

# SUBVERSION

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## EUROPE : AFTER EXIT, TURN RIGHT?

The issue of Britain's membership of the European Union has shot to the top of the political agenda in recent months, with discussion over a mooted 'in-out' referendum dominated the mainstream media in the UK.

That the rightist majority interest within the mainstream media are driving the issue is of little surprise. However, the issue of EU membership has also long been a contentious issue for the British left also, with the possibility of a British withdrawal from the EU being one that will whet the appetite of a large bulk of the socialist & communist movement within the UK. It is therefore vital that we begin to pull apart the issues at stake in this debate.

We have to begin with an honest assessment what the European Union union is. Any Communist analysis of substance must recognise that the nature and aims

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of the EU are essentially neo-liberal; that is, it is not a free federation or loose community based on solidarity and national sovereignty, but a common market based upon a shared economic and political model, that of European 'competitiveness' in the globalised markets. It is therefore an explicitly capitalist body which represents the shared interests of European capital.

Of course, such a model means that the free movement of money, products and labour are required, and socialists would recognise both the generic internationalism of the EU and some of the vestigial social-democratic trappings of EU economic policy to be less severe than the alternative. However, we should not make the mistake - as the soft left in the UK do - of viewing such measures as the substantive basis of the EU, and therefore that the EU itself is in some way progressive.

That said, the current political framework in which this debate is being held in the UK is not based on a Communist analysis of the EU, but on a Nationalist one as supported by traditional forces of British reaction - the Conservative Party and their allies. It is a debate based not on the need to roll out the legal autonomy and democratic control of the people

over capital and society; it is, on the contrary, based on a wish to remove all legal barriers to the total domination of the British ruling class over the majority of working people in the UK. Even in the outline of the debate already apparent, one of the key areas which the Tory government want 'repatriated' is employment law, with the European Convention on Human Rights and EU immigration laws plausibly next on the shopping list. So whatever the shared aim of a withdrawal from the EU between left and right, the rationale and implications for such a move are diametrically opposed.

Some on the left have tried to support the calls for a referendum on the EU by supporting initiatives such as the Peoples Pledge, or in some cases supporting UKIP in their desire to force the issue. Although this may be the case for honest and honourable reasons, it is nonetheless a grave political error. By supporting an anti-European move led by the right, they are only strengthening a narrative that runs counter to the interests of the British working class.

Indeed, if the European Union was the major threat and barrier facing the working class movement in Britain, then that would call for a special type of Popular Front, or a broad alliance with Conservatives, UKIP and other forces from middle England; and if that was the case, then such an alliance would surely be worth it. But the reality is that this alliance is not required - and the main threat facing the working class movement in Britain is not the EU, but the very forces framing the debate around EU membership.

It would be incredibly naive to believe that if these forces were to succeed in calling a referendum, and succeed in winning it, and gaining endorsement for their narrative every step of the way, that the resulting political situation would create new political space, or democratic opportunities, for the left. The reality is that such a departure would be directed, by the ruling class, to have specific political aims - aims which are set against the interests of the mass of working people in Britain.

There is the vital and overwhelming need to create an anti-EU campaign and political current based in the left, to advance both our different aims from independence but also our different reasons and aims. Maybe in the future the left can be in a position to secure a referendum based upon these aims, and be in a position of power to direct the campaign - a 'left referendum'. That, however, is a different campaign and a different referendum. The current debate is a 'right referendum', one in which the direction of travel is towards an Atlanticist, neo-

liberal Britain set against the interests of the working class.

The real question, then, is not 'in-out' but 'out...in which direction'?



**PUBLIC MEETING & DISCUSSION:**

**"Nepal - Where Next for the Revolution?"**

Speaker: Peter Tobin (editor, Red Front Magazine)

Swarthmore Education Centre

Woodhouse Square, Leeds

Wednesday 13th February

7pm-9pm

Free Admission



Organised by the League of Communists in Britain

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# GENERAL STRIKE . . . NOT ONLY, BUT ALSO



The decision taken by the TUC in 2012– after a somewhat stilted and inconclusive debate – to establish the feasibility and possibility of a general strike in the UK is, of course, broadly welcome. At a time when other European states are seeing their working class fight back against austerity with national strikes on a regular basis, it must be considered the basic minimum for the labour movement in Britain to coordinate such a statement.

Calls to place 'pressure' on the TUC to call such a strike, and to 'mobilise' such a strike, have understandably gathered much support throughout the left. However, it would be remiss of the movement to only place our hopes on this one tactic, or to consider it a panacea.

There are a number of issues that the underline this. First, there is the fact that such behaviour falls into the traditional of trap of taking a 'leaderist' approach to industrial action – i.e that the leaderships of the TUC and of the trades unions are given a peculiar

power to call and coordinate action, whilst the activists and workers in the movement are content to give themselves the job of 'persuading' or 'calling on' the leadership to do the right thing. This tends to involve the usual litany of demonstrations, lobbies, rallies and petitions which generally fail to persuade the 'leaders' to hear the 'call'. Where is the independent, autonomous movement within the working class capable of organising the mass of workers into action without permission?

Second, if the answer to the above is the fear of the legal repercussions of action then where is the movement to remove those legal barriers? The fight to repeal and reform the laws holding back industrial action needs to be fought with much more conviction if these problems are to be *solved*. Class warfare need to be conducted in the legal field, as part of a wide-ranging struggle to advance the forces of resistance.

Third, in addition to any general strike there needs to be a fierce and multi-directional movement of resistance and action that takes in large sections of organised and non-organised workers. In this the unity of the movement behind set-piece strikes or demonstrations is not vital; what *is* vital is that workers, students, migrants, youth and all oppressed sections of society are given the confidence and tools to empower them to organise themselves. Not one struggle, but many linked struggles; not one front, but several; not one method, but all. The work for a single general strike must not be allowed to divert efforts from the work to build a hundred different struggle. So, general strike yes – but more, much more than that.



# ABOUT

## THE LEAGUE

The League of Communists in Britain was formed on 30th November 2011, and is a non-party, political organisation dedicated to grassroots political activity and practical solidarity. We are an inclusive, broad and non-sectarian platform for the non-authoritarian Left, and we include anarchists, communists, socialists and environmentalists in our affiliates. We believe that we are working in a post-Leninist politics, where the issue is not the establishment of another 'revolutionary vanguard' but the engagement of the working class with the masses, and the direct role of the masses in politics. The imposition of structure upon politics has failed, and the issue today is that of developing political consciousness and on supporting struggles against oppression and exploitation, and to work towards building a mass movement.

Communism in the 21st century is not a struggle for state power, but the struggle against it; it is the engagement in a radical, decentralised politics, which manifests itself as a challenge and resistance to exploitation and oppression on the basis of class, gender, sexuality, disability, nationality, immigration status, species and religion. Resistance and practical solidarity is the basis for all of the Leagues political work. We work to defend human rights and political autonomy, provide humanitarian assistance and support those in struggle. We publish a regular newspaper, 'Subversion', which acts as a focus for politics and organising. Our members are active in trade unions such as PCS, Unite and the NUT, and campaigning groups such as UK Uncapped, refugee support organisations and the anti-cuts movement.

We believe in a radical politics which is decentralised and broad; we do not have a structure of committees or branches, we have no conditions of affiliation or payment of dues, and we do not work on the basis of an agreed political 'line'. Instead our emphasis is on practical political work, and not on party building. Affiliation is open to anyone, regardless of membership of other organisations, who agrees with our core mission. statement and signs our equalities disclaimer. Affiliation costs £1 per month.



### JOIN THE LEAGUE!

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