now on ‘three and a bit’ nations.

Furthermore, the first part of the review also pointed out that Lenin glossed over one of the key reasons behind the success of Norway’s secession from Sweden – the existence of independent social democratic parties in both countries. They were able to coordinate their actions on an ‘internationalism from below’ basis. This observation is linked to our need to look anew at the party issue today.

Donnie Gluckstein and Bob Fotheringham, keen to promote the SWP as a Leninist inspired party, turn to the October 1917 Revolution itself. They state within a few weeks the Bolshevik government had passed the *Declaration of Rights*.” This stated that all these {oppressed and repressed} nations {within the former Tsarist Russian empire} were equal and that any which wanted to secede could do so”.³⁰

The problem with this is that there proved to be a considerable gap between the rhetoric of this 1917 Declaration and its actual implementation in the following years. After Lenin’s experience in the 1904-6 Revolution³¹ in the Tsarist empire, he had already realised that the movements of the oppressed (including nations, nationalities and the peasantry) in the Tsarist empire would be a major factor in any future revolutionary wave. In this he parted company with Rosa Luxemburg, who thought that demands for self-determination only had relevance where industrial capitalism had hardly penetrated, e.g. the Ottoman and other eastern empires and that the peasantry were inherently reactionary.

The First World War highlighted the failure of the Second International and the majority of its Social Democratic party affiliates to transcend the social nationalism and social parliamentarianism of its Right and Centre. However, before this, an Internationalist Left had already emerged. It had three main components, who were all to oppose their states’ participation in the First World War. These included Lenin and Luxemburg, but there was a third component, the advocates of ‘Internationalism from Below’. Key figures, who contributed to this thinking included Kazimierz Kelles-Kreuz³² in Poland (who died during the 1905 Revolution), James Connolly³³ in Ireland (who was shot at the outbreak of the new International Revolutionary Wave in 1916) and Lev Iurkevich³⁴ in Ukraine (who died in 1919 at an early stage in the spread of the International Revolutionary Wave to Ukraine). John Maclean also took up such thinking in 1920 within the context of the ongoing International Revolutionary Wave.

Each of the three components of the International Left had different theories on how to approach the issue of national self-determination. These were tested in the First World War and in the International Revolutionary Wave from 1916-21.

The failure of the majority of Bolsheviks (who came to the fore in this revolutionary wave because Russia was its epicentre) to adopt an ‘Internationalism from Below’ strategy was to have seriously negative effects.

Lenin, despite his differences with Luxemburg, still adhered to a key aspect of the thinking of the orthodox ‘Pope of Marxism’ - Karl Kautsky – regarding national self-determination.³⁵ They both thought that as soon as the working class (and their peasant allies) had taken direct power, those in the oppressed nations would abandon any desire to secede and throw in their lot with the leaders of the new revolutionary state. During the revolutionary period of heightened democratic fervour, following February 1917 Revolution, this was a bit like advocating coitus interruptus as an effective method of birth control!

Thus, a key opportunity was missed in Finland in July 1917 (which could have speeded up the revolutionary process in Latvia and Ukraine);³⁶ in Ukraine from 1918 (thwarting a possible southern revolutionary road to neighbouring Hungary and Slovakia and on to Vienna in 1919).³⁷ The defeat of the Red Army outside Warsaw in 1920 confirmed by the closure of a northern revolutionary path from Russia and Byelorussia through Poland and on to Berlin. Polish Communists, heavily influenced by Rosa Luxemburg’s Radical Left thinking, opposed any support for Polish independence or peasant struggles.

It is still more than possible that the balance of class forces internationally would have thwarted any greater ‘internationalism from below’ endeavours too. But this would have produced a case of ‘failing better’. This means, despite any immediate defeats, Socialists, having absorbed the lessons, would be at a better starting point in any future International Revolutionary Wave. This had proved to be the case after some Fraternal Democrats took on board Marx and Engels’ analysis of the lessons of the 1847-9 International Revolutionary Wave; and later when some Social Democrats followed a similar critical path after the defeat of the 1870 Paris Commune.

During the 1916-21/3 International Revolutionary Wave, there were moves in Finland and Ukraine to secede from the Russian empire, in defiance of Lenin’s theory that this should no longer occur. But the majority of Bolsheviks (upholding a key aspect of Kautsky’s thinking) no longer supported the exercise of the right to national separation, either within the post-February 1917 Russian Republic, or later within the post-October 1917 Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic (RSFSR). Lenin, however, having opposed the exercise of self-determination, which could have been implemented by the Left in Finland in July 1917, was forced to concede this to the Right (backed by Germany) in December. And it was the Right who led the secession of the Baltic States, which Lenin was

also forced to concede. This highlighted the missed opportunities which could have accelerated an ‘internationalism from below’ challenge.

This is why those from the ‘Internationalism from Below’ tradition argued for a different method of organising to those like Lenin and Luxemburg, who gave priority to ‘one-state, one-nation’ parties. As early as 1900, James Connolly had to defend the right of the Irish Socialist Republican Party to represent Irish Social Democracy at the Second International congress in Paris, and in 1912 he argued for a distinctive Irish Labour Party. It is significant that these proposals were most strongly opposed, first by British chauvinist, social democrats - Henry Hyndman of the SDF, and then by William Walker of the ILP in Belfast.

Kazimierz Kelles-Kreuz had similar problems upholding the PSP’s right to organise Socialists throughout partitioned Poland (at the same time as taking on the Polish social patriotism of Pilsudski).³⁸ However, Ukraine was where the ‘Internationalism from Below’ tradition probably had the greatest impact during the 1916-21/ International Revolutionary Wave. The infant Ukrainian Social Democratic Labour Party (USDLP) had applied without success to be an autonomous section of the RSDLP in 1905, during the 1904-6 International Revolutionary Wave.³⁹ During the 1916-1921/ International Revolutionary Wave, the USDLP split, somewhat later than the final split in the RSDLP between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks.⁴⁰ The Left wing joined with others and constituted themselves as the Ukrainian Communist Party (borotbist) - UCP (b). They initially demanded an independent Ukraine within a wider Soviet (not Russian) Federation and to be recognised as the Ukrainian section of the Third International. The ‘Bayonet Bolshevik’ ‘internationalism from above’ approach of the RCP(b) (and its Left SR allies) in Ukraine was so counter-productive, that a pro-independent Ukraine faction emerged within the RCP(b) itself, led by Serhii Mazlakh and Vasyl Shakhrai.⁴¹

Nevertheless, even in the Tsarist Russian empire, when it came to the ‘one-state, one-party’ principle, Lenin allowed for the exception of Finland, partly because of its unique constitutional relationship with Tsarist Russia. The Finnish Social Democrats never formed part of the RSDLP nor of the Bolsheviks (although some Russians in Finland did become members of the Bolsheviks).⁴²

Following others from the ‘Internationalism from Below’ tradition, John Maclean advocated the idea of a Scottish Communist Party in 1920, with independent representation at the new Third International. This was opposed by his former ally, Willie Gallacher. He was also chosen by the infant CPGB, probably on the instructions of the officials of an already RSDLP-dominated, Third International, to help close down the newly formed Communist Party of Ireland in 1923.⁴³

The SWP remains an all-Britain party, but not an all-UK party. This modification of the orthodox ‘one-state, one-party’ principle applies to Northern Ireland/Ireland. This reflects Ireland’s and later Northern Ireland’s semi-detached constitutional relationship to the rest of the UK. And, as has been shown, this has also contributed to the SWP’s ‘national exceptionalist’ politics towards Ireland/Northern Ireland.

In relation to Scotland, elements of this ‘national exceptionalism’ have also begun to inform the SWP’s actions here. The political pressures in Scotland could lead to the SWP here slipping from the old Left unionism of the British SWP to adopting Left Scottish nationalism. This might lead to the repeat of the conflicting trajectories of the Communist Party of Britain and the breakaway Communist Party of Scotland, and of the Socialist Party of England and Wales (with its Scottish branch office) and the breakaway Scottish Socialist Party. Left Unionists, whether in the old Soviet Union or the UK/Great Britain, have opposed any departure from the principle of ‘one-state one party’, unless events have overtaken them. This happened with the First Irish Republic then the Irish Free State, and in the new Baltic States of Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

Left unionists argue that support for secession leads to concessions to social patriotism, in the face of the pressure from other classes competing to lead any national movement. This can indeed be a problem. However, one of the main contributors to social patriotism in Socialist parties in the oppressed nations has been their experience of social chauvinism in one-state Socialist parties in the oppressor states. This is why the solution does not lie in ‘one-state, one-party’ political organisation, and certainly not in Internationals which tolerate ‘great nation’ chauvinism (and sometimes ‘great nation’ imperialism). Each oppressed nation should have the right to organise its own party and work with other parties within the state on an ‘internationalism from below’ basis. Any new International should also be based on these parties. In a future International Revolutionary Wave, each new liberated nation would become part of a federated Global Commune.

Such thinking was already being advanced by ‘Internationalism from Below’ advocates, including John Maclean, during the post-First World War revolutionary challenge to the imperialist world order. Maclean’s anti-unionism and anti-imperialism were linked. And what strikes you about Maclean is his much more internationalist approach compared to many of those he challenged in the CPGB.

Thus, *ButBS*’s uncritical championing of the 1917 *Declaration of Rights* can only lead to considerable problems today. With the benefit of hindsight, we can see that the failure to meet up to the Declaration’s stated aims contributed to the

emergence of the USSR as a Greater Russian, one-party, unionist state. The right to national self-determination was written into the USSR constitution, but anyone wanting to pursue this, especially to the point of secession, came up against the ruling CPSU. The USSR party-state made the raising of such demands a criminal offence, punishable by exile, imprisonment in psychiatric wards or labour camps, or by being shot.

The UK remains, and the USSR was, a unionist and imperialist state. However, there was an apparent difference, because the UK state has remained politically and geographically separate from the wider British empire. But the territories, which the USSR inherited from the former Tsarist Russian empire, were formed from Russia's adjoining territories on the Eurasian landmass. After the 1917 October Revolution, the leaders of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) (RCP(b)), in what was now the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic (RSFSR), maintained that there was no longer a Russian empire (which they acknowledged had existed under the tsarist regime), but a federation of equal republics⁴⁴ (despite the state's still Russian title).

The USSR was only set up in 1922. It took another three years before the Russian CP(b) became the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) -AUCP(b). But by this time, the domination of the RSFSR component of the USSR was already firmly established. The USSR was set up by an agreement between the RCP(b) leaders of Russia, Byelorussia and Ukraine. In contrast, when the other constituent republics were admitted to the USSR, the terms of their acceptance and the extent of their territories were determined first by the leaders of the RCP(b) and later by the leaders of the Russian dominated AUCP(b).

Thus, like the UK and the British empire, there was a de facto political separation between a 'Greater Russia' or 'Vostokslavia'⁴⁵ and the wider Soviet empire. Josef Stalin wanted to maintain the privileged position of the 'Slav' republics, so he backed the separate admission of Byelorussia and Ukraine to the UNO in 1946, along with the USSR (dominated by the RSFSR).

Within the USSR, various hybrid-Soviet identities were promoted, just as hybrid-British identities have been promoted in the UK and British empire. And it was possible for people with subordinate hybrid identities to advance to the highest levels of their respective states, e.g. the Georgian-Soviet, Josef Stalin and the Ukrainian-Soviet, Nikita Khrushchev in the USSR. This followed the examples of Welsh-British, David Lloyd-George and the Scottish-British, Ramsay MacDonald in the UK. Indeed, given the greater career chances provided by unionist states with empires, it is not surprising that it has often been those with a hybrid unionist identity, who have been the most vehement in their defence of their own union.

The old SDF and BSP held to their own notions of a 'British road to socialism', based on the idea of Victorian Britain having become the holders of the world baton of 'progress'. This was a continuation of the old Radical Liberal thinking, especially that of James Stuart Mills. The CPGB, however, in rejecting this claim, considered that the baton of 'progress' had been handed over to the USSR - another unionist state. This contributed to the updated version of the 'British road to socialism' advocated by the CPGB.

In championing the Bolsheviks' 1917 declaration, *ButBS* doesn't help us address the nature of past defeats. It also pushes the SWP outside of the republican socialist, 'internationalism from below' politics needed to meet the challenges of today.

7. Conclusion

This review has shown that *ButBS* does not provide a convincing analysis of the emergence, global hegemony, or decline of the UK state and British empire. This is partly because it does not recognise the real nature of the UK state - a unionist, imperialist and constitutional monarchy, based on the sovereignty of the Crown-in-Westminster with its armoury of Crown Powers. *ButBS* also expresses an unease over the emergence of the issue of Scottish (and earlier Irish) self-determination on the Left. It is unable to understand that oppression means the denial of democratic rights, which doesn't necessarily take the form of repression (although that possibility is always latent under oppression).

ButBS hankers after what it sees as earlier Left unionist working class unity, based largely on trade unions, but which has now gone into wholesale retreat. This means *ButBS* is not successful in locating SWP in the tradition of James Connolly's and John Maclean's republican socialist 'internationalism from below' politics.

Nevertheless, there is plenty of historical and current economic and social material in *ButBS* which could make a positive contribution to debates on the Left in Scotland and throughout these islands. Furthermore, there are still SWP members looking for better answers, and who maybe appreciate that these are not going to be forthcoming, without wider and more genuine debates, than those confined to the SWP's own ranks, or sometimes extended to approved Left social democrats (whether in Labour or the SNP and Alba).

Also, ex-SWP members are to be found in a number of breakaway organisations. But they seem to have just as limited view of how to promote wider debate and

democratic organisation. Having made a partial break with the SWP, they have still to dig deeper to see what other aspects of its politics they haven't questioned. But in addition to members of the SWP and of ex-SWP breakaways, there are also ex-SWP and ex-SWP breakaway members looking for new answers. Many of these have chosen to remain active by participation in the movements.

As this article has attempted to show that trying to duplicate aspects of Bolshevik methods of organisation today reproduces old problems. The 'one-state, one-party' model definitely needs to be jettisoned. So does the perceived need to establish an official orthodoxy based upon the thinking and activity of 'great individuals.' In this respect, it would be better to go back to the First International, founded on principles, rather than the attempted Marxist orthodoxy of the Second International, the attempted Leninist orthodoxy of the Third International, or the competing Trotskyist 'orthodoxies' of the various Fourth Internationals. This just produces an ingrained sectarian approach.

For most sects, internal democracy is seen as a real problem. The formation of factions, when permitted, usually leads to a battle in which one faction has to bludgeon down its competitors and emerge as the victor. In the run-up to the annual SWP conference, the permanent leadership faction sees the formation of any new faction is seen as a declaration of war. These factions have to be marginalised if possible before the conference; or if they get to attend, they are inevitably defeated because the bureaucratic centralist constitution is designed to ensure this. Afterwards, the defeated members must show contrition, otherwise they are made to feel so uncomfortable they leave, or they are expelled.

The experience of many former members of various sects, and not only from the SWP, has been so bad, they now argue against the right of platforms (which they call factions) in any new political organisation. However, in order to put across their views, they are sometimes compelled to resort to a concealed form of faction dressed up as a 'think-tank'. This can end up being as manipulative as an openly recognised central committee.

But there is still a need to form a party. Yet one of the first things that must be recognised is that the SWP is not a genuine party. And maintaining itself as a sect is not the way to advance anything positive by which its members could still contribute to the wider Left. And the SWP breakaways provide no longer term answers either. But neither will confining any political activity to the movements bring about the wider changes and the ending of capitalism which alone can provide us with a future into today's crisis-ridden world.

What is required instead, in both pre-party and party organisations, is the promotion of a real culture of democracy. This should be enshrined in a constitution with a code of conduct. This means seeing the formation of

platforms not as something negative, but as something positive. They can produce debates which can lead to a higher political synthesis.⁴⁶

Furthermore, programmes are a central democratic tool to enable both pre-party and party organisations to distil what has been learned internationally and nationally. Debates organised around programmes are both politically educational and allow proposals and demands to be agreed democratically. Those who oppose programmes can be motivated by an anarchism, which believes that the major international and national demands of the exploited and oppressed arise spontaneously. The SWP leadership, however, opposes programmes, because they act as a democratic impediment to the opportunistic U-turns it often makes - not least on Scottish independence itself.

Where are we today? Clearly, we are some distance away from being able to form a genuine party with strong links to the advanced sections of the exploited and oppressed with their own autonomous organisations of struggle. But there was a time in the Tsarist Russian empire, before the formation of any party, whether it was the Bolshevik ASUCP in 1925, its RCP predecessor in 1918, or the RSDLP in 1902, when Socialists got together to promote the very first phase of political organisation. They formed the League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class in 1898.

Perhaps today we could envisage a League of Struggle for Emancipation, Liberation and Self-Determination, with the ambition of uniting republican socialists on an 'internationalism from below' basis across the four nations of these islands. After all the dead-end organisational experiences so many Socialists have gone through, maybe the time has come for such an idea.

18.8.21 updated 9.9.21

References

¹ The very earliest manifestation of the SWP was the Socialist Review Group ((SRG) formed in 1950), followed by the International Socialists (IS) formed in 1962. The SRG and early IS were in the Labour Party or Labour Party Young Socialists up to 1968. As with other Leninist or Trotskyists organisations, which spent time in the Labour Party, they adopted many social democratic characteristics, particularly in their understanding of the nature of the UK state. Even, when the IS left the Labour Party, in some ways, both it and its successor, the SWP, have often acted as an external faction of the Labour Party. This has been highlighted by their willingness to vote for Right wing Labour candidates during general elections.

² Kevin McKenna, in particular, sometimes looks wistfully back at the Old Labour days, ‘before’ there were transgendered people, and when gays, women and those from a BME background weren’t so demanding in pushing for their democratic, economic and social rights, and Labour was still the best vehicle for advancing Catholic rights and careers, in a still sectarian Scotland.

³ *ButBS*, Bob Fotheringham, p.319

⁴ <https://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2021/06/03/breaking-up-the-british-state-scotland-independence-and-socialism/>

⁵ One alternative to this involvement in ongoing struggles is to fall back on abstract propagandism. This can take two forms. The Socialist Party of Great Britain offers a vision of a moneyless socialist society, by providing socialist education and by standing in elections. In some ways they are a modern version of the old Pietist Christian sects. Another version of abstract propagandism is provided by the Trotskyist, Socialist Party, which is reluctant to join any united front unless it uses ‘Socialist’ in its label (e.g. the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition). Thus, the SP refused to join RIC. Yet the SP was still asking people to vote for the SNP’s immediate constitutional proposals in IndyRef1. This behaviour is like those more belligerent Christian (especially the Presbyterian) sects of the past. Although revealingly the SP dropped its demand for a Socialist label in No2EU with CPB. The pull of Left British nationalism was just too strong!

⁶ *ButBS*, B. Fotheringham, p. 402.

⁷ *ButBS*, B. Fotheringham, p. 319.

⁸ <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/nov/01/scottish-labour-votes-ditch-trident-renewal>

⁹ <http://www.campaignforsocialism.org.uk/articles/2017/7/19/helicopter-view-of-the-2017-ge-results-a-tale-of-two-parties>

¹⁰ *ButBS*, Dave Sherry and Julie Sherry, p.254.

¹¹ This also applied to Northern Ireland, where both Labour’s 2019 manifesto and Johnson’s Tories wanted to re-establish the Stormont Executive. When it came to the English regions, rather than giving any support to political devolution, which was now supported by largely social democratic regional and other local parties, Labour’s 2019 manifesto opted for more regional mayors, on the US corporate business backed model.

¹² <https://bellacaledonia.itg.uk/2021/06/03breaking-up-the-british-state-scotland-independence-and-socialism/>

¹³ In this. Labour is far from unique. The British Labour Party, joined most Social Democratic parties in throwing their weight behind their ruling class in the First World War. And it was the post-war German Social Democracy which used the Far Right Friekorps to brutally suppress the German Revolution in 1919.

¹⁴ These Loyalist forces were also clandestinely backed by the British security forces. This was a relationship the NF undoubtedly hoped to establish too.

¹⁵ *ButBS*, Dave Sherry & Julie Sherry, p. 205.

¹⁶ *The British Left and the UK state, 9. Conclusion – challenge the UK and partitioned Irish state’s ‘internationalism from above’ allies and the disunited Left’s ‘national exceptionalism’ with a socialist republican ‘internationalism from below’ strategy*, Allan Armstrong (<https://allanarmstrong831930095.files.wordpress.com/2021/06/the-british-left-the-uk-state-1-2.pdf>)

¹⁷ It was only when the British and Irish ruling classes had decided on their ‘Peace (or pacification) Process’ in the mid-1990s and had drawn in the majority of Irish Nationalists/Republicans and the Ulster Unionist Party (officially, but with considerable internal tensions) and some of the Loyalist organisations, (again producing considerable internal tensions), that the ICTU-NIC and its affiliated unions encouraged some wider constitutional discussion. The UK and Republic of Ireland governments had already gained the backing of the US and the EC. Their next stage was to arrange for Northern Ireland Forum outreach (1996-98) to maximise support. This led to the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) (itself part of a larger ‘Devolution-all-round scheme’).

The old-style Unionist/Loyalist Orange supremacy, which had underpinned Stormont from 1922-72 and undermined the cross-community Sunningdale Agreement (1973-5), was set aside. Sectarianism was reconstituted but on a new basis. The GFA gave official recognition to two camps in the Northern Ireland Executive and Stormont - the Unionist/Loyalist and Nationalist/Republican. It placed the UK state in a position of ‘neutral’ arbiter, albeit with a strong pro-UK union (as opposed to Ulster unionist) bias. And in wider social terms, the sectarian flashpoints moved from the Border, which was effectively neutralised, to the city communities divided by ‘peace walls’.

The ICTU, and especially its NIC has given wholehearted support to the system, which the GFA put in place. NIC has been to the forefront of attempts to get it re-established, whenever it has stalled (in 2000, 2001, 2002-07 and 2017-20). NIC’s role in helping to maintain the post-GFA arrangements was officially recognised in the Fresh Start Agreement of 2015. But the limited toleration encouraged by the GFA is now being undermined by the breach with the EU and USA, two of its principal backers, following Brexit. This is not only heightening pre-existing tensions around the ‘peace walls’ but is reopening the prospect of a return to a harder Border.

¹⁸ The autonomy given to each of the components of a wider Unionist and Loyalist alliance, allows other participating organisations to disown actions, which they think may compromise them. This has been a longstanding feature of the broader Unionist and Loyalist alliance. What such disavowals don’t do is end the wider Unionist/Loyalist alliance. This can be seen today with the DUP (and sometimes the UUP) entering ‘discussions’ with the Loyalist Communities Council (LCC). The LCC is the lineal descendant of the Loyalist Army Council of 1974-4.

¹⁹ <https://www.historyireland.com/20th-century-contemporary-history/sunningdale-and-the-1974-ulster-workers-council-strike/>

²⁰ The CPGB candidate was Sammy Barr, one of the UCS Work-in leaders.

²¹ Socialist Unity was an electoral alliance of the IMG, Workers League (whose members had either been expelled or left the SWP) and the soft Maoist, Big Flame (which was heavily influenced by Lotta Continua in Italy).

²² <https://inews.co.uk/culture/uprising-new-cross-fire-true-story-40th-anniversary-london-black-community-steve-mcqueen-1110516>

²³ *ButBS*, Dave Sherry and Julie Sherry, p. 200.

²⁴ It was at this point that the SWP leadership turned to what has become a very well-established tactic to deal with what it saw as failed initiatives. Instead of opening up a genuine debate, certain existing leaders were singled out to act as scapegoats. In this case it was Industrial Organiser, Steve Jeffreys, one of the SWP's most thoughtful and experienced members, whose partner, Joan Smith was also very much associated with Women's Voice (WV). WV, along with Flame, designed for Black supporters, were singled out by Tony Cliff, as a dry run for his main target, the rank and file organisations. With the exception of the Building Worker Group (BWG) and Scottish Rank & File Teachers (SR&FT), which were genuine democratic united fronts, the other rank and file groups had degenerated into SWP fronts, making their closure on the orders of the central committee easier. The convenors of the BWG & SR&FT later develop a linked industrial and political republicanism, which was taken into the Scottish Republican Forum, later the Republican Communist Network (a platform within the SSA/SSP in Scotland) and into the English Republican Forum. A lot of information on this can be seen in *Rank & File or Broad Left? – A Short History of the Building Worker Group* by its secretary, Brian Higgins (<https://libcom.org/library/chapter-3-broad-left-construction-popular-front>).

²⁵ “The first class opposition that appears in history coincides with the development of the antagonism between man and woman in monogamous marriage, and the first class oppression coincides with that of the female sex by the male” - F. Engels (<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1884/origin-family/ch02d.htm>)

²⁶ “The worker is the slave of capitalist society, the female worker is the slave of that slave” -James Connolly – (<https://www.marxists.org/archive/connolly/1915/rcoi/chap06.htm>).

²⁷ Surplus labour can take the form of the surplus extracted from chattel slaves (beyond the cost of the slaves and their maintenance); the compulsory labour, produce or even money extracted from peasants (beyond their subsistence needs) under various tributary modes of production, including feudalism; and the surplus value extracted from wage slaves under capitalism (beyond the costs of their reproduction).

²⁸ *Marxism and the Oppression of Women, Towards a Unitary Theory*, Lise Vogel (Rutgers University Press 1983)

²⁹ *Women, Race and Class*, Angela Y. Davis (Random House, 1983)

³⁰ *ButBS*, Donny Gluckstein and Bob Fotheringham, p. 48.

³¹ It could be argued that this had an earlier beginning in the Gurian Republic in Georgia which lasted from 1902-06 (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gurian_Republic). Georgia was the one area where the Mensheviks, unlike their Russian wing, behaved in a more

revolutionary manner. In some ways the Gurian Republic anticipated the peasant-based Red bases established by the Chinese Communist Party from the late 1920s.

³² *Internationalism from Below, Volume 3, Revolutionary Social Democracy, Nation-states and Nationalism in the age of High Imperialism and the Second International (1889-1916) (IfB-3)*, Allan Armstrong, Section 2C- *Kazimierz Kelles-Kreuz takes on the Orthodox Marxists* (<https://allanarmstrong831930095.files.wordpress.com/2021/07/internationalism-from-below-book-3doc-1.pdf>). As well as the then orthodox Rosa Luxemburg, Kaul Kautsky and Karl Renner, Kelles Kreuz took on the Right social democrats, Josef Pilsudski and August Winter.

³³ *IfB-3*, Allan Armstrong, Section 2D, *James Connolly's early contribution towards 'Internationalism from Below* and Section 4A. *The further development of 'Internationalism from Below' - James Connolly* (<https://allanarmstrong831930095.files.wordpress.com/2021/07/internationalism-from-below-book-3doc-1.pdf>). Connolly began by taking on Henry Hyndman and the SDF, and later took on the orthodox Daniel de Leon (SLP) in the USA and the Right ILP member, William Walker in Belfast.

³⁴ *IfB-3 – Allan Armstrong, Section 4B, The further development of 'Internationalism from Below' - Lev Iurkevich* (<https://allanarmstrong831930095.files.wordpress.com/2021/07/internationalism-from-below-book-3doc-1.pdf>). Yurkevich took on Lenin and the Right social democrat, Dmitro Dontsov.

³⁵ Even after 1914 Lenin still supported a lot of Kautsky's thinking. Indeed, Lenin claimed that it was the Bolsheviks who upheld Kautsky's views, which he had reneged on.

³⁶ *Internationalism from Below, Volume 4 Communists, Nation-States and nationalism during the 1916-1921 International Revolutionary Wave (IfB4)*, Allan Armstrong, Section 2C - *Other Revolutionary Timelines – Finland* (<https://allanarmstrong831930095.files.wordpress.com/2020/05/internationalism-from-below-book-4a-3.pdf>)

³⁷ *IfB4*, Allan Armstrong, Section 2D, *Other Revolutionary Timelines – Ukraine* (<https://allanarmstrong831930095.files.wordpress.com/2020/05/internationalism-from-below-book-4a-3.pdf>)

³⁸ *IfB3*, Chapter 3C, Allan Armstrong (<https://allanarmstrong831930095.files.wordpress.com/2021/07/internationalism-from-below-book-3doc-1.pdf>)

³⁹ *IfB3*, Chapter 4Biii (<https://allanarmstrong831930095.files.wordpress.com/2021/07/internationalism-from-below-book-3doc-1.pdf>)

⁴⁰ Even the much-vaunted split between Mensheviks and Bolsheviks at the Bolshevik-called RSDLP conference in Prague in 1912, still left many Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, (particularly the anti-war Left Mensheviks) working together until 1917, including in Latvia (the Bolsheviks' main stronghold) and in Ukraine (where they were not so well placed).

⁴¹ *Communism and the Dilemmas of National Liberation: National Communism in Soviet Ukraine, 1918-33*, pp. 40-49, James Meek, (Harvard University Press, 1983)

⁴² The position in Poland was murkier. Here was to be found, the openly social patriotic Polish Socialist Party (led by Jozef Pilsudski from 1892); the more orthodox Polish Socialist

Party-Left (from 1906); Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania (with Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Radek) which tried to make itself part of Russian Social Democracy, denying Poland's right to independence (whilst also cultivating close connections to the German Social Democracy); and Russian or Russian-identifying Bolsheviks living in Poland. Sectarian jockeying for position against Luxemburg on one hand and the PSP-Left on the other sometimes appeared to inform the Bolsheviks' relationship to these parties in Poland. And in Baku (now part of Azerbaijan) the Bolsheviks worked with Hummet, an organisation mainly for Muslim workers (without any clear national identification), in strong contrast to the exclusionary stance the Bolsheviks adopted towards the Jewish Bund in the RSDLP (*Internationalism from Below*, Part 3 (*Ifb3*) Chapter 3Biii, Allan Armstrong. (<https://allanarmstrong831930095.files.wordpress.com/2021/07/internationalism-from-below-book-3doc-1.pdf>))

⁴³ *From Pre-Brit to Ex-Brit*, part 5. chapter 2g, Roddy Connolly and Jim Larkin swimming against the ebbing tide of revolution in Ireland, Allan Armstrong, p.706 (<https://allanarmstrong831930095.files.wordpress.com/2021/07/from-pre-brit-to-ex-brit-4.pdf>)

⁴⁴ The post-independence US republic also tried to maintain that it was a non-imperialist state on a similar basis. Its leaders claimed that US expansion into adjacent continental territory was not imperialism unlike the overseas colonialism of the European, particularly the British, imperial states. The Native and Hispanic Americans contested this. However, after the 1898 Spanish-American War, which led to the annexation of considerable overseas territories, the US anti-imperialist claim was no longer sustainable even in its own terms.

⁴⁵ 'Vostokslavia' would mean the eastern Slav peopled area of the old USSR, analogous to Yugoslavia, the southern Slav peopled area in the Balkans. And just as there was a Right-wing view that upheld Yugoslavia as a Greater Serbia, so there has been a Right wing view, that has viewed Russia, Byelorussia and Ukraine as constituting parts of a 'Greater Russia'. And, of course, another unionist state, the UK, projects itself as British, whilst there is also a Right-wing view, which sees Britain as a 'Greater England'.

⁴⁶ *A Critique of Jeremy Corbyn and Left Social Democracy*, Part 2, parts c-f, Allan Armstrong (republicancommunist.org/blog/2017/08/11/a-critique-of-jeremy-corbyn-and-british-left-social-democracy-part-2/)