



weekly worker

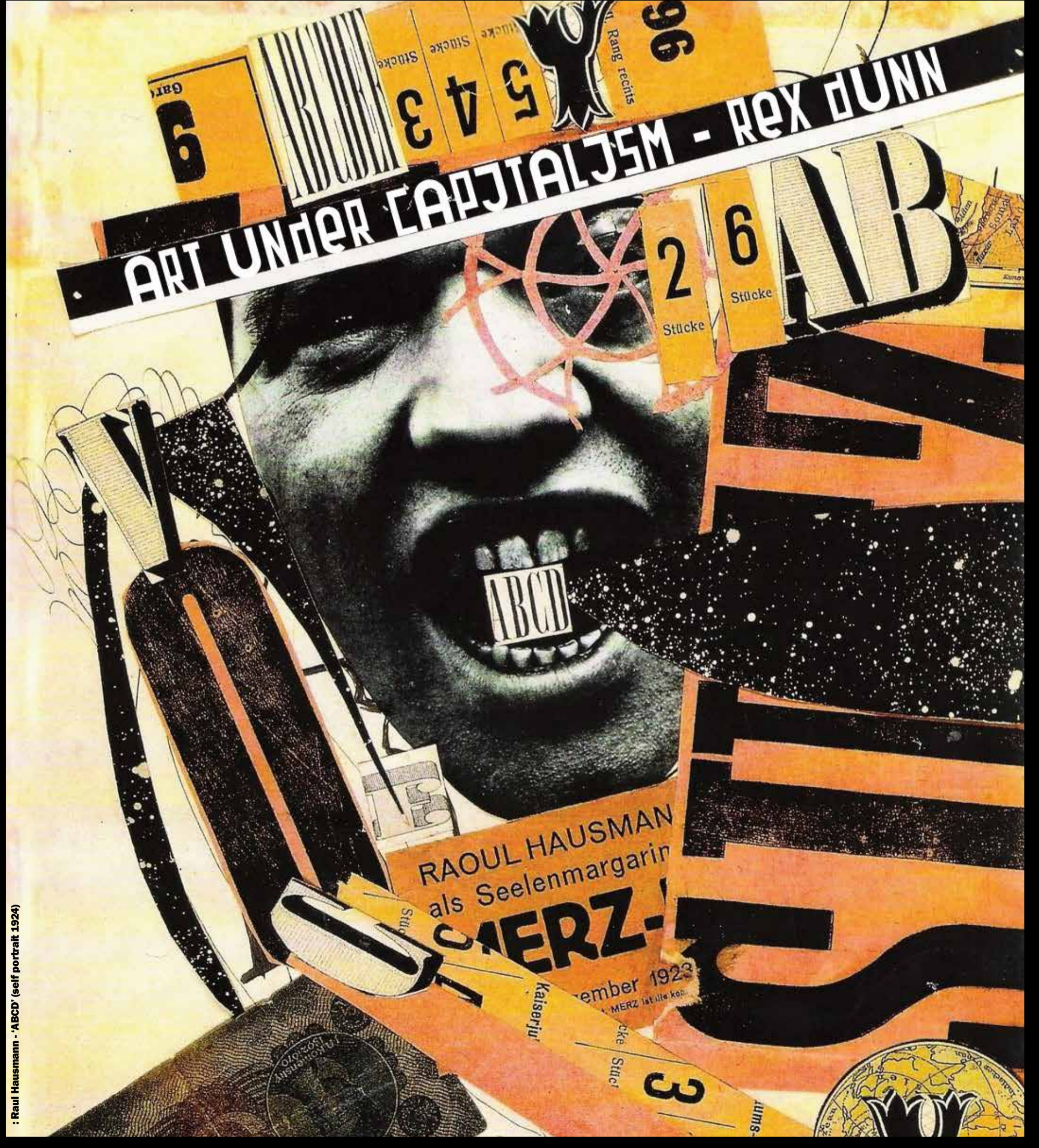
Zapatistas and overcoming capitalism: Mike Macnair reviews John Holloway

- Tony Greenstein's trial
- Official anti-racism
- Iranian workers
- Corbynite economics

No 1108 Thursday May 26 2016

Towards a Communist Party of the European Union

£1/€1.10



: Raul Hausmann - 'ABCD' (self portrait 1924)

LETTERS



Letters may have been shortened because of space. Some names may have been changed

All out

On May 23 her majesty's treasury produced an analysis on the immediate impact of leaving the European Union. It was shocking reading. In the event of an exit vote, the gross domestic product would fall by between 3.6% and 6%. This is a serious recession on any estimates. Average wages will fall by 2.8% or £780 a year and unemployment will rise by 500,000. This will increase poverty levels amongst the poorest sections of society.

Obviously, this is an attempt to bully the working class into voting to 'remain' in the EU. Should workers be frightened by the threats emanating from George Osborne, the treasury and the City of London into voting for dodgy Dave's dirty little deal? Certainly not. With or without threats, workers should refuse point blank to support the Tory demands. Let them stew in their own juice.

However, it would be irresponsible to ignore the threat. It is credible. We don't know whether these estimates are exaggerated. But it makes sense to think that capital and the City of London are planning to take revenge if we vote to leave. If there is an exit vote there will be retribution. The Tory government will enjoy imposing greater austerity and blaming us for bringing it on ourselves.

There is no way we can vote for exit. Workers have been promised more immigration controls, creating more division, encouraging greater racism and hence lower wages. Now we have been promised the additional 'benefit' of more unemployment and lower pay. Voting exit would be like pouring a pot of crap on your own head. Why would anybody do that?

This referendum is a fight between the Tories. Nothing good can come of it. We should not be turkeys voting for a blue Christmas. We should not be taken in by 'parliamentary cretinism', which thinks the vote is the only - or even the main - decider, rather than the class struggle. The day after the votes are counted the struggle will have to continue. If there is an exit vote the working class will be facing the attacks promised by HM treasury, the Bank of England and the City of London.

So it is sensible to prepare for this danger. Indeed it would be irresponsible for the working class not to plan for dealing with the attacks that will follow an exit vote. The working class movement will have to take strike action to defend ourselves. It would have to be generalised political strike action in the face of a general attack on the working class. A general strike is the only sensible and reasonable response to the Tory threats.

Steve Freeman

Left Unity and Rise

Effective

Johan Petter Andresen from Norway asks about your position on the European Union (Letters, January 14).

Presumably your organisation opposes the retaining by Britain of nuclear weapons and thus the replacement of Trident. Obviously you're against the maintenance of any standing armed forces by any of our bourgeois governments on behalf of their innately ruthless and unflinchingly aggressive capitalist/imperialist state. Equally I assume you're entirely antagonistic to the existence and therefore any prolonging of the proxy-imperialist and thus highly dangerous Nato.

However, if I understand these overall matters correctly, in stark contrast the CPGB regards UK membership of the EU as necessary,

desirable and therefore to be tacitly supported until such time as we reach a stage of European-wide revolutionary consciousness and associated anti-establishment action that will allow the dismantling and replacement of what is, in its very essence, that 'neocentric' set-up and thus anti-working class gang of countries. Not to put too fine a point on things, those being the same countries and the self-same EU that will send Nato troops in support any UK government faced with a Marxist-Leninist-driven revolutionary takeover!

Once again, if correct in my understanding, it seems to me this is a massively confused and ridiculously contradictory position for you to take. Alongside a lack of any inspirational and uplifting 'messaging', this is not the stuff that will result in the building of an effective revolutionary movement via a truly communist party here in the modern-day UK.

Bruno Kretzschmar
email

Betrayal

Paul Demarty asked whether there had been any recent mention of Syriza on the Socialist Resistance website, as an example ('Collective amnesia', May 19). Coincidentally, among my holiday catch-up reading was an article by Alan Thornett, entitled 'A debate opens up on Tsipras capitulation' in the spring 2015 *Socialist Resistance*. It raises issues of relevance to debates and discussions within the communist movement and within the pages of the *Weekly Worker*.

I too was shocked at the speed and scale of the Syriza capitulation, especially following the resounding 61% referendum vote to reject the terms of the EU 'deal' - surely a substantial mass democratic basis for a programme and campaign of resistance and for pro-working class policies. I would note that, even before they were elected to office, the Greek Communist Party (KKE) subjected Syriza to the most devastating and harshest of critiques, arguing that this latest manifestation of social democracy would subject the Greek people to the most appalling and cruel betrayals. Many on the left in this country (and even some communists) winced at the ferocity of the KKE polemic and felt Syriza should be given a fair wind, that its election might stimulate the development of further and deeper left advances, and might potentially open up the road to socialism. I wonder if even the KKE predicted just how rapidly and completely Syriza would collapse and 'transform' into a respectable implementer of austerity.

Alan wheels out the tired and worn Trotskyist mantras that the failure of Syriza was a "collapse in leadership" and a "failure to prepare your supporters and your electoral base". I am not sure that is any way adequate as explanation or analysis.

Alan states elsewhere that "there is no guarantee that any party, or leadership, radical left or even revolutionary, will stay the course in such conditions of harsh and uncharted waters" and that this emphasises the "importance of the position such parties place on the key political issues involved and the ability of the party to hold its leadership to account in relation to such policy issues". This seems to be a much more valid position. We may well face similar issues if and when a Corbyn/McDonnell government is ever elected in this country - although what stripe the leadership will be wearing then is anyone's guess. It probably will not be revolutionary or even anti-capitalist, judging by (ex-Trotskyist) McDonnell's recent remarks about "transforming capitalism".

Syriza seemed to be a relatively democratic party, so it appears simplistic in the extreme to ascribe the

collapse to "leadership capitulation" and not ask some very hard questions of the membership. Just 25 out of the 149 of the pre-September 2015 election Syriza MPs defected in opposition to the capitulation to form Popular Unity. Syriza nonetheless won 145 seats (including the 50-seat top-up), down slightly on previously. Popular Unity won only 2.86% of the vote.

Where was the Syriza membership in all this? Confused, misled, disarmed? Waiting for the 'correct' (Trotskyist!) leadership? This actually shows contempt for 'the masses' and their potential role and capacity to shape and change history. It seems to me that, despite the 61% 'no' vote in the referendum, the problem with Syriza was far wider than just its leadership, and extended to the majority of its membership and electoral base.

It is a characteristic of 'bourgeois democracy' that 'bourgeois political parties' (of which Syriza undoubtedly is and always was) tend to reflect rather than change prevailing values, prejudices and attitudes within the population. So the failure of Syriza is perhaps the failure of the revolutionary left to connect and engage with the mass of the population, rather than a 'betrayal of leadership'.

In an interesting contribution in the same article, Alan argues that the situation in Greece "posed the possibility of a workers' government. A government, though taking office with a parliamentary election, with capitalism still intact, that would act consistently in the interests of the working class, even if that meant taking actions in order to defend itself and implement its programme that would be contrary to the capitalist mode of production and take it in a socialist direction."

I like this concept and find it a clearer, simpler and sharper formulation than, say, the Communist Party of Britain's formulation of "a leftwing government at Westminster, based on a socialist, Labour, communist and progressive majority at the polls" (*Britain's road to socialism* 2011). I find this far too woolly and clumsy and far from adequate, when we might be thinking of testing and challenging a future Corbyn/McDonnell government.

The old Communist Party of Great Britain's 1977 *BRS* contained a clearer and more positive formulation of a left government, which would be defined by "its attitude to the class struggle and the respective classes. It would tackle the economic problems in the interests of the working people and in the process shift the balance of class forces against the big capitalists and their allies."

Unfortunately, this positive formulation got caught up in the factional divisions in the 1980s, where opponents of the *BRS* and the concept of the Broad Democratic Alliance insisted that fighting for economic, political and social rights as intrinsically important and valuable in themselves was "revisionist" and "reformist" and the necessary alliance had to be defined (and restricted) as being "anti-monopoly".

The subtlety and the dialectic of the 1977 *BRS*, where a progressive alliance was to be built and developed on the basis of pro-people and pro-working class policies and which addressed the progressive needs of people "which emerge out of areas of oppression not always directly connected with the relations of production", was lost in the first versions of the *BRS* produced by the CPB.

The 1977 *BRS* and its defenders always recognised that "the monopolies are the main enemy in the way of democratic, economic and social progress" and "that the economic and class content of the Broad Democratic Alliance had to be anti-monopoly in character". But the BDA should never

be reduced to its economic and class content, and progressive forces are motivated by factors not directly related to economics and class, even though they may ultimately have a relationship with that base. It is astonishing in 2016 to think that such frankly hesitant concepts were so controversial in the 1980s and ultimately ripped the CPGB apart.

The concept of "democracy" encapsulates the revolutionary dialectic. As a positive concept, it has a very broad, even instinctive, appeal and can motivate very substantial sections of the population to defend and extend it, hundreds of thousands times more in number than those who are persuaded of Marxist ideas. We recognise, however, that democracy has a class content, in that real democracy must inevitably be limited, while a minority class controls most of economic, social and cultural life. The overthrow of that minority rule is a necessary, but not of itself a sufficient, condition to ensure the flowering of democracy in its fullest sense. The experience of the socialist countries has shown us that.

In the same way, emancipation along the lines of gender, race, ethnicity, nation, species, ecology, personal beliefs, age, ability/disability, lifestyle choices, etc, will ultimately require socialist revolution, but, unless these struggles are part of and distinctive in the revolution and in the future society, there is no guarantee that full and comprehensive emancipation will ever be achieved. They need to be part of the broad progressive alliance and coalition, but in their own right and distinctiveness, and not restricted or reduced to being "anti-monopoly".

I think it is important in a 'bourgeois democracy' that socialists/communists/revolutionaries engage in the democratic process, both to defend democratic values, rights and institutions as valuable and important in themselves, and to extend them. Such rights and freedoms - limited and reversible as they are - also provide important space and opportunity for us to put our ideas forward and for them to be tested with the wider population.

The corollary is that it is right to express a view as to which, if any, candidates from 'bourgeois' parties are preferable, on any government to be formed from such parties, to consider standing in our own right in elections, and to seek to place demands on and pressure any government in office. Not to do so would be to abandon a vast amount of terrain to the ruling class and disconnect us from 95% of our class.

In the final part of his article, Alan goes on to blame "Eurocommunism" and "left Europeanism" as principal political factors behind Tsipras's capitulation. This again repeats the 'leadership betrayed the masses' Trotskyist dogma. Alan gives a fair definition of 'Eurocommunism' by quoting one of its key developers, Santiago Carrillo of the Communist Party of Spain. It is instructive that the three communist parties most identified with Eurocommunism (those of Spain, France and Italy) had suffered the direct impact of fascism and Nazism, the complete destruction of bourgeois democratic norms and institutions, and the open terrorism and violence of the state.

Carrillo stated: "The aim was to elaborate a solid conception of democratising the apparatus of the state, transforming it into a valid tool for constructing a socialist society, without needing to destroy it radically by force." This echoed Karl Marx in *The civil war in France*, when he said the task was to "convert universal suffrage from a means of deception into an instrument of emancipation".

There is a basic political contradiction in Alan's article. He earlier referred positively to the concept

of a "workers' government" elected "within capitalism", its possibility in Greece, and the fact that it would have to work within the rules and institutions of capitalism - including, presumably, the institutions and norms of bourgeois democracy. No call here from Alan for the "overthrow and smashing of the parliamentary state". Yet he separately ascribes the capitulation of Syriza to "Eurocommunism", which he himself quotes (and defines) as aiming to "transform" the state in order to "construct a socialist society". Was this ever part of Syriza's programme? 'If only', one might say.

There is clearly a legitimate debate within the revolutionary left, broadly defined, as to how far a workers' or a progressive left government could actually go in "democratising and transforming the capitalist state", as to whether this could ever lead to its complete transformation, or would at some point raise the need for its dismantling and replacement by a "completely new and democratic working class state" (Engels, preface to *Civil war in France*).

Andrew Northall

Kettering

Our slogan

My recent contact with Charley Allan, Labour Party member and *Morning Star* columnist, caused me strain. He wants to basically lie to people on the subject of immigration and pander to the Ukip analysis, which he suggests is widely accepted within the 'working class'. I don't accept this type of politics. What does it amount to for a start? Apart from mimicking the lies and deception of Ukip and the general media line, what is the actual structural outcome? There is no outcome. It's just useless chatter. It doesn't improve the situation for our domestic population.

What it actually is, is misdirection, keeping the subject on immigration when we should be focused on social chaos, which is the result of government malice and determination to impoverish millions of people. Whatever economic destruction is wreaked on our immigrant population is ultimately intended to be wreaked on our domestic population. We share the same interests as those from all other national communities. This is a government war against both the domestic population and our immigrant population.

By standing aside, whilst people in our communities are viciously targeted by the government and abused in the media, we are laying ourselves open to such a fate ourselves in the future. We must stand together with all our fellow citizens. An attack on one section of our communities is an attack on all of us. We are all immigrants. That's our message, that's our slogan.

Elijah Traven

Hull

Marxist feet

I'm disappointed that we still have people like Phil Sharpe who venerate the Russian Revolution as "the one and only genuine proletarian revolution" (Letters, May 19). To justify this it becomes necessary to speculate upon the motives of the Bolsheviks in dissolving the Constituent Assembly and reach the conclusion it had nothing at all to do with the fact that they never gained a majority of seats! Plus, I thought it long established that the Bolsheviks had no intention of delivering 'proletarian democracy' to the soviets, with the historic record showing that the dismantling and emasculation of the soviets began within a matter of days of the Bolshevik seizure of power. But more pertinently, Phil Sharpe continues the Bolshevik tradition of redefining Marxian economics and distorting the vision of socialism.

Now let's be clear, the Socialist Party of Great Britain, to which I belong, has its own differences with Hillel Ticktin (www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/video/did-trotsky-point-way-socialism), but its feet are set upon more firm Marxist ground than Phil.

Conventional economics defines itself as the study of the allocation of limited resources amongst competing wants, where these are greater than resources, and teaches that markets and prices arose as the best way to do this. In fact, since it assumes that human wants are infinite, it teaches that scarcity and markets and prices will always exist. For Phil the 'hidden hand' of the market will still determine what, where and how things will be produced and distributed. Any society which retains market mechanisms just can't be regarded as socialist, at least not without violating the original, historical meaning of the word. Phil's brand of market socialism (managed capitalism) has nothing to do with socialism as envisaged by Marx and Engels.

Once more we have someone purporting to be a socialist arguing that prices are required to evaluate externalities and the cost-benefit of various production processes - something they claim can only be determined by a prices system. Phil rejects the view that, given the abolition of capitalism, enough to satisfy people's needs could be produced and that therefore a socialist society would not have to price or ration goods, but could implement the principle of 'From each according to their ability, to each according to their needs'. Phil's 'socialism' is the equivalent of a square circle.

Marxian socialism is based on associations of free individuals in a society with no commodity, no money, no wage labour, no state. Men and women will never be free from exploitation and oppression until all work is voluntary and access to all goods and services is free. This is a practical proposition now. Tinkering with administrative forms is of no use. Buying and selling must be abolished. The wage packet 'permission to live' must be abolished.

I'll leave the final words to Hillel (about which I still possess some reservations over the methods on how to deal with any shortages):

"As Marx makes clear in the *Gotha programme* and elsewhere, value and so price and hence money is abolished under socialism. This does not necessarily mean that there may not be tokens used for items which are not yet in sufficient supply for all or may never be, like Mediterranean homes. The society will gradually distribute more and more goods on a free basis, beginning with those items which are communal because they are natural monopolies or so costly that they require the intervention of society to ensure provision like transport, housing, water and power" (Hillel H Ticktin *Critique* Vol 25, No1, 1997).

Alan Johnstone
SPGB

Tanked up

Despite being a long-time member of the Socialist Party and disliking a lot of your attitudes, I have been an on-off reader of the *Weekly Worker* for around 20 years - although lately I only glance through and read an occasional article. I don't find your paper very inspiring any more. I say this, as I get the impression that your members still think it is the greatest thing since sliced bread. Get real!

I find that my experience is common. I know a lot of people on the left in London. The standard line on the *Weekly Worker* these days is it 'used to be entertaining, now not so good'. I suspect your web traffic and paid circulation is much more modest than in the past.

I used to read the paper from cover

to cover because I wanted to know what was going on in the left (Socialist Labour Party, Socialist Alliance and so on). Sometimes I knew the information was suspect, but, in general, it was useful and informative. I also used to read it because I was interested in what the CPGB thought about X. You had a 'Party notes' column by Mark Fischer that threaded the key themes of the issue together. Often, I found it bloody annoying, but the bugger could write and did sum up your politics well. These days, it's more difficult to deduce what your politics actually are.

That's the problem with using one-man self-publicists, such as Tony Greenstein. These people have no interest in your broader politics and the quality of your paper suffers by giving them keynote articles (I was actually looking forward to reading Mark Fischer dissect the Alliance for Workers' Liberty's latest crap on anti-Semitism).

It's obvious that you have been screwed over by the internet. Often there's not a lot of point detailing what's going on in the left, as it has already been picked over on the internet and social media. During the Socialist Workers Party's recent crises you have been completely behind the curve and I didn't bother reading much of your commentary.

Many leftwing events happen over the weekend. By the time you lot get your act together on the next Thursday/Friday, anything controversial has been digested by those of us who are interested. By the time your commentary becomes available it's old news. You obviously have no clue about using the internet and social media alongside your printed material, although you're not alone in that.

Being a retired printer, I have to say that the presentation of your paper is absolutely appalling. You're not alone on the left on this, but you are the worst! The typography is so bad on occasions that my bifocals can't cope! It might be an idea to tell your layout 'artist' that the point of laying out is to help the reader and draw them into the page, not to hammer the elements into submission so that they all look murdered. As for the pictures, who researches all this shit? The pictures are either irrelevant, downright weird or simply don't relate to the story. I once read an article that said how it would be great to have full colour in the paper. I remember thinking it might be an idea if you knew how to use black and white to begin with.

It's a shame, really. You once had one of the most visually striking papers on the left with *The Leninist*. It wasn't bad for a bunch of tankies. With the *Weekly Worker*, your paper has no real sense of purpose any more, combined with an obvious lack of professionalisation (which Lenin was rather keen on). I hope you can improve, for your sakes.

Victor Jenkins
London

Reds

The Red Party will hold its first convention on June 17-19, in which members will debate policy, tactics and strategy, ratify a constitution and programme, and hold elections for leading committees. The convention will be held via teleconference. Those who are interested in the project of uniting the American left into a communist party worthy of the name are invited to attend as observers.

For more information, see www.red-party.com.

Red Party
USA

Impression

It was inevitable that in summarising my full response to Mike Macnair, to comply with the space requirements for publication in the paper, I would

leave some points poorly explained ('Social democratic stepping stone', May 19). I would encourage readers to read the full version, on my blog (<http://bit.ly/boffywindmills>). However, there are some aspects of the further edited summary, which I think directly conflict with even the summarised version I submitted, and which I would therefore like to clarify.

Firstly, at the start of the article you show a picture of an engineering shop with rows of industrial workers, and the caption, "Functioning capitalists". This gives the wrong impression - that I was saying that all workers are functioning capitalists. All functioning capitalists are workers, but not all workers are functioning capitalists. To use Marx's analogy, the functioning capitalist is like the conductor in an orchestra. Their function is to get the optimal performance out of instruments and musicians. Moreover, within socialised capital, all workers "from manager down to the last day-labourer", as Marx puts it, become objectively the representatives of that socialised capital, and that is most apparent within the worker-owned cooperatives. However, even within such a cooperative, not every worker carries out the role of functioning capitalist, any more than in an orchestra every musician is a conductor!

A similar wrong impression is conveyed in relation to the division between industrial capital and interest-bearing capital. I was attempting to show that Mike's division in this regard into industrial capital (in the shape of things like car factories) and financial capital (in the shape of banks, etc) was wrong. A bank can be just as much a socialised industrial capital as a car factory. A bank needs to accumulate capital as much as a car factory, and the extent to which accumulation is hindered by the payment of dividends to its shareholders affects it as much as such limitations affect a car factory. It is the division between the socialised industrial capital (which operates within the circuit of capital) that needs to accumulate capital, and the interest-bearing capital (which operates outside the circuit of capital), in the shape of shareholders, bondholders etc, which is the objective division of material interests that Marx describes, and which I was setting out.

So Marx writes: "These two forms - interest and profit of enterprise - exist only as opposites. Hence, they are not related to surplus value, of which they are but parts placed under different categories, heads or names, but rather to one another. It is because one portion of profit turns into interest that the other appears as profit of enterprise ... On the other hand, profit of enterprise is not related as an opposite to wage-labour, but only to interest ... Firstly, assuming the average profit to be given, the rate of the profit of enterprise is not determined by wages, but by the rate of interest. It is high or low in inverse proportion to it."

But the wrong impression is given in the edited response which says: "Productive capital seeks to maximise the profit of the enterprise, whilst minimising rent, interest and taxes." The phrase "profit of the enterprise" suggests only profit maximisation in the usual sense of the term, whereas I used the term "profit of enterprise", which is the specific term that Marx develops to describe the particular type of revenue that accrues to industrial capital, only after the payment of rent, interest and taxes. In other words, after shareholders have been paid dividends, bondholders their coupon, banks their loan interest, corporate executives their stipends and so on. It is the revenue that becomes available to the socialised capital for use as capital accumulation.

Arthur Bough
email

ACTION

CPGB podcasts

Every Monday we upload a podcast commenting on the current political situation. In addition, the site features voice files of public meetings and other events: <http://cpgb.org.uk/home/podcasts>.

London Communist Forum

Sunday May 29, 5pm: Weekly political report from CPGB Provisional Central Committee, followed by open discussion and reading group. Calthorpe Arms, 252 Grays Inn Road, London WC1. Study of Ralph Miliband's *Parliamentary socialism*. This meeting: chapter 5 ('The general strike'), section 2: 'The fear of success'. Organised by CPGB: www.cpgb.org.uk; Labour Party Marxists: www.labourpartymarxists.org.uk.

Radical Anthropology Group

Tuesday May 31, 6.45pm: Introduction to social and biological anthropology, Daryll Forde seminar room, Anthropology Building, 14 Tavitt Street, off Gordon Square, London WC1. 'The cosmic vagina: discovery, death and the purification of life among the Maori'. Speaker: Dave Robinson. Organised by Radical Anthropology Group: radicalanthropologygroup.org.

No to austerity

Thursday May 26, 6pm: Public meeting, Queen's Park Community Centre, 52 Marlborough Road, Bedford MK40. Speaker: shadow chancellor John McDonnell. Organised by Momentum Bedford: www.facebook.com/MomentumBeds.

Save Lewisham libraries

Saturday May 28, 8pm: Benefit gig, Old Tiger's Head, Lee, London SE12. Organised by Save Lewisham Libraries: <http://savelewishamlibraries.blogspot.co.uk>.

Unofficial war artist

Ends Monday May 30: New exhibition of Peter Kennard's work, Imperial War Museum, Lambeth Road, London SE1. Free entry. Organised by Imperial War Museum: www.iwm.org.uk/exhibitions/iwm-london/peter-kennard.

Stop the fascists

Saturday June 4, 10am: Anti-fascist counterdemonstration. Assemble outside railway station, Queens Road, Brighton BN1. Organised by Brighton Anti-Fascists: www.facebook.com/Brighton-Antifascists-253814721337252.

Bursary or bust

Saturday June 4, 1pm: Protest march to save NHS bursaries. Assemble St Thomas's Hospital, Westminster Bridge Road, London SE1. Organised by Bursary or Bust: www.facebook.com/bursaryorbust.

The secret war against apartheid

Saturday June 4, 6pm: Meeting, Marx Memorial Library, 37A Clerkenwell Green, London EC1. Speaker: Ronnie Kasrils. Organised by Marx Memorial Library: www.marxlibrary.org.uk.

Islamophobia and civil liberties

Saturday June 4, 11am to 6pm: National conference, Goldsmiths, University of London, London SE14. Hosted by Students Not Suspects: www.facebook.com/StudentsNotSuspects.

Momentum youth and students conference

Sunday June 5, 10:30am-6:30pm: All Momentum members under 30 urged to attend. Venue: University of Manchester Students Union, Steve Biko Building, Oxford Road. <https://www.facebook.com/events/1721818888102312/>. info@peoplesmomentum.com

People's Chilcot Tribunal

Wednesday June 8, 3pm to 7pm: Public event, Amnesty International Human Rights Action Centre, auditorium, 17-25 New Inn Yard, London EC2. Organised by Stop the War Coalition: www.stopwar.org.uk.

Peace in the Park

Saturday June 11, 12 noon to 8pm: Annual outdoor summer event of art, music and celebration for peace and justice. Ponderosa Park, Oxford Street, Sheffield S6. Organised by Peace in the Park: www.peaceinthepark.org.uk.

Social justice in old age

Tuesday June 14, 2pm: National pensioners conference, Winter Gardens, 97 Church Street, Blackpool. Opening rally with John McDonnell. Organised by National Pensioners Convention: <http://npcuk.org>.

Imperialism centenary

Thursday June 16, 7pm: Lecture, Marx Memorial Library, 37A Clerkenwell Green, London, EC1. Speaker: Andrew Murray, marking 100 years since Lenin wrote *Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism*. Organised by Marx Memorial Library: www.marxlibrary.org.uk

End the arms trade

Thursday July 7, 6.30pm: Public meeting, small meeting room, Friends House, 173-177 Euston Road, London NW1. Organised by Campaign Against the Arms Trade: www.caat.org.uk.

For a world without arms

Sunday July 10, 11am to 5pm: Conference, St Hilda's East Community Centre, 8 Club Row, London E2. Organised by Campaign Against the Arms Trade: www.caat.org.uk.

CPGB wills

Remember the CPGB and keep the struggle going. Put our party's name and address, together with the amount you wish to leave, in your will. If you need further help, do not hesitate to contact us.

LABOUR



Tony Greenstein: on trial

Right's heresy hunt

If I am anti-Semitic, so is the Israeli press, writes Tony Greenstein

In 1633 Galileo was convicted for heresy by the Inquisition for arguing in support of the Copernican belief that the earth revolved around the sun. This was despite the fact that most of the scientists and philosophers at the time were convinced that the Aristotelian concept of a stationary earth, around which the sun and planets moved, was false.

Galileo's problem was that scientific evidence, logic and observation conflicted with the ideological needs of the system he lived under. A reordering of the heavens challenged the very basis of the theological precepts by which papal rule was maintained.

Galileo wrote to the German mathematician, Johannes Kepler: "What would you say of the learned here, who, replete with the pertinacity of the asp, have steadfastly refused to cast a glance through the telescope? What shall we make of this? Shall we laugh, or shall we cry?"

I am reminded of Galileo's travails, since the heresy hunt in the Labour Party makes it an expulsion offence to even hint that Zionism is racist or to compare Israel in any way with the Nazis. Indeed to pretend that Israel is anything other than a fine, democratic example to the rest of the world, a beacon of freedom, is not only reason enough for suspension, but *prima facie* evidence of 'anti-Semitism', it seems.

In the Labour Party today there is a similar refusal to look through the telescope - or perhaps it is the turning of a Nelsonian blind eye - to see the Israeli state as it actually exists. Israel permanently rules over four and a half million Palestinians, who cannot be granted the vote or any measure of civil rights, because that is incompatible with a 'Jewish state'. It is a situation whereby there are two different systems of law - one for Palestinians and another for Jewish settlers. Even within the non-existent 'green line', Israel's own Arab citizens are there on sufferance, with a plurality of Jewish voters wanting them expelled. Apartheid may not be officially declared, but it exists in practice.

The Labour Party seems to be in a parallel universe, whereby black is white and truth is false. The laws of logic no longer apply. How else can one describe a situation whereby those who

support the world's only apartheid state are the ones defining what is and what is not racism?

In recent weeks, Ken Livingstone has been suspended for mentioning the relationship of the Nazis to the Zionists, David Watson has been suspended for claiming that Zionism is racist and I have been suspended for, among other things, claiming that Zionism is a Jewish form of anti-Semitism.

The latter is a question of fact. Although Zionist supporters today claim to oppose anti-Semitism, no historian of Zionism can be unaware that both anti-Semites and Zionists shared the same prejudices against diaspora Jewry. As Jacques Doron notes, "It cannot be denied that the Jewish self-criticism so widespread among the German Zionist intelligentsia often seemed dangerously similar to the complaints of the German anti-Semites."¹

There is a universal consensus in the media, that extends from *The Guardian* to the *Daily Mail*, that anyone who criticises Zionism is anti-Semitic. The mere suggestion that Israel is anything other than the purest form of Athenian democracy is likely to result in Labour's Inquisition bearing down on them, presided over by Tomás de Torquemada in the form of John Mann MP. Events, however, have a habit of defying even the most prosaic of ideologues.

In the past week alone Israel's deputy chief of staff, general Yair Golan, has compared developments in Europe - particularly Germany in the 1930s - to Israel today.² Yair's speech at a ceremony remembering the holocaust led to a series of events, which culminated in the removal of Moshe Ya'alon as Israel's defence minister. Ya'alon was no slouch when it came to killing Palestinians, but his replacement, Avigdor Lieberman, is the Israeli equivalent of Islamic State. Lieberman had previously called for the beheading of "disloyal" Israeli Arabs³ and the drowning of thousands of Palestinian prisoners in the Dead Sea.⁴

Lieberman agreed to join Netanyahu's Likud coalition on the basis that he could introduce the death penalty. Naturally the death penalty will only apply to Palestinians, since only military courts, which have a conviction rate of some 99.7%, will have the power

to impose it. Jewish settler terrorists are tried in civil courts.

Tsunami

Meanwhile, we have an Alice in Wonderland situation in the Labour Party, whereby the Jewish Labour Movement, which supports the Israeli state and its founding ideology, Zionism, is to be put in charge of anti-racism training by Baroness Royall, who investigated 'anti-Semitism' at Oxford University Labour Club. It is akin to having the late Dr Harold Shipman given responsibility for developing a course in medical ethics. The JLM is affiliated to the World Zionist Organisation, which is responsible for the funding and development of settlements in the West Bank. Its institutions are key to the maintenance of Israeli apartheid, both in Israel itself and the occupied territories. Since the JLM excludes from membership anyone who is not a Zionist or supporter of the Israeli state, it would be more honest to call it the Zionist Labour Movement.

It is part of the new political gospel that the Labour Party is being submerged in a tsunami of anti-Semitism. What we are witnessing is the manufacturing of consent that flies in the face of all the evidence. It is the perfect example of Marx's dictum that the ruling ideas in any society are the ideas of the ruling class. The existence of 'anti-Semitism' is assumed as a given. It is above and beyond challenge in the mainstream press and media, despite the lack of any evidence.⁵

The now-defunct European Union Monitoring Centre's 'working definition' of anti-Semitism,⁶ which Zionist groups fought a rearguard action to defend,⁷ defined anti-Semitism as "holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel". Yet almost every day people who criticise Zionism, the movement which founded the Israeli state, are being suspended for 'anti-Semitism'. Although it is anti-Semitic to equate Jews and Zionism, anyone who criticises the latter is deemed anti-Semitic!

Jackie Walker, the vice-chair of Momentum who is both black and Jewish, has been suspended for mentioning the involvement of Jews in financing the slave trade. She is required

to accept the myth that anti-Semitism is a seamless continuum of Jewish oppression for 2,000 years - Jews were always victims, never perpetrators. It was this, the "lachrymose version of Jewish history", that Salo Baron, perhaps the greatest Jewish historian of the 20th century, railed against.

I was myself suspended on March 18 for having made unspecified comments, the details of which Labour's compliance unit refused to give me. This did not prevent members of the unit from leaking those details to *The Daily Telegraph*, which printed them on April 2.⁸ Suffice to say, after a little persuasion, both papers retracted any suggestion that they were implying I was anti-Semitic - even though, of course, that had been the whole purpose of the articles!

I will shortly be appearing before an investigation meeting. It would appear that the acting regional organiser for the South-East, Harry Gregson, has gone into overdrive trying to find some incriminating evidence against me. It is a strange process whereby you first suspend someone and then begin trying to find the evidence to justify the suspension.

One of the charges now is that I wrote a blog post entitled 'Israeli policy is to wait for the remaining holocaust survivors to die'.⁹ This was deemed by Gregson to be such a terrible accusation that he could only conclude it must be anti-Semitic. It is, of course, a terrible accusation, but exactly the same charge is made in an article in Israel's *Ha'aretz* newspaper!¹⁰

It is beyond dispute that Israel is parsimonious in the extreme in withholding benefits from holocaust survivors. Thousands of them live in dire poverty in Israel - forced to choose between heat and food.¹¹ Israel has received billions of shekels in reparations from the German state, but it has preferred to spend it on holocaust memorials and holocaust 'education' (to say nothing of weaponry) rather than on the holocaust survivors themselves. To Israel the holocaust is a nationalist symbol above all. Thousands of Israeli schoolchildren are taken to Auschwitz each year in order that they will learn the lesson that Israel must be militarily strong. Far from drawing anti-racist

lessons, their racism is strengthened.

The true reason for my suspension though may lie in one other charge that I am facing: namely that I have called for the deselection of Peter Kyle, the New Labour MP for Hove. Kyle is someone who believes fervently in the involvement of private companies in the NHS. He voted for the bombing of Syria and is a darling of the Progress wing of Labour.

The anti-Semitism witch-hunt in the Labour Party has one overriding purpose. It is not just about sanitising Israel: its primary purpose is the removal of the Jeremy Corbyn leadership of the party. It is a testament to the stupidity of Corbyn, John McDonnell and Momentum's Jon Lansman that, instead of standing up to those who equate anti-Zionism and criticism of Israel with anti-Semitism, they are helping to lead the charge. Appeasement is never a very good strategy and in this case it is a recipe for defeat. Its only effect is to whet the appetite of Labour's McCarthyites ●

Notes

1. 'Classic Zionism and modern anti-Semitism: parallels and influences (1883-1914)' *Journal of Israeli History* No8, September 1983, p171.
2. 'IDF general in bombshell speech: Israel today shows signs of 1930s Germany' *Jerusalem Post* May 4 2016.
3. www.haaretz.com/israel-news/elections/1.646076.
4. www.haaretz.com/lieberman-blasted-for-suggesting-drowning-of-palestinian-prisoners-1.93554.
5. See 'How Israel lobby manufactured UK Labour Party's anti-Semitism crisis': <https://electronicintifada.net/content/how-israel-lobby-manufactured-uk-labour-partys-anti-semitism-crisis/16481>.
6. www.antisem.eu/projects/eumc-working-definition-of-antisemitism.
7. See <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/ben-white/pro-israel-groups-keen-revive-discredited-anti-semitism-definition>.
8. 'Activist who derides critics as "Zionist scum" admitted to Labour in latest anti-Semitism scandal to hit party' *The Daily Telegraph* April 2 2016. See also 'Labour welcomes back blogger who compared Israelis to Nazis' *The Times* April 2.
9. <http://azvsas.blogspot.co.uk/2016/05/israeli-policy-is-to-wait-for-remaining.html>.
10. Its article was also headlined: 'Israel is waiting for its holocaust survivors to die' (www.haaretz.com/opinion/israel-is-waiting-for-its-holocaust-survivors-to-die.premium-1.501630).
11. See 'Tens of thousands of Israeli holocaust survivors are living in abject poverty': www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/israel/12122754/Tens-of-thousands-of-Israeli-Holocaust-survivors-are-living-in-abject-poverty.html.

ANTI-RACISM

Life in the bubble

Paul Demarty argues that the growing culture of brittle denunciations only hurts the left

When Pat Glass was a young woman, what did she want to be when she grew up?

We can probably rule out 'shadow minister for Europe', which would be a most peculiar ambition for *anyone*. Maybe she wanted to be prime minister or something; but then, you'd think she would address herself to the political life with a dash more urgency than she did - she finally got round to the parish council at the age of 50, after a long career as a local education authority bureaucrat with a particular interest in special educational needs.

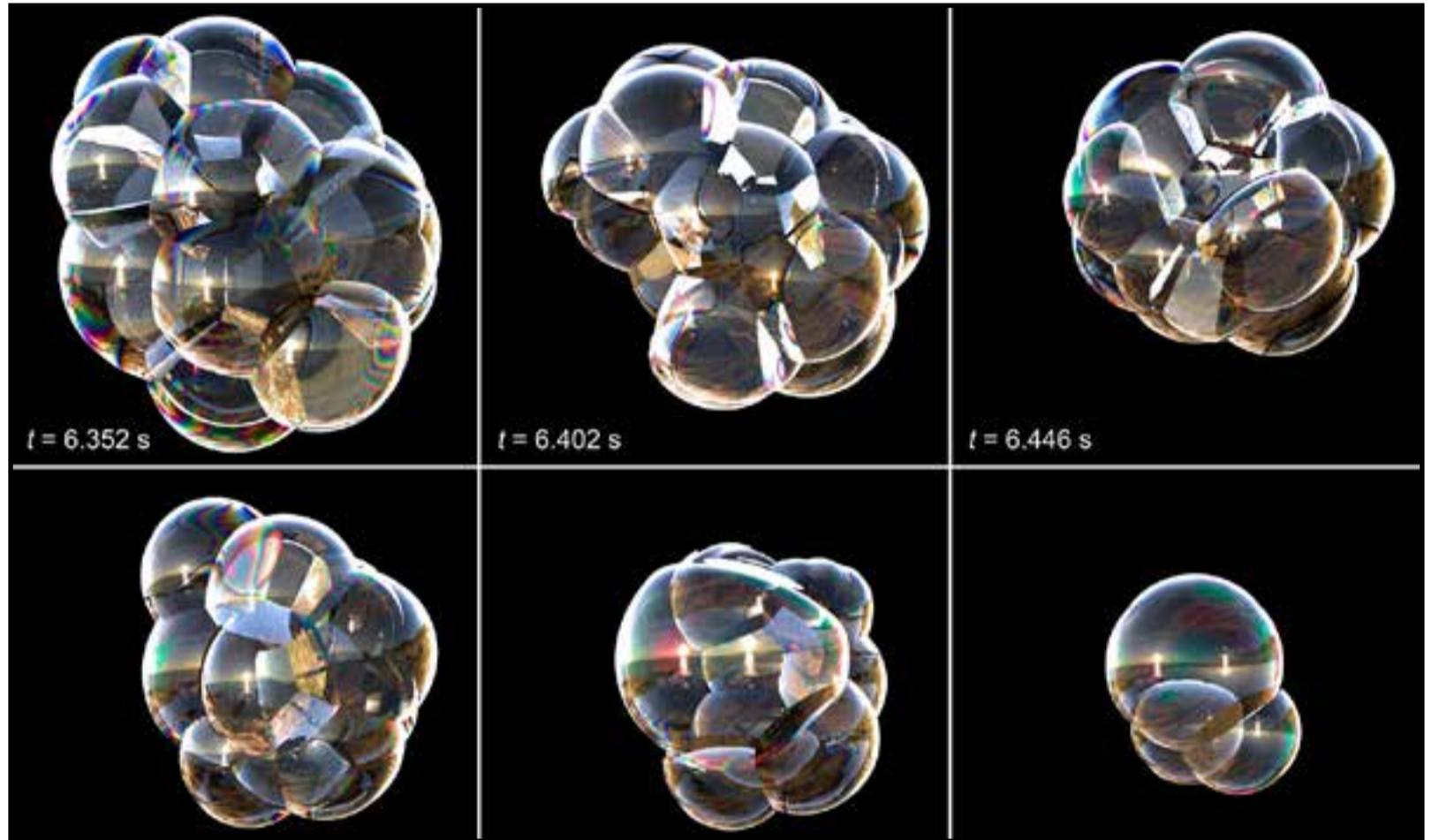
She seems, thus, to be that rarest of modern political animals - someone motivated by an utterly naive commitment to public service. She looks the part, as well: she wears the banal, benign smile of every municipal pen-pusher in the history of bureaucracy. Unfortunately, the world seems a little too cruel for her liking; for she has found herself in hot water after being overheard calling a member of the public a "horrible racist" in private conversation, and vowing never to come back to "wherever this is" (it was a place called Sawley, for the record - in all fairness to Glass, a fairly undistinguished village in the East Midlands, although you'd think she'd at least remember the name of the place *while she was actually there*).

Anyway, this turned predictably into a silly-season shitstorm, after the fashion of 'Bigotgate', where Gordon Brown was caught on-mic calling random voter Gillian Duffy a "bigoted old woman"; and most ridiculously of all, Islington MP Emily Thornberry's roasting for tweeting - *without comment* - a picture of a house draped in England flags while on the by-election campaign trail in Kent. Brexiteers of all stripes lined up to condemn Glass, who had shown contempt for an ordinary voter's "perfectly valid concerns about the impact [of] uncontrolled migration", in the words of Tory Brexiteer Peter Bone.

What concerns are these? The "horrible racist" in question is believed to have expressed the opinion that a Polish family supposedly living on benefits on his street were "spongers".

Cruddas

Right on cue (and, we must grudgingly concede, purely by coincidence), up pops Jon Cruddas. A somewhat free-floating figure on the fringes of the Labour establishment, Cruddas cut his teeth in the 'left-Blairite' Compass think-tank, before taking up with Maurice Glasman and his communitarian 'Blue Labour' trend, where - we surmise - he still basically is. He has conducted



Sage and Sethian: Evolution, dissolution of clusters of soap bubbles

his own investigation into the causes of Labour's election defeat in 2015, and concluded (*quelle surprise*) that failure was ultimately down to people not listening to a certain Jon Cruddas.

So basically we have the Blue Labour agenda laid out again, only this time with a press release implying that it is just Scientific Fact. "Labour is becoming a toxic brand," he writes. "It is perceived by voters as a party that supports an 'open door' approach to immigration, lacks credibility on the economy, and is a 'soft touch' on welfare spending." Stop me if you've heard this one before. In any case, what is needed is to slam the door shut - Labour must "stop patronising socially conservative Ukip voters and recognise the ways in which Ukip appeals to former Labour voters", etc, etc. This is the usual nonsense of the Labour right - the demagogic contempt for 'Islington liberals' expressed by Blairites as they rolled out anti-social behaviour orders and the like - given undue topicality by Glass's meltdown.

Because Glass *really did* melt down. Her response to this grumpy Derbyshire man was worthy of ridicule. We might dispute whether foreigners-on-benefits represents a 'valid concern' in the sense that Peter Bone means it - ie, one that is not spurious and is soundly based in the empirical reality of migration. On the other hand, worse things are printed across 10 or more pages of the *Daily Mail* every day. Certainly, this is hardly the stuff of Enoch Powell or suchlike. It is a run-of-the-mill prejudice, expressed (and challenged!) the length and breadth of the country on a daily basis. It is a common view in the British political mainstream. *How can Pat Glass possibly have been shocked to hear it?*

But then, alas, we glance back at her CV. The reality of modern public-sector life (and, for that matter, corporate bureaucracy) is official anti-racism, anti-sexism and so on. It is a world of diversity targets, sensitivity training and HR mediation, in which your pay

cheque depends on your expressing the approved platitudes. It is perfectly possible, in this run of existence, to go many decades without hearing a peep that did not conform to benign liberal orthodoxy. Proceeding from there to professional politics, Glass merely exchanged one right-on bubble for another. Thus, presented with the kind of diatribe the rest of us have to put up with in every public house from Lands' End to John O'Groats, Glass was genuinely affronted.

Leftwing roots

This peculiar, right-on epistemology is expressed most clearly in the contemporary bureaucracy - be it public or private. Yet it is *in origin* a leftwing cause; the far left, and elements of social democracy and 'official communism', took up the rampant racism, sexism and homophobia (unevenly, admittedly, especially in the latter case) that riddled society in the 1960s and 1970s far more severely than they do now.

It was (and remains) right and necessary for the left to take a lead on matters of oppression, and it is right that those who compromised, who failed to address the aforementioned bigotries when they were at their most severe in recent history, are remembered as opportunists and cowards (Militant, the Workers Revolutionary Party, and so on). Yet the *form* in which this political project was pursued was fatally flawed by moralism - an exclusive obsession with spontaneous action led to an unwillingness to address the uncomfortable complexity of each form of oppression, the appeal that bigotry has to those at the bottom of the social pile as much as elites, and so on.

Paradoxically, as victories were scored - as the state toleration and even endorsement of bigoted reaction was rolled back, stage by stage, over the years - the left became more and more paralysed. For its commitment to fighting racism had become naive and moralistic; but the state itself was by 1990s also unambiguously committed to just such a moralistic anti-racism and

anti-sexism; equalisation of rights for non-heterosexuals has followed since. Official anti-racism and its cousins are so dangerous to the left precisely because they are an undead form of leftism, a malady that originates in us.

No better contemporary illustration is available, of course, than the contemptible moral panic around anti-Semitism in the Labour Party. Janet Royall has just reported back on the status of Jew-hatred in the Oxford University Labour Club, and other parts of the National Organisation of Labour Students. What a remarkable summary she gives! "I do not believe that there is institutional anti-Semitism within OULC," she writes. Nonetheless, "I am ... making recommendations about how Labour tackles anti-Semitism to minimise the chance of any repetition of incidents such as those described at OULC." In other words, happened in Oxford - and we must take steps to make sure it never happens again.

Yet this has ever been the very essence of official anti-racism, and before it left anti-racist campaigning - above all else, we must be seen to be taking racism seriously! This condition is ultimately judged more important than deciding whether an accusation of racism is *actually serious*. Hence the paralysis in the face of the recent Blairite and Zionist offensive, the setting up of uncounted inquiries and investigations into accusations so obviously baseless they would be laughed out of a Stalinist show-trial.

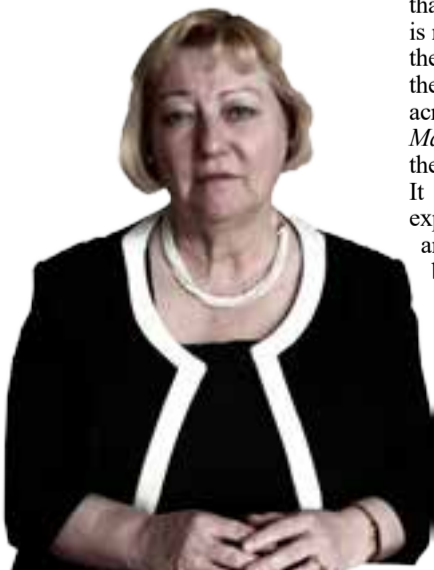
So Royall's recommendations will no doubt be observed - viz, that Labour Students officials should have to attend (what else?) an awareness and sensitivity course (Pat Glass would approve!) administered by the Jewish Labour Movement. The JLM, needless to say, is not just some sort of generic Jewish members' caucus of the Labour Party, but essentially the British section of the Israeli Labor Party, "affiliated to the World Labour Zionist Organization, which is in turn organized as a 'faction' inside the

[World Zionist Organisation]," in the words of its chair, Jeremy Newmark. (Its commitment to anti-racism may be measured by the Israeli Labor Party's recent enthusiasm for the far-right lunatic Avigdor Lieberman's presumed inheritance of the defence ministry from Moshe Ya'alon.) Moralistic forms of anti-racism are most convenient for Zionists, as they reward those prepared to step forward as self-appointed representatives of some ethnic group - something supporters of Israel have never suffered much shame over doing.

So what is the alternative? To be sure, we do not find ourselves in agreement with Jon Cruddas, whose perspective is in its own way nonsensical. Labour must stop patronising Ukip voters; but can there be anything more patronising than pretending to agree with someone in order to get them on your side? Either this is the substance of Cruddas's recommendation, in which case he stands exposed as an especially incompetent demagogue; or *he himself* thinks there are too many immigrants coming over here, stealing our jobs, and that the European Union is an insult to patriotic Englishmen, etc; in which case he should work up the gumption to *just say it*, rather than dishonestly genuflecting before the part of public opinion he happens to like. As with all 'provocateurs' in bourgeois politics, Cruddas in the end is simply a toxic admixture of egotism and moral cowardice.

The necessary response is far more modest - it consists in treating racism (and suchlike) not as some great cosmic evil, but all too mundane; a problem boringly explicable to all those willing to take a little time to understand it. When we encounter bigotry, we must not flee in terror, like the naive Pat Glass; still less should we accommodate to it, like the spineless Cruddas. We must roll our eyes, roll our sleeves up and talk people out of it - *to their faces* ●

paul.demarty@weeklyworker.co.uk



ART

For Marx, against Althusser

What is the nature of art under capitalism? Rex Dunn responds to Paul Demarty

I disagree with most of what Demarty says in his article, 'What is art and can it survive?'¹ for three main reasons: Firstly, he ignores the fact that classical philosophy and aesthetics are integral to Marx's thought as a whole. Secondly, there is a nihilist tendency in his thinking. Thirdly, he has a mechanical, undialectical view of bourgeois institutions - that they are merely a means to dispense patronage and regulate mass consumption; hence we have the elitist privileging of high art over low art.

The root of Demarty's problem is clear: he rests his whole argument on Althusser's structuralist theory of Marxism (which turns the latter into its opposite). Unless he is of an eclectic disposition, then he must also accept Althusser's basic premise of a dichotomy between the young, humanist Marx of the Paris manuscripts and the mature, scientific Marx of *Capital*. This is a fallacy.

The essential Marx

As a young man, Marx read the classics of world literature, which provided the germ of his key ideas about the nature of capital and the reification process. To give one example, in his *Economic and philosophical manuscripts* (1844), Marx quotes from Goethe's *Faust*, specifically the speeches of Mephistopheles (man is duped by money, just as Faust is duped by Mephistopheles). This is carried over by the mature Marx into *Grundrisse* and *Capital* Vol 1; and used again in *Capital* Vol 3:

Capital assimilates labour into itself 'as though it had love in its body'. In capital that bears interest the movement of capital is abbreviated to the fullest extent; the mediating process is omitted ... a capital of 1,000 ... is transformed after a time into 1,100, just as after a certain period of time wine kept in its cellar improves its use value ... by incorporating living labour-power into a dead substance, the capitalist converts value - past, materialised, dead labour - into capital, into value big with value, a monster that has life breathed into it and begins to 'work' as though it had love in its body.

A few pages later, a table, an ordinary object perceived by the senses, is transformed - as a commodity - into a "sensual-supra-sensual" object. This corresponds to Mephistopheles admonishing Faust for not making the most of Gretchen's flirtations: "You supra-sensual, sensual wooer. A slip of a girl leads you by the nose!"²

Art is both subjective and objective, but Demarty more or less rejects this idea. This is clearly evident in his discussion of Kant's *Critique of judgement*, along with its rejection by the populist critic, John Carey. As an idealist philosopher, Kant recognises that beauty is both a "subjective and universal" (objective) judgement. But he attributes this to each individual's innate ability to experience beauty; regardless of the inequality of income and educational opportunity within capitalist society. Thus, for Kant, beauty is a universal property. Carey rightly dismisses this as idealist, without which, according to Demarty, "aesthetics does indeed appear to be just the opinion of one individual". Hence he polemicalises against the "religion of art", related to the state "subsidising high art". Yet, says Demarty, "there is absolutely zero evidence that going to a gallery or a concert [as a mere spectator] has any



Instantly commodified

positive effects whatsoever".

Carey's points "have some validity", argues Demarty. *Vis-à-vis* the question of "an objective standard of beauty ... it is possible: but only with a *historical*, rather than an aesthetic, perspective". By saying this, he leaves the door open to dismiss high art, which is based on the unity of form and content (beauty is form; ugliness is the absence of form). But in today's world it is immoral to celebrate beauty: eg, 'art for art's sake'. So the art terrorist is justified when he physically attacks it!

But this flies in the face of Marx. Aesthetic sensibility - the appreciation of beauty - is innate in man; but it can be eroded by material circumstances, as well as ideology.

I shall return to this point later, but here I want to consider its relevance to Marx's concept that art is both subjective and objective. This is derived from Schiller's aesthetics, quoted by Vischer in his *Aesthetik*. Marx refers to this in his notebook (1857-58). Because beauty is an innate human quality, it was theorised by the classical philosophers. But it cannot be explained away by means of structuralism/post-structuralism/postmodernism; just because the social revolution was derailed:

The beautiful exists only for consciousness ... it is a property of man ... [But] this does not mean ... that the 'aesthetic' is purely subjective.

Beauty [in art] is simultaneously an object and a subjective state. It is at once form, when we judge it, and also life, when we feel it [either directly from nature or via the art object; both in its form and content]. It is at once our state of being and our creation.³

Furthermore, beauty cannot be denied, just because Marx and Engels were in the privileged position - as members of the bourgeoisie themselves - to take advantage of the objectivity of concepts. The latter (backed up by empirical evidence, where possible) can be shared and debated, which is the basis of all knowledge. Hence they were able to distinguish between high and low art works. On the one hand, Marx saw much merit in Eugène Sue's

novel, *The mysteries of Paris*, because the main character, 'Fleur-de-Marie', possesses "a vitality that goes beyond her bourgeois context". On the other, he criticised Lassalle's political play, *Franz von Sickingen*, because "his characters are hollow"; mere "mouthpieces of the *Zeitgeist*", etc. Engels agreed with him.

Both realised that, while it is true that the making and appreciation of art is the preserve of the educated classes, at the expense of the direct producers of surplus value, high art is not elitist in itself. Rather, as Demarty himself points out, the problem is that the bourgeoisie have a monopoly of this. A Marxist movement has to challenge the bourgeois division of labour, so that the masses are able to know and appreciate high culture for themselves. To condemn high art as elitist is a red herring; Therefore it should not be thrown out with the bathwater à la Bohemian nihilism.

Art's autonomy

Like the Russian constructivists, etc, Demarty is basically saying that Marx is wrong in relation to the question of beauty, despite the fact that it is bound up with his idea of man as a "species-being" ("Man is a species-being, not only because he practically and theoretically makes the species - both his own and those of other things - his object; [but also] because he looks upon himself ... as a universal ... and free being").⁴ This is also linked to his concept of art's - relative - autonomy.

In the *EPM*, Marx argues that:

the objective mode of the beautiful is 'mass' ... (a) reproduction of the structures of physical reality (their shapes mainly [dating back to pre-history]); and (b) various specific attributes of symmetry, regularity, proportion, and harmony, which provide an attractive and coherent whole, [which also] *rivals* the shapes of material reality.⁵

Of course, Demarty could argue that Marx is out of date here, because he is clearly espousing a *mode* of the beautiful which predates 20th century modernism. The latter is characterised by opposing values, apropos the organisation of forms; not forgetting fragmentation, and so on. The point

here is that Marx may or may not have sided with Lukács on the question of modernism. But I think he *would* have recognised aesthetic modernist art works as art: eg, cubism, futurism, abstract expressionism, a Joycean novel with its disjointed inner thoughts, etc - because, (a) they still represent the *realisation of aesthetic use-value*, based on a "free play of the physical and psychic faculties"; (b) they are *art objects* (compare post-modernism, which 'rationalises' anti-art objects).

Whether it has a cognitive, ideological aspect or not, for Marx, the art object is the harbinger of human freedom: ie, his vision of "an expanded artistic activity and freely playful spontaneity in work and leisure"; the realisation of "an enriched human being who will appropriate the world with a fullness of the senses" and is "in need of human life-activities", which "existing social conditions suppress and distort": ie, the emergence of *homo aestheticus*.⁶

In *The German ideology*, along with *Grundrisse* and *Capital*, it is possible to identify three elements regarding Marx's expectation about art in a future communist society:

- The creative abilities of each individual shall be developed to their full potential, based on individual aptitude.
- Labour itself, either at the workplace or during leisure time, will become more aesthetic.
- Every person will be able to achieve a degree of artistic achievement in each domain of the arts.

For example, there will no longer be 'professional painters', but, at most, 'people who engage in painting among other activities'. (Note that Demarty also quotes from *The German ideology*, but he omits this last point!) Thus it would be wrong to suggest that

Marx anticipated the disappearance of the art object. If this were so, then Marxian disalienation would paradoxically provide a retrograde utopia, an atavistic lapse into the time when aesthetic structure had still to be consciously developed ... [arguably] a dimming of the Marxian original into mere reverie on the idea of technological benefits.⁷

All of the above expresses what Marx means by the relative autonomy of art, both now and in the future. The artist, if he/she wishes, mediates the material/social world via impractical (as well as practical) art objects. Therefore Marx's idea of art's autonomy is *not* an "illusion". It is an aspect of the real world and humanity's desire for freedom and fulfilment. This is true, even if we object to the fact that, under capitalism, the making and appreciation of art, such as this, is an activity of a privileged minority of the population. But today, of course, many artists and academics choose to attack art, as we have come to know it, for reasons that are already becoming clear. This is another reason why art's autonomy is a relative thing. After the holocaust, Adorno attributed the rise of the anti-aesthetic to "a destructive discontent with culture", which is essentially correct.⁸

Russian nihilism

Early on in his article, Demarty refers to the jailing of 'comedy terrorist' Aaron Barschak for damaging the Chapman brothers' artwork, a pastiche of Goya's *Disasters of war*. If he merely objected to the standard of the work in question, then I would agree with him; but the judge was right to point out that "anyone could see that the Chapman's Goya project was art, and Barschak's stunt was not". Demarty makes his own position pretty clear in his following statement: "... a great deal of writers on aesthetics have fallen into the trap of fetishising the work of art, as such".

There is an echo here of the nihilism of the Russian left avant garde, which sprang up after the October revolution. They were optimistic - and impatient - about the new possibilities for art that were opened up by October. Some of them also wanted to destroy bourgeois art, because, (i) it is made by privileged people, who had the money and the time to enjoy impractical art objects; (ii) as Alexei Gan stated in his 'constructivist manifesto', "Art is dead!" The notion of aesthetic structure, such as easel painting, is "as dangerous as religion. [It is] an escapist activity."⁹ The victorious proletariat requires a new kind of art which is useful to the revolution; such as photomontage posters - even symphonies based on factory hooters

(yes to the former, but no to the latter!).

Gan's attitude is based on subjective idealism, not dialectical materialism. Like others, he fails to realise that the human senses are innate, but they are skewed by class society, especially under the capitalist mode of production. As Marx's says in his *EPM*,

... just as the growth in the division of labour increases the accumulation of capital, ... the worker becomes more and more uniformly dependent on labour, and on a particular, very one-sided and machine-like type of labour ... he is depressed, both intellectually and physically to the level of a machine, and from being a man becomes an abstract activity and a stomach.

And:

The *cultivation* of the five senses is the work of all previous history. *Sense* which is a prisoner of crude practical need has only a restricted sense.¹⁰

The worker has a right to become an all-rounded human being, which includes the cultivation of his/her senses to their full potential. But this will not come overnight, even after the social revolution is underway.

Trotsky knew this too (despite the fact that the EPM was not yet available to him): In his *Literature and revolution* (1922), he writes:

The working class does not know the old literature; it still has to commune with it; it still has to master Pushkin, to absorb him and so overcome him ... A Bohemian nihilism exists in the exaggerated futurist rejection of the past, but not a proletarian revolution. We Marxists live in traditions, but we have not stopped being revolutionists on account of it.¹¹

The harsh reality is that, by attacking the freedom of art, the Constructivists, et al, were hoist by their own petard. Once the bureaucracy had a firm grip on power, Stalin opted to preserve conventional forms, including the art of the past, for his own ends - to keep the masses on his side. Thus experimental art was brutally suppressed, replaced by official Soviet art, within which 'Socialist realism' (which was neither) would stand alongside bourgeois art.

During World War I, the Dadaists also attacked bourgeois art, especially its latest incarnation: aesthetic modernism, or 'art for art's sake' (eg, expressionist, cubist, futurist artworks). Dada responded by introducing ready-made anti-art objects: eg, Duchamp's famous *Urinal* (1917). In 1918 Tristan Tzara's *Dada manifesto* proclaimed that "a work of art should not be beauty itself, for beauty is dead". Other Dadaists were influenced by surrealist ideas; and were more politically motivated. They produced irrational, anti-art objects or 'provocations', aimed at bourgeois culture as a whole, since the latter is "no more than a mask of civilisation laid over by a deeper barbarism". In 1920 the Berlin Dadaists staged an art fair, which featured grotesque cut-outs of war cripples, along with Grosz's dummy (a pig dressed in a German officer's uniform). This was their answer to the bourgeoisie, who used instrumental reason to slaughter millions of workers on the battlefields of Europe.¹² At the same time, the work of the Dadaist, Francis Picabia, was being bought up by the collector/couturier, Jacques Doucet.

Paradoxically, in no time at all, anti-art objects had become artistic commodities themselves, thanks to the role of the art market. They also ended up as exhibits in private/public galleries. At the same time, anti-art would become a subject to be studied by academics within the art institution. As with the rise of the art object itself,

this was a dialectical process. But let us not blame the art object: it is capitalism and the commodity form which is the problem and must be overthrown.

Althusser and art

Althusser introduced his structuralist theory of Marxism in the 1960s. This is another form of nihilism, because it involves a complete break with the classical Marxist tradition, which includes Marx and Engel's ideas about art. (Yet, at the same time, their ideas were being collated by Lee Baxandall and Stefan Morawski, which I am using here.)

What does this mean for art? Althusser drives a wedge between the young, humanist Marx of the Paris manuscripts and the mature, scientific Marx of *Capital*. Hence he eliminates the idea of the "knowing subject", etc. Therefore one can reject Marx's idea of "great literature" and the notion of genius, as idealist humanism (but wasn't Marx himself a genius?). It follows that Althusser/Demarty must also reject Marx's idea that, prior to the epoch of capitalism's decay, there emerged artists who reacted against the alienating effects of the commodity form. Given their attention to form as well as content - ie, the making of an art object: eg, by developing real individual characters within the novel, etc - they were able to transcend mere exchange values and point to "the values of a society that has yet to be born", despite their privileged social position (eg, Shakespeare, Goethe, Flaubert, Tolstoy).¹³

Althusser's notion that the individual is constituted by ideology, backed up by bourgeois "institutions of patronage", also feeds into a nihilist approach to art. High art only survives because of such patronage. So why not turn to nihilism (albeit in the form of Dadaist stunts, rather than that of the Russian constructivists)? This is the underlying message in Demarty's article.

In the section headed 'Art and culture', he writes:

Art is a subset of cultural production as a whole; and its defining feature is neither the genius of its makers nor the inherent qualities in the objects that constitute it. At the core of art is an institutional relationship of patronage; along with that relationship goes the regulation of its mass consumption.

But first we need to know a bit more about Althusser's system. What follows is a series of key statements by Althusser, taken from Terry Lovell's book, *Pictures of reality* (1983):

Ideas are seen as reflections, distorted or otherwise, of material reality. Althusser, in *For Marx and Reading Capital*, proposed a redefinition of the social formation as what he calls a "structure in dominance". The social formation consists ... in a series of "material practices" which are mutually interdependent. Each practice is relatively autonomous, both determined and determining within the whole of which it is a part.

Althusser defines 'practice' as: "the transformation of a determinate given raw material into a determinate product, a transformation effected by determinate human labour, using determinate means (of production)".

He identifies, in *For Marx*, four practices (or levels): "the economic, political, ideological and theoretical, which operate independently within the whole; albeit not always and everywhere with the same efficacy" ...

"in real history determination in the last instance by the economy is exercised precisely in the permutations of the principal role between the economy, politics, theory, etc."

[Therefore] The economic level, in all social formations, retains

only this privilege of determination in a last instance which never comes [ie, the economic transformation of society as part of the social revolution].

Two points:

(i) If the institution functions as a filter for theory that is tainted by ideology, then either Marx's ideas are false or he possessed a divine gift to somehow rise above this. Of course, this is nonsense, because it omits the possibility of "the knowing subject and experience in the production of knowledge".

(ii) Althusser dismantles Marx's base/superstructure model - or the struggle between ideas and material forces: productive forces/the forces and relations of production. The latter must be mediated by ideas, initially created by representatives of the educated classes in conjunction with advanced workers, organised in a vanguard party, capable of mobilising the masses to its cause, leading to the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of communism, "the true realm of freedom".

Instead, for Althusser,

all levels are constituted by practices and all practices are material ... Both the ideological and the theoretical are redefined as practices which produce particular products and, as such, are as much material forces as are economic or political practices.¹⁴

This is crude mechanical materialism, not dialectical/historical materialism.

Unlike other intellectuals, for some reason, Althusser refused to break with the Parti Communiste Français, despite Stalinism's betrayal of the world revolution. Hence post-1945, the door was opened - even wider - to the US hegemon, along with the unprecedented rise of the *société de consommation*, the ubiquitous spread of the culture industry, etc. But, for Althusser, the subjective factor - the role of a vanguard party - is excluded from the revolutionary process.

Thus we have a rationale for the crushing of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, as well as the defeat of the *événements* in 1968, wherein Althusser's own party, the PCF, played a decisive role.¹⁵

We can now return to Althusser's theory of art ("At the core of art is an institutional relationship of patronage", etc). First of all, Demarty fails to define what this institution actually is: an alliance between the artist, dealer, art market (for which the price of the artefact has become the dominant factor), on the one hand; art theory (which artists increasingly buy into) and art galleries (private or public), on the other. Therefore he fails to see the institution as a site for *contradictory* struggle, including ideas; that it is capable of change (not necessarily for the better); which is a reflection of the ebb and flow of the class struggle.

During the middle part of the 20th century, for example, Marxism was a part of the university curriculum. But in the 1960s academic Marxism (for all its faults) was undermined by Althusserian structuralism, along with the ideas of the late Frankfurt School, in the form of 'cultural studies', until both were replaced by the 'negation of the negation': ie, post-structuralism in the late 1970s and 80s.

Post-structuralism

In his book, *The logics of disintegration* (1987), Peter Dews analyses how post-structuralism came about. At the same time, his analysis does not overlook the influence of political events (viz 1968). It shows - very clearly - that these changes within the institution relate directly to the class struggle.

Consider the work of Althusser versus Jean-François Lyotard. In a section called 'The politics of desire', Dews tells us that the problem for Althusser and Lyotard was how to explain away the upheavals in French

society, which began with the student revolt at Nanterre. Each starts out with the common aim of "stripping Marx's thought of its Hegelian residues", which they allege is characterised by an historicist assumption that the proletariat is "the predestined gravedigger of capitalism, whereby the latter becomes conscious of itself - and that 'Marxism ... is no more than the theoretical expression' of this". But henceforth their ideas diverge. Althusser "insists on the ontological separation of knowledge and the real, in order to preserve a positive conception of Marxism as a science, but at the same time downgrades the lived experience of capitalism, so that a gulf opens up between the enlightened Marxist theoretician and the ideologically ensnared proletariat".

Lyotard, on the other hand, wants to retain Marx's concept of alienation, which he calls the "lived experience" of capitalism, whilst "rejecting the notion of Marxist theory as simply the recovery of the reality hidden within this alienation ... [rather it becomes] the speculative self-confirmation of a political elite". So he recognises the revolt, but then limits this to a "type of political intervention which [can only] disrupt the very forms of political activity, rather than simply filling them with a new content". Instead he falls back on Freud's theory of drives: "a complicity of Eros and Logos" are replaced by the death drive, which can only "stare down" at the "chaos of the primary process" (the commodity system and its market).

So there is a correspondence between the libidinal and the social: when the workers jump on the factory production line, they are merely "supplanting the produce with the labour-power which it produced; nothing more". Similarly, when the students "invade a metro station and urge passengers not to have their tickets punched, these actions are not aimed towards a transformation or democratisation of political power". But, once again, the role of revolutionary leadership and organisation by the party is left out.¹⁶

The post-structuralists argue that the epoch of modernism, which emerged at the end of the 19th century, came to an end in the 1960s-70s. It has been replaced by a new epoch, which they call postmodernism. In reality, it is merely the 'fag-end' of modernism: part of art's decay during the period of late capitalism. It is characterised by the following: the idea of the death of the subject; blind faith in the age of mechanically produced images (reinforced by the digital age, now expressed in the form of technofetishism); an ambiguous relationship with mass consumerism, including mass entertainment; pluralism (therefore high and low art are equal in value). By so doing, postmodernism exhibits a strange mix of "euphoria and self-annihilation".¹⁷

Demarty briefly refers to this. He correctly points out that "contemporary academics in cultural studies" spend a lot of their time "identifying the 'transgressive' and 'subversive' features of soap operas, Madonna singles, etc." Therefore the products of the culture industry are equal in value with the high art of the past. He is also right to say that "Adorno's pessimism is infinitely preferable to this desperate modishness". Yet in the same paragraph, he links this with the "fallacy of beauty". Once again, he means the beauty of form embodied in the art object (as a means to express its content or for its own sake); hence it has acquired an unhealthy cultic value.

He uses this to confirm his thesis, which he restates in his conclusion: that the "monopolies of patronage" are behind the "illusion of art's autonomy", the "cult of genius", beauty, and so on. Surely there is a conflict going on here within the art institution - between those academics who espouse this nonsense about the culture industry

(re Madonna, etc), on the one side, and the promotion of high art by means of public subsidies, on the other (eg, the Royal Shakespeare Company and the National Theatre). The former, like Lyotard, seek to reconcile themselves with an increasingly commodified society, whilst the latter struggle to resist it. (But they are showing signs of weakening - the latest BBC version of Shakespeare's history plays ratchets up the violence at the expense of the bard's words. It looks like a *Game of thrones!*)

Conclusion

Demarty's fundamental problem is structuralism itself, upon which he bases his theory of art. Not only is this anti-Marxist: objectively, if not subjectively, it is a rationale for the defeat of the proletarian revolution in the 20th century. Structuralism bases itself on the "constituted subject" (as opposed to a 'constituting' one), at the mercy of "ideology in general". But it has now been replaced by post-structuralism, which celebrates the irrational or "the politics of desire": viz a sort of bacchanalian dance of death before the idol of the commodity form!

Demarty accuses others of "fetishising the work of art", whereas he is fetishising the art institution (which he does not define). The latter is not the problem *per se*, because it is being subsumed by the monopoly of capital itself. The art institution did not produce the "illusion of art's autonomy", etc. Rather this is the product of the "knowing subject and experience in the production of knowledge". Meanwhile the fate of art - and culture as a whole - is being decided by the rule of capital, even whilst it shows signs of its own decay.

The other problem, of course, is the defeat of the proletarian revolution: the subjective factor, as well as objective ones, went in a different direction from that envisaged by Marx (ie, the historic betrayals of social democracy, Stalinism and its offshoots; the latter's poisonous legacy; the great depression, imperialist war; the rise of the post-war *société de consommation* and the culture industry).

One can only hope that the proletarian revolution will not only resume, but go beyond where the Bolsheviks left off. This must include the struggle for a Marxist theory of the aesthetic, and a democratised art institution, wherein the argument about 'what art is' and 'what function it plays' can finally be resolved ●

rex.dunn@rexdunn.co.uk

Notes

1. *Weekly Worker* April 28 2016.
2. SS Praver *Karl Marx and world literature* London 2011, pp83-84, 323-28.
3. M Lifshitz *The philosophy of art of Karl Marx* London 1973, pp95-96.
4. K Marx *Economic and philosophical manuscripts* London 1975, p327 (my emphasis).
5. See Stephan Morawski's introduction to *Marx and Engels on literature and art* New York 1977, p15.
6. *Ibid* p24.
7. *Ibid* p22.
8. T Adorno *Aesthetic theory* London 1984. Marx also provides another - historical - aspect to his concept of art's relative autonomy. This is based on his theory of the 'non-uniformity of historical development': ie, between the material and spiritual spheres, first stated in *The German ideology* (1845-46). Lack of space prevents me from addressing this question here (see M Lifshitz *op cit* pp87-89).
9. C Gray *The Russian experiment in art 1863-1922* London 1986, p256.
10. K Marx *Economic and philosophical manuscripts* London 1975, pp285, 353.
11. L Trotsky *Literature and revolution* Michigan, pp130-31.
12. C Harrison and P Wood (eds) *Art in theory 1900-1990* Oxford 1993, p219.
13. See SS Praver *op cit* p105.
14. T Lovell *Pictures of reality* London 1983, pp30-34.
15. *For Marx* and other key works were, of course, published before 1968. But they were republished at least twice during the 1970s: ie, after the PCF's betrayal. Despite a self-criticism which also appeared during this period, Althusser's essential position remained unchanged, as Lovell's quotations clearly show.
16. P Dews *Logics of disintegration* London 1990, pp128-30.
17. 16. See Fredric Jameson's essay, 'The deconstruction of expression', in C Harrison and P Wood (eds) *Art in theory 1900-1990* Oxford 1993, pp1074-80.

IRAN

Pro-Zionists are false friends

We need a movement for genuine solidarity with the working class, writes Yassamine Mather

When it comes to Iran, the world's media has concentrated on the crippling sanctions imposed by the United States and its allies and then the long-drawn-out nuclear negotiations. Meanwhile, not a day has gone by when there has not been a strike, a protest, a sit-in by Iranian workers demanding their unpaid salaries, job security, the right to organise in independent workers' organisations ... These struggles were taking place before the nuclear deal and they have continued - indeed escalated - since, especially as government promises of economic recovery and full employment have not materialised.

Because of this the life of a number of jailed labour activists hangs in the balance. Obviously we must do what we can to draw attention to their plight. Those in danger include the spokesman of the Iranian Teachers' Trade Association, Mahmoud Beheshti Langroudi, who was hospitalised on May 8 after falling seriously ill following a 17-day hunger strike; and political prisoner and labour activist Jafar Azimzadeh, who has also been on hunger strike in Tehran's Evin prison for the last 26 days.

According to Owen Tudor of the TUC,

Throughout the diplomatic standoff, unions globally and here in the UK have continued to demand that, whatever else happens, Iran's international obligations to respect workers' rights - especially freedom of association and the right to strike - must be observed. We have opposed the threat of war, but at the same time drawn attention to the way the Iranian theocracy has acted just like any other bosses' club, cracking down on trade unionism and preventing workers getting a fair day's pay for their work.

Now that the sanctions are being lifted, the Iranian government's excuses are less and less believable. Without an external threat, violent repression of internal protest is even less justifiable. And, with growing trade, the money should now be available to meet demands for back pay and higher wages. But we are concerned that, as Iran becomes 'just another regime', the attention we have been able to secure for the harassment and physical attacks on trade unionists will ebb away.¹

In other words, international pressure was only imposed up until the nuclear deal was signed. Western governments' 'concern' for the plight of Iranian workers and other oppressed sections was an integral part of a policy of exercising pressure to force the signing of the nuclear deal.

Of course, Iranian workers continue to face hardship and many obstacles inside the country. Repression continues, wages remain unpaid, factories are still closing. The complete removal of sanctions is proceeding slowly and at a time of economic uncertainty there is little enthusiasm for major investments in Iran. At the same time, since the conclusion of the nuclear agreement Iran's president, Hassan Rowhani, and his foreign minister, Javad Zarif, have travelled to most of the key European capitals declaring that Iran is open for business and that its labour force - intimidated by years of recession, mass unemployment and



Assembling Peugeots in Iran - Kharodo plant

repression - will accept low wages, poor conditions and superexploitation.

These overtures have also been backed up by practical examples of the regime's style of 'labour discipline'. Thus, we have seen the brutal attack by the paramilitary *basij* on a group of striking factory employees in Kalaleh, the continuing attacks on workers in Haft Tapeh and the crackdown on protests at the Ardakan Foulad steel plant.² Here one should also mention the destructive role of the government-sponsored Islamic 'workers' councils, nowadays gaining more prominence because of their association with the 'reformist' factions of the regime and the Rowhani government. They continue to play an important role in containing and controlling workers' struggles.

Pro-regime

Following the February 1979 uprising, when the Iranian working class played a crucial role in the overthrow of the shah's dictatorship, the Islamic government did all it could to undermine workers' organisations and since then it has been illegal to set up independent trade unions. The only 'workers' organisation' that the government authorises is the Khaneh Kargar (Workers' House). This is not a trade union in any recognisable sense. Rather it is a political organisation that was set up by a faction of the Islamic movement after the destruction of the workers' *shora* (councils) after the 1979 revolution. It does not have representatives or shop stewards in workplaces, but communicates from its office with the Islamic workers' councils. Although these councils vary considerably, in general their members are nominated locally by clerical associations rather than directly elected by the workers.

The labour code stipulates that "the workers ... may establish Islamic councils and associations at the workplace" in industrial, agricultural

and service organisations of more than 35 employees. They consist of representatives of the workers and one representative of the management. Once these bodies are set up, no other workers' organisation can be established. Labour activists arrested by the government are accused of plotting against national security. They are political prisoners with no rights, facing incarceration for long periods.

In such circumstances the Iranian working class needs international solidarity, independent of the interests of world powers. Of course, we should not be surprised that yellow trade unions in the west, together with social-imperialist groups and their fellow travellers in what passes as 'solidarity movements' (the pro-Zionist wing of reformist trade unionists), have taken up the cause of Iranian workers, but what is regrettable is the way the supporters of Iranian workers abroad have collaborated, willingly, or unconsciously, with such efforts and the inevitable damage this has done to the working class movement inside the country.

The Iranian left in exile has many major shortcomings. There is a failure to report, explain and inform the international working class movement of the struggles inside Iran in any language but Persian. Long before the region became known as the home of failed states, civil wars and military interventions, the sheer number of workers' strikes, factory sit-ins and demonstrations in Iran was impressive, even though most of the time we have to admit the demands were and still are defensive. However, what remains of the various organisations of the Iranian left in exile compete with each other in posting news bulletins and reports about workers' actions (almost always in Persian). You get exactly the same news from each

of the various mailing lists about a particular struggle or the latest arrest.

Of course, there are valid reasons for these shortcomings. Many, if not most, of the comrades, who are long-term refugees in western Europe, and some in North America, do not speak the language of the host country - mainly because illusions about their imminent return to Iran and their full-time political activism in exile (mainly consumed in endless debates about the past) have isolated them from the workers' movement and the radical left in the host country.

When the exiled Iranian left does try to gain solidarity for imprisoned workers, it often goes about it in the wrong way. In its impatience for publicity and high-profile support, some exiled groups have now become accustomed to ditching principles, when it comes to accepting financial or political support from the most dubious sources. We saw this time and time again in relation to campaigns regarding women's rights, gay rights and the infamous tribunal for the victims of the Islamic Republic's mass execution of political prisoners in the 1980s. So it is not surprising that Iranian leftwing exiles have not done better, when it comes to campaigns in solidarity with the Iranian working class today. They have associated themselves with some of the most unsavoury international forces such as the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions.

Anyone who has followed the daily confrontations with the Iranian regime will have no doubt that, faced with the ravages of neoliberal capitalism, a factory worker who goes on strike or takes part in a sit-in or demonstration in Iran is not simply demanding trade union rights or even just fighting the theocracy. That worker is conscious that his/her struggle is against international capital and its institutions, such as

the International Monetary Fund and World Bank - organisations that have dictated the neoliberal economic policies being imposed on Iran over the last two decades.³ He/she believes that, despite differences and inter-capitalist rivalries, the imperialist military presence in the region will in the long term support the interests of both international capital and ruthless local capitalists. Such a worker has no illusions about the US military presence or intervention by CIA-sponsored trade unions in the region.

Broader vision

Over the last decade both the Iranian economy and the labour movement have changed dramatically. Young workers have internet access and are often well informed on international issues. Today's labour movement is not limiting itself to trade union struggles. Nor is it simply fighting 'Islamic' capitalists and their legislation. Its leaflets and declarations show it to be against imperialism and, of course, western military intervention.

What is more, to reduce the Iranian workers' movement to minimalist economic struggles is to underestimate and ignore the historic role of our class in leading revolutionary battles. After all, this is the working class that played a crucial role in the overthrow of the shah's regime - and, of course, it is also opposed to Israel's aggression. The continued US financial and military support for Israel is correctly regarded as part and parcel of imperialist strategy in the Middle East, adversely affecting radical political struggles throughout the region. So supporters of the Iranian working class cannot and should not turn a blind eye to the actions of the Zionist state - indeed the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is not a separate issue.

That is why we need an international campaign in support of Iranian workers that includes anti-Zionist activists, Arab, Kurdish and Palestinian supporters - a campaign that steers clear of opportunist forces, who, on the one hand, claim 'solidarity with Iranian workers' and, on the other, declare themselves supporters or apologists of Zionism - as proclaimed by Eric Lee, the coordinator of the LabourStart website.⁴

Such individuals and the groups they are associated with have no legitimate place in the movement for solidarity with the Middle East's revolutionary struggles. Iranian exiled groups who, out of expediency, accept their support should be thoroughly ashamed of themselves. Having received repeated warnings about these groups, ignorance is no longer an excuse.

In the next few months the campaign, 'Support Iranian Workers' (*Karegaran*), will concentrate on reporting workers' struggles in Iran with a view to gaining a different kind of international solidarity: genuine, independent workers' solidarity between Iranian, British and Middle Eastern socialists. Our new website will play a crucial role in reporting the struggles, ideas and debates of the Iranian working class ●

Notes

1. <http://strongerunions.org/2016/02/22/iran-what-does-ending-sanctions-mean-for-workers>.
2. Short film of workers' protests in Ardakan Foulad: www.bbc.com/persian/interactivity/2016/05/160519_193_ugc_steel_workers.
3. 'Iran's political and economic crises' *Critique* (www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03017605.2010.492694).
4. www.ericlee.info/blog/?p=1150.

ECONOMY



Capitalist vampire cannot be reformed

Not so new economics

Michael Roberts reports on John McDonnell's plan to 'transform capitalism'

Over 1,000 people packed into a London college on May 21 to take part in a day of analysis of the state of the British economy organised by the Labour Party. And hundreds had been turned away. This was a conference called by the new leftwing leadership, and the hard-working and dedicated activists who had backed Jeremy Corbyn turned out in droves to discuss with due intent what is wrong with capitalism in Britain and what to do about it. It was an unprecedented event: the leadership had actually called a meeting to discuss economic policy and were allowing party members to put their point of view.

Labour's finance leader, John McDonnell, opened the conference by saying the aim of the various sessions was to see how Labour could "transform capitalism" into delivering a "fairer, democratic, sustainable prosperity, shared by all". We needed to "rewrite the rules" of capitalism to make it work for everybody. He argued that British capital was failing to invest

for growth and jobs. So we should break with the 'free market' ideology of the neoliberal agenda, and "reshape the narrative" with "new economics".

What was this "new economics"? Well, I am afraid it was not new at all, but really a rehash of old Keynesian arguments and policy proposals. As McDonnell had made clear, the aim was to "transform capitalism" through new rules and state intervention, not to replace it.

The keynote speaker at the conference was left Keynesian Cambridge University economist Ha-Joon Chang. He delivered an entertaining and amusing presentation, the gist of which he had already written in an article for *The Guardian* newspaper that week.¹ Chang presented a compelling argument that the strategy adopted by previous governments, both rightwing and Labour, of weakening manufacturing and industry in favour of finance, property and other unproductive services (in other words, turning Britain into a rentier economy²) was a big mistake.

British capitalism was failing to compete in world markets and had a record high deficit on trade with the rest of the world.

And its people had seen no rise in real incomes for eight years since the global financial collapse. British economic strategists reckon that the UK economy did not need a thriving industrial base and could rely on its financial services - just like Switzerland. The irony was that Switzerland is actually the most industrialised economy in the world, as measured by manufacturing output per person. In contrast, British manufacturing has been in rapid decline as a share of total output among major capitalist economies.

Chang reckoned Labour should aim to boost research and investment and development, because those sectors can raise productivity for all sectors and incomes. But he did not expand on how that was to be done in an economic world where banks and hedge funds rule, while loans are made for property and businesses hold back from investment.

In the finance workshop, the poverty of analysis and policy was very evident. The main speakers were Frances Coppola, who has worked as an economist in many banks and now runs a blog on economics;³ and Anastasia Nesvetailova, who is a professor at the City of London University⁴ and has spoken before at the series of 'new economics' meetings run by the Labour Party.⁵ Both speakers basically told the hundreds listening that the regulation of the banks would not avoid a future financial crash - indeed by making regulation 'too tight', it was strangling the ability of the banks to lend. A financial transaction tax would not work either in controlling risk-taking by banks, particularly in new finance

areas outside regulation. Breaking up the big banks or separating their speculative operations from basic banking would not work either. Indeed, nothing would work to avoid yet another crash in the future: "We just have to prepare for one"!

So our finance experts had not a clue about what to do. Staring them in the face was the obvious answer. If the big banks are still engaged in risk activities, in greedy laundering and in paying grotesque salaries to their top executives, despite regulation, why not take them into public ownership under democratic control, so that banking becomes a public service for the people to help investment and growth? This policy move was never even considered by these banking experts - even though the Fire Brigades Union produced an analysis showing why it was the best way forward, which was formally approved by the Trades Union Congress.⁶ I was told that state-owned banks would not work because they are corrupted by politicians - sure, as opposed to privately-owned banks that are as pure as snow.⁷

At least in the session on fiscal and monetary policy, Michael Burke⁸ provided a coherent account of how the weak economic recovery in the major economies, including the UK, was not due to a lack of consumer demand, as the Keynesian 'experts' keep arguing, but to one major factor: the failure of business to invest. The graph below for the UK shows how it was investment that collapsed in the great recession, not consumption. It was the same story in all the major economies.⁹

The large companies were hoarding cash, small businesses were just hanging on and governments were cutting back on public-sector

investment. Indeed, British capital has the lowest level of investment compared to gross domestic product of all the major capitalist economies.

Weak and even falling investment had lowered growth rates and so held down incomes. The answer was a new plan for growth based on public investment.

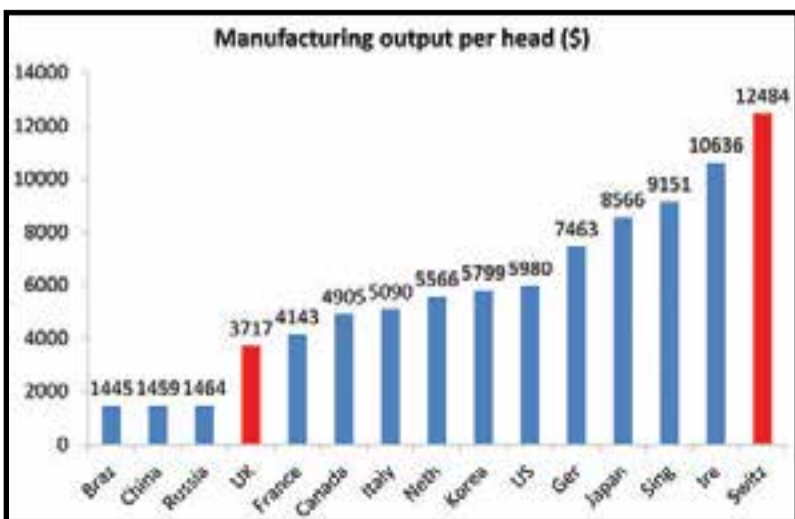
The conclusion of the day's conference screamed out to me. The capitalist sector had caused the crash, not the public sector. But the public sector had to pay with increased debt and a reduction in the role of the state as support for growth and as a safety net for those who lost their jobs, homes and incomes.

So instead of trying to "transform capitalism", Labour needs to develop a programme to replace capitalism by bringing into public ownership the major banks and business sectors under democratic control, to be integrated into a plan for investment in people's needs, not profit. But instead, Labour's advisors and experts offered just some old ideas that had been tried and failed before to direct or regulate capitalism to make it 'work better'.

No new economics there ●

Notes

1. 'Making things matters - this is what Britain forgot' *The Guardian* May 18.
2. See <https://thenextrecession.wordpress.com/2013/01/28/the-rentier-economy>.
3. www.coppolacomment.com.
4. www.city.ac.uk/people/academics/anastasia-nesvetailova.
5. See <https://thenextrecession.wordpress.com/2016/03/31/is-finance-fit-for-purpose>.
6. <https://thenextrecession.files.wordpress.com/2012/11/s-time-to-take-over-the-bankslr.pdf>.
7. <https://thenextrecession.wordpress.com/2013/02/01/the-never-ending-banking-story>.
8. See <http://socialisteconomicbulletin.blogspot.co.uk>.
9. <https://thenextrecession.wordpress.com/2016/02/19/investment-investment-investment>.



REVIEW

Closed Marxism

John Holloway In, against and beyond capitalism: the San Francisco lectures Kairos/PM Press, 2016, pp85 (plus preface), £10.59

In April 2013, John Holloway gave a series of three lectures at Namaste Hall, California Institute of Integral Studies, San Francisco (a private HE institution originating in the promotion of south Asian philosophy), organised by its department of anthropology and social change. *In, against and beyond capitalism* is a lightly edited transcript of these lectures and of the question-and-answer sessions after the first and third lectures (which occupy 27 pages of the 79 devoted to the lectures), together with a 5½-page 'Bibliographical note' by Holloway (mainly an opportunity for further argument) and a 10½-page preface, 'Why Holloway?', by Andrej Grubačić (who is chair of the department).

I say 'lightly edited', because the text feels closer to raw speech than is normally the case of - for example - the transcribed speeches we regularly publish in this paper.¹ I make this point for two reasons. The first is that the reader should not expect to find 'depth arguments' here; in fact, the interaction between Holloway and the questioners is probably a bit more interesting than the lectures themselves. The theory can be found in more depth in his *Change the world without taking power* (2002) and *Crack capitalism* (2010). The second is that the product is unambiguously ephemeral, and it is not clear why it was thought worthwhile to bring it out three years after the lectures had been given.

The first lecture, 'Who are we?', argues, in essence, that left activists should use the term 'we' rather than talk of (for example) 'the working class': by doing so we identify ourselves with the broad masses, whereas terminology like 'the working class' traps us in 'vanguardism', the sin which produced all the defeats of the 20th century. This is not a novel idea, but one which goes back to 1970s Eurocommunist use of anarchist polemics against Marxism as a stick with which to beat the class politics of the Trots, the Tankies, and that generation's left Labourites, and defend the 'broad democratic alliance'.

Moreover (and this may actually be a more helpful idea), Holloway argues that our arguments should rest not on the unpleasantness, injustice, etc, of capitalism, but on our (the broad masses') thwarted creativity and our dignity. Our aim should be to *make the new* rather than merely to oppose the existing order.

The second lecture, 'Capital, the social cohesion that strangles us', restates these points, and goes on to assert explicitly: "I'm quite happy to say that the working class is the only force that can break the dynamic of capital, but only if we say we have to understand the working class as the movement of doing against labor" (p37).

In other words, while calling on Marx, and in the 'Bibliographical note' recommending reading of *Capital* (volume I only) and the *Grundrisse*, Holloway explicitly rejects Marx's politics of class-political organisation and its development out of the self-developing class movement. Marx's line was argued *alongside* these books from the time of 1840s Chartism and down to and including that of the early Social Democratic Party of Germany in the 1870s. There is nothing wrong with selecting parts of an argument that you agree with and disagreeing with other parts; but the argument should be more explicit than it is here (or in *Crack capitalism*) and should engage directly with the logical connections proposed in the original argument.

Here Holloway assumes there is no need to argue it; the point was already made by his co-thinkers in the 1970s - and by himself, in the shape of 'form-analytic' criticism of Ralph Miliband's 'class instrumentalism' and 'reductionism' on the state, in the introduction of Holloway and Sol Picciotto to their *State and capital: a Marxist debate* (1978).

The 'we' that is the 'force of rupture' is also the 'forces of production'. Now, for Marx, it is quite true that humans are *part of* the forces of production; but these forces also include tools, machinery and, most fundamentally, land and natural resources. We will return to this point later, as it is quite fundamental to Holloway's strategic conception.

The 'we' acts through 'cracks' (more on this, of course, in *Crack capitalism*); or 'interstitially' (more on this, of course, in *Change the world without taking power*). But then,

[W]hat are the forces we come up against? The most obvious force is the violence of the state ... But behind that, it seems to me, there is a greater force of social cohesion, which is the force of money or the force of value (pp45-46).

The state is thus brushed aside. The force of value, Holloway argues, is an ongoing struggle: there is an intensifying tendency to commodification, which is met with intensifying counter-struggles (pp47-49).

The title of the third lecture, 'We are the crisis of capital and proud of it', rather reminds me of a couple of badges I and other people I knew used to wear in the 1970s: They read: "We are the people that our parents warned us against" and "Out and proud". The argument here is that the 'we' is to be the force of rupture in the sense of *refusing* all 'alternatives', of denying the need to seek solutions to the crisis of capitalism: this crisis is merely the result of our own insufficient subordination, the falling rate of profit due to wage-push (drawing here on Italian *operaismo*), so that 'solutions' would involve our further subordination. We have to, in effect - to borrow another slogan, this time from the US government in the 1980s - 'Just say no' to capitalism.

Questions, questions

Some of the questions asked of Holloway after his lectures pose rather sharply the limits of his strategy. After the first lecture, one questioner raised the issue of the necessity of the use of force to overcome that of the capitalists. Holloway responds primarily with the (and his) standard response - remember the Soviet Union as (merely) a disaster; and then repeats a point - that he has no answers. This is problematic when he has begun by *ruling out* all state-centred approaches: so that he clearly *does* claim to have *some* answers, if only negative ones. Then he comments:

But I think that we also have to be aware that the current struggles in places like Greece and Spain also confront us with our own crisis. In Greece you've got, on the one hand, this appalling politics of austerity and, on the other hand, you have the most militant tradition of struggle, both state-centred struggle and anarchist struggle and autonomous creative struggle, certainly in Europe,



Zapatistas have a strategy, but not one that can bring liberation to the working class

and they've been struggling and struggling and doing everything possible. But they haven't actually succeeded in breaking the dynamic of austerity. I think we have to see that that's our crisis too: it confronts us with the limits of our own thinking (pp18-19).

Which is plainly true, but raises large questions about Holloway's strategy ...

A second questioner in this session asked what Holloway meant by his opposition to institutions. He is explicit in his response:

[A]ny kind of establishment of patterns is always an attempt to lay down what people in future will do. I think that is generally harmful; not always, but on the whole it is not the way to think about the sort of change that we want to create.

But immediately, he pulls back (perhaps sensing doubts in his audience):

On the other hand, I do feel that in some ways, because of our own limitations, we need institutions. Here we are in an institution, aren't we, in the CIIS, the After Capitalism program. I work in an institution as well in Puebla, which I like very much indeed ... (p21).

In the third session, Chris Carlsson, the author of *Nowtopia* (2008), which Holloway referenced favourably in *Crack capitalism*, raised the question (among others) that

[T]o put it simply, what you are arguing for is that we can get up tomorrow and make the world very differently than what we do today. But one key element of that is convincing ourselves that we can reproduce a complex society. And you use a lot the language of rupture and breaking and anti-institutionalization, and I'm both enthused about that and then I think, well, but so many people, that scares the hell out of them. Because they feel, well, if we're going to break everything, how is the water going to get here and how is electricity going to keep running? (p70).

Holloway's response (pp71-72) is merely evasive, in so far as it does not simply fall back on his argument that human creative capacity *is* the forces of production. After all, we have before our eyes the effects of state failure without alternative forms of human political and productive coordination ready to hand - in Somalia, Afghanistan, Syria, Libya ...

Another questioner in this session

raised the issue of Holloway's "likening our ruptures to volcanic eruptions"; but "I do want to have a little bit more insight from you around keeping the momentum going." Holloway's response to this, besides celebrating the elemental force of the volcano, is:

How do you keep the momentum going? I suppose part of that idea is that you don't. Or that you may do, but that perhaps we shouldn't put too much emphasis on continuity ... If you think that there are explosions of anger, explosions of creation, it doesn't necessarily mean that they are going to last more than a week ... and their success or importance doesn't necessarily depend on their continuity. ... They can be important as moments of creation, as great fireworks that light up the sky and change the way we think ... (p78).

This is a realistic self-recognition of the limits of Holloway's politics: this approach *can only* celebrate "explosions of anger, explosions of creation".

But it still fails to recognise that what is left behind by "explosions of anger, explosions of creation" is usually demoralisation of the defeated militants and/or exploitation by those who *do* have a strategic project, which extends beyond this sort of action to create a degree of continuity. Witness - among numerous other examples - the 'Arab spring' and its real beneficiaries: the street 'revolutionaries' merely open the way to a struggle between the *long-term organised* forces of, on the one hand, the Arab dictatorships (Egypt, Syria) and, on the other, the Saudi-backed Islamists.

Zapatistas

I have indicated so far only what I think are the main lines of the lectures and some 'strategic matters arising' in the question sessions. I observe more generally that Holloway's positive reference points remain the anti-globalisation movement and the Social Forums of around the turn of the millennium (a spent force); the 'Occupy' movement of 2011-12 (already a spent force by the time Holloway was giving these lectures in April 2013); and the Zapatistas, who are a slightly different case.

The Zapatistas - formally the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional ('Zapatista Army of National Liberation' or EZLN) - drew international attention when they launched an insurrection in Chiapas province in southern Mexico in January 1994, demanding indigenous rights and opposing the North American Free Trade Agreement.

The insurrection as such was short-lived, but successful publicity and low-

grade solidarity (albeit insufficient to actually defeat the government) meant that the Mexican regime was unable *simply* to crush it by force. Instead, a 'peace deal' was agreed; and, though the government rapidly broke many of its promises, and licensed the use of private hit-squads, it did not embark on a thorough official crackdown; with the result that a small number of indigenous communities were able to continue, and continue to this day, as 'autonomous' communities, cooperatives and municipalities with Zapatista links. Earlier this year, the criminal charges against Zapatista leaders in relation to 1994 were finally dropped on the ground that the statute of limitations had expired.²

The Zapatista project started as a Guevarist *foco* guerrilla project in the 1970s, moved into something more like a Maoist 'prolonged people's war', and then in 1994 into an attempt to emulate the Nicaraguan Sandinista insurrection of 1979 (an influence also visible in the organisation's name). But Mexico, with a population of 93.5 million in 1994, and a functioning, albeit deeply corrupt and clientelist, parliamentary system, was a different beast to 1979 Nicaragua's 3.2 million under a third-generation dynast personal dictator. The insurrection attracted no significant support outside Chiapas, and the territory the Zapatistas have been able to hold afterwards is trivial.³

In short, the project has mutated into a localised peasant cooperative movement with an attached militia, with more friendly outside leftist attention than is attached to similar phenomena elsewhere. The impact on Mexican politics has in the end been marginal: this remains dominated by neoliberalism in spite of the return of the 'Institutional Revolutionary Party', as well as by corruption and gangsterism.

To say this is not to deny the actual value of what the Zapatista movement *has* done since 1994 in the way of building cooperatives, autonomous education, and so on. But, in the first place, the Zapatistas are the opposite of a good advertisement for Holloway's anti-institutionalism and renunciation of projects of continuity: the institutions of self-government the movement has created are, precisely, institutions - and endeavours to create continuity.

Secondly, another fan, Leonides Oikonomakis, argues that the Zapatistas after 1994 'rejected vanguardism'. But the evidence offered is no more than that they have, in fact, attempted to mobilise masses and promoted standing institutions of mass self-government, based on anti-hierarchical rules and principles. This is an activity which is usually absent from the work of 'anti-vanguardists', precisely because 'consensus' decision-making produces either absence of decisions or unaccountable decisions. It is, on the contrary, a common feature of the mass work of ... 'vanguardist' parties, going back to the SPD, and through even the old 'official' communist movement in its most 'Stalinist' periods.

I accept, however, that promoting self-government is plainly inconsistent with either the caricatural bureaucratic 'democratic centralism' of the Socialist Workers Party variety; or with Tony Blair-style media management; or with 'rule of law'-style regimes, which set up the judiciary (or party internal tribunals) as saviours from on high to deliver us from evil (like Left Unity). All three options are demobilising, requiring rigid

What we fight for

control of local initiative either by the full-time bureaucratic apparatus, or by the (state or internal) judiciary.

Thirdly, even the limited seizure of territory which characterises the Zapatistas is, firstly, based on a *peasant* base - as was, of course, true of the Chinese Red Army before 1948, and other such operations. Secondly, it is a peasant base in a markedly impoverished highlands area. The value of the land held by the Zapatistas may be guessed to be relatively low. The social dynamic may, then, in a sense, have elements in common with that discussed in James C Scott's *The art of not being governed: an anarchist history of upland Southeast Asia* (2009). That is, that 'upland' or otherwise agriculturally marginal areas can partially escape from state power by avoiding producing a surplus product, which would make it worthwhile for the state to expend resources extracting it.

Holloway, in fact, recognises at some level that the Zapatistas may be in a situation sufficiently different from that of the urban working class to limit the lessons that can be drawn from their experience. One of the questioners suggested that the Zapatistas had access to "kinds of [decision-making] technologies that come from 500 years of [indigenous] struggle, as a cultural and political resource" (p66). Holloway responded:

If we think of the Zapatistas and their amazing ability to rise up, to involve a huge number of people in a constant process over a very long time, almost 20 years publicly, almost 30 years since they started, it is extraordinary. The ability to do that, I think, has a lot to do with the traditions that existed in those communities before the Zapatistas came into being ... But everywhere there are certain traditions and certain patterns of working together, certain patterns of solidarity, certain patterns of mutual support, even in the most apparently individualized society. It's no good wishing that we too were an indigenous community in Chiapas; we have to start from where we are.

There are two problems here. First, if Holloway were to be more concrete about the "certain traditions and certain patterns of working together" of urban working class society, which constitute the "where we are" from where we have to start, these would turn out to be the historically developed working class institutions which his anti-institutionalism rejects.

The more fundamental problem is that the issue is not, in fact, a matter of 'traditions'. The point is that the urban proletariat or wage-earning class is *immediately and visibly* enmeshed in a complex (in fact, global) division of labour - Chris Carlsson's "How is the water going to get here and how is electricity going to keep running?" Hence in the first place the problem of *access to the means of production* - land, tools and machinery, raw materials - poses itself very differently to the proletariat than to the peasantry. Secondly, the extended division of labour means that "traditions and certain patterns of working together, certain patterns of solidarity" *require for urban workers the ability to coordinate beyond the local*, in a way which is, to say the least, *less* necessary for peasants. It is from this that there flows both the problem of episodic outbursts without long-term result *and* the unsolved problems of 'authority' and labour bureaucracy. Holloway's approach merely attempts to dodge these issues.

Finally, it is important to recognise that the Zapatista project in its present form started with an open insurrection: that is, an - at least ostensible - attempt to seize political power. The fact that the cooperative and municipality projects survived and survive reflects the fact that the Mexican state calculated that open and full-scale repression posed a greater threat to its political power than a sort-of 'negotiation' and subsequent *toleration*

of small-scale Zapatista mass operations in parts of Chiapas.

One should compare and contrast the 1916 Easter Rising, where the British state's decision to kill the leaders turned a micro-putsch into an event which 'lit a candle' for overthrow of British rule in the 26 counties a few years later. The Mexican state acted more intelligently in 1994 than the Brits in 1916. But they did so in face of a real *political* threat in 1994 - not a mere attempt to "change the world without taking power".

Holloway says that "It's no good wishing that we too were an indigenous community in Chiapas; we have to start from where we are." True. Part of that "it's no good wishing" is that we cannot practically build a militia in the forest (in the Forest of Dean, perhaps?) and launch a rural insurrection. But we *can* begin work to threaten the capitalist class with loss of its political power, in ways which might make it more willing to make concessions - as concessions have been made to the Zapatista movement.

To do so would necessarily start from using the limited freedoms of press, speech and organisation that we have and the limited electoral opportunities we have - not with a view to obtaining a friendly *government*, which would give economic concessions through tax-and-spend or borrow-and-spend, but to build a serious *party of political opposition*, which combined support for the workers' independent movement (trade unions, cooperatives, strikes, etc) with exposing the corrupt character of the capitalists' *constitution* and proposing alternative forms of decision-making.

Even quite limited success with a project of this sort could reinforce trade unions, cooperatives and other forms of "traditions and certain patterns of working together" against the efforts of capital to appropriate or dissipate them; and could make capitalists and their state sense the need to look over their shoulder at the risk of overthrow before they take decisions.

At the moment, the left and the workers' movement is committed to *not* threatening capital's political power - whether this commitment takes the form of the 'transitional method', the promotion of Keynesian solutions or 'change the world without taking power' ephemeral forms of 'direct actionism'. The result is that, to the extent that capitalists look over their shoulder at the possibility of their overthrow, the spectre they see haunting them is the nationalistic far right, and this is the trend they conciliate.

Millions of ways

I said earlier that Holloway was, in my opinion, helpful to argue that we should go beyond mere anti-capitalism to efforts to construct alternative ways of doing things in the present. To take a representative quotation:

We exist in and against this society. And We also exist beyond, because, all the time, what We are trying to do is to create ways of relating to other people that don't follow the logic of money, that don't follow the capitalist pattern ... There are millions of ways of doing it (p12; the capitalisation of "We" is deliberate emphasis on Holloway's part).

What this implies is, indeed, cooperative and similar endeavours, building mutuals, workers' education (or peasants', as in Chiapas), the seizure of any opportunities ('cracks') to do things differently, radical literature and art, and so on, and so on; indeed, millions of ways of doing it.

One of these ways is, precisely, to think about *institutional forms of decision-making on a scale larger than the local face-to-face group*. We can think these questions in relation to the critique of the constitutional forms of the existing state order, and in relation to the concrete critique of the forms of bureaucratic management in the workers' movement (in cooperatives, in

trade unions, in campaigns, in political parties). It is no doubt true here as elsewhere that (as Holloway insists) no-one has a monopoly on truth - certainly not so as to justify the *a priori* exclusion of any point of view. Again, 'millions of ways'.

But Holloway's proposal is not in reality to 'let a hundred flowers bloom': he is committed *a priori* to 'anti-institutionalism', to the point that he is willing to surrender the possibility of building continuity and long-term momentum in favour of celebrating the 'outbreak' as the necessary form of the movement. Even the *possibility* of thinking about doing things differently through rethinking institutional order is in his account *prima facie* excluded.

There are here certain *a priori* commitments. They go back to the 1970s. 'Anti-vanguardism' could be a straightforward anarchist point of view. But it could, equally, be about an attempt to do politics without disagreement - which actually meant, in the 'anti-vanguardism' of 1970s Eurocommunists, without criticism of the labour bureaucracy (or of the self-appointed organisers and initiators of the movement). This was very visible in the meaning of 'consensus' in the Social Forums - which meant, in substance, not 'consensus' of all, but 'consensus' of the *big players* - primarily the Brazilian Workers' Party in the World Social Forum and Rifondazione Comunista in the European Social Forum; in the London meeting of the latter, it meant the veto right of Redmond O'Neill *per pro* Ken Livingstone.

That Holloway is still thinking at least partially in these terms is visible from a response to a questioner in the third session, who asked:

... a lot of these projects have succeeded to some extent, but what happens over and over again is individual human beings have conflict with each other, and a lot of times that conflict breaks apart, whatever the project is ... How do we deal with that? (p67).

Holloway responds by recognising the fact, but

I think that these things tend to happen in moments of stagnation. As long as the movements are moving - movements that don't move aren't really movements - as long as there is a development, then on the whole the situation will be much more productive (p68).

Disagreement then appears as a product of failure. The idea would be fatuous if it was not so common and influential, and

so poisonous.

Holloway's exclusionary arguments for this approach are built by *philosophising* the reasons for the defeats of the workers' movement in the 20th century. The need for 'We' is given by the danger of treating the masses as an object. Capitalism, on the other hand, does not have any tendency to decline as such: merely a tendency to intensify itself. Hence the only contradiction is 'We'; "We are the crisis of capital and proud of it". 'We' *are* the forces of production. 'We' produce capitalism merely by consenting to it.

None of this is a novelty in response to 1991, or (as Holloway might possibly argue) to the Zapatista movement. Holloway was already pre-empting political and empirical argument with philosophical arguments in his 1978 work on the state with Picciotto. That book was built primarily out of translations of German 'form-critical' arguments about the state, based on *Capital* volume 1 (not, please note, *Capital* volumes 2 or 3; and, at that, only on the first, most Hegelian part of *Capital* volume 1, not the second, more historical part). In these lectures there is further reliance on Adorno. The point that the approach goes back to the 1970s was well taken by Andrew Coates in his 2010 review of *Crack capitalism* in this paper.⁴

The school of which Holloway was part in the later 1980s to 1990s purported to be 'Open Marxism'; but this 'openness' was, in fact, decidedly in one direction only: it was closed against Marx's concrete political strategy of the centrality of class, and hence of building the actual existing workers' movement, while giving it theoretical assistance - an approach which was supposedly an 'Engelsian' vulgarisation.

The lectures reproduced in this book indicate that this closure remains central to Holloway's politics to this day ●

Mike Macnair

mike.macnair@weeklyworker.co.uk

Notes

1. Although presumably there has been some editing to remove 'ums' and 'ers' and similar features of taped speech.
2. I have drawn for this and the next paragraphs on B Sunkara, 'Why we loved the Zapatistas' *Jacobin* January 2011; L Oikonomakis, 'Why we still love the Zapatistas' (undated) *Roar* magazine (<https://roarmag.org/magazine/why-we-still-love-the-zapatistas/>); JM Garcia, 'Faded Zapatista legacy lingers in Chiapas' *Catholic Reporter* February 10 2016; P Salgado, 'An undefeated movement' *Jacobin* April 7 2016.
3. As can be seen from Wikipedia (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rebel_Zapatista_Autonomous_Municipalities).
4. 'Capitalism cracked' *Weekly Worker* November 11 2010. Paul Blackledge ('In perspective: John Holloway' *International Socialism* October 2012) is naturally enough friendlier to Lukácsian aspects of Holloway's argumentation, which fit with SWP-think.

Fighting fund

£515 in five days

With just five days to go before the end of our May fighting fund, we have received £1,235. That means we still need another £515 by May 31 if we are to reach our £1,750 target.

Last week saw £357 come in, so obviously we now need a big effort to pull in rather more over a shorter period. That £357 included a cheque for £100 from GT - £60 was for his annual subscription and the other £40 was a donation - plus £25 donated by PayPal from comrade LS. There were two other PayPal donations - both for £5 - from PM and NM.

In fact NM's was an accident. Apparently he clicked on the 'Subscribe' button and paid for the first month by mistake! He says: "Sorry, didn't mean to subscribe in the first place! Treat the fiver as a donation!" Feel free

to make more mistakes like that, comrade! He was among 3,233 online readers last week, by the way.

Finally, we got £282 in standing orders - thanks go to SK, MF, TH, DT, GD and DC.

But now we need quite a bit more over the next few days and, because of the bank holiday, there might be a problem in relying on the post. The best way to make sure we get your donation double quick is by bank transfer - to account number 00744310 (sort code - 30-99-64). Or there's always PayPal - whether by accident or not! Please help us reach our target. ●

Robbie Rix

Fill in a standing order form (back page), donate via our website, or send cheques, payable to *Weekly Worker*

■ Without organisation the working class is nothing; with the highest form of organisation it is everything.

■ There exists no real Communist Party today. There are many so-called 'parties' on the left. In reality they are confessional sects. Members who disagree with the prescribed 'line' are expected to gag themselves in public. Either that or face expulsion.

■ Communists operate according to the principles of democratic centralism. Through ongoing debate we seek to achieve unity in action and a common world outlook. As long as they support agreed actions, members should have the right to speak openly and form temporary or permanent factions.

■ Communists oppose all imperialist wars and occupations but constantly strive to bring to the fore the fundamental question - ending war is bound up with ending capitalism.

■ Communists are internationalists. Everywhere we strive for the closest unity and agreement of working class and progressive parties of all countries. We oppose every manifestation of national sectionalism. It is an internationalist duty to uphold the principle, 'One state, one party'.

■ The working class must be organised globally. Without a global Communist Party, a Communist International, the struggle against capital is weakened and lacks coordination.

■ Communists have no interest apart from the working class as a whole. They differ only in recognising the importance of Marxism as a guide to practice. That theory is no dogma, but must be constantly added to and enriched.

■ Capitalism in its ceaseless search for profit puts the future of humanity at risk. Capitalism is synonymous with war, pollution, exploitation and crisis. As a global system capitalism can only be superseded globally.

■ The capitalist class will never willingly allow their wealth and power to be taken away by a parliamentary vote.

■ We will use the most militant methods objective circumstances allow to achieve a federal republic of England, Scotland and Wales, a united, federal Ireland and a United States of Europe.

■ Communists favour industrial unions. Bureaucracy and class compromise must be fought and the trade unions transformed into schools for communism.

■ Communists are champions of the oppressed. Women's oppression, combating racism and chauvinism, and the struggle for peace and ecological sustainability are just as much working class questions as pay, trade union rights and demands for high-quality health, housing and education.

■ Socialism represents victory in the battle for democracy. It is the rule of the working class. Socialism is either democratic or, as with Stalin's Soviet Union, it turns into its opposite.

■ Socialism is the first stage of the worldwide transition to communism - a system which knows neither wars, exploitation, money, classes, states nor nations. Communism is general freedom and the real beginning of human history.

The *Weekly Worker* is licensed by November Publications under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International Licence: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/legalcode>. ISSN 1351-0150.

**Active boycott:
neither
Cameron nor
Johnson**

Two reactionary camps

Our class can gain nothing by voting for either of the two options, argues Peter Manson

Another day, another scare story. I am referring, of course, to the European Union referendum campaign, with both the 'remain' and 'leave' camps throwing around all sorts of highly tenuous and speculative projections of the disaster waiting to happen if we get it wrong on June 23.

So for 'remain' the last few days have seen the release of a treasury report claiming that withdrawal would cost hundreds of thousands of jobs, while the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) predicted it might mean an extra two years of austerity. Prime minister David Cameron claimed that a Brexit would result in "a DIY recession for the first time in history" (this was immediately seized upon by some as implying that the last recession was not, after all, a result of 'Labour mismanagement', as the Tories have consistently - and absurdly - alleged). It would "knock 3.6% off GDP", said Cameron, and, what is more, it would mean that "the cost of family holidays will soar".

For his part, chancellor George Osborne claimed: "If we leave the European Union, there will be an immediate economic shock that will hit financial markets." While even some Brexiteers admit a 'leave' vote would indeed produce a short-term negative effect on the stock markets, Osborne was on far shakier ground when he said a withdrawal would mean that house prices could "fall by a fifth" - or by between £30,000 and £50,000 - by 2018. Of course, if you are a first-time buyer, that might be considered a reason to vote 'leave', so Osborne immediately added that interest rates would also rise, making mortgages much more expensive.

Meanwhile, Jean-Claude Juncker, the president of the European Commission, was the latest big name from outside the UK to throw his oar in. Britain will be regarded as a "third country" by the EU if it leaves, said Juncker, and "the deserters will not be treated with open arms". Outrage! Pro-Brexit Labour MP Gisela Stuart claimed: "These extraordinary comments are a new low" - an example of "intimidation" apparently.

Of course, it is less straightforward for the Brexiteers to dismiss institutions like the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development or the International Monetary Fund as stuffed with people in thrall to David Cameron - and the same applies to the Bank of England and the IFS, and even Barack Obama. After all, in normal times rightwing Conservatives would be falling over themselves to identify with the 'leader of the free world'. It is all very well stating that the European Commission cannot be trusted, but what about the OECD, IMF and even (by extension) Nato? These are supposed to be international institutions that everyone respects, promoting 'stability' and 'democracy'.

Keep 'em out

Nevertheless, the Brexiteers are not wrong when they say that the 'remain' camp is putting its own exaggerated spin on the possible negative repercussions of a UK withdrawal.



June 23: a Tweedle Dum/Tweedle Dee choice

Take, for instance, the claim made by top Brexiteer Michael Gove. The justice secretary said that there could be more than 400,000 extra migrants a year arriving in Britain by 2030 if the UK remained in the EU - adding up to five million by that year. Even if Turkey, Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia do not join, there would still be 172,000 a year - or 2.6 million overall, claimed Gove.

This was seized upon by the *Daily Express*, which revealed the results of its "exclusive poll". In the event of Turkey being admitted, "12 million Turks say they'll come to the UK once EU deal is signed", read its headline. But the actual story informs us that "almost 16% of Turkish adults said they would consider relocating to the UK once their country becomes a full

member of the EU" (my emphasis).¹ While the 2,600 people surveyed might be considered a reasonable sample, the story is so ludicrous that you would think the pro-EU establishment would simply laugh it out of court. But Cameron, even though he had previously expressed support for Turkey joining, now stated that its membership is "not remotely on the cards". The UK would use its veto to ensure it was kept out.

But this is par for the course for his side. Both camps contend that immigration is a big problem and so Cameron, for instance, feels he has no option but to respond by renouncing his previously stated position. After all, he cannot deny that millions of Turks would seek to migrate (to other EU countries as well as Britain, of

course), even if the projected numbers are absurdly exaggerated.

Then there was Boris Johnson and the 'H' word. He made the mistake of bringing Hitler into the argument, thus allowing his opponents to claim that he was somehow likening the EU, or present-day Germany, to the Nazis. It was almost as though he had not noticed the furore when Ken Livingstone did something similar in a different context just a few weeks earlier.

What Johnson actually said was:

The truth is that the history of the last couple of thousand years has been broadly repeated attempts by various people or institutions - in a Freudian way - to rediscover the lost childhood of Europe, this golden age of peace and prosperity under the Romans, by trying to unify it. Napoleon, Hitler, various people tried this out, and it ends tragically. The EU is an attempt to do this by different methods.²

While you can argue with much of this - the idea that Hitler was trying to "rediscover the lost childhood of Europe" is frankly laughable - the basic point that Johnson was making was that the promoters of "ever closer union" are attempting to do bureaucratically what the Nazis did by force. But after saying such a thing, according to Michael Heseltine, Johnson "can never be prime minister". With or without Boris Johnson, it now looks pretty clear that 'remain' will win the day on June 23. The 'What UK Thinks' "poll of polls" shows a 10% margin in favour of 'remain' - the six polls it reports show a lead of between 1% and just under 20% over 'leave'.³ The one ray of light for the Brexit camp is that, it is generally agreed, there will probably be a bigger turnout amongst 'leave' voters.

Left confusion

But, even so, things do not look good for the likes of Robert Griffiths, general secretary of the *Morning Star's* Communist Party of Britain, who writes: "Inflicting a popular defeat on Cameron, Osborne, the CBI, the Institute of Directors, the IMF, the Pentagon and Nato on June 23 should be the top priority for communists, socialists and trade unionists."⁴

It is true that all the above favour Britain remaining in the EU, but surely the 'leave' camp is just as reactionary (if not more so). Why not vote 'remain'

in order to 'inflict a popular defeat' on the Tory right and Ukip? In actual fact, that is why both Socialist Resistance and Paul Mason have temporarily suspended their opposition to the EU and will vote 'remain' next month. But the truth is, as we have constantly pointed out, this is a battle between two anti-working class camps. Whoever wins will use their victory to promote their own aims at our expense.

Comrade Griffiths continues by claiming that a 'leave' vote "would clear the way for the downfall of a divided Tory regime and the early election of a Labour government free to pursue left and progressive policies". In similar vein, the Socialist Workers Party - which has joined forces with the CPB in the 'left exit' campaign - proclaims: "The Lexit campaign rejects the pessimism of those who see the consequences of exit as an automatic shift to the right. More likely it would result in the departure of Cameron and a fatally weakened government."⁵

This is cloud cuckoo land. In the unlikely event of a 'leave' majority, the Conservative government will not fall. Yes, Cameron will resign - to be replaced, quite possibly, by Johnson. The new Tory leader will then go through the motions of drawing up a new set of 'conditions', which, if met by Brussels, would allow Johnson to recommend a positive response in a second referendum. Like his predecessor he would return triumphantly waving an equally worthless piece of paper, on the basis of which he would recommend a 'remain' vote later in the year.

Either way, the Tories will not collapse. They will soon reunite against both the Ukip threat and, more importantly, the possibility of a left-led Labour government in 2020. We cannot avoid this scenario by siding with one reactionary camp or the other. The left should be campaigning for an active boycott of the referendum and the construction of an independent working class alternative ●

peter.manson@weeklyworker.co.uk

Notes

1. www.express.co.uk/news/uk/672563/Turkey-EU-Britain-exclusive-poll-crime-figures-Turks.
2. www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/05/14/boris-johnson-interview-we-can-be-the-heroes-of-europe-by-voting.
3. http://whatukthinks.org/eu/opinion-polls/poll-of-polls.
4. *Morning Star* May 18.
5. https://socialistworker.co.uk/art/42550/Launch+of+united+left+campaign+to+leave+the+EU.

Subscribe				Name: _____	
	6m	1yr	Inst.	Address: _____	
UK	£30/€35	£60/€70	£200/€220	_____	
Europe	£43/€50	£86/€100	£240/€264	_____	
Rest of world	£65/€75	£130/€150	£480/€528	_____	
<p>New UK subscribers offer: 3 months for £10</p> <p>UK subscribers: Pay by standing order and save £12 a year. Minimum £12 every 3 months... but please pay more if you can.</p> <p>Send a cheque or postal order payable to 'Weekly Worker' at: Weekly Worker, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX</p>				Tel: _____	
				Email: _____	
				Sub: £/€ _____	
				Donation: £/€ _____	
Standing order					
To _____			Bank plc _____		
Branch address _____					
Post code _____		Account name _____			
Sort code _____		Account No _____			
Please pay to Weekly Worker, Lloyds A/C No 00744310 sort code 30-99-64, the sum of _____ every month*/3 months* until further notice, commencing on _____ This replaces any previous order from this account. (*delete)					
Date _____					
Signed _____			Name (PRINT) _____		
Address _____					