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## Chris Knight of the Radical Anthropology Group responds to criticisms

'Desperate stratagems' was the title of a recent *Weekly Worker* article by Nick Rogers ([November 13](#)). Was the author referring to the frantic recent efforts of the world's bankers to avoid financial meltdown? Or the increasingly desperate stratagems of governments to shore up the system they serve? Unfortunately, no.

Like so many contributors to the *Weekly Worker* these days, Nick chooses to attack his closest comrades - this time in a rambling exercise in nit-picking, point-scoring and pseudo-academic, philosophical navel-gazing. Workers faced with the imminent threat of redundancies, repossessions and desperate poverty need not look to Britain's communists for a solution. Real communists, argues Nick, have more important things to do. We must first address "the difficult and arduous task" of ... well ... arranging and re-arranging our thoughts. We haven't yet refined our programme! The collapse of the banking system has caught us by surprise! The communists aren't ready yet! Give us a few more years to recruit sufficient members! Give us time to do the necessary theoretical work!

According to Nick, the programme of agitprop street actions currently being staged by a network of activists, including myself, in the name of 'the Government of the Dead' smacks of "desperation". We are accused of organising a Halloween Dancing on the Grave of Capitalism event at Canary Wharf which 'only' attracted some 300 souls - including four large effigies ('Horsemen of the Apocalypse') and a 20-strong samba band, inexplicably described by Nick as "depleted in numbers".<sup>1</sup>

To buttress his claim about our 'confused' political message, Nick fails to mention the enormous, beautifully designed banner dominating the entire evening's proceedings - 'Capitalism isn't working - another world is possible'. So very few helpers were on hand at the moment Nick arrived (with exemplary Bolshevik discipline) at 5pm that he "ended up carrying one of the excellently designed effigies". All this is supposed to count as criticism.

Nick's strangely self-contradictory article attacks me on three grounds. First, I am accused of publicly predicting that the worldwide communist revolution would be accomplished in its entirety at Canary Wharf on the evening of October 31 2008. Second, I am accused of siding with the top military brass in Afghanistan, supporting an imperialist war. Finally, I am accused of "nostalgia" in drawing on my scientific research as a source of activist inspiration under present conditions. I let me deal with these allegations in turn

## Fighting Fund No handouts

The economic crisis is continuing to cause casualties as I write, with two retail giants, Woolworths and MFI, going into administration and thousands of jobs lost. Alistair Darling's cut in VAT, to be financed by £118 billion of borrowing, obviously came a little too late for them (I suspect they will not be the last victims either).

While the reduction in VAT will ease some cash flow problems, it will certainly not help the *Weekly Worker* much - we don't pay VAT on printing, for example. In other words, we can't expect any state handouts. As always, we rely only on our readers and supporters to keep us going.

And this week we had a big boost with a £100 cheque from comrade LJ (funded, ironically, from his redundancy payment). There were also donations from HT (£25), TG and FG (£20 each), plus three tenners - from comrades RF, CG and FS. We can also add two standing order gifts: £20 from GD and £10 from DO.

All this takes our total up to £919 towards our £1,000 target for November. But there are only three days to go. We urgently need comrades to bring or mail us a cheque or postal order straightaway.

Better still, go online and make use of our PayPal facility. Last week we had 18,910 internet readers, but not one of them thought to make a donation.

Let me deal with these allegations in turn.

Why proclaim 'the start of the revolution'? Street theatre needs to be taken as street theatre - unlike scientific reporting, it gives you freedom to dream, to imagine, to explore.

My main political inspiration has always been the real, living Bolshevism that culminated in the October revolution of 1917. Anarchists, socialists, communists, pacifists, libertarians and revolutionaries of every kind found unity under the banner, 'All power to the soviets!', transcending their former differences. The sciences and arts were in revolutionary ferment, the most daring musicians, painters, poets and others bitterly opposed to the carnage of World War I and were correspondingly sympathetic to Bolshevism, with its call for fraternisation across the trenches. Following the insurrection, the 'futurists' and their allies sought to spread the flames of mutiny and internationalism by all possible means, relying especially on the combination of street theatre, art and revolutionary education dubbed 'agitprop'.

Communists today who seem content to churn out turgid prose in small print have much to learn. Nick concedes that our Halloween event was "decent enough street theatre", adding for good measure that "an attempt to use Halloween to focus attention on the failures of capitalism and the possibility of an alternative future via the platform of street theatre is valid". Well, that is good news.

In point of fact, the Halloween event was a stunning success - as a brief glance at the Indymedia video footage will confirm.<sup>2</sup> Across the entire Canary Wharf estate, the bosses were so worried that they gave their employees the afternoon off! The pavement outside Lehman Brothers is possibly the most intensively surveyed, heavily policed bits of real estate on the planet. Seasoned activists were confidently predicting we would be dragged off within minutes. Not quite everything worked out quite as we had initially planned. Yet under the circumstances, the achievement was remarkable. Nick himself, as he carried aloft one of our effigies, can take some of the credit. We sent out a signal: we're back on the scene.

I hereby invite readers of the *Weekly Worker* to participate in the Government of the Dead's future efforts, hopefully no less "valid". No revolution can be won in a day (did I really claim that, even in my wilder moments?). The coming revolution will need months, possibly years or even decades. Maybe, though, we have made a start. Impending actions are likely to include an attempt to stop the meeting in London of the G20 scheduled for late April 2009. The street theatre component will comprise the trial and public execution of capitalism by beheading, with a final speech of repentance from the guilty party. All are welcome to put their charges and have their say. Of course, we cannot guarantee that any of this will culminate eventually in socialist revolution. But, yes, Nick, that's generally the plan. Our theoretical work has been sufficiently done. Let us now move from theory to practice.

Why appeal to British troops in Afghanistan? In his article, Nick depicts me as a nationalist warmonger offering support to Britain's military intervention in Afghanistan. Such wilful misrepresentation is simply a disgrace. In my letter I called the conflict "this disgusting imperialist war", continuing: "Break with American imperialism! Stop invading other people's countries! Arm the working class! Defend women's rights! All weapons to be placed under the control of women's anti-rape militias!" (October 9).

In what sense is this support for imperialism? Instead of raising the banner of revolutionary internationalism, Nick apparently rests content with choosing between two evils - in this case taking sides with the Taliban.

I fail to understand how simple defence of the Taliban can possibly be construed as communist in any sense. Yes, the Taliban's Islamic fighters - however reactionary their politics - have displayed courage and most certainly have the right to take up arms in defence of their country. As a communist, I welcome the defeat of 'my own' army in an imperialist war. In the letter to which Nick objects, I explained: "History teaches us that defeat in a major war constitutes the gravest possible threat to the stability and constitutional legitimacy of the regime or regimes held responsible." No honest reader of the *Weekly Worker* can possibly have mistaken my meaning here. Defeat in Afghanistan

Unlike Woolies, we will not go under. We know that there will always be comrades prepared to make the necessary sacrifices. But they could do with some more help. Please give us what you can - to reach us by 12 noon on Monday December 1.

Robbie Rix

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now stares the US and British top brass in the face. President-elect Barack Obama may demand thousands more British troops to help turn the tide, but 'our' generals seem reluctant to comply. Their soldiers on the ground are asking too many awkward questions already.

Across Europe and America, do we prepare to make a class appeal to these disaffected troops? Do we urge that they refuse to fight in a war that is both unwinnable and morally despicable? Of course we do! But on what programme? Nick denounces as 'reactionary' my call for "an internationally coordinated people's war" against western and all other forms of terrorism, Islamic varieties included. As I understand it, Nick advocates either neutrality or outright support for the Taliban. The idea that either stance could possibly win over 'our' troops - let alone the wider working class - is simply too absurd to be worth dwelling on.

Finally, what about the moon? Why use 'human revolution' theory as a guide to current political practice?

Central to Marxism is the dialectical method. Among other things, this entails the idea that historical time is not simply linear. Instead, we should think of a spiral. The 'human revolution' gave us language and culture in the distant past. That is the scientific theory for which I have become best known.

But at no point have I ever conceptualised this momentous event as confined merely to humanity's past. The relevance of dialectical materialism - the relevance of the theory that evolution is not purely gradual, but involves sudden 'leaps' - is more immediate. I know that the coming revolution can be won - because in a real sense we have won it already. Communism, if successfully established in the future, will be a repetition on a higher plane of the communism of our hunter-gatherer ancestors.

Nick says this cannot be true. Among other complicating factors, he cites my own work elucidating the moon's centrality to the lives of hunter-gatherers. This feature, writes Nick, cannot possibly be re-established because, as he puts it, "Today in most capitalist societies light pollution means the moon can barely be seen." Anyway, observes Nick, we are all wage-slaves. To this, I can only say, yes, Nick. We are indeed wage-slaves. But it is when the slave-masters are in disarray that slaves have the best chance of setting themselves free. By all means base yourself on the realities of capitalism, but do not stop there. Our vision is of a world turned upside down. Light pollution is not just a god-given, unalterable fact. Like other forms of environmental vandalism and pollution, it is a product of capitalist chaos and greed. In other words, it is something to fight against.

For 4,000 million years, the moon has been circling above us, governing the tides and acting as Earth's living pulse. Without it, we would not be here. If the only known living planet survives, it will be as one commonwealth, beating to the rhythms of sun, moon and tides, our sustainable future guaranteed by a united, fully conscious populace.

I see no reason at all why future generations should not want their children to look up each month to see the Milky Way, Orion and the Plough. I see no reason to assume automatically that our current 24/7 'time is money' clocks must govern our lives for all future generations, long after the associated system of wage-slavery has become a distant memory<sup>3</sup>.

Radical Anthropology Group: [www.radicalanthropologygroup.org](http://www.radicalanthropologygroup.org)

## Notes

1. See [graveyard.at](http://graveyard.at)
2. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=i4VylvlqcVY&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i4VylvlqcVY&feature=related)
3. For example, see details of the Aluna project at [www.alunatime.org](http://www.alunatime.org)

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