

A paper of Marxist polemic and Marxist unity

weekly



worker



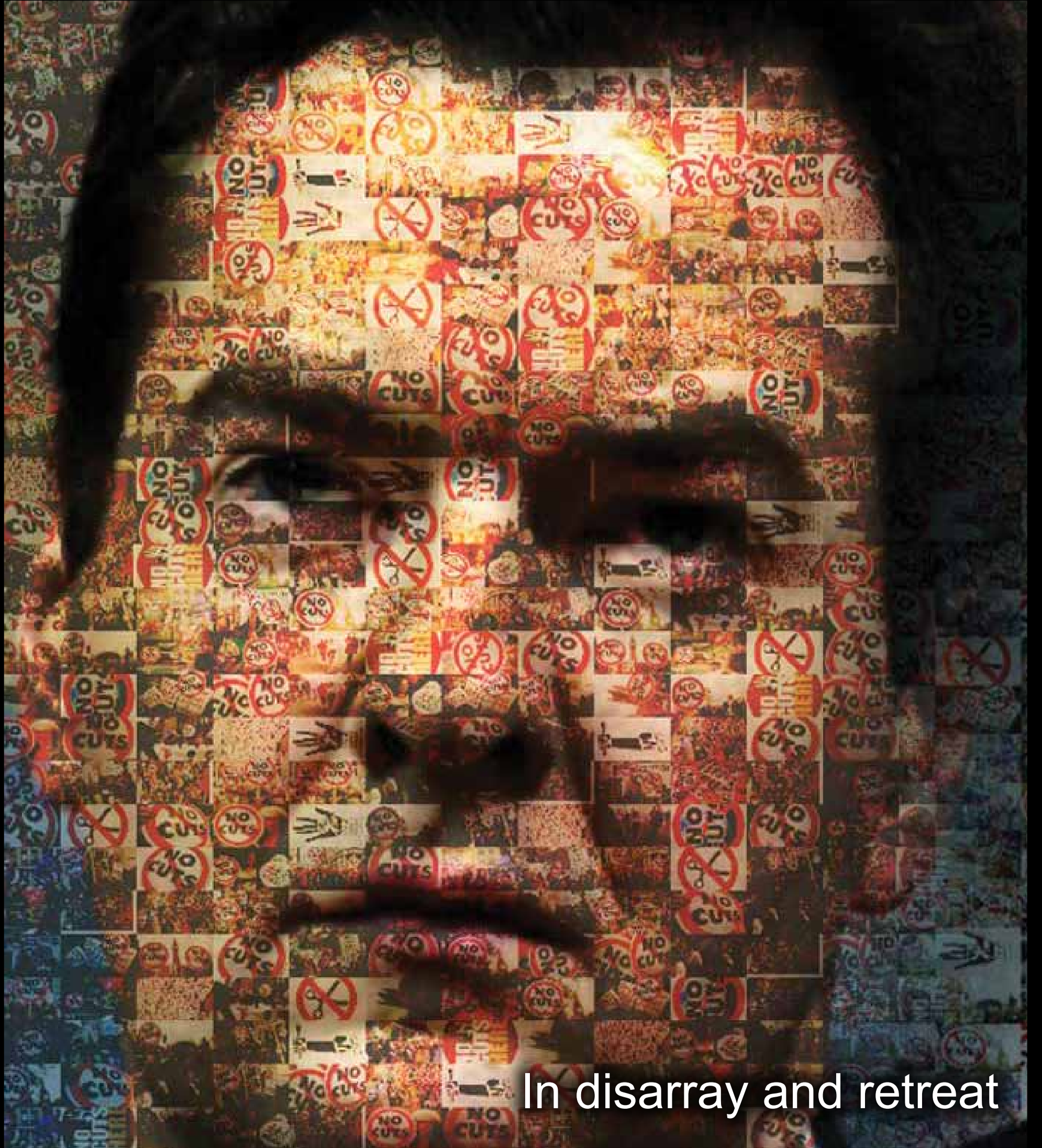
Mike Macnair: Britain's industrial prowess is not about to make a comeback

- CLPD AGM
- EU's rotten deal
- Iranian workers
- Anti-Semitism

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In disarray and retreat

LETTERS



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

Fake Marxism

Demarty chides me for not giving "any consideration to the surely not irrelevant fact that there is no independent party of the working class in the United States, which means that we have to fight for one". He links this to an argument that "Marx aggressively supported Abraham Lincoln in two American elections - why? Because Lincoln was the man most likely to destroy slavery - a necessary (though, as it turns out, hardly sufficient) condition for working class politics in the States."

It is true that Marx wrote a few letters and articles supportive of Lincoln and his efforts to end slavery, most notably the 1865 'Address of the International Working Men's Association to Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States of America'.

However, the US civil war was in essence the completion of the bourgeois democratic revolution, and Marx's support was wholly correct in the era before the advent of imperialism. Are the CPGB asserting, as the logic of Demarty's argument implies, that Bernie Sanders' election campaign is in some sense revolutionary, and that the outcome of his proclaimed 'political revolution' will lay the basis for an independent party of the working class? This is pure fantasy.

Demarty then refers to the Bolsheviks' electoral arrangements with the bourgeois-constitutionalist Cadets in a few Duma elections in the early 1900s. The different understanding of the CPGB and the International Bolshevik Tendency on what this represented is an existing dispute which was definitively dealt with in the letters pages of *Weekly Worker* less than 10 years ago - see 'Bolsheviks, ballots and the class line' (http://www.bolshevik.org/1917/no32/ibt_1917_32_10_CPGB_Cadets.html).

As we explained in that exchange, the Bolsheviks were quite clear that these electoral arrangements with the Cadets did not involve any political support and, to quote a 1907 Russian Social Democratic Labour Party conference motion, "the only agreements permitted are those of a purely technical nature". This reality is something that to my knowledge the CPGB have never subsequently contested - I presume because the facts presented by the IBT are simply incontrovertible.

The third supposed precedent is Lenin's support for the 1916 Easter Rising, an analogy which borders on the obscene. On the one hand, we have Lenin's support for a military uprising against British imperialism in the midst of World War I. And, on the other hand, we have the CPGB's political support to a politician with a long political history of backing US imperialism (see for instance <http://screachingkettle.blogspot.de/2015/07/if-bernie-sanders-was-against-invasion.html>).

I can't help but notice that Demarty, presumably unintentionally, gives away what is probably the real reason for the CPGB's position - ie, his reference to the "external ridicule" that the IBT's consistent defence of the principle of working class independence elicits. I for one have indeed suffered ridicule from many on the reformist left in Ireland for applying this principle in the context of the recent Irish elections by telling the truth about Sinn Féin's pro-capitalist political nature and that there should be no

political support to them. Being a Marxist is not about popularity for popularity's sake - sometimes we are unpopular and suffer ridicule, and worse, for telling the truth.

It seems that, like many other fake Marxists, the CPGB are more interested in avoiding ridicule and courting immediate political popularity than they are about applying the principles of Marxism in any consistent way in their concrete political activity.

Alan Gibson
Cork

Homework

I see from the letters page of the *Weekly Worker* that various American Trotskyists are insistent on missing the opportunity for building a mass socialist movement that the Bernie Sanders campaign represents.

I really shouldn't care so much. But I do wish these comrades would do their homework and realise that it's been a very long time since the Democratic Party was the pure-and-simple bourgeois party that they believe it to be. (Hint: Sanders himself has admitted that the reason he ran as a Democrat was to get media exposure, not because he thinks the Democratic Party is innately wonderful - and, boy, did establishment Democrats go apoplectic upon hearing that!)

I humbly submit a link to my piece in *New Politics* that makes the case for supporting Sanders as a means towards independent political action: <http://newpol.org/content/bernie-sanders-and-dilemma-%E2%80%A8-democratic-%E2%80%9Cparty%E2%80%9D>.

Who knows? One might actually learn something from reading it.

Jason Schulman
email

Not anti-Semitic

Socialist Fight is grateful to the *Weekly Worker* for its solidarity against the witch-hunt against me and for publishing my full appeal against expulsion ('Due process and justice', March 17). And to Paul Bloom for correctly rallying against the witch-hunt, whose target is the leftist surge that saw Jeremy Corbyn elected as leader (Letters, March 17). And to Jim Grant, who rallies against the expulsion in a principled way, but is opposed to "Gerry's anti-imperialism", which is, he thinks, "needless to say, confused in the extreme" ('Thin end of the wedge', March 17).

Jim sets out his own views of anti-imperialism, which are, like Tony Greenstein's, not anti-imperialist at all, but based on various moral and political judgements which totally ignore the anti-imperialism of the masses, as if no serious Marxist should address themselves to that.

No human being in the planet needs to die from starvation, dirty water, lack of healthcare or proper education to develop their potential to the full. All the technology and all the means to deliver it to everybody on the planet exist right now. But it cannot happen because global imperialism, centrally located in Wall Street and its European and Japanese allies, must have its profits and so this cannot be organised and planned. That's why it's not the third world 'terrorist' that causes the central problem for humanity, but US world imperialism. So I will not lie and make the small terrorist the central enemy, when it is the great USA terrorist and its global allies who are that problem.

It is futile to give us long lists of how reactionary those that imperialism now wants to bomb and defeat are. History is full of

these 'Frankenstein monsters' that imperialism sponsored at one point, only later to turn against - Selassie, Hussein, Gaddafi and Assad, to mention just a few. We did know all about the CIA and the Saudis sponsoring al Qaeda, Islamic State, etc. All bourgeois nationalists and all past and present Stalinists are reactionary forces, who only fight imperialism when they absolutely have to in order to stay in power or alive. The goal of their struggle is to forge a better deal with imperialism. Putin is doing that right now over Syria and he would sell out the Donbass in the morning if he could get a deal that secured his borders. Such forces have no principled opposition to imperialism, so spare us the details of how bad IS, etc are, Jim and Tony - we know.

But those who are fighting imperialism right now are by definition anti-imperialist and their struggle gains some legitimacy in the eyes of the masses they control, because they see that struggle as genuine to some extent at least. Supporting your own imperialist power against any other force is pro-imperialist, Jim and Tony. No exceptions for the truly nasty IS, Serbs, Hutus, etc. When wars that some leftists supported on a 'humanitarian' basis are over, the USA is always the clear winner and the third world country the clear loser.

And it is to the anti-imperialism of the masses we must orientate: to them the tactic of the anti-imperialist united front is pitched from above and below. Neither Jim nor Tony make a single mention of the masses: they do not assess the difference between the anti-imperialism of a bourgeois-nationalist ruling class or caste and the anti-imperialism of the masses - or even consider how to drive a wedge into that relationship to forge a new revolutionary leadership.

On our statement that the 9/11 hijackers "must never be condemned", the argument was that the cause of 9/11 was violence by the US in the Middle East and justified anger against it. I wrote: "Only it is the justified outrage of the oppressed, as opposed to the outrage of the oppressor: one violence is that of the slave and the other is that of the slave-owner. One is progressive, no matter how distorted its actions are, and must never be 'condemned'. Imperialism is the violence that holds the whole planet, or almost the whole planet, in thrall, and that violence can never be supported by serious Marxists in any circumstances."

I never condoned the killing of innocent civilians and never would. It is the causes to which I referred. I would not expect a ruling class ideologue to concur with that sentiment, but it does deserve to get a proper hearing.

The assertion that Jewish millionaires and billionaires have extraordinary influence in the ruling classes of the US and Europe in general is obviously true. Possible explanations we have advanced refer to divided loyalties as a result of dual citizenship of their own land of birth and Israel. Marxists hold that such national questions will be resolved when the exploitation of one class of human beings over another is ended. It is not anti-Semitic to believe this, but it is definitively anti-Zionist.

Greenstein's article is far worse than Grant's on the question of anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism, making the direct equation between Nazism and Socialist Fight in his use of the phrase "the socialism of idiots". I

am not an anti-Semite and neither is Ian Donovan. I have never said an anti-Semitic thing since I became politically active and conscious in my mid-20s some 40 years ago. The understanding of the Jewish question in the Marxist tradition is a long one since 1843 and I defend it and affirm I stand in that tradition. Most of the stuff about us is rightwing Labour, Tory and Zionist distortions. Socialist Fight has black and Jewish supporters who will attest to my personal stances on this.

Despite the fact that last week's *Weekly Worker* was overlaid with accusations of anti-Semitism, 'foolish' or malignant, I would assert that for historical significance the article entitled 'By your advisors shall you be known' is far more important, although it is false to put an apartheid wall between the two subjects: a Zionist-orchestrated campaign against Corbyn and McDonnell based on falsehoods and half-truths sees both a capitulation and my expulsion.

John McDonnell adopts his 'sensible' economic orientation - a defence of capitalism, and in its neoliberal form to boot (the only way to defend it, as Yasmine Mather correctly asserts in her article), as Ian Duncan Smith resigns and the Tory Party descends into further chaos over that and the EU. Suddenly, as Labour rallies at the polls, a victory in 2020 is not only possible, but likely. And an early election is not ruled out if the expletives issued by Cameron against Duncan Smith and the vehemence of the other Tory attacks on him are anything to go by. Major's bastards are back stronger than ever.

But the second line of defence of British capitalism is now consolidating itself. The criticism of the Scottish National Party that they, meekly or enthusiastically, carry out Tory cuts always looked weak when Labour councils did the same - with the support, intended or otherwise, campaigned against or not, of the McDonnell 'legal budgets' advice.

The mass movement that elected Corbyn must be mobilised against this McDonnell 'balance the books' agenda and capitalism itself.

Gerry Downing
Socialist Fight

Severity

Gerry Downing's argument on anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism reduces to this: 'Some misuse the charge of anti-Semitism. By this I mean that actually every charge of anti-Semitism is a misuse. Only some criticism of Zionism is anti-Jewish. By this I mean that actually none of it is.'

I am happy to see that Downing's position is obviously finding so little in the way of fertile ground outside the now-discredited Socialist Fight. Nevertheless, I still wait for Jeremy Corbyn to indicate that he truly gets it in his kishkes: that the Jewish left is ringing an alarm bell with all their might; to understand they do so from a place of genuine and grave dismay; and to acknowledge that he hears it in all its urgent severity, as I do not believe he currently does.

Judd Seuss
email

Shameless

There are times when pragmatism curdles into outright lack of principle. The process is illustrated with terrifying vividness in Jim Grant's morally depraved article on the expulsion of Gerry Downing from the Labour Party.

Having acknowledged that

Downing and his low-life comrades in Socialist Fight are peddling anti-Semitic tripe, Grant goes on to argue that Downing's expulsion sets a dangerous precedent and needs to be reversed. He even goes so far as to refer to Downing as "comrade Gerry". It seems that even the most odious Jew-haters can be regarded as bosom pals if they serve as human shields for other members of the Labour left.

No political party can function effectively if it admits people whose beliefs depart too drastically from its core principles. The Labour Party is an anti-racist party. Gerry Downing, Ian Donovan and their ilk are entitled to express their anti-Semitic prejudices if they so wish; but their right to free speech does not entail a right to belong to an organisation whose principles are the polar opposite of their own.

One would not expect to find an exponent of multiculturalism in the British National Party or an ardent anti-socialist in the CPGB. By the same token, there can be no room for anti-Semites in the Labour Party. If people like Downing are allowed to join, the party leadership will give the impression that it regards anti-Semitism as a matter of purely secondary importance. In his letter (March 17), replying to mine (March 3), Paul Demarty provides three historical precedents to justify the CPGB's position of political support to capitalist politician Bernie Sanders.

to join, the party leadership will give the impression that it regards anti-Semitism as a matter of purely secondary importance. At a time when too many people on the Corbynist left are already deranged by their hatred of Israel, this would merely fan the flames of the hard left's incipient hostility to Jews.

Jim Grant's article could only have been written by someone who doesn't think that anti-Semitism is a big deal. Many words could be used to describe his shameless defence of Gerry Downing. 'Socialist' isn't one of them.

Peter Leapman
email

Painful history

Anti-Zionism is no more anti-Semitic than an opposition to the Chinese politburo necessarily conceals a wish to destroy Chinese people.

The Chinese too have a painful history. Like the Jews, they look back on a past of oppression by many nations, including massacre by a fascist power - Japan in China's case, estimated at 20 million civilians from 1937 to 1945 - as well as discrimination in Europe and the suspicion that they are a secret threat: the 'yellow peril' or the 'world Jewish conspiracy' respectively. But this doesn't mean that the People's Republic is the only hope for the Chinese.

Mike Belbin
email

Witch-hunt

For over 100 years Marxism has misled the revolutionary left into believing that capitalism arose from the circulation of money rather than the energy revolution of the 18th and 19th centuries - a view which comes directly from classical political economy. Regardless of this and other fundamental mistakes contained within Marxism, I agree with Paul Bloom that we must oppose the witch-hunt against Marxists in the Labour Party (Letters, March 17).

Regardless of the mistakes of the Marxists, Labour members should form a united front with them and strengthen the struggle

for a democratic socialist society. If there is to be any witch-hunt, let it be against the enemies of socialism.

Tony Clark
Labour supporter

Review review

I am the author of *Social democracy and anarchism in the International Workers' Association 1864-1877*, about which you published two reviews, for which I would like to thank you.

You certainly will not be surprised if I do not object to Dave Douglass's review ('When Marx was a reformist', December 10 2015). However, concerning Mike Macnair's ('Bakuninist hatchet job', February 18), I wrote down some reflections which I do not particularly consider as an 'answer', for eventually my text ended up disproportionately longer than Mike's.

I simply intend to inform you that my text can be found on the following: 'About Mike Macnair, social democracy and anarchism and hatchets' at http://monde-nouveau.net/ecriture/?exec=article&id_article=607 (monde-nouveau.net is one of the websites of the French Anarchist Federation).

René Berthier
email

US questions

I am an associate of the Communist League of Tampa. I am working on a text of ours with reference to political demands in the minimum programme for the CLT and its sister local groups.

I have a few questions. We are aiming to defuse the 'council fetish' and also to 'indigenise' the programme: just as the CPGB harkens back to the Levellers and the Chartists, we in the US seek to emphasise the heritage of the most radical of the early US state constitutions (especially the Pennsylvania constitution of 1776).

Firstly and most pertinently, I was wondering if you could clarify your commentary in 'What is workers' power?' (*Weekly Worker* August 8 2007).

Mike Macnair writes: "But in a hierarchy of councils, now we have arrived at the workers electing the factory committee, which elects delegates to the local council, which elects delegates to the regional council, which elects delegates to the national council ... Nick Rogers has argued forcibly in these pages that preserving accountability for national-level decisions will require some form of direct election of a national council (or parliament ...).

"I am not myself convinced by this; it seems to me that collective accountability, and recallability, are critical issues, and that direct election of individuals to a national council/parliament militates against this and in favour of cults of the personality. As to bureaucratisation, Nick himself refers to the militia question, and I have previously referred to freedom of information and communication, and freedom to organise parties and factions, as partial measures against bureaucratisation. I would add, as I have also argued elsewhere, rotation of officials, or term limits: ie, the abolition of the individual political career by requiring the individual delegate/representative to return after their term of office to a 'grunt-level' job ...

"The point, however, is that on either Nick's analysis or mine, or almost any other, the mere fact of the form of the soviet/workers' council as a delegate committee, and the fact that such bodies grow out of the class struggle, does not solve the problems of accountability and democratic decision-making on more than a local scale.

"To address these problems we have to go behind the form of the delegate committee to the underlying

principles. But, once we go to the underlying principles, it is clear that how the new form of authority is originally created is quite immaterial. It may be in origin a coalition of strike committees or trades council, as the 1905 Petrograd soviet was; or a British Labour Party general management committee (some GMCs became quasi-soviets during the 1926 general strike); or an organ of local government of the existing state, as the Paris Commune was; or it may be set up by a national party - as, in fact, happened in much of Russia in 1917 and, as Trotsky argues in *Lessons of October*, may turn out that way again. To repeat, then, what we have to fight for is the political principles - election and recallability, abolition of judicial review, accountability, freedom of information, and so on - not the merely organisational form of the workers' council."

My comrades and I are a bit perplexed by this discussion. I mean, do you imagine collective responsibility in terms of indirect elections? If so, does this take the form of party-list elections? Or perhaps a very large and unwieldy chamber that elects from among itself a working minority (analogous to the Congress of People's Deputies and the Supreme Soviet after 1989)? Or do you maintain the delegate-pyramid is workable, that local soviets should be electors for the regional or national delegates? Institutionally how do you think cults of the personality or their embryos can be smothered before the flow of authority is reversed between the rank and file and officialdom?

Jonathan Miles
Communist League of Tampa

Compelling case

I submitted an article to the *Weekly Worker* making the case that the Scottish working class should vote to remain in the European Union, whilst the English working class should abstain. This is the only position in the referendum that secures the interests of the European working class. Readers should ask themselves what would be the outcome of the referendum if the working class carried this line in practice.

So it is unfortunate that the editor decided not to publish it. It might look as if the CPGB did not want readers to hear the full case. It might look as if the CPGB was worried that it did not have an answer to a compelling revolutionary case. I hope it is nothing to do with keeping

the *Weekly Worker* as a 'safe space'. I hope these are not the reasons, because all communists would be disappointed. I look forward for the editor being open about his rationale.

Comrade Sandy McBurney has been a consistent 'remainder'. He urged Scotland to remain in the UK and remain in the EU. The CPGB has been a consistent abstainer/boycotter. The *Weekly Worker* wanted the Scottish working class not to vote in the Scottish and EU referendums.

Now I am proposing a synthesis of the two positions. Sandy is right to urge Scottish workers to remain and the CPGB's Jack Conrad is right to urge workers in England to abstain or not vote. This will surely become famous in dialectical circles throughout the world as the 'McBurney-Conrad synthesis'.

However the opposite synthesis is that Sandy wants England to remain and Jack wants Scotland to abstain/boycott. That, I am afraid, is completely off the wall because it would not serve the interests of the working class. If the working class acted in that way the big winner would be Cameron and the Tories, and the big loser would be Farage.

As far as I can see, the CPGB is mainly in England and Wales. Are you going to going to fight for the abstain/boycott line in England? Or are you going to abstain from any abstain campaign? We need a united front of all those prepared to fight. All the serious class forces in this referendum are in 'remain' or 'leave' united front campaigns. The CPGB should be calling a meeting of all those who want to fight for the interests of the working class to meet in London and plan a campaign.

Scotland remains, England abstains.

Steve Freeman
Left Unity and Rise

Who?

Among the many EU foes that Oliver Healey claims are causing Britain's 'financial stagnation', one in particular stands out: "plutocratic moneymen" (Letters, March 17). They are not speculators, spivs and bankers, since Healey singles these out for separate mention. They are European though. The (non-European?) City of London appears to be in thrall to them.

Who are these people? I think we should be told.

René Gimpel
email

Fighting fund

Grandstand finish

We'll need a grandstand finish if we're going to reach our target of £1,750 for our March fighting fund. The last seven days saw a sterling effort from several comrades - special thanks to SK and MM in particular for their standing orders - but the £390 that came in still leaves us rather short on £1,234.

Which means we still need £541 in just over a week. That, of course, is more than possible, but it will depend on a good number of comrades doing their bit. Especially those online readers - there were 3,350 of them last week, but only one, comrade TB (£30), clicked on the 'Donate' button. Of course, if just one percent of those internet readers had contributed, say, a tenner, that would have amounted to £335, so you can see that the March target is still well within reach.

Two comrades wrote us a

cheque. While FN gave £10, KS doubled his subscription payment to £60 for the next six months - that's £30 towards the fighting fund. KS writes: "I know I'm not the only one to say it, but when the *Weekly Worker* lands on the doormat every Friday it brings a smile to my face." And it's not just those thought-provoking articles he's talking about: KS is one of those subscribers who just loves the unusual stamps we often have on the envelope!

Anyway, whatever the reason, if like him you appreciate the *Weekly Worker*, please help ensure we can keep delivering! Help us break through that £1,750 barrier this month ●

Robbie Rix

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

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 27: No forum.

Sunday April 3, 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 3 ('Parliamentarism vs direct action'), section 3: 'Labour's fling'. Organised by CPGB: www.cpgb.org.uk.

Leave or remain?

Tuesday March 29, 6pm: Discussion, Unison Centre, 130 Euston Road, London NW1. How should workers vote in the EU referendum? Speakers: John Hilary (War on Want) and Owen Tudor (TUC head of international relations).

Organised by Unison London Region: www.unison.org.uk/regions/greater-london.

Women making 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>.

Socialist opposition to World War I

Monday April 4 to Thursday April 14: Exhibition, Congress House, Great Russell Street, London WC1. Display of historic posters and photographs.

Organised by Marx Memorial Library: www.marxlibrary.org.uk.

No to settler violence

Tuesday April 5, 7.30pm: Meeting, Kingston Quaker Centre, Fairfield East, Kingston upon Thames. Featuring eye witnesses from Palestine.

Organised by Palestine Solidarity Campaign: www.palestinecampaign.org.

15 years of the 'war on terror'

Wednesday April 6, 6.30pm: Meeting, Torriano Meeting House, 99 Torriano Avenue, London NW5. Speaker: John Rees.

Organised by North London Stop the War Coalition: www.facebook.com/events/972875536166608.

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>.

Universal credit - what next?

Wednesday April 13, 9.30am to 3pm: Education session, Learning Partnership Cornwall, Redruth Centre, 5-6 Station Road, Redruth.

'Universal credit - what will it mean for workers?' Free entrance. Bookings: www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/universal-credit-what-will-it-mean-for-workers-tickets-17222895143.

Organised by South West TUC: southwest@tuc.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.

Workers Memorial Day

Thursday April 28, 11am: Meeting, Unite the Union, 1 Cathedral Road, Cardiff CF11. Memorial for all workers killed or injured due to unsafe working conditions. Free, with small buffet.

Organised by Welsh TUC: wtuc@tuc.org.uk.

Racist and Islamophobic

Saturday April 30, 5pm: Meeting, Augustine United Church, George IV Bridge, Edinburgh EH1. The effects of the 'anti-terrorist' Prevent policy.

Organised by Muslim Women's Association of Edinburgh, Edinburgh Stop the War and Scotland Against Criminalising Communities: www.stopwar.org.uk/index.php/events/local-stop-the-war-events/1837-30-apr-edinburgh-public-meeting-prevent-racist-and-islamophobic.

Stop the War Coalition

Saturday May 14, 11am to 5pm: Conference, Midlands Institute, Margaret Street, Birmingham, B3.

Organised by Birmingham Stop the War Coalition: www.stopwar.org.uk/index.php/events/local-stop-the-war-events/1842-14-may-birmingham-stop-the-war-conference.

Unofficial war artist

Ends Monday May 30: New exhibition of Peter Kennard's work, Imperial War Museum, Lambeth Road, London SE1. Free entry.

Organised by Imperial War Museum: www.iwm.org.uk/exhibitions/iwm-london/peter-kennard.

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

Advancing but taking heavy casualties

The Labour right is doing all in its power to retain control and exclude opponents. Stan Keable of Labour Party Marxists reports on the AGM of the CLPD

Summing up at the end of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy's March 19 annual general meeting in London's Conway Hall, chair Lizzy Ali reminded us of the "anti-Jeremy plotters" active in the Labour Party, and that we have "many expellees to support".

Anyone experiencing difficulties with their application to join the party, or having problems with their membership, were urged to contact one of the three national executive members present - Ann Black, Christine Shawcroft and Pete Willsman - who would take up their case. Christine related how she had been "trampled in the rush" at a regional Party meeting, where she had offered to help comrades with membership problems - at least 30 came forward. She asked: "The question is, is this an organised witch-hunt? We need to gather information from all regions, to see if there is a pattern."

A group of Corbynistas from one Constituency Labour Party told the meeting how they had been suddenly suspended from membership, just in time to be excluded from an important decision-making meeting - a notorious bureaucratic tactic of the right. When they are later reinstated with 'no case to answer', no doubt, it will be too late, and anti-Corbyn CLP officers will be entrenched for another year. When the comrades said the CLPD seemed to be taking this outrage lying down, Pete Willsman let rip with a torrent of invective against the right. "We have been struggling for 20 years against Blairite rule. They cheated. They even broke into ballot boxes. They have a culture of cheating. They are crooks. Labour First is organised in every trade union, in every constituency - a continuation of the anti-democratic organisation set up by Frank Chapple."

The infamous 'compliance unit', according to Ann Black, is not to blame for the glut of challenges to membership. Decisions are made by NEC panels, she said: "Blaming the compliance unit is like blaming the ticket collector for a late train." The unit is a section of party staff which handles such complaints. They had told Christine Shawcroft that they forward membership complaints to the relevant CLP, and if it has no objection to the membership of someone who has been suspended, then the compliance unit has no objection either and the member is reinstated. Christine Shawcroft has requested a report on how many membership challenges are in hand. However, the obvious question remains, she said: "If they are not coming from the individual's CLP, where are the allegations coming from?"

CLPD youth convenor Dominic Curran reported that the left is now "in charge of Young Labour for the first time in 30 years", following the victory of Momentum's youth and students slate in the election of the YL national committee. The downside of this happy victory, however, is that the turnout was a measly 3.5%. John Chamberlain of Labour Party Marxists asked why the NEC had not rejected the dubious election as Young Labour delegate to the Party's NEC of Blairite candidate Jasmin Beckett, who had scraped in by one electronic vote after a contrived smear campaign had labelled her opponent, Momentum's James Elliott, an anti-Semite. A recount had been refused by the returning officer, Progress recruiter Stephen Donnelly,

and formal complaints were made by Unite and others.¹

Our three NEC members explained how the executive, instead of rejecting the election of a candidate who had clearly violated the code of conduct for elections, had kicked the issue into the long grass, allowing Beckett to retain her seat. So much for the idea that the NEC majority is now "leftwing". All complaints around the YL election, along with the outrageous charges of anti-Semitism made against the Oxford University Labour Club for its stand against Israel's persecution of the Palestinians, have been referred to an "enquiry" under Baroness Jan Royall - who, Ann Black reminded us, worked for Neil Kinnock and is a supporter of Labour Friends of Israel. Labour Party "enquiries" can last years, and may never reach a conclusion.

Michael Calderbank added his concern that many delegates to the Young Labour conference in Scarborough had been "priced out of attending" because of a failure to provide travel costs. And Pete Willsman explained: "There are no procedures for the enquiry. Write to the party's general secretary, and send copies to me or Ann."

CLPD role

Surprisingly perhaps, the massive intake of new members, young and old, since Corbyn's election as leader became a possibility, has had minimal impact on the CLPD - as with the Labour Representation Committee. (Incidentally, the customary team of sellers of the LRC's version of *Labour Briefing* were nowhere to be seen, while 'the original' *Labour Briefing* published by Christine Shawcroft's Labour Briefing Cooperative had its own table.)

Attendance at the AGM barely reached the usual 80 almost entirely elderly, well known faces. Thirty-six new members joined during 2015 and, after allowing for a few who passed away, individual membership reached 270 at year end. However, another 34 have joined so far during the early part of 2016, so perhaps substantial reinforcements are on their way. (At its peak in the mid-1980s, individual membership reached only about 1,100.) There are also affiliated organisations, including CLPs, Branch LPs and 13 trade unions, so individual membership figures only tell part of the story.

The CLPD's main role is to promote rule changes to democratise the party - a frustrating process, as rule change proposals from CLPs are subject to a one-year delay. There are seven rule changes already on the agenda of Labour's 2016 conference, but those submitted by the current deadline of June 24 will only be considered at the 2017 annual conference. The NEC, on the other hand, can submit last-minute rule changes for immediate consideration by conference.

So the CLPD is

campaigning for one particular change to be put to conference by the NEC - to "Clarify the rules for electing leader to avoid the party being involved in legal battles". The purpose is to make explicit that, if a leader or deputy leader contest is triggered, the incumbent will automatically have a place on the ballot paper.

Assistant secretary Barry Gray explained that there are "huge business interests" which not only want to prevent a Corbyn-type anti-austerity government in 2020: "they don't want an anti-austerity opposition". The Corbyn-McDonnell leadership has already succeeded in stopping the tax-credit cuts, and "now the Tory government has lost a minister" (referring to the resignation of Iain Duncan Smith). "Ever since Corbyn became the front-runner, the right has been talking about a coup. They know they cannot win a democratic election in the Labour Party, so they are intent on an undemocratic coup."

John McTernan, previously Blair's political advisor, is leading the attack, said comrade Gray. The right have obtained legal advice that, if a leader ballot is triggered, "the high court would insist on a 20% threshold for Jeremy. This is the only threat to Jeremy's leadership," he added. "The right will fight this."

Secretary Pete Willsman moved his 'omnibus' motion, re-iterating the various - and many - campaigning objectives: to "increase party democracy", "increase annual conference democracy", "regain conference sovereignty in relation to policy" and, interestingly, remove "the sole right of MPs to trigger a leadership election". Of course, one of LPM's long-term objectives for party democracy is abolition of the post of leader and the system of patronage which goes with it, but not at present - not while Corbyn is under siege in a hostile PLP. Comrade Willsman's motion commits the CLPD to tackling the "lack of accountability to local parties of councillors and MPs", which results from the "undermining" of local government committees and constituency general committees (CGCs consist of delegates from party branches and local affiliated trade union and socialist groups).

The CLPD does not limit its work to rule changes, but also organises "a range of contemporary motions for CLPs, etc, to submit to annual conference". But Pete Willsman advised CLPs, given the choice between submitting a rule change or a contemporary motion: "Contemporary motions end up in the bin - rule

changes last a hundred years."

According to his motion, the CLPD now has "nearly 30 comrades" on the national policy forum, along with several on the joint policy committee, which is the NPF's leading body. But, comrade Willsman complained, individuals promoted by the CLPD cannot be relied upon when it comes to a vote. In a similar vein, Christine Shawcroft reported that the Labour Party NEC supposedly now has a leftwing majority - but she is "still waiting to see evidence of this".

The amendment from Labour Party Marxists to motion 5 aimed at removing the bureaucratic exclusion of organised communists from party membership. Clause II (5), which had been inserted into Labour's constitution in 1944, reads:

Political organisations not affiliated or associated under a national agreement with the party, having their own programme, principles and policy for distinctive and separate propaganda, or possessing branches in the constituencies, or engaged in the promotion of parliamentary or local government candidates, or having allegiance to any political organisation situated abroad, shall be ineligible for affiliation to the party.²

These provisions destroyed the traditional character of the Labour Party as a federation of trade unions and socialist societies. They would have disqualified all the original socialist societies which helped to form the Labour Party. The Independent Labour Party, the Social Democratic Federation, the Fabian Society, all undertook some or all of these activities.

Described as "well intentioned"

by executive committee member Richard Price, the LPM amendment was remitted to the CLPD executive. Hopefully, this will lead to a well drafted rule change proposal, so that - as I argued from the rostrum - socialists and socialist organisations of all stripes will be able to join the Labour Party's umbrella, the only condition being that they do not stand candidates against Labour.

Democracy

A highlight of the AGM was the speech on "party-union relations after Jeremy's victory" by Matt Wrack, Fire Brigades Union general secretary. The FBU had been affiliated to Labour from 1927 until 2004, when its conference wanted out after being vilified by Labour government politicians during the 2002-03 pay dispute. But in exile the FBU had built a strong parliamentary group - Labour only, unlike some unions, he said - including John and Jeremy, who had "always stood side by side with us". He had a photo of John and Jeremy on the 1977 FBU picket line: "We don't forget."

The FBU is coming back into the party "for public services, for public ownership and for party democracy", he said. "The supreme party body must be annual conference, with the leadership accountable to conference." When Matt's renewed individual Labour membership was reported, he said, Labour First's Luke Akehurst foolishly tweeted: "Another Trot who should have remained expelled."

Corbyn's director of strategy and communications, Seamus Milne, made a "surprise appearance" at the AGM, reassuring us (or perhaps himself) that only a small minority of Labour MPs are hoping for a poor result in the May 5 elections so as to weaken the Corbyn-McDonnell leadership, while the majority "want to make it work". Nevertheless, he correctly pointed to the "symbiosis between some in the Labour Party and elements of the media and the establishment". We must counter this, using social media to "isolate those who want to create a feeling of confusion and failure" ●

Notes

1. See www.leftfutures.org/2016/02/young-labour-in-left-landslide-but-chaos-manipulation-smears-mar-nec-election.
2. www.labourcounts.com/constitution.htm.



Matt Wrack: affiliated

TORIES

In disarray and retreat

The budget fiasco is a perfect illustration of the contradictions at the heart of the modern Tory Party, argues Paul Demarty

It is safe to say that we have all become very used to George Osborne's budgets and, on the face of it, this one was unexceptional.

There were to be more cuts to welfare - in this case, £1.4 billion was to be snatched from the disabled. Vintage Osborne! On top of that, tax cuts were to be handed to people in the 40p tax bracket, raising the threshold by a couple of grand. A sugar tax would be imposed on fizzy drinks. The event of the budget was, of course, repurposed to serve other political ends (and this is hardly an Osborne novelty, having been part of the stock in trade of ambitious chancellors, since David Lloyd-George used a budget to provoke a constitutional crisis that would ultimately rob the Lords of their veto) - broadsides abounded against Brexiters, Corbynistas and whoever else was available to be slapped around.

It was also vintage Osborne, in that its relationship with reality was tenuous. His own creation, the Office for Budgetary Responsibility, immediately pointed out that - insofar as he has set himself the aim of running a surplus by 2020 (and *this time I mean it*) - his numbers only added up on the basis of outdated assumptions and 'creative accountancy'. No matter; the OBR has made statements of this sort many times, and the criticism has never stuck.

Jeremy Corbyn slammed the thing, in the sentimental left terms he usually employs, making the point that all the targets had been missed, and yet George was still busily engaged in doing favours for everyone with an income 50% north of the median wage. Corbyn was, predictably, decried as useless and mad by the media. What more, exactly, is expected of Her Majesty's Opposition than strenuous and sincere opposition to the government remains a mystery - not least in the light of subsequent events.

For March 18 was the day that the quiet man roared like a lion. Iain Duncan Smith resigned as secretary of state for work and pensions, and all hell broke loose. His *casus belli*? That a further cut to disability benefits was the final straw, and IDS's pursuit of a fair, socially just conservatism was no longer best served by participation on the front bench.

An alternative explanation has been put forward most energetically by anonymous briefings and by junior cronies of the David Cameron/George Osborne faction, who claimed that the disabled have very little to do with the whole thing: Duncan Smith is really concerned with undermining the government in favour of the Eurosceptic wing of the Tory Party, of which he is a prominent member. His allies have been enthusiastically briefing that he has destroyed Osborne's leadership ambitions (if only), giving succour to those who accuse him of merely leading a fiendish plot against the prime minister, chancellor and their greasy clique.

Neither side, unsurprisingly, is telling the whole truth.

Modern Tories

Understanding all this requires an understanding of the social role of the Conservative Party.

Contemporary society is dominated by the bourgeoisie: that is, the class of people who own the means of production and employ it to make profits through the exploitation of labour. The bourgeoisie is *not* the particular set of people who as *individuals* happen, *de jure*, to own



Pips protest

a share of the means of production, however: there is a complex division of labour. Profits accrue, for example, to those in high finance, in the form of commissions and fees, even if those individuals merely shuffle other people's money around.

In society at large, size matters. The capitalist class is small - indeed, it tends, due to the concentration of capital, to get smaller. Those it exploits form large classes - the proletariat and the petty bourgeoisie, which in many countries have won, through determined struggle, the right to vote on the government of the day. In this situation, the bourgeoisie cannot rule without some measure of consent from those subordinated to it.

The historic purpose of the Labour Party has been to weld the interests of the proletariat to those of the bourgeoisie - a difficult task, in that the bourgeoisie exploits the proletariat. Far easier, relatively speaking, is the job of the Tories: to do the same, but appealing instead to the petty bourgeoisie.

Thus the Tories must face in many directions at once. They must, of course, pursue the effective aims of the British capitalist class. In this day and age, this means adopting a position of utmost subservience to the shekel-shifters in the City. Yet they must also *present* this programme as advantageous to the interests (or prejudices) of the petty bourgeoisie. The story of the modern Tories is the story of this dilemma.

In the immediate post-war era, the primary concern was anti-communism, understood as anti-Sovietism. Like many other 'natural parties of government', the Tories were faced primarily with the need to ensure British society did not generate any great attraction among the lower orders for 'official communism'. A great welfare state was created by a Labour government that also chose to engage in large-scale nationalisations; the Tories did not dare do more than tinker at the edges for several decades afterwards.

In the 1970s, as the oil shock and stagflation crisis hit, the capitalist world shifted away from that model, which had (for obvious reasons) never suited it. In the Tory Party, the shift was exemplified first by Edward Heath - who wanted to break the back of the unions, but was defeated by the miners - and secondly, and definitively, by Margaret Thatcher.

With Thatcher, something of the *social character* of modern Toryism started to shift. The post-war situation was ill-suited to full-blooded advocates of capitalism, but it had a place for a certain sort of old-fashioned Tory: he was a patrician sort of guy with good breeding; his wife ran the harvest festival collection at the local church; he had a high-minded concern for the poor. Thatcherism ripped the heart out of such people. Her pitch to the petty bourgeoisie, and to layers of the working class, was that the establishment and state bureaucracy were holding them (and 'their families') back *as individuals*.

From the 30,000-foot view favoured by Marxism, and indeed the *historical* perspective as such, little changed in the distribution of social and economic power, but the *bearers* of that power changed. The City changed, making itself a home for people with regional accents prepared to work long hours to supplant the sclerotic scions of the old establishment. As opposed to the shattered illusion of a benevolent ruling caste, the 'new' fiction of meritocracy became the central pillar of the Tory ideology. True to form, this shift was reflected within the party itself: after Thatcher, no Tory leader was public-school-educated until David Cameron (in striking contradistinction to the ranks of his MPs).

Rise of the quiet man

One of those humble boys who ran the shop between Maggie and Dave was IDS - elected as leader in 2001 with Thatcher's blessing as a staunch

Eurosceptic against Ken Clarke. His reign was brief and farcical, not least because at the time the media was behind Tony Blair, and for them Duncan Smith could do nothing right. Having caused endless trouble for John Major the previous decade, he got a taste of his own medicine in 2003, and was rudely defenestrated in favour of the 'unity' candidate, Michael Howard. He nursed his wounds by reinventing himself as an old-fashioned, patrician, 'one-nation' Tory, founding the bleeding-heart Centre for Social Justice think-tank, and found his way back to the front benches under Cameron.

His grand wheeze as the minister in charge of the department for work and pensions was 'universal credit' - an attempt to streamline the benefits system into a simple single payment, which would at the same time ensure that work always paid more than benefits alone. This policy has been a total disaster. He has missed even the generous deadlines he set for himself; and beyond the inherent complexity of the task, he has had to carry it out under circumstances where his department was basically the only one not ring-fenced against Osborne's cuts.

On his resignation, his argument was that the latest £1.4 billion cut was the last straw - which we can believe in the very restricted sense that nobody much likes to see their own departmental budget hammered again and again, and eventually enough may turn out to be enough. He denies any connection to the issue of Europe, but we must insist that there is one, even if it is only that his enthusiasm for Brexit had definitively cut him out of the charmed circle of those who actually decide government policy: paid-up members of the new 'project fear'.

IDS is a contradictory character - on one level, a ruthless and mercenary political operator; on the other, someone who clearly believes in *something*, even if the idea that the issue was his concern for the

disabled, after six years of beating them about, is hardly credible. In 2001, he was the legitimate and popular choice of the Tory rank and file, because of his unashamed chauvinism and Euroscepticism. His broadside against Osborne has made that kind of hero of him once again.

Osborne, meanwhile, is a different kind of operator. Indeed, one can almost squint at him and see a pure avatar of capital standing there. He is slick, modern, yet more ruthless and mercenary, and crippled by the most vulgar short-termism. It was his ridiculous pre-election pledge to find another £12 billion of welfare cuts that led to this farce over disability benefits. It was no doubt his 'strategic genius' that convinced David Cameron to promise an in-out referendum on European Union membership. Neither were expected to be more than empty words, in a situation where continued coalition rule was thought to be the best possible outcome of the 2015 election.

The spat between Iain Duncan Smith and George Osborne is ultimately a demonstration of how tenuous the grip of the Tories has become on the traditional alliance of the ruling class and the petty bourgeoisie. The beautiful lies of patriotism and tradition sit ever more uneasily against the plainly corrupt and cynical operations of bourgeois politics.

In fact, this is a problem afflicting more parties than the Tories: one need only mention Donald Trump in this connection. The shakiness of the mainstream right opens the way for more radical chauvinist-reactionaries to break *to the right*, giving the establishment a scare. In Britain, that scare is Brexit: the second referendum on Cameron's watch, greeted initially with glib insouciance, is now provoking a degree of panic.

Things are about to get a lot dirtier ●

POLEMIC

Two strategic illusions

Money can function fully only if it is *world money*, writes Mike Macnair

On January 21 this paper published Arthur Bough's 'Making inroads into power of capital', which was a critique of my two-part series, 'Overcoming the power of capital' (November 15 2015) and 'Masses and government' (November 12 2015). Comrade Bough's article is an abbreviated version of his critique, which appeared as an eight-part (16,000-word) series, 'Overcoming the power of capital' on his blog (January 17-25 2016).¹ My response is, therefore, to comrade Bough's full version.

At the most basic level, comrade Bough accuses me of buying into the pro-capitalist economists' ideology of surplus value. The accusation is false. In fact, the boot is on the other foot: *comrade Bough* buys into the pro-capitalist *jurists*' (and 'new institutional' economists') ideologies of formal legal property rights, and the idea that the capitalist state 'defends property rights' generally, without considering what *operative rules and practices* lie behind these formal legal property rights.

He promotes two strategic illusions. The first is that the working class can strategically ally with industrial corporate management (which he claims, falsely, is represented by social democracy) against financial capital, to defend immediate common interests. This is a variant on the traditional people's front line of the *British road to socialism*, with the Labour Party cast as representative of a section of capital - an equivalent of what 'official communists' have traditionally called the 'democratic' or 'national' bourgeoisie.

The second illusion is about the road to socialism: that the working class can build massive worker-managed cooperatives, which can foreshadow socialism, *without* at the same time building an *anti-constitutional workers' party* working to discredit the media, judiciary, corrupt MPs, and so on.

In reality, without such a party to make them into part of a 'state within a state' movement, cooperatives would be 'regulated' into compulsory managerialisation²; if successful, they would be entrapped (as the Cooperative Bank was) into bailing out failing firms, themselves bankrupted and turned into a mere 'cooperative brand' owned by capitalist financiers; and/or would be simply expropriated by the state (as comrade Bough has himself pointed out happened to pre-1945 cooperative and trade union hospitals, cooperative coalmines, etc).

Lying behind these strategic illusions is a peculiar Bough version of some of the common ideas of the (larger) part of the far left, which in the 1950s-70s constructed explanations of the characteristics of the capitalist economy, and politics, in that period. These escaped from the 'coming crash' theories shared both by the 1930s Comintern authors, Trotsky and his co-thinkers, and by 'orthodox' Trotskyists like the Gerry Healy groups.³

But they did so at the expense of two problems. The first was failing to explain the characteristics of the earlier period, 1900-50. (The Alliance for Workers' Liberty's Martin Thomas, for example, has argued that Lenin's account of imperialism was true for its own period, but that capitalism had moved after 1945 into a new period: the move into a 'new period' is a pure Ptolemaic-astronomy epicycle to 'save the phenomena'.) The second, related, problem was transforming peculiarities of the cold war into



A return to industrial capital? Laura Knight's 'Ruby Loftus screwing a breech ring' (1943)

permanent features of capitalism (or of 'late capitalism', as in Ernest Mandel's 1975 book). The result is that, since the late 1970s, such theories have proved to have decreasing predictive value; and the same is true of comrade Bough's version.

Argument

In spite of its length, comrade Bough's critique does not respond at all to the larger part of my arguments in the original articles (and in previous articles on the same issue). If comrade Bough's *a priori* arguments for his point of view are correct, my empirical evidence to the contrary would be irrelevant and it would not be necessary for comrade Bough to answer it. It is, however, necessary to note this point before engaging with comrade Bough's substantive points.

I will attempt to lay out the shape of comrade Bough's argument before responding to the principal points; in passing, while doing so, I will respond to some minor mistakes in his critique.

Comrade Bough begins with objections to my use of the formula $M - C - C' - M'$. The *form* of the objection is that I should have written $M - C \dots P \dots C' - M'$. This is trivial. In any case it fails to recognise that *what I actually wrote* was " M (money) - C (commodities) - C' (worked-up commodity product) - M' (increased money)", a formulation which explicitly refers to the stage of production.

Comrade Bough has a more substantial point behind this, however, which is that this formula should in the light of the discussions in *Capital* volume 2 rather be written ' $P \dots C' - M', M - C \dots P$ ', and that when this is done the result "puts the money-capital in its rightful, subordinate role".

This starting point then yields a move to Marx's discussions of merchant and money capitals in *Capital* volume 3, and in the same

volume of fictitious capital, of the emergence of joint-stock companies and of the separation of the employed managers from the *rentier* shareholders. Comrade Bough follows Marx's discussions in identifying the joint-stock company with a deformed-form transition to socialised production - and in seeing the wages of managerial supervision as tending to fall, producing a common interest of industrial managers with the workers.

A fundamental role in this analysis is played by comrade Bough's acceptance of the black-letter legal dogma of the separate personality of the company, for which he oddly relies on Greer LJ's dictum in *Shaw & Sons (Salford) Ltd v Shaw* (1935) rather than any of the more fundamental cases on the issue (*Salomon v Salomon & Co* (1896) and so on). None of the various books and articles, leftwing or academic, on the historical development of the corporate form, or the neoclassical economic analysis of this form (notably 'nexus of contracts' theory) or even the actual legal textbook literature, is discussed or critiqued. On the basis of this analysis, comrade Bough argues that "what we currently have is the coercive subordination of the owners of socialised capital, in the shape of joint-stock companies, by non-owners: ie. shareholders".

Linked to this, but a good deal later, he rejects my use of the quotation attributed to Andrew Mellon, that "in a depression assets return to their rightful owners" (meaning the creditors). Rather, in comrade Bough's view the tag merely misdescribes devaluation of capital. Since I used the quotation attributed to Mellon simply as a nice illustration of a view more widespread among a section of capitalists and one which in my opinion has some explanatory power, given the corrupt character of the judicial system, this is a secondary

point. But it illustrates the fact that here, too, comrade Bough refuses to look behind the superficial attribution of 'ownership' in the most elementary, 'Nutshell'-type law textbooks.

Moving on from here, comrade Bough argues that I am wrong to suggest that the "formal subsumption of labour to capital" (meaning a mechanism or mechanisms analogous to the old 'putting out' production, where numerous small domestic producers are controlled by a merchant monopolist) continues to operate today. His reasons are obscure, but appear to be, in substance, first, that it is only the large scale of industrial production that enables the present similarly large scale of financial operations and, second, that the present high levels of asset values are merely inflationary, therefore amounting to an actual devaluation of the asset-holders holdings relative to real values. It seems to me that neither point is at all relevant.

He now shifts into the argument that the measures of welfarism, etc are in the objective interests of productive capital and especially of 'socialised capital' (corporations). He accuses me, when I remark that "even badly-off Brits are a lot better off than (for example) Somalis", of giving "the impression that British workers' living standards are somehow achieved at the expense of Somalis". He says this shows "an only grudging acceptance of the idea that capitalism actually does produce real improvements of workers' living standards": ie, that I buy Lassalle's 'iron law of wages'.

This is, bluntly, nonsense. Suppose for the sake of argument that there was no such thing as value transfers from (some) countries lower in the global hierarchy to (some) countries higher, and that it was true that high British living standards were *merely* a product of increased productivity (as we will see below, given the very large British

deficit in 'visible' trade, that view is more than slightly implausible). Even on this assumption, it would still be true that workers in Britain could quite properly look outside their own country and say, 'Hey, it's better to have capitalism than whatever it is they have in Somalia' (or in the old USSR); hence, we should put up with the social subordination that capitalism entails. That hypothetical was the whole of the argument I made which comrade Bough criticises as Lassallean, and so on. It will be necessary to return to the issue of the world economy, but not in this framework.

Once the argument for social democratic measures as being in the objective interests of capital has been (sort of) made, we come to the critical question of the explanation of post-1945 politics and economy. Comrade Bough argues that the period saw measures which were *merely* in the interests of industrial capital - they only aided the working class in the sense that strengthening industrial capital, by tightening the labour market, also strengthens the working class. The resistance of the Tories, and their ability to move politics in their direction since 1948, which I see in terms of a 'ratchet to the right', he identifies as opposition from "backward-looking sections of capital, from the small private productive and merchant capitalists, and from the private money-lending capitalists..."

Comrade Bough therefore rejects my argument that the state is subordinated to capital *through* subordination to money capital on purely dogmatic grounds: "For Marx, the determinant is property. As he sets out early in *Capital* volume 1, people are no more than the personification of economic relations and forms of property".

He thus sees only a *partial* reversal of the dominance of industrial capital after the 1970s. He attributes the

increased role of financial capital in this period to the move into the down phase of the long 'Kondratiev cycle' in the economy. In his view the bailout of the banks and reaching for Keynesian fiscal tools in 2008 represented the true interests of industrial capital, while the shift (back) to austerity (aka 'structural adjustment' or 'structural reform'⁴, etc) showed that "conservative governments once more began to tend to the interests of those reactionary sections of capital on which they rest".

He insists, in other words, that the dynamic to dominance of industrial capital and hence of its (alleged) ideological representative, social democracy, *must* still be at work, in spite of all appearances to the contrary. There is an odd sense in which comrade Bough's arguments here might be seen as a symmetrical inversion of the Healyites' arguments in the 1950s-70s against the 'impressionism' of those who asserted that a crash was not just around the corner.

The concluding part of his critique attempts to 'cash' the preceding argument in policy prescriptions. The first point is that Marxists should not 'oppose' the implementation of social democratic policies. I put quote-marks round 'oppose', because comrade Bough gives the word a slightly unusual meaning: he actually means we should not *criticise the realism of proposals to implement social democratic policies through taking government office under present conditions*. The positive policy he puts forward is to *support* the implementation of such policies, including through large-scale money-printing, as strengthening the general position of the working class in alliance with industrial capital, while proposing as a more positive Marxist alternative the replacement of forms of state provision of welfare, housing, policing and so on, by large-scale cooperatives.

In spite of his previous - correct - observation that the 1945 Labour government expropriated existing workers' cooperatives and mutuals as part of their 'reforms', he argues that it would be politically harder for the capitalists to steal cooperative-held assets than it has been for them to steal public, charitable and local government assets in the last 50 years.

Since, as I said before, comrade Bough makes no serious attempt to answer the empirical elements of my argument, this response is mainly to the theoretical arguments. Further, I will not go through the process of responding in detail to each of comrade Bough's quotations from Marx, and so on, since this would be tedious for the reader and not particularly illuminating.

There are, I think, three major substantive issues. The first is the relation of money and production. The second is the meaning of legal ownership and corporate personality in relation to concepts of the mode of production. The third is comrade Bough's misleading use of the truth that, while the cold war order has gone away, the *statisation* of capitalism has not.

For reasons of time and space I will write only on the first issue in this article. A second article will address the other two issues and return briefly to comrade Bough's positive policy prescriptions.

Production and money

The substantive case in support of comrade Bough's view is quite simple. In order for there to be money profits, interest and rent, there must also be two phenomena. The first is the production of a material surplus of use-values (usable goods and some sorts of services). The second is the existence of social relations by which this material surplus is extracted from the direct producers. In this

sense, money profits, interest and rent are necessarily subordinate to the continuation of productive capitalism - which means, primarily, though not exclusively, the industrial-scale production of use-values (including services, such as hospitals).

If there was no material surplus of use-values, the possession of large quantities of a money commodity or of forms of credit money would be quite pointless: there would be nothing you could buy with it. It is for this reason that merely printing more money, without generating equivalent increased productive output, merely produces inflation. The fact that the present high level of capital asset valuations are merely inflationary, as comrade Bough notes, is a case in point.

The same would be true for slightly less direct reasons if the mechanisms for the extraction of the surplus product from the direct producers failed. If the exploitation mechanism is merely weakened because the organised working class becomes too powerful on wages and conditions issues, capitalists may engage in large-scale layoffs and production cutbacks as a form of 'go-slow' or 'investment strike' to force concessions from trade unions and government, while simultaneously raising prices; this is an element of what was going on in the 'stagflation' of the mid-1970s in the UK and USA.

Alternatively, imagine the exploitation mechanism was wholly eliminated, but without the creation of coordination mechanisms alternative to money ('planning'). Now there would be a surplus *material* product, but one retained in the hands of the direct producers in the form of - for example - stocks of unsold motorcycles held by a motorcycle-producing cooperative because the item is a luxury product and there are insufficient middle class buyers,⁵ or of unsold grain held by small farmers who, having been 'freed' from the obligation to turn over part of their product as rent, interest or tax, found they had no buyers - because, if there is *no* unpaid transfer of surplus product from the primary agricultural producers, everyone else will starve.

At this point we see why the fact that money profits, rent and interest are dependent on the production of a material surplus *does not* imply the dominance of productive capital over money capital, but only *determination in the last resort* by production. In capitalism, it is not merely the case that *joint stock companies* are 'socialised' production; *all market-dependent production* is 'socialised' production - the product of what Marx called the 'collective labourer'. Although this production is not consciously coordinated within the individual firm or by the state, it is (roughly) coordinated through money transactions, creating the superficial appearance which supports the economists' ideologies of the 'hidden hand', 'Say's law' and 'dynamic stochastic general equilibrium'. *Access to money, and money returns on money investment*, decide which productive activities will be carried on and which will cease.

Printing money?

Comrade Bough's answer to this point, so far as he offers one at all, has three elements. The first is that, since the material surplus is generated by industrial productive firms, these firms *could* cut out the banker and merchant middlemen by *themselves* printing money, by issuing their own private 'commercial paper' - bills of exchange, promissory notes, and so on.

This was, in fact, common practice in 18th and 19th century capitalism before the rise of the limited-liability joint-stock *banks* after the 1878 crash of the City of Glasgow Bank.

It would be a mistake, however (and was a mistake in Marx's 1864-65 draft, which Engels edited as *Capital* volume 3), to imagine that industrial firms' self-issue of commercial paper was *actually* independent of the financial operations of the City of London. The ability to use non-bank-issued commercial paper as a *means of payment* was dependent on the existence of financial markets *discounting* this commercial paper (selling it to third parties), chiefly in London - and all, in fact, dependent on the discounting operations of the Bank of England (as became apparent at every crisis from 1763 on).

Once the large-scale corporate banks had developed, and reached the point at which *de facto* state bailouts existed, the ability to use non-bank-backed commercial paper to fund industrial operations largely evaporated. Though they are (as they have always been) willing to *give credit* to large firms, vendors from this point wanted, and still want, *bank-backed* commercial paper as *means of payment*. It should perhaps be added that the Truck Acts 1831-1940, obliging employers in general to pay wages in cash (or, more recently, by bank transfer), add to the requirement on industrial operations to have bank credit facilities.

Secondly, comrade Bough argues that industrial investment comes mainly from retained profits, rather than money borrowed from banks or raised on stock markets. This is certainly to a considerable extent true,⁶ but does not actually resolve the issue, for the reason given above: *day-to-day* industrial operations require financial credit facilities. Further, the retained profits have to be by some means saved up to finance any large new investment - and the means of doing so is to bank them or invest them in one or another form of financial securities. Otherwise, the firm would have to hoard cash on its own premises, incidentally withdrawing it from circulation.

Thirdly, comrade Bough argues that the state in a strong capitalist country could get away with printing money on a large scale:

As much currency as you like, in the form of notes and coins, or as much money-capital as you like, in the form of loans advanced, could be thrown at Greece, and indeed has been, but will not solve the problem of inadequate capital. By contrast, a country with adequate capital can always obtain the currency it requires, by printing it, or by use of credit, electronic transfers and so on, and can obtain the money-capital it requires by simply metamorphosing commodity-capital into money-capital, or using its existing capital as collateral.⁷

The error is twofold. The first is the implicit assumption that *physical assets* amount to capital, in the absence of their circulation through the money-form (whether M - C ... P ... C' - M' or P ... C' - M', M - C ... P). In reality - for example - the former site of a factory which has ceased production may be worth extraordinarily little.⁸ The value is in capital as an *active process*.

The second, and more fundamental, error is that comrade Bough has not attempted to answer the point I have made repeatedly - that the material division of labour is international, with the result that money, to function as money in the full sense, has to be capable of functioning as *world* money. In this I am merely following Marx.⁹

This point has equally important implications beyond the issue of printing money. The UK has a large deficit in 'visible trade', and has had for years.¹⁰ This deficit remains relatively unproblematic for the capitalist UK, because of the overseas income

arising from financial and related legal services.¹¹ This financial income enables the UK to import 40% of total food consumed.¹² The implication is that even if on a *world scale* finance must be *in the long term* subordinate to industry, *an individual country* may be a niche 'financial services producer': the 'offshore' islands, but also including *this* offshore island.

The UK can indeed get away with printing money, and has done - as long as it does so as part of a policy designed to protect the dominance of the UK economy by financial services and the international role of London in skimming a share of surplus value from material production mostly carried on elsewhere. It is this activity which makes the UK *credit-worthy* from the point of view of international money-users and hence sterling is a (relatively) 'hard' currency in spite of 'quantitative easing'.

To print money in the service of a national policy of export-led reindustrialisation (to pay for all the food imports ...) and full employment would be a very different matter. Leave aside for the moment the political choices which have always been and remain part of the decision-making processes of financial markets.¹³ To go for industrial production at the 'high end' British industry would enter into direct competition with Germany and Japan, already solidly ensconced in the markets for capital goods, and which out-competed most of British engineering 50-plus years ago; at the 'low end' it would enter into direct competition with China and other 'emerging economies', still characterised by massively lower wages than the UK. It would thus *not* be a *credit-worthy investment project*.

Reproduction schemas

It is for related reasons that comrade Bough's reliance on Marx's reproduction schemas from *Capital* volume 2 to deduce the necessary dominance of industry is unsound. These reproduction schemas apply¹⁴ to a *closed* capitalist economy, thus to the *world* economy as a whole.

The converse of this point is that the reproduction schemas in fact set out to specify *one of the causes of recurring crises in capitalism*: that is, that the flexibility given by the credit system allows productive activities to become, in the boom period, systematically out of alignment with the needs of material reproduction. In the crisis and following depression of a 'normal cycle', there is a forcible realignment, and in this way, *in the business cycle*, the form, 'P ... C' - M', M - C ... P', as expressed in the reproduction schemas, does indeed *determine* M - C ... P ... C' - M' *in the long term, not the immediate term*.

If the nation-state intervenes to prevent the losses falling on savers - that is, to prevent the necessary bankruptcies - this necessarily *exports* the deviations from reproduction needs, which are (among other causes) pushing towards a crash. In doing so, it will in turn destabilise the political regimes of the countries onto which the losses are exported. The result, to the extent that it is not a rise of radical socialism, will be a rise of radical nationalism and a long-term tendency towards war.

The losses in the end *must* fall on the owners of capital; if they are not made to fall on the owners of capital by a wave of bankruptcies and debt 'haircuts', they will be displaced geographically and temporally, to return in a few decades as bombs falling on buildings and infrastructure and massive state defaults, of the sort which occurred after 1918 and 1945. The underlying *determinant role* of productive industry is then displayed *in the world* by the victory of the state that has the greater productive capacity on its own territory, yielding a greater

military productive capacity. As long as matters are not carried to this point, however, financial dominance can continue. Thus the UK experienced a much less severe 1930s depression than the US, precisely because, in spite of the US's greater material *productive* capacity, London remained globally financially dominant.

Just as the UK, as it entered into relative competitive decline in the industrial field in the later 19th century, displayed increased dominance of financial operations and financial capital, so the US, as it in turn entered into relative competitive decline in the industrial field in the late 1960s, has shifted to financialisation - a shift which was *facilitated* through London's Eurodollar market and London's network of offshore jurisdictions. Production remains *in the last analysis determinant* over finance - but that is not the same as its being immediately or politically dominant.

In short: once we recognise the constraints of the global division of labour, and the need for money to be world money in order to function fully as such, the idea that what is involved in the persistence of financialisation is *merely* the resistance of reactionary sections of capital to the needs of industrial capital, expressed in an ideological form, falls to the ground. It is indeed *possible* to have a new 1950s-60s. But the price of doing so is the overthrow of the global *military* power of the USA, analogous to the 1914-45 processes of the overthrow of the global power of the UK - and, going along with it, the loss of London's global financial role ●

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Notes

1. <http://boffyblog.blogspot.co.uk/2016/01/overcoming-power-of-capital-part-1-of-8.html> has links forward.
2. The current legislation is the Cooperative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014, replacing various acts going back to the later 19th century.
3. On the 'official communist' analyses, see RB Day *The 'crisis' and the 'crash'* London 1981. Trotsky's *The death agony of capitalism and the tasks of the Fourth International* (1938) is available at www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1938/tp/index.htm - see especially 'The objective prerequisites for a socialist revolution'. On Healy, R Alexander *International Trotskyism 1929-1985* Durham NC 1991, pp467-68, has a convenient discussion of the origins of Healy's 'catastrophism'; P Pitt *The Rise and Fall of Gerry Healy* (www.whatnextjournal.org.uk/Pages/Healy/Contents.html) has more on the subsequent history.
4. Compare, for example, 'What structural reform is and why it is important' *The Economist* December 9 2014.
5. The Meriden Motorcycle Cooperative was in fact bankrupted in 1983 (along with a lot of other British industrial operations) by Thatcher's high pound sterling, making Triumph motorcycles uncompetitively expensive: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Triumph_Engineering.
6. 'To a considerable extent' - consider, for instance, the arguments as to whether firms *should* retain profits for investment discussed: eg, in AP Dickerson *et al*, 'Internal vs external financing of acquisitions' *Oxford Bulletin of Economics and Statistics* Vol 62 (2000), pp417-31; limits discussed in S Bond and C Meghair, 'Financial constraints and company investment' *Fiscal Studies* Vol 15, No2 (1994), pp1-18; and the 2015 HM Revenue and Customs Research Report study of unlisted companies: G Keilloh, K Chhatralia and C Johnson *Profit distribution and investment patterns of unlisted companies* (I use these 'orthodox' economic products merely because they discuss some empirical data on the issue).
7. <http://boffyblog.blogspot.co.uk/2016/01/overcoming-power-of-capital-part-6-of-8.html>.
8. Compare various discussions by David Harvey; in agriculture, see, for example, K Verdey *The vanishing hectare* Cornell UP 2003.
9. References in R Vasudevan, 'From the gold standard to the floating dollar standard: an appraisal in the light of Marx's theory of money' Vol 41 (2009) *Review of Radical Political Economics* pp473-91.
10. Compare, for example, 'UK trade deficit prompts alarm as exports fall' *The Guardian* January 8 2016 (merely a recent piece).
11. Eg, L Yueh, 'Making the invisibles in the economy visible', BBC News June 16 2015: www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-33146186.
12. www.foodsecurity.ac.uk/issue/uk.html.
13. 'Have always': see BG Carruthers *City of capital* Princeton NJ 1996. 'Still are': for instance, 'Markets soar and close on a high after Conservative election victory' *Daily Mail* May 9 2015; 'Pound falls after Iain Duncan Smith quits and sparks rumours of Tory civil war' *City AM* March 21 2016.
14. To the extent that they apply at all, as opposed to being an elaborate form of the counter-factual.

MIGRATION

Disaster waiting to happen

Eddie Ford finds the EU-Turkey deal on migrants both inhuman and unworkable



They will keep coming

Communists start with the basic proposition that workers should be allowed to live and work anywhere they choose, even if most people naturally want to stay close to their family and friends. Capitalism is an exploitative *global* system, and arguably always has been - with capital freely able to whizz around the world at the touch of a button except for this or that freakish corner of the planet. An inescapable fact is that we live under a 'dog eat dog' imperialist system in which some countries will come out better than others.

As we see with the refugees washed up onto the shores of Lesbos and elsewhere, some countries come out a *lot* worse: getting torn to pieces by a grim cocktail of imperialist intervention, proxy wars, corrosive civil wars and general economic meltdown. Under such conditions, you would expect nothing less than to feel immediate and instinctive *solidarity* with those who have become casualties of a system beyond their control.

Needless to say, the bourgeoisie and their agents feel nothing of the sort - rather, they increasingly regard refugees/migrants as a *threat* to political stability. This could not be made clearer by the wretched European Union-Turkey deal on migrants, which epitomises the inhumanity of the bourgeoisie as a class and was the fruit of five months of intense diplomacy. Under this agreement, which took effect from March 20, at least on paper, any "irregular" or "illegal" migrants who arrive in Greece from Turkey and cannot prove that they are 'genuine' asylum-seekers will be forcibly shipped back to Turkey unless they can somehow prove that doing so would put them in harm's way. Theoretically, this measure would close down the Aegean 'smuggling route', through which nearly one million people arrive in Europe via Turkey and then Greece last year.

In return, the EU has promised

Ankara €6 billion to help the estimated 2.7 million Syrians now languishing in Turkey - and by as early as June will make it easier for Turkish citizens to get short-term visa-free travel to countries in the Schengen area. EU leaders have also agreed a 'people swap': for each Syrian returned to Turkey, Europe has promised to accept another Syrian living in a Turkish camp. However, the EU has set a cap of 72,000 people who will be given asylum: way short of the 108,000 a year recommended by international aid agencies if Europe is to do its 'fair share'. Additionally, for what it's worth - which is not much - Turkey can expect "re-energised" talks on possible EU membership.

Quite monstrously, the EU is turning its back on refugees in what the *Financial Times* (March 18) calls the "harsh collective response" to migration since the end of World War II. Turkey is hardly a safe haven or a promised land. It has regularly flouted international law by sending back refugees to Syria and, despite new labour legislation, does not offer most Syrians access to legal work - as a result, many Syrians send their children to work to make ends meet.

Herculean

Apart from being vile in principle, the EU-Turkey deal is obviously unworkable on just about any level you care to mention - logistically, legally, diplomatically and politically. For instance, somewhat madly, debt-stricken Greece is supposed to have in place by April 4 a 'fast-track' process for assessing asylum claims, which will require a mini-army of some 4,000 staff, including judges, interpreters, border guards, police and others to manage each case individually (those not claiming asylum are expected to be returned even sooner).

True, about 2,500 of the total staff are to come from other EU countries - but they will not start to arrive until March

28, meaning that the country is more or less expected to construct a fully-fledged asylum system on the Greek islands within a few days. The 'hot spot' reception areas, which have been set up over the last few months, will have to be turned into detention centres and Turkish police officers will have to cooperate with the Greek police after many decades of simmering tensions - not exactly a recipe for success.

A despairing Greek interior ministry official said last week that it will "take several weeks to get going, even with help from EU partners" - with Jean-Claude Juncker, president of the European Council, admitting it was a "Herculean challenge" for Greece and the "biggest task the EC has ever faced".

Meanwhile, the refugees continue to flow in. On March 20 alone some 1,600 arrived in a flotilla of flimsy dinghies - they "react with disbelief" when told they will be deported back to Turkey, according to an aid worker. More than 50,000 refugees and migrants are trapped in squalid conditions, with over 13,000 effectively imprisoned in the appalling Idomeni camp on the sealed Greek-Macedonian border. Some of those may try to move onwards through the Balkans - via Albania, maybe, and perhaps by sea to Italy. Historical migration patterns consistently show that when one route closes another one opens.

Politically the deal already seems to be falling apart. Representing a major setback for Brussels, Turkish government sources on March 21 said they would not change their domestic law to grant Afghans and Iraqis refugee status in Turkey - currently, only Syrians are recognised as potential refugees, while others can be deported back to war zones. But 24% of those landing in Greece are Afghans, and 15% are Iraqis, with a high proportion eligible for asylum - meaning that, as the deal currently stands, they may escape being

shipped back to Turkey. Unhappy EU officials said a change in Turkish law was essential to make the deal "compliant" with international law, claiming they received "verbal assurances" from the Turkish delegation that they would do so. However, a Turkish diplomat insisted that his country "does not need to pass further legislation" on this issue.

Further adding to the confusion, an official at the European Asylum Support Office (an EU agency that will advise migrants on their claims) said that people with "immediate family" in Europe could avoid deportation and win the right to re-join their loved ones - the proportion of women and children has surged to six in ten this spring as families attempt to follow menfolk who successfully made the trip to Germany and Sweden last summer. However, EASO's contention contradicts those made by the EC, which argues that rules on family reunification do not "trump" the power to send people back to Turkey. Complicating things even more, it now seems that the one-for-one 'people swap' is "voluntary" - raising doubts about how many countries will actually offer places for Syrian refugees.

As mentioned above, the entire legal basis of the EU-Turkey deal stinks to high heaven - appearing to break both EU law and the United Nations refugee convention, which was created in the aftermath of the Nazi genocide and World War II. Apparently sacrosanct, the convention says signatories cannot expel or deport asylum-seekers/refugees without seriously examining their claims *individually*. Responding in a blatantly disingenuous manner, the EU implied that it would comply with this provision - but, given that it is simultaneously deeming Turkey a 'safe country' for refugees, in reality most people will still be sent back *en masse* in what amounts to a form of collective punishment.

Various international organisations are up in arms against the new scheme.

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees, which has been unenviably tasked with supervising the deal, has stopped cooperating on the Greek islands. Objecting in principle to detention, it has suspended a bus service used to take migrants to the 'closed reception centres'. A UNHCR spokesperson stated that the deal is being "implemented prematurely", as the "necessary safeguards are not yet in place" - adding that Greece "does not yet have the capacity or staff to deal with this and the facilities are not up to standards that guarantee a dignified environment". People claiming asylum need unfettered access to interpreters and the right of appeal, he said, both of which Greece - even on the most generous assessment - is "struggling" to implement.

Amnesty International delivered an even more damning verdict - this is a "dark day for the refugee convention, a dark day for Europe and a dark day for humanity". Similarly, Mike Noyes of Action Aid correctly said that the deal would turn the Greek islands into "prison camps", where "terrified people are held against their will", before being deported back to Turkey. Contemptuously brushing off such criticism, a spokesman for Juncker declared, "We don't have time for comments", as "we have to make this work". But the dinghies and boats keep coming, and Greece is fast becoming the moat, or outer perimeter, of the EU - no longer an integral part of Europe or the Schengen area.

Short-termism

EU leaders know full well that the Turkey deal will be challenged in the courts, and that they will almost certainly lose - publicity that will be accompanied by lots of harrowing pictures of people, including women and young children, being *forcibly* turned away. The whole thing is a complete nonsense, a disaster waiting to happen, so why are they doing it?

The only conclusion you can come to is that it is all about short-term news management: we must be seen to be doing something, even if it is completely inhuman and counterproductive. Germany has felt compelled to dump its humanitarian, refugee-friendly image and policies, following increased support for rightwing groups. However, by adopting their rhetoric, chancellor Angela Merkel is only strengthening the hand of Alternative for Germany, which in the recent state elections saw it gain a double-digit percentage of the vote - it finished second in Saxony-Anhalt on 24.2%. Regrettably, you can only expect it to do even better when the Turkey deal unravels.

Yes, this approach is extraordinarily short-termist, but is just what you expect from bourgeois politicians. David Cameron, as readers will recall, made the call for a referendum on EU membership purely in order to outflank the UK Independence Party - he did not appear to consider that he might actually be forced to keep his promise and risk not only losing the vote, but splitting his party down the middle. The same goes for his obvious nonsense about reducing immigration to the "tens of thousands" - something his advisors must have warned him against and was instantly mocked by anyone with half a brain.

All that matters is *today's* problem and generating a few favourable, passing headlines in the more stupid end of the rightwing press. An outlook that characterises the present-day political class, totally devoid of any vision or programme ●

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IRAN



South Pars gasfield: working class key

New era, new focus

The nuclear deal means we must refocus our campaigning priorities, writes **Yassamine Mather**

If anyone had any doubts about the new relations between Iran's Islamic Republic and the west, the messages by Iranian and US leaders on the occasion of the Persian New Year, Nowruz, will show that a dramatic change has occurred.

President Barack Obama said that, although the nuclear deal was "never intended to resolve all disputes between the United States and Iran", it nonetheless "opened a new window of dialogue" and made it possible for Iran to "rejoin the global economy" through increased trade and investment, creating jobs and opportunities for Iranians to "sell their goods around the world".

In his own congratulatory message, Obama's counterpart in Iran, Hassan Rowhani, called for internal reconciliation following bitter divisions around last month's elections. Reminding the country that "sanctions aimed at banks, oil, finance, money, petrochemicals, insurance, transport, and all nuclear-related sanctions have been lifted", he declared that the scene was set for "our people's economic activities". Thanks to "god's favour" and "the people's efforts", Iran got through the last year and now "without a doubt we all can create an Iran which is worthy of this great nation."

Rowhani stated that the Iranian revolution had been "for Islam and morality", and so, "in our revolutionary society, there should be no trace of lies, false accusations, mistrust, bad language and irritability. In our society, there should be no trace of corruption." Hardly the Iran that most of its people would recognise.

While Rowhani said that further engagement with other countries was the key to economic growth, Iran's supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, seemed to disagree. What was needed was "self-sufficiency" and a

"resistance economy". After all, in Khamenei's eyes, the "government of the US" is still Iran's "enemy". The Islamic Republic should take steps to reduce its vulnerability to the designs of the US and other "enemies", he said.

Sometimes it is difficult to decide whether one should laugh at Khamenei's hypocrisy or cry at his self-deception. Here is a man leading a country where the 'approved' president and his government are embarking on a major project to persuade transnationals to invest in Iran and take advantage of its

cheap skilled labour, so that Iran can be fully integrated into global capitalism, which is still headed by a single hegemonic military and economic power, the United States. It is a country where the president's opponents in the more rightwing factions have no hesitation in working with capitalists of any nationality, as long as they themselves can take their own cut, aided by corruption and the black market. Yet Khamenei is still going on about "self-sufficiency" and the "economy of resistance". He is either delusional or an accomplished liar.

Irrespective of all this, the nuclear deal has marked a new phase in Iran's relations with the west. There is no longer a threat of military action against the country. Of course, given the tumultuous situation in the Middle East, the civil wars in Iraq and Syria, the conflicts in Yemen, Bahrain and elsewhere, all this could change dramatically and suddenly. No doubt the election of a Republican president, whether it is Donald Trump or one of his rivals, would signal an end to the "new window of dialogue" and a return to a conflict situation.

Nevertheless, we in Hands Off the People of Iran have decided that the case for a shift in the nature of our campaign is clear. It is no longer a case of opposing imperialist war against Iran. We need to concentrate our focus on the struggles against the neoliberal economic policies of the government by the Iranian working class - they are a beacon of hope in a region devastated by war and conflict. Our organisation will need a new name to reflect the changed circumstances ●

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Statement

The campaigning anti-war organisation, Hands Off the People of Iran, was founded in 2007 and quickly established itself as a principled focus for activists in the movement who understood it was possible and necessary to oppose the threat of imperialist war against Iran without dressing up the country's rulers as 'anti-imperialist' or maintaining a diplomatic silence on their repressive crimes against the working people of the country. We are proud of the record of our campaign, but it is clear that these are challenging new political times in the Middle East and, in particular, that the new relationship between Iran and the west presents us with important new tasks.

The country's rulers have complied with the nuclear agreement signed in July 2015 with the five 'official' nuclear powers (United States, United Kingdom, France, China and Russia) plus Germany. This has opened up a new period

of cooperation and a degree of rapprochement between Tehran and US-led imperialism.

Given this new political context, Hopi activists have held discussions on the future of the campaign. The west, and in particular US imperialism, has emerged victorious from this confrontation. Of course, we have to remain alive to the possibility of new conflicts arising. The situation in Syria and Iraq, as well as the Palestinian people's struggles against Israeli colonisation, continue to be destabilising factors. In addition, the danger remains frighteningly real of regional wars, such as those in Syria, Yemen and Bahrain, escalating and dragging others into the maelstrom. However, it seems clear that the prospect of an imminent imperialist attack on Iran has considerably receded.

There is no doubt that the relaxation of tensions and the lifting of sanctions will mean an improvement in the material

wellbeing of many working people in Iran. They, after all, are the ones who have borne the heaviest burden in the sanctions period. However, it will not mean a relaxation of the political oppression of the Iranian people by the regime. In fact, the rapprochement with its external enemy will free the Iranian ruling elite to concentrate on its internal enemy: the working class and its allies. As the threat of conflict with the US recedes, the regime will step up the domestic class war.

Iran's president, Hassan Rowhani, and his foreign minister, Javad Zarif, have already sent very clear messages to foreign capital. Iran is open for business and its labour force - intimidated by years of recession, mass unemployment and the regime's brutal repression - will accept low wages, poor conditions and vicious exploitation. These overtures have also been backed up by practical examples of the regime's style of 'labour discipline'. Thus, we

have seen the brutal attack by the paramilitary Basij on a group of striking factory employees in Kalaleh, an assault brazenly reported by pro-regime media outlets as one of a number of exercises by this militia in preparation for future actions against protesting workers.

In these new circumstances, we need to refocus the work of Hands Off the People of Iran, to give it a different emphasis, a new style of work, and this must be reflected in a different name. In contrast to others, Hopi has been implacable in its commitment to the principle that the only consistent anti-war, anti-imperialist and democratic force in Iran and beyond is the working class. Now is the time to step up our solidarity with the beleaguered workers' movement in that country, as the reactionary regime - having made important concessions on the international stage - looks to consolidate its repressive hold on domestic power ●

Hands Off the People of Iran

ANTI-SEMITISM

Weapon of choice

False accusations are being carefully aimed at Jeremy Corbyn and the left, argues **Tony Greenstein**

You might be forgiven for thinking, such has been the plethora of articles about 'anti-Semitism' recently, that the Labour Party had been taken over by the provisional wing of the National Front. But, of course, the recent obsession with 'anti-Semitism' has nothing whatsoever to do with the Oswald Moseley/British Union of Fascists variety.

It is what is termed the 'new anti-Semitism'. This does not include any of the old features, such as hatred of Jews as Jews, stereotyping, hideously distorted cartoons, violence and theories about world Jewish conspiracies. Good gracious no. That would mean that groups such as the Zionists' friends in the English Defence League, alongside whom Jonathan Hoffman, vice-chair of the Zionist Federation, happily demonstrated against the boycott of the Ahava shop in Covent Garden, would have to be ostracised. The EDL has a habit of attacking Palestine solidarity events - flying the Israeli flag in one hand, whilst giving the Hitler salute with the other.

'New anti-Semitism' means that Israel is the "Jew amongst the nations".¹ It is picked on, not because it is the world's most racist state, but allegedly because it is a Jewish state. Opposition to the Israeli state and Zionism therefore qualifies as anti-Semitism. However, a traditional anti-Semite, such as Poland's Michał Kamiński MEP, who demanded that the Jews of Poland apologise for the fact that 900 of their fellows had been burned alive by fellow Poles in 1941, can qualify - according to the editor of the *Jewish Chronicle*, Stephen Pollard - for the title of "friend to Jews".²

The recent hysteria over 'anti-Semitism' began last summer when the British establishment and the Labour right, via its 'liberal' mouthpiece, *The Guardian*, woke up to the fact that rank outsider Jeremy Corbyn was about to win the leadership of the Labour Party. Their initial reaction was to try and get the whole election called off because of 'infiltrators', but that was too obvious. Even Harriet Harman worked out that this would have led to an insurrection by Labour members.

At the same time the *Daily Mail* and the *Jewish Chronicle* tried to suggest that Corbyn had kept company with a Jewish Holocaust-denier, Paul Eisen, British director of *Deir Yassin remembered*. There is, of course, a rich irony in the *Daily Mail's* concern with anti-Semitism. Not only did the *Mail* vigorously campaign in the 1930s against the admission of Jewish refugees from Germany, but its owner, Viscount Rothermere, wrote that the Jews had "started a clamorous campaign of denunciation against what they call 'Nazi atrocities', which, as anyone who visits Germany quickly discovers for himself, consists merely of a few isolated acts of violence".³

The allegations against Corbyn were preposterous. He had attended a Palestinian fundraising concert in 2013. However, Eisen played no part in organising that concert. It was St John's Wood Church which organised the event through another organisation called Deir Yassin Day.

The campaign against Corbyn and his supporters went quiet for a few months. There was a brief interlude when the father of the House of Commons, Gerald Kaufmann, a Jewish MP and previously strong supporter of Zionism, referred to "Jewish money". It's not a phrase that



There is a full-scale witch-hunt

I would have used, but it is commonly used by Jewish people. One of Kaufmann's main accusers was the far-right *Jewish Chronicle* journalist, Geoffrey Alderman, who called for the excommunication of Kaufmann despite using the same phrase himself, twice within the same paragraph.⁴

However, it was different when it came to David Whelan, the owner of Wigan Athletic football club, who told of how "there is nothing like a Jew who sees money slipping through his fingers" and when challenged by *The Guardian* responded, "I think they are very shrewd people ... I think Jewish people do chase money more than everybody else."⁵ Complaints

about this for Alderman amounted to "a sad and miserable tale of political correctness taken to new depths of absurdity". In his view "there is nothing remotely anti-Semitic in what Whelan is alleged by *The Guardian* to have said about Jews".⁶

As the Tories find themselves in political difficulty over George Osborne's budget and the resignation of Iain Duncan Smith, Labour is beginning to seem a credible government in waiting. But thankfully for the establishment, the Zionist movement had already taken on the role of an outrider for the political establishment. Together with *The Guardian*, it has decided to revert to

that tried and trusted weapon, 'anti-Semitism'.

Labour's 'problem'

Jonathan Freedland, a senior *Guardian* journalist, set the tone with an article which used the idiocy of one Labour Party member, Vicky Kirby, and the stupidity of Gerry Downing⁷ to tar the left in the party as anti-Semitic.⁸

Kirby apparently believes that Jews have big noses and that Hitler is a Zionist god, which suggests she needs help rather than expulsion. Downing's stupidity is less excusable.⁹ The French Revolution resolved the Jewish question, the place of Jews in European society, over 200 years ago. In the words of Stanislas Marie Adélaïde, the count of Clermont-Tonnerre, "We must refuse everything to the Jews as a nation and accord everything to Jews as individuals."¹⁰ Only the Zionists and the anti-Semites rejected the emancipation of the Jews.

What Freedland lacks in substance he makes up for with innuendo. Not once does he attempt to define the anti-Semitism he talks about. Is it new or old anti-Semitism or a mixture thereof?

Zionists like to use the discredited European Union Monitoring Committee definition of anti-Semitism, which included "vilification of Israel" and comparisons between Nazi Germany and Israel. The only problem is that even the European Union's Fundamental Rights Agency has junked it - which led Shimon Samuels of the Simon Wiesenthal Center to claim: "Those who fight anti-Semitism have lost an important weapon." A weapon not against anti-Semites, but against anti-Zionists.¹¹

Clearly Kirby and Downing are two idiosyncratic individuals. Even Freedland did not think it wise to base his suggestion of widespread anti-Semitism in the Labour Party on these two. It is on the case of Oxford University Labour Club that his case rests.¹²

In his own words, its chair, Alex Chalmers, decided to resign "in the light of OULC's decision ... to endorse Israel Apartheid Week".¹³ But Chalmers' assertion that "the student left in Oxford ... have some kind of problem with Jews" was clearly based on their anti-Zionism, not their anti-Semitism.

Chalmers is a political lightweight. His Zionist politics are crystal-clear. He speaks about Hamas's violence, yet he ignores the far greater violence of the Israeli state and the settlers. He claimed on his blog that he was offended by use of the term 'Zio' - shorthand for 'Zionist' - because apparently the Ku Klux Klan use it. Possibly they do, but so do many people and it has no anti-Semitic connotations. Chalmers also complained that a former Labour club officer commented that "most accusations of anti-Semitism are just the Zionists crying wolf". In asserting that anti-Semitism was the reason for his resignation, Chalmers has proved the very point that he disputes.

Chalmers lost the vote over the Labour club's support for Israel Apartheid Week and decided to throw his toys out of the pram. Yet it is indisputable that Israel presides over a system of overt racial segregation in the West Bank, where four million Palestinians have lived under military law for nearly 50 years, without any civil or political rights, whilst Jewish settlers enjoy all the benefits of Israel's civil law. Even the highways

are reserved for Jews only. How can anyone seriously suggest that this is not apartheid?

Behind the 'green line' (Israel's borders till 1967) a subtler form of apartheid exists. There are no 'Arabs only' signs, but housing, employment, education are segregated. Only five private high schools in Israel are mixed. Half of Israel's Arab villages are 'unrecognised' - meaning that they have no electricity, sewerage or services and they are liable to be demolished at a moment's notice. In the Negev, Jerusalem and Galilee there is an ongoing government programme of Judaisation, just as in Nazi Germany prior to 1941 there was a process of deJewification. Zionist policy is a mirror reflection of European anti-Semitism.

In the recent Pew Opinion Survey a majority (48%) of Israeli Jews want Israeli Palestinians expelled from the country. 79% believe Jews are entitled to preferential treatment.¹⁴ In which western state would a majority of the citizens support the expulsion of 20% of the population?

The only example of anti-Semitism at Oxford that Freedland gives is where apparently one member of the Labour club "organised a group to shout 'filthy Zionist' at a Jewish student whenever they saw her". This allegation is sourced to Aaron Simons.¹⁵ We have no indication of who made the allegation, the name of the student who organised this shouting or indeed the alleged victim. Bearing in mind that Jewish students who support the Palestinians are regularly abused with the terms, 'traitor' and 'self-hater', and told they should have died with their families in the gas chambers, it is pretty small beer, even assuming there is any truth in it.¹⁶

Identity

Freedland's other argument is that in a recent survey 93% of British Jews said Israel formed some part of their identity. Even were this true, then the obvious retort would be ... so what? Is it racist to criticise and attack a state that people identify with? The journalists of *Charlie Hebdo* attacked what some Muslims identified with. Were they racists or defenders of free speech? Supposing Muslims or Africans were to argue that female genital mutilation was part of their identity, would we be racist to oppose FMG and challenge that identity?

I have a brother living in Israel but that does not affect my anti-Zionism. Many British people had relatives in Rhodesia and South Africa under apartheid. Were they victims of racism when we opposed the system they identified with? Freedland is unable to explore the implications of his statement because he knows that it does not stand up to scrutiny.

Racism is about denying the existence of a human being because of fixed or unalterable characteristics. It is about dehumanisation. It involves stereotypes, discrimination, hate and violence. It is not about challenging group identity. If it is part of free speech not to accept reactionary Islamic practices or ideology, then the same applies to Jews. Freedland reluctantly accepts that opposition to Israel "is not always anti-Semitic", implying that it normally is. Having conceded the point, however, he goes on to make the opposite case: viz that anti-Semitism is equivalent to anti-Zionism.

Freedland tells us that when Jews

What we fight for

pray they face east towards Jerusalem and that they have done so for 2,000 years. Certainly the holy land had a religious symbolism for Jews, but it had no political significance. When the Zionist movement first arose, the fiercest opposition to it came from the Orthodox Jews. Jews never sought to go to Palestine until the era of late-colonialism. The migration to Palestine was provoked not by religion, but by anti-Semitism in eastern Europe. It was evangelical Christians such as Lords Palmerstone and Shaftesbury who urged Jews to settle in Palestine (and build a state which would protect the Suez Canal). Even then most Jews desired to go anywhere but Palestine (between the mid-19th century and 1914, of the 2.5 million Jews who fled tsarist Russia only 2% went to Palestine).

Freedland's other point is simply dishonest. He says that Corbyn "praised Islamist leader Sheikh Raed Salah". He may well have, but so what? Contrary to Freedland's assertions, a British court was in no position to determine whether or not Raed Salah had "deployed the blood libel". It heard no witnesses to this event. The passing comment of the court that in its opinion Salah had referred to the Jewish blood libel was *obiter dictum*: ie, wholly irrelevant to the court's actual finding that Raed Salah's detention by Theresa May was illegal. May's deportation order was overturned and Salah was freed as a consequence. The Upper Immigration Tribunal also found that the allegation that Salah had written an anti-Semitic poem was based on faked evidence supplied by the *Jerusalem Post* and the Zionist Community Security Trust. Freedland does not mention this, however.

He also fails to mention that the Jerusalem magistrates court found Salah had not referred to the Jewish blood libel in a speech. Salah said his reference was to the Spanish Inquisition and its murder of children. The decision was reversed on appeal by a colonial court in a nakedly political attack on Salah, who has been one of the main leaders of Israeli Palestinians and a thorn in the government's side. During the Israeli raid on the ship, the Marvi Marmara, when Israel murdered nine Turkish citizens, there was an attempt by Israel's forces to assassinate Raed Salah, but they shot a Turkish man by mistake. I clearly remember the announcement of Salah's death by Israel.¹⁷

In short there is no substance to Freedland's arguments. The issue of 'anti-Semitism' in the Labour Party is wholly contrived. It is the creation of journalists and Zionist activists. It has no basis in reality. The real agenda is defence of the Israeli state.

Mental disease?

The Guardian has gone overboard in the campaign to brand Labour under Corbyn as anti-Semitic. It recently printed an article by that champion of the Iraq war, Nick Cohen, on how it is the duty of every freedom-lover to convert to being Jewish as a protest against anti-Semitism.¹⁸ Unfortunately, in its eagerness to attack the left, *The Guardian* failed to pick up on a similar article by Cohen

in the *Jewish Chronicle* a mere seven years previously!¹⁹ (Another person with an urge to regurgitate a previous offering is Owen Jones.²⁰ His latest piece bears a distinct resemblance to an article he wrote last summer.²¹)

Leon Pinsker, one of the earliest Zionists, the founder of the *Lovers of Zion*, wrote in 1882: "Judaophobia is then a mental disease and, as a mental disease it is hereditary; and, having been inherited for 2,000 years, it is incurable."²² This summarised Zionism's attitude to anti-Semitism. If anti-Semitism was incurable it was 'futile' to fight it. This belief that anti-Semitism was an incurable disease was fundamental to Zionism's acceptance of anti-Semitism. It was a natural consequence of living in 'other people's lands'. Far better to establish a settler-colonial state of Israel.

In fact anti-Semitism had material roots in the societies in which it occurred. Far from suffering a continuous anti-Semitism for 2,000 years, Jews were both oppressors and oppressed. They were the allies of the ruling classes under feudalism and the exploiters of the peasantry. In the words of Abram Leon, the Jews were a people class.²³ It was the transition to a decaying capitalism in eastern Europe which unleashed racial, as opposed to religious, anti-Semitism. The Jews found themselves "wedged between the anvil of decaying feudalism and the hammer of rotting capitalism".²⁴

Jones has the advantage over Nick Cohen of possessing a modicum of intelligence. Unfortunately it is wasted. The only example he finds of anti-Semitism is Vicky Kirby. Jones, a gadfly of the left, complains that whenever he raises the question of anti-Semitism people cry, "Ah, but what about Israel?" It doesn't seem to have occurred to him that the reason why Israel and anti-Semitism have become intertwined is because it is a deliberate strategy of the Zionist movement to label supporters of the Palestinians and opponents of Zionism as anti-Semitic.

If Jones has any doubts on the matter then he could, for example, refer to Abe Foxman, director of the US Anti-Defamation League: "To me, it's very simple: anti-Zionism 99% of the time is a euphemism for anti-Semitism."²⁵ In such a situation and where communal bodies such as the Board of Deputies proclaim that British Jews support the latest attack by Israel on Gaza, it is inevitable that people will react to allegations of anti-Semitism, even if genuine, by raising the question of Israel.

Owen Jones is a fair-weather friend of the Palestinian struggle and the fight against Zionism. He tries, like a good opportunist social democrat, to befriend both the oppressor and the oppressed.²⁶

Also jumping on the bandwagon is Blair's 'Lord Cashpoint' - otherwise known as Lord Levy. He has taken to both *The Guardian* and the *Jewish Chronicle* to warn that he could quit Labour over anti-Semitism! If the noble lord carries out his promise, it will be one of the few gains from this contrived affair of 'anti-Semitism'.²⁷

Chipping into this one-sided debate is Aaron Simons, a former chair of Oxford University's Jewish Society

(for which read Zionist society). Borrowing from the 1999 Macpherson report, Simons claims that Oxford's student left is "institutionally anti-Semitic". There cannot be a more absurd formulation. Anti-Semitism is not a form of state racism in British society. Jews in this society are white, not black. Anti-Semitism is, at most, a marginal form of prejudice. It is not synagogues, but mosques, which are repeatedly the subject of arson attacks. Just as defenders of Israel and its genocidal attacks on Palestinians have resorted to the tag, 'Jewish lives matter', in imitation of 'Black lives matter', so Zionist students in Britain, having played no part in anti-racist struggles, seek to capitalise on the struggle of black people.²⁸

Thought-provoking

There was also the affair of York University's Palestine Society, which was accused of 'anti-Semitism' for putting on the play *Seven Jewish Children* (an added ingredient was that Jeremy's son, Tom Corbyn, is a member of York's Palestine Society). Freedland did not publicise this example of 'anti-Semitism' - perhaps because *The Guardian* has promoted *Seven Jewish Children* on its own website. This is a quite beautiful and thought-provoking play by Caryl Churchill, comparing a child hiding in a Jewish ghetto in Nazi-occupied Europe to a Palestinian child killed in Gaza.²⁹

Of course, the fact that some Jewish students supported the play was not news - maybe theirs is a form of 'anti-Semitism' that Jonathan Freedland and co have not examined. This is an example of making Jewish people who are anti-Zionists invisible - as Jewish anti-Zionists do not support the Israeli state, they do not count, of course, being 'race traitors' and 'self-haters'. The *Jewish Chronicle*, however, ran with a story calling the play "anti-Semitic"³⁰ - which provoked an open letter from six Israeli and Jewish students from York University's Palestine society denying this.³¹

The theme of *Seven Jewish Children* is one taken up by the socialist and Jewish folk singer, Leon Rosselson, in his recent song, 'The ballad of Rivka and Mohammed', which ends up with Rivka, the Jewish girl in the ghetto, and Mohammed, the Palestinian boy in Gaza: "then each took the hand of the other and then they were seen no more".³²

Not surprisingly members of the Blairite right, such as Michael Dugher MP, who was recently sacked from the shadow cabinet, Rachel Reeves MP and, of course, rent-a-mouth John Mann MP have all jumped on the bandwagon. Mann is quoted as saying that "urgent action" must be taken, as "the problem has got worse since new members joined following Mr Corbyn's election" and the Labour leader will face "an almighty row" if he does nothing. Of course, there is something very simple that Corbyn could do - and that is to tell Mann and co to put up or shut up. In other words, come up with some evidence that there is a problem of anti-Semitism in the party.

We should bear in mind that this is not the first time that Mann has made allegations he cannot back up. John Mann was a witness in the Fraser v University College Union employment tribunal case, where it was alleged that the boycott of Israeli universities was anti-Semitic. The tribunal dismissed the claim and described Mann's evidence thus:

We did not derive assistance from the two members of parliament who appeared before us. Both gave glib evidence, appearing supremely confident of the rightness of their positions ... Mr Mann ... told us that the leaders of the respondents were at fault for the way in which they conducted debates, but did not

enlighten us as to what they were doing wrong or what they should be doing differently ... And, when it came to anti-Semitism in the context of debate about the Middle East, he announced, "It's clear to me where the line is ...", but unfortunately eschewed the opportunity to locate it for us. Both parliamentarians clearly enjoyed making speeches. Neither seemed at ease with the idea of being required to answer a question not to his liking.

When put to the test, Zionist claims of 'anti-Semitism' are invariably found wanting, because Zionism has no interest in combating genuine examples of anti-Semitism. That is not, and never has been, its concern ●

Notes

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Latest victim

In the course of writing this article I received a letter from the Labour Party. I was informed that, on the basis of comments I was alleged to have made, I was being suspended forthwith from membership. No indication was given as to the nature of the comments I was alleged to have made. I can only assume that they related

to anti-Semitism or Zionism. Perhaps my case too will be used as an illustration of the growth of 'anti-Semitism' in Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party!

I shall, of course, be fighting this new witch-hunt and I hope that Corbyn and McDonnell will begin to take charge of the Blairite civil service they have inherited in the party ●

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

**Little if
anything
to do with
performance**

End of accountability

Total academisation of schooling was always the logical next step, says Micky Coulter

The local council may have sold the school field to housing developers, but the future could soon be even worse. Chancellor George Osborne announced during his March 16 budget speech that all primary and secondary schools in England (education being a devolved matter in Scotland and Wales) are to become academies in a 'non-optional' fashion by 2020, with plans in motion to complete the conversion by no later than 2022. The idea is that the process will be so far advanced by then that it will be enormously difficult for any incoming Labour government to reverse it.

Forced academisation comes after years of incentivised academisation - extra money, new buildings and so on - which in turn came after a series of initial academy experiments in distressed inner-city areas during the New Labour years of the late 1990s and early 2000s. At the time critics had the foresight to point out the obvious slippery slope: slice by slice, the existing education system would be chopped away and restructured into something entirely different - perhaps even an entirely academised system. Even so, as of now two-thirds of primary schools and around a quarter of secondary schools are still local government-maintained. Intolerable!

Given the neoliberal movement in the economy across the whole globe, awash for some time now in privatisations and pseudo-privatisations of former state-owned assets; given the victory, or at least the resignation to and acceptance, of these new policies across the leadership of all major political parties; and given that, once a direction of travel is being followed, it requires huge determination to overcome that trend, such critics have been well and truly vindicated.

However, a new critic of the policy is that former champion of academisation, David Blunkett. Writing for *The Guardian* website on March 20, the former Labour education minister complained that the Tories have not built on the model of a successful 'mixed' education system bequeathed to them by Labour, but instead grabbed the ball and have run directly across the forced academisation goal line. In other words, bad tactical moves are to blame, not the initiation of the whole programme by Labour in the first place. This ignores the underlying factors.

In the first place, the inner-city academies that Blunkett's government pioneered were generally successful¹, it seems, but not because of what they were called, or their particular organisational structure. These schools were knocked down and rebuilt in brand new buildings, thanks to generous funding. This restored pride to the area in question and, perhaps importantly in some cases, led to a change in their intake, which helped push up measured results.² They were flagship projects that could not be seen to fail.



Rejected by the unions

The issue, of course, is that new buildings, big money, reinvigorated staff, management shake-ups and a changing intake of perhaps higher ability are in no way dependent upon academisation: they can be achieved in *any number of ways*, including the previous system of local, education authority-maintained schools. So Blunkett's protestations here are a little feeble.

Ideologically we can be sure that this represents the onward march of privatisation, from Thatcher to Blair, to Michael Gove (and now Nicky Morgan) and George Osborne. It is a given that a market-imitative model must be superior to the local council model, and also comes with other benefits. According to the hype, schools are being broken free from the chains of hapless, low-energy councillors and given to their staff and experts from business and other fields.

The natural sorting of the academies into better and worse schools in a pseudo-market will then encourage the more successful academies and multi-academy trusts to take other schools under their wings and increase their market share of pupils. Over time good practice will spread, better schools will emerge and governing trusts will be able to remunerate themselves and their staff as they see fit.

Except, of course, most of this already existed under the LEA

system. There is already the option for school leadership teams to make use of 'performance'-related pay, schools are often already grouped in local or regional support and best-practice sharing clusters, which includes co-management of failing schools by their more successful peers. LEA-maintained schools were also free to pick and choose from the national curriculum, and the coming abolition of automatic NQT (newly qualified teacher) status in favour of an earned accreditation given by the school leadership team makes the issues around hiring 'qualified' or 'non-qualified' staff moot. Even the money will come from the same source - central government - and the vast majority of academised schools are not sponsored by religious groups or second-hand car dealers (though some *are* and *will be*), but will simply become a small self-incorporated trust and continue much as before, preserving the existing terms and conditions of staff under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) regulations. The new academies will mostly set the same exams for their students and be subject to inspection by the Office of Standards in Education (Ofsted).

One might wonder, given all this, why the government is actually bothering. So much of the academy way of doing things has already been smuggled into LEA schools - from performance-related pay to

attempts to end national bargaining, to the ranking of schools in league tables, and so on. Of course, it is less pointless than it seems and, given how much like academies LEA schools can be already, why not go the whole hog? In addition, we can be sure that seeking to break the strength of the teaching unions is at the forefront of the government's motivations.

It is claimed that the policy will drive up results through all the outlined mechanisms - educationalists have long been complaining about UK schools dropping down the global league tables. So what education systems do those states which rank above the UK have, if the 'magic' is simply in the academy structure?

South Korea, the land of 'exam hell' and a relatively higher number of student suicides, often driven by the pressure to succeed, has a mixed public and private system. Finland has an all state-owned, all-comprehensive and non-selective education system. Poland has leapt up the Programme for International Student Assessment rankings by, according to *The Daily Telegraph*, focusing on teaching quality and making the curriculum harder.³ Australia too has a mixed system of government and independent schools, as does Vietnam - all of the above exceed the UK in educational outcomes, as do Japan, Singapore and so on.

Clearly a model of total

academisation will do little, if anything, to improve performance. And in any case, the supposed freeing up of schools - allowing greater local decision-making, based upon local information - will be countered by increased centralisation, shifting ultimate responsibility from where it was previously, at the local authority level, upwards to either the minister of state for education, with whom each academy will have to draw up a contract, or, slightly less far up, to the new-fangled regional educational commissioners. The role of the latter is to ensure oversight over potentially many thousands of academy schools and trusts in a given area, with only marginal input from headteachers, when they can find the time. How all this is supposed to work remains unclear - indeed it looks utterly impractical.

At worst the new trusts will function as cash cows for corrupt, self-enriching managers and 'sponsors', who will be freed from their own pay constraints to turn government cash into private profit. Asset-stripping of schools, reduction in staff pay, the construction of unwieldy and impersonal mega-trusts who run staff morale and results into the ground - none of this can be ruled out. At bottom this policy is designed to remove the last vestiges of accountability from both local councillors and even parent governors, who are to be abolished and replaced with 'experts', preferably from a business background, and to break the teaching unions and end national pay bargaining. Worryingly, the new trusts will apparently have no statutory responsibility to provide education for disabled and special-needs children - responsibility, it seems, that will remain with the local council.⁴

The process of stratifying education looks set to continue, while ultimate power will be further centralised, and community and parent involvement curtailed ●

Notes

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