

A paper of Marxist polemic and Marxist unity



weekly **worker**

No vote for Clinton: Bernie Sanders should run as an independent socialist

- Letters and debate
- EU referendum
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One, two, three revolutions

Don Troiani: 'Mahone's counterattack'

LETTERS



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

Wrong question

I would reiterate Tony Greenstein's view when he wrote: "I don't think either Donovan or Downing are anti-Semitic in any sort of personal way" (Letters, April 14). I consider, however, that their assignment of collective ethnic tarring of a given group not only non-Marxist: it designates inappropriately the real 'enemy,' which is imperialism. As such, it gives unwanted ammunition to real anti-Semites and anti-Jewish bigots.

Ian and Gerry resurrect, in turn, *The Jewish question: a Marxist interpretation* by Abram Leon. Like other Trotskyists, I have always disagreed with the claim that Jews in the period prior to World War II were a 'people-caste'. Of course, Leon only projected this for pre-capitalist Jews, not really to WWII. But others, as is the case here, have taken it this far, and beyond. Unfortunately, no-one has ever challenged in writing the young Abram Leon on this question. We could debate, as well, the 'historical' accuracy of Leon's and Marx's putative 'facts' with respect to the role of Jews, including the presentation of Jews as a homogeneous people engaged in small trade. This latter point is not unimportant, given that Zionists believe strongly in the false concept of an ethnic 'Jewish' people. Anti-Zionists have rightly disputed this. Do Gerry and Ian?

The problem here is not just that Leon may or may not have gotten it right about village and ghetto-confined, Yiddish-speaking Jews in eastern Europe, but to resurrect this transient reality without offering an iota of evidence regarding the status and character of Jews at large - an extrapolation that is a central problem of the writings of Abram Leon - mischaracterises Jews today as some sort of 'caste': a contention that flies in the face of reality and is beyond silly, let alone being non-materialist. But, to give Leon his due, this 'caste' characterisation, according to Leon, ended with feudalism itself. It was not carried on into the 19th and 20th centuries, so how then is it relevant today? It isn't and that is the point.

I do not believe there is any current basis for postulating a 'Jewish question', as there had been in the ghetto-confined past. The basic assimilation of Ashkenazi Jews in general and western European Jews in particular into capitalist society resolved this issue decades ago.

Trotsky, by 1940, had begun to doubt and challenge Marx's assumption of inexorable assimilation, given the events in Europe under the Nazis, but Marx's expectation has been borne out in the end. Notwithstanding the holocaust and the retrograde claims of Zionism, Jews are basically assimilated. The 'Jewish question', essentially, has been solved in this regard.

The real problem resides in holding on to a fake concept of a 'Jewish' bourgeoisie, one that Gerry and Ian each invoke. In fact, there is no such thing. There are 'Jewish' members of the ruling class, even as, in the US, there are black and Chicano millionaires and bankers. What is decisive, however, is that there is no distinct role that 'society' - ie, capitalist society - has assigned to Jews, as was the case in the pre-capitalist Poland and Russia, that was the specific locale and basis for Leon's study of the Jews. It is what defined the existence of a 'Jewish question'.

Ian conflates the 'numbers' of Jews in the ruling class as a percentage of billionnaires in the US and then, mixing metaphors, notes the discrimination of blacks and their exclusion from the ruling class (itself not true, since there are millionnaires who are black Americans today, though not many). The difference is that, as Jews became white, they achieved white ethnic equality (and thus removed the previous 'Jewish question' based on that exclusion). US capitalism, however, never based its development on exclusion of any white ethnic group, Jews included. What was effectively the national or racial exclusion of blacks (and to a large extent, Chicanos as well) was a basis for capitalist development. So the comparisons of blacks in the development of capitalism in America to that of Jews is silly and unmaterialist: in fact it shows a degree of uneducated understanding of the class dynamics of capitalism in the US. Eventually what was the strictly WASP ruling class allowed those other white ethnic groups in. It proves Jewish-Americans, hitherto excluded, were allowed into the ruling class. It does not mean they got there through caste privileges, the only way Ian could claim there is a Jewish question.

There is no question that Jews as a defined ethnic group (as 'hyphenated Americans', for example) are not only wealthier than any other group, but influential. Most Jews, however, are neither ruling class nor even 'rich' by American standards. At best they have moved out of the working class, blue-collar life of parents, such as my own, and into the professional middle class. This migration they shared with other white ethnic groups in the US. This is not part of the caste-like assignment given Jews since the Middle Ages in Europe. It unfolded through the development of imperialism in the post-war period. Jews were, as I note above, one of the last groups to become 'white' in America.

Jewish-Americans, like hyphenated Jews in Europe and Latin America, are pro-Israel in their majority, but they are also critical of Israel. Many simply don't care and some - a growing minority - question Israel's right to exist and are demonstrably pro-Palestinian. Jewish capitalists, some of whom are even part of the imperialist ruling class, are very pro-Israel. Their influence via the American Israel Public Affairs Committee is as powerful as the counterrevolutionary Cuban lobby based in Miami.

Imperialism, however, must be examined objectively. It has its own defined interests. Anything that conflicts with those interests is stomped out or pushed aside. We observe this today with the US-Iran nuclear deal. Not only did Obama ignore Israeli governmental views on this. Presented to the Bush administration, US governmental imperialism ignored pressure by Israel to bomb Iran - belying the fiction that the (US) dog is wagged by the Israeli/AIPAC tail. The 'neocons' in both the Pentagon and at State were shut down and told to shut up. In their compliance they did exactly that. Among even these bourgeoisified Jewish-Americans, there is no unanimity. If not, how then is there a 'question' regarding them as a group?

Beyond this, the majority of Jewish-Americans have opposed major foreign policy initiatives of the Israeli state on multiple occasions, including their supposed lobby, AIPAC, according to every single poll conducted on the subject. This has been exposed in numerous

magazine articles on AIPAC in the last few years and has given rise to 'J-Street', the anti-Likud lobby group for Jewish-Americans.

The problem here lies in Ian and Gerry's attempt to provide left cover to Petras, Weir and Mearsheimers, who believe that imperialist foreign policy is shaped by AIPAC and thus Israel. Imperialism is a political economy that has its own rules and that at best can use racism and social issues as tools to continue its rule. The influence of Jewish billionnaires and millionnaires (the latter of which represent only 6% of America's 325,000 million-dollars-a-year income holders) is not going to change the laws of politics. The US position on Israel hasn't changed an iota since the US recognised the Zionist entity and since it recognised that state in 1948. Exactly how many Jewish millionnaires or billionnaires were there in, say, 1948? Or 1968? The consistency of US policy toward Israel is what is ignored by Ian and Gerry and that is the sad thing about their resurrection of the Jewish question. Imperialism supports Israel because Israel's existence serves, greatly, imperialist ambitions in the region. It always has, and it always will, regardless of the number of 'Jewish billionnaires'.

I highly recommend Jeff Halper's book *War against the people: Israel, the Palestinians and global pacification*, which shows unmistakably why it is Israel that is subordinate to US imperialism, not the other way around.

David Walters
email

Solved

You could save reams of paper and barrels of printers ink in the endless dispute with Ian Donovan (and now Gerry Downing's Socialist Fight too) if you were to cut to the chase and state sharply and simply that the entire so-called 'state' of 'Israel' is a giant historical lie - a deliberately created artificial cuckoo in the Middle Eastern nest that has no right to exist, and needs overturning.

All the specious and outrageous opportunist accusations of "anti-Semitism" thrown at SF, which are simply capitulating to the latest CIA-Zionist campaign (to cow the 'left' with absurd 'racism' allegations) could be cut through as the nonsense they are. So too could Donovan's and Downing's weird and elaborate mechanistic rigmarole about "non-national" Jewish bourgeoisies, etc. But in over 18 months of this discussion, no such point has been made, and the CPGB has even reneged on its alleged 'free discussion' principles in order to "discipline" Donovan because he strays near to it.

So. Start with the fact that this is a colonialist monstrosity, installed by the outright theft of another people's land, ripped away from them by ethnic-cleansing terror. The population is exiled by the millions, held in what are effectively concentration-camp conditions or endlessly harassed and sabotaged where it still holds farmland or property.

All this has been maintained for seven decades by non-stop terrorising, intimidation through continual assassinations, police and military bullying, universal surveillance, arbitrary arrests, imprisonment and torture, outright death-squad killing and summary prisoner execution (as recently caught on video) - all supplemented by regular outright genocidal 'collective punishment' blitzkriegs (approximately every three years).

Only the total ending of this vile

and fascist monstrosity can possibly produce any sort of solution either for the Palestinian people or the wider Arab nation, and is in fact pivotal in resolving the agony of the entire Middle East and increasingly the world imperialist crisis as a whole. It is also, paradoxically, the only rational solution for the Jewish population too.

This is not 'just another' colonial occupation (as one of your correspondents said, trying to wriggle away from the point), which would be bad enough anyway, but was carried through long after the colonising age of early semi-feudal and monopoly capitalist imperialism was over - that is to say, post-World War II, when the entire understanding of the world had moved on to communist or at least universal anti-imperialist struggle and the 'international community' United Nations had accepted (notionally anyway) decolonisation and 'granting independence'.

'Israel' was always a grating and grotesque attempt to swim back along the historical stream. It has to be ended - totally dismantled - and all property returned to its proper owners: every farm, home, garden, olive grove and grazing patch stolen, not just since 1967, but since the very beginning of the Zionist project.

The only alternative in practice is what was imposed on other imperialist colonies' peoples, from the Aztecs and Incas, and dozens of native American nations to the Aborigines, the Maoris and assorted African nations among others: which is to say either complete extermination or their reduction to a defeated rump on tiny 'reservations'. The Palestinians will never stop fighting for justice, and Israel therefore can never stop suppressing them, by the logic of its position.

The civilised way to do things is obviously a single Palestinian state, as Donovan suggests, in which those Jewish people who wish to remain could stay on under the overwhelmingly majority Palestinian rule, and contribute their huge talents and skills to building a new unified nation. But, to repeat, that is possible only once *all* stolen property has been restored to all the Palestinian people.

It is clear this will never happen by the voluntary agreement of the Jewish occupation. Neither is imperialism about to impose any such thing (even if it could); the purpose of this intrusion from its point of view has always been as a very useful dagger into the heart of Middle Eastern revolt (though there is not always a complete concord between Washington and the Zionists).

A one-state solution certainly will *not* happen through Donovan's laughable ideas about "basic democracy", which simply reveal how far away he (and the CPGB, which proffers the same opportunists formulas), are from basic Marxism: Lenin clearly laboured in vain in *The state and revolution* and many other works explaining the fraud of abstract 'democracy' and the need for the dictatorship of the proletariat as far as that is concerned.

And obviously no-one is watching Latin America currently, where CIA-promoted judicial coups and economic sabotage throughout the 'Bolivarian revolution' are toppling one 'left' reformist national regime after another - yet another practical lesson in the dangers of bourgeois 'democracy', to add to Allende, Morsi, etc.

Change in Palestine can only come about through rising revolutionary struggle, already long begun in embryo by the Palestinian people and

by much of the Middle East around them, fighting in many ways, all totally justifiable against this endless oppression, currently behind the Hamas national liberation leadership and eventually, necessarily, coming to revolutionary Marxism.

With this in mind, the nonsense about "anti-Semitism" can be seen for what it is: a dirty innuendo to try and head off growing world support for the Palestinians, reflecting imperialism and Zionism's fears. World mass hostility is rightly turned against all those who support this colonialist monstrosity and its fascist, murderous impositions which have killed and are killing tens of thousands, using the most horrific of weaponry on men, women and children. That is not anti-Semitism, but anti-Zionism, of course.

But Zionism now *includes* virtually all the Jewish diaspora: the religious social freemasonry intertwined through the whole of imperialism. That is a real enough cultural and social network with enormous influence - denying its existence and influence is simply nonsensical (not least in witnessing the current carefully organised "anti-Semitism" media lie campaign itself, which its influence has set going throughout capitalism).

There has been no sensible difference between Zionism and Jewishness since 1948 *except* for the very tiny minority of Jews who actively oppose the Israeli 'state' and have in various ways expressed it (such as burning their Jewish passports and renouncing the Zionist-granted 'right of return' (to settle on someone else's land)). According to the figure quoted by Tony Greenstein from Jonathan Freedland, that would be less than 7% - the rest, Freedland declares, seeing their "identity bound up with Israel"; even then most of that 7% is not actively *against* Israel, so the actual numbers are negligible.

Freedland argues that to oppose Israel is therefore to oppose the majority of Jews and is therefore anti-Semitic. The opposite is the case: to oppose Zionism is to oppose all those who support Zionism in practice, which means all those supporting Israel as a state. Even if they declare themselves 'anti-Zionist' they are still accepting the 'right' of Israel to exist; and therefore the 'rightness' of Palestinian oppression; their 'anti-Zionism' is just liberal hesitancy, fearful of the ultra-rights 'going too far' and threatening to lose everything because of the rebellion they trigger. They just want to keep what they have taken already.

The craven acceptance throughout the fake 'left' of this anti-Semitism allegation, and the 'admission' that 'some people have a problem with it' is disgusting. Hostility to Israel and all its supporters follows from its grotesque fascist record, and has nothing to do with the anti-Semitic scapegoating that *capitalism* whipped up for its World War II Nazi warmongering or past societal backwardness.

This imperialist and Zionist campaign should be exposed for what it is: censorship, and a form of demonising scapegoating in itself; not battling against hatred, but deliberately whipping it up to cow the 'left'.

Don Hoskins
Economic and Philosophic Science Review

Crystal-clear

Tony Greenstein in a letter to the *Weekly Worker* quotes what he claims is a tweet from Gilad Atzmon: "I am not a Jew any more. I despise the Jew in me. I absolutely detest the Jew in you" - which he identifies as anti-

Semitic (April 14).

Atzmon, recognising the Jewish role in the oppression of the Palestinian people, 'resigns' as a Jew and 'detests' the remnants of oppression which lie within him and those who are oppressors. If an Afrikaans during apartheid rule had said something similar about the position pertaining in South Africa at the time, would they have been accused of anti-Afrikaans racism? To ask the question is to answer it.

Also, congratulations to Ian Donovan for presenting a crystal-clear exposition of his position, in marked contrast to his opponents.

Ted Hankin
email

Kangaroo court

Following an exchange of letters with the Labour Representation Committee, I got a reply from Michael Calderbank, the political secretary of the LRC, which contradicted the two tweets from Dave Osland, embellished by Andrew Coates, that I had been unanimously expelled from the LRC for anti-Semitism by the NC at its meeting of April 2.

Michael assured me that only a "formal complaint", which "includes allegations of 'anti-Semitic claims' ... made in broadcast or written material", had been made against me. He goes on to say: "We view it as extremely important that any individual against whom allegations are made is treated fairly, and the LRC rules and standing orders provide a procedure which ensures this", which apparently did not happen at that meeting.

"The matter is now being referred to the complaints sub-committee (CsC) under the LRC standing orders," I learned, and they will examine it and "explain what has been alleged and ask you to comment". "If the CsC consider it appropriate, they will present a report to the NEC, which you will receive a copy." The national executive committee will then take a decision with a time limit of 42 days from April 2. In the meantime, I am suspended from membership, but not at all expelled.

So what did happen? I am demanding a copy of the minutes of the NEC of April 2 to ascertain what went on at that kangaroo court, who voted for what motions, etc. Is it the case that the meeting voted to publicly branding a revolutionary socialist with a 40-year record of fighting racism and anti-Semitism an anti-Semite and racist? Was this what drew the immediate reference of the proceedings of that meeting for legal opinion by more balanced leaders of the LRC not present? What legal rights had an NC, whose terms of office were illegitimately extended by a year by the cancellation of the 2015 AGM, to take such steps? What gave them the right to override the LRC standing orders and constitution, if this is what happened?

It may have been such considerations that produced the legal advice that informed the communication from the political secretary on my request. Well, at least I will get a better form of justice from the LRC than I apparently got at that farce of a meeting. I will get a hearing with a representative and the right to appeal to the next AGM as per the constitution. It was apparently the intention of the majority of those at that LRC NC that I be denied that. I trust the hearing will turn out to be more than a show trial.

Gerry Downing
Socialist Fight

Bourgeois

Peter Manson is absolutely correct in criticising the Socialist Party in England and Wales for failing to recognise its past and current errors

in relation to the Labour Party ('Carry on regardless', April 14). Of course, SPEW is not the only sect that got it wrong, and failed to account for that error. Some of those organisations, like the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, have not even admitted that they have changed their position, having previously claimed that the Labour Party was a stinking corpse. Such organisations make so many zigs and zags in their positions that it is much easier for their leaderships to simply pretend that nothing has changed, and so avoid the complicated matter of explaining the reason for the new course.

But, while Peter is right to point to the inadequacies of SPEW and the Socialist Workers Party in this regard, his own analysis is also faulty. For example, he writes: "While SPEW is quite right to dub the Labour right 'pro-capitalist', shouldn't the Corbyn wing be considered, at least in terms of its aspirations, as being 'pro-working class' (in however attenuated a form)?"

But this reflects a failure to properly understand the concept of a bourgeois workers' party, as adopted by Lenin. It confuses and conflates two different things: class and ideology. The whole point about the concept of a bourgeois workers' party - and indeed of the concept of social democracy, as put forward by Marx - is that it is possible to be avowedly and subjectively pro-working class, and yet for that affiliation to take the form of a promotion of bourgeois ideas, which are, necessarily, therefore, pro-capitalist.

Lenin, writing about some of the ideas of the Narodniks, talks about individuals who were some of the most dedicated revolutionaries, and subjectively dedicated to the interests of the working class, and yet whose ideas and policies were not just bourgeois, but objectively reactionary. Many of those in the 1970s who supported the Alternative Economic Strategy were undoubtedly subjectively pro-working class, and yet the ideas they promoted of nationalist support for import controls and so on were objectively reactionary.

And if we talk about the working class itself, it is unfortunately, but equally undoubtedly, the case that many workers themselves support reactionary ideas on a range of issues, whether it is in relation to immigration and even racism, through homophobia, sexism and so on. It is indeed why the UK Independence Party and others on the right are able to gain the support of such sections of workers. Peter's equation of working class with 'anti-capitalist' or 'pro-socialist' is not scientific, and is not justified. It assumes that, because objectively the interests of labour are contrary to those of capital, this mechanically transforms into the owners of capital being automatically bourgeois, and the owners of labour-power being automatically socialist, or anti-capitalist. But that quite manifestly is not the case.

In *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Marx comments: "The peculiar character of social democracy is epitomised in the fact that democratic-republican institutions are demanded as a means, not of doing away with two extremes, capital and wage labour, but of weakening their antagonism and transforming it into harmony."

That is simply a continuation of the idea that Marx outlined in his economic critique of the ideas of Ricardo, and also set out by Marx in *Wage, labour and capital*, where he writes: "And so the bourgeoisie and its economists maintain that the interest of the capitalist and of the labourer is the same. And in fact, so they are! The worker perishes

if capital does not keep him busy. Capital perishes if it does not exploit labour-power, which, in order to exploit, it must buy. The more quickly the capital destined for production - the productive capital - increases, the more prosperous industry is, the more the bourgeoisie enriches itself, the better business gets, so many more workers does the capitalist need, so much the dearer does the worker sell himself. The fastest possible growth of productive capital is, therefore, the indispensable condition for a tolerable life to the labourer."

It is precisely that idea that social democracy, be it of the right or of the left, promotes. It is the fundamental idea that lies behind trade unionism: to fight for the highest wages, and best conditions possible, within the confines of capitalism, and its need to grow and accumulate, so as to be able to employ more workers, on higher wages, and so on.

What makes the Labour Party, and other such social democratic parties, bourgeois workers' parties is not that they are a coalition of interests, whereby a socialist, working class base allies with, and is often dominated by, a pro-capitalist faction, but is that they are parties of the working class, comprised mostly of workers, obtaining their support from workers, including from the trade unions. What makes them bourgeois workers' parties, therefore, is the simple fact that the working class itself is bourgeois in outlook; it is necessarily dominated by bourgeois ideas. The trade unions themselves are a perfect manifestation of that fact, and the workers' parties built on those trades unions are simply a reflection of it.

The idea that the working class is somehow innately socialist, even revolutionary, and is simply being held back by a bourgeois leadership in the trade unions and social democratic parties is a total fallacy, and a myth that the left sects have told themselves, over the last century, to justify their own failure to win over the majority of the working class. Just as it is possible to be 'anti-imperialist', and yet to be so on the basis of reactionary ideas, so it is quite possible to be 'anti-capitalist' on the basis of reactionary ideas, and to be 'pro-worker' both on the basis of reactionary ideas (Marx's analysis of reactionary socialism) and on the basis of bourgeois ideas (trade unionism, social democracy).

Social democratic parties are bourgeois workers' parties precisely because the working class is itself bourgeois in outlook. It sees no further, in its majority, than the current set of property relations and the social relations that exist upon them. How could it? It would have to have already come to the same kind of theoretical understanding of capitalism and society that Marxists have arrived at - not on the basis of its own experience, but on the basis purely of such a theoretical and intellectual study. Its own direct experience leads it not to that revolutionary socialist consciousness, but purely to a bourgeois, reformist, trade union consciousness of bargaining within the existing system, and consequently of the need to only press its own needs as far as is compatible with the continuation and growth of that system, upon which it relies for its own existence and wellbeing. It could only move beyond that if it saw in practice, and experienced in practice, alternative forms of property - working class forms of property - and the social relations that rest upon them.

As Marx put it, in his *Inaugural address to the First International*, speaking of the worker-owned cooperatives: "The value of these great social experiments cannot be overrated. By deed instead of by

argument, they have shown that production on a large scale, and in accord with the behests of modern science, may be carried on without the existence of a class of masters employing a class of hands; that to bear fruit, the means of labour need not be monopolised as a means of dominion over, and of extortion against, the labouring man himself; and that, like slave labour, like serf labour, hired labour is but a transitory and inferior form, destined to disappear before associated labour plying its toil with a willing hand, a ready mind and a joyous heart ..."

If it were already the case that the working class was innately socialist, then it would not tolerate either its parties being dominated by bourgeois politicians, or indeed its own parties being anything other than reflections of its own revolutionary, socialist consciousness. The task of building socialism would be a simple matter, as these millions of workers imbued with a revolutionary, socialist consciousness simply swept aside the tiny number of bourgeois opponents.

Consequently, Peter's comment - "In that case, how on earth did Corbyn - a self-avowed socialist and anti-imperialist - manage to win so overwhelmingly?" - is also misplaced. Firstly, we do not judge whether someone is what they proclaim themselves to be, but on the objective basis of what they do, and what their ideas represent. On that basis Jeremy, who is, most definitely, subjectively pro-working class, is by his actions and by his ideas, still only a social democrat, albeit a left social democrat, and thereby objectively still dominated by bourgeois ideas. He was able to win precisely because the majority of the current Labour membership is dominated by those bourgeois ideas, which itself is a reflection that the working class is massively dominated by bourgeois ideas.

It is for that reason that the Labour Party, as a social democratic party, always has been and still is a bourgeois workers' party.

Arthur Bough
email

Collaboration

I wholeheartedly concur with Peter Manson's analysis of why the Socialist Party now misunderstands the nature of the Labour Party and the current titanic struggle for working class politics there.

By coincidence I also looked at Peter Taaffe's further review of the Crick book on Militant, where he

correctly analysed the current reprint as a further attempt to attack the left in the Labour Party. Somehow Mr Taaffe missed the irony that this and other attacks did not include the Socialist Party amongst its targets - for the very good reason that the SP is outside and mainly irrelevant to the battle for socialist ideas in the Labour Party. Ted Grant must indeed be turning in his grave.

Peter Manson is also correct in his call for a united front approach by Marxists to seek to transform the current bourgeois workers' Labour Party into a "united front of the entire working class". Sadly his and my criticism of the SP could equally apply to others, from the SWP to the remnants of Left Unity. The Marxist left has a lot to answer for in failing to grasp this opportunity historically and particularly now.

In taking a good look at ourselves, we can see two distinct trends on the left in the Labour Party. One group has adopted totally uncritical support for Corbyn and McDonnell, including the sub-Keynesian approach to mending capitalism and the desertion of class politics in the call, for example, on Labour councillors to implement cuts. Here we will find *Labour Briefing* and its various breakaway copies, together with the majority of the Labour Representation Committee leadership.

By contrast, Red Flag, Socialist Labour, Socialist Appeal, Labour Party Marxists and others are correctly remaining supportive of the Corbyn leadership, whilst arguing that an active struggle against capitalism is necessary and reformist ideas are inadequate for this task.

Perhaps we need to further discuss whether we on this wing of the Labour Party could do more to present our own united front to the movement, perhaps collaborating on a single paper/bulletin in the Labour Party which debates our differences also, whilst respecting the right of supporting groups to continue to publish and organise as they wish.

The *Socialist Labour* bulletin is open to discussion on this

Graham Durham
editor, *Socialist Labour*

Reactionary

I read Eddie Ford's 'Both sides are reactionary' - with general agreement. Unfortunately it said nothing about what to do and what attitude to take to remaining in the European Union. I don't think the *Weekly Worker* should fudge the issue or hide behind the

Fighting fund

Two boosts

This week saw our fighting fund boosted in two different ways.

First, there was the cash raised at the April 16 People's Assembly demonstration in London, amounting to £336. Second was comrade PM, who bought the *Weekly Worker* £500-worth of postage stamps and said he didn't want the money back! As I say, two separate boosts for an April fund that had been sadly lagging behind in terms of our £1,750 target. But no longer - especially when you add on the seven standing order payments that totalled £345 this week. Plus the £20 that comrade RB added to his subscription cheque.

All that comes to no less than £1,201, which takes our running total to a fantastic £1,721. So we're just £29 short and there

are still 10 days to go!

But readers may have noticed something missing from what I've said so far. That's right - not a single PayPal donation over the last seven days. And that's despite the fact that our website recorded 3,297 visits. But I'm sure comrades will make up for that over the coming week - won't you, dear readers?!

Anyway, we could really do with going way over target this month - the extra £800-plus from those two boosts will soon be spent. There's no reason why we shouldn't smash right through the £2,000 barrier!●

Robbie Rix

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

LETTERS

term 'active boycott', not least when no activity is proposed. I condemn the 'plague on both houses' type of anarcho-leftism, which the *Weekly Worker* is flirting with.

We have to be absolutely clear that the working class should be in favour of remaining in the EU for *revolutionary*, not reformist, reasons. Jeremy Corbyn and the Labour Party are in favour of the latter. True to form, reformists, so lacking in confidence in the working class, follow the Tory-led reactionary popular front straight into the polling booth.

The idea that workers should remain in the EU because of the working time directive is at best naive. Workers know that a future social Europe is not to be trusted and no more permanent than an NHS junior doctor's contract. Many feel uncomfortable at being hoodwinked into backing the Tories, who will opt out of EU benefits as soon as they can.

Every politically active worker knows all good things depend on class struggle, not the beneficence of the European Commission - or, for that matter, the British crown. After all, the main slogan of the commission and their corporate friends is 'Here today and gone tomorrow'. So why would anybody vote for such a future? The Tories are so confident that they have not even bothered to promise the usual jam tomorrow for the "hard-working families" who back Cameron.

The Tories are not getting my vote without paying for it. As far as I can see, they have offered us nothing but more austerity. So who is daft enough to vote for a continuation of that? Of course, I like a free health service, but voting Tory for free is not part of the deal.

Revolutionaries want to remain for revolutionary reasons. The EU is a halfway house which cannot be sustained unless there is a European democratic revolution. The present crisis will blow the house down unless there is a popular revolution which creates a republican United States of Europe. The Greek people know it is democratic revolution or bust. Scotland is nearly ready for another go. It is time we learned the lesson.

The Tory referendum is therefore an irrelevant and reactionary distraction from the real democratic problems besetting the EU. Worse, it has a nasty, racist sting in the tail. So the job is fighting to remain in the EU *without backing the Tories* in their referendum.

Instead of clinging desperately to the coat tails of the Tories, as the Labour right and Corbyn are doing, a revolutionary approach means using the Tory referendum to prepare the working class movement for independent political action.

First, if there is an anti-working class result, we should no more accept it than the City and their Tory friends will. There must be demonstrations and, even better, political strikes against exit or Cameron's 'reformed' EU. This would mean acting independently of the Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress - who will accept exit, as they have accepted the anti-union laws.

Second, we must recognise the unevenness of the democratic revolution across the UK and promote direct action against exit in Scotland, Ireland and Wales.

Finally, in making clear what the working class must do after the referendum, we can 'return' to the ballot itself. We must call for the working class to act independently from the British ruling class by opposing both options on the ballot paper - not least because both, as Eddie Ford says, are reactionary.

Steve Freeman
Left Unity and Rise

No analysis

How to vote in the coming EU referendum is a tactical question. The CPGB's *Weekly Worker* has made its position on this question clear: it recommends active abstention.

James Marshall reports that an American professor, writing in the *Financial Times*, predicts that Brexit will never happen, irrespective of the referendum result ('The in-out kabuki dance', April 14). But I suspect that most readers of *Weekly Worker* do not read it for guidance on tactical matters, or for the speculations of some bourgeois American professor. Your paper is widely read and respected for its serious theoretical discussions and analyses.

Yet you have not so far published any analytic article assessing the consequences of Brexit - if it does come to pass, contrary to the professor's prediction - for the interests of the working class and the struggle for socialism. Surely, this is a most interesting and vital theoretical question, on which you have been strangely silent.

What is stopping you?

Moshé Machover
email

Connolly's fight

Years before he faced the firing squad in Dublin's Kilmainham Jail for his role in the 1916 Easter Rising, James Connolly faced the wrath of a conservative mob in a small harbour town in the south of Ireland.

The socialist trade union leader was in Cobh in County Cork in March 1911 to address an open-air meeting regarding the introduction of school meals for children from a poorer economic background. Connolly argued that this could be funded through a special rate at the cost of the church and local business. Of course, this was not warmly welcomed by the church hierarchy or business leaders.

The Education (Provision of Meals) Act was introduced in 1906 across the United Kingdom, but was not extended to Ireland, even though those in power in Westminster considered the island as part of the kingdom. Feminist and republican activist Maude Gonne McBride first launched a campaign to extend the act to Ireland before Connolly joined the cause of feeding the impoverished youth of Ireland.

This was a time in Ireland when poverty was rife and the child mortality rate was the highest in Europe. Many teachers witnessed their pupils on the brink of starvation, which prevented them from fulfilling a days worth of school work. In 1910 Maud Gonne McBride established the Dublin Ladies School Dinner Committee, which ensured over 400 children from the city's slums had at least one full meal a day.

Connolly saw the failure to extend the school meals act to Ireland as yet another example of John Bull trying to starve the poor of Ireland, who were considered unworthy and often disloyal. He hoped his speech in the garrison town of Cobh might convert the sailors and soldiers from British imperialism to socialist ideals. Connolly was once one of those in an imperial uniform in that town, when as a young man he joined the Kings Liverpool regiment and was shipped to Cobh in 1882 for a stint.

As Connolly took to the platform, a group had gathered and began heckling and throwing stones. A local councillor - who also happened to own the local laundry, where the women workers were paid under three shillings a week - led the mob which attacked Connolly. This councillor represented a rather large swathe of Irish society who in 1911 were nationalistic in their political

outlook to a certain point, but had a divine loyalty to the rightwing values of the Catholic church.

What Connolly was advocating that day in Cobh was not popular with bourgeois nationalists or the Catholic church. The church deemed this charitable suggestion 'demoralising' for the underclasses and this was peddled by both church and business, who stated it was the responsibility of the family to feed their children and not the state.

As bottles, sticks and stones rained down on Connolly and his fellow socialists, they managed to escape from the mob and fled to the nearby Rob Roy hotel, where they were given refuge. The crowd were left to tear up and dismantle the platform, as Connolly was then escorted by police from the hotel to the station and put on a steam locomotive out of town.

1911 proved to be a turning point in the social politics of Ireland. Nationalist politics was broken into several different factions, but a more radical political set-up was beginning to emerge in the form of Sinn Féin, which within seven years became the dominant political party in the Ireland.

That same year saw women workers in the Jacobs biscuit factory in Dublin go on strike for better pay, while foundry workers in Wexford found themselves locked out by their employers when they joined Connolly's Irish Transport and General Workers Union. Irish working class militancy would become a united force in the face of capitalism during the 1913 Dublin lockout, but, like conservative constitutional nationalism, the labour movement also fell victim to the rise of Sinn Féin and republicanism in the aftermath of the 1916 Easter Rising.

Today in Cobh a striking black-granite plaque adorns the wall outside the Rob Roy bar, where Connolly had to seek refuge from a conservative, nationalist mob in 1911. After that incident Connolly did not hide his distaste for the garrison town, which he called "a nest of parasites feeding on parasites"! Harsh words indeed for what is today quite a pleasant harbour town, but over 100 years ago it, like many other towns across Ireland, hung heavy with an air of ideological conflict.

Pauline Murphy
email

Savage state

I have just read the Labour Party Marxists contribution to Labour's defence review. Hopefully it will be published by the *Weekly Worker*. Though it seems to be unfeasible, it is still a valued contribution, as it introduces the thought of having such a militia into the public arena.

Like a seed dropped by a passing bird, it will germinate come what may and, as you said, it has historical roots. The people of Britain have never been so vulnerable to what is becoming a weird and savage state machine. We must have no limits to our defence endeavours.

Elijah Traven
Hull

£150 a week

We are all a bit out of date. We should be demanding an income for everyone over the age of 16 who has a bank account. I think we should start at around £150 per week. We know the state can afford this amount because it's just numbers on a balance sheet. That's the beauty of a fiat money and this would free the low-paid from having to accept jobs which pay too little to live on.

There is no better way to free the working classes than a secure income.

Eugene McAteer
email

ACTION

CPGB podcasts

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

London Communist Forum

Sunday April 24, 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 4 ('From opposition to office'), section 2: 'Office and its purpose'. Organised by CPGB: www.cpgb.org.uk; Labour Party Marxists: www.labourpartymarxists.org.uk.

Radical Anthropology Group

Tuesday April 26, 6.45pm: Introduction to social and biological anthropology, Daryll Forde seminar room, Anthropology Building, 14 Taviton Street, off Gordon Square, London WC1. 'What makes people weird? Menstrual taboos among scientists in Western, Educated, Industrial, Rich and Democratic (WEIRD) countries.' Speaker: Chris Knight. Organised by Radical Anthropology Group: radicalanthropologygroup.org.

World of political cartooning

Thursday April 21, 7.30pm: Public meeting, Auditorium, Students Union, Western Bank, Sheffield S10. Speaker: Steve Bell. Entry: £6/£8. Organised by Opus Independents: www.opusindependents.com.

Anarchist books

Saturday April 23, 10am to 6pm: Bookfair, Showroom cinema, Workstation, 15 Paternoster Row, Sheffield S1. Free admission. Organised by Sheffield Anarchist Bookfair: <https://sheffieldbookfair.org.uk>.

Save our fire service

Saturday April 23, 11am: Protest against cuts to Essex fire service, Chelmsford High Street, outside Saracens Head, Chelmsford. Organised by Essex FBU: <https://twitter.com/essexfbu>.

Trade unionists for Calais

Sunday April 24, 10.30am to 4pm: Meeting, Student Central, Malet Street, London WC1. Report-back from last visit to migrant camp and planning for June 18 Convoy to Calais. Organised by Stand Up To Racism: www.standuptoracism.org.uk.

Support the junior doctors

Tuesday April 26, 5pm: Demonstration. Assemble St Thomas Hospital, Westminster Bridge Road, London SE1, for march to department of health, Richmond House, 79 Whitehall, London SW1. Organised by British Medical Association: www.bma.org.uk.

Jeremy for PM

Tuesday April 26, 7.30pm: Public meeting, Bournemouth International Conference Centre, Exeter Road, Bournemouth BH2. Places must be reserved via www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/jc4pm-hosted-by-the-cwu-tickets-24314055996. Organised by Jeremy Corbyn for Prime Minister: <https://en-gb.facebook.com/JeremyCorbyn4PM>.

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.

May Day Marx

Sunday May 1, 11am to 4pm: Marx Memorial Library open day, 37A Clerkenwell Green, London EC1. Including exhibition, stalls, displays and free tour of the site. Organised by Marx Memorial Library: www.marxlibrary.org.uk.

The Russian Revolution

Saturday May 14, 10am to 5pm: Critique conference, Student Central, Malet Street, London WC1. Preparing for and discussing next year's centenary. Organised by Critique journal: www.critiquejournal.net.

Stop the War Coalition

Saturday May 14, 11am to 5pm: Conference, Midlands Institute, Margaret Street, Birmingham B3. £5 waged/£2 unwaged. Organised by Birmingham Stop the War: www.facebook.com/BStWC.

90 years since 1926

Thursday May 19, 7pm: Lecture, Marx Memorial Library, 37A Clerkenwell Green, London EC1. Speaker: professor Roger Seifert. Organised by Marx Memorial Library: www.marxlibrary.org.uk.

Jerusalem: crucible for peace?

Saturday May 21, 10am to 4pm: Conference, Centre for Contemporary Arts, 350 Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow G2. The origins and background to the *Haram*. Organised by Scottish Friends of Palestine: www.scottishfriendsofpalestine.org.

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.

AMERICA



Raw material for a mass socialist party

Don't support Clinton

Sanders should build on what has been achieved by standing as an independent, urges Tom Munday

Oh, *The Guardian* must be pleased. After months of bettering all initial expectations, the Bernie Sanders campaign for the Democratic nomination may finally have run aground. The New York primary was always a must-win for the Vermont senator and, with its 250 or so delegates, one of the most significant prizes he needed to bag in order to keep his presidential hopes alive, but it was taken by Hillary Clinton by 58% to 42%.

Contrary to the smug assertions of the bourgeois press, Sanders' game had, until this point, been almost impeccable. Not necessarily in the sense that he had been scoring goliath-felling victories, but rather that, so far, proceedings had been unfolding almost entirely in accordance with his campaign's predictions (with some helpful upsets in his favour along the way).

Where capitalist cheerleaders had screamed that the septuagenarian should drop out after each Clinton win, the truth had been that the consistent accuracy of long-term polling trends (showing that Sanders was closing the gaps in each primary) meant that his campaign was pre-emptively prepared for every one of them. Clinton's victories were consistently in states where she held unassailable leads (for fairly obvious reasons - they were the most conservative states) right up until the votes were cast. Taking the Super Tuesday result as indicative, you could easily see that, whilst Clinton took eight of the 12 primaries on offer, of the four where polling was inconclusive (ie, where Clinton was not already polling well ahead), Sanders had stormed to double-digit wins in three of them.

Although obviously Clinton's wins by default still counted, the results pointed to an underlying dynamic that ultimately favoured Sanders - Clinton scoring big in conservative primaries, but struggling in 'left' and swing states. Undoubtedly too they realised that the absurdly drawn-out electoral process was playing into her hands - giving her the early veneer of success that she needed to avoid a full-on panic. The Sanders camp,

on the other hand, always knew they had to sit quietly and wait for the 'red states' to be called before they could fully commit to the counteroffensive. Though New York, where Clinton had been a senator, was always going to be a gamble, it was one of the key places where that counteroffensive was going to have to bear fruit. Ultimately - and at 16% down, rather decisively - it has failed to do that.

The question that now presents itself is 'Where next?' True, Sanders can carry on - the actual delegate difference from New York was 31 and nationally is 241.¹ In spite of the outright lies which many pro-establishment outlets have now resorted to, victory is still within the bounds of mathematical possibility (although highly unlikely). There are around 1,646 delegates yet to be allocated, and the 540 votes of the wildly anti-democratic super-delegates (as yet officially uncast) would still be enough to sway it in Sanders' favour - although that would, of course, necessitate them all going temporarily insane.

Alternatively Sanders can drop out now (or later) and run as an independent. This certainly would allow him the luxury of gambolling around the byzantine structures of the Democratic Party (structures often deliberately designed to hobble the 'radicals' and 'outsiders' of his kind). The downside, at least if you're a dyed-in-the-wool Democrat, is that this will inevitably impact on the electoral chances of Clinton (who, lest we forget, has only been leading Trump by a fairly modest (considering the candidates) margin since the beginning of March - and the gap is now narrowing).² The benefit then of not being a Democrat is that you can now full-throatedly call for exactly this.

Critical support

Contrary to the assertion of various critics, we understand that supporting Sanders is a question of *tactics*, not principle. In our earliest piece on his meteoric rise we pointed out that the reason we should muster a little enthusiasm for the man was

because he represented a potentially fundamental shift in US politics. For the first time in many decades a self-professed "socialist" was battling in the big leagues (and this week he has taken 42% of the Democrat vote in the metropolitan heart of global capitalism). By engaging with his campaign, communists would be able to put forward a programme for *real* socialism. The fact that Sanders was attempting to win the nomination of a bourgeois party does not rule out critical support. When it comes to tactics, whatever advances the cause of the working class is permissible.

We need not bother ourselves with the prospect of him actually winning the Democrat nomination (we are not the official Communist Party USA, which farcically ignored all the polling that was giving Sanders a much better chance against Trump,³ and called for their members to back Hillary to keep out a racist ... first Clinton, then us, comrades!). The thrill here was in the chase not the kill.⁴ The act of supporting Sanders, precisely because it gave the left such an opportunity to put forward its own ideas, was in itself a purposeful and worthy thing. It had nothing to do with some Machiavellian opportunism - there was no call to set aside disagreements, no facetious appeal to some common good that ought not be questioned.

It was/is simply a recognition of the fact that if Sanders was going to bring formerly banished words, phrases and ideas back into the daylight, then here was a politician at least creating the space for arguments of our type to be heard (and, for the CPUSAers out there, Hillary Clinton, who barely stopped short of calling Barack Obama a mega-sofie for not dropping *more* bombs on Syria, is most assuredly going to move the spectrum *to the right*).⁵ Irrespective of his intentions, Sanders is helping to create a movement and making waves in American politics in a way that nobody else has in living memory.

Take this Twitter exchange:

Bhaskar Sunkara @sunraysunray: You know Bernie Sanders is

a social democrat because we haven't had a show trial for Jeff Weaver yet.

Jim Marchwinski (@jjmjesq): @sunraysunray Democratic Socialist, asshole.⁶

For those of you out of the know, Sunkara is editor of *Jacobin* magazine. The guy has earned his leftwing chops - the joke proves it. And now the comrade has amassed such a following and recognition in the wake of the Sanders campaign that he has to deal with random stab-in-the-dark abuse from angry knuckle-draggers like Marchwinski. The difference illustrated here is that, where six to 12 months ago that abuse would have likely hammered him for being a pinko-soviet (or worse), it now comes from confused and disgruntled and (most importantly) freshly-minted lefts. While that is not much (and perhaps Marchwinski is not a great salesman for our movement), it certainly seems that a new dawn is upon us when grumpy, ill-informed mouth-breathers start getting angsty about the apparent besmirchment of their hero's socialist credentials.

Sanders has brought more potential recruits into the American movement than ever before. And if sharing a spittle-flecked twitter-feed with an army of such people sounds unappealing, it is worth considering this serious point: there are a whole lot of Jim Marchwinskis out there amongst the working class - those recently politically activated workers now trying to find their feet and their identity, defending what they know passionately and aggressively. For those of us who follow the small section of the press which is pro-Sanders, we can see a parallel (and perhaps more intellectually reassuring) change occurring: voices which once described themselves as 'very liberal', or 'extremely progressive', or just 'radical', or even none-of-the-above, are coming round to embracing a new lexicon, where they begin to feel comfortable describing themselves as 'socialist'. Maybe they hastily prefix it with 'democratic', so as not to sound

like a filthy commie, but at the very least they no longer find their political vocabularies impaired by a toxicity of association (and it is no coincidence that so many of Sanders' supporters were born immediately before or after 1989).

All this represents a small step, of course, but an eminently necessary one nonetheless - a fact that those comrades who think of our support as a betrayal are entirely incapable of appreciating. Those comrades seem to assume that class-consciousness will fall upon the workers like manna from heaven - that suddenly, in spite of years of being conditioned to see red and think gulags, something will twig and that'll be it: the revolution will be in the bag by teatime. The real world ain't so, comrades - there is a ladder to the top, and a lot of rungs to pass on the way up. One of those rungs is getting people to actually talk in our language, to be open and amenable to our ideas.

As much as you do not achieve this with that weird coyness of a Syriza or Podemos (ejecting our hard-won vocabulary and a pandering to a paranoid phobia about 'dead Russians'), you equally do not do so by surrounding yourself in a tiny halo of Marxist purity. Make no mistake - Left Unity or Tusc can give me a room full of well-meaning, ex-Greens, but it is those Jim Marchwinskis - angry and confused and full of latent potential - those vast, presently unactivated (or recently activated) swathes of the working class, that in the end will win us the day. Sanders, for all his faults, has and is delivering such people in spades ●

@Tommundaycs

Notes

1. www.democraticconventionwatch.com/diary/4795.
2. www.realclearpolitics.com/epolls/2016/president/us/general_election_trump_vs_clinton-5491.html.
3. www.realclearpolitics.com/epolls/2016/president/us/general_election_trump_vs_sanders-5565.html.
4. www.cpusa.org/taking-a-sober-look-at-the-2016-election.
5. www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/hillary-clinton-iran-foreign-policy_us_55f05c2ac4b002d5c07786b2.
6. https://twitter.com/jjmjesq/status/722629835571376129.

AMERICA



Howard Chandler Christy, 'Signing of the constitution', September 17 1787

One, two, three revolutions

Jack Conrad argues that democracy in the United States is corrupted and far from complete. The working class must finish what 1775 began

Writing in his well remunerated *Daily Telegraph* column, Boris Johnson protests that when the US president arrives in this country on April 22, he will "like some *deus ex machina* ... pronounce" upon the forthcoming European Union referendum. Barack Obama, says the over-ambitious London major, will tell the British people "to do the right thing".

Having expressed his love for America and belief in the American dream, Johnson bitterly complains that "our most important ally" will inform us "that it is in our interests to stay in the EU, no matter how flawed we may feel that organisation to be." Without that, Britain will lose its "influence" in the "council of nations". Johnson bangs on:

Never mind the loss of sovereignty; never mind the expense and the bureaucracy and the uncontrolled immigration. The American view is very clear. Whether in code or *en clair* [in plain language - JC], the president will tell us all that UK membership of the EU is right for Britain, right for Europe and right for America.

Predictably, not least given his leadership of the EU 'out' campaign, Johnson dismisses Obama's "wholly fallacious" argument out of hand; moreover, he brands it "a piece of outrageous and exorbitant hypocrisy", coming from an American. "There is," after all, "no country in the world," he declares, "that defends its own sovereignty with such hysterical vigilance as the United States of America. This is a nation born from its glorious refusal to accept overseas control."¹

However, as might be expected, two centuries ago, the birth pangs of the USA elicited a rather

different response from the British establishment.

In 1775 George III denounced "the authors and promoters of this desperate conspiracy", who had "laboured to inflame my people in America ... and to infuse into their minds a system of opinions repugnant to the true constitution of the colonies, and to their subordinate relation to Great Britain."² The king's position was loyally endorsed by both houses of parliament. In the same grovelling spirit, Edward Gibbon - celebrated for his multi-volum history of the Roman empire - branded America as a nation founded in the "criminal enterprise" of rebellion.³ Samuel Johnston, the essayist and dictionary writer, was hired by the Tory government of Frederick North as an anti-American propagandist. His pamphlet, *Taxation no tyranny* (1775), was a response to the *Declaration of rights* agreed by the first Continental Congress, which famously damned "taxation without representation".

Johnson stated that, by migrating to America, the colonists had "voluntarily resigned the power of voting". Yet somehow they still had "virtual representation" in the British parliament. Mocking the *Declaration of rights*, Johnson said Americans had no more right to govern themselves than the Cornish. If the Americans wanted to participate in parliament, Johnson suggested that they move to England and purchase an estate. Inevitably, Johnson castigated English supporters of America as "traitors to this country".⁴

Supposedly, our Johnson, the London mayor and would-be prime minister, unlike his 18th century namesake supports what was an epoch-making revolution. As shown by countless historical studies, tax boycotts led to riots, sacking the houses of rich people, the tarring

and feathering of Tory loyalists, and finally an armed insurrection, which let fly the hopes and creative energies of the "lowest dregs of the people".⁵

Of course, what Boris Johnson really admires is not the revolutionary origins of the United States, but its present-day position as the global hegemon. If he were ever to become prime minister, then like Harold Macmillan, Ted Heath, Margaret Thatcher, Tony Blair, Gordon Brown and David Cameron, he too would be a wholly dependable US satrap.

Model

Needless to say, Marxists do genuinely admire the American revolution. Karl Marx declared that "the American war of independence sounded the tocsin for the European middle class".⁶ Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov presented the American revolution as a model for all colonised peoples:

The history of modern, civilised America opened with one of those great, really liberating, really revolutionary wars, of which there have been so few, compared to the vast number of wars of conquest, which, like the present imperialist war, were caused by squabbles among kings, landowners or capitalists over the division of usurped lands or ill-gotten gains. That was the war the American people waged against the British robbers, who oppressed America and held her in colonial slavery, in the same way as these 'civilised' bloodsuckers are still oppressing and holding in colonial slavery hundreds of millions of people in India, Egypt and all parts of the world.⁷

Nothing could be more mistaken than characterising the American revolution as "anti-feudal".⁸ It was

far more advanced than that. All 13 colonies were dominated by money relations, commodity production and the drive to realise a fat commercial profit.

While there was, at first, widespread use of indentured labour, this proved unsustainable. There followed a switch to importing black slaves on a mass scale. This unfree labour force was employed on the sugar, tobacco and cotton plantations. Whites, north and south, had to be paid high wages, and often they used their not inconsiderable savings to go west and establish themselves as small farmers. Needless to say though, the plantations were unmistakably capitalist operations and thoroughly integrated into the booming British import-export trade. Robin Blackburn describes Britain's relationship with the plantation zone as one of "extended primitive accumulation". The trans-Atlantic regime allowed "metropolitan accumulation" to "break out of its agrarian and national limits and discover an industrial and global destiny".⁹

Though the 1775-83 war of independence was fundamentally a bourgeois anti-colonial revolution, there can be no denying the role of the masses. After all, the ground for the revolution was laid not just by elite resentment over British tax demands and an interest in mercantile free trade. Town meetings, regular gatherings of the Committees of Correspondence, Sons of Liberty and Sons of Neptune in taverns and coffee houses, etc moulded mass consciousness, as did the publication of radical papers and pamphlets, such as Tom Paine's *Common sense* (it went through 25 print runs in 1776 alone). Hence popular opinion sought political democracy, religious toleration and a general levelling that would see an end to the distinction between the rich

and poor.

So what became the United States of America emerged not only as a result of a hard-fought war of independence, conducted by a subject people against an imperial overlord. The USA came into history through a complex stand-off between mass forces seeking a radical democracy, on the one side, and, on the other, exploitative, upper class interests - not least as expressed in rival, state interests. As Herbert M Morais argues,

The first American revolution was the product of two general movements: the struggle for self-government and national independence, and the struggle amongst the American people themselves for a more democratic order. The revolution therefore had an external aspect, the colonial war of liberation against Britain; and an internal aspect, the mass upsurge against anti-democratic elements.¹⁰

Together the 13 American colonies fought as one against the Hanoverian crown. But despite securing a military victory, they could not agree even a customs union of the type that put together the loose, 1834 *Zollverein* unification of Germany. There was no single American foreign or domestic policy. The revolution severed the link with Great Britain and Ireland, but could not replace it with another unifying authority.

After the decisive Battle of Yorktown in October 1781 - continental and French armies forced a humiliating surrender of the British-Hessian regiments under the command of general Charles Cornwallis - unity began to fray. Smaller states jealously promoted their sovereign status. Congress was widely resented and each state began to go its own way. Customs barriers

were erected and tensions mounted. Inter-state “bickering” was in danger of getting out of hand and “tearing the confederation apart”.¹¹

The existing articles of confederation had to be rewritten. The promise to nationalise state debts accumulated during the revolutionary war, the mutual advantages offered by protection of nascent industries, and the prospect of lucrative trade deals with key European powers were all factors that encouraged the states to surrender vital elements of their sovereignty and accept the not inconsiderable burden to running a central governmental apparatus. Admittedly, the danger of war with France and restive native tribes were important factors in bringing about unity too.

Unity

But it was the threat from the ‘mobocracy’, more than anything else, that brought together the northern merchants and industrialists and the southern slavocracy in a keen realisation of the inadequacies of continuing with a loose confederation. Having fronted a popular revolution, the elite constitution-makers of 1787 were confronted with the problem of how to rein in the masses, and how to harness them behind one or the other exploitative system - free labour or unfree labour.

Mass agitation had already forced the outright abolition of slavery, first in Vermont and then Massachusetts. Other northern states gradually followed suit. In Virginia provisions were agreed which allowed for the private manumission of slaves. As a result the free blacks living along the Chesapeake estuary shot up from 6,000 in 1780 to 60,000 in 1810 (in all, one-third of all the free blacks in the United States). Then there was the 1786-87 Shays rebellion in Massachusetts. Leonard L Richards argues that it was responsible for “fundamentally altering the course of US history”.¹²

David Shays, a veteran of the revolutionary war, led a force of 4,000 armed men in the bid to overthrow the elite-dominated state government. The Shaysites were organised into regiments and were run by democratically elected committees. Though it was eventually trounced by the privately financed Massachusetts state militia under general Benjamin Lincoln, the Shays rebellion “served notice on the ruling classes of the precariousness of their position in face of the rising popular clamour”.¹³ Revealingly most of the rebels ended up being pardoned. Shays himself survived into old age, albeit an impoverished one.

Confronted by a white male population which had flintlocks in their hands and *Common sense* in their heads, the drafters of the US constitution had to tread a careful line. Hence the attempt to reconcile the interests of the northern capitalists and the southern planters, on the one hand, and on the other, gaining acceptance from the great mass of the people, whom they instinctively feared.

Indeed it is surely no exaggeration to say that the ruling principle that guided the 55 delegates to the Constitutional Convention - all members of the elite - lay in keeping political power as far away as possible from the hands of the urban and rural masses. Their thinking can be gleaned from the federalist papers of 1787-88. Eg, Alexander Hamilton asserted that a “firm” union would be of the “utmost moment to the peace and liberty of the states, as a barrier against domestic faction and insurrection”.¹⁴ A classic ruling class formulation.

However, some kind of democracy was unavoidable - the people had been mobilised and were liable to act on their own behalf. Of course, the natural inclinations of those above were aristocratic and anti-democratic. So, the smaller the proportion of the people

represented in congress the better. Black slaves, native Americans and women were therefore automatically excluded.

Ellen Meiksins Wood pointedly comments that the American model was Rome, not Athens; Cicero, not Pericles; not the rule of the *demos*, but SPQR, the “mixed constitution” of the senate and the Roman people; the *populus* with rights of citizenship, “but governed by an aristocracy”.¹⁵

The constitution that came into force in 1789 was a multi-layered compromise. A compromise between rival states; a compromise between the two systems of labour; and, no less fundamentally, a compromise between the aristocratic and democratic principles of government. Hence, the system of checks and balances *against* democracy. The state is headed by an *indirectly* elected monarch, who exercises enormous executive powers. True, the top office-holder is not addressed as “His Highness, the President of the United States, and Protector of their Liberties” (as proposed by John Adams, the second president).¹⁶ Nevertheless, the US president is the chief administrator and commander-in-chief of the armed forces. Furthermore, the president appoints all secretaries of state (ministers) and members of the supreme court - who serve for life. The two houses of congress - the House of Representative and the Senate - exist to ratify presidential proposals. If, for one reason or another, presidents are met by stubborn refusal, they can veto congress and try again. Either way, popular initiatives and pressures from below can be constantly held back and frustrated - by either the presidency, the congress or the supreme court.

Democratic forces in America - including popular leaders, such as Mercy Otis Warren, James Warren and Eldridge Garry - experienced no trouble in recognising the constitution as a victory for the Tories (as the country’s right was then called). They, the radicals, opposed not the unity of states, but unity without liberty. In her *Observations on the new constitution* (1788), Mercy Otis Warren objected to the lack of democratic guarantees - no press freedom, no right of conscience, no right to trial by jury. In addition, she opposed any moves towards establishing a standing army - a “nursery of vice and the bane of liberty”. Moreover she objected to representatives setting their own salaries, and called for annual elections. The electoral college - which to this day actually elects the president - was branded an “aristocratic junta”.¹⁷

The radical left rallied around the demand for a Bill of Rights - which became for them a condition for the adoption of the constitution and was finally enshrined in the first 10 amendments. Thomas Jefferson and James Madison took the initiative here, so reconciling the radical left to the constitution. Not that these rights were realised in practice - the fight for them transferred to each separate state.

It is surely therefore one of those historical tragedies that the Committees of Correspondence, the Sons of Liberty, the Sons of Neptune, etc, which taken together constituted the American equivalent of the English Levellers and the French *Enragés*, failed to transform themselves into a programmatically coherent national party completely separate from the men of property.

Interests

Two great *bourgeois* parties emerged. Albeit through a disorderly course of splits and fusions, the pro-federalist and anti-federalist camps became the Federal Party and the Republican Party (officially the Democratic-Republican Party till 1828). Crudely put, the Federal Party - led by Alexander Hamilton - articulated the interests of the northern merchant class and the ever more powerful industrial

capitalists. The Republican Party - under Thomas Jefferson - defended the south and the slave-based plantation system. After a bitter struggle within George Washington’s cabinet, the Federal Party triumphed. It took over the reins of government and embarked on a single-minded programme of primitive capitalist accumulation.

A national bank, common finances and a system of industrial protection against British competition were put in place. Tough restrictions were also imposed on land sales in the west. Labour-power had to be retained and kept as cheap as possible. Funding for the nationalised debts came from taxation - primarily on landowners and the rural masses (90% of the population). This programme stimulated overseas trade and allowed capitalist accumulation to take off. However, it provoked stiff opposition from the slavocracy. Wasteful and ecologically unsustainable plantation agriculture - tobacco, sugar but especially cotton - quickly exhausted the soil. Virgin land was therefore vital for the survival of the system. Yet the great plantation-owners found their “natural” route to the west blocked by the Federal Party administration.

Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe and similar figures from amongst the slavocracy sought to rally the majority of the population behind them through an overlapping series of political and class alignments. Their main slogans concerned defending state rights and encouraging western expansion. The industrial bourgeoisie found popular support draining away. Increasingly isolated and desperate, it enacted the draconian Alien and Sedition Act, in order to scapegoat the democratic clubs founded in the wake of the French Revolution. There was much hysterical talk of “French gold” and outside subversives. But the tide was moving inexorably against the Federal Party. The slavocracy aligned the whole countryside to its programme. Doubtless that is why in the mid-1930s Earl Browder, general secretary of the ‘official’ Communist Party of the USA, attempted to claim Jefferson as a representative of “agrarian democracy”.¹⁸ He was, of course, no such thing.

Jefferson and his party captured both the presidency and congress in 1801. However, the Federal Party, in a pre-emptive move, stacked the courts - especially the supreme court - with their chosen men. Jefferson’s two administrations were characterised by a constant to-and-fro struggle with the judiciary. Under John Marshall, a leading Federalist, the supreme court tried to impose a judicial dictatorship. Marshall deliberately issued a loaded court decision, which declared that a particular piece of obscure legislation passed by congress was unconstitutional and therefore void. This highly controversial precedent was kept in reserve - they had no stomach for a popular explosion - till the notorious Dred Scott case in 1857 ... and then a revolutionary civil war was necessary to expunge that decision and its consequences.

Federalist minds turned to out-and-out treason. They plotted with Britain to halt western expansion. Plans were also discovered to hive off the newly acquired Louisiana Territory. Justice Marshall, presiding over the trial of the conspirators, ruled administration evidence out of order. He thus saved their necks.

Though the Federalist Party quickly collapsed, never to rise again under that name, none of the administrations that followed touched the foundations of American capitalism laid down over the years 1789-1800. Indeed Jefferson knew that the slavocracy had no long-term future - and he actually prohibited the importation of slaves in his second term as president.

The slavocracy willingly cemented an historic compromise with the

northern industrialists and the small family farmers - it held fast till the constitutional crisis that led to the civil war of 1861-65.

America rapidly spread westwards through a series of mammoth purchases, violent land grabs and peaceful absorptions of frontier states - all at the expense of the native Indian tribes. Each successive enlargement benefited either the slavocracy or the small farmers. However, industry found itself more than compensated for the loss of eastern proletarians to the never ending lure of the west by the huge surge in demand for its commodities and the promotion of mass migration from Europe.

Second revolution

The civil war was America’s second revolution. National rights and union authority triumphed over state rights; the north over the south; the system of wage labour over slave labour. After the war the banking and industrial bourgeoisie stood alone as the sole ruling class in the US. The slavocracy and the southern secession were crushed, using the revolutionary methods favoured by the most extreme wing of democracy. Civil war excluded any middling course. Having taken up the struggle against the slave states, the northern bourgeoisie and their working class and rural allies were forced to resort to increasingly daring and far-reaching measures.

This was both predicted and urged by Marx. He thought that the south would initially prove militarily superior. Poor white adventurers provided a ready supply of manpower. But the north would eventually prove victorious. Not just because of its greater population numbers and industrial capacity. It had the possibility of transforming what began as a “constitutional” matter into a “revolutionary” war. Instead of exclusively focusing on the issue of secession, Lincoln had the “great radical remedy” of demanding for abolition of slavery and turning the black slaves into active agents of their own liberation. In other words, a “slave revolution”.¹⁹ Abraham Lincoln hesitated time and time again before announcing the abolition of slavery in the confederate states. This finally became the 13th constitutional amendment in 1865.

However, the northern bourgeoisie became increasingly frightened by the results of the second revolution. Most Republican leaders - the Republican Party was formed in 1854 out of the remnants of the Federal Party - were unenthusiastic about freeing the slaves. And after the Confederacy had been defeated, they feared that the poor - especially the doubly oppressed black population - would push democracy way beyond the limits imposed on it by the interests of property. Black soldiers in the union army kept their rifles and the freed slaves organised action committees and defence squads. There was a series of splits in the Republican Party.

What had been a military dictatorship over the south, with the support of the poor and black masses, gave way in 1876 to a squalid deal between the managers of the Republican Party and the Democratic Party. Rutherford B Hayes was allowed to become president in return for the restoration of white supremacy in the south. Most Democrat hierarchs in the north opposed the confederate secession and therefore did nothing to oppose Lincoln’s military conduct of the war; but they objected to the freeing of slaves let alone giving them any kind of equality. Military government in the south officially came to an end in 1877 - and so began the era of Jim Crow and *de jure* racial segregation that endured till 1965.

No choice

As Bernie Sanders has argued, it is abundantly clear that, whether the

Republicans or the Democrats hold the presidency or have a majority in the congress, it is the plutocracy which wields real power in the United States. Typically elections are about money and buying politicians from either persuasion. Meanwhile the gulf separating rich from poor has never been greater. And blacks remain the poorest of the poor.

A choice between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump would be no choice at all. Of course, if Sanders ran as an independent socialist, that would be another matter entirely. Such a presidential campaign might have little or no chance of success, but it could provide the raw material for the formation of a mass socialist party in the US. A historic opportunity.

Sanders says he wants a “political revolution”.²⁰ Brilliant. That opens up a mass audience for our ideas. We communists envisage a third, worker’s revolution in America. What the patriots of 1775-82 began only the working class can complete.

Towards that end the working class must arm itself with a programme for a root-and-branch overhaul of the 1787 constitution. As is their “inalienable right”, the American people should as a matter of elementary self-interest abolish the monarchical presidency. It is an oppressive system of government. The senate and life-long appointments to the supreme court must likewise be abolished and “new guards” put in place, which will secure the wellbeing and happiness of the people. All judges must be elected and subject to instant recall. A single chamber of congress, elected annually, which has full legislative and executive powers, should be established. Congress delegates, or representatives, should get their democratic mandate from an *equal* constituency basis. The democratic case against the standing armed forces - grown to the point of hypertrophy since World War II - is surely unanswerable. A system of popular militias must once again be initiated.

Technically none of these demands in and of themselves go beyond the limits of capital as a system. However, they do, taken together, provide the necessary salient from which the battle for democracy can be fought and won. Then the rule of the majority can be realised - not merely in form, but in substance. That is a truth we communists hold to be self-evident ●

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REFERENDUM

Much ado about nothing

History does repeat itself, says **Eddie Ford**. Just as with the 1975 referendum, once again we have a government trying to pull a fast one



Whatever the vote, Britain will not leave

Though you could be forgiven for thinking it started ages ago, April 15 saw the official beginning of the European Union referendum campaign. In its bureaucratic wisdom, the Electoral Commission - having to decide who has the greatest "breadth of support" - gave the 'remain' franchise to the Tory-dominated Vote Leave, as opposed to the more oddball Grassroots Out. The latter is widely seen as a front for the UK Independence Party, but includes amongst its ranks the weirdly pro-fox-hunting Kate Hoey and - perhaps stranger - George Galloway, who appeared at a GO rally alongside Nigel Farage. This was unfortunately reminiscent of the 1975 referendum campaign, which saw Tony Benn and Enoch Powell campaigning together for a UK withdrawal from the then European Economic Community.

Totally predictably, the ridiculous - if not slightly surreal - bid by the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition to get recognised as the official campaign came to nothing - though it is still innocently complaining about the EC "bowing to political pressure".¹ For the other side, Britain Stronger in Europe's application was uncontested and hence got the EC's imprimatur. The two official campaigns can spend up to £7 million each on campaigning, with £600,000 in public funds, and both get a free mailshot and national TV broadcast. Of course, the government got in first with its £9 million taxpayer-funded pamphlet warning of the dire consequences of Brexit.

On the day before official kick-off, Jeremy Corbyn finally delivered his long-awaited speech in favour of continued membership - formally reversing his historic Bennite hostility to the "bosses' club", despite refusing to rule out backing Brexit only last summer. Admitting that he was still critical of Brussels' "shortcomings", he urged support for the EU "warts and all" - arguing that a Conservative government would use Brexit as an opportunity to attack workers in a "bonfire of rights". He went to say, not particularly convincingly, that the EU had helped to underpin "investment, jobs and protections for workers,

consumers and the environment", and working together with European allies offered the "best chance of meeting the challenges we face in the 21st century".

For Corbyn then - or at least the new Corbyn - there is a "strong socialist case" for remaining in the EU, just as there is for "reform and progressive change" in Europe. In remarks about migrants virtually ignored by the liberal press (ie, *The Guardian*), but picked up immediately by the rightwing media, he did not think "too many have come" - rather the issue is of "wages and regulations": hence his call for a "minimum wage tied to the cost of living" across the entire EU. Naturally, *The Sun* slammed Corbyn's "wacky" comments (April 14).²

However, whatever *The Sun* or *The Daily Telegraph* might think, his speech was welcomed by everyone from David Cameron, Chuka Ummuna and Alastair Campbell to the *Financial Times*³ - and you can see why. The polls are still alarmingly close for the twitchy 'remainers'. For example, the *FT*'s 'poll of polls' instant tracker has 'stay' on 44% and 'leave' on 42%, whilst the 'What UK thinks' poll of polls has the scores respectively on 52% and 48%.⁴ Meanwhile, an April 17 online ICM survey actually has 'leave' ahead by one percentage point.

Of course, what really worries the 'remain' camp - quite understandably from their perspective - is the question of turnout: the fact of the matter is that Brexiters are more ideologically committed than 'stayers', especially the older ones. In turn, younger 'remainers' tend to be less committed. Meaning, obviously, that 'leavers' - though Europe may not be top of their agenda - are just more likely to vote on June 23. Hence the relief expressed after Corbyn's intervention, especially given that the 66-year-old has a considerable base among younger people, especially young Labour voters (or potential voters). From a 'stayer' point of view, what Corbyn says *matters* - it could tilt the balance.

Further emphasising this point, an ORB poll for the *Telegraph* shows that currently 41% of the British

population would vote 'leave', but a rather larger 52% say that leaving the EU would "improve" the UK's immigration system.⁵ Therefore, concludes Sir Lynton Crosby, guru of the dark electoral arts, if the 'leave' campaign can advocate changes to the immigration system that would "make them more important in voters' decision-making", there is possibly up to 11% of the population they can win over. The June 23 result? Close - very close.

Strategic

However, despite Corbyn's April 14 contribution - or maybe *because* of it - there are still loud voices complaining that the Labour leader's 'pro-EU' stance is still too tepid: indeed, that he is effectively mounting a passive boycott, the evidence being that the shadow front bench is not expected to actively campaign or participate in Britain Stronger in Europe. More condemnatory still, albeit from the other end of the referendum telescope, Ian Davidson - former MP and coordinator of Labour Leave - remarked that "Jeremy Corbyn believes every word of his speech, but not necessarily in that order".

As far as the Labour leader is concerned, there are a lot more important things to be concentrating on than the sodding referendum - and in one sense the CPGB thinks he is right. The plain truth is that we are not having this referendum because Cameron and other fellow-thinkers in the Tory Party and beyond have come to the considered opinion that Britain needs a complete *strategic reorientation* of its position in the world - quite the opposite. This makes it totally unlike 1956 following the Suez debacle, when British imperialism was told in no uncertain terms by the US that it was not going to be allowed to play the role of a third superpower. Therefore US imperialism pressurised Britain to join the EEC in order to act as its agent, or proxy, from within (something that Charles de Gaulle was acutely aware of).

No, Cameron's referendum is not the result of a 'big idea' or 'vision

thing', but naked political expediency - proving that history does repeat itself. The 1975 referendum too was not the result of a strategic rethink, but Harold Wilson trying to pull a *fast one* on Ted Heath and also show the 'Europhobes' within his own ranks - most notably Barbara Castle, Michael Foot and the aforementioned Tony Benn - who the boss is. Fast forward over 40 years and this is essentially what we have now. Cameron may boast about having achieved a "fundamental renegotiation" of the terms and conditions of Britain's EU membership, but *exactly* the same words were used by Wilson in 1975 regarding the EEC - and it was meaningless nonsense then, as it is now. Cameron, just like Labour's foreign secretary Jim Callaghan, before him, came back from Brussels with a piece of paper that did not amount to a row of beans - pseudo-negotiations leading to pseudo-concessions.

Rather, the June 23 referendum has everything to do with Cameron holding on to his position as prime minister. He calculated that he could check the rise of Ukip by stealing its demand for a referendum: if you really want a referendum, vote Tory, not Ukip - which obviously would be a wasted vote in any case. At the same time, he could out-manoeuvre Ed Miliband with regards to his own Eurosceptics and also throw a piece of red meat to his backbenchers - who for years had been calling for a referendum, partly due to electoral fears and partly because of primordial ideological instincts.

But Cameron never imagined that he would have to deliver on his 'promise'. He thought he would still be in coalition with the Liberal Democrats after the 2015 general election and they would veto any proposals for a referendum, thus letting him off the hook. Yet things did not turn out that way and he is now fighting for his political life. Ken Clarke was surely right when he said that, in the event of an exit vote, Cameron would not last "30 seconds" - the idea that he could stay to oversee Brexit negotiations is

utterly fantastic.

Yes, clearly, big business and the City - the movers and shakers - want to stay in. For that reason alone, in a strict betting shop sense, you go for David Cameron to win on June 23. Also helping, letters and 'other forms of communication' from bosses to employees are bound to increase over subsequent weeks - if you want to keep your job, you know how to vote. More importantly still, Obama's visit to Britain on April 22 will make the position of US imperialism perfectly clear: he may not be giving an actual speech on Europe and the referendum, but journalists afterwards will ask him questions - and we all know what they will be about. So does Obama, not being an idiot, and hence will have his answers primed and ready: while it is not for the US to say what Britain should do, the US would prefer Britain to remain within the EU. You can also guarantee that in the closed talks following the speech he will be unambiguous in his views. The US is in charge, not the British people or even the UK government.

Hammering home the point in a joint letter-cum-article for *The Times*, no less than *eight* former US treasury secretaries warned that Brexit is a "risky bet" that could threaten London's pre-eminence as a financial capital - it would be "difficult" to negotiate trade agreements outside the EU, they pointed out.⁶ The eight go on to say that, though it is the UK's decision alone, naturally, the US has a "critical interest" in the outcome - so get it right. "Shared economic views and interests", they continue, have been at the "heart of the special relationship between the two countries" - and in recent times the US has appreciated how Britain has "taken the lead" in rescuing the banking industry and "confronting Russian aggression". They finish by urging the UK not to "turn inward" at a critical juncture for the European and global economies, fearing that to do so could open up a "Pandora's box" of problems for the continent.

It goes without saying that Downing Street, which denied coordinating the letter - perish the

thought - were delighted by the intervention from the ex-treasury secretaries. George Osborne and Cameron himself tweeted that the "important" letter showed the UK's influence was stronger as part of the EU. Less happy, Vote Leave declared that, "not content with doing down Britain's economy", the British government is "now soliciting help from across the pond" - with Farage stupidly describing Obama as the "most anti-British president" of the modern era. As for Johnson, we are familiar with his recent outburst about Obama being a "hypocrite" for wanting the UK to remain within the EU - which makes no sense at all. What is 'hypocritical' about US imperialism outlining what is in its strategic interests?

Second referendum

We need to be clear that June 23 is not a general election by a different name. There is no way that Nigel Farage will become prime minister: thanks to the electoral system, he and Ukip are a parliamentary irrelevance. The House of Commons will remain the same and the Tory Party will remain the same - except that in place of Cameron, not exactly a friend of the working class, we will have Boris Johnson instead (or maybe somebody else might come through the pack).

More fundamentally, in the event of a Brexit vote on June 23, Britain will not leave the EU - *it will not happen*. This is something that cannot be said too many times. Johnson, the most likely replacement for Cameron, has already made his position clear when valiant Cameron came 'triumphantly' back from Brussels. According to the London mayor, he converted to Brexit at the last minute - a stance totally inconsistent with his previous views on the matter - because Cameron did not return with a promise to put forward legislation enshrining "parliamentary sovereignty", etc. And then he picked up on an idea mooted by former Tory leader Michael Howard: a *second* referendum after renegotiations with the EU would result in further 'concessions'.

In other words, Johnson's game plan is obvious - he opportunistically calculated that attaching himself to the 'exit' cause would considerably enhance his prospects of becoming Tory leader and hence

prime minister, even if 'remain' wins the day on June 23. But if it does not, newly elected prime minister Johnson will come back from Brussels waving his own piece of paper proposing a new bill to the effect that British sovereignty cannot be overruled by the EU (as is the case in Germany, which has a much more formal constitution). Then Johnson would claim to be satisfied.

At the moment, needless to say, both Cameron and Johnson are dismissing the idea of a second referendum - but you would not expect them to do anything else at this stage in the game. Cameron cannot recognise the possibility, of course, because he is compelled to go through the *pretence* that he will still remain prime minister if the exit vote wins - pigs might fly too. Johnson, equally, has to pretend to be a great defender of British freedoms and democracy, not a power-hungry cynical conniver. But for anyone sceptical about the idea of a second referendum, there is an easy response - look at France, Ireland, Denmark and Netherlands. All these countries had referendums that went the wrong way, so they just held more until until the people voted the *right* way. Job done.

The straightforward reality is that Britain is politically and strategically wedded to the US order and the architecture that was put in place after World War II - specifically the *post-1956* order. Britain is not inside the EU to further the project of "ever closer union", but quite the opposite - in order to *block* the process of "ever closer union". Note Britain's key role in expanding the EU to the east. Anyone who thinks that is about creating a European superstate needs their head examined: rather, it was about *watering down* closer union. As any half-intelligent economist will readily tell you, a euro project incorporating Germany, Luxembourg, France, Holland and Belgium is a viable option - the economies are sufficiently alike and at similar levels of development. But,

as soon as you extend it eastwards - say, to a country like Greece - then disaster is inevitable: many predicted that it would either break Greece or break the EU. Look at what happened.

Expanding the EU was also about expanding Nato - and thus US power - whilst bugging up any plans that Jacques Delors or any of the EU's founding fathers had for a United States of Europe. Britain will not allow it, in line with the larger interests of US imperialism, which does not want a rival power bloc. Everyone knows it.

Taking it on the level of economics, the UK will not and *cannot* leave the EU in any meaningful sense. Brexiters say if Britain leaves the EU it will be 'free' of stifling EU laws and regulations - complete fantasy. You cannot trade with the EU unless you buy into *all* the bureaucracy, give or take this trifling sub-clause or coda. Ukip types moan about regulations for cabbages being 30,000 words long, which might well be true - this writer has absolutely no idea. But, whatever the word length, you will not be able to tear up the regulations on cabbages: you have to *abide* by them. Otherwise France or Germany will just say that your cabbages are not allowed in and, sure as night follows day, that also applies to cars, aeroplanes and medicines - in a word, to *everything*. The same goes in terms of financial contributions to the EU. Sorry, Nigel, but per head Switzerland and Norway pay in *more* to the EU than Britain. So, when you listen to Farage waxing on lyrically about the 'freedoms' supposedly enjoyed by those two countries, we have to remember that they conform to all the EU's laws and regulations, but have no real say in how they are constructed and implemented.

Therefore, we in the CPGB are convinced that, even if disaster occurs - from a ruling class point of view - and there is a large enough exit vote to make the EU turn around unanimously and give the UK its marching orders, the worst that will happen is Britain becoming an oversized version of Switzerland or Norway.

But, to stress, this is an *extremely improbable scenario*. Much more likely is a second referendum - maybe called for by Boris Johnson, this time leading the call for a 'stay' vote. Ultimately, that is what we saw in 1975. Wilson said Heath got a "rotten deal" in Europe, but produced something that was virtually indistinguishable - and went on to win a two-thirds majority in the referendum.

Doomsday?

Even though the official campaign is less than a week old, we have been presented with all sorts of doomsday scenarios - but especially from the government and 'remain' camp in general. The latest being a 200-page treasury 'analysis' making out that the country would be "permanently poorer" if the UK leaves the EU and negotiates a bilateral trade agreement with the bloc - the government apparently stands to lose £36 billion in net tax receipts, shrinking GDP by 6.2% by 2030 and costing every household the equivalent of £4,300 a year.⁷

This is obviously pure speculation and nothing but economic science fiction - the same goes for the claim from Britain Stronger in Europe that Brexit might lead to the loss of three million jobs. Evidence? Facts? Mocking such apocalyptic talk, the *Daily Mash* spoof news ran the headline: "No more sex if we leave the EU, warns Osborne".⁸

Alas though, the left is coming out with its own version of doomsday - a common story being that an exit vote would lead to an immediate attack on migrants, employers dumping them on the boat back home. Again, utter rubbish. Why are bosses suddenly going to employ *more expensive* British workers rather than cheaper migrants? Such a claim is irrational scaremongering of the worst sort. Ditto with the idea from soft-left types like Another Europe is Possible that Brexit would lead to a "carnival of reaction", and so on. The *Weekly Worker* letters pages have also featured correspondence from those worrying that politics would move radically to the right following an exit vote on June 23.

Comrades, your imagination is running away with you. Now you could say that replacing Cameron with Johnson on the back of a narrow 'leave' vote (say 51% to 49%) would represent a *marginal* move to the right. But in terms of *overall* British politics, a radical shift to the right? This seems like a

complete misreading of the present situation or political period. In terms of the forthcoming general election we would surely see a battle between Boris Johnson and *Jeremy Corbyn*, the most leftwing leader Labour has ever had by a mile - hard to explain if society is charging to the right.

Post-Panama papers, opinion polls for the first time are showing Labour in the lead - ie, an April 14 YouGov survey has Labour on 34% and the Tories lagging on 31%, with Ukip getting 17%.⁹ Possibly of more significance in the same poll are Corbyn's *personal ratings*, which are higher than Cameron's (28% to 21%). Remember, this is the man who cannot talk properly in parliament, dresses terribly, loves terrorists, is soft on anti-Semitism, does not know the words to the national anthem, supports strikes, prefers Glastonbury to Whitehall ... No, rather than a carnival of reaction or a radical shift to the right, we are witnessing a *polarisation* of politics - which for communists can only be a healthy development after the dog days of Blair, Brown and Miliband.

What is the CPGB's vision of Europe? Can the EU be reformed? Yes, of course, it can - Schengen Treaty, Single European Act, Maastricht Treaty, Amsterdam Treaty, Nice Treaty, Lisbon Treaty ... all of which involved major economic, legal and political changes, not just name changes. Obviously, the EU can be reformed this way or that way - pulled here or there depending on the tempo of the class struggle.

But for communists the EU (even reformed) can never deliver socialism, unless you think King Charles III will preside over the introduction of the lower stage of communism. No, you have to do away with the EU constitution and overthrow the existing 28 state machines. But, on other hand, the fact that the leading capitalist powers have come together in some sort of confederal relationship gives the working class in Europe the potential for a *qualitative* breakthrough in terms of the world balance of forces - something the Russian Revolution was never able to do, or could ever do, and the same applies to even a genuinely socialist revolution in a Latin American country (or China or India, for that matter). The EU is the world's largest trading bloc and has the most experienced and cultured working class on the planet. The revolution may not *begin* in Europe, but a revolutionary upsurge and victory on that continent is the only way to challenge the hegemonic role of US imperialism.

Our vision of Europe, however, does not involve saving Cameron's bacon - why should communists prefer a Cameron to a Johnson, or vice versa? No, on June 23 take your ballot paper and register your politics by writing 'For a socialist Europe' across it ●

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Rerun of Tony Benn and Enoch Powell in 1975: George Galloway and Nigel Farage share anti-EU platform

REVIEW

Populism, nationalism and racism

Fred Leplat (ed) *The far right in Europe* Resistance Books and International Institute for Research and Education, London 2015, pp334, £12

The rise of the far right in Europe - amply demonstrated by the high votes obtained by assorted reactionary parties in the European parliament elections of May 2014 - is clearly an important and dangerous phenomenon, which needs to be analysed, discussed and, if possible, reversed. Whilst much of the British left has focused on the relative success of the radical left, often in new forms, in Greece, Spain, Portugal and, to a lesser extent, the Irish Republic, the predominant trend on the continent since the financial crisis of 2007-08 has been the rise of the far right.

These forces, already renowned for their xenophobia against all immigrants and refugees, as well as for their particular focus on scapegoating Muslims in the period since the attack on the Twin Towers, will undoubtedly have been given a considerable further boost by the recent indiscriminate jihadi massacres in Paris and Brussels, all or most of whose bombers and gunmen seem to have been born and brought up in France or Belgium, in very marked contrast to the Middle Eastern assassins of 9/11. Therefore, the publication of this collection of essays dealing with the far right in seven European countries by a group of Marxists, most, although not all, of whom are members or supporters of groups linked to the Fourth International - or, as some would describe it, the Mandeliste version of that International - should be welcomed by anybody on the left with a genuine interest in the struggle against both neo-fascism and other ultra-nationalistic racist currents in European politics; currents which are increasingly influential on this side of the Channel and will become far more so in the event of a Brexit.

Ukraine

It is not my intention to use this review to comment extensively on the successes or failures, the correct decisions or tactical errors, of various national sections of the FI in relation to fascism and the rest of the far right over the last few decades but to concentrate on the contents of the book itself. However, in the light of some very disturbing statements made about Ukraine, after the coup by far-right paramilitaries linked to the Maidan in February 2014, by some prominent members of Socialist Resistance and what appeared to be a majority position of the FI as a whole favouring the current Kiev regime, one cannot help noticing that the Ukraine is not one of the countries discussed here.¹

Nonetheless, it is reassuring that the longstanding and highly regarded FI theoretician, Michael Löwy, in his 'Ten theses on the far right in Europe' (pp28-33), when making the important point that "A significant part of today's European far right has a directly fascist and/or neo-Nazi framework", includes "the Ukrainian parties, Svoboda and Right Sector" (p29), alongside the Hungarian Jobbik and the Greek Golden Dawn. This is in marked contrast to SR's self-proclaimed experts - at least one of whom has explicitly denied Svoboda's fascist nature, despite its previous name containing the words 'Social Nationalist'.

Anders Svensson in the chapter on Sweden also remarks:

The Nazi groups are very violent, and becoming even more so, as they are fuelled by the situation in Ukraine. SVP members have joined



Ukraine: far right

the ranks of Svoboda and the Right Sector in Kiev, while members of the SMR fight on the pro-Russian side in eastern Ukraine (p327).

Which is probably a fair point, even if most armed European fascist volunteers are, of course, fighting for Kiev. Manuel Kellner comments in the introduction that "the necessity of self-defence and mutual support against far-right aggressions should be patiently argued for. In Greece, in Hungary and in the Ukraine this is evidently an actual necessity today" (p26). This has a potential ambiguity in relation to Ukraine, especially given his earlier assessment that "An atmosphere of violence and civil war in the Ukraine has led to the emergence of rightwing, semi-fascist and fascist forces on both sides" (p14). However, one would hope that Kellner's statement about self-defence is supportive of those fighting back against Svoboda, Right Sector and the Azov Battalion by all means necessary, rather than endorsement of any Russophobe bloc with the neo-Banderites, who have carried out such actions as the Odessa massacre of May 2014 and driven the leftists of Borotba underground in western Ukraine.

To return to the countries which do receive dedicated chapters, the point has to be made that they do not receive equal attention. As a result, the chapter entitled 'France: Pétain's children', written by the Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste's anti-fascist commission, is far longer than any other section of the volume. There are similar substantial discrepancies in literary style. Some contributions are written in an academic format - occasionally excessively so in Adam Fabry's case - while others have a more activist stamp, sometimes one more appropriate to a journalistic piece written for the deadline of an agitational or propagandist weekly paper rather than a bound volume that will be on sale for some years, as with Checchino Antonini.

The absence of any chapter on Germany seems a major gap - the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) was already making an impact on German politics when this project was conceived,² even if its electoral advance has accelerated since the book's publication. Whilst there must have been some consensus amongst the editor (Leplat) and the more theoretical contributors (Kellner and Löwy) that a chapter on Hungary was urgently needed,³ but no such attempt was made to find a suitable contributor

on the Polish case, where the activities of the governing Law and Justice party have aroused concern far beyond the ranks of the radical left. Some might feel that, given Latvia's regular and shameless celebrations of its citizens' role in the SS in 1941-45 and systematic persecution of its Russian minority since 1991, it too deserved a chapter, but I would see the major omissions in terms of population numbers and geographical size amongst the EU countries as being Germany and Poland.

'Populism'

Obviously not all of the far-right parties and movements discussed in this book can be described as fascist - certainly the Danish People's Party is not defined in such terms in the Danish chapter by Tobias Alm, nor does Phil Hearse claim that the UK Independence Party is fascist in the chapter on the UK. As the NPA commission points out, "it is unacceptable to use the term 'fascism' lightly, simply as an insult. The term so used would lose all its political meaning, and its use could even become dangerous" (p165) - I do not think any of the contributors to this volume fall into that trap. However, the question arises as to how one describes xenophobic anti-immigrant and racist parties that are clearly further to the right than the mainstream conservative parties. Anybody familiar with either academic political science writing or journalistic writing about such parties will have frequently seen the word 'populist', but there does not appear to be any consensus about the legitimacy of this term amongst the authors of the book.

The sixth of Löwy's 'Ten theses' is devoted to this concept. He condemns it in no uncertain terms, opening the section as follows:

The concept of 'populism' employed by certain political scientists, the media and even part of the left is wholly inadequate to explaining the phenomenon, seeking only to sow confusion. If in the Latin America of the 1930s to 60s the term 'populism' corresponded to something quite specific - Vargasism, Peronism, etc - its European usage from the 1990s onwards is ever more vague and imprecise (pp30-31).

He also emphasises that "'Populism' is also used in a deliberately mystifying fashion by neoliberal ideologues in order to make an amalgam between the far right and the radical left, characterised as 'rightwing populism'

and 'leftwing populism', since they are both opposed to neoliberal policies, 'Europe' etc" (p31).

The NPA not only argues that "the term and concept of 'populism' do not in any way explain the political behaviour of a party like the FN" (p177) - a reasoned position that it backs up with an intricate empirical history of the FN's twists and turns. But it also makes the far more general and contentious claim that "the use of the term 'populism' smacks of confusion rather than political explanation and it should be left to bourgeois commentators, who are content with simplistic labels rather than analysing the dynamic of things" (pp177-78), which presumably means that it endorses Löwy's thesis in relation to Europe as a whole, not just France.

However, in sharp contradiction to this unequivocal rejection of the term 'populism', two chapters in this book endorsed by the FI via the International Institute for Research and Education employ the term in their titles: Tobias Alm's 'Rightwing populism and the Danish People's Party'; and Alex de Jong's 'National populism in the Netherlands'. Moreover, whilst the 'Notes on contributors' give the impression that Alm may be an independent left known for his anti-fascist activism and journalism, Alex de Jong is clearly identified as a member of the Dutch section of the FI.

In short not only is there no consensus about 'populism' amongst the contributors as a whole, but, more significantly, there is no consensus even amongst those with a clear identification with the FI itself. SR's Phil Hearse seems to hedge his bets slightly, using 'populism' in quotation marks on p52 and without on p58, while frequently employing the term 'ultra-Thatcherism' as his main way of describing Ukip - his chapter is called 'Ukip and the politics of ultra-Thatcherism'. As somebody who has employed the term 'populism' in my own writings on Italian politics, despite my awareness of the dangers of the amalgam rightly referred to by Löwy, I am inclined to think that what I take to be the majority position of the FI in this controversy is far too dogmatic.

Germs of fascism

Nonetheless, I think that the NPA has done us all a service in showing that the FN is not a French equivalent of Ukip, but "a political formation carrying within itself the germs of fascism" (p178) and in effect showing that the belated revival of the party's organisational structures (which had been very badly damaged by the split of 1998-99, when Bruno Mégret took most of the leading cadres with him) under the new leadership of Marine Le Pen makes it more dangerous, not less. This is despite the superficial drive for respectability, which largely consists of dropping any open anti-Semitism and association with Holocaust denial - a drive that ultimately left Le Pen with no choice but to expel her own father, who stubbornly persisted in raising these themes.

The FN's move away from neoliberalism to protectionism and anti-globalisation (including an anti-Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership stance) may have lost it some of the petty bourgeois elements who once formed the mass base of Poujadism. However, what the NPA calls "a 'national-social' discourse" (p177) adopted in the

1990s has facilitated its inroads into the French working class. The NPA argues that this turn was a conscious decision in response to the collapse of the Soviet Union, with the FN intellectuals arguing that the Marxist left was finished, so that they could present themselves as the only serious opposition to the system.

Whilst Antonini's chapter on Italy makes some good points, he probably underestimates the electoral potential of Giorgia Meloni's Fratelli d'Italia (FdI) and he barely mentions the Lega Nord, which in the last few years, under the leadership of Matteo Salvini, has abandoned its old regionalist emphasis in favour of an alliance with Marine Le Pen's FN at the European level and which is in a (perhaps temporary) alliance with the FdI on the national level.

Hearse's chapter on Ukip is very thoroughly researched, as well as being clearly argued, and correctly avoids the moralistic and rather liberal variant of anti-racism that we so often get from the SWP and Socialist Action in their responses to Ukip. Hearse rightly emphasises that "subjective anti-racist feelings cannot provide a barrier unless the racist anti-immigrant discourse is replaced in popular consciousness with an alternative narrative about the nature of the economic and social crisis through which Europe is passing" (p61).

Given the far right's intense ultra-nationalism, it is always dangerous to draw too close a parallel between extreme rightists in different countries. Whilst Geert Wilders' Dutch PVV, a party broadly similar to Ukip, has ended up in alliance with the FN at the European level, as Alex de Jong points out, one suspects that Farage is too shrewd an operator to associate himself with continental fascism - he knows only too well why the British National Party's electoral surge was so short-lived. Perhaps if one is going to draw any parallel, it would be with the Danish People's Party, so ably discussed by Tobias Alm.

Be that as it may, there is much we can all learn from this wide-ranging transnational survey, despite the reservations expressed earlier. However, if there is ever to be a second edition, I would suggest that the SR comrades pay more attention to proofreading. Whilst there are rather a lot of typographical errors throughout the book, one might have expected somebody to have spotted the one on p315, when a couple of lines about Jobbik in Hungary appear in the Swedish chapter. And there is a discrepancy between the back cover's claim that the book surveys "seven countries of Europe" and the contents, which actually cover eight countries in detail! ●

Tony Abse

Notes

1. The SR members whose names have appeared in statements on the Ukraine do not include the named contributors to this book - Fred Leplat and Phil Hearse, so I make no presumption one way or the other as to whether these two comrades share the stance of those who present themselves as SR's experts on that country.
2. Kellner makes some attempt to discuss the AfD on pp16-19 of his introduction. Nevertheless, it is a bit surprising, given his role in the Internationale Sozialistische Linke, one of the FI's two organisations in Germany, that he was not encouraged to expand his useful comments into a full-scale chapter on Germany.
3. The author, Adam Fabry, seems connected to the Socialist Workers Party rather than the FI. He has contributed not just to *International Socialism*, but also to *Socialist Worker* and prefers phrases like "neoliberal restructuring" in reference to the changes after 1989, when to non-Cliffites the blunter 'capitalist restoration' would seem more appropriate.

POLEMIC

Openness is a weapon

The *Weekly Worker's* commitment to open reporting on the affairs of the labour movement is not a fetish, but a political necessity, argues Paul Demarty

Last week we published a letter from a comrade Dave Gee (April 14), responding to Sarah MacDonald's defence of our earlier decision to quote comments made by Seumas Milne at the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy annual general meeting ('Straight-talking left', April 7).

This decision generated some controversy, as in the event *The Daily Telegraph* cited us in order to red-bait comrade Milne. Comrade Gee finds himself sharing such misgivings: "Surely there's a case for keeping much that is said in meetings private?" he ponders. "Otherwise you will end up with less than candid views being expressed and small cliques operating in a clandestine manner, for fear of allowing their plans to reach the ears of their intended targets."

Such open reporting will also, for example, disrupt attempts to "replace certain Labour MPs" - and "at the end of the day, one would risk firing squads for revealing your side's intention to attack the enemy at dawn during a war! The class war and fight for socialism is perhaps not yet at such a critical intensity, but how far do you go?"

Comrade Gee's concerns are plainly sincere. Unfortunately, they are also wrong-headed in the extreme.

Candour

His first concern - that generalised open reporting will lead to clandestine cliques instead of people talking candidly in meetings - is a statement that has some evidence backing it (to which we shall return). Yet his conclusion is incoherent.

For without open reporting the meeting itself is functionally equivalent to the gatherings of an unaccountable clique. Who said what? What political dividing lines were there? Did a branch delegate defy the branch's position on something? Anyone who was not at the meeting just will not know. The choice then is not between frank political exchange with private meetings, on the one hand, and open reporting of meetings with informal cliquery, on the other. We would be *guaranteed* to have cliques without openness in the movement - we *may* be able to avoid them if there is no expectation of privacy in political matters.

I said earlier that there was some evidence for the hypothesis that open reporting drives people to make real decisions informally outside of public view. It is here that we alight upon the most unfortunate feature of comrade Dave's letter, in that it repeats almost exactly the language of British parliamentarians when the press first started reporting exchanges in the Commons.

They too complained that the presence of the gentlemen of the press would present an intolerable burden on MPs, who would not be able to speak with the 'candour' to which they were accustomed. For the aristocrats and bourgeois in parliament in the 19th century, that meant expressing 'candid' opinions about the scummy lower orders. If intemperate quotations ended up in *The Times* or elsewhere, who knows what working class agitation might arise?

It is perfectly true that, with journalists scribbling away furiously in the press gallery, the nature of parliamentary exchanges changed somewhat. Candour was replaced by bullshit; decision-making was shifted to backroom deals, to the courts and the corridors of Whitehall. Nowadays,



Nothing to hide

you can live-stream parliamentary debates on the internet, and yet learn almost nothing.

It is hardly surprising, for capitalism was not overthrown by virtue of press reports of parliament, and capitalism works in part by the unequal distribution of access to *information*, just as much as it works by concentrating ownership of the means of production. Insider knowledge becomes itself a kind of pseudo-means of production; tight control of the 'knowledge economy' underlies the stratification of the workplace and the power of managers. At the level of the state, it ensures that only the representatives of the ruling class or classes may participate in effective decision-making.

Our aim is socialism - the rule of the working class. But for the working class to rule it must learn how to do so; which means practical and meaningful exposure to decision-making, both in the political and economic spheres. The fight for transparency in our own movement is fundamental to mass participation in politics, for it is only by the cooperative 'ownership' of information that a potential alternative ruling class can be prepared for power.

It is straightforward for the left to demand greater transparency from bourgeois politics (successes in this regard include, for example, the register of MPs' interests, whereby we can make some kind of guess as to who is bribing whom in the Commons). It is even unremarkable when it comes to the most 'bourgeois' parts of our own movement. Nobody much objects to the reports made and widely circulated by comrades Ann Black, Christine Shawcroft and Pete Willsman of the proceedings of Labour's national executive committee.

Unfortunately, the left's interest in such transparency is shallow and instrumental, consisting *only* in wanting to 'know what the enemy is up to'. The more fundamental point - that there is a *bourgeois class interest* in private communications among politicians, and a *proletarian class interest* in transparency - is missed; and therefore exposure of the opinions of people on our own side is viewed as treachery, not something that contributes to the strengthening of the

movement.

What kind of revolution?

A minor negative effect of this approach, of course, is to provide evidence for the typical rightwing smear that the left operates fundamentally through conspiracy and dishonest means. Comrade Dave seems in some respects to *believe* this smear. He asks how practical it would be to report a meeting that decided to force the deselection of some Labour MP or - *in extremis* - organise an insurrection.

Here, we will make a brief historical digression. In 1903, the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party met in Brussels and London for its Second Congress. It immediately split, dividing the predominant *Iskra* faction into a majority (the Bolsheviks) and a minority (the Mensheviks). Vladimir Lenin proceeded to write the pamphlet, *One step forward, two steps back*, in which he laid out in exhaustive detail the disputes at the congress. In the present context, the disputes themselves are not significant - merely the fact that they were openly reported on by the leader of the *majority* faction.

Not only that - Lenin's preface sharply criticised other RSDLP factions for

the almost complete absence of an analysis of the minutes of the party congress ... The truly undeserved neglect of [the minutes] can only be explained by the fact that our controversies have been cluttered by squabbles, and possibly by the fact that these minutes contain too large an amount of too unpalatable truth ... If the writer of these lines only succeeds in stimulating the reader to make a broad and independent study of the minutes of the party congress, he will feel that his work was not done in vain.¹

We highlight this episode not as a naive appeal to authority - 'Lenin did it, so it must be OK' - but because of its historical context. The RSDLP was meeting under conditions of the most acute tsarist tyranny. The 1st Congress

ended with every single delegate being arrested and packed off to Siberia. The 2nd had to be moved from Brussels to London because the Russian government leant on the Belgians to kick the delegates out.

You could not imagine a *worse* situation, then, for political openness. Yet here we are - factional leaders giving detailed discussions of the controversies, and the party as a whole *publishing stenographic minutes* of the whole affair! They must have been mad. Except, of course, they weren't: Russian social democrats were able to participate centrally in the 1905 events, and ultimately in the overthrow of tsarism and the birth of Soviet Russia 14 years later.

It is not hard to see why factions of the Russian social democrats might have been so keen to take the risk of political openness (and 'risk' is probably the wrong word, since we can be more or less *certain* that the tsarist police made a "broad and independent study of the minutes of the party congress"!)

With congresses and other activity being conducted in exile, the leading figures had extra work to do to grow their influence over Russian workers; it is difficult to build your faction if nobody in St Petersburg knows it exists and why. They also had to curry favour among other parties in the International.

Finally, it is worth noting that, when it came, the October insurrection was a surprise to absolutely nobody. Lenin and others had been arguing the matter out in the public press. Trotsky was going to lead it. The date was set, and leaked by Zinoviev and Kamenev; and *still* the thing came off with barely a street scuffle. It was less an insurrection than a formality.

For reasons we will not go into here, it has become common on the far left to conceive of the revolutionary seizure of power as a direct military conflict between the workers and the state. Yet we have no interest in seizing power this way, simply because the state has bigger guns. Success in Russia came in large part because the Provisional government lacked an army prepared to fight for it at all. It did so because the Bolsheviks and their allies had broken the soldiers' loyalty to the state.

The working class has as its prime source of power sheer numbers; it is from this vast mass of the population that the armed bodies of the state obtain their personnel. Our strategic objective is to build party-movements that command such vast support among the general population that the capitalists *cannot rely on their own troops*. If we succeed, we will be able to project the date of the insurrection and the phone numbers of the military committee on the side of the Houses of Parliament in letters 20 feet high, and *still* the only people to face a firing squad will be reactionary army officers.

Along the way, no doubt, there will be some occasional and incidental need for clandestinity. Yet we should view this as a sign of *weakness*. We should strive to make as much known about as much of our activity as possible. The maximum possible openness is a *precondition* for the mass socialist activity we need. Secrecy in political discussion, on the other hand, will build only ineffective or corrupt cliques ●

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Notes

1. www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1904/onestep/preface.htm.

What we fight for

■ 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

**We must tell
the truth to
the working
class**

Solidarity and concrete action

Last weekend's demonstration was dominated by the politics of Corbynism, writes Peter Manson

Organised by the People's Assembly, the April 16 anti-austerity demonstration was undoubtedly a success in terms of the numbers mobilised - it always boosts the confidence of those engaged in a struggle when they are able to come together with tens of thousands of like-minded others.

As we have pointed out on several occasions, it is important not to overstate things, and maintain a sense of proportion as to exactly where we are in the long-term struggle to transform society. Certainly the 50,000 or so who turned up, in a period when the organisations of the Marxist left are in an appallingly weak state, is no mean achievement - but that does not equate to a politically organised mass movement that knows what must be done and how to do it.

However, a sense of proportion is not something PA leaders - mainly the ex-Socialist Workers Party comrades who are now organised in the Counterfire group - are renowned for. Thus, in its post-demonstration circular issued on April 19, the PA stated:

On Saturday April 16 at least 150,000 people descended on the capital to make our key demands of this Tory government. The anti-austerity movement mounted a huge display of strength on the streets, is growing in strength and will keep coming back until this government is gone.

As if demonstrations and their size determines who is in government. But that is what counts as strategy in the PA. But at least its claimed figure is not so absurdly exaggerated as was the "quarter million" who allegedly rallied to the PA's previous national demonstration in June 2015.

And lack of strategic thinking is not confined to Counterfire alone. At the Trafalgar Square rally, following the march through central London, when the chair declared that "150,000" were in attendance, this prompted the following speaker - Communication Workers Union general secretary Dave Ward - to remark: "If you can get 150,000 out on the streets, we're well on the way to kicking the Tories out of office."

The truth is that the Conservatives - and the establishment as a whole - are hardly quaking in their boots at the thought of being driven out of office by a mass movement from below. True, the BBC gave the demonstration prominent coverage and a number of Sunday newspapers (although not all) mentioned it, but it did not quite manage to relegate pictures of the royal couple in front of the Taj Mahal off the front pages.

But comrade Ward did usefully summarise the kind of immediate tasks that must be undertaken in order to build a fightback, when he ended his speech by identifying three basic requirements: first, the unorganised must be won to "join a union"; secondly, everyone should "join the People's Assembly" (it does not actually have an individual membership structure, but you know what he means); and, finally, we must "back Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell".



Huge cheers for Corbyn

The final point encapsulates the kind of politics that now dominates such events. Thousands have been, quite rightly, encouraged and invigorated by comrade Corbyn's election as Labour Party leader, but that is about as far as it goes: there is no clear idea of where this takes us - apart from waiting for 2020 (or hoping that some catastrophe befalls the Tories before then, causing an early general election).

But at least this (admittedly uncritical) support for the new Labour leadership is an improvement on the politics (or rather lack of it) that Counterfire comrades like John Rees and Lindsey German used to foster in the PA, and before that in the Stop the War Coalition, prior to Corbyn's victory. Of course, in the heyday of the STWC they were leaders of the SWP, and they saw organisations like Stop the War as conduits into the revolutionary group they headed.

Not that they ever let revolutionary politics - or any kind of coherent politics - pass their lips from STWC platforms. The aim seemed to be to 'build the movement' almost for its own sake, not to take the working class forward in a political sense. And today, now that they have long parted company with the SWP, they are in no position to offer a substitute - unlike the SWP, Counterfire at least has the honesty not to call itself a "party".

Corbynism

However, as I have stated, mass demonstrations are today typically imbued with the politics of Corbynism - and comrades Rees and German are quite happy to go along with this. Sure, Green Party leader Natalie Bennett

featured on the platform, but her support for the four priorities identified by the PA - health, homes, jobs and education - was not at all different from those of the union general secretaries and Labour's shadow chancellor, John McDonnell. The difference was, it was comrade McDonnell - and Corbyn himself, whose message was conveyed by video - who generated the huge cheers.

McDonnell - introduced by chair Steve Turner, the assistant general secretary of Unite, as the "next chancellor of the exchequer" - started by conveying "solidarity greetings from Jeremy Corbyn". He went on to say: "This Labour leadership will be with you" in every struggle. "We salute the junior doctors and we will be on the picket line on every occasion." And "If the teachers take industrial action, we'll be with them in solidarity." As for steelworkers, comrade McDonnell promised: "If we have to nationalise in the short term", then that is what Labour would do.

(Note, by the way, the rider, "in the short term" - McDonnell does not want to alarm capital by giving the impression that widespread, permanent nationalisation is on the cards under Labour. Mind you, I am not sure how a later speaker, south Wales steelworker Mark Turner, would have taken that. He thought that the priority was not just to save his fellow workers' jobs, but to "save manufacturing".)

Comrade McDonnell also promised: "As a Labour government, we will end austerity, halt the privatisation of the NHS, build hundreds of thousands of homes and restore disability benefits." Exactly what the thousands listening

wanted to hear - although, of course, it remains to be seen how a Corbyn-led Labour government would cope with the realities of office if elected. His commitment to "work to bring this government down at the first opportunity" also went down well, of course. But, responding to the Panama scandal, he promised rather vaguely to "make the rich and the corporations pay their way in our society". But it was enough to earn another round of prolonged applause and cheers.

Similar sentiments - and frequently a similar degree of vagueness - were echoed by other speakers. For example, Christine Blower, National Union of Teachers general secretary, was for "a fair and just society, where refugees are welcome and we can protect our planet". And she stated the need to "march together, demonstrate together, strike together" in the meantime. Owen Jones too wanted to "build a different society" - one that was "based on the real wealth-creators, in the interests of the majority".

When it came to the current anti-Cameron mood following Panama, comrade Turner led the way from the chair, when he said in his opening, "Cameron, you must go!" And added: "Take the rest of the Tory thieves with you." He thought that "Today represents everyone working together in the interests of the majority" and promised: "We will continue the struggle until the Tories are kicked out of No10" - before adding: "And we'll make sure they never get there again!"

Unite general secretary Len McCluskey, like other union leaders, expressed his solidarity with the junior doctors. But, also like other union

leaders on the platform, did not commit to anything concrete. Nevertheless, his statement that "The only thing I've got from Panama is a hat" went down well, as did his advice to Cameron: "Slope off to one of your tax havens!"

Yannis Gourtsoyannis of the British Medical Association's junior doctors committee reminded us that medics were about to escalate industrial action - next week will see two consecutive 8am-5pm strikes with no emergency cover - and described the Tories as a "government of tax evaders, for tax evaders". He then added the rather better and more accurate description: "a government of capital, for capital".

The one speaker who was not received in a totally positive fashion was actor, writer and director Jolyon Rubinstein. He included the police - "who are also suffering from thousands of cuts" - amongst those we must defend: "The police are not your enemy," he declared. "Make them your friend." This prompted an immediate response from Roger McKenzie, the black assistant general secretary of Unison, who remarked: "This is the first demonstration I've ever been on where I've been asked to love the police!"

As for John Rees himself, he spoke out in favour of the June 18 pro-migrant Convoy to Calais, jointly organised by the PA, STWC, the SWP's Stand Up to Racism and Momentum, and supported by "major trade unions, including Unite, CWU, NUT and many others". Comrade Rees perhaps summed up the politics of the occasion when he said: "It's time for the Tories to go and refugees to come!"

Possibly the most powerful speaker was Danielle Tiplady of Bursary or Bust, which campaigns against the proposed introduction of tuition fees for trainee nurses. She said: "I came into nursing because I care for every one of you, but now someone like me will be blocked" - many will not be able to afford the fees. She reported: "I see nurses crying on their own in the staff room" because of inadequate staffing levels and the resultant burden of work. And she ended with the militant call to "Reject the one percent! Fight for our patients! Ballot for industrial action!"

There was no doubting the sincerity of what she said, and the same applied to several other speakers. But afterwards the question still remained: how exactly will we "kick out the Tories"? And if we succeed, what then? How precisely and to what extent should we offer support to Corbyn and McDonnell? ●

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