

A paper of Marxist polemic and Marxist unity

weekly



worker



Moshé Machover: don't retreat before the anti-Semitism smear campaign

- Letters and debate
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No 1107 Thursday May 19 2016

Towards a Communist Party of the European Union

£1/€1.10



William Blake 'The ancient of days' 1794

LETTERS



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

No to oppression

What is anti-Semitism? My understanding is that it consists of ideas and practices that justify the oppression and mistreatment of people of Jewish heritage. In my opinion, the forcible expulsion of Jews from Palestine would be anti-Semitic. Conversely, the establishment of a United Socialist States of the Middle East, which recognises and protects the democratic rights of Hebrew-speaking people (whilst also abolishing the present settler colonial state of Israel), would not be anti-Semitic. In other words, not all criticisms of the Israeli state's assertion of its right to exist are anti-Semitic. Indeed orthodox Haredi Jews, who make up nearly 10% of the Israeli population, do not recognise the Israeli state on religious grounds. They refuse to serve in its army.

Similarly, I think the denial of freedoms of expression and assembly to Jews who defend the Israeli state by denouncing them as fascists is arguably anti-Semitic. Clearly, it is a mistaken way of challenging Zionism. Promulgating the false allegation of fascism to legitimate the suppression of difference of opinion, however offensive, serves to reinforce a sense of Israeli righteousness. On the other hand, to point out that, although different, Zionism and fascism are forms of nationalism is not anti-Semitic. Put differently, not everyone who maintains that Zionism and fascism have something in common is anti-Semitic.

My understanding of Zionism is that it is a false doctrine. It is not true that people of Jewish heritage constitute a nation. It is not true that Jews who choose to identify as cosmopolitan, secular citizens of the world and reject a so-called homeland in Palestine are self-hating. Zionism is based on the false idea that a Jewish state will liberate people of Jewish heritage from anti-Semitism. It is a subjective form of the nationalism of the oppressed, the objective manifestation of which is an oppressive, settler-colonial state. This state exemplifies the bankruptcy of nationalist strategies for liberating oppressed peoples. Zionism presupposes and requires an eternal form of anti-Semitism in order to justify its existence. It shares the assumption of never-ending oppression and the cross-class establishment of an ethnically or religiously homogeneous state with other forms of modern Islamic, Hindu and Buddhist nationalism found in Iran, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Burma and elsewhere.

I think Tony Greenstein disagrees with my understanding of anti-Semitism and Zionism ('Slurs, lies, innuendos', April 28). This is because he denies the existence of anti-Semitism in Britain and states that in other countries, where the oppression of Jews still exists, Zionists manufacture anti-Semitism. He argues that the sole cause of anti-Semitism today is the actions of the Israeli state against the Palestinians. It follows that, were the Israeli state to come to end tomorrow, there would be no objective or subjective basis for continued anti-Semitism.

In contrast I contend that Zionism does not create Jewish oppression, but uses it to justify the false idea that the only alternative to anti-Semitism involves the oppression of Palestinians. Although Israel's actions against Palestinians inflame anti-Semitism, within a declining capitalism people of Jewish heritage would be oppressed, whether Zionism existed as an oppressor state or not.

One of comrade Greenstein's supporting arguments for the contemporary non-existence of anti-Semitism (or its exclusive dependence on Zionism in the west) is that Jews are no longer economically exploited in Britain. In other words, there is a tendency for proletarian Jews to be absorbed within the petty bourgeoisie and bourgeoisie.

He quotes an authority who refers to the "near disappearance of a Jewish proletariat in the west".

Comrade Greenstein here ignores the effects of a crisis of capitalism on people of Jewish heritage. When capitalism is trying to forcibly adjust the contradictions of the system, increasing numbers of individuals are thrown into the industrial reserve army of labour. A crisis-ridden capitalism loses support within a section of the intelligentsia and forces educated professionals to act collectively as part of the working class. If it is true that there is a disproportionate section of the population with Jewish heritage within the bourgeoisie, petty bourgeoisie and professional classes (and this is contestable - there is a continuing history of proletarian Jews living in relative poverty in the west), then crises would not only declass many Jews but drive some in a proletarian direction. Competition for jobs and petty bourgeois resentment of monopoly capitalism foster political and economic divisions, within which anti-Semitism, alongside other forms of oppression, thrives.

Since the days of Marx's involvement in the First International, anti-Semitism has functioned both as a fake form of anti-capitalism and a virulent form of anti-communism. As far as I know, Bakunin, the anarchist leader, was the first anti-capitalist to argue that there is an alliance between Jewish finance capitalists and Jewish communists to bring into being Jewish world domination. I understand that remnants of Stalinist parties in the former Soviet Union, fascists and Christian and Islamic religious nationalists still promote the forged document, 'Protocols of the Elders of Zion', to popularise this conspiratorial nonsense. These anti-Semites claim to be 'anti-Zionist'. Today, their hostility to the state of Israel is typical of those whom Moshé Machover calls the "anti-Zionism of fools" ('Zionism and anti-Semitism', May 5 2016).

It is therefore unsurprising that recent UK police figures reveal that violent crime against Jews has risen over 25% in the last year. As long as capitalism is not fully understood and the ruling class tolerates and promotes division between workers, there is the potential for the further oppression of people with Jewish heritage. Comrade Greenstein may well be correct to argue that Zionist policy towards Palestinians contributes to rising levels of anti-Semitism. However, he is mistaken to suggest that the latter is reducible to the former or that a political reaction to the colonial policy of the Israeli state is a sufficient explanation for the increasing number of violent crimes against Jews.

Communists are opposed to every form of oppression. They are also implacable enemies of nationalism of whatever kind. They maintain there is no nationalist solution to oppression. Jewish liberation like the liberation of every other oppressed group entails, as Marx argued, the liberation of the whole of humanity. This can only take place through a proletarian overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a classless society of freely associated producers. There is no other perspective that can end oppression and nationalism. This includes the particular forms of anti-Semitism and Zionism in existence today.

Paul B Smith
email

PCS conference

At the May 24-26 conference of the Public and Commercial Services union, for the first time in many years we will debate whether to affiliate to the Labour Party.

But first it is worth recording that PCS has survived a Tory onslaught aimed at decimating and bankrupting the union. As the government is our employer and we have exposed and campaigned against their austerity measures (either by calling for them to clamp down on

tax-dodging corporations or opposing their office closures and job cuts), so they have singled out PCS, above all unions, for special treatment.

First they have kept pay down, claiming it would be wrong to give 'their' employees a rise, when those in the private sector were facing recession and redundancy. Then, during the supposed economic recoveries, we could not have a decent pay rise for fears that would trigger pay claims from other unions.

The reality is, ever since Thatcher scrapped the civil service pay review body in 1980 we have had pay restraint. Even the Labour government brought in regional pay to the ministry of justice in 2007, which, thankfully, has not been spread as intended throughout the rest of the civil service and public sector.

While many civil servants have had no pay rise for the last four years, private-sector pay is now rising and, even though Cameron pinched the TUC slogan, 'Britain needs a pay rise', his own employees are still to be kept to 1%. (Bear in mind though that in the MOJ last year 52% of that 1% went on performance pay bonuses, so many staff got nothing.)

Then our redundancy pay was attacked. First they lowered compulsory redundancy pay, so staff went for voluntary early departure on better terms, when and where it was offered (to drive through job cuts), rather than wait to be made compulsorily redundant on worse terms. It's hard for any union to fight voluntary redundancy, when, due to demoralisation, staff queue up to go. Now the government has got rid of loads of civil servants, they are reducing compulsory terms again, ready to move to compulsory redundancies.

They increased the staff pension contributions, so staff are paying more to get less and to work for longer. PCS had achieved a united fightback with other unions over public-sector pensions and saw 2.4 million workers out in November 2011 in the biggest strike since 1926. I remember non-member civil servants almost queuing to join PCS to be part of that action. Then, within days, we saw Labour-affiliated unions settle individually and sell that fight out rather than call further action to defeat the government. PCS members to this day are bitter about that sell-out.

Then they cut facility time (when elected reps carry out their union duties during paid hours) to stop them 'organising strike action' - when the reality is most of a union rep's time is taken up representing members facing disciplinary proceedings or sick absence management warnings! No rep can be on more than 50% facility time. Facility time was also no longer allowed for delegates attending PCS conferences or for members of the national executive to attend its meetings (see later).

The biggest attack came with the withdrawal of check-off (where members have their union dues taken out of their pay packets), forcing PCS to have to re-recruit every member and get them to pay dues by direct debit. The more apathetic members didn't bother. Despite losing 15%-20% of our membership, PCS has survived and membership numbers are starting to actually rise again. We now see the check-off part of the Trade Union Bill - where it was proposed to extend this across the public sector - now not going ahead! Due to the sudden loss of income, PCS suspended NEC and departmental elections (with the agreement of conference in 2015). The Independent Left faction condemned this at the time and suggested it would be extended. It wasn't and we've just had the 2016 NEC elections as promised, and the results are now out.

There were four factions. Left Unity (Socialist Party in England and Wales, Socialist Workers Party, etc); Independent Left (IL - Alliance

for Workers' Liberty and some other socialists, some Labour Party activists, some non-aligned); PCS Democrats (PCSD - centre-left, usually Labour members) and '4 the members' (4tm - rightwing, so-called 'moderates').

For years the group comprising 100% of the NEC has been the Democracy Alliance - an electoral pact between Left Unity and the PCSD - said to be necessary to stop the right (4tm) regaining control of the NEC. 4tm have been the closest runners-up, with the IL next. However, with the reductions in facility time, the 'moderates' have ceased to exist - they are not prepared to give their own time up to be on the NEC or to attend conference. Clearly then they were never '4the members' - they were only in it '4themselves'!

So governmental attacks aimed at breaking PCS have ended up making PCS more leftwing, with newer activist members willing to do some union organising work in their own time, instead of attracting those who wanted 100% facility time until they retired - terrified of ever going back to the shop floor. Now all our activists have the credibility of being on the shop floor (and coping with today's workplace pressures) and in amongst fellow members!

The 2016 NEC results have shown that now the closest opponents of those running the NEC are the Independent Left, who managed to win three out of the 30 NEC places - and would have had another four but for limitations aimed at ensuring no one department dominates the NEC.

The Democracy Alliance electoral pact is now solely operating against the challenge to their left. The results must show that there is significant membership dissatisfaction (whether that is fair or justified is a matter of opinion) by many of the more active members with the record of the current SPEW-dominated NEC in very difficult circumstances.

On my own 'non faction' candidature, I did better than usual - fourth from the bottom! But you have no chance of getting on the NEC unless you are in a faction. Once again though, we are talking of the usual dismally low turnout (but I'm told that the 9.4% this time is still better than most unions!).

And now to the major conference debates that will take place. I am not going to bother analysing all the motions about our industrial strategy over pay, pensions, jobs, etc, but I will highlight one over compulsory redundancies. Motion A2 calls for a national ballot for strike action in the event of any compulsory redundancies being announced.

This is current PCS policy anyway, but we are a smaller union now and there is no mention of what the action to be taken is. 'Day here, day there' is unlikely to engender membership enthusiasm, but, due to low or no pay rises for years, we will not see any mood for all-out action either. The debate will be interesting.

Conference is to debate three options on the EU referendum. Motion A18 (NEC) calls for a neutral stance - to just get 'the facts' out to members and how they will/may be affected as civil servants, so that members can then make their own minds up. A19 is for remain and A20 for Lexit. That will be quite a debate!

Then there are the expected 'Refugees welcome here' motions, which are rather disingenuous, as few mention support for open borders. Bear in mind, we have SWP activists, whose policy is no immigration controls and support for open borders, but who never actually argue this from the conference floor. Then we have SPEW, who are against open borders, against 'racist' immigration controls, but who also never openly argue this on the conference floor - hence the disingenuous 'Refugees

welcome' wording, which allows both sides to feel their position is reflected (instead of the more honest 'Some refugees welcome here', which would be SPEW's actual stance). We will have an admirable display of 'internationalism' and 'feel-good humanitarianism' here - unless a certain activist (ahem) once again spoils the fake unity by asking whether these motions commit PCS to open borders or not.

And now the *big* debate - whether PCS should affiliate to the Labour Party. Motion A36 (NEC) calls for close working between PCS and Corbyn and McDonnell, and to look into PCS policy of supporting or standing candidates in exceptional circumstances, our relations with anti-austerity parties in the devolved administration and our relations with the Labour Party - including the issue of affiliation, which would be decided next year.

Meanwhile, motion A37 calls for us to work closely with the Labour Party, but to reaffirm our independence from any political party, and A38 calls for affiliation at a cost of £3 per member (another motion calls for affiliation to Momentum). I think conference will go for A36 and the NEC's cautious approach, even though general secretary Mark Serwotka has himself joined the Labour Party already.

Personally I registered as a Corbyn supporter, was delighted at his victory, but have not joined the Labour Party due to Corbyn's and McDonnell's constant backsliding on so many key issues ever since. The suspension of Ken Livingstone is also very off-putting. John McDonnell is always a welcome and appreciated guest speaker to national conference, but we will also hear from Jeremy Corbyn this year. Despite their backsliding on so many issues I am sure they will get a friendly and warm welcome.

This is the year PCS survived the worst attacks seen on any union since the National Union of Mineworkers in the mid-80s. We are still calling for united action from other unions, but Unison has agreed to the local government employers' offer of 1% over two years. The GMB (Arise, Sir Paul Kenny!) have also settled and so Unite will not take action despite TUC policy being for united action over pay. These are all Labour-affiliated unions, who have all, once again, left PCS high and dry and defied TUC policy. This will certainly influence the historic debate PCS is about to have on the question of Labour Party affiliation.

Dave Vincent
Manchester

Market socialism

Hillel Ticktin has recently written an article for the *Weekly Worker* about his vision of socialism ('Society of abundance', April 28 2016). The major problem is that he concentrates on economic issues and ignores the importance of politics. He does not address the importance of the class struggle for influencing the character of the post-capitalist society, and nor does he outline his conception of the relationship of democracy to socialism. The aftermath of the October revolution was never able to establish a satisfactory relationship of democracy to socialism. Thus the legacy of the one and only genuine proletarian revolution is not promising in relation to the possibilities of establishing a society that is more democratic than advanced capitalism.

The very process of revolutionary change will create tensions in regard to the relationship of democracy to the promotion of socialism. It is likely that the act of revolution will involve the importance of popular forms of democracy, such as workers' councils, which will supercede the institutions of parliamentary democracy. This means there will be a conflict of political sovereignty between two conflicting

forms of democracy. The Bolsheviks resolved this dilemma by dissolving the Constituent Assembly in favour of the soviets, or organs of proletarian democracy. This action was made credible by the fact that the soviets had superior prestige, and the assembly was relatively new and had not yet established its credentials.

But the situation will be different in relation to any attempt to repress institutions like the parliament of the UK. Parliament has a long history, and is respected as an expression of the democratic will of the population. Its closure will cause outcry, and could result in the undermining of popular support for the revolutionary regime. The only principled democratic decision will be to uphold the joint sovereignty of parliament and the workers' councils, creating a contradiction between the conflicting influences of bourgeois and proletarian democracy. It will only be possible to resolve this problematical situation by a revolutionary party - hopefully with Labour Party support - winning a majority of seats within parliament. In this context the activity of the workers' councils, such as promoting industrial democracy and popular forms of economic and political organisation, should generate electoral support for the revolutionary party.

However, if despite the increasing influence of the forms of popular democracy, victory in the election goes to the bourgeois parties, the working class must reluctantly accept the verdict. This is because the only alternative is civil war, which can have a devastating effect on society. But it is to be hoped that the revolution will continue to generate support and represent the potential for a future victory in elections.

Only if we manage the delicate task of reconciling democracy with the aims of the class struggle can we then begin to conceive of a situation of political stability that will enable us to contemplate the tasks of the development of socialist economy. Ticktin's glossing over of the necessity of immediate political tasks assumes a situation of inherent stability that may be very difficult to realise. Until he develops a strategy of democratic victory in the class struggle his economic conception of socialism will be an unrealistic utopia.

He establishes strict criteria for the possibility of socialism: "However, there must be relative abundance or else there cannot be socialism at all, and there can be no market." The criteria of relative abundance are problematical in this era of ecological problems. The point is that the importance of scarcity cannot be overcome with the creation of the post-capitalist economy, and how we tackle this scarcity will be vital if the aim of socialism is to be realised. Furthermore, the significance of scarcity means that the role of the market cannot be dispensed with. This means production must be orientated towards the continued importance of supply and demand. The only alternative to the market is rationing or coercion, which can only be utilised in exceptional circumstances.

The only criteria by which needs can be satisfied in the most efficient manner is through the role of the market. It is the very experience of the USSR which has proved this point. However, there will also be large sections of the public sector, because the role of the market in these areas would distort the ability to realise need. But, in relation to production of consumer goods that are able to satisfy expectations, there is no substitute for the role of the market.

Ticktin also makes another controversial statement: "Abstract labour amounts to the control and imprisonment of the ordinary worker and for that reason we cannot have abstract labour under socialism/communism." This comment indicates the problem of conceiving reality in terms of categorical absolutes. Within the socialist society small businesses will not be nationalised under workers' control, and so will still

be subject to the law of value. In this context commodities will represent the character of abstract labour. If we applied the approach of Ticktin these enterprises will be nationalised in order to undermine the possibility of the generation of abstract labour. This development will only alienate the small business owner from the aims of socialism. The point is that, whilst the forces of socialism are establishing their hegemony, the role of abstract labour, or the influence of the law of value, cannot be immediately overcome. The very importance of the interaction of old and new economic forces means the alienated and abstract character of labour remains for an extended period of time.

But this situation is not an expression of exploitation because the domination of capital has been replaced with the ability of labour to define its own conditions of work. The ability to create cheap goods comes from the initiative and creativity of the workforce, and not because of the ability of capital to extract surplus value from alienated abstract labour.

The point is that the relationship of supply and demand can be realised in a more flexible manner in a socialist type of society. The amount of labour time will also be an important guide for prices because this is an indicator of the value of the good. However, the good is not a commodity because the relations of production are no longer those of capital and labour.

Phil Sharpe
Nottingham

Democratic unity

Do you want to live in a country called Europe? Boris Johnson says 'no, no, no', whereas I would give a conditional 'yes'. If Europe was a fully democratic country, it would be infinitely better than living in the current bureaucratic European Union or the more bureaucratic British 'crown-in-parliament'. But, of course, a democratic country called 'Europe' does not exist and we cannot live in it.

Johnson subsequently continued to elaborate on the same theme. He compared the EU's aims of uniting Europe with the efforts of Hitler and Napoleon. The EU is "an attempt to do this by different methods". He is right so far. Europe can in theory be united 'from above' by military or bureaucratic means. Napoleon and Hitler tried and failed. But Johnson does not consider all alternatives.

Soon he was assailed by moral outrage. He had mentioned the taboo word, 'Hitler', not long after Ken Livingstone had used it. Linking 'Hitler' and 'Europe' caused 'grave offence' or, according to Johnson, a media Twitter storm. He was told by Yvette Cooper to go and stand on the naughty step. Still it was not as bad as Livingstone, who caused John Mann to riot, by mentioning 'Hitler' and 'Zionism' in the same sentence.

Labour's shadow foreign secretary, bomber Benn, said Johnson's comparison was "offensive and desperate". He continued: "To try and compare Hitler and the Nazis - the millions of people who died in the Second World War, the holocaust - with the free democracies of Europe coming together to trade and cooperate, and in the process to help to bring peace to the continent of Europe after centuries of war, is frankly deeply offensive."

Yet Johnson is clearly on to something here. He says "the EU has changed beyond all recognition". It is a "continuing and accelerating effort to build a country called Europe" (*The Daily Telegraph* May 10). Yet, in warning us of the grave danger of waking up in a new country, he ignores the fact that Cameron has negotiated an exit. Cameron's dirty little deal ends the UK's commitment to 'ever closer union'. We can never wake up and find our little island is in 'Europe'.

Voting to remain is not only voting for restrictions on migrant workers, but voting to reject a future united democratic Europe. No working class internationalist and democrat should endorse this rotten

deal. There is no principled reason to vote for Cameron's worse EU. Going backwards is the only thing you can vote for on 23 June. Should we reverse fast or slow?

Johnson has not told us the full story. For that we need to look to Trotsky. There are three ways that Europe can be united. In 1915 Trotsky identified the unification of Europe as a result of a German victory in the war. He recognised a union negotiated between imperialist powers, "an imperialist trust of European states, a predatory share-holding association". He identified a democratic and social revolution, in which the working class came to power in one or more of the European states.

Democratic revolution is one thing Johnson forgot to mention. It is the means by which the people take power and establish government of the people, by the people and for the people. In 1830 Germany was fragmented into 36 petty states, Prussia being the strongest. The German common market, the Zollverein, had begun economic integration.

In 1848 the German people burst into democratic revolution with a popular assembly in Frankfurt. This revolution failed. Twenty years later, Germany was being united by military force under Bismarck's policy of 'blood and iron'. Present-day Europe can be united 'from above' or by democracy 'from below'.

Steve Freeman
Left Unity and Rise

Mean-minded

It's a shame and quite shocking that the editor of the *Weekly Worker* should criticise the Socialist Party for being focused on the austerity crisis ('Making history', May 12 2016). Peter Manson is obviously living comfortably. He is supposed to be a socialist.

The social and economic crisis is the central fact of life for millions of people in the UK. Yet Peter disparages this with mean-minded remarks against the Socialist Party. I really think he should take time off and go into the real world, where such remarks would get him crucified. He needs to do some deep reflection work.

Socialism is about the real struggle that characterises the life of millions of people. Try going without food for 24 hours. Hunger does tend to concentrate the mind. Try living in damp-infested housing, where you can't afford to heat your home. Try living in a work environment that belts you from beginning to the end of the shift and where unemployment could mean you being deprived of the essential income you need to buy food.

I'm sorry to say this, but the CPGB/*Weekly Worker* rarely deal with the most important issues of the day, which dominate the consciousness of millions of our fellow citizens. In which case it can hardly be classified as a socialist/communist party.

Elijah Traven
Hull

Shallow

Your article, 'Recipe for disaster' (May 12), is almost as shallow as a BBC report. Usually such shallow, horse-race, football-pitch reporting is the turf of the UK's jingoistic right wing. This report is not serious analysis, or even good journalism.

'First past the post' gives election wins to the Tories without major changes in the Labour vote. At no time in our lifetime has the government in parliament represented a majority of its voters. None of the post-war Labour or Conservative governments had a majority vote for their 'majority' governments.

The popular vote tells another story. So does Labour's municipal victory that included London. Any report on a British election that does not report at length on how the system awards seats and how many real votes each group gets is incomplete.

Don Macleay
USA

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. 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 22: Ralph Miliband's Parliamentary socialism, Chapter 5 ('The general strike'), section 1: 'Red Friday - and after'.

Radical Anthropology Group

Tuesday May 24, 6.45pm: Introduction to social and biological anthropology, Daryll Forde seminar room, Anthropology Building, 14 Taviton Street, off Gordon Square, London WC1. 'The masquerade and the mobile phone: how do local religious traditions survive and adapt in an era of globalised technology?' Speaker: Roger Blench. Organised by Radical Anthropology Group: radicalanthropologygroup.org.

Save Lewisham libraries

Saturday May 21, 12 noon: Protest. Assemble Lewisham library, 199 Lewisham High Street, London SE13, for march to town hall. Organised by Save Lewisham Libraries: www.facebook.com/SaveLewishamLibraries.

The future of the left

Saturday May 21, 10am to 7pm: Spring conference, People's History Museum, Left Bank, Spinningfields, Manchester M3. Tickets: www.eventbrite.com/e/spring-conference-2016-tickets-25347422824. Organised by Spring Manchester: www.facebook.com/springmanchester.

How revolutionary was the Easter Rising?

Saturday May 21, 2pm: Public meeting, room 2, Liverpool Central Library, William Brown Street, Liverpool L3. Speakers: James Heartfield and Kevin Rooney (authors of *Who's afraid of the Easter Rising?*). Organised by supporters of *Critique* journal and CPGB: study4socialism@gmail.com.

Britain in Palestine 1917-48

Tuesday May 24, 7.30pm: Film screening and discussion, Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution, 16-18 Queen Square, Bath BA1. Organised by Bath Friends of Palestine: www.palestinecampaign.org/events/film-talk-britain-palestine-1917-1948.

Maintaining Momentum

Tuesday May 24, 7pm: Meeting, Tyneside Irish Centre, 43 Gallowgate, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1. 'After the May elections: how to keep Labour's momentum going?' Organised by Momentum Northern: www.facebook.com/events/812010048929662.

No to austerity

Thursday May 26, 6pm: Public meeting, Queen's Park Community Centre, 52 Marlborough Road, Bedford MK40. Speaker: shadow chancellor John McDonnell. Organised by Momentum Bedford: www.facebook.com/MomentumBeds.

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.

Stop the fascists

Saturday June 4, 10am: Anti-fascist counterdemonstration. Assemble outside railway station, Queens Road, Brighton BN1. Organised by Brighton Anti-Fascists: www.facebook.com/Brighton-Antifascists-253814721337252.

Bursary or bust

Saturday June 4, 1pm: Protest march to save NHS bursaries. Assemble St Thomas's Hospital, Westminster Bridge Road, London SE1. Organised by Bursary or Bust: www.facebook.com/bursaryorbust.

Momentum Youth and Students Conference

Sunday June 5, 10:30am-6:30pm: All Momentum members under 30 urged to attend. Venue: University of Manchester Students Union, Steve Biko Building, Oxford Road. <https://www.facebook.com/events/1721818888102312/>. info@peoplesmomentum.com

The People's Chilcot Tribunal

Wednesday June 8, 3pm: Public meeting, Amnesty International Human Rights Action Centre, auditorium, 17-25 New Inn Yard, London EC2. Public inquiry into the Iraq war and government misrepresentations. Organised by Amnesty International: www.amnesty.org.uk

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

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.

ANTI-SEMITISM**Don't apologise - attack**

The right will not let up if we retreat before their smears, argues **Moshé Machover**. This is an edited version of his speech to the May 15 London Communist Forum

Everyone is familiar with the current orchestrated witch-hunt and artificially whipped-up hysteria around 'anti-Semitism' on the left and in the Labour Party. It is, of course, directed against Jeremy Corbyn and in fact is part of a larger picture.

From my reading of the Israeli press, what is happening is a coming together of two distinct offensives. The first has been going on before anyone thought of Corbyn becoming leader of the Labour Party. For those coordinating pro-Israel, pro-Zionist propaganda, a few cracks had started to appear in the edifice. This is noticeable mainly, but not only, in the United States - which is, of course, the main arena for the pro-Zionists - but here in Britain too. There has been a shift in public opinion regarding Israeli policy and the conflict in the Middle East and the legitimisation or otherwise of Israel as a Zionist, colonising state.

Take, for example, the current primary campaign for US president. One of the remarkable things about it is that, of all the serious candidates, the one who is attracting the most support amongst the broad left - especially among young people, including and especially among young Jewish people - happens to be Jewish. And he is the only one who refused an invitation to address the main pro-Israel lobby, the American

Being anti-Zionist is not being anti-Semitic - obviously

Israel Public Affairs Committee (Aipac).

Apart from calling himself a socialist and getting support despite this, Bernie Sanders is the only candidate who has talked about the rights of the Palestinian people. He has not gone as far as we would like, but in the context of the United States it is still remarkable. Various opinion polls show he has gained support among both Muslims and Jews, especially the young. This represents a shift.

One focus of this shift has been the campaign for boycott, divestment and sanctions. When the BDS campaign was very young there was some discussion about whether it could actually overthrow the Zionist regime - just as some people thought a boycott of South Africa could overthrow apartheid. Of course, all analogies between South Africa and Israel are misleading, because they represent two different models of colonisation. But, leaving that aside, while sanctions may help to produce favourable conditions, those who think they are going to overthrow the regime in this way are deluding themselves.

The BDS campaign has, however, been a mobiliser of public opinion. Its advantage is that in various trade unions and professional organisations, in every college and university, there is a group of people campaigning, and this has provoked a very useful debate about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. What is remarkable is that among the BDS activists there is an overrepresentation of young

Jewish people.

That is very worrying for the Zionists and if you read the Israeli press it is clear that there is a determination to take measures to halt this erosion of support and the attack on the legitimacy of the Zionist state by discrediting the other side. This was the situation before there was even a hint that Jeremy Corbyn could become Labour leader. Of course, his election is an added worry, because for the first time ever a leader of the main opposition party in Britain is someone who has supported the Palestinian struggle.

And so the Zionists and all their allies decided to target Corbyn. Accidentally or not, the current Israeli ambassador to London is a certain Mark Regev, who has in the past justified genocide. Regev is hardly a normal diplomat - he is a propagandist by trade. This campaign has merged with the efforts of those who have no particular pro-Israel sentiments, but are looking for ways to attack the left of the Labour Party.

So there is now a coalition between, on the one side, people worried about the rise in support for the Palestinian cause and would like to discredit Corbyn and the Labour left for that reason; and, on the other, people like the vile blogger, Guido Fawkes, whose real name is Paul Staines - a rightwinger who would do anything to discredit Corbyn and the Labour left. He

is using 'anti-Semitism' smears for

opportunistic reasons, not because he really cares one way or the other about Israel/Palestine.

Four examples

So what have they come up with in regard to the accusations of anti-Semitism? A few essentially trivial examples and some *non-examples*. Most of what has been publicised in the press fall into the latter category. Let me mention the four most prominent, that have been widely publicised in the media.

First there is Naz Shah, one of the new Labour MPs, who some years ago shared an image of Israel superimposed on the United States, with the ironic comment that the Israel-Palestine conflict would be resolved if Israel could be relocated to the USA. This image originated in the States and was meant as a satirical comment on US support for Israel - Norman Finkelstein, the renowned anti-Zionist professor, gave it prominence. And this was supposed to be anti-Semitic? Anybody who thinks that this was anything but a piece of satire should have their head examined.

Obviously nobody was seriously suggesting that Israel, or the Israeli people, should be physically relocated to the United States. But, it was claimed, the implication was that the Israelis should be 'transported' to the US, just as the Jews had been transported to Auschwitz, so the image must be anti-Semitic! In fact this is the sort of joke that is very popular in Israel, as well as in the US, because it says a lot about the relationship between the two states.

Then there is Jackie Walker, a black Jewish activist, who is actually prominent in Momentum. Like Naz Shah she has been suspended, under a process that is

completely opaque, for saying that there was not only a Jewish holocaust, but a black African one too (she is a descendant of both groups). Moreover, she remarked that some Jews had been involved in the slave trade - an historical fact. Would it be anti-Christian to say that some people of that religion had been involved? Or anti-British to say that some people from this island had been too? In fact is you go further back, ironically one of the best examples of collaboration between Jews and Arabs was during the slave trade in east Africa. There are perpetrators as well as victims amongst all ethnic groups.

Next there is an example - not from the Labour Party, but from the left more generally - of the president of the National Union of Students, Malia Bouattia, who remarked that Birmingham is "something of a Zionist outpost". If I said, rightly or wrongly, that University College London is 'something of a Trotskyist outpost', so what? Of course, if you believe that 'Zionist' is a synonym for 'Jewish', then perhaps that does not sound so good. But this is a Zionist conflation and there is no indication that this is what Malia Bouattia meant - her whole history contradicts such an assumption.

Finally there is Ken Livingstone, who said that Hitler "supported Zionism until he went mad". This is certainly inaccurate and Livingstone would have been well advised not to make such a statement on that occasion, but the point he was



making is basically correct, as I shall demonstrate.

Of course, he got the date wrong, when he said that the Nazi change of policy occurred in 1932, when Hitler was not yet in power. It was also wrong to personalise the shift in policy, but this stems from a general misunderstanding on the left. You see, we speak about Stalinism, but not 'Hitlerism', and there is a good reason for this. Stalin was a micro-manager. He slept very few hours at night and personally went through all the relevant papers, so that what went on in the Soviet Union was very much under Stalin's personal control. But Hitler was an indolent bastard, who spent most of his evenings watching westerns! He certainly did not micro-manage the Nazi regime. He relied on his staff and trusted associates, whom he actually treated much better than Stalin treated those around him.

I mention this because the two are frequently compared, but they had very different ways of conducting their affairs. In Germany there were no great purges after the massacre of the SA, the paramilitary wing of the Nazi Party. Hitler's close collaborators remained in place until the end. However, as I will demonstrate below, the essence of what Ken Livingstone said was basically correct - perhaps more correct than he realised and certainly than most people realised.

Don't mention Zionism

How should the left react under such circumstances? A good friend of mine, who is on the left and has been a co-signatory of some of the statements we have been issuing, said to me that maybe we should not talk too much about Zionism, because people do not understand it and can get confused. Maybe we should just concentrate on the actual evils carried out by Israel.

You will not be surprised to learn that this person belongs to that part of the left which is happy to talk about austerity, but does not want to mention capitalism. Everyone understands austerity and it is good to organise demonstrations against it, but 'capitalism' is too much of a political word.

I fail to see how dropping mention of Zionism can work. Even the Zionists acknowledge that it is acceptable to criticise Israeli policy and would not be too concerned if we criticised, say, Israel's continuing colonisation - building settlements on the West Bank and so on. But I ask a question: why does Israel persist in this? It is a policy which earns it the most criticism, even in the United States. Barack Obama and John Kerry have criticised it directly and the British government's official policy is that these settlements are 'illegal' - they are an 'obstacle to peace', etc. So why does Israel do it? How can you explain it?

It can be explained by the fact that it is an essential part of Zionist policy. In carrying out this policy Israel is, if you like, following an imperative of Zionism from the very beginning. Once you accept that this is an integral part of Zionism, then you realise it would be strange if Israel did not attempt to implement it. It is not as if it were a policy specific to the current government of Binyamin Netanyahu. It has been carried out by all Israeli governments since 1967 and it took place within the former borders - the so-called 'green line' - before 1967. It has been an ongoing policy of Zionist colonisation from the very beginning.

You cannot explain why Israel is continuing with a policy that is not winning it any friends without

mentioning Zionism. On the contrary, I think what we should do is not apologise - I am not a member of the Labour Party, so I will not directly advise Corbyn - but instead go onto the offensive and be aggressive: directly attack Zionism.

And you can also attack Zionism precisely because of its collusion and collaboration with anti-Semitism, including up to a point with Nazi Germany. We should not respond to the attacks by saying, 'We are against anti-Semitism, as we are against all racism', which is to accept that anti-Semitism is actually a problem on the left. While of course we oppose such racism, the fact is that its proponents within the left and the Labour Party account for a minuscule proportion. We can deal with anti-Semitism if it shows its head, but we should not make gestures as a kind of apology in the face of the current assault. The handful of people on the left who propagate a version of the 'Protocols of the Elders of Zion' carry no weight and are without any intellectual foundation.

The Protocols contained claims of both capitalist and working class conspiracy: Jews were 'overrepresented' among capitalists, but they were also 'overrepresented' in the revolutionary movement. The anti-Semitic slogan in revolutionary Russia was: "Sugar - Brotsky, tea - Vytovsky, Russia - Trotsky" - the first two were magnates and all three were Jews. We can deal with similar nonsense on the left in our own time, but not as an apology in response to the anti-Corbyn attacks. On the contrary, we need to go on the counteroffensive.

Zionist link

We should take the side of the Board of Deputies of British Jews - not the current one, but the Board of Deputies of 100 years ago! It put out some very pertinent statements about Zionism and its connection with anti-Semitism. When the negotiations on the 1917 Balfour Declaration were taking place, a prominent member of the Board of Deputies, Lucien Wolf, wrote:

I understand ... that the Zionists do not merely propose to form and establish a Jewish nationality in Palestine, but that they claim all the Jews as forming at the present moment a separate and dispossessed nationality, for which it is necessary to find an organic political centre, because they are and must always be aliens in the lands in which they now dwell, and, more especially, because it is "an absolute self-delusion" to believe that any Jew can be at once "English by nationality and Jewish by faith".

I have spent most of my life in combating these very doctrines, when presented to me in the form of anti-Semitism, and I can only regard them as the more dangerous when they come to me in the guise of Zionism. They constitute a capitulation to our enemies, which has absolutely no justification in history, ethnology or the facts of everyday life, and if they were admitted by the Jewish people as a whole, the result would only be that the terrible situation of our co-religionists in Russia and Romania would become the common lot of Jewry throughout the world.¹

About the same time, Alexander Montefiore, president of the Board of Deputies, and Claude, his brother, who was president of the closely associated Anglo-Jewish Association, wrote a letter to *The Times*. They stated that the "establishment of a Jewish nationality in Palestine, founded on

the theory of Jewish homelessness, must have the effect throughout the world of stamping the Jews as strangers in their native lands and of undermining their hard-won positions as citizens and nationals of those lands".²

They pointed out that the theories of political Zionism undermined the religious basis of Jewry, to which the only alternative would be "a secular Jewish nationality, recruited on some loose and obscure principle of race and of ethnographic peculiarity".

They went on:

But this would not be Jewish in any spiritual sense, and its establishment in Palestine would be a denial of all the ideals and hopes by which the survival of Jewish life in that country commends itself to the Jewish conscience and Jewish sympathy. On these grounds the Conjoint Committee of the Board of Deputies and the Anglo-Jewish Association deprecates earnestly the national proposals of the Zionists.

The second part in the Zionist programme which has aroused the misgivings of the Conjoint Committee is the proposal to invest the Jewish settlers [in Palestine] with certain special rights in excess of those enjoyed by the rest of the population ...

In all the countries in which Jews live the principle of equal rights for all religious denominations is vital to them. Were they to set an example in Palestine of disregarding this principle, they would convict themselves of having appealed to it for purely selfish motives. In the countries in which they are still struggling for equal rights they would find themselves hopelessly compromised ... The proposal is the more inadmissible because the Jews are and probably long will remain a minority of the population of Palestine, and might involve them in the bitterest feuds with their neighbours of other races and religions, which would severely retard their progress and find deplorable echoes throughout the orient.³

This turned out to be highly prophetic.

Nazi collaboration

Let us turn now to the Zionist-Nazi connection. In fact it sounds more shocking than it is, because we are talking about the early days of the Nazi regime. Today the holocaust is taught in schools, so people may know when the policy of extermination of Jews actually started officially - in January 1942, when a Nazi conference was convened in Wannsee under the chairmanship of Reinhard Heydrich. Heydrich was second in command to Heinrich Himmler, the head of the SS.

The minutes of this conference are actually online and in them a change in policy towards the Jews, ratified by the *Führer*, was declared. Although it is phrased euphemistically, it is clear that what was being talked about was both deportation to the east and extermination.

This change occurred following the attack on the Soviet Union, when the Nazis felt they had to find different ways of dealing with the 'Jewish problem'. Until that time the official policy was for the exclusion of the Jews from political and civic life, for separation and for emigration. Quite naturally the Zionist leadership thought this set of policies was similar to those of other anti-Semitic regimes - which it was - and the Zionist approach was not peculiar to the Nazi regime.

The founder of political Zionism, Theodor Herzl, had pointed out that anti-Semitic regimes would be allies, because they wanted to get rid of the Jews, while the Zionists wanted to rid them of the Jews. That was the common interest.

In 1934 the German rabbi, Joachim Prinz, published a book entitled *Wir Juden* ('We, the Jews'), in which he welcomed the Nazi regime. That regime wanted to separate Jews from non-Jews and prevent assimilation - as did the Zionists. Philip Roth's novel, *The plot against America*, is based on actual people, including Prinz, who emigrated to America and became a leader of the US Jewish community - the fact that he was a Zionist is not mentioned.

Anyway, the Zionists made overtures to the Nazi regime, so how did the Nazis respond? Here are two relevant quotations. The first is from the introduction to the Nuremberg laws, the racist legislation introduced in Nazi Germany in 1935. This extract was still present in the 1939 edition, from which I am quoting:

If the Jews had a state of their own, in which the bulk of their people were at home, the Jewish question could already be considered solved today ... The ardent Zionists of all people have objected least of all to the basic ideas of the Nuremberg laws, because they know that these laws are the only correct solution for the Jewish people too ...⁴

Heydrich himself wrote the following in an article for the SS house journal *Das Schwarze Korps* in September 1935:

National socialism has no intention of attacking the Jewish people in any way. On the contrary, the recognition of Jewry as a racial community based on blood, and not as a religious one, leads the German government to guarantee the racial separateness of this community without any limitations. The government finds itself in complete agreement with the great spiritual movement within Jewry itself, so-called Zionism, with its recognition of the solidarity of Jewry throughout the world and the rejection of all assimilationist ideas. On this basis, Germany undertakes measures that will surely play a

significant role in the future in the handling of the Jewish problem around the world.⁵

In other words, a friendly mention of Zionism, indicating an area of basic agreement it shared with Nazism.

Of course, looking back at all this, it seems all the more sinister, since we know that the story ended with the gas chambers a few years later. This overlap is an indictment of Zionism, but the actual collaboration between the two was not such an exceptional thing, when you accept that the Zionists were faced with the reality of an anti-Semitic regime.

By the way, half of what Ken Livingstone said is not very far from the caricature uttered by Netanyahu last year during an address to delegates at the World Zionist Congress in Jerusalem. According to Netanyahu, "Hitler didn't want to exterminate the Jews" until he met the grand mufti of Jerusalem, Hajj Amin al-Husseini, in 1941. Netanyahu claimed that "Al-Husseini went to Hitler and said, 'If you expel them, they'll all come here'."

Of course, the allegation that the idea of extermination originated with the grand mufti has been rejected with contempt by serious historians, but Netanyahu was at least correct in saying that emigration, not extermination, was indeed Nazi policy until the winter of 1941-42.

Let me repeat: we must go on the counterattack against the current slurs. It is correct to expose Zionism as a movement based on both colonisation and collusion with anti-Semitism. Don't apologise for saying this. If you throw the sharks bloodied meat, they will only come back for more. At the moment the left is apologising too much, in the hope that the right will let up.

They will not do so, until they succeed in their aim of deposing Jeremy Corbyn ●

Notes

1. Reproduced in B Destani (ed) *The Zionist movement and the foundation of Israel 1839-1972* Cambridge 2004, Vol 1, p727.
2. *The Times* May 24 1917.
3. See www.godlikeproductions.com/forum/1/message55570/pg1.
4. See M Machover and M Offenberg *Zionism and its scarecrows* London 1978, p38, which directly quotes *Die Nurnberger Gesetze*. See also F Nicosia *The Third Reich and the Palestine question* London 1985, p53; and FR Nicosia *Zionism and anti-Semitism in Nazi Germany* Cambridge 2008, p108. The latter cites a 1935 article by Bernhard Lohsener in the Nazi journal *Reichsverwaltungsblatt*.
5. *Das Schwarze Korps* September 26 1935.

Fighting fund

Appreciation

"I found the *Weekly Worker* a bit 'heavy' at first," writes comrade JP in the note accompanying his cheque, but now "I really enjoy each issue". To show his appreciation he added an extra £5 to his six-month subscription.

Another cheque donation to our fighting fund came from CT. But, unlike JP, he didn't bother with a note - no doubt he thought his £20 would speak for itself. Quite right too! Then there were two PayPal donations - £25 from FC and £20 from SM, all the way from Canada. They were among 3,541 online readers last week.

There were also six standing orders, including a handsome £50 from TB, who has increased her regular monthly donation substantially, and £75 from MM. The others were TR (£30), KB and DW (£20), and SP (£5). Finally comrade PB handed

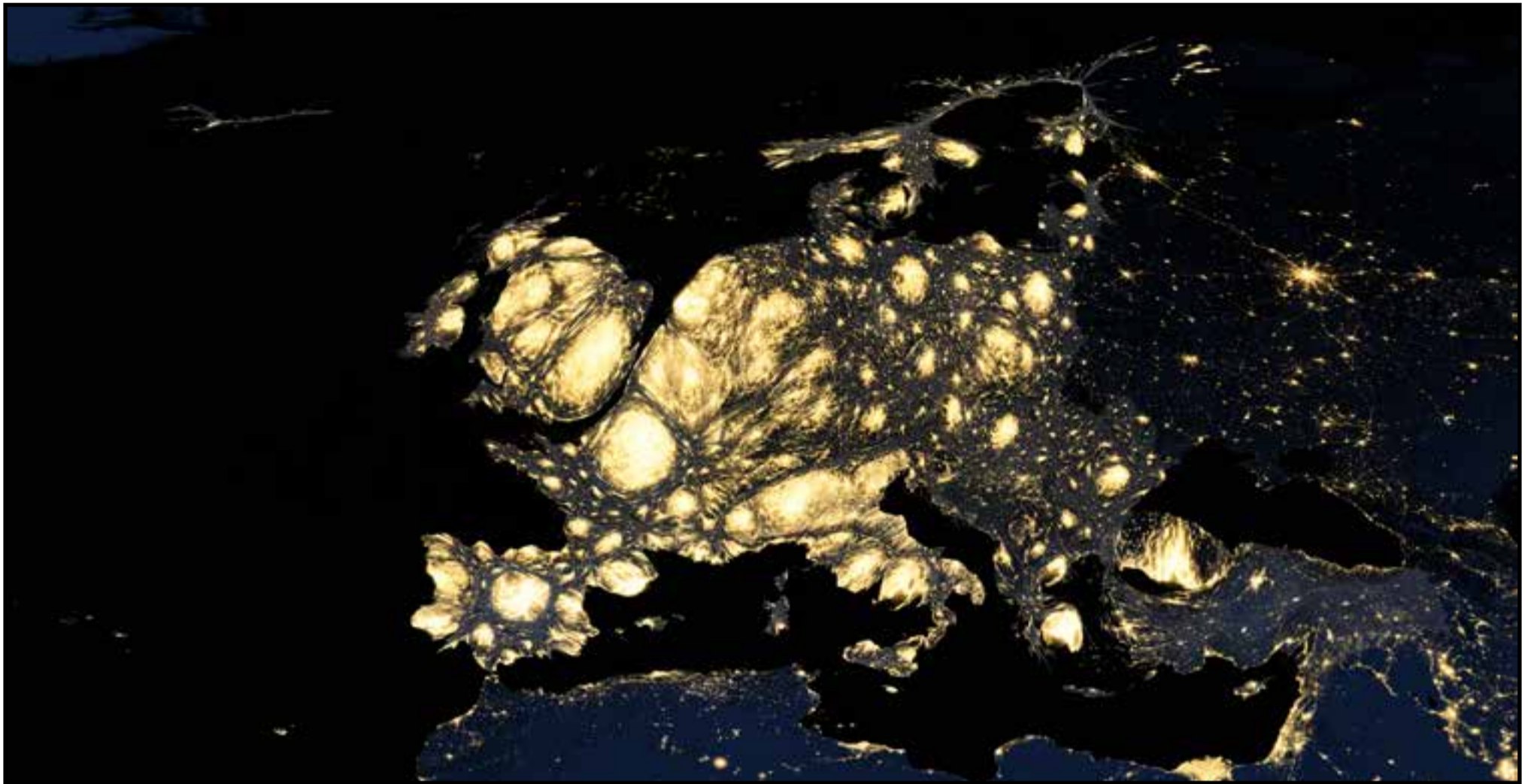
over £40 towards our fund at the CPGB's well-attended London Communist Forum, addressed by Moshé Machover, on May 15.

All that comes to £310 and takes our running total for May to £878. I hate to say this, though, but we are well into the second half of the month and just a little bit behind where we need to be if we're to reach our £1,750 target. So you know what to do - any of the methods above will do nicely, but, best of all, especially for those with an online account, why not make a bank transfer? Not only are there no fees, but we get it almost instantly. Please pay *Weekly Worker* at 00744310 (sort code 30-99-64) ●

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EUROPE



Europe at night: adjusted to account for population size

A continent of the mind

Jack Conrad shows that the European Union has been shaped not only by rival state powers, but by class politics too

Europe is a comparatively recent concept. As historian Norman Davies explains, it “gradually replaced the earlier concept of ‘Christendom’ in a complex intellectual process lasting from the 14th to the 18th centuries”. Only in the early years of the 18th century did notions of a common European identity finally supercede those of Christendom. The Treaty of Utrecht (1713) provides perhaps the last major diplomatic reference to the “Christian commonwealth”.¹

Europe is a continent of the mind. Europe certainly owes more to culture, politics and history than geography. In terms of space, Europe is merely an extension of the great Asian land mass akin to the Indian subcontinent.

Over time borders have waxed and waned. William Blake illustrates his 1794 book *Europe a prophesy* with a frontispiece depicting Urizen reaching down from the heavens holding a pair of compasses (reproduced on this week’s front cover). Yet despite such divine intervention Europe’s dimensions have never been fixed. Europe is “tidal”; the main gravitational factor being Russian state power.²

Russia, and Russian otherness, stretches deep into Asia, all the way to the Pacific, but also menacingly reaches to the west. Sometimes the perceived borders of Europe have included Russia. At other times Russia - along with its occidental outer shell - has been excluded. But, whether Europe stops at the Elbe, the Wista or the Don, there have been repeated proposals to overcome its often bloody divisions.

Quaker leader William Penn (1644-1718), the founder of Pennsylvania, advocated religious toleration and has the distinction of being perhaps the first to propose a European parliament. Charles Castel de St Pierre (1658-1743), a dissident French abbot, called for a European confederation in order to secure peace. Certainly, the so-called religious wars of the 15th,

16th and 17th centuries and then the emergence of Orthodox Russia as a great power saw Christendom lose ground as a concept.

Notions of a European commonality steadily gained traction. Voltaire, writing in 1751, described Europe as a “kind of great republic”, some parts of it monarchical and “others mixed ... but all corresponding with one another”. He cites not only common religious foundations, but common “principles of public law and politics unknown in other parts of the world”.³ Twenty years later, Rousseau was saying that there were no longer French, German, Spanish “or even English”, but “only Europeans”.⁴

Europe came to represent a cherished goal - the ideal of peace and harmony that was so lacking in reality. Invoked by revolutionary democrats and reactionaries alike, Europe served rival causes. Napoleon Bonaparte sought to unite Europe in the image of France. In turn the main counterrevolutionary powers joined in concert against the French revolution in the hallowed name of European civilisation. The 1814 Congress of Vienna put in place an interlocking system of European states. Later, imperialism was justified with reference to Europe’s moral superiority and worldwide mission.

Another Europe gestated. Proletarian Europe. Taking his cue from the Marx-Engels team, Karl Kautsky desperately tried to prevent the outbreak of a horrendous inter-imperialist war - millions would die and socialism would be thrown back a generation or more. As we have seen, in 1912 Kautsky proposed that the working class should settle accounts with autocratic Germany, Austria-Hungary and Russia and boldly take the lead in bringing about a republican United States of Europe.⁵

Treacherously, ignoring its Stuttgart and Basel resolutions, the Second International abysmally failed

to fight war with revolution. In the name of defending the fatherland, most affiliated parties sided with their own ruling classes. However, as we all know, World War I triggered the collapse of the European autocracies. Despite that, socialism was left isolated in the suffocating backwardness of Russia. The German and Austrian revolutions were halted halfway by official social democracy.

The centre of gravity of the world economy shifted from Europe to the United States. Yet because of its strong working class movement, high culture and extensive colonial possessions, Europe remained of paramount political importance. Revolutionaries and reformists alike sought to rescue Europe from decline and fragmentation - the former for socialism and working class rule, the latter for a beneficial deal for the working class under the rule of capital. Eg, Trotsky won Comintern to the ‘United States of Europe’ slogan in 1923. A short while later, in 1929, Aristide Briand, the right socialist, then France’s foreign minister, presented proposals to the League of Nations for a European Federal Union. At the centre of his plan lay the goal of a Franco-German rapprochement. Briand envisaged economic collaboration between Europe’s states, a permanent executive and provision for common military protection against the Bolshevik menace. Nowadays Eurocrats celebrate Briand as a kind of grandfather of the European Union.⁶

The 1929 great crash, then the coming to power of Adolf Hitler scuppered the Briand plan. Nevertheless, by 1941 half of the continent was united ... in Nazi chains. Despite the claims of Boris Johnson, Hitler actually despised the Briand and other such plans. Indeed Hitler emphatically dismissed talk of post-war European unity as a “preposterous irrelevance”.⁷ However, yes, there were those in the Nazi

hierarchy who did want to promote a European identity. Eg, Werner Daitz, Joachim von Ribbentrop and Joseph Goebbels. Indeed, the more the war went against Germany, the more did its propagandists project the Nazi regime as the protector of “European culture against the barbarians from the east”.⁸

As for Hitler, with increasing madness, he dreamt of a Europe purged of all *Untermenschen* - the mentally disabled, communists, social democrats, Jews, Roma and homosexuals - and a Germany vastly expanded “at the expense of Russia”. Those semi-Asiatic Slavs permitted to survive would be reduced to serfs; their lot in life - to serve under a colonial master class of Aryan farmers. Hitler thought that the only effective way to arrive at this hideous destination was a diplomatic deal with England: that alone would protect “our rear”, he explained in *Mein Kampf*.⁹

Blocs and contradictions

World War II was fought between two great predatory blocs. On the one side, the axis of Germany, Italy and Japan and, on the other, the alliance of Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union. Leave aside the Soviet Union and its freak social relations. From a Marxist point of view World War II logically developed from World War I - and that itself was a logical development of capitalist competition, reaching back to the stage when monopolies first came to dominate the whole economy and therefore began to involve states and their armies in their struggles for markets and domination (maybe during the late 19th century, as Lenin thought, or maybe some time considerably earlier).

As an aside, Joseph Schumpeter could not have been more wrong. Contra Marxism, he insisted, in his famous apology, *Capitalism,*

socialism and democracy (1943), that imperialism and militarism were explainable as pre-capitalist or semi-feudal phenomena. “As a matter of fact”, he naively states, “the more completely capitalist the structure and attitude of a nation, the more pacifist - and more prone to count the cost of war - we observe it to be.”¹⁰ A thesis essentially repeated by Thomas L Friedman in *The Lexus and the olive tree* (1999): “No two countries that both had McDonald’s had fought a war against each other since each got its McDonald’s.”¹¹ Friedman argued that when a country has reached a certain level of economic development, whereby the middle classes were strong enough to support a McDonalds network, there was no longer an interest in fighting wars. Needless to say, just after *The Lexus and the olive tree* was published, Nato bombed Serbia. On the first day of the air strikes, the McDonald’s outlets in Belgrade were trashed by furious crowds.

Schumpeter’s book is far, far more serious. Ernest Mandel says, with damning praise, that *Capitalism, socialism and democracy* is “one of the few bourgeois historical studies ... worth mentioning, and [is] vastly superior to Popper’s critique of Marx, let alone Hayek’s anti-socialist rantings”.¹²

Schumpeter rested his case on the observation that in so-called normal times the US possessed no army or military bureaucracy, so to speak. Vast ‘empty’ native lands in the east, an unthreatening and sparsely populated northern neighbour and weak client states to the south did historically allow the US to ply a very different course compared with Europe. Between 1870 and 1913 the US spent on average less than one percent of net national income on its military. Nor did World War I significantly alter that. After peaking at 13% of GNP in 1919, arms spending fell

rapidly to one percent and below for most of the 1920s. However, World War II changed things *permanently*. Today US spending on its armed forces matches that of Russia, China, Germany, France, Britain and Japan put together.

Almost needless to say, within the US-UK-USSR alliance there were rivalries and deep contradictions. Each power wanted to win out over the other. In that sense the war conducted against the Axis powers was simultaneously a hidden conflict between Britain, the US and the USSR; a conflict which inevitably continued and intensified, first after VE day and then after VJ day.

Britain, the US and the USSR beat Germany. And yet, in 1945, Britain lay exhausted and massively indebted to the US. Britain's Anglo-Saxon cousins exacted their pound of flesh - controlled decolonisation and subordination of the pound sterling to the dollar. Back in 1924 Leon Trotsky had predicted an Anglo-American war: "Britain," he said, "is America's chief rival, the main obstacle on its path."¹³ A prediction that proved brilliantly accurate - except, of course, that the war was carried out using other, peaceful, means.

Till the 1956 Suez crisis, Labour and Tory governments alike put up a timorous resistance. The empire in Africa and the Middle East was to be maintained and, when feasible, considerably expanded. John Kent, an expert on the 'close of empire', writes that the "overriding aim" was the "re-establishment of Britain as a world power equal to and independent of both the United States and the Soviet Union". British weakness was viewed by Whitehall as "a temporary rather than a permanent phenomenon".¹⁴

Needless to say, US might, plus the aspirations of the colonial bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie, proved irresistible. What had been the world's largest empire gave way to the laughably insubstantial Commonwealth. Nevertheless the "special crisis of Britain", keenly anticipated by 'official communist' theorists, failed to materialise.¹⁵ The retreat from empire coincided with an unprecedented economic boom. Not the end of capitalism. The massive destruction of capital in Europe plus the Marshall plan saw a huge rise in effective demand.

Meanwhile, divisions between the US and the USSR became overtly antagonistic by 1946. Indeed, even before VJ day and the formal Japanese surrender, the US was busily preparing for an attack on the Soviet Union.

Once Harry Truman received news that the US - and the US alone - had acquired the atomic bomb, relations with the USSR rapidly deteriorated. According to official minutes, in the summer of 1945 the US joint chiefs of staff had already adopted a policy of "striking the first blow" using nuclear weapons.¹⁶

The 'Strategic Vulnerability' war plan envisaged a surprise, "preventative" attack on the Soviet Union. B29 bombers were to penetrate deep into Soviet airspace. Twenty cities would be obliterated in an instant. Millions perish ... but, as we all know, "better dead than red". Invasion quickly follows by sea and land. Moscow and other key centres are taken. Or so the Pentagon calculated. Having lost 10% of its population and something like a quarter of its industrial capacity in the titanic battle with Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union was believed to be in no position to fight a World War III. Hence, after the fall, or removal, of the "totalitarian" regime, the plan was to dismember the Soviet Union and bring about a return of capitalism to the national parts. Truman apparently went into raptures about the atomic bomb being "the greatest thing in history".¹⁷

The subsequent course of the cold

war is well known and does not need repeating here. The Soviet Union collapsed in 1991. The US beat the "evil empire" without dropping a single bomb. As a consequence the US now exercises a global influence that puts all previous empires into the shade. Neither Alexander the Great nor Genghis Khan can remotely compare, let alone present-day Germany, China, Japan or Russia. Though the US is undoubtedly in decline, it is a slow decline that still sees it operate as the hegemonic power, when it comes to the key institutions of global capitalism: International Monetary Fund, World Bank, World Trade Organisation, G7, G20, Nato, etc. So, by any serious reckoning, the US must be regarded as the sole superpower.

Reduction and expansion

Because of World War II Europe found itself much reduced. Under the terms of the Yalta agreement, the eastern half of the continent was incorporated into the Soviet Union's sphere of influence and through bureaucratic revolution 'Sovietised'. In effect Mitteleuropa disappeared. As to western Europe, it was shorn of the glories - and booty - of empire. Humiliatingly it had to rely on US military power to counter the internal and external 'communist threat'. The US certainly strongly supported the integration of western Europe. In particular US pushed Federal Germany and France towards a rapprochement: John Foster Dulles described moves towards placing Franco-German coal and steel under a single authority as "brilliantly creative".¹⁸

European capitalist integration has advanced qualitatively since the Treaty of Rome was signed between Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands in 1957. The customs union has become a political zone embracing 500 million people and 28 countries. But what was advancing tortuously - with endless compromises and half-measures - speeded up following the collapse of bureaucratic socialism in the USSR and eastern Europe in 1989-91. With the Maastricht (1992), Amsterdam (1997) and Lisbon (2009) treaties, the tempo of integration catapulted forward: a common currency and new members to the east. Sacrificing his beloved deutschmark for the euro was purportedly the price chancellor Helmut Kohl paid for French acquiescence to German reunification. Though the EU still often appears to be a jerry-built Tower of Babel, the goal in Berlin and Paris is clear - some kind of superstate. That is what "ever closer union" unmistakably implies.

So the EU embodies colossal ambitions. Ambitions that perhaps reached their dizzyest rhetorical expression at the EU's constitutional convention, which met under the chairmanship of the former centre-right president of France, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. Speaking to the opening session of the constitutional convention in February 2002, Giscard d'Estaing looked expectantly towards the future horizon:

If we succeed, in 25 or 50 years time Europe will have changed its role in the world. It will be respected and listened to, not only as the economic power that it already is, but as a political power that will speak as an equal with the biggest existing and future powers on the planet.¹⁹

For a time it was fashionable in liberal and social democratic circles to claim that Europe embodied a higher, more humane civilisation than America; that the US represents a particularly brutal capitalism. Will Hutton in particular championed EU unity on the basis of such a caricature. Europe's capitalism

is based on "reciprocal obligations", which go back to "early Christianity". The US, on the other hand, "is in thrall to an extreme brand of conservatism" and prone to use the "iron fist".²⁰

Of course, capitalism does not come in ready-made models, to be swapped one for the other according to intellectual whim or fad. Eg, the European, Japanese, Singaporean, Swedish or American. Social relations are in constant flux and assume a particular equilibrium due to the balance of contending forces and interests. Crucially, dead labour and living labour. What interests capital is exchange-value, what interests the working class is use-value.

On neither side of the Atlantic can capital's paid persuaders admit the vital role of the other nation within each nation in bringing about change - powerful trade unions, traditions of solidarity, Marxism and working class self-liberation. Nor the vital role of the class struggle in constantly shaping and reshaping politics. Europe's post-World War II social democratic settlement owes everything to the clash of class against class; nothing to the establishment's supposedly benign desire to see fair play, equality and opportunity. Useful lies. The ruling class in Europe put off socialism by organising far-reaching concessions. The same goes for the US. Roosevelt's New Deal originated in the economics of the working class, not the high bourgeoisie. Class struggle alone can reverse the rightwing tide that has polluted and suffocated US society since the days of Joseph McCarthy and Dwight D Eisenhower.

Ironically the dreams of Giscard d'Estaing, Will Hutton, etc, came off the rails because of success. The launch of the euro in 1999 was widely greeted as a triumph. But, after the 2008 financial crisis and the subsequent austerity imposed on Ireland, Portugal, Cyprus, Spain and Greece, it is now widely viewed as a curse. However, it was the expansion of member-countries to the east that finally sabotaged attempts to build the EU into a world power that could rival the United States. Expansion from six to nine ... and finally to 28 members guaranteed political incoherence and institutional logjam. Note, the US and Britain acted together in urging the EU to accept the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Rumania, etc, into membership.

Turns

In Britain the ongoing process of European integration caused well-known deep divisions. Ideologically the residues of empire arrogance clouded the brain. The 1956 Suez fiasco was a wake-up call. On October 31 1956 British and French forces intervened in the Suez Canal zone, ostensibly in the attempt to separate Israeli and Egyptian armies. In fact the whole thing had been prearranged between Britain, France and Israel. The government of Gamal Abdel Nasser had the temerity to nationalise the Suez canal in July 1956. However, the Americans condemned what they called an act of naked aggression and triggered a run on the pound. Anthony Eden had to concede a ceasefire and Britain humiliatingly withdrew. An historic turning point. Attempts to maintain and extend Britain's Middle Eastern and African empires had to be abandoned. America was now master of the western world and Britain was forced to find for itself a new role.

Charles de Gaulle's 1963 and 1967 vetoes barred Britain from the Common Market. He rightly considered Britain little more than a pliant US agent. De Gaulle sought to re-establish France as an independent global power through leading a so-called "little Europe". In his own barbed words: a Europe "of Europeans", not Americans.

De Gaulle resented what he called Anglo-Saxon imperialism, concluded independent deals with the Soviet Union and equipped France with its own nuclear arsenal, the *force de frappe*. Showing his defiance of the US, de Gaulle withdrew French troops from the Nato command structure in June 1966. The Americans punished him with non-cooperation during the May 1968 crisis. An aged de Gaulle bowed out in April 1969 after losing a referendum vote - a considerable swathe of the French establishment wanted him gone.

As for Britain, its ruling class cemented the (subordinate) special relationship with the US and meanwhile provided itself with a continental presence through the European Free Trade Association (Austria, Denmark, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland and United Kingdom). However, with de Gaulle safely out of the way and with active American connivance, Britain finally entered the European Economic Community in January 1973 under Heath's Tory government (along with its Danish and Irish allies).

Apart from its hard right around Roy Jenkins, Shirley Williams, David Owen, etc, the Labour Party presented itself as highly critical of the terms and conditions. Nonetheless, in 1975 - after gaining some very minor concessions - Harold Wilson's government successfully fought a referendum on continued membership. The main opposition came from a Tony Benn-Enoch Powell popular front with the 'official' Communist Party, the *Tribune* left and associated trade union bureaucrats forming the tail (the revolutionary left formed the tail of the tail). Labour remained programmatically uneasy with European integration till the leadership of John Smith and then the government of Tony Blair. A parallel shift occurred in the Trades Union Congress with the appointment of John Monks.

New Labour and its coterie of middle class career politicians loyally and openly served the interests of the most competitive, most internationalised sections of British capital. The subaltern working class pole of Labourism was purged, coopted or marginalised. Peter Taaffe's Militant Tendency was not alone in concluding that the Labour Party had become a straightforward capitalist party, in essence no different from the Tories and Liberal Democrats.

Nowadays, of course, it is the Tories who are organically split. David Cameron travelled to Brussels committed to a "fundamental renegotiation" of Britain's relationship with EU. But his referendum campaign clearly relies not on any outcome of his hard bargaining in Europe, but the politics of fear. Eg, if Britain votes to leave, the results will range from the bad to the very, very bad. As for Boris Johnson and Michael Gove, theirs is the politics of nostalgia. They appeal to those sad beings aggrieved by Britain's loss of global status.

Of course, in the unlikely event that there is a 'leave' vote on June 23, there will no Brexit. As we have seen, the architecture of the post-1945 world simply does not allow it. That in effect was Barack Obama's stark message when he visited Britain. Boris Johnson could conceivably become prime minister under such - unexpected - circumstances. But, as with Harold Wilson before him, having negotiated a few cosmetic changes, prime minister Johnson will get his two-thirds 'remain' majority (if he goes for a second referendum).

Europe divides the Tories, but it also divides the left. Nationalism runs deep. Concern for preserving working time directives, human rights legislation and the free movement of labour has seen the formation of Another Europe is Possible (promoted by Left Unity, the Alliance for Workers' Liberty and the Greens). Then, on the other hand, there is Lexit (founded by the *Morning Star's*

Communist Party of Britain, Socialist Workers Party and Counterfire). Sadly, national sovereignty, immigration controls and 'British jobs for British workers' have in some quarters replaced the language of working class solidarity and international socialism. Hence, those on the left who willingly play second fiddle to David Cameron, while others willingly do the same for Boris Johnson and Michael Gove. As for ourselves, we argue for an active boycott of the Cameron-versus-Johnson referendum farce.

Siding with either camp is fundamentally mistaken. Both sides are equally reactionary. Nevertheless, the tried and tested way to fight for socialism is in unity: beginning in our case on the continent-wide terrain established by the EU. Communists argue and work towards the unity of our forces across the whole of Europe. Instead of the Europe of the bosses and unelected bureaucrats, we stand for a Europe without monarchies and without standing armies. Such an internationalist perspective directly points to the necessity of organising across the EU at the highest level - crucially a Communist Party of the European Union.

The idea that our side would be collectively strengthened if one or two of our national battalions aligned themselves with a faction of the ruling class with a view to forcing a Britain, a France, or a Spain to withdraw from the EU displays a lack of both internationalism and seriousness. Socialism in a breakaway country is the socialism of fools. Any reformist or revolutionary government that might arise amidst the national chaos would suffer instant retaliation. Fascist counterrevolution or, that failing, isolation through asphyxiating trade embargoes and perhaps a joint EU-US military 'peacemaking' force.

Our strategy is resolutely opposed to any renewed 'Balkanisation' of Europe. The SWP's Charlie Kimber, Peter Taaffe of the Socialist Party in England and Wales, and Robert Griffiths of the *Morning Star's* CPB might irresponsibly campaign for such a scenario. But, whether it comes from right or left, the fragmentation of Europe can do the working class nothing but harm: ethnic cleansing, cleaving apart historically established workers' organisations, national hatred.

Communists strive for working class unity within, but against, the existing EU. Winning the battle for democracy in the EU and securing working class rule over this small but politically important continent is the best service we can do for our comrades in the Americas, Africa, Asia and Australasia.

That is our Europe ●

Notes

1. N Davies *Europe: a history* London 1997, p8.
2. See WH Parker, 'Is Russia in Europe?' in *An historical geography of Russia* London 1968, pp27-29.
3. Quoted in D Hay *Europe: the emergence of an idea* Edinburgh 1957, p123.
4. Quoted in N Davies *Europe: a history* London 1997, p8.
5. See J Conrad, 'A highly serviceable political weapon' *Weekly Worker* May 5 2016.
6. See M Lagana *Quest for unity: Aristide Briand and European integration, 1929-1930* San Jose 1968.
7. C Booker and R North *The great deception: can the European Union survive?* London 2016, p32.
8. *Ibid* p34.
9. A Hitler *Mein Kampf* London 1992, p129.
10. J Schumpeter *Capitalism, socialism and democracy* London 1987, pp128-29.
11. TL Friedman *The Lexus and the olive tree* London 1999, p251.
12. E Mandel *The meaning of the Second World War* London 1986, pp171-72.
13. L Trotsky *Writing's on Britain* Vol 1, London 1974, p145.
14. A Deighton (ed) *Britain and the first Cold War* London 1990, p166.
15. R Palme Dutt *The crisis of Britain and the British empire* London 1957, p27.
16. M Kaku and D Axelrod *To win a nuclear war* London 1987, p29.
17. Quoted in *ibid* p33.
18. Quoted in M Gilbert *European integration* p28.
19. *The Guardian* March 1 2002.
20. W Hutton *The world we're in* London 2002, pp352, 357.

ITALY

Scandal hits M5S

As Beppe Grillo prepares to step down, his populist party stands accused of corruption. Toby Abse reports

The Movimento Cinque Stelle (Five Star Movement - M5S) of Beppe Grillo is facing a serious crisis a few weeks before the June 5 municipal elections, in which the mayoral contests in Rome, Milan, Turin, Naples and Bologna are regarded as being of national importance.

Until now Virginia Raggi, the M5S mayoral candidate in Rome, seemed certain to get through to the second, run-off, ballot on June 19 between the two leading contenders¹ and stood a strong chance of emerging as mayor. M5S regarded the capture of Rome as a stepping stone to forming the national government in the general election due in 2018 - although it could be brought forward if the coalition led by Matteo Renzi's Partito Democratico (PD) undergoes a major crisis. However, M5S hopes of making major gains in June are now in jeopardy because of developments in the two large cities in which they already hold the mayoralty: Livorno and Parma.

Livorno was the most unlikely prize that M5S ever gained - a predominantly working class port city, which used to have a major shipyard and engineering factories, where the Partito Comunista d'Italia was founded in 1921 and which the Partito Comunista Italiano (as it was renamed after the dissolution of the Comintern) and its various successor parties (including today's PD) had administered without a break from 1946, when the first post-war municipal elections were held, until 2014. In that year Filippo Nogarini won a surprise victory in the run-off ballot, as a result of a wide range of forces - including the local radical left, as well as most of the centre-right - backing him against the PD.²

The M5S administration has not proved particularly competent and some of its councillors have defected, leaving Nogarini with a very precarious majority of one. Whether fairly or not, its principal claim to national notoriety has been its poor handling of refuse collection - for some years, including during the PD administration, there have been major problems with the municipally owned company in charge of this service. Similarly the municipal administration's failure to collect its debts and its apparently dubious accounting practices cannot be entirely laid at the door of Nogarini or his M5S municipal cabinet. However, Nogarini's decision to voluntarily put the company into receivership may not have been the wisest course of action and some have alleged that he only went to such extremes under pressure from the national leadership of M5S, who were very eager to score a political point against PD.

Inevitably this decision led to conflict with the company's administrators - and with the dustmen themselves, whose understandable industrial action, given the very serious threat bankruptcy posed to their continued employment, led to rubbish piling up in the streets. This is a situation which will strike many British readers as rather similar to that provoked by Jason Kitcat's deplorable antics during the disastrous Green administration of Brighton council, even if the Livornese may have been far more concerned with the appalling damage to their city's reputation from unwelcome parallels with the internationally notorious Neapolitan rubbish crisis - one

that owed more to the interference of the Camorra, the Campanian organised crime group, than to any genuine industrial dispute.

The decision to voluntarily declare bankruptcy has rebounded on M5S. On May 7 Nogarini himself was charged with participation in fraud - the precise grounds for the charge are a bit unclear, but seem to be related to a payment to 33 casual workers after the declaration of bankruptcy, deliberately ignoring auditors' objections to this expenditure.³ Of course, given the considerable pressure both from the dustmen and their families and from the wider citizenry anxious to have their rubbish collected, the action for which the mayor is being charged does not appear heinous in itself, even if it was the consequence of a reckless and incompetent course of action. But such behaviour is absolutely typical of an M5S administration that at one stage in the last few months appeared to be about to close Livorno's main municipal library, as a result of some half-baked idea of separate tendering for the running of each and every library, museum and cultural institution in the city. This seemed designed to favour some small cooperatives close to M5S (which has always posed as the champion of small business), but made absolutely no sense in terms of a coherent, city-wide cultural policy.

It should be stressed that charges have also been brought against Nogarini's PD predecessor as mayor, Alessandro Cosimi, and against two of his PD cabinet members, as well as against Nogarini's own M5S cabinet member for finance, whose own office had been subjected to a spectacular police raid earlier this year. Whilst the PD - despite Cosimi's own involvement in, and very probably much responsibility for, the bankrupt company's colossal €35 million debt - was overjoyed by the M5S mayor's humiliation, Grillo rallied to him, saying, "We support you, we are with you - hold fast".⁴ Whilst Nogarini has made some statements suggesting he will resign if he is not vindicated, there is absolutely no pressure from the M5S national leadership for him to step down. However, there have been demonstrations against him outside the town hall, with former M5S members playing a leading role, as well as very rowdy sittings of the council itself, with the opposition parties making

demands that he should resign.

Parma

However, within a week a similar situation affecting Parma's M5S mayor came to light. Federico Pizzarotti, who had been elected in 2012, before M5S's national breakthrough in the 2013 general election, had to finally admit that he too had been charged with a criminal offence - abuse of office. He had actually been charged back in February, but the local paper, *La Gazzetta di Parma*, chose to reveal this on May 12 - timing that suggests that its source was seeking to damage M5S in June's local elections and capitalise on the Livornese scandal that already was at the centre of a media storm.

The charge relates to the appointment of Anna Maria Meo as director general of the Teatro Regio, the local theatre. There were 30 applicants for this post and seven of the most promising were short-listed, but none were deemed suitable. A week later Pizzarotti and his cabinet member for culture - also charged with a similar offence - nominated Meo.⁵ The reaction of the M5S national leadership to Pizzarotti's alleged misdemeanour was entirely different to their response to Nogarini's alleged offence.⁶ Within a day Pizzarotti had been suspended from M5S.⁷ Allegedly, the entirely divergent treatment of the two mayors was a consequence of Pizzarotti's keeping the matter of the charge against him secret for months instead of informing the central leadership of M5S the moment he was informed he was under investigation. The M5S dogma of transparency was evoked in favour of Nogarini and against Pizzarotti.

However, this line could not be sustained for long when it was revealed that Fabio Fucci, the M5S mayor of the far smaller town of Pomezia, had also been informed he was under investigation in 2013, but had not revealed it until May 13 2016, when he put it on his Facebook

page. In actual fact the investigating magistrates had dropped the charge against Fucci in April, but even this had not led the vindicated Fucci to go public; he had clearly waited until the Livorno and Parma scandals placed him in an awkward position if the truth got out.

The national leadership of M5S, faced with the Fucci case, came up with a new line of argument to justify its inconsistent stance on disciplining mayors. This involved a new distinction between allegations of defamation, which M5S claims are commonly and casually made against M5S by political opponents, especially the PD,⁸ and charges relating to holding municipal office. However, the problem is that, whilst this explains the failure to take any disciplinary action against Fucci, it does not really account for the Nogarini/Pizzarotti dichotomy - except on the basis of transparency, which M5S had appeared to retreat from.

Of course, the real reason for the suspension of Pizzarotti, who by most accounts has been a far more successful and competent mayor than Nogarini, at least by conventional standards,⁹ is that, unlike the cringingly loyalist Nogarini, Pizzarotti has probably been the only major figure in M5S who has both stood up to Beppe Grillo and his close associate, Gianroberto Casaleggio, and shown no inclination to leave M5S voluntarily. Pizzarotti's attempts on occasions to stand up for M5S dissidents, particularly in his own region of Emilia-Romagna (at least until they had either been expelled or resigned), made him an object of hatred for the obsequious loyalists in his area, especially the current M5S mayoral candidate in Bologna.

The use of Grillo's blog¹⁰ to suspend Pizzarotti by a simple posting, without any semblance of due process - even if only as feeble as that of the Labour Party's compliance unit - seems, according to Pizzarotti and his allies, to be the work of Davide Casaleggio, Gianroberto's son. After the death

of Gianroberto in April, some had, perhaps naively, assumed that his internet and publishing company, Casaleggio Associati, would become merely a technical support service for M5S and that some sort of democratisation was in the offing - a younger group of M5S leaders, especially the 29-year-old Luigi di Maio, had appeared to be groomed for the succession, as the elderly Grillo faded into the background. However, Davide seems to be proving as autocratic as Gianroberto, even if he is far less weird in physical appearance and apparently less prone to his father's off-the-wall, science fiction-style visions of the future, eerily reminiscent of David Icke.

It has even been claimed by some that during the last two years of Gianroberto's life, as his health deteriorated, it was in fact Davide who, as the ruling dynasty's heir apparent, laid down the law to M5S parliamentarians, councillors and ordinary members. As I have pointed out before, the use of online polls with small numbers of responses on blogs controlled by the Casaleggio family has in fact proved far easier to manipulate than the old-fashioned ballot box primaries of the PD¹¹; the techno-utopians of the Paul Mason ilk are talking self-evident nonsense.

Pizzarotti shows no signs of going quietly; even if the crisis in M5S is contained until June, he is rumoured to have plans to unite many of the M5S dissidents who have already been expelled or resigned into a new, more bottom-up movement, which will lay claim to the founding ideals of M5S's grassroots supporters ●

Notes

1. If one candidate gets over 50% on the first ballot, there is no need for a second round, but such outcomes are relatively rare in a fragmented party system and becoming rarer, as the PD is no longer able to mobilise all of the traditional PCI electorate in cities like Bologna, Siena or Livorno. There certainly will be no outright first-round victory in Rome; there never has been since the essentially mayoral system of local government was brought in during the early 1990s.
2. See my earlier article, 'M5S takes ex-communist stronghold' (June 12 2014), for more details.
3. *La Repubblica* May 8 2016. Whilst this surmise is probably correct, the judicial authorities do not seem to have gone into this kind of detail as yet.
4. *Ibid.*
5. This account of events relies on *La Repubblica* May 13 2016 and may be disputed by the accused.
6. Incidentally Nogarini's Livornese political opponents have accused him of similar favouritism in making cultural appointments in relation to the Teatro Goldoni, Livorno's main theatre and opera house - although it must be emphasised that as yet no criminal charges have been brought in connection with these allegations.
7. It is widely suspected this is a preliminary to expulsion, but that there is some unaccustomed reluctance by Grillo to adopt this widely used method against the mayor of a major city.
8. Whilst there is some truth in this, it is also true that M5S politicians are very prone to making off-the-cuff accusations without evidence to support their wilder claims.
9. He has reduced Parma's substantial municipal debt; I do not currently have sufficient information to know whether this was achieved at the price of cuts to services.
10. Or is it now M5S's blog? There seems to be some ambiguity as to whether it is regarded as Grillo's personal property, as was the case in the past, or has become the collective voice of the party. That is because, over the last few months, when Grillo has returned to his original profession as a comedian and engaged in a national tour, there have been claims, whether genuine or spurious, that he will be taking a back seat role in future.
11. I would not seek to deny that these have been rigged too. The most recent major case occurred in this year's Neapolitan primary, in which it was quite clear that in five polling districts bribery and intimidation were employed against Antonio Bassolino in favour of Renzi's favoured woman for the PD mayoral candidacy.



Beppe Grillo:
on the way out

POLEMIC

Social democratic stepping stone

Arthur Bough responds to Mike Macnair

In his recent two-part article¹ in response to me Mike Macnair clearly misunderstood what I had written². Company law is at variance with economic and property laws. Corporate governance and industrial democracy is an arena of political struggle.

A company is made up of “the associated producers” existing within it. Corporate governance *should* consist of a form of democracy, whereby the company controls the use of its capital. The 1970s witnessed social democratic proposals in that realm - the Bullock report, the European Union’s draft Fifth Company Law Directive, etc. Such laws already exist in Germany and the issue has been raised by Hillary Clinton. Industrial democracy is not against the interests of socialised capital.

Then Mike confuses corporate executives with “functioning capitalists”! *Functioning* capitalists are workers, members of trades unions, and the Labour Party. Production managers earn £20,000-£35,000 a year and, as the personification of socialised capital, they stand in an antagonistic relation to other wage workers. In the case of the worker-owned cooperatives, that antagonism disappears.

The conflict is between industrial capital and interest-bearing capital - different forms of capital, as sources of different revenues. Productive capital seeks to maximise the profit of the enterprise, whilst minimising rent, interest and taxes. Money-lending capital seeks to maximise interest/dividends, or capital transfers. Dividends and capital transfers undermine the accumulation of capital.

I have made no proposal for any “alliance of workers and the national bourgeoisie”, as Mike claims. Socialism arises from the extension of cooperatives, worker-owned property and workers’ self-government. The bourgeoisie attempts to restrict it. Workers develop their own party in order to engage in political struggle to overcome that resistance. Mike sucks that party from his thumb, proselytising for it, hoping the scales will fall from the eyes of millions of workers.

Conservative forces defend control over socialised capital by owners of interest-bearing capital. Because workers are imbued with bourgeois ideas, the workers’ party, initially, takes the form of a social democratic party. It represents the interests of the socialised capital. As workers defend the interests of their property, this political conflict sharpens.

The major parties seek to build electoral coalitions to win office. They move towards conservatism or social democracy, depending upon what ideas are prevalent at the time, which reflects whether industrial or interest-bearing capital has the upper hand. When unemployment is low, and the demand for labour is high, labour may obtain temporary advantage, also manifest within the realm of ideas, and reflected within such coalitions.

I use ‘social democracy’ and ‘liberal democracy’ as sub-species of bourgeois democracy. Liberal democracy reflects conditions where private capitalist property predominates; social democracy where socialised capital predominates.

As Marx says,

The peculiar character of social democracy is epitomised in the fact that democratic-republican institutions are demanded as a means not of doing away with two extremes, capital and wage labour, but of weakening their antagonism and transforming it into harmony.³

The “functioning capitalist”, and

their equivalents within assorted bureaucracies, are personifications of that petty bourgeois mindset.

Stability

Profit derives overwhelmingly from relative surplus value, requiring huge fixed capital investment, which is not undertaken without stable profits over prolonged time scales. The social democratic state provides stability: undertaking macro-economic planning and regulation; promoting social harmony for continuous exploitation of labour-power, via a welfare state to regulate its supply, and to socialise and incorporate the working class via the trades unions and social democratic parties.

Social reproduction sets the constraints within which elected governments are allowed to operate.

Engels makes the same point:

The repeal of the Corn Laws was the victory of the manufacturing capitalist not only over the landed aristocracy, but over those sections of capitalists, too, whose interests were more or less bound up with the landed interest - bankers, stockjobbers, fundholders, etc ... And, practically, that horrid People’s Charter actually became the political programme of the very manufacturers who had opposed it to the last.⁴

Rent and interest depend on the production of profit, and so on surplus value, produced by labour exchanging with productive capital! Neither capitalist rent nor interest can exist without productive capital. Were the average rate of interest to approach the rate of profit, industrial capital would stop borrowing for investment, and become interest-bearing capital, undermining it.

Interest-bearing capital can only exist on any sizeable scale so long as industrial capital exists, and that makes it dependent on and subordinate to the latter.

Mike explains US and UK wealth by the mercantilist argument that surplus value is the product of unequal exchange and a transfer of value; that their wealth is not the result of their phenomenal ability to accumulate capital, but of grindingly poor countries somehow continuing to transfer increasing amounts of value to them, century after century! Yet some of those grindingly poor countries have also managed to grow, and are far from Mike’s picture of being “fundamentally colonised economies”.

The genealogy is the idea about capitalism having reached the end of the road, only able to increase metropolitan workers’ living standard by a superexploitation of those in the periphery. Marx demonstrates why the higher level of productivity in more developed economies ensures their real wages are higher, and yet the rate of surplus value and profit is greater than in less developed economies: “The more intense national labour, therefore, as compared with the less intense, produces in the same time more value, which expresses itself in more money.”⁵

More productive British labour acts like complex labour, compared to Somalian labour. Despite much higher real wages, the British worker is far more exploited than the Somali worker. Mike’s comments about the UK’s “visible” trade deficit, are physiocratic. Service industry comprises 80% of GDP! Huge amounts of complex labour employed in service industry produce large amounts of surplus value.

The interest money-lending capitalists obtain from their overseas assets is different to the profits made by the financial services industry. There



Functioning capitalists

is no difference in the profits obtained by selling services than any other commodity.

Mike clings to Lenin’s erroneous *Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism*. By the end of the 19th century, colonialism was past its peak. Big industrial capital extracts surplus value on a mammoth scale via relative surplus value, and a continual expansion in the number of workers drawn into wage-slavery.

Lenin and Trotsky saw the period of long wave boom from 1890-1914 as unusual, just as Mike sees the post-war boom as unusual. They mistook the period of long-wave downturn that followed for the period of decay and decline of capitalism.

For Mike, workers’ higher living standards, the creation of the welfare state, etc, can only be explained by the fact that imperialism had to buy off workers potentially attracted by the USSR. Yet Mike also wants to portray the USSR as anything but a pole of attraction that would have caused imperialism to lose any sleep!

Many “concessions” were implemented prior to 1917. Social democratic ideas were already being put forward by sections of industrial capital in the 19th century. Churchill introduced the minimum wage in 1909. In the 1920s, with workers in retreat, Neville Chamberlain drew up proposals for a welfare state. After 1945, it was in West Germany that the codetermination laws, etc, were introduced! The Wilson/Callaghan governments saw the introduction of measures of workers’ democracy, greater social democratic planning and strategy than did the Attlee government. After 1948, there was no “ratchet to the right”. Up to the early 1980s, Tory governments also supported the welfare state. They followed Keynesian orthodoxy to cut short recessions, to maintain full employment - ‘Buttskellism’. More recently, US car makers complained about their disadvantage, compared to European capital, because of the costs of providing healthcare and so on for their workers. China is introducing its own welfare state.

Social democracy’s need to extend planning and regulation has been met by the growth of transnational organisations, such as the EU and similar economic blocs; and by the power to intervene and regulate by the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, World Trade Organisation and other ad hoc bodies such as the G20, despite the existence of conservative governments, for much of the intervening period. Much of that process, as part of globalisation, intensified *after* the collapse of the USSR.

Economic development in emerging economies has been premised on the use of planning and regulation, and growing international economic cooperation. It is that which caused conservative objection to the EU. Yet Cameron was forced to limit his ‘reforms’ to a request for minor tinkering with the EU’s regulations.

Mike confuses and conflates state power and governmental office. His view of political parties and the

implementation of class interests is mechanistic and assumes the policies introduced by governments are identical with the wishes of the state, and the interests of the socialised capital it represents.

From the late 1980s, large sections of industrial capital were migrating to Asia. Workers in western Europe and North America found themselves in a much weaker position. Sections of small private capital became stronger, obtaining a more powerful voice through Thatcher.

The rise in the rate of profit, on the back of falling wages, caused interest rates to fall, and the prices of fictitious capital to rise. Huge capital gains in stock, bond and property markets strengthened the position of those social strata traditionally associated with conservatism - the landed and financial oligarchy. It created the conservative ideas, adopted by New Labour, about the ability to get rich from speculative gains, and borrowing on the back of them.

State macro-economic planning and regulation shifted from Keynesian fiscal intervention to Friedmanite monetary intervention, illustrated by the repeated intervention by Alan Greenspan, every time the US stock market hinted that it might fall.

Policies and capital

I have never suggested that every increase in the size of the state is equivalent to a social democratic policy. It does, however, indicate the contradiction that interest-bearing capital faces, because the alternative to subsidies such as housing benefit is higher wages and lower property prices, directly hitting the owners of fictitious capital.

Social democratic policies promote industrial capital, so it is realistic for those parties to pursue them. Such policies may be opposed by sections of capital, which see them as immediately against their interests, where they cause capital losses from falling bond, stock and property markets. Conservative politicians will reflect those concerns. But rentier capitalists ultimately need the maximisation of yield, and that requires industrial capital to grow, to maximise profits, out of which interest and rent is paid.

The last 25 years has been the anachronism. Instead of concern for yield, the owners of fictitious capital have been concerned with maximising speculative capital gains, which is unsustainable - and only sustained, thus far, as a result of the unprecedented levels of state intervention to keep asset price bubbles inflated.

The representatives of fictitious capital realise the situation is not sustainable. ‘Extend and pretend’ has been applied to Greece, and the vast amount of private household debt across Europe and North America. Huge amounts of Greek debt were written off, in the hope of maintaining ‘extend and pretend’ a while longer, and thereby not suffering an even greater write-off of debt.

Mike argues that social democratic

governments across Europe would still be hopeless, because they would face the other power structures of the EU commission, and so on. It is a counsel of despair with no possibility of any intermediate stages, no concept of process.

It is “politically harder”, but not impossible, for conservative forces to take over worker-owned, cooperative property. That is the reason to develop workers’ self-government alongside, and as a means of defending, socialised property. Worker-owned property has to be linked with the trade unions and other workers’ organisations, and the ideas about worker-owned property and workers’ self-government carried into the workers’ party, as a means of transforming it. Workers brought into that party, organised around those ideas, develop new cadres of elected representatives able to challenge any attacks by conservatives upon it.

A European movement, around support for social democratic measures that oppose austerity and promote the notion of an EU-wide fiscal stimulus, is a stepping stone towards building such a European workers’ party. Mike desires a workers’ party, but is reluctant to engage in any of the necessary practical actions and struggles, by which it would be forged in the fire of class struggle, out of the existing materials.

Mike confuses commercial credit with bank credit. Commercial credit involves firms not demanding immediate payment from each other for the commodities supplied. He confuses the money-dealing operations of the banks with their money-lending operations. The money paid into customers’ accounts is the property of the depositor. The bank merely transfers it to someone else. It does not advance credit or loan-capital by such operations, but acts as a merchant, moving around other people’s funds! It is quite clear that the money from realised profits, etc, deposited in companies’ accounts belongs to the industrial capitalist, not to the bank or any money-lending capitalist.

A country with lots of capital can always obtain liquidity. I did not refer to such countries printing money on a large scale. I did point out that such large scale money-printing, or indeed the provision of large amounts of money-capital via the provision of loans, would not solve the problems of Greece, because those problems consist of a shortage of capital, not of money or money-capital.

I made no assumption that “physical assets amount to capital”. The argument that, no matter how much money or money-capital Greece had, it would not resolve its problem of a lack of capital, is only comprehensible on that basis!

Prior to 2008, the global economy already was experiencing economic growth and dynamism. Within the confines of the long-wave cycle, factors such as the actions of governments can and do play a role. Conservative governments and central banks have acted to reflate huge asset price bubbles and, in Europe, undermined the accumulation of productive capital by austerity. Once those effects are removed, that dynamism, together with economic growth, will resume and the basis of it is already discernible ●

Notes

1. ‘Two strategic illusions’, March 24 2016; and ‘Social democratic corporate management’, March 31 2016.
2. My ‘Making inroads into power of capital’ (January 21 2016) was itself a response to Mike’s two articles published in November 2015.
3. K Marx *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*: www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/subject/hist-mat/18-brum/ch03.htm.
4. F Engels *The condition of the working class in England*: www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1892/01/11.htm.
5. K Marx *Capital* Vol 1, chapter 22.

OUR HISTORY

Too close for comfort

The errors of the CPGB in relation to the 1924 minority Labour government were deeply rooted in the political physiognomy of the early Comintern, argues **Lawrence Parker**

This article maps out some of the Communist Party of Great Britain's response to the installation of a minority Labour government under prime minister Ramsay MacDonald in January-November 1924.

In summary, the CPGB had an opportunistic wobble at the beginning of 1924, as the government was formed, followed by the adoption of a more principled line after the intervention of the Communist International, with the CPGB then moving against some of those elements within its organisation that had been infected with the earlier opportunistic line. There then followed debates that suggested figures such as Rajani Palme Dutt were guilty of collapsing politically in the face of the Labour government and flitting between opportunism and sectarianism.

The CPGB's problems with its united front tactics in this period were constant, going far beyond individual errors, generalised misapplication or specific misguidance from the Comintern. Rather, such problems can be seen as extending back into the notion of a united front tactic wielded by the militarised, top-down parties envisaged by the 21 conditions adopted at the second congress of the Comintern in 1920.

Space precludes a detailed discussion of the machinations of Britain's first Labour government and we can only record that it defiantly set itself *against* any assertion of class interest and instead stressed the cause of 'national' unity, which, in this case, meant the pacification of capitalists and capitalist interests.¹ In other words, it was not a particularly edifying institution to be spreading illusions in, as the CPGB certainly did in early 1924. However, it was not as if the CPGB did not know what was going to take place in regard to the illusions that the working class had in 1923 and 1924 regarding MacDonald and company. Thus in May 1923, the communist MP for Motherwell, Walton Newbold, wrote:

The Labour Party, so far as it remains under the leadership of Mr MacDonald, will re-enact in English history the role of the Presbyterian majority in the Long Parliament [1640-60]. It will vacillate and compromise, compromise and vacillate, until finally, through intrigue, it goes over bag and baggage to the counterrevolution.²

In a similar preparatory vein, Tom Bell warned that it would be "folly to think that the [CPGB] can ever give up its right to criticise the policy of the Labour Party or the personal conduct of the Labour leaders".

Writing in November 1923, Dutt continued this sober appreciation into his analysis of the December 1923 general election: "It is no good looking to the existing [Labour] leadership to produce a working class programme: they are too far gone in confusion and capitulation already."³ However, while the author is looking to the "local bodies of the workers themselves",⁴ Dutt narrows the horizons of the movement in an economic manner, with his talk of keeping "clear of all the intricacies of bourgeois politics, foreign policy, economic theory, restoration of markets, empire trade, tariffs, free trade, inflation, deflation", in order to concentrate on "the plainest immediate issues".⁵ This odd train of reasoning - as if those "immediate issues" were not bound up with "bourgeois politics",

"free trade" and "economic theory" - is then hunkered down onto the issue of unemployment, which leads Dutt to a seemingly radical conclusion:

... it is the business of the state to take charge now of the production of the country ... so as to employ the unemployed and supply the needs of the workers, and that if to do this means trenching on wealth and property, whether by capital levy or otherwise, we should do it without fear - and to get it done we should set up a Labour government [that] shall be made to do it. That is the plain, direct agitation of the election.⁶

Collapse

Whatever the radical language employed, Dutt had limited his horizons to that of leftwing Labourism and it was this mixture of sobriety and economism that swiftly collapsed in late 1923 and early 1924. By December 1923, the CPGB was clearly getting overexcited: "If only the workers can unite, there is no limit to what they can reach, in this moment of the breakdown of capitalism."⁷ This 'objectivist' vein continued through the month: "The force of the mass movement is driving forward the Labour Party to a class challenge, whether it wishes it or not."⁸

By January 1924, Dutt could also be found in an excitable mood with the formation of the minority Labour government, writing that the "the struggle for power is here". The earlier economism remains securely in place, with unemployment seen as key, while other issues, such as "democratic reform ... universal suffrage, the abolition of the House of Lords ... should certainly be put in hand, though it cannot occupy the forefront of attention".⁹ Dutt, however, moves beyond this by taking a moderate, understanding, tone:

A Labour government on a minority cannot be expected to show easy successful action or immediate results straightaway. That must be recognised, and there will be patient understanding of the position on the part of the workers.¹⁰

This conciliatory stance became worse: "There is no wish at this moment to endeavour to force alternative programmes or issues upon a Labour government or to complicate its path or embarrass its support."¹¹

Dutt was also subsequently criticised for another article he had written in *The Workers' Weekly*, where it was suggested that "the greatest danger" to achieving a working class government was the "discrediting of a Labour government by its open association with the bourgeoisie and impotence to help the workers".¹² This attempt to close ranks with Labour leaders at the expense of the "bourgeois elements in the cabinet" was forcefully exposed by 'CM Roebuck' (Theodore Rothstein) in April 1924.¹³ JT Murphy subsequently recalled a proposal that Dutt had made in early 1924 regarding the close approximation of the CPGB and the Labour Party, which meant that the CPGB should not put forward an independent programme in any future election to save the Labour government from defeat.¹⁴

However, Dutt, clearly the main villain of this particular piece, was not alone in the CPGB with such formulations. In the same year, Willie Gallacher had argued for a "responsible" and rightist interpretation of the policy



Ramsay MacDonald

of the united front, stating that it was not a "happy phrase or a mere sentimental expression used for the purpose of getting party advantages".¹⁵ In relation to the 1924 government, Gallacher added:

Had we been concerned merely with the treacherous and self-seeking leaders, we could have struck several of them heavy, deadly blows. But, while such action may have been no more than these individuals personally deserved and while it might have soothed the offended 'dignity' of CP members, the ultimate result would have been to strengthen the forces of reaction. Our concern was not to assert or defend our own 'dignity', but to strive all the time for working class victory.¹⁶

The conciliatory outcome of such a stance is clear. CPGB general secretary Albert Inkpin went even further, writing to the Labour home secretary Arthur Henderson on December 20 1923 with some programmatic "suggestions":

Please accept this as an earnest of the very sincere desire of the Communist Party to help. We hail the present triumph of the Labour Party and will throw all our energy into making that triumph a lasting victory for the cause of the workers.¹⁷

Dutt, therefore, was simply "swept along with the euphoria like everyone else",¹⁸ opportunistically arguing that the CPGB could not 'lash' the Labour Party in the same way it could the Independent Labour Party because of working class attachment to the former.¹⁹

It was also clear that Dutt and others were being led astray by the slogan of the 'workers' government', defined by the CPGB's electoral manifesto of November 1923 as the "watchword of the moment".²⁰ He argued in January 1924:

Therefore the first need for all of us

at the present moment, whatever our differences, whatever our criticisms and distrusts, is to unite in support of a workers' government and its supremacy first and foremost, and to exert all our forces one and all to fight on its behalf four-square against the whole capitalist world ...²¹

But in the absence of any minimum political programme, the 'workers' government' slogan has merely become a cloaking device that breeds illusions in the Labour administration.²²

Correctives

This relative political collapse provoked some alarm in both CPGB and Comintern circles. Indeed, Karl Radek, writing in 1924 of the "reformist epidemic [that] affected even certain communist parties and writers", playfully suggested a disbelief in the stance that the CPGB had adopted: "... we do not think for a moment that our British comrades believed that Henderson and MacDonald were capable of conducting the class struggle."²³ Harry Pollitt of the CPGB reported to Moscow of a "a tendency on the part of some to subsume the identity of the CP into that of the Labour Party, and a countervailing tendency on the part of others towards sectarian 'overzealousness'".²⁴ Bob Stewart, CPGB representative in Moscow from June 1923 to September 1924, was "alarmed by the extent to which the CP welcomed the new administration; it seemed to him that the party was once more lurching dangerously to the right".²⁵

The Comintern responded quickly to Pollitt's report. A resolution of the Communist International Presidium executive committee - 'The British Labour government and the Communist Party of Great Britain', published on February 6 1924 - warned that the Labour government was not one of "proletarian class struggle".²⁶ It stated that the CPGB "must preserve its ideological, tactical and organisational independence ... It must appeal to all groups and organisations of the working class who demand of the Labour government a resolute struggle against the bourgeoisie".²⁷ When the Comintern's president, Zinoviev, wrote an anniversary message to *The Workers' Weekly* in late February 1924, it was noticeably blunt: "You must ... take every opportunity to expose the Labour government whenever it betrays the interests of the workers."²⁸ The fifth congress of the Comintern in June-July continued with this process of firmly yanking the CPGB to the left.²⁹

This had a positive impact on the CPGB, which then began to hold the Labour government properly to account for its miserable record of conciliationism - although, when Dutt wrote in April 1924 that the "political education of the British working class is proceeding very fast"³⁰, one does wonder whether he also had himself in mind. He also began to develop, clearly under Comintern influence, some sound political criticisms on the standing army and the use of military force in industrial disputes.³¹

The CPGB then began to move against those elements in its organisation that were unwilling to accept the party's toughening of its line in relation to the Labour administration. Therefore, Morgan Philips Price,³² who left the CPGB in July 1924, had a 'protective' introduction imposed on his piece by Dutt in *The Labour Monthly* of that

month (published as the final part of a four-article series), to disabuse readers of any notion that Price spoke for the journal's producers.³³

Price obviously had the CPGB in mind when he wrote:

It is therefore no use clothing oneself in sackcloth and ashes and going about croaking like ravens that the Labour government has sold the British workers to the bourgeoisie and that all is lost. Such tactics will only make the group that does this ridiculous, and nothing kills in English politics so easily as ridicule.³⁴

He then moved towards nationalism and a strand of anti-intellectualism:

Nor will extracts from the speeches of Zinoviev and Trotsky in 1920 impress those unemployed engineers, who are hoping from an Anglo-Russian agreement to get to work again, any more than a recitation of what the Sultan of Zanzibar said in the year one. Without reflecting the least on the brilliant writings of our Russian comrades, it is nevertheless essential to adapt language to the mentality of the country in question.³⁵

Price also showed that the use of wretched conciliatory politics had begun to seep down from the Labour government into the interstices of the movement, when he discussed how to conduct relations with the ILP: "... if they are dubbed 'political bankrupts' and 'agents of the bourgeoisie' from the first, the psychological atmosphere necessary to impress the Labour Party right wing and the careerist element, which is among them, will be absent."³⁶

In his introduction, Dutt argued that the effect of Price's reasoning was "to surrender Marxism for a programme of revolution by state purchase" and to "encourage the apostles of social pacification".³⁷ JR Campbell, writing in August 1924, also in response to Price, illustrates the 'firming up' of the CPGB's line on the Labour Party:

If [Price] is out to suggest that the communists should kindly water down their policy, moderate their criticism and whisper to the active workers within the labour movement that after all the Labour Party might be a little more extreme, but we must not say so too openly in public, then the Communist Party is standing none of that nonsense ...³⁸

Leftism

However, as the CPGB moved into early 1925, Dutt was not content with the correction that had been made to the opportunistic line on the Labour government a year earlier, and now adopted a more overt leftism. Despite admitting that Labour "still possesses a hold upon the workers as the representative of their awakening claim to power",³⁹ Dutt was clearly banking on this state of affairs coming to an abrupt end. A "mass Communist Party" was presaged on the notion that the "days of the old comprehensive, democratic Labour Party, with its contradictory banner of 'independent working class politics' and 'no class antagonism', are drawing to a close under the relentless pressure of the class struggle in Britain".⁴⁰

This threadbare logic, displaying some of the misplaced 'objectivism'

**Bribes
substitute for
lack of national
majority**

Collective amnesia

The job of the left is to learn from past errors, not succumb to fanboyism, argues **Paul Demarty**

In Brazil, it is beginning to look like we have reached the nadir of the political fortunes of the Workers Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores or PT) - certainly it is the end of nearly 15 years during which the PT has occupied the presidency, first under Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and then Dilma Rousseff.

Only two years ago Rousseff was re-elected, albeit narrowly, in spite of economic cooling-down, a rightward shift in government policy, and widespread social discontent that gained international attention in the run-up to the 2014 football World Cup. How things can turn: Rousseff is now impeached, accused of fiddling economic data to scrape victory, amid a barrage of corruption accusations against PT apparatchiks.

In Venezuela, things are looking even worse: the country is in chaos, with inflation soaring and the economy in freefall as a result of the collapse in international oil prices. President Nicolás Maduro has declared a 60-day state of emergency, blaming the US for destabilising the country; whoever's 'fault' it is, however, the 'Bolivarian Revolution' has ground to a halt.

Finally, in Greece, it is panto season - once more, it is time for further 'negotiations'. The Greek government has pretended to play hardball, the International Monetary Fund has pretended to take a 'firm line' against the European Union and European Central Bank over the need for debt restructuring, and the latter forces have pretended that the resulting deal - with trivial debt relief coupled with a continuing commitment to the fantasy of running a primary budget surplus in an economy that has been contracting for half a decade - is anything other than kicking the can further down the road. Almost all opinion polls put the rightwing New Democracy party ahead of the Syriza government - with the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn on course for a solid third place.

In each of these cases - the respective political crises of Brazil, Venezuela and Greece - we find common features. All three are stories of disillusionment in political movements of the 'radical' left, and of that 'radicalism' dissipating. Moreover, the PT, Chávezistas and Syriza were all enthusiastically adopted as models of new social movements by the international left: apparently each represented a vibrant and novel way out of the political dilemmas bequeathed to us by our forebears. The PT, from the late 1980s, was the model; then, after it had reconciled to social liberalism in the early aughts, and the Chávez regime had coterminously shifted to left populism and anti-imperialist braggadocio, suddenly Venezuela was the bright future of '21st century socialism'; then the explosive electoral success of Syriza, culminating in last year's two general elections, propelled its photogenic leaders into the affections of the international far left.

All of these heroes have failed; they have failed for remarkably similar reasons; and they have been lionised for the same spurious reasons. It is time we took stock of matters.



Dilma Rousseff and Lula da Silva: running capitalism

Dirty hands

The PT is in origin a party of opposition to the military junta that ruled Brazil from the 1960s to 1985; it emerged out of the illegal unions that organised a wave of strikes in the late 1970s, along with various esoteric leftwing groups.

Its popularity should not be underestimated: particularly in the north and north-east of the country, and in the industrialised areas around São Paulo, it has enjoyed real support since its formation. Its real breakthrough came, however, when the Cardoso government of the 1990s ended with economic crisis early the next decade; with Cardoso's Social Democrats in disarray, Lula was able to sneak into the presidency.

The PT, however, has never enjoyed a majority in either legislative house. Indeed, the Brazilian political scene is highly fragmented, and no party ever really does. There is a perfectly traditional way around this, which is corruption. Either bribe people with money, or bribe them with positions (which they will use to get money). Regrettably, this was precisely how the PT proceeded - the farrago that led to the Rousseff impeachment is hardly the first scandal to hit the presidency in the last 15 years.

It is claimed by defenders of the PT that there are no clean hands in Brazilian politics, that they have done nothing

more than was necessary to get a popular legislative agenda through, and that the enormous prominence given to PT figures in the latest corruption scandal, as opposed to others, means that the impeachment amounts to a legal coup by the establishment. There is certainly some justice to all of this; that the impeachment was begun by Eduardo Cunha, speaker of the lower house and recipient of \$40 million of bribes related to the state petroleum company, Petrobras, is merely the most glaring example of the 'special treatment' meted out to the PT.

At the end of the day, however, the truth is less conspiratorial and more prosaic: the PT chose to govern through a patchwork coalition of careerist politicians; it could just as well have refused to do so. Having made the necessary compromises, up to and including large-scale corruption, no more sinister fate has befallen the PT than that its coalition has now collapsed. Rousseff was only impeached because she lost the support of the corrupt establishment on which she relied.

The Venezuelan case is somewhat different, in that Hugo Chávez was not - like Lula - originally a figurehead for some great social movement, but rather a junior military officer with a populist bent, who failed to make a coup in the 1990s and succeeded instead at the ballot box later on. The 'Bolivarian

riot cops, a switcheroo achieved - in contradistinction to the relatively patient likes of the PT and PSUV - in little over a year.

Self-criticism

In retrospect, all these outcomes seem perfectly inevitable. A government based on bribery will fall as soon as the bribed get a better offer (or are threatened with exposure and are suddenly in need of a scapegoat). A 'socialism' dependent entirely on the world's most artificial commodity price is something of a hostage to fortune - especially if the price is controlled in substance by one's enemies. As for Greece, it was always powerless to impose terms on Europe, and the core EU states had every interest in making an example out of it.

We say 'in retrospect', but in reality these notions were flagrantly fantastical to begin with. They were fantastical above all because capitalism is an *international* political-economic system, whose global organisation is used to discipline the more recalcitrant countries of the world order. You can thumb your nose at the big boys for a while, as Chávez did; but not forever.

The international following of these three political formations was ultimately down to their outward appearance of popular initiative. The PT and Syriza were propelled to importance by mass upheaval; Chávez and co brought a Bonapartist simulacrum of 'participatory democracy' into being after the fact, but nonetheless carried the same cachet of authentic mass popular initiative among international admirers. In short, all three played perfectly to the prejudice that it is more important to be seen to be 'doing something' than to get matters of theory, strategy or politics *right*.

The result is the endless repetition of the same problems - there is some great movement which is the new shining example; it is crushed; then there is another one ... The failures are barely analysed, or else are put down to insufficient intransigence, as if one could somehow feed a country with a solid ration of defiant slogans. We search in vain, for example, for any recent mention of Greece on the websites of Socialist Resistance or Left Unity, which styled itself as Syriza's sister party until fairly recently. Having set yourselves up as uncritical cheerleaders for projects that ended in disaster, how about an ounce or two of *self-criticism*, comrades? ●

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