



weekly
worker



Toni Negri's 'Storia di un comunista': last hurrah of a psychopath

- Young Labour conference
- Ireland's austerity election
- Iran's double election
- Body image obsession

No 1096 Thursday March 3 2016

Towards a Communist Party of the European Union

£1/€1.10

NO BACKTRACKING ON PALESTINE



LETTERS



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

Irrelevance

Reading the CPGB statement on the European Union referendum and Paul Demarty's accompanying article, 'A carnival of reaction' (February 25), it would seem as though the choice is between two repellent 'sides': one led by David Cameron; the other by the clownish duo, Boris Johnson and Nigel Farage; with George Galloway as left auxiliary. But in reality the choice will be between two outcomes: the UK staying in the EU or exiting it.

We are also told that the referendum is a cynical, deceptive manoeuvre. This is true, but the same could be said about most bourgeois elections, especially those held under the blatantly anti-democratic first-past-the-post rule.

The statement and the article studiously avoid the question as to which outcome of the referendum would be worse for the long-term interests of the working class and the struggle for socialism. In my opinion, exit from the EU would be considerably worse: all the arguments for exit are overtly or covertly nationalist, while some of the arguments for staying in are internationalist. And I have reason to believe that the CPGB comrades share this assessment. Had the CPGB been able to tip the balance, it would be highly irresponsible not to do so, and thereby allow exit to occur by default. The present call for boycotting the referendum is a pose, assumed in the secure knowledge that it is virtually certain to have nil effect on the outcome. This is a luxury of irrelevance.

Moshé Machover
London

Vote 'yes'

We should call for a 'yes' vote in the referendum because as socialists we must ask and answer the question: is it in the interests of the working class and oppressed in Britain and internationally for the UK to remain in the EU or to leave it? That is our sole criterion.

We are for a 'yes' primarily because we recognise that socialism in a single country is impossible. Indeed capitalism has long ago become impossible to sustain and develop in a single country, and socialism must be built on a far higher level of wealth and productivity. An exit from the EU would strengthen nationalism and patriotism - not only in the British ruling class, but also in a big section of the British working class.

But surely we must not attempt in any way to confuse the Socialist United States of Europe with the present imperialist cabal that is the European Union? The United States of America was established in the War of Independence and maintained in the Civil War in revolutionary struggles. France's internal customs borders were demolished along with the *ancien régime* by revolution in 1789-94. However, both Germany and Italy were unified from the top down basically by reactionary political movements after failed revolutions.

Labour MP Kate Hoey, George Galloway and the *Morning Star* have pandered to 'anti-establishment' Strasserism. Five Labour MPs have left the pro-establishment Vote Leave Tory-dominated campaign and founded the Labour Leave campaign, funded and chaired by millionaire John Mills. They have (all?) now lashed up with the

Grassroots Out (GO)! Campaign, which includes the Campaign against European Federalism, Ukip and sundry other racist scumbags, on the basis that it is more 'anti-establishment'. This is leftwing populism lashing up with rightwing populism in an unprincipled carnival of reaction.

Hoey defended her conduct in a *Morning Star* article. It was pointed out that Grassroots Out is led by hard-right Tory MP Peter Bone and she was asked if she finds it difficult to campaign alongside people she has such ideological differences with. She replied: "The reality is that if you really want to get out, every group has a slightly different perspective, and we can only win this referendum if we can all come together. I don't think there's a problem with that." That's pandering to Strasserism. We are pleased to see a principled opposition to this Strasserism has emerged in the Communist Party of Britain/*Morning Star*.

Vote 'no' from the Socialist Workers Party, Socialist Party and others is essentially reformist with a perspective of the parliamentary road to socialism, dominated ideologically by the old CPGB's 1951 *British road to socialism*. The abstentionist line of today's CPGB, the RCIT and others is unpardonable fence-sitting in this most vital of political questions for the class-consciousness of the British and international working class. Comrades of Workers Power, Left Unity, Socialist Resistance and others who take the vote 'yes' line do so on the basis of seeking to advance the struggle for the Socialist United States of Europe and rejecting all this economic nationalism and anti-immigrant bigotry and putting forward the programme of internationalist revolution in Europe and globally.

Gerry Downing
Socialist Fight

LU bleeding

Left Unity was founded on a Labourite programme - the 'Spirit of 45' - which, like old Labour, sought to restore the UK's 'social monarchy' established after World War II. This has now been reclaimed by the Corbyn movement. You would have to have your head buried in England's sandy beaches not to notice that the democratic movement in Scotland has already seriously damaged the prospects for a British social monarchy.

Left Unity needs to change its programme and strategy by ditching its Labourite programme and adopting a democratic programme (the 'social republic'), which addresses the crisis of Westminster and issues such as popular sovereignty, a new constitution, so-called local government devolution, the relations of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, the European Union, as well as democracy in local communities, in the workplace and in the trade unions.

It is indisputable that such a shift from a Labour programme to a democratic programme must be debated across the party and agreed at national conference. The only question is whether this should take place before the scheduled conference in November. I agree with the Communist Platform it should be sooner rather than later. Nothing is more dangerous in a crisis than doing nothing to resolve it positively.

The 2015 annual conference had to deal with a crisis of disorientation. Many followed the logic of their own 'Spirit of 45' towards liquidation into Momentum and the Labour Party. The CPGB are not the last to take that

path in the hope of transforming the Labour Party from a broad church into a communist halfway-house party. LU decided to fight on as an independent party without discussing or deciding how that would be done. No real decisions were taken.

In May and June Left Unity faces the biggest test since the Scottish referendum and the general election. There will be the elections for London mayor, local councils in England and Wales, the national assembly for Wales, the police and crime commissioner in Wales, the Scottish parliament - and in the European referendum the potential exists for a serious political crisis over the future of the UK.

Now the leadership of LU have a choice. Take a time-out and effectively sit out the battles of May and June. Stick with the old politics until November. The current policy is to back Labour by not standing any candidates in the local and national elections in May and supporting the Tory-Labour 'remain' popular front in June. In Scotland LU is not going to back Rise or be active by backing their candidates against the Scottish National Party and Labour. In short the 'Spirit of 45' policy is simply to make way for Labour.

If we are not going to sit out the political battles of May-June we need a special one-day conference no later than April. We could then adopt a democratic programme and strategy to adopt a position to fight Labour by showing we have an alternative. Of course, this costs money and takes time, and plenty of people will want to avoid that. But it means investing in the future and getting ready to start building a new Left Unity.

Here is the catch 22. If LU is not going to fight any of these elections or campaigns, it would be better to use the time and resources to hold a special conference in May-June and involve members in a national debate to develop a fighting perspective on democracy. On the other hand, if we are going to fight the May-June political struggles, we will need a special conference to adopt a militant, democratic programme in sharp contrast to Labour's social monarchy. In conclusion, LU can avoid the political struggles in May-June and keep busy campaigning on a host of worthy causes. 'Activism' is the programme of the SWP. But, as long as we remain stuck in the 'spirit of 45' programme, Left Unity will be in danger of dissolving politically into the Labour Party. How long can we keep bleeding before we die?

Steve Freeman
LU and Rise

What militia?

James Marshall correctly draws attention to numerous existing conflicts that have the potential to spin out of control (or be deliberately pushed that way), to a direct confrontation between major powers ('A working class military programme', February 25).

I do not regard 'mutually assured destruction' as a barrier to a protagonist calculating they could win a 'regional' war. Clausewitz famously referred to war as resembling a game of cards. James's comments, however, are welcome, as I have at times argued that the CPGB has not dealt with this or paid enough attention to the threat of war. He also makes some correct points about the Stop the War Coalition's pacifist leanings.

A few years ago when an attack by the west on Iran seemed likely (not that the threat has disappeared) Hands Off the People of Iran was set up to oppose the threat, but was not presented as a wider anti-war

movement. Indeed, it sought to work under the STWC umbrella; its affiliation bid was turned down, but that of CPGB was allowed.

The situation is overripe for a movement on socialist principles. The World Socialist Web has called for an anti-war movement based on a perspective of mobilising the working class internationally. I wonder now if the CPGB has any response to that.

Turning from the war danger to the need for the working class to defend itself, James calls for a people's militia. Why "people's" and not "workers'" he does not explain, but it sits uneasily with the simultaneous call for soldiers to be protected against bullying and be represented by trades unions. It is not clear who is meant to create the (workers') militia.

To say it would be needed to protect a left Labour government from military intervention raises other issues. A Labour government in 2020 is entirely possible, given a likely major global economic crisis. Whatever the subjective desires of its new-found support base, I can only assume that such a government would be the one to implement the ruling class agenda. We have the example of the 'far-left' Syriza raising the hopes of the masses, only to betray them. If a new party of the hard left can do that, how much easier for the British Labour Party after a century of loyalty to the ruling class?

It will be necessary to arm the workers politically against such a government by drawing lessons from the Greek experience. Much of the left currently flocking to Labour were precisely the ones cheering on Syriza and making the excuses when it scabbed. Arming the working class politically is the absolutely necessary first step before talk of militias makes any sense.

In a period of intense struggle the question of arming the workers arises not as abstraction - as a list of demands presented to a Labour government, in its own best interests - but from the objective need to defend strikes, demonstrations, occupations, etc against such a government. A nucleus of a militia could emerge and grow alongside strike committees, factory councils, escalating to dual power and a challenge to the state. Drawing, in fact, on the experience of the Russian Revolution.

Mike Martin
Sheffield

No game of bluff

Following Yasmine Mather's piece on the risks of nuclear weaponry ('Weapons of genocidal destruction', February 25), there is one other myth we might specifically confront. Namely, that the UK is strong and secure because it has its own 'independent nuclear deterrent'.

Britain's Trident weapons system is not technically independent and, as Yasmine and others have pointed out, is only part of the American arsenal to knock out Russia, with Trident specifically aimed at Moscow. As Russia is the only nuclear power equal to the huge US weapons stock, the strategy of 'deterrence' by the threat of mutual destruction is aimed only at Russia, whatever its government happens to be. If some unforeseen leader with a martyr complex did get hold of Russian hardware, we wouldn't be looking at a game of bluff.

As for British autonomy, the Trident missile system requires navigation assistance from US satellite technology: the warheads would not reach the designated city of Moscow without it (source: Greenpeace, 2006). So if an exchange like the old cold war scenario were to occur, Britain would either be a

target - if it didn't join in a first strike by the US - or an assassin. It is not an independent power impressing everyone with its big gun.

Mike Belbin
London

Democratic USSR

The guru of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty group, Sean Matgamna, has rather proudly published a second book on the Russian Revolution, a 798-page tome entitled *The two Trotskyisms*.

Sean has recently introduced a number of sections and themes from the book in the AWL's weekly, *Solidarity*, and there have been a subsequent number of quite lengthy review articles exploring and rehearsing some of the key contesting themes.

I don't come from any of the many Trotskyist traditions, and in fact regard them as diversions and alien from what one may term traditional Marxism-Leninism, so I am somewhat surprised to find myself becoming interested in a series of articles intimately concerned with the key competing catechisms of conflicting Trotskyists concerning the class nature of the Soviet Union, and thus really only of interest to present-day high priests and priestesses of the different factions.

Andrew Coates summarises Matgamna's book (*Solidarity* No394) as consisting of "a selection of original articles from 1939 to the early 1950s, by Trotsky, his 'orthodox' champions, and those expressing opposing views on the errors and gaps in their political approach. The present work aims to present a demythologised account of the raucous debates of the Trotskyist movement inside the American Socialist Workers Party ... during the 1940s - placing the heretics on an equal, if not superior, footing to the orthodox."

If I understand correctly, the "orthodox" are the James Cannon trend who broadly held that the Soviet Union remained a form of workers' state, albeit 'degenerated', while the 'heterodox' were associated with Max Shachtman, who held that through 'bureaucratic collectivism' a new form of class-divided and class-exploiting society had arisen.

Coates raises the question as to whether this book and subject is really "worth the time and effort," and certainly I don't think I will be adding it to my collection.

I personally find Trotsky to be a most unappealing character: arrogant, vainglorious, narcissistic, anti-social, a fop, a dilettante, with ruthless dictatorial tendencies and with family roots among the petty bourgeois kulak class in pre-revolutionary Russia. These roots reflected themselves first in his vacillating but general siding with the Mensheviks and against Lenin during those critical splits and debates within the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party from 1903, and later in his estrangement from the 1917 Bolshevik revolution, after joining with it at almost the 11th hour.

Even Matgamna - presumably a fan of Trotsky - states in the book that "over the period leading up to the [second world] war he presented a large quiver of half-evolved and half-eroded 'positions', ambivalences, and contradictions." Indeed so.

At this point, I am reminded of Moshé Machover's second very convoluted and lengthy article in the *Weekly Worker* ('New contest, new focus', February 4), anticipating what we are all waiting for - namely the third article, presenting his no doubt unique analysis of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In this second piece, Machover seems desperate to pray in aid Trotsky

for his arguments (why?), claiming first and ridiculously that “Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution was foreshadowed in Lenin’s *Draft theses on national and colonial questions for the second congress of the Communist International*, dated June 5 1920”. Machover actually quotes part of the theses in his article and anyone who can read can see that Trotsky’s version of permanent revolution has absolutely nothing to do with Leninism.

Machover then demolished his own argument by going on to say: “the Portuguese case (in 1974) is the only one that came even remotely close to Trotsky’s scenario of permanent revolution. But in the case of Portugal this movement was not actually consummated.” So Trotsky’s theory has proved completely useless in practice in explaining the world and contradictions of imperialism from the turn of the 20th century, and has not been able to guide a single successful revolutionary struggle in world history.

Machover actually summarises well the Leninism of Lenin on imperialism and the national and colonial question as: “in this new worldwide struggle, liberation movements in the colonies would be objectively important allies of the socialist revolution, because they were ranged against a common enemy: imperialism. Even where these liberation movements are led by bourgeois or petty bourgeois elements and have ‘bourgeois democratic’ nationalist aims, they would nevertheless undermine world imperialism and thereby help to bring about the demise of moribund capitalism.”

One can read precisely this Leninist approach in works by, for example, JV Stalin in the *Foundations of Leninism*, the documents of the 17th and 18th Congresses of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (1934 and 1939), and the 1961 programme of the CPSU - all of which not only successfully analysed the changing balance of world forces, but provided a guide to action in practice for millions of working and oppressed peoples around the world, and delivered real and significant gains for working people as a consequence.

Machover is also forced to acknowledge the complete false analysis, premises and sheer “unreality” of Trotsky’s central strategic thesis and approach to revolution, his dilettante 1938 *Transitional programme*, “the founding document of the Fourth International”, and therefore the progenitor of all successor Trotskyisms.

Desperate to pay homage to Trotsky and give him credit for something, Machover claims that “in 1938, Trotsky correctly predicted World War II”! A stunning and useful insight, no doubt.

Paul Le Blanc’s article in *Solidarity* No388 “was a detailed and thoughtful piece and deals with the subject (of *The two Trotskyisms*) in a tone of ecumenical and scholarly tact” (comment by Ed Maltby in *Solidarity* No391). I too found it fascinating and revealing; it includes a number of interesting formulations, which together seem to suggest the publicly stated bases of the four key Moscow trials between 1936 and 1938 were in fact broadly correct.

Le Blanc quotes Trotsky in exile calling for “the removal of the bureaucracy (ie, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union) by force”, that the role of the exiled Fourth International “was to prepare for this [coup d’état] and stand at the head of the masses in a favourable historical situation”, that the FI was “underground” and that “the illegal existence of a party [conspiratorial

organisation] is not non-existence.”

Paul traces the political evolution of leading Trotskyists, such as Shachtman and Burnham, who ended up seeing the Soviet Union “as much worse, far more exploitative, far less progressive than capitalism”. “They then joined cold-war anti-communists, who saw the power of the capitalist (imperialist) United States as the strongest bulwark against” the Soviet Union and its positive example, especially in the third world and for national liberation movements.

The arguments set out by the prosecution and supported by the trial judges that former leading members of the party, who had systematically lost the political arguments over 20 or more years, made just about every wrong political judgement conceivable, had lost the trust, respect and support of the party and the people, had conspired with displaced persons, both inside and outside of the USSR, “people of the past”, remnants of overthrown classes and strata, and with state agencies of western powers, including those describing themselves as ‘national socialist’, to carry out a revolutionary coup d’état against the Stalin regime, and replace it with some form of “coalition government”, seem to be supported by the facts now available to us.

No doubt replacing the Stalin regime by some form of “coalition” or “government of national unity” might have appeared “progressive” to exiled and dispossessed leftists, but surely the new regime’s dependence on the western and Axis powers would have soon revealed itself and would in time result in the dismemberment of the USSR and the probable extermination of large numbers of Slavic peoples at the hands of triumphant Nazism.

Paul concludes by quoting from Marcel van der Linden in his book *Western Marxism and the Soviet Union* that “it is perfectly clear that the Soviet society can hardly be explained in orthodox Marxist terms at all; a fully adequate analysis of the USSR has still to be developed.”

This is an extraordinary place for Trotskyism to end up. Marxism is surely about the “concrete analysis of concrete reality”. To claim to be completely mystified as to the true class nature of the Soviet Union means either a complete abandonment of any semblance of Marxism or a wilful refusal to acknowledge the true reality of the Soviet Union, or both.

If the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was a “new ruling class”, it must have been the most democratic and meritocratic ruling class in history, drawing into its ranks the brightest and the best representatives of the majority working people and the working class.

Andrew Northall
Kettering

Globalisation

While the United States pushes its new globalisation through the new Trans-Pacific Partnership of 12 countries (including Mexico and Chile, but excluding China), the whole ideology of globalisation faces a crisis.

The theory depends on a world division of labour, where each country specialises in exporting its most efficient products ... and imports from countries who are doing the same. Of course, this relegates a few countries to exporting bananas or coffee, while they import automobiles from the US.

This theory, which is a justification for imperialism, assumes that each country must depend on every other capitalist country (like the USA) for their basic food and services. But it begins to break down when one of those countries faces an internal

crisis: the Chinese total debt will have increased from \$10 trillion in 2015 to more than \$30 trillion in 2019; and Chinese capitalists are sending hundreds of billions of rmbini outside of their country and buying dollars and euros instead.

Although China is not part of the TPP agreement, it is part of a world economy that can only function when all parts of globalisation, including China, are functioning - similar to a watch which requires all parts to work or nothing works. Deglobalisation has begun: all throughout Asia cargo ships are not moving. Singapore has 14 cargo ships and China 13 ships that are not going anywhere because there is no cargo. They sit at anchor. The dry bulk index is 74% below last August. India’s Mercator Co has just sold its interest in six ships for the equivalent of \$2.

Globalisation only works when there is no crisis. Otherwise it turns into its opposite.

Earl Gilman
email

Printing money

It is a topical delusion to dismiss the monopoly power of bankers, when parliamentary legislation has afforded them the privilege of benefiting from the ‘ability to create money’. In circulation in the United Kingdom today we have 3% of hard currency produced by the Bank of England and 97% of soft currency - the electronic transactions created by the banking system through credit cards, electronic payments and such things. The reason for the failure of banks is because they have only hard currency reserves of 3%.

The economic power of the bankers should be incorporated into government economic decision-making, because through legislation the government can control the power of bankers to create money through requiring them to purchase every £1 they lend from the Bank of England that is under state ownership.

100% reserve banking would insulate the UK economy from future repetitions of the Northern Rock bank run fiasco and would increase the profits accrued by the treasury from the Bank of England selling the money that it does still print to the private bankers.

It is the nationalisation of the printing of money that we need to achieve, because that would raise the income to repay the national debt and eliminate the reductions made in public expenditure.

Oliver Healey
Leicester

Contribution

Twenty-three people attended a discussion, ‘William Morris: revolutionary socialist or utopian dreamer?’, at the Red Shed, Wakefield on Saturday February 27. The speakers were Colin Waugh (Independent Working Class Education Network), Brian Else (Wakefield Green Party) and Bill Martin (Socialist Party of Great Britain). The chair was Yvonne Sibbald.

After the speeches there was a lively discussion about Morris’s attitude towards anarchism and about whether he was in fact a Marxist. One contributor from the floor emphasised the need not to “pigeon-hole” Morris, but rather to concentrate on and appreciate his contribution to art and to political thought.

The group’s next planned event is on Saturday July 16 - again at 1pm at the Red Shed - when we will be discussing ‘Tolpuddle and the fight for trade union rights today’.

We are looking for speakers for this event. Call Alan on 07931 927451.

Alan Stewart
Wakefield Socialist History Group

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 March 6: No forum.

Sunday March 13, 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 2 (‘Parliamentarism v direct action’), section 3: ‘Labour’s fling’. Organised by CPGB: www.cpgb.org.uk.

Radical Anthropology Group

Tuesday March 8, 6.45pm: Introduction to social and biological anthropology, Daryll Forde seminar room, Anthropology Building, 14 Taviton Street, off Gordon Square, London WC1. ‘The incredible bleeding woman: a cabaret performance’. Speaker: Marisa Carnesky. Organised by Radical Anthropology Group: radicalanthropologygroup.org.

Meet the doctors

Thursday March 3, 7pm: Community meeting, Albrighton Centre, 37 Albrighton Road, London SE22.

Organised by South London People’s Assembly: www.southlondonpa.org.

Don’t steal our libraries

Saturday March 5, 10.30am: Demonstration, Windrush Square, London SW12. Defend Lambeth libraries under threat of closure.

Organised by Defend the Lambeth 10: <http://defendthe10-lambeth.org.uk>.

Defending adult education

Saturday March 5, 10.30am to 5pm: Conference, School of Oriental and African Studies, Thornhaugh Street, London WC1.

Organised by London region UCU: www.ucu.org.uk/londoncommittee.

Organise the unorganised

Saturday March 5, 10am: Yorkshire conference of National Shop Stewards Network, Ebor Court, Skinner Street, Leeds LS1.

Organised by Yorkshire Shop Stewards Network: www.facebook.com/Yorkshire-Shop-Stewards-Network-156443814473411.

Imperialism, war and the Middle East

Saturday March 5, 10.30am: Public meeting, Institute room, Liverpool Quaker Meeting House, 22 School Lane, Liverpool L1. Speaker: Yasmine Mather.

Organised by local socialists: study4socialism@gmail.com

The Corbyn effect

Monday March 7, 7.30pm: Debate - ‘Dream or nightmare for Labour?’ Phoenix Centre, 26 Malling Street, Lewes. Debated with Zoe Williams and Neal Lawson.

Organised by Lewes Labour Party: gill@leweslabour.org.uk.

Corbyn for PM

Wednesday March 9, 7.30pm: Evening out, Edinburgh Festival Theatre, 13-29 Nicolson Street, Edinburgh EH8. Line-up of comedians, singers, campaigners and poets for Jeremy Corbyn. Part of national tour.

Organised by JC4PM tour: www.jc4pmtour.com.

Images of a communist

Wednesday March 9 to Sunday May 8: Exhibition, Pallant House Gallery, 9 North Pallant, Chichester. The photography of Helen Muspratt, one of the leading female photographers of the 20th century.

Organised by Pallant House Gallery: www.pallant.org.uk.

Stop scapegoating Muslims

Thursday March 10, 6.30 pm: Public meeting, Bloomsbury Baptist Church, 235 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2. Speakers include: Salma Yaqoob, Lindsey German, Moazzam Begg.

Organised by Stop the War Coalition: <http://www.stopwar.org.uk>.

Women for Palestine

Saturday March 12, 12 noon: Workshops and discussion, Delius Arts and Cultural Centre, 29 Great Horton Road, Bradford BD7. Tickets £10/£5: 07471 907969; hillyfletcher@btinternet.com.

Organised by Northern Women for Palestine: www.facebook.com/NorthernWomenforPalestine.

National march for homes

Sunday March 13, 12 noon: Assemble Lincoln’s Inn Fields, London WC2. Organised by Kill the Housing Bill: <https://killthehousingbill.wordpress.com>.

EU referendum debate

Sunday March 13, 1.30 pm: Public meeting, Cock Tavern, 23 Phoenix Road, London NW1. Speakers: Graham Durham (Leave); Gerry Downing (Remain); Ian Donovan (Active boycott).

Organised by Socialist Fight: <http://socialistfight.com>.

Corbyn for PM

Tuesday March 15, 7.45pm: Artists, activists and celebs for Jeremy, Tyne Theatre and Opera House, 117 Westgate Road, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1.

Organised by JC4PM-TOUR: www.jc4pmtour.com.

No to drones

Saturday March 19, 1pm: Demonstration, RAF Waddington main gate, Lincoln LN5 (on the A607).

Organised by Drone Campaign Network: <https://dronecampaignnetwork.wordpress.com>.

End austerity now

Saturday April 16, 1pm: National protest against state budget cuts. Assemble Gower Street/Euston Road, London NW1.

Organised by People’s Assembly: www.thepeoplesassembly.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

No backtracking on Palestine

Unfortunately the Labour leader appears to be beating a retreat, writes Tony Greenstein



Jeremy Corbyn: long and consistent record

I first met Jeremy Corbyn over 30 years ago when I chaired the Labour Movement Campaign on Palestine.¹ It would be no exaggeration to say that Jeremy, along with Ken Livingstone and the late Joan Maynard, were the most consistent supporters of the Palestinians. He later became a patron of Palestine Solidarity Campaign and a regular fixture at PSC annual general meetings.

The policy of the LMCP, which Jeremy Corbyn sponsored, was to support a democratic, secular state in the whole of Palestine rather than a two-state solution. We did not support the 'right to exist' of the apartheid state of Israel, for whom its Palestinian citizens are a demographic threat. We supported the creation of a unitary state of its own citizens, regardless of ethnic or religious affiliation, rather than a state of the Jews.

The 1982 Labour Party conference, held in the wake of Israel's invasion of Lebanon, passed an emergency resolution calling for a democratic, secular state in the whole of Palestine. People forget the international reaction to an invasion which killed over 20,000 people. Two thousand Palestinians in the Sabra and Chatilla refugee camps were butchered with medieval savagery by Israel's Phalangist allies. The Israeli army lit up the night sky in order that they could kill their victims, mainly women and children, more efficiently. The Labour Party reaction mirrored that of British society, which was one of horror. In Britain a group of us formed the Palestine Solidarity Campaign.

It was therefore no surprise that the Zionist movement, when it was obvious that Corbyn was heading for victory in the Labour Party leadership

contest, pulled out all the stops to prevent it. Together with the *Daily Mail*, Zionists attempted to brand him a holocaust denier. This is somewhat ironic, given that in the 1930s the most pro-Hitler paper was the same *Daily Mail*. Citing a magistrate who had complained that "The way stateless Jews from Germany are pouring in from every part of this country is becoming an outrage", the *Mail* commented that "the number of aliens entering the country through the back door [is] a problem to which the *Daily Mail* has repeatedly pointed".²

On the basis of an article alleging that Corbyn had attended a concert organised by a holocaust denier, Paul Eisen,³ the Zionist movement engaged in a conscious and sustained smear campaign. Leading the pack was the editor of the *Jewish Chronicle*, Stephen Pollard, a member of the cold-war far-right Henry Jackson Society, who posed a series of questions to Corbyn.⁴

Unfortunately, instead of responding with a few questions of its own, Corbyn's campaign decided to treat them as genuine queries. Needless to say, their answers were never going to satisfy the Zionists. Those of us with experience of the Zionist attack dogs know that they cry 'anti-Semitism' whenever support for the Palestinians is on the agenda. Only last month Oxford University Labour Club was the subject of vicious attacks - it was labelled anti-Semitic after it decided to support Israeli Apartheid Week.⁵

It is no accident that the Zionist movement in this country acted as the outrider for those who wanted to keep the Labour Party safe for capitalism. It is an article of faith for New Labour that they must stand firmly alongside US imperialism - which means

unquestioning support for the Israeli state. 'Anti-Semitism' has become the rallying cry of *The Guardian*, its *Comment is free* editor Jonathan Freedland and liberal bourgeois opinion in general.

'Anti-Semitism' is today's false anti-racism of the right.⁶ It is sometimes called 'new anti-Semitism' to distinguish it from the traditional variety. 'New anti-Semitism' has nothing to do with hatred of, discrimination or violence against Jews. It is about opposition to Zionism and the state of Israel.

According to Abe Foxman, former national director of the Anti-Defamation League (which specialises in defaming its opponents), Israel has become "the Jew among the nations".⁷ Criticise Israel and you are criticising the collective Jew, which makes you an anti-Semite! If you criticise Israel for its confiscation of land or locking up Palestinian children and torturing them, then you are a vicious Jew hater. Telling the truth can be equivalent to anti-Semitism where Israel is concerned.

Zionist anti-Semitism

Of course, if you hate Jews but love Israel then there is no problem. Even English Defence League thugs understood this when they physically attacked the stall of Birmingham Palestine Solidarity Campaign, carrying an Israeli flag in one hand, whilst giving Hitler salutes with the other!⁸

Christian Zionism provides the best example of this form of anti-Semitism. According to pastor John Hagee, president of the million-strong Christians United for Israel, Adolf Hitler was not so much a genocidal

anti-Semite as a hunter, sent by god to drive the Jews to Israel!⁹ According to Hagee's interpretation of Jeremiah, Hitler was an agent of God! Abe Foxman, always eager to detect signs of 'anti-Semitism' when criticism of Israel is involved, leapt to Hagee's support: "Pastor Hagee has devoted his life to combating anti-Semitism and supporting the state of Israel."¹⁰

Stephen Pollard is a British replica of Foxman. In 2009, the Tories left the European People's Party in the European parliament, and joined the European Conservative and Reformist Group. The ECRG contained far-right politicians such as Michał Kamiński of Poland's Law and Justice Party and Robert Zile of Latvia's For Fatherland and Freedom.

Both Kamiński and Zile had a record of support for fascism and anti-Semitism. On July 10 1941, up to 900 Jews were burnt alive in a barn by fellow Poles, under the approving eye of the SS, in the village of Jedwabne. Although the majority of Jedwabne's population was Jewish before World War II, today there are no Jews left in what was a 300-year old community.¹¹ Polish-Jewish historian Jan Tomasz Gross estimated that 300 Jews had been burnt alive,¹² but a subsequent book by Anna Bikont¹³ revises these figures to over 900. The massacre led to a national Polish apology in 2001.

Jedwabne was represented by Kamiński in the Polish parliament from 1997. He vigorously campaigned against any apology. In an interview with the nationalist *Nasza Polska* newspaper in March 2001, Kamiński argued that Poles should not apologise for Jedwabne until Jews apologised for "murdering Poles".¹⁴ Kamiński had previously worn the Mieczyk Chrobrego - the Chrobry sword, symbol of the National

Radical Camp, which "practised violent anti-Semitism, including attacks on Jewish students, buildings and businesses, organised boycotts of Jewish businesses and attacks on leftwing groups".¹⁵

None of this, however, stopped Pollard, who led the campaign to smear Jeremy Corbyn as an anti-Semite, from defending Michał Kamiński. In a quite extraordinary article for *The Guardian*¹⁶ Pollard claimed that Kamiński was "one of the greatest friends to the Jews in a town [Brussels] where anti-Semitism and a visceral loathing of Israel are rife". Note the sleight of hand. Kamiński is a "friend to the Jews" because of his support for Israel, notwithstanding the fact that he is an anti-Semite.

Historically anti-Semites have been some of the strongest supporters of Zionism, from Édouard Drumont and Heinrich Class to Adolf Eichmann and Alfred Rosenberg. Next year the Zionists will be celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, when Britain, in the form of its foreign secretary, Arthur James Balfour, agreed to sponsor the Zionist settlement in Palestine. Balfour was also the home secretary who, in 1905, introduced the Aliens Act, whose aim was to prevent Jewish refugees from tsarist Russia entering Britain.

Kamiński has been feted in Israel. Not only has he made the ritual trip to Yad Vashem, the holocaust propaganda museum in Jerusalem, but in 2009 he was a guest speaker at the World Summit on Counterterrorism conference at Herzliya.¹⁷

Robert Zile is also a fully paid up anti-Semite. Every March he marches with the veterans of the Latvian Waffen SS in Riga. Yet like Kamiński

he is a strong supporter of Israel.

Appeasement

Instead of responding to the Zionist attacks on him by pointing to their hypocrisy, Corbyn has chosen to appease his critics by playing down his support for the Palestinians and retreating into meaningless soundbites.

For example, Corbyn sent a letter to a Zionist heckler at the Labour Friends of Israel meeting he addressed at Labour Party conference, reassuring him that he was pleased to “have the opportunity to express how I felt about progressing the peace process in the Middle East ... Israel has always, and will continue to be, recognised by both myself and the Labour Party.”

Last week, following talks with Corbyn, the Board of Deputies of British Jews was quoted as saying that they “were pleased that Mr Corbyn gave a very solid commitment to the right of Israel to live within secure and recognised boundaries as part of a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict”, whilst demanding “more clarity” that the Labour Party “will maintain its longstanding opposition to boycotts against Israel”.¹⁸

People need to face up to the fact that one of the consequences of the attacks on Corbyn has been a retreat from his previous political positions. I have never heard Corbyn previously speaking about the need to recognise the state of Israel. He used to be more concerned about recognising its repressive qualities. Instead of distinguishing between the oppressor and the oppressed, the coloniser and the colonised, Corbyn has depoliticised the issue, calling for peace in the abstract.

It is as if Corbyn had called for peace between white proponents of apartheid and black South Africans rather than supporting the abolition of apartheid. This is one of the political liabilities of Corbyn’s Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament-style politics. Instead of opposing imperialism and Zionist settler colonialism, Corbyn imagines that ‘conflict resolution’ via United Nations diplomacy will solve what is at heart a political problem - the racist oppression, dispossession and expulsion of the Palestinians.

No-one in Israel seriously believes that a two-state solution is achievable. There is not one government minister who supports it. The leader of the Israeli Labour Party, who is more hawkish than prime minister Binyamin Netanyahu, also opposes a two-state solution. In the words of Israel’s religious nutcase and deputy foreign minister, Tzipi Hotoveli, “This land is ours. All of it is ours. We expect as a matter of principle of the international community to recognise Israel’s right to build homes for Jews in their homeland, everywhere.”¹⁹

Corbyn retreats into the weasel words of Israel’s ‘right to exist’. The problem is not Israel’s rights, but the lack of Palestinian rights. Israel defines itself as a Jewish state. What does that mean? It is a state which counts how many Jews it has compared to non-Jews. It is an ethno-religious state, in which Jews have privileges compared to non-Jews. So, for example, because I am Jewish, I have an automatic right to ‘return’ to a state where I have never lived. Palestinians who were born in Jerusalem have no such right. But like all settler states, Israel is very good at portraying itself as the victim. Corbyn pays homage to Israel’s right to ‘secure borders’ (Israel frames its racism in terms of its own security needs), while it seems Palestinians have no need of security.

Not only is partition - a two-state solution - neither desirable nor feasible, but it serves as a pretext for Israel’s continuing denial of even the most basic civil or political rights

for Palestinians in the occupied territories. ‘Two states’ provides a justification for a situation where there are two legal systems - military law for the Palestinians and civil Israeli law for Jewish settlers on the West Bank. The idea that Israel is going to withdraw over 600,000 settlers behind an imaginary green line is the stuff of dreams.

Jeremy Corbyn, as a patron of PSC, was a supporter of boycott, divestment and sanctions. But this is an issue over which he has recently gone very quiet. Corbyn has forgotten that Israel is a Jewish supremacist state, which defines its Jewishness in terms of maintaining an 80% Jewish majority population. It is a state where virtually all areas of public life, from housing to education and employment, are segregated. A symptom of Israel’s Nuremberg mentality is the decision of the education ministry to ban a book, *Borderlife*, from the high school syllabus because it depicts a romantic relationship between Jewish and Arab teenagers. In an ethno-religious state, inter-marriage is seen as equivalent to national treason, a betrayal of one’s racial kith and kin.²⁰

Corbyn’s retreat from the Palestinians is best demonstrated by the appointment of a rightwing Zionist, Fabian Hamilton, as a junior shadow foreign office minister. In a recent article Hamilton was quoted as saying that boycotting the Jewish state without taking action against other countries is “simply anti-Semitic”.²¹ Perhaps Bishop Desmond Tutu and Ronnie Kasrils (a Jewish member of the African National Congress and former government minister in South Africa) are also anti-Semitic for supporting a boycott of Israel?

Hamilton said that he was “staggered” to have been appointed and that when he initially asked if his support for Israel was a problem, he was “told by Corbyn’s office in clear terms it wasn’t”. I was also staggered by this totally unnecessary concession to the Zionist right. The appointment of an open Zionist suggests that Corbyn has effectively decided to abandon his previous support for the Palestinians.

Appeasement of Labour Friends of Israel will not serve the cause of either socialism or peace in the Middle East. Nor will it help Corbyn’s own precarious position as leader. Quite the contrary ●

Notes

1. In 1982, following the passing of our successful amendment at the 1982 Labour Party conference, the organisation was taken over by the Workers Revolutionary Party, with the help of our treasurer, Ted Knight.
2. *Daily Mail* August 20 1938.
3. *Daily Mail* August 7 2015.
4. *Jewish Chronicle* August 12 2015.
5. See letter from 22 Jewish people: www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/23/antisemitic-or-just-against-the-israeli-governments-oppressive-actions; also www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/feb/17/labour-condemns-antisemitism-oxford-university-labour-club-claims.
6. See T Greenstein, ‘Redefining anti-Semitism - the false anti-racism of the right’ *Return* No5, December 1990.
7. www.thejc.com/news/world-news/139820/israel-now-jew-among-nations-says-abe-foxman.
8. <http://azvsas.blogspot.co.uk/2010/06/edl-fascists-attack-birmingham.html>.
9. www.cbsnews.com/news/hagee-pro-israel-anti-semitic.
10. www.huffingtonpost.com/bruce-wilson/hagee-still-sells-controv_b_107545.html.
11. <http://azvsas.blogspot.co.uk/2015/10/jedwabne-polish-village-where-up-to-900.html>.
12. T Gross *Neighbours: the destruction of the Jewish community in Jedwabne, Poland* London 2000.
13. *The crime and the silence*, which won the European Book Prize in 2011.
14. *The Observer* October 11 2009.
15. *Jewish Chronicle* October 10 2009.
16. *The Guardian* October 9 2009.
17. http://powerbase.info/index.php/World_Summit_on_Counter_Terrorism:_Terrorism's_Global_Impact_-_ICT's_9th_International_Conference.
18. *Jewish Chronicle* February 9 2016.
19. *The Guardian* May 22 2015.
20. www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3381978,00.html.
21. *Jewish News* January 13 2016.

Anti-Semitic smears employed by right

The Labour left must get better organised, argues Gary Toms of Labour Party Marxists



Scarborough: Young Labour

The right held onto its Young Labour seat on the national executive committee by just a single vote. The Momentum-backed candidate, James Elliot, lost out to ‘moderate’ Jasmin Beckett, who had received the support of the hard-right Labour First and Progress groups. The circumstances of this victory at the February 27-28 Scarborough conference have been hotly contested.

The Unite union has called for an inquiry after it was revealed that Jasmin Beckett won her slender majority on the back of a foul Facebook and Twitter campaign against her rival. Beckett had suggested: “Get a few people tweeting saying, ‘Shocked my union GMB are supporting James Elliott, who is anti-Semitic?’” The national secretary of Labour Students, Josh Woolas, advised: “Needs to look like a genuine complaint about racism and not a smear campaign!” (*Morning Star* February 26). The full exchange between Beckett and her supporters has since been published anonymously on Twitter.

This was an attempt to link James Elliot to accusations levelled at the Oxford University Labour Club by its former co-chair, Alex Chalmers. His resignation came following the OULC’s announcement of support for Israeli Apartheid Week (and, of course, comrade Elliot is an ex-Oxford student). The Labour Party has since opened an inquiry (it is still unpublished, though its impartiality has been called into question, not least because it was conducted by Michael Rubin, a Progress partisan). The fact of the matter is that the OULC is simply committed to solidarity with the Palestinian people - not to demonising Jews. Nonetheless, the ridiculous accusations of anti-

Semitism levelled by Alex Chalmers have been presented by McCarthyite journalists, such as Dan Hodges, as if they were simply facts (see ‘Is the Labour Party’s problem with racism beyond repair?’ *The Daily Telegraph* February 29).

Doubtless there are a tiny number of individuals within the left milieu who hold anti-Semitic views and obviously such people have no place within our movement. However, anyone expressing solidarity with the Palestinian people automatically face charges of anti-Semitism. An accusation which comes from people who are determined to support Israel despite its dispossession of millions of Palestinians, despite its occupation of the West Bank and despite its readying itself for another bout of ethnic cleansing.

‘Intimidation’

As well as the smear campaign conducted by Beckett and co, there are other complaints. Apparently she falsely presented herself to some voters as being linked to Momentum. Despite the tiny margin of her victory, calls for a recount were rejected by returning officer Stephen Donnelly (who, according to Jon Lansman, is a “recruiting sergeant for Progress”).

Predictably there were accusations from the right of “intimidation” and “bullying” by the left and the unions. One delegate, Charlotte, a Unite shop steward, posted a picture of herself having a telephone conversation as ‘evidence’ of such behaviour. Unite official Zac Harvey had asked to see her ballot paper so as to check that she was abiding by her union mandate. Rightwing Labour MPs - eg, John Mann - and the bourgeois press, from *The Guardian* rightwards, have

subsequently mounted a campaign for Young Labour to be made into a “safe space” (for Labour First and Progress).

It is worth mentioning that a week before the Young Labour conference, Momentum-backed candidates had won every seat on the youth wing’s national committee, a sure sign of the resurgence of the left - for the first time in 30 years.. Given this, it is more than a pity that the Young Labour rep on the NEC remains a rightwinger. So Scarborough was a missed opportunity for Momentum (hopefully comrade Elliot will be lodging an appeal).

While the right urges the membership to ‘unite against the Tories’, it does everything to undermine the Jeremy Corbyn leadership and attack the left (seeking the expulsion of socialists with links to the far left, etc). The shrill condemnation of Momentum by rightwing MPs, their Labour First co-thinkers and the mainstream media is part of an ongoing civil war, even if the Parliamentary Labour Party right is not yet prepared to launch an open leadership bid at the moment - Corbyn is far too popular within the labour movement (even more so than when he was elected leader).

Against the machinations of the right our best response is organisation. Momentum needs cohesion and a clear orientation towards transforming the party through carrying out a democratic revolution. The right is not a legitimate trend in the labour movement. They are class enemies and ought to be driven out ●

Notes

1. www.leftfutures.org/2016/02/young-labour-in-left-landslide-but-chaos-manipulation-smears-mar-nec-election.

TRIDENT



Great and good of pacifism

Waiting for Corbyn

Tens of thousands rallied to Saturday's anti-Trident demonstration. Peter Manson reports

The February 27 demonstration against the renewal of Trident was a big success in terms of the numbers mobilised - the marchers took 45 minutes to pass a given point on the route, while Trafalgar Square was crammed for the subsequent rally. I would estimate that around 30,000 supported the event - a mixture of experienced old hands and a welcome contingent of new young supporters.

No doubt the main organisers, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, were very pleased not just by the numbers mobilised, but also the range of speakers who came together on the platform. They included three party leaders - the Scottish National Party's Nicola Sturgeon, Leanne Wood of Plaid Cymru and, of course, the star of the show, Labour's Jeremy Corbyn. The chair of the rally, Kate Hudson, who is both CND general secretary and national secretary of Left Unity, also introduced a couple of dozen others, including ex-Trotskyists Tariq Ali and Vanessa Redgrave, veteran anti-nuclear campaigner Bruce Kent and Green MP Caroline Lucas.

According to another of the participating groups, the Stop the War Coalition, whose very own Lindsey German was another platform speaker, "Tens of thousands attended the biggest anti-nuclear march in a generation, calling for a new, *more civilised* foreign policy" (my emphasis - statement, February 29). Unfortunately "more civilised" just about sums up the kind of pacifism, liberalism and welfarism on display: not one speaker put forward *any* kind of working class politics.

Yes, nuclear bombs are "weapons of mass destruction", capable of destroying the world several times over. Yes, they could be triggered accidentally. Yes, if they are a deterrent for Britain, then shouldn't that apply

to all non-nuclear states too? Yes, the £160 billion spent on Trident renewal would be a monumental, criminal waste of resources. Yes, the money would be far better spent, especially in this time of austerity, on health, education, housing ...

But, for most of the Trafalgar Square thousands, the two hours of repetitious oratory was well worth enduring - unlike other such rallies that last as long, there was no noticeable exit despite the bitterly cold weather. The sense of anticipation, as the time approached for Corbyn to mount the platform, was palpable and he got a huge cheer when he finally arrived.

But it has to be said that his speech was a disappointment, certainly in terms of Labour's own politics. True, he said he had been a committed campaigner for nuclear disarmament and a CND supporter from the outset, and so of course he was always going to address this demonstration. But he did not refer directly to the manufactured outrage of the Labour right and their supporters in the bourgeois press - for instance, Labour had apparently agreed to campaign for an 'in' vote in the European Union referendum on the very day of the demonstration, yet there was the party leader making a 10-minute speech on something completely different!

Michael Dugher, former shadow culture secretary, claimed: "For Jeremy to share a platform with many of Labour's political opponents and denounce what is still Labour policy is quite frankly barmy." Of course, Labour will not "share a platform", let alone campaign jointly, with its "political opponents" in the lead-up to the June 23 referendum, will it?

In fact, while officially Corbyn was putting forward a line that is against Labour policy, a 'defence review' has been commissioned under shadow

defence secretary Emily Thornberry, with the clear aim of reversing Labour's current disgraceful support for the British 'nuclear deterrent' and Trident renewal. In fact that is why Corbyn's deputy leader, Labour centrist Tom Watson, has urged prime minister David Cameron to call the parliamentary vote on Trident renewal "as soon as possible" - ie, before Labour's policy can be officially changed (hopefully at its 2016 conference in September).

Of course, those dedicated partisans of winning elections for the sake of winning elections, Neil Kinnock and Peter Mandelson, both claimed that such a change of policy would cost Labour in 2020 - it is only common sense that the ability to slaughter hundreds of thousands in a few seconds is something that must be retained.

Meanwhile, the GMB union did its best to undermine the impact of the demonstration by issuing several statements alleging that a failure to renew Trident would mean the loss of "tens of thousands of jobs". Gary Smith, GMB secretary in Scotland, described Corbyn and his supporters as "armchair generals". He added: "Whether the professional posers with their brand of student politics accept it or not, the people of this country do believe Trident makes us more secure."

The type of politics represented by that last statement is in reality an afterthought. What matters to most union bureaucrats is workers' current jobs - whether they manufacture genocidal weapons or guard prison camps, obviously. In fact, although he did not name the GMB, Mark Serwotka gave a useful reply to this sort of sectionalism from Saturday's platform. The PCS general secretary pointed out that his union represents thousands of job centre workers, but,

if unemployment were abolished tomorrow, no-one would be more pleased than himself. His members could be redeployed to "useful work".

But, once again, comrade Corbyn himself did not stray into such controversial territory. Nor did he say anything about the "serving British general", who warned just after Corbyn's election as Labour leader that if he became prime minister there would be "mass resignations at all levels" and "the very real prospect of an event which would effectively be a

mutiny".

Similarly he did not say anything about the internal Labour Party battle, which was a great pity. Think what a fillip it would have been, had he given a commitment to the thousands who had waited so long to hear him speak that he would fight to ensure that Labour's defence policy was radically changed, irrespective of the views of the bourgeois establishment, union bureaucrats and 'serving British generals' ●

peter.manson@weeklyworker.co.uk

Fighting fund

Notable success

I'm pleased to report that our February fighting fund achieved a rare and notable success - we exceeded our £1,750 target by £101!

That was due in no small measure to the £310 raised for the *Weekly Worker* at last Saturday's big anti-Trident demo in London. I witnessed myself the appreciation there is for our paper amongst a small but substantial minority of the mainly leftwing demonstrators. Although sometimes it was hard going trying to sell the paper, my patience was on more than one occasion rewarded by someone offering a note and saying, "Keep the change". Or - another popular one, as £1 was handed over - "I read it online, but take this anyway."

We also received a total of £107 in standing orders/bank

transfers in the last four days of the month - thanks to JT (£30), RK (£25), GT (£15), SS (£10), SS and RL (£10 each) and JC (£5). And those standing orders have continued to come in over the first couple of days of March - 17 of them! That's too many to list, but I will mention the most generous: £40 from MS, £30 from EW, ST, TB and SW, plus £20 from DL and TG.

But unusually not a single PayPal donation came our way over the last week - that despite the fact we had 3,360 readers. I'm sure a good number of you will want to put that right in time for next week! ●

Robbie Rix

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

IRELAND

Austerity parties punished

Following the indecisive general election, Anne McShane discusses the rise of Sinn Féin and the divisions in the anti-austerity movement

The 2016 general election has resulted in a unique predicament for the Irish political establishment. The governing coalition of Fine Gael/Labour has taken a hammering, falling from a combined percentage total of 56% - and an unassailable majority in the Dáil - to a predicted 32%. For the first time Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil are contemplating a 'grand coalition'. And that loyal lieutenant of the capitalist class, the Labour Party, has been humiliated too. The combined vote of FF, FG and Labour was 91.3% in 1982. Now it is less than 60%. More than 30% of the electorate has gone elsewhere.

Key to the crisis is deep hostility to the austerity offensive of the last eight years. The outgoing government boasted continuously of how it had turned the economy around. It omitted to say that any recovery that might exist (which is of a very tentative and sluggish kind, even according to its own economists) has been achieved on the backs of the working class. Since the ignominious collapse of the 'Celtic tiger' in 2008, two successive governments have overseen major 'economic restructuring' - in other words, massive cuts. Public-service workers and social welfare recipients were the first to be targeted in 2008, with €4 billion of swingeing cuts to wages, pensions, child benefits and social welfare. Hospitals, schools, unemployed workers and families went under the knife. In his December 2009 budget speech the FF minister for finance, Brian Lenihan, boasted that the worst was over - "We have now turned the corner." A blatant lie.

There have been eight budgets between 2008 and 2014, imposing a total of €18.5 billion in public spending cuts and €12 billion in increased taxation. Health spending has been cut by a third, while repossessions have resulted in enormous stress and homelessness. Landlords have taken advantage by jacking up rents - while the government has slashed rent supplements. It is an intolerable situation for more than two million adults and children in receipt of some form of social welfare. Figures show that 30% of the population are now officially economically deprived, including two thirds of lone-parent families.¹ Meanwhile, according to a recent Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development report, Ireland's rich have gotten richer - "there is a considerable gap between the richest and poorest - the top 20% of the population earn almost five times as much as the bottom 20%".²

The FF/Green coalition went to the country in February 2011 and suffered what was described by the *Irish Times* as "the worst defeat of any government since the formation of the state in 1922". Fianna Fáil lost 51 seats and the Green Party had an electoral wipe-out. The previous November the government had adopted a 'national recovery plan', with a commitment to reducing public spending by €10 billion and raising €5 billion in additional taxes. That was in return for a bailout of €67.5 billion from the European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund - €35 billion of that to go directly to the banks. This sparked tremendous anger among the population.

In response Labour Party leader Eamonn Gilmore pledged to end the crisis and ensure that the poor, unemployed and "ordinary families" did not suffer any further. He would



Gerry Adams and SF President Imelda Munster: celebration

renegotiate the troika deal, declaring that it would be "Labour's way or Frankfurt's way" - and he would not back down. His party could be trusted to be the voice of the working people in coalition with Fine Gael. On the back of these undertakings Labour more than doubled its vote - going from 17 to 37 seats, and becoming the second largest party. The majority of those seats were in urban working class areas.

But after only days in government it was clear that Labour had made false promises. Gilmore did not stand up to Angela Merkel or to the IMF. Instead his party joined enthusiastically with FG in implementing the troika deal, imposing five years of pain and hardship on an already suffering working class. It was a Labour minister, Alan Kelly, who took responsibility for driving through what has now become their Achilles heel - the hated water charges.

Resistance

The last eight years have seen huge outbursts of resistance. Protests erupted from late 2008 - firstly pensioners and then local groups began to stage regular marches against the bailout conditions. The first major demonstration - of 120,000 people - took place in February 2009 and public-sector workers launched a series of national strikes, with 250,000 taking action by November. Unfortunately - but characteristically - this militancy was sold out by the leadership in return for talks with government and employers. Further strike action was banned for four years under the 'public service agreement', with a pledge to cooperate with the reform programme. At a second national demonstration of more than 100,000 in November 2009, union leaders were heckled and booed. But by then they had stopped worrying about the rank and file - and had set about the task of getting Labour back into government.³

With the defeat of the public-sector workers, the protest movement was subdued until late 2011. Then students began to rebel in occupations and demonstrations. People returned to the streets in early 2012, with angry nationwide protests outside FG and Labour conferences. A mass boycott was organised against a new direct tax, the household charge, making it ultimately uncollectable. It became

clear by 2013 that implementation was impossible without taking half of the country to court. That lesson learnt, its replacement, the property tax, was imposed through deduction at source.

2014 brought the water charge. This sparked a mass revolt, with demonstrations, occupations and the organisation of street and estate committees to prevent the installation of water meters. Stands-offs have taken place in towns and cities all over the country since 2014 and still continue. It is a war of attrition, with Irish Water being driven from a number of towns, as well as parts of Cork, Dublin and Limerick. Activists have been arrested and some are still awaiting trial for obstruction of water metering. As a result protests have now spread to the courts, with hundreds turning up to show solidarity.

The Labour Party leadership has taken a keen interest in hunting down transgressors. Current leader Joan Burton is chief state witness in a high-profile prosecution of Paul Murphy, the Anti-Austerity Alliance (Socialist Party) TD, and 33 others on inflated and hysterical charges of "false imprisonment". In November 2014 Burton's chauffeur-driven ministerial car was surrounded by protestors in Jobstown and the Gardaí were called in mob-handed. In the general election Labour lost both their Jobstown TDs - a fitting rejoinder.

Such is the hostility towards the charges that even Fianna Fáil included a commitment to abolish them in its election manifesto. Talk of going into a grand coalition with Fine Gael is complicated by this promise and the massive climbdown that FG would have to make. Those who have already paid are demanding reimbursement. Both Fianna Fáil and Sinn Féin have said that there will be no compensation, but this question will not go away if the charge is abolished.

Right to Change

The Right to Water (R2W) campaign was launched in April 2014 by the Unite and Mandate trade unions, along with Sinn Féin, the Socialist Workers Party, the Communist Party of Ireland and the Workers Party. From the outset it has been dominated by SF, in particular through the main R2W spokesperson, Brendan Ogle, an official of Unite. Ogle has been particularly antagonistic to the Socialist Party from the outset and has

only suffered the SWP if it behaved with toadying loyalty.

R2W's main focus until the general election was to call national demonstrations around broad slogans. Despite the mass boycott and the militant organisation on the ground, it has refused again and again to call for a boycott of the charges, or to come out in support of local direct action. Ogle cites problems for R2W's component parts in calls to break the law. No doubt SF is the chief obstruction.

In late 2014, R2W announced that it would shift its emphasis away from demonstrations to the forthcoming general election. It declared that it was time to elect politicians who "enact laws that are wanted and needed by the people they are elected to represent".⁴ R2W held two national meetings in May and June 2015. These events, misleadingly titled 'conferences', were nothing of the kind. Two of the three so-called pillars of the campaign - the political groups and trade unions - were allowed to send their own delegates. But the third, the 'community pillar', did not enjoy such representation. Local groups were not allowed to choose their own delegates, with loyal individuals being handpicked by Ogle and his allies.

R2W transmuted into Right2Change - a campaign to elect a slate of TDs. A "fiscal framework document" was produced to argue for "more than €9 billion in spending over four years". This would apparently "help to create a fairer, more equal society with greater investment in jobs, as well as our health, education and housing systems, which are consistently starved of resources".

A list of 100 candidates was drawn up. It was dominated by SF - and not only because it is the biggest component. In *Change*, a publication produced by Right2Change for distribution, SF candidates are number one on every list. I have been told that this was an "administrative error", but even if it was it shows a certain mindset. This impression was strengthened by the appearance of Gerry Adams on the platform at a demonstration organised by Right2Change on February 20, the week before the election. He was given a unique opportunity - not extended to, say, SWP Right2Change candidates - to put himself and his party forward as the solution for the

movement just days before voting.

Significant gains

The left was in a strange position in the run-up to this election. The United Left Alliance, which saw the election of five TDs in 2011, had fallen apart because of internal wrangling in 2013. Clare Daly and Joan Collins, two of the original five, stood as 'Independents for Change' this time. The SWP-led People Before Profit alliance stood under the umbrella of Right2Change, but also as part of a bloc with the SP-led Anti-Austerity Alliance (which remained outside Right2Change). This bloc - the AAA/PBP - stood 31 candidates. Six have been elected, with the SWP gaining two new Dáil representatives. This is a major boost for the left, and puts it on par with the Labour Party in the new Dáil. Three others came very close to getting seats.

Hopefully comrades Daly and Collins (both re-elected) will rejoin the organised left in the Dáil, helping to form a bloc of eight TDs. This would mean increased speaking rights and provide a more effective way of championing the working class in the chamber. The left results show that there is the space for a working class party and we urgently need to get our act together.

The left has been a consistent opponent of austerity and has also been at the forefront of demands for the abolition of the constitutional ban on abortion. This has brought it a lot of support from young people and women - many of whom took part in the successful referendum to introduce same-sex marriage. Without overstating it, there is today certainly a sense of far more assertive secularism in Irish society. The continuing unpopularity of the church has undermined its position so much that the main parties are completely out of step with the electorate on abortion.

Meanwhile, Sinn Féin has increased its vote significantly - thanks to the efforts of Right2Change and the lack of a working class party. It now has 27 seats - not that far behind FG's 49 and FF's 44, with, as I write, one count still to be completed. Gerry Adams is currently refusing to discuss coalition with FF - something which he has previously hinted was possible. Having seen the demise of the Labour Party, he has said Sinn Féin will not be in a minority in a coalition government. An alliance of the two main parties would suit him to the ground, as that would provide a clear opportunity to build SF as the party of opposition.

Of course, SF is not a working class party, but it has been successful in increasing its support in the absence of such a party. Sinn Féin is far to the right of Syriza in Greece and does not pretend to support any form of socialism. The AAA has been very critical of SF for refusing to rule out a coalition with Fianna Fáil, but now the SP comrades in the AAA are under huge pressure to drop this criticism. As far as Adams and his leadership are concerned, SF is the only alternative and all the left groups should help to build it ●

anne.mcshane@weeklyworker.co.uk

Notes

1. www.irishexaminer.com/viewpoints/analysis/irelands-austerity-success-is-no-model-for-greece-340662.html.
2. www.oecdbetterlifefindex.org/countries/ireland.
3. 'Old loyalties under threat' *Weekly Worker* December 2 2010.
4. 'Desire to take power triumphs' *Weekly Worker* January 1 2015.

IRAN

Iran's elections: winners and losers

Yassamine Mather analyses the results of elections to the majles and Council of Experts

Reformists' and 'moderate conservatives' have made major gains in Iran's parliamentary elections, according to results published by Iran's ministry of interior.

In the elections for the Council of Experts, whose main task in the next period will ironically be to nominate Iran's next supreme leader - in other words, the country's next dictator - 'reformists' around Hashemi Rafsanjani and president Hassan Rowhani made major gains. Just as significantly, of the three main conservative figures in the Council of Experts targeted by the 'reformists' in Tehran, two influential ayatollahs lost their seats, while the third, Ahmad Jannati, was relegated to bottom of those elected. Conservatives have lost their dominant position in this all-important council and the elections will make some difference to the politics of the country. However, it should be noted that, even by the standards of a number of sham polls worldwide, these were far from free.

The government claims that 55 million of Iran's 80 million people were eligible to vote and, according to the ministry of interior, some 60% did so on Friday February 26. The turnout was higher than expected mainly because 'reformist' leaders tried to make this a referendum against the more conservative factions of the regime. However, in the capital the turnout was less than 50%.

Of the 12,000 people who registered to run for office, the nominations of 5,200, mostly 'reformists', were rejected by the Guardian Council. The GC was carrying out its right, laid down in article 99 of the constitution, to apply "approbation supervision": the right to judge the 'suitability' of candidates. Under this provision every nomination is vetted and both secular candidates and 'reformists', including ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's own grandson, were barred from standing.

It is as if in the UK a body composed of representatives of the monarch and the Church of England plus civil servants routinely barred candidates on the basis of their politics (too liberal, too leftwing) or their personal lifestyle (divorced women, those who drink too much or posted jokes on social media ...) this would leave a number of very boring rightwing conservatives (both capital and small C), including a good number of Blairites and maybe a few Lib Dems.

No illusions

This raises the question, why did so many Iranians participate in the elections, given the limited choices available?

The answer is clear. Iranians look across the country's borders to the devastated 'failed states' of Iraq and Syria. They note what has happened in Libya. The choices they made reflect the desperate situation in the region, where a choice between corrupt, anti-democratic leaders (as opposed to worse and more corrupt ones) is preferable to US-led regime change scenarios. There are clearly those in the Pentagon and elsewhere in the US administration who hope to divide the country into regional semi-statelets and so resolve the 'Iran problem' once and for all. Many Iranians are concerned about national unity and sovereignty and they do not wish to see a divided Iran, which would lead to the creation of yet another failed state, plagued by interminable civil wars. Having said that, Iranians are well aware that their

leaders are corrupt. For example, very few Tehranis have any illusions in their former president, Rafsanjani - a man who made a fortune thanks to the position he occupied in the leadership of Iran's Islamic republic.

For all the obvious shortcomings of these elections, it is clear that many Iranians made use of the limited opportunity to show their dissatisfaction with the more conservative factions of the regime by inflicting a humiliating defeat on them. Iranian opposition forces in exile - both right and left groups, many with illusions about the propriety of elections in western countries - have been pointing to these shortcomings and to a certain extent they are right to do so. However, it is ironic to hear those who have supported western military intervention in Iran castigating their compatriots for having participated in these elections - as if such military intervention would have heralded anything better.

Iranian members of pro-Zionist think tanks and those who benefit from neo-conservative Republican regime change funds for the day-to-day running of their TV and radio stations, would do well to look at the current US presidential elections and the role of money/capital in the nomination of Republican and Democratic candidates, not to mention the role of media outlets such as Fox TV, before condemning their compatriots for using the limited opportunity presented by Iran's clerical rulers to express their opinions. In this respect Hamid Dabbashi, professor of Iranian studies and comparative literature at Columbia University, is right to say:

While the control of the elections in Iran is a matter of crude and blatant engineering by the ruling factions, in the US the oligarchical machination of money and power limits the choices that people have, habitually setting one faction of the ruling elite against the other ... what is important about the Iranian elections is the resolute ingenuity of Iranian people to outmanoeuvre a deeply corrupt and illegitimate ruling regime and their kindred souls among the treacherous expat oppositions trying to mobilise a US or Israeli military strike against Iran.¹

As election fever took over the Iranian capital, senior ayatollahs tried to damn their opponents by pointing to the wealth accumulated by their relatives. Supporters of supreme leader Ali Khamenei listed accounts held by Rafsanjani's offspring, while Rafsanjani's supporters published details of the wealth accumulated by Khamenei's sons and daughters in Iran and abroad. At least now we know a bit more about the way corruption has helped rulers of the Islamic Republic combine political with financial gains.

The elections also marked a kind of rehabilitation for the leaders of the 2009 protest movement, as Mir-Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi were allowed to participate in the voting - a mobile

ballot box was sent to where they are held under house arrest. Apparently in Karroubi's case, it arrived at 1am in the morning after voting had closed and he refused to cast his vote on the basis that it is illegal to do so after the deadline! But this has given rise to rumours that, following his electoral gains, Rowhani might now be in a good position to demand an end to their house arrest - a promise he alluded to during the election campaign.

The hard-line conservative camp, mainly composed of those loyal to the former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad - who is accused of involvement in major corruption and embezzlement of public funds - lost badly. Supporters of president Rowhani entered the elections under the title, List of Hope, while the 'reformists' stood on a joint list with 'moderate conservatives' - many of whom have split with the more hard-line conservatives because of their opposition to Ahmadinejad.

So in the 290-seat majles (parliament) Rowhani is likely to face less opposition to his programme, although 'reformists' still do not have a majority despite taking all 30 seats in the capital. Although the second round of elections will determine the final results, it is clear that hard-liners will be the main losers. According to the semi-official news agency Isna, this is the position after the first round - 'reformists': 83 seats; 'moderate conservatives': 78; independents: 60; religious minorities: 5.

What will change?

First of all, let us be very clear that all factions of the Islamic regime are pro-capitalist - the overwhelming majority are in fact the political representatives of the bazaar.

The 'reformist' factions and to a certain extent their

new 'moderate conservative' allies are in favour of further integration into the capitalist global order. They might occasionally recite anti-US slogans, but as a group they favour closer relations with the west, which is why they supported the Iran nuclear deal with the blessing of the supreme leader.

Rowhani and his foreign minister, Javad Zarif, have already sent very clear messages to international capital. Iran is open for business and its labour force - intimidated by years of recession, mass unemployment and the regime's brutal repression - will accept low wages, poor conditions and vicious exploitation. These overtures are also being backed up by practical examples, such as the vicious attack by the paramilitary Basij on a group of striking factory workers in Kalaleh - an assault brazenly reported by pro-regime media outlets as one of a number of exercises by this militia in preparation for future actions against protesting workers.

In terms of democracy, the 'reformists' are in favour of political freedoms for their supporters within the confines of the Islamic Republic, but they have shown that they are just as capable as Ahmadinejad of keeping dissidents in prison. They have so far failed to make any serious attempts to release their former allies, Mousavi and Karroubi, from house arrest and they are definitely in favour of continuing the clampdown on workers' rights - the large-scale arrest of labour activists opposed to their neoliberal agenda is proof of this. Their liberalism is very limited: they are opposed to aggressive interference by organs of the religious state in private lives, since the activities of the Islamic moral police can cause embarrassment when they visit European capitals. The westernised urban middle class is their main

constituency and they do not want to alienate this group.

The 'moderate conservatives' share many of the ideals of their reformist allies, although, of course, they are more reactionary when it comes to religious issues, including the wearing of the hijab. For their part, the ultra-conservatives - those who openly opposed the nuclear deal and rapprochement with the west - employ anti-US and anti-western slogans in support of their nationalist position favouring independent Iranian capital. Many of them and their financial backers benefited enormously from the years of sanctions, making good use of their connections with the security services to sell goods confiscated by the Revolutionary Guards (Pasdaran) or imported illegally on the black market. Their proposed 'economy of resistance' is in fact a demand for an autarky, where such corrupt practices can flourish. The fact that the Iranian people have so clearly rejected them is therefore positive.

An outburst from ayatollah Sadeq Larijani soon after the results were announced summarises the ultra-conservative stance. Repeating an accusation that dominated the headlines of the rightwing press in the run-up to polling day, he claimed that 'moderates' and 'reformists' had formed a "British list" and worked with "American and English media outlets" during the election campaign: "Is this type of coordination with foreigners, in order to push out these figures from the Council of Experts, in the interests of the regime?"²

In these new circumstances, at a time when gains made by the 'reformist' factions of the regime have left them in a strong position to pursue neoliberal economic policies, at a time when most sanctions have been lifted, it is our task to refocus the work of Hands Off the People of Iran. We need to give Hopi a different emphasis, possibly reflected in a different name and style of work.

In contrast to so many others, Hopi has been implacable in its commitment to the principle that, in Iran as elsewhere, the only consistent anti-war, anti-imperialist and democratic force is the working class. Now is the time to step up our solidarity with the beleaguered workers' movement of Iran, as the reactionary regime - having made important concessions on the international stage - looks to consolidate its repressive hold on domestic power ●

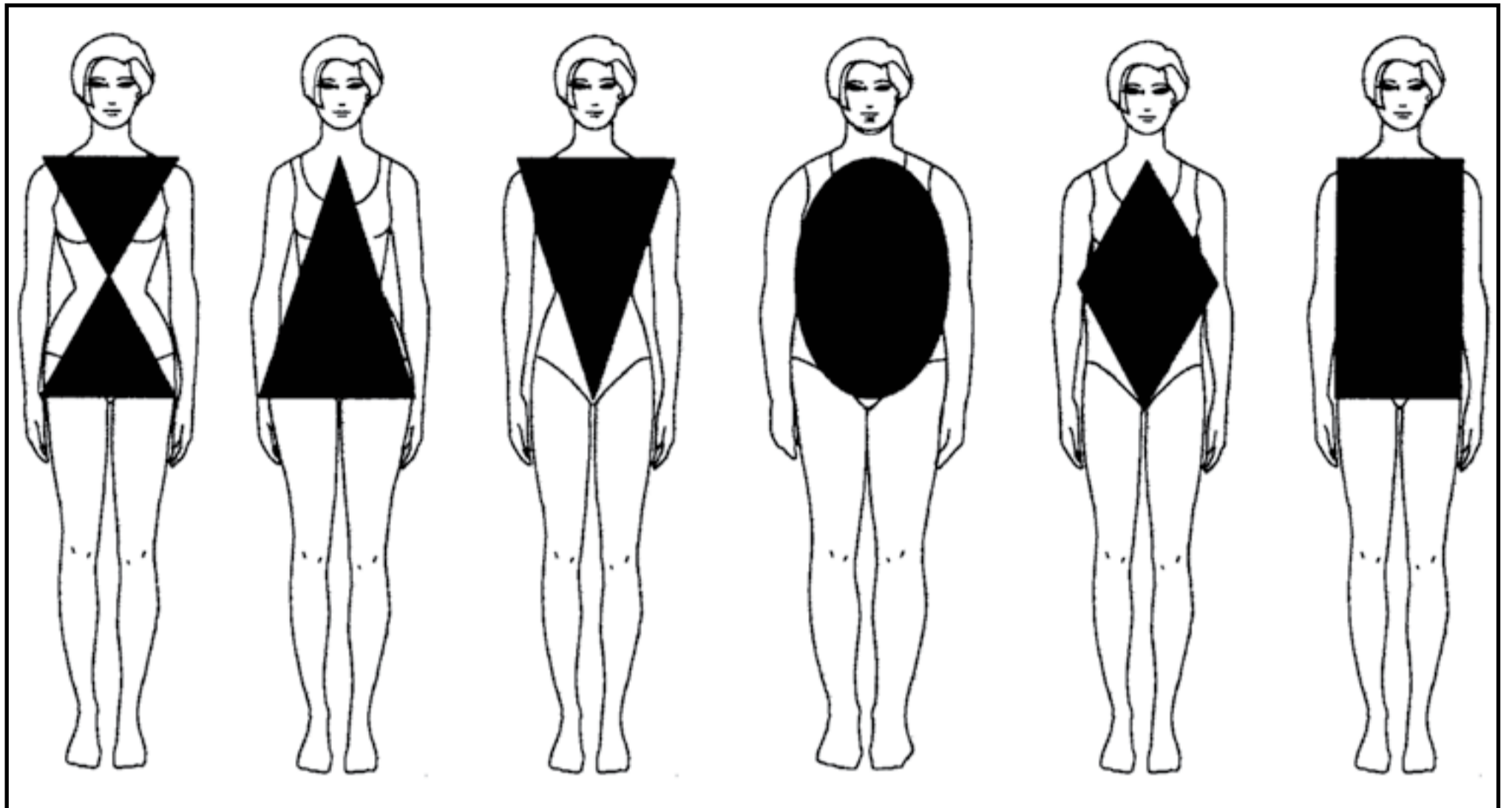
Notes

1. www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2016/02/tale-elections-iran-united-states-160217061655476.html.
2. www.middleeasteye.net/news/reformists-elected-assembly-experts-iran-2108836539.



Hassan Rowhani: victor

IMAGE



Body obsession

Ugly truth about feeling ugly

Our society encourages low self-esteem and unhealthy attitudes towards food, writes **Commissaress** - and the results are not pretty

Last week was UK Eating Disorder Awareness Week - which was dutifully ignored by my school and went virtually unnoticed by my peers.

This would be forgiven if dedicating a week to raising awareness of eating disorders were some relic of a past, in which such disorders were more prevalent than they are now. Unfortunately, this is not the case. The statistics I found while doing my research for this article are rather sobering: some 1.6 million people in the UK are estimated to be directly affected by eating disorders (but, according to some estimates, the real figure is closer to four million); the number of people diagnosed has increased by 15% since 2000 and the number of men by 27% (although men still make up just 25% of diagnoses); only 47% of patients are eventually classified as having completely recovered, and social media is making everything a whole lot worse.¹

Not that I needed to do any research to reach these conclusions: I am in year 10 at school, which is for students aged 14 to 15, and 15 is the most common age at which girls are admitted to hospital for eating disorders.² Every time I go to school or to a party or do any sort of socialising with people my age, there is some sign of unhealthy relationships with food and body image - whether it is one of the ubiquitous 'Ooh, my stomach/thighs/face/whatever look(s) huge' comments, or guilt about eating a few too many Doritos and the affirmation to go out running tomorrow morning, or the conversation with which we teenagers are all too familiar. It goes something like:

'Oh my god, I look like a fat cow!'
'No you don't, you're gorgeous! Have you even seen my sausage legs?'

'What are you talking about? My legs aren't even sausages, they're doughballs. You're like a size 8!'
'I'd kill for your legs! And actually I'm a size 10. I'm so fat ...'

And so it continues, beyond the infinite.

As you might expect, the internet provides no respite from this. Instagram and Tumblr are awash with, if not boards, posts and websites explicitly meant to induce eating disorders (called 'proana' or 'thinspiration'), or images of ostensibly perfect people living ostensibly perfect lives. On the internet, you can erase all your flaws; however depressed or uninspired or lonely you might be feeling on the inside, however often you might look in the mirror and feel ugly and worthless, you can build yourself a shell by editing your selfies with a dozen different filters, creating a beautiful Instagram which shows off your bikini body and minimalist apartment and designer bags and hiding or blocking out anything you don't want to see - or you don't want others to see.

The result is that social media - and particularly the newer platforms like Instagram, which are used more for self-promotion than for social connection - paint a totally inaccurate picture of people's lives, so teenagers (and children and adults too) therefore start to think, very much mistakenly, that everyone else's life is better than their own. The natural next step is for us to try to improve or take better control of our own lives and appearances, so that we too can be 'goals'.³ In some cases, striving to be thin can be a way to do this.

Shared behaviour

Although it is extremely important for society to become more aware of eating disorders and just how severe

the problem they pose actually is, I am not exactly focusing on eating disorders in this article, though the behaviour which I am discussing can, as far as I know, be applied to sufferers as well.

True, I by no means have a totally healthy relationship with food and my appearance - I count calories sometimes, am very familiar with body mass index (BMI), waist-to-hip ratio (WHR), body fat percentage and similar mechanisms for ascertaining weight health, hardly ever feel satisfied with how I look and have to force myself to go two days without make-up every week so as not to become dependent on it. However, while I know several people who have had eating disorders and have read a few books and articles on the topic, I have never had a disorder myself and do not want to pretend that I know how it feels or am any sort of expert. Secondly, if we as a society do increase our awareness of the severity of this issue, there is a danger that we may forget about everyone else: those of us who do not have an eating disorder and are definitely not going through such a painful ordeal, but who still constantly feel social pressure to fit beauty standards, to be slim but 'hourglass-shaped' and busty (for women) or muscular (for men), and constantly feel that they are not meeting these standards.

Let us look at these people in a bit more detail. From my experience, the majority of teenage girls fall into this category, and the statistics seem to agree with me: according to a Schools Health Education Unit study, only 33% of teenage girls say that they feel good about themselves and two-thirds think that they are too fat.⁴ Such people may not make themselves extremely thin or binge and purge, but they - worryingly, given how common they are - share some behaviour with *some* sufferers of

eating disorders. They might develop a habit of comparing themselves to other people (their friends, celebrities, people who show up in their feed on social media) and aspire to look 'as good' as they do. They might try to make themselves look a certain way that matches up to the size and features which the media tells them, either overtly or covertly, are desirable. They might buy products, like 'slimming' clothes, 'skin-perfecting' creams or even the latest pitiful fad: 'beauty drinks' (!), aimed at helping them to comply with perceived standards. Or they might strive to look 'better' as a means to gain control over or improve their lives, or a particular aspect of their lives.

These observations lead me to an uncomfortable conclusion. In all of this behaviour, common to almost all of the people with low body confidence whom I know (I would, of course, need to carry out a study to verify my conclusions, but I spend too much time being an inmate of the GCSE prison to do that), there are reflections of some of society's basic features. I do not think that anyone would dispute that consumption and competition are two lynchpins of social and economic organisation today. We also live in a world in which people's judgements of one another and themselves are informed to a great extent by roles: social expectations and obligations based on gender, race, sexuality, age and any number of equally arbitrary characteristics a person might have.

And, despite a risible amount of pretence to the contrary, people have very little control over their lives: we are forced through education, generally forced to pursue a career which we do not enjoy because the alternative is poverty and boredom, and forced to act and even think in a certain way in order

to be accepted and to 'succeed'. Thus we can see that the body confidence crisis of our generation is quite possibly a reaction to the processes of categorising and ascribing obligations to people, pitting them against each other, robbing them of autonomy and conditioning them into conforming and consuming: processes which have become rampant.

If this is the case, it will unfortunately take a lot more than banning size-zero models and sticking positive affirmations in school toilet cubicles to solve this problem. The tendency of both those with eating disorders and the non-disordered but unconfident majority to compare themselves to others, try to regain control over their lives and feel obliged to buy products and fill roles is symptomatic of the chronic competition, consumption, conformity and chaos which are making people's lives a misery right now.

As usual, government leaders and campaigners who want to fight eating disorders and negative body image need to look beyond the surface of the problem and see the endemic root causes. But those of us who realise how destructive these root causes are should be broadening our critique too - to cover not just the economic shortcomings of the system, but its effects on behaviour, on sense of self, on psychological health. Because there is reason to believe that these effects could be seriously harming lives, and getting worse as we speak ●

Notes

1. www.anorexiabulimiacare.org.uk/about/statistics.
2. *Ibid.*
3. www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=goal&defid=8300187.
4. www.educationworld.com/a_news/report-social-media-blame-low-self-esteem-young-women-2903645.

REVIEW



Toni Negri: past still going unrevealed

Last hurrah of a psychopath

Toni Negri *Storia di un comunista* Milan, 2015, pp608, €18

Toni Negri's 608-page autobiography is a predictably strange, and in places virtually unreadable, document.¹ The 82-year-old author is rumoured to be in declining health and is certainly obsessed by death (particularly pp9-15). He seems to have been assisted in unspecified respects by a named editor - Girolamo De Michele, a 54-year-old philosopher and novelist, who, as far as I am aware, has no particular connection with Negri's autonomist circles.

The publisher has inserted a preliminary note claiming to have numbered "some paragraphs that are most closely related to the philosophical formation of Antonio Negri: the encounter with his authors and the evolution of his theories" (p8). Since the entire book is full of numbered paragraphs, regardless of whether they deal with weighty theoretical or philosophical issues or with much more directly political or even personal matters, this cryptic and confusing explanation will leave any reader outside Negri's inner circle totally baffled. Moreover, up until p316 there is a strange alternation between the predictable first person singular characteristic of conventional autobiography and the use of the somewhat pretentious third person ("Toni") - presumably by the author himself, since this is not a book based on interviews. Whilst perhaps a closer reader, more imbued with Negri's own world view, might detect some logic here, this too will puzzle the merely curious.

Given the vast number of both academic authors and political activists referred to in the course of this somewhat prolix text, it is a great pity that it has no index at all - not even the usual Italian *Indice dei nomi* (index of names). One would hope that, if an English-language edition ever appears, there might be some attempt to remedy this, in line with the editorial apparatus that seems to have

been attached to the English-language versions of his earlier autobiographical works referred to below.

Whilst the overall structure of the work is conventional, leading from Negri's birth in 1933 to his famous arrest on April 7 1979, with only very occasional and very brief references to the rest of his life, such as his friendly chats in prison with "the comrades of the Red Brigades" (pp476-77), the chronological flow is frequently interrupted by very lengthy summaries of the many books and articles that he wrote at various points in his first 45 years, including his *tesi di laurea* (final-year undergraduate dissertation).

Since his substantial work on Descartes,² amongst other studies of the history of philosophy, had little obvious connection with his political career, the relevance of these interminable digressions to what Negri's own summarisation as "a reading of the political destiny of my generation otherwise falsified by repression" (p6) escaped me, even if it reminded me that large chunks of *Empire* concentrated on early modern philosophy rather than concrete analysis of the world in the years leading up to 2000. Nor do Negri's long-winded attempts to précis more directly political books and articles make the reader's task any easier. Whether De Michele just saw his role as fitting pieces of a jigsaw together (indeed this seems a more plausible explanation of the numbered paragraphs than the one offered by the publisher) or curbed even greater verbosity on Negri's part remains unclear, but the younger man certainly lacked the ruthlessness one would have expected of a professional editor.

Testament?

Whilst Negri has written some more fragmentary autobiographical works about specific episodes in his life in previous years³, one assumes that the

new book represents his last attempt at providing some sort of political testament for future generations - certainly its aggressively political title, *Storia di un comunista*, would suggest this.

Now that he has entered his ninth decade, one would not imagine that Negri runs any risk in telling the truth as he remembers it - he has long since served whatever prison time is likely to come his way.⁴ However, some aspects of his political evolution remain as mysterious as ever. Despite the title of the autobiography Negri was never a member of the Partito Comunista Italiano (PCI) or even of some dissident communist formation - whether Bordigist, Trotskyist or Maoist - that came out of the PCI.

Whether his father, who died when Negri was only two, ever had any socialist sympathies, as Negri asserts at various points in this book, is not something that at this distance in time can be easily proved or disproved, but it is absolutely certain that his elder brother, Enrico, volunteered to fight for Mussolini's German-backed Republic of Salò in December 1943, before his 18th birthday: in other words, not in response to the coercion of conscription. Enrico died within weeks of volunteering, possibly killing himself after being wounded in combat in order to avoid falling into the hands of the "reds" (p13).

Negri himself first entered politics not as a socialist or a communist, which would have been the logical outcome of his family background as he chooses to present it, but in the Gioventù Italiana di Azione Cattolica and various Catholic youth and student organisations linked to the Christian Democracy (DC). Whilst the trauma of his brother's death might have explained a totally apolitical turn towards detached scholarship, it does not account for Negri's actual path of deep involvement with the DC - the overwhelmingly dominant political force in the Veneto during the 1950s -

whose student affiliates, in which Negri played such a prominent role would generally have been stepping stones to a parliamentary career in the DC.

Negri now claims to have joined the Partito Socialista Italiano (PSI) in October 1956 (p128),⁵ although he does not claim to have been very active in the PSI until 1959, when he was elected to Padua's municipal council, showing none of his later total abhorrence for any involvement in electoral politics. Negri claims that he lost his religious faith some time before abandoning Catholic student politics. He then sought, and succeeded in gaining a permanent university post at a very early age - as he puts it, "The Paduan chair is prestigious and Toni has conquered it early: he is the youngest Italian professor and he is good - friends and enemies recognise it" (p275). He consciously cultivated friendly relations with powerful academics and displayed no leftist inclinations whatsoever, so it seems reasonable to characterise the young Negri as an extremely ambitious opportunist and careerist rather than a "communist" in any sense of that word.

Whilst Negri rapidly moved left after 1960, becoming involved with far-left journals - first Renato Panzieri's *Quaderni Rossi* (*Red Notebooks*) and then Mario Tronti's *Class Operaia* (*Working Class*) - even by his own accounts he seems always to have lived a strange double life right up to his arrest in 1979. He completely dominated the Institute of Political Science at Padua University, whose staff he filled with his own cronies in the manner of the classic Italian academic *barone*, whilst leading increasingly extreme political groups, which after 1969 were ever more deeply involved in illegal activities.

The contradictions of this double life have given rise to deep suspicion in some quarters - most notably on the part of the British journalist, Philip Willan, who suggests some link

with both the Italian and American intelligence services.⁶ Willan infers that Negri's intense hostility towards the PCI would have served the interests of the CIA during the 1970s. Negri's book has very little to say about any American links - with the obvious exception of small groups that had emerged out of CLR James's 'Johnson-Forrest tendency', whose ideological influence on early *operaismo* (workerism) has long been known.

Whilst one could put a sinister construction on Negri's presence in autumn 1960 at an Italian conference organised by the Rockefeller Foundation, immediately after his return from a journey to the Soviet Union with some members of the PCI and PSI leftwingers, it seems much more likely this was pure academic careerism. However, there are a few oddities towards the end of the book. First:

An American journalist (who during my trial revealed himself to be a CIA agent) comes to find me in Milan; I explain him the difficulties of the situation in which we find ourselves. I accept his insistence to explore all possible channels to save Moro's life - he, an expert in anti-terrorism, is even less convinced than I am (p579).

Then, when Negri is in New York in early autumn 1978:

One day this fake journalist who came to find me during the Moro kidnapping takes me to New York inside the ABC skyscraper in Washington Square. He leads me for an hour from one office to another, up to the television studios; here he has projected a film on the Symbionese⁷ that recounts the destruction of the group, up until the bombardment of the house where the last resisters had taken

What we fight for

refuge. I do not know exactly what the agent of the CIA wanted to tell me ... (p583).

One wonders why Negri does not choose to name the journalist/agent after all these years. Perhaps more significantly, one might ask why Negri, who had already spent a large part of 1977 abroad and on the run from the Italian police after magistrates had issued arrest warrants for him, had no difficulty in getting an American visa at a time when even the most pacific and respectable 'official communists' from the PCI were frequently banned from entering the US. One might have thought that in the immediate aftermath of the Moro kidnapping the American authorities would have been particularly suspicious of any Italian extreme leftist who had publicly glorified violence, as Negri had in his widely cited pamphlet *Domination and sabotage*, even if they may not have known of the involvement of former members of Negri's old organisation, Potere Operaio, in the Roman column of the Red Brigades - which they may well have done if it was really the case that a CIA man was asking him to try and get Moro released, as he claims here.

It is not clear from Negri's autobiography if Willan's claim on p187 of his book *Puppetmasters* that Negri went to and fro between Italy and the US on a number of occasions in these years has any substance. Also interesting is the attempt in the mid-1960s to block the appointment of his colleague, Antonio Pigliaru, according to Negri as a manoeuvre directed mainly at Negri's own simultaneous appointment to the chair of state doctrine in the political science faculty at Padua. Pigliaru (and thus Negri) had the support of Pigliaru's fellow Sardinian, Francesco Cossiga. Negri writes: "Thus I know Cossiga: elegant, passionate and critical in the things he does and in discussion", even if Negri has to admit he was "a strange personality" and "great friend of the American embassy" in the days when he was still "the young under-secretary for defence with special responsibility for the secret services" (p268). Given Cossiga's later role as 'minister of civil war', as the Movement of 1977 branded him, not to mention his tenure at the interior ministry during the Moro affair, this friendship seems more than a little odd.

Operaismo

Although the best theoretical contributions to what became *operaismo* came not from Negri, but from Renato Panzieri, Mario Tronti and Roman Alquati, one must acknowledge that Negri played a very important role in maintaining a genuine connection between the theory of workerism and the practice of working class struggle in the large chemical factories of Porto Marghera, and to a lesser extent other industrial workplaces in the Veneto and Emilia, throughout the 1960s, long after Tronti and other Roman intellectuals associated with *operaismo*, who never really applied their theories to factory agitation, embarked on the dead-end strategy of re-entering the PCI. The chapters dealing with this period (pp196-380) that are clearly based in large part on a run of old journals, are from an historical perspective the most useful part of the book, shedding more light on the practice of *operaismo* than most previous accounts, which have tended to concentrate on theory.

However, whatever praise has to be accorded to Negri's tireless activity in the 1960s, his political role in the 1970s as the main leader of, first, Potere Operaio (1969-73) and then Autonomia Operaia (1973-79) were completely destructive in terms of the far left, let alone the general interests of the working class as a whole. Neither group would ever engage in

electoral work of any kind, whether at the municipal or parliamentary level, and they increasingly moved away from mass action, as it might be generally envisaged in terms of strikes, workplace occupations or peaceful demonstrations, towards the advocacy of some form of armed or insurrectionary action without anything approaching majority support in the working class. Potere Operaio resembled the Communist Workers Party of Germany (KAPD) or the more putschist elements of the early Communist Party of Germany (KPD) involved in episodes like the March Action of 1921, whilst Autonomia was much closer to Bakunin, with its cult of rather pointless, almost random violence and idolisation of the lumpenproletariat.

Given the way Negri, in the mid-1970s abandoned the somewhat obsessively factory-based politics of *operaismo* for nebulous rhetoric about the 'social factory' and the *operaio sociale* (a phrase that is best not translated as 'social worker', as some rather farcical Anglophone accounts have done in the past), the poisonous venom with which he still writes about the groups that rejected hard-line *operaismo* in favour of a more community-based approach and became Lotta Continua in 1969 is astonishing.⁸ Discussing Lotta Continua or its predecessors, first he writes of "a populist tendency of Catholic and socialist origin" (p357) and then he polemicalises even more viciously: "I had undervalued the presence in the coalition around Sofri at Turin of a profoundly anti-Marxist animus that was descended from a still deeper anti-communist tension of Catholic or socialist origin" (p357). Given his own dubious Christian Democratic political past, the sheer chutzpah of this attack on Lotta Continua beggars belief.

Negri's enduring narcissism and total lack of any self-awareness is best exemplified in his grandiose explanation of his own leadership role in Potere Operaio:

Why did I agree not only to construct Potere Operaio, but to be its secretary? I believe through a sort of 'ethic of service', through a strange lack of arrogance - very far distant from the presumed arrogance that they will attribute to me later on. I was 36, the others at most 25 ... I had studied so much, the others who were much younger much less ... I had studied a lot, always in an interdisciplinary manner, doing theory in the American manner - a little philosophy, much history, a fair amount of Marxism and political economy, a lot of political science, enough law. Moreover, I had behind me a university institute that could sustain a good part of the theoretical work that Potere Operaio required (p375).

One cannot imagine even the SWP's 'Red Professor', Alex Callinicos - not a modest man by many accounts - making quite such hyperbolic claims.

Bakunist

Negri still grossly exaggerates the importance of the Movement of 1977, which was essentially confined to students and some young unemployed or precariously employed workers⁹, making the ridiculous assertion that "Probably the real Italian 68 was in 77, when everything in Europe seemed to be finished" (p355). He seems more honest about Autonomia Operaia and its aims than in the years when he, or at least his foreign apologists, claimed he was put on trial and imprisoned by the Italian state merely for his ideas.

The absurd pretence that Autonomia was not a hierarchical and militarised organisation, but

some sort of vague current of ideas - which always reminded me of the unconvincing claim that *Militant* was just a newspaper - is finally abandoned. Negri quite clearly indicates how he created it as an organised faction in opposition to the Roman leadership of Potere Operaio and seems to date its foundation to a meeting on his 40th birthday - August 1 1973 (p463). He also discusses "expropriations that were instead organised inside Autonomia's activities to sustain the costs of the press, of party offices and then, to an ever increasing extent, of the clandestinity to which many comrades were constrained" (p483).

He admits in relation to Autonomia:

As far as strategy was concerned, it was animated by a firm relationship between mass agitation and armed struggle; this label excludes any 'terrorist' action in the strict sense ... The objective is always singular and transparent, possible to make propaganda about: nothing to do with the objectives of the fascist bands or of the state that theorise and practise terror. On the contrary, the strategic determination of the armed struggle in the working class groups of Autonomia is always understood to create 'counter-power' in preparation for and in expectation of the moment of crisis, in which mass insurrectional operations could be conceived (p501).

When he indulges yet again in his now habitual rant against his colleague at Padua, professor Angelo Ventura, for having assisted the prosecutor and the Digos (special branch) to build a case against him in 1979 (p589), he refuses to acknowledge the kneecapping inflicted upon Ventura by the Paduan *autonomi* - presumably his students wearing the balaclavas he found so entrancing¹⁰ - in 1979. It would be hard to dodge any responsibility for it, given the way he ruled the roost in the university - doubtless what was really meant by "the objective is always singular and transparent".

Perhaps Negri's utterly bankrupt Bakunist conception of 'revolution' is most clearly indicated by his glowing reference to the New York blackout of July 13 1977:

an insurrection of a great part of the New York proletariat: Assaults on the supermarkets, generalised reappropriation of goods, defence in a military manner against the interventions of police repression: an entire night of metropolitan jacquerie (p584).

We have nothing whatever to learn from a man who still sees the usually apolitical and often totally anti-social armed robber as the best revolutionary. With any luck this rambling and frequently unreadable tome will make no more converts to autonomism.¹¹

For an author who wrote a book called *Goodbye, Mr Socialism* in 2006¹² to claim his life is "The history of a communist" is, of course, profoundly irritating, but one suspects that this is the last hurrah of Italy's most notorious academic psychopath - even if a fanatical fan like the tireless translator, Ed Emery, will probably inflict an English-language edition on us before very long ●

Toby Abse

Notes

1. None of his previous texts, either in the original Italian or in English translation, have been easy to follow; very few of those who have attempted to read him, other than autonomists or the worldwide academic coterie of Negri fans that has developed over the last couple of decades in the wake of his collaborations with Michael Hardt - *Labour of Dionysus* (1994), *Empire* (2000), *Multitude* (2004), *Commonwealth* (2009) and *Declaration* (2012) - would disagree with this assessment. It is worth remarking that Negri himself once

described his own style as "unnecessarily convoluted", "baroque" and "bombastic"; this brief moment of insight about a particular text could be applied to most of his writings.

2. This is now available in English as *Political Descartes: reason, ideology and the bourgeois project* (London 2007). The first Italian edition was published as *Descartes politico* in 1970.

3. *Diary of an escape* (the British edition was published in 2010, but the French edition came out in 1985 and the Italian in 1986) and *Pipeline* (Italian edition: 1983; English edition: 2014). The first is a diary of the period February-November 1983 and the latter was supposedly composed in 1981-82, taking the literary form of letters from prison to a fictitious correspondent, with the 'letters' being designed for publication from the very beginning. This was clearly a conscious attempt to appear to ape Gramsci's genuine letters from prison - typical of Negri's penchant for self-dramatisation. *Pipeline* is in effect a rather odd sort of autobiography covering various aspects of Negri's life from adolescence until the third anniversary of his arrest - April 7 1982. Both of these texts were translated by Negri's most committed British disciple, Ed Emery, who presumably would be the obvious candidate for the translation of *Storia di un comunista*.

4. Whilst one has to acknowledge this was a significant episode in his life, particularly his first imprisonment awaiting trial from April 1979 to July 1983, since the precise nature of the deal he struck with the Italian state when he returned from France in 1997 to "serve out his sentence" (as Timothy S Murphy puts it in the introduction to *Pipeline* - p9) is rather murky, and there seems some doubt as to how much more time he actually served in a 24-hour jail. Even if his period of house arrest only ended in 2003, the attempts of his most ardent fans to compare his fate with that of Gramsci, whose early death in a room with bars on the windows was clearly hastened by his imprisonment, is rather extravagant. Negri managed to write not only *Pipeline* but his weighty book on Spinoza - *L'anomalia selvaggia* (1981), later published in English as *The savage anomaly* (Minneapolis 1991) - and various political essays while in jail and of course, what he suffered pales into insignificance compared with, say, the probably endless torment of Abdullah Öcalan by the Turkish state. One might also point out that thousands of other Italian far lefts were imprisoned at the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s - a rather random mixture of genuine members of the Red Brigades and other terrorist groups, and activists who had no real connection with terrorism. In other words Negri's fate, including years of preventive, pre-trial detention, was far from unique and by and large he was treated more mildly than many of his contemporaries, as should be evident from his prolific authorship in jail - even if he may have been beaten up by prison guards in the immediate aftermath of a prison revolt by BR members in the Trani prison in December 1980.

5. This contradicts his earlier claim in *Pipeline* (p25 of the English language edition) that he joined the PSI in 1953, around the time of the *Legge Truffa* (Swindle Law) - a DC-inspired attempt to undermine proportional representation for the Italian parliament. As I have stated earlier, the Italian edition of *Pipeline* was published in 1983 and it seems to have been written in 1981-82. Either Negri's memory is fading fast or more probably he was not being truthful in the 1980s.

6. P Willan *Puppetmasters: the political use of terrorism in Italy* London 2002, particularly pp181-88. This is an American reprint - probably self-published - of a work first published in London by Constable in 1991.

7. The Symbionese Liberation Army was a very minor American ultra-left terrorist group which enjoyed a certain amount of fame in the media because of the involvement of the kidnapped heiress, Patty Hearst, in some of their exploits.

8. Negri's attempts to expound and justify his mid-1970s theories are as incomprehensible in this book (for example on pp558-61) as they were at the time. It is probably true that Negri spotted the significance of the 1973 oil crisis as marking the end of the 'thirty glorious years' of the Long Boom, and the Keynesianism associated with it, long before most observers, and there is some rational core in his musings on post-Fordism and outsourcing, even if they exaggerate the rapidity of such shifts. The Bakunist political conclusions he draws from this in terms of 'mass illegality' are as demented as ever.

9. I have discussed the Movement of 1977 at much greater length, in 'A Blind Alley or a New Beginning?': The Italian Autonomists and the Movement of 1977, *New Interventions*, Vol 11, No 2, Summer 2003, pp21-29.

10. See my article, 'The professor in the balaclava: Toni Negri and autonomist politics' *What Next?* No22, 2002. To my surprise, I discovered a few years ago that this old article in a now defunct, small-circulation periodical still has a certain notoriety in cyberspace, largely because autonomists hate it.

11. Given Negri's tirades against the more pacific and playful elements of the Movement of 1977 - the groupings known as the Metropolitan Indians - on p555 and p576, one suspects that the 'soft' autonomism of daft hand signals and phoney consensus that undermined the UK student movement of 2011 would not have met with the professor's approval; probably even the occupation of Millbank would have been judged as far too mild in its violence against property - merely breaking a few windows, as opposed to the more authentically autonomist use of arson. Although perhaps Negri would have been delighted by the idiot who threw a fire extinguisher from a high building.

12. This is the date of the publication of the Italian edition, which interestingly always had the English-language title; the English translation came out in 2008.

- 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.

weekly worker

**US Marxists
can get a
hearing**

Not out of it yet

Bernie Sanders is still in the race, argues Tom Munday

So-called Super Tuesday, the day on which 11 presidential primaries are contested by both major US political parties, came and went in a blur. For the Republicans, Robocop baddie made manifest Donald Trump romped home to win seven key states, extending his sizable lead into the stalwart southern party heartlands. For the Democrats it was Hillary Clinton who came out on top, finishing well ahead of Bernie Sanders when it came to the minority voters who make up a significant portion of the southern Democrat base.

The Clinton victory in particular was generating headlines even before being fully confirmed. The liberal media hot air was on full blast - within hours of the counts coming in, two separate pre-prepared articles in *The Guardian* were already declaring that Sanders should now back out of the race so as not to damage Clinton's chances any further, or inadvertently hand victory to a Trump-led Republican Party, seemingly a certainty.

The argument came in two flavours. The first was conciliatory and cloaked in Google-esque cod-slang: "It's time for the haters to get behind Hillary Clinton," it squeaked like a hipster mouse on a fixie bike.¹ The second was cold, pragmatic, serious-looking - "The cold, hard truth," it said with no doubt furrowed brow, is that "it's game over for Bernie Sanders."² Together they formed a double whammy aimed at Sanders' two key demographics: cute for the millennials, 'realist' for baby-boomer, born-again lefties with vague memories of their compromise with the other Clinton. Both were on message: Sanders is wantonly scuppering Hillary's chances and it's time for him to go.

Never mind that - from the left - it is quite a struggle to muster much sympathy with that view. It also obscures the fact that the real threat to Clinton's campaign is Clinton herself. The pig who can't keep her nose out of the trough is in many cases as despised by rank-and-file Democrats as she is by 'cold beer and blue jeans' Tea Party loons. Yes: in spite of all that desperate triangulation, Clinton remains Beelzebub-incarnate to a vast swathe of the electorate. A slimy, warmongering, corporate shill to the left; a latte-sipping, cosmopolitan prig to the right. Many (a majority it seems at present) vote for her out of brand loyalty rather than with any genuine enthusiasm.

One need only look at her victory in South Carolina, predicated on winning a large majority of the African-American vote, and then juxtapose it to her dubious record on race to see that the dots are not joining up here (her husband was the 'first black president', don't forget - an embarrassing, arrogant absurdity of the 'post-racial' 90s, made all the worse by the fact that it now presumably bumps the current occupant of the White House into an inconsequential second place).³ It is



Long game

hard to imagine black voters feeling quite as sympathetic after they see the former first lady in 1996 denouncing inner-city black men as amoral "super-predators" in need of being "brought to heel".⁴ A disgraceful piece of opportunistic race-baiting that by rights, and were it not for her wall-to-wall support amongst the liberal establishment and media, should cost her that minority vote.

And, just as *The Guardian's* rent-a-gobs misrepresent the interests of Democratic or working class voters in keeping Sanders in the race, so they misrepresent the importance of the outcome. Hillary, we are told, delivered the knockout blow on super-Tuesday. The figure you will hear repeated *ad nauseum* is 7-4: seven Clinton victories to Bernie's four. What you will not hear is that, of the 11 contested states, only four had been so close they could have gone either way. Of those four, Sanders won three: Oklahoma, Colorado and Minnesota. In the fourth, Massachusetts, he came within a whisker of Clinton, losing by only

1.5%. Whereas in Minnesota his victory was thumping, nearly 23% clear of Clinton; in Colorado he was 18% above and 10% in Oklahoma.⁵

What pundits have conspicuously ignored is that Clinton's tally of victories, comfortable though they were, were in states where there was no realistic chance she would lose. These are, to make it abundantly clear, overwhelmingly 'red states': ie, states that will *not* vote for a Democrat come November. At no point would the Sanders campaign have been expecting victory here - and in its own assessment of its chances, was never even contemplating a shock victory in Alabama or Tennessee.

Fundamentally, the Sanders campaign has always been about the long game - delivering big results in a smaller number of primaries, and banking on the proportional allocation of delegates to see them across the finish line. As a post on the Sanders campaign Reddit explained, the key date is March 15.⁶ This is the point up until which Clinton is expected to build her lead - essentially the point

wherein most of the southern states will have been decided, leaving the remainder (particularly big-money states like New York and California) to form the true battlegrounds of the contest. Certainly the Sandernistas expect a healthy Clinton lead that will unravel as the days wear on.

Now, whether we regard that assessment as overly optimistic or not has little bearing on the reality that there is still a battle here to be fought. The Sanders campaign correctly assessed the current standing: building a strategy around modest predictions that are now becoming reality. It is the Clinton campaign that, despite its lead, finds itself groping in the dark - the more so as the 60% lead she once enjoyed begins to crumble into nothing.⁷ In other words, reports of the death of Sander's campaign are (for the time being) grossly exaggerated.

And until that day of reckoning the Sanders campaign continues to serve its purpose - even if this is a fact lost on some hopeless leftists. Eg, Alan Gibson's letter in the February 26

issue of this paper (on a side note, comrade, Abraham Lincoln was hardly a socialist champion of the working class, but that did not stop Marx advocating support for him). In a manner unseen in the US for decades, Sanders has forced a mainstream party to divert considerable resources into combatting a threat to its left. If he does, as per the doomsayers, break the Democratic Party, then think what an opportunity that would represent for the US working class.

And, no, Sanders is obviously not a working class candidate (as if that really needs repeating for the umpteenth time), but his continued presence in the race is clearly yielding potential benefits for partisans of the working class. Even if Clinton fails to maintain the vaguest semblance of her minimal left posturing in office, for the establishment the damage is being done already - recent polling indicates that 56% of Democrats now have a "favourable" view of socialism.⁸ *Jacobin*, the prettiest journal of the American left, repeatedly gloats about its subscriptions booming month by month.⁹ In other words, his campaign has given US Marxists some space to put the case not for Sanders' version of 'socialism', but something that vaguely resembles the *genuine article*.

His success has irrefutably demonstrated, on an incredibly public platform, that socialism is not an anathema for the American masses as we have been told for so long. Long may he continue ●

@TomMundayCS

Notes

1. www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/mar/01/its-time-for-haters-get-behind-hillary-clinton-super-tuesday-vote.
2. www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/mar/01/super-tuesday-results-bernie-sanders-campaign.
3. www.nytimes.com/2016/03/02/us/politics/democratic-primary-results.html?_r=0.
4. www.youtube.com/watch?v=IsSDqbot-EI.
5. www.theguardian.com/us-news/ng-interactive/2016/mar/01/super-tuesday-results-live-state-by-state.
6. www.reddit.com/r/SandersForPresident/comments/47jkl/advanced_warning_clinton_likely_to_build_lead.
7. www.realclearpolitics.com/epolls/2016/president/us/2016_democratic_presidential_nomination-3824.html.
8. www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/feb/29/why-are-there-suddenly-millions-of-socialists-in-america.
9. https://twitter.com/sunraysunray/status/704442773815095297.

| Subscribe | | | |
|---------------|---------|-----------|-----------|
| | 6m | 1yr | Inst. |
| UK | £30/€35 | £60/€70 | £200/€220 |
| Europe | £43/€50 | £86/€100 | £240/€264 |
| Rest of world | £65/€75 | £130/€150 | £480/€528 |

New UK subscribers offer: 3 months for £10

UK subscribers: Pay by standing order and save £12 a year. Minimum £12 every 3 months... but please pay more if you can.

Send a cheque or postal order payable to 'Weekly Worker' at:
Weekly Worker, BCM Box 928,
London WC1N 3XX

Name: _____

Address: _____

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 _____