

A paper of Marxist polemic and Marxist unity

weekly
worker



**John McDonnell: by
your advisors shall
you be known**

- Ankara bombing
- Basic income
- Right's Dan Jarvis
- Gerry Downing

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Towards a Communist Party of the European Union

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The socialism
of fools

LETTERS



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

Sanders disaster

The CPGB has produced a series of positions opportunistically divorcing electoral support from promoting the formation of a government. First, it advised Greek workers to oppose a Syriza-led government only after these workers had been advised to vote Syriza - this despite Syriza's public intent to form a government. Second, the CPGB applied the same logic to Jeremy Corbyn, for whom it advocated electoral support without any commitment to a Corbyn government. Now, supporting Sanders, the CPGB clears the smokescreen, since support for a *presidential* candidate is by definition a vote for that candidate to form a government.

A principled Marxist appraisal of a presidential candidate is based on the consequences of the candidate's victory. A Sanders government would be a disaster for workers, like the governments of other left-liberals, such as Allende, Chávez and Tsipras. Comrades advocate supporting Sanders using opportunist reasoning: Sanders is thought to lay the subjective basis for a socialist movement with some useful propaganda. It is not scientific socialism to calculate the immediate subjective value of a vote, while recognising that the candidate's victory would lead to class defeat. It is demagoguery.

Paul Demarty's letter last week (March 10) explains that Sanders' refusal of corporate financing draws a "class line"; but a class line is not a mere convenient focal point for propaganda. (If it were, Donald Trump would be supportable, because he has done more than Sanders to expose the nexus between policy and campaign contributions.) A class line is a commitment to a principled position, rendered sufficiently concrete that the candidate can be held accountable: a commitment to the organised masses who do the accounting. This contrasts with Sanders' individualistic stance on campaign finance, which could be invoked against a labour party.

To the extent that Sanders expresses the working class, the government on offer with Sanders is a popular front, for he has operated for years in a permanent bloc with Democrat politicians. These politicians are completely dependent on corporate financing, riving his campaign with a transparent contradiction.

The lesson opportunists never learn is: popular fronts spell disaster.

Stephen Diamond
USA

Point made

I was going to send a quick note about how odd it was that the *Weekly Worker*, despite having a cover story on anti-Semitism, hadn't managed to mention even *en passant* the problem that the Marxist left is less spotless than one might wish on the issue, and that it wasn't that long ago that, for example, Tony Greenstein was ferociously attacked for documenting Gilad Atzmon's anti-Semitism for what it is, even as the Socialist Workers Party kept inviting Atzmon to event after event.

Then Gerry Dowling, Ian Donovan's comrade at Socialist Fight, went on the *Daily politics* show and made my point far better than I could.

Judd Seuss
email

No witch-hunt!

The point of Cameron's attack on Downing/Socialist Fight is to encourage a Labour Party witch-hunt against the revolutionary left. We can debate the correctness of Socialist Fight positions in the pages of the *Weekly*

Worker, but, whatever our views, we should not support this witch-hunt.

The LP right wing will jump on Cameron's bandwagon, inflating the compliance unit's ongoing witch-hunt and exclusion of socialists from the LP. We must defend the democracy of the labour movement and the right of groups and individuals to debate important questions. In particular we call on all socialists and communists to join the LP and fight for socialism.

Stop the witch-hunt!

Paul Bloom
email

No pose

On the CPGB call to boycott the June 23 referendum on Britain's continued membership of the European Union, comrade Moshé Machover argues: "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" (Letters, March 3).

This is a defensible position, but mistaken. Suppose CPGB was supported by, say, 10% of the popular vote - enough potentially to tip the balance by our call. It would still be true that our most likely course of action would be to try win broader support to delegitimise the referendum, minimise the total number of voters and where possible actually disrupt its conduct. With that sort of support we would have the potential of *actually* calling the legitimacy of the referendum into question.

In contrast, look at what happened in the Scots referendum: far from defeating the nationalist project, the narrow victory of 'no' led immediately to Cameron's 'English votes for English laws' scheme, and this, in turn, prepared the ground for the Labour wipe-out in Scotland, the loss of class-consciousness this represents, and in turn to Tory victory in the 2015 general election: 'left unionism' was still unionism. Similar if not identical results will result if the labour movement falls in behind Cameron on the EU - which is also to fall in behind the US administration's geopolitics, and behind the 'merits' of Cameron's 'deal' to squeeze UK wages further by making European migrants more dependent on their employers.

Mike Macnair
Oxford

Get out

The stagnation in living standards experienced by trade unionists will continue, as long as the bankers' EU controls us. Non-European goods cost more because of the external border tariff/import tax, costing trade unionists £400 extra on their food bill.

The VAT contribution paid to the EU by trade unionists is £380. This is £780 taken by the EU from the pockets of hard-working people. The architects of austerity, David Cameron and George Gideon Osborne, have been instructed by their paymasters in the City of London club of bankers and financiers to keep the UK in the European Union. The reason is that the City benefits to the sum of multi-billions of pounds in earnings from the EU and they would be impoverished by the UK leaving the European Union.

The European Union is the bankers' club - it always has been and always will be, because that is how it was constructed to be. Forlorn campaigners have said we will reform it to be more akin to the interests of the workers, but, apart from a few topical scraps, that reform agenda has not come to fruition. I question the logic of trade unionists being compelled to finance this pet political project of the top 1%

any longer.

Look at the facts: higher living costs reduce and decimate the purchasing power of the working classes, both here in the UK and in Europe. We need look no further than the scandalous poverty experienced by millions of workers in Greece. It is shameful the suffering Greece has had imposed on it by the EU. Consider the fact that families using food banks in the UK would automatically benefit from a £400 cut in the cost of food - a basic necessity for life.

The EU will never be reformed and it is time it was dismantled. This economic cartel has eroded the collective wealth of the proletariat. We workers are not slaves of financiers, bankers and tax-avoiders. We are proud people and will not be cowed into submission by their economic threats. The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership agreement will wreck public services and strangle the democratic life out of the nation, because it empowers the corporations to take legal action against the policy direction of democratically elected governments through the judiciary. This is not democracy: this is economic dictatorship.

The neoliberalism of the EU is written into its DNA. The single European market gold-plates these philosophical principles into law. The international hegemony of the transnational capitalist class over the economic security of the worker is administered through the EU. The European Central Bank now controls Europe without democratic supervision and control. The EU is a Ponzi scheme that hollows out permanent job security and economic borders that restrict predatory corporations and predatory bankers. The democratic principles of nation-states are stripped away and the prosperity of the workers is diluted, chipped away and thrown to the dogs. Greece is a perfect example of this. It is reckless futility to think otherwise.

The austerity that we see in the European single currency zone is the fault of the EU. A vote for the continuance of this superstate project is a vote for the bankers, corporations and the doomsters of neoliberal philosophy. The workers' state will never exist in Europe because it was created not to be one. The degenerated capitalist state of Europe punishes those who oppose it.

The EU is protectionist because it enforces global poverty through its paraphernalia of import regulations, import controls and import taxes for the benefit of those who created it: European speculators, spivs, bankers and plutocratic moneymen. The unMarxist alliance of conservatives, big business, the big trade unions, the Labour Party and the bankers is corrupting the prosperity of the working people for their self-interest: profit.

The bankers in Goldman Sachs say, stay in the EU. They pillage and ravage the workers all over Europe. The UK should leave the EU and teach these reactionary predators a lesson they will never forget. Enough of bogus, hallucinating promises of reforming the EU. The only course of action is its complete elimination.

Oliver Healey
Leicester

Liberal drugs

In a welcome move, the Liberal Democrats have called for an end to the 'war on drugs'. At its spring conference, the party endorsed a motion calling on them to extend their support for the legalisation of cannabis for medical purposes to include recreational use.

This comes after a report from an expert panel was presented to conference. The report showed that legalisation of cannabis could save the exchequer £1 billion a year, with £200-£300 million saved in the criminal

justice system, together with tax income of £400-£900 million.

The experience of Colorado, Oregon, Alaska and Washington State, where cannabis is legal, is instructive. In these four states cannabis is available from licensed outlets. Some of the tax revenue generated has been used in the anti-cannabis education of minors.

Legalisation of cannabis brings quality control, labelling and a public health education campaign similar to alcohol and tobacco. The labelling of cannabis, like alcohol and tobacco, would allow users to choose between milder and stronger versions and different flavours.

A closely regulated market in cannabis would displace both the new synthetic 'legal highs', with their unknown effects, and the high potency 'skunk' and other forms that have increasingly dominated the illicit market and have been linked to a higher risk of dependency and psychosis.

Cannabis has many good medicinal properties, including in the treatment of MS, Parkinson's disease, Crohn's disease, PTSD, glaucoma treatment, epileptic control, ADHD, rheumatism, arthritis and asthma. Cannabis - it's time to legalise.

John Smithe
Cambridgeshire

Eternal hope

Pretty damned disgusting, isn't it, what capitalism does to any inborn or intrinsic decency; what it does to fundamental integrity; what it does to the very soul of those who, either with enthusiasm or for objectively uncontrollable reasons, are obliged to live under its system.

Take this as a prime pressing example. Here we all are, nowadays both stranded and struggling together as normal working citizens - aka non-stakeholders under the terms of that capitalism. And how do those fortunate enough to find themselves as relatively comfortable occupants of the middle class react or behave in our shared circumstances?

Well, in the face of what might best be described as an extensive and pretty damned eye-catching menu of multiple atrocity, horror and distilled ghastliness to spew out from the kitchen doors of our surrounding world, surely the pseudo-irate and furrow-browed *hand-wringing* that members of our middle class choose to adopt; surely the delicately scandalised, but otherwise entirely hollow, running commentary they think it right to broadcast and thereby what, in effect, is that root complacency bordering upon pure-form apathy of theirs, quite simply is not only disgusting and appalling. It is not only that tragic 'sacrifice of their very souls' to the devil of self-interest and the demons of greed. Oh no, in even deeper terms, it provides a searing exposé of the fraud surrounding their own concept of sophisticatedly 'balanced' and cultured views; it reveals the sheer pretence of any true democracy to stem from our so-called civilised society.

Of course, included in that abhorrently monstrous stuff there's the small matter of chubby-cheeked babies and their older siblings washing up along the shoreline of our holiday resorts, in the company of their similarly drowned refugee or migrant parents. So, if looked at in the round, clearly the conclusion should be drawn that we are only partially developed and inadequately evolved as a species. We are still largely primitive in our abilities and competence to function in harmony with each other in a mutually supportive and respectful manner - let alone align with that system for sensible survival, as designed and generously provided by mother nature.

But, getting back to the precise consideration of our middle class,

both foolish short-sightedness and self-inflicted impotence (leading to an eventual self-imposed 'co-victimhood', by the way) in relation to the ongoing onslaught that our mutual and various power-elites have been planning over the past several years; and moreover whose schemes for 'austerity' - aka the dismantling of working people's past victories in the class struggle - have only just begun.

Oh yes, there's a whole truckload more of that so-called 'austerity' stuff parked up their nasty and dark little back alleys, folks! Deeper and denser economic cutbacks, of course; but all of that accompanied by even greater disruption from the socio-cultural chaos being created by their grossly negligent, indeed their outright criminal, response to the so-called 'migrant crisis' - (moreover a catastrophe wholly of their own making, despite aggressively scorn-filled denials).

None of that even to mention the fact that, as anyone with the right kind of eyes or correct 'tilt' of head will know for themselves, this current situation and scenario of capitalist crisis bonded to internal contradictions - this *morphing* from structural chaos into potential outright disintegration - can only end up in an international socioeconomic quagmire: a festering farrago of *dog-eat-dog* new isolationism. Or, maybe even worse, in heightened levels alongside unimaginable new permutations of *dog-kill-dog* military conflict/full-scale war between our ever more desperate and ever more dangerously defunct nation-states.

Where's the sense in that middle class of ours burying their heads in the sand? Where's the sane thinking behind the myopic self-interest or even determined ignorance in the face of such enormous and demonstrably ruthless forces? This head-in-the-sand, 100% selfish thing they've got buzzing around as a plan for life is merely project dumb daft and dead-in-the-making.

As a matter of fact, any proper and genuine Marxism-Leninism-based left wing of our modern-day societies had better take full and urgent note of this general scenario if they don't want to go down the same plughole of self-generated impotence/self-imposed victimhood as part of overall humiliation and defeat. So square up to the task in hand. Together let's learn the lessons about precisely what this fermenting battle of immutably hostile class enemies will encompass and inevitably lead to.

If we do so and that turns out to be the case, not all is lost - quite the opposite. However, whether the wider 'marketplace' of those on the ostensibly sensible and dedicated Marxist-Leninist/Trotskyist left wing will find it within themselves to join with us in this spirit of much needed/long-overdue, full-blooded, clear, firm and durable action via identically motivated unity, we'll all have to wait and see.

But don't leave it too long. The capitalist/imperialist clock of subjugation, exploitation and oppression keeps ticking on - indeed, ticking away like a rusty time-bomb beneath the feet of us all.

Bruno Kretzschmar
email

Prolific

The funeral for comrade Peter E Newell, who passed away recently, is on Tuesday March 22. He was member of East Anglia Socialist Party of Great Britain, a prolific writer and author of *The impossibilists: a brief profile of the Socialist Party of Canada*.

Jon D White
SPGB

TURKEY



PKK fighters

Bleak prospects for democracy

The latest atrocity once more draws attention to the fact that Turkey is at war, writes **Esen Uslu**

On March 13 a powerful car bomb shook the centre of Ankara, killing 37 and injuring 120-odd people. Earlier in the day high school students had been taking their university entrance examinations, the weather was fine and as usual there was a large crowd out and about enjoying the evening. The site targeted is very near the central intersection of several major roads, as well as a metro station serving two principal lines.

It is close to the thoroughfare leading to Çankaya Hill, which is topped by the former presidential palace - nowadays housing the prime ministerial offices and residence. Across the road is the high court of justice, while almost all the major embassies are located nearby. A couple of minutes walk away is the Grand Assembly building - Turkey's parliament - and nearby are the headquarters of the army, navy, air force and gendarmerie.

The bombing took place just a couple of weeks after the government declared new measures to protect Ankara. Two rings of steel were to be thrown around the capital - the outer one to be manned by the gendarmerie and the inner one by the police. And, yes, it was the third major explosion in Ankara within the last five months. If, like most of the Turkish left, along with many a Turkish citizen, you are accustomed to excluding what has been going on in Kurdistan day in and day out, it was one of the most shocking and unexpected atrocities we have seen in Turkey for some time.

It came as a reminder that Turkey is at war. At war in Turkish Kurdistan, and at war with the fledgling self-governing Syrian Kurdistan. Turkish Kurdistan has seen an onslaught of massive military force: the ancient walled city of Diyarbakır; Cizre, the traditional seat of power of the Kurdish Bedirxahni dynasty; Nusaybin, the ancient Nisbis, near the border with Syria; Şırnak, the gateway to Iraqi Kurdistan; Silopi, where the oil pipeline between Kirkuk and Ceyhan crosses the border; İdil, part of the ancient Tur Abdin, where the last Assyrian mayor was gunned down in 1994; Yüksekova, the ancient Gaur, meaning 'infidel', with reference to its

Zoroastrian inhabitants in the past; and many others cities and towns.

The makeshift barricades erected, the ditches dug by hand, the tunnels created by knocking down walls between houses - all were attacked, including by tanks and, when required, by air. Curfews lasting months were declared. The emergency services were not allowed in and the press was excluded. Such use of unrestrained force within inhabited districts caused massive destruction and cost many lives. More than 350,000 were made refugees.

The air force has been regularly bombing Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) positions in Iraqi and Syrian Kurdistan. The US-led coalition in Syria was seen as a problem by Ankara, since it would not allow further military action against the Rojava Kurds. However, long-range artillery was used from the Turkish side of the border. A four-metre high wall was being built along the border with Rojava in an attempt to impede the physical unity of both parts of Kurdistan.

At the same time as it was conducting this war, the government has been busy clipping the wings of the last remnants of democracy and the rule of law in Turkey - it wants to amend the constitution to allow the unbridled rule of an elected sultan and his henchmen. Such a situation appears to be acceptable for the European Union and the USA, provided their plans for the Middle East are not hampered.

To create a favourable atmosphere in the region the Turkish prime minister visited Iran to rebuild bridges. Since the end of UN sanctions, well-to-do tourists from Iran have been flocking into Turkey, and Turkish businessmen are chasing opportunities in Iran. However, the underlying animosity is palpable.

The government has also been negotiating with an EU hell-bent on stemming the flow of refugees. Ankara is seeking substantial financial aid from the EU in return for agreeing to unrealisable demands, such as stopping the unauthorised movement of refugees to Greece. Turkey is also seeking visa-free travel for Kurdish citizens in the Schengen zone - the government believes that would sugar-

coat several bitter pills the population has been forced to swallow.

Predictably the government has blamed the Ankara bombing on the Kurdish freedom movement - without a shred of evidence. And within hours air force jets were bombing the not-so-secret headquarters of the PKK in Iraqi Kurdistan, near the Iranian border. The official press was full of rhetoric about the 'revenge' exacted, and the determination of the government to end all forms of terrorism.

The March 14 issue of *Özgür Gündem*, the daily newspaper of the Kurdish freedom movement, was duly seized amidst charges of aiding and abetting terrorism. The headline that day was "You cannot stop spring coming" - a reference not only to the approaching Newruz celebrations on March 21, but also to an approaching 'Kurdish spring'. As a matter of routine, during the night unknown persons fired on the offices of the leftwing, pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP). Luckily there were no casualties.

The government also issued warrants to arrest four leading academics who had dared to sign the petition against the dirty war in Kurdistan. Three of them were lifted from their homes in the small hours (the fourth was abroad at a conference).

However, the real news was that two days before the bombing the US embassy had warned Americans in Turkey that an attack in Ankara was imminent. When government mouthpieces in the media hinted that perhaps the US itself had something to do with the atrocity, the US embassy made a further announcement: the source of its information was the Turkish government.

The prospects of democracy in Turkey seem very bleak. While most are waiting for 'something' to happen, many democrats and socialists are still reluctant to extend the hand of solidarity to the Kurds. However, unless we not only act in unison with the Kurds, but embrace the refugee communities and minorities to create a broad front and prepare for a long and protracted struggle, the potential for working class gains will remain an elusive mirage ●

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 20, 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 ('Paliamentarism v direct action'), section 3: 'Labour's fling'. Organised by CPGB: www.cpgb.org.uk.

Radical Anthropology Group

Tuesday March 22, 6.45pm: Introduction to social and biological anthropology, Daryll Forde seminar room, Anthropology Building, 14 Taviton Street, off Gordon Square, London WC1. 'Lysistrata decoded'. Speaker: Camilla Power. Organised by Radical Anthropology Group: radicalanthropologygroup.org.

Education Question Time

Thursday March 17, 6.30pm: Q&A with SW London Assembly candidates about their plans for London's Education. Richmond Adult Community College, Parkshot, London SW9. Organised by SW London Education Question Time: www.facebook.com/events/1659197457678478/.

Migrant solidarity

Saturday March 19, 12 noon: National demonstration. Assemble Portland Place, London W1. Organised by Stand Up To Racism: www.standuptoracism.org.uk.

Labour Party democracy

Saturday March 19, 11:30am to 4.30pm: Campaign for Labour Party Democracy AGM, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Organised by Campaign for Labour Party Democracy: www.clpd.org.uk.

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>.

UN Anti-Racism Day

Saturday March 19, 12 noon: Protest, Greys Monument, Grey Street, Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE1. Organised by Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!: www.revolutionarycommunist.org.

Discussing Razem

Monday March 21, 7.30pm: Wood Green Social Club, 3-4 Stuarts Crescent, London N22. Pawel Jankiewicz, member of Razem and Left Unity, introduces a discussion about the new left party in Poland. Organised by Haringey Left Unity: www.facebook.com/events/1700074233584639.

Talk about socialism

Monday March 21, 7pm: Making positive arguments for socialism, Broadacre House, Market Street, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1. Organised by Momentum: www.peoplesmomentum.com.

No to war in Yemen

Tuesday March 22, 6.30pm: Meeting, Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, 235 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2. Organised by Stop the War Coalition: www.stopwar.org.uk.

Cooperation in Sheffield

Tuesday March 22, 7pm: General meeting of Cooperative resources and education group, The Harlequin, 108 Nursery Street, Sheffield S3. Newcomers welcome. Organised by Principle 5: www.principle5.org.uk.

Stop fracking!

Thursday March 24, 7pm: Film showing of *It started with one well*, followed by discussion. Regather Works, 57-59 Club Garden Road, Sheffield S11. Organised by Sheffield Against Fracking: www.sheffieldagainstfracking.org.uk.

Women make history

Saturday April 2, 11am to 3pm: Political and historical day school, Working Class Movement Library, 51 Crescent, Salford M5. Organised by Independent Working Class Education: <http://iwceducation.co.uk>.

Attack of the drones

Friday April 8, 11am: Protest against local manufacture of military drones. Thales arms factory, Manor Royal, Crawley, West Sussex. Organised by Sussex Stop Arming Israel: www.ssaai2016.wordpress.com.

IS, imperialism and Syria

Monday April 11, 7pm: Public meeting, Friends Meeting House, Upper Goat Lane, Norwich NR2. Organised by Norwich Stop the War Coalition: <http://norwichstopwar.org.uk>.

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.

Skateboarding in Palestine

Tuesday April 19, 7.30pm: Film show and discussion, Whitstable Labour Club, 12 Belmont Rd, Whitstable. With Theo Krish, who builds skate-parks in Palestine. Organised by Faversham and Whitstable Palestine Solidarity Campaign: www.facebook.com/fwpsc.

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

Right's fear and loathing

Communists defend Corbyn from his impatient assassins, whilst retaining our criticisms, writes Eddie Ford

Over recent weeks the media has been full of excited speculation about a possible leadership challenge to Jeremy Corbyn - despite the fact he won a landslide victory only six months ago, with 59.5% of first-preference votes on a massively expanded electorate. Still, the right wing of the Labour Party has never been renowned for its devotion to democracy.

Corbyn's fate, at least in the imagination of his more determined opponents, depends on the results of the May local elections. From various reports, it seems that the right in the Parliamentary Labour Party (or "moderates", as the rightwing press insists on calling them) are setting the bar at 434 English council seats - the average local election gain for an opposition party since 1974. This figure, needless to say, is way above current projections - which has Labour losing around 200 seats¹ and getting somewhere between 30% and 33% of the total vote.² If Corbyn fails to meet this target, it seems, his parliamentary foes will deem him to be "unelectable" - and thus he must go.

The obvious danger is that, whatever happens in May, Corbyn cannot win. Rightwing Labour councillors responsible for imposing cuts will bitterly blame Corbyn if they lose, but if they do fairly well then it will be *in spite of* the Labour leader - that you can guarantee, as we saw with the Oldham West by-election. Nevertheless, having said that, the Oldham result *did* matter - the fact that Labour convincingly won with an *increased* share of the vote put the right on the back foot for a while. Indeed, those of a more ungenerous frame of mind could almost think that the right actually wanted Labour to do badly on the night.

As for possible leadership challengers, there seems no getting away from the Barnsley Central MP, Dan Jarvis - former paratrooper and current darling of the right. Writing in the *Yorkshire Post* on March 10, Jarvis argued that the party will "never" form a government again unless "we respond to what the public think about us" - which, decoded, means the party has to swing to the right. Labour needs, he continued, "fundamental change" and that means "rooting our politics in the things people actually care about - their family, work and community."³

Then, on the same day, he gave a speech to the Demos think-tank - a natural venue for ambitious rightwingers. Here he outlined his "vision" of Labour's future, widely interpreted as the beginning of a leadership bid. Jarvis wanted Labour to be "more radical" than it was under Tony Blair, Gordon Brown or Ed Miliband - a party does not just "oppose the government", but beats it. He argued that today's senior Labour politicians must be critical of some of the choices Labour made in power after 1997, while embracing others - "we should defend our achievements and learn from our mistakes". For "anyone outside" Westminster, said Jarvis, whether the person on the bus or tube, that is "common sense".

Trying to attract the 'soft' left, Jarvis tactically distanced himself from the excesses of New Labour, which did not get at the "root causes" of rising inequality and had been "intensely relaxed about things they shouldn't have been intensely relaxed about" - a direct reference to the notorious remarks of Peter Mandelson, who was "intensely

relaxed about people getting filthy rich as long as they pay their taxes". We also learnt that Jarvis had only met Tony Blair a "handful of times" - good to know, Dan. Alas, the spirit of Blairism seemed to animate his remarks about being "tough on inequality" and "tough on the causes of inequality" - not to mention his asinine remarks about wanting businesses to "do well" and "make profits", because in that way the profits can be used to "pay dividends to their shareholders" (including "employee-owners"), thereby "benefitting customers, workers and savers". According to Jarvis, this is how a capitalist system "should work" - as a "servant, not master".

Alongside trooper Jarvis, Rachel Reeves is being touted as a shadow chancellor-in-exile. Other names regularly mentioned as potential candidates include Caroline Flint, the ex-minister who came third in the deputy leadership competition, and Keir Starmer, the former director of public prosecutions - plus usual suspects like Chuka Umunna, Tristram Hunt and Liz Kendall. Yes, the right really is getting desperate - *Liz Kendall*, for god's sake!

Reboot

Highlighting the contradictions and tensions of the Labour Party, *The Daily Telegraph* prominently featured an 'exclusive' (March 11), describing how 24 of the party's 30 biggest individual donors have not given to Labour since Jeremy Corbyn's victory. Instead, they are funneling money into the private offices of Jarvis, Umunna, Hunt and Kendall. We discover that the funds are being used to hire staff to help - try not to snigger - "intellectually reboot" our brave moderates: salaries that would have been covered by Labour Party monies when they were in the shadow cabinet.

True, we are not talking enormous sums of money - tens, not hundreds of thousands. Nevertheless, it is still significant - if only for the political symbolism. An analysis of electoral commission data by the *Telegraph* shows that Labour's 30 biggest individual donors gave more than £8.7 million to the party between 2010 and 2014, but the same individuals gave only £74,109 between Corbyn's election in September and the end of the year - with, as noted above, 24 giving nothing at all (figures for 2016 have not been released yet). For example, John Mills, Labour's biggest donor under Ed Miliband, has not given to the central party since last September, though he has contributed something to Sadiq Khan's London mayoral campaign.

Then we have the grateful recipients. Umunna, the former shadow business secretary, has been given £25,000 by property tycoon Sir David Garrard - who had previously donated around £700,000 to Labour. Tristram Hunt, former shadow education secretary and historian, has received £40,000 from Bet365 founder Peter Coates, £20,000 from Lord Sainsbury and £5,000 from Trevor Chinn, another of Labour's biggest donors. Kendall, who was comprehensively trounced during the leadership battle, has nonetheless received £23,000 from, amongst others, Lord Waheed Alli and businessman Michael Foster.

Jarvis - as we all now know, thanks to the headlines - received £16,800 from hedge fund manager Martin Taylor. That earned him a stinging rebuke from Ken Livingstone, who

stated on LBC radio that receiving money from the manager of a hedge fund - the "most rapacious and damaging form of capitalism" - is like a children's group getting money from Jimmy Savile. As nearly always seems to be the case these days, this generated a fake moral outrage from the 'politically correct' guardians of the right over Livingstone's supposed "disgusting, offensive and stupid" remarks.

Explaining his decision to quit funding Labour centrally, one former donor stressed that the "most important thing" is to get rid of Corbyn as soon as possible, since "anything that props him up and drags out the agony before he's replaced would actually be against Labour's best interests". In fact, he helpfully added, in business terms it is like "having a company struggling on the edge of bankruptcy with a hapless chief executive" - the very first thing you do is "change the chief executive" and "trigger a recovery plan", not "dribble money in and keep him going". Using similar language, a Labour rightwinger told the *Telegraph* that "the first eleven isn't on the pitch; it's on the backbenches" - adding that "it is not lost on anyone" that Corbyn won partly because of a "big money campaign from the unions".

Labour's paradoxical nature as a *bourgeois workers'* party could not have been made clearer by recent developments. When it comes to funding, we are seeing in almost chemically pure form the two wings of the party fighting it out. It is more than obvious that the capitalist wing of the party wants to dump Corbyn, but the problems facing the right are legion. For starters, as much as the right must hate it, Corbyn remains overwhelmingly popular with the party membership. According to YouGov, the Labour leader has an approval rating of 55% from Labour members and 63% say he should stay to fight the 2020 general election. Out of a long list of suggested candidates he would get 43% of first preferences, while on a shortlist of big Labour names Corbyn's share of the vote increases to 63%.⁴ It is hard to argue with the maths.

Compounding the problems for the right, proposed rule changes at the party conference in September will make it a lot harder to dislodge the leader and keep out left candidates. The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy has drawn up draft rules for the party's national executive committee that would see the incumbent's name *automatically* placed on the ballot paper if he or she states their intention to stand in a fresh election, and also lower the nominations threshold for any potential leadership candidate from 15% to 5% of all MPs/MEPs. This means that if Corbyn stood down for some reason (say, as a result of ill-health) then any leftwing successor, anointed by the Labour leader or not, would be able to get their name on the ballot paper and therefore

stand a good chance of winning the election.

The putative rule changes, tabled by the veteran CLPD secretary and NEC member, Peter Willsman, were motivated by the totally legitimate concern that if 20% of Labour MPs - the required threshold - triggered a leadership ballot, there was previously a degree of uncertainty over whether Corbyn would be allowed to put his name on the ballot. Encouragingly, Willsman also proposes changes to make it easier for the left to table motions at the Labour conference after Corbyn failed to table a contemporary motion on Trident - as well as giving affiliated organisations and party branches a greater say in the selection of Labour MPs.

Kamikaze

Tom Watson, the deputy leader, reiterated on Sky News that Corbyn had been elected on a "very large mandate" and his supporters would "not accept any attempts at a coup". But to stand any chance at all Corbyn's impatient assassins have to make a move in the summer, as time is running out. Yet it would almost certainly be a kamikaze operation, to which communists have no inherent objection - we would certainly enjoy seeing the right crushed and humiliated, and Corbyn winning by an even bigger margin.

Given the obviously hopeless nature of the 'stop Corbyn' project as currently constituted, it is clear that we are not dealing with the *entire* right of the party - just a particularly desperate section or faction, driven half-mad by fear and loathing. The more patient or

intelligent members of the right know that to take on Corbyn now in a straight battle would be extremely foolhardy. Talking to *The Guardian*, one senior shadow ministerial source said "nothing has changed" - there might have been a "lot of chat among a lot of people, but there has not been a single coherent, concrete actual plan about how it could be done" (March 4). The more honest anti-Corbynites know that their leadership candidates *deserved* to lose, as they totally failed when it came to organisation and political inspiration - "they lost because they were shit", as one former minister bluntly put it.⁵ At this point in time there is no sign of a candidate or programme around which the dissident Labour right can rally, communists are glad to report.

Therefore it does appear that the right have no choice but to play the 'long game', the idea being that Labour members will eventually become sympathetic to a leadership challenge, once they have seen the Corbyn experiment starting to 'fail'. In the words of one disgruntled MP in a marginal seat: "Before people lecture me about loyalty to Jeremy, they should try selling Jeremy on the doorstep." The game plan, such as it is, holds that constant sniping and carping - and active sabotage - are counterproductive because they actually play into Corbyn's hands, enabling him to portray disunity *from the right* as a reason for Labour's underperformance. A party divided can never win.

Communists, it almost goes without saying, defend Corbyn from the putschists on the right, whilst retaining our criticisms - whether over his nonsensical suggestion of Trident submarines without missiles or John McDonnell's recent hogwash about "iron discipline" over day-to-day spending. We will never be simple cheerleaders or Corbynistas, but intransigent advocates of socialism and radical democracy - within the Labour Party and society as a whole ●

Notes

1. www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jan/22/labour-warned-to-expect-losses-in-may-local-elections.
2. www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/feb/29/jeremy-corbyn-confident-about-mays-local-elections.
3. www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/opinion/dan-jarvis-labour-will-only-change-if-it-becomes-a-party-of-reform-1-7770720#ixzz41wjs0iEs.
4. <https://labourlist.org/2016/02/grassroots-support-leaves-corbys-position-secure-until-at-least-2020>.
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Dan Jarvis: darling of rightwing media

WELFARE

Basic income urgently needed

Defence mechanisms against the iniquities of capitalism are needed *now*, argues Chris Gray

The aim behind the Tories' 'universal credit' welfare payment system, launched in 2013, was to integrate six means-tested benefits and tax credits into a single monthly payment for those who qualify. The six include jobseekers' allowance, working tax credit, child tax credit and housing benefit.

There are obvious advantages in consolidating various welfare payments into a regular monthly payment, but, as outlined, the legislation has several drawbacks. Guy Standing has drawn attention to some of them. For example, unlike a system based on a basic income, which he supports, "Topping up low wages with tax credits is expensive, distorting, inefficient and inequitable, as well as moralistic [ie, discriminatory] in its selective conditionalities."¹

Furthermore,

Universal credit, combined with raising the amount a person can earn without paying tax, will mean that, for every £1 of extra income, benefits will be cut by 65p. The £1,000 increase in the personal tax allowance in 2013 will give £200 per year to every basic-rate taxpayer except those on universal credit, who will gain only £70.²

Standing notes that the new scheme places tougher demands on jobseekers and provides for sanctions for up to three years if they fail to carry out jobcentre demands.

To summarise, there are three main criticisms that can be made of universal credit:

- It is means-tested: ie, not everyone gets it as of right.
- Benefit is still paid if you find employment - but, unlike a system based on a basic income, it is taxed away if you 'don't really need it'.
- It is subject to disciplinary scrutiny: the 'undeserving poor' are excluded.

Paul Mason, in his recent book *Post-capitalism: a guide to our future* (2015), comes out in favour of basic income as a building block in the transition to "post-capitalism". He writes:

The idea is simple: everybody of working age gets an unconditional basic income from the state, funded from taxation, and this replaces unemployment benefit. Other forms of needs-based welfare - such as family, disability or child payments - would still exist, but would be smaller top-ups to the basic income.³

Paul meets the obvious objection head on:

Why pay people just to exist? Because we need to radically accelerate technological progress. If, as [a recent study] suggested, 47% of all jobs in an advanced economy will be redundant due to automation, then the result under neoliberalism is going to be an enormously expanded precariat.

He writes eloquently on the expanded choices which would be open to people if a basic income were available:

A basic income paid out of taxes on the market economy gives people the chance to build positions in the non-market economy. It allows them to volunteer, set up co-ops, edit Wikipedia, learn to use 3D design software, or just exist. It allows them to space out periods of work; make a late entry or early exit from working life; switch more easily into and out of high-intensity, stressful jobs ...

Suppose, in the UK, we set



Everyone should share the earth's wealth

the basic income at £6,000 [£115.38 per week] and hike the minimum wage to £18,000. The advantages of working remain clear, but there are also advantages to be gained through not working: you can look after your kids, write poetry, go back to college, manage your chronic illness or peer-educate others like you.⁴

Historically, it could be argued that the idea of income as a citizen right goes back to ancient Athens: there, Guy Standing tells us, "a stone device called a *kleroterion* was used to select a random 500 people to make policy, out of 50,000 citizens".⁵ Perikles won popularity in Athens for introducing payment for officers of state. However, this was not payment for just being alive, but for carrying out duties which all citizens were expected to perform.

Tom Paine

Guy Standing alludes specifically to the work of Tom Paine (1737-1809): namely his *Agrarian justice* (1797). Paine's argument, as summarised by Standing, runs as follows:

Every affluent person in every society owes their good fortune largely to the efforts of their forebears and the efforts of the forebears of less affluent people. If everybody were granted a basic income with which to develop their capabilities, it would amount to a dividend from the endeavours and good luck of those who came before.⁶

Standing adds pointedly: "The precariat has as much right to such a dividend as anybody else."

Paine, it appears, explicitly declared that "Every individual in the world is born therein with legitimate claims on a certain kind of property, or its equivalent."⁷ But his *Agrarian justice* has received scant attention from mainstream historians and political scientists. If you read it, you will see why: Paine shows a definite anthropological awareness - something that was evident in the 18th century enlightenment⁸ and developed later on in the 19th century. Paine writes:

To understand what the state of society ought to be, it is necessary to have some idea of the natural and primitive state of man; such as it is at this day among the Indians of North America. There is not, in that state, any of those spectacles of human misery which poverty and want present to our eyes in all the towns and streets of Europe. Poverty, therefore, is a thing created by that which is called civilised life. It exists not in the natural state. On the other hand, the natural state is

without those advantages which flow from agriculture, arts, science and manufactures.⁹

Paine rightly rejects any idea of returning to the 'state of nature':

It is always possible to go from the natural to the civilised state, but it is never possible to go from the civilised to the natural state. The reason is that man in a natural state, subsisting by hunting, requires ten times the quantity of land to procure himself sustenance than would support him in a civilised state, where the earth is cultivated.¹⁰

He immediately introduces a sentiment - an ethical precept - which any hunter-gatherer would accept, as follows:

the first principle of civilisation ought to have been, and ought still to be, that the condition of every person born into the world, after a state of civilisation commences, ought to be no worse than if he had been born before that period.

Implicitly, Tom Paine agrees with the judgement expressed by Leon Rosselson in his song about the expropriation of common land by the ruling classes: "By theft and murder they took the land. Now everywhere the walls spring up at their command."

Paine writes: "Every proprietor ... of cultivated lands owes to the community a *ground rent*" (original emphasis). He therefore proposes to

create a National Fund, out of which there shall be paid to every person, when arrived at the age of 21 years, the sum of 15 pounds sterling, as a compensation in part for the loss of his or her natural inheritance, by the introduction of the system of landed property.

And also the sum of 10 pounds per annum, during life, to every person now living, of the age of 50 years, and to all others as they shall arrive at that age.¹¹

This payment should be a universal right:

It is proposed that the payments ... be made to every person, rich or poor. It is best to make it so, to prevent invidious distinctions. It is also right that it should be so, because it is in lieu of the natural inheritance, which, as a right, belongs to every man, over and above property he may have created, or inherited from those who did. Such persons as do not choose to receive it can throw it into the common fund.¹²

Paine comes close to stating that the expropriation of surplus value by

the ruling classes is the cause of the existing destitution:

If we examine the case minutely, it will be found that the accumulation of personal property is, in many instances, the effect of paying too little for the labour that produced it; the consequences of which is that the working hand perishes in old age, and the employer abounds in affluence.¹³

"Personal property," Tom Paine avows, "is the *effect of society*". Hence the wealth accumulator has an obligation to repay society for the contribution made therefrom to individual wealth accumulation. This is not some thing that can be left to charitable feeling or to the Islamic obligation of *zakat* (funds given to the poor by the wealthy).

Updating Paine

Guy Standing's proposal for a basic income brings up to date Tom Paine's plan for a payment due to individuals as of right:

The core of the proposal is that every legal resident of a country or community, children as well as adults, should be provided with a modest monthly payment ... with add-ons for special needs, such as disability. In most rich countries, it would be less radical than it may appear, since it would mean consolidating many existing transfer schemes and replacing others that are riddled with complexity and arbitrary and discretionary conditionality ...

It would not create a poverty trap, in which, as income rises, the benefit is lost, acting as a disincentive to labour. The person would retain the basic income, regardless of how much is earned from labour, just as it would be paid regardless of marital or family status ... If the state wanted to limit the amount going to the affluent, it could claw it back through higher tax on higher incomes.¹⁴

The principal objection would no doubt be: 'Why reward people for doing nothing?' This is eloquently answered:

The vast majority would not be content to live off just a basic income. They want to work and are excited by the possibility of improving their material and social living. To hound a tiny minority for their 'laziness' is a sign of our weakness, not our merit.

In that regard a little experiment, conducted in the backstreets of London in 2010, had heart-warming lessons. Some homeless vagrants were each asked what they most wanted; their dreams were modest, as befitted their situation. The money to fulfil those dreams was provided without conditions; a few months later, nearly all of them had ceased to be homeless and a burden on the local authorities. The savings for taxpayers of giving that money amounted to 50 times the cost of giving it.¹⁵

The whole approach makes sense. Standing suggests that the value of basic income could be varied in order to counteract the effects of the economic cycle, but how would the payments be financed under current economic arrangements? The solution is right to hand:

Sovereign wealth (or capital) funds,

which already exist in 40 countries, are a promising way of doing that. If the income accruing to such funds could be shared, the precariat would gain a means of control over their lives.¹⁶

It might be alleged that provision of a basic income would undermine the desire of workers to push for income increases. However, all depends on the level at which the basic income is set: it should be sufficient to prevent starvation, but not enough to erode a legitimate desire to earn more by taking employment.

However, there is an overwhelming reason why the capitalist class would adamantly refuse to accept the idea, and that is its propensity to undermine the efficacy of the industrial reserve army: if the unemployed are given such income that they refuse to offer themselves for super exploitation, then this undermines the desired degree of competition in the labour market (as tends to happen under 'full employment') and enables workers to demand remuneration at a level equal to or in excess of the value of labour-power. That, in turn, would exert an adverse influence on the rate of profit and would, therefore, create additional difficulties for employers.

The introduction of a basic income would indeed tend to lower the supply of labour, but that would not necessarily be a bad thing. Increased productivity might be the result. As for inflation, it might well be that a basic income requirement might fuel inflation in a set of circumstances in which the forces of capital and labour were equally balanced, so that a wage increase spontaneously provokes a price rise.

In any case, such a complaint should not bother us: it is necessary to strengthen the power of organised labour, in order to abolish the current mode of production, which is an obstacle to the overall wellbeing of humanity. The objection that a basic income is 'unaffordable' is laughably inept, for reasons outlined above. As for abuse by populist politicians, there is practically no socialist or progressive proposal that could not be so utilised - including calls for the abolition of capitalism - by irresponsible demagogues. It is necessary to unmask the demagogy.

Paul Mason, as indicated above, emphasises the greater choices available to individuals if we establish a basic income. Paul advocates instituting such a basic income as part of a programme for the supersession of capitalism. While that would obviously be a good thing, a basic income, as a necessary support for those disadvantaged in the current rat race, is needed *now*. Defence mechanisms against the iniquities of capitalism are needed *now*.

The left should launch a campaign for the introduction of a basic income as a matter of urgency ●

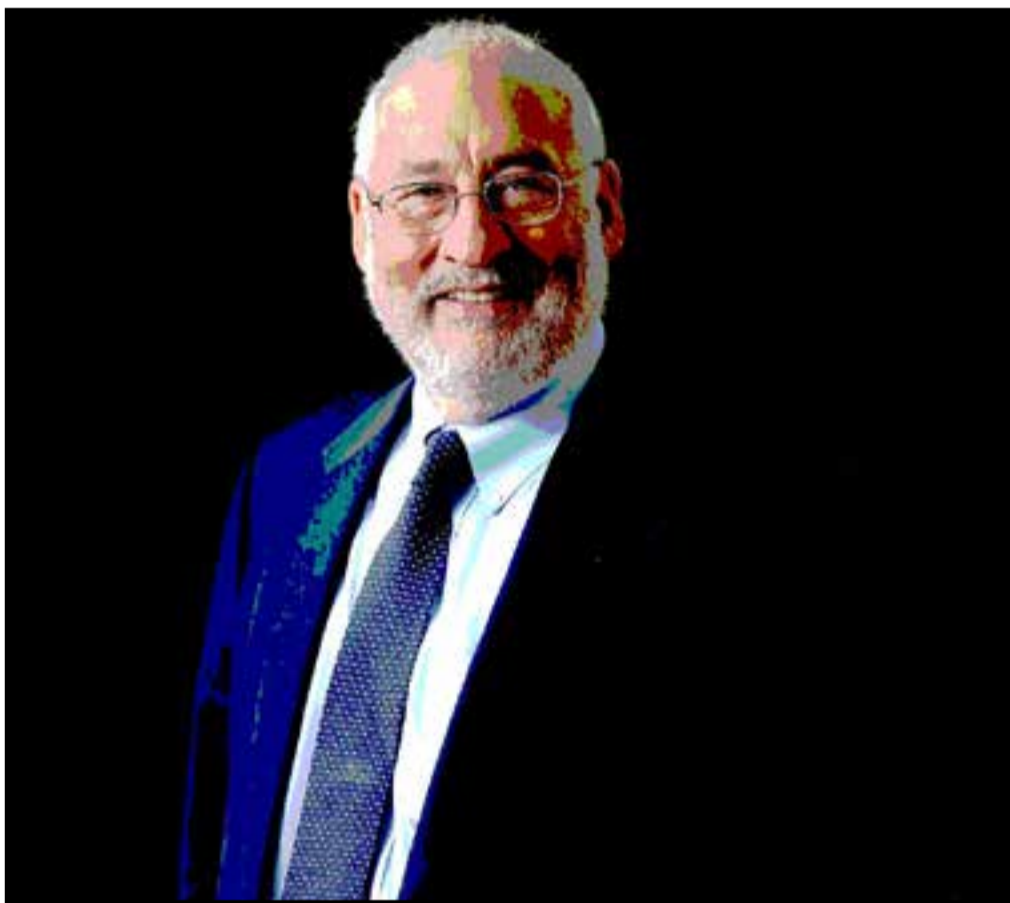
Notes

1. G Standing *A precariat charter* London 2014, p321.
2. *Ibid* pp240-41.
3. P Mason *Post-capitalism: a guide to our future* London 2015, p284.
4. *Ibid* pp284-85.
5. G Standing *op cit* p180.
6. *Ibid* p173.
7. Quoted in *ibid* p339.
8. Cf Denis Diderot's 1772 *Supplément au voyage de Bougainville*.
9. P Linebaugh *Thomas Paine: rights of man and common sense* London 2009, p299.
10. *Ibid* p300.
11. *Ibid* p302.
12. *Ibid* p303.
13. pp309-10.
14. G Standing *op cit* pp171-72.
15. *Ibid* p174.
16. *Ibid* p176.

ECONOMICS

By your advisors shall you be known

Yassamine Mather takes apart John McDonnell's pledge of responsibility



Joseph Stiglitz, Mariana Mazzucato, Paul Mason, Yanis Varoufakis

In the run-up to chancellor George Osborne's March 16 budget statement, a number of economic predictions have made the headlines, most of them predicting doom and gloom. Speaking to ministers from the G20 countries, the governor of the Bank of England, Mark Carney, warned that "despite seven years of money-printing and near-zero interest rates", the "vigour of monetary stimulus" has "not been matched by structural measures".

For his part, Paul Mason, newly

appointed advisor to shadow chancellor John McDonnell, wrote in *The Guardian*: "George Osborne's recovery is in danger. The only option now is to steal Jeremy Corbyn's clothes." According to Mason,

If this is the last quarter of Osborne's time in the treasury, the sterile correspondence with the bank will stand testimony to a government dead behind the

eyes when it comes to monetary policy. The problem is that now his choices are limited. Productivity growth is poor - and will not increase as long as we go on creating low-paid, precarious jobs. Debt stands at 78% of GDP. And, though the banking system has been stabilised, it is still highly exposed to global risks (March 14).

A headline in the *Financial Times*

of March 16 sums up the current state of the economy and the plight of the Conservative chancellor: "Osborne to break second promise in budget of fiscal claustrophobia".

Throughout all this John McDonnell's 'economic policy' statements have been extremely depressing. Even more so if you happen to read *The Independent on Sunday's* John Rentoul:

Listening to John McDonnell's

speech on Friday was a shameless welding of the rhetoric of 'doing politics differently' with the policy positions of doing it the same. He said he would "rewrite the economic rules", and then copied out the rules laid down by his predecessor, Ed Balls. Except that he made them slightly stricter - more 'austere', if that is the language you prefer (March 13).

He was, of course, referring to the shadow chancellor's pledge that under Labour, day-to-day spending would not exceed government income and that a Corbyn administration would "balance the books" over its term of office.

In February, I was listening to a speech McDonnell made at the London School of Economics. The title of the talk gave the game away: "Rewriting the rules of market economy to achieve shared prosperity". He started by explaining that Labour's U-turn - he actually uses that term - over Osborne's austerity measures came about because the Labour conference had "told us to become an anti-austerity party". This, he said, is why the party opposed the fiscal charter.

He then continued by stating that the Labour leadership had "embarked on a review of the economic situation by respected figures". This emphasis shows the problem. Who are these "respected" people? One is monetary policy committee member David Blanchflower. Another is Prem Sikka, professor of accounting at Essex University. I have been to talks that Sikka has given - he and Greg Philo work together and they have presented a paper on non-domicile tax status. Their ideas were interesting, but hardly revolutionary. I can imagine that, as the economy gets worse, the Conservatives may have to take action on this question, because it is the kind of thing that will get them votes. Anyway, McDonnell did not name the other "respected figures" in this talk, but they include Mariana Mazzucato, Yanis Varoufakis, Joseph Stiglitz and the above-mentioned Paul Mason.

McDonnell talked of putting forward "the radical alternative which our economy needs". This economic team will, by May, produce a document explaining the current economic situation and laying out plans for a "balanced" economy. Who is Labour consulting about this? Microsoft, British Telecom, the Confederation of British Industry and the Bank of England. There was no mention of the trade unions, for example. What is the consultation supposed to be about? New ideas. Well if you want new ideas, you do not talk to Microsoft.

The point of this consultation is to "win back economic credibility". McDonnell emphasised the "public perception" that Labour cannot be trusted to "balance the books". The LSE lecturer who introduced the shadow chancellor to the audience explained how McDonnell was one of the few Labour politicians who knows how to balance books because of his record in the Greater London Council.

Well, in the case of local authorities, you cannot spend more money than is coming in, but in terms of a national economy this is not the case. There are many instances where a large debt has coincided with substantial growth. It is silly to think that because McDonnell 'balanced the books' in the GLC he will therefore do the same when it comes to UK spending, and that this notion will change Labour's "public perception". Rather it is the perception of debt itself, and why it is usually not significant, that needs to change. At the end of the day you may not be able to "balance the books" over a given period - which, as I have said, counts for very little in any case. By arguing on these terms McDonnell is digging a hole for himself.

New technology

There was a lot of talk in

McDonnell's speech about new technology, including what he called the iPad "shared economy". Labour is moving with the times! He seemed to be feeding off Paul Mason's idea that new technology will not only bring people into the discussion, but also allow them to share the wealth. According to Mason and his co-thinkers, such technology will radically change society all by itself - no need for a revolution.

A problem with this kind of thinking is that the massive growth in the use of mobile technologies has not created the kind of economic growth that some had predicted. Automation and advances in artificial intelligence have not got us out of the economic crisis. The reason why this is the case is clear. Anyone who knows how business regards new technologies will tell you why things are not so simple. The kind of research and development that, say, Mazzucato talks about just will not happen and all this talk of the economic benefits of automation is simply pretence. Increased productivity means the displacement of labour and a fall in the rate of surplus value - the way capital uses automation means it is highly unlikely to 'create prosperity' or 'revolutionise the economy'.

McDonnell went on to talk of creating an "inclusive, climate-change-sensitive economy, based on rapid technological change". The terminology is very useful, in that it can be deconstructed to help us understand what is going on. When listening to the speech, for a moment I thought I was in one of the business meetings I have to attend for my job - it had not crossed my mind that such language could be used by anyone on the left.

Obviously business does not argue for a 'non-inclusivene' economy - in fact capital is more likely to contend that we already have an "inclusive" one. They want to be inclusive (in their own terms, of course). Nor will capitalists admit that they are climate-change deniers - business claims to be on the side of environmentalists, just like some might call themselves feminists.

I can understand that Labour thinks this strategy will win votes. But this language of 'new business' is not the language of ordinary people. It is the jargon of computer programmers, chief technology officers and CEOs. More importantly, it is not a sensible approach when it comes to economic stagnation. Even more importantly, it is part of an approach which creates illusions in the possibility of solutions within capitalism: bit-by-bit we can achieve progressive change without militant struggle, thanks to new technology.

Globalisation

Probably one of McDonnell's better advisors is Joseph Stiglitz. His latest book, *Rewriting the rules of the American economy*, is concerned with the current scale of inequality - in fact there is a whole section of capital that has become a little anxious about this. According to Stiglitz, the causes of such inequality are structural: neoliberal policies have resulted in low taxes, limited regulation, weakened demand and poor growth.

The interesting part is that Stiglitz does not say why capitalism went down this road - why it gave up on what Thomas Piketty calls the golden years of the 1945-75 period. It was because they were not sustainable. Piketty is correct in saying that those 30 years were the exception. In general, capitalism does not concern itself unduly with the distribution of wealth or with

workers' conditions. The 1980s was not some 'strange period', but an inevitable consequence of a 30-year period that occurred following two world wars, because of the strength of the communist parties in Europe and the existence of the Soviet Union. Unless you grasp the exceptional character of that period, it is difficult to understand why it ended. Stiglitz blames Reagan and Thatcher, but in reality it was a whole historical period that was coming to an end - those 30 years are not going to be repeated. The idea that it could be repeated (a) on a national scale and (b) in the current world situation is fantasy land.

One thing that has changed since the 1980s is the way in which capital has become even more globalised - its structures have changed, including the relationship between capital and individual states. The way capitalism as a global entity can intervene in politics has changed considerably. However much you might wish that was not the case, it is going to be impossible to reverse that within the current order. Imagine John McDonnell as chancellor of a Labour government. He is not going to have real power and he is not going to be able to do much in this global economy.

It has been argued that today we are dealing with 10 major monopolies and that these monopolies basically control most of the productive sector across the world. In many ways this globalisation has exposed the true nature of capital. It has demonstrated why capital is aggressive, why it cannot be controlled and why it has such a destructive effect. The 1930s saw, if you like, a poor man's version of global capital - the genuine article is before us now. It shows its character ever more clearly through wars, failed states and the way it atomises and sucks labour dry. This cannot be changed, however much we introduce new technologies.

Contrary to what we may think, whilst it may appear that there is a multitude of brand names, the most prominent are owned by a small number of monopolies. For example in the auto industry, quite a lot of Scandinavian car companies and so on are actually owned by German companies. This is important because the control these monopolies have over the economy makes them extremely powerful in relation to states and state regulation. If socialism could not be achieved in one state 30 years ago, talking about it now is even more absurd. And in this sense Stiglitz's arguments are not going to help. I can see why you might wheel out a Nobel prizewinner in an attempt to impress the media, but in many ways this so-called 'sharing technology' means that anyone who can read what these people say will come to the conclusion that this is cloud-cuckoo-land stuff. You might impress a *Daily Mirror* journalist, but any informed person will just think, 'How would this come about?'

Varoufakis and Mazzucato

Another advisor is Yanis Varoufakis. I want to leave aside how he dealt with being in the Syriza government, negotiated with the European Central Bank and so on. One of the main problems with Varoufakis, and Mason, is not simply that they are media personalities who do not say much, but that what they say is quite dangerous: the idea, for example, that a 'Marxist economy' inevitably 'leads to Pol Pot or Stalin'. I found a quote from

Varoufakis, where he argues that Marx was too dogmatic and "did not consider the possibility that the creation of a workers' state would force capitalism to become more civilised, while the workers' state would be infected with the virus of totalitarianism". The conclusion from this is very clear: while a workers' state will degenerate, its existence will force concessions under capitalism, which will become more equitable. You could argue that during the Keynesian period the idea that there existed some kind of workers' state impacted on capitalism, but to argue that a workers' state is inevitably going to end in Stalinism is a terrible statement to make. Varoufakis complements this by declaring that we need to "save capitalism from itself".

At the time of the Greek negotiations he argued that Europe's present crisis is not merely a threat for workers, for the dispossessed, for the bankers. No, "Europe's current posture poses a threat to civilisation, as we know it." I am not quite sure if the European crisis represented a crisis of civilisation as we know it - this assumes a very Eurocentric view of the world, apart from anything else.

However, let us assume the crisis does have such historic significance. He argues that this is why it is "the left's historic duty, at this particular juncture, to stabilise capitalism; to save European capitalism from itself and from the inane handlers of the euro zone's inevitable crisis". This idea is used to justify wholesale reform and thus the saving of capitalism. He goes on to say that the failure of the UK left in the 1980s arose because a programme with an agenda for socialist change was scorned by British society and that is why nothing could be achieved. He is actually arguing that proposals to counter Thatcherism were too far to the left.

Finally there is Mariana Mazzucato. Her book, *The entrepreneurial state*, contains some very good points. I have seen arguments against what she is saying in regard to the state's role in innovation and technological progress, with critics claiming that her arguments are valid only in relation to Europe and not the USA. In fact quite a lot of her examples are from the US, but this has been the response nonetheless.

She is right to argue against the illusion that Microsoft created or discovered the internet. She is right in explaining the role of the state in creating the technologies that gave us the global positioning system (GPS), touchscreens and the Siri app, for example. She argues that governments should remain in the forefront of that kind of entrepreneurial work

because they can be far-sighted and can actually look at what humanity needs. Her argument is that in order for the economy to progress there should be more government funding for research and development.

While there is an element of truth in this, the problem once again is that you cannot reverse the clock. For decades research and development, at least in the UK, has been moved out of universities, except for the elite institutions. Those groups that get funding from the government do so for what I would call 'test and control'. Cheap labour at universities is used for testing when companies do not want to pay for research and development - 90% of university research has now become business-orientated. It has got government funding, contrary to what McDonnell and Mazzucato are saying, but it is not innovative, it is not going to bring about a sharing economy and it is not going to bring us Mason's iPad-orientated, tech-aware working class that will change the world.

For all the attention that has already been focused on biotech, pharmaceuticals and automation innovations, nothing has moved in the last 10 years beyond the maintenance of previous achievements. This is a problem - we have come to the cusp of many breakthroughs, but no further, and it is unlikely that state intervention will change that in the current economic climate. The uncertainties of the economic situation has produced a retreat from innovative work. It is not simply that an injection of state money can solve this - if that was the case, I am sure that the Obama administration, for one, would have intervened.

Mazzucato's book has been received well by many, but I do not see it as a panacea which can lift the economy out of its present impasse and reduce the levels of inequality.

To sum up, the Keynesian solution of Stiglitz, the 'saving capitalism' solution of Varoufakis, the technological innovation solution of Mazzucato, and the whole language of shared, participatory economics rather than socialism are not going to resolve things for capital. If there is a crisis, I could imagine quite a lot of this language being adopted by sections of the Conservatives Party.

That is why hiding behind 'respected' figures and using the language of 'fiscal credibility' and 'responsibility' is not going to help Labour. Some of McDonnell's ideas may be slightly more innovative than those of Ed Miliband, but they will not help Corbyn, never mind save the economy ●

Fighting fund

Useful mistake

Bit of a slow week for our fighting fund, I'm afraid to say. It just so happens that there are very few standing orders in this particular segment of the month (only four in fact - thanks to DW, KB, SP and RP) and those SOs always make up a large part of what comes in.

But the total of £50 from that quarter was matched by a couple of comrades who clicked on our PayPal button - fantastic donations from KL (£30) and HG (£20). Those two were among 3,841 online readers last week. Then there were two cheques - one, for £25, was from FD, who writes: "A couple of really good issues. This is to prove I really mean it!" (we believe you, comrade); the other was from VD, who sent in £20.

Finally I must mention comrade JP, who paid his £60 annual subscription to the *Weekly Worker* twice by mistake. When we pointed this out, offering a refund, he was so grateful that he let us keep £20 of the second one! And he promised: "I'll donate more in the future, funds permitting." We could do with more mistakes like that.

Anyway, our March fund has benefited to the tune of £165 in all. As I say, not a good week, but we still have a total of £844 towards our £1,750 target. But now we need to up the pace ●

Robbie Rix

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

LABOUR



It is the right that is rotten

Thin end of the wedge

We must oppose the expulsion of Gerry Downing, but fight to expose his political errors, argues **Jim Grant**

On February 20, I attended the special general meeting of the Labour Representation Committee.

It was far from my first LRC general meeting, and the form was getting familiar. I was struck when we were treated to our annual John McDonnell boilerplate speech from the top table by the fact that things, in the standard dialectical fashion, can be terribly familiar and also completely different at the same time. We had heard that speech before as the defiant cry of a lone voice in the enemy camp; but now, it was the voice of the shadow chancellor, a fixture of television and radio, albeit still surrounded by foes.

Something similar can now be said about Gerry Downing, also among those present on February 20 and at LRC gatherings *passim ad infinitum*. A perennial orthodox Trotskyist gadfly, Gerry's political journey has taken him from the cultish Workers Revolutionary Party, through several of its posthumous fragments, into the Mandelstam International Socialist Group (today's Socialist Resistance) and out again, and around the houses a little more before washing up with his own micro-group, Socialist Fight, whose operative strategy has been obedience to the letter and spirit of Trotsky's 'French turn' - enter the social democratic parties in order to take the best fighters into the revolutionary party when they inevitably split under inclement historical conditions.

Gerry's brand of Trotskyism has now become national news. During the Labour leadership campaign he was expelled, as central office desperately tried to reduce Jeremy Corbyn's vote by purging every last individual who, by an elastic interpretation of Labour's onerous rules, could be excluded. He was readmitted to the party shortly afterwards, in what is becoming a

recurring pattern. Last week, however, Gerry found himself the subject of a feverish exchange on the Commons floor, when David Cameron himself cited his opinions on September 11 and Islamic State in order to smear Corbyn. By the time Gerry reported for a grilling on Andrew Neil's *Politics show* the next day, he was outside the fold again.

He found old Brillo Pad in unusually accommodating form. We sometimes wonder if Neil's middle name is 'If you'll just let me finish ...', such is the vigour of his sub-Paxmanite shtick. Yet he treated comrade Downing firmly but fairly, putting a whole series of his outrageous views to him and allowing him good time, by television standards, to respond. The argument that the 9/11 bombers "can never be condemned"? We must understand, before we condemn - 9/11 was a response to American incursion on their lands. "Critical support and tactical military assistance" to (among others) Islamic State? The point, Andrew, is that US imperialism must be sent packing from the Middle East.

It was Neil and his researchers who managed to dig up the most damning evidence, however, which was and remains fellow SF member Ian Donovan's writing on 'the Jewish question'. Comrade Ian has unfortunately collapsed into anti-Semitism in the last couple of years; he has developed a theory that US support for Israel can be explained by the fact that the Jews form a transnational "semi-nation", and that a preponderance of them among the wealthiest Americans has led them to become the "vanguard" of the imperialist bourgeoisie. (It was *after* this collapse that Ian found a welcoming home in SF.)

And so Gerry was left defending this rubbish on the BBC. Neil was able to drop comparisons to Hitler and

the *Protocols of the elders of Zion*; and despite Gerry's protestations of 'materialism', the charge sticks better than it really should to a leftwinger.

Gerry's anti-imperialism is, needless to say, confused in the extreme. The confusion stems from exactly where Gerry says it does: Leon Trotsky's policy of critical support to anti-imperialist nationalist forces - most notably Haile Selassie in Ethiopia during the Italian invasion - and his argument that, instead of joining the Chinese nationalist Kuomintang in the 1920s, the communists ought to have fought separately but alongside them against the Japanese. This policy ultimately stems from the anti-imperialist united front advocated by the early Comintern.

The trouble is that Trotsky's judgments were straightforwardly incorrect, and Gerry's later ones also wrong for much the same reasons. Selassie was a British client; Trotsky's support effectively meant supporting British imperialism against Italian imperialism. (His vigorous pursuit of this policy *inside the British labour movement* was thus particularly misguided.) As for China, it is difficult to see how the communists could have suffered *less* except by fighting the KMT and the Japanese, as they ended up doing anyway.

Likewise with, say, Islamic State - after all, who *are* they, really? A bunch of disaffected ex-Ba'athists, funded lavishly by factions of the Gulf monarchies. They are 'anti-imperialist' only in the most limited sense that they are clients of regimes that are in turn clients of the US, albeit of elements within those regimes least susceptible to the direct discipline of the US. In general, we find in the chaos of the Middle East numerous examples of allegiances spinning on a sixpence; never before has arbitrary 'critical support' of 'anti-imperialist'

forces been such a hostage to fortune.

Defeat the right

It is nevertheless not so much in spite of his worsening political errors as *because* of them that we oppose Gerry Downing's expulsion from the Labour Party. Every wedge needs a thin end, and by remaining wedded to the moralistic anti-imperialism of his Trotskyist extraction, with the additional seasoning of Ian Donovan's 'theories' about Jews, Gerry has made just such a thin end of himself.

We do not get to pick and choose the terrain of every battle, however. Gerry's expulsion is part of a wider project on the part of the Labour right and their cronies in the yellow press to delegitimise the left, not least by equating our opposition to Zionism and the ongoing Israeli colonial-settler project with anti-Semitism. Let us get things in perspective: despite the ravings of Simon Schama, Dan Hodges and the like, the Labour Party's biggest problem is not that it is riddled with anti-Semites. (Even within their specific corner of the far left, Gerry and Ian are oddities.) It is that it is bound tightly to British imperialism.

A great many sitting Labour MPs voted for Blair's war in Iraq, a course of action that has led to uncounted deaths and the rise of IS. We know what is going on - these people, with real blood on their hands, would like to use comrade Gerry as a cheap way to buttress their moral credentials. We are not prepared to let them. His notions about the proper conduct of anti-imperialist struggle are risible, and must be exposed as such (and indeed stand exposed as such). But we do not consider the Labour Party's shadowy compliance unit, or David Cameron, or Andrew Neil, fit to judge such political subtleties.

Mutatis mutandis, take Jill

Mountford. The comrade is a member of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, an organisation whose equivocations on the question of imperialism are - from our point of view - quite inexcusable. There has been more than one political formation in which the AWL has been the least healthy element and which would have benefited, were the AWL to be shown the door. Plainly, the Labour Party is not such an organisation. The priority now is to fight for a space for avowedly working class socialist politics *as it actually is* inside the Labour Party. That includes the AWL, but by the same token it includes crankier outfits like Socialist Fight. We do not suspend, for a moment, our polemical fire against them; but we recognise that they are our *opponents*, and not our *enemies*.

If these expulsions stand, who is next? The organisation formerly known as Workers Power has spent much polemical energy on defending the pro-Russian areas of east Ukraine against the 'fascist Kiev government', for instance. It is another, similar error: yet more Trotskyists bigging up the anti-imperialist credentials of reactionaries, whose opinions on gays and - who knows? - Jews might not play very well in the British public gallery. Organisations of the left are not under fire because their anti-imperialism is crude and moralistic, but because they *are* anti-imperialist.

When the Labour Party is cleansed of warmongers, city shills and cabs-for-hire, there will be time enough to deal with people whose anti-imperialism leads them to idiotic political conclusions; and with those, like the AWL, whose horror of the latter leads them to worse errors in the opposite direction. Hopefully the comrades will learn along the way. Until then, we deny the right of the Labour right to police the left *tout court* - no exceptions ●

ANTI-SEMITISM

Confusing the question

Tony Greenstein dissects Zionism, Jewish identity and the 'socialism of fools'

It was August Bebel, the leader of the German Social Democratic Party, who described anti-Semitism as the "socialism of fools". Gerry Downing - the leader of a tiny Trotskyist group, Socialist Fight, one of the splinters resulting from the implosion of the Workers Revolutionary Party of Vanessa Redgrave fame - is nothing if not a fool. He is a complete muddlehead who hit the headlines last week when he was cited by David Cameron at prime minister's question time in the House of Commons.

Socialist Fight is an organisation that is causing much amusement to the right. However, Downing's defence, or "understanding", of al Qa'eda's 9/11 attacks and the actions of Islamic State are anything but amusing. His playing with anti-Semitism is also no joke and his actions have been used to discredit the wider left.

Downing, who has probably been somewhat taken aback at all the publicity his sect has garnered, has mounted his own defence against the attacks from the capitalist media, Guido Fawkes¹, David Cameron *et al.* Downing is fond of quoting Baruch Spinoza, who said: "I have striven not to laugh at human actions, not to weep at them, nor to hate them, but to understand them."

There is, of course, nothing at all wrong in understanding the actions of al Qa'eda or IS. The problem is that Downing's understanding is both simplistic and wrong. His main point - which is that the horrific massacres and oppression in the Middle East and elsewhere are the result of imperialism's intervention and presence - is correct. It is not controversial that the US war in Iraq killed approximately one million people. Nor is it a secret that US and British imperialism supports oppressive regimes like Saudi Arabia, Egypt, etc. Where he goes wrong is in seeing in either al Qa'eda or IS any form of anti-imperialist force.

As Hillary Clinton has freely admitted,² al Qa'eda is a creation of the very US imperialism that Downing opposes. That in itself should give him pause for thought. The US deliberately created a fundamentalist Islamic military/political presence in Afghanistan and Pakistan in order to counter Soviet influence and the liberal bourgeois regime of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan³ under Babrak Karmal, which had emerged in Afghanistan. The USSR stepped in to support this regime and the US and Britain did their best to put reactionary cut-throats in place, alongside their allies in the Inter-Services Intelligence in Pakistan and the Saudi regime.

The Taliban and al Qa'eda were the fruits of US imperialism and like Frankenstein's monster they turned on their benefactor. But there was and is nothing anti-imperialist about them. Their politics represent the worst form of medieval savagery. Nor is there anything progressive about them - whether it is women's education, Sharia law punishments, workers' oppression, the destruction of cultural symbols such as the Buddhist statues of Bamiyan or the Greek-Roman architecture at Palmyra.

Like the Khmer Rouge these groups are neither fish nor fowl. They defy political description. 'Fascist' is an easy shorthand, but it is not really appropriate, because fascism is a product of a modern industrial society, where a movement based on a petty bourgeois rabble and lumpen elements are welded into a nationalist



Nazi propaganda: 'Jews control 98% of US finance'

force capable of destroying working class and progressive forces.

The Taliban, al Qa'eda and IS are modern movements, using modern technology, which are certainly a reaction to imperialism - but a reaction of the most politically backward type. They are akin in some ways to the feudal socialism of anti-Semitic movements like the Christian Social Party of Adolf Stoecker.

IS, for example, is known to be controlled militarily by ex-Ba'athist officers who have adopted Islam as a convenient justification and legitimation for their barbarous rule. How any socialist can support or "understand" - not as a means of analysis, but as a form of apology - an organisation which enslaves young Yazidi women, whilst slaughtering all the men and older women, defies belief. A group which openly uses rape as a weapon of war. This genocidal group may indeed be a reaction to the US's imperialist slaughter in Iraq; it may have come into conflict with the US and its sectarian Iraqi regime (although being supported by the Turkish regime); but what type of reaction is it? Do we support any opposition, however reactionary, to US capitalism? Would that include the KKK?

The actions of both IS and al Qa'eda have, if anything, been detrimental to liberation struggles in the Western Sahara, coming into conflict with Polisario rebels in Morocco and attempting to confessionalise its struggles. Likewise they have been a dire threat to the Tuareg people and the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA)⁴

in Mali. Indeed they have been responsible for poisoning the struggle of the Syrian people against Bashar al-Assad.

It is no accident that Israel is known to support al Qa'eda's al-Nusra in Syria and it is widely suspected of supporting IS (it is known to be the largest purchaser of IS-produced oil). Opposing Zionism is not on the agenda of IS or al Qa'eda.

Jewish question

But it is not just the attitude of Socialist Fight and Gerry Downing to IS and al Qa'eda. It is also their barking attitude to what they term "the Jewish question". In 'Why Marxists must address the Jewish question concretely today'⁵ Socialist Fight cites the classic Marxist tract *The Jewish question: a Marxist interpretation* by Abram Leon, the leader of the Fourth International in Belgium, who died in Auschwitz. The article states:

The Jewish bourgeois were exceptionally well-suited for capitalist success, because the social role of Jews as commodity-traders, and later money-traders and lenders - a 'people-class' in the phrase of Abram Leon, the great Belgian-Jewish Marxist theorist of the Jewish question - in medieval Europe prior to the emergence of capitalism, gave them the cultural advantage of a much older tradition in commodity economy than the 'native' ruling classes.

Much of the above is arguable. Did Jewish bankers have any more formidable advantages than those of

Lombardy or Venice? Were the Jewish bourgeoisie any more advantaged than the merchants of the City of London or the French Huguenots? I doubt it. What is certain is that a separate Jewish bourgeoisie, whose most famous representative was the Jewish financier and philanthropist, Sir Moses Montefiore, disappeared in the 19th century. As Leon noted, "The economic process from which the modern nations issued laid the foundations for integration of the Jewish bourgeoisie into the bourgeois nation."⁶

The remark in the article that "Zionism is the cutting edge of bourgeois reaction today" is unexceptional. There is no doubt that Zionist organisations such as the American Israel Public Affairs Committee or Christians United for Israel are the most hawkish groups in terms of foreign policy. In this they are allied with the neo-conservatives who dominated the Bush cabinet and who are fretting at Donald Trump gaining the Republican nomination.

Likewise the statement, that "The role Zionists have played in the attempted witch-hunt against Jeremy Corbyn's Labour leadership campaign is glaringly obvious", cannot be doubted. But this was a Zionist witch-hunt, not a Jewish one. The *Daily Mail* initiated it and MPs like John Mann perpetrated it. Mann is not Jewish, but he is a devoted Zionist.

Quite what the long gone Jewish question (which was as much a problem with anti-Semitism) has to do with the role of Zionism is somewhat of a mystery. The article

points out that 80% of Tory MPs supported the Conservative Friends of Israel in the last parliament and that leading figures in Labour like Ed Miliband and Ed Balls are involved with Labour Friends of Israel. All this is true, but most Tory MPs are not Jewish. Likewise most LFI sponsors. Ed Miliband, who *is* Jewish, was far less sympathetic to Zionism than Ed Balls, who is not.

But the article abandons Marxism and adopts anti-Semitism when it asserts that Zionism's

supporters are highly conscious ethnocentric activists with a material base in terms of capitalist property, within the ruling classes of several imperialist countries, as well as Israel. This caste has acquired major moral and political influence among much wider layers of the imperialist bourgeoisie. If this were not true, Zionists could not have the influence they do in the current situation.

Zionism's supporters include president François Hollande of France and his prime minister, Manuel Valls, who are waging war on France's boycott, divestment and sanctions movement. They include David Cameron and Cornerstone Church pastor John Hagee. The supporters of Zionism and the racist Israeli state include both Jewish and non-Jewish politicians and capitalists. They have nothing whatsoever to do with a transnational Jewish bourgeoisie. This allegation reeks of the Jewish conspiracy theory. There is absolutely no evidence that the non-Jewish bourgeoisie of Britain, the United States or France is at odds with the Jewish bourgeoisie. This is fantasy land stuff.

The problem is that the ruling elites in all the aforementioned countries support the Israeli state; they attack anti-Zionists and the supporters of the Palestinians as 'anti-Semites'. That is why, in his interview on the BBC with Andrew Neil, Gerry Downing was, to put it mildly, left spluttering and inarticulate, since he knew deep down that what he was arguing made no sense from a Marxist or communist perspective.

That is the price of allowing Ian Donovan, who was excluded from the Communist Platform of Left Unity and is an open supporter of Israeli anti-Semite Gilad Atzmon, into his organisation. There is no Marxist or materialist analysis which explains the support for Zionism amongst western bourgeois politicians and their acolytes in terms of an ethnic Jewish presence or lobby. This is indeed the socialism of fools and idiots.

It is ironic that in the United States, the unexpected victory of the only Jewish candidate, Bernie Sanders, in the Michigan primary, was partly due to the overwhelming support for Sanders in the city of Dearborn, where 40% of the inhabitants are Muslim and Arab Americans.⁷

That should give even Gerry Downing pause for thought! ●

Notes

1. <http://order-order.com/2016/03/09/gerry-downing-we-must-address-the-jewish-question>.
2. www.youtube.com/watch?v=WnLzV9xAHA.
3. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/People%27s_Democratic_Party_of_Afghanistan.
4. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Movement_for_the_Liberation_of_Azawad.
5. <http://socialistfight.com/2015/08/22/why-marxists-must-address-the-jewish-question-concretely-today>.
6. A Leon *The Jewish question: a Marxist interpretation* London 1971, p116.
7. www.azvsas.blogspot.co.uk/2016/03/muslim-voters-support-bernie-sanders-in.html.

APPEAL

Due process and justice

In the interests of political debate and clarification we publish Gerry Downing's appeal against his expulsion

To Labour Party NEC

March 16 2016

Dear comrades

I am in receipt of your letter of March 10, re-expelling me from Labour after my earlier successful appeal last year.

What I am first seeking to appeal against is the lack of due process in the procedure, as put forward in the letter. This is contrary to Labour Party democracy in a double sense: one is that prior to this expulsion and the previous one, no proper hearing was held and I was not invited to put my case to the body that decided the expulsion. In both cases, this was an anti-democratic procedure that is a disgrace to a party that claims to want to be a force for defending democracy in British society. The letter also says that "no appeal is possible" against this latest expulsion.

This lack of due process is contrary to the democratic traditions of the working class movement that the Labour Party is supposed to politically represent. It is rather like the extremely undemocratic procedures that have been rife at times in those trade unions with the most corrupt, bureaucratic leaderships, such as the EETPU under the late Frank Chapple, to give a notorious example.

This anti-democratic procedure (no hearing before expulsion; no right to appeal) was initiated by the Labour Party leadership of Tony Blair, which was involved in extensive criminality against working class people at home and abroad. Such as, most notoriously, the Iraq war, where the Labour Party leadership bore responsibility for over a million deaths, caused by the unprovoked invasion. It was also involved in terrible abuses of democratic rights, such as torture and 'extraordinary rendition', and even complicit in the American sexual abuse of Iraqi detainees at Abu Ghraib prison. So it is hardly surprising that a party whose leadership did things like this evolved procedures that show contempt for the seemingly more mundane democratic rights of ordinary Labour Party members at home. If Labour is really trying to improve itself from the days of Blair, it needs to adhere to due process, proper hearings before expulsion, and full rights to appeal.

Previously the appeal body (NEC Panel) decided that support for *Socialist Fight*, the Marxist publication and trend that I support, was compatible with membership of the Labour Party, since it has never stood in elections against Labour in the past and had no intention of doing so in the future. This is still true, contrary to the sole charge in the letter that I am in breach of clause 2.1.4A of the Labour Party's rules on supporting "a political organisation other than an official Labour group or unit of the party". If this description is now deemed to apply to *Socialist Fight*, it also logically applies to Progress, or for that matter the Labour Friends of Israel. I note that unlike these two organisations, *Socialist Fight* has no external sources of funding whatsoever.

Now, as a result of an intervention by David Cameron, the NEC has either changed its mind or had its mind changed for it by someone. The sheer speed of the expulsion, only hours after Cameron's denunciation, suggests the decision was taken in an arbitrary manner with no consultation with the members of the NEC or any other body. After all, the appeal against my previous expulsion took many weeks to be processed. There was no reason for such a political decision to be taken in such haste and without a proper

procedure being gone through. It is obvious that massive shortcuts were taken in terms of democracy and due process in my case, and what happened was basically a form of summary 'justice' driven by political panic.

The letter claims that 'new evidence' has emerged about the nature of *Socialist Fight*. But all material mentioned as being supposedly 'new' was in the public domain when the original appeal took place. Even in its own terms, if taken at face value (which it should not be - see later), this implies either negligence in carrying out the original appeal or, more likely, a political fix to appease David Cameron.

I openly stated my revolutionary socialist beliefs in the original Twitter profile that was the basis for my original expulsion, and did not in any way disavow those beliefs in making my original appeal - in fact I reiterated them. My revolutionary Trotskyist views were taken into account by those who granted the appeal and all my political positions were available to them. There is no 'new evidence' that was not available to the people who granted my previous appeal. Morally the original appeal should stand, according to the basic norms of the British legal system among others, when an acquittal can only be overturned in the event of genuinely new evidence, which was not available to the original trial or appeal, being found. The claim of 'new evidence' is fraudulent.

Now I will deal with the real politics underlying my summary and anti-democratic expulsion. Three accusations were made against me and *Socialist Fight* by David Cameron, the Tory blogger, Paul Staines (Guido Fawkes), and various rightwing Labour MPs and media people. These were:

- (1) that I am a 9/11 apologist;
- (2) that I am in some way a supporter of Islamic State;
- (3) that the material published by *Socialist Fight* on the Jewish question is in some way 'anti-Semitic'.

All these allegations are false and mendacious. I will demonstrate this below.

First there is the question of *Socialist Fight*'s militant anti-imperialism. I note that Jeremy Corbyn has stated that the Tony Blair-led Labour government was involved in war crimes in invading and occupying Iraq, and has called for Blair to be extradited to The Hague for trial. Yet Tony Blair is still allowed to be a member of the Labour Party. I note that among the most vociferous political figures demanding my expulsion were people who supported the Iraq war. As anti-imperialists, myself and *Socialist Fight* oppose all wars against semi-colonial countries by imperialist powers such as Britain and the United States, and defend the peoples and institutions targeted. We consider that they are all lesser evils to imperialist rape and pillage. Complementary to this, we oppose all attacks on civilians anywhere, such as 9/11 and the more recent massacre in Paris last November.

9/11 and imperialism's wars

A large and hypocritical fuss was made about some phrases in a recent *Socialist Fight* article by myself that was in fact debunking so-called '9/11 truth' beliefs: ie, that the attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon in September 2001 were carried out by the US government and/or the Israelis. In debunking this I talked about the motivation of the attackers and the crimes of western imperialism - in



Tony Blair: responsible for more death and destruction than IS

particular the sanctions against Iraq in the 1990s that led to the deaths of over half a million Iraqi children.

When Madeleine Albright was US ambassador to the United Nations in May 1996, she was asked: "We have heard that half a million children have died. I mean, that's more children than died in Hiroshima. And, you know, is the price worth it?" She replied: "I think this is a very hard choice, but the price - we think the price is worth it" - obviously to achieve the political objectives of the USA through sanctions in that period.

The death toll from the 2003 invasion of Iraq was reported from various sources to be in excess of one million. I noted that it was the thirst for vengeance for such crimes that drove such people and that, however much you abhorred the loss of civilian life in the 9/11 attacks, you could not condemn the rage and motivations of those affected by the mass murder of Arabs, including children, by the west in carrying out its objectives. And you had to say that condemnation had to be directed to those who reduced the relatively advanced lands of Libya, Syria and Iraq to rubble by destroying their infrastructure for 'regime change' - for 'peace, justice and democracy' which never came and will never come from that source.

But this was not a statement on an event that had just happened. This was an article discussing motivations, and conspiracy theories, involving an event that happened nearly 15 years ago. In other words, it was discussing a historical event in broad-brush, generalised terms, not taking a position on something current. When it comes to events as they occur, it is clear *Socialist Fight* condemns indefensible attacks on civilians. I quote the statement that *Socialist Fight* issued about the Paris attacks in November 2015, which make our position on this abundantly clear:

Socialist Fight condemns utterly the barbaric terrorist action carried out on Friday November 13 in Paris, which has left around 130 dead, and another 300 injured, 80 critically. These came only hours after other bloody actions targeting Shia Muslims in bombings in Beirut, where 41 died, and Baghdad, where 26 were killed.

We condemn these actions as bloody crimes against the French, Middle Eastern and international working class, and indeed the civilian populations more generally. We extend our profound condolence, sympathy and solidarity to the families and friends of the murdered victims and the wounded.

As Marxists we are totally opposed to methods of individual

terrorism, however 'anti-imperialist' the motivation of the perpetrators may be. The inevitable consequences of this is civilian casualties, intended or not. And the attack never weakens imperialism, it *always* strengthens the repressive forces of the capitalist state against the working class and its aspiring revolutionary leadership.

This attack in Paris is qualitatively worse than the *Charlie Hebdo* massacre, because, however misguided that was, at least it was against targeted victims who they held to be in some manner, however distorted, responsible for the wars in the Middle East and North Africa. This attack was for openly reactionary motives specifically targeting defenceless civilians which can only result in increased Islamophobia and repression of the entire working class and further moves towards a police state.¹

There is no contradiction between this statement, about a recent and contemporary event, and my statement about the motives of the attackers in September 2001. I was referring to the events that motivated the attackers, being driven by western crimes against the Arab peoples. There is abundant evidence that it was the crimes of the US-led forces in Iraq and the sanctions regime that led the previously pro-western al Qa'eda Network led by Osama bin Laden, that previously fought on the US-UK side in Afghanistan against the USSR, to turn against the west.

IS and imperialism

The second point concerns my statements about Islamic State. It is a principled position of Marxists that we oppose all attacks by imperialist forces - that is, the armed forces of advanced western capitalist countries - on the peoples and regimes of dependent, third world, semi-colonial countries. We consider the western countries, so long as the long established capitalist ruling classes in those countries remain the real ruling power in society (which is true even under reformist Labour-type governments under capitalism), to be by far the main predatory force in the world.

This has not changed since the heyday of the colonial empires, though the successful struggles for independence since World War II have modified the way that this predation is carried out. We therefore, as a matter of principle, support the right of indigenous forces in such countries to resist imperialist attacks. We also say that it is the duty of the workers' movement in imperialist countries to assist them in defending themselves when possible. This is the

meaning of the phrase about "tactical military assistance" that has been so often quoted, again out of context. In the current situation such assistance would most likely take the form of political strikes against a given war. In a developed revolutionary situation, more might be possible.

If this is considered impermissible in the Labour Party, let me recall that the Labour Party was split down the middle over the issue of armed resistance to British colonial rule in the days of the Irish war of independence before 1921. More recently, under Tony Blair, a Labour government, jointly with the administration of George W Bush, committed a terrible crime in invading Iraq in a blatant neo-colonial war. The Iraqi people, and indeed its government, had every right to expect support from working class organisations in the west to resist the conquest.

The Iraq war led to chaos in the entire region. The destruction and destabilisation of Iraq spilled over into Syria with the outbreak of the Arab spring. The west, along with close allies in Israel and also Saudi Arabia, backed some of the Islamist forces that spilled over from Iraq in a very cynical policy aimed at overthrowing the Assad regime. Similar things happened also in Libya, this time with direct western military intervention and, unlike in the Assad case, actually succeeded in overthrowing Gaddafi. The result: murderous chaos.

A *Guardian* article on October 25 2015 recorded that Tony Blair admitted the rise of IS was due to the Iraq invasion of 2003:

Blair indicated that he saw merit in the argument that the Iraq war was to blame for the rise of Islamic State (Isis). "I think there are elements of truth in that," he said, when asked whether the Iraq invasion had been the "principal cause" of the rise of Isis. He added: "Of course, you can't say those of us who removed Saddam in 2003 bear no responsibility for the situation in 2015."

Western militarists propose to combat the chaos that they have already caused in the Middle East by more attacks, this time on forces like IS in Iraq and Syria, having previously tried and failed to cohere an armed coalition to overthrow Assad the way they overthrew Gaddafi. We have the same principled position on these attacks and proposed attacks as we did over the Iraq war. We are utterly opposed to all such imperialist attacks and support the right of semi-colonial peoples and forces to resist these attacks, whether it be on Assad, IS or whoever. At the same time we do not support the politics of any of these forces.

IS, no matter how reactionary they are, should be supported only in these circumstances and only against imperialist attack. David Cameron quoted half a sentence to propose that I was giving them unqualified and uncritical support. The criminal barbarians in Raqqa commit crimes that are relatively minor compared to the million or so Iraqis evaporated and slaughtered by high-tech 'smart' bombs that only inflict incidental 'collateral damage'.

This is a completely principled anti-imperialist position: if the Labour Party prohibits such views, while allowing the perpetrators of crimes like the Iraq war to call the shots, it shows that it is still basically a party whose role is to assist in imperialist crimes against the peoples of dependent, underdeveloped

What we fight for

countries. Labour needs to break from this, as I am sure the party leader, most members and the most progressive members of the shadow cabinet agree.

Jewish question

Then there is the furore about the Jewish question. Many of the allegations made against me and Socialist Fight are libellous and would not stand up in a court of law. Our tradition is rooted in the ideas of Karl Marx, Leon Trotsky and particularly the Belgian-Jewish Trotskyist, Abram Leon, the author of *The Jewish question: a Marxist interpretation* (1942) and a heroic leader of working class clandestine resistance during Nazi occupation in World War II, who for his activities was murdered by the Nazis in Auschwitz. Contrary to various ignorant innuendos and amalgams made by unscrupulous and often racist people both inside and outside Labour, my views of and those of SF on this are based solidly on a long tradition of socialist and Marxist thought and have nothing to do with Nazism.

It should not even be necessary to defend oneself against such smears in this day and age. I thought we had moved on from the terrible days of Stalinist domination, when leftwing people had to defend themselves against unscrupulous allegations of support for fascism. But we are living in a period where those who defend Palestinian rights are coming under anti-democratic attack on a wide scale from pro-Israel forces in western societies. If you believe that all peoples are equal, and the right of Palestinian Arabs not to live in conditions of impoverished exile from their own country, and be massacred on a regular basis, then you must be concerned to unearth the political roots of these attacks on democratic rights.

Israel's supporters (including those in the Labour Party) say that Jews have every right to steal land from the Palestinian people by force and mass expulsions, and have the right to 'defend' the territory so taken by force from their victims in the name of fighting 'terrorism'. The argument goes that this is acceptable because of the genocide committed in Europe by the Nazis in World War II, and because of the origin of the Jewish religion in Palestine and the existence of two Jewish states there around 2,000 years ago. In the face of all these ideological arguments, in which Jews and Zionism as a form of Jewish nationalism feature very heavily, we in the Labour Party and the left are supposed to defer to the Friends of Israel and refrain from analysing the Jewish question independently of them on pain of being accused of anti-Semitism.

I disagree. I think these are fundamental attacks on democracy and anti-racism. I support the right to return of the Palestinian refugees - a position endorsed by the United Nations general assembly in 1948 and 1974 - which would result in a narrow, but clear, Arab majority in historic Palestine and make any ethnic-based state impossible. And in a democratic party opposed to racism I would have every right to argue my point of view against others.

For me the Jewish question is inseparable from the Palestinian question and has no meaning without that. Israel says it is the Jewish state, and claims to represent all Jews. Israel's supporters in the Labour Party both support that claim as the moral basis of Israel's 'case' against the Palestinians, and at the same time lie that any attempt to analyse the real relationship of Jews to Israel is in some way 'anti-Semitic'. This is a deeply hypocritical position.

In particular, it is inseparable from the drive to suppress pro-Palestinian activism in the UK and other western countries. Apparently it is unacceptable to question whether organised ethnocratic politics is involved in this and influences western governments. But it can be clearly demonstrated that

part of the capitalist classes of important western countries, including the US and the UK, have a material stake in the maintenance of the Israeli state against the Palestinian people. The mechanism of this is a well-known racist law: the 1950 and 1970 Law of Return, which says that any person born of a Jewish mother anywhere in the world is entitled to Israeli citizenship by birth. Whereas any non-Jew born to parents of Palestinian refugees driven out of Israel proper in or since 1947-48, which even then amounted to over two-thirds of the Palestinian Arab population, is entitled to nothing at all. Of course, there is no Palestinian Law of Return for the 6.5 million exiled so brutally from their homeland since 1948.

In practice the state in all capitalist societies is dominated by sections of big capital which are tied to a particular state, particularly by ties of residence and/or citizenship. This is so pronounced that in 1914 in Europe, different national ruling classes, defined in this way, fought each other for domination and killed millions of workers in the process. In Israel, the state is partly 'owned' in this way by Jewish capitalists overseas with dual citizenship according to the racist Law of Return. This is the material stake just referred to. This section of the capitalists has over decades since World War II acquired a broad authority among the western ruling classes and the clout to exert great political pressure in western countries.

This is why Palestinian solidarity activity is being incrementally banned in a number of western countries, including many US states, the UK and most notoriously France. This is the material basis of Zionist power in western societies.

Part of this banning of Palestine solidarity activity is the attack on myself and the denial of due process and right of appeal. This is entirely alien to Labour movement democracy. It is, however, in the spirit of Israeli racist tyrannical practices, such as 'administrative detention', where ordinary Palestinians who dissent from Israeli oppression and abuses are locked up without rights of appeal. A little bit of Israeli contempt for democracy has been imported into the Labour Party.

The mechanism for this is the Labour Friends of Israel, which is a racist, anti-Arab Zionist 'party within a party', aiming to garner support for the ongoing *Naqba* against the Palestinians and to suppress sympathy with their plight by a mendacious narrative that says that solidarity with Palestinians is driven by Nazi-style race hatred against Jews. Ironically, this narrative is a prime example of a technique pioneered by the Nazis: Goebbels' technique of the Big Lie.

I will quote Ronnie Kasrils, one of the key leaders of the struggle for liberation in apartheid South Africa, who is himself of Jewish origin:

The people within the West Bank and Gaza are literally imprisoned under the most unjust conditions, suffering hardships and methods of control that are far worse than anything our people faced during the most dreadful days of apartheid. In fact any South African, visiting what amount to enclosed prison-ghettoes - imposed by a Jewish people that tragically suffered the Nazi holocaust - will find similarity with apartheid immediately coming to mind; and, even more shocking, comparisons with some of the methods of collective punishment and control devised under tyrannies elsewhere. An Israeli cabinet minister, Aharon Cizling, stated in 1948, after the Deir Yassin massacre: "Now we too have behaved like Nazis and my whole being is shaken."²

It is pretty clear that on the spectrum of racist terror and tyranny, Israel is considerably worse than apartheid

South Africa, though obviously so far less severe than Nazi Germany itself (though it should be noted that Hitler's regime lasted only 12 years - Israeli terror continues unabated after 70 years). Apartheid South Africa did not seek to eliminate its black majority the way Israel has tried to do with its Arab majority population, more than two thirds of which were expelled in 1947-49. Obviously it has not attempted to physically exterminate the Arab population outright. But the terror involved in Gaza, particularly, has been characterised as "incremental genocide" by prominent Israeli-Jewish dissidents such as Ilan Pappé, the historian who has documented the *Naqba* in painstaking detail.

There is a terrible logic in seeking to get rid of an 'unwanted' population that has a dynamic that can lead to outright genocide. The ethos of the Israeli state is to change the composition of the population of historic Palestine through the elimination from the country of the Arab majority, and the creation of an artificial Jewish majority, in an ongoing *Naqba*.

Could Labour have tolerated a 'Labour Friends of White South Africa'? Or a 'Labour Friends of Nazi Germany'? Such things would be a disgrace, and an obscene insult to blacks and Jews, as well as anti-racists who sympathise with them. Why should it therefore tolerate a Labour Friends of Israel? That it does so is an equally obscene insult to Palestinians and those who oppose the racist treatment and abuse of them.

LFi is a communalist organisation that promotes anti-Arab racism in the Labour Party and acts in collaboration with the Conservative Friends of Israel and similar groups to promote support for Israeli ethnic cleansing in wider British society. Its activity in concert with David Cameron, who is a declared supporter of Conservative Friends of Israel, in demanding my expulsion from Labour, is proof of this. This is characteristic of a racist, cross-party, cross-class, anti-Arab coalition aimed at destroying Labour Party democracy.

The narrative that Israel is 'the only democracy' in the Middle East is another Big Lie. It is the only 'democracy' in the world established by expelling the majority of its native population and replacing them with armed settlers. It is not a democracy, but an ethnocratic tyranny of the worst sort. Any support for this is contrary to the interests of the working class, for whom drawing a class line against racism is of the highest necessity.

Unproscribe the militant socialist, anti-imperialist and anti-racist Socialist Fight trend! And hence reinstate myself as a Labour member with full rights, as part of restoring democracy and due process in the Labour Party.

Anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism

Finally on the question of what is anti-Semitism and what is anti-Zionism and the difference between the two, so assiduously confused in the allegations against me and Socialist Fight. I would cite four leftist authorities to defend me, Socialist Fight and the Labour Party in general against the false charges laid against us in the present wide-ranging witch-hunt, initiated by the far-right blogger, Guido Fawkes (aka Paul Staines), and David Cameron.

The four are Noam Chomsky, Norman Finkelstein, Michael Marder and Tariq Ali, who have argued that the characterisation of anti-Zionism as anti-Semitic is inaccurate, sometimes obscures legitimate criticism of Israel's policies and actions, and is sometimes a political ploy to stifle criticism of Israel. Professor Noam Chomsky argues:

There have long been efforts to identify anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism in an effort to exploit anti-

racist sentiment for political ends; "one of the chief tasks of any dialogue with the gentile world is to prove that the distinction between anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism is not a distinction at all," Israeli diplomat Abba Eban argued, in a typical expression of this intellectually and morally disreputable position (Eban, *Congress Bi-Weekly*, March 30 1973). But that no longer suffices. It is now necessary to identify criticism of Israeli policies as anti-Semitism - or, in the case of Jews, as 'self-hatred', so that all possible cases are covered.³

Philosopher Michael Marder argues:

To deconstruct Zionism is ... to demand justice for its victims - not only for the Palestinians, who are suffering from it, but also for the anti-Zionist Jews, 'erased' from the officially consecrated account of Zionist history. By deconstructing its ideology, we shed light on the context it strives to repress and on the violence it legitimises with a mix of theological or metaphysical reasoning and affective appeals to historical guilt for the undeniably horrific persecution of Jewish people in Europe and elsewhere.

American political scientist Norman Finkelstein argues that anti-Zionism and often just criticism of Israeli policies have been conflated with anti-Semitism, sometimes called new anti-Semitism for political gain:

Whenever Israel faces a public relations debacle such as the Intifada or international pressure to resolve the Israel-Palestine conflict, American Jewish organisations orchestrate this extravaganza called the 'new anti-Semitism'. The purpose is several-fold. First, it is to discredit any charges by claiming the person is an anti-Semite. It's to turn Jews into the victims, so that the victims are not the Palestinians any longer. As people like Abraham Foxman of the ADL put it, the Jews are being threatened by a new holocaust. It's a role reversal - the Jews are now the victims, not the Palestinians. So it serves the function of discrediting the people levelling the charge. It's no longer Israel that needs to leave the occupied territories; it's the Arabs who need to free themselves of the anti-Semitism.⁴

Tariq Ali, a British-Pakistani historian and political activist, argues that the concept of new anti-Semitism amounts to an attempt to subvert the language in the interests of the state of Israel. He writes that the campaign against "the supposed new 'anti-Semitism'" in modern Europe is a "cynical ploy on the part of the Israeli government to seal off the Zionist state from any criticism of its regular and consistent brutality against the Palestinians ... Criticism of Israel cannot and should not be equated with anti-Semitism." He argues that most pro-Palestinian, anti-Zionist groups that emerged after the Six-Day War were careful to observe the distinction between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism.⁵

The above is extracted from Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia⁶ Fraternally

Gerry Downing

Notes

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■ 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.

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weekly worker

**Free
movement is a
basic socialist
principle**

Not letting on

Peter Manson asks why the CPB fails to inform us as to its real attitude to immigration controls

What is the policy of the *Morning Star's* Communist Party of Britain in relation to immigration controls? Should all people, including workers, have the right to move, live and work wherever they choose, or should such movement be controlled and curtailed by individual states? The reason I ask is because nowadays the CPB position is never openly declared in the pages of the *Star*.

The question was brought up last year in an article co-authored by Steve Gillan, general secretary of the Prison Officers Association, and the POA's "standing counsel", John Hendy. The two were uncertain as to their view of the European Union, but gave a reasonable representation of the problems with the EU version of free movement:

... the right of free movement of labour - attractive though it sounds - has been the source of much friction exploited by neofascists across Europe.

The EU, instead of outlawing the undercutting of collectively bargained terms and conditions, has deliberately refused to uphold the primacy of collective bargaining. This has encouraged employers to import migrant labour (skilled and unskilled) to work on lower terms and conditions than local workers, undermined (and, in some cases, destroyed) collective bargaining, fanned the flames of racism and often condemned migrant labour to Victorian levels of poverty.

This is precisely the 'social dumping' which it was claimed the social dimension of the EU would prevent.¹

However, whereas these two seemed genuinely unsure as to the merits or otherwise of EU membership, and therefore of free movement, the CPB has no such doubts. It is just that, unlike in decades past, today the *Morning Star* declines to inform us as to its precise views on immigration. For example, its opposition to European regulations on this question is presented in a way which makes it appear that the EU does not actually practise what it preaches. Take, for example, this editorial statement from September 2015, which declared that the "so-called 'free' movement of workers" within the EU is in fact "more often economically forced". Meanwhile, "the attitude to people seeking to enter from outside is quite different" - almost €2 billion is allocated "for control of external borders".²

In similar vein, a more recent editorial states:

The EU's commitment, enshrined in the Single European Act, to the free movement of labour doesn't allow for the free, unregulated movement of people. This is something which regularly wrong-foots many on the left. It's designed to restrict national collective bargaining agreements and other domestic 'protectionist' legislation. It provides capital with

the freedom to move jobs.³

How exactly are we on the left supposed to be 'wrong-footed'? Is the *Star* saying that workers do not actually have the right to migrate to other EU states? Or is it implying that we are not aware that such free movement applies only internally, within 'Fortress Europe'? It is true that this right is used by capital to try to undermine pay and working conditions, but does that mean we should oppose not only those attempts, but the right itself? We are not told. The editorial goes on to state:

Stopping employers using immigration to fuel a race to the bottom on wages and conditions has always been, and continues to be, the job of the labour movement. Organising workers in Britain, irrespective of their country of origin, is not just an article of faith we should cling to - it is the only answer.

Quite right. But this still does not tell us whether immigration should be subject to state restrictions. And we are left in the same quandary when we look at another editorial a couple of weeks later, which declares: "The Labour Party should be pointing out how EU treaty provisions for the free movement of labour are there to facilitate superexploitation of migrant workers for profit." It continues:

EU treaty provisions on government borrowing and debt, state aid for industry, free movement for commodities and public funding of capital investment would obstruct the left and progressive policies of a future Labour government at every turn" (my emphasis).⁴

I do not think the *Star* is consciously including the commodity of labour-power here. Rather it is deliberately omitting anything which openly states that its programme for national Keynesianism would also include controls on the movement of labour.

And, while *Morning Star* editorial comments are in line with liberal and left opinion condemning the attitude of David Cameron's government to, say, Syrian refugees, it strongly implies that a UK welcome to such migrants must have its limits: "If Britain is still the fifth or sixth biggest economy in the world, it is capable of offering succour to many

more refugees than the government has already agreed to accept" (my emphasis).⁵ In fact, last autumn the paper claimed that "Yvette Cooper's call for distinguishing asylum-seekers ... and economic migrants is a step forward."⁶

In fact the policy of the 'official' Communist Party of Great Britain (and, after it, the CPB) has been, and remains, one of 'non-racist immigration controls'. Here I am grateful to Dr Evan Smith and his website, *Hatful of History*, for having collated the statements of the CPGB on this question since the early 1960s.⁷ For instance, Evans quotes the Communist Party weekly, *Comment*, which in 1963 stated that the previous year's Commonwealth Immigrants Act must be opposed, because it was "not an act to control immigration in general", but constituted "colour discrimination in immigration".⁸

This CPGB policy of non-racist (or, to use the terminology of the time, 'non-racialist') border controls was most clearly laid down in a 1965 statement, which declared:

Every government, whatever its character, and whatever the social system, will naturally make regulations concerning immigration and emigration. This is an understandable exercise of its power by any sovereign government. The Communist Party has never stood for general unrestricted immigration, but has always opposed racialism and racial discrimination in Britain.⁹

In the same year a CPGB pamphlet informed its readers that the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act was "not an act introduced for normal immigration purposes, but designed to introduce an element of racial discrimination into the system of immigration".¹⁰

What struck me about this was its similarity to the position of the Socialist Party in England and Wales, as can be seen from the relevant section of its 2013 perspectives document, which the *Hatful of History* site helpfully reproduced:

Of course, we have to stand in defence of the most oppressed sections of the working class, including migrant workers and other immigrants. We staunchly oppose racism. We defend the right to asylum and argue for the end of repressive measures like

detention centres.

At the same time, given the outlook of the majority of the working class, we cannot put forward a bald slogan of 'open borders' or 'no immigration controls', which would be a barrier to convincing workers of a socialist programme, both on immigration and other issues. Such a demand would alienate the vast majority of the working class, including many more long-standing immigrants, who would see it as a threat to jobs, wages and living conditions ...

We have to put forward a programme which unites the working class in dealing with the consequences of immigration.¹¹

This is, of course, pure opportunism: while SPEW comrades may believe in open borders (perhaps 'may' is now the operative word), the working class is far too backward to agree with them - that is the clear implication. In reality SPEW stands four-square behind the 'official' CPGB: what matters is 'unity', and we just have to face facts - unity is only possible on the basis of 'common-sense' (ie, rightwing) ideas.

A couple of years after this perspectives document was published, SPEW deputy general secretary Hannah Sell showed that she was well acquainted with both its content and terminology. Speaking to the January 24 2015 conference of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, comrade Sell defended the proposal to include in Tusc's electoral programme opposition only to "racist" immigration controls: "We can't just make the bald demand" for no controls at all, she said. That was not the way to win support amongst workers.

Comrade Sell published an article in December last year outlining SPEW's position in relation to the current crisis, entitled 'Solidarity with refugees - defend the right to asylum'. The words of the headline - like those in the article - were carefully chosen: SPEW's "solidarity" is with "refugees", as opposed to migrants, and it defends the right to "asylum", not migration.

True, like the 'official' CPGB, SPEW claims to believe that in the future everyone will be able to live wherever they choose:

A socialist society would harness the wealth, science and technique created by capitalism in order to meet the needs of the majority worldwide.

Only on that basis would it be possible to have a world where people are free to move if they wish to, but are not forced to do so by the nightmare conditions they face at home.

In the meantime, however, comrade Sell clearly implies that only 'genuine' refugees should have the right to migrate. And she proposes a better way of rooting out the impostors:

Control of decisions whether to grant asylum cannot be left in the hands of this callous government. We demand that elected committees of ordinary working people, including representatives of migrants' organisations, have the right to review asylum cases and grant asylum.¹²

Yes, she really is proposing that "ordinary working people" should take responsibility for turning workers away from where they choose to live.

But that is no real surprise. You see, SPEW, like the CPB, is part of the mainstream consensus contending that immigration is a problem and that it must be 'controlled'. This consensus would have you believe that people should have no right to live, settle and work anywhere on this planet; that, far from the whole world belonging to all of its people, it must remain divided up; that each nationality must protect its 'own' patch at the expense of outsiders.

However, for communists, for whom the common interest of the international proletariat is an absolute principle, this consensus is poison. We stand for genuine free movement. The world belongs to all its people ●

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