



weekly
worker



SWP and SPEW constitute themselves as main barrier to PCS Labour affiliation

- Junior doctors contract
- Referendum and youth
- Zionism and anti-Semitism
- Chilcot report and Blair

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Towards a Communist Party of the European Union

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FALLUJAH: 50,000 IN MORTAL DANGER



LETTERS



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

Market socialism

In reply to Alan Johnstone (Letters, May 26), I certainly did not mean to create the impression that the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly by the soviet government was an ideal measure.

The reason for this action was that the Constituent Assembly refused to accept the legitimacy of the soviet government. Consequently this antagonistic situation could only be resolved if this institution "unreservedly recognises soviet power, the soviet revolution and its policy on the questions of peace, the land and workers' control, and to resolutely join the camp of the enemies of the Cadet-Kaledin counterrevolution" (Lenin: 'Theses on the Constituent Assembly' *CW* Vol 26, p383). This proposal was refused because the Constituent Assembly was unable to accept the validity of the soviet revolution. The inevitable clash of sovereignty was resolved by the dissolution of this parliamentary institution.

The specific polarisation of opposing class forces could not have resulted in any other situation. In other words, the only other option was the capitulation of the soviet government. This act would have represented a betrayal of the working class and poor peasantry. Thus civil war became inevitable. Such a development is not an ideal scenario for the present, which is why I would advocate the attempt to peacefully resolve the tension between rival forms of sovereignty.

In relation to the issue of market socialism, I concede that our aim may be a communist society without markets, wages and money. But this is a long-term goal, and what is more practical and concrete is the issue of how we promote the transition to this type of society. I do not support the type of reformist market socialism advocated by Alec Nove, and instead support the leftwing variety outlined by Tony Smith in his work: *Globalisation: a systematic Marxist account* (Chicago 2009). He outlines a society based on industrial democracy, in which the market has an important role.

But let me firstly establish a practical reason for my support of the market. The attempt of the Bolsheviks to develop an economy based on war communism and the suppression of the market was a failure, as admitted by Lenin. The attempt to develop a direct transition to socialism was not successful, because there were no incentives for the peasantry to provide grain for the starving cities. It was admitted that incentives had to be provided to the peasants, if trade was to occur. The economy could not develop successfully without the material rewards provided by the market. This understanding followed the onset of famine, which led to the deaths of five million people, and the widespread generation of peasant revolts.

In other words, the transition to socialism, which was to be accompanied by international revolution, required the utilisation of transitional mechanisms like the role of the market, stable money and wages. Hence the law of value cannot be administratively abolished in this transition period. Preobrazhensky outlined this contradictory process most eloquently in terms of the contradiction between the law of value and the law of primitive socialist accumulation ('the new

economics'). Unfortunately, the New Economic Policy was ended because of Stalin's view that the kulaks were a threat to socialism. This was a myth, and Stalin's dogmatism ended any economic rationality based on the role of the worker-peasant alliance. The generation of socialism requires the reconciliation of economics and politics rather than the imposition of inflexible truths.

Stalin's repressive policies indicated that the attempt to prematurely dissolve the transitional mechanisms of the process to realise socialism end in the creation of a new form of exploitative regime. However, you may ask, what has this to do with the situation today? The historical lesson is that we have to recognise that the transition to socialism involves compromise and the recognition of the importance of the reconciliation of theory with the practical difficulties that may arise in the process of transition to socialism. Hence the Bolsheviks were originally misled by the view that the major aim was the overcoming of the danger of capitalist restoration, via suppressing the role of the market. This standpoint meant they neglected the task of how to realise material needs and welfare of the peasants. However, they recognised their mistakes with the introduction of the New Economic Policy.

We would do well to learn from them and understand that the market, via the relation of supply and demand, is the most efficient mechanism to allocate scarce goods. This process also provides high-quality goods because the realisation of demand is connected to the provision of the items of the highest standard. Under capitalism, the market is an imperfect mechanism to distribute goods because of low wages, which results in underconsumption, and the related promotion of overproduction because of the attempt to realise high profits. This problem can be tackled in the transition to socialism by actually making the market more efficient and able to correspond to demand more effectively. Surplus goods will also be distributed for free.

Hence over time, and gradually, the role of the market may be started to be overcome. But to have illusions in 'skipping over the market' will be to court disaster. This is because the attempt to distribute goods without the relationship of supply and demand, and without prices, or for free, is to generate a situation of the scarcity of certain items, which will lead to rationing. Such a development will only result in resentment in societies that were advanced capitalist economies. Hence, it also goes without saying, that the role of the market is accompanied by an economy based on wages, or monetary rewards. Wages will be an indicator of what it is possible to buy.

But the significance of the market will be offset by the development of industrial democracy and the effective replacement of the dominating role of capital with the importance of workers' control of production. This situation will be reinforced with democratic planning. Hence at the level of production the role of the working class is to provide alternative criteria for the realisation of need. In this manner the objective conditions become possible for the role of the market to become transcended.

As Tony Smith comments, "It is possible to imagine a feasible and normatively attractive society combining markets with the socialisation of the means of production: that is, a society

making use of producer and consumer markets after abolishing both capital markets and labour markets" (*op cit* p303). Hence the continued role of the market is not able to undermine the progressive promotion of socialist relations of production based on industrial democracy. Gradually the character of production will influence the process of consumption, and need will dominate what has been based on the relation of supply and demand.

But, if the attempt to skip the role of markets is tried, the connection between production and consumption is undermined. The result will be the creation of goods that are of low quality and so do not meet demand. In this situation centralised and bureaucratic planning agencies will emerge in order to impose arbitrary prices that have little relationship to market demand. The result is waste and inefficiency. Hille Ticktin does not seem to recognise that one of the reasons for waste in the Soviet economy was the failure to develop market socialism. But this possibility was unlikely because Stalin wanted to develop an arms economy, and had little concern with the consumption needs of the population.

Alan Johnstone is not a Stalinist. He rejects the role of the market with immaculate Marxist credentials. But the point is that the very development of market socialism, combined with the lessons of the Bolshevik experience, have taught us that the approach of Marx has flaws. The point is that the theoretical and practical choice is between our emphasis on aiming to create a society in transition to socialism and communism, or adherence to dogma.

Kevin Hudis has written one of the most detailed studies of Marx's concept of a socialist and communist society: *Marx's concept of the alternative to capitalism* (Chicago 2012). He argues that a society based on concrete labour, or the production of use-values, will overcome the alienated condition of abstract labour and the production of commodities: "This much is clear: a generalised commodity - or labour market, in which the products of labour are mutually interchangeable, cannot exist if the substance of value, abstract labour, ceases to exist. A society cannot be characterised by or dominated by market transactions or a market of any kind if the conditions for its possibility are not present. And the condition of possibility for a market is the existence of indirectly social labour - a condition that is annulled in the new society" (p192).

But the point is that it requires a protracted period of transition to realise this situation. What we do know from actual historical experience is that the attempt to directly overcome the market results in economic and political problems. Marx's texts represent no answer to concrete issues, because he could not anticipate them in the future. Instead we have to develop our own, non-dogmatic, understanding of how it is possible to develop a socialist economy. We can learn from Lenin, Bukharin and Preobrazhensky, and many other theorists. The last word is not with Marx.

Phil Sharpe
email

Nuanced

In the latest of the polemical exchanges between Arthur Bough and Mike Macnair ('Social democratic stepping stone', May 19), Bough accuses Macnair of simultaneously (a) claiming that gains by the working class in the centres of western imperialism during the period of the existence

of the Soviet Union and its satellites were due to the latter's presence as a "pole of attraction" for workers, who therefore had to be bought off; while (b) characterising the Soviet Union in a way that would make one think that it could not possibly have been functioning as such a pole.

I do not want to get into the debate about the precise nature of Soviet society - 'state capitalist', 'bureaucratic socialist' or some sort of 'frozen transition between late feudal absolutism and emergent capitalism'. Whichever such analysis one might cleave to - or if one does not take a view between them, or thinks that elements of them can be usefully fused - one can accept what one might call 'the weak non-capitalist hypothesis': ie, whatever Soviet societies were, within them the capitalist class had clearly been expropriated (although with hindsight we know that this expropriation was temporary).

This minimalist position, is enough to explain, at least partly, the concessions made to the working class in the western imperialist centres while the USSR stood: Soviet propaganda about the USSR was sufficient, given what in fact the USSR was, for the bourgeoisie to take seriously the idea that enough workers in the west would buy it and try to achieve something similar, to pose a threat to capitalist class rule in the west.

I think that this point by Bough is a good example of his rather mechanistic and black-and-white approach. One could paraphrase it as: 'If Soviet society was not ideal, its existence cannot possibly have had any positive effect on the wider fortunes of the working class during its existence.' This contrasts with the much more nuanced position I have laid out above as more or less being Macnair's.

Sean Thurlough
London

United States

Irving Welsh sums *an* abstention case ('However we vote, the elites will win the EU referendum' *The Guardian* May 30), when he says: "Whether you back red or black in the tawdry, crumbling casino of neoliberalism, and whatever the slimy croupiers of the mainstream media urge, it's the house that invariably wins." At the crooked wheel keep your money in your pocket and not on red or black.

I enjoyed the analogy, but it doesn't really cut the mustard. There is much more to this than gambling on June 23. It is better to start with the medium and long term, where the working class can be next year or in five years time. There are two different debates that socialist should have.

First is the argument between reactionary, conservative and revolutionary views of the future. Then there is the immediate vote for 'leave', 'remain' and abstain. Of course, the Tories have only offered people a binary choice between 'remain' and 'leave'. The media national debate is between these two. However, millions of people will not vote and, the larger the abstention, the worse it gets for those who own the crumbling casino. Those calling for abstain [or boycott] are demanding that workers do not simply follow in the choices the Tories have given us.

The big picture is that the European Union is in crisis and cannot stay as it is. It will have to break up or become more fully integrated. It is a 'halfway house' - neither fish nor fowl. In the next

year or five years the EU may break up and Europe disintegrate. Alternatively the EU may become or be part of a United States of Europe, a federal republic of Europe.

A United States of Europe is a realistic possibility, because it is rooted in the real world of capitalism and is the logical extension of the process of European integration that has been going on for the last 50 years. It is revolutionary, because it requires a break with the present. Of course, it is no more than an idea and many kinds of United States are possible. It only becomes a revolutionary reality by the intervention of people and social classes.

Boris Johnson has talked about the future of the EU with a sense of history and a longer-term perspective. Therefore he better understands the present choices. He rejects the United States of Europe and elaborates the reactionary case for taking the UK back to the past as an independent, 'sovereign' country. He omits to mention this would be in the pocket of Washington, continuing our role as the 51st state of America.

Of course, Johnson presents himself as the progressive leader of the British freedom movement engaged in national liberation struggle against the evil empire. He declares he is not anti-European and even sings in German. If Hitler tried to unite Europe under the jackboot, Boris is full of the Dunkirk spirit and ambition to lead Dad's Army.

So what about the conservative future for the EU? Carry on as before, but try a bit of change? This is the best conservatives can offer - remain and tinker about with petty, fogging reforms. In essence neither forward nor back. In the conservative centre, Cameron and Corbyn are together in an unhappy Viennese waltz, pulling in different directions. Cameron wants to take one step backwards and Corbyn one forward. But get real. Cameron is in charge of this little dance.

Voting in the Tory referendum is really a strategic choice between reactionary and conservative options. These are the only two on the ballot paper, hiding under the words 'leave' and 'remain'. But in reality Cameron has not given us a conservative option, because we are voting on his reactionary negotiated 'dirty little deal'. Those socialists backing reaction or conservatism are not facing reality. They are in fantasy land.

Steve Freeman
Left Unity and Rise

It's imaginary

According to Michael Roberts, the fall in the price of oil from over \$100 per barrel in 2008 to around \$40 per barrel today cannot be explained in terms of changes in supply and demand. Any attempts to explain the fall in this way is "superficial at best" ('Consistent, realistic, verifiable', April 28).

Every time soaring oil prices lead to a collapse of demand, which turns into a recession - ie, a slowdown in economic growth - out come the Marxists with their labour theory of value to explain the crisis. Marxists usually relate most crises to the labour theory of value and this happened in the early 1970s, when Opec started a global recession by raising oil prices. The crisis, we were told by leading Marxists, resulted from the falling rate of profit, which occurrence is related to the law of value expounded by Marx. Since for

Marx the law of value is “the pivot on which a clear comprehension of political economy depends”, it behoves us to look closer at the labour theory of value.

One of the great historical ironies of political economy is that the bourgeois classical economists, like Smith and Ricardo before Marx, opted for a labour theory of value around the same time as the industrial revolution had begun to transform the role of workers from skilled artisans to machine operators and supervisors - a process which still continues today. Consequently, by the time Marx came on the scene, the labour theory of value established by the classical economists was already facing problems. Although a labour theory of value is not needed to explain the exploitation of the working class - for instance, if a group of workers produce 100 TV sets and are paid for producing 50, the additional 50 forms the profits of the capitalists - Marx nevertheless latched on to the labour theory of value because it was convenient to do so. As a result, Marxist economic theory was based on something which has no corporeal existence, a theory which, like time, only exists in the human mind.

The classical economists claimed that the value of a commodity was determined by the labour time necessary for its production. So, in the labour theory of value we see that value is closely linked to time, or labour time. As time has no reality outside the imagination, value must be of the same nature: a complete abstraction. This, in fact, is how Marx presents it in *Capital* volume 1, where he derives the value of a commodity not from concrete, particular labour, but abstract universal labour, which disregards the concrete form taken by labour.

The truth is that the abstract labour from which Marx derives the value of a commodity can only exist in the human mind as an abstraction. So we have a failure of dialectics here on the part of Marx. The term ‘abstract’ includes the meaning, ‘having no material existence’, just like the value of a commodity, which Marx derives from abstract labour. What Marx is doing in *Capital* volume 1 when he discusses the nature of the commodity and its two opposed sides expressed through value and exchange value - that is to say, abstract and concrete labour - is to relate ‘value’ to universal abstract labour, or labour in the abstract: that is, independent from its concrete form, from which use-values are produced. Marx uses dialectical logic to explain the two opposed sides of the commodity, but fails to grasp that abstract labour, as a category, can only exist abstractly, in the human mind.

So, according to the argument of supporters of the labour theory of value, or the law of value, as Marx called it, the value of a commodity comes from abstract universal labour, which like time, can only exist in the imagination. It is impossible to grasp Marx’s error without understanding that the abstract, including what Marx calls abstract labour, can only exist in the imagination. It has no corporeal reality because real labour is always concrete and particular, with a defined purpose. In the labour process the universal is immediately turned into its opposite, the concrete particular, negating its existence as actuality. Marx’s error consisted in not taking into account the transformation of the abstract into its opposite, the concrete.

Thus Marx’s theory of value is

based on separating the abstract from the concrete, and viewing the two in rigid opposition. This is a mistake in dialectical logic, and so his theory of value results from this mistake. Therefore, to defend Marx’s version of the labour theory of value it is necessary to abandon dialectics. This is because not only the conflict of opposites, but also the unity of opposites and the transformation of opposites into each other, is essential for grasping the *modus operandi* of dialectical thinking.

If the value of a commodity does not come from abstract, universal labour, which exists only in the imagination, where does it come from? A clue is found in Marx, when he argues that no commodity can possess value unless it simultaneously possesses use-value. It is indeed remarkable that Marx could argue that without use-value a commodity cannot possess value, but then proceeds to develop a theory of value which disregards use-value. How is it possible to argue that use-value doesn’t count when discussing value? This is Marx’s failure of dialectics - the elevation of abstract labour over concrete labour and deriving value from the former, while claiming nothing can have value without use-value.

Michael Roberts does not dissent from Paul Mattick junior’s view that Marx’s theory of capitalism is a value theory, and most Marxists will agree with this. Yet value, as conceived by Marx, is an abstraction with no substance. In other words, Marxist economics is based on a theory of value which has no material existence. Those who argue that the value of a commodity is based on the labour time socially necessary for its production, are in fact putting forward a *time* theory of value: in other words, value comes from the labour time necessary to produce something. But if time is illusory how can value come from an illusion? And how can the development and decline of capitalism be determined by illusory time which determines value? It is not clear why labour and its duration in ‘time’ should determine the value of anything outside of an agreement that it should do so. And if this is the case, it is obviously not a objective law of capitalism, but something completely arbitrary and subjective.

The Marxist theory of capitalism is based on the law of value, a value which Marx derives from abstract labour time. But Marx’s argument that no commodity can possess value without having use-value and that value has no relation to use-value is a classic example of cognitive dissonance, which means holding two incompatible views simultaneously.

The collapse of oil prices in recent times has nothing to do with a labour theory of value, but rather a collapse in demand brought about by the slowdown in the global economy, itself resulting from triple-digit oil prices. The industrial revolution, and modern society in general, was a result of cheap energy. This cheap energy has lasted for most of the period of modern society. The end of cheap energy will signal the end of the present society if no cheap substitutes are available for capitalism. In a similar way, the end of cheap energy signalled the end of feudalism, although in this case a cheap substitute - coal - was found, which further undermined feudal society by powering industrial capitalism.

A society based on cheap energy cannot survive if cheap energy not only comes to an end, but its

cost constantly rises as a result of depletion. In this scenario, the only thing which can temporarily keep energy prices down in the short to middle term is a permanent economic slowdown, or depression, or what Richard Heinberg is calling the “end of growth” and James Kunstler “the long emergency”.

Tony Clark
Labour supporter

Talent

I don’t agree with very much of the letter from Victor Jenkins (May 26). To contextualise his points about the *Weekly Worker*, the Socialist Party produces an absolutely unreadable weekly paper that looks terrible, from a much larger resource base. The issue of poorly produced newspapers is one endemic to the left in its decline (although *Socialist Worker* and the *Morning Star* have professionalised their output - proof that you can at least try and shine shit). People in glass houses really shouldn’t throw stones. Actually, in direct contradiction to Jenkins, most CPGB members I speak to are usually honest that their paper doesn’t have the highest production values.

I do agree with his point about the badly-presented typography arising from excessive tracking and leading, which makes the text look either squashed or stretched. The routine of thinking you can just fit any amount of text onto a page without some heavy-duty cutting or rejigging the layout is one that needs to be ditched. However, it’s not impossible to fix these things and pick better/more meaningful pictures - and soon.

I also think Jenkins misunderstands the point about using contributors who are not CPGB members or supporters. The comrade clearly has a template in mind whereby leftwing newspapers present one undifferentiated viewpoint of this or that sect and send their readers rapidly to sleep. I think it’s genuinely great that the *WW* has a diversity of voices and I’m always grateful when my stuff gets used. The point about Mark Fischer’s ‘Party notes’ of the past was not that it was meant to merely sum up some facet of the CPGB’s politics by imposing some kind of spurious sect order on the ‘chaotic’ debate in other areas of the paper (as Jenkins seems to imply). Rather, it highlighted the CPGB’s outlook through attention to the process of debate and clarification that informed the organisation’s understanding of events in a highly entertaining manner.

If all comrade Fischer did was to pedantically sum up the CPGB’s line in the manner of, say, Alex Callinicos in *Socialist Worker*, then no-one would have read it, much less remember it. However, the fact that comrade Fischer, the best journalist in the CPGB by a country mile, was only ever marginally involved in the paper suggests a real problem in recognising and using talent to its full ability.

Lawrence Parker
email

Toilet paper

Victor Jenkins obviously cares enough to write such a tirade to the paper. As someone who once worked in the printing industry myself, I can certainly commend your printer. My eyes are quite settled by the paper layout.

As for the quality of the paper on which the Socialist Party print *The Socialist* each week, it’s the cheapest imaginable. It’s quite good as toilet paper (especially when the articles are by Peter Taaffe).

Elijah Traven
Hull

ACTION

CPGB podcasts

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

London Communist Forum

Sunday June 5, 5pm: Weekly political report from CPGB Provisional Central Committee, followed by open discussion and reading group. Calthorpe Arms, 252 Grays Inn Road, London WC1. Study of Ralph Miliband’s *Parliamentary socialism*. This meeting: chapter 6 (‘The price of respectability’), section 1: ‘Tentative, doctrineless socialism’. Organised by CPGB: www.cpgb.org.uk; Labour Party Marxists: www.labourpartymarxists.org.uk.

Radical Anthropology Group

Tuesday June 7, 6.45pm: Introduction to social and biological anthropology, Daryll Forde seminar room, Anthropology Building, 14 Taviton Street, off Gordon Square, London WC1. ‘Through the dark vale: interpreting the Stonehenge Palisade by interdisciplinary convergence.’ Speaker: Lionel Sims. Organised by Radical Anthropology Group: radicalanthropologygroup.org.

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.

The secret war against apartheid

Saturday June 4, 6pm: ‘London Recruits’ Meeting, Marx Memorial Library, 37A Clerkenwell Green, London EC1. Speaker: Ronnie Kasrils. Organised by Marx Memorial Library: www.marxlibrary.org.uk.

Islamophobia and civil liberties

Saturday June 4, 11am to 6pm: National conference, Goldsmiths, University of London, London SE14. Hosted by Students Not Suspects: www.facebook.com/StudentsNotSuspects.

Hackminster: A-Z of everyday politics

Saturday June 4, 10.30am to 5.30 pm: Conference, Arts 2 Building, Queen Mary University of London, Mile End Road, London E1. With workshops, panel discussions and film screenings. Organised by People’s Philosophy, Politics and Economics: www.facebook.com/www.facebook.com/peoplesppe.

Momentum youth and students

Sunday June 5, 10.30am to 6.30pm: Conference, University of Manchester Students Union, Steve Biko Building, Oxford Road, Manchester M13. All Momentum members under 30 urged to attend, Organised by Momentum: info@peoplesmomentum.com

Teesside People’s Assembly

Tuesday June 7, 7.15pm: Planning meeting, St Mary’s Centre, 82-90 Corporation Road, Middlesbrough TS1. Organised by Teesside People’s Assembly: www.facebook.com/events/1704068136541912.

Referendum: how to vote

Wednesday June 8, 7pm: Debate, London School of Economics, Houghton Street, London WC2. Speakers: Neil Davenport, Gerry Downing, Sacha Ismail, Mike Macnair. Hosted by Platypus Affiliated Society: <http://platypus1917.org>.

People’s Chilcot Tribunal

Wednesday June 8, 3pm to 7pm: Public event, Amnesty International Human Rights Action Centre, auditorium, 17-25 New Inn Yard, London EC2. Organised by Stop the War Coalition: www.stopwar.org.uk.

Peace in the Park

Saturday June 11, 12 noon to 8pm: Annual outdoor summer event of art, music and celebration for peace and justice. Ponderosa Park, Oxford Street, Sheffield S6. Organised by Peace in the Park: www.peaceinthepark.org.uk.

Democracy and the European Union

Saturday June 11, 12.45pm to 5pm: Public meeting, room LR120, London South Bank University, London Road, London SE1. The crisis of the EU; Democratic lessons from Greece; European democracy; Debating the referendum. Organised by South Bank UCU: www.ucu.org.uk.

Social justice in old age

Tuesday June 14, 2pm: National pensioners conference, Winter Gardens, 97 Church Street, Blackpool. Opening rally with John McDonnell. Organised by National Pensioners Convention: <http://npcuk.org>.

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

Convoy to Calais

Friday June 17, 6pm: Rally, Emmanuel Centre, Marsham Street, London SW1
Saturday June 18, 9.30am: Vehicles depart, Whitehall, London SW1. Organised by Convoy to Calais: <http://convoytocalais.org>.

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.

UNIONS

Edging towards affiliation

Mark Serwotka hopes to win next year's PCS conference to join the internal Labour battle to defeat the right, writes Peter Manson

The Public and Commercial Services union took a step towards affiliation to the Labour Party at its annual conference last week. The PCS - Britain's sixth largest trade union, which organises government employees and civil servants - agreed by 70,823 to 64,772 on a card vote to reconsider the existing PCS policy of "supporting or standing candidates in exceptional circumstances" and, centrally, undertook to review the union's "relations with the Labour Party, including the issue of affiliation".

The carrying of this motion, proposed by the executive committee, meant that two rival motions - one calling for immediate affiliation to Labour and the other opposing it outright - were not put to the vote. Undoubtedly the driving force behind the successful motion was the union's general secretary, Mark Serwotka, who since the election of Jeremy Corbyn has himself joined Labour and urged union members to follow suit.

Comrade Serwotka referred in his conference speech to the PCS's "longstanding relationships with Jeremy and shadow chancellor John McDonnell" and added: "This is a fantastic opportunity. What we have to do is not let this moment pass us by." The PCS must now seriously ask itself "whether it is time to affiliate to Labour". After all, the chance to get involved in the formation of Labour policy was "an opportunity we cannot turn down". He was well aware that "some people want to move faster", but he claimed that "you have to take the members with you".

What he really meant was that *you have to win a majority at conference*, and the reality is that right now no majority for affiliation exists. In effect there is an anti-affiliation bloc consisting of both the traditional union right and, more pertinently, elements of the left: namely the Socialist Party in England and Wales, and the Socialist Workers Party. I say 'more pertinently' because, of course, for most of its existence the PCS (and before it the Civil and Public Services Association) was dominated by the right wing and, although the CPSA and then PCS were always affiliated to the Trades Union Congress, unlike many other unions they remained aloof from Labour. However, while there is no doubt an element of the right's 'anti-politics independence' line still to be overcome, in practice it is SPEW and the SWP that have provided the main opposition to providing Corbyn and co with real support where it matters most - within the Labour Party.

The case for immediate affiliation was strongly put by several delegates. One argued: "The fight to transform the Labour Party is happening right now. It's happening in the branches, on the NEC and in a few weeks at Labour conference. It's not going to be won by people outside the Labour Party. We can't stand on the sidelines cheerleading." Another said: "This fight will not wait for us to have a review", which in reality "kicks affiliation into the long grass". She urged the union to follow the lead of the Fire Brigades Union, which reaffiliated to Labour last year - in November 2015 there was a special FBU conference, which took that decision.

But things are not quite so simple in the PCS, thanks to the prominence of SPEW and the SWP. While both those organisations declare their support



SWP and SPEW: real barrier

for the Corbyn wing of the Labour Party in the battle to defeat the right, that support is purely platonic. At the conference both SPEW and the SWP opposed not only affiliation, but even a review of current policy. According to *Socialist Worker* online, the alternative motion supported by the SWP agreed that "the election of Jeremy Corbyn as leader of the Labour Party was a welcome surprise to trade unionists and anti-austerity campaigners". In fact, "Trade unionists need to do everything we can to support the Corbyn/McDonnell project in their opposition to austerity."

However, "everything we can" does not include joining the battle where it really matters. You see, "Despite the millions that trade unions

have poured into the Labour Party, once in office it has failed to represent trade union interests." And how do we reverse this state of affairs? "The most important thing we can do to support Corbyn and McDonnell is to continue to build the movement in the streets and the workplaces".¹ So the answer apparently lies in the SWP's abstract 'movementism' - and definitely not in joining a concrete political fight.

If anything, SPEW's line is even worse. While, like the SWP, declaring its support for Corbyn and the Labour left, it continues to promote its (Labourite) political alternative: ie, the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition. Tusc, you may recall, was set up to campaign for a Labour Party mark two - SPEW has long declared that

the genuine article is now a bourgeois party pure and simple, and so the task for revolutionaries is to campaign for an alternative: the unions must be won to break from Labour and come over to its embryonic replacement in the shape of Tusc.

At least that was the line before Corbyn's victory. Since then SPEW has even admitted that there are in fact "two Labour Parties",² yet, far from abandoning Tusc as misconceived, it is continuing to build its profile - Tusc is now engaged on a tour of 20 cities as part of the campaign for a 'leave' vote in the European Union referendum. Unsurprisingly, its showing in last month's elections was dismal, but SPEW is undeterred. Of course, if it was a question of posing a principled

alternative (rather than a Labourite/reformist version of opposition to austerity), then it might be argued that its current electoral forays were still worthwhile. But what on earth is the point in continuing to campaign for a Labour Party mark two?

SPEW's own report of the conference implies that the success of the executive motion represents a kind of victory (it does not mention the alternative motion that SPEW itself was backing). It reports that "members want to soberly weigh up options, as the struggle within Labour develops". You see, "Delegates were not convinced that the Blairite right have been decisively defeated, nor that the official left, including Momentum, have the necessary policies and organisation to defeat them." So clearly it is best to keep out and watch as the right regains control.

And the report in *The Socialist*, written by SPEW industrial organiser Rob Williams, gives a separate - left nationalist - reason why it is correct for PCS members north of the border to reject affiliation:

It is also clear that among Scottish members, despite warmth towards Corbyn's policies, there is still a legacy of mistrust towards Labour after decades of rightwing leadership, which reached its nadir in the 'Better Together' alliance with the Tories in the 2014 independence referendum. This isn't helped by Corbyn's continued mistaken approach to Scottish independence.³

The executive's motion was moved by comrade Serwotka himself, but it was seconded by an EC member who clearly takes a different view. Laura Dempster said it would be wrong to throw the union's lot in with Labour right now, while sections of the party "remain in the grip of the right wing". Nevertheless, she was prepared to support a review of the PCS's current electoral policy, following which the EC would make its recommendations at next year's conference.

This shows the divisions even among the non-SPEW, non-SWP left on the executive - divisions which seem to confirm that the vote for a review was the best that comrade Serwotka could have achieved right now.

By the way, Serwotka has confirmed that following the abolition of 'check-off', whereby government departments previously deducted dues from union members' pay on the union's behalf, the PCS has recruited 90% of its membership, who now pay by direct debit. This is no mean achievement, but the 10% loss means that over 20,000 of its former members are no longer organised.

Nevertheless, the PCS has clearly used the opportunity provided by the abolition of check-off to develop and to some extent reinvigorate a good many of its branches. This needs to be combined over the next year with a rank-and-file campaign to win branches for a genuinely political approach to the Labour Party - despite the opposition of SPEW and the SWP.

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Notes

- <https://socialistworker.co.uk/art/42820/PCS+conference+cheers+museum+strikers+and+debates+Labour>.
- www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/21820.
- The Socialist* June 1.

DOCTORS

Reject the new contract

We need to develop a realistic strategy for victory, writes **Richard Galen**



Jeremy Hunt: forced to compromise

Last weekend saw the public release of the terms and conditions for the renegotiated junior doctor contracts after the conclusion of talks between the department of health and the British Medical Association in May. The contract offer is set to be balloted to BMA members (both junior doctors and senior medical students) on June 17, with the BMA itself pushing hard for a 'yes' vote. This has come following unprecedented industrial action by medics, including the first strikes encompassing emergency care in the history of the national health service.

The latest talks came after health secretary Jeremy Hunt, in what he called a "show of good faith", said the government was willing to "hold off the threat of imposition" of the new contract, while negotiations took place - a bizarre sentiment, given that he did not intend to change the date when the new contract would take effect (however, during the latest round of negotiations he conceded that implementation would now be put back to October).

Despite the lack of any real substance to the rhetoric used, however, this marked a significant U-turn from the man who insisted back in April that "the matter is closed" and refused to entertain the idea of reopening negotiations. It is, of course, impossible to identify exactly what caused this retreat by the department of health, with some newspapers speculating that a plea from the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges to both sides was the trigger, but it is clear that many doctors who reluctantly manned the picket lines during the all-out strikes last month will now feel a degree of vindication for

their actions.

Although dire warnings from the government that the strikes would cause an "unacceptable" risk of patient deaths filled the headlines, stories of harm and calamity resulting from industrial action were conspicuous only by their absence. Neither did the predicted drop in public support occur, with a post-strike poll conducted by *The Independent* showing that 58% supported the action, with only 31% opposed.

The solidarity shown to striking doctors by the teachers' unions and other public-sector workers, despite its token nature, did also not go unnoticed, with the BMA's junior doctors conference in April voting to develop links with other unions, and to lobby the union itself to do likewise. This was a much-needed step in the past has remained aloof from organisations such as the Trades Union Congress.

In a further blow to Hunt's imposition plan, his stated motivation for the contract change - reduced numbers of doctors causing the so-called 'weekend effect' of higher mortality, following hospital admissions at the weekend - was also called into question by the publication of two papers in the medical journal *The Lancet*. One found no association between numbers of senior doctors rostered at the weekend and mortality rates, while the second, looking at stroke patients, showed no difference in 30-day mortality between patients admitted during the week and at the weekend.

This, then, was the backdrop to the reopened contract negotiations, which was hosted by the Advisory,

Conciliation and Arbitration Service, with many doctors feeling the BMA simply needed to consolidate its position of strength in the form of a contract registering real gains in working conditions, remuneration and patient safety. The main areas of concern amongst junior doctors were: the existing draft contract's inherent discrimination against women and single parents; the penalties for taking time out of careers to carry out research; the lack of safeguards against unsafe working patterns; and unacceptable levels of remuneration for the impact of out-of-hours working on family and social life, as well as the medics' own general well-being.

Ultimately the admission of discrimination in the government's pre-negotiation contract was down to the loss of automatic pay progression, as well as the disparity in pay for so-called 'less than full-time' (LTFT) trainees, of which the vast majority are women (often due to childcare commitments). Single parents would also lose as a result of increased rostering during unsocial hours.

Terms and conditions

Although there have been some gains for the BMA (including better relocation expenses for families; and pay protection if disability, caring or family issues mean a doctor has to change specialty), these issues have not been adequately addressed in the renegotiated terms and conditions, with the government having achieved one of its major aims - making it cheaper to roster doctors at the weekend (as part

of the misguided "seven-day NHS" pledge).

Weekend hours during the daytime will effectively count as 'plain time' - doctors instead getting a percentage uplift to salary (from 3% to 10%) only if they work more than one weekend in eight. The calculation is to be based on the number of weekends worked rather than the percentage, meaning that many LTFT trainees will lose out despite doing the same proportion of weekend work - an issue compounded by the fact that childcare is often far more expensive at the weekend.

Importantly, this also establishes a precedent for the government to renegotiate other NHS workers' weekend pay and conditions for the worse - an issue that drew many fellow health workers to side with the junior doctors during the strikes.

For those taking time out for teaching or higher degrees, there remains a 'pay premium' onto any basic salary of £4,000 per annum - but with the increase in university fees this may not be enough to cover even the tuition, thus discouraging those who wish to get involved in research and training future doctors.

Some of the biggest negotiated changes have come in regard to the new role allocated to the so-called 'guardian of safe working', who will supposedly prevent unsafe working hours. The guardian will be appointed by a panel which includes junior doctor representatives and will be advised by a junior doctors' forum scrutinising the use of any fine payments made by the hospital for overworking their medics. Also, panels for reviewing work schedules deemed unsafe and excessive will now have to include a representative from the BMA or another recognised trade union.

However, such safeguards will mean nothing if they do not tackle the root cause of the problem - simply not having enough junior doctors - an issue that has been conspicuously absent from both sides in the negotiations. With no rota examples published for the proposed contract, it remains impossible to see how increased rostering at weekends will not affect weekday care, with medics being forced to remain beyond their hours to ensure the safety of their patients (it

is, of course, already routine practice for doctors to remain at work unpaid for as long as an hour after the end of their shift to ensure a smooth and safe handover).

Finally, for many doctors, a fair salary is a key issue that needs to be encompassed in an agreed new contract. Although the so-called 'front-loading' of pay (ie, higher salary at earlier levels, with less incremental pay rises to compensate) was welcomed due to increased access to loans and mortgages, the fact remains that over the last six years doctors (along with most other NHS employees) have had their pay frozen, and the new contract simply does not make up for this. Future rises will again, in effect, be 'pay cuts by stealth' as a result of inflation - these are to be fixed at 1%, 0.9% and 0.8% over the next three years. There is also a reduction in the original offer of a 13% pay rise (now 10%) and 150% basic pay (now 137%) for night shifts - a totally unacceptable concession by BMA negotiators.

On social media, doctors have given differing interpretations of the new contract, and it is difficult to tell currently which way the vote will go. Given what has been achieved so far, however, it is hard to imagine that we will now abandon fighting for our cause. But it is important to remember that the ballot result is not completely binding and the BMA can still choose to accept the contract on our behalf - there is a danger it will do just that if the vote is particularly close.

We now need to confirm and re-establish the unity that has marked this dispute - the original ballot for action garnered a 76% turnout, with an unprecedented 98% voting in favour, while every strike has been fully supported by the vast majority of BMA junior doctors, as well as some who are (or were previously) non-members.

Up to now the government line has been that we naive junior doctors have been misled by BMA officials with a 'political agenda'. Let us now expose this for the nonsense it is by voting overwhelmingly to reject the latest package. We must also develop a realistic strategy for resisting any imposition and continue working for the necessary concrete solidarity from our fellow workers ●

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REFERENDUM

Stop treating people like idiots

Paul Demarty surveys the latest output of 'Project Fear' - so you don't have to

British politics is presently dominated by a question of enormous historical importance. To wit: how hard do you have to scrape the bottom of the barrel before the whole thing falls apart into splinters?

As June 23 approaches, so the people of Britain get closer to a key referendum that will decide whether David Cameron gets to continue as prime minister or else will be replaced in short order - most likely by the extravagantly-coiffed buffoon, Boris Johnson. Since honest political combat is entirely foreign to these two self-regarding posh boys, their titanic struggle is being conducted by proxy, through the question of Britain's continued membership of the European Union (in reality, as we have repeatedly argued, not likely to actually be at risk).

The standard of debate between the two sides has so far been abysmal and, though we will focus today on the 'remainers', readers will remember well the stupidities of their opponents, from accusing Barack Obama of bitterness over the suppression of the Mau-Mau, to the promotion of the idea that 12 million Turks were about to descend on Britain, to the use of the epithet 'Project Fear' despite having nothing themselves to offer other than ... fear - of migrants, of Brussels bureaucrats, of German expansionism.

Safe as houses

The sheer *obviousness* of the Brexiteers' degeneracy, however, does the 'remainers' favours they do not deserve. For the 'in' campaign is quite singular in its dishonesty, and sinks ever lower as the big day looms.

We should recall to comrades' memories the circumstances of the 'remain' campaign's birth. It exists, obviously, only because the referendum is taking place; and the referendum is taking place only because David Cameron and his allies were playing 'clever' games for short-term advantage a year or two ago, when the UK Independence Party was eating a little more dangerously into the Tory vote.

Cameron's next great ruse was to go on a grand European tour and 'renegotiate' Britain's terms of European membership, which was, of course, heralded as a great success for all concerned, despite absolutely nothing of substance being agreed at all. Showing how much stock even Cameron himself placed in that piece of theatre, the agreed terms - remember, this historic deal that would fundamentally alter the balance of power between Westminster and Brussels, etc - have been entirely absent in 'remainder' propaganda; no argument has been made, with any kind of prominence, that at all depends on the terms 'negotiated' by Cameron. The whole escapade served no greater purpose than to fill the bellies of Cameron and his entourage of flunkies at diplomatic luncheons from Dublin to Bucharest - and, naturally, to dominate news headlines for all of a week, which seems to be as far ahead as Cameron is physically capable of thinking.

Instead of the glories of Cameron's amazing new settlement, we have had a solid diet of fear-mongering (the fact that the Brexiteers' complaint is hypocritical does not make it untrue). Having wheeled out everyone from Christine Lagarde to Barack Obama and the pope, George Osborne last week decided to 'go nuclear', and threaten the home counties with an 18% drop in house prices. Frankly



Patronisin, cringin, embarrassin

they could do with a rather sharper drop than that, if they are to be reacquainted with reality; Osborne is rather betting that the Brexit core vote of ageing petty bourgeois enragés will see things differently.

Demographic peril

Perhaps it will work. As things stand, it had better; for such people as a social stratum are more likely to vote, and are less likely to vote to *remain* in the EU.

This is an aspect of a wider problem, which is that Cameron is more or less reliant on *Labour* voters (plus Liberal Democrats, or whatever is left of them) to save his bacon. Hence the anxiety about Jeremy Corbyn's relative non-presence in the 'remain' campaign -

Corbyn is astute enough to remember how his predecessors were stitched up over Scottish independence. A Labour In for Britain leaflet, dropping on a doormat near you any day now, is quite a sight - on the back is Jeremy, giving a short spiel about the need for international cooperation, and that's it from him; the rest is full of pictures of Blairite pin-up Alan Johnson, to the point that someone really ought to have told him that this is not about *him* (it's about Dave and Boris ...).

The front page carries a stock photo of two small, smiling children using a computer, and the enticing promise - "*Inside*: your guide to making the right decision for you and your family" (the guide in question is basically a carbon

copy of everything George Osborne has said on the matter in the last few months). It is a cheery spin on what is an increasingly common theme of 'remainder' fear-mongering - *think of the children!*

The leaders of the campaign are, indeed, thinking of the 'children'. For the most egregious aspect of the aforementioned problem is this: 18-24-year olds are practically the only demographic with a solid, predictable majority for a 'remain' vote. They are also by far the least likely people to be registered to vote at all. Thus has begun an undignified scramble to get polling cards out to 'the youth'.

This has become the most absurd part of the campaign so far. This great

push for the young started with the re-emergence of Ed Miliband, of all people; only the boundless charisma of 'Red' Ed is enough, apparently, to get the young and feckless to the polling booth. "Today is a call to arms to all young people to register to vote," he told a 'remainder' rally last Saturday. "Let's be clear about the danger - a decision not to vote is a decision to let someone else decide your future. Young people can decide this referendum. If they don't use their vote, the danger is this referendum will be lost." The best way to avoid "letting someone else decide your future", kids, is to *do exactly as Ed tells you*.

We shall see if Miliband makes all the difference - somehow we doubt it. Fortunately, if Ed and his many teeth are not enough to convince you, good young person, there's more! Head on over to votin.co.uk, and enjoy perhaps the most ill-judged political social media campaign in the short and miserable history of the form. It seems to consist entirely of an enormous video, which sets various gerunds in capital letters, minus their concluding G, atop non-specifically 'yoofy' imagery. *Workin, Playin, Ravin*, and before long, no doubt, *vomitin*. From this, the young person is supposed to - what, exactly? Identify continued EU membership with the continued availability of dance music and state-sanctioned graffiti opportunities? Is this what it has come to?

It is no surprise that things are so desperate; after all, the Tories have spent the last six years conspicuously ignoring the concerns of the young, cynically concentrating on doing favours for their core base (which skews grey). But, as we noted at the outset, this whole Brexit farrago is a stitch-up - if literally the best being offered to the young is more of the same, then it is no wonder that they cannot be bothered to register to vote.

No doubt some recognition of this dilemma was behind the 'in' campaign's ridiculous 'Votin' initiative and its shiny, positive character (as well as Miliband's praise for "the optimistic generation"); but a more patronising end result cannot be imagined. The contempt just sings out of the webpage: the huge pink icons, the 25-second shouty video (for that is as long as an 18-year-old can go before snapchatting a picture of their genitals to an acquaintance). Everyone involved with this was young, once. What happened to them?

In the long run, however, the most unfortunate thing about the Votin campaign is that it will be forgotten. It deserves to be remembered; the creative agency behind it, *venturethree*, should go bankrupt out of shame; any politician who defends it should suffer irreparable reputational damage from the association. For it sums up, in concentrated form, the whole referendum debate: a shallow and undignified struggle between two gangs of reactionaries to manipulate the anxieties of the wider masses. In 20 years, when we want to tell the story of this dismal summer, we need only point the student of history to this day-glo website, and they will understand.

Should any 18-year-olds be reading *these* words, naturally, we have the same advice we have for everyone else, older and younger - this referendum is rigged, both choices are reactionary, and anyone who pretends otherwise is trying to sell you a bad bill of goods. Spoil your ballot.

Innit, cuz ●

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ZIONISM

Relationship of mutual dependency

Zionism uses the term 'anti-Semitism' against anyone who opposes its crimes against the Palestinian people, writes **Eli Aminov**

When Binyamin Netanyahu enlisted Adolf Hitler in October last year to claim that the responsibility for the holocaust and the extermination of European Jewry lies with the grand mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin, and with the Palestinian people, he also stated that the *Führer* wanted at the beginning of his rule to only expel the Jews, and it was the mufti who persuaded him to exterminate them. This rehabilitation of Hitler, as carried out by Netanyahu, may not have made Hitler into a Zionist, but did indeed give him the status of a pro-Zionist, like many other anti-Semites.

While Netanyahu was unsuccessful in linking the Palestinian struggle with the holocaust, this recurring wave of accusations has prompted a surge of attacks which were aimed at purging the critics of Zionism within the British Labour Party. This was all carried out under the pretext of combating anti-Semitism.

'Anti-Semitism' is a derogatory term which the Zionist movement has associated with anyone who opposes it or its crimes against the Palestinian people. But history shows that Zionism and anti-Semitism are in fact like Siamese twins. Anti-Semitism in the literal sense today is mainly expressed through the hatred of Muslims - the vast majority of whom are Arabs - in Europe, and in that respect Israel is by far the world's most anti-Semitic country. Along with the expressed opposition to Israel's policies against the Palestinians, the more traditional anti-Semitism, which focuses on the hatred of Jews, is also rearing its head. It is fed by both Israeli propaganda, which claims to represent world Jewry, and by the fact that more and more people around the world understand that Israel is an apartheid state, which was built on the basis of a continuous act of ethnic-cleansing and the denial of human and civil rights from its non-Jewish subjects.

Building the common interest of anti-Semites and Zionists had already been started by the founder of Zionism, Theodor Herzl. His network of relations and lobbying efforts included not only the murderous and dictatorial Ottoman Sultan or the conquest-driven German kaiser, but also the anti-Semitic tsarist regime - the Great Prince Vladimir, Count Witte, as well as Plehve, head of the tsarist police and organiser of the Kishinev pogrom. In 1903, Herzl had obtained a letter from Plehve, which reads: "If Zionism means the establishment of an independent state in Palestine and promoting the emigration of Jewish subjects from Russia, then it can take into account the moral and material support of the Russian government." For his part, Herzl pledged that world Jewry would not attack Russia in response to the pogrom which was carried out by Plehve's men. Indeed, Zionist diplomacy at its best.

Zionism's inability to exist without anti-Semitism had already been anticipated by Ahad Ha'am in 1897. In his criticism of Herzl, *The Congress and Its Creator*, he writes: "From [Herzl's] notebook we learn that the soul of the whole [Zionist] movement, also to this day, is anti-Semitism alone. It is still dependent on being 'influenced' by that which gave it birth, as a baby who constantly needs its mother. And if it had passed away from this world, also [Zionism] will not be able to



Nazis proposed to remove Jews - Zionists agreed

survive for even a single moment." Simply put - there is no Zionism without anti-Semitism.

Zionism and Nazism

Zionist diplomacy was also reflected in its relationship with Nazi Germany. In his book *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, Saul Friedlander tells of the memo sent by the leaders of the Zionist organisation in Germany to Hitler in June 1933, to which a researcher of the Third Reich had commented: "It seems that the memorandum reveals a degree of sympathy with the Folkist principles of Hitler's regime and claims that Zionism is compatible with these principles." Friedlander then elaborates: "The first reaction of some Zionist leaders on the new situation in Germany was not negative. There was a hope that the Nazi policy of promoting Jewish emigration from Germany would open up great opportunities for the Yishuv [Zionist settlers in Palestine]."

On the other hand, the Zionists also feared too many immigrants, as Arthur Ruppin declared during the 1933 Zionist Congress in Prague: "In order that immigration will not flood the Yishuv like hot lava ..." As is well known, the Zionists had openly violated the international Jewish boycott of Nazi Germany by signing the Transfer Agreement with the Nazis, and had been purchasing German goods with German Jews' money.

The highlight of its shocking solidarity with the Nazi view of racial purity can be found in the 1934 book by Rabbi Joachim Prinz, who was among the Zionist leaders in Germany. In his book *Wir Juden* ('We, the Jews'), Prinz had expressed his satisfaction with the "German revolution" that had destroyed liberalism: "The only form of political life which had helped Jewish assimilation had sunk and disappeared," celebrated Dr Prinz,

who saw the Nazi racial laws as "fulfilling our aspirations". He then continues:

We wish that assimilation today will be replaced with a new law: a declaration of belonging to the Jewish people and the Jewish race. A country which is built on the basis of national and racial purity can only be respected by a Jew who declares his affiliation with his own species.

This gross flattery of Hitler did not prevent this Judeo-Nazi from later becoming an American citizen and the deputy chair of the World Jewish Congress, as well as being a close friend of Golda Meir when she was prime minister of Israel.

Saul Friedlander also mentions in his book the crisis that arose between Zionists and non-Zionists at a conference of Jewish bankers in London in November 1935 concerning the rescue of Jews from Germany. Chaim Weizmann was strongly opposed to Max Warburg's plan of using the funds of German Jews to finance Jewish emigration into countries other than Eretz Israel. Until the outbreak of World War II the uncompromising conflict continued. The Zionist leadership vehemently opposed the US joint position, wanting to save Jews by sending them wherever possible. The Zionist position was: 'To Palestine or to hell'.

Propaganda

The claim of 'anti-Semitism' is what fuels the Zionist movement today, as well as being a foundational element in its strategy of fear. This core element is regularly being used in both domestic and foreign policy, while constantly being maintained by a huge propaganda machine.

The propaganda is based on the outrageous Zionist claim that the state of Israel represents the whole of world Jewry, both politically and morally, even if they do not wish to

be represented in this manner. This propaganda is designed for two main purposes: transforming world Jewry into the human shield of Zionist policy - a shield whose role is to conceal Israeli crimes from the rest of the world; and, secondly, to undermine the confidence of Jews in themselves, while driving them to emigrate to Israel.

Zionism had purported to solve the 'Jewish question' by establishing a 'safe haven' for Jews in historic Palestine. But the formula had been reversed: the 'safe haven', which has become the most dangerous ghetto for Jews today, needs new Jewish immigrants in order to maintain its demographic superiority, as well as to serve as cannon fodder for the Israeli army. Jews around the world who do not wish to be exploited by Zionism and who do not require it are turned into Israel's hostages against their will and even into potential victims of its actions.

Allegedly, Israel and the Zionist movement try to fight anti-Semitism and cry out for a global effort against it. But in reality such a struggle would contradict the real interests of Zionism, mainly for practical reasons: a successful struggle against racism and anti-Semitism would allow Jews to continue as equal citizens in other countries - and then what would happen to Zionism? From its inception, the Zionist movement had adopted the position of the anti-Semites: that Jews constitute one people, who are alien among European nations. Therefore, they should be separated from the others - the gentiles - and be concentrated in a single territory (where again they should be separated, from the native gentiles).

Lucien Wolf, a leading figure among British Jewry, wrote to Rothschild in 1916 concerning this idea:

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 ... I have spent most of my life 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.

Those who are not poisoned by the Zionist ideology may understand differently the statements of Ken Livingstone, a former British Labour Party member and mayor of London, regarding Hitler's Zionism, and also the irritating question of the Venezuelan ambassador to the UN with regard to the "final solution" prepared by Israel against the Palestinians. They do not constitute anti-Semitic expressions, but a staunch criticism of Zionism, which is a colonialist, racist, violent and hypocritical movement.

Zionism today endangers not only the Palestinians, not only every Israeli citizen, but also the whole of world Jewry which Israel has taken hostage in order to protect its criminal policy. The Labour Party leadership in Britain, which was quick to denounce Livingstone, has played into the hands of the Zionist movement. Instead, it had better understand and explain to the public that there should be no confusion between the struggle against anti-Semitism and support for its evil twin - Zionism ●

This translation, by Ronnie Barkan, first appeared on the website of the Grayzone Project: www.alternet.org/grayzone-project/mutual-dependency-zionism-and-anti-semitism.

IRAQ

Letting Blair off the hook

Eddie Ford is not holding out any hopes for the Chilcot report

At long last, the Chilcot report will be published on July 6 - after being "cleared" by the security services, of course. It will be 2.6 million words long and based on the testimony of more than 150 witnesses, incorporating the results of the examination of 150,000 government documents - of which 1,500 will apparently be published online.

Even for a British public inquiry - nearly always tortuously long exercises in obfuscation - the whole process has been a farce. The report was initially expected within *months* of the last evidence session way back in February 2011, yet here we are. According to Sir John Chilcot, a privy counsellor and former civil servant mandarin paid £790 a day to head the inquiry, the absurd delay in publishing is due to "negotiations" over which documents should be declassified and the need to give those individuals criticised in the report the chance to respond to it first. Most people would think that five years is quite sufficient to prepare a defence.

Previously, there had been extremely optimistic stories about how the Chilcot report would deliver an "absolutely brutal" verdict on the failings of the 2003 occupation of Iraq and "savagely" Tony Blair - claiming he offered military support to George W Bush a year before the actual invasion of Iraq (*The Independent* May 22 2016). We also read that the harshest criticism would be reserved for the former foreign secretary, Jack Straw, and in general would "damage the reputations" of various people - including Richard Dearlove, the former head of MI6, for allowing Downing Street to "gloss", or 'sex up', supposed intelligence about weapons of mass destruction, and so on. In turn, this led to some speculation that Blair would "refuse" to accept Chilcot's findings - especially when he remarked that he would be taking to the airwaves to defend himself rather than going to ground (*The Guardian* May 29 2016).

Frankly, these stories were hard to take seriously. Are we really supposed to believe that an establishment figure like Chilcot would find an ex-prime minister guilty of conducting an illegal war - or even lying? Such an accusation was unthinkable. Chilcot was a participant, after all, in the discredited 2004 Butler review - clearly watered down to protect Blair.¹ This report did not apportion blame to any specific individual, the assumption being that everyone was acting in good faith. The main conclusion was that the key intelligence used to justify the Iraq war was "unreliable", as the security services did not check its sources "well enough" and sometimes relied on "third-hand reports" (with an "over-reliance"

on Iraqi dissident sources). Overall, said Butler, "more weight was placed on the intelligence than it could bear", and that judgements had stretched available intelligence "to the outer limits" - suggesting that the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission's inability to find WMDs should have prompted a "rethink". The nearest thing to a criticism of Tony Blair comes with the comment that the government's language left the impression that there was "fuller and firmer intelligence" than was the case. Say that again. When the review was published, the joke went: 'When you call the Butler, you get what you ordered.'

And now we have son of Butler. Philippe Sand, an international lawyer familiar with Chilcot's approach, went on record as saying that "it is not immediately apparent that he will have the backbone" to take on former government ministers. As an example, he mentioned Chilcot's questioning of attorney general Peter Goldsmith during the Butler review - remarking that the "spoon-fed questions give every impression of being designed to elicit a response from the attorney general that would demonstrate the reasonableness of his actions and those of the government".²

The remit of the Chilcot inquiry itself was made quite clear in 2009 by Gordon Brown, who insisted it would not find evidence of "dishonesty" in the use of intelligence in the run-up to the Iraq war - adding that, in his view, the Butler inquiry had found none and "if you are looking for a great conspiracy you are not going to find it".³ The Chilcot report was always going to find what it wanted to find. No wonder Jack Straw told the BBC that "I'm not nervous" about the pending publication.

Therefore it is not in the slightest bit surprising, though morally disgusting, that all the latest leaks and rumours strongly indicate that Blair will be vindicated - not guilty. Instead, just as

predictably, the report will criticise easy targets like the cabinet secretary, the chief of the defence staff, MI5, MI6, etc. At most, Blair will be rebuked for undermining government ministers or having no plans for post-war Iraq - essentially harmless fluff that he can easily shrug off. That will be the extent of his 'savaging' at the hands of Sir John Chilcot. In which case, he can merely dust off the 'apology' he gave last year in an interview with CNN, because "the intelligence I received was wrong". He also apologised for "some of the mistakes in planning, and certainly our mistake in our understanding of what would happen once you removed the regime". On the other hand, though, he told the *Andrew Marr show* on May 29 that he made his position on Iraq quite clear at the time (ie, for regime change), something no-one can "seriously dispute", he said.

'Illegal'?

Many on the left, including Jeremy Corbyn, have banged on repeatedly about the Iraq war being 'illegal'. The Labour leader has already strongly hinted that he will push for Blair to be prosecuted if found to have broken any laws - not that Chilcot will say any such thing, of course. Last August, Corbyn declared himself "confident" that it was an "illegal war" - pointing out that Kofi Annan, the former United Nations secretary general, had "confirmed" that was the case, and so Blair "has to explain to that". Corbyn's aides signalled last week that he stood by these comments.

For communists, all this talk about legality (or not) is liberalistic drivel. If the Iraq war, or any other war, was deemed 'legal', does this mean we cannot oppose it? What nonsense. We in the CPGB oppose *all* imperialist wars and adventures, regardless of their 'legality' or the exact circumstances that lead to the conflict - we reject fundamentally irrelevant questions, such as who fired first or who was the 'aggressor'. The fact that during World War I Germany invaded Belgium, no doubt illegally, did not make the latter 'plucky' or a victim worthy of support.

Nor do communists

make appeals to the bogus moral authority of the UN, a den of thieves and dictators. We want to overthrow 'international law', not shore it up.

However, once the report officially confirms the invasion's legality, Blair has stated that he "looks forward" to participating in the post-Chilcot debate. You can bet that is true, as he and his advisors will have already read the pertinent parts and know he is going to be let off the hook. His lawyers will not be visiting him in jail.

Obviously convinced of his own innocence, if not pristine virtue, an increasingly confident Blair has made a number of *direct* political interventions. Most significantly, on May 28 he came out with an explicit attack on the Corbyn leadership, whilst being interviewed for BBC2's *This week's world*. Rejecting the suggestion that he was responsible for Corbyn's emergence as a political force, he argued that it was a "result of the way the world works these days". He then went to comment:

It's a big challenge for the centre and, when I'm not thinking about the Middle East, I'm thinking about this, because I do think, by the way, it would be a *very dangerous experiment* for a major western country to get gripped by this type of populist policymaking left or right - a very dangerous experiment. I do think the centre ground needs to work out how it gets its mojo back and gets the initiative back in the political debate, because otherwise these guys aren't providing answers - not on the economy, not on foreign policy (my emphasis).

The following day, Blair disingenuously denied on the *Marr show* that he was referring to Corbyn - rather, merely "about the general populism there is in the world today". But, given that the original comment was responding to a specific question about Corbyn, this is transparent nonsense. Indeed, you cannot entirely dismiss the possibility

that Blair and elements of the Labour right will urge a non-Labour or Tory vote in 2020 - even if he did tell *Marr* that he was "not being disloyal" to the Labour leader and would "always tell people to vote Labour because I am Labour - it is just the way I am". Hmm ...

Perhaps more interestingly, as implied by these remarks, Blair seems to assume that Corbyn will still be leader by 2020 - this implicitly backs up the view of Lord Peter Mandelson that the 'moderates' will have to engage in a patient, long-term war, not just go straight for a coup. For Mandelson, who is certainly no idiot, they should only consider forcing out Corbyn when the majority of party members realise the public has formed a negative view of him:

Nobody will replace him, though, until he demonstrates to the party his unelectability at the polls In this sense, the public will decide Labour's future and it would be wrong to try and force this issue from within before the public have moved to a clear verdict" (*The Guardian* September 25 2015).

Yes, of course, there are still those rightwing hotheads who dream of removing Corbyn in some sort of putsch - but time is fast running out for them. Fairly obviously, they cannot move before the June 23 referendum - otherwise they will be accused of aiding and abetting the Tories. But rule changes at the September party conference will ensure that the incumbent leader is automatically placed on the ballot paper in the event of a challenge - and *everyone* knows, of course, that under those circumstances Corbyn will almost certainly win by an even bigger majority. It is nearly now or never for the Corbyn-hating, recalcitrant Labour right.

Showing that a sinner never really repents, Blair has also been urging boots on the ground in Syria to "crush" Islamic State - western intervention has worked out so well in Iraq and Libya, so why not do it again? Writing in *The Sunday Times*, he says: "We must build military capability able to confront and defeat the terrorists, wherever they try to hold territory. This is not just about local forces. It is a challenge for the west. Ground forces are necessary to win this fight and ours are the most capable" (March 27). Blair's obvious calculation is that Donald Trump will not win the presidency, and Hillary Clinton will be sympathetic to the military option: ground forces, not just air strikes. He might well be right.

Meanwhile, another hellish battle of Fallujah is ongoing - two separate large-scale offensives by the US military in 2004 destroyed much of the city, which fell to IS early in 2014. Yet who was one of the prime architects of this horrific situation? Yes, a certain Mr Anthony Charles Lynton Blair. But on July 6 you will search in vain for such a conclusion in the Chilcot report: yet another establishment whitewash ●

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Notes

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Tony Blair and George Bush: architects of today's mayhem

Legacy of the 2003 war

We all know who is responsible for Fallujah, writes Yasmine Mather

As reports continue to come from Iraq indicating advances by the country's armed forces on Fallujah, held by Islamic State, a number of international organisations, including the United Nations, are echoing earlier warning from Iraq's main Shia cleric, ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, that the lives of the town's 50,000 inhabitants are in mortal danger.

Al Jazeera's Omar al-Saleh, reporting from Erbil in northern Iraq, described the situation in Fallujah as dire: "There is a lack of medicine and food. They are caught in the fighting between Isil and Iraqi forces."¹ And, according to UN agencies, Fallujah civilians were starving to death - some have been killed for refusing to fight for IS, while others were being used as "human shields". Melissa Fleming, a spokeswoman for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, said: "We have dramatic reports of the increase of the number of executions of men and older boys, refusing to fight on behalf of Isil."

With Tony Blair about to be exonerated by the Chilcot enquiry for his criminal part in the invasion of Iraq, it is time to remind ourselves why we are where we are, with the continuing civil war in Iraq and the rise of IS. In the words of lieutenant-general Michael Flynn, the former head of the Defence Intelligence Agency, the Bush-Blair Iraq war was a "tremendous blunder" that "helped to create Islamic State". According to Flynn, "As brutal as Saddam Hussein was, it was a mistake to just eliminate him." In fact the "historic lesson" is that it was "a strategic failure to go into Iraq".²

Fallujah hit the headlines in 2004, when four American private military contractors were ambushed and killed in the city, leading to what became known as Operation Vigilant Resolve and the subsequent battle for control, lasting most of the year. The US-led Fallujah offensive of November 2004 was documented by Italian film-makers Sigfrido Ranucci and Maurizio Torrealta, who claimed that white phosphorus, a highly efficient smoke-producing agent (ironically not considered a chemical weapon), was being used by US troops against civilians.³ This was later confirmed by the journal *Field Artillery* in April 2005.

Anyone in their right mind will tell you that it was the atrocities committed by US and British troops in Fallujah (as well as the rest of Iraq) that helped the Iraqi al Qa'eda recruit those who wanted to resist the occupation, including previously secular Ba'athists, to what was to become Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (Isil) and later IS.

Fallujah is important to IS, not just because of its proximity to the capital, Baghdad, but because it is the jihadist group's birthplace. That is why, contrary to early predictions, the battle for Fallujah is turning out to be far more difficult than expected.

However, for the Iraqi regime regaining control of the oil-producing town of Mosul in the north remains a priority. Yet that battle has been left to the Iraqi Kurdish Regional Government, aided by US air strikes. The Zerevani special forces involved in that battle consist of 5,500 Kurdish Peshmerga, who are attempting to wrest control back from IS. Western reporters, including Sky News and CNN, have identified American and Canadian advisors in the front line, but no-one is claiming that the current fighting will lead to the recapture of the city, which had a population



Siege of a city: 50,000 in mortal danger

of over two million before IS took control.

Mosul is close to a number of smaller towns on the Nineveh plains, such as Qaraqosh. But these towns effectively no longer exist - their Christian inhabitants, who had lived there for centuries alongside Muslims, have been forced to flee from their birthplaces. And in another battle in western Anbar province, in and around the town of Heet, 40 Iraqi security forces were killed by IS, forcing a retreat.

All this is yet another sign of the contradictory US policy in the region. If the aim is to defeat IS, then the solution is obvious. Put pressure on Turkey and Saudi Arabia to impose economic and political sanctions against anyone financing or dealing with the jihadists.

Rivalries

However, for the time being the main battles are around Fallujah, where a visit by Iranian general Qasem Soleimani to encourage Shia al-Quds paramilitary forces fighting alongside the Iraqi army caused controversy, with Sunni politicians condemning the visit for fuelling sectarian tensions. Hamid al-Mutlaq, a Sunni member of the Iraqi parliament, told news agencies: "We are Iraqis and not Iranians ... Would Turkish or Saudi advisors be welcomed to assist in the battle?"⁴ For his part, the MP for Fallujah, Salim Muttar al-Issawi, said: "Soleimani's presence is suspicious and a cause for concern. He is absolutely not welcome in the area."

All this was grist to the mill of Saudi foreign minister Adel al-Jubeir, who accused Iran of interfering in the internal affairs of other regional countries - not that Saudi Arabia itself would do such a thing, of course. Iran's response came via the deputy head of the Iraqi volunteer forces, who stated that Soleimani's presence followed a "request of the Baghdad government".

So the battles in Iraq (as well as in Syria) are not just about control of Fallujah, Mosul, Heet, etc. They are part and parcel of the regional rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia, who are still fighting to fill the political vacuum left after Saddam Hussein's downfall more than a decade ago.

As I have pointed out many times, the current civil wars in the Middle East have little to do with 'Sunni-Shia conflict': they are part of this regional rivalry. Iran's Islamic Republic, the unintended beneficiary of the Iraq war, continues to support the corrupt, sectarian government in Iraq, the brutal dictator in Damascus and its long-term allies in the Lebanese Hezbollah. Meanwhile, Islamic State would not survive for long if Saudi and Turkish financial and military support was ended. But that is unlikely, as long as the two main rivals of the Islamic Republic of Iran feel threatened by its ability to control what they consider to be a Shia belt stretching from Afghanistan to the Mediterranean (albeit with an Alawite strip in Syria).

IS's revenge has come in the form of suicide bombings. Sadr City - a Shia suburb in eastern Baghdad, considered a stronghold of the cleric, Muqtada al-Sadr - has been one of the main targets and on May 17 a crowded market was hit and dozens were injured. Of course, Baghdad's infamous 'green zone' - the government quarters inherited by the post-occupation administration - has been the scene of a number of protests by supporters of al-Sadr, who are campaigning against the corruption and incompetence in the government led by fellow Shias. However, according to the website *Al monitor: The pulse of the Middle East*, "IS has been seeking to provoke Shi'ite infighting in a bid to delay the liberation of the remaining areas under its control."⁵

Shi'ite political parties have accused each other of initiating the bombings in Sadr City and other Baghdad suburbs. Al-Sadr himself has issued statements naming the current interior minister, Mohammed Salem al-Ghabban, as responsible for the previous suicide attack on May 11 and called on prime minister Haider al-Abadi to dismiss him - "or else the people will find a way to deal with him on their own ..." In other words, al-Sadr is equating the Iraqi authorities and IS.

Throughout all this another, related, civil war is continuing in Syria and, of course, both Iran and IS are involved there too. News in late April was dominated by the discovery

that the Islamic Republic had sent thousands of Hazara Afghan men (who are Shias) to fight alongside the Syrian regime's army. They were born to Afghan refugee families in Iran and dispatched to Syria, courtesy of the Revolutionary Guards. Some of these 'volunteers' have subsequently deserted and joined Syrian refugees trying to seek asylum in Europe. According to BBC Persian service, these Afghans are fleeing the "multinational Shia Muslim militia - in effect a 'Foreign Legion' - that Iran has mobilised to support Syrian president Bashar al-Assad."⁶

No-one is expecting much from the Chilcot enquiry. However, Tony Blair's blatant denial of his part in the creation of the chaos in the Middle East shows that few have learnt any lessons from the invasion of Iraq. More worryingly, Hillary Clinton - who in private meetings with the Israeli lobby and rightwing Iranian

exiles in the United States is allegedly promising regime change from above in Iran - is ready to repeat the same mistakes all over again, this time in Syria.

As the examples of Iraq and Libya show, overthrowing dictators is easy for imperialism. The problem is, what will replace them? ●

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Notes

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Fighting fund

Vital reading

Well, we didn't quite get there, but we came pretty close to reaching our fighting fund target for May.

In order to make the £1,750 we need each month, we were looking to raise an extra £515 in just five days. In fact, thanks to a number of comrades who rallied to the cause, we finished the month on £1,632, with £397 coming in between the previous issue of the *Weekly Worker* and May 31.

Among the comrades who were determined to see us home were LF from Canada, who donated a fantastic £75 via PayPal, and regular supporter RG, who sent in a cheque for exactly the same amount! Then there was PM's standing order for £100, plus six others ranging from £5 to £35. Other PayPal donations were from JW and TT (£5 each) and ET (£10), who writes of our paper: "Vital weekly reading for me". He was among 3,379 online

readers last week.

Also among the cash received in May was £20 from BL, representing two £10 tickets in the Euro 2016 football sweepstake being organised by the CPGB for its forthcoming Summer Offensive - the proceeds for this will go to the *Weekly Worker*. To enter, please transfer £10 to our bank account (00744310: sort code 30-99-64), using the reference, 'Euro sweepstake'. To be allocated a team for the Euro championship, your £10 must be received by Wednesday June 8 at 6pm.

Finally, let me report that 15 standing orders have come in to start June's fund, totalling £214. But we could really do with a big boost to ensure we get the full £1,750 this month! ●

Robbie Rix

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

ITALY

Divisions continue to multiply

Berlusconi shows all the signs of being a spent force, writes Toby Abse. But overall, politics still moves to the right

The forthcoming municipal elections in Milan, Turin, Naples and Bologna will all give important indications of the national balance of forces between Matteo Renzi's Partito Democratico (PD), Beppe Grillo's Movimento Cinque Stelle (M5S - Five Star Movement) and the various contenders on the traditional centre-right. However, it is the Roman contest that will in all probability be the best indicator of whether Renzi will still be Italian prime minister by the end of this year, as well as whether M5S stands any chance of becoming a credible contender for national office in a general election in 2017 or 2018.

The municipal election campaign has exposed the divisions in what is conventionally labelled the 'centre-right' (even if some of its components are better characterised as far-right). From 1994 until the autumn of 2013, Silvio Berlusconi had been the dominant figure in this part of the political spectrum and had generally succeeded in holding together its constituent components - his own Forza Italia, the neo-fascists originally represented by the Alleanza Nazionale after the Fuggi congress of the Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI), and the regionalist Lega Nord.¹ However, Berlusconi's conviction for tax fraud and consequent exclusion from parliamentary office, together with his increasing age and declining vigour (he will be 80 in September), have drastically undermined his political authority. His resurrection of Forza Italia, in the wake of a split in the Popolo della Libertà (PdL) that gave rise to Angelino Alfano's Nuovo Centro Destra (NCD - New Centre Right), has not proved to be a winning formula, as he had fondly imagined.

Further splits at a parliamentary level have left Forza Italia with roughly half the representation in the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate that the PdL had immediately after the February 2013 general election and now it often barely reaches double figures in the opinion polls. Whilst some of the splinters from the PdL (such as the NCD and Denis Verdini's ALA) have moved to the centre in order to reach formal or informal deals with Renzi's PD, the most serious challenge to Berlusconi's old dominance has come from the populist far right - from two parties that at the European level are aligned with Marine Le Pen's neo-fascist Front National. These are the more traditionally neo-fascist Fratelli d'Italia (Fdi) and the Lega Nord, under its new younger leader, Matteo Salvini. The Lega Nord has more or less abandoned the aggressive regionalism (sometimes mutating into outright separatism) of its founder, Umberto Bossi, playing down its old fierce anti-southern prejudices, whilst stepping up its traditional Islamophobia and anti-immigrant racism and adopting a new Europhobic line.² Salvini has allied himself with the Fdi's leader, Giorgia Meloni, and this duo has undermined Berlusconi's leadership, preventing a unified nationwide centre-right challenge in the coming municipal elections.

In some cities Forza Italia and the Fdi are united behind one candidate, so that Milan, for example, looks like being a close-run contest between the centre-left and centre-right, with both the PD and Forza Italia fielding rather technocratic centrist candidates: respectively Giuseppe Sala, the chief executive officer of the Milan Expo of 2015; and Stefano Parisi, former



Giorgia Meloni: reactionary to the core

city manager of Milan in 1997-2001.³ Elsewhere this is not the case; in Turin Forza Italia and the Lega have rival candidates - Alberto Morano and Osvaldo Napoli⁴ - although it is likely that the PD's sitting mayor, Piero Fassino, will be re-elected, even if in the run-off ballot rather than the first round, where he faces a challenger on the radical left.

Rome

However, the major focus of attention has been Rome. For a period Berlusconi thought he had got Salvini and Meloni to support Guido Bertolaso, who played a key role in civil protection during Berlusconi's last government, having been in charge of coping with the earthquake in L'Acquila, the rubbish crisis in Naples and other similar emergencies. Needless to say, he like so many of Berlusconi's cronies, is still facing criminal charges, in his case in relation to some of these infrastructural projects.⁵ Giorgia Meloni had originally ruled herself out as a mayoral candidate after in January very publicly announcing her pregnancy at this year's Family Day - a mass rally in Rome of hard-line Catholics and far-rightists against same-sex partnerships and other alleged threats to the traditional family.⁶

Bertolaso had always faced a certain amount of competition from Alfio Marchini, a construction magnate, who had stood as an independent candidate for the Roman mayoralty in 2013. Whilst Marchini's dynasty of entrepreneurs originally had some links with the Roman federation of the Partito Comunista Italiano, initially as a result of his grandfather's resistance record, by this year Marchini's campaign was tilted towards the right in contrast to his centrism on the previous occasion. Indeed Berlusconi, as a man who had made his initial fortune in construction in the Milan

area, had originally wanted to back Marchini and only enlisted Bertolaso as a candidate because Meloni vetoed the adoption of Marchini as an official centre-right candidate.

Salvini started to turn against Bertolaso, because in the view of the Lega leader one of Bertolaso's speeches showed a certain sympathy for the gypsies' plight; Salvini has always been notorious for his immediate bulldozing of gypsy camps, whether in Rome or anywhere else in Italy, and has on occasions arrived at such camps accompanied by Lega thugs, deliberately seeking to provoke clashes with gypsies or radical left defenders of their rights.

In March Meloni belatedly decided to stand as a mayoral candidate after all, easily gaining the support of Salvini and the Lega, and Bertolaso suggested somewhat crassly that she should concentrate on being a full-time mother. Berlusconi, a man with some form as far as misogynist remarks were concerned, backed this up, adding that somebody who had never run a newspaper kiosk lacked the practical experience of Bertolaso. Meloni, as a shrewd 21st century neo-fascist, played the feminist card, gaining solidarity from Italian female politicians across the political spectrum, regardless of her own appalling bigotry on so many social issues.

However, Berlusconi, as an expert in marketing, avidly followed the opinion polls, including the private ones he had commissioned himself. It became all too apparent that Bertolaso was getting roughly similar percentages to Marchini and coming far behind Meloni, the only avowedly rightwing candidate who stood a chance of getting through to the second round. Some leading Forza Italia figures in northern Italy were urging Berlusconi to switch horses and back Meloni instead of

Bertolaso - some because of their own original ideological background in the neo-fascist MSI/AN, others out of an opportunist belief that it was necessary to keep the Lega Nord onside in the northern regions, especially Lombardy and the Veneto. A smaller faction within Forza Italia urged Berlusconi to adopt the more centrist course of switching his support to Marchini.

For a period Berlusconi - unwilling to be humiliated by the young challengers, Salvini and Meloni - stuck by his old friend, Bertolaso, but in the end he threw him to the wolves, although not before giving the former candidate the right to make the decision on whom to endorse in his place. Needless to say, Bertolaso chose Marchini, for whom he had already expressed some sympathy in press interviews - in part because he felt a greater affinity with somebody in the construction industry and in part because of sheer personal detestation for Meloni. In theory Berlusconi's backing should have doubled Marchini's vote share, but in practice it has made little difference - whether because most Forza Italia voters switched to Meloni or because some of Marchini's original supporters became less enamoured with him when he ceased to be 'an independent without a party' - as his campaign posters all over the city had proclaimed - is not clear and indeed it might well be a mixture of the two factors. This outcome seems the definitive proof that Berlusconi's political marginalisation is now irreversible.

Whilst Meloni at the time of writing is definitely amongst the top three candidates in the first-round contest, it is not at all clear if she will make it into the run-off ballot. Contrary to widespread earlier expectations, Roberto Giachetti, the PD candidate, seems to have gained ground over Meloni, despite the demoralised state of the Roman PD

in the wake of the Mafia Capitale scandal and the Ignazio Marino saga, as well as the presence of a serious competitor to his left: Stefano Fassina of Sinistra Italiana.⁷

Still in first place is the Roman-born lawyer and member of the outgoing municipal council, Virginia Raggi of M5S - although her lead over her main rivals has narrowed, perhaps as a result of the scandals surrounding M5S mayors in Livorno and Parma. Raggi has so far refused to participate in face-to-face debates with her rivals and on at least one occasion a television debate starring the other principal contenders went out with the classically symbolic empty chair.

Raggi's professional background as a lawyer in the practice of the notorious Cesare Previti, the appallingly corrupt defence minister in Berlusconi's first government, who was eventually convicted, even if his age ensured he spent no more than a few days behind bars, is a very clear indication that she is not a woman of the left.⁸ Her gaffes as a candidate - making it far too obvious in public statements that, unlike Parma's rebellious mayor, Federico Pizzarotti, she would take her instructions on all major matters from the national (Milanese) leadership of the party (ie, Beppe Grillo and Davide Casaleggio) - seem to have disheartened Grillo, who is not going to attend her closing rally in Rome for "personal reasons". This despite the original expectation that he would be leading the M5S campaign in the manner of the 2013 general election, where his Roman rally played a crucial role. Internal rivalry within M5S's Roman membership also seems to have weakened Raggi's position.

All this means that, whilst an M5S triumph in the second round of the Roman contest is still a real possibility, it is by no means a certainty ●

Notes

- At times this bloc also included fragments of the right wing of the old DC (Democrazia Cristiana) - under a variety of names, including the Unione di Centro (UdC). But its presence was not a constant feature of Berlusconi's coalitions, as it sometimes acted as the right wing of a centre-left coalition or took a neutral position between the two main blocs.
- Originally it tended to argue that an independent, economically and culturally advanced Padania should be part of the EU, whilst Italy's allegedly 'African' south was best excluded.
- There were three major candidates in the centre-left primary, but the PD's left was split between Francesca Balzani with 33.92% and Pierfrancesco Majorino with 23.1%. This allowed Renzi's favoured candidate, Sala, who had no previous track record in left politics, to win with a 42.33% plurality in this first-past-the-post contest.
- Morano also has the backing of the neo-fascist Fdi, whilst Napoli is supported by the centrist Area Popolare (which includes the NCD).
- Whilst Bertolaso was allegedly reluctant to return from his charitable work on development projects in Africa to contest the Roman mayoralty, and had earlier in his career obtained an MSc from the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine as a supplement to his original Italian medical degree, it is hard to believe that this renewed interest in tropical issues was altogether unconnected with his legal problems at home.
- As far as I am aware, she is not married to Andrea Giambro, by whom she is expecting this baby, but rabid homophobia seems to be more important to the 'traditionalists' than conformity to the institution of marriage.
- The 26-year-old candidate of the Partito Comunista, Alessandro Mustillo, is not a serious competitor. The Partito Comunista is a neo-Stalinist splinter from the Partito dei Comunisti Italiani with some links to eastern European parties of a similar persuasion.
- This statement may seem self-evident to readers of my earlier *Weekly Worker* articles on M5S, but, given the perverse and thoroughly misleading categorisation of M5S as somehow akin to Corbynism, the Sanders campaign and the French Parti de Gauche in Susan Watkins' 'Oppositions' (*New Left Review* March-April 2016), it has to be forcefully reiterated.

REVIEW

Short cuts may not work

Yanis Varoufakis *And the weak suffer what they must?* Bodley Head 2016, pp336, £11.89

Margaret Thatcher made two errors regarding Europe. The first - a common one among British politicians and commentators - was to imagine that a single European market was possible without something resembling a single European state. Tariffs can be lowered and quotas abolished without affecting the sovereignty of national parliaments, but a single European market requires a lot more: it demands a single rulebook. This means that member-states lose all power to set particular quality standards, environmental controls tailor-made for specific habitats or protection for workers and pensioners from cross-border races to the bottom. A single market may not need a single currency, but it needs a single federal-like state to function properly. But, then again, if a single federal-like state is in place, then we might as well have a single currency too (p121).

Varoufakis's book is subtitled *Europe, austerity and the threat to global security*. The analysis deserves scrutiny. The title is a clause from Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian war*, taken from the famous passage concerning the island of Melos, which had rebelled against Athenian rule and was about to suffer the consequences.¹ His book is especially valuable because it analyses in detail the economic consequences of the Bretton Woods settlement of 1944, which inaugurated the period in which the USA operated as undisputed capitalist hegemon.

The plan put forward by Keynes at Bretton Woods involved creating a new world currency (the 'bancor') with exchange rates fixed between it and national currencies; there would be a tax on bancor surpluses run up by individual countries participating, under the auspices of the new International Monetary Fund. The US authorities were opposed to both these ideas - especially the notion of a tax on surpluses: they insisted that the dollar would be the world currency, in effect, and that the US would unilaterally decide what to do with any surplus it earned. As Varoufakis notes, "America owned the surpluses and would recycle them herself, without petitioning a group of bankrupt Europeans for their permission to do so" (p27).

The emergent system worked as long as the US was effectively able to recycle its surpluses. However, once this became inoperative, the US pulled the plug. Varoufakis notes:

The moment men like Paul Volcker saw that political surplus recycling was beyond the American economy's capacity, they brought the whole system down - with the 1971 Nixon shock. For they understood the fallacy that Europe refuses to grasp: if you set up a free trade, free capital and single currency system without a political surplus recycling mechanism, you will end up with something like the 1920s gold standard (p137).

The result is to force adjustment on economies in deficit, whose populations suffer as a consequence. (This seems to be why Keynes denounced the gold standard as "barbaric").

As Varoufakis explains, the system worked as long as recycling between



Yanis Varoufakis: no strategic mastermind

the US and Europe operated:

As long as America sold enough stuff to Europeans, the dollars that America was sending to Europe (as aid, to purchase European goods or even to fund US military bases on the continent) were steadily repatriated ...

Things began to go awry, as Keynes had predicted they would, when America began to spend consistently more money on European and Japanese goods than foreigners were spending on wares made in America. At that moment, when American surplus turned into deficit, the net stream of dollars reversed its flow, feeding into an ever-expanding euro-dollar lake. By the late 1960s, that stream had turned into a torrent; the euro-dollar lake was larger than the Caspian Sea, and the Bretton Woods system came under siege (p32).

The European Union, as it became, was, according to Varoufakis, spirited into being by "le défi américain" - the American challenge: in a new world of fluctuating exchange rates some way had to be found to cohere the various west European economies into a functioning whole (pp71-72). Hence the various expedients, such as the 1970s 'snake in the tunnel', the European Monetary System and, last but not least, the creation of the euro zone. Varoufakis's remarks on all three are highly instructive, but the key target of his analysis is the decision by western European politicians to put economic cooperation before political unity. Varoufakis writes:

If the custodians of Europe's monetary union were crypto-federalists, as Thatcher feared and Mitterrand hoped, why is a European federation further away today than it has ever been? François Mitterrand, and probably German chancellor Helmut Kohl too, knew that the common currency would spearhead unsustainable flows of money from the surplus to the deficit countries (sic - CG). They

could see that a large-scale crisis was inevitable. But they hoped that the crisis would create the political momentum towards a federal Europe. It did no such thing (p101).

Meanwhile in 2008 the US lost the ability to stabilise the world economy via America's trade and federal government budget deficits (p217). The result was that the euro zone got into huge difficulties.

Varoufakis's policy solution to all this can be found in an appendix (pp249-57). He buttresses it with three principles, designed to complement the French revolutionary slogan of 'Liberty, equality and fraternity':

1. No European nation can be free as long as another's democracy is violated.
2. No European nation can live in dignity as long as another is denied it.
3. No European nation can hope for prosperity if another is pushed into permanent insolvency and depression (p233).

The policy prescriptions on pp249-57 are extracted from *A modest proposal for resolving the euro zone crisis* by Varoufakis, Stuart Holland and JK Galbraith, which was published in July 2013. A key sentence runs: "Europe cannot wait for federation" (p251).

He goes on to say:

If crisis resolution is made to depend on federation, the euro zone will fail first. The treaty changes necessary to create a proper European treasury, with the powers to tax, spend and borrow, cannot, and must not, be held to precede resolution of this crisis.

What, then, do the authors propose?

1. Recapitalisation of failing banks should be handed over as a task from national governments to the European Stability Mechanism.
2. The European Central Bank should offer member-states an opportunity to convert their 'Maastricht compliant debt'.
3. A "pan-euro zone investment-led

recovery programme" amounting to eight percent of euro zone GDP, to be administered by the European Investment Bank and its investment fund.

4. "We recommend that Europe embark immediately on an emergency social solidarity programme that will guarantee access to nutrition and to basic energy needs for all Europeans, by means of a European food stamp programme modelled on its US equivalent and a European minimum energy programme" (p254).

I do not see how socialists can be opposed to any of this, but it appears that the elites who run Europe are dead set against such plans - otherwise they would have implemented them by now. And if they did implement them they might well produce a watered-down version. It appears unlikely that the mass of Europe's population will eagerly demand any of the above except perhaps point 4, but in that case why be satisfied with half-measures? Why not push for point 4 as part of an EU-wide programme including such things as enhanced powers for the EU parliament, an end to legislation by inter-governmental treaty, a European Constituent Assembly, a basic income for European citizens, etc, etc?

As Yanis Varoufakis says, Europe is too important to be left to its clueless rulers (p195). History is showing nasty signs of repeating itself:

In 1929 all the burden of adjustment was forced upon the weakest debtors. Such a policy cannot succeed since the resulting deflation poisons debt dynamics and mass joblessness poisons democracy (p235).

Be warned: demand a Socialist United States of Europe ●

Chris Gray

Notes

1. The 17th century English political philosopher, Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), described Thucydides as "the most politic historiographer that ever writ". This was because Thucydides's description of class struggles in ancient Greece at the time of the war between Athens and Sparta in the second half of the 5th century BCE struck him as analogous to the current English civil war, which was raging as he wrote.

What we fight for

■ Without organisation the working class is nothing; with the highest form of organisation it is everything.

■ There exists no real Communist Party today. There are many so-called 'parties' on the left. In reality they are confessional sects. Members who disagree with the prescribed 'line' are expected to gag themselves in public. Either that or face expulsion.

■ Communists operate according to the principles of democratic centralism. Through ongoing debate we seek to achieve unity in action and a common world outlook. As long as they support agreed actions, members should have the right to speak openly and form temporary or permanent factions.

■ Communists oppose all imperialist wars and occupations but constantly strive to bring to the fore the fundamental question - ending war is bound up with ending capitalism.

■ Communists are internationalists. Everywhere we strive for the closest unity and agreement of working class and progressive parties of all countries. We oppose every manifestation of national sectionalism. It is an internationalist duty to uphold the principle, 'One state, one party'.

■ The working class must be organised globally. Without a global Communist Party, a Communist International, the struggle against capital is weakened and lacks coordination.

■ Communists have no interest apart from the working class as a whole. They differ only in recognising the importance of Marxism as a guide to practice. That theory is no dogma, but must be constantly added to and enriched.

■ Capitalism in its ceaseless search for profit puts the future of humanity at risk. Capitalism is synonymous with war, pollution, exploitation and crisis. As a global system capitalism can only be superseded globally.

■ The capitalist class will never willingly allow their wealth and power to be taken away by a parliamentary vote.

■ We will use the most militant methods objective circumstances allow to achieve a federal republic of England, Scotland and Wales, a united, federal Ireland and a United States of Europe.

■ Communists favour industrial unions. Bureaucracy and class compromise must be fought and the trade unions transformed into schools for communism.

■ Communists are champions of the oppressed. Women's oppression, combating racism and chauvinism, and the struggle for peace and ecological sustainability are just as much working class questions as pay, trade union rights and demands for high-quality health, housing and education.

■ Socialism represents victory in the battle for democracy. It is the rule of the working class. Socialism is either democratic or, as with Stalin's Soviet Union, it turns into its opposite.

■ Socialism is the first stage of the worldwide transition to communism - a system which knows neither wars, exploitation, money, classes, states nor nations. Communism is general freedom and the real beginning of human history.

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weekly worker

Syriza and Podemos are not models to copy

Political response needed

How will the resistance to France's 'labour reforms' end? Daren Greene looks at the contending forces

The struggle against the 'El Khomri law', the package of labour 'reforms' being pushed through by the French government, has intensified in recent weeks. Hundreds of thousands have taken to the streets and the trade unionists have taken militant action in resistance to this significant attack.

The bill is an attempt to wrest back various concessions won by the French working class over the course of decades. The legislation would extend the legal working week from 35 to 46 hours, overturning the law brought in during 2000, although currently most work more hours than this already. It would also allow employers to dismiss workers with greater ease, reducing the period for which a business's revenue must fall before workers can be laid off. Companies would be able to opt out of labour protection measures, make local instead of industry-wide agreements on hours and conditions, and reduce wages more easily. The bill has been forced through the lower house using emergency powers, due to government fears that it would fail to secure a majority - a move that has added to the anger felt by millions of workers. The government appears to have made a U-turn on imposing a cap on payments for unfair dismissal, but it has indicated that it will not compromise on the meat of the reforms.

The resistance to these measures is being led by the Confédération Générale du Travail (General Confederation of Labour - CGT). Shamefully the opposition of the unions is not unanimous, with the collaborationist Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail (the French Democratic Confederation of Labour) accepting the proposed changes, its general secretary even stating that it would be "unacceptable" to scrap the plans under pressure from the CGT. Clearly though, a large section of the working class rejects the idea that these 'reforms' are either required or inevitable.

Last week workers blockaded fuel depots and strike action spread from oil refineries to nuclear power plants and docks. The response from the state was severe: police violently dispersed the blockades and clashes broke out at protests in a number of cities. The CGT managed to prevent all newspapers apart from the 'official communist' *L'Humanité* from going to press on May 26 after they refused to publish a statement from the CGT. This was, of course, condemned by liberal commentators as an outrageous assault on the freedom of the press - the editor of *Libération* claimed the move by the CGT was "shameful". The freedom referred to by these individuals simply amounts to the freedom for these owners to dispose of their property as they wish, with a guarantee that their employees will do as they are told. It is "shameful" that workers refuse to facilitate the publication and distribution of papers hostile to their cause.

Rail and airline workers are set



Mass support for militant action

to join the fight, rolling strikes have been called for by the CGT and other unions and a coordinated day of action is planned for June 14, when the bill is due to reach the Senate. Despite the combativity of the workers, and the widespread support they are receiving, the government is taking a hard line. Prime minister Manuel Valls condemned the actions of the CGT, saying: "You cannot blockade a country, you cannot attack the economic interests of France in this way." The Socialist Party government is anxious to avoid appearing weak in the face of the unrest and so a climbdown on the key parts of the bill appears unlikely, despite their unpopularity. As has been demonstrated across Europe, 'social democratic' parties led by the right are particularly keen to be seen as effective and responsible administrators of capitalism.

The French capitalist class is also anxious; it wants to avoid any repeat of Jacques Chirac's defeat in 2006, when labour reforms aimed at removing protection for young workers had to be repealed. Hence the shrill cries from the bosses'

confederation, Medef, demanding the restoration of the "rule of law". From the point of view of large employers, the fact that the working class have been able to effectively defend their conditions in the past reveals a weakness of the French state.

Given the potential electoral impact these measures may have on the Parti Socialiste, you would be forgiven for asking why they are being attempted now. With the resurgence of the right, and the Front National in particular, it is important for the PS to mobilise its base and appeal to the increasing number of working class voters who are attracted to Marine Le Pen's protectionist stance.

This is clearly a government for whom bourgeois wealth and privilege are off limits. Wealth expropriation and redistribution are not considered possible. That being the case, the government has no choice but to make the working class pay and hope that this frees up employers to hire enough people to put a dent in the 10%-plus official unemployment rate.

The labour reforms, like those carried out by Renzi's government in Italy, are part of a wider trend, an

offensive by the European capitalist class to roll back gains made in the second half of the 20th century. In both France and Italy, strong Communist Parties and a high level of class-consciousness led to relatively large concessions to the working class. Global economic trends, the fall of the Soviet Union and the failed strategies of the left leave us in a very different situation today. Business and its political representatives intend to 'rectify' what they see as the excessive gains of European workers. The capitalist class is conscious of its tasks. A *JP Morgan* report from 2013, 'The Euro area adjustment: about halfway there',² includes a section on political reforms required to deal with the crisis in Europe. It talks of "deep-seated political problems in the periphery... reflecting the political strength that leftwing parties gained after the defeat of fascism", including "constitutional protection of labour rights ... and the right to protest if unwelcome changes are made to the political status quo. The shortcomings of this political legacy have been revealed by the crisis."

The process well underway in

southern Europe is gaining pace in France, because the ruling class sees an opportunity to roll back the vestiges of compromise made in the last century - helped by the fact that the governing Socialist Party is steeped in the ideology of neoliberalism.

The outcome of this confrontation remains unclear, although both sides so far seem determined to see it through to the end. Struggles such as these, when it is clear what is at stake, can galvanise large sections of the population. However, the recent history of similar struggles in France demonstrates that it can be the right which benefits. In the context of the hysterical rightwing reaction to the movement of refugees into Europe, it is quite possible that the Parti Socialiste is going to be pushed into third place in next year's presidential elections. The Front National is going from strength to strength, capturing areas once held by the Parti Communiste Français (PCF). Whatever happens it looks set to make substantial gains.

The left currently has no answer to the resurgence of the right. Some look to Nuit Debout, a movement similar to the Spanish Indignados that has arisen out of the labour law protests, and see the possibility of building a "grassroots political alternative". This is to ignore the experiences of Syriza and Podemos.

There was talk among sections of the PS left and some outside it of a "primary of the left" in order to stand a single candidate in 2017. It is not yet clear which parties would be involved and whether this will happen. The fight over the labour law will probably have made it hard for a candidate from the governing party to win the support of the left, and the Parti de Gauche (Left Party) has already announced that its leader, Jean-Luc Mélenchon, will be running. The PCF is yet to announce whether it will be backing him. Whatever the approach of the French left going into the elections, a long-term plan for principled Marxist unity is required, in order to create an internationalist working class political alternative to re-territorialisation and neoliberalism in Europe ●

Notes

1. *Morning Star* June 27 2016.
2. D Mackie, M Barr, 'The euro area adjustment: about halfway there' *JP Morgan*: www.europe-solidarity.eu/documents/ES1_euro-area-adjustment.pdf.

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