

A paper of Marxist polemic and Marxist unity



weekly worker



**Paul Demarty: art
and its function in
capitalist society**

- Anti-Semitic slurs
- Hillel Ticktin: socialism
- Marx-Engels and Germany
- Fred Moseley reviewed

No 1104 Thursday April 28 2016

Towards a Communist Party of the European Union

£1/€1.10

The republican
speech Jeremy
Corbyn should
have made



LETTERS



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

Disappointment

Further to Jack Conrad's concise political history of the US, American rulers have always disavowed an interest in military adventure abroad, in contrast with the old empires of Britain and France ('One, two, three revolutions', April 21). Yet from Mexico to Cuba, Europe to Asia, Washington has never stopped intervening with force to assist its commercial empire - aka 'freedom'.

Accordingly, in Hollywood cinema we mostly find not happy squads of 'officers and men', as in British film, but various gunslingers, lone wolves (*Rambo*), fantasy guerrillas (*Star Wars*) and subaltern grunts supposedly fighting for themselves as much as Old Glory. Every movie from *Shane* to *Avatar*, not forgetting *An officer and a gentleman*, proposes that patriots need not be interested in the facts of a military class going about its job, but only the bravado of a 'few good men', initially reluctant, but still ready to survive the fight with Evil.

In politics, we are even presented with Democrats not keen on war, like Bobby Kennedy and Obama, who manage, however, to never totally condemn the federal state's military 'responsibilities'. But Hillary Clinton - currently all hugs and adherence to 'smart power' - may prove, as president, as big a disappointment to her fans as warrior Blair was to his. I don't fancy the Palestinians' chances much.

Mike Belbin
London

Republicans

Jack Conrad writes: "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."

It was actually the Whig Party, which did descend from Federalists, that the Republicans came from.

Joseph Tyler
email

Simple

Arthur Bough writes that the Labour Party "always has been and still is a

bourgeois workers' party" (Letters, April 21). True, but the question is, can it be anything else and under what conditions?

Too often the term 'bourgeois workers' party' is used to justify sectarianism. As long as capitalism thrives, the right wing will control the party or have significant influence on it. If capitalism goes into long-term decline, the right will begin to lose their influence and thereby their control of the party. But there are issues which are more important than the present nature of the Labour Party, such as the nature of the left in general.

For instance, whether socialism comes to Britain via the Labour Party or some other grouping, it will probably end in some kind of police dictatorship, encouraged by the Marxist theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat, followed by the state bureaucracy trying to take power, if we are not careful. This is precisely what needs to be avoided.

What do we need to do? The answer is simple: we should all campaign for a democratic socialist society. I want the freedom to criticise a socialist government, leader or theory.

Tony Clark
Labour supporter

Weird

Arthur Bough's letter, which says the 'working class' has a bourgeois outlook, is clearly an attempt to scramble the readers' minds. We are being befuddled by words and collective terms that need to be broken apart in order to understand them afresh.

As for Ukip, it would be interesting to look at the political map to see where their support is coming from in order to challenge the lie that they are some kind of additional 'working class' election vehicle. It doesn't seem credible that a business-minded party that hasn't got a democratic bone in its body should be classified in that way.

We need to get back to solid social and economic reality. Capitalism, according to Arthur Bough, is vital to the existence of the 'working class'. Just as in *Alice in Wonderland* it couldn't get weirder than that.

Elijah Traven
Hull

Busted flush

The sort of Labour Party we need is one that can get elected.

As a backbench outsider MP, Corbyn manifested out of Nato, out of Europe, scrap Trident and use reserves to avoid cuts. No-one paid any attention and he could avoid the political realities, of which he had no experience. Now he is a frontbench insider and he has learnt the political realities of that position. So six months after his election, he now manifests in Nato, in Europe, swap the nuclear warheads for conventional ones and don't set illegal anti-austerity

budgets.

This apparent volte-face is the result of the political realities that he now faces if he wants to get elected in 2020. By the time we reach 2020, Corbynism will have mutated in Blairism. That is necessary to win the Tory marginals that hold the keys to No10.

All the busted flushes that constitute the fringe left continue to think like backbench MPs who can say what they like because no-one except naive young idealists and tired old revolutionaries pays them any attention.

Capitalism is not approaching its final crisis. Class conflict is not about to break out like wildfire the length and breadth of the country. The working class is not going to leap up and overthrow the existing order. Dream on.

Unless you can get elected, then all your policies are merely leaves in the wind.

Michael Ellison
email

Exploitation

Eugene McAteer (Letters, April 21) writes: "There is no better way to free the working classes than a secure income." Free them from what, Eugene? Certainly not from capitalist wage-slavery.

Marx explains: "A rise in the price of labour, as a consequence of accumulation of capital, only means, in fact, that the length and weight of the golden chain the wage-worker has already forged for himself allow of a relaxation of the tension of it. In proportion as capital accumulates, the lot of the labourer, be his payment high or low, must grow worse."

He explains elsewhere that "the system of wage labour is a system of slavery, and indeed of a slavery which becomes more severe in proportion as the social productive forces of labour develop, whether the worker receives better or worse payment."

The Marxist concept of exploitation is very different from a proposition which equates exploitation with workers being paid low wages. Even if we were paid high wages, we would still be exploited. Exploitation is something which is built into the very nature of the employment relation itself, which implies the division of society into employers/owners and employees/non-owners and all this entails. Apologies if I misinterpreted the letter's intent and am preaching to the converted.

Alan Johnstone
SPGB

Hypocrisy

There are images in every conflict symbolically summarising its nature which we cannot forget - brutal scenes which create indelible memories. Such as the events sometimes captured on film by the organisation B'tselem, The Israeli Information Centre for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories.

On March 24, in the occupied city of Hebron, Ramzi al-Qasrawi and Abd al-Fatah a-Sharif, two Palestinian residents, attacked Israeli troops with a knife. One soldier was left slightly injured and the two assailants were immediately neutralised by Israeli gunfire. A lethal shot killed al-Qasrawi on the spot and another bullet wounded a-Sharif.

The video filmed by a passer-by and then sent to B'tselem opens with a-Sharif lying, open arms and eyes skyward, in the middle of the blocked road. Around the man, there is the coming and going of troops, doctors and civilians helping the wounded soldier, while others transmit radio messages, reporting on the incident. A-Sharif is clearly alive, but ignored by doctors and soldiers. No-one seems interested in approaching him or providing first aid - a legal and military requirement, and more notably a human and moral

duty of any doctor. And it is precisely this indifference that seems to outline, as I see it, the sense of despair and madness illustrating the absurdity of the ongoing conflict and oppression, carried out for political and economic interests, power and money.

Only a few more seconds into the video and the unexpected happens: a military paramedic cocks his rifle, moves a few steps towards a-Sharif, who is still lying on the ground. Unhurriedly he takes aim and pulls the trigger, releasing a bullet which hits the Palestinian in the head and kills him instantly. Unaffected by the sound of the shot, everything proceeds unchanged - the same bustle continues, the same soldier with his ear to the radio carries on as if nothing has happened.

These are shocking images of an execution in broad daylight - ignored by almost everyone present: soldiers, doctors, paramedics, commanding officers. Judging by the coldness and lack of interest of the parties involved, it is natural to ask whether this is not a common reality, a daily occurrence. One can almost wonder whether there would have been any need to comment on what happened but for the uncomfortable fact that this execution was filmed and the video made public. Otherwise what impact would it have made on public opinion?

Should this tragic event not be thoroughly investigated now that it has been made public? Should the culprits not be judged in the courts before the eyes of all?

However, Zionist propaganda has to carry on perpetrating the myth of the inevitability of the occupation and the moral superiority of its perpetrators. And so it was when the unnamed

soldier - little more than 18 years old - was brought before the judges. He claimed he feared that the Palestinian had a bomb strapped around his waist. But the same commanders who were uninterested and distant during the fatal event itself rejected that defence - it was all a lie. Justice had to be served and punishment meted out.

Of course, nothing can restore the victim to life, but we should also spare a thought for the soldier on trial, to whom the papers refer only by his initial, 'A'. The executioner, the man who pulled the trigger, is also a victim. A victim of the system that led him to take up that gun and shoot.

In contrast to their silence and impassivity during the act itself, his commanders were suddenly prominent in hurling allegations at this one individual. Once the video was distributed, everything turned upside-down. Nobody had tried to stop 'A' before he took aim, no-one took his weapon away after the crime, no-one paid any attention. But suddenly everyone was high-minded and upright in their condemnation.

But in a system that prepares kids to love weapons and the flag, and to hate the designated enemy, a system which teaches them to shoot and puts a machine gun in their hands, who can frankly and sincerely expect that such tragic events will not happen? Certainly not the politicians and rightwing leaders, the military chiefs and heads of institutions which themselves instruct the lower ranks on how to commit such crimes - and then, hypocritically, act amazed and dismayed if they are committed in front of a camera.

Shlomo Ben Yosef
Tel Aviv

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Fighting fund

Another target

"Brilliant issue!" writes comrade KC, referring to the April 21 *Weekly Worker*. And to prove he means it he popped a £50 cheque in the envelope!

Another cheque, from JF, included a £20 donation to our fighting fund, which was added to the comrade's resubscription, while JP (£10) and PM (£5) did their bit by clicking on our PayPal button. They were among 2,665 online readers last week. On top of which, there were seven standing order contributions, ranging from £5 to £30.

All of which means that our April fighting fund has well and truly exceeded our £1,750 target and now stands at £1,893, with two days still to go. And now we have another target in sight: as KC writes, his donation was "To make sure we break through that £2,000 barrier!"

Just a few more donations will see us there! ●

Robbie Rix

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

ANTI-SEMITISM

Slurs, lies, innuendos

Defend Malia Bouattia and Naz Shah, urges Tony Greenstein

You might think that the election of the first black woman president of the National Union of Students would be a cause for celebration. After all, it is evidence of Britain's anti-racist society.

Instead Malia Bouattia, a refugee from Algeria and secular Muslim, has been subject to the usual vicious lies of Britain's tabloid press. The *Daily Mail*, the paper which supported Hitler and warned against the evils of Jewish immigration from Nazi Germany, reported Malia's election thus: "NUS elects president who refuses to condemn Isis and calls Birmingham University a 'Zionist outpost'."

Malia's real crime is her support of the Palestinians and her opposition to Zionism. As the NUS's black student officer for two years, she has been a consistent anti-imperialist. The lie that Malia supports Islamic State has been repeated *ad nauseum* by the gutter press, yet, as she explained,

I delayed a national executive council motion condemning Isis - but that was because of its wording, not because of its intent. Its language appeared to condemn all Muslims, not just the terror group. Once it was worded correctly, I proposed and wholly supported the motion. Yet newspaper reports this week still depict me as a young Muslim who supports Isis. This is simply not true.²

The other lie is to accuse Malia of anti-Semitism. This is just part and parcel of the anti-Muslim racism of the media and the Zionist lobby, which holds that to be a Muslim is to be anti-Semitic. This campaign aligns very neatly with the Zionist and rightwing attack on Jeremy Corbyn and the Labour Party - also on the grounds of alleged 'anti-Semitism'.

Malia's main crime is to have described Birmingham University, with its large Jewish Society, as a "Zionist outpost". This is apparently anti-Semitic. Of course, if you believe that being a Zionist is no different from being Jewish, then you have a point. It is a standard anti-Semitic trope that Jews and Zionists are one and the same. When fascists use the term 'Zionist' they usually mean 'Jew'. Likewise it is a Zionist axiom that Zionism is an integral part of being Jewish. It is another example of how Zionism and anti-Semitism can converge ideologically.

It is clear that Malia was not using the term 'Zionist' in any other way than its actual dictionary definition. Zionism is a political movement which aimed at creating a Jewish settler colonial state, based on Jewish racial supremacy and the expulsion of the indigenous population. To therefore refer to such a university as a Zionist outpost is no different from referring to Cambridge as a Tory outpost. It is a political, not a religious or racial, reference.

At the same time as Zionist propagandists argue that blaming Jews for the actions of Israel is anti-Semitic, they are busy claiming that Israel represents and acts on behalf of all Jews! It is a classic example of cognitive dissonance - the ability to hold two contradictory ideas in one's head at the same time.

The attacks on Malia have been led by the Union of Jewish Students. The UJS is not a Jewish student organisation that is open and welcoming to all Jews, but, as an affiliate to the Zionist Federation, is specifically Zionist. Non-Zionist or anti-Zionist Jewish students have no place in it. University Jewish societies wishing to affiliate to the UJS are required to have advocacy for Israel

written into their rules and objectives. When Jewish students at Edinburgh and elsewhere have tried to remove this requirement, leaving advocacy for Israel to a separate Israel Society, they have been threatened with disaffiliation and withdrawal of funding.³

The latest smears are part of an overall campaign being waged by Zionist groups, the Tories and the Labour right. We see this most clearly in the Labour Party, where I (and one other person I know of) have been suspended over allegations of 'anti-Semitism'.

Every day there are new charges and only this week Naz Shah was forced to resign as John McDonnell's aide because of a 2014 post she forwarded about Israel's attack on Gaza during 'Operation Protective Edge', when over 2,000 Palestinians, including 550 children were killed. The post, suggesting that Israel's Jews be transferred to the United States, was certainly written in jest - although no doubt it reflected the anger of many at the attack on Gaza, supported by around 95% of Israel's settler Jews. There is nothing anti-Semitic in this.

In contrast to the feeble reaction of the Labour left around Momentum to the smear campaign, the Jewish anti-Zionist left has been active. This week a letter from an ad hoc group was published in *The Independent*,⁴ while Mike Cushman of Jews for Boycotting Israeli and myself had letters in *The Guardian*.⁵ During the summer a number of similar letters were published in the *Guardian*, *Independent* and *Jewish Chronicle* by Jewish groups in defence of Jeremy Corbyn.⁶

But Momentum is marked by its silence - indeed by its inability to even comprehend what is happening. I have had a long conversation and increasingly acerbic correspondence with Jon Lansman, Momentum's chair. Jon is a member of the non-Zionist Jewish Socialists Group. Yet his reaction to the allegations that anti-Semitism is rife in the Labour Party is not to challenge this Zionist narrative, but to accept it wholesale.

In what is a truly pathetic acceptance of such slurs, Lansman writes that anti-Semitism has "always been there at least in a latent form, but it has been exposed by a pro-Tory campaign and we cannot ignore it or deny its existence". What does this mean in practice? That there is an organised anti-Semitic faction within the Labour Party? Hardly. That some people may harbour anti-Semitic prejudices? Possibly. It would not be surprising, given the deliberate conflation of Zionism and Jewishness, if some people therefore blame Jews for the barbarism of the Israeli state.

To those like Lansman, however, racism is not about power relations in society and economic deprivation: it is about words and prejudice. Lansman told me: "I do not understand why you think the Labour Party should be immune from genuine anti-Semitism, which exists in British civil society - albeit at a lower level than in most of the last century." This encapsulates the problem of liberal social democrats. For them racism is a virus - a disease which spreads, regardless of the social, economic or political climate. And for some it is endemic in non-Jews, which suggests it cannot be cured. This is really a variant of the Zionist myth of eternal anti-Semitism, which itself is a mirror image of the Nazi view of the 'eternal Jew'.

Racism is not words or imagery disconnected from reality. Racism means economic exploitation of a section of the working class, such as the Irish, which is particularly oppressed.

It means physical attacks by racist hoodlums and the scapegoating of a particular group as an exploiter. Jews in Britain suffer from none of this. Jews are not economically exploited, they are not subject to the attentions of fascist gangs, they are not at the mercy of a racist police force or the object of institutionalised state racism. In short, Jews are not oppressed.

Groups like the Zionist Community Security Trust earn their living by playing to the fears of Jews about a past era of anti-Semitic violence. When pro-Zionist students speak about anti-Semitism, it is often because they are uncomfortable that their identity is being challenged. Giving offence, however, is not the same as anti-Semitism. While Zionism in British society and on campuses poses a direct threat to freedom of speech, in general this is an age in which 'anti-Semitism' has to be manufactured.

William Rubinstein, the former president of the Jewish Historical Society, wrote of "the rise of western Jewry to unparalleled affluence and high status", which "has led to the near-disappearance of a Jewish proletariat of any size; indeed, the Jews may become the first ethnic group in history without a working class of any size."⁷

It is because of the *lack of anti-Semitism* that the Zionists are forced to manufacture it. The silly comments of a Vicki Kirby about "Jewish noses" do not hurt a single Jew, unlike the bricks and bottles of Moseley's British Union of Fascists. I have written extensively on Gilad Atzmon, the anti-Semitic jazz musician, but Atzmon does not pose a threat to the safety of a single British Jew.⁸ In so far as anti-Semitism exists at all, it is because of the actions of the Israeli state against the Palestinians. When people hear that 12-year-old children are jailed and subject to beatings and worse, then they are understandably angry; and, when British Jewish organisations proudly take responsibility for these outrages, it is no wonder that some people take them at their word.

When the fascists were on the march in the East End of London, the advice of the Board of Deputies and British Zionism was for Jews to stay indoors and ignore all provocations. Jewish people in 1936 preferred to ignore the advice of the Zionists and Jewish bourgeoisie at the Battle of Cable Street. When Jews were predominantly working class they voted overwhelmingly for the Labour Party. Indeed in 1945 one of only two communist MPs elected was Phil Piratin in the constituency of Mile End in London's East End. It is estimated that half of his vote came from British Jews. The decline in Jewish support for the Labour Party today has nothing to do with Israel and everything to do with the economic position of British Jewry ●

Notes

1. www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3549948/NUS-elects-president-refuses-condemn-ISIS-calls-Birmingham-University-Zionist-outpost.html#ixzz46yb0Yuxo.
2. www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/apr/24/new-nus-president-not-antisemitic-isis-sympathiser.
3. Thanks to Stephen Marks (email April 2016).
4. www.independent.co.uk/voices/letters/reaction-to-obama-s-brex-it-views-exposed-xenophobia-in-the-leave-camp-a7000356.html.
5. www.theguardian.com/education/2016/apr/25/zionism-racism-and-the-new-nus-president-malia-bouattia.
6. See, for example, www.theguardian.com/politics/2015/aug/20/jeremy-corbyn-and-antisemitism-claims.
7. WD Rubinstein *The left, the right and the Jews* London 1982, p51.
8. See 'The seamy side of solidarity': www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2007/feb/19/greenstein.

ACTION

CPGB podcasts

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

London Communist Forum

Sunday May 1, 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 3: 'No gratitude at the top'. Organised by CPGB: www.cpgb.org.uk; Labour Party Marxists: www.labourpartymarxists.org.uk.

Radical Anthropology Group

Tuesday May 3, 6.45pm: Introduction to social and biological anthropology, Daryll Forde seminar room, Anthropology Building, 14 Taviton Street, off Gordon Square, London WC1. 'Major transitions in evolution: when's the next one?' Speaker: Kit Opie. Organised by Radical Anthropology Group: radicalanthropologygroup.org; <https://en-gb.facebook.com/JeremyCorbyn4PM>.

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.

Celebrate May Day

Newcastle upon Tyne

Saturday April 30, 11am: Assemble Princess Square, NE1, for march to Exhibition Park, Claremont Road, NE2. Speakers include UCU general secretary Sally Hunt and PCS president Janice Godrich. Organised by Tyne and Wear May Day Committee: maydaycommittee@newcastle-tuc.org.uk.

London

Sunday May 1, 11.30am: Assemble Clerkenwell Green, London EC1, for march to Trafalgar Square, London WC2. Organised by London May Day organising committee: www.londonmayday.org.

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.

Teesside People's Assembly

Tuesday May 3, 7.15pm: Planning meeting, St Mary's Centre, 82-90 Corporation Road, Middlesbrough TS1. Organised by Teesside People's Assembly: www.TeessidePA.tumblr.com.

Stop Yemen war

Wednesday May 4, 7pm: Public meeting, Conway Hall, London WC1. Speakers: Kim Sharif (Human Rights for Yemen), Ann Feltham (Campaign Against Arms Trade). Organised by Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament: www.londoncnd.org.uk.

Britain's hidden war

Monday May 9, 7.30pm: Public meeting, Brent Trades Hall, 375 High Road, London NW10. End the UK's relationship with the Saudi dictatorship. Organised by Brent Stop the War Coalition: www.facebook.com/BrentStoptheWar.

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.

Remember Grunwick

Wednesday May 18, 7.30pm: Film screening and discussion, North Walthamstow Trades Hall and Institute Club, Hoe Street, London E17. 40th anniversary meeting. Bar and refreshments available. Organised by Walthamstow Constituency Labour Party: <http://walthamstowclp.blogspot.co.uk>.

Unofficial war artist

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

1820 Yorkshire Rebellion

Saturday June 25, 1pm: Meeting, Red Shed, Vicarage Street, Wakefield WF1. Speaker: Shaun Cohen (Ford Maguire Society). Admission free, including light buffet. Plus bar with excellent real ale. Organised by Wakefield Socialist History Group: www.theredshed.org.uk/SocialHist.html.

Stop the arms trade

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

CPGB wills

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

MONARCHY**A missed opportunity**

Eddie Ford laments the republican speech Jeremy Corbyn did not make

In case you spent last week in a deep underground bunker, on April 21 Elizabeth Windsor enjoyed her 90th birthday - showing that with the *best* medical treatment available, and a little bit of luck, you can reach such an age nowadays without it being regarded as a minor miracle. Communists look forward to a time when everyone can reasonably expect to live to such an age, or even older, whilst retaining a sufficient quality of life.

Of course, just like with last year's hoo-ha about her becoming Britain's longest ever reigning monarch, we have been carpet bombed with nonsense about how we are "uniquely blessed" - as David Cameron put it - to have the queen ruling *over* us. In fact, according to the prime minister, it is a "joy" for "us all to celebrate", "cherish" and "honour" - he gushed on about how Elizabeth Windsor has "led to a gentle evolution of our monarchy" that has brought the institution "closer to the people, while also retaining its dignity".

Feel a tear coming to your eye yet? No, you're right, it *is* weird and creepy. Having said that, you will still be hard pressed to outmatch *The Spectator* when it comes to toer-curling, barmy obsequiousness. Last year it told us that that the "second Elizabethan age" represents a "golden age of prosperity", which is "almost unprecedented in the history of human societies" - not to mention the "peaceful unwinding of an empire, which, with a few exceptions, has been neither violent nor tragic".¹ This might come as news to the Indians, Kenyans, Irish ...

Forelock-tugging servility aside, some newspapers - if that it is not too generous a term - persist in peddling the most absurd downright inaccuracies and falsehoods worthy of Stalin's *Pravda*, though that is probably being unfair to the former Soviet publication. The most egregious, perhaps, is, in the words of *The Independent*, the idea that Windsor is the "longest reigning monarch in history" (original capitalisation).² Sorry to spoil the party, but, though it might be an unpatriotic act to point this out, the prize for the longest ever serving monarch goes to Sobhuza II of Swaziland, who reigned for 82 years until his death in 1982. Indeed, Windsor only comes a comparatively unimpressive 44th in the charts.³

Naturally, as only befits someone totally dedicated to duty and selfless service to the nation - as we must have been told countless times by the enraptured media - her birthday celebrations are modest. Merely a four-day pageant at Windsor Castle involving 900 horses⁴ and in June a street party for 10,000 invited guests (£150 per head) on the Mall, the grand avenue leading to Buckingham Palace.⁵

Anyway, during the excruciating tributes to Elizabeth Windsor in the House of Commons that went on for *five hours* - where we had to endure some of the most boring anecdotes of all time⁶ - Cameron during his "humble address" highlighted the "exquisite and defining" speech the queen gave on her 21st birthday, in which she said that "my whole life, whether it be long or short, shall be devoted to your service". Perfectly capturing the whole revolting tone of the parliamentary tributes, and the birthday toadying in general, the prime minister exhorted the whole country to join him in saying, "Long may she reign over us". For any democrat or vaguely sentient person, this is a depressing thought.

Then again, so is the likelihood of her ghastly eldest son (now aged 67) becoming King Charles III.

Missed opportunity

In his capacity as leader of the official opposition, Jeremy Corbyn too delivered his thoughts on the nonagenarian. Now, Corbyn has a *reputation* of being an ardent, lifelong republican - fierce opponent of the establishment, man and boy. Therefore you would have expected him to use the occasion to say that we do not want her to "reign over us" at all, thank you very much, and call for the abolition of the monarchy, not to mention the House of Lords.

After all, this is the man who refused to sing the national anthem in September 2015 and in 1995 seconded the Commonwealth of Britain Bill put forward by Tony Benn - which called for the transformation of the UK into a "democratic, federal and secular Commonwealth of Britain" through the abolition of the monarchy, privy council and House of Lords.⁷ Corbyn has also talked previously about stripping the monarch's royal prerogative - powers which, in his own words, are a "very convenient way of bypassing parliament". What democrat can disagree?

Alas, he did not say that. Communists cannot pretend to be surprised, it does have to be said, but we were still disappointed. What a missed opportunity to actually shock the establishment, galvanise the population and shift the debate away from the fawning crap of the mass media. He could have said that at this ripe old age - congratulations and all that - not only should Elizabeth Windsor retire, but the entire *institution* of the constitutional monarchy should be abolished. Allow Charlie and the rest to experience some sort of normal, socially useful life - as opposed to the fantastically alienated, hyper-strange existence they currently suffer. Do them a favour, relieve the burden and make an intransigent call for a republic - rallying many younger people, and previous non-voters, to the ranks of the Labour Party.

Rather, what we got was a speech peppered with references to "Her Majesty" (eight times) and Windsor's "outstanding commitment" to "public life", "the country" and so on.⁸ True, there was an initial rider about "whatever differing views people across this country have about the institution" - itself fairly mealy-mouthed, if truth be told - but from then onwards it was sentimental gum⁹ about a "highly respected individual". He stated that the "vast majority share an opinion that Her Majesty has served this country" and she "has overwhelming support in doing so, with a clear sense of public service and public duty". Thanks, Jeremy - very radical.

Painfully, the supposedly 'anti-imperialist' Labour leader praised Windsor for being a "defender of that incredible multicultural global institution", the Commonwealth, and lauded her "historic visit" to Ireland in 2011 - gosh, we are told, she even spoke a few words in Irish Gaelic at a Dublin reception: will wonders never cease? Even worse, Corbyn implicitly parroted hoary old myths about the 'anti-fascist' role of the monarchy during World War II, waffling on about how two nonagenarians from his constituency (George and Iris) were part of the generation

- "that of the queen and of my parents" - that "defeated the horrors of fascism in Europe, endured the privations of the post-war era and built a more civilised and equal Britain". Is this the same Elizabeth Windsor who as a child did Hitler-salutes and comes from a family that were sympathetic, putting it *very* mildly, to Benito Mussolini and Adolf Hitler?¹⁰

And when did she ever go through "privations", then or now? She frequents opulent palaces, castles and mansions, and has a personal fortune worth at least £340 million (not forgetting the millions from the public purse). Equally as laughable is the notion that the Windsors have helped to build a more "equal" Britain. Quite the opposite - they are at the top of a *grotesquely* unequal and unjust society. One newspaper recently featured an article about how more than a million people in Britain are "living in destitution" - so poor that they are "unable to afford essentials such as food, heating and clothes".¹¹ Just as dismal was Corbyn's comment that the queen was "absolutely above politics".

In short, whatever the subjective intentions might have been, Corbyn's speech was diabolical: a low point that we hope is never repeated - though the idiotic suggestion that you could have Trident without missiles came pretty close. George Eaton, the political editor of the *New Statesman*, summed it up in a tweet saying that Corbyn "raised as much enthusiasm as any lifelong republic [sic] should summon".¹² That is, playing the respectable politician, he was as *positive* about the monarch as a republican could possibly be - and then a bit more, arguably. Close your eyes and you could almost think that you were listening to a pro-monarchist in the House of Commons on that day.

Safe republicanism

In reality though, as we have pointed out before in this paper, Corbyn's republicanism is of a *platonic* kind - a fine ideal, it appears, but not something you fight for in the here and now (not since the days of the Commonwealth of Britain Bill, in any case). There are more important things to concentrate on. In other words, a republicanism that the establishment can easily live with.

Communists, on the other hand, have a radically different perspective. We prioritise the fight for republicanism, not because we want to replace the monarch with a directly elected president (ie, an elected monarch), but rather out of the programmatic conviction that the working class must become the most *consistent* fighter for extreme democracy in *every sphere of society* - and fighting for a genuinely democratic republic is part and parcel of the struggle to democratise all aspects of society. Unlike the bourgeois liberal

Republic campaign group, we do not call for a referendum on the monarchy *after* the present queen has died, on the dubious basis that the period of time between Elizabeth Windsor's funeral and the coronation of Prince Charles' coronation will provide an "opportune moment".¹³

No, communists fight for the *immediate* abolition of the monarchy as it underpins the British state, and the status quo as a whole (how we communists would respond if there actually was a referendum on the monarchy is an entirely different, *tactical*, matter). For the ruling class, it symbolises the mythological unity of the British people and the nation - a unity they would have us believe transcends all divisions in society, not least those of class. When all is said and done, when the chips are down, we can all come together in support of this imaginary, fairy-tale, British family - deadening the class struggle and dulling radicalism.

This explains why we in the CPGB place so much stress on the fight for a democratic republic, not because we have a weird programmatic or ideological fetish (let alone a commitment to an artificial 'stagist' theory of revolution, as some of our more stupid critics allege) but simply for the reason that it constitutes an intrinsic part of our communist *minimum* programme: our demands directly raise the question of the state itself, of how we are ruled and hence *how we need to rule ourselves*. Hence our call for the sweeping away of the House of Lords, presidential prime minister patronage, the disestablishment of the Church of England, the introduction of a single-chamber parliament with proportional representation, annual elections, the replacement of the standing army by a people's militia, a federal Britain, etc.

As for Elizabeth Windsor herself, her present-day politics are not too hard to work out - even if we generously discount her Hitler-saluting as childish "larking about", as *The Sun* put it.¹⁴ *The Independent* recently ran an article about the only "five times", supposedly, that her political opinions have slipped out. There was her comment during the Scottish referendum that people should "think very carefully about the future" and, when they did, David Cameron reported that she "purred down the

line" with satisfaction (unsurprisingly, he had to apologise afterwards). Then she told a BBC special correspondent she was "upset" that there had been no way to arrest Abu Hamza and had spoken to the home secretary about the issue (the BBC had to apologise for that one too). She regretted the loss of the American colonies during the bicentennial celebrations in 1976 because Britain "lacked the statesmanship to know the right time and the manner of yielding what is impossible to keep". She made "reactionary and unconstitutional" remarks at a Downing Street Christmas party about Turkey's bid to join the European Union (yes, she was not too keen on the idea). And she was not too impressed either by Margaret Thatcher's "confrontational and socially divisive" approach to the apartheid regime in South Africa - especially her refusal to impose token sanctions.¹⁵

This writer can add another entry to the list, which *The Independent* oddly missed out - Michael Gove's *deliberate* leak to *The Sun*, which revealed that at a Buckingham Palace reception with MPs in 2011 the queen said "I don't understand" Europe and was hostile to further EU integration (thus the headline in *The Sun*: "Queen backs Brexit"¹⁶). An impression only further reinforced by the Palace's purely technical or semantic complaint that the "Queen backs Brexit" headline was inaccurate, as the term had not been coined at the time. Very convincing.

The politics of Elizabeth Windsor are in fact totally predictable. What else would you expect from an aristocratic old lady brought up in the days when Britain still presided over a global empire of robbery, cruelty and oppression? ●

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Notes

1. <http://blogs.spectator.co.uk/2015/09/our-longest-reigning-monarch-has-presided-over-a-second-elizabethan-age>.
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14. *The Sun* July 17 2015.
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**Jeremy Corbyn: platonic**

THEORY

Society of abundance

What is our vision of socialism? Hillel Ticktin outlines the basic features

In Marx's writings there are actually only two stages apart from capitalism: that is to say, a transitional period and then socialism (ie, communism). However, in the early period of the Soviet Union, 'socialism' came to mean something different from communism. Lenin and others were not really clear about the nature of this difference and whether therefore socialism was an additional stage.

While the historic Marxist viewpoint is one of two stages, the other view is one that emerged after 1917 and was dogmatised by Stalin, but I think it gives people the wrong impression as to what socialism would be. As far as I am concerned, there are only two stages. There is an introductory stage after capitalism has been overthrown - we do not know how long this period would last, but let us say anything between 10 and 50 years. After this we would arrive at a socialist (or if you like a communist) society. A distinguishing mark of socialism is that distribution would operate according to need, rather than input, whereas this would not be the case in the introductory phase.

In the 1930s there were debates as to what exactly socialism was and whether it was possible at all. Ludwig von Mises had argued that under socialism it was impossible to make economic calculations. For his part, the Polish economist, Oskar Lange, produced a long argument which basically asserted that market calculations could be applied to socialist society. So the debate was between an imputed market, on the one hand, and the argument of von Mises that said you simply could not calculate. The debate on 'market socialism' continues today.

In fact I believe von Mises was right (on a previous occasion when I made that point, the Ludwig von Mises Institute actually wrote to me, astounded that I could support his argument, being a Marxist). However, there must be relative abundance or else there cannot be socialism at all, and there can be no market. So this argument does not apply to the introductory phase, where distribution is according to a worker's input.

Under capitalism we have abstract labour, and a contradiction exists between abstract labour and concrete labour. Abstract labour amounts to the control and imprisonment of the ordinary worker and for that reason we cannot have abstract labour under socialism/communism. If it continues to exist it means there is no socialism/communism or any higher form of society: the worker is still exploited and controlled. We cannot have this insistence on homogenous human labour - the reduction of the human being to something approximating a machine of production. This is not just a question of reward, but of the life of the ordinary worker. The point is that a socialist society is one in which work becomes humanity's prime want.

From this it follows that you cannot measure labour exactly under socialism. You could say that a particular unit of production accounts roughly for so many units of labour time, but it is always going to be approximate. This means that, for example, things might be very different in one part of a particular country compared to another or between one unit of production and another. You cannot reduce people to machines and so each person will work in their own way - they will exercise control over the way they do so. Of course, we are not talking about the kind of mass production that exists today,



Capitalism treats people like machines

particularly in China. There would have to be highly skilled production, where the skilled worker has a good deal of leeway as to how they work. In fact to a certain extent this is true even within capitalism.

An extreme example of where workers worked poorly was under Stalinism. In every unit of production each worker did what they wanted to do and no two workers worked the same way. In part this was a form of protest - a refusal to accept the system imposed from above. But the result was that you could not add things up (although they insisted on doing it anyway): you could not talk of abstract labour in the Soviet Union. This meant that the 'plans' failed, although this was not the only reason.

The working class always finds a way to protest and that is true not just of the Soviet Union. Under the generals in Argentina I remember a headline in *The Economist* which read, "Sad working" - workers also worked in the way they wanted in opposition to the junta. So this form of protest exists throughout the world: it is simply that it was most extreme in a country that could not control the working class as a class; where work took place under conditions where there was no abstract labour because there was no collectivity. Such protest did not result from workers combining together, but occurred individually. In the Soviet Union, contrary to the claims of totalitarian theorists, the ability to control workers was absent.

Planning

I have touched on labour under Stalinism, under which there is an absence of abstract labour, in order to contrast it to what could exist under socialism. In a socialist society you would expect workers to work in the way that they judge is correct. Since a worker's incentive under socialism is not money, they work as best they can

in order that they not only fulfil what they are doing for the collectivity, but for themselves. You would expect that they would work as well as they can, without any need for discipline from outside.

Of course, this would mean different things for each worker. It may be that the tendency would be similar among most workers, but equally it could be very different. You would expect it to vary in different parts of the world, in different regions, and even in different parts of the same city. While under such circumstances there can be no precise calculations, it is possible to produce an abstract average.

What I am talking about here is planning. The difference between a socialist society and a capitalist society lies above all in the fact that under socialism there is genuine planning, which is defined by Marx in chapter 1, volume 1 of *Capital*. Marx talks of the regulation of the economy under socialism by the associated producers themselves, meaning that society is controlled from below. Where this does not prevail there is no planning - the Soviet Union from that point of view was not planned. Looked at from a purely theoretical level, that is in one sense obvious, but it was equally obvious empirically when the absurdities that existed in the Soviet Union are examined.

The question then is, can socialism work? If there cannot be precise economic calculations, is it still possible to plan? Yes, it is, but, as I have pointed out, the first condition is relative abundance, so that if a mistake is made it will not result in a disaster. In other words, you must have a plan that allows for mistakes, but if there are inadequate reserves or stocks it obviously will not work. (The Soviet Union acts as a wonderful negative example here: it never had sufficient stocks and it always failed.) It is then possible to establish what is likely to happen over time:

you will be able to see how often these mistakes occur, identify a tendency and then work on the basis of experience. You can interrelate different sectors, which in the Soviet Union was done in a completely insane way. Today this is done with input-output models, but these only go so far and ultimately we would hope that computing will get to the point where it can play an enormous role in this.

Crucially we have to be clear on the necessity of there being a democratic input at both ends - otherwise it will not work. In the Soviet Union a factory was supposed to produce x units of whatever, but the central 'planners' would know that nobody on the ground was telling the truth about what was being produced. The point is that, if ordinary workers interrelate with society as a whole and there is a degree of faith and support, there is not an issue. But if they do not it will not work - the process must be democratic. When it is not, the workers will not believe that the authorities will come up with a viable plan for them and they will be forced to do things they do not want to. So there has to be control by the population as a whole, and the periphery and the centre must trust each other.

Conditions of democratic control and relative abundance, under which workers are living happy lives, should lead to a situation where the orders coming from the centre are acceptable. Remember the famous example of the cartoon in the *Krokodil* magazine in the Soviet Union, where the central planners asked for one ton of nails and the factory manager displayed a single one-ton nail, allowing the plan to be 'fulfilled'. That is the way the Soviet Union worked.

Under a situation of relative abundance, there will be a high level of production without shortages. In that case growth rates will be relatively

low. The green demand for lower growth will be realised, because there will be no need to go on producing and producing for its own sake. The bourgeois concept of the human being having infinite needs is ridiculous, but it is the basis of bourgeois economics. Since they say there are infinite needs, growth could reach any level. In fact there is a limited amount that needs to be produced for a given society and consequently under socialism we will be able to identify the limited areas in which increased production is needed.

Planning, including central planning, would be entirely possible under socialism without a market: people will be able to walk into a distribution point and pick up what they need. Obviously there will be no such thing as finance, and whole sections of economic activity will no longer exist because they are completely wasteful and unnecessary. There will be no arms production, no advertising and, of course, no City of London - you can go through the different wasteful forms that will cease to exist. It is quite clear that the standard of living could very quickly be raised if such waste is removed.

The individual

I support decentralised planning, and so, for instance, we would expect parts of Britain to be decentralised in planning terms (Scotland, Wales, parts of England, etc). You cannot expect the central planners to have an opinion on some part of the world about which they know nothing. It would be far better if there were sub-planning units for particular regions and this is obviously necessary in order to plan at all. It would be ridiculous to plan the collection of dustbins in Wales from London - there are obvious limits to central planning. In the debate on the Scottish referendum I made this point - it is not a nationalist argument. Obviously, however, the central planners and local planners will interrelate and the whole mechanism will be quite complex.

In contrast to current society, where people are so far removed from decision-making, you would expect that the people as a whole will take part in running society when given the opportunity. It is not just a question of elections: you would expect administration roles to be rotated and no-one would perform such roles permanently. It is only in this way that there could be a truly democratic system - democracy would have to be fully incorporated into the economy of society and be present throughout social life.

Finally there is the argument about whether socialists should take the individual or the collective as their starting point. Stalinism insisted on the primacy of the collective and socialists have been tarred with the idea that they want to control individuals from above. It seems to me that we ought to stress the importance of the individual within socialism. Marx makes the point that only in a socialist society could the individual be fully free for the first time. For the first time the individual will be able to express themselves fully in their work, in their control of society and in their relationships with other people.

Personally I have started with the individual and worked my way towards the collective. You could try to do this the other way round and perhaps arrive at the same result, but the former method sounds much better, given the awful influence of Stalinism ●

CULTURE

Rising to the heights and beyond

What is art and can it survive? Paul Demarty investigates

To talk about the future of art, we need to understand what art is, and what function it plays in capitalist society. Such matters become most clear when things are in dispute.

In 2003, Aaron Barschak - the "comedy terrorist", who famously infiltrated Prince William's birthday party dressed as Osama bin Laden - poured paint over the 'young British artist', Jake Chapman, and one of his paintings at a gallery in Oxford. Jake and his brother had just caused a stir by buying up a set of Francisco Goya's *The disasters of war* and systematically defacing them, for a project called 'The rape of creativity'. Barschak claimed that he was merely making a work of art in the same way ("it's an improvement on Mr Chapman's painting"), but the law disagreed. He got 28 days for criminal damage, the judge stating that *anyone* could see that the Chapmans' Goya project was art, and Barschak's stunt was not.

Barschak is a rightwing philistine. His stunts are facile, and his stand-up routines are awful. But his attack on Chapman is a salutary reminder that the borders of art are heavily policed. And if a border is heavily policed, it is usually because it is naturally porous.

John Carey picked up on the Barschak/Chapman fracas in his book, *What good are the arts?*, and came out for Barschak. A work of art is anything that anyone has ever called a work of art, he says. No other definition can be rigorously defended.

This is a nice little provocation from an avowedly populist cultural critic. But he, Barschak, the judge in his case, Brian Loosley, and a great deal of writers on aesthetics have fallen into the trap of fetishising the work of art as such - and I mean this expansively, including visual arts, musical compositions, works of literature and so on. The task becomes a matter of taking something, examining it and deciding whether or not it counts as a work of art. Thus - particularly in the early period of aesthetics as a branch of philosophy - much energy is expended on defining the exact characteristics that make something beautiful.

The most famous example is Immanuel Kant's *Critique of judgment*. Kant writes that beauty is a "subjective universal" judgment - that is, we judge something to be beautiful as a consequence of our individual experience, but we expect that judgment to represent something beyond our own prejudices: other people will also be able to identify the beauty in it. That universal property of beauty has to do with the artefact seeming like the complete, final result of a purposeful labour in creating it. Objects of this kind - or musical scores, etc - are able to engage both our imaginations and our reason.

Carey mocks Kant's assertions (without really engaging with the underlying philosophical claims of Kant's work, without which the aesthetics does indeed appear to be just the opinion of one individual). Carey's book as a whole - well, the first half at any rate - is a polemic against the 'religion of art', and in particular the state subsidising 'high art'. He claims that there is absolutely zero evidence that going to a gallery or a concert - ie, being a *spectator* of art - has any positive effects whatsoever. Throwing taxpayer's money at it simply subsidises luxury consumption on the part of the bourgeoisie.

His points have some validity; but underlying his polemic is the assumption that, if it is (as he claims) not possible to distinguish art from non-art reliably in terms of an objective standard of beauty, it cannot be possible



Knowing the price of everything and the value of nothing

at all. In fact it is possible: but only with a *historical*, rather than an aesthetic, perspective.

Art and culture

Cultural production has been an element of human existence, for all intents and purposes, for the entirety of the history of our species. 'Cultural production' is an Althusserian phrase, but I mean it here to be taken at face value - any work of labour that produces a use value whose purpose is purely *symbolic*, whether that is a cave painting, a renaissance masterpiece or a graffiti tag. (There are advantages and difficulties in talking at this level of generality about culture - the main difficulty is that each form of cultural production has a history of its own, literature being different from visual art, and poetry being different from prose fiction and drama within literature. The advantage, of course, is that it highlights the longer-term shifts more easily, which are generally further removed from the actual acts of cultural labour themselves.)

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

The nature of this relationship shifts vastly over time. To look only at the last thousand years of western art, we see in the mediaeval period the domination of the Catholic church and thus sacred art forms; then the long period of feudal decline, and the corresponding rise of the bourgeoisie, during which the practices now considered forms of 'high culture' (painting and sculpture, theatre, classical music) *appear* to gain autonomy; finally the contemporary age, where high culture is maintained in large part by the state and bourgeois philanthropy as a supposed 'public good'.

The decisive period in this schematic outline is the middle one - it is that which gives our modern conception of the arts its overall shape. Between the centralisation of political power in the great absolutist monarchies and the rise of the bourgeois class of *ingénus*, the near-monopoly of the church on artistic patronage could be challenged - by the largesse of the crown, and the insurgent power of the owners of capital. In parallel, the development of significant urban communities supported both a milieu of dedicated artists and a

material infrastructure of museums, theatres and so on.

The effect is that it *begins* to seem as if the arts are autonomous practices. In fact, *they are not* - it is merely that there is competition for their attention, and also greater resources available. A good case study is music at the turn of the 19th century: composers such as Haydn and Beethoven benefited both from the patronage of individuals in the central European nobility and from the emergence for the first time of 'orchestras for hire': that is, a pool of *professional* musicians. Haydn in particular was also the beneficiary of another new phenomenon - large bourgeois audiences, especially (and not surprisingly) in his London years.

We have mentioned that the *consumption* of art is regulated by the forms of patronage that dominate it. In the case of mediaeval church art, that regulation is straightforward. You go to church. You admire the stonework, the paintings and the choral music. You feel a little bit more in love with Jesus.

In the period of transition between feudalism and capitalism, high art becomes the site of a deflected form of class struggle. The transfer of power from aristocrat to bourgeois took many forms: rapid and glacial, peaceful and violent; the *inculturation* of the ascendant bourgeoisie is one of the peaceful forms, whereby the means of artistic patronage are, as it were, bequeathed by a declining class to a rising one. Old money mixes with new at the art show or the opera house. The middle class *ingénus* gain this way a culture amongst themselves, separate from the masses they exploit, even if it is not purely their own. For this to take place, however, an ideology of art as autonomous, as dealing with a realm beyond the merely earthly, is necessary - whether that is the movement of the Holy Spirit, the World Spirit or the human spirit. Art must objectively appear to be objective.

The evidence for this comes, first of all, from the artistic revolutions of 15th-century Italy, whose constituent city states saw the greatest advances of the bourgeoisie up to that point - bankrolled both by the church and the likes of the Medici clan. Secondly, we can cite the geographic distribution of development in the 'high' arts in the 'long 19th century', overwhelmingly concentrated in continental Europe, where the wider social transformation was most tumultuous and protracted. In America and Britain, where capitalism is least challenged by

the traditional aristocracy, there is instead a revolutionary expansion of *popular* culture, a matter to which we shall return later. Classical music is striking in this regard: the standard repertoire contains, from this period, a decent amount of French and Italian composers, a veritable army of Germans and Austrians, and a sprinkling of Russians.

In this extraordinarily fertile era, stretching from Mozart to Schönberg, the Anglosphere, in spite of its *economic* dominance, barely registered at all. This mismatch coloured the consumption of art in Europe as well, leading to the proliferation of a *nationalist* idea of the 'objective spirit' of art. The most infamous example is, of course, Richard Wagner, the left-nationalist 1848er turned anti-Semite; but one can also cite the chauvinist hysteria which gripped both French and German composers at the outbreak of the Great War. Camille Saint-Saëns co-founded the Ligue Nationale pour la Défense de la Musique Française, to oppose performances of German music, and blacklisted Maurice Ravel when he declined to join. Arnold Schönberg, meanwhile, declared in 1914 of French and Russian composers: "Now comes the reckoning! Now we will throw these mediocre kitschmongers into slavery, and teach them to venerate the German spirit and to worship the German god."²²

Modernism

This takes us to the final part of our periodisation. Students of the arts - whichever form it happens to be - can recite our undergraduate slogans in one voice. World War I transformed art: it was the midwife of modernism in literature, painting and sculpture, and music. On our thesis, it is hardly surprising, since what remained of the feudal state regimes of Europe - from the tsar to the kaiser to the Habsburgs - was finally swept aside. The bourgeoisie was finally left in sole custodianship of 'high' art.

Yet this was also the era in which technological advance gave us the cinema, the recording studio and the mass-market paperback. Cultural products made their way to new mass markets. The supremacy of the bourgeoisie, now undiluted by its antecedents, faced the proletariat, which had become incomparably more threatening by conquering power in Russia.

This is how high art became first and foremost a matter for the *state*

- it was to be a weapon in an often bizarre war of position against Soviet influence on the western working class. The teaching of English literature to working class children had first been suggested by Matthew Arnold in the 1860s, as a way of mollifying working class agitation by inculcating a national spirit through Shakespeare and the like. His plans only really bore fruit from the 1920s, however. Infamously, the CIA later began channelling funds to the artistic avant-garde, using abstract expressionism as an advertisement for American freedom, as against the tyranny of the Stalinist bloc and its conservative antipathy towards 'formalism'.

It is here that we meet the most influential Marxist writers on culture in the 20th century - the Frankfurt School. There are two central statements of this school that interest us here. Firstly, Walter Benjamin's essay, 'The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction', which largely focused on photography and the cinema, examines the demystifying effect of modern artistic technology on art as a whole. He concludes that this effect is revolutionary, though he seems to have in mind the 'all that is solid melts into air' sense of that word, rather than revolutionary *politics*. The audience for art is being transformed by the mass, collective experience of culture, rather than the selective and refined experience of traditional high culture. The 'aura' of works of art - the sense we have of their art-ness while observing them - is being destroyed.

Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, in their *Dialectic of enlightenment*, identify many of the same motive forces, but arrive at a dramatically more pessimistic vision. The transformations in aesthetic technique had instead resulted in a "culture industry", whose mass-produced artefacts represented the colonisation of those hours when one is not at work. "Free" time becomes "leisure", no less dominated by capital than the daily grind. This instrumentalisation of culture is part of a broader historical shift, from classical capitalism to the 'administered society' and the total, hierarchical organisation of social life.

In Adorno's estimation, there remains only one possible job for art, which is to somehow represent its own impossibility and bad faith; thus he is best known as an advocate of 'difficult' modernism, and indeed a musical practitioner of it. "The aesthetic condemnation of the ugly is dependent on the inclination, verified by social psychology, to equate, justly, the ugly with the expression of suffering and, by projecting it, to despise it," he wrote later in *Aesthetic theory*. "Hitler's empire put this theorem to the test, as it put the whole of bourgeois ideology to the test: the more torture went on in the basement, the more insistently they made sure the roof rested on columns."²³

This view has been frequently caricatured as 'elitist' (again, John Carey, who misses the point completely). The argument is a little more subtle: in place of both high art and low culture (that is, the spontaneous culture of the popular masses, the aesthetic record embodied in folk songs and the like), you have a kind of bad fusion of the two. The complex techniques of 'high culture' are used to produce works in a mechanical fashion, which are then foisted upon the masses. They do not in any real sense emanate from those masses, who are merely passive in the whole affair. (It is for this reason that Adorno and Horkheimer chose the term 'culture industry' rather than 'mass culture'.)

It is worth stressing this point, since a great deal of dismal work has been produced by contemporary academics in cultural studies, dedicated to identifying the 'transgressive' and 'subversive' features of soap operas, Madonna singles, etc, which supposedly compare favourably to the buttoned-up 'dead white men' of the official artistic canon. We are back at the fallacy of beauty as an inherent property - digging around in *Eastenders* for signs of life, without actually looking at the institutions that govern taste in class-divided society. Adorno's pessimism is infinitely preferable to this desperate modishness.

Still, there are serious problems here. We suppose we should start with jazz, which Adorno notoriously hated with a vengeance. When Adorno writes about jazz, to be sure, he has in mind its early adaptation as popular dance music, and then Glenn Miller and the sanitised big band sound of the 1930s, rather than Coltrane or Mingus. Yet around the time of Adorno's death, there came the 'new thing': the explosion of the jazz avant-garde. 'Explosion' is the right word, since it went in all directions at once - towards low culture in the old sense (the incorporation of motifs from spirituals), towards high culture (the adoption of compositional and organisational methods from the classical avant-garde), and towards the unknown (free improvisation). It was also, in the main, politically militant and associated with the radical wing of the civil rights movement.

How are we to think about this from a Frankfurt School standpoint? The truth is that we cannot. Adorno's perspective is based on a misunderstanding of his historical period: that the period basically from the rise of Hitler amounted to a decisive epochal shift from capitalism proper to the 'administered society', extinguishing more or less completely any possibility of revolutionary political agency, and with it the possibility of a genuinely new artistic avant-garde. (This is a common deficiency in Hegelian Marxism - drastic theoretical overreach.) On the contrary - the culture industry is *already there* in the fully-developed popular literature of the Anglophone countries in the 19th century. Its great product is Charles Dickens. *This is just what capitalist culture is like*. The existence of a culture industry in no way implies either political passivity or the supersession of creative invention.

We also have, however, the problem of what exactly the 'high arts' represent in this situation. For we cannot straightforwardly say that they operate by the same laws as the 'culture industry'. The latter is overwhelmingly *privatised*; it obeys at least some of the laws of the market. Pop record labels, movie studios, video game companies - all are straightforwardly subject to the long-term tendencies of capital to become concentrated. (There are exceptions, such as the BBC and other state-run popular broadcasters.)

High culture, however, obeys different laws. As noted earlier, the system of patronage obtaining today is led by the *state*. An orchestra will be propped up by arts funding; it will play in buildings created with public money; tickets will likewise often be subsidised. The market does not directly determine what will be put on; that is a secondary consideration, after the matter of deciding what music constitutes a 'public good', what should be the proper balance of classics from the symphonic repertoire and 'difficult' new works, and so on. All these matters are entirely extraneous to the law of value.

The same is true of the most important art museums, which have legal obligations in terms of widening access to the visual arts. It is true of 'serious' theatre, as opposed to Broadway/West End musicals.

So far as painting, sculpture and company go, there is something called

the 'art market', to be sure - but in this case we doubt whether it is much more than a device for money laundering. Dodgy money is cleaned up by being exchanged for Damien Hirst spot paintings. The latter fetch such a tidy price primarily because he is a popular draw for big art galleries. There are a handful of mega-collectors who have significant power over the success of contemporary artists. This is not typically how prices are determined under capitalism. It is as if New York stock prices were simply decreed by Warren Buffett and Carl Icahn; big-time investors and funds have power *as a collective* to make and break companies, but no clique of individuals has power over the markets of the kind that Charles Saatchi has over British art.

Be quiet

The difference is all the more striking when we consider the regimes of consumption imposed on 'high culture' in the age of its total statification.

It is common for Shakespeare's plays to start with a bang. Think of *Romeo and Juliet* - the Montagues and Capulets march out onto the stage. They start arguing with each other. Then they start brawling. (Or *Othello* - within moments, Iago is hurling crude, racist innuendo at Brabantio's window.) There's a simple reason for that - theatre audiences in Shakespeare's day were not possessed by the idea that there was anything terrifically important about a Shakespeare play. This was grimy mass culture. It was necessary to grab people's attention, in order to get them to shut up, so the play could start.

An even more wonderful anecdote has to do with Richard Wagner. In 1861, Wagner managed to get his early opera *Tannhäuser* staged in Paris, which was a major centre of opera at that time. He badly needed the money, as he very often did; but in order to fit into the French style he needed to rearrange things. At the Paris opera, it was traditional for there to be a ballet section. The ballet was conventionally supposed to come in the second act, but Wagner decided to put it in the first, since there are a lot of frolicking nymphs and suchlike involved.

One social circle to frequent the opera was the Jockey Club, composed of rakish sons of the super-rich aristocrats. Their habit was to have a long, booze-drenched dinner, turn up for the second act, and then leave, so they could try to cop off with the ballerinas. When they discovered that they had missed the ballet, they disrupted the performance so aggressively that it had to be cut short. They did so for three nights straight, and eventually the whole run was cancelled.

This sort of thing simply no longer happens. Every so often, there is a little disruption here and there. Zionists like to make a habit of picketing John Adams' opera, *The death of Klinghoffer*. A particularly controversial performance at Bayreuth will draw catcalls - after the final curtain. Aaron Barschak may turn up in drag with a pot of paint - that's about it. The theatre, the art gallery, the concert hall - in all, spectators stare in deathly silence. The etiquette of high art is regimented to a level beyond parody - and in stark contrast to the lively crowds suffered by Shakespeare, Wagner and the like. (There is, believe it or not, a Wikipedia page for 'Classical music riots', which runs out of examples in 1973.)

This fact obtains despite the conscious incorporation of popular and populist material into 'high' art in the last 50 years or so: the phenomenon that has come to be known as postmodernism. The work of the Young British Artists - Hirst, the Chapmans and so on - is provocative, but hardly hyper-intellectual. Indeed, it is almost desperate to appear stupid. It has been quite normal for composers to play with popular musical forms in one way or another for over a century,

but more common in this more recent period. There is, conversely, a tendency for images and snatches of high culture to be appropriated by forms of popular culture. Yet, despite these nods in the direction of the demotic, and eyelash fluttering in the opposite direction, 'high' art is still treated with conspicuous respect and unease by its general audience. Is this really a good sign?

This is, in brief overview, the cultural landscape in 2016, divided into three parts. Firstly: a vast popular culture industry, in trouble thanks to the move from mechanical to digital reproduction, but still making hay. Its level of rationalisation and risk-aversion is such that even Adorno would balk in horror - as one example, Marvel Comics film adaptations operate on the basis of a Stalin-style five-year plan (missing the Gosplan target for irony, the tagline for the last Fantastic Four film was "Change is coming"). Secondly: a heavily-staffed high-culture apparatus, based partly on the ideology of art as a public good, and partly on national chauvinism. Thirdly: as with 60s-70s jazz, a cottage industry of 'small producers' - independent bands and musicians, independent film studios, bohemian cliques of visual artists. Some of their members will be 'promoted' to the big time, whether that is in industrial or high culture; but the mere fact that capitalism and its culture is *not* monolithic means that this stratum will survive its individual members.

The future

This is the raw material we have for the future. But there are two futures at issue here - their future and ours. So far as capitalist society is concerned, I fear we are in for more of the same, only more so.

Both industrial and high culture will become *more* risk-averse, more conservative, as the decades draw on. On the industrial side, it is plain, for example, that the film studio franchises are too big to fail. If the next two *Star wars* trilogy should all tank, it would probably be enough to cause another great recession. They will not be allowed to fail; so nothing in the direction of experimentation can be expected of any of them. There will just be ... more. More incomprehensible, extended fight scenes, more over-investment in what Alan Moore called "the sprawling, meaningless, but at-least-still-finite 'universes' presented by DC or Marvel Comics". Similar processes will prevail in popular music, although the latter's disturbing cult of young flesh means the names will change far more rapidly than the sounds.

So far as 'high' culture goes, despite high-concept showpieces like Punchdrunk's 'immersive theatre' work *The drowned man*, times are tight. We are in the age of austerity, and beyond that an age where many a state bureaucrat is asking John Carey's question: what good are the arts? The days when it was a concern for capitalism that it should seem somehow more cultured than the Soviet bloc are definitively gone. In fact, they were over before the USSR collapsed; I have no evidence that the CIA worked out finally that throwing money at avant-garde art critics was unimportant, since alienated Soviet citizens were more interested in Levis and the Beatles; but they may just as well have done. They did not put a symphony orchestra on top of the Berlin Wall, but David Hasselhoff. Thus bourgeois philanthropy and corporate sponsorship shall loom larger in the system of patronage. We can scarcely imagine that this will have no effect on the quality of output.

As for the indie, bohemian set - they will keep on keeping on; yet the truth is that it is not only the long-term unemployed who suffer from attacks

on benefits and the welfare state. One of the (admittedly less malign) effects is to reduce the space formerly available for people to practice their craft instead of 'getting a real job'. Those who wish to live at the edges of society will find those edges rougher. The result is that these outsiders will be more easily dwarfed by industrial and state-sponsored culture even than they are now; and the composition of such strata of society will become even *more* skewed towards the scions of the middle class, who can supplement the starvation stipend of jobseekers allowance with loans from the Bank of Mum and Dad.

About *our* future, one must necessarily be vague - the whole point, after all, is to allow future generations to work it out for themselves. Nonetheless, communists are guided by a vision of the human potential retarded and suppressed by the irrationality and barbarism of capitalist society. In the most famous passage of *The German ideology* Marx and Engels write:

In communist society, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity, but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, herdsman or critic.⁵

That sounds like an awfully long day, but the point is that the *specialisation* of economic functions in society must be broken down. In retrospect, we note that this specialisation was quite in its infancy in 1845, and has been all the more aggressively pursued as capitalism has matured, and become decadent. Everyone must be filed away into a little box; except, that is, the growing surplus population, who are not needed at all.

This is quite plainly of direct relevance to art and more broadly cultural pursuits. Capitalism, in its contest with the last vestiges of feudalism and now with the working class, has forced its pseudo-rationality onto art and culture. It separates cultural producers from the broad masses; and then it divides them into pop stars and mezzo-sopranos, painters and advertising creatives; it carves up the pop stars into arbitrary radio formats; etc. Wagner's dream of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* - the total work of art - has, with a predictable dialectical reversal, become one more hyperspecialism on the menu, at least for those bourgeois well off enough to spend a week in the *Festspielhaus* in the company of Siegfried and Brunnhilde.

Trotsky, in *Literature and revolution*, likewise writes of the contradictory position of the poet in the post-revolutionary era.

It consists in the separation created by bourgeois society of intellectual work, including art, from physical work ... One of the ultimate aims of the revolution is to overcome completely the separation of these two kinds of activity. In this sense, as in all other senses, the problem of creating a new art proceeds entirely along the lines of the fundamental problem of constructing a socialist culture.⁶

Trotsky is, of course, primarily concerned with the difficulties facing the young Soviet regime - as he writes, in 1924, already in serious difficulty. He feels all too keenly the primitiveness of the cultural base in Russia, the need for massive expansion of literacy, and so on; but also that it is partly a matter of *time*. Socialism lays the foundations for a revolution in culture partly by overcoming the division between those

who think and those who do, and partly by abolishing unemployment, thus reducing the burden of labour on all, and opening up the possibility of free cultural development for everyone.

Back for a moment to capitalism - those of us with an interest in modern technology and its effects on culture cannot ignore the controversy raging over the market price of music, films and other reproducible goods in the age of the internet. It is common enough to hear people opposed to piracy, and even streaming services like Spotify or Netflix, argue that if the price of these commodities is not kept high there will be no incentive for people to make music, films, etc. This is an extraordinary argument, simply because people *already do* make such things without compensation - in spite of everything. How many death metal bands make money from their craft, never mind enough to quit the day job? The simple response is - if you want there to be music in an age where it is technologically implausible to sell it for more than a truly trivial unit cost, then bring in a 15-hour working week. It barely needs to be said that such a world cannot be a capitalist one, and indeed must be socialist.

The final pages of Trotsky's book are truly heady stuff. It is essentially science fiction. Socialism will move mountains, he says, and he means it literally. He is talking about what later science-fiction writers would call 'terraforming' - literally picking up a mountain, and dropping it somewhere else. We will "build people's palaces on the peaks of Mont Blanc and at the bottom of the Atlantic". This panegyric to the socialist future is tainted somewhat by the technocratic outlook Trotsky flirted with in the middle 1920s; but the fundamental point is sound - the culture of a developed socialist society will arise in response to unimaginable changes to material life, to disputes of a kind vastly different (and hopefully more fruitful) than those of class society. We can no more anticipate its forms and contents than we can imagine being dead - since that, in effect, is what we are trying to imagine: a life after the death of the society which has produced us.

We *can* say that this will, in substance, mean the end of art as such. The separation of the artist from the general population will be overcome. The monopolies of patronage will consequently fall. With those, the illusion of art's autonomy from material life will be destroyed, and the cult of genius - the individual 'great artist', summoning the divine into his canvas by some kind of Nietzschean act of will; the tyrannical one-man management of the 'great conductor' over the orchestra. In the place of art, there will be a great flourishing of liberated *culture*. Trotsky concludes:

Man will become immeasurably stronger, wiser and subtler; his body will become more harmonised, his movements more rhythmic, his voice more musical. The forms of life will become dynamically dramatic. The average human type will rise to the heights of an Aristotle, a Goethe or a Marx. And above this ridge new peaks will rise.⁷

We could not put it better than that ●

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Notes

1. *The Guardian* November 25 2003.
2. Alex Ross *The rest is noise* New York 2007, p60.
3. TW Adorno *Aesthetic theory* Minnesota 1997, p49.
4. <https://slovobooks.wordpress.com/2014/01/09/last-alan-moore-interview/>
5. www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/ch01a.htm
6. www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1924/lit-revo/intro.htm
7. www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1924/lit-revo/ch08.htm

OUR HISTORY

Better bad unity than bad disunity

Jack Conrad examines the German question in light of the perspectives of the Marx-Engels team

German unification in the 19th century does not represent a direct parallel with contemporary Europe - there are, for example, 24 official *working* languages in the European Union. Nonetheless, valuable lessons - theoretical and programmatic - can be drawn. This is particularly so because Germany was the birthplace of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels and remained a preoccupying concern despite their permanent exile in Britain after the failure of the 1848 revolution.

Admittedly, given the division of labour between the two men, much of what I shall quote comes under the signature of Engels. Yet they communicated with each other virtually daily and worked so closely that to all intents and purposes they formed a single political entity. Therefore, when one says 'Engels' one might just as well say 'Marx' - or even 'Marx-Engels'. Having underlined that particular point, let us move on.

In the early 1840s, when Marx and Engels began their partnership, Germany was woefully backward, compared with France, Belgium, Holland and, above all, Britain. There existed no common foreign policy, no common army, no common economy, no common education system, no common system of weights and measures, no common currency. Internal disputes and wars of foreign intervention were endemic. Migrants were Germany's biggest export - especially to Britain and North America.¹ The people suffered from the double burden of government over-taxation and lack of spending. In short Germany desperately required a radical unification. Without unity there could be neither capitalist progress nor hope for working class rule - so reasoned Marx and Engels. Tasks of national unification and social revolution therefore interwove.

Germany was a cultural expression, reflecting history and language, but found itself divided into dozens of rival absolutist states, ranging in size from the medium to the micro. During medieval times this was, of course, true for most of western and central Europe. Feudalism is characterised by decentralisation and fragmentation in extremis. Only England - because of the thoroughgoing nature of the 1066 conquest - constituted a partial exception.

'Old Germany' - the Holy Roman Empire - was founded in 962 and lasted till 1806. Quixotic Roman empire-building ideologically blunted goals of German unification from above and steered energies and resources into fruitless campaigns of Italian conquest (reminiscent of the Plantagenet and Lancaster feudal monarchies in England and their countless wars in France).

To cap it all, the 16th century German religious revolution proved inconclusive. Protestant nobles, imperial cities and peasant masses failed to unite their efforts against the Catholic enemy. The Holy Roman Empire was nevertheless reduced to a shell and as such drifted towards historical irrelevance. The centralism of the parts overwhelmed the centralism of the whole. Over these hardening petty divisions Germany found itself cleaved into hostile theological zones: a predominantly Protestant north; a predominantly Catholic, but mixed, south-west; and an exclusively Catholic south-east.

Germany shows an opposite pattern to France and England. France crushed the Protestant Huguenots in 1685. England broke with Rome under Henry VIII. Both countries were therefore

essentially mono-religious. Aside from the obvious advantage of cohesion this brought, the "eventual suppression" of Protestantism in France, was, comments Engels, "no misfortune". Instead of Protestantism the country is blessed with enlightenment thinkers, such as Voltaire and Diderot. Anti-clericalism constitutes the other France and stands today as the *dominant* intellectual tradition.

Being a precursor, the English form of development is in many ways comparatively primitive. The official Protestantism of the Tudor and Stuart monarchs was Catholicism without the pope. Put another way - semi-Catholic. Engels mockingly describes England's universities, colleges and public schools as "Protestant monasteries".² Real Protestantism in England came in the form of the Lollards, Puritans and Methodists. Yet there is still no theoretically rigorous *mass tradition* of anti-clericalism, let alone atheism - a definite misfortune.

Religious divisions and the hollowing out of the Holy Roman Empire turned Germany into the main battleground for the contending Protestant and Catholic powers in the 16th and 17th centuries. The pope, the Spanish and Austrian Hapsburgs, the German Catholic princes - all fought it out with the Protestant German states and their backers in Bohemia, Denmark, Sweden and the Dutch Republic. The result of the Thirty Years War (1618-46) was death, plunder and a political-theological division sealed with the 1648 treaty of Westphalia. Germany became a byword for fragmentation and economic stagnation.

A ray of light shone out amidst the mordant decay. Intellectual life flourished. Handel, Mozart, Goethe, Schiller, Kant and Fichte. A short while later, Beethoven and Hegel. German economic and social backwardness found its opposite in music, literature and philosophy. All served as a kind of hope. After Copernicus, Galileo and Newton, Catholicism hardly deserves to be taken seriously as an object of criticism. It could be defeated intellectually by ridicule alone. Eg, randy priests, cruel abbesses, imprisoned nuns and sadistic inquisitors frequently appear in Gothic novels. On the other hand, German Protestantism was "worth criticising". It could only be overcome "scientifically": that is, in the words of Engels, "explained historically" - a feat which is in actual fact beyond the natural sciences.³ Hence Ludwig Feuerbach's *The essence of Christianity* and then Karl Kautsky's *Foundations of Christianity*.

Where Britain forged itself into a nation, with a common economy binding its peoples together, Germany languished in disunity. Each electorate, principality, bishopric and duchy acted independently of the others. All were formally subject to the Holy Roman emperor - if there was one - and the imperial diet (consisting of electors, princes and delegations from the imperial cities it was meant to keep in check). However, the emperor increasingly became a fiction and the diet never did anything serious - its deliberations became a laughing stock.

To further its expansionist goals in the east Catholic France was quite prepared to back German Protestant princes. Hence, it was not uncommon to find that, when the Holy Roman Empire solemnly declared itself at war, various component states were to be found aligned with the other side. Fragmentation thereby led to disintegration. French-speaking areas on the western bank of the Rhine were



Napoleon: a united Europe

hacked away. First Burgundy, then the three bishoprics of Metz, Toul and Verdun, then the rest of Lorraine, and finally parts of Flanders and Alsace were joined to France. In a similar manner, Switzerland was allowed to establish an independent confederation and what is now Belgium was handed to Spain under the terms of Charles V's public - and most famous - abdication. All fared better separated off from Germany.

Germany found itself in a blind alley. Remnants of feudalism still held sway everywhere and serfdom was rigorously reinforced in the east. The nobility had military officers, palaces and court musicians to maintain. For the serfs that meant labour services, tributes, land-sale taxes, death taxes, protection money, etc. Besides taxes the serfs were expected to hand over an inexhaustible supply of young female flesh. Either that or receive a sound beating. Every attempt at resistance was savagely put down.

What of the imperial cities? They were hardly beacons of liberty. The burgher-master and a caste of self-selected senators ruled like tyrants. Cheated and robbed by the princes, the bourgeois class tried to profit from the chaos. They righted the wrongs done to them by their oppressors by cheating and robbing in turn.

If they had put themselves at the head of the people, they might have been able to refund the country, as the bourgeoisie did between 1640 and 1688 in England and in 1789 in France. But the German bourgeoisie was weak, cowardly and lacked decisive leadership. Engels seethes with contempt for this class. He compared it to shit - or, in the polite translation, "dung": "Germany is nothing but a dunghill, but they [the bourgeoisie] were comfortable in the dung because they were dung themselves, and were kept warm by the dung about them."⁴

The 1789 French revolution acted like a thunderbolt in Germany - not upon the mass of the people, but the middle classes and sections of the aristocracy. But their enthusiasm was, said Engels, "theoretical". Once the French revolution moved to its most extreme stage with the fall of the Gironde, as those below exerted

maximum pressure, polite approval gave way to downright hostility: "Germany was converted to a fanatic hatred against the revolution."⁵ The bourgeoisie preferred the dunghill.

But the Holy Roman Empire was reaching its point of no return. Once he had "exploded every trace of democracy" and had "all power" heaped on his "single head", Napoleon directed his armies into the heart of Germany.⁶ France preached liberty, equality before the law ... and modernisation. Nobles, abbots and pampered hangers-on fled in droves. Napoleon was "always revolutionary *vis-à-vis* the princes".⁷ He formally dissolved the Holy Roman Empire in 1806 and reorganised a bloc of the western German states into the French-aligned Confederation of the Rhine. The *Code Napoléon* was imposed - infinitely superior to the feudal law that had previously crippled Germany.

Napoleon attempted to unify Europe from above: "I wished to found a European system, a European code of laws, a European judiciary: there would be but one people in Europe," he declared in his St Helena exile.⁸ A laudable goal, to be achieved through blood and iron. Not surprisingly then, despite Napoleon shattering the *ancien régimes* in Germany, Spain and Italy, his methods alienated those whom he sought to lift out of benighted darkness. Germany's peasants resented the requisitions, the taxes and the brutal conscription of 60,000 sons into the *Grande Armée*. The bourgeoisie was, however, particularly parochial. The 1806 embargo against British goods might have laid the basis for German industry in the future, but, meanwhile, it meant certain imports were unavailable - Engels cites coffee.

Disappointed by the lack of revolutionary zeal, Engels tore into all classes. The peasants must be, he said, "the most stupid set of people in existence". German students and the run-of-the-mill intellectuals fared no better. As to the bourgeoisie, they merely wanted to buy cheap and sell dear ... and drink unadulterated coffee. Nevertheless Engels has to admit that, whereas before there was only self-interest, a dawning German national consciousness had begun to appear.

In this context, it is worth mentioning the reactionary anti-imperialism of Andreas Hofer. He was the leader of peasant guerrilla war against the French army in Tyrol in 1809.⁹ Shades of Hamas, bin Laden, the Taliban, Islamic State, etc. Years later, Hofer had evolved into something of a folk hero amongst republicans and democrats in Britain. They would merrily toast his memory and cheer his name. Engels hated such misdirected solidarity and tried to put the historical record straight. He roundly condemned Hofer and his backward-looking programme. Hofer was a "stupid, ignorant, bigoted, fanatical peasant". He fought for the "church and emperor", for the paternal despotism of Rome and Vienna. Yes, he fought bravely, but, as Engels pointed out, so did the counterrevolutionary French peasantry of the Vendée.¹⁰ Engels contrasted him to Thomas Müntzer, the leader of the peasant insurrection of 1525. He was worthy of being celebrated.

New order

Britain, Austria, Russia, Prussia and the whole of reactionary Europe fought for the downfall of Napoleon, so as to snuff out the French Revolution. The final act came with the battle of Waterloo in June 1815. However, such was the fear of the French people that, though the Bourbon dynasty was restored,

they got a tolerably liberal constitution. Elsewhere the counterrevolution was pressed home - in an upper class swirl of balls, celebrations and casual sexual encounters, the 1814 Congress of Vienna saw the nations of Europe bought and sold, divided and augmented.

Only four powers really knew how to achieve their strategic objectives. All the rest was thwarted ambition, sentimental posturing or deluded petty pleading. Austria sought to stave off the danger of revolution by restoring dynastic legitimacy. Britain wanted to maintain its colonial supremacy and ensure a docile Europe. Russia strove to fully integrate itself into the European state system and add yet more territory to its vast empire. France attempted not to suffer too much. And, of course, each state tried to block or hinder rivals. The final result was a counterrevolutionary new world order.¹¹

At the prompting of Austria's Klemens von Metternich, grand dukes and religious orders were reinstated in Italy, radical movements suppressed and Prussian plans to absorb Saxony scuppered. Though returned to its 1795 borders, Bourbon France was readmitted into the inner circle of European powers. Britain extended its maritime power and domination of European markets. As for Russia, it became master of eastern and central Europe. Tsar Alexander II gobbled up most of Poland, installed a puppet king in Denmark and re-'Balkanised' Germany. To ensure it could never stand up to Russian might, 36 states were carefully crafted and, to make matters worse, they were disorganised into over 200 separate patches of land. Not surprisingly most of these states were obsessed with their own legitimacy.

What the German people gained with Napoleon's invasion they lost through his defeat.

The tinpot despots uprooted French liberties and reintroduced old ways. Yet a return to pre-1789 conditions was impossible. The bourgeoisie was not strong enough to govern. But it was strong enough to force some concessions. Hence the reaction was somewhat restrained. Constitutional guarantees were granted in some places: Bavaria, Württemberg, Baden, Hanover. Elsewhere aristocratic elites pretended to take care of the interests of the middle classes by putting on a show of good governance.

Ironically William III's Prussia was another factor holding back the counterrevolution. Of course, he did so for his own counterrevolutionary reasons. Prussia vied with Austria for domination over Germany - and, in order to weaken the other German states, he pressed them into enacting "mongrel constitutions", which provided for vaguely representative assemblies. Yet, while the micro autocracies were weakened, no actual power was given to the people, not even the middle classes.

Such an arrangement satisfied no-one. Neither the Christian Germanists, romantics and reactionaries nor the liberals. And from these two last-named sects - they were not parties - arose the "mongrel liberals" who between 1815 and 1830 formed the dominant opposition current. Yet, trapped in the numerous petty states, the liberal-reactionary middle classes proved utterly impotent. In their secret societies they drew up schemes for a German emperor wearing a crown, purple and all the gaudy imperial rubbish - not to forget an assembly of estates, in which clergy, nobility, bourgeoisie and peasants would be

properly separated. They shunned the 1789 revolution. Their model was medieval, their intentions servile.

Post-Napoleonic Germany was a confederacy of states. But there was no risk of the people imposing their will. There was no genuinely representative national assembly. The delegates who formed the confederal diet were sent by governments alone. Every state was bound by resolutions of the diet. But between them Prussia and Austria ruled. All they needed to do was to threaten to abandon the micro-autocracies in their struggle with their assemblies and the lesser princes would snap into line. Nothing could be done in the petty states. Prussia and Austria alone were crucial.

Engels contemptuously dismissed the Prussian king, William III, as one of the "greatest blockheads that ever graced a throne".¹² The man knew only two feelings - fear and imperiousness. The king of Prussia had been cheated by Britain, cheated by France, cheated by the emperors of Russia and Austria. Nevertheless, he was happy. Napoleon had been beaten. Fear lifted. Having had half his kingdom confiscated by Napoleon, he surrounded himself with half-and-half reformers. They abolished servitude and feudal services, and reorganised the local municipalities. An unthreatening constitution was drafted - though it never appeared in law. However, 15 years after the Congress of Vienna, the masses of Paris rose once more. Fear returned.

The 1830 revolution signalled the general outbreak of middle class, aristocratic and popular discontent throughout Europe. The results were mixed. The aristocratic Polish revolution failed. The bourgeoisie in France and Belgium succeeded. The British middle classes won the reform bill which gave them the vote. In Italy the insurrection was defeated after pope Gregory XIV appealed for Austrian aid. In the spring of 1831 the Austrian army marched in and overwhelmed province after province.

In Germany there were several dozen insurrections between 1830 and 1834. All were hampered by the division into numerous states. There was no focal point. However, two or three of the middle class revolutions managed to succeed. Germany began to move. Headed by Prussia, 17 of the states came together to form a customs union - the Zollverein - in 1834. Austria was kept out and created its own separate tariff system. The Zollverein ushered in free trade between its members and, with Prussia leading negotiations, subsequent trade agreements were cemented with the Netherlands (1839), Belgium (1844), France (1862) and Britain (1865). The Zollverein saw the building of a German railway network, the general introduction of steam power and the growth of an internal market.

Interestingly the US historian, Paul Kennedy, suggests that in some respects the situation in mid-19th century Germany was "similar" to the European Economic Community - economic success encouraged new members to join and that created the possibility of turning the customs union into "a power state" and a "major new actor in the international system".¹³

Though unanimous votes were needed and each state clung "tenaciously to their sovereign rights", the Zollverein union represented the *de facto* acceptance of Prussian hegemony in Germany.¹⁴

Communists

Despite the miserable record of the middle classes, Marx and Engels were, in 1847, still looking for a German version of the 1789 French revolution. "The party of the bourgeoisie is," said Engels, "the only one that at present has a chance of success."¹⁵ Both men expected the bourgeoisie to do their historic duty and take the lead. Their

party, the communists, would try to win the minuscule, but rapidly growing, working class to fight alongside them. But, once the bourgeoisie secured power, the workers would constitute themselves the party of extreme opposition. From here the proletariat would gather their strength before squaring up for the next, final, battle, which would be with the bourgeoisie.

Marx and Engels had definite immediate aims *vis-à-vis* the constitutional question in Germany. The first demand of the Communist Party in Germany was that the whole country "shall be declared a single and indivisible republic".¹⁶ To ensure a democratic and lasting unification the 'giants' of Germany, Austria and Prussia had to be broken up into autonomous provinces. The interests of the proletariat ruled out either the Prussianisation or Austrianisation of Germany, just as much as the perpetuation of its division into petty states. The working class required the unification of Germany into a fully-fledged nation.

Interestingly, given our current concerns, echoing the likes of William Penn, Henri de Saint-Simon and Giuseppe Mazzini, Engels mused about the possibility of a "European federation". However, for him, it had to be based on the unity of all the main nations of Europe - defined by common language and fellow feeling.¹⁷ In other words, a centralised German republic was a precondition for the voluntary coming together of Europe.

In 1848 a powerful revolutionary wave swept Europe. Paris took the lead; Italy and Hungary followed; the Chartists in Britain made plans for a nationwide physical-force uprising. Germany was no exception: Munich, Cologne, Berlin, Vienna, Dresden, Frankfurt. Street barricades were built, constitutions rewritten, crowns wobbled.

Marx and Engels hastily packed their bags and returned to Germany, along with some 400 fellow Communist League members. Under their leadership the working class in Germany appeared before history in its own right and with its own mission. And yet, though the communists pushed, pleaded and pulled, the bourgeoisie refused to act in any decisive fashion. A miserable bunch. No Cromwell, no Ireton, no Robespierre, no Washington.

The Frankfurt national assembly generated plenty of hot air and countless proclamations. It thought itself a parliament, but the country it ruled over existed in the imagination alone. Its resolutions amounted to fiction. No king or prince was overthrown. No independent army raised. The official left of the Frankfurt assembly were little better. Marx and Engels lambasted the radical democrats for their timid plan for a federal *monarchical* Germany. The petty princes would remain as constitutional monarchies, but the central government was to be republican! The 'model' of these radicals was the USA. But, of course, they shied away from their own 1776.

It was under these circumstances that Marx and Engels developed their programme of permanent revolution - the working class would take the lead in the anti-autocratic national revolution and, having done so, would take things as far as objective circumstances permitted.

Because of its autocracy, relatively large size and long militaristic tradition, Prussia was viewed as the main obstacle to revolution in Germany. Prussia might attempt to unite Germany - but it would do so as an act of counterrevolution. Even then, it could only unite Germany by tearing Germany apart. Prussia would have to lock Austria out. The same would apply to Austria - the most conservative German state. An Austrian Germany would have to lock Prussia out. Hence, under either Prussia or Austria there could only be a 'smaller Germany'. That is why, in the

name of "real unification", Marx and Engels wanted to see the "dissolution" of Prussia and "disintegration" of the Austrian empire.¹⁸ If Germany were ever to achieve anything worthwhile, there could be neither an Austria nor a Prussia.

It should be stressed that Marx and Engels sought the "dissolution" of Prussia and the "disintegration" of Austria in the context of bringing about a *centralised* revolutionary social republic. A country like Germany, which had suffered from extreme fragmentation, needed, if it was to survive, the most "stringent revolutionary centralisation". This was especially so because the Germany of 1848 contained "20 Vendées" and found itself sandwiched between the two most powerful and most centralised European states: ie, Russia and France. Such a country cannot, in the present period of universal revolution, avoid "either civil war or war with other countries", proclaimed Engels.¹⁹

Specifically Marx-Engels advocated a revolutionary liberation war against Russia - that would unite Germany on the basis of democracy and hold out the promise of Polish independence and reunification. But, though Germany had made "several dozen small and big revolutions", the actual situation narrowed the mental horizons of the middle classes instead of broadening them. To ingratiate itself with the partitioning powers - Russia, Prussia and Austria - the Frankfurt national assembly endorsed the division of Poland.

With such a cowering, directionless and feeble assembly the writing was on the wall. By 1850 the situation had been stabilised in favour of reaction - especially in the 'big' German powers, Prussia and Austria. Concessions were rolled back. However, Engels explained the defeat of the revolution not in terms of the betrayal of this or that leader. Rather he blamed the fragmentation of Germany. The incoherence, myopia and irresolution which prevailed at every turn derived from interests so varied, so conflicting, so strangely antithetical, that decisive action was impossible.

After the failure of 1848 some disillusioned liberals began to yearn for unity under Prussia. But, as explained above, that meant little Germany locking out Austria. For their part, the most conservative nationalists pinned their hopes on Austrian domination. The dream was of Austria, Prussia and the rest of Germany uniting into a federal state and then proceeding to Germanise Austria's Hungarian and Danube empire through schools, laws, colonies and a strong military hand. The formerly Austrian Netherlands would also be incorporated, albeit as a vassal state. Engels damned these "patriotic fanatics".²⁰ Meantime, disorientated radicals sank into admiration of the Swiss constitution. Only the communists remained true to the German republic, "one and indivisible".

Half-revolution

As the reader might well know, in 1866 the armies of Prussia defeated Austria in a lightning eight-day war. From this moment onwards Prussia stopped viewing the rest of Germany as prey. Prussia became *nationalised*. Germany was its protectorate - even if that meant excluding a large part of Germany: ie, Austria. War with France followed. Again Prussian forces scored a swift and resounding victory. France surrendered. Napoleon III was replaced by the second republic. Prussia could now impose its terms on the rest of Germany and in 1871 William I of Prussia assumed the title of German emperor.

Let us note, both Marx and Engels predicted a new war - between Russia (aligned with France) and Germany. This, however, was something they now dreaded. The transition to socialism would be put off by such a bloodbath.

Engels warned that such a "conflict will be the downfall of the Prussian state and the Prussian army - probably in a war with Russia, which might last four years - and would yield nothing but disease and shattered bones".²¹ He also talked of 20 million deaths.

How did Engels assess this Prussian version of German unity? Bismarck - Prussia's uncrowned Bonaparte - had, he said, carried out a "revolution" and a "revolution with revolutionary methods". Only, because it was carried out from above, it was "not revolutionary enough"; this half-unification of Germany was only a "half-revolution".²²

Real measures which unified the country were welcomed as a step forward: eg, the common legal code and Bismarck's legislation creating common banking laws and a common currency over the years 1873-75. Engels expressed the opinion that it would have been better if the mark could have been pegged to one of the big three - dollar, pound or franc.

Yet Prussia had not dissolved into Germany. Instead Bismarck introduced the Prussian system throughout most of Germany. Bavaria and the southern states retained a degree of autonomy. In certain ways it was as if the semi-feudal Scottish highlands had managed to conquer England in 1745. Political power resided with the emperor, a caste of aristocratic bureaucrats and the military top brass. Universal male suffrage was granted, but the emperor appointed the chancellor and the feeble Reichstag could not turn down tax demands. A carbon copy of the 1850 Prussian constitution. Put another way, there existed a pseudo-constitutionalism. The Reichstag served as a fig leaf for absolutism. Germany was in fact a military despotism with parliamentary embellishments.

But this was no return to the past. Germany set itself on a course of rapid industrialisation and with that the bourgeoisie came to exercise a decisive influence. There also came into existence a powerful, well organised and highly educated proletariat.

It was in these promising circumstances that Marx - writing in 1875, in what became known as the *Critique of the Gotha programme* - took issue with his comrades in the newly formed Social Democratic Party. They were reluctant to highlight the demand for the abolition of the monarchy. By contrast Marx renewed his call for a "democratic republic" against the Prusso-German monarchy.²³ A theme Engels elaborated upon some 15 years later in his *Critique of the draft programme* in 1891.

Engels attacked Prussianism and the peaceful illusions being entertained by some party leaders in Germany. There could conceivably be a peaceful transition to socialism in countries where the "representatives of the people concentrate all power in their hands, where, if one has the support of the majority of the people, one can do as one sees fit in a constitutional way; in democratic republics such as France and the USA, in monarchies such as Britain ... where this dynasty is powerless against the people".²⁴ But not absolutist Germany.

Doubtless, not a good formulation. Relying on the army, the courts and the big capitalists in France, the US or Britain to meekly accept a popular vote which declares for the socialist republic is hardly a realistic course of action. Of course, what Engels is combating here is constitutional illusions in the SDP; he is not seeking to promote them in France, the US and Britain. Anyway, showing his appreciation of tactics, Engels admits that, due to police censorship and legal restrictions, it may not be possible for the SDP to baldly demand the abolition of the monarchy in its programme. Some devious formulation ought to be concocted therefore. Either way, Engels is insistent that the working class "can

only come to power under the form of a democratic republic". He calls this the "specific form for the dictatorship of the proletariat".²⁵

So as to open up the road to working class power, Engels argues for the "reconstruction of Germany". The system of small states within Prusso-Germany "must be abolished". How, as he asks, can you revolutionise society, while there are special rights for Baden-Württemberg and even the small state of Thuringia consists of statelets? Again he balances off the abolition of the small states with the call to abolish Prussia and break it up into "self-governing provinces". For Engels the system of small states and Prussianism are the "two sides of the antithesis now gripping Germany in a vice", in which one side "must also serve as an excuse and justification for the existence of the other".²⁶

What should take the place of Prusso-Germany? Engels opposes federalism and repeats the demand for the "one and indivisible republic". He is no dogmatist. Remember, there is no principle involved. The goal is to achieve the maximum voluntary union between peoples - most importantly the working class.

In his reckoning, federalism is on the whole necessary in the "gigantic" USA, although in the eastern states it was already "becoming a hindrance". "It would be a step forward" in the British Isles, where the two islands have four peoples - English, Scots, Irish, Welsh - three different systems of legislation and at the time a single parliament. In "little" Switzerland, federalism "has long been a hindrance, tolerable only because Switzerland is content to be a purely passive member of the European state system". For Germany, federalism on the Swiss model would be an "enormous step backwards". Germany already had a second, federal, chamber - the Bundesrat - that, like the House of Lords in Britain, served reaction. Germany certainly did not need separate legislation enacted in each state or canton.

No, the best conditions for progress and preparing the working class for the revolutionary transition to socialism is the unified *democratic* republic: ie, elections at every level, local self-administration and absence of bureaucracy, a militia system and the abolition of the standing army ●

Notes

1. See JR Davis, S Manz and MS Beerbühl (eds) *Transnational networks* Leiden 2012.
2. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 23, London 1988, p608.
3. *Ibid*.
4. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 6, New York 1976, p17.
5. *Ibid* p18.
6. Antoine de Thibaudeau, quoted in W Hazlitt *The life of Napoleon Bonaparte* Vol 1, London 1862, p358n.
7. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 23, London 1988, p603.
8. WHC Smith *The Bonapartes* London 2005, p93.
9. See F Gunter Eyck *Loyal rebels* Washington DC 1986.
10. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 6, New York 1976, p26.
11. See H Kissinger *A world restored* Boston MA, 1957.
12. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 6, New York 1976, p23.
13. P Kennedy *The rise and fall of the great powers* London 1989, pp608-09.
14. WO Henderson *The rise of German industrial power* Berkeley CA 1975, p37.
15. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 6, New York 1976, p86.
16. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 7, Moscow 1977, p3.
17. *Ibid* p51.
18. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 26, London 1990, p124.
19. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 7, Moscow 1977, pp237-38.
20. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 16, London 1980, p217.
21. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 23, London 1988, p604.
22. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 26, London 1990, p481.
23. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 24, London 1989, p95.
24. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 27, London 1990, p226.
25. *Ibid* p227.
26. *Ibid* p228.

REVIEW

Consistent, realistic, verifiable

Fred Moseley *Money and totality* Brill, 2016, pp436, £102

One of the major trends in the world economy in the last two years has been the collapse of the price of oil in world markets. From a peak of over \$100 a barrel, the price plummeted to under \$30 a barrel and is still only around \$40. The explanation for this fall, as provided by mainstream economics, is simple. There has been a change in the supply and demand for oil. Economists then go on to discuss which is the more important factor: supply increasing or demand falling.

But this analysis of the price of a commodity and what it is worth at the level of supply and demand - as taught in all economics textbooks in colleges - is superficial at best. There is a joke in financial investor circles, when discussing why the stock price of a particular company has suddenly fallen: 'Well, there were more sellers than buyers' - true to the point of tautology.

What explains why a barrel of oil is \$40 and not \$1? Why do 100 paper clips cost \$1 and one car costs \$20,000? In other words, we need to understand what something is worth in the marketplace beyond just supply and demand; we need a theory of value. From that, we can begin to explain the workings of a capitalist economy, where everything is produced for sale. And if we can measure changes in value we can begin to understand the laws of motion of a capitalist economy - and, Marxist economics would add, its key contradictions, because Marxist economics is not so interested in the changes in the price of one commodity as in the nature and causes of the overall trends and fluctuations in an economy. That is, macroeconomics - with a purpose.

Marxist value theory is based on the view that commodities are priced in the market according to the labour time expended on them. Actually, labour time is basic for all forms of social production by human beings. As Marx wrote,

Every child knows a nation which ceased to work, I will not say for a year, but even for a few weeks, would perish. Every child knows, too, that the masses of products corresponding to the different needs required different and quantitatively determined masses of the total labour of society. That this necessity of the distribution of social labour in definite proportions cannot possibly be done away with by a particular form of social production, but can only change the mode of its appearance, is self-evident. No natural laws can be done away with.¹

But Marx goes on:

What can change in historically different circumstances is only the form in which these laws assert themselves. And the form in which this proportional distribution of labour asserts itself, in the state of society where the interconnection of social labour is manifested in the private exchange of the individual products of labour, is precisely the exchange value of these products.

This is why Marxist theory of value applies to capitalism, not previous modes of social organisation.

An alternative theory of value might possibly be based on the amount of material that goes into a commodity. There are physically much more steel, other metals and ingredients in weight that go into the production of a car than

go into the production of a paper clip. Can this explain the difference in value or price? Hardly. The actual qualitative content of a car is different from a paper clip or, for that matter, a hat - and weight does not provide an abstract measure for all items. Indeed, there is no common physical attribute that we can find to compare their value.

But the amount of labour time that goes into each thing or service does provide a common measure. That is why the great classical economists of the late 18th and early 19th century quickly latched onto labour time as an abstract measure of value that removed the heterogeneity of different physical materials and also different skills and types of labour. Labour time in the abstract provides the base for the value of commodities sold on the market.

Of course, it is not as simple as that - unfortunately. Capitalism is a mode of production for the sale of commodities on the market (including the sale of labour, or the power of labour). The market decides whether certain amounts of labour time expended on producing particular commodities are 'socially necessary'. If it takes most of the labour time available (workers and hours of work) in an economy to make one car for sale, the car would be socially unnecessary, as there are no hours left for food, housing, clothing, etc. So the car is not made and such a society makes do without cars.

However, if cars can be produced with a lot less labour time due to improved technology and better productivity of labour, then they can make it to the market place. Some car manufacturers may be more efficient and so gain market share or perhaps even drive out of the market other less efficient manufacturers. Or other entrepreneurs may have an even better technology or a different product (electric cars) and so try to enter the market to undermine the position of the existing producers. Such is the dynamic motion of competition in capitalist production. Something that Marx was very impressed by.

Capitalism is also different from previous modes of production and exploitation. Capitalism is a mode of production where labour itself is exploited by forcing people to sell their labour-power on the market to the private owners of the means of production (factories, offices, materials, finance) for wages. And capitalism is a monetary economy, where workers get money wages and capitalists get money from the sale of the goods and services produced by workers. Capitalists employ workers and sell commodities that people need (or thought they needed) on the market and only do so if they get more money than they started with. This is the particular form of class exploitation that is capitalism. What drives competition and production under the capitalist mode is profit. Capitalism is a money-making, profit-making mode of production. Money enters the equation from the very beginning.

The circuit of money

And that, at last, is where Fred Moseley's new book, *Money and totality*, comes on stage. Moseley is professor of economics at Mount Holyoake women's college in Massachusetts and has been for decades. He is one of the foremost scholars in the world today on Marxian economic theory (as a theory of capitalism). He has written or edited seven books, including *The falling rate of profit in the post-war United States economy* (1991), *Marx's logical*

method: a re-examination (1993), *Heterodox economic theories: true or false?* (1995), *New investigations of Marx's method* (1997), and *Marx's theory of money: modern appraisals* (2004).² Moseley says he has been working on his book for over 20 years and, as such, this book is Moseley's *magnum opus*. And it richly deserves that designation.

Moseley says, in *Money and totality*, that a Marxist analysis of the circuit of capital does not start with value as measured in labour time, which then has to be explained or transformed into money. A real capitalist economy starts with money, and Marx's value theory also does. From the capitalist point of view, money advanced must lead to more money, or forget it. M becomes M' (pp11-12).

Marx starts there, but sets out, with a theory of value, to explain how M becomes M'. He expands this trite formula into M - C - P - C' - M'. Money (M) is advanced by capitalists to purchase raw materials and technology (means of production, C). Then money is advanced to workers for their labour-power (hours and skills) in production (P). At the end of the production process, a new commodity for sale is produced containing more value than before (C'), which is then sold on the market for more money (hopefully) that was originally advanced: M'. Money makes more money, but through exploitation of the workforce and the private appropriation of surplus value in the sale of the commodity.

This brings us to one of the key insights of Moseley's book. The Marxist theory of value and his analysis of the laws of motion of capitalism is a macro-monetary theory. There is one real capitalist system, advancing money in order to make more money - namely a profit (a surplus of value) - over the money (or value in labour time) paid to the workforce and for the means of production (value contained in constant capital). We do not start with a certain value of labour time or a certain amount of physical units of workers and technology, and finish with that. We start with money and we finish with money.

Yes, beneath the process of money making money, we can show that this happens through the exploitation of labour and the amount of exploitation or extra money made can be explained by the appropriation of surplus labour time (beyond that needed to keep workers alive and in production). Thus money is value, or the form of value that we see.

As Moseley shows, so thoroughly and clearly, Marx's value theory means that the total amount of money in an economy (excluding the impact of inflation and short-term fluctuations) matches the total amount of value ('socially necessary', 'abstract' labour, as measured in time). Total prices of production are equal to total value and total money profits in this one-world economy are equal to total surplus value (in labour time). Value explains money; surplus value explains profit.

From macro to micro

This is a macro theory, as Moseley explains, which looks at the total economy. But, when we go below the macro aggregates and consider individual prices of production for different products and individual profit rates for each capitalist, then values in labour time do not match prices. While the great classical economists - Adam Smith, David Ricardo, James Steuart and others - recognised that

commodities produced should be valued in labour time, or the labour expended overall in an economy, they had serious flaws in their versions of the labour theory of value. David Ricardo thought individual prices had to match individual values in labour time; Adam Smith thought that prices were made up of inputs in value from separate 'factors of production': profit (value from the capitalist); wages (value from labour) and rent (value from land).

But Marx solved this issue of the macro to the micro by showing that because individual capitals compete amongst each other, as a result sectors with higher profitability get 'invaded' by other capitalists seeking to increase their profitability. In so doing, profit rates tend to be equalised between sectors. As Marx showed, this did not change the overall value created in an economy, but merely redistributed the surplus value over and above the cost of capital advanced from less efficient capitals to more efficient ones through the equalisation of profit rates across sectors. This transformation solution was a brilliant one that Marx was very proud of.

Marx's analysis of capitalism in *Capital* was generally ignored by mainstream economics. But when attention was paid to it, it was attacked immediately. Eugen Böhm von Bawerk,³ an economist of the 'Austrian school', launched in with the argument that Marx's theory of value was contradictory, because it assumed that total prices equal total values in volumes one and two of *Capital*, but that prices of production were not equal to value in volume 3. How can prices be both equal to value and not equal to value? As Moseley comments,

Böhm-Bawerk did not understand Marx's logical method of the two levels of abstraction: the total economy and individual industries. In Marx's theory, total price = total value, but individual values = prices of production. There is no contradiction with Marx's logical structure of the two levels of abstraction (p39, note 13).

And this conclusion is the first overriding merit and insight from Moseley's interpretation of Marx's analysis of capitalism - a brilliant insight that is mostly Moseley's, although it had forerunners in the work of Roman Rosdolsky, Paul Mattick and David Yaffe, as Moseley attributes⁴ (p23). The logical approach of Marx is to look at the macro first to show how money makes more money; and then look at the micro to see how that extra money is distributed among many industries and capitals through competition and the equalisation of profitability. The more efficient get a transfer of value from the less efficient through capitalist competition. But profits come from the surplus value generated by the labour force employed in the whole economy and appropriated by capital as a whole.

Realistic single system

Moseley shows that Marx's analysis is based on a realistic view of capitalism. The circuit and motion of capital starts with money and finishes with money. It does not start with value (labour time) or with physical things (labour and means of production) and end with value or things. So it does not need value or things to be converted or transformed into money. There are not two 'states of capitalism' (one with values and one with money or prices). Marx's view is a single-state system.

So there is no 'mistake' or logical contradiction in Marx's explanation of the transformation of values into prices. The so-called transformation problem of values into prices and money does not exist.

The mainstream critiques of Marx's analysis make the mistake (deliberate or not) of arguing that Marx had two logical analyses - first based on values, which had to be transformed into prices. They say, if you start with 'inputs' of labour and means of production measured in values (as they claim Marx does), surely you must convert these values into money prices? And if you do so, then, using simultaneous equations, you find that total values no longer equal total prices and/or total surplus value no longer equals total profit. That is because your original inputs in value will also be converted into prices. Marx's analysis is thus indeterminate or logically inconsistent.

This is the kernel of the critique first pronounced by Ladislaus von Bortkiewicz in the early 20th century - "the most frequently cited justification for rejecting Marx's theory over the last century" (pxii). This critique was enthusiastically adopted by mainstream economics as finally crushing Marx's value theory of capitalism. It was accepted by hosts of Marxist economists like Paul Sweezy⁵, many of whom spent many years trying to reconcile Marx's 'mistake' with a theory of capitalism or looking for alternative interpretations of value theory - a "long 100-year detour", as Moseley describes it.

In the post-war period, so-called 'neo Ricardian' Marxists reverted to a version of Ricardian theory: namely that value was determined by the labour time, as measured in physical production. Either money played no role or there was a money theory of capitalism (prices) and a value theory of capitalism (physical things), but the two could not be reconciled.

Indeed, one consequence of this 'correction' of Marx in the neo-Ricardian/von Bortkiewicz model was that money was tacked onto the capitalist system as a separate department of production: that of gold. In doing so, the price of gold, and thus the price of money under a monetary system based on a gold standard, diverges from its value. So the 'value of money' changes, further complicating and confusing the connection between value and price - another mistake of Marx, according to these critics.

But Moseley shows brilliantly that this is nonsense. Gold as money has no price of production and surplus value is not distributed in and out of the gold industry into other sectors. So total prices of all commodities in capitalist production still equal their total values. When gold acts as money, the price of a given quantity of gold (dollars per ounce) functions as a money measure of the value of a commodity. Gold itself has no price, but merely serves as a measure of value. So gold as money does not enter the equalisation process of values into prices of production. Gold is already money (p201).

As a result, money is the 'monetary expression of labour time' taken to produce a physical amount of gold, (Melt, in the modern Marxist jargon). Melt is not affected by any changes in the prices of production because, it is the measure of those prices. But if Melt changes it will affect the prices of production, because capitalism is a monetary economy. In a non-gold standard world, where money is just paper or even units of account in a bank, Melt will also vary if the quantity of paper money exceeds the

What we fight for

quantity of money as measured by gold (commodity money).

Ironically, as Moseley says, the end of the gold standard and commodity money actually rule out the neo-Ricardian argument for the gold sector to be included in the equalisation of profit rates across the economy. As money is no longer gold, the profit rate in the gold sector is irrelevant to the prices of production in commodities in the neo-Ricardian model. Marx's theory of money fits into a macro-monetary analysis of capitalism - it is a real analysis, not a concoction by the neo-Ricardian critics that tries to tack money on to the transformation of values into prices.

'Standard interpretation'

The Bortkiewicz-Sweezy 'standard interpretation', as Moseley calls it, culminated in its destruction with a seminal paper by the leading mainstream economist of the post-war period, Paul Samuelson, the author of the major academic textbook on economics in my days at college. Samuelson showed that if you started with two systems - one in values in labour time and one in prices - the labour values can be cancelled out and play no determination in the real world of prices. Prices are then determined by the quantities of things produced and the demand for them (supply and demand).

In summary, transforming from values to prices can be described as the following procedure: (1) write down the value relations; (2) take an eraser and rub them out; (3) finally write down the price relations - thus completing the transformation process! (p229).

Samuelson's sarcastic joke may have buried the 'standard interpretation', but his own mainstream theory of prices was equally irrelevant. What determines whether the price of a car is \$20,000 or \$2,000? - supply and demand. But why \$20,000 and not \$2,000? - well, because the market says it is so (revealed preference of individual consumers). Brilliant!

But, as Moseley says, Samuelson was right on the standard interpretation. If you interpret Marx to have two systems of capitalism - one based on values (in labour time or physical units) and another on prices - then you have to transform values into prices. But why bother? - values can be cancelled out. Marx's value theory then becomes metaphysically unnecessary like the concept of god. We can explain all in the universe without god and god explains nothing.

But what Moseley shows in the body of his book is that the 'standard interpretation' is a misinterpretation of Marx's analysis. He takes the reader carefully and thoroughly through all the competing interpretations of Marx's value and price theory, starting with the standard interpretation, as expressed by the theory of Piero Sraffa, an epigone of Ricardo. He shows not only that Sraffa's approach of looking at capitalism as 'the production of commodities by means of commodities' is unrealistic in the extreme;⁶ it also has nothing to do with Marx's analysis of capitalism as the process of money capital trying to make more money capital (pp230-43).

Sraffa ends up with a theory that implies capitalism can go on producing more things from things without any contradiction or limit - the example of automation (p233) shows that clearly. Marx's own theory shows that there is an essential contradiction in capitalism between the production of things and services, on the one hand, and the profitability of doing it for private capital, on the other. That contradiction is much more real, explaining cycles of boom and slump, crises and the

eventual demise of capitalism as a system. While Sraffa's theory implies the universality of capitalism, Marx argues for its specificity.

Moseley then shows that other interpretations (Anwar Shaikh's iterative way, the 'new interpretation', *Rethinking Marxism*, etc) all fail really to break with the standard interpretation and thus cannot resolve the apparent logical inconsistency (Bortkiewicz) or irrelevance (Samuelson) of Marx's analysis. He goes into each in some detail for the reader to ponder.

Temporal or historic?

However, it is somewhat different with the temporal single-state interpretation (TSSI). The essential points of the TSSI group of Marxist economists⁷ were summed up in another seminal work on Marx's analysis from Andrew Kliman in 2007, with his book, *Reclaiming Marx's Capital*.⁸ Those points were that Marx's theory is temporal. Money advanced for means of production and the labour force are the initial capital, in time; the production of commodities and their sale on the market come later. So we cannot impute simultaneous equations in the conversion of value into prices, as the standard interpretation and others do. Second, Marx's theory is single-state. It is not a question of converting initial inputs (means of production and labour) as values into prices of production in the final commodity. Capitalists start with money (prices of production) and end up with money (prices of production). But they end up with a different value or price of production, as explained by the exploitation of labour-power, with its value ultimately measured in labour time in the whole economy.

I single out TSSI from other interpretations, because I consider that it did provide the breakthrough in refuting the standard interpretation by returning Marx to the logic and reality of a money economy. And I have been a strong supporter of this interpretation in the past. Moseley agrees that TSSI made great strides in this task. However, he has two important disagreements with TSSI. He reckons it takes prices of production as short-term movements that change with each production cycle to equalise profitability within sectors. Moseley thinks this cannot be right, as prices of production are predetermined over the long term by the productivity of labour (new value) and the rate of surplus value in the class struggle (deciding the level of the real wage). So prices of production only change if productivity and real wages alter. Prices of individual commodities fluctuate around a 'centre of gravity' set by prices of production. Indeed, Moseley argues that, unless his interpretation of prices of production as long-term centres of gravity for individual prices is accepted, then the two aggregate equalities (total price = total value; and rate of profit = rate of surplus) would not hold over successive production periods, thus defeating the very objective of TSSI.

Second, Moseley disagrees that a temporal interpretation of Marx's circuit of capital means that the cost price of the advanced money capital (for means of production and the employment of the labour force) is fixed and historic after production has commenced. He reckons that, if the price of equipment and other means of production changes after production starts (as it does), it is still acceptable to upgrade the value of the commodity produced to include the current cost of the means of production, not the original cost. So it is not necessary or correct to use historic cost in the measure of constant capital or in the profitability of capital.

The Australian Marxist economist, Peter Jones, in a very interesting paper,

attempts to reconcile the historic versus current cost approach in the light of this debate:

Standard current cost measures of the rate of profit compare profits over the course of the year to the stock of constant capital at the end of the year. Kliman's historical cost measure uses the stock of constant capital at the start of the year. I cannot see a good reason for either of these choices. Since profits are generated over the course of a year, a good measure of the rate of profit should take into account the changes in the stock of capital advanced over the course of that year. In both cases, the average rate of profit could roughly be thought of as an average of a series of 'snapshots' of the rate of profit over the course of the year.⁹

That seems fairly close to Moseley's view on the issue.

This latter point is very important in any empirical analysis of profitability in modern capitalist economies. Andrew Kliman's view is that historic cost measures must be used and anything else is a distortion of Marx's measure of profitability. And this makes a difference when we try to measure the movement in the rate of profit in a major capitalist economy like the US.¹⁰ Kliman's measure shows a 'persistent fall' in profitability of US capital since 1945 without any significant rise, even during the so-called neoliberal period from the early 1980s to now.¹¹ The current cost measure, on the other hand, shows a trough in the early 1980s and then a significant rise through to the end of the 1990s at least. Which is right has led to different views on the health of US capitalism, the role of the financial sector and what causes capital investment to change. However, perhaps the differences between the two measures are overdone because, as Deepankar Basu shows, over the long term, since 1945, the two measures have tended to converge.¹²

Empirically verifiable

Fred Moseley has made a major contribution to a clearer understanding of Marx's method of analysis, showing that a Marxist analysis delivers, with money, prices and values integrated into a single realistic system of capitalism.

Moseley shows that Marx had two main stages of analysis or theoretical abstraction. First, he analyses the production of surplus value in capital as a whole (volumes 1 and 2 in *Capital*) and then he analyses its distribution through the competing sectors of many capitals (volume 3). Marx starts with money, so there is no need to 'transform' an underlying system based on value into a system based on prices. At the beginning of the circuit of capital, money capital is taken as given, or 'presupposed'. So total value equals total prices in the 'totality' (this is what the title of the book alludes to¹³); and all that happens with many capitals is that the extra value (surplus value) created in each sector will be equalised by the market, so that the rate of profit is also equalised (or tends to equalise) across all sectors. Total surplus value equals total profit, but the prices of production vary in each sector to equalise profitability across all sectors. And the whole circuit of capital is one that takes place over real time and is not completed hypothetically and simultaneously, as critics argue.

One implication of Moseley's interpretation of Marx's analysis as a macro-monetary one, that starts with money and finishes with money, is that it is perfectly open to empirical verification. There is a view among some Marxist economists - as eminent

as Paul Mattick Jr for one¹⁴ - that it is impossible to measure empirically a Marxian rate of profit on capital and use official price data to evaluate trends in modern capitalism. That is because value cannot be calculated from money prices and Marx's theory of capitalism is a value theory. We are left with just recognising that Marx was right because of the very occurrence of exploitation and crises. This is a bit like saying that we cannot determine the existence of black holes in the universe because their mass is so great and gravity so strong that nothing comes out of them. So we can only tell they exist because of the wobbles they cause in other objects in space nearby.

But if we interpret Marx's as a single system - an actual capitalist monetary macro-economy - then it is perfectly possible (with all the caveats of measurement problems and data) to carry out empirical analysis to verify or not Marx's laws of motion of capitalism. Indeed, Marx did just that, as Tapia Granados reminds in a forthcoming paper.¹⁵ In 1873, Marx wrote to Frederick Engels that he had been "racking his brains" for some time about analysing "those graphs in which the movements of prices, discount rates, etc, etc, over the year, etc, are shown in rising and falling zigzags". Marx thought that by studying those curves he "might be able to determine mathematically the principal laws governing crises". But he had talked about it with his mathematical consultant, Samuel Moore, who had the opinion that "it cannot be done at present". Marx resolved "to give it up for the time being".

Times have moved on and now we have lots more data and better methods of analysing it. Tapia concludes:

To develop scientific knowledge is to advance concepts that are useful to describe reality, to make testable predictions and to be ready to assess any hypothesis by contrasting it with empirical data ... Phlogiston had not a place in chemistry and economic crises of a fuzzy character shall not have a place in social science.

Indeed ●

Michael Roberts

Notes

1. Marx to Kugelmann, July 11 1868, shortly after the publication of *Capital*.
2. See www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/facultyprofiles/fred_moseley.
3. E von Böhm-Bawerk *Karl Marx and the close of his system* (1896): <https://mises.org/library/karl-marx-and-close-his-system>.
4. R Rosdolsky *The making of Marx's 'Capital'* London 1977; P Mattick Jr *Some aspects of the value-price problem* London 1983; D Yaffe *Value and price in Marx's 'Capital'* (1974): www.marxists.org/subject/economy/authors/yaffed/1974/valueandpriceinmarxcapital.htm.
5. See P Sweezy *The theory of capitalist development* Oxford 1942.
6. P Sraffa *Production of commodities by means of commodities* Cambridge 1960.
7. TSSI from Guilelmo Carheddi, Alan Freeman, Andrew Kliman, Ted McGlone and several others: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Temporal_single-system_interpretation.
8. www.amazon.co.uk/Reclaiming-Marx-Capital-Inconsistency-Dunayevskaya/dp/0739118528/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1323255230&sr=8-1. See my review: www.amazon.co.uk/Great-Recession-Michael-Roberts/dp/144524408X/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1323255509&sr=1-1.
9. P Jones *Depreciation, devaluation and the rate of profit* (2012): <http://gesd.free.fr/jonesp12.pdf>.
10. See my post at <https://thenextrecession.wordpress.com/2013/12/19/the-us-rate-of-profit-extending-the-debate>.
11. A Kliman *The failure of capitalist production* (2012): www.amazon.co.uk/Failure-Capitalist-Production-Underlying-Recession/dp/0745332390/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1323254965&sr=8-1.
12. D Basu *Replacement versus historic cost rates* (2012): <https://thenextrecession.files.wordpress.com/2012/11/basu-on-rc-versus-hc.pdf>.
13. The subtitle for Moseley's book is *A macro-monetary interpretation of Marx's logic in 'Capital' and the end of the transformation problem - a mouthful for most*.
14. P Mattick Jr *Business as usual* (2011): www.amazon.com/Business-Usual-Economic-Failure-Capitalism/dp/1861898010.
15. J Tapia *Investment, profits and crises - theories and evidence* (as yet unpublished).

■ 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

Two-party system suspended

Establishment reaches a deal

The Irish working class needs its own party, writes Anne McShane

After two months of political paralysis it seems a deal is in the offing to put a government in place in Ireland. After weeks of stand-offs it now seems that we will have a Fine Gael minority administration. An agreement has been reached with Fianna Fáil to support this government by abstaining on important votes for a period of two years.

At the centre of the agreement is a major concession by Fine Gael on water charges. Charges are to be suspended for nine months, while an 'expert commission' is set up to consider the situation and report to another committee - of TDs - which will then report to the Irish parliament, the Dáil. This is a highly risky strategy for the establishment. Even now, with the deal not even confirmed, the reaction from some quarters has been vitriolic. The former minister for the environment, Alan Kelly, a leading Labour TD, voiced his rage at Fianna Fáil for its imposition of this deal. He declared: "Politics is failing the people of the country again. Utopian populism is winning again."¹ On the other hand, FF had promised in its election manifesto to abolish the hated Irish Water utility - which now stays. It had also said it would suspend water charges for five years, not nine months. So it has effectively reneged on these pledges - which will cause even more tensions within its ranks. Fine Gael, which made its obduracy on this question a badge of honour, has had to fall on its sword.

Six years of mass demonstrations, boycotts, direct action and working class self-organisation has inflicted an important blow against the austerity regime, which has been enforced by successive governments. This has been a long, bitter struggle and even this partial victory will boost self-confidence. But it also raises many challenges which need to be faced up to. At the moment our class can do no more than voice opposition to measures taken by the government. We need a mass political party which puts forward the completely realisable perspective of ending the rule of capital.

Unfortunately the two main leftwing groups, the Socialist Party and Socialist Workers Party, fall far short of what is needed to make any real political advance. They have both formed 'broad alliances' to try and win more votes - through the Socialist Party-led Anti-Austerity Alliance and the SWP's People Before Profit Alliance. Even the SP-SWP electoral pact was a very limited one - to win more seats through their combined resources, to gain more speaking rights for leftwing TDs in the coming Dáil. There seems to be an absolute refusal to go any further than this. The United Left Alliance, an important pro-party initiative in 2011, collapsed because of internal bickering and control-freakery.

Efforts need to begin again to unite our forces in a party. The left has a responsibility to lift its horizons. With all its limitations, the AAA-PBPA pact has meant an increase in the number of socialist TDs and given the working class a more coherent voice. Its newly elected TDs have



Gerry Adams: preparing for power

been powerful voices. In the Dáil debate on the deal, Mick Barry of the AAA paid tribute to the working class movement and applauded the activists who had organised the struggle. He demanded the immediate abolition of water charges, their repayment and the dropping of all criminal charges against protestors.

SF threat

That FG and FF are united over the need to provide a stable government illustrates the extent of the predicament. Never before has either party been forced into a position of sitting down with the other to form a government. Now Fianna Fáil has suspended its right to behave as an opposition party for two years, although this will not assist it in warding off the threat from Sinn Féin. FF may already be regretting its last-minute decision to include such radical pledges on water charges in its election manifesto. Of course, it only did so to prevent SF eating into its own vote.

There is also pressure from the European Union, which does not want any backsliding on austerity. On March 29 advice commissioned by Irish Water was leaked to the *Irish Times*, which reported that the "legal opinion commissioned by the utility company says the state is required under EU law to keep the contentious regime in place".² On April 25, with FG and FF closeted

in talks, the European Commission issued a statement confirming that the EU directive on water is binding on Ireland. There is no way out without clashing with the EU.³

The aim of the 'expert commission' is, of course, to divert attention and allow some revamped charge to be introduced. Who the 'experts' are is anybody's guess - presumably the usual dependable figures.

A major worry for the main parties is that all this will be a gift for Sinn Féin. SF has painted itself as the only coherent opposition and absolutely refused to discuss coalition with any of them. Instead it has pushed for FG and FF to bite the bullet and form a coalition. On April 6 SF lambasted leaders Enda Kenny (FG) and Micheál Martin (FF) for taking "so long to face up to the fact that neither can be elected taoiseach today without the cooperation of the other". For SF it was "a matter of grave concern that the business of the Dáil has been effectively suspended for 40 days".⁴ Instead, according to Gerry Adams, "Sinn Féin will seek to provide progressive opposition to the conservative majority that exists, and I am firmly of the view that those who share this ambition must work together." SF would become the clear opposition and use the unpopularity of a FG/FF pact to continue building up its own support.

In less than 20 years SF has gone

from one rural TD to becoming the third force in southern Irish politics - emerging with nine additional seats from the 2016 general election - bringing it to 23 - as opposed to FG's 50 and FF's 44. It is without doubt directing all its energies to emerging as a major governing party in the next election. That it did not do so this time around is a source of disappointment among its members. Despite success in hitching the official leadership of the anti-water charges movement to its bandwagon, Sinn Féin did not make the breakthrough that had been predicted.

At the SF *ard fheis* (conference) last weekend, vice-president Mary-Lou McDonald accused Fianna Fáil of having stolen her party's policy of opposition to the hated water charges - of being "Sinn Féin lite".⁵ The fact that she can make such a political attack tells us just as much about SF as it does about FF. They are rivals for a populist anti-austerity vote.

Left nationalism

One of the biggest problems for the working class arises from Sinn Féin's posing left. While no doubt there are SF members who consider themselves socialist, the leadership is certainly no longer of that persuasion. A brief glance of its record in power in the north is evidence of this - it has cooperated in the programme of cuts inflicted by the Tory government. Its

representatives argue that it is in a more difficult position in the Belfast assembly because of the sectarian divisions. Apparently it will be a lot easier in the south. That is absolute rubbish. In the south there will be the same kind of pressures that Syriza had to face in Greece - pressures under which SF, which wants to run capitalism more humanely, will be bound to buckle.

But illusions in SF are perpetuated by its inclusion as part of the left by the PBPA. Despite the leftwing impact of its TDs, the PBPA continues to peddle a populist programme. Its election manifesto did not mention the working class or socialism. Instead it claimed: "We do politics differently. We try to empower communities and unions. We see 'people power' as the way to bring change."⁶ The PBPA "represents a different form of politics, fitting for the 21st century. It sees 'people power' and the mobilisation of citizens in workplaces, communities and on the streets as the key to bringing change in society." In its statement on the government's retreat it continues to include Sinn Féin as part of the alternative.

The Socialist Party has been rather better. In fact there seems to have been a shift to the left within the AAA in response to Syriza's defeat. It now makes a call for a socialist response throughout Europe and for the working class to play an active role in the setting up of popular assemblies and workplace organisations on a delegate basis. This would create "a weapon to take on and replace the old state machinery with a democratic and socialist state". However, like its parent organisation, it persists in the call for a "radical left government" to lead this process.⁷ Of course, Sinn Féin says that it is out to create a left government, which means that the SP/AAA is open to the accusation of offering *de facto* support to SF ●

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