



# weekly worker

**Easter 1916: admiration of James Connolly should be tempered with criticism**

- CPGB aggregate report
- AWL's horrible history
- Corbyn's EU flip
- Turkey: split in regime

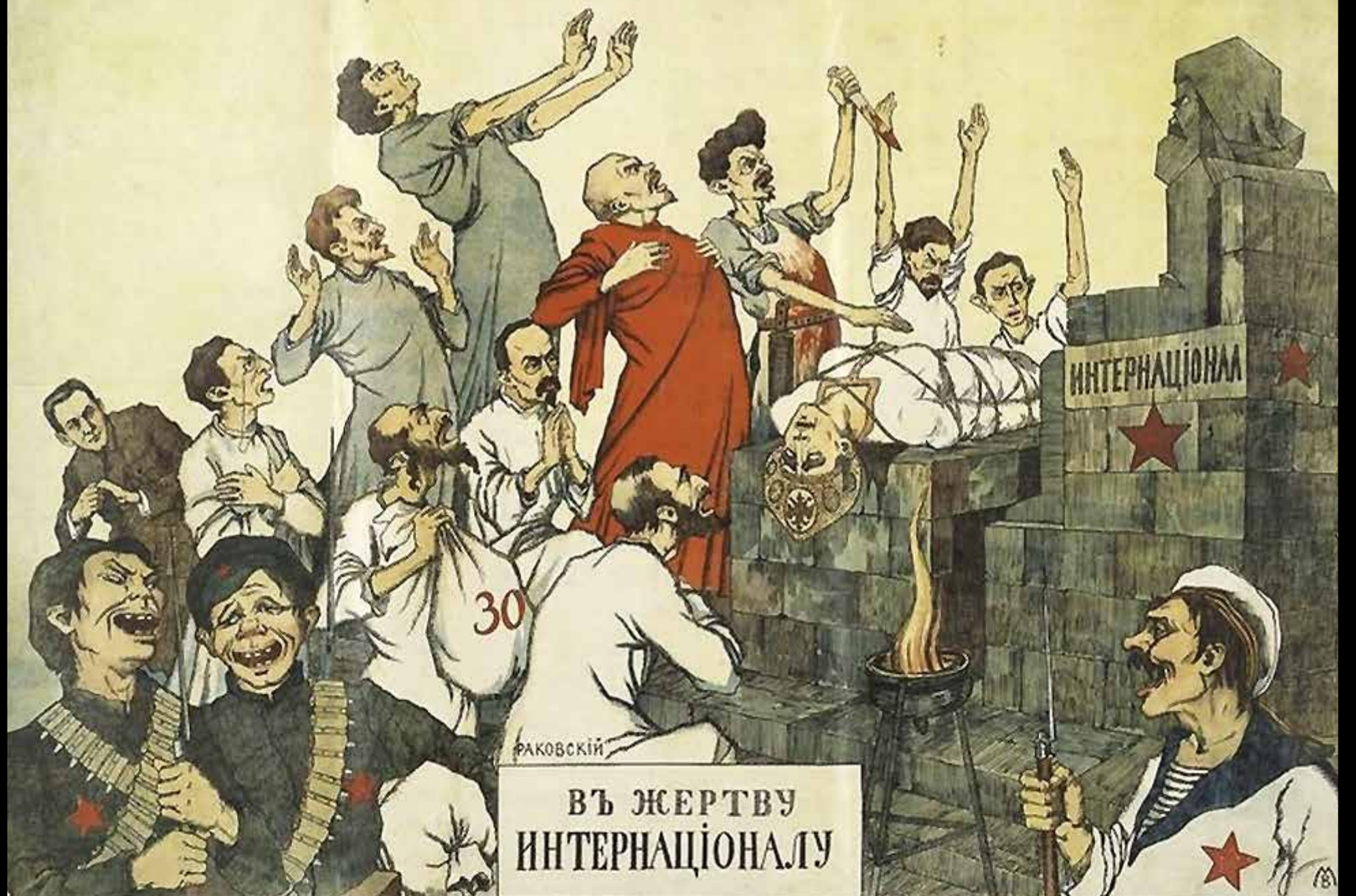
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Kerensky	Uritsky	Sverdlov	Zinoviev	Lunacharsky	Lenin	Trotsky	Kamenev	Radek

## THE LEFT THE RIGHT AND ANTI SEMITISM



## LETTERS



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

## Class enemy

Tom Munday suggests, absurdly, that the Bernie Sanders could “break the Democratic Party” - “think what an opportunity that would represent for the US working class” (‘Not out of it yet’, March 3).

The reality is that Sanders, the supposed ‘independent’, is running to bolster, not break, the Democratic Party - to shift it nominally a few steps to the left, so that it can appeal to the legions of working people and youth who are fed up with establishment politics as usual. He has made clear repeatedly since the start of his campaign that, once he loses at the nominating convention, he will support the Democratic candidate.

The only opportunity that Sanders’ campaign offers to the US working class is to engage in class collaboration with the liberal imperialist wing of the ruling class. Labels aside, Sanders is nothing more than a traditional liberal Democrat who harkens back to the time before the party swung rightward, before capitalism’s long economic stagnation required a stepped-up attack on the working class. He imagines a moderately humanised capitalism that he labels socialism, downplays the racism that capitalism uses to divide the working class, and defends the basic interests of US (and Israeli) imperialism.

Jim Creegan argues - correctly in my view - that “the Sanders bid must be assessed in terms of what I regard as the main socialist objective in the electoral arena: the political independence of the working class from the twin parties of capitalism” (‘Possibilities and pitfalls’, February 25). There are quite a few US socialists who claim to agree with the goal, but who say that Sanders is building something that will outlast his campaign and be a step forward toward building an independent movement, even a working class one. Some claim that the momentum of the surprisingly large Sanders sentiment can be channelled, once Sanders loses the Democratic Party nomination, into existing independent campaigns - like that of the Green Party, whose liberal programme explicitly swears allegiance to capitalism.

But that claim is an illusion. The Sanders ‘movement’ is a mass phenomenon with genuine hopes of transforming America politics and gaining power and influence. The leftwing alternatives - socialist or just ‘progressive’ - are small-scale propaganda efforts that few will even hear of. If Hillary Clinton (or some other establishment Democrat, in case she founders under the weight of scandal) gets the nomination, then many Sandernistas are likely either to drop out of activism or reluctantly support the Democratic nominee as the lesser evil against, whatever reactionary the Republicans decide on.

The Sanders campaign has tapped into a vein of mass outrage against the expanding economic inequality in the US. But, in building a base inside the Democratic Party, his campaign is not promoting working class independence, but rather

strengthening one of the two major parties of Wall Street and imperialism: that is, it is building the class enemy.

**Walter Daum**  
New York

## Independent yoga

Reading comrade Alan Gibson’s letter (February 25), one gets a most peculiar idea of the principle of working class independence. It seems - as often it does with comrade Gibson and the various fragments of the Spartacist tradition in general - that working class independence is almost like a particularly awkward yoga position, that one can nevertheless get into with enough persistence in the face of external ridicule.

He complains that we recommend our American readers give critical support to Bernie Sanders, a “capitalist politician” - by which he seems to mean a politician belonging to a capitalist party, which is a fair enough description of Sanders. Yet he does not give any consideration to the surely not irrelevant fact that *there is no independent party of the working class in the United States*, which means that we have to fight for one.

This sort of problem was perfectly transparent to our forebears in the movement. Marx aggressively supported Abraham Lincoln in two American elections - why? Because Lincoln was the man most likely to destroy slavery - a necessary (though, as it turns out, hardly sufficient) condition for working class politics in the States. On top of that, it is worth mentioning the Bolsheviks’ electoral arrangements with the bourgeois-constitutionalist Cadets, and Lenin’s support for the 1916 Easter Rising, for which he was condemned by a thousand contemporary Alans. Marx and Lenin were not exhibiting any particular genius on these points - they merely understood that the working class does not become ‘for itself’ without a messy process of protracted struggle.

Sanders has done us the favour of demonstrating that ‘socialist’ is no longer a scary enough word in American politics to rule out a candidate in advance. He has also conveniently drawn a rough ‘class line’ between himself and Hillary Clinton by refusing corporate donations. This is, surely, an *opportunity* for communists to flesh out that picture, argue among the layers he has mobilised for a clearer and sharper picture of the class structure of society, and the need to overturn it, and most immediately the need *not* to go running back to Hillary when Sanders likely loses.

The most common misunderstanding of the ‘Spartacist tradition’ is that it is a straightforwardly Trotskyist tradition: in reality, the political positions of the Sparts, Alan’s International Bolshevik Tendency and so on owe a great deal more to ‘classic’ left communism, with a few ortho-Trot phrases grafted on. Alan’s letter, alas, is a typical example of the style.

**Paul Demarty**  
London

## It’s the system

Oliver Healey is wrong (Letters, March 3). Banks don’t have the

“ability to create money”. They only have the ability to lend money. The illusion that they can “create money” arises from the modern definition of money as including bank loans. Obviously banks make loans, but to say this is ‘creating’ money is a misuse of the word, as the money banks lend already exists. It is what has been deposited with them and what they themselves have borrowed from the money market (ie, other banks and financial institutions) or a part of their capital.

Purchasing power is generated when goods and services are produced, as the income of those involved in it, as wages and profits (or, more accurately, surplus value), the counterpart of the value added in production. The total amount of money in an economy does not have to equal this, as money (whether physical or electronic) circulates and can be used for more than one transaction. Banks help circulate money. They do not create it.

Banks redistribute purchasing power by obtaining money from people and firms who don’t want to spend it for the time being and lending it to those who need it to spend on some project. Their income arises from the rate of interest they pay depositors and others they borrow from and the higher rate they charge those they lend to. They are basically financial intermediaries.

There are other errors in Oliver’s letter. Banks don’t fail because “they have only hard currency reserves of 3%”. These days, most banks - including those that haven’t failed and were never likely to - have cash reserves of much less than even this. Northern Rock and HBOS failed because, once the financial crisis broke, they could not renew (except at a higher rate than they were charging those they had lent to) the money they had borrowed from the money market to relend.

As to the proposal to require banks to “buy” the money to lend from the Bank of England, presumably with the funds they now get from depositors and the money market, this would just be a bureaucratic detour that would make no difference - unless, that is, the bank were to limit sales. Which in fact is what those who thought up this idea of so-called ‘100% reserve banking’ had in mind as a way of curbing bank overlending, which they held was the cause of booms that bust and result in a slump in production. They offer a purely monetary explanation of economic crises and slumps, whereas in fact these are caused by overproduction of real things, not by banks ‘creating’ too much money.

In any event, banking and monetary reform is not going to do anything to improve the position of wage and salary workers. That requires a political and social revolution from capitalism to a society of common ownership and democratic control, where banks would be redundant.

**Adam Buick**  
email

## What about PLO?

I have read a number of articles on Israel, the Israel/Palestine conflict and the Palestine solidarity movement by Tony Greenstein in the *Weekly Worker* over a number of years.

While they were usually well written and contained some interesting and useful points and

references, I for some reason felt there was something of a pointlessness about them, as they never seem to conclude with any solution or recommended direction of travel. Israel was variously castigated as bad, racist, violent and oppressive, especially to the Palestinians, but also to a degree in relation to its own citizens.

In his most recent article, ‘No backtracking on Palestine’ (March 3), I read that in 1982 Tony was an advocate of “a unitary, democratic, secular state covering the whole of Palestine” and, to make the position even clearer, “we did not support the ‘right to exist’ of the apartheid state of Israel”. This is the first time, I think, I have seen Tony be explicit on his proposed solution to the Israel/Palestine conflict, and it certainly provides a clarifying strategic perspective to his previous articles and comments.

I don’t want to misinterpret Tony’s current views, but from his comments later in the article, including “no-one in Israel seriously believes a two-state solution is possible”, the need to “oppose Zionist settler colonialism”, “partition - a two-state solution - is neither desirable nor feasible”, “the idea that Israel is going to withdraw over 600,000 settlers behind some imaginary green line is the stuff of dreams”, it seems clear Tony continues to advocate the effective abolition of the state of Israel and the creation of a unitary Palestinian state covering the whole territory of what between 1920 and 1948 was termed Mandatory Palestine.

I would be very interested to learn how Tony envisages this coming about. The violent overthrow and destruction of the state of Israel? Through insurrection and revolution? Carried out by the Palestinians alone or with significant Israeli support? Through external intervention and invasion? The democratic transformation of Israel into a unitary, inclusive and democratic state? A negotiated settlement between Israel and the principal representatives of the Palestinian people?

I would also be interested to know Tony’s views on the potential role of the Israeli working class and labour movement in any such change process, and also which current political, social and military forces in Israel, Palestine and in the wider region he thinks can play a significant role in this, and whether they currently share Tony’s strategic aim of a ‘one Palestinian state’ solution.

I am conscious, for example, of an article in the *Morning Star* of June 11 2015 by Hannah Amireh, member of the executive committee of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, where she carefully, cogently and effectively weighs the pros and cons of the one- and two-state solutions, and concludes by advocating the two-state solution, as contained in the national programme of the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

Surely the democratically formulated and expressed strategic perspectives of the representative structures of the Palestinian people should carry significant weight in the minds of those in the imperialist heartlands who genuinely wish to conduct effective and meaningful

solidarity, and support and effect real change and progress in the Middle East?

**Andrew Northall**  
Kettering

## Flawed

Both Moshé Machover and my comrade, Gerry Downing, make a number of flawed arguments against the CPGB’s broadly correct ‘active boycott’ position in the current Euro referendum campaign.

Moshé’s key argument is: “The statement and the article studiously avoid the question as to which outcome of the referendum would be worse for the long-term interests of the working class and the struggle for socialism. In my opinion, exit from the European Union would be considerably worse: all the arguments for exit are overtly or covertly nationalist, while some of the arguments for staying in are internationalist.”

But it is not true that all of the arguments for Brexit are nationalist. One common argument on the far left for this position is that the EU is an imperialist bloc aimed at coordinating Europe’s imperialist powers and maximising their ability to exploit and oppress the workers and peasants of semi-colonial nations. There is considerable truth in this, but it is not decisive and does not make the dissolution of the EU a lesser evil, as, if the EU did not exist, other forms of imperialist bloc would necessarily be created to do the same thing. Imperialist capital has an organic tendency to form such blocs.

Moshé appears to reject key elements of Lenin’s understanding of imperialism. But Gerry Downing most certainly does not. Which makes the historical analogies that he uses to justify a ‘yes’ vote all the more puzzling.

“But surely we must not attempt in any way to confuse the Socialist United States of Europe with the present imperialist cabal that is the European Union? The United States of America was established in the War of Independence and maintained in the Civil War in revolutionary struggles. France’s internal customs borders were demolished along with the *ancien régime* by revolution in 1789-94. However, both Germany and Italy were unified from the top down basically by reactionary political movements after failed revolutions.”

The problem with this reasoning is twofold. All of the events referred to above, from the French revolution to the US Civil War, the Italian *Risorgimento* and the unification of Germany under Bismarck, involved the creation of nation-states. Even the USA is and always was a bourgeois nation-state, despite its peculiar federal structure. The creation of a genuine European federation, which some may call the ‘United States’ of Europe, would be the creation of a formation that would genuinely transcend the nation-state, which is a task for the proletariat, not the bourgeoisie.

The other significant point about this is that they all took place in the epoch of progressive capitalism. It is not true that Italian unification was carried out by a reactionary movement; there was a considerable revolutionary-democratic aspect and mass agitation to the creation of unified Italy, even if it did result

in a constitutional monarchy, which was also true of the French Revolution of 1830.

If these unifications were created by reactionary movements, they can hardly have been supportable, even in the most critical sense. But in fact what happened is that part of the Junkers and Italian nobility were captured politically by the bourgeoisie and became its surrogates in the creation of nation-states by almost entirely military-bureaucratic means (in Germany) or with a mixture of the latter with some real revolutionary struggles and battles (in Italy).

Thus the dismissal of these movements as reactionary is too strong. They carried out progressive, bourgeois tasks in an epoch where capitalism was still progressive, while either ensuring the absence (in Germany) or only an attenuated occurrence (in Italy) of revolutionary elements and struggles, not least the independent struggle of the working class. That did not make them reactionary. They still inflicted defeats on the contemporary reaction, albeit by non-revolutionary means.

This is important to understanding why the EU is not more progressive, fundamentally, than its nationalist-imperialist opponents today. Capitalism today is dominated by an imperialist bourgeoisie, which threatens humanity with destruction, and is no longer a progressive social system. The EU at its core is imperialist. Its subjugation of Greece has the character of a semi-colonial-type capitalism being crushed by an imperialist bloc. We as Marxists cannot support the little England proponents of Brexit, as their programme is simply one of piloting imperialist Britain out of this particular imperialist bloc, and into other blocs of a similar type, but with different specifics. But a vote for the EU today is also a vote for a European imperialist bloc.

Different people on the left are reacting to different facets of this reality in an often one-sided way. Some are supporting Brexit in the mistaken belief that they are helping to prevent future occurrences of the Greek crime. Others are reacting, equally understandably, against the disgusting British imperialist and anti-migrant politics of the UK Independence Party and the Brexiters. This is a complex issue with many facets, and difficult for the left to analyse.

There are honest and decent subjective socialists on both sides of the argument, and no monopoly of socialist aspiration and integrity on either. But revolutionaries in imperialist countries have a responsibility above all to draw a line against all shades of imperialist politics, which is why in my view it is essential to support neither of the imperialist camps in this referendum. This is not abstentionism, but the only coherent way to draw the class line against imperialism in both of its currently contending forms.

Socialist Fight will be hosting a public debate on these questions this coming Sunday (March 13) at 1.30pm at the Cock Tavern, Phoenix Road, London NW1.

**Ian Donovan**  
Socialist Fight

## Remain-abstain

In the Scottish referendum the CPGB has a 'no-abstain' position. They argued for 'no', but called on people to abstain. Comrades

like Sandy McBurney, Sarah McDonald and Moshé Machover were frustrated by this, because the CPGB did not back their anti-Scottish nationalism rhetoric with deeds.

'Remain-abstain' (or boycott) means arguing that, while it is *currently* in the interests of the working class to remain in the EU, workers should take an independent position and not vote for Cameron's Dirty Little Deal or Brexit. Both options are reactionary, both damage the EU and the working class and both are part of the nationalist-inspired disintegration of the EU.

The idea that voting for Cameron's deal will save the EU from disintegration is false. After seriously damaging Greece, threatening to kick Scotland out of the EU and the treatment of Syrian asylum-seekers we can see the EU is corrupted and busted. Voting 'yes' is not going to save it. The only thing that can save Europe from disintegration is the working class acting independently with its own programme.

Moshé (Machover) says it is a straight choice between 'leave' or 'remain' (Letters, March 3). That would be true if you took the whole issue out of the context of the class struggle and simply vote on an abstraction. But there are many possible outcomes, including a low turnout and a draw. In terms of real outcomes the best is a low turnout, with Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales voting to remain and England voting to leave. That is the only possible outcome taking the UK towards a democratic revolution.

The worst-case scenario is a high turnout and a big majority for 'remain'. That will be great news for Cameron and bad news for housing, the NHS and Jeremy Corbyn. So the working class should let Cameron stew in his own juice. The lesson from Scotland is that Labour saved Cameron, committed political suicide and then got stuffed by Cameron. Now the Labour right has Corbyn's head on the same chopping block.

Does this mean that we should get in the taxi with Farage, Johnson, Galloway, *Morning Star* and the Socialist Workers Party? And the queen is in that cab too! 'Restore the social monarchy' may be a programme for Ukip and the 'Spirit of 45ers', but

definitely not for any republican.

In Scotland there was a massive referendum turnout because people could sense, feel and hear the drumbeat of democracy. This time they will smell the rotting corpse of reaction, the disintegration of the EU and the oppression of the Greek working class. If people don't know who to believe, the bad smell will keep them away from the polling booth.

So we have to fight tooth and nail for a low turnout. I think we can win 50% of the voters. No votes for reaction and no votes for more reaction, because both damage the unity of the international working class. There is only one class that can halt the break-up of the EU and that is the independent industrial and political action by Europe's only democratic class. Remain - yes, but on our terms, not theirs.

**Steve Freeman**  
Left Unity and Rise

## Conspiracy

The big question for me is, will Barack Obama vacate the White House in January? Obama has served the Conspiracy well. His masters may still have need for him. We will have to wait and see.

One thing is certain - if they still have need for Obama, they will engineer a serious crisis. This will allow Obama to declare a state of emergency and continue to lead America for another four years, or for as long as the emergency lasts. A terrorist attack on America would certainly give the president all the excuse he needs.

2017 could may well see Obama still in the presidency, unless they decide otherwise.

**Tony Clark**  
email

## Correction

I am the shop steward mentioned in your article, 'Anti-Semitic smears employed by right' (March 3). It says I complained against the left's alleged "intimidation" and "bullying", when it was the other way round: I was the Unite delegation leader and was trying to ensure Zac Harvey followed the union mandate to vote for James Elliot, the candidate backed by Momentum. But instead he cast the Unite vote, worth 50,000 due to electoral college rules, for Beckett, handing her the victory.

**Charlotte Upton**  
email

## Fighting fund

## Real debate

**A**fter February's success, our March fighting fund is continuing to make strides.

First of all, we had no fewer than four PayPal donations - definitely well above average! Pride of place goes to comrade JP for his £60 donation, while NW and AN both contributed £20 and TT added a tenner. They were among 3,939 online readers last week, by the way - that's quite a bit above the recent average too.

Our standing orders, totalling £155, included regulars from CG (£30), RK and GD (£25 each), and DV (£20), while a couple of cheques from KC (£25) and DN (£20) took our weekly tally to £310 and our running total for March to £679.

One of those cheque-writers,

comrade KC, was moved to comment on the reason he added that £25 to his subscription. He says: "I know a lot of people must tell you, but your honesty and readiness to publish so much criticism in the *Weekly Worker* is a breath of fresh air." He particularly likes our letters pages, where, he says, there is "real debate".

That's what this paper is about, comrade! And that's why it's so important we raise the £1,750 we need for our fighting fund every month! ●

**Robbie Rix**

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

# 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 March 13, 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 2 ('Paliamentarism v direct action'), section 3: 'Labour's fling'. Organised by CPGB: [www.cpgb.org.uk](http://www.cpgb.org.uk).

## Radical Anthropology Group

**Tuesday March 15, 6.45pm:** Introduction to social and biological anthropology, Daryll Forde seminar room, Anthropology Building, 14 Taviston Street, off Gordon Square, London WC1. 'A Greek comedy: Lysistrata and the sex strike' (RAG workshop). Organised by Radical Anthropology Group: [radicalanthropologygroup.org](http://radicalanthropologygroup.org).

## Women for Palestine

**Saturday March 12, 12 noon:** Workshops and discussion, Delius Arts and Cultural Centre, 29 Great Horton Road, Bradford BD7. Tickets £10/£5: 07471 907969; [hillyfletcher@btinternet.com](mailto:hillyfletcher@btinternet.com). Organised by Northern Women for Palestine: [www.facebook.com/NorthernWomenforPalestine](http://www.facebook.com/NorthernWomenforPalestine).

## Junior doctors can win

**Saturday March 12, 1pm:** Discussion, room B111, Brunei Gallery, School of Oriental and African Studies, Thornhaugh Street, London WC1. Organised by Healthworkers for Healthworkers: <http://uniteresist.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/health-workers-open-meeting-A6-front.jpg>.

## National march for homes

**Sunday March 13, 12 noon:** Assemble Lincoln's Inn Fields, London WC2. Organised by Kill the Housing Bill: <https://killthehousingbill.wordpress.com>.

## EU referendum debate

**Sunday March 13, 1.30 pm:** Public meeting, Cock Tavern, 23 Phoenix Road, London NW1. Speakers: Graham Durham (Leave); Gerry Downing (Remain); Ian Donovan (Active boycott). Organised by Socialist Fight: <http://socialistfight.com>.

## Creating Co-ops

**Monday March 14, 8.30pm:** Discussion, Quaker Meeting House, 22 School Lane, Liverpool L1. Organised by Cooperatives UK: [www.uk.coop](http://www.uk.coop).

## Corbynomics

**Monday March 14, 7pm:** Five-week course, Bussey Building, CLF Art Cafe, 133 Rye Lane, London SE15. This session: 'The rise and rise of the corporations'. Presented by Brick Lane Debates and Red Pepper. Organised by Momentum: [www.facebook.com/MomentumCityofLondon/posts/203820683309645](http://www.facebook.com/MomentumCityofLondon/posts/203820683309645).

## Syria, ISIS and the spread of war

**Tuesday March 15, 7pm:** Public meeting, Quaker Meeting House, 22 School Lane, Liverpool L1. Organised by Merseyside Stop the War: [www.stopwar.org.uk](http://www.stopwar.org.uk).

## Corbyn for PM

**Tuesday March 15, 7.45pm:** Artists, activists and celebs for Jeremy, Tyne Theatre and Opera House, 117 Westgate Road, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1. Organised by JC4PM-TOUR: [www.jc4pmtour.com](http://www.jc4pmtour.com).

## No to Trident

**Wednesday March 16, 7.30pm:** Meeting, Quaker Meeting House, 10 St James Street, Sheffield S1. Organised by Sheffield Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament: [www.yorkshirecnd.org.uk/sheffield](http://www.yorkshirecnd.org.uk/sheffield).

## Education Question Time

**Thursday March 17, 6.30pm:** Q&A with SW London Assembly candidates about their plans for London's Education. Richmond Adult Community College, Parkshot, London SW9. Organised by SW London Education Question Time: [www.facebook.com/events/1659197457678478/](http://www.facebook.com/events/1659197457678478/).

## Migrant solidarity

**Saturday March 19, 12 noon:** National demonstration. Assemble Portland Place, London W1. Organised by Stand Up To Racism: [www.standuptoracism.org.uk](http://www.standuptoracism.org.uk).

## Labour Party democracy

**Saturday March 19, 11.30am to 4.30pm:** Campaign for Labour Party Democracy AGM, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Organised by Campaign for Labour Party Democracy: [www.clpd.org.uk](http://www.clpd.org.uk).

## No to drones

**Saturday March 19, 1pm:** Demonstration, RAF Waddington main gate, Lincoln LN5 (on the A607). Organised by Drone Campaign Network: <https://dronecampaignnetwork.wordpress.com>.

## End austerity now

**Saturday April 16, 1pm:** National protest against state budget cuts. Assemble Gower Street/Euston Road, London NW1. Organised by People's Assembly: [www.thepeoplesassembly.org.uk](http://www.thepeoplesassembly.org.uk).

## Skateboarding in Palestine

**Tuesday April 19, 7.30pm:** Film show and discussion, Whitstable Labour Club, 12 Belmont Rd, Whitstable. With Theo Krish, who builds skate-parks in Palestine. Organised by Faversham and Whitstable Palestine Solidarity Campaign: [www.facebook.com/fwpsc](http://www.facebook.com/fwpsc).

## 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.

## AGGREGATE

# Ideas to transform Labour

William Sarsfield reports on the weekend's CPGB members' meeting

While the agenda of the CPGB's March 6 aggregate had to be juggled at the last minute due to a speaker's illness, the two openings presented were thought-provoking and sparked plenty of discussion.

Jack Conrad kicked off the day on the situation in the Labour Party and our role in the civil war that the right has launched (and is more energetically prosecuting than the left, it must be said). Early in his talk, he noted that - in view of the surprise landslide victory of Corbyn - it was perhaps worthwhile comrades rereading Plekhanov's *On the role of the individual in history*, and in particular his comments on the interplay between the talents and attributes of the particular humans involved, the objective circumstances that they are presented with and accident. In an intervention later in the day, Moshe Machover added the qualification that, while Corbyn's addition to the leadership ballot courtesy of the "morons" was an accident, his crushing victory certainly was not. It was to be explained by the contradictions inherent to the Labour Party: "necessity sometimes makes itself apparent through contingency", as the comrade put it - another example he pointed to being the success of Bernie Sanders in the US.

Comrade Conrad firmly restated the orthodox Marxist position on the Labour Party and gave us a thumbnail history of its early period and the attitudes taken by members of Second International, such as Lenin and Kautsky, to the new formation. Usefully, he reminded the audience that the largest constituent organisation - the British Socialist Party (which went on to form the Communist Party itself in 1920) - had been an affiliate of Labour from 1916 and that a very high percentage of the CPGB members in those early days would have held dual membership, including some MPs who came over to the communists.

He also used an amusing anecdote from the *Weekly Worker* series on the formation and early years of the party to illustrate the point about the communists' close relationship with Labour at that time. The debate on possible CPGB affiliation to Labour provoked some heated exchanges in the first congress. One delegate from Wales roundly denounced the possibility of changing the Labour Party to a body that could genuinely serve long-term working class interests - and underlined his leftist-

leaning point with words to the effect of "And I should know - I've been a Labour councillor for years!"

The political situation we currently face in Labour is historically unique, comrade Conrad stressed. Corbyn is definitively not a George Lansbury type - ie, a lefty actively promoted by the Labour bureaucracy to pacify a restless and alienated membership. From the moment he was elected - before it, actually - a one-sided civil war had broken out in Labour with the vicious opposition of the majority of the parliamentary party. These foul rightwingers are biding their time so far as a direct challenge to Corbyn's leadership is concerned, only because the polls tell them that the man would, if anything, be re-elected with an even *bigger* majority. They would be in for a spanking and they know it.

However, in the comrade's view they were unlikely to do us the favour of simply walking *à la* Social Democratic Party of yesteryear. That rightist 1981 split from Labour coincided with a relatively strong Liberal Party and the subsequent SDP-Liberal alliance was able to prosper for a time. Clearly, the political landscape today is far less hopeful for a similar development, not least because of the enjoyably parlous state of the Lib Dems. No, these treacherous careerists will stay and fight.

That said, Jack noted that there had been a small surge of resignations from the party in the aftermath of Corbyn's victory - between 15,000 and 20,000 according to reports (although, of course, that number has been dwarfed by the thousands of recruits). And "good riddance" the comrade added, to universal approval in the room.

But, while the rank and file of the right wing may have contracted, the new mass base of the left is not homogeneous either politically or demographically. It tends to be divided between older 'returnees' who are out of touch with the new innovations in the party's rules, structures, etc, and much younger, politically raw recruits (the comrade later defined these types as having "Owen Jones" politics). The political (and cultural) problems that this poses in cohering a left that is able to effectively deploy its numerical advantage in the organisation are not insurmountable, but should not be underestimated either. An important element in this will be to defeat the idea that the internal party politics of the fight against the right is 'boring'

- a diversion from 'the real struggle' (ie, demos, strikes, etc), as so many comrades who should know better put it. Rather, it is a "very welcome development", comrade Conrad observed, that these people are now in a serious organisation - "better to have 10,000 people in a party than simply 100,000 people turning up on a demo", as he put it.

## Confused left

Taking "a step sideways", comrade Conrad then turned his attention to a left whose lack of theory "has been utterly exposed" by developments in Labour. While it was hard to say whether the new influx into Labour represented a shift to the left or the right by the people involved, on the organised left we have definitely seen utter confusion.

As examples, the Independent Socialist Network, the Socialist Party in England and Wales, Socialist Resistance, Workers Power, Socialist Appeal and Left Unity were cited. The comrade caustically dubbed these profoundly disorientated comrades "leftwing flotsam and jetsam" - they have "no theory, no strategy - they simply flip" from one mutually contradictory position to another.

However, the comrade wondered "what better circumstances" could we possibly have imagined to open up the Labour Party to affiliation from all working class political groups and organisations? Yet the vast majority of the organised left is programmatically and strategically adrift. They have "internalised defeat", as one comrade put it in the debate, and thus become simply a "protest movement".

The left in Labour obsesses about the elections scheduled for 2020. But what sort of social and economic programme would a victorious Labour Party under Corbyn implement? Would he stick to any of its more radical promises? We have seen him buckle already. Would we perhaps see a British version of Syriza? The left is not politically equipped to navigate a crisis like this.

Comrade Conrad returned to Lenin's tactics towards Labour at the end of the opening. He reminded us that Lenin's 'hanged man' approach was premised on his plausible view of the world as being ripe for revolution. Therefore, what was posed were tactics to *expose* Labour. Obviously, we are under no illusions that the situation we face is comparable. Thus we need a

long-term strategy, a protracted fight to make Labour into a permanent united front of our class. We may not succeed in this, but anything else is to implicitly or explicitly attempt to go round Labour and Labourism.

Next, the comrade spoke about the Labour Party Marxists organisation that the CPGB has been involved in. It needs to be developed in qualitative and quantitative ways and make itself far more Labour-rooted - although he stressed that this does not mean an assimilation into the party apparatus. We are in there to propagate ideas, not primarily to win positions.

Finally, he reminded comrades that, while we aim to transform Labour, that is not in contradiction to our central goal - the creation of a Communist Party that alone can lead our class in the battle for humanity's emancipation.

In the discussion that followed, friend of the CPGB Moshe Machover wanted clarification on what we were calling on individuals rather than organisations to actually do: "People who read the *Weekly Worker* - what should they do?" ("Definitely join Labour!" the reply came later.) Alluding to comrade Conrad's comments on the left's tendency to tout activism as 'proper' working class politics, comrade Machover put forward the notion that this was actually an expression of them having "internalised the defeats" of the previous period - an idea that comrade Farzad Kamangar picked up on and developed in her immediately following intervention.

It was a "good way to put it", she thought. In addition, activism is a "cover" for not "seriously re-interrogating" your political positions - she used the example of the Socialist Workers Party's absurd gyrations over the Arab spring. Activism diverts serious attention from drawing up a critical balance sheet of disastrous interventions like this - indeed, any attempt to do so is normally denounced as time-wasting and a diversion from the *next* activity ... then the next, *ad infinitum*.

The challenge for LPM must be to become an "extreme opposition" to things like Corbyn's economic position, while at the same time rooting itself in the party.

## Corbynomics

The aggregate's second session was on 'Corbynomics' and was led off by comrade Farzad. She apologised for the sketchy and provisional nature of her opening - she had been given very little time to prepare. Nonetheless, the meeting clearly found the item a useful beginning to a much more detailed and theorised critique of the economic programme of Corbyn, John McDonnell and the 'expert' advisers they have surrounded themselves with.

The comrade warned at the outset that "some of what I'm going to tell you is extremely depressing" - and she lived up to her word. For instance, she drew our attention to a February 2016 McDonnell speech in the London School of Economics - ominously titled 'Rewriting the rules of the market economy to achieve shared prosperity'. McDonnell has drawn around him a group of what he dubs "respected figures" to develop Labour's economic policy.

These "respected figures" include economist Danny Blanchflower CBE; Preeti Sikka, who has done some good work on non-dom tax; plus Paul Mason, Yanis Varoufakis,

Nobel prize-winning Joseph Stiglitz and others - all brought together to produce "new ideas" for what is dubbed a "balanced economy". Comrade Farzad noted that a significant absence from the list of bodies that these luminaries were consulting in their work were the trade unions or any other working class bodies. Being approached instead are the likes of British Telecom, the Confederation of British Industry, the Bank of England and Microsoft (comrade Farzad commented ironically that if you're looking for "new ideas", Microsoft are really the last people you call).

The comrade made three key points in her wide-ranging opening.

First, that from the Labour leadership's point of view the main aim of gathering these advisors together and the associated consultation was, in John McDonnell's words, to "win back economic credibility" and convince people that Labour can "balance the books". In fact, McDonnell was actually introduced in the LSE meeting referenced above as "one of the few Labour politicians who has balanced the books" - an allusion to his time as treasurer of Livingstone's Greater London Council. An institution like the GLC is one thing, but comrade Farzad blasted the notion that a national economy can be treated in the same manner as "a silly idea".

Similarly, another comrade - speaking in the debate following the opening - suggested that the notion should be "laughed at". A national debt has been intrinsic to the development of capitalism as a system and the fact that the left in the party, not least shadow chancellor McDonnell, was bowing to reactionary, essentially petty bourgeois notions of 'book balancing' shows the success of the pressure exerted by the right.

Secondly, the material our comrade had read or watched online that suggested that automation and technological innovation provide an objective basis for "shared prosperity" made her think for a moment that "I was in a business meeting at work". Nobel prizewinner Stiglitz uses this phrase quite frequently. While he has done some quite useful work on inequality, he sees the growth of this inequality as being simply a result of structural reforms, consciously initiated by the likes of Reagan and Thatcher. In fact, as comrade Farzad suggested, it is more accurate to see the post-World War II Keynesian period as the *exception* and the idea that it can be repeated - that we can revive the 'Spirit of 45', as it were - is "day-dreaming, complete madness", she emphasised.

In fact, capital itself has reverted more to its true character - destructive, war-mongering, producing failed states and harsh treatment of workers. This development is "impossible to reverse", comrade Farzad suggested.

Thirdly, comrade Farzad made the damning observation that all the versions of a "shared, participatory economy" that McDonnell's team of "respected advisors" might dream up could, if it became politically expedient, be lifted wholesale by the right and peddled as their own solutions to a crisis. In today's world, big business itself uses all the same buzz-words of inclusiveness, participation, equality and the environment. There is nothing inherently radical - let alone *socialist* - about any of it ●

## "Winning back economic credibility"



## ANTI-SEMITISM

# Left wing of Zionism

Recent smears of 'anti-Semitism' against the left are an echo of similar allegations emanating from *within* the left, argues **Paul Demarty**



Israeli settlement on West Bank

**S**uspiciously silent on the recent 'controversies' over alleged 'anti-Semitism' in the Labour Party are our old friends, the Alliance for Workers' Liberty.

To recap briefly: Oxford University Labour Club found itself at the centre of an almighty shit-storm over its support for Israeli Apartheid Week, an annual pro-Palestinian event. The controversy seems to be entirely synthetic, as very many of them are nowadays, but it resurfaced at the recent Young Labour conference in Scarborough, where left candidate James Elliott was defeated narrowly - perhaps by one vote - after his victorious rival, Jasmin Beckett, allegedly conspired to smear the Oxford boy as an anti-Semite. The inevitable inquiry looms.

Last week's *Solidarity* managed to mention the YL conference, under the headline 'Young Labour: gains for the left' (March 2); and pointed out that "it was a tense race which saw an orchestrated smear campaign". Space was mysteriously not found, however, to mention the *nature* of the smears - viz, that comrade Elliott, who is also a member of the AWL's favoured student front, the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts (NCAFC), is supposedly none too keen on the Children of Israel.

Beyond that, the comrades are not touching the issue with a bargepole. Why? We humbly submit that it might have something to do with the comrades' own inglorious history of promoting fatuous scare stories about leftwing Jew-hatred.

The AWL's history is, even by the standards of left-sect genealogy, somewhat complicated. Its founder-guru, Sean Matgamna, emigrated to Britain in 1960, and passed through the ranks of the Young Communist League and Socialist Labour League

before arriving in the Militant Tendency in the middle of that decade. At this time, he began to gather co-thinkers, and rapidly left Militant, washing up as a faction in the International Socialists (forerunner of today's Socialist Workers Party), where by all accounts the faction stirred up a bit of a ruckus, recruiting a good clutch of people before its summary ejection by the leadership. At this time, its political character was orthodox Trotskyist, albeit unusually soft on the Provos and the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

This successful raid on the IS seemed to give Matgamna and co a taste for such activity, and indeed the broad contours of the group's subsequent history is in one sense a picaresque tale of con-artists moving from one easy mark to the next. There are very few organisations on the British far left who have not been at the business end of a dangerous liaison with Sean and his crew.

Typically, this sort of manoeuvre means taking sharp ideological turns, such that the cosy basis for unity between the Matgamna organisation of the day and its contemporary suitor is ripped away before the victim has sufficient time to react. In the 1980s, these 'turns' began to take on a more consistent political character: they took what was then *Socialist Organiser* into an ambiguous relationship with imperialism.

One of the first such 'turns' was on the Palestinian question; contemporaries remember the thing differently, but it seems to have first surfaced as part of manoeuvres within the National Union of Students. At the time, some on the left were pursuing a line of 'no platform for Zionists', which was stupid for all the reasons no-platform politics usually are; *Socialist Organiser* took advantage

of the situation to bloc with the Union of Jewish Students, which is historically dominated by Zionism. Suddenly, the PLO's *soi-disant* best friends in Britain switched to support for a negotiated two-state settlement and discovered a concern for subtle anti-Semitism in the Palestine solidarity milieu. It was all too much for Andrew Hornung, a Matgamna minion since the Militant days, and no doubt others.

Yet the new identity has stuck. From advocacy of a 'two-state solution', *Socialist Organiser* and then the AWL moved to explicitly drop support for the Palestinian right of return, on the basis that this actually amounted to the destruction of Israel - an eventuality deliberately confused with the driving of the Jews into the sea. The operative definition of anti-Semitism has since expanded continuously, now including support for boycott, divestment and sanctions, and almost all activity of the Palestinian solidarity movement, with the grudging exception of marching against Israel's periodic punishment bombings of the Gaza Strip.

It is difficult to pinpoint the exact nadir of this tendency, mainly because there are two of them. The first came in 2007, when Matgamna penned a truly awful think-piece for *Solidarity*, in which he came close to supporting, in advance, Israeli air strikes on Iran, on the basis that the Iranian regime was a bunch of religious fanatics hell-bent on the obliteration of all life in the country - a truly idiotic idea, lifted wholesale from Israeli propaganda. (The Iranian theocracy, like all ruling classes, is driven primarily by self-preservation, and thus not given to utterly suicidal military adventures.) At the time, the AWL's leadership was under intense pressure from many of its younger

members over its refusal to call for an end to America's occupation of Iraq, and the article was an attempt - unfortunately successful - to lance the boil.

The second saw Mark Osborn, the AWL's most aggressive attack dog, agree to testify in a tribunal against the Universities and Colleges Union in 2012. Ronnie Fraser, a lecturer, had brought a case against the UCU on the basis that the latter's decision to support BDS was anti-Semitic. Osborn saw no problem with intervening on Fraser's behalf, such was the mortal danger of "the demonisation of Israel and Zionism in the British unions". Despite some opposition, he was supported in this by the AWL's UCU fraction and the leadership. Fortunately, he was not supported by the judge, who decried "an impermissible attempt to achieve a political end by litigious means", and threw the case out.

So ingrained is this reactionary balderdash within the AWL - especially combined with their softness on American military adventurism - that it left the group somewhat wrong-footed by the Jeremy Corbyn surge. Corbyn is, of course, the left Labour MP most closely associated with the Israel-Palestine issue and anti-imperialism more generally; thus, he is least of all to the liking of the AWL. Matgamna had to fight hard to get his people in line, reassuring them that Corbyn was for a two-state solution, which was good enough, so they did not miss the opportunity.

It was a timely intervention from their point of view, seeing that AWLer Jill Mountford made it to the Momentum steering committee in short order, despite her subsequent expulsion from Labour. Unsurprisingly, the AWL has since become coy about its more scandalous

views on these matters, since its allies against Labour's 'compliance unit' are to be found to its left, not its right.

It has to be said that there *is* an anti-Semitic wing of the Palestinian solidarity movement, of which the most notorious members are probably Gilad Atzmon and Israel Shamir. The former, an Israeli by origin, explains the whole unpleasantness in mandate Palestine by the tribal identity of the Chosen People; the latter advocates alliances with the far right, against the 'common enemy' (guess who). On top of that, there is the matter of Islamists, who have plenty of Jew-haters among them.

Yet these people are essentially marginal. The vast bulk of pro-Palestinian sympathy amounts to run-of-the-mill leftwing solidarity, and an instinctive understanding that the Israeli state is founded upon the oppression of the Palestinians. The 'apartheid' label is, for narrow factual reasons, incorrect - but it is not *morally* inappropriate. This, in the end, is why identifying the 'destruction of Israel' with a pogrom is ridiculous - Israel is an ethnically exclusionary colonial project. Yes, therefore, the *state* of Israel needs to be *destroyed*; fortunately, history abounds with examples of the destruction of oppressive regimes without aiming to drive out every last individual member of the oppressor population.

The net effect, then, of the AWL's activity on this is to spread *within the Labour movement* the poisonous association of anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism (which in the end is only the flipside of the Atzmon-style anti-Semitism that conflates Jews with Israel). They may be keeping quiet about it just now, but it remains a criminal enterprise ●

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## ANTI-SEMITISM

# Everything in socio-economic context

By equating anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism, the bourgeois establishment is determined to brand a racist anyone who dares criticise the Israeli state. Ahistorically plucking out a few phrases from *On the Jewish question*, it levels the exact same charge against Marx too. Jack Conrad puts the record straight<sup>1</sup>

As a young man Karl Marx studied and thoroughly absorbed the materialist and atheist ideas of Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-72). However, he soon became convinced that, while atheism was a vital intellectual premise, historic processes, developments in the means of production, social relations and crucially revolutionary practice had to be made the real starting point of "our criticism".<sup>2</sup>

Inevitably, that necessitated further, deeper, endless investigations, not least into the "inverted reality" of the bourgeois world. Hence the first of two articles which Marx wrote in what was a seminal period spent in the small Rhineland town of Kreuznach between March and October 1843 - just prior to his Paris exile.

*On the Jewish question* was published in the first and only edition of the *Deutsch-französische Jahrbücher* journal (February 1844). *In toto* it constitutes a devastating rebuttal of Bruno Bauer - the Young Hegelian radical, atheist firebrand and a former collaborator and friend. Leave aside the now largely forgotten Bauer - *On the Jewish question* also establishes a profound critique of the way liberals typically treat demands for equality, freedom, rights, etc.

Protestant Christianity was the only officially recognised religion in Frederick William IV's Prussia. Jews in particular faced a whole raft of laws which humiliatingly discriminated against them. Bauer - barred from teaching in 1842 for daring to show that biblical stories were full of human invention - argued in his book, *The Jewish question* (1843), that Jews can achieve political and civic emancipation *only* if they abandon their religious allegiances, religious modes of thinking and religious practices.

In the meantime, by appealing to the Christian state for equality, Germany's Jews were inexcusably legitimising the Christian state. Therefore their demands for equality ought to be rejected simply because they undermined the cause of general emancipation. Bauer actually maintained that granting Jewish rights would be incompatible with either the political rights of citizens (eg, the 1787 US constitution) or general civic rights (eg, France's 1789 'Declaration of the rights of man').

According to Bauer, an *atheist state* was the only solution ... and for him that obviously meant Jews, Lutherans, Catholics - everyone - renouncing their religion. Note, for Bauer, the Christian religion was considered to be altogether superior to Judaism. And, sadly, after the failure of the 1848 German revolution he swung violently to the right and began to promote an ever more vile anti-Semitism.

### America

In the name of human liberation Marx rejected Bauer's 'solution' as theoretically flawed and totally inadequate programmatically. Bauer was trying to solve a social question as if it were a purely theological one. He failed to see that religious inequalities were not the cause of social inequalities; merely their symptom. Bauer's critique was misdirected because it was aimed at the *Christian* state, and not at the state as such.

Bauer's problem (and that of bourgeois radicals in general) was that he mistook political emancipation, embodied in declarations of human rights, constitutions, etc, for human emancipation. Simply decreeing the separation of church and state,

while needed, could not ensure the disappearance of religion (and its associated prejudices). The original American states, for example, had written separation from organised religion into their constitutions, yet the US remained "pre-eminently the country of religiosity".<sup>3</sup> Bauer was still using the criticism of religion as his basis for the criticism of politics, but, as Marx insisted,

the existence of religion is the existence of a defect ... We no longer regard religion as the cause, but only as the manifestation, of secular narrowness ... History has long enough been merged in superstition; we now merge superstition in history. The question of the *relation of political emancipation to religion* becomes for us the question of the *relation of political emancipation to human emancipation*.<sup>4</sup>

So it is not that Marx rejects demands for political and civic equality. Of course not. He sees such demands as eminently supportable, but not sufficient for human emancipation. The principal defect of political emancipation in and of itself is that it is purely formal. Taking issue with his own earlier reliance on universal suffrage, for example, Marx points out that various American states had abolished property ownership as a qualification for participation in elections. From the liberal standpoint, it could be said that "the masses have thus gained a victory over the property owners and moneyed classes", that the "non-owner had become the law-giver for the owner".<sup>5</sup>

This victory, however, was only apparent, not real, because there is a world of difference between giving everybody a vote - desirable and necessary as that is - and giving everyone real and effective power over their lives:

The perfect political state is, by its nature, man's *species-life*, as opposed to his material life. All the preconditions of this egoistic life continue to exist in civil society *outside* the sphere of the state, but as qualities of civil society. Where the political state has attained its true development, man - not only in thought, in consciousness, but in *reality*, in *life* - leads a twofold life, a heavenly and an earthly life: life in the *political community*, in which he considers himself a *communal being*; and life in *civil society*, in which he acts as a *private individual*, regards other men as means, degrades himself into a means, and becomes the plaything of alien powers ... he is the imaginary member of an illusory sovereignty, deprived of his real individual life and endowed with an unreal universality.<sup>6</sup>

Counterposing humanity's "heavenly" and "earthly" existences in a "double life" is, of course, a borrowing from Feuerbach. Marx's approach to religion was grounded in a Feuerbachian rejection of the way in which religion demands subservience to a fantastic being who is no more than a projection of authentic human sovereignty in alienated form.

Hence the parallel which Marx draws between Christianity and political democracy:

Political democracy is Christian, since in it man - not merely one man, but every man - ranks as sovereign,



'The sacrifice by the International' (unknown date): obviously anti-Semitic in inspiration

as the highest being, but it is man in his uncivilised, unsocial form, man in his fortuitous existence, man just as he is, man as he has been corrupted by the whole organisation of our society, who has lost himself, been alienated and handed over to the rule of inhuman conditions and elements - in short, man who is not yet a *real* species-being. That which is a creation of fantasy, a dream, a postulate of Christianity - ie, the sovereignty of man, but man as an alien being different from the real man - becomes in democracy tangible reality, present existence and secular principle.<sup>7</sup>

While Marx might have described himself as a 'Feuerbachian' for a brief period in the early 1840s, it is clear that he developed increasingly profound disagreements with Feuerbach's philosophy and specifically with his materialism.

The problem with Feuerbach's materialism, for Marx, was that on investigation it was annoyingly elusive, abstract and theoretical. A necessary though not sufficient step towards understanding our relationship with the natural environment. Feuerbach forever remained one-sided. Why? Because he conceived of things in passive, intuitive terms. His conception of the sensuous world was "confined, on the one hand, to mere contemplation of it and, on the other, to mere feeling".<sup>8</sup>

Nature, for all the importance which Feuerbach attached to it, remained something 'out there', something dissociated from humanity, to which he related in essentially theoretical terms. In the memorable words of the *Theses on Feuerbach* (1845): "The chief defect of all previous materialism - that of Feuerbach included - is that things, reality, sensuousness are conceived only in the form of the object, or of contemplation, but not as human sensuous activity, practice, not subjectively."<sup>9</sup> Marx believed that Feuerbach's failure derived from his lack of an historical approach. In *The German ideology*, he argued that Feuerbach did not grasp that "the sensuous world around him is not a thing given direct from all eternity, remaining ever the same, but the product of industry and the state of society".<sup>10</sup>

Similarly, the problem with

Feuerbach's attitude to science was that he consistently identified it with observation and description of natural phenomena, not realising that 'pure' physics, chemistry and biology are inadequate to account for our human species-being:

Feuerbach speaks in particular of the perception of natural science; he mentions secrets which are disclosed only for the eyes of the physicist and chemist; but where would natural science be without industry and commerce? Even this 'pure' natural science is provided with an aim, as with its material, only through trade and industry, through the sensuous activity of men ... This activity, this production [is] the basis of the whole sensuous world as it now exists.<sup>11</sup>

Perhaps most seriously of all, in terms of Marx's own political agenda for the self-liberation of the proletariat, Feuerbach was certainly a "static" materialist, in that he never really went beyond the notion that freeing human beings from religious alienation would in and of itself, in some unexplained way, simply usher in a society which expressed the 'communist' species-being of humanity. Marx's early writings were, in no small part, intended to counter the "static" approach to religion. Together with the *Theses on Feuerbach*, not to mention the scintillating first hundred or so pages of *The German ideology*, this constituted a devastating critique of the Young Hegelians (a group of radical intellectuals which included Ludwig Feuerbach, Bruno Bauer, David Strauss, Arnold Ruge and Max Stirner). That said, there can be no doubt that in its essentials, no matter how enriched and modified, Marx's understanding of religious alienation remains firmly within the framework established by Feuerbach. It was this that Marx was surely referring to in his *Contribution to Hegel's philosophy of law* (1843), when he declared that, "For Germany the criticism of religion is in the main complete."<sup>12</sup>

Unsurprisingly, *On the Jewish question* reiterates the ethical postulate Marx presented in 'Debates on freedom of the press' - a six-part supplement carried by the *Rheinische Zeitung* back in May 1842. Here Marx lambasted Prussian press censorship - "a perfumed

abortion", he called it. Prometheus-like, he defiantly proclaims: "only that which is a realisation of freedom can be called humanly good".<sup>13</sup>

Since organised religion, by its very nature, makes human beings into slaves of an imaginary deity, conceding them merely a specious sovereignty in alienated form, it cannot, in Marxist terms, be a force for human good in any meaningful sense. Religion and 'morality' (ie, bourgeois morality) exist in the abstract sphere of 'public life', the realm of illusory collectivity and illusory sovereignty represented by the state, whereas the concrete sphere of 'everyday life' - civil society - remains dominated by individual antagonisms and by all the kinds of inhuman domination, bondage and debasement implicit in the category of alienation.

Bruno Bauer's mistake was to imagine that religious emancipation in and of itself could free humanity, whereas for Marx even the most far-going version of (bourgeois) political emancipation cannot succeed in achieving freedom. Religious emancipation gives freedom of religion, but it does not give freedom from the rule of religion, property or trade: it just gives us the right to profess the religion of our choice, hold property and practise trade as individuals, in a civil society dominated by the *bellum omnium contra omnes* (war of all against all).

Just as religion, though constituting an illusory collectivity of humanity in relation to god, actually renders us into alienated, atomised individuals in relation to an imaginary creator, so political emancipation, while endowing us with an illusory sovereignty as citizens of the state, renders us into alienated, atomised individuals in a civil society dominated by property and the power that flows from it. Genuine, human emancipation requires more:

Only when the real, individual man reabsorbs in himself the abstract citizen, and as an individual human being has become a *species-being* in everyday life, in his particular work, and in his particular situation, only when man has recognised and organised his own '*forces propres*' [own powers] as *social forces*, and consequently no longer separates social power from himself in the shape of *political* power, only then will human emancipation have been accomplished.<sup>14</sup>

The commanding idea is that humanity can achieve real emancipation by rediscovering its identity in and through community, but not through the imaginary community represented by either religion or the state.

In the second part of *On the Jewish question*, the category of religious alienation appears in another guise, strikingly adapted in order to illustrate the significance of money and commodities in capitalist society, in a way that foreshadows some of Marx's fundamental ideas about commodity fetishism and the alienation inherent in the capitalist mode of production. While Bauer argued in terms of the emancipation of "the Sabbath Jew" - Jews seen purely in terms of their religion<sup>15</sup> - Marx extends the notion of emancipation by focusing on the oppression of Jews in actual socio-economic context:

Let us not look for the secret of the Jew in his religion, but let us look for the secret of his religion in the

real Jew. What is the secular basis of Judaism? Practical need, self-interest. What is the worldly religion of the Jew? Huckstering. What is his worldly god? Money. Very well then! Emancipation from huckstering and money, consequently from practical, real Judaism, would be the self-emancipation of our time.<sup>16</sup>

Why, for Marx, is “emancipation from huckstering and money, consequently from practical, real Judaism,” rated as the “self-emancipation of our time”? Because it is money that dominates all social relations; money and the power that flows from it constitutes the material base of capitalist society:

Money is the jealous god of Israel, in face of which no other god may exist. Money degrades all the gods of man - and turns them into commodities. Money is the universal, self-established value of all things. It has therefore robbed the whole world - both the world of men and nature - of its specific value. Money is the estranged essence of man's work and man's existence, and this alien essence dominates him, and he worships it.<sup>17</sup>

## Jewish progressives

Biased or simply worthless opinion - eg, Simon Schama writing in the *Financial Times*<sup>18</sup> - reacts with feigned horror to such passages, denouncing them as unmistakable evidence of anti-Semitism. In other words, Marx was a ‘self-hating’ Jew.

However, such an assessment is quite clearly wrong. Few of Marx's detractors go to the bother of explaining that he was actually advocating Jewish emancipation. Fewer still show any appreciation of the fact that it is thoroughly misleading to read post-1945 sensibilities back onto the language of the 1840s.<sup>19</sup> By contrast Hal Draper convincingly shows that Marx was merely following the near-universal practice of his day. One could make the same point about his male-dominated language: ie, the word ‘man’ is used more or less unremittably as synonymous with ‘humanity’. Ditto, ‘Jew’ is treated as synonymous with ‘usury’.<sup>20</sup> In this case a join with well recognised material roots in the economics of feudal society. Other contemporary Jewish progressives wrote in exactly the same terms: eg, Ferdinand Lassalle and Heinrich Heine. And the fact of the matter is that Marx was criticising not Jewry alone, but what he saw as a “Judeo-Christian complex”, which elevates money-making above every human value, relationship and instinct.<sup>21</sup>

No, at least when it comes to the left, for a hatred of Jews of a kind that does resemble the Nazis, you must look not to the writings of Marx, but to Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809-65). The father of anarchism advocated the physical extermination of the Jews.<sup>22</sup> Mikhail Bakunin (1814-76) held similar views.<sup>23</sup>

Leave aside Marx's own Jewishness, a religiously pious mother and rabbinical lineage - a good case can be made for his communism being connected, consciously or otherwise, with messianic *Old Testament* prophets, such as Amos, Micah and Habakkuk.<sup>24</sup> Possibly this came through his personal acquaintance with the proto-Zionist, Moses Hess (1812-72), who likewise condemned the “Judeo-Christian huckster world” - a line of thought that certainly came via Spinoza, Goethe and Hegel. In turn their passionate commitment to human freedom recognisably descends from the Christian utopias of the 16th and 17th centuries.

Not that I would go along with Erich Fromm (1900-80), when he describes Marx's communism as “the most advanced form of rational mysticism”.<sup>25</sup>

Such a paradoxical formulation, while having the merit of counteracting the dismal technological determinism of the Stalinists, runs the risk of appearing to reconcile Marxism with religion.

Anyhow, for the Marx of *On the Jewish question*, money was the god of the bourgeois and the worship of money was their religion. Hence the following passage:

Selling is the practice of externalisation. Selling is the practical aspect of alienation. Just as man, as long as he is in the grip of religion, is able to objectify his essential nature only by turning it into something alien, something fantastic, so under the domination of egoistic need he can be active practically and produce objects in practice only by putting his products, and his activity, under the domination of an alien being, and bestowing the significance of an alien entity - money - on them.<sup>26</sup>

Feuerbach's ‘inverted reality’ - a world in which the essence of everything is externalised (*entäußert*), or objectified (*vergegenständigt*) into an alien, imaginary entity, a process whereby all values are turned upside-down - could not be more clear. Both notions, of course, appear - in a richer, more profound and dialectical form - in Marx's later critique of political economy.

But - some may ask - how can the social role of money and commodities be equated with religion? Is this not stretching a point? No, it is not, for by ‘religion’ and ‘religious’ in this context Marx refers not to the cultic beliefs or observances of this or that religion, but the subordination of human beings to a thing of their own making. Hence, in *Capital* Marx says “in religion man is governed by the products of his own brain”. He elaborates:

A commodity is therefore a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men's labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour; because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour ... [the commodity is] a definite social relation between men ... [and] assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things. In order, therefore, to find an analogy, we must have recourse to the mist-enveloped regions of the religious world. In that world, the productions of the human brain appear as independent beings endowed with life, and entering into relation both with one another and the human race. So it is in the world of commodities with the products of men's hands.<sup>27</sup>

It is precisely the analogical, paradigmatic role of religious alienation in unravelling the “mysterious” nature of commodities, money and much else in the world of political economy that is of central importance to an understanding of the development of Marx's thought. Commodities - the products of our hands and brains which exert an alien power over us - at least exist in actuality, whereas god or gods are entirely a figment of the human imagination, with no existence in objective reality. It is precisely the ‘purity’ of religious alienation in this respect that endows it with a prototypical value when alienation in general is considered.

The point is that the relationship between religious alienation and its ‘secular’ counterpart in the world of humanity's productive activity rests on the same basis of a fundamental inversion of subject and object, a radical confusion between appearance

and reality at every level:

The religious world is but the reflex of the real world ... The religious reflex of the real world can ... only then finally vanish when the practical relations of everyday life offer to man none but perfectly intelligible and reasonable relations with regard to his fellow men and to nature.<sup>28</sup>

Hence, as Marx argued, “All science would be superfluous if the manifest form and the essence of things directly coincided”,<sup>29</sup> but, so long as the capitalist mode of production continues to exist, we all move about in forms of illusion.

## Opium

It was the desire to carry the exposure of religious alienation into the real world of politics and society that led Marx to write his *Contribution to the critique of Hegel's philosophy of law* (1844), which effectively summarises his views on religion and contains his best known aphorisms on the subject. Marx begins by stating:

The basis of irreligious criticism is: *Man makes religion*; religion does not make man. Religion is the self-consciousness and self-esteem of man, who has either not yet found himself or has already lost himself again. But man is no abstract being encamped outside the world. Man is *the world of man*, the state, society. This state, this society, produce religion, an *inverted world-consciousness*, because they are an *inverted world*. Religion is the general theory of that world, its encyclopaedic compendium, its logic in a popular form, its spiritualistic *point d'honneur*, its enthusiasm, its moral sanction, its solemn complement, its universal source of consolation and justification. It is the *fantastic realisation of the human essence*, because the human essence has no true reality. The struggle against religion is therefore indirectly a fight against *the world of which religion is the spiritual aroma*.<sup>30</sup>

Again, Marx calls for a shift in focus - from the world of religion, the criticism of which is already “complete”, to the real world of the state and politics. In an eloquent passage, however, he frankly acknowledges why it is that the illusory world of religion can grip the human mind and heart:

Religious distress is at the same time the expression of real distress and also the protest against real distress. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of spiritless conditions. It is the opium of the people. To abolish religion as the *illusory happiness of the people* is to demand their real happiness. The demand to give up illusions about the existing state of affairs is the *demand to give up a state of affairs which needs illusions*. The criticism of religion is therefore in *embryo the criticism of the vale of tears*, the *halo of which is religion*.<sup>31</sup>

This passage demands careful attention. In the first place, the phrase, “Religion is the opium of the people”, is often quoted in isolation, to suggest mere contempt - religious people are just spiritual junkies. In the 19th century, however, opium, especially in the form of laudanum, was in widespread use as a primitive analgesic and tranquilliser. Had he been writing today, Marx might well have described religion as the valium, or the prozac, of the people - ie, a means of dulling not just the physical or mental pain that is an inescapable part of the human condition, but also the anguish engendered by consciousness of the inevitability of disease, decay and death. To separate the phrase, “opium

of the people”, from “the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world ... the spirit of spiritless conditions” is to disregard the evident understanding and compassion which Marx feels towards those who have nothing else in their impoverished and alienated world from which to take comfort.

The criticism of religion, the exposure of its illusory nature, is seen by Marx as by no means merely a negative, destructive exercise, engaged in with relish by the cocksure atheist without regard to the feelings of others. In terms of his naturalistic materialism, which attaches so much significance to the needs of human beings, including their spiritual needs, Marx's attitude is sensitive to the pain that can accompany disillusionment:

Criticism has torn up the imaginary flowers from the chain, not so that man shall wear the unadorned, bleak chain, but so that he will shake off the chain and pluck the living flower. The criticism of religion disillusiones man to make him think and act and shape his reality like a man who has been disillusioned and has come to reason, so that he will revolve round himself and therefore round his true sun. Religion is only the illusory sun which revolves round man as long as he does not revolve round himself.<sup>32</sup>

Marx believed that to discard the comforts of religion, to throw away one's chains and come to one's senses is a necessary part of achieving genuine human autonomy and the only way to encompass a genuine fulfilment. Nonetheless, it is a painful business. The “living” as opposed to the “imaginary flowers” to which Marx refers are flowers of living knowledge. Collectively and individually, human beings have to try to pierce through the veil of illusion and come to know themselves and their world for what they really are. Armed with this knowledge, they can “fashion their own reality”, by transforming nature (and with it themselves) through their purposeful productive activity. Such knowledge cannot, however, be fully attained in a society where we all still move about in forms of illusion.

Exposing the illusory nature of religion and its comforts (the “imaginary flowers”) was, in any case, only the beginning of a much broader historical task:

The task of history, therefore, once the world beyond the truth has disappeared, is to establish the truth of this world. The immediate task of philosophy, which is at the service of history, once the holy form of human self-estrangement has been unmasked, is to unmask self-estrangement in its unholy forms. Thus the criticism of heaven turns into the criticism of the earth, the *criticism of religion* into the criticism of law and the *criticism of theology* into the *criticism of politics*.<sup>33</sup>

At the heart of this ‘new’ critique - one that moves onward from the exposure of religious alienation, while retaining its vital lessons - is the profoundly humanist notion of the centrality of the human person:

To be radical is to grasp the root of the matter. But for man the root is man himself ... the criticism of religion ends with the teaching that man is the highest being for man, hence with the categorical imperative to overthrow all relations in which man is a debased, enslaved, forsaken, despicable being.<sup>34</sup>

By 1844, when these words were first published, Marx had been breathing in the heady atmosphere of French socialist politics in Paris - an experience whose vivid impact provided the intellectual stimulus for the *Economic*

*and philosophical manuscripts*. Within the next two years, having begun his lifelong collaboration with Frederick Engels, Marx's approach to religion was to take a radically new direction.

As we have seen, for Marx, the ‘purity’ of religious alienation - ie, the fact that in religion human beings submit themselves to and are dominated by entirely imaginary and fantastical entities that have no existence in objective reality - gave the category a certain paradigmatic, prototypical quality. That is why we find him throughout his life using it analogically - most notably, of course, in the final section of chapter one in the first volume of *Capital*, entitled ‘The fetishism of commodities and the secret thereof’. There he has “recourse to the mist-enveloped regions of the religious world”, in order to explain how “the productions of the human brain appear as independent beings endowed with life, and entering into relation both with one another and the human race”.<sup>35</sup>

Just as “the religious reflex of the real world can, in any case, only then finally vanish, when the practical relations of everyday life offer to man none but perfectly intelligible and reasonable relations with regard to his fellow men and to nature”, so “the life-process of society, which is based on the process of material production, does not strip off its mystical veil until it is treated as production by freely associated men, and is consciously regulated by them in accordance with a settled plan”.<sup>36</sup>

Only communism can bring about such “perfectly intelligible and reasonable relations”, because production under communism - motivated by human needs, not by profit - will be free, collective and founded on a plan that will not only incorporate the most advanced scientific knowledge, but, more importantly still, will be characterised at every level by active popular control, thereby reintegrating human beings with themselves and one another, in a society where the gulf between appearance and reality - all the illusions and mystifications embodied in bourgeois ideology - will be left behind ●

## Notes

1. This contribution is adapted from the opening chapter of *Fantastic reality* (2013). A chapter which is itself part based on a reworking of Michael Malkin's February 1 2001 *Weekly Worker* article, ‘Karl Marx and religion’.
2. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 3, London 1975, p144.
3. *Ibid* p151.
4. *Ibid* p151.
5. *Ibid* p153.
6. *Ibid* pp153-54.
7. *Ibid* p159.
8. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 5, London 1975, p39.
9. *Ibid* p6.
10. *Ibid* p39.
11. *Ibid* p40.
12. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 3, London 1975, p175.
13. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 1, London 1975, pp158-59.
14. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 3, London 1975, p168.
15. *Ibid* p169.
16. *Ibid* pp169-70.
17. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 1, London 1975, p172.
18. Schama writes: “Demonstrating that you do not have to be a gentile to be an anti-Semite, Karl Marx characterised Judaism as nothing more than the cult of Mammon, and declared that the world needed emancipating from the Jews” (*Financial Times* February 21-22 2016).
19. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 1, London 1975, p172.
20. See H Draper *Karl Marx's theory of revolution* Vol 1, New York 1977, pp591-608.
21. *Ibid* p593.
22. See JS Schapiro *Liberalism and the challenge of fascism* New York 1949.
23. See EH Carr *Michael Bakunin* New York 1961.
24. E Fromm *Marx's concept of man* London 2004, p52.
25. *Ibid* p52.
26. *Ibid* p174.
27. K Marx *Capital* Vol 1, London 1970, p72.
28. *Ibid* p79.
29. K Marx *Capital* Vol 3, Moscow 1971, p817.
30. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 3, Moscow 1975, p175.
31. *Ibid* pp175-76.
32. *Ibid*.
33. *Ibid*.
34. *Ibid* p182.
35. K Marx *Capital* Vol 1, London 1970, p72.
36. *Ibid* p80.

**EUROPE**

**Consistent Europhobes: Kate Hoey alongside Graham Stringer, John Mills and Kelvin Hopkins**

# Flip-flopping over in or out

Neither Corbyn's current stance, nor his former position is in workers' interests, argues **Peter Manson**

**O**n March 6 *The Sunday Telegraph* revealed that all of Jeremy Corbyn's previous comments on the European Union that were, or could be construed as, Eurosceptic have been removed from his personal website. The paper states that among the comments deleted - including some that date back many years - are: "The project has always been to create a huge free-market Europe, with ever-limiting powers for national parliaments and an increasingly powerful common foreign and security policy."

It could be argued that this is just a statement of fact and it does not necessarily follow that we should therefore demand a British withdrawal. How about - particularly from a reformist point of view - working to transform the existing "project" into something else? Nevertheless the implication is clear. The same could be said about the following comments, also removed: "There is a strong socialist argument against the Lisbon treaty and the economic consequences that flow from it." And:

What is also explicit in both the Maastricht treaty and the Lisbon treaty is the imposition of a market economy on Europe, a control on borrowing made by any member-state's government and serious control on the political choices open to any one member-state.

The official explanation for the deletions was given by a Labour spokesperson: "The website has been updated: it now contains things Jeremy has written since he has been leader of the Labour Party. That was Jeremy's website when he was a backbench MP. We are now converting it to reflect his

work as leader, and afterwards other material will be archived."

Perhaps it will, but the suspicion remains that Corbyn has authorised the removal of postings he considers embarrassing, now that he is party leader. As Conservative MP Julian Knight commented, "If he wasn't leader, he would almost certainly be speaking out for the UK to leave." In fact up to a week ago the more stupid sections of the media were speculating that Corbyn could still adopt a publicly declared 'leave' position.

As a left Labourite, Corbyn's position had been similar to what can be read virtually every day in the *Morning Star*: the EU is, and always will be, a staunchly capitalist institution dominated by big business and banking interests, and therefore it is in the interest of the working class to demand a British withdrawal.

Of course, there are two obvious flaws in this argument. Firstly, *why* is the EU beyond reform? If the overwhelming majority across Europe, particularly the working class, insisted on fundamental change within Europe, then, at the very least, the EU institutions would be forced to make concessions, irrespective of what the current rules (on free trade, decision-making and vetoes, for example) state. Surely rules can be changed? Secondly, isn't the UK state also staunchly capitalist, and also dominated by big business and banking interests? In that case, shouldn't the left campaign for a withdrawal from Britain too?

However, leaving aside those obvious flaws, the *Morning Star*-type argument has long been prevalent within the Labour left and you would very much expect both Corbyn and his number two, shadow chancellor John McDonnell, to hold such views. But right now, as we all know, they

are under enormous pressure. The left is in a tiny minority within the Parliamentary Labour Party they lead, and the PLP majority favours a position in line with the interests of British capital: continued UK membership of the EU.

What is more, since the announcement of the referendum date, the question of EU membership is clearly a pressing issue that cannot be skirted over. True, the Tories have allowed all their MPs to take up and campaign for either a 'stay' or 'leave' position, but the difference is that the majority of Conservative MPs are on the same side as their leader on the question: for continued EU membership. But how could Corbyn and McDonnell claim to be leading a party in which they are among a tiny minority of its elected parliamentary representatives on this key and immediate question?

But the enthusiasm for what is now the official Labour line, adopted after Corbyn's victory in September 2015, has not been apparent. Even so, the *Star* comments: "There is a vacuum at the heart of the EU referendum debate where the Labour Party should be" (March 7). Although it has to be said that the *Star* editorial does not mention the previous day's revelations in *The Sunday Telegraph*.

## False choice

In fact both positions - the 'stay' held by the Labour Party and the 'leave' of most of the Labour and non-Labour left - miss the point. As noted above, the choice is between two bourgeois formations: the current EU, with its range of anti-democratic institutions and practices; and the United Kingdom under its anti-democratic constitutional monarchy.

A better choice was the one posed by comrade McDonnell himself at the February

20 special general meeting of the Labour Representation Committee: on the one hand, there is the current "capitalist club"; and, on the other, the prospect of "a workers' Europe, a social Europe". However, for him, "Labour should now be working with socialist and social democratic parties across Europe" to achieve the latter.

It goes without saying that such a choice will not be offered to the electorate on June 23. Nor is it the aim, I suspect, of the type of "socialist and social democratic parties across Europe" McDonnell is thinking about. The Parti Socialiste under François Hollande? The Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands under Sigmar Gabriel? Syriza under Alexis Tsipras (or does he mean the Pasok of Fofi Gennimata)?

No, European co-thinkers of the traditional Labour Party are just as committed to the "capitalist club" as the rightwing parties - and in actual fact, before us on referendum day will be a choice between two reactionary, rightwing agendas: a Europe of big business and the bankers or the little-Britain nationalism of the Eurosceptics. That is why the CPGB is recommending a campaigning, *active* boycott of the poll - not, as some have chosen to dub it, 'abstention'.

We do indeed need a "workers' Europe, a social Europe". But that will not be delivered from on high by social democracy. In every country across the continent what is needed is a fighting working class united under the leadership of a proletarian internationalist party. We should use the opportunity of the referendum campaign to propagate and highlight this aim, along with our vision of a Europe of the working class ●

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TURKEY

# Stumbling towards collapse

In light of the latest moves against the media, Esen Uslu analyses the contending forces within the state apparatus

The cracks in the ruling bloc of Turkey first became apparent to the casual observer in August 2013. In the aftermath of the Gezi Park resistance of that year, the Journalists and Writers Foundation - a public front of the secretive Gülen movement, named after its leader, Islamist scholar Fethullah Gülen - published a statement refuting allegations against it. The statement contained unusually strong wording about its relationship with the AKP (Justice and Development Party) government.

For the seasoned observer of the Islamist political scene in Turkey, the presence of fault lines within the AKP is well known. Their roots lie deep in the history of early 20th century Turkey, when a new nationalist politics emerged as the cosmopolitan, Islamist Ottoman state collapsed. During the long 20th century, Islamist organisations, under attack by the racist-nationalist regime, split and bent, but proved resilient and able to survive under adverse conditions.

The decolonisation era after World War II gave a new impetus to Islamist politics, while the onset of the cold war opened up new perspectives and opportunities, as the US strategy to 'contain' the USSR ushered in a new era of cooperation with the Islamists. Under all those sometimes conflicting influences, Islamist politics began to flourish within new types of organisations.

## Nur and Gülen

The standard-bearer of such politics in Turkey during most of the 20th century was the 'Nur (Holy Light) community', led by Said Nursi. He was a Kurdish Sunni scholar, active from late Ottoman times until his death in 1960. He was revered and referred to as the 'Badi' al-Zaman - a rarely used honorific that means 'The Wonder of his Age'.

He considered the *Quran* as a living book, which needs to be freshly interpreted in every era. His own interpretations were contained in the *Risale-i Nur* ('Tracts of light') collection, which consists of his writings on various subjects between 1926 and 1949. The tracts were copied by hand and circulated clandestinely across Turkey - this duplication constituted the main activity of the Nur community for decades. It was no mean feat, since the total text came to over 6,000 pages when legally printed after 1956.

Said and his movement were avowedly anti-Kemalist, since Kemalism represented their anathema - secularism - as well as dictatorial state control over the social sphere. On the other hand, the Nur community was tapping into the Islamic veins of an old regime that still survived into the new one. So while it was prosecuted by the state, there were forces within the Kemalist establishment rendering mostly covert, but occasionally open, protection and support.

The state's religious affairs department was the main target of Islamist venom, since it was considered as the tip of the Kemalist spear, aimed at the heart of Islamist politics; particularly in relation to what they saw as state interference in the control of schools.

On the other hand, mullah Said and his movement was rabidly anti-communist, and that created new opportunities in the late 50s. The USSR containment strategy pursued by the US and its allies aimed to create a 'green belt' along its southern flank. The pro-US regimes in Turkey, Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan were to be propped up despite their instability, while at the same time covert support and assistance was offered to the Islamist political underground, with a view to taming them through a conversion to



Another blow against press freedom: police raid offices of *Zaman*

'moderate Islam'. That strategy created new opportunities for anti-communist Islamist groups and organisation.

The Nur movement suffered after mullah Said's death. New avenues were opened up for Islamist politics within the mainstream parties, while the nationalist-racist military juxtaposed itself to the Islamist underground and put pressure on the clandestine Nur community. At the end of the 60s the Nur movement was crumbling and new Islamist political organisations appeared. Successful offshoots included a legal political party that was centred on Necmettin Erbakan and a 'moderate' grouping around Fethullah Gülen Hodja, which refrained from any participation in mainstream politics.

From the early 70s both organisations pursued almost the same aims, but operated within differing spheres. Erbakan formed several parties, each of which were eventually banned by the military regime or closed down by courts dominated by the military and its allies. But he enjoyed growing electoral support and was first a minister, then deputy prime minister and finally prime minister in the 1996-97 coalition government. However, you could not say that he ever enjoyed holding the 'reins of power'. Each success of whatever party he was heading was followed by yet another military intervention. When in 1998 his party was closed down once again, a split took place in the movement.

A new grouping was formed, including some conservative liberals and democrats with Islamist leanings, who were disillusioned with the old mainstream parties. The AKP's Islamist core consists of a small cadre that had cut its teeth in militant Islamist student politics in the 70s and extended its political experience in Erbakan's party. One of this grouping was a certain Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who had served as mayor of Istanbul. They formed an alliance with the Gülen movement to increase their electoral chances.

The Gülen movement has been visibly active in the shape of various charities, especially in the field of education. It has used the difficult, centralised system of examinations for university admissions to its benefit, organising special courses preparing students for them all over the country. Those courses became money-spinning enterprises.

In addition, new media channels were

opened up, including daily newspapers and satellite TV channels, as well as news agencies for the holding companies of the newly emerging bourgeoisie of the Anatolian cities. Their well-educated cadres were active on the web and in other media, creating attractive sites and channels. They initiated interfaith dialogue and were involved in high-profile conferences, etc, where they built a media presence for Fethullah Gülen, who is currently in self-imposed exile in the US out of fear of prosecution, should he return to Turkey. This current, viewed as the moderate face of Islam, enjoyed the support of some influential mainstream politicians.

During this period, the racist-nationalist underground also suffered various splits, and the most influential section has arrived at a new world view summarised as the 'Turkish-Islamic synthesis' - a hodgepodge of nationalist-racist and religious ideas. Some have even jumped ship and joined the Gülen bandwagon - those who previously damned political Islam have turned out to be ardent supporters of the Gülen movement.

Meanwhile, it has developed a strong cadre of followers in the agencies and departments of the state, especially in the security services and judiciary. Previously activity in the armed forces was carried out clandestinely - even moderate Islamism was despised by the military, so it was not possible to build a strong follower base in the armed forces.

Attention was instead focused on the police department, and by the late 90s the movement boasted quite a strong organisation within the ministry of interior, which oversees the police. It paid particular attention to intelligence-gathering, and especially the tapping of communications. Under the benign gaze of successive AKP governments, the movement's influence extended to other critical ministries and departments.

## Cracks deepen

The first crack in relations between the AKP, centred on president Erdoğan, and the Gülen movement appeared in 2004. At a meeting of the national security council, where ministers and the top brass of the armed forces come together with the president of the republic to discuss security issues, the armed forces supported a resolution calling for measures to be taken against these Islamists.

The resolution - coyly signed by

the premier and other senior ministers - named the Gülen movement as one of the main components of religious reaction. That was, of course, duly noted by the movement itself, which had been half-expecting such treachery from its fellow-travellers. It did not respond immediately, but we can trace its new strategy, which was subsequently adopted to strengthen its position, back to that time.

One of the main cards it has played in this game takes the form of secret dossiers on the government and AKP built up through illegal phone taps with the assistance of their operators in the judiciary, which have provided a cloak of legitimacy for their wiretapping activities. Its other trump card has been its knowledge of the secret negotiations conducted between the national intelligence agency, attached directly to the prime minister, and the Kurdish freedom movement, which were aimed at a truce leading to a negotiated settlement of the age-old 'Kurdish problem'.

The AKP government was treading a thin line in the face of the military clique's covert interventions through their men in the judiciary. In 2008 a case was initiated before the constitutional court, the aim of which was to disband the AKP government on the grounds that it breached the principles of secularism. The Gülen movement's support for the government was crucial in stopping this move in its tracks; however, the court fined the AKP itself and half of the state's aid to the party was withheld.

However, in 2010 the AKP supported the Gülen movement's police and prosecutor teams in their instigation of charges against the army top brass for planning a military intervention in 2003. The arrest and ensuing trial of top generals, which focused on wiretaps and digital evidence, ended in their conviction in 2012. That was the zenith of the Gülen movement's organisation within the state apparatus.

However the controversy did not end, since claims of fabricated evidence were brought before the court of appeal, which quashed some verdicts, but upheld most. However, when the case was brought before the constitutional court in 2013, all convictions were quashed and the officers were released.

Then, in order to undermine the AKP government, the Gülen movement instigated a prosecution against the head of the national intelligence service.

Even though the government succeeded in stopping the case, in the course of investigations it had become apparent that the prime minister's offices had been tapped by Gülen movement supporters.

The AKP started to seek new allies. One of Erbakan's remnants was lingering on as a political party and it contained some high-profile figures who may have been tempted to mount a challenge to Erdoğan. To avoid a damaging contest they were invited to join the AKP and guaranteed influential positions, provided they persuaded their party to switch too. The subsequent gobbling up of the Erbakan party in 2012 strengthened the Islamist core of the AKP.

That marked a change in Erdoğan's strategy of alliances. He now sides with the nationalist-racist clique in the military, which seems at present to support his dictatorial tendencies, and has dropped the Gülen movement. The price to pay for the new alliance was the termination of attempts to find a negotiated settlement with the Kurdish freedom movement, and a new assault on Kurdish towns and cities was launched.

While the Gülen movement was paying the price for its overconfidence and reliance on the AKP to further its aims, the AKP itself now had new allies for its project of amending the constitution in order to bring about presidential rule that would dominate the legislature and the judiciary, as well as executive power.

Such change has been rapidly snowballing since Gezi Park and the crackdown in June 2013. The so-called liberal media - that is, the media controlled by the Gülen movement and used for the benefit of the AKP - was liquidated through quasi-judicial means. Amidst the sacking and prosecuting of police officers, other state officials and financiers associated with the Gülen movement, many media channels, newspapers, news agencies and TV channels were forced to close down - or else were brought under state control through court-appointed caretaker administrators. Overnight the editorial direction of such media was changed from one of criticising the government to supporting it.

However, action against the Gülen movement created cracks in the core of the AKP. The former deputy prime minister, former president of the republic and former influential ministers were now in open rebellion. Erdoğan the Invincible suddenly seemed to lose his magic touch. In order to pass his much desired constitutional amendment he now needs the support of the nationalist-racist opposition.

The ever-increasing brutality in the war to reconquer Kurdistan, and meddling in Syrian affairs to stop the formation of a Kurdish regional government there, are the sops to these forces. The Islamist rhetoric of the AKP has been replaced by the ever sharper nationalistic-racist rhetoric of the MHP (Nationalist Action Party). The paramilitary police forces used in the Kurdish campaign, along with the army, have committed atrocities beyond belief. They openly displayed their adherence to those nationalist-racist MHP politics.

The Syrian war and refugee crisis has helped to obscure the war in Turkish Kurdistan. Refugees have become a new weapon in the hands of the AKP government, enabling it to haggle with the European Union. While all political attention and rightwing rhetoric in Europe has been focused on the refugee crisis, nobody seems to care about the Kurds and the fate of democracy in Turkey ●

**IRELAND**

# Who's afraid of 1916?

Admiration of James Connolly should be tempered by criticism, writes Anne McShane

The commemoration of the Easter Rising takes place this year in a period of political instability. In the aftermath of the general election, as Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil scabble around to pull together a government, the question of who will take power is still very uncertain. Though both the main parties on a charm offensive in an attempt to lure independent TDs and small parties, neither is likely to be able to form a 'narrow' administration when the Dáil reconvenes on March 10. Hence the talk of a 'grand coalition'.

It is important for the establishment that there is some kind of government in office by Easter. A lot of planning has gone into the centenary events - in particular to make sure that they pass off without stirring up any old animosities. A great deal of pomp and circumstance is on the cards. On Easter Sunday the 1916 Proclamation will be read by a member of the armed forces outside the General Post Office, which served as a headquarters for the rebels. There will be a military parade, a 21-gun salute and a state reception at Dublin Castle. The official website stipulates that

the commemoration will be measured and reflective... informed by a full acknowledgement of the complexity of historical events and their legacy, of the multiple readings of history, and of the multiple identities and traditions which are part of the Irish historical experience.<sup>1</sup>

The commemoration is about "remembering, reconciling, presenting, imagining and celebrating". It forms part of the "Decade of Commemorations", which includes "many anniversaries relating to World War I, including the Gallipoli landings, the Somme offensive and the battle of Messines Ridge".<sup>2</sup>

It may seem contradictory that the Irish state has organised to mark World War I battles on an equal footing with 1916, which above all was a rebellion against that war. It shows just how far the southern state is determined to go to decontextualise and neutralise the fundamental premise of the rising - and the actions of those who used the war as an opportunity to stage an armed revolt against British imperialism. But the Irish establishment does not let a trivial thing like historical accuracy stand in its way. Its strategy is to reshape the past so as to consolidate its rule today. It is a whitewash which allows Ireland's political elite to confidently claim to be the legitimate heirs of James Connolly, Pádraig Pearse and the other leaders.

Of course, none of this is news. Since the inception of the Irish state it has sought to drape itself in the banner of 1916, venerating the executed leaders of the rising while sweeping aside their revolutionism. The aim has always been to cultivate a sense of 'small nation' pride - a nationalism which is no threat to the British state and its continued presence in Northern Ireland.

But this has not always been easy. The Irish Free State, which came into being under the Anglo-Irish treaty of 1921, has been torn by conflict over the division of Ireland. The re-emergence of a struggle in Northern Ireland in 1969 made any commemoration of 1916 too risky. The annual government-organised parades were stopped in the 1970s and events at the GPO banned. Any celebration could be seen as siding with the armed struggle against British

imperialism in the north. It was a very dangerous time to express any support for republican ideas - the Offences against the State Act 1939 had made it a crime to advocate force as a method of achieving political ends. Over the decades thousands were harassed, imprisoned and silenced under this legislation. The Irish state managed to create an atmosphere of intimidation, where it was impossible to express support for republicanism - or to even question the legitimacy of the status quo. Such were our lives in the holy Catholic 26 counties.

Not until the Good Friday agreement had formally deactivated the IRA's armed struggle did the government feel secure enough to identify more openly with 1916. Fianna Fáil reintroduced parades along O'Connell Street, ending at the GPO. This year there will be an enormous number of official events nationally, with an underpinning strategy of the creation of a benign cultural pride in the past.

## James Connolly

But while it is easy to point to the hypocrisy and dishonesty of the governing classes, it is often difficult to raise any criticism of the rising within the left, and in particular of the role played by James Connolly.

I am certainly not exempting myself from the ranks of those who feel an intense loyalty to Connolly. He was an inspiring individual, a trenchant and passionate critic of British imperialism and its cohorts within the Protestant ascendancy. As Belfast organiser of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union, and alongside James Larkin, he fought tirelessly against employers during the 1913 Dublin lockout. The terrible living conditions of the Irish working class moved him to savage both Protestant and Catholic employers and the London government in the pages of *Workers Republic*.<sup>3</sup>

Connolly was perhaps the most famous of the 1916 rebels. He was a working class leader, a fierce opponent of British imperialism, and a member of the Second International until its ignominious collapse in 1914. He is perhaps best known for his role in connecting the struggle for national liberation with the necessity for socialism. A famous quote of his is: "If you remove the English flag tomorrow and hoist the green flag over Dublin castle, unless you set about the organisation of the socialist republic your efforts will be in vain". However, despite his identification with the working class, there were problems with his programme on a number of levels. It is necessary for revolutionaries today to seriously consider these questions.

Writing in 1916, Lenin viewed the Easter Rising as part of the "epoch of crisis for the west-European nations, and for imperialism as a whole". He condemned those who dismissed it as a putsch and argued that it was an integral part of the historic mass struggle for national self-determination in Ireland. The struggle of small nations like Ireland for independence needed to be supported by revolutionaries. But that was not the end of the matter. Lenin argued: "it is the misfortune of the Irish that they rose prematurely, before the European revolt of the proletariat has had time to mature".<sup>4</sup> In such circumstances it was easy for the British state to crush the rising.

It has been wrongly claimed by some on the left that Connolly

had the same approach to World War I as Lenin, and that the Easter Rising was an example of Lenin's tactic of revolutionary defeatism in practice. This was, for instance, the view expounded and popularised by Charles Desmond Greaves (1913-88), a prominent member of the 'official' Communist Party of Great Britain. Connolly was presented as being completely in step with Lenin over the necessity to turn the imperialist war into a civil war.

Liam O'Ruairc takes on this argument and points to the fact that it is completely undermined by Connolly's own writings. He contends that Connolly:

clearly believed that the war was a result of the crisis of a decaying British capitalism and imperialism, as opposed to a general crisis of world capitalism and imperialism. It was the war of "the pirate nation" and "savage Cossacks" against the progressive German 'state socialism'.

O'Ruairc further says:

There is no doubt that from September 1914 Connolly not only desired a German victory over Britain, but also praised Germany as a modern, progressive state, containing the "best educated working class in the world, the greatest number of labour papers, the greatest number of parliamentary and local representatives elected on a working class platform, the greatest number of socialist voters - all of this was an infallible index to the high level of intelligence of the German working class, as well as their strong and political and industrial position."<sup>5</sup>

He helpfully provides a list of Connolly's articles from *Workers Republic*, so that his analysis can be verified.

From my reading of Connolly's articles of 1915 and 1916, I consider that there can be no doubt but that Connolly saw the German state as progressive compared with the British empire. He claimed that the "German empire" allowed autonomy for its component parts, while its British counterpart relied only on suppression. And, while "we do not wish to be ruled by either empire... we certainly believe that the first named contains in germ more of the possibilities of freedom and civilisation than the latter".<sup>6</sup>

In the same article he also maintains that "the instinct of the slave to take sides with whoever is the enemy of his own particular slave-driver is a healthy instinct, and makes for freedom". Connolly was not only so driven by his hatred of British imperialism that he wanted to back its enemy: he also had illusions in the efficiency and justice of the Prussian state.

## Nationalism and socialism

Connolly often used the terms 'working class', 'nation' and 'people' as if they were interchangeable. In his article, 'What is a free nation?', from *Workers Republic* February 1916, he said this:

The future requires the possession by Ireland of all the national rights now denied to her. Only in such possession can the workers of Ireland see stability and security

for the fruits of their toil and organisation.

And the working class had to be prepared to die for national independence - a "destiny not of our fashioning has chosen this generation as the one called upon for the supreme act of self-sacrifice - to die if need be that our race might live in freedom".<sup>7</sup>

Announcing the Irish Citizen Army's decision to take part in the 1916 rebellion, Connolly famously declared:

The cause of labour is the cause of Ireland; the cause of Ireland is the cause of labour. They cannot be dissevered. Ireland seeks freedom. Labour seeks that an Ireland free should be the sole mistress of her own destiny, supreme owner of all material things within and upon her soil. Labour seeks to make the free Irish nation the guardian of the interests of the people of Ireland, and to secure that end would vest in that free Irish nation all property rights as against the claims of the individual, with the end in view that the individual may be enriched by the nation, and not by the spoiling of his fellows.<sup>8</sup>

To me this is confusing things, and consequently highly problematic. Connolly was urging the working class to put all its efforts into winning national independence. Indeed he had a thoroughly romantic view of Ireland's past. In the pamphlet *The reconquest of Ireland*, Connolly painted a bucolic picture of the country prior to colonial conquest. It was

a country in which the people of the island were owners of the land upon which they lived, masters of their own lives and liberties, freely electing their rulers, and shaping their castes and conventions to permit of the closest approximation to their ideals of justice as between man and man.

It was

a society in which all were knit together as in a family, in which all were members having their definite place, and in which the highest could not infringe upon the rights of the lowest - those rights being as firmly fixed and assured as the powers of the highest, and fixed and assured by the same legal code and social convention.<sup>9</sup>

Connolly's programme was for "labour" (the working class) to reverse the conquest and 'reconquer' Ireland - returning it to the Irish people. His idea of a future Ireland was based on a combination of state control and smallholdings. A separate and independent economy.

Connolly's decision to unite his Irish Citizens Army with the nationalist Irish Volunteers must certainly have been driven forward by this vision. This view, along with frustration and despair

at the defeat of the lockout, the continued repression and the threat of conscription looming, seems to have pushed him to act. The decision to take on the British empire with 1,200 volunteers and less than 200 ICA members was certainly audacious, but it was doomed. The rising began on Easter Monday, April 14, and was forced to surrender on April 29. All the leaders were rounded up and 15 of them were then publicly and cruelly executed. In this way the British empire sent out a message to any of its colonies tempted to follow in Ireland's footsteps.

In his final statement - made to his daughter, Nora, before his death - Connolly declared:

The British government has no right in Ireland, never had any right in Ireland, and never can have any right in Ireland. The presence, in any one generation of Irishmen, of even a respectable minority, ready to die to affirm that truth, makes that government forever a usurpation and a crime against human progress.<sup>10</sup>

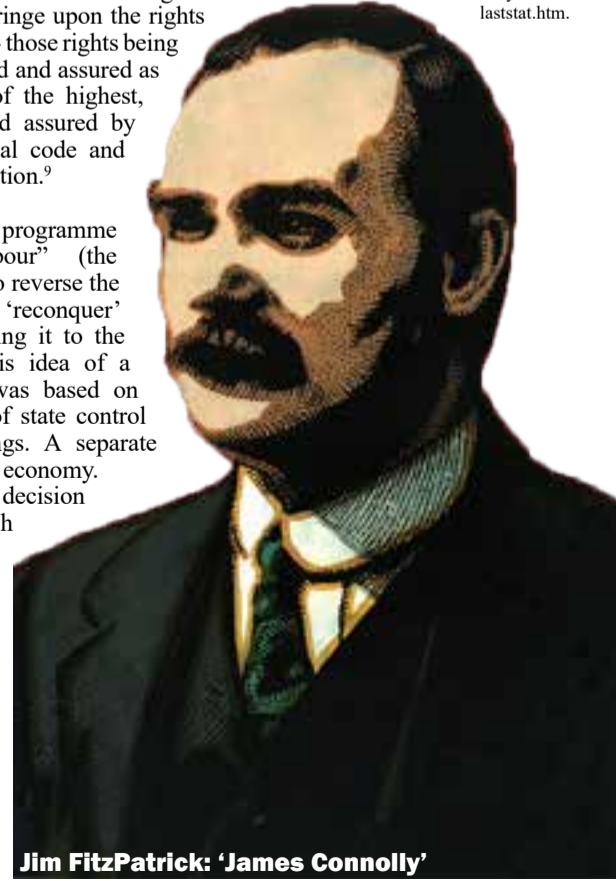
Having completed this statement, he was taken out before a firing squad and shot while tied to a chair. The injuries he sustained during the rising meant he could not stand.

For me his final words are the most compelling, as they point to his deep commitment to Irish self-determination. That is beyond question - but it is the rest of his legacy that comrades need to address too ●

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## Notes

1. www.ireland.ie/about.
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3. www.marxists.org/archive/connolly/1915/05/lekoutsq.htm.
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Jim FitzPatrick: 'James Connolly'

REVIEW

# What will be will be

Michel Houellebecq *Submission* (Translated from the French by Lorin Stein)  
William Heinemann, 2015, pp256, £18.99

This latest novel of Michel Houellebecq is set in a future France which is about to get a Muslim president.

It is Paris in 2022 and François is an unmarried lecturer at the Sorbonne. His particular interest is JK Huysmans, a late 19th century writer who began as a 'decadent' aesthete and later converted to Catholicism. François himself observes no belief apart from his practice of taking a different lover each year - usually a student. He lectures, travels and eats mostly ready meals. When we encounter him, he is in the middle of a relationship with Myriam, another of his students. He expects this to end soon, even though she is keen for it to continue. It will in fact be one of the things affected by the forthcoming presidential election. It is expected that this will be won by Mohammed Ben Abbes, the candidate for a coalition of the centre-left and the new Muslim Fraternity party.

What reason does the novel give for this prospect of a Muslim-left government? The threat of the far right coming to power. In order to stave off a Front National victory with its plans to leave the European Union, the centre-left Socialists and centre-right Union for a Popular Movement ally with a party recently formed out of the Muslim Brotherhood.

As the contest rises to a climax, Myriam visits François and offers him fellatio. She declares that she loves France - she loves the cheese - but her parents are talking about leaving for Israel. She asks him what he intends to do after the election. François realises that he has no idea and anyway "I didn't give a fuck".

Myriam will in the end accompany her parents, fearing a Front National victory. Incidentally she happens to be the most developed female character in the book - which means she is not that developed. Houellebecq's protagonists are not particularly interested in women except for their 'beauty' and for sex.

In the meantime François's parents both die and François, fearing that he is on the verge of suicide, goes on retreat to a monastery, where his subject, Huysmans, was once a lay member. François does not stay there long - he doesn't believe in that either - and returns to Paris.

The coalition's Ben Abbes is elected president and the Sorbonne is privatised: only Muslims can now teach there. François is made redundant. When the Islamic University of Paris-Sorbonne reopens, some of François's colleagues convert and acquire second wives under the new polygamy laws. President Ben Abbes, however, distances himself from his Saudi investors and presses for French to become the first language of the EU. He is considered a charming moderate who gets on well with the rabbi of France.

François visits Robert Rediger, a rightwing politician who contends that Europe has "committed suicide in a matter of decades"; it is now Islam that "has been chosen for world status". A publisher offers François the editorship of Huysmans' complete works. Meanwhile he reads up on *Questions about Islam*, a specially prepared booklet, and inquires of Rediger, "Could I convert to Islam?" Rediger does not see why he could not. François, after all, has no strong views about how the cosmos or society works.

François does recognise that petty bourgeois conservatives, the nativists and the Muslims, were in perfect

agreement:

When it came to rejecting atheism and humanism, or the necessary submission of women, or the return of patriarchy, they were fighting exactly the same fight. And today this fight, to establish a new organic phase of civilisation, could no longer be waged in the name of Christianity. Islam, its sister faith, was newer, simpler and truer ... (p230).

François even gets to return to teaching. He will miss tight slacks and the faces of female students, but he is ready to resume his job and even allows a spouse to be chosen for him. The novel ends, with a brief glimpse of the new era and François's place within it.

Is it convincing, this transformation that some French writers have called 'the Great Replacement' - the hypothesis that the rise in the Muslim population within France may lead to a change in politics? Can one imagine a sizable section of the European middle class, indeed of Britain - not the intellectuals, of course - giving up the liberties of public drunkenness, internet porn and gay liberation, while embracing a simple monotheism, community in faith, almsgiving by the mega-rich and the feeling that free speech is reckless? Surely, a moderate patriot like Ben Abbas would never score with an electorate that will forever identify Allah with masked martyrs and dour sheiks.

Houellebecq does not appear to agree with Alain Badiou that values are binary, that the west and its copycats are opposed by 'nihilist' rejectionists - principally Islamic State and their offshoots. For the record though, the *Koran* neither vindicates the ill treatment of women nor the killing of innocents. But, because Islam has no pope or synod, it is easier for some Muslims to reinterpret it in order to allow both.

*Submission* stops before it can show us the kind of internal conflicts such a society could develop, like those between Muslim and Non-Muslims and between different Muslims. The book runs out of steam, just as François makes his submission to the new hegemony. Is this more than a failure of imagination? Is Houellebecq just not interested in the kind of future fiction that has a detailed social landscape, like Aldous Huxley's California-plus *Brave new world*?

As a character in a French novel, François is not unlike Meursault in Albert Camus's *Outsider*. Meursault was not particularly committed to anything either, back then in colonial French Algeria. Meursault, like François, is mainly a believer in the truth of his own feelings rather than any ideas, even if this leads him to shoot an Arab on an Algiers beach without much reason.

François has reminded some of another fictional character. The writer, Emmanuel Carrère, has already compared *Submission* to Orwell's *1984*. François, however, is no Winston Smith.

## Novel and value

Before the novel there was the epic and romance - stories of heroes, knights and ladies. Some novels are still romances in this fashion, like James Bond, while some are anti-romances - the work of grittily debunking Tolstoy. If we try to refer to the novel as a distinct genre, one prominent aspect would be that the protagonist is one who is *searching*, who attempts to find a place for values, or something other than 'money to

value', in the modern capitalist world. The break-up of traditional society in the 15th and 16th centuries gave the bourgeoisie economic power and political clout, but led to a lack of general social values, apart from individual advancement and declining religion.

This lack of consensus was dangerous for social cohesion. Intellectuals, from Shakespeare to Adam Smith, who worried about modernity, could not help but ask the question about what greater values were realistic in this situation. On the other hand, in the heroic romance tales of TV and movies, the Hero, who already has values, almost always wins: love conquers all, heroes defeat evil, comedies end with all's well. But from Robinson Crusoe to the Great Gatsby characters, novels search for values by which they can live, but that also accommodate to reality. In early capitalist fiction, realism is not just a panorama of everyday life, but poses the question whether one can be a hero in a disenchanted world - Don Quixote, Crusoe, Pickwick.

In Jane Austen's *Pride and prejudice*, the petty bourgeois Elizabeth Bennett arrives at the realisation that the aristocrat Darcy is worthy to be loved and admired, even though - or perhaps because - he criticises the limitations of her genteel family. Later, Thomas Hardy's narratives are a lot more sceptical about Victorian society: his working class protagonists may conform (Tess) or rebel (Jude), but both are destroyed. In the 1920s, the couples of DH Lawrence's *Women in love* seek to discover a way of living passionately together among the increasingly atomised world of monopoly capitalism, where everything seems mechanical and petty. The prose of *Women in love* presents us with characters that are not 'characters': that is, types. They are unfinished, shifting, not secure in themselves, even as they pursue conflicting destinies of Love or Will or Art.

Those who have read Orwell's dystopia of 1949 know that Winston Smith seeks a personal escape too with colleague Julia, against the ubiquitous double-think (bullshit) of Big Brotherism. He does not succeed and never could succeed, given the all-powerful surveillance system. But he tries for the impossibility of a private solution (given his position in the party), as well as attempting to explore questions about the society he lives in. The Big Brother society does not even have a special day of celebration - a day of independence or revolution, when positive values are affirmed. This makes one doubt whether a society like Orwell's design could be feasible. Can a divided (class) society do without even the hypocrisy of having common values?

## Depression

In Houellebecq's previous and award-winning second novel *Atomised* (2001), the paths of two half-brothers dovetail into a future - yes, another projection - where biological science has provided the solution, as well as the problem. Here we have another decline of civilisation hypothesis, where chemistry in the 1960s - the pill and mind-altering drugs - has led to a crisis of individualism, when single-minded desire promoted by advertising and the sexual revolution gives way to cruelty.

"Charles Manson," the text tells us, "was not some monstrous aberration in the hippie movement, but its logical conclusion." Individual liberty has been

reduced to self-seeking for personal satisfaction, whether sexual, economic (in consumption) or ultimately religious, with the churches crumbling before the sects and their offers of personal ecstasy and small group bond.

However, one of the characters in *Atomised* works in molecular biology and invents principles for the absolute separation of sex and reproduction. This results in the creation of a post-individualist human being - a body cloned, perfect and detached from evolution, united with their fellow clones by a common sameness, involved in a love that is the oblivion of mind.

*Atomised* keyed into and may even have promoted a mood in the noughties where science - biological, chemical or IT-based - was declared to promise freedom from single consciousness and mortality, finally achieving unity and everlasting life in the 'cloud mind'. There was much talk of the 'post-human', at least in literary theory textbooks and on Radio Four science shows. Whether this was of much use to people now was something I do not remember being discussed.

## Submitting

In *Submission* François is not happy either about the way things are going, but this can have no impact. With *Submission* we have reached a *depressive* stage of fictional character, where a protagonist submits because any choice of values or even a compromise is impossible. From this character's point of view it does not matter whether anything *works* or not - the depressive can live in the most perfect or imperfect society without much difference: their alienation from society is presented as psychological, not political. Given a protagonist like this, *Submission* has no need to tell us much about the new society: the point is that things are going somewhere - maybe worse or not - and what will be will be. It is unnecessary from this point of view to go very far in depicting social details and personal struggles, as in Orwell or, for that matter, Lawrence.

Not that pessimism as such need be a dull read. Take that most *unprogressive* of texts, *Gulliver's travels* by Jonathan Swift. What does Gulliver get out of his travels? Certainly not a fortune nor much pleasure and only one useful lesson, which is for the reader. Gulliver travels to new countries, explores science (Laputa), and encounters humanity in the raw (the Yahoos).

The beings which he finds who are like those at home, though smaller or bigger, are awful and the ones who are not like his fellow citizens, the horsey Houyhnhnms, leave him shamed about his humanity and unable to bear the smell of his own family in England. He gets nothing of benefit from meeting new people or observing faraway societies. The message of *Gulliver's travels* would seem to be: don't do it; stay put - progress, of any kind, is a delusion.

Houellebecq's characters mostly do not get anywhere, not even by going into new lands, new futures; they live passively with things as they are, while the story merely hints at a 'shocking' hypothetical change. Even as readers, we may want more than this, more than a tease. Maybe the next kind of utopian novel could imagine a society, which, although not perfect (like a socialist Europe faced with an unreconstructed US and China), might at least have a go at struggling with problems we recognise as ours ●

Mike Belbin

## 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

**TUC needs  
to take the  
lead**



Out yet again

## United front needed

As the third strike by junior doctors takes place across England, with medics withdrawing all non-emergency cover for 48 hours, health secretary Jeremy Hunt is still pressing ahead with plans to unilaterally impose his controversial new contract, which he announced in the wake of the previous industrial action back in February.

He claimed that the decision was made on behalf of "Sir David Dalton ... along with other senior NHS leaders" in an attempt to justify his actions, yet by the end of the day in which he made that claim, 14 out of the 20 senior leaders named on the letter sent to the government had denied they were in favour of his contract imposition, scheduled for August.

Amazingly, at the same time Hunt also announced a national review of junior doctor morale, apparently because the negotiation process had uncovered some "deep-seated issues" relating to doctors' well-being and quality of life. Notably, the review explicitly excludes pay and working terms and conditions from the issues it considers worthy of discussion; instead shifting the focus - and therefore the responsibility - onto relationships between doctors, their hospitals and senior staff.

The announcement of the imposition has forced the doctors' trade union, the British Medical Association, to consider other options alongside continued strike action. It has launched a judicial review of the new contract, based on the fact that there is no evidence that the government has carried out

an 'equality impact assessment', as required under the Equality Act 2010. This process is designed to prevent a new policy or project from discriminating against disadvantaged or vulnerable members of society.

This seems an imprudent omission by the Department of Health, given the new contract's potential impact on women, who take time out of their career in far greater numbers and make up a greater percentage of doctors in less-than-full-time training. Both of these factors would result in a loss of earnings under the new contract, as the old year-on-year pay progression is removed, and the premiums for working one in four weekends or more would very rarely apply.

However, the BMA's lawyers have warned that despite the planned legal action having a "greater than 50%" chance of succeeding, it would most likely prove a "considerable drain" on the BMA's resources, and advised that it should only be used

as a stopgap measure to provide an opportunity to make further changes to the contract.

In order to defeat the imposition of contracts that not only adversely affect doctor's working conditions, but also jeopardise the safety of their patients, two linked developments need to occur. First, we need coordinated action with our fellow NHS employees - soon to be also targeted by Hunt's misguided crusade for a so-called "seven-day NHS". It was recently announced that public sector workers will get a below-inflation 1% pay rise this year, following a five-year pay freeze, and this should certainly prove sufficient motivation for a united front amongst NHS staff. MPs are, of course, the exception to this, receiving a 1.3% rise just nine months after their previous 10% pay increase, even though they themselves voted for the 1% cap on public sector pay rises until 2019.

This will serve to further damage

the NHS, as staff turn to agency working to boost their earnings, thus vastly increasing labour costs, or simply leaving their jobs altogether for better remunerated work elsewhere. Adding to this, the swingeing cuts to social care and mental health provision mean that more strain is placed on hospitals, which have to care for increasing numbers of 'bed-blockers' - patients who are medically fit to be discharged, but cannot go home due to a lack of support services in the community.

Other public-sector unions have yet to announce whether they will be balloting for strike action, but even if they do, coordinated action between healthcare workers may prove difficult. NHS workers are extremely reluctant to carry out any action that could have a detrimental impact on the patients who use the service - an effect that would be exacerbated if several groups of employees went on strike at the same time.

However, this kind of action

would be about safeguarding the future of public healthcare, and the government's response following the last set of strikes proves that doctors cannot do this on their own. This brings me to the second prerequisite for a successful campaign against the new contracts: we need solidarity from other workers, whether they work in the public sector or not, to force the department of health to drop its damaging campaign against the NHS. My advice to the BMA? Demand solidarity action from other unions, and call on the Trades Union Congress to initiate and coordinate such action. Such coordinated action would not only aid their fellow workers: it would represent a clear statement in opposition to the destruction of the health service upon which all workers depend. This needs to be linked to a political campaign for an end to austerity measures and for better funding for hospitals and all medical and social care.

Richard Galen

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