

A paper of Marxist polemic and Marxist unity



weekly worker



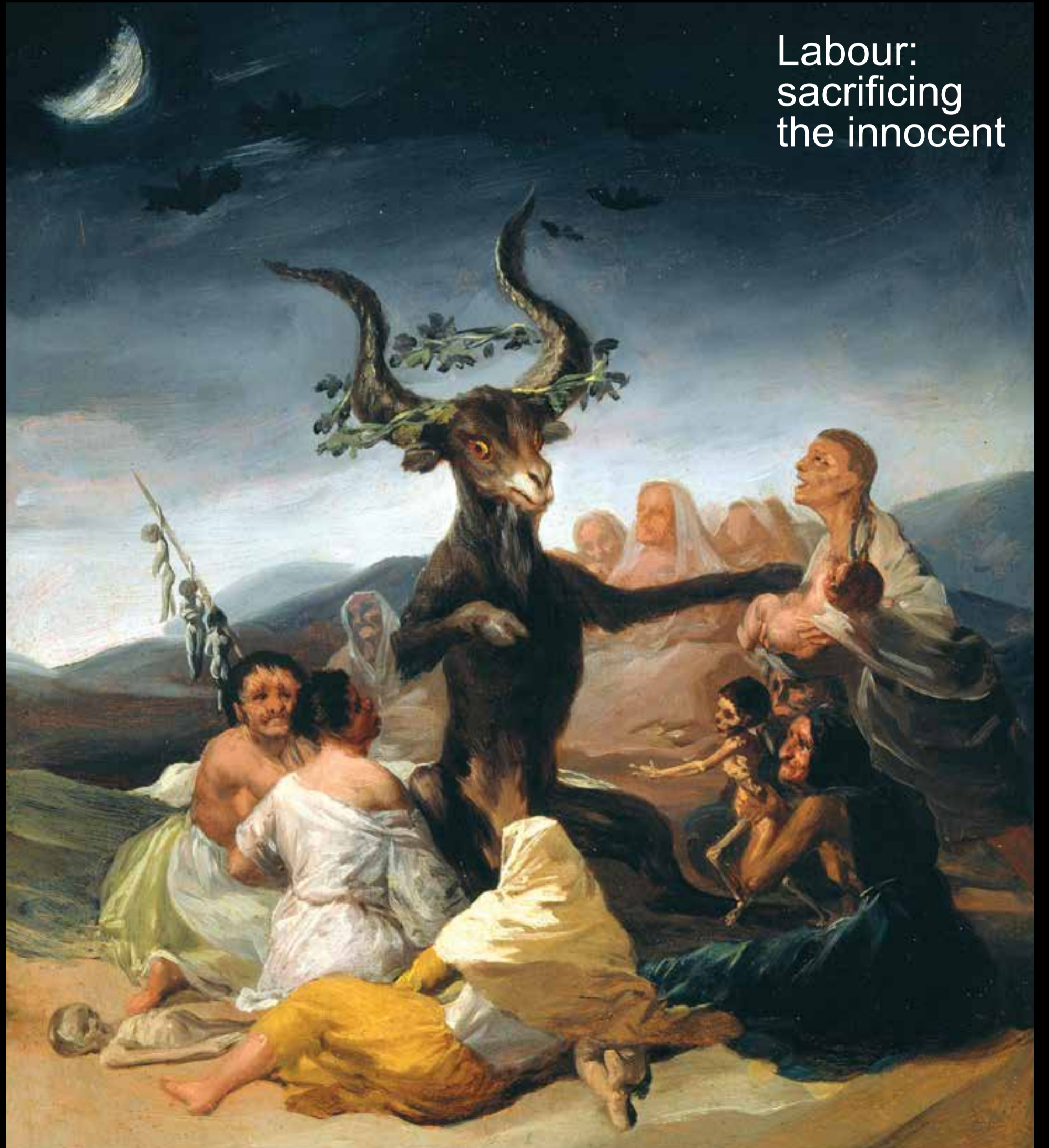
**Jack Conrad: Lenin
and the 'United States
of Europe' slogan**

- Letters and debate
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No 1105 Thursday May 5 2016

Towards a Communist Party of the European Union

£1/€1.10



Labour:
sacrificing
the innocent

LETTERS



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

Jellyfish Jez

Jeremy Corbyn has placed himself beyond the pale. He has settled some distance from his former political home. He has violated a principle of the working class and socialist movements: he has refused to be solidaristic when it is necessary. And he has done this meekly, without a fight. By his own standards he has been a traitor, reneging on his values, his beliefs, his political past, his comrades, his supporters, the Palestinian people. He has deserted Ken Livingstone. He has hung him out to dry. The significance of this cannot be underestimated.

The central point is this: it is proximately about the UK, and distally about Palestine. The hysteria and witch-hunt is about undermining Corbyn, stymying the pro-working class potential he has engendered, and installing a new leader to get back to business, with the focus on the Parliamentary Labour Party. But, whatever the motives of the reactionaries in Britain, it is being used as an extension of Israeli state policy, of its settler-colonial project to create a new people and maintain a state in someone else's land.

Isaac Deutscher asked, "Who is a Jew?" And criteria differ - believers, practitioners, or enjoined by the mythic kin that is ethnicity - but perhaps they number 15 million. Their prominence obviously comes from the fascist European Judeocide and the subsequent creation of Israel. Since 1945, in North America, Europe and Australia, the topic of 'the Jews' has been laden intensely with similar emotions. Of all racisms, anti-Semitism has become the great taboo, trumping any other exploitation or oppression. In these countries it is social death to be declared an anti-Semite. And, as we have seen, blackening a person can be enough, however irrational the damning. (Oh dear, is that racist imagery?)

The ease of this has been greatly aided by two changes in the meaning of alleged anti-Semitic practice: definitional extension, and mode of operation. First, directing actions, images and words towards perceived Jews for their alleged misanthropic *Jewish* qualities or behaviour is one thing - that is to be anti-Semitic. But this conception has been expanded to include actions and words directed towards the *institutionalised behaviour* of a group of perceived Jews with access to a particular state: namely Jewish-Israeli supremacists and their supporters. This has involved changing the type of referent involved, from an inherent intrapersonal quality to collective behaviour, from alleged *Jewishness to behaviour channelled through a supremacist state*.

To appreciate how peculiar this extended conception is, just take an allegation, substitute *French, German, Swiss or Sikh* (the last one is there as a reminder of those, like the Roma and Kurds, who lack a state), and experience the outrage. It is true that of the alleged anti-Judaic acts, sometimes the language is inexact, sometimes it's in poor taste, and, importantly, sometimes it's inappropriate because it's politically counterproductive (the placard becomes the mainstream-media focus, not why there's a demonstration). But anti-Semitic? The criticism is not of people for *being Jews*, be they religious or ethnic Jews, but for their *behaviour as human beings*, behaviour deserving reproach. It's applying a pan-human standard, not one pertaining to a certain group.

The second change in the content of alleged anti-Semitic practice is how it is achieved. It's precisely because legal discrimination has ended - moreover,

it has been criminalised - that the focus has turned to 'hate speech'. With liberalisation the focus of racialised discrimination - and, yes, Jews and Sikhs are racialised in UK law - has shifted from the group to the individual and their mind: prejudiced attitude. Education is called for, awareness training. It's about examining one's unacknowledged prejudices. Being hateful is for extremists; for the rest of us it's about being sensitive, not causing upset, making everyone feel safe, secure.

However, oppression (including discriminating against some because others are privileged) is in part about how political power is exercised in human relations, in class society. It's not about intent: it's about living in and through existing exploitative and oppressive relations, with some flourishing and others suffering. Palestinians in Jewish-Israelised Palestine are systematically exploited and oppressed, whereas Jewish Europeans are not. The result of these two changes is a conflation of so-called anti-Zionism and the abomination that is anti-Semitism. Our political task is to speak and organise efficaciously to keep them apart.

So, given the current climate, what's next? All communists, all anarchists, and anyone else who doesn't believe that any state has a right to exist - are they to be condemned as anti-Semites? Are all atheists to be castigated as anti-Semites for arguing that humanity should rid itself of religion?

Then there's the whole matter here of irrationality in politics: the hysteria, the witch-hunting. Scientific communists don't have much to say on irrationality. For too long we have been immersed in the enlightenment idea that reason is at work and that argument and action will prevail. Well, some who witnessed the political success of fascism in Germany knew that Marxism had a big hole: the fantastic and the affective. These dimensions of human living were largely ignored, often not recognised as powerful supra-individual forces. Political strategy and policy suffered as a result.

Which brings us back to Corbyn. As a marginalised MP, for decade after decade he defended his corner and was a valuable voice. But as leader he had to set the agenda, set the mood, ensure his support was organised efficaciously. But he's been all at sea, swept here and there. Now he's submerged himself.

Some are suited to lead. He was reluctant to stand after Miliband resigned. Everyone knows why. Galloway, Scargill, Crow - all would have relished the opportunity to present their politics to the whole country, from a platform that was theirs. Trying to smear the arty, to undermine the leader, cow criticism of Israeli state practice? Just try. Lacking an adequate strategy, policies and techniques is one thing, but in a leader-centred political formation like the LP that person needs to be up to the task. In part it requires that person to have the emotional resources to pursue a course of action and to weather the storm. Resilience, stubbornness, persistence. These can't be bought off the shelf.

Jara Handala
email

Really Palestine

Labour shadow educational secretary Lucy Powell has claimed that Labour has a problem with anti-Semitism - "otherwise we wouldn't have spent the best part of the last six days talking about it". The Labour right has indeed spent this time talking up a storm - a whole farrago of hints, misrepresentations and false allegations.

The *Telegraph* claimed that 50 members had been "secretly suspended over anti-Semitic and racist comments, as officials struggle to contain the crisis engulfing the party". Labour had been "swamped by complaints about hard-

left supporters". This has the smell of a witch-hunt directed against Corbyn and those who oppose the oppression of the Palestinians.

Anti-Semitism has a long history in the British ruling class including the 1905 Aliens Act, aimed at keeping out Jewish asylum-seekers fleeing tsarist programs, the Balfour Declaration, the support for Hitler by Edward VIII, sections of the aristocracy and the *Daily Mail*. If it was a major problem today, the pro-Hitler fascists would be using it to mobilise support on the streets.

The main problem today is prejudice against Muslims and Islamophobia. This is where the fascists and the rightwing parties are focused. It is how the Tories are trying to stop Sadiq Khan for London mayor. The Tories are a racist party, ready, when necessary, to exploit race issues for political advantage, as in the London mayoral election. The Labour right is using the charge of anti-Semitism as a political weapon to undermine Corbyn. They are no better than Cameron and the Tories, with their Islamophobic London mayoral campaign.

Anti-Semitism has been mainly a European problem. It adds to a sense of injustice in the Middle East that European imperialism and European anti-Semitism was responsible for creating the state of Israel. There is no reason to assume that British Muslims are any more anti-Semitic than the rest of the population and may indeed be less, since they are victims of racism themselves. But Muslims are more likely to speak out and demonstrate against crimes by the Israeli state in Palestine. Most of the alleged claims of 'anti-Semitism' relate to Muslim members.

Now we turn to Ken Livingstone. I am no fan, but I defend him one hundred percent against the witch-hunt. Defending him does not mean agreeing with everything or indeed anything he says. It does not mean not criticising him. But he is not a racist and not an anti Semite. There is no valid reason to suspend, expel him or remove him from office, especially when bully boy John Mann got away scot-free.

Criticism is the essence of science and truth seeking. I don't criticise Livingstone for mentioning negotiations between the Zionists and the Nazis in 1933 because he might 'offend' people. His statements on this were crass. But, like anything that comes out of our mouths under pressure, it can be clarified, confirmed or modified.

I don't like to see the bullying of Livingstone by Mann and the Tory press. But worse are his Labour left friends saying he is not allowed to clarify or explain his view, but must just "shut up" and apologise. The Corbynistas may think they can save themselves from the witch-hunt by throwing Livingstone to the wolves. They can't. Once the Tory fox hunters have devoured Ken, they will want more blood.

Steve Freeman
Left Unity and Rise

Genuine debate

Further to the recent issues concerning alleged anti-Semitism in the Labour Party, I shall be proposing that the following motion be adopted by the Teesside branch of Momentum at its next meeting on May 10:

We note:
1. The Tory press and some Labour Party individuals are focusing on accusations of anti-Semitism in the party.

2. The statement by Ken Livingstone that in the early 1930s Zionists made a deal with the Nazis to relocate Jews to Palestine.

We believe:
1. Any political differences within the party must be addressed politically through discussion and education. That requires an atmosphere of free speech and debate, not bureaucratic measures,

moralising, finger-pointing or witch-hunts.

2. The party and wider labour movement must take seriously our responsibility to confront anti-Semitism and other forms of bigotry. The current accusations are being used as a cynical attack on the left, but that does not mean we discount anti-Semitism: we are aware that it can exist quite distinct from justified opposition to Israel's oppression of the Palestinians. Those raising concerns of anti-Semitism must be taken seriously, yet criticisms of Israel are not to be automatically shouted down as anti-Semitic.

3. The historically true fact that in the early 1930s, some Zionists made a deal with the Nazi government to settle some German Jews in Palestine has been used by some to 'prove' some kind of affinity between Zionism and the Nazi Party. This ignores Jewish condemnation of the deal - despite the pressures to escape increasing persecution, many Jews including Zionists saw it as a betrayal. It also ignores the actual very close links the Nazis had with Arab regimes and nationalist movements. To talk about 'Nazi Muslims' or 'Nazi Arabs' as if all Arab nationalists or Muslims are inherently and eternally 'pro-Nazi' would be rightly offensive, but this is what is suggested by the 'Nazis and Zionists' argument.

4. We must fight against any party members cynically exploiting these real issues to undermine Jeremy Corbyn and derail our efforts to revitalise and transform the Labour Party.

We resolve:

1. To support a genuine debate within the party on anti-Semitism, including any related accusations of pro-Zionism, Islamophobia, racism or 'pro-Nazi' opinions. For accompanying analysis of and education on 'Zionist conspiracy' theories, the 'Nazi-Zionist pact' in context, and other issues to facilitate an informed debate.

2. To oppose calls to further empower bureaucratic or unaccountable parts of Labour Party structures, particularly the compliance unit, which has attempted to persecute the left, to suspend and expel members, as inimical to such debate.

Alan Theasby
Middlesbrough

Party or bust

Socialist Alternative's front, 'Movement for Bernie', is distributing an online petition calling for Bernie Sanders to run as an independent (read Green Party) and, as a necessary consequence, "organise a new party for the 99%". The petition, which can be seen at www.movement4bernie.org/run-all-the-way, presents the left with another dead end.

Ignoring the obvious facts that Bernie has already agreed to endorse Clinton and that 'sore loser laws' would put him at a massive handicap, let's examine this perspective deeper.

Socialist Alternative and the International Socialist Organisation are the two largest advocates of independent political action devoid of working class politics, best embodied by the Green Party. The Green Party calls itself socialist to socialists and liberal to liberals. It is everything and nothing. The past three decades have shown this knock-off popular front to be nothing but a dead end to our movement. The liberals aren't going to break with the Democratic Party for Green liberalism and the working class won't turn out for it either.

Calling for Bernie to take up this mantle is simply another delay in forming a working class party. The Communist Party of the USA - formed with 20,000 militants, divided by a dozen languages and concentrated only among white workers in the north-east of the country - laid the groundwork for the mass unionisation and anti-racist campaigns of the 1930s, provoking the New Deal (that the Greens wish to emulate), among many other reforms.

Granted, these people are convinced that socialism is simply government control, but they are willing to break with the Democrats. They represent the raw material, the possible rebirth of a mass communist party-movement in the States. They represent a mass hearing for communism not seen since the 60s and 70s.

Socialist Alternative: You must dump the Green Party, recognise Bernie isn't on board and declare a party of the working class for socialism. Anything less represents the criminal destruction of a great opportunity. We can change the whole game in one fell swoop.

Miah Simone
email

Dementia

The government's record on caring for dementia patients is poor. The quality of treatment that sufferers receive is fragmented, with some counties giving better service others.

This state of affairs is not acceptable and needs to be changed with a clear and comprehensive plan. The number of dementia sufferers is estimated to increase from the current 766,000 to one million within the next decade. An extra 234,000 people will be diagnosed with suffering from dementia or one of its sister conditions.

Dementia sufferers are not a burden or a problem. They are human beings with rights and feelings. Dementia care has been overlooked by the politicians and by society. We need to ensure that the correct treatment is available to any dementia sufferer anywhere in England and that the national health service has the budget and the skilled personnel required to care for sufferers.

Our NHS should be reformed, with fewer managers and a more sensible pension scheme, which excludes all earners over £50,000. We must plan ahead and put in place the equal funding per hospital that is required and ensure that GPs, when they suspect that a patient may have first-stage dementia, are duty-bound to refer that patient to a specialist. One solution proposed by myself is that we have a national memory test for all adults over a certain age to ensure that patients with signs of dementia are assessed and begin treatment and support early.

We need to ensure that dementia sufferers and their families are given full support, so they can live independent lives and enjoy a quality of life. Through reforming NHS pay and pensions, as outlined above, we will keep money in reserve for recruiting one thousand more specialist dementia care nurses and ensure that our hospitals have the space and money for specialist dementia clinics. Palliative care is equal to medical care and so we will ensure that dementia sufferers have access to specialist health visitors.

I believe that we should leave the European Union and invest the savings in NHS care for our elderly population.

Oliver Healey
Leicester

Illusions

I enjoyed 'Establishment reaches a deal' (April 28). I particularly like your observation: "But illusions in [Sinn Féin] are perpetuated by its inclusion as part of the left by the [People Before Profit Alliance]."

Unfortunately SF is a big problem for the growth of the left and this is not helped by PBPA and other left independents allying with SF. I suppose there are occasions to pose a front of opposition to the right, but the left have to be clear. Perhaps this inclusion may change during the elections in the north, where both PBPA and SF are competing.

James Quigley
email

LABOUR

A shameful retreat

It is time the Labour leadership realise that no amount of grovelling will spare them nightmares like the 'anti-Semitism' smear scandal, argues Paul Demarty

The first thing that needs to be said - and repeated, as often as necessary - is that the present anti-Semitism crisis in the Labour Party is characterised by an exceptionally high degree of artificiality.

Most of the claims levelled about the supposed plague of Jew-hatred ripping through the party are straightforwardly false. Of those that are not false, most are unverified. Of those that are actually true, almost all are insignificant, proving only that among the 400,000 members of the Labour Party, there are a few anti-Semites to be found, which is presumably true of almost any sample of the general population of equivalent size. Strictly in epistemological terms, it is equivalent to conspiracy theories about 9/11, or - alas! - Jewish domination of finance: a pile of lies, atop a mound of speculation, with a mushy foundation of misleadingly deployed truths.

Lies, unlike the truth, must necessarily have an instrumental purpose - to justify the risk and expense of making things up. What is the purpose here? Sure, we meet some old friends: supporters of Israel, whose primary political objective for the last 50 years has been to expand the world's working definition of anti-Semitism to include any and all criticism of that state. Yet these people, though loud and in some cases important (Israeli ambassador Mark Regev, for example), are basically peripheral to the affair. Discussing the rights and wrongs of Zionist colonialism is rarely a bad idea, but it has to be said that in this case it is missing the point.

What we are witnessing is the latest, and most serious yet, attempt to mount a coup against Jeremy Corbyn. The scalp of Ken Livingstone is, from the plotters' point of view, quite the prize: Livingstone has seemed over the last six months to act as an unofficial attack dog, prepared to make much more robust attacks on the Labour right than Corbyn and McDonnell deem politic. More than that, he is the Labour left's most significant power-broker in the party apparatus. The saboteurs will be glad to be rid of him - even if their relief turns out to be temporary.

Exemplary here is the odious MP, John Mann, for whom this is merely the latest of a continuous stream of sabotage actions he has undertaken since the moment Corbyn made it onto the ballot paper. (He previously threatened to embroil Corbyn in a child-abuse scandal, which mysteriously never came to pass.) Almost admirably, he has not resorted to the kind of two-faced rhetoric about inclusivity and openness common to many on the Labour hard right. For him, Corbyn has to be *crushed*, even at the risk of making himself look a little deranged (by screaming accusations of Nazism at Livingstone, for example). It is fundamentally the John Mann types who are leading the charge - abetted and amplified as usual by friends in the capitalist media. If it was not Palestine, it would be something else.

Since it is Palestine, of course, it is worth pointing out that the Parliamentary Labour Party's saboteurs have overwhelmingly been supportive of British compliance with the needs of the American state department, including its strategic alliance with Israel. These are people who have voted for war after catastrophic war, and smear all opponents of the dispossession of the Palestinians as racists. The idea that even the worst of Labour's

'anti-Semites' are guilty of anything remotely as bad is risible. Promoting a stupid conspiracy theory is not the same as *actually getting people killed*.

What these MPs want - along with their friends in the yellow press - is a Labour Party as it was and has almost always been: tied by a thousand threads to imperialism. Their aims are deplorable; their methods underhand. What begs explanation, then, is the fact that they are winning, that the elementary case has not been made that we should sooner entrust our children's safety to a Burmese python than hand the Labour Party back to such moral pygmies. Instead, what has happened is an ignominious collapse. It seems there is no demand that John McDonnell or Jeremy Corbyn are unable to grovel before. When somebody with enough spine to stand up to the onslaught pops up - Ken Livingstone - they wash their hands of him. *Why?*

At root, this is a consequence of the strategy chosen by Corbyn, McDonnell and their allies - which is to focus all efforts on winning the 2020 general election.

They aim to do this by focusing almost exclusively on 'bread and butter' issues - the spiralling economic inequality of capitalist society 40 years after the post-war settlement was rammed into reverse; the perverse scarcity of housing; the NHS; the railways. Other issues have fallen by the wayside: the monarchy, the constitution and so on (Trident renewal being the exception). Even the core issue of austerity must be treated in a 'respectable' way: Thomas Piketty and Mariana Mazzucatto are in, Marx and Engels definitely not.

We have argued before that this is a self-defeating strategy. For one, the opposition benches can only *propose* left Keynesianism, whereas the treasury can deliver it. If George Osborne really were to feel under threat from his left flank, as the 2020 election looms, that 'master strategist' (read: shameless opportunist) will start flinging presents at the electorate. He has done it before; and a sitting chancellor can always find a few more quid down the back of the sofa for such emergencies.

Yet there is a more fundamental problem which is at issue in the present fracas. The strategy works only on the assumption that the exclusion of moderately leftwing Keynesian redistribution from the Overton window is fundamentally a matter of there not having been a party-political advocate of such action in this period; in other words, the idea that the Labour Party under Blair's leadership *chose* to abandon this terrain, and might have chosen otherwise with equal or greater success. In reality, no fair contest between even timid left reformism and Thatcherism is possible, because the latter enjoys the effective support of all the pillars of bourgeois power.

Focusing entirely on winning the next election means fighting on the existing electoral terrain, and thus being 'realistic'. To hinge one's policy on what is respectable or realistic, however, is to implicitly accept the *right of the establishment* to define one's political horizon. It means retreating whenever attacked. Even Ed Miliband was not able to retreat far enough.

There is also another political commitment of the Labour leadership - shared by the broader left - that has become a serious point of weakness, which is a naive anti-racism.

By naive, we do not mean that a more sophisticated anti-racism would

acknowledge that racists 'have some good points' or something like that; instead the naivety consists in going no further, or little further, than asserting - with conviction! - that racism is bad, and people really ought not to be racist.

It has oddly escaped the notice of much of the far left that this is now official ruling class ideology. For an organisation like the Socialist Workers Party, anti-racism is a staple of a balanced diet of street demonstrations. It has been for decades; indeed, back to the times when there really were governments committed to restricting non-white immigration. For the SWP and many other Trotskyist groups, the point of all demonstrations (whatever their notional purpose) is the same: to get people doing activism. Thus the actual nature of racism, or strategic responses to it, will always come second to merely asserting that it is bad.

The state has, in reality, simply lifted this approach to racism wholesale and taken steps to enforce it as a matter of bureaucratic procedure. The logical end result is all the more clear in this case: racism is rewritten not as a symptom of fundamental dysfunction in society, but as a character defect. Racists are to be shunned; overt racism leads to the sort of personal vilification in the media typically reserved for the perpetrators of shocking crimes. Once the pitchforks come out, rational discussion of the issues at hand becomes impossible.

John McDonnell has provided a symptomatic example with his recent hurried advocacy of a 'zero tolerance' approach to anti-Semitism, which is tantamount to selling the pass. For the problem is precisely that McDonnell's tormentors want to draw the definition of anti-Semitism as widely as possible; if he dares to point out that opposing Israeli colonialism is not anti-Semitism, then he will have the 'zero tolerance' quote hung over him to paint him as a hypocrite.

The most depressing thing about this whole fiasco, of course, is the painfully obvious inability of the left, and workers' movement *as a whole*, to get any kind of counter-narrative to stick. It matters not that the charges are ludicrous and sometimes outright mendacious; nor that it is straightforward and well documented that Zionist leaders *did* collaborate with the Nazis (although this was highly controversial). The official narrative, whereby we can expect Brownshirts goose-stepping through the streets of Islington any minute now, drives ever onward.

This, ultimately, has to do with what we *could* be focusing on instead of trying to sneak Corbyn into No10 four years hence. We mentioned that this prospect is unlikely to succeed because, all things being equal, such a project would have to be conducted on the establishment's terms. What we need to do is change the terrain, and build up our own strength, so that we might define our own political horizons.

There is much work to be done simply repairing the battered infrastructure of the movement - trade unions, co-ops, parties. The infusion of new blood into Labour has not yet translated into the democratisation we need, nor (unfortunately) any serious effort to change the political composition of the PLP. Momentum started with a lot of fanfare, but has made little impact so far. What we feel most acutely this week, however, is the lack of a serious workers' media ●

paul.demarty@weeklyworker.co.uk

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

Sundays, 5pm: Weekly political report from CPGB Provisional Central Committee, followed by open discussion and reading group, currently studying Ralph Miliband's Parliamentary socialism. Calthorpe Arms, 252 Grays Inn Road, London WC1. Organised by CPGB and Labour Party Marxists. www.cpgb.org.uk; www.labourpartymarxists.org.uk. Sunday May 8: No forum. Sunday May 15: Chapter 5 ('The general strike'), section 1: 'Red Friday - and after'.

Radical Anthropology Group

Tuesday May 10, 6.45pm: Introduction to social and biological anthropology, Daryll Forde seminar room, Anthropology Building, 14 Taviton Street, off Gordon Square, London WC1. 'Late Pleistocene demography and the appearance of modern human behaviour'. Speaker: Mark Thomas. Organised by Radical Anthropology Group: radicalanthropologygroup.org.

Own the future

Saturday May 7, 10am to 4.30pm: Public meeting, Trade Union Congress, 23-28 Great Russell Street, London WC1. Help reclaim the idea of different kinds of public ownership. Entry: £8 from www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/own-the-future-tickets-22781065781. Organised by We Own it: <https://weownit.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.

Momentum Teesside

Tuesday May 10, 7pm: Meeting, St Mary's Centre, 82-90 Corporation Road, Middlesbrough TS1. Latest developments in Labour Party politics and local Momentum activities. Organised by Momentum: www.facebook.com/MomentumTeesside.

Living under military occupation

Wednesday May 11, 7.30pm: Meeting, Friends Meeting House, Upper Goat Lane, Norwich NR2. Speaker: Kate Cargin, recently returned from Jerusalem. Organised by Palestine Solidarity Campaign: www.palestinecampaign.org.

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.

Artists against war

Sunday May 15, 3pm: Protest, Trafalgar Square, London WC2. Organised by Arts For Action: www.artsforaction.org.uk.

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>.

No to austerity

Thursday May 26, 6pm: Launch of Bedford Momentum, Queens Park Community Centre, 52 Marlborough Road, Bedford, MK40. Special event with John McDonnell MP. Organised by Momentum: www.peoplesmomentum.com.

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.

Imperialism centenary

Thursday June 16, 7pm: Lecture, Marx Memorial Library, 37A Clerkenwell Green, London, EC1. Speaker: Andrew Murray, marking 100 years since Lenin wrote *Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism*. Organised by Marx Memorial Library: www.marxlibrary.org.uk.

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.

LABOUR

Reinstate Ken Livingstone

Corbyn must fight back against Britain's Cointelpro, urges Tony Greenstein

The late Phil Agee revealed in his book *Inside the company!* how the CIA went around Latin America destabilising governments and parties it did not like. In American domestic politics there was a similar programme aimed at dissident and radical organisations known as Cointelpro (counter-intelligence program) - a series of covert projects conducted by the FBI that infiltrated, surveilled and disrupted domestic political organisations.

For the past few months the Labour Party has been subject to a similar programme of destabilisation - a programme in which the Zionist movement has played and is still playing a major role. From July 2015 onwards, when it became increasingly clear that Jeremy Corbyn would win the Labour leadership election, we had a campaign, initiated by a *Daily Mail* "exclusive", in which Corbyn's "long-standing links" with a "notorious Holocaust denier" was "revealed",² and fronted by the *Jewish Chronicle* under Stephen Pollard, its far-right editor and member of the Henry Jackson Society.³ The aim of the campaign was to paint Corbyn as a "friend" of "terrorists" like Hamas and Hezbollah, with links to anti-Semites.

When Corbyn became leader, the campaign shifted to an attack on Gerald Kaufmann for having said that it was "Jewish money" that was responsible for the pro-Israel policy of the Conservative government. Groups such as the misnamed Campaign Against Anti-Semitism, an overtly Zionist political organisation masquerading as a charity,⁴ waged a prolonged campaign against Kaufmann, as if he was the most notorious anti-Semite since Adolf Eichmann. As an example of Zionist hypocrisy, on May 1 a former prominent Jewish funder of the Labour Party, Michael Foster, was given nearly 10 minutes of airtime on BBC Radio 4's *World at one* programme to explain why Jewish people were not going to be funding the Labour Party whilst Corbyn was leader.

Of course, the phrase 'Jewish money' is only anti-Semitic when used by opponents of the state of Israel. *Jewish Chronicle* columnist Geoffrey Alderman called for Kaufmann's excommunication from the Jewish community, in spite of having used the term twice himself in the same article.⁵

Despite this outburst Alderman had been remarkably tolerant of David Whelan, the former owner of Wigan Athletic football club, who stated that "there is nothing like a Jew who sees money slipping through his fingers" and, when challenged, added: "I think they are very shrewd people... I think Jewish people do chase money more than everybody else. I don't think that's offensive at all." To most people this would count as anti-Semitism, but Alderman's take was that the condemnations of Whelan represented "a sad and miserable tale of political correctness taken to new depths of absurdity".⁶ After all, he wrote, "it's certainly true that the Jewish view

of money differs considerably from that of Christianity".

New phase

In February there began the new phase in the 'anti-Semitism' campaign. It centred on Oxford University Labour Club, whose co-chairman, Alex Chalmers, resigned, claiming that his fellow Labour Club members were anti-Semitic. The occasion of this resignation was the club's decision to support Oxford's Israel Apartheid Week.

Since then we have had the case of Vicky Kirby, the former mayor of Bradford, who tweeted that, although six million Zionists died in the Holocaust, even greater incidents of genocide did not receive the same attention. And now, of course, there is Ken Livingstone's reference to Hitler's support for the Zionist 'solution' to German anti-Semitism.

In what is the first comprehensive investigation of these allegations, by *Electronic Intifada* researcher and journalist Asa Winstanley, it becomes clear that none of them are what they might have seemed.⁷ Winstanley reveals that Alex Chalmers was an intern with the Britain Israel Communications and Research Centre, a pro-Israel propaganda group.

As for Vicky Kirby, whose case was presented as one of the worst examples of 'anti-Semitism', this turns out to be someone quite innocent being fitted up. Her "big noses" comment was nothing more than a quote from the 2010 comedy film *The Infield*. It turns out that the far-right Conservative website *Guido Fawkes* had cropped a screenshot of her tweet to make it appear that these were her own words.

Then there was Livingstone himself. On April 28, in the course of defending suspended MP Naz Shah from accusations of 'anti-Semitism' in an interview with BBC Radio London, Livingstone remarked: "Let's remember, when Hitler won his election in 1932, his policy then was that Jews should be moved to Israel. He was supporting Zionism - this before he went mad and ended up killing six million Jews."⁸

There is no doubt that Ken made a number of mistakes here. First, Israel did not exist in 1932 - the area was then called Palestine, a British mandate territory. Secondly, Hitler did not win any election in 1932. On the contrary, his vote in November, compared to the July 1932 election, dropped by two million to 11.74 million (33.1%), as against a combined total of 13.23 million (37.3%) for the Communist and Social Democratic parties. Despite this, Hitler was

put into power on January 30 1933 by reactionary political and military forces intent on the destruction of the German labour movement. Thirdly, the 'final solution' was not a product of Hitler's 'madness'. Even without Hitler it would still have taken place. It was the product of war, imperialism and the fanatical anti-Semitism of a section of the Nazi Party. It had a logic and momentum of its own. When the expulsion of Jews was no longer an option after 1939, the countdown to the destruction of European Jewry had begun.

Livingstone's comments were not the wisest to have made in the course of an 'anti-Semitism' witch-hunt. However, in essence his point was correct. The Nazis singled out the Zionists as their favourite Jews. For example, on January 28 1935 Reinhardt Heydrich, the "real engineer of the final solution",⁹ issued a directive to the Bavarian Gestapo that "The activity of the Zionist-oriented youth organisations ... lies in the interests of the National Socialist state's leadership ... [they] are not to be treated with that strictness that it is necessary to apply to the members of the so-called German-Jewish [assimilationists]."¹⁰

The Zionists were allowed to organise, hold meetings, fly flags and publish newspapers, whereas the 'assimilationists' were repressed. The Zionists used the patronage of the Nazis to encroach on the position of the majority of the Jewish community, demanding parity in the Reichsvertretung - the Jewish communal organisation in 1935. Indeed they took over all the positions on the officially recognised Reichsvereinigung, established in 1939.

The Zionist policy was that Jews should flee to Palestine or nowhere. Their twisted logic was that if the crisis of anti-Semitism in Europe was resolved then the 'Jewish homeland' would be redundant. But they believed that was unlikely, since anti-Semitism, being a disease, would continue to spread and only Palestine could provide a long-term solution. The Zionists, with this racial concept of humanity, therefore lobbied the Gestapo not to allow Jews to emigrate to countries other than Palestine. It was a consistent Zionist policy to oppose the emigration of Jews to other countries - such as Santo Domingo, which had offered to take 100,000 refugees following the Évian conference.

In a memo to the Jewish Agency Executive, Israel's first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, wrote:

if the Jews are faced with a choice between the refugee problem and rescuing Jews from concentration camps, on the one hand, and aid for the national museum in Palestine, on the other, the Jewish sense of pity will prevail and our people's entire strength will be directed at aid for the refugees in the various countries. Zionism will vanish from the agenda and indeed not only world public opinion in England and America, but also from Jewish public opinion. We are risking Zionism's very existence if we allow the refugee problem to be separated from the Palestine problem.¹¹

Witch-hunt

It is essential that socialists defend Livingstone. The suspension of a national executive member, a former MP and London mayor, and a figurehead of the Labour left for the last 30 years, marks a new stage in the witch-hunt. According to reports, Corbyn was extremely reluctant to suspend Ken, but he was bullied into it. Popular

opinion holds that it is John Mann, not Livingstone, who should have been suspended for staging the confrontation. Mann is chair of the Parliamentary Committee on Anti-Semitism, which devotes its time to opposing boycott, divestment and sanctions, as well as support for Palestinians.

To the humourless and vindictive squad of Progress MPs, Naz Shah was the next worst thing to Eva Braun for sending that tweet and she was forced to resign her position as John McDonnell's parliamentary private secretary. She was suspended from the Labour Party and forced to make a humiliating apology like a prisoner in a Stalinist re-education camp. When I was asked why she would confess to anti-Semitism if she was not guilty, I explained that there have been many false confessions in history, such as the defendants in Stalin's purge trials. It is not difficult to persuade someone that they are guilty if you apply enough psychological pressure - and they see their career disappearing before them.

The *Guardian's* Jonathan Freedland in particular has played a despicable role in the witch-hunt.¹² Freedland, a 'liberal' Zionist, berates the left in particular for not accepting the Israeli state.¹³ What if, he asked, Israel were the only black state in the world. Would we oppose it then? Professor Kamel Hawwesh of Birmingham University answered yes: Palestinians would reject any coloniser, whatever their colour.¹⁴ But Freedland demonstrated both his ignorance and his malevolence when he compared a Jewish Israel to a Christian Britain. In Britain Christianity is an adornment: it does not entitle people to special privileges. It does not mean that the planning application of an 'outsider' will be rejected, as is the case for Palestinians in the Jewish town of Afula.¹⁵

The BBC has also lived up to its reputation. It has afforded the Labour right every opportunity to air their allegations, whilst denying anti-Zionists a platform. There has been an almost one-sided media barrage. One of the few exceptions was the BBC *Big questions* programme on Sunday May 1, which has relatively few viewers. On that programme Moshé Machover, Daphne Baram and myself were widely considered, even by Zionists, to have trounced those who alleged that anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism are one and the same thing. I also did an interview with Vanessa Feltz, BBC London's Zionist interviewer, where I refused to be diverted from explaining why Israel is an apartheid society. But these are very much the exception.

One of the most egregious examples of BBC bias was that of Andrew Neil's *Sunday politics* show on March 18. This gave MPs West Streeting and John Mann the opportunity to talk at length about Labour's 'anti-Semitism problem'. Neil himself is a former Murdoch editor and Conservative Party research assistant. James Schneider, a supporter of Corbyn was given just 25 seconds to state his view, whereas Streeting and Mann were allowed almost seven minutes between them.

Andrew Neil, rather than subjecting his claims to cross-examination, urged Mann on to greater excesses. Take, for example, this penetrating question: "Why has [anti-Semitism] come back?" Note that Neil assumes the very thing he is supposed to be investigating.

But in response Corbyn has shown not only spinelessness throughout this affair, but a culpable failure to understand what is at stake. If Livingstone is expelled from the Labour Party, Corbyn will not last long as leader. He has continuously rowed back from the positions he adopted in previous

years. Alongside MPs such as the late Joan Maynard, he was a sponsor of the Labour Committee on Palestine and the Labour Movement Campaign on Palestine, both of which I chaired. These organisations supported a democratic, secular state solution in Palestine. We opposed a two-state solution, which at that time was supported by George Galloway's Middle East Council. (George has now come round to our way of thinking!)

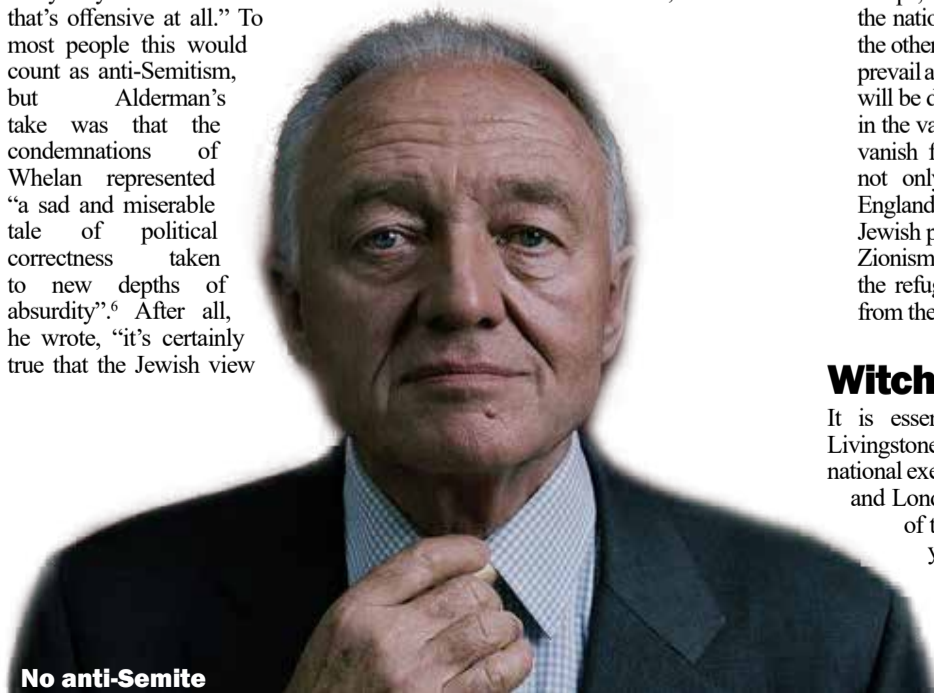
John McDonnell has taken an even worse position. He backed off last September from his comments over Ireland. Now he has added Palestine to his list of retreats. Rather than sacking Naz Shah, he should have backed her. Instead, with his 'out, out, out' remarks about alleged anti-Semites, he has encouraged those making false allegations to greater efforts.

Momentum under Jon Lansman has been equally abysmal. Lansman has held secret talks with Labour Friends of Israel and the so-called Jewish Labour Movement, the British branch of the racist Israeli Labor Party, in order to reach some form of agreement. This is like the chicken negotiating a safe pass from a fox. Lansman openly criticised Livingstone and supported his suspension. On *Left Futures* Lansman argues that we should drop all mention of Zionism.¹⁶ The movement that founded the racist settler colonial state of Israel should not be mentioned, even though the World Zionist Organisation is alive and kicking, funding the settlement of the Palestinian territories. (In the meantime, Israeli prime minister Binyamin Netanyahu proclaims that in the name of Zionism he cannot admit refugees to Israel, because it would undermine the national identity of the Jewish state.¹⁷) Lansman argues that if we pretend there is no such thing as Zionism then all the fuss about 'anti-Semitism' will go away. Such is the craven attitude of left social democrats when they come under any pressure.

It is not necessary to defend everything that Ken Livingstone said in order to oppose his suspension. Defending Livingstone goes hand in hand with opposing what is a new McCarthyite witch-hunt. However, whereas Joe McCarthy was an anti-Semite, his disciples today come in the guise of opponents of anti-Semitism ●

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No anti-Semite

Elephant in the room

While the Labour left is under attack, writes Eddie Ford, why is there no criticism of Zionism?

For anyone who doubted that official or institutional anti-racism is now a key component of the modern-day bourgeois ideology, the scales must surely have fallen from their eyes over recent weeks. The mass media, the Labour right, David Cameron, etc all throw endless accusations of racism against the Jeremy Corbyn leadership, and the left as a whole. Our ranks are supposedly riddled with anti-Semites.

Apparently Naz Shah and Ken Livingstone were just a sample. *The Sunday Telegraph* (May 1) talks of a “dossier” containing a “series of disturbing examples of anti-Semitic attitudes” among party activists and leading members. The “examples” given are: a London Labour council leader sharing a Facebook post comparing the “terrorist state of Israel” to Islamic State; the fact that Corbyn “questioned” why an “anti-Semitic mural” in east London should be taken down; and that he attended events run by self-confessed Holocaust-denier Paul Eisen, “long after his views had become clear”.

With the witch-hunt gathering momentum, on May 2 the *Daily Mirror* reported that three councillors had been suspended “within hours” over alleged ‘anti-Semitic’ material posted *two years ago* on social-media sites - someone has clearly been doing their homework.¹ Blackburn councillor and ex-mayor Salim Mulla committed the same crime as Naz Shah - sharing on Facebook the obviously satirical graphic suggesting Israel could be relocated to the United States; and he also posted footage of a Palestinian boy being arrested in 2014 with the comment: “Apartheid at its best. Zionist Jews are a disgrace to humanity.” Meanwhile, Nottingham councillor Ilyas Aziz shared a link about Nazi Germany with the comment: “A reminder of the treatment and suffering of Jews in Nazi Germany. Are there any similarities to how Israel is treating Palestinians?” As for Burnley councillor Shah Hussain, he tweeted to Israeli footballer, Yossi Benayoun, “You are an complete and utter plonker, you and your country doing the same thing that hitler did to ur race in ww2.”

All these suspensions are clearly irrational, and the councillors have become the latest victims of a well-coordinated campaign to smear critics of Israel, and Zionism in general, as inveterate anti-Semites. There will be plenty more such accusations.

Self-determination

Yes, it is possibly true that some of those castigated for ‘anti-Semitism’ may have come out with crude or crass formulations. But there are worse crimes than sloppy language (or, in the case of Livingstone, historical inaccuracy). More to the point, we need to deal with those pro-Zionist groupings that are *not* being accused of racism despite excusing the oppression of the Palestinians, sometimes in the most grotesque way. Indeed, the smear campaign against Corbyn and the left is predicated on the basis that Zionism is an entirely legitimate movement, and therefore anti-Zionists can only have sinister motives.

Which brings us to Labour Friends of Israel - the elephant in the room. Now, at one stage, the likes of Eric Heffer, Tony Benn and other members of the Tribune left were members of LFI, but they started to drop out following Israel’s 1982 invasion of Lebanon - in fact, for the most part and to their credit, they became champions of the Palestinian cause (reversing the general trend up until then of the Labour left having



Isaac Herzog: no socialist

distinct pro-Israeli sympathies, whereas sections of the Labour right, and some Tories, favoured the Palestinians/Arabs).

LFI used to be a pretty substantial organisation and historically was seen by many Labour MPs as a stepping stone to ministerial office - for example, one of the first things Tony Blair did on becoming an MP in 1983 was join LFI, and Gordon Brown used to be a member too. LFI supporters, such as Lord Sainsbury, Michael Levy, Sir Trevor Chinn and Sir Emmanuel Kaye, were among the most generous donors to the party. Interestingly, LFI appears to have shrunk in size over recent years - though obviously it would be foolish to deny that it still wields a fair amount of influence within the party and beyond.

Its current chair is Jo Ryan MP and the list of officers/supporters represents a roll call of Labour rightists - Michael Dugher, Louise Ellman, Rachel Reeves, Jonathan Reynolds, John Woodcock, Hazel Blears, David Blunkett, Caroline Flint, Chuka Umunna ... On its (rather dull) website, LFI claims it is “working towards a two-state solution”, promoting a “vision of coexistence founded on peace and liberal democracy” and fostering “close links with progressive Israelis and Palestinians”. It prominently features a quote from Ed Miliband (who is not a member), saying that the organisation “plays an incredibly important role in the debate about a peaceful settlement in the Middle East”.² Seemingly all very liberal and not particularly offensive.

However, Jo Ryan gave the game away when she expressed her “horror” at Naz Shah’s and Ken Livingstone’s comments - “no question that their statements were anti-Semitic” - and then gave a revealingly disingenuous definition of Zionism as “the right of Jewish people to self-determination”.³ Who could possibly object to that? Similarly, chief rabbi Ephraim Mirvis informs us that Zionism is a movement “celebrated by people right across the political spectrum, all over the world” - and those who seek to “vilify and delegitimise” it are “deeply insulting not only to the Jewish community, but countless others who instinctively reject the politics of distortion and demonisation” (*The Guardian* May 3 2016).

Communists flatly reject not just the *dishonest* definition of Zionism on offer from Jo Ryan and rabbi Marvis, but Zionism itself - which is a *colonial-settler* project based on ethnic cleansing of the indigenous population and discrimination. Marxists do not recognise the ‘right’ of anyone to march into another country and bomb and shoot the hell out of people, any more than we would advocate or support the ‘right’ of Protestants, Jews, Catholics, Muslims, Sikhs, etc in London having

off a bit of territory and kicking out others. Oppressors do not have the right to oppress, nor do exploiters have the right to exploit. This is the ABC of Marxism.

We in the CPGB, unlike some, are not minded to fling around accusations of racism - or treat racism as the greatest crime one can ever commit. Most on the left *still* tell us that immigration controls - like capitalism itself - are ‘inherently racist’ - which we communists regard as absurd (obviously we oppose *all* immigration controls, racist and non-racist alike). Should we write off everyone who advocates some form of immigration control or utters words perceived to be discriminatory? No, as a *general* principle, *open debate* is the best means to combat bigotry and backwardness.

That does not mean that working class groups and parties should impose no limits on the kind of politics they tolerate. For example, the CPGB supported the expulsion of Ian Donovan from Left Unity’s Communist Platform when he started to articulate and develop his views about the Jewish “pan-national bourgeoisie” constituting itself as the ruling class “vanguard” in key imperialist countries, and so on.⁴ But it is undoubtedly the case that Donovan’s views - which unfortunately were adopted by Gerry Downing and Socialist Fight - shaded over into *genuine* anti-Semitism.

Hence the Communist Platform was quite right to boot out Donovan. Similarly, before the formation of the CP, we were against the participation within LU’s Socialist Platform of the pro-Zionist, pro-imperialist Alliance for Workers’ Liberty. But, obviously, there is quite a difference between a particular faction or a Marxist group and the current Labour Party, which includes plenty of out-and-out pro-imperialist and pro-capitalist reactionaries.

So, if Ken Livingstone, Tony Greenstein, Gerry Downing, etc can be suspended or expelled from the Labour Party for alleged racism, then what about LFI? Propaganda aside, it does not primarily exist to encourage “peace” or foster links between Israeli Jews and Palestinians, but to promote Zionism - an ongoing colonial project. Imagine if there had been ‘Labour Friends of Apartheid South Africa’. So why should it be any different for LFI?

‘Labor’ Party

Fairly predictably, the leader of the Israeli Labor Party, Isaac Herzog, could not resist getting in on the act. What is the point of a smear unless you can spread it around? Herzog wrote to Jeremy Corbyn saying he was “appalled and outraged” by the recent examples of ‘anti-Semitism’ in the British Labour Party - which,

remember, is a “sister party” to the ILP as both are part of the Socialist International (Britain’s Labour Party is nowadays an ‘observer’). Insultingly, Herzog invited Corbyn to visit Israel’s Holocaust museum in order to help the Labour leader “better understand the scourge of anti-Semitism”. We are sure that Corbyn appreciated the gesture.

In the words of *The Independent*, “such a visit would likely be a test” for Corbyn (April 30). In other words, if he fails to take up Herzog’s invitation, then he will be condemned for deplorable anti-Semitism - and if he does go, he will be criticised for merely going through the motions: deep in his heart he regards Hamas and Hezbollah as “friends”.

Needless to say, even before the cynically manufactured scandal about anti-Semitism, Corbyn was not popular with the Israeli Labor Party. In February Herzog described Corbyn as “naive” because he did not understand the realities of the Middle East, and in September Michal Biran - an ILP MP - told a fringe meeting at the Labour conference that Corbyn’s election would be a “disaster” for Israel. You do not really feel the fraternal love.

Of course, the ILP is not a labour or workers’ party in any accepted or conventional sense of the term - at least for Marxists. If you take the ILP’s political progenitors in the 1920s-30s, they constituted mainstream Zionism - which admittedly then viewed itself as progressive and leftwing. Maybe some Labor Zionists seriously believed they were on a civilising mission in the Middle East. According to their propaganda, when trade unions, or kibbutzim or cooperative industries were developed, this would help educate their Arab brothers and sisters. Not too far removed from the propaganda about US and British troops being greeted by the joyful masses of Baghdad with flowers and celebration. Unsurprisingly, Zionists were not welcomed by the Arab masses - quite the opposite. Instead, it was revisionist Zionists and their descendants like Likud who actually *told the truth*: it will be a military confrontation and we will win, as we have better technology and better contacts.

If you take the Labor Zionists and the ‘trade union’ movement (Histadrut) - the latter a key player in the founding of Israel - their main demand was *Jewish jobs for Jewish workers*: they did not

want Arab workers undermining their pay and conditions. Jewish capitalists in mandate Palestine, naturally enough, were tempted to follow the South African example and use indigenous labour, which was massively cheaper - but the trade unions put a stop to that. Histadrut has organised Arab workers here and there, but it was always a *Jewish* trade union movement - indeed Pinhas Lavon, former secretary-general of Histadrut, readily admitted that it “is not a trade union.” In fact, historically Histadrut served as an agent of Jewish colonisation.

The Labour Party should break the links with this so-called “sister party”, the ILP. As for the so-called Socialist International, till it was expelled in 2011 the National Democratic Party of Egypt was a full member - its chair was a certain Hosni Mubarak. Just like the NDP, the ILP stinks - underlined by Herzog’s recent advice to his own party activists - “We need to stop giving the impression that we are ‘Arab-lovers’” - which progressive MPs in the Knesset rightly condemned.⁵

In the last analysis, the difference between the ILP and Likud is a matter of nuance. Take Golda Meir and Moshe Dayan, both Labor Zionists. They were the prime architects of the Six-Day War that saw Israel conquer the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Golan Heights and East Jerusalem - part of the relentless process of expansion.

By a perverse irony, it is the ILP that is now considering cutting ties because of the Labour Party’s “toxic atmosphere of hatred and fanaticism” - apparently this represents a “moral collapse that requires immediate and unequivocal action”.⁶ Those on the left of the Labour Party should do whatever they can to speed-up the divorce proceedings ●

eddie.ford@weeklyworker.co.uk

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Vote Galloway

The following CPGB statement was issued prior to the May 5 election

The Provisional Central Committee of the Communist Party of Great Britain, meeting on May 1, agreed to call for a vote for George Galloway (first preference) in the London mayoral election and Sadiq Khan (second preference).

We call for a first-preference vote for George Galloway in spite of his notorious alliances with the Iranian regime, with Ba’athists and other oppressors in the Middle East, and in spite of the political differences for which we have repeatedly criticised him.

We do so because the witch-hunt around allegations of ‘anti-Semitism’ currently being conducted by the Labour right and the mass media is an attempt to

smear any opposition to US policy in the Middle East as racist, and is part of a class struggle conducted by the capitalist class to recover full control of the Labour Party by its paid agents.

Sadiq Khan has come onside for capital in this witch-hunt; Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell have collapsed in the face of it. In contrast, George Galloway has responded robustly and broadly correctly. In this context a first-preference vote for Galloway is a useful, if limited, protest against the witch-hunt.

Aside from this, we recommend a Labour vote across the board for the reasons outlined in the *Weekly Worker* article, ‘Drawing lines of distinction’ (April 14).

INTERVIEW

Zionism and anti-Semitism

This interview with Israeli communist and *Weekly Worker* writer Moshé Machover was conducted by the Croatian online publication *Slobodni Filozofski*¹

What is the meaning of Zionism today, almost 70 years after the formation of Israel, and why is it such a buzzword? Are we talking here about a particular form of nationalism or is it something a little bit more complex? What is its agenda?

This is not really one question, but four ... Let me start with their core. Zionism is what it has been from its beginning, more than 100 years ago: in its essence it is a political project, the project of colonising Palestine by Jews and turning it into a nation-state with an overwhelming Jewish majority. Israel is both a product of this project and an instrument for its further continuation, because the project is not yet at an end: the colonisation of Palestine is proceeding in full swing. And Israel is faced with what Zionists call a 'demographic peril': there are 'too many' Palestinian Arabs in Palestine and not enough Jews to secure an overwhelming majority.²

So the agenda of militant Zionism, which is the dominant Zionist current, is to complete the project: colonise as much land as possible and leave in place as few Palestinian Arabs as possible. The latter would require additional massive ethnic cleansing, on a scale similar to that perpetrated in 1947-49. There are actually plans for doing this, if and when an opportunity presents itself.³

Is Zionism a particular form of nationalism? Superficially it is, but a very peculiar one. Zionist *ideology* certainly has many features of nationalism. But its peculiarity is that the 'nation' of which it is supposed to be the *nation*-alism is a fictitious one: an ideological construct. *All* nations are to some extent ideological constructs, but this one is more so than others. The idea that all Jews around the world constitute a nation does not hold water. *Nation* in the modern sense is a secular concept, but the only thing common to all Jews is the religion (Judaism) which they practise or which was practised by their parents or grandparents. And the only way in which a non-Jew can become Jewish is by religious conversion.⁴

By the way, throughout this interview I make a terminological distinction between 'people' and 'nation'. The former is more general. I do not know if you make such a distinction in Croatian, but in Russian there is such a distinction: people = *narod*; nation = *natsia*. The same distinction exists in French (*peuple/nation*) and in German (*Volk/Nation*). But note that the term 'people' in English is ambiguous: in addition to its meaning as a singular noun, explained above, it is also used as a plural noun, the plural of 'person'.

Is 'Zionism' a buzzword? I am not sure it is. But in recent years there is certainly a great controversy around it. An important reason for this is that many ordinary people around the world have become aware of the true nature of the Zionist project, as a project of colonisation, and there is a growing movement to delegitimise it and defend the individual and national rights of its victims, the Palestinian Arab people. The Israeli leadership is getting increasingly worried about this, fearing that it may hinder its chances of bringing the project to completion. So it has mounted a big propaganda campaign, alleging that Zionism is the same as Jewishness, or that at least Zionism is an inherent essence of being Jewish; so that anyone condemning or opposing Zionism is anti-Semitic. According to this propaganda, anti-Zionism is the 'new anti-Semitism'. Of course, no decent person wishes to be branded as an anti-Semite ...

When talking about Israel a lot



Master race: Nazi anti-Semitism

of its critics, especially those coming from the left, talk about 'settler colonialism' as form of nation building. What is your opinion on that?

This is roughly correct; although I prefer the term, 'exclusionary colonisation', to describe this project and process. Marxists have distinguished two basic models of colonisation. In both models the indigenous people are dispossessed. However, in one model - the *exploitative* model - they are reintegrated economically as the main source of labour-power. The political economy of this model depends on exploitation of the labour of the indigenous people. In the second model - the *exclusionary* model - the settlers' political economy does not depend significantly on indigenous labour-power, so the indigenous people are excluded: pushed aside, ethnically cleansed, and in some cases (as in Tasmania) exterminated. This distinction between two models of colonisation goes back to Marx, who made it *en passant*, and was theorised by Karl Kautsky.⁵

As should be clear to any Marxist, the distinction between these two types of colonisation, with their very different political economies, is absolutely fundamental. It has many crucial consequences. In exploitative colonisation, the settlers are a small minority, and usually form a dominant exploiting quasi-class. This was the case, for example, in Algeria and South Africa. In contrast, wherever exclusionary colonisation took place, the settlers formed a new nation. Such was the case in North America, Australia and New Zealand. In fact, I do not know of any exception to this rule.

The Zionist colonisation of Palestine - which definitely belongs to the exclusionary type - is certainly no exception: it led to the formation of a new nation, the Hebrew nation, which uses Hebrew as its language of everyday discourse, and has all the objective attributes of a distinct nation. But in this particular case there is a peculiar twist. Zionist ideology refuses to recognise the existence of this new nation. Zionism is like a father that refuses to recognise his own child. This is because, according to

Zionist ideology, there is a worldwide *Jewish* nation, and the settler community in Palestine/Israel is just a part of this mythical nation - the vanguard that is reclaiming its old, god-promised homeland.

In the past, even Zionists, while denying that the Hebrew-speaking settler community in Palestine was a new *nation*, recognised its distinctness and referred to it as 'the Hebrew people'. This is how it is referred to in the original Hebrew text of Israel's declaration of independence. But later on this term was suppressed in Zionist discourse, and replaced by 'Israeli Jews'. The official English translation of the declaration is accordingly falsified.⁶

How does the claim made by Binyamin Netanyahu's government that Israel is the Jewish state find reflection in everyday life in Israel?

The claim made is that Israel is the *nation-state of the Jewish people* - which means that it is not the state of its inhabitants or of its citizens, but of all Jews around the world, of the alleged worldwide 'Jewish nation'. This claim is made not only by Netanyahu's government, but is common to all the main Zionist parties. In fact it is enshrined in one of Israel's basic laws, which have a quasi-constitutional status.

Before discussing its implications in Israel's internal everyday life, I wish to stress that its main purpose is to legitimise Zionist colonisation of Palestine and the Israeli settler state.⁷

Briefly, Zionists do not claim legitimacy for Israel as realising the right to self-determination of its actual majority nation, the Hebrew nation (whose very existence Zionist ideology does not recognise, as I have pointed out). Such a justification would immediately raise the question as to when and how that right was acquired; and it would also raise the issue of the prior right to self-determination of the indigenous Palestinian Arab people. It would thus raise the question of the legitimacy of Zionist colonisation. Instead, they claim legitimacy for Israel as the nation-state - not of a real nation, but of an alleged one: the ancient Jewish 'nation'. Zionist colonisation is thereby

legitimised as a 'return' of the Jews to their ancient homeland. To be a Zionist you do not necessarily have to believe in god, but you do have to believe that he promised that land to the Jews.

Now, as a very convenient by-product, this claim at the same time also provides formal justification for treating Palestinian Arabs as mere interlopers. This includes those who are citizens of Israel - the remnant community that avoided the major ethnic cleansing of 1947-49, and now constitutes about 20% of Israel's population. They are second-class citizens, severely discriminated against, according to some laws (such as the laws of citizenship and land tenure) and a host of regulations and informal practices in all spheres of life.⁸

Recently, Israeli minister of justice Ayelet Shaked attacked boycott, divestment and sanctions campaigners for their alleged anti-Semitism.⁹ What is your opinion of BDS? Does the movement have any perspective and is it anti-Semitic?

I think that the BDS initiative is eminently justifiable. It is a non-violent act of conscience on the part of ordinary people, who wish to express their horror at Israel's oppression of its Palestinian Arab subjects, and solidarity with the latter. The so-called 'international community' - which is a fancy name for the government of the USA and its camp followers - does nothing to restrain Israel's violation of the human and national rights of its Palestinian victims, but, on the contrary, supports this rogue state. So it is up to ordinary people to take action.

Note that BDS is not aimed at individuals. It does not advocate a blanket boycott of individual Israeli academics, artists, etc. It is institutional: aimed at institutions that are part of the Israeli matrix of occupation and oppression.

I should add that we must not exaggerate the likely effects of this tactic. It will not by itself bring to an end Israeli colonisation of Palestine, let alone overthrow the Zionist regime. But it is already contributing to a mobilisation of civil society and is helping to create a political climate in which Israel will find

it harder to perpetrate greater atrocities, such as massive ethnic cleansing. So BDS may in the long run have a restraining effect.

The claim that BDS is anti-Semitic is not only a vile and stupid lie; it is also logically absurd. It is an example of what philosophers call a 'category mistake'. BDS is a *political* initiative directed against a *state*, which is a *political institution*. Anti-Semitism is hatred of, discrimination and violence against Jews as Jews, a group of people having a certain religious background (or belonging to a certain 'race', according to racists). So these two things are not only different: they belong to different categories.

As I mentioned in reply to an earlier question, the Israeli propaganda machine cynically uses the accusation of 'anti-Semitism' to deflect and denigrate the growing criticism against its actions. I should point out that, paradoxically, this mendacious propaganda itself has an anti-Semitic implication. By conflating Israel with the totality of Jews and claiming that hostility to Israel is hostility to that totality, this propaganda implies that Israel is acting in the name and on behalf of all Jews. But from this false proposition it would follow that all Jews are somehow complicit in the atrocities committed by Israel, that all Jews are to blame for what Israel is doing to the Palestinian Arabs. So anyone who hates what Israel is doing, but is stupid or naive enough to take seriously that claim of Israeli propaganda, may develop negative feelings against all Jews.

What actually is anti-Semitism in the 21st century? Is it more of a European issue, connected with the rise of the extreme right, because of the death of the left and migration, or is it a more complex issue?

It is indeed more complex. Currently there are two types of anti-Semitism.

First, there are remnants of the 'traditional' anti-Semitism that was widespread, mainly on the political right, in Europe (and to some extent in America) during the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. It reached its climax in World War II, with the Nazi mass extermination of European Jews. Following the war, this rightwing anti-Semitism has become discredited and has greatly declined. It is no longer fashionable even among the right. It has largely been replaced by Islamophobia. In Europe and America Muslims are the *Jews de nos jours*. But, at the rightwing backwoods margins, there are still some remnants of this old-fashioned anti-Semitism. Examples of such groups are Golden Dawn in Greece and Jobbik in Hungary. There is also an undercurrent of populist, rightwing anti-Semitism among ordinary people; but it is no longer acceptable to voice it in polite company ...

I should point out that between Zionism and that old-style anti-Semitism (excluding its most extreme variety that wished to exterminate the Jews) there was a large degree of mutual understanding. They both shared a basic view. Let me put it this way. Suppose you met a man in a bar, and over a drink or three he told you that in his opinion Jews should not be living among non-Jews, but go and live among their own kind. On your way home you might ask yourself, was he an anti-Semite or a Zionist? Could be either.

In fact Theodor Herzl (1860-1904), the founder of political Zionism, was quite explicit about this common ground between Zionism and anti-Semitism. This view was shared by many leading anti-Semites and Zionists. Even in Germany in 1934, soon after Hitler

came to power, Joachim Prinz, a leader of the Zionist movement in Germany, published a book pointing out the wide area of agreement between Zionism and the racist policy of the Nazis, designed to separate Jews from non-Jews. Of course, this was several years before extermination of Jews became Nazi policy.¹⁰

The second type of anti-Semitism is relatively new. It is the stupid anti-Semitism I alluded to in my previous reply. Its dialectical relationship with Zionism is not one of partly shared ground (as was the case with the old rightwing anti-Semitism), but is a relation of mutual reinforcement.

In order to be quite clear and avoid misunderstanding I will illustrate this with a somewhat analogical case: the dialectic between Islamophobia and Islamist jihadism. I am sure you would agree that they reinforce each other, provide fuel for each other. Please note that I am not saying the jihadism is really, objectively, justified by Islamophobia, or vice versa. Neither of them is really justified. But jihadis are largely motivated by the insult and injury inflicted by Islamophobia on its victims. And, since jihadis claim - falsely - that they represent and act on behalf of all true Muslims, many politically unsophisticated people take them at their word and react in an Islamophobic way.

A somewhat similar perverse dialectic exists between Zionism and the second type of anti-Semitism. The latter is common not on the extreme right, but can often be found among unsophisticated, politically uneducated, would-be supporters of the Palestinian struggle. There are also a few, isolated, people like this on the left. It is the anti-Zionism of fools.

You were involved in the 1960s Israeli left. At that time you wrote the famous text, 'The nature of Israeli society', with your comrade, Akiva Orr. What can you tell us about the Israeli Communist Party, Matzpen and the Israeli left of that time?

I am going to pass on the main part of this question, because it would require a long essay, if not a whole book. You can find a great deal of relevant historical material on the Matzpen website.¹¹ But I wish to take this opportunity to say something about the article you refer to, which was written in 1970 and published widely in various editions.¹²

A few years ago, in 2012, I published a collection of articles and essays I had written or co-written since 1966.¹³ In collecting material for this book, I noticed something paradoxical. Those articles, many of them written long ago, have remained topical. This is because the conflict they discuss and analyse has not changed fundamentally, although it has been exacerbated over the years. But there was one exception: the article you referred to - which is indeed by far the most famous of all the political writings in which I had a part, in fact the *only* famous one - is completely outdated.

The reason is that since the 1970s Israel has undergone very great internal socio-economic changes. Partly this is in line with what happened in all capitalist countries: neoliberal globalisation, large-scale privatisation. But in Israel these changes have been more pronounced than in most countries that were capitalist in the 1970s. In this sense Israel is intermediate between those capitalist countries and bureaucracy-ruled countries that were calling themselves 'socialist' in the 1970s, in which the private sector of the economy was relatively small, mostly confined to the black and grey economy. In the Israel of 1970 the private sector comprised only about half of the economy - a much smaller part than in advanced capitalist countries. So the rate of privatisation in Israel had to be especially steep in order to reach the present position, in which the private sector share in Israel is more or less in line with other advanced capitalist countries.

Another important change is the

very great development of the Israeli economy. In 1970 Israel's rate of internal capital accumulation was about zero, and its productivity was low. For both investment and maintaining an acceptable standard of living for the Hebrew population, Israel was totally dependent on large external capital and aid inflow - subventions mainly from the US, but also from Germany. Most of this inflow was channelled through the state, which used it to 'irrigate' the economy. In this way, not only was the capitalist class dependent on the state and controlled by it; but also the standard of living of Israel's working class - or more precisely its Hebrew majority - was in effect subsidised via the state. All this has changed dramatically. Israel has become in many socio-economic respects - including its class structure - similar to other advanced capitalist countries. The UN Human Development Index ranks Israel 18th, between South Korea and Luxembourg. (For comparison: the UK ranks 14th and Croatia 47th).¹⁴

Israel still receives a very large amount of US aid - it is in fact the top recipient of US aid - but this is almost entirely military, and is in any case a far smaller proportion of Israel's GDP than it was in 1970.

Moreover, in those early years Israel's main value to the US imperialists was as a reliable guard dog - a military ally that proved its usefulness in weakening and defeating secular Arab nationalism, which dared to defy American imperialism. Now Israel has become an important asset for the US-led military-industrial complex - a powerhouse of innovation in the technology and techniques of surveillance, long-range assassination, smart warfare and mass 'pacification'.¹⁵

Yet another big change is that Israeli Hebrew society is no longer composed predominantly of immigrants. In that article we pointed out that in 1968 only 24% of the Hebrew population were born in the country; the rest were immigrants. By 2008 more than 70% were born in the country; and this proportion is increasing from year to year, because immigration to Israel has declined since then (with a brief spike in the early 1990s) in absolute numbers and *a fortiori* in relative terms.¹⁶

So the Israel of 2016 - while, of course, still a settler state - is socio-economically very different from the Israel described and analysed in our old article.

Even though now you live in the UK, do you still have connections with the Israeli left? What does it look like today? Are there any groups with internationalist positions?

First I must make it clear that in Israeli discourse - the discourse of the Israeli media and general public - the meaning of the term 'left' is not the same as in most other countries. This peculiar Israeli usage takes no account of a person's views on socio-economic matters, but only on questions of war and peace. So a person who is against the occupation and is not a chauvinist counts as a 'leftist', irrespective of whether s/he is a socialist.

But I suppose you have in mind 'left' in the more usual sense. Yes, I have some connections with the very tiny Israeli left, through personal contacts. But for a detailed answer to this question you would need to interview a comrade who is living in Israel. I can only give you a brief outline.

The state of the left in Israel today is rather sad. There is, of course, the Israeli Communist Party, which is the main component of the Democratic Front for Change (known by its Hebrew acronym, Hadash, which is also a word meaning 'new'). The membership of Hadash is mostly Arab, but it has some Hebrew members. Hadash in turn is the leading component of the Joint List, an electoral bloc with two Arab parties, which in the last elections to the Knesset (March 17 2015) won 13 seats, making it the third largest faction. The Israeli CP/Hadash,

like most of its 'official' communist sister parties, has undergone a natural transmutation from orthodox Stalinism to centre-left reformism.

To the left of the CP there are some small single-issue protest groups, whose courageous activity against various aspects of the occupation and ongoing colonisation is truly admirable. An example of such a group is Anarchists against the Wall.

But after the demise in the 1980s of the Socialist Organisation in Israel (Matzpen) - which had been greatly weakened by splits motivated by Trotskyist and quasi-Maoist sectarianism - there has not existed in Israel a non-sectarian revolutionary socialist group. In my opinion this is vitally needed: a revolutionary socialist, broadly Marxist, organisation with a democratic internal structure, allowing different tendencies to coexist and debate openly, without rushing to split over secondary differences, as unfortunately is common practice almost everywhere in the radical left.

You have developed an interesting thesis on how a solution to the conflict between Israel and Palestine lies in the whole region instead of within the 'national box'. Could you outline this thesis for our readers?

Let me put it more precisely. The thesis that I and other Matzpen comrades have put forward on numerous occasions is that the framework for resolving the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians cannot be the confined 'box' of Palestine (a country created by imperialism in 1922, ruled by Britain under a League of Nations mandate from 1922 to 1948, and currently ruled by Israel), but must be the entire region of the Arab east. Nor can the resolution be confined to a so-called 'bourgeois-democratic' format, but must involve a socialist revolutionary transformation of the region. This view was adopted by Matzpen long ago, before the June 1967 war.¹⁷

The reasoning behind this thesis is not based on any generic formula applicable to all colonial and national conflicts. It is based on the specific (and rather exceptional) features of this particular conflict. I have explained this at some length in my articles.¹⁸

Here I can only outline this reasoning. It is based on assessing the balance of power, which is very favourable to the Israeli settler state, and very adverse to the Palestinian Arab people. This is obscured by false analogies with South Africa under apartheid, which was based on a different model of colonisation, as I mentioned before, and in which the balance of power was very different.

In South Africa the settlers were a relatively small minority; they needed the majority black population, the black working class, because the economy depended on its labour. But they could not go on indefinitely subduing this majority and denying it political rights. The settlers' leaders understood that they had to give way. Decolonisation there did not involve a socialist transformation; it was a bourgeois deal, achieved without bloodshed. The settlers were not expropriated. The majority, the black working class, remains extremely exploited, but it has nevertheless won a great deal politically; it has achieved political rights.

In Israel/Palestine the situation is very different. The majority of victims of Zionist colonisation, the bulk of the Palestinian Arab people, are external, not an internal labour force vital to the Israeli economy. Decolonisation of Israel/Palestine would require the overthrow of the Zionist regime, the deZionisation of Israel. But the only social force capable of overthrowing this regime is the Israeli people, primarily the Israeli working class. However, the Hebrew majority of this working class has nothing to gain from a bourgeois decolonisation. On the contrary, that would mean exchanging its present position of an exploited

class possessing national privileges for a position of an exploited class without national privileges.

The only way in which the Israeli working class may be attracted to the idea of overthrowing the Zionist regime is if that would mean exchanging its position of an exploited class for being part of a ruling class. In other words, a socialist decolonisation. Clearly, this can only take place as part of a regional transformation, involving the entire Arab east. This is also the only way in which the present imbalance of power can be redressed. In this context the Hebrew working class would gain even if that would involve giving up its national privileges and accepting equal national rights.

Why do you think that the Israel-Palestine conflict has such an impact on the world's left? Until the current situation in Rojava there has been no national conflict which has attracted so much attention and almost every left group or initiative has a unique opinion about it.

There are several reasons. This conflict, which has the superficial form of a national conflict, is, as I have explained, in essence a conflict of colonisation - between a settler state and the indigenous colonised and dispossessed people. If you look at it in this way, you realise that it is very special, in the sense of being the only remaining major conflict of this kind. All conflicts arising from colonisation have been resolved one way or the other. Some ended during the 19th century with the total triumph of the settlers, with the indigenous peoples pulverised and subdued, reduced to relics, clinging to the vestiges of their ancient cultures. Others ended during the second half of the 20th century with decolonisation. (By the way, all cases of decolonisation occurred in exploitative colonies; there is no historical precedent of decolonisation in places where colonisation was exclusionary.) The colonisation of Palestine remains in the 21st century as the only survivor: an anachronism.

Moreover, this conflict - which shows no signs of being resolved any time soon - is located in what is arguably the world's most sensitive and strategically important region. It has been compared to a keg of gunpowder standing among many barrels of petroleum. But the keg of gunpowder is in reality Israel's large

nuclear arsenal.

And this conflict is a constant irritant that has not only caused several regional wars, but is a grievous provocation to the Arab masses and to Muslims everywhere. Thus it is a major contributing cause of insult and humiliation felt by many, which impels them to choose the desperate and destructive blind alley of terrorism ●

Notes

1. <http://slobodnifilozofski.com>.
2. For a fuller coverage, see my article, 'Israelis and Palestinians - conflict and resolution' (www.matzpen.org/english/2006-11-30/israelis-and-palestinians-conflict-and-resolution-moshe-machover).
3. For details see my article, 'Quest for legitimacy' *Weekly Worker* September 18 2014.
4. For a more detailed discussion, see my article, 'Zionist myths: Hebrew versus Jewish identity' *Weekly Worker* May 16 2013.
5. For a critical discussion of Kautsky's typology of colonies, see my article, 'Colonialism and the natives' *Weekly Worker* December 17 2015.
6. I discuss these matters in greater detail in my article, 'Zionist myths: Hebrew versus Jewish identity' *Weekly Worker* May 16 2013.
7. I have dealt with this in detail in 'Quest for legitimacy' *Weekly Worker* September 18 2014.
8. The *Adalah* (Justice) website lists more than 50 Israeli laws that discriminate against Arab citizens: www.adalah.org/en/content/view/7771. A recent *Adalah* report contains information on Israel's discriminatory land and housing policies in 2015: www.adalah.org/en/content/view/8771?mc_cid=85cee170f&mc_cid=e1ce773f14.
9. <http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/ngo-law-protects-israel-from-existential-threats/>.
10. You can find more about this symbiosis, with references to sources, in the article, 'Zionism and its scarecrows', which I co-authored with Mario Offenber: www.matzpen.org/english/1978-10-10/zionism-and-its-scarecrows-moshe-machover-and-mario-offenber/.
11. <http://www.matzpen.org/english>.
12. See, for example, M Machover and A Orr, 'The class character of Israeli society' (1972): www.matzpen.org/english/1972-02-10/the-class-character-of-israeli-society.
13. *Israelis and Palestinians: conflict and resolution* Chicago 2012.
14. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Developed_country.
15. See J Halper *War against the people: Israel, the Palestinians and global pacification* Chicago 2015; and my review: 'The dog and the tail' *Weekly Worker* October 8 2015.
16. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_Israel; www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Immigration/Immigration_to_Israel.html.
17. For an early official formulation, see the Matzpen statement, 'The Palestine problem and the Israeli-Arab dispute' May 1967 (www.matzpen.org/english/1967-05-18/the-palestine-problem-and-the-israeli-arab-dispute).
18. See 'Resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict - a socialist viewpoint': www.matzpen.org/english/2009-02-10/resolution-of-the-israeli-palestinian-conflict-a-socialist-viewpoint-moshe-machover; and 'Belling the cat' *Weekly Worker* December 12 2013.

Fighting fund

We approve

It seems the *Weekly Worker* is appreciated for more than just its stimulating content. Comrade OG is one of those who also takes pleasure from the "colourful old stamps" that feature on the envelope it arrives in.

She says that she painstakingly removes them every week and donates them to the charity, Freedom From Torture, and adds: "I'm sure you approve!" We do, comrade - especially as we also feature on your list of worthy causes and our fighting fund has benefited to the tune of £25, which you added to your subscription!

OG's cheque was one of the early donations to our May fund, but, before I update you on that, I'm sure readers will be keen to know how we did in April. We'd already exceeded our £1,750 target, remember, and I can tell you that we also managed to reach the second figure I proposed we should try for - yes, the £2,000 mark! Thanks to PM's £100 standing order and two last-minute PayPal donations from TT, we actually reached £2,010. Congratulations

to everyone who helped us in what has been our best monthly total for several years.

But we are off to a good start in May too. Apart from OG's cheque, there were PayPal gifts from MD (£12) and NW (£5), plus no less than 20 standing orders in the first few days of the month. We already have £288 in under a week.

And it's been a week that saw our online readership shoot up dramatically, compared to where it's been of late. We had 3,686 visits - just over 1,000 up on the previous week. We must be doing something right!

Mind you, I'm not sure these figures are entirely accurate - what with ad-blockers and all the rest of it. That's why our team is currently trying to come up with the best way of ensuring that the readership figures I report are as accurate as possible ●

Robbie Rix

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

EUROPE

A highly serviceable political weapon

Jack Conrad discusses Lenin and the 'United States of Europe' slogan

One tried and tested way Stalinists and Cliffites alike justify their Lexit campaign,¹ is to recruit, quote or paraphrase Lenin.² After all, he did write a forthright article in August 1915 on the United States of Europe, dismissing it as either "impossible" or "tantamount to an agreement on the partition of colonies".³

It would, of course, be easy to dismiss attempts to drag Lenin's shade into the Boris Johnson-Michael Gove 'leave' camp by arguing that what Lenin said in 1915, in the midst of World War I, has little or no relevance to the situation in Britain over a century later. But that would be a mistake. We can draw valuable lessons for today by seriously cross-examining our movement's history, theory and polemics.

Even if we think Lenin displayed a one-sidedness or was simply wrong in 1915, those of us who understand that developing a Marxist programme is vital for the success of the workers' self-liberation movement, are obliged to approach a revolutionary politician of Lenin's stature with respect and due consideration.

Before dealing with Lenin's article, 'On the slogan for a United States of Europe', it will help if some background is provided. The 'official communist' editors of Lenin's *Collected works* say the slogan, in different variations, "gained wide currency" during World War I and was promoted by bourgeois politicians and the "Kautskyites, Trotskyites and other opportunists".⁴ This is doubtless true. By the same measure it is also true that the slogan had a prior life - moreover, the Bolsheviks themselves, under Lenin's leadership, deployed the slogan as part of their first collective response to the outbreak of inter-imperialist war.

After he successfully managed to get from Kraków in Poland to Berne, and the safety of neutral Switzerland, during August 1914, Lenin drafted a set of theses which were approved by the *ad hoc* Bolshevik leadership gathered there - Grigory Zinoviev, Nicolai Bukharin, GL Shylovsky, etc. 'The tasks of revolutionary social democracy in the European war' included the demand for the "United States of Europe".⁵ This very same formulation was carried over into the manifesto of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party central committee - again drafted by Lenin.

In this manifesto, as before, it was stressed that the slogan for a United States of Europe did not imply the coming together of the existing, monarchical, Europe. The Bolsheviks presented a *revolutionary democratic* way out of the carnage. Lenin explained a short while later that without the "revolutionary overthrow of the German, Austrian and Russian monarchies" the slogan of a United States of Europe was "absolutely false" and "meaningless".⁶

The Hohenzollern and Hapsburg monarchies in Germany and Austria were, of course, only half-democratic. Behind the facade of parliament lay autocracy. As to Russia, the tsar's duma was nothing more than a pathetic fig leaf - Bolshevik deputies who expressed militant opposition to the war found themselves summarily clapped in irons. Exile in Siberia awaited.

Hence the Bolshevik demand: "propaganda for republics in Germany, Poland, Russia, and other countries"; and "transforming of all the separate states of Europe into a republican United States of Europe".⁷ Naturally such a "republican United States of Europe" went hand in hand with other key elements in the minimum programme, such as self-determination



Lenin: star pupil

for Europe's colonies in Asia and Africa and for the oppressed nations languishing in the internal Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires.

The Bolshevik slogan for a "republican United States of Europe" did not spring out of thin air. The slogan was part of the common culture of the pre-World War I Second International.

A loose parallel might be drawn with the Casablanca wing of the Organisation of African Unity. Instead of settling for the division of Africa and the neat, artificial borders inherited from the French, Belgian, Portuguese and British colonial administrators, the likes of Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Gamel Abdel Nasser of Egypt and Sékou Touré of Guinea envisaged a petty bourgeois African socialism stretching from the Cape to Cairo. Towards that end, Nkrumah outlined a bold four-point programme in 1963: (1) a "common foreign" policy, so that internationally Africa could "speak with one voice"; (2) a continent-wide "system of planning and development"; (3) a "common currency" and a "central bank"; (4) a "common defence and security system", including the formation of an all-African army.⁸

I am not sure exactly who originally coined the "republican United States of Europe" slogan. Suffice to say, within the Second International the call for a United States of Europe was routinely upheld by the orthodox mainstream and various leftist schools of thought.⁹ In his *The national question and social democracy* (1907) the Austro-Marxist, Otto Bauer, writes of "a United States of Europe" in essentially evolutionary terms. It is "not an empty dream", but the "inevitable end of the road on which the nations set foot long ago".¹⁰ Alexander Parvus advocated a similar position. Writing in 1900-01, having denounced the "curse of traditional thinking", Parvus asserted that "free trade will do away with it, it will create a great group of nations, it will lead to a United States of Europe".¹¹ He sought the "democratisation of Germany's political system and the economic unification of Europe, first through removal of all economic barriers and ultimately through socialist revolution". His watchwords were: "Democracy, union of Europe, free trade".¹² But it seems clear to me that the most important champion of the *republican* United States of Europe was none other than the Second International's leading theoretician.

Eg, in his April 1911 article 'War and peace', Karl Kautsky presents the case in favour of linking anti-

militarist propaganda to a United States of Europe. The United States of Europe is conceived of as an alliance "with a common trade policy", a single parliament, a single army, etc. Not that Kautsky preached pacifism or reformism. On the contrary, the Kautsky of 1911 is convinced that "a European war is bound, by natural necessity, to end in social revolution". That is why the most far-sighted sections of the ruling class strive to "preserve peace" and seek measures of "disarmament". They dread war because it will bring revolution. "War," considers Kautsky, "is followed by revolution with inevitable certainty." This is not the result of some devious "social democratic plan", but "the iron logic of things".

Industrial capital has given way to finance capital and brought to a halt all measures of social reform. Nevertheless, despite the difficulties of realising the United States of Europe, "efforts to peacefully unite the European states in a federative community" are by no means hopeless. "Its prospects are bound up with those of the revolution," maintained Kautsky.

Whether revolution arises from "competition in armaments" or from "war" itself, there will in any case be an "international revolution". Even if revolution "does not arise from reaction against the burden of armaments" or "against the horrors of war", but from other causes, and even if at the outset it is not international, but restricted to a single state, it "cannot remain so for long under present conditions". The revolution is "bound to spread to other states". As it does, Kautsky believes that the "United States of Europe" and eventually the "United States of the civilised world" will progressively come into being.¹³

Lenin's switch

Obviously, having been content to repeat the "republican United States of Europe" slogan in 1914, Lenin began to rethink. His first objections, in 1915, appear secondary, or technical. He expressed himself keen at the RSDLP's conference of groups abroad, held in Berne, to put the slogan on hold, "pending a discussion, in the press, of the economic aspect of the matter". So far, the discussion had been "purely political" - the economic aspect had, by implication, been neglected.¹⁴

However, a blistering criticism soon followed. *Social Democrat* No44 - the Bolshevik central organ - carried Lenin's article, 'On the slogan for a United States of Europe'. What was his

argument?

Explanations backing the *republican* United States of Europe "expressly emphasised" that the slogan was meaningless "without the revolutionary overthrow of the German, Austrian and Russia monarchies". Lenin said he did not quarrel with such a presentation of the question "within the limits of a political appraisal". In other words, Lenin rejected the charge that the 'republican United States of Europe' slogan "obscures or weakens" the "slogan of a socialist revolution".

To counterpose democracy and socialism is to fall headlong into the stagnant pond of economism - the natural habitat of today's left in Britain. "Political changes of a truly democratic nature" - especially a political revolution - "can under no circumstances whatsoever either obscure or weaken the slogan of a socialist revolution." Quite the reverse. In Lenin's opinion, they always bring it closer, extend its basis and draw in petty bourgeois and semi-proletarian masses into the struggle for socialism.

The republican United States of Europe slogan - if accompanied by demands for the revolutionary overthrow of the most reactionary monarchies - is "quite invulnerable as a political slogan". However, there still remains, argued Lenin, the "highly important question of its economic content and significance". From the angle of the economic conditions of imperialism - the export of capital and the division of the world by the leading powers - a United States of Europe "is either impossible or reactionary".

Britain, France, Russia and Germany controlled vast tracts of the planet, either directly in the form of colonies and dominions or indirectly in the form of semi-colonies. These powers (bar Russia) also exported capital in huge sums, so as to exploit the world and extract super-profits - from which elite state officials, high clergy and "other leeches" gain their fat sinecures.

That system of plundering the majority of the world's population by a handful of great powers represented the highest stage of capitalism. Britain, Germany, France and Russia could no more renounce their colonies and spheres of influence than they could the export of capital, reckoned Lenin.

Following this line of reasoning, Lenin insisted that a United States of Europe under capitalism must be tantamount to an "agreement on the partition of colonies". Furthermore, such an agreement between the great powers is itself impossible except by

way of a trial of strength. And that in plain language means war. Germany was growing economically four times faster than Britain and France. As to Japan, its economic growth was 10 times more rapid than Russia's. Hence the *redivisionist* inter-imperialist contest and its attendant slaughter.

So temporary arrangements were possible, conceded Lenin. In that sense a United States of Europe is possible "as an agreement between the European capitalists". But to what end? Only for the purpose of "suppressing socialism in Europe" and jointly "protecting colonial booty" against Japan and the United States: ie, great powers denied their 'fair' share of colonies.

Compared to the USA, the United States of Europe "denotes economic stagnation" and signifies the organisation of reaction. Under capitalism a United States of Europe would retard the more rapid economic development of the USA. Lenin also wanted to strike a blow against the Eurocentric prejudices that frequently passed for common sense in the Second International: "The times when the cause of democracy and socialism was associated only with Europe have gone forever," he announced.

Lenin concluded on the basis of the above arguments that the slogan for a United States of Europe "is an erroneous one".¹⁵

Lenin elaborated upon the *economic* argument against the United States of Europe in his *Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism* (1916). Much of the raw material for this pamphlet came from *Imperialism* by the British Liberal anti-imperialist, JA Hobson (1902).

Hence we find Hobson approvingly quoted by Lenin when he warns that imperialism - the conquest of colonies and the export of capital on an unprecedented scale - carried the risk that western Europe would end up like the south-east of England, the Riviera or the "tourist-ridden" or residential parts of Italy and Switzerland - "little clusters of wealthy aristocrats drawing dividends and pensions from the far east", surrounded by professional retainers and tradesmen, personal servants and workers in the transport trade, with all the real work done in Asia and Africa.

Hobson specifically held out the danger of an "alliance of western states, a European federation of great powers, which, so far from forwarding the cause of world civilisation, might introduce the gigantic peril of a western parasitism". Hobson admitted that the "situation is far too complex, the play of world forces far too incalculable, to render this or any other single interpretation of the future very probable". But the influences which govern the imperialism of western Europe today are "moving in this direction" and, unless "counteracted or diverted", point towards some such "consummation".¹⁶

Lenin enthusiastically concurs: "The author is quite right: if the forces of imperialism had not been counteracted, they would have led precisely to what he has described. The significance of a 'United States of Europe' in the present imperialist situation is correctly appraised."¹⁷

Perspective

So what is Lenin's own political perspective? Essentially it lay in making revolution in one's own country. Not in some messianic, nationalistic fashion, but as the beginning of a process that can only be completed globally.

Not surprisingly Lenin argued against the United States of the World as an immediate slogan. Such a state form of the unification and freedom

of nations is associated with socialism. But as an immediate slogan it would be wrong for two reasons. Firstly, it merges with socialism. Secondly, it may be wrongly interpreted to mean that the "victory of socialism in a single country is impossible".

This second point was squarely directed against Leon Trotsky, who - as his splendid biographer, Isaac Deutscher says - had "seemed to imply that revolution could break out in Russia only simultaneously with a European upheaval".¹⁸ Trotsky, we should add, denied the charge and defended the slogan of a United States of Europe throughout World War I ... and beyond (the subject of the next in this short series of articles).

Lenin feared that, if erected into a rigid, self-fulfilling prophecy, such an insistence on a simultaneous European revolution could excuse revolutionary fatalism and breed passivity. "Uneven development," states Lenin, "is an absolute law of capitalism." Hence the "victory of socialism is possible first in several or even in one capitalist country alone". After expropriating the capitalists and organising its own socialist production, the victorious proletariat of that country would "rise against the rest of the world" and attract to its cause the oppressed classes of other countries. The use of force is not ruled out in order to spread the revolution. "A free union of nations in socialism is impossible without a more or less prolonged and stubborn struggle of the socialist republics against the backward states." Finally, Lenin once again stresses, the "democratic republic" will be the "political form" of the dictatorship (rule) of the proletariat and the oppressed classes.

This argument in favour of the possibility of a victorious socialism in one country is, of course, now famous - or infamous. Having discovered it nearly 10 years later, Stalin went on, in 1924, to use the passage just quoted above in order to justify his theory of socialism in one country against what he dubbed Trotsky's "theory of the simultaneous victory of socialism in the principal countries of Europe".¹⁹

It has to be admitted that Lenin's formulation about the victory of socialism in one country is open to such a nationalist interpretation - if one shamelessly ignores the entire corpus of his writings which take for granted the necessity of socialism being international. Evidently on that basis what Lenin meant - and here Trotsky agreed - was that in all probability the proletariat of one country would seize state power ahead of others and might have to survive in isolation for a short period of time before revolutions arose elsewhere. In the conditions of 1914-18 no country should wait for others. Revolutionary initiatives in one country take forward the struggle in others. But, in the face of a counterrevolutionary Europe, revolutionary Russia could only but succumb or turn into its opposite.

Nevertheless in 'On the slogan for a United States of Europe' Lenin is hardly at his best. Leaving aside the sloppiness around the "victory" of socialism in one country, Lenin rests the whole weight of his case against the 'republican United States of Europe' slogan on a rigid conceptual separation between the political and the economic. Politically he says it is a good slogan. Economically it is bad. True, capitalism has put in place such a structural separation between the 'economic' and the 'political' spheres. It is though, argues Ellen Meiksins Wood, "the most effective defence mechanism available to capital".²⁰

Previous modes of production - such as feudalism and Asiatic despotism - are completely bound up with political force. 'State unit' and 'economic unit' are indistinguishable. The position of exploiter is inseparable from their political (military) power and consequent place in the hierarchy.

Surplus is extracted from the direct producer either by custom, backed by force, or simply obtained through employing naked force. The exploiter has nothing or very little to do with production itself or even supervising production.

It is capitalism which creates a separate sphere of economics by discarding the former extra-economic means of exploitation - labour duties, tithes, royal tribute. Social obligations and functions are discarded too. The business of the capitalist is business.

The extraction of surplus value can, in principle, be achieved through purely 'economic' mechanisms. Private property becomes absolute. Having been 'freed' from the means of production, workers must sell their ability to labour to the capitalist - who now monopolise the means of production. So, although the state is still necessary in order to stand guard over property and the general conditions of production and reproduction, the inescapable need to gain a living provides, in normal circumstances, all that is required to persuade the worker to make themselves available for exploitation.

That is precisely why the capitalist market is a political as well as an economic space. By taking up the struggle for democracy and giving it a definite social content, the working class thereby begins to challenge not only the state, but the conditions of its own exploitation. As a rule, Lenin experienced no problem whatsoever in recognising that. Hence for him the task of Marxist politicians was to lay bare the economics in politics and the politics in economics.

In that light Lenin's numerous writings on the right of nations to self-determination sit oddly with his rejection of the republican United States of Europe as being either "impossible" or "reactionary". Leftist critics - eg, Luxemburg, Bukharin and Pyatakov - maintained almost exactly the same thing when it came to "self-determination". Self-determination of small nations under the conditions of imperialist capitalism was either a "reactionary utopia" or "impossible". "So long as capitalist states exist," writes Luxemburg in her *Junius pamphlet*, "there can be no 'national self-determination' either in war or in peace."²¹

On the contrary, Lenin replied, the demand was perfectly feasible. He used Norway's separation from Sweden in 1905 as proof. Furthermore, he insisted, if they were to achieve anything serious, not least socialism, Marxists must champion the rights of oppressed nations, especially against the great powers. Not to do so is to abandon the fight for socialism.

Self-determination is a demand for the equality of rights between nations: no, not in the sense of economic power, population size, military strength. The bottom line is the right to secede. Self-determination does not mean advocating breakaways and the establishment of a multitude of dwarf states. Sadly, an approach all too common on the left nowadays: eg, irresponsible demands for an independent Scotland, Catalonia, Quebec, etc. Lenin touches upon this in 'Socialism and war' - the pamphlet he and Zinoviev jointly authored in 1915.²²

"The championing of this right", the right to self-determination, "far from encouraging the formation of petty states, leads, on the contrary, to freer, fearless and therefore wider and more universal formation of large states and the federation of states." The authors insist that such states "are an advantage" to the masses and that workers, in the oppressed nation, must "unfailingly" fight for the "complete" unity of the workers of the oppressed and oppressor nationalities, "including organisational unity" - Peter Taaffe, Charlie Kimber, Neil Davidson, Alan Thornett, etc, take note.

It is one thing to oppose a United

States of Europe brought about by blood and iron. But there is no need to conflate that with the republican United States of Europe won through revolution and completed by the voluntary agreement of the peoples. If there is a general right to freely merge into larger and larger states and federations, surely that applies as much to Europe - which has long established economic and cultural ties - as it does to any other continent or region.

Motives

So why did Lenin perform an 180-degree about-turn between 1914 and 1915 on the 'republican United States of Europe' slogan? Undoubtedly there were numerous reasons, including, I suspect, psychological factors, besides those of economic analysis, political programme and factional calculation.

But let us begin with the obvious. There existed many out-and-out reactionary advocates of a United States of Europe. Germany was not untypical. Here such people ranged from conservative university professors to influential figures in the imperial high command. A modern-day version of Charlemagne's Holy Roman Empire appealed to those bewitched by romantic national historiography or schooled in Hegelian state worship. Naval warfare, massed armies and heavy artillery were, though, the methods they excused, or directly oversaw, in order to achieve their chosen ends. Unity brought about in such a way could only but multiply existing social oppression and national grievances many times over. Their Europe was to be born in chains.

German military strategy, in the words of Friedrich von Bernhardi, a junker general, writing in his 1912 bestseller, sought to finally settle scores with France in the west and expand territorially deep into tsarist Russia in the east. After a two-fronted military triumph, continental power would be consolidated through a "Central European Federation" - with at its core a Greater Germany, incorporating Austria, Holland, South Prussia, etc.²³ From this fortress Europe, Germany confidently steps forth - fulfilling its god-given destiny - as the world's leader. The so-called narrow-mindedly commercial Anglo-Saxon powers, Great Britain and the US, are henceforth reduced to a more fitting ranking.

The German ruling classes turned to war in an attempt to put off socialism. The Social Democratic Party achieved remarkable electoral successes after Bismarck's anti-socialist laws were lifted. The 1912 election in particular "frightened all the forces of the establishment", writes US historian Paul Kennedy. The results, which were a "stunning victory" for the SDP, provoked pan-German calls from big industrial capital, the great landowners and Lutheran newspaper-owners for a "coup d'etat from above". Plans to curb the Reichstag's already severely limited powers were certainly given a more than sympathetic hearing "in court and army circles".²⁴

However, German socialism was far from united and far from single-mindedly committed to revolutionary Marxism. German armies fighting on the western and eastern fronts were supported and given succour by rightwing social democrats: eg, Friedrich Ebert, Philipp Scheidemann ... and Gerhard Hildebrand. This last named socialist coloniser, even before the outbreak of war in August 1914, had promoted the idea of a "United States of Western Europe" (he excluded Russia). His united Europe - fronted, of course, by Germany - would fend off the "great Islamic movement" rising in Asia and teach the "African negroes" the virtues of hard work and industry. The "African people require guidance and care", he said, "for an indefinite time to come".²⁵

The August Babel-Karl Kautsky leadership quite rightly expelled him from the party in 1912. Yet with the declaration of war Hildebrandism

- to coin a phrase - almost instantly infected the majority of the SPD. Rosa Luxemburg, half in mourning and half in defiance, described the SPD as a "stinking corpse".

Other equally disgusting personifications of social chauvinism were found in Russia, France and Britain - Jean Longuet, Jules Guesde, Edouard Vaillant, Viktor Chernov, Georgi Plekhanov, Henry Hyndman, Philip Snowden, etc. Meanwhile Lenin sifted through a vast mass of books, journals and papers in the well-stocked libraries of Switzerland to find the political ammunition he needed in order not only to expose the predatory war aims of the belligerent powers, but to polemically demolish rightwing social democracy. Suffice to say, the views of Hildebrand and his ilk were useful for "understanding the tendencies of opportunism and imperialism within social democracy!"²⁶

Besides the united Europe advocated by generals and social chauvinists, there were, however, other plans for a united Europe - crucially those still emanating from former comrades, whom Lenin now scornfully referred to as the Kautskyites. Lenin was determined to draw a clear line of demarcation that would completely separate off the Bolsheviks and the principled internationalist left from Kautskyite centrism.

Centrism is a political category defined by Marxism not so much by what it is. Rather centrism must be grasped in movement. To avoid a split in the SPD, Kautsky, for example, refused to condemn the majority of the Reichstag fraction when it agreed to support the bill to finance the kaiser's war effort (there was an anti-war minority, but it abided by party discipline and voted with the majority). Nor did he protest, at least to begin with, when the right acted as Wilhelm's loyal recruiting sergeant. Indeed he pleaded for understanding and urged an imperialist peace without annexations.

In effect Kautsky alibed the right and held out the prospect of recentring unity with the social chauvinists once the war finally finished. In so doing, he betrayed himself and, of course, the great cause of socialism. What made him a particularly dangerous source of political confusion, though, was his well-founded reputation as an outstanding Marxist theoretician.

Such centrism was not isolated to Germany - far from it. Every country had its centrists and, whether they stood on the right of that spectrum or on the extreme left, what marked them out for Lenin was their unwillingness to countenance an irrevocable political and organisational schism with the social chauvinists - and those who defended them. In Russia this amorphous and ever-shifting centrist trend included Jules Martov - the Menshevik Internationalists' leader, who would, in 1918, gain an overall majority in the Menshevik Party - and the so-called *Mezhraiontsy*, most notably Leon Trotsky, Anatoly Lunacharsky, David Riazanov and Adolf Joffe.

At this point, I think we must bring into our account psychological as well as factional considerations. The relationship between Kautsky and Lenin before 1914 might be described as that of star pupil to learned teacher. Lenin willingly expressed his disagreement with Kautsky on this or that secondary issue. However, he considered Kautsky the worthy intellectual leader of the Second International and sought wherever possible to secure his support in the inner-party struggle against the Mensheviks. Kautsky often wrote about Russian affairs and in general sided with the Bolsheviks - eg, over the worker-peasant nature of the Russian Revolution, election tactics and combining insurrection with general strike in 1905. Not without foundation he has been called a "sort of honorary Bolshevik".²⁷

Kautsky's miserable collapse in

August 1914 hit Lenin like a bolt from the blue. He could hardly believe the news when it came. Nevertheless he quickly fought back, hurling polemical thunderbolts against Kautsky for all he was worth. The Bolsheviks audaciously raised the call for a Third International and for turning the inter-imperialist war into a civil war of social liberation. To begin with, the Bolsheviks made little headway. Nadezhda Krupskaya, Lenin's comrade and wife, writes amusingly of the situation of the Zimmerwald left in 1916, when it consisted of "the Dutch left, plus ourselves, plus the German left, plus nought".²⁸

The general mood internationally - as revealed by the socialist conferences in London, Berne and Zimmerwald - was for arriving at a broad consensus around inoffensive slogans, such as 'peace', and harmless resolutions pointing out the errors of social chauvinism.

It was in this context of murderous world war and conciliation with rightwing traitors that Lenin turned against the 'republican United States of Europe' slogan. Lenin decided to associate the slogan with Kautsky and those who refused to break with the right. It became intertwined with Lenin's undeniably correct campaign to draw lines of demarcation.

Surely, though, he overcompensated and drew a line that was far too defensive on this occasion. In so doing he gave away a highly serviceable political weapon. Post-1914 Kautsky might have come to give the slogan a "pacifist reading". But, if the slogan was supplemented with the call for the revolutionary struggle to abolish monarchies throughout Europe and other key planks in the minimum programme, such as self-determination for the colonies and oppressed nations, then, yes, even in the darkest days of World War I, it would carry a powerful message.

Workers throughout the European continent share a common history and can together make a common contribution towards making the world communist revolution ●

Notes

1. Lexit is chaired by Robert Griffiths and includes the RMT rail union, Trade Unionists Against the EU, the *Morning Star's* Communist Party of Britain, the Indian Workers Association (GB), the Bangladeshi Workers Council of Britain, Scottish Left Leave, Counterfire and the Socialist Workers Party.
2. Rejection of a United States of Europe is standing SWP policy. Back in 1971 Chris Harman wrote that "the demand for the United States of Europe is not going to be an immediate agitational demand in the conceivable future" (www.marxists.org/archive/harman/1971/xx/eeec-pt3.htm). For the CPB's use of Lenin see www.comunist-party.org.uk/britain/youth/2232-the-anti-worker-nature-of-the-eu.html.
3. VI Lenin *CW* Vol 21, Moscow 1977, p339-43.
4. VI Lenin *CW* Vol 39, Moscow 1977, p776n.
5. VI Lenin *CW* Vol 21, Moscow 1977, p18.
6. *Ibid* p33.
7. *Ibid* p18.
8. DJ Francis *Uniting Africa* Aldershot 2006, p19.
9. Of course, it is not that straightforward. Eg, we find Rosa Luxemburg writing this in May 1911: "Plausible as the idea of the United States of Europe as a peace arrangement may seem to some at first glance, it has on closer examination not the least thing in common with the method of thought and the standpoint of social democracy." See www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1911/05/11.htm.
10. Quoted in O Bauer *The question of nationalities and social democracy* Minneapolis MI 2000, p414.
11. ZAB Zeman and WB Scharlau *Merchant of revolution* Oxford 1965, p42.
12. RB Day and D Gaido *Discovering imperialism* London 2011, p324.
13. www.marxists.org/archive/kautsky/1911/04/war1911.htm.
14. VI Lenin *CW* Vol 21, Moscow 1977, p158.
15. *Ibid* p343.
16. JA Hobson *Imperialism* London 1938, pp364-65.
17. VI Lenin *CW* Vol 22, Moscow 1977, pp280-81.
18. I Deutscher *The prophet armed* Oxford 1979, p237.
19. JV Stalin *Works* Vol 6, Moscow 1953, p391.
20. E Meiksins Wood *Democracy against capitalism* Cambridge 1999, p20.
21. R Luxemburg *The national question* New York 1976, p290.
22. VI Lenin *CW* Vol 21, Moscow 1977, pp295-339.
23. F von Bernhardi *Germany and the next war* London 1914, p106.
24. P Kennedy *The rise of Anglo-German antagonism 1860-1914* London 1980, p453.
25. Quoted in VI Lenin *CW* Vol 39, Moscow 1977, p112.
26. *Ibid* p113.
27. LT Lih, 'VI Lenin and the influence of Kautsky' *Weekly Worker* September 2 2009.
28. N Krupskaya *Memories of Lenin* Vol 2, Letchworth 1970, p171.

POLEMIC

No substitute for politics

Is it really as simple as 'social networks vs the hierarchies'? Yassamine Mather takes issue with Paul Mason

First of all let me clarify that this is not a review of Paul Mason's *Post-capitalism: a guide to our future*. The book was published almost a year ago and the general theme has been explored by many commentators and reviewers. What follows are a series of comments about some of the claims made by Mason regarding the effect of new technology and how they have been interpreted.

Post-capitalism is a follow-up to *Why it's kicking off everywhere*, in which Mason reviewed the protests of the 'Arab spring', as well as the Occupy movement, demonstrations and political events in southern Europe in 2012, leading him to conclude that a new era had started. At that time he wrote: "We're in the middle of a revolution caused by the near-collapse of free-market capitalism".¹ However, the claim about the "near-collapse" was and remains an exaggeration. No doubt free-market capitalism has problems: no-one believes the promises of the 'trickledown effect' from the astronomical wealth gathered by the one percent, while underconsumption and overaccumulation of capital are creating serious economic problems. But capitalism is not collapsing and it will take a lot more than the current level of dissatisfaction for it to be overthrown.

In describing a number of global protests, Mason argued that unemployment amongst graduates "with no future" meant their technological and networking skills were producing new forms of rebellion. There was "an upswing in technical innovation, a surge in desire for individual freedom and a change in human consciousness about what freedom means".²

Of course, it is true that there is a new generation of protestors (as opposed to the 'Thatcher generation', who were wholeheartedly pro-market). This new breed is less cynical and more active than some sections of the radical left amongst the older generation. However, reading the book today, many of the global protests described in detail seem distant, if not irrelevant. The 'Arab spring' was predictably defeated: the situation in Libya and Syria is disastrous, while there is military rule in Egypt. And there is nothing very progressive or revolutionary about the current Syriza administration in Greece - in fact it represents another example of the left's many defeats in the current period.

The campaigns around Jeremy Corbyn and Bernie Sanders have replaced Occupy as the centre of attention for many and, while both campaigns have their limitations, we should welcome them as positive. Youth unemployment remains a major issue, but, in the absence of a revolutionary alternative, it can be diverted into nihilistic, rightwing or religious forms of rebellion - as we are witnessing in parts of the third world and amongst sections of the migrant population in advanced capitalist countries.

Economy

I am not going to write much about Paul Mason's analysis of the current economic situation in *Post-capitalism*, except to pour scorn over claims that Kondratiev's long wave theory - according to which capitalism goes through generational cycles of stagnation and innovation - explains the current economic downturn. According to Mason, the current wave is different from those that went before, because new technology has allowed capitalists to adapt without

**Linked, but with no coordination**

innovating, by providing them with the tools to seek out new forms of value. At the same time, it has allowed the rest of us to innovate without adapting, by allowing us to explore new lifestyles without having to think about their political implications. That is why, he believes, capital will not find a way out of the current crisis and the present situation is unsustainable.

Basically, Kondratiev argued that the 'long waves' of the capitalist economy lasted something like five decades, during which there are shorter booms and slumps. At first there are strong booms and weak recessions, while later there are more serious recessions. I can think of a number of problems with this:

1. The idea of fixed-period cycles is itself problematic. The long length of the cycle and their relatively short duration in the last two centuries makes any summation on this issue unscientific.
2. While economic cycles are technical realities, they have nothing to do with Marxist political economy: they do not relate to the class nature of society, surplus value or the organic composition of capital.
3. Kondratiev's theory ignores the effects of wars and imperialism.

In summary it is difficult to find any reasons to support the relevance of long-wave theory as far as the current state of the capitalist economy is concerned. It is true that capitalism has undergone periods of overaccumulation and underconsumption, but we are now witnessing a more fundamental structural crisis of capital, with serious devastating consequences. In the words of István Mészáros:

It is not a matter of indifference whether a crisis in the social sphere can be considered a periodic/conjunctural crisis, or something much more fundamental than that. For, obviously, the way of dealing with a fundamental structural crisis cannot be conceptualised in terms of the categories of periodic or conjunctural crises. The crucial difference between the two sharply contrasting types of crises is that the periodic or conjunctural crises unfold and are more or less successfully resolved within the established framework, whereas the fundamental crisis affects that framework itself in its entirety...

It cannot be stressed enough that the crisis in our time is not intelligible without being referred

to the broad, overall social framework. This means that, in order to clarify the nature of the persistent and deepening crisis all over the world today, we must focus attention on the crisis of the capital system in its entirety. For the crisis of capital we are experiencing is an all-embracing structural crisis.³

The current crisis affects all aspects of the economy, from manufacturing to finance and commerce, throughout the world, and no-one is talking of a speedy recovery. Far from it: we are witnessing a gradual worsening of the situation. Under such circumstances it is irresponsible to imagine the situation can be resolved, as some propose, by neo-Keynesian policies or gradual change which exploit "cracks" in the existing order⁴ - or, for that matter, through the use of networks aided by technology and virtual mobilisation.

Digital

My main comments about the book deal with what Mason calls the digital revolution, his enthusiasm for the widespread use of social media - and the claim that it will change and indeed speed up resistance and rebellion against the ravages of capital, paving the way for gradual yet fundamental change in the political/economic system.

Never mind the self-driving car (mentioned by Mason) - the gurus of new technology promise the 'internet of things'. However, capitalism controls every aspect of the 'technological revolution', gearing it towards the interests of profit in terms of targeted marketing, advertising and consumption; towards increasing control in terms of the power of the state to be able to monitor everything we do or say, courtesy of social media.

So, under capitalism, the promised 'internet city' will be a walled environment catering for the rich and better-off middle classes, while the rest of the population will be kept well away from it. In 'The fragment on machines' (*Grundrisse* pp690-712), quoted by Mason, Marx writes about "an automatic system of machinery" - one "set in motion by an automaton, a moving power that moves itself", so that "the workers themselves are cast merely as its conscious linkages". I have read the various passages of this section and, although it is remarkable in terms of predicting the role of machinery, I cannot see how one can deduct from it that on the basis of

the current state of automation (both in manufacturing as well as software automation) capitalism will ultimately be destroyed by dispersing knowledge among the workers.

According to Marx, given the tendency for knowledge to become predominant, labour-time becomes a "miserable foundation": the worker "steps to the side of the production process instead of being its chief actor". The law of value (the value of a commodity being determined by the labour time embodied in it) is regarded by Marx as the architrave of modern social relations, yet apparently it crumbles in the face of the development of capitalism.

According to Mason, the digital revolution has created unprecedented opportunities for the working class and its allies. However, this is not quite the full story. Not only have advances in digital technology empowered states to monitor every aspect of our lives: they have enabled ignorant capitalists to use even the least trusted software or hardware to sack employees - not to forget the fact that it has given states and bankers the ability to print money under that elusive title, 'quantitative easing'. Some of the abuses of technological progress in the era of capitalist crises have caused serious damage.

In addition the future of new technology itself is not so rosy as Mason portrays. The fall in Apple's profits are, above all else, yet another sign of stagnation in the mobile technology sector. Robert J Gordon, in his book *The rise and fall of American growth*,⁵ analyses the political economy of new technology and argues against techno-utopians who think that the information revolution will rescue the American economy. Of course, Gordon has his own critics, but the data he provides is quite convincing:

The evidence accumulates every quarter to support my view that the most important contributions to productivity of the digital revolution are in the past, not in the future. The reason that business firms are spending their money on share buy-backs instead of plant and equipment investment is that the current wave of innovation is not producing novelty sufficiently important to earn the required rate of return.⁶

There are many illusions about the

current state of automation and the liberating, organising role of social media and Mason is not an exception in this regard. New digital technology is facing many challenges, both in terms of its limitations - mainly to do with current understanding of the functioning of the human brain - but also to do with problems created by its short-sighted, at times disastrous, evolution and management. Superficial understanding of new technologies has led to poor execution of projects aiming to reap short-term benefits from technological advances. In addition, the non-technical, bureaucratic layers working and managing these systems are paralysing progress and, of course, the limitations of these current developments will be exacerbated, as the economic situation worsens. Those with any in-depth knowledge of robotic and software automation, the efficient use of databases or cloud systems point out these limitations; however, 'business' rarely listens to their concerns.

As far as automation is concerned, we now have the ability to work a robot in space, yet collecting garbage remains a task performed by humans even in advanced capitalist countries - where there is enough unemployment and wages are low enough to discourage the use of robots in this unpleasant task. Capitalism's priorities are determining where progress is made and often this is against humanity's interest. When it comes to jobs in the service sector, from supermarkets to airlines, the drive for profits leads to the replacement of cashiers or check-in staff with automated systems, yet the new technology is often inefficient and poorly tested. In fact, in both supermarkets and airports, there are workers ready to intervene between the customer and the device, as they are frequently required to do.

A little knowledge

New technology is now dominating every aspect of the workplace, from finance to law, from e-commerce to customer relations. Companies ranging from banking and insurance to travel and marketing are investing huge sums in the automation of processes and tasks. This reliance on new technology has increased demand for skilled labour, systems experts and developers dealing with complicated code and networks. Shortages of such skills means that companies are paying astronomical sums for anyone with expertise in continuous integration, continuous deployment and development operations.

In the UK, many companies are compensating for this shortage by ignoring the complexities of new technology and the consequent need for specialist staff, claiming that administration and management of an advanced IT project is all about procedure or project management, not technology. So management of complicated IT projects involving automation is left to those who have no understanding of or expertise in the complicated programs, codes or systems used in the development and deployment of such tools. Business schools are training a whole layer of these people.

These middle managers and administrators are experts in using spreadsheets and smart sheets to produce project plans that are invariably inaccurate, or simply wrong. This group, who know how to fill in the right box and can show projections with pie charts, produce 'high-level presentations' to impress

What we fight for

senior management, yet they have little or no understanding of what they are talking about. A whole language has been developed by this layer; they are experts at fooling the many. They copy-paste meaningless phrases purporting to display technological understanding, but in fact, the more they talk, the more they expose their ignorance of hardware, software, systems and networks.

This vast layer of middle management, business analysts and project managers with little or no knowledge of technology are a real threat to technological progress. Currently they are slowing down, and at times paralysing, the introduction of new technology, especially automation; in the long term they will cause disaster, as they are not equipped to understand, assess or deal with the risks. We can already witness how this is failing to work on a daily basis.

One part of an automated or general IT system goes down, which may be a website or an application essential to the functioning of all or part of a company. The IT department is contacted, although, strictly speaking, it is just a buffer between the company and the suppliers, who could be anywhere in the world: India, east Asia, Ireland, the US or eastern Europe. The IT department's knowledge of the web of technologies deployed is so limited that it is not even in a position to determine if the problem is down to software, hardware or networking. So they arrange an international conference call of the various suppliers. Many of those on the call are unfortunately part of the same administrative layer of middle management, repeating terms and phrases they do not understand.

We should be happy that new technology is providing jobs for school-leavers without training in these disciplines and graduates of business schools. It is just that in a different economic order these individuals would be using their education doing something more constructive. In calls or meetings intended to solve IT problems, they talk about firewalls, server patches, CMS, databases - yet few of them have ever come across a database or witnessed a single installation, never mind installing any serious software (perhaps with the exception of redundant packages offered by Microsoft pop-up adverts on their laptop). A major IT problem is being discussed, and typically each supplier tries to prove the problem has nothing to do with their product. Non-technical staff from the IT department are clueless and so are the quiet participants in, or moderators of, interminable conference calls. An exhaustive, unproductive and often useless exercise. At the end of the day the problem is best resolved in an email exchange between two technical experts. The long call with this layer of middle management can be summed up as a complete waste of time and effort, yet it is a regular part of the daily activity of most major IT departments.

In the public sector there has been an abysmal failure of expensive IT projects, such as those undertaken by Capita. Despite repeated failures to complete a project on time and in budget, the company is still the favourite contractor for local and central government. According to the Public Accounts Committee, in 2014 the ministry of defence wasted at least £70 million on an army recruitment system due to poor management of IT suppliers: "Leaked MoD documents seen by *The Times* show that the £1.3 billion Recruitment Partnering Project ... is almost two years behind schedule, and may require a £50 million investment to replace flawed IT systems."⁷

Indeed, according to *The Daily Telegraph*,

Whitehall has been plagued by

costs of its administration online. But few programmes have been more troubled than the shambolic efforts to establish an electronic borders system. In 2007, the home office published a strategy "to create a new offshore line of defence", checking individuals as far from the UK as possible and through each stage of their journey.

The contract was placed with Raytheon Systems Limited, an American-based technology and defence company. But within three years the deal was terminated - at a cost of £224 million to the taxpayer in compensation paid after a lengthy legal battle. Since then, a series of successor programmes, including the latest called Semaphore, have sought in vain to realise the aims of the original e-borders concept.

A damning National Audit Office study found that at least £830 million had been spent without "failing to deliver the full vision". That is a charitable way of putting it. As we report today, the system routinely collapses and over a 48-hour period last June, effectively ground to a halt.⁸

In other words, the evolution of new technology is a disaster under capitalism and it is facing a brick wall at a time when research establishments and universities are starved of funding.

Who controls what?

Like other parts of the digital revolution, social media - credited by Mason as the host of networks capable of challenging the "hierarchies" - has its own limitations. This is what Mason writes on the subject:

Social media and new technology were crucial in shaping the revolutions of 2011, just as they shaped industry, finance and mass culture in the preceding decade. What's important is not that the Egyptian youth used Facebook, or that the British students used Twitter and the Greek rioters organised via Indymedia, but what they used these media for - and what such technology does to hierarchies, ideas and actions.

Here, the crucial concept is the network - whose impact on politics has been a long time coming. The network's basic law was explained by Bell Telephone boss Theodore Vail as early as 1908: the more people who use the network, the more useful it becomes to each user. (The most obvious impact of the 'network effect' has been on the media and ideology. Long before people started using Twitter to foment social unrest, mainstream journalists noticed - to their dismay - that the size of one's public persona or pay cheque carried no guarantee of popularity online. People's status rises and falls with the reliability and truthfulness of what they contribute.)

First of all, the organising power of social media, used on its own, is often exaggerated. Yes, we can advertise demonstrations, protests and meetings online. However, the approval of virtual-reality participants (those who might 'like' or indicate possible attendance) never matches actual participation. No wonder the powers that be couldn't care less about 'virtual' support.

In the examples Mason mentions -, the demonstrations in Egypt, Greece and so on - social media has only been one of dozens of mobilising tools used by very organised, often centralised forces, with decades of history. It is only on the basis of this background that they had any effect. The Muslim Brotherhood's strength in the demonstrations before the downfall of

Hosni Mubarak resulted from many factors - amongst them decades of semi-clandestine organisation, the power of the mosques and seminaries, the ability of the party to organise political activity under the guise of religious work, and of its hierarchical, centralised network to acquire extensive financial support from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states. All this played a far more significant role than the use of social media.

The younger left and secular forces, solely relying on social media and the web for organising protests, were under the illusion that they enjoyed much support - support which was nowhere to be seen when it came to the real struggle against both Mubarak and his successors. The same is true of Greece - at the end of the day, for all the efforts and sacrifices of the protestors and their radical presence online, they were unable to oppose the collapse of Syriza in an effective, revolutionary way, precisely because they did not have a centralised, organised party.

Yes, social media can help tremendously in the organisation of protests and actions, but it also plays an important role in terms of surveillance and control, not just by the state and its security forces, but also the media, employers and capitalists. Note, for example, the use to which the rightwing media puts its scrutiny of Labour leftwingers and activists in the current debacle over 'anti-Semitism'.

Targeted advertising

Why do most sites you visit these days, from travel companies to software sellers, to retailers, encourage you to log in via Facebook or Twitter? Because they can ascertain your tastes, your travel habits, your friends, your last purchase ... 'Targeted advertising' is now the claim of the market groups all over the world, and Facebook, Twitter and Instagram play an important role in this. You basically save the companies time and money by providing them with an enormous amount of information. Facebook's own propaganda makes this clear: "Facebook brings more advertising control to location targeting."

But Mason tells us that everything comes down to the struggle between the network and the hierarchies, which represents "the main fault line" in the modern world. Yet we never learn why Mason does not consider the hierarchies' own use of networks, let alone how he thinks the networks will defeat the hierarchies, which by definition are better financed and better organised and therefore more successful.

In his review of Mason's book, David Beer writes:

Despite their appearance, networks often contain hierarchies. Much of what we know about contemporary decentralised networks would suggest that they are not free from hierarchies. Just to pick one quite superficial example, if we look at something obvious like social media then Clout scores and other means of measuring influence and amplification are designed to reveal those very hierarchies. Networks are not flat: they are three-dimensional, and they have a z axis.

Decentralisation, then, is not necessarily equivalent to empowerment or democratisation. It may not even give people the voice that it appears to give them. Instead we are all left howling into the wind, with a few select voices getting heard above the din. We should instantly wonder why it is that those few voices get heard. Is it something about what is being said or is it potentially a product of the particular hierarchies afforded by these media infrastructures and

their apparently equally distributed chances of communication?"

The reality is that the 'networks' we on the left create online are limited either to the people we know or those who more or less agree with what we say. In other words, a predictable, self-congratulatory group giving illusions of general consensus, while at the same time providing the state with sometimes invaluable information (until a few years ago they could only acquire such knowledge by going through our bins!). All this at a time when marketing firms are getting detailed information about our tastes and preferences - not to forget our plans and schedules ...

So far the most western states have informed us about what they have learned from social media relates to 'Islamic terrorists' or paedophiles. However, we know that states have the power to limit and control social media. China and Iran's Islamic Republic are examples of countries known to keep a tight grip, gaining from posts and messages the information needed to thwart and arrest members of the opposition. They also use IT infrastructures to stop the normal functioning of social media through filtering, and slowing down internet speed, especially at crucial times.

In 2009, Conservative minister for security Vernon Coaker acknowledged that government plans "may include requiring the retention of data on Facebook, Bebo, MySpace and all other similar sites ... It is absolutely right to point out the difficulty of ensuring we maintain a capability and a capacity to deal with crime and issues of national security ..." Civil liberty activists were quoted as saying that, even without recording social media activities, the plans "would allow the government to record every email, text message and phone call and would turn millions of innocent Britons into permanent suspects".

To sum up, the idea that social media based 'networks' could break hierarchies built on class allegiance, aided by state organisations, is clearly ridiculous. We welcome every act of defiance, every protest against the system of capital and its state, whether organised via social media, through the print media or by word of mouth, but we must remember that protests on their own do not change anything. For far too long the left has held the illusion that radical actions, in the absence of a powerful working class party, can mobilise the forces to make the ruling class retreat. The sad reality, however, is that radical action is too often accompanied by defensive slogans (save the NHS, our library, our education ...) and no serious politics at all.

It is inevitable that, faced with the ravages of neoliberal capital, many seek quick and easy answers to the structural crisis engulfing our planet. However, those of us who have witnessed the repeated defeats of the left must accept that calls to activism in themselves solve nothing. Without *political* organisation, far from advancing our cause, they may delay serious planning and long-term preparation ●

yassamine.mather@weeklyworker.co.uk

Notes

1. P Mason *Why it's kicking off everywhere* London 2012, p3.
2. *Ibid.*
3. <http://monthlyreview.org/2012/03/01/structural-crisis-needs-structural-change>
4. See J Holloway *Crack capitalism* London 2010.
5. RJ Gordon *The rise and fall of American growth: the US standard of living since the Civil War* Princeton 2016.
6. *Ibid.*
7. www.computerworlduk.com/news/it-business/mod-faces-increased-costs-for-delayed-online-recruitment-system-3497020
8. www.telegraph.co.uk/opinion/2016/04/28/costly-and-shambolic
9. www.lancaster.ac.uk/staff/tyfield/On_Postcapitalism_1.pdf

■ 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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New federation put on hold

Cosatu rival is yet to get off the ground, reports Peter Manson

South Africa's trade union movement - already divided into several federations - has recently been further weakened, thanks to the actions of the South African Communist Party.

In 2014 the SACP - for so long the prime organising force within the Congress of South African Trade Unions and its affiliates - ensured that the 350,000-strong National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (Numsa), the country's largest union, was expelled for daring to renounce its previous support for the African National Congress. Numsa's response was to call for the founding of a yet another federation, and initially this was supposed to happen on May 1.

However, it soon became clear that all that would take place would be a "Workers' Summit" of all unions interested in (eventually) forging an organisation that would be "independent" of the ANC-SACP alliance, and this was actually convened on April 30. The Workers' Summit would "consider the possibility of forming a new trade union federation, based on an agreement on fundamental principles and a shared orientation".¹

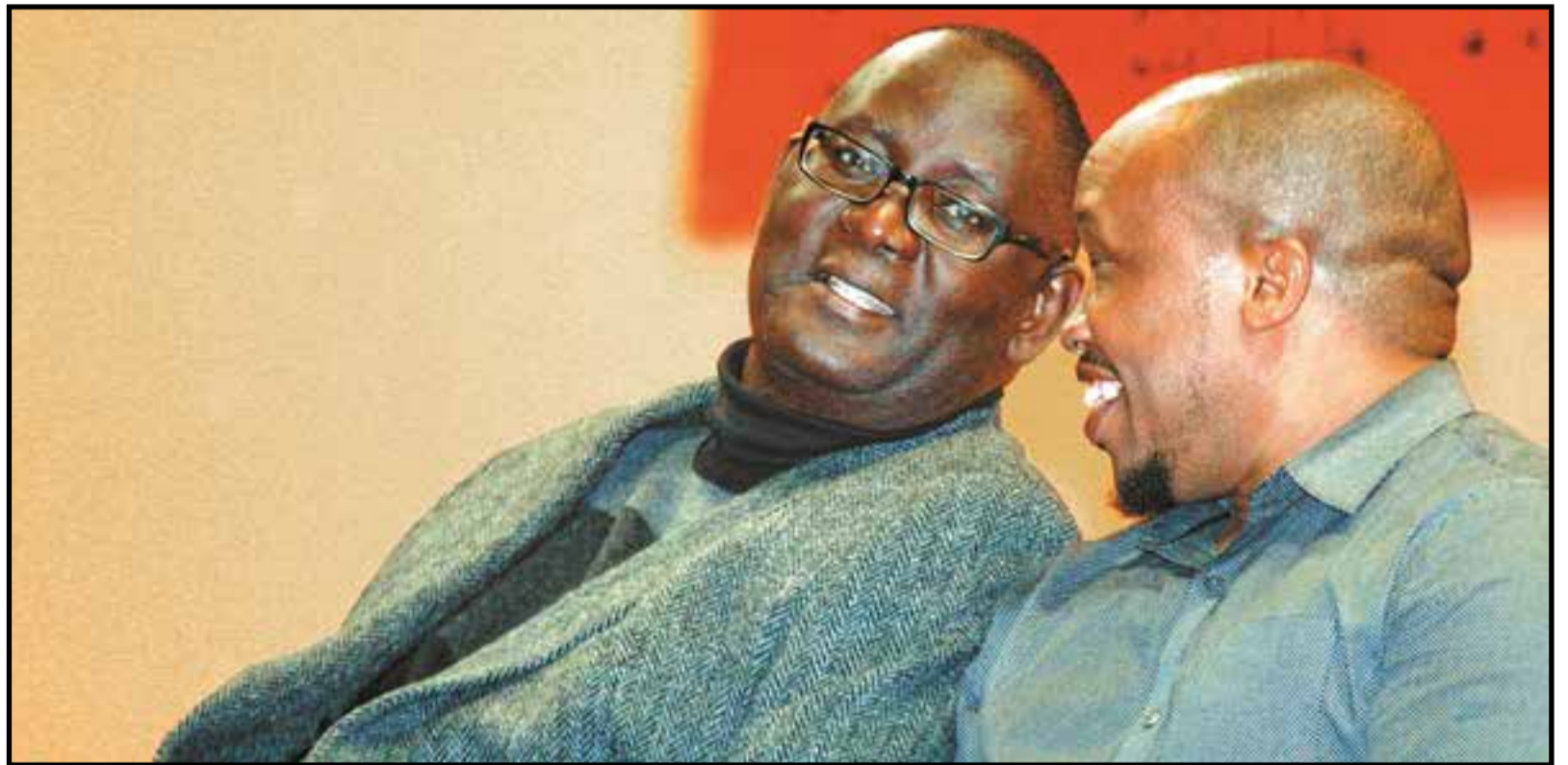
According to Zwelinzima Vavi - the former Cosatu general secretary, who, like Numsa, was also given the boot by the SACP-led Cosatu leadership - "we now have the possibility of having unions representing over one million workers at the Workers' Summit next weekend".² That prediction, made on April 23, was backed up by Numsa, which was expecting "50 unions representing well over a million workers", according to its April 28 statement. It stated that "up to 3,000 delegates will attend".³

However, Numsa's subsequent report, issued on May Day, announced that a rather more modest "1,406 representatives of 29 separate trade unions and one existing federation" were present.⁴ The "existing federation" is the National Council of Trade Unions (Nactu), which has 22 affiliates. While Nactu is inspired by the politics of black nationalism, another participant was the mainly white Solidarity - "the only Christian trade union in South Africa".⁵

After Numsa itself, the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (Amcu), which claims 180,000 members, was the largest individual union present. Amcu split from the SACP-loyal National Union of Mineworkers in protest at its constant accommodation with the mineowners in the run-up to the 2012 Marikana massacre.

But information is scarce about the representatives of any Cosatu affiliates who might have been present. Beforehand a "group of nine" Cosatu unions had declared their solidarity with Numsa, but it seems that none of them were *officially* represented on April 30.

Numsa's report stated that items not discussed at the summit will be "placed on the agenda of the founding congress of the new federation", which will be "up and running before the end of the year". However, Cosatu itself was obviously delighted - and somewhat



Zwelinzima Vavi and Irvin Jim: keep away from 'dark corners'

relieved - by the fact that things had not quite lived up to Numsa's predictions - "the reality is that there is no federation that was formed over the weekend, and there is no federation that will be formed any time soon," it crowed.⁶

However, Charlie Kimber, the Socialist Workers Party national secretary here in Britain, was greatly enthused by the Workers' Summit. His *Socialist Worker* article was headlined: "Is this the birth of new power for workers in South Africa?" (May 3). The article talked about the "new and exciting possibilities for the South African left" which "emerged last weekend."

Nor was he disturbed, it seems, by reports that Vavi - one of the two main leaders of the Workers' Summit - had earlier this year held a meeting with Mmusi Maimane, the leader of the official opposition Democratic Alliance, which is to the right of the ANC - its origins are as a (whites-only) liberal grouping that supposedly opposed apartheid. The South African *Sunday Times* claimed that Maimane and Vavi met on February 1 "to discuss forming a coalition government" in an Eastern Cape municipality, "should the ANC fail to win an outright majority there" in August's municipal elections.⁷ There has been talk for some time of the Numsa-sponsored

United Front starting to contest elections as part of the process of creating a genuinely "independent" workers' party, but it is disturbing, to say the least, that Vavi both confirmed he had met Maimane and did not deny the speculation about a local coalition.

Mind you, comrade Kimber's judgement on matters of South African politics can be considered questionable - especially when you take into account his assessment of another opposition party, the Economic Freedom Fighters. The EFF is a black nationalist formation set up by former ANC Youth League leader Julius Malema shortly after his expulsion from the ANC in 2012. Although Malema is a small-time capitalist who undoubtedly personally benefited from the contacts he gained under the 'Black Economic Empowerment' tendering process, the EFF has adopted a left populist programme, while its leaders - in their red berets - point to the evils of "white monopoly capitalism".

But comrade Kimber states: "Meanwhile, in another sign of the growth of a left outside the ANC, nearly 40,000 people came to a mass meeting last weekend for the Economic Freedom Fighters' local government manifesto launch."

It is evident, however, that the EFF

is not a genuine part of the left. In fact socialist journalist Terry Bell has been among those referring to it as "proto-fascist" - a description eagerly taken up by the opportunists of the SACP. And now the ANC, fully supported by the 'official communists', has opened a case of "high treason" against Malema following comments he made in an interview with *Al Jazeera* on April 25.

Even though the EFF, whose 6.35% of the vote gave it 25 MPs in the 2014 general election, is still languishing at well under 10% in various polls, Malema threatened to "remove the government through the barrel of a gun" if it does not "respond constitutionally to our demands" rather than send in the army, as was recently the case in the township of Alexandra outside Johannesburg.⁸

Later EFF spokesperson Mbuyiseni Ndlozi claimed in a radio interview: "We prefer democratic and peaceful demonstrations and elections, but the ANC must not think that it's going to rig elections, then send the army to silence us, and we'll just go home. We will be forced to take up arms." However, he admitted that "the EFF doesn't have an army, the EFF doesn't have an underground unit, doesn't have a self-defence unit, we don't have guns." In other words, just another example of the EFF's leftist

rhetoric, aimed at winning over more of the ANC's disillusioned supporters.

However, Cosatu president Sdumo Dlamini was pleased to lump Numsa in with the EFF - and just about everyone else who opposes the ANC: "They meet in dark corners with racist unions such as Solidarity, DA and EFF to plot against Cosatu," he said.

Unlike Dlamini, we on the left must carefully distinguish between the various strands of the opposition. We must not fall for the EFF rhetoric, but insist that a genuine left opposition must be based on the independence of the working class, organised around its own programme ●

peter.manson@weeklyworker.co.uk

Notes

1. My emphasis: www.numsa.org.za/article/workers-summit-may-day-2016.
2. Numsa is currently providing Vavi with office space at its Johannesburg headquarters and is also paying him a salary.
3. www.numsa.org.za/article/workers-summit-may-day-2016.
4. www.numsa.org.za/article/declaration-workers-summit-may-day-rally.
5. <https://solidariteit.co.za/en/who-are-we>.
6. Cosatu statement, May 3.
7. www.timeslive.co.za/sundaytimes/stnews/2016/04/24/DA-courts-Vavi.
8. www.aljazeera.com/programmes/talktojazeera/2016/04/julius-malema-ready-remove-zuma-government-force-160422094620380.html.

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