

A paper of Marxist polemic and Marxist unity



# weekly **worker**



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Lenin's return: Zinoviev's  
eye-witness account**

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No 1149 Thursday April 6 2017

Towards a Communist Party of the European Union

£1/€1.10

# DEFEND KEN LIVINGSTONE



# LETTERS



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

## Cuts stand

The Rugby Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition will be standing candidates in the two central Rugby divisions of Benn and New Bilton and Overslade in this May's Warwickshire county council elections. We took this decision after much discussion, to ensure there is an anti-cuts voice for electors.

It is both local and national Tusc policy not to stand against any Labour candidate who supports Jeremy Corbyn and opposes cuts. However, we found no such evidence in Rugby or Warwickshire. In fact, Labour in Warwickshire supports the Tory £67 million cuts package. Rugby Tusc wrote to all opposition councillors on Warwickshire county council last October, suggesting they should join together and use their numerical majority to overturn the Tory budget proposals. The Greens replied to say they would oppose some cuts, the Liberal Democrats noted our plea, but not one of the 22 Labour councillors even had the courtesy to reply.

Furthermore, we wrote to all Labour county councillors and candidates in January asking them pledge their opposition to cuts and agree there are alternatives to austerity. We received no replies. We wrote to Rugby Labour Party in February to ask if any Labour candidates publicly supported Jeremy Corbyn. The reply failed to answer the question. Now we know why: the Tories on Warwickshire county council could only get their massive cuts through by having the full support of all 22 Labour councillors. The £67 million cuts are the direct result of a compromise budget agreed between Labour and Tory councillors.

We are deliberately standing in the areas of Rugby most likely to be hit by the cuts to public services and welfare, which always hit the poorest and most vulnerable disproportionately. We want to concentrate our resources and show local people there are alternatives to austerity.

We have two excellent and locally well-known candidates, who both live where they are standing. Former postal worker Marian Wakelin will be our candidate in Benn. Trade union studies lecturer Julie Weekes will stand in New Bilton and Overslade.

In Rugby and Warwickshire, we are now facing massive cuts in care for the elderly, libraries, the fire and rescue service and road maintenance. Thousands will lose their jobs. The 4% increase in council tax will hit the poor and those on low wages particularly hard. Cuts to support for recovering addicts are particularly callous. All this is in addition to the severe welfare cuts claimants are suffering, including personal independence payments, child benefit and universal credit. Health spending is to be cut by £30 billion nationally through sustainability and transformation plans.

We are standing to oppose all such cuts because, as we have repeatedly pointed out, councils can avoid passing on government cuts.

Local councils are close to insolvency. Health services cannot cope, hundreds of thousands will lose their jobs and those who cannot work, including the disabled, are being pushed into abject poverty through benefit cuts and sanctions. None of these austerity measures are being actively opposed by any other party, but Tusc is committed to opposing all cuts at all levels and will centre its local election campaign around that.

**Pete McLaren**  
Rugby Tusc

## Hot spot

Democracy in Turkey is on a knife edge and in a few weeks time the country will be going to the polls in a referendum on the most radical changes to the constitution since the founding of the republic in 1923.

If a 'yes' vote is secured, president Erdoğan will wield unprecedented powers, which will enable him to appoint key positions in the government and judiciary and, more worryingly, give him the ability to dissolve parliament altogether. This is the most critical time in the country's history and has serious implications for the people of Turkey and internationally.

As Solidarity with the People of Turkey (Spot) we are supporting a project by two British-based journalists, who will be travelling to Turkey in the days preceding the referendum. Award-winning Kurdish journalist Figen Gunes and British journalist Steve Sweeney will be spending 10 days in the predominantly Kurdish south-east of the country from April 8 to 18. They will be travelling from Gaziantep to Sirnak and their visit will

include Mardin, Nusaybin and Suruç. Along the route, they will be speaking to and interviewing community leaders, politicians, trade unionists and ordinary people. Figen and Steve will also be reporting daily for British and Turkish newspapers and producing a documentary on their return to the UK.

Spot believes this is vital work particularly in the current political climate and it is likely they will be the only western-based journalists in the area.

In order to make this project a reality, there is a need for urgent funding and we are appealing to you to help raise the target of £5,000, which will help with flights, internal travel, accommodation and much-needed specialised equipment. They are happy to come and speak about their experiences at your branch or community organisation on their return.

You can contribute using the following bank account details: Mr Steve Sweeney, 'Turkey Solidarity account', account number 90509628, sort code 09-01-28.

Alternatively, please get us in touch with us at Spot ([spot@daymer.org](mailto:spot@daymer.org)) and we can assist with alternative ways to donate to Steve's and Figen's project. Please feel free to contact Steve Sweeney ([stevesweeney@peoplespress.com](mailto:stevesweeney@peoplespress.com)) for further information.

**Solidarity with the People of Turkey**  
email

## Union studies

I am a product of trade union education. I did an MA in labour and trade union studies at the University of North London. I was privileged to be supported through this by my union (and my employer) and that is how I ended up becoming professor of work and employment relations at the University of Leeds.

I was also external examiner at Ruskin College on its BA in labour and trade union studies for three years and I have done guest lectures here and supervised MA dissertation students. I can attest to the changes in people who are able to gain an education later in life - often those who were failed earlier in their studies or who just weren't able to continue into further education at that time in their lives. I have seen many fantastic students graduate from these courses and take up important positions in the labour movement.

Learning about the labour and trade union movement is vital if we are to learn from our history and to be in a position to change the world in which we live to something that has greater equality and compassion. My uncle was a beneficiary of trade union education at Ruskin College over 60 years ago.

Sadly, there will no longer be any degree-level courses in trade union studies left in the country, now that Ruskin College has announced plans effectively to close its BA and MA programmes in international labour and trade union studies by making all the staff in this department redundant. What are our unions doing about this? It's time there was a plan of action and an injection of resources.

My deep commiserations to colleagues Ian Manborde, Tracy Walsh, Fenella Porter and all others who have lost their jobs as a result of these unnecessary cuts. Shame on those who brought them about.

**Professor Jane Holgate**  
Leeds University Business School

## Yevtushenko

I was sad to read news of the death of Russian poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko. As a young activist, I was tremendously influenced by his work, which at that time simultaneously hailed the historic achievements of Soviet socialism and criticised the bureaucratic errors and backward thinking of many politicians in the post-Stalin era. Later

on, Yevtushenko would move steadily to the right, eventually celebrating the fall of the Soviet Union.

While some saw Yevtushenko's rightward shift as evidence of his commitment to 'democracy', to me it appeared the kind of slow rot of conservative thinking that he had railed against in his poems. I choose to cherish Yevtushenko as the writer of great celebrations of true Bolshevism, in works such as *Bratsk station* and 'Babi Yar'. The former is a book of poems telling the story of how the Russian Revolution unleashed the incredible human forces that turned rural, backward Russia into a technological and economic powerhouse. The latter is a direct attack in the name of communism on official anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union.

**Peter Gosellin**  
Connecticut

## War talks

Thirty-three people packed into the meeting room at the Red Shed in Wakefield on April 1 to discuss British socialism and World War I.

The first speaker, historian Martin Crick, gave a fascinating account of socialist responses to World War I, including the struggles of socialist conscientious objectors. Martin noted that there were 30 conscientious objectors in Wakefield. He also explained that Wakefield prison became a home office work centre for conscientious objectors who agreed to do work of 'national importance'. The conscientious objectors did not have to wear uniforms, had free association and were able to go out during the day. This led to letters from residents to the *Wakefield Express* complaining that the conscientious objectors were "cluttering up the free public library" and warning of the impact they might have on the "morals of Wakefield's young women".

The second speaker was Paul Bennett from the Socialist Party of Great Britain. Paul noted that the SPGB was unequivocal at the time. It described the war as a "capitalist war". It called on workers to "join the army of revolution instead". During the war, the party itself faced many difficulties. Its membership fell two thirds. Outdoor meetings were broken up and speakers attacked. Some members lost their jobs because of their opposition to the war. The party was battered, but emerged better prepared for the struggles to come.

The final speaker was Jock from the Communist Workers Organisation. He said World War I was an "extraordinary watershed in human history" and that we are "still living with the consequences". Jock noted in particular what a socialist among the 16 conscientious objectors imprisoned in Richmond Castle in 1916 wrote on his cell wall: "The only war which is worth fighting is the class war ... if the workers of all countries united and refused to fight, there would be no war!"

This event was organised by Wakefield Socialist History Group, whose next event is 'Syndicalism and the great unrest' on Saturday May 13 at 1pm. This will also be held at the Red Shed (Vicarage Street, Wakefield WF1). All are welcome and admission is free.

**Alan Stewart**  
Wakefield Socialist History Group

## Hope Hospital

I'm delighted to share an update on the People's Convoy - the very first crowdfunded hospital, which was delivered via convoy from London to Syria, and has just opened. After almost three months of building work, Hope Hospital has opened its doors to patients in northern Aleppo - the only facility like it in the area.

Last December CanDo spearheaded the People's Convoy campaign - alongside partners organisations Across the

Divide, Doctors Under Fire, Hand in Hand for Syria, Phoenix Foundation, the Syria Campaign, Union of Medical Care and Relief Organizations - raising money to rebuild the last children's hospital that had been bombed out of action in Aleppo.

CanDo's focus is to bring the dignity of independence to local organisations working on the front lines by recognising their incredible work and connecting them to direct funding and resources. The not-for-profit organisation is creating a new international aid ecosystem that recognises, respects and empowers local humanitarians using crowdfunding technology.

The campaign resonated with public figures, humanitarian organisations and the public globally, and resulted in raising a staggering £246,505 (270% of the fundraising target) in just 14 days, which in addition to rebuilding the hospital, also provided enough funding for six months of running costs.

The convoy departed from Chelsea and Westminster Hospital in London on December 17 2016 to a buzz of media attention. The heavy-goods vehicle carrying the hospital equipment and supplies drove over 2,600 miles, passing through France, Belgium, Holland, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria, before crossing Turkey and finally reaching the border with Syria on January 2 2017.

With over 4,800 single donations mostly from the UK and USA, the People's Convoy sent a strong message of solidarity to the Independent Doctors Association (IDA), who were rebuilding this children's hospital for the seventh time after the six previous buildings had been bombed out of action.

The IDA is an independent humanitarian organisation founded by a medical committee of Syrian doctors from Aleppo in 2012 as a response to the humanitarian needs. They work to rehabilitate medical services in northern Syria and attain a standard level of health and social well-being for the affected populations.

Inspired by the public display of generosity and solidarity, the IDA decided to name the facility Hope Hospital. Dr Hatem from the IDA said: "After evacuating from Aleppo our hearts ached, because we had been building the children's hospital in Aleppo for two years and then lost everything. There was something in my heart that said we would have to give up and not work inside a children's hospital again."

He went on to say: "After we saw the People's Convoy, something rebuilt within ourselves. The hope returned to me when I realised that there are people thinking about us and supporting us. It means all the people in the world aim to save children's lives wherever they are and whoever they are. It means the world knew what we were doing inside Aleppo: serving the children, the civilians. So we began working hard to build Hope Hospital. For us, it represents a new place where we can work and still imagine ourselves back in Aleppo."

Hope Hospital is a clear victory for humanity. While it might seem like a small victory in the face of the continued adversity in Syria, it marks a significant milestone. From the thousands of supporters and the tens of organisations that endorsed the convoy, to the media supporters and the breathtaking resilience of the IDA team, the achievement is a celebration of the human spirit.

The hospital will serve Jarablus district (northern Aleppo), a community of 170,000, treating over 5,000 children each month - a figure which is likely to grow, as more communities become displaced from continued evacuations and news of the hospital spreads.

**Dr Rola Hallam**  
CanDo

## Communist University 2017

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# LIVINGSTONE

## Labour's Star Chamber

Why do the witch-hunters refuse to deal with the *content*?  
Tony Greenstein comments on the Livingstone verdict

It says a lot about Jeremy Corbyn that he not only refused to condemn the witch-hunt of Ken Livingstone or the false anti-Semitism campaign in the Labour Party. After Livingstone was found guilty by Labour's national constitutional committee of bringing the party into disrepute and suspended from standing as a party candidate for another year, Corbyn actually said that Livingstone's repeated "offensive remarks" about Hitler having supported Zionism, and his refusal to "acknowledge or apologise for the hurt he has caused", left him open to "further action".

Yet Labour's witch-hunters are desperate to avoid any debate about the *content* of what Livingstone said. We were told a year ago that what Livingstone said about Hitler supporting Zionism and whether the Zionist movement collaborated with the Nazis was a heinous example of anti-Semitism. But Labour's general secretary, Iain McNicol, in setting out the accusations against the former mayor, stated that the case against him was not about the historical facts, but whether his conduct was "grossly detrimental" to the party, "especially given his defence of anti-Semitic Facebook posts by Bradford West MP Naz Shah".

We should bear in mind that the 'anti-Semitic Facebook posts' by Naz Shah included a map of the United States with Israel transplanted to it. The map first appeared on the site of the Jewish Virtual Library,<sup>1</sup> which is not known to be an anti-Semitic site!

The catch-all charge, favoured by McCarthyites, of bringing the Labour Party into disrepute, is of course entirely subjective. It is a matter of opinion, depending on where you stand. Some of us think that if anyone brought the Labour Party into disrepute it was Tony Blair's support for the Iraq war, but clearly being a war criminal is not seen as disreputable by the crooked McNicol.

### Wise professor

But it seems that the truth is 'anti-Semitic'. So it is useful to look at the argument of Rainer Schulze, an academic apologist for Zionism, to understand why McNicol fought shy of tackling the substance of what Livingstone said.

Livingstone was attacked a year ago by Schulze, who is professor of modern European history at the University of Essex, in an article reprinted in *The Independent* as 'Hitler and Zionism: why the Ha'avara agreement does not mean the Nazis were Zionists'.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately being a professor of history does not mean you have to know much about your subject and this is often the case with 'holocaust professors'.

When the Nazi government was put in power in January 1933, world Jewry reacted by setting in motion an economic boycott of Nazi Germany. Given that this was completely unorganised and spontaneous, it was remarkably successful.

Even in Palestine in the first few days of April thousands of orders for German goods in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem were cancelled. However, the 'socialist' Zionists of Mapai, the Israeli Labour Party, were furious. They wanted to do business with the Nazis, not campaign against them. They immediately launched a campaign *against* the boycott of Nazi Germany. On May 18, they claimed in a broadcast that "Screaming slogans calling for a boycott ... are a crime ... We are all anxious about our brethren in Germany, but we have no quarrel with the representatives of the German government in Palestine."<sup>3</sup>

In the 1930s the same establishment

worthies who today are opposed to the boycott of Israel as 'anti-Semitic' were equally opposed to the boycott of Nazi Germany. The Board of Deputies of British Jews voted on July 23 1933 by 110-27 to oppose such a boycott.

Schulze puts forward the establishment view of Ha'avara, the agreement between the Nazis and Zionists, that there was nothing wrong with a trade agreement with the Nazis. In essence he is arguing that the Zionist policy of constructive engagement was the best policy.

He is, however, correct on one thing: Hitler was not a Zionist. Nor did Ken Livingstone claim he was. But it is indisputable that the Nazi regime supported and favoured the Zionist movement. Reinhardt Heydrich, Himmler's deputy and leader of the police, security and Gestapo department, issued on January 28 1935 an order which stated: "The activities of the Zionist-oriented organisations [are in line with] the interest of the National Socialist state leadership" - before going on to say that Zionists "are not to be treated with that strictness that it is necessary to apply to the members of the so-called German-Jewish organisations (assimilationists)".

Throughout the 1930s, as part of the regime's determination to force Jews to leave Germany, there was almost unanimous support in German government and Nazi party circles for promoting Zionism among German Jews, together with Jewish emigration from Germany to Palestine.

If Schulze is not aware of this then he has no business trumpeting his professorial credentials on the subject (if he is aware of it then he is an academic liar, an establishment poodle). The above quotes can be found in books by two Zionist historians, the late Lucy Dawidowicz's *War against the Jews* and Francis Nicosia's *Zionism and anti-Semitism in Nazi Germany*.

Not once did Schulze even mention the boycott of Nazi Germany. This is academic dishonesty. You cannot understand the opposition from the overwhelming majority of Jewish people to Ha'avara without understanding that boycott. Its purpose was to force the Nazis to halt their persecution, so that Jews could continue to live in Germany. Ben Gurion and his associates, by contrast, wanted German Jews to settle in Palestine and they saw the Ha'avara policy as a means toward that end.

In other words, this was the old Zionist policy of welcoming anti-Semitism as an inducement to Jews to emigrate to Palestine. The Zionists did not want Jews to live in the diaspora. They saw the persecution of Jews in Germany as the inevitable outcome of Jewish 'homelessness' - living in the countries of 'other peoples'. While the Nazis were frantic in their desire to destroy the boycott, the Zionist movement, by agreeing to Ha'avara, helped the Nazi regime survive. Ha'avara, far from being a rescue scheme for Jews, was a rescue scheme for the Nazi state. That the Zionist movement was guilty of collaboration cannot be doubted, even if the tame establishment historian, Rainer Schulze, suggests otherwise.

The idea that the Zionist Organisation or the Jewish Agency were concerned with rescuing German Jews in their own right is for the birds.

### Jewish 'self-determination'

Rainer Schulze argues that "Zionism was a movement based on the right of self-determination. It originated as

a national liberation movement ..." A question I have often asked Zionists is, when was it they first decided that Zionism was a national liberation movement? I have never received an answer. The founders of Zionism, from whatever political persuasion, described Zionism as a *colonial* movement at a time when colonialism was still respectable.

The founder of political Zionism, Theodore Herzl, when he wrote to Cecile Rhodes, the British colonialist and white supremacist in southern Africa, explained thus: "How, then, do I happen to turn to you, since this is an out-of-the-way matter for you? How indeed? Because it is something colonial."<sup>4</sup>

Vladimir Jabotinsky, the founder of revisionist Zionism (the equivalent of Likud today), in his famous essay 'An iron wall', which was a polemic against his opponents in Labour Zionism, argued:

There can be no voluntary agreement between ourselves and the Palestine Arabs ... it is utterly impossible to obtain the voluntary consent of the Palestine Arabs for converting 'Palestine' from an Arab country into a country with a Jewish majority.

My readers have a general idea of the history of colonisation throughout the world. I suggest that they consider all the precedents with which they are acquainted, and see whether there is one solitary instance of any colonisation being carried on with the consent of the native population. There is no such precedent.<sup>5</sup>

There is not even one instance of any reference to a 'national liberation movement' in the writings of the founders of Zionism. Zionism only became a national liberation movement when colonialism got a bad name! Today's Zionists have decided to disguise what even the Zionists themselves used to admit was a colonialist movement in the apparel of the oppressed in order to deceive the innocent. Rainer Schulze's history lessons are in reality an act of deception.

Rainer Schulze finished his article by indulging in a piece of straw-man rhetoric: "Any claim that Nazis and Zionists ever shared a common goal is not only cynical and disingenuous, but a distortion of clearly established historical fact."

That is, of course, true. But no-one has claimed that they shared common goals. Clearly the Zionists did not support the mass genocide of European Jewry. Marshal Pétain collaborated with the Nazis, but that does not mean he supported their aims. He collaborated because he did not want a Nazi occupation of France. When a weaker party collaborates with a stronger party they rarely if ever share the same goals.

Unfortunately professor Schulze, having very little knowledge or understanding of the topic he was writing about, decided to engage in an old debating tactic: attack something your opponent hasn't said! ●

### Notes

1. www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/map-of-israel-relative-to-united-states.
2. www.independent.co.uk/news/world/world-history/adolf-hitler-zionism-zionist-nazis-haavara-agreement-ken-livingstone-labour-antisemitism-row-a7009981.html.
3. E Black *The transfer agreement: the dramatic story of the pact between the Third Reich and Jewish Palestine* New York 2009, p144.
4. T Herzl *The complete diaries of Theodor Herzl* Vol 4: https://archive.org/stream/TheCompleteDiariesOfTheodorHerzl\_201606/TheCompleteDiariesOfTheodorHerzlEngVolume1OCR\_djvu.txt.
5. www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/quot-the-iron-wall-quot

# ACTION

### London Communist Forum

**Sunday April 9, 5pm:** 'Defend Ken Livingstone', Calthorpe Arms, 252 Grays Inn Road, London WC1. Speakers: Mike Macnair (CPGB and Oxford University law lecturer); Tony Greenstein (Jewish anti-Zionist). Organised by CPGB: www.cpgb.org.uk; and Labour Party Marxists: www.labourpartymarxists.org.uk.

### Radical Anthropology Group

**Tuesday April 11, 6.45pm:** 'Reconstructing the world's first cosmology'. Speaker: Camilla Power. Organised by Radical Anthropology Group: http://radicalanthropologygroup.org.

### Inside the global arms trade

**Friday April 7, 7pm:** Film screening, student cinema, University of Bradford, Richmond Road, Bradford. Showing of *Shadow world* followed by Q&A. Organised by West Yorkshire Campaign Against Arms Trade: https://en-gb.facebook.com/WestYorkshireCAAT.

### Take back control

**Saturday April 8, 10am to 4pm:** Workshops, theatre, music and film, TMRW Hub, 75-77 High Street, Croydon. Momentum's latest anti-Brexit event. Organised by The World Transformed: www.facebook.com/TWTNow.

### Close Guantanamo

**Wednesday April 12, 12 noon:** Protest vigil, Parliament Square, Westminster, London SW1. Organised by Guantanamo Justice Campaign: www.facebook.com/London-Guant%C3%A1namo-Campaign-114010671973111.

### End the trade in arms

**Saturday April 15, 11am to 5pm:** Meeting, Quaker Meeting House, 7 Victoria Terrace, Edinburgh EH1. Organised by Campaign Against the Arms Trade: www.caat.org.uk.

### A Marxist History of Ireland

**Thursday April 20, 7pm:** Second of three-part series of talks, Brent Trades and Labour Hall, 375 Willesden High Street (Apollo Club), London NW10. 'The 1916 uprising to the end of the civil war in 1923'. Organised by Socialist Fight: https://socialistfight.com.

### Film against war

**Friday April 21 to Thursday May 18:** Film festival, Sands Films Studio, 82 St Marychurch Street, London SE16. A series of classic anti-war films created over the past 80 years: see www.stopwar.org.uk/index.php/events/national-events/2483-21-april-18-may-rotherhithe-stop-the-war-film-festival. Organised by Stop the War Coalition: www.stopwar.org.uk.

### Drop bass, not bombs

**Friday April 21, 8pm to dawn:** Music event, CLF Art Cafe, Bussey Building, 133 Rye Lane, London SE15. Organised by Stop the War Coalition: www.stopwar.org.uk.

### We are many

**Wednesday April 26, 7pm:** Film screening, Blackburne House, Blackburne Place, Liverpool L8. Followed by Q&A with Murad Qureshi. Organised by Merseyside Stop the War: www.facebook.com/MerseysideSTW.

### Blood on the streets of Halifax

**Friday April 28, 5.30pm:** Guided walk through historical sites. Meet Central Library, Northgate, Halifax HX1. With Catherine Howe, author of *Halifax 1842: a year of crisis*. Free - donations welcome. Organised by Calderdale Trades Council: http://calderdaletuc.org.uk.

### Stop Le Pen

**Tuesday May 2, 7pm:** Rally, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Organised by Unite Against Fascism: uaf.org.uk.

### Banners for Spain

**Friday May 5 to Saturday July 8:** Display of socialist/republican banners plus a programme of related activities and events, Islington Museum, 245 St John Street, London EC1. Organised by Islington Museum: islington.museum@islington.gov.uk.

### Critique conference 2017

**Saturday May 6, 9.30am to 5.30pm:** Annual event sponsored by *Critique* journal, University of London student central, Malet Street, London WC1. Speakers include: Savas Michael-Matzas, Hillel Ticktin, Raquel Valera, Yassamine Mather. Organised by *Critique* journal: www.critiquejournal.net.

### Britain and the Spanish civil war

**Tuesday May 9, 6.30pm:** Talk, Islington Museum, 245 St John Street, Clerkenwell, London EC1. Speaker: professor Tom Buchanan, University of Oxford. Organised by Marx Memorial Library: www.marxlibrary.org.uk.

### People's Assembly

**Saturday May 13, 10.30am to 6pm:** National conference 2017, Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London WC1. 'The NHS is in crisis, education is in crisis, the Tories are in crisis'. Organised by People's Assembly: www.thepeoplesassembly.org.uk.

### CPGB wills

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

## LIVINGSTONE

# Compulsory lies

Caving in to the 'anti-Semitism' falsehoods is Labour's contribution to the 'post-truth society', writes Mike Macnair

On Tuesday April 4 Labour's national constitutional committee (NCC) suspended Ken Livingstone for another year - after postponing its decision from Friday March 31. The immediate reaction of the media and their friends in the Labour right has been to denounce the sanction as insufficient.<sup>1</sup> This is news management, whose purpose was to drown out criticism of the charges themselves - which was offered, for example, by a group of Jewish Labour Party members.<sup>2</sup>

Surprise, surprise - Corbyn immediately caved in to this news management and announced that Livingstone's responses to the decision can be the ground for a "further investigation".<sup>3</sup>

It is important to be clear about the nature of the charges. Livingstone was accused with breaking the catch-all rule 2.1.8, that "no member of the party shall engage in conduct which in the opinion of the NEC is prejudicial, or in any act which in the opinion of the NEC is grossly detrimental to the party". Translated into slightly plainer English, this rule means that the NEC can retrospectively penalise any conduct whatever, on the basis of its own opinion alone.

In fact, the rule as published in Labour's 2016 rule book is a bit narrower. To quote it in full:

No member of the party shall engage in conduct which in the opinion of the NEC is prejudicial, or in any act which in the opinion of the NEC is grossly detrimental to the party.

Any dispute as to whether a member is in breach of the provisions of this sub-clause shall be determined by the NCC in accordance with chapter 1, clause IX above and the disciplinary rules and guidelines in chapter 6 below.

Where appropriate, the NCC shall have regard to involvement in financial support for the organisation and/or the activities of any organisation declared ineligible for affiliation to the party under chapter 1.11.5 or 3.C above; or to the candidature of the members in opposition to an officially endorsed Labour Party candidate or the support for such candidature.

The NCC shall not have regard to the mere holding or expression of beliefs and opinions.

At first sight, the last sentence should bar the proceedings against Livingstone. But, of course, although "mere holding or expression" can have a wide sense of meaning, it can also be given a narrow sense - if the expression of opinions causes distress, offence or other problems, perhaps it is no longer "mere holding or expression". This narrow sense is the one the NCC has adopted.

The detail of the charges as introduced was given in a February 2016 letter from Labour general secretary Iain McNicol to Livingstone.<sup>4</sup> They are three. First, Livingstone defended Naz Shah and downplayed the offensive and "anti-Semitic" character of her social media posts, which "is likely to prejudice the party by causing dismay among the

Jewish community and indeed Labour supporters and members more generally". Second, Livingstone asserted in media interviews that Hitler at the outset of his regime supported Zionism: ie, advocated removal of German Jews to Israel; and further, he attempted to justify this view on grounds of historical accuracy, which was likely "deeply to offend the Jewish community". Third, Livingstone refused to apologise for the second alleged item, and this again was "likely to deeply offend the Jewish community".

McNicol explicitly claims that the truth or otherwise of Livingstone's statements about the early Nazi regime and the Zionists is immaterial to the charges (though he makes a protestation in a footnote that they are untrue). The disciplinary proceedings are, therefore, to be judged on the supposition that they are true. The logic of 'convicting' Livingstone is therefore that *true* statements are to be suppressed if they are likely to "offend" a particular "community". The underlying formal ground for suppressing such comments is then, completely clearly, 'safe spaces' and 'political correctness'.

Moreover, it is not merely that you may not tell truth; according to McNicol and the NCC, and their media cheer-leaders: there is a *positive duty to lie* where not to tell lies would "offend the Jewish community".

It is an instance of the remarkable hypocrisy of the mass media that the campaign against Livingstone and against 'anti-Semitism' in the Labour Party - justified on 'offence' grounds - is being conducted at the same time and in parallel with a Tory and media campaign for 'free speech on campus' directed against student 'safe spaces' and 'political correctness'.<sup>5</sup>

It should be perfectly clear from this set of double standards that 'free speech' for these journo means that *they and their proprietors, and their proprietors' political allies*, should have freedom of speech - and that no-one else should. In reality, of course, the Labour bureaucrats who have suspended Livingstone are not actually doing so on the basis of on 'safe spaces' arguments. Rather, they are merely kowtowing to media opinion on the issue. For the Labour right this is for political purposes *shared* with the media - reasons which are worth looking at a little more below. For the Labourite left and centre it is an illustration of their seemingly endless belief that canny 'media management' can enable Labour to 'reach the voters' round economic issues by backing down or dodging the substance of the media's attacks on other issues.

Parts of the left are, of course, onside with this witch-hunt - the Alliance for Workers' Liberty ought more properly to be called the Alliance for Foreign Office Liberty. One of its interventions in the March 11 Grassroots Momentum conference was to speak against ... committing the network to opposition to the witch-hunt.

No surprise here, since the AFOL has been committed to 'anti-Zionism = anti-Semitism' since this idea was a peculiar aspect of Zionist campaigning in the



Iain McNicol: offence, not history, please

1980s, before it obtained any wider public credibility. Its backing for intervention in Libya in 2011 showed that what is decisive in its policy is not - contrary to much of the AWL's writing - opposition to Islamist reaction (which the intervention supported), but support for the British state.

Owen Jones has also taken the opportunity to get his two-penn'orth in.<sup>6</sup> Again, not a complete novelty: Jones had written along similar lines in August 2015 and March 2016, no doubt by virtue of his standing as a well-known 'left' helping to encourage witch-hunt.<sup>7</sup>

It is unclear whether this is a matter of long-held personal convictions, or if it is a rite of passage into full acceptance in the journo-tribe to join in one of their two-minute-hate operations. If so, this would be another form of 'positive duty to lie', of a sort which certainly exists among the journo - just as all the economics editors were obliged to 'repeat after me' the lie that Gordon Brown 'spent all the money', and so on.

Why, then, is Livingstone merely suspended and not - as the media and its allies are loudly demanding - expelled? The answer offered by the NCC is Livingstone's "long services to the party"; but this can be no more than a pretext, given that the man was expelled from the party in 2000 for running against Labour in the London mayoral election, and only readmitted later.

## Litigation risk

The answer *may* raise issues which can be most conveniently described by the ambiguous expression, 'litigation risk'. Livingstone had threatened before the decision that, if he was expelled, he would sue.<sup>8</sup> Now that the decision has come down as a suspension, while he has reasserted that the process did not give him procedural 'natural justice', he is saying merely that he will build a campaign to lift the suspension.<sup>9</sup> Litigation so far seems to have been avoided.

The 'litigation risk' is a combination of things: the *risk of losing* litigation; the *possible costs*, even if the litigation is won, including the (potentially very extensive) costs in management time dealing with the lawyers, preparing evidence, and so on; and the *potential reputational damage* to the party of the levels of detail about the dispute that may come out in court. Thus, for a single example, the 'McLibel' case in 1987-97 was a pyrrhic victory for McDonalds, whose reputation suffered

in spite of the damages it was awarded in court.<sup>10</sup>

We cannot, of course, form any useful assessment of the likely costs; though Tom Spiller of City law firm Rosenblatt reports that the Foster litigation about whether Corbyn would automatically be on the Labour leadership ballot in 2016 cost "several hundred thousand pounds".<sup>11</sup>

The risk of loss arises because the case for a narrow interpretation of the phrase, "the mere holding or expression of beliefs and opinions", is seriously weak in legal terms. It is, to be blunt, flatly contrary to the freedom of expression case-law of the Strasbourg European Court of Human Rights under article 10 of the European Convention.

Now, of course, the Labour Party is not a public authority, so that it is not bound by the convention as such. But a court in deciding a hypothetical case about an equally hypothetical expulsion of Ken Livingstone would inevitably ask what the Labour Party's members are to be taken to have intended in adopting the rule including this final sentence. And the answer could very probably be that they intended to limit the reach of a rule, which is, in its terms, extremely broad; and that they intended to preserve freedom of opinion and expression in broad terms.

In support of this view, on March 27 the lobby group, Free Speech on Israel, launched at a meeting at parliament an opinion of counsel which they had obtained from Hugh Tomlinson QC on the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) non-legally binding 'working definition of anti-Semitism' and the legal effect (if any) of the British government's decision to adopt this 'definition'.<sup>12</sup>

Tomlinson rightly points out that the adoption has no legal effect and cannot modify the duties of public authorities under the European Convention article 10, or the more specific duties to promote free speech at universities and other higher education institutions under the Education Act 1986. Moreover, the definition itself is vague and indeterminate, and its adoption by public authorities would for this reason risk involving them in breaches of their legal duties.

Tomlinson's opinion is rightly carefully cautious on the legalities. But at the launch meeting retired court of appeal judge Sir Stephen Sedley was considerably sharper on the issues.<sup>13</sup> There is, in short, a respectable body of legal opinion under which it would be hard to justify the charges against Livingstone.

That said, the actual risk of loss is probably quite limited. This is because - as Sedley said on March 27 - the policy of equating anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism is an actual policy of her majesty's government. It is also one which (Sedley did not say) is probably connected to foreign policy choices. The witch-hunt against Livingstone is a part of this policy. And it is extraordinarily rare for the courts to reach decisions in litigation which will seriously interfere with the policy choices of Conservative governments. The court would therefore *probably* find some contorted means of ignoring the final sentence of rule 2.1.8 - by way of the sort of 'deference to the party's internal judgments' arguments which were used in the 2016 litigation.

The reputational risk, however, is very substantial indeed. The judge who handled the case at 'trial' level would in the first place be faced with a choice between *obviously* denying Livingstone his 'day in court' and permitting his counsel to explore to some extent the extent to which

the disciplinary process followed 'natural justice' and the substantive strength of the case against him. It is unlikely that the judge would be willing to take the first course, which would be to sacrifice *his own* reputation on the altar of short-term government and media convenience.

But once Livingstone's counsel was permitted to address these issues, it would inevitably become clear to a public audience of the proceedings that the NCC's decision (again, hypothetically) to expel Livingstone rested on a concept of free speech so narrow as to display contempt for the very idea: that Livingstone was being expelled for making true statements about matters of history.

It would, of course, be possible for the Labour Party to respond by setting up McNicol's protestation in the footnote that the truth of Livingstone's claims is denied. But this would be a worse choice, because it would risk setting the Labour Party up for a case like *Irving v Penguin Books & Lipstadt* (2000), in which, after massive expense, Irving was found to be a Holocaust denier<sup>14</sup> - with the symmetrical result that Livingstone's claims were contested, but found to be substantially (even if not precisely) true.

It makes sense, therefore, for the party bureaucracy to try to avoid litigating this issue. And in any case, from the point of view of the conduct of the witch-hunt around the issue, keeping Ken Livingstone suspended works just as well as actually expelling him: it keeps the issue live, without bringing it to a point at which it can actually be directly contested.

Never letting the lies actually be tested, constantly reasserting them, creating a positive duty to lie. This infernal machinery is the Labour Party's and the media's own contribution to the 'post-truth' society ●

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## Notes

1. Eg, 'Labour ruling "fails Jewish community", says chief rabbi' *BBC News* April 5; 'Pressure mounts on Labour to review Ken Livingstone decision' *The Guardian* April 5; D Sugarman, 'The Jewish community will not soon forget Labour's obscene decision on Ken Livingstone' *The Daily Telegraph* April 5; and many others ...
2. <http://freespeechonisrael.org.uk/jewish-labour-party-members-slam-decision-suspend-ken-livingstone>.
3. 'Ken Livingstone: Jeremy Corbyn announces new investigation' *BBC News* April 5.
4. <http://kenlivingstone.net/Docs/Letter%20from%20Iain%20McNicol%20to%20Ken%20Livingstone.pdf>.
5. Eg, 'Jo Johnson says universities will be compelled to protect free speech under new government plans' *Huffington Post* March 21; also at *Hansard* March 20: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2017-03-20/debates/5B2B73EC-BCF3-4010-972C-D4BAD4E22CED/FreedomOfSpeechStudentCampuses>; 'Government may force universities to uphold free speech' *Catholic Herald* March 27; 'Cowardly university academics undermine free speech' *Grassroots Conservatives* March 30; 'University student tries to set up men's rights group and is banned by student union' *Daily Express* March 30; and so on and tediously on ...
6. Owen Jones condemns anti-Semitism and Netanyahu at Jewish Labour lecture' *Jewish News Online* April 2.
7. 'Anti-Semitism has no place on the left. It is time to confront it' *The Guardian* August 26 2015; 'Anti-Semitism is a poison - the left must take leadership against it' *The Guardian* March 15 2016.
8. 'Ken Livingstone in threat to Labour over Hitler remarks row' *Evening Standard* March 31.
9. <http://kenlivingstone.net/2017/04/ken-statement-extension-suspension> (April 4).
10. Convenient summary at Wikipedia: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/McLibel\\_case](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/McLibel_case).
11. <http://rosenblatt-law.co.uk/bulletins/law-politics-collide-curious-case-jeremy-corbeyn>.
12. <http://freespeechonisrael.org.uk/ihra-opinion>.
13. <http://freespeechonisrael.org.uk/sedley-ihra>.
14. [www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWHC/QB/2000/115.html](http://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWHC/QB/2000/115.html).

### Defend Ken Livingstone

London Communist Forum

Sunday April 9, 5pm

Calthorpe Arms, 252 Grays Inn Road, London WC1

Speakers:

Mike Macnair (CPGB and Oxford University law lecturer)

Tony Greenstein (Jewish anti-Zionist)

Organised by CPGB: [www.cpgb.org.uk](http://www.cpgb.org.uk)

and Labour Party Marxists: [www.labourpartymarxists.org.uk](http://www.labourpartymarxists.org.uk)

SPEW

# Diversionsary dead end

The Socialist Party's decision to stand candidates in May is delusional, argues Paul Demarty

Every so often, the polite mutual silence of the two largest far-left groups in Britain, the Socialist Workers Party and Socialist Party in England and Wales, is breached - usually in the context of some dispute.

So it has proved in the first quarter of 2017, on the issue of May's local and mayoral elections. The SWP and SPEW have stood candidates under the common banner of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition for the last seven years. In January, the Tusc conference - against the objections of the SWP - resolved to stand, again, albeit only in wards where they faced pro-austerity, anti-Corbyn Labour opponents. For the SWP, this was reason enough to announce in March the suspension of its participation in Tusc, in England and Wales.

SPEW, of course, will press on. Tusc has so far registered 60-odd candidates for the elections, markedly fewer than last year, when close to 300 stood. After a reasonable showing in the Liverpool mayoral election in 2016, where he won 5.1% of the vote, SPEW die-hard Roger Bannister will run for the Liverpool city region mayoralty (a new mega-municipality of the type favoured by George Osborne).

Clive Heemskerk, SPEW's polemical point-man, responded to the SWP's decision with disappointment, but not surprise. He takes issue with the apparent inconsistency that the SWP continues to stand Tusc candidates in Scotland, on the basis that Scottish Labour "is headed up by the anti-Corbyn Kezia Dugdale [and] the rise of the Scottish National Party has raised the question of alternatives to Labour".<sup>1</sup> Heemskerk asks, not wholly unreasonably:

The political context in Scotland is clearly different - but qualitatively so? Labour in Wales, for example, is led by the anti-Corbyn Welsh first minister, Carwyn Jones, rightwing Blairite councillors dominate local government, and Plaid Cymru is able to pose as a radical alternative. Why does this not mean that Tusc should stand candidates in Wales?<sup>2</sup>

Comrade Heemskerk is correct to imply that the SWP's reasoning does not stack up on this point; the difference is, first of all, one of scale (the SNP is vastly more powerful in Scotland than Plaid is in Wales) and, secondly, one of wholesale capitulation on the part of the SWP to Scottish nationalism. The latter problem does not occur to Clive, naturally, as SPEW capitulated much earlier on this point. He goes on, anyway:

The big majority of Labour's 7,000 local councillors oppose Jeremy Corbyn and, as the *Socialist Worker* article [announcing the SWP suspension of Tusc participation] says, are "ruthlessly imposing Tory cuts". How would giving these councillors a free run at the ballot box in England and Wales help "Corbyn-supporting Labour members" in their fight against them?

We note, first of all, that this gives the lie to the idea - promoted in SPEW's successful motion to Tusc conference - that Tusc's electoral interventions are targeted in any meaningful sense. After all, by Clive's own admission, the "big majority" of Labour councillors meet SPEW's criteria for a Tusc challenger. The Tusc electoral intervention this May is not surgical in its precision - merely smaller than previous ones. Why?

In any case, this argument - though superficially convincing - is, on slightly closer examination, absurd. Let us imagine that there was a highly successful leftwing challenge in the boroughs and cities where Tusc is able to stand anyone much - in Liverpool and around Merseyside, for example. A few safe Labour councils are suddenly thrown into the 'no overall control' column. Is comrade Heemskerk really

saying that this would *strengthen* the Corbyn leadership's position *vis-à-vis* the right?

## On a rail

When people speak obvious nonsense, we cannot stop at its internal determinations, for there must always be some external inducement to contorted reasoning and ill-advised action.

The story of how SPEW came to be peddling these riddles bears examination, then. Its longer-term roots will be familiar to regular readers, in that SPEW was once the Militant Tendency, the most successful of the Trotskyist entryist groups in the Labour Party, but turned away from Labour work in the early 1990s after a sustained witch-hunt against them, in pursuit of greener pastures. This turn was overtheorised into the idea that the Labour Party had been transformed, by Neil Kinnock's purges and then by Tony Blair's exuberant rightism and dictatorial methods, into a plain old bourgeois party, no different in substance from the Tories or Liberal Democrats.

Jeremy Corbyn's victory in the 2015 Labour leadership contest put this perspective under severe strain. Observable since that time has been a real tension - the leadership plainly wants, on one level, to row back on its previous strategy and re-engage with Labour politics, but without conceding that the intervening 25 years of Militant-SPEW history were based on a theoretical error. The question of standing candidates against Labour is a particularly sharp one in this regard, for doing so makes a turn towards Labour incomparably more difficult.

By last autumn, it *seemed* that SPEW was prepared to take the necessary step. Dave Nellist, formerly one of Militant's Labour MPs and these days the front man for Tusc, began making noises about suspending electoral activity for the time being. He said as much in a meeting at SPEW's annual school, Socialism, in November. Many lay members object to any such move (after all, those who would support it have tended, for better or worse, to vote with their feet) - and so did Sean Hoyle, president of the RMT union, who was also speaking from the platform.

Sean Hoyle, in the SPEW universe, is not a nobody. The organisation's strategy of pursuing the creation of a new party based on the trade unions has met with very little actual engagement from the unions themselves - hardly surprisingly, since most of them already have a party. The exception is the RMT, which broke with Labour in the Blair years and immediately began supporting candidates from other parties (as well as individual Labour MPs and so on), and is a key component of Tusc. Comrade Hoyle said that the last RMT conference had agreed to continue supporting candidates on an *ad hoc* basis, instead of committing to Labour, and the union leadership was not prepared to defy that decision. Fast forward a couple of months, and SPEW has come around to the same view. Just fancy that!

It looks, for all the world, that the say-so of the RMT leadership provided sufficient inducement for immediate retreat. Indeed, on the basis of the 'new workers' party' strategy, that kind of veto is natural and proper. In statements *passim ad infinitum*, SPEW tops tell us that the unity of the left will not be achieved by "bolting the existing groups together", but by movement among the mass contingents of the class, by which (the Labour Party being excluded from consideration) they mean the unions. Baby steps in this direction by the RMT thus achieve the possibility of great historic importance, just as the 2nd Congress of the RSDLP - in spite of its apparent modesty at the time - had such vast influence over the course of the 20th century.

Thus the counterintuitive result that SPEW - in its own view destined to be the vanguard party of the working class - is

led around like a well-trained shar pei by a section of the trade union bureaucracy. The problem with this situation is, in fact, staring the comrades in the face. The RMT's militancy is undeniable, and sticks out particularly in these days of (albeit uneasy) industrial peace. No partisan of the working class should begrudge it admiration on that point. Yet a union it remains, and thus preternaturally vulnerable to sectionalism.

This malady, in fact, governs the very electoral policy that forms the basis of the RMT's veto. What was agreed at that union conference? To back candidates, regardless of party, that support the union's industrial objectives politically: that is, a *sectional* policy (albeit one that seems itself to be devoid of usefulness in the current political situation). In Liverpool and the surrounding area, meanwhile, comrade Bannister seems to be running almost on a single-issue basis in support of the striking Merseyrail workers.

## Liverpool

In SPEW's open defence of its position, the other major strand of its strategy is far more in evidence: its energetic advocacy of resistance to austerity at the level of local government.

That is hardly surprising - the peak of the Militant's influence came in the 1980s, when it had three MPs and took effective control of Liverpool council. The legacy of the Liverpool experiment is, at best, ambiguous, but it remains a touchstone for SPEW comrades to this day. A recent restatement of this principle comes, again, from the pen of comrade Heemskerk, criticising the decision of Corbyn, John McDonnell and John Trickett to write a letter to Labour councils urging them not to set illegal budgets.

Heemskerk's take is not uninteresting, not least because - as SPEW comrades sometimes do - he goes into some detail on the practicalities of municipal defiance. Corbyn's "letter misleadingly conflates the issue of not setting a budget at all - which would be open to immediate legal challenge - with the legal requirement that councillors have to set a 'balanced budget'," he complains:

But in fact a no-cuts budget could meet the legal requirement to be 'balanced' ... by drawing on the councils' reserves, using the borrowing powers that councils have, and 'creative accountancy' ... But they would only have bought time for the individual council, preventing cuts for a year or two. They could only ever be a first step in a national campaign to force the government to properly fund local public services.<sup>3</sup>

If such resistance is not forthcoming, then no quarter should be given: "any politician who votes for cuts cannot expect to have a free run at the ballot box ... There can be no compromise on cuts."

Heemskerk's tactical advice has at least the plausibility afforded to every fully elaborated plan of action. Does it stand up to deeper scrutiny? After all - no council has tried any such thing since Lambeth and Liverpool in the 1980s. The outcome of the Thatcher period was the decimation of local authority power, already eroded by the centralisation of social provision in the post-war years. By the 1970s, 60% of local authority funding came from central government, already a very substantial proportion; by the millennium, that had risen to 85%. Osborne's and Cameron's cuts inflicted the level of damage they did in part because of this total dependence on central government grants.

That dependence is wholly artificial. It was the logical outcome of a deliberate process of disenfranchising local government. Revenue-raising powers

were scrapped, areas of responsibility hived off (one consequence of the forced academisation of schools is the destruction of local education authorities, for example). If councils step out of line, or otherwise fail the hardly politically neutral tests of good governance, central government has broad discretion to send in administrators.

We must, then, voice a certain scepticism as to Heemskerk's 'creative' budget setting. It works on paper, but, of course, almost any budget can be subject to "immediate legal challenge" - even a time-wasting injunction with no real legal basis can be costly to fight. Take the borrowing powers Heemskerk refers to, awarded to councils under the Local Government Act 2003: these are used typically to fund large projects, where the expected revenues or cost savings can be plausibly expected to finance the debt. There are plenty of rules, and thus plenty of opportunities for an "immediate legal challenge", however vexatious.

But say it does work, and you can defy cuts for one or two years. Comrade Heemskerk's expectation is that a mass movement will emerge and mount an insurmountable collective challenge to Tory policy:

A combined campaign of Labour councils refusing to implement the cuts could defeat the government. If the total gross spending of the 100-plus Labour-controlled councils in Britain was counted as a 'gross domestic product' (GDP), they would be the 18th biggest country in the EU! How can it be credibly argued that they 'have no power' to resist the Tories?

Yet this is exactly what *didn't happen* in the 1980s. None of the 'loony left' councils followed the example of Liverpool and Lambeth - not even Ken Livingstone's infamous Greater London Council. Since then, local government (as noted) has been gutted like a kipper, and the political complexion of Labour councils has drifted to the right - and indeed these phenomena are mutually reinforcing, for who other than careerists and the corrupt can be bothered with the endless punishment diet of municipal government?

It would be one thing, in such a situation, to fight *within the Labour Party* for a *coordinated* programme of municipal defiance. It is quite another to demand that councils implement, on an individual basis, budgets that may lead to their immediate political expropriation without the reasonable expectation of coordination.

Heemskerk and his comrades present in particularly clear form a very common symptom on the left, which is the setting up of local authority cuts as an absolute fetish, a litmus test entirely devoid of context or mitigation. This is surely unsustainable in its limits (as an extreme example, civil war-era Russia was pretty big on austerity ...), but in the immediate situation involves presenting a programme of municipal suicide as a shibboleth, to 'prove' that Labour councils are beyond the pale. The policy of Corbyn and McDonnell, that councils should set budgets and make the best of it, is the other side of the coin: for them, stepping outside the law is inadmissible *tout court*. Both are wrong - the one an empty posture, the other just another dreary compromise with the right.

There is, finally, an underlying commonality between this defect in SPEW's analysis and its prostration before the whims of the RMT. For the demand that some locality or other set itself up as a bastion of resistance is also subject to the lures of sectionalism - do not shut *our* hospitals, do not close *our* libraries. The most sensational example is Militant's Liverpool 'experiment', which was paid off by Thatcher when she was busy with the small matter of the miners' 1984-85 Great Strike, and then crushed at her leisure. Full

marks for tactical nous to the government; not a great advert for isolated acts of leftwing fiscal irresponsibility.

## Vote Labour

For all these reasons, the SWP is right to radically wind down its participation in Tusc, and SPEW was wrong to (apparently) retreat from its earlier intention to do the same. For Tusc offers *only* support for trade union struggles, and *only* inveterate localism and calls for defiance, and not a *national political alternative* that could make these things more than symbols and gestures.

In truth, Tusc was a hopeless project all along - an attempt to build up an alternative Labour Party in competition with the existing one, on the false premise that a combination of internal reforms had decisively resolved the class contradiction in the original version in favour of the bourgeoisie. For the last two years, that perspective has been proven comprehensively false - there is, at the very least, still a battle to be had, if people can be found to fight it.

For the first five years of Tusc's existence, it faced the dying Labour government of Gordon Brown and then the lukewarm centrist opposition of Ed Miliband, with occasional Blairite sniping in the wings. In such circumstances, we in the CPGB sometimes judged it politic to call for votes for Tusc candidates over rightwing Labour candidates, in spite of the project's hopelessness, in order precisely to highlight the division within Labour between its bourgeois and working class poles.

In the current political conjuncture, there are many places where that distinction can be drawn, and its related contradictions sharpened - wards and branches, CLPs, conference ... That is where the battle is - or ought to be, and would be, if the Labour left had a little more backbone. (We note, with some frustration, that SPEW often makes correct and pertinent demands on the Labour Party for democratic changes, the opening up of affiliations, reselection, etc - the problem is that SPEW seems to expect other people to do it all for them.) The battle, moreover, is not about 'cuts', as everything seems to be for SPEW, but about *power*. Corbyn will never be able to compromise enough for the right - his leadership *in itself* is an insult to their banker and press baron friends.

In this situation, every election is treated as a referendum on Corbyn's leadership and, by extension, a referendum on the natural right of Labour's bourgeois wing to govern the party in perpetuity. The only reasonable course of action for communists in such conditions is to vote Labour. We do not suspend, for a moment, our criticisms of Corbyn, his endless compromises, the way in which he and his cronies conspired to strangle their own Momentum organisation at birth, and so on. We vote for Labour because it is the *duty* of the British Marxist left to exploit the opportunities that even now remain open, to revolutionise the Labour left and then the party.

The overwhelming rightwing coloration of Labour councillors presents its own problem, and comrade Heemskerk is justified in returning to it constantly. We recommend that comrades, where possible, expend their campaigning energy on leftwing candidates, supportive of the leadership against its rightwing foes (obviously readers will make their own judgements on this point). And lastly, we invite the comrades in SPEW to join battle where it is actually raging, not where they would like to fight ●

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## Notes

1. *Socialist Worker* March 7.
2. *The Socialist* March 15.
3. www.socialistparty.org.uk/keyword/Capitalism/Budget/21933/04-01-2016/no-retreat-on-resisting-council-cuts.

## IRELAND

# Man, movement and state

The transformation of Martin McGuinness from freedom fighter to 'man of peace' cannot be put down to individual failings, writes **James Harvey**

**M**artin McGuinness's funeral in Derry on March 23 has been described as "the nearest thing that Derry had seen to a state funeral".<sup>1</sup> The list of mourners, a roll call of the great and good included Irish president Michael D Higgins, taoiseach Enda Kenny, former US president Bill Clinton, former Irish president Mary McAleese, British secretary of state James Brokenshire, the leaders of the main Stormont parties (past and present), and Northern Ireland's chief constable, George Hamilton. Barack Obama wrote a letter of condolence, whilst Queen Elizabeth sent a private message to McGuinness's widow, Bernie.

This symbolic gathering of representatives of the political establishment from both sides of the Irish Sea clearly represented a very public acknowledgement of Martin McGuinness's contribution to the peace process and recognition of his personal journey from gunman to politician.<sup>2</sup> As father Michael Canny said during the requiem mass, "There are people in this church today whose presence would have been unthinkable a generation ago."<sup>3</sup>

Clinton's eulogy during the mass captured the mood by urging the assembled politicians to continue his "legacy and finish the work he has started" by restoring the power-sharing government.<sup>4</sup> But, as Clinton reminded the congregation, these positive assessments of McGuinness as a republican leader were not shared by everyone: according to him, Martin McGuinness's political journey from man of war to man of peace had "risked the wrath of his comrades and the rejection of his enemies".<sup>5</sup>

Whilst in his graveside oration (delivered far away from 'the great and the good'), Gerry Adams might reaffirm that McGuinness was a "freedom fighter", for revolutionary republicans he had indeed died a traitor. For those still standing by the republic, McGuinness, "the boy from the Bogside who took on the British", had ended his days as a counterrevolutionary in 'the service of colonial power'.<sup>6</sup>

The dramatic quality of the funeral and conflicting political emotions it aroused amongst republicans understandably focused attention on McGuinness as a man and a political leader. However, any assessment of his historical significance demands much more than a simple retelling of the old, old story of individual treachery and betrayal that is too often associated with the history of Irish republicanism. The boy from the Bogside's life was both very different and yet essentially the same as that of thousands of other republicans in the last 50 years of conflict.

Martin McGuinness helped to create the movement he embodied, but was also in turn shaped by it. In this sense the life experience of the man and the political trajectory of the movement are one and the same, and the only way we can really understand both is by bringing the two stories together.

## The man

The journey of Martin McGuinness from IRA volunteer to deputy first minister encapsulates the history of Northern Ireland since the late 1960s. He was born in the Bogside, a nationalist working class area of Derry, which would become one of the cockpits of 'the troubles'. An area of high unemployment and poor housing, the Bogside epitomised the social deprivation endured by Catholics in the Orange state.

Derry was a notorious example of the political gerrymandering and conscious discrimination which ensured unionist



**Martin McGuinness: back to the streets of Derry one last time**

domination of the Six Counties state from 1920 and ultimately brought about its collapse in 1972. Some of the key moments in the history of the civil rights challenge to the unionist state were enacted in Derry. Following one of the first major civil rights marches in October 1968, confrontations between the nationalist population and the forces of the state intensified, culminating in the Battle of the Bogside and the introduction of British troops in August 1969. The city that McGuinness grew up in would become a global symbol of struggle and resistance against state repression. It was in this environment that McGuinness became involved with the developing militant republican movement.

The Provisional IRA began to emerge as an armed movement among the urban working class and sections of the rural population from the autumn of 1969. The Provisionals combined a defence of the nationalist community with a developing campaign against the unionist state and British imperialism and for the reunification of Ireland. The growth of the Provisionals can be explained as a response to particularly draconian examples of state repression, including internment without trial in 1971 and Bloody Sunday in January 1972. Thus the founding moment of Provisionalism was one of revolutionary crisis for the British state in Northern Ireland, while the movement reflected "a community in revolt rather than a hermetically sealed secret society of gunmen and bombers".<sup>7</sup>

As a leading figure in the Derry IRA, McGuinness was prominent in turning it into an effective guerrilla force and, while still young, commanded sufficient respect to become a member of an IRA delegation (including Gerry Adams) that was flown to England in 1972 to negotiate with the Conservative government.

## The movement

From this time on he earned a reputation, both within and without the movement, as an uncompromising and committed republican. McGuinness continued to reject constitutional politics throughout the 1970s and early 80s, stating as late as 1986 that "the war against British rule must continue until freedom is achieved".

He spoke these words at the 1986 Sinn Féin *ard sheis*, as the Provisionals voted to end abstentionism and take seats as elected members of the Dublin parliament. His speech in support of this decision was vital in reassuring delegates that the leadership had "absolutely no intention of going to Westminster or Stormont" or "edging the republican movement onto a constitutional path". Trying to head off a split by supporters of 'traditional' republicanism, McGuinness concluded his speech with a now famous appeal

for unity:

If you allow yourself to be led out of this hall today, the only place you're going is home. You will be walking away from the struggle. Don't go, my friends. We will lead you to the republic.<sup>8</sup>

In retrospect the decision to end abstentionism proved to be a significant turning point in the republican struggle and McGuinness, as a leading figure in both the military and political wings of the republican movement, played an indispensable role in ensuring that this new direction was taken. Just as an earlier generation of republicans had argued that 'if it's good enough for Mick (Collins), it's good enough for me', Martin McGuinness drew on his almost legendary status as an 'active republican' and his personal powers of persuasion to assuage fears of betrayal and manage internal critics.<sup>9</sup> This role placed him at the centre of events, as the Provisionals moved into the political mainstream and began secret contacts with the British state from the late 1980s.

However, this transformation from 'insurrection to parliament' was not simply a product of Martin McGuinness's own personal journey.<sup>10</sup> In common with the rest of the Provisional movement, his individual political trajectory away from militant republicanism towards constitutional nationalism was part of a much wider political shift that had been underway in the north of Ireland from the late 1970s.

Notwithstanding his confident assertions at the 1986 *ard sheis* about the effectiveness of the ballot paper and armalite strategy, it was becoming increasingly clear by that the Provisional campaign had been contained. The Adams/McGuinness leadership were coming to believe that a qualitatively new political situation was developing, both in Ireland and internationally, and the Provisional movement would be unable to achieve even limited goals by itself - much less fulfil its central aim of national reunification. Drawing on the experience of the H-block and hunger strike protests as models of political mobilisation, the leadership advanced a new 'broad front' strategy, which required building a coalition with potentially progressive anti-imperialist elements outside the republican movement.

Initially directed at the 'green wing' of the Social Democratic and Labour Party or 'traditionalists' in Fianna Fáil, the broad front was defined as a site of struggle in which republicans would fight to establish a revolutionary hegemony over these wavering elements. However, in practice, as the broad front quickly evolved in the early 1990s from a revolutionary war of manoeuvre into a diplomatic strategy of position, the

anticipated positions were reversed: instead of the Provisionals leading the broad front, it was the Dublin government and constitutional nationalism that established *their* political dominance over the republicans.<sup>11</sup>

## ... and the British state

The other determining factor of this new political landscape was the changing relationship between the nationalist community and the British state following direct rule in 1972, which would ultimately prove decisive in the incorporation of Provisionalism into the status quo in Northern Ireland.

From the 1970s, Britain launched a series of political initiatives, such as the Sunningdale (1973) and Anglo-Irish (1985) agreements, aimed at countering a perceived nationalist alienation from authority, and bolstering constitutional politics by undermining support for militant republicanism. This was combined with the state's 'economic and social war against violence', which would have much wider, although largely unforeseen, long-term political and social implications for the nationalist population.<sup>12</sup>

The net effect was that social and economic change in the 1980s and 1990s, whether independent of or mediated through the state, combined with British state strategy to reshape the terrain on which republican politics were conducted. One significant and widely noted result of these changes was the development of a new nationalist middle class, largely employed in the public sector, alongside the emergence of a new class of nationalist businessmen and social entrepreneurs.<sup>13</sup>

Many commentators have attributed the impact of this 'rising nationalist bourgeoisie' to the twin dynamics of political demobilisation and a deepening rapprochement between a new nationalist elite and the state. Eamonn McCann, in particular, described how this process was well underway by 1990 in McGuinness's home city of Derry.<sup>14</sup> Nationalist civil society in general, and community organisations in particular, became increasingly oriented towards the British state (and the European Union) for funding and resources during this period.<sup>15</sup>

These developments in civil society were also mirrored by processes of institutionalisation within the Provisional movement itself. With their deep roots in the nationalist community, and membership drawn from the same milieu as community activists (frequently the same individuals), it was perhaps inevitable that the Provisionals would experience similar processes of organisational formalisation and engagement with the state.<sup>16</sup> In this way, community organisations and political structures that had originated as agencies of revolutionary mobilisation became gatekeepers between the state and the nationalist community, as well as acting as transmission belts for the Provisional movement.

Consequently by the early 1990s the Provisional movement's position within the nationalist community had begun to express some of the characteristics of a form of state power, combining elements of consent with implicit and explicit coercion. Ultimately, however, that power was both directly and indirectly reliant on access to British state resources, and subject to Provisionalism's role as a mediator between the state and the 'resistance community'. Even before the peace process the "broad republican community", as the Provisionals defined it,

were acting as partners in the state's peace-building strategy. Whilst the Provisionals may have believed they were subverting the intentions of the British state, in practice it was *their* revolutionary strategy which was being both subverted and transformed.

As the state now enjoyed increasing power to shape the terrain, so it was able to define the agenda for nationalist civil society. The impact was as much ideological and cultural as material. From the late 1980s onwards, key elements of the Provisional political agenda were concerned with making demands directed towards the state. Whilst republicans were theoretically committed to overthrowing the Northern Irish state, their political practice was more and more focused on bargaining with it and mobilising their supporters to pressurise it into granting concessions.

With the acceptance of the new dispensation after the Good Friday agreement, theory and practice were blended into a new synthesis of power-sharing and partnership. Thus the Provisionals were essentially functioning within an ideological framework and political context that has long been largely defined by the British state.<sup>17</sup> In this sense, the peace process and the resulting political settlement that followed 1998 merely formalised existing, organically formed relationships between the nationalist community, the Provisional movement and the British state.

Whilst revolutionary republicans regularly attribute Provisional Sinn Féin's movement into mainstream politics to the betrayal of republican principles and corruption - and sometimes even treachery - of individual leaders, such as Martin McGuinness, a real political obituary has to go beyond the circumstances of the individual life, and consider the dialectical relationship between the man and the movement, the movement and the state, the terrain on which they were formed and the social and economic forces that have transformed the nationalist community as a whole since the late 1980s.<sup>18</sup> ●

## Notes

1. BBC News March 24.
2. See K Bean, 'From guns to government' *Weekly Worker* March 23; and 'Historic moment or business as usual?' *Weekly Worker* March 9.
3. H McDonald, 'Bill Clinton urges leaders at Martin McGuinness funeral to finish his work' *The Guardian* March 24.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*
6. G Moriarty, 'McGuinness a freedom fighter, not a terrorist, says Adams' *The Irish Times* March 24. For a summary of republican critiques of McGuinness's political trajectory see DÓ Donghaile, 'The death of a traitor': <http://irishdissent.wordpress.com>; and K Rooney, 'The boy from the Bogside who took on the British' *Spiked Online* March 24.
7. Former IRA volunteer Tommy McKearney, quoted in K Bean *The new politics of Sinn Féin* Liverpool 2007, p53.
8. All quotes from McGuinness's speech on abstentionism in Sinn Féin *The politics of revolution: main speeches and debates, 1986 Sinn Féin ard sheis*.
9. E Phoenix, 'History will view Martin McGuinness positively' *The Irish News* March 22.
10. T McKearney *The Provisional IRA: from insurrection to parliament* London 2011.
11. For an account of these developments see A McIntyre *Good Friday: the death of Irish Republicanism* New York 2008; and K Bean *The new politics of Sinn Féin* Liverpool 2007.
12. R Needham *Battling for peace* Belfast 1998.
13. F O'Connor *In search of a state: Catholics in Northern Ireland* Belfast 1993, p16.
14. E McCann *War and peace in Northern Ireland* Dublin 1998.
15. F Meredith, 'Putting a price on peace?' *Irish Times* January 10 2006.
16. For examples of this relationship between the Provisional movement and the nationalist community, see C de Baróid *Ballymurphy and the Irish war* London 2000.
17. A Aughey, 'Unionists can add to vision of UK' *The News Letter* July 7 2010.
18. See, for an example, an editorial in Republican Sinn Féin's newspaper: 'Adams accepts British police' *Saoirse* November 2006.

SOUTH AFRICA

# Split in the offing

Following the cabinet reshuffle, Peter Manson looks at the rival factions within the ANC

The African National Congress is in deep crisis following last week's cabinet reshuffle, which saw president Jacob Zuma dismiss finance minister Pravin Gordhan and his deputy, Mcebisi Jonas.

The ANC consists of various components and factions, of course - not least the South African Communist Party and the SACP-led Congress of South African Trade Unions. But recently these have been overshadowed by two basic wings - the Zuma loyalists and those who now want to see the back of the president. He is due to step down as party leader in December in any case, ahead of the 2019 general election, after which parliament will nominate a new president to replace Zuma, who will have completed his second term in office.

But for years he has been dogged by accusations of corruption - not least over state payments made for the upgrading of his private residence and, more recently, alleged 'state capture' by self-seeking businessmen. Most notoriously among the latter are Ajay, Atul and Rajesh Gupta - three brothers who are said to have exerted extraordinary influence over governmental appointments. Ousted deputy finance minister Jonas claimed last year that the Guptas had attempted to bribe him and actually offered him that post.

He and, most importantly, the finance minister himself, Pravin Gordhan, were the main casualties of the reshuffle. Gordhan in particular was regarded by most sections of capital as a safe pair of hands, who was not only a stalwart against corruption, but could be relied upon to control state spending. According to Reuters, he was viewed as "a figure of stability and integrity, who is managing a flatlining economy burdened by high government spending".<sup>1</sup> But last week Gordhan and Jonas were recalled by Zuma from an international investment road show in London after a leaked "intelligence report" alleged they were using it to push for a change in government - or even, according to some pro-Zuma forces, "wanting to overthrow the state".

Zuma's allies had accused Gordhan of thwarting the president's desire to enact "radical economic transformation", which is supposed to be tackling the racial inequality inherited from apartheid through 'black economic empowerment' (BEE). In fact BEE has been a vehicle for the enrichment of those with connections and their promotion to positions of influence under the guise of meeting racial quotas. The new finance minister, Malusi Gigaba, is said by some commentators to be not only financially incompetent, but a servant of the Guptas.

Dennis Dykes - the chief economist of one of South Africa's largest financial institutions, Nedbank - said the cabinet reshuffle was a "disaster": Gordhan had done a good job. As for Gigaba, putting him in charge of finance was like "asking a motor vehicle driver to fly a plane".<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile Business Leadership SA, which represents many of the country's major companies, said that the manner and timing of the cabinet changes were not in the economic interests of the country.

Immediately the rand plummeted and on April 3 rating agency Standard and Poor's downgraded South Africa's credit rating to junk status - two other major agencies were set to follow suit by the end of the week. Fitch Ratings said that the new appointments would see "radical socioeconomic transformation"



Jacob Zuma: when we were friends

getting priority over fiscal discipline: "The political backdrop increases the risk that government will resort to costly expenditure measures or legislation that will weaken economic growth to stabilise its support."<sup>3</sup>

## De facto alliance

While business claims to be worried by plans for "radical economic transformation", there is hardly anyone on the left who is taken in by such phrases any more. In fact what we now have is in effect an alliance between big capital, the opposition parties and left activists seeking to oust Zuma. For instance, the Save South Africa campaign declared:

The cabinet reshuffle announced by president Jacob Zuma on behalf of the Gupta family is an outrage ... It is a brazen attempt to undermine the gains of the liberation struggle by taking power away from the people and handing it over to a clique based in Dubai.<sup>4</sup>

The group called for marches to the ANC headquarters and parliament, and an occupation of the treasury: "We must chase Zuma and his cronies out of office ... We must take this defence of democracy to the streets."

As for the Alternative Information and Development Centre, it claimed that the reshuffle "opens the door to the looting of the state on an unprecedented scale". Admittedly, "While the treasury under Gordhan and previous ministers of finance has been the guarantor of neoliberalism, the treasury under the Guptas will be neoliberal and predatory."<sup>5</sup>

The AIDC also called for "progressive forces" to mobilise, in order to "bring into existence broad united fronts to launch mass action". In this it hoped that the left-led split from Cosatu - the newly created South African Federation of Trade Unions, headed by expelled Cosatu general secretary Zwelinzima Vavi - would take the lead.

Meanwhile, at the March 29 funeral of ANC stalwart Ahmed Kathrada, Gordhan received a standing ovation - a response which provoked a furious reaction from the pro-Zuma ANC Youth League. Its secretary-general, Njabulo Nzuza, said the president should continue discharging his duties, "including rearranging and strengthening his cabinet". He warned that from now on the ANCYL would "tackle head-on anybody that thinks that they can willy-nilly attack the president"

using funerals, which in African custom were sacred: "We will one day be forced to physically disrupt those who find comfort in disrespecting the memory of the dead."

Unsurprisingly, however, the ANC itself issued a conciliatory statement after the meeting of its national working committee on April 5. The NWC thanked dismissed cabinet members for their previous work, but "accepted the irretrievable breakdown of the relationship between the president and a member of his cabinet as sufficient explanation for the decision taken by the president". And, in an effort to reassure capital, it reiterated the ANC's commitment to "keeping the expenditure ceiling ... intact" and reinforcing strict control of state-owned companies.

But some individual ANC leaders had not been slow to express their disapproval of Zuma's actions. For instance, treasurer-general Zweli Mkhize issued a statement expressing his frustration at how the cabinet reshuffle was handled, saying he felt the ANC was no longer at the centre of the president's decisions. And no less a figure than ANC secretary-general Gwede Mantashe complained he had not even been consulted about the reshuffle. Interestingly, Mantashe is a member of the SACP central committee, who to all intents and purposes has 'gone native' in the ANC.

## Whither SACP?

That brings me to the SACP itself. For some time the party has been openly discussing a possible split from the ANC, whereby it would contest elections under its own name. At present its comrades are elected as ANC members - there are 17 SACP MPs and several of them are actually members of the government. However, last month second deputy general secretary Solly Mapaila said that an SACP split was "almost a *fait accompli*" (although there could be a 'reconfigured alliance', whereby independent SACP MPs still act alongside the ANC). According to Mapaila, the party's July congress "still has to decide" the question, but no-one has any doubt what its decision will be.

However, for the moment, SACP ministers, including general secretary Blade Nzimande (higher education) and Aaron Motsaedi (health), remain in post - despite the SACP's increasing criticism of his presidency, Zuma decided for tactical reasons to leave them in place.

Immediately after the reshuffle Mapaila complained that there was no reason for Zuma to fire Gordhan, as he had been leading one of "the best-run departments" with "absolute cleanliness" and "absolute distinction". But the SACP was determined not to "allow the country to be run by gangsters" - in fact "We think the citizenship of the Guptas must be revoked because of their poisonous nature" (the brothers were originally from India).

Clearly the sackings were the last straw for the SACP and on March 31 it issued a statement demanding that "Zuma must now resign". It described the recall of Gordhan and Jonas from "a promotional tour in South Africa's interests" as "outrageous" - it was "a decisive moment":

Increasingly our country is being ruled not from the Union Buildings [seat of government], but from the Gupta family compound. More and more, critical ANC decisions are being decided not by elected and collective structures in Luthuli House, but in Saxonwold [a wealthy Johannesburg suburb].

The party called for "popular anger" to be mobilised "in constructive ways that unite South Africans of all persuasions and backgrounds in the defence of our country's interests". But it instructed SACP ministers:

Remain at your posts ... You have a responsibility to serve a massive constituency and the country at large ... If you are fired at the behest of the Gupta network because of the SACP's stand on these matters - so be it.

As for Cosatu, while it is "still very much committed to the alliance", it "no longer believes that the president is the right person to unite and lead the movement, the alliance and the country" - the cabinet reshuffle was "not based on merit, but on political loyalty".<sup>6</sup>

In response the April 5 ANC statement commented that it had "reflected on the calls by the SACP and Cosatu, amongst others, for president Jacob Zuma to resign from his position", and had resolved that members of the NEC "must continue to engage with Cosatu, SACP and organs of civil society on this matter". The statement was signed by ... Gwede Mantashe, ANC secretary-general and SACP CC member!

## Divided

As you might suspect, after so many years within the ANC-led alliance, the party itself is now divided, with a minority still expressing loyalty to Zuma himself. For example, Dominic Tweedie, who runs several pro-SACP email lists, on April 3 reposted without comment an SACP statement dated December 17 2015 - just after the dismissal of a previous finance minister, Nhlanhla Nene.

In this statement the party had "strongly opposed the regime-change agenda disguised as 'Zuma Must Fall'". It called on "our liberation alliance, all formations of the mass democratic movement and democratic people of South Africa as a whole to close ranks" against "an imperialist-supported offensive ... to discredit and delegitimise the whole of our ANC-led national liberation movement" by "singling out targeted leaders". How times change!

Interestingly, the next day Tweedie reported that one of the email lists he ran, 'Communist University', had been closed down by Google Groups, allegedly because it was carrying "spam,

malware or other malicious content". He was clear that "The CU Google Group is suppressed", although he did not say who he thought was responsible. Now, who could it be?

But pro-Zuma ANC loyalists like Tweedie are very much in a minority - a fact that can be demonstrated by the attitude of Cosatu. In 2014 the federation expelled its largest component, the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (Numsa), because it had broken from the ANC. Two of the unions that engineered Numsa's expulsion, representing healthworkers and teachers, have themselves now come out against Zuma.

Meanwhile, the main opposition party, the rightwing Democratic Alliance (whose roots lie in the whites-only liberal Progressive Party under apartheid) is demanding a parliamentary vote of no confidence in Zuma. And the left-populist Economic Freedom Fighters has filed a request for the constitutional court to institute impeachment proceedings against him.

For a no-confidence motion to succeed, it would need 201 votes from among the 400 MPs - in other words, at least 50 of the 249 ANC MPs would have to rebel. But, as I have stated, 17 of them are SACP members and there is certainly a substantial anti-Zuma faction - which might take its lead from the likes of Gordhan, who says he is now "unashamedly encouraging mass mobilisation", and a certain Cyril Ramaphosa.

Ramaphosa is the current deputy president - of both South Africa and the ANC - and is one of the two front runners to take over when Zuma steps down as head of the party in December. But Zuma himself wants his ex-wife - former African Union chair Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma - to succeed him.

Both Cosatu and the Young Communist League had come out in favour of Ramaphosa (although the SACP itself had not officially stated its position on Zuma's successor), even though Ramaphosa is viewed by sections of capital as "market-friendly". Hardly surprising, since, despite his origins as an anti-apartheid militant and union leader, he is now one of the country's richest men. It was Ramaphosa who sent out several emails on the eve of the 2014 Marikana massacre demanding that firm action be taken against striking mineworkers - 34 of whom were shot dead by police the very next day.

But for the moment Ramaphosa is saying that, like the SACP, he will remain in the cabinet, even though he is "unhappy about this situation" - for him, Gordhan had been "serving the country with absolute distinction, with great ability", and his sacking was "unacceptable".

It is quite possible that the likes of Ramaphosa and Gordhan will lead an open rebellion within the ANC, which could end in a split. If that happened no-one would be surprised if they were joined by the SACP, as it looks elsewhere for a vehicle to lead the ongoing "national democratic revolution" - the "most direct route to socialism in South Africa" ●

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## Notes

1. <http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-safrica-zuma-exclusive-idUKKBN1711C1>.
2. [www.fin24.com/Economy/removal-of-gordhan-the-road-to-ruin-20170402](http://www.fin24.com/Economy/removal-of-gordhan-the-road-to-ruin-20170402).
3. *Ibid.*
4. Statement, March 31.
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6. [www.cosatu.org.za/show.php?ID=12610#sthash.uksGc9t4.dpuf](http://www.cosatu.org.za/show.php?ID=12610#sthash.uksGc9t4.dpuf).

**1917**

# Lenin's arrival in Russia

One hundred years ago a small group of revolutionaries returned to Russia in the famous 'sealed train'. Ben Lewis introduces his translation of Grigory Zinoviev's account of this truly historic event

On April 16 (April 3 according to the old Russian calendar), a group of exiled Russian revolutionaries headed by VI Lenin returned to their homeland. The journey - which saw them travel in a 'sealed train' (ie, with something tantamount to diplomatic immunity) through war-weary Germany and then up through Scandinavia, finally arriving at the Finland station in St Petersburg - was not without its risks. Given that Europe remained a theatre of war, it necessitated a deal between Russian social democrats and the German high command, which agreed to guarantee the revolutionaries safe passage through Germany in the hope of

further destabilising its enemy to the east.

One of the mediators between these two forces was the Swiss communist, Fritz Platten (1883-1942), who also made some of the journey with the exiles in order to ensure that the deal was upheld. Following Lenin's death in 1924, 'red Fritz' edited a book of German-language essays and memoirs devoted to these events (*Die Reise Lenins durch Deutschland im plombierten Wagen*). It featured a number of leading communists, including Radek<sup>1</sup> and Zinoviev, both of whom also made the journey with Lenin.

Mine is the first translation - as far as we know, - of Grigory

Zinoviev's contribution, 'Lenin's arrival in Russia'.<sup>2</sup> Zinoviev was one of Lenin's closest allies in exile and the two collaborated on a wide range of articles, pamphlets and theses, written, among other things, in response to the political collapse of the Second International at the outbreak of World War I. The rapturous reception of the returning exiles in St Petersburg testified to the revolution that had just recently happened and a portent of what was to come. Indeed, the crucial role played by Lenin after his return means that the train journey from Switzerland counts as one of those seminal moments in history.

Yet the journey became an

instant cause of controversy. Various Mensheviks, such as Plekhanov, joined with the scandal mongering bourgeois press in branding Lenin and his comrades as 'German spies'. There was also accusations of German gold. In fact, the Bolsheviks had gone to the greatest lengths to have as little to do with the representatives of the German high command as possible. And, of course, it was not only Bolsheviks who were on the train.

The arrangement with Germany implied no *political* sacrifice or silence. The exiles were meant to agitate in Russia for the release of a corresponding number of Austro-German prisoners.

Nothing more. If anything, Lenin and the Bolsheviks *stepped up* their criticisms of German imperialism. And, for its part, the German high command certainly had grave misgivings about its decision to allow safe passage for the Russian exiles. As for German gold the Bolsheviks took none. Nevertheless, sadly, there are still those hopeless 'left' outfits, and not only in the so-called 'third world', who abuse the 'sealed train' to justify taking money from all kinds of imperialist agencies and charitable fronts. This political prostitution has nothing to do with the history or spirit of Bolshevism.

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**T**he writer of these lines heard the news of the outbreak of the February revolution in Berne. At that point, Vladimir Ilyich lived in Zurich. I remember how I left for home from the library without suspecting anything. Suddenly I noticed great unrest on the street. A special edition of a newspaper was being hastily sold with the title: 'Revolution in Russia'.

My head was spinning in the spring sunshine. I rushed home with the newspaper, printed in ink which was not yet dry. As soon as I got home I found a telegram from Vladimir Ilyich, which asked me to get to Zurich "immediately".

Had Vladimir Ilyich expected such a rapid solution? Those who flick through our writings from that period (printed in *Against the current*<sup>3</sup>) will see how passionately Vladimir Ilyich called for the Russian Revolution and how he expected it. But nobody had counted on such a speedy solution. The news was unexpected.

So tsarism had fallen! The ice had been broken. The imperialist slaughter had been dealt a first blow. One of the most important obstacles had been cleared from the path of the socialist revolution. The dreams of entire generations of Russian revolutionaries had finally become reality.

I recall a walk, lasting for several hours, with Vladimir Ilyich through the streets of Zurich, which were flooded with spring sunshine. Vladimir Ilyich and I walked around without any particular destination in mind; we stood in the shadow of the rapidly unfolding events. We drew up all kinds of plans, as we waited at the entrance of the editorial offices of the *Neue Züricher Zeitung* for new telegrams and our speculation mounted on the basis of fragmentary pieces of news and information. But, of course, hardly had a few hours passed and we were unable to contain ourselves.

We had to get to Russia. What could we do to get out of here as soon as possible? That was the driving idea which dominated any other thoughts we had. Vladimir Ilyich, who had felt the storm approaching, had been particularly agonised by the past few

months. It was almost as if he lacked the air to breathe. He was drawn to work, to struggle, but in the Swiss 'hole' he had no other option but to sit around in the libraries. I recall the 'envy' (envy indeed, I cannot find any other expression for this feeling) with which we viewed the Swiss social democrats who, one way or another, actually lived among their workers and merged into the workers' movement of their country. But we were cut off from Russia as never before. We yearned for the Russian language and Russian air. Back then Vladimir Ilyich almost reminded me of a lion trapped in a cage.

We had to go. Each and every minute was crucial. But how were we to get to Russia? The imperialist slaughter had reached its zenith. Chauvinist passions raged with all their might. In Switzerland we were cut off from all the states involved in the war. All roads were prohibited, all paths blocked off. At the

beginning this was not all that apparent to us. But already after a few hours it became clear that we were blocked by large obstacles and it would not be easy to break through them. We went this way and that, we sent a number of dispatches: it was obvious that we were trapped and that it was impossible to get to Russia. Vladimir Ilyich made plans, each of which proved to be more unfeasible than the last: flying to Russia by plane (we were lacking just a few things: a plane, the necessary means, the permission of the authorities, etc); travelling through Sweden using the passports of deaf-mutes (since we did not speak a word of Swedish!); arranging for our passage to Russia in exchange for the release of German prisoners of war; travelling through London, etc. A

series of émigré

conferences (alongside Mensheviks, Social Revolutionaries and so on) took place, which discussed how amnesty could be achieved and how all those wishing to go to Russia could do so. Vladimir Ilyich did not attend these conferences but sent me, without entertaining any great hopes as to the outcome.

When it became clear that we would not manage to leave Switzerland - at least not for the next few days - Vladimir Ilyich turned to his 'Letters from afar'.<sup>4</sup> In our small group, intensive work began to determine our line on the revolution which had now begun. A series of Vladimir Ilyich's writings from that period are sufficiently well known. I recall a heated debate in Zurich, in a small workers' pub and once also in Vladimir Ilyich's flat, over whether we should immediately issue the demand for the overthrow of the Lvov government.<sup>5</sup> Several 'lefts'<sup>6</sup> from back then insisted that the Bolsheviks were obliged to issue this call immediately. Vladimir Ilyich was decidedly against doing so. Our task, he said, was to educate patiently and stubbornly, to tell the people the whole truth, but at the same time to understand that we needed to conquer the majority of the revolutionary proletariat, etc.

## Departure

It had been decided. We had no other choice. We would travel through Germany. Come what may, it was clear that Vladimir Ilyich must be in Petrograd as soon as possible. When this idea was first mentioned, it provoked - as was to be expected - a storm of indignation amongst the Mensheviks, Social Revolutionaries and indeed among all non-Bolshevik elements of the émigrés in Switzerland. There was even some hesitation among the Bolsheviks. This reaction

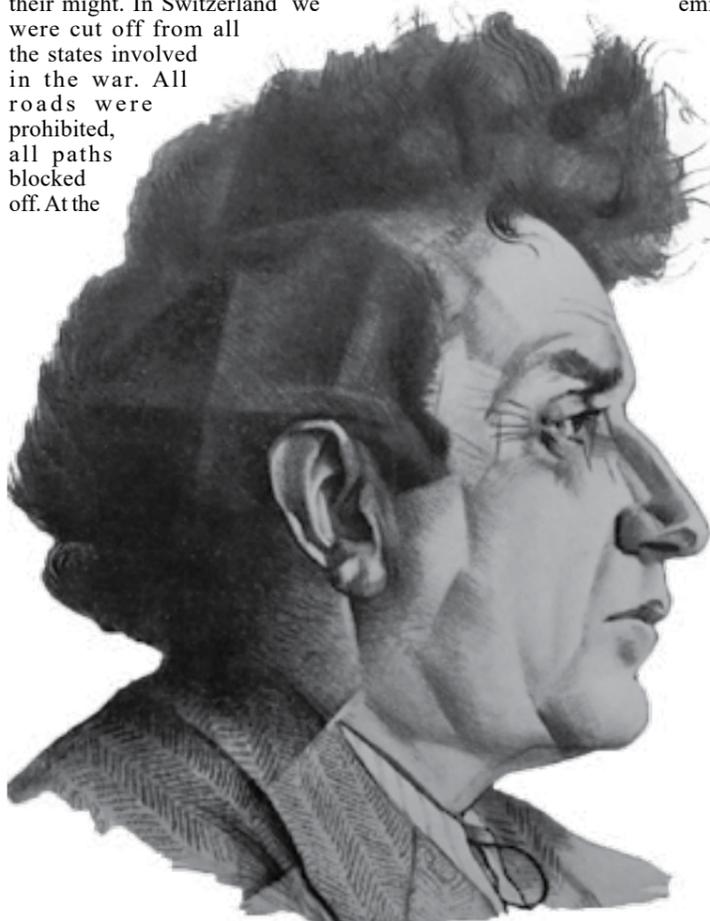
was, indeed, understandable: the risks involved were not insignificant.

I recall how, when we went to board the train at Zurich station which left for the Swiss border, a small group of Mensheviks organised a kind of hostile demonstration against Vladimir Lenin. At the 11th hour - literally a few minutes before the train departed - a highly agitated Riazanov<sup>7</sup> called the writer of these lines to one side and said: "Vladimir Ilyich has let himself be carried away and is overlooking the dangers. You are too sanguine: can't you see that this is madness? Convince Vladimir Ilyich that he should drop his plan to travel through Germany." But after a few weeks, Martov<sup>8</sup> and other Mensheviks were themselves compelled to embark upon the "madness" of taking this journey.

... We have departed. I recall the macabre impressions of a dead country when travelling through Germany. Berlin, which we see through the train's windows, is reminiscent of a cemetery.

The state of excitement in which we all found ourselves somehow abolished our perception of space and time. A faint memory of Stockholm has stuck in my mind. We mechanically moved through the streets and mechanically bought the necessary things to improve the hygiene of Vladimir Ilyich and the others. We inquired when the next train would depart for Torneo - they were almost every 30 minutes. In Stockholm too our image of events in Russia was still highly unclear. There was no longer any doubt about the equivocal role played by Kerensky.<sup>9</sup> But what was the soviet doing? Have Chkeidze<sup>10</sup> and co already established themselves in the soviet? Who do the majority of workers support? What position has the Bolshevik organisation adopted? All of that remained unclear.

Torneo - I recall that it was night time. We travelled on sledges over the frozen gulfs. There were two people to each sledge. The tension reached its zenith. The most vivacious of the younger comrades (such as Usievich,<sup>11</sup> who is now dead) were unusually nervous. We would soon see the first revolutionary Russian soldiers. Ilyich



**Eye-witness: Zinoviev**  
by Yuri Annenkov



Lenin: towards socialism

was extremely calm. He was especially interested in what was happening in Petersburg. Travelling over the frozen gulfs, he looked curiously into the distance. Apparently, his eyes could already see what was happening in the revolutionary country one and a half thousand kilometres in front of us.

## Russia

We were now on the Russia side of the border (today's border between Finland and Sweden). The youth amongst us in particular leapt towards the Russian border soldiers (there were probably only 20 to 30 of them) and struck up conversations in order to find out what was happening. Vladimir Ilyich seized on the Russian newspapers in particular. Individual editions of the Petersburg *Pravda* were there. Vladimir Ilych bit into the columns and then held up his hands reproachfully: he had read the news that Malinovsky<sup>12</sup> had actually turned out to be a spy.

Vladimir Ilych was disturbed by several articles in the first editions of *Pravda*, which were not entirely beyond reproach from the standpoint of internationalism. Was it true? Was the internationalist standpoint not clear enough? Now, we would fight against it and the line would soon be straightened out again.

We then encountered the 'Kerensky' lieutenants - the 'revolutionary democrats' - for the first time. Then we came across Russian revolutionary soldiers, who Vladimir Ilych deemed "conscientious defenders of the fatherland", whom in particular we had to "patiently educate". Following orders from the authorities, a group of soldiers accompanied us to the capital. We got onto the train.

Vladimir Ilych 'bit' into these

soldiers; they talked about the nation, war and the new Russia. Vladimir Ilych's particular, well-known manner of approaching everyday workers and peasants ensured that in a short time he established an excellent, comradely relationship with the soldiers. The discussions continued throughout the night without interruption. The soldiers, the "defenders of the fatherland", insisted that they were right. The first thing that Vladimir Ilych took from this exchange was that the ideology of 'defending the fatherland' remained a powerful force. In order to struggle against it we needed a stubborn rigidity, but patience and a shrewd manner of approaching the masses were equally necessary.

We were all convinced that we would be arrested by Miliukov<sup>13</sup> and Lvov on our arrival in Leningrad; Vladimir Ilych was the most convinced that this would happen and he prepared the entire group of comrades who travelled with him for this eventuality. For extra security we even had all those travelling with us sign official declarations, stating that they were prepared to go to prison and that they would defend the decision to travel through Germany before any court. The closer we got to Bjelooostrov, the more excited we became. But on arrival there we were received by the authorities with sufficient courtesy. One of the Kerensky officers, who had the post of commander of Beloostrov, even reported to Vladimir Ilych.

In Beloostrov we were received by our closest friends - among them Kamenev, Stalin and many others.<sup>14</sup> In a dim, narrow third-class carriage, illuminated solely by a stub of light, the first exchange of opinions occurred.

Vladimir Ilych pelted the comrades

with a series of questions.

"Will we be arrested in Leningrad?"

The comrades who travelled to meet us did not provide us with a specific answer and merely smiled furtively instead. On the way, at one of the stations near to Sestroretzk, hundreds of proletarians greeted Vladimir Ilych with the warmth which they held only for him. They carried him up on their shoulders and he gave his first short welcoming speech.

## A triumph

The platform of the Finland Station in Leningrad. It was already night. Only now did we understand the furtive smiles of our friends. Awaiting Vladimir Ilych was not imprisonment, but a triumph. The station and the square in front of it were flooded by the light from the headlights. On the platform there was a long column of guards of honour of all branches and arms. The platform, the square and the nearby streets were packed with tens of thousands of workers enthusiastically welcoming their leader. 'The Internationale' rang out. Tens of thousands of workers and soldiers were buzzing with excitement.

In a few seconds Vladimir Ilych 'adjusted' to the new situation. In the so-called Imperial Chamber he was received by Chkeidze and a full delegation of the Soviet. In the name of 'revolutionary democracy' the old fox Chkeidze welcomed Lenin and expressed 'his hope', etc. Without batting an eyelid, Lenin responded to Chkeidze with a short speech, which from the very first word through to the last was a slap in the face for 'revolutionary democracy'. His speech ended with the words: "Long live the socialist revolution."

At this moment an enormous mass

of people poured towards us. My first impression was that we were rather like straws on this huge wave. Vladimir Ilych was raised up into the air and placed on the top of a tank and in that way he took his first trip through the revolutionary capital, past dense rows of workers and soldiers, whose enthusiasm knew no limits. He gave short speeches and threw the slogans of the socialist revolution into the crowds.

An hour later we arrived at the Kschessinska Palace, where almost the entire Bolshevik Party was assembled. The comrades' speeches there lasted until the morning and Vladimir Ilych gave the final speech in response to them. Early in the morning, with dawn hardly upon us, we parted from each other and breathed in the homely air of Petersburg. Vladimir Ilych was fresh and happy. He had a good word for all. He remembered everyone and he would come across them all again tomorrow, when the new work was to commence.

Happy faces all around. The leader has arrived. All of them look at Vladimir Ilych with boundless joy, enthusiasm and love and took note of this fact.

Vladimir Ilych was in Russia, in revolutionary Russia, following long years of exile. The first in a series of revolutions had begun. Revolutionary Russia acquired a real leader. A new chapter in the history of the international revolution was beginning ●

Grigory Zinoviev

## Notes

1. Radek's essay, translated by Ian Birchall, can be read on the Marxist Internet Archive: [www.marxists.org/archive/radek/1924/xx/train.htm](http://www.marxists.org/archive/radek/1924/xx/train.htm).
2. Translated from Fritz Platten (ed) *Die Reise*

*Lenins durch Deutschland im plombierten Wagen* Berlin 1924, pp88-95. I am grateful to Lawrence Parker for scanning this rather rare publication for me. I have been informed that the book will be on display in the British Library later this year.

3. A collection of articles, co-authored with Lenin in exile in 1916, which excoriated the European socialist parties' politics of social patriotism ('defence of the fatherland').

4. Five letters sent to Russia by Lenin for publication in the Bolshevik publication *Pravda* in March 1917, the last of which was written just before his departure.

5. Prince Georgy Lvov (1861-1925) was head of the provisional government in 1917 following the abdication of Nicholas II. Lvov held this post until July 1917, when he gave way to Kerensky.

6. This is presumably a reference to the grouping around the Bolshevik factional publication *Kommunist*, led by those such as Nikolai Bukharin. The faction only came into existence in 1918, however, so it is rather unclear whether Zinoviev is referring to another grouping in exile or 'reading back' subsequent factional developments onto earlier history.

7. David Borisovich Riazanov (1870-1938) was a Russian Menshevik intellectual and archivist who founded the Marx-Engels Institute. He was purged in the Great Terror of the late 1930s.

8. Julius Martov (1873-1923) was a Russian Menshevik leader who also found himself in Swiss exile during the outbreak of the revolution in Russia. He returned to Russia from Switzerland in May 1917.

9. Alexander Kerensky (1881-1970) held the posts of minister of justice and then minister of war in the provisional government and was simultaneously vice-chair of the Petrograd soviet.

10. Nikolay Chkeidze (1864-1926) was a Georgian Menshevik who was president of the executive committee of the Petrograd soviet.

11. Grigori Aleksandrovich Usievich (1890-1918) was a member of the Bolshevik Party from 1907 and in 1917 became a Bolshevik deputy in the municipal duma.

12. Roman Vatslavovich Malinovsky (1876-1918) was a member of the Bolshevik central committee and duma parliamentarian who was simultaneously in the pay of the tsarist secret police.

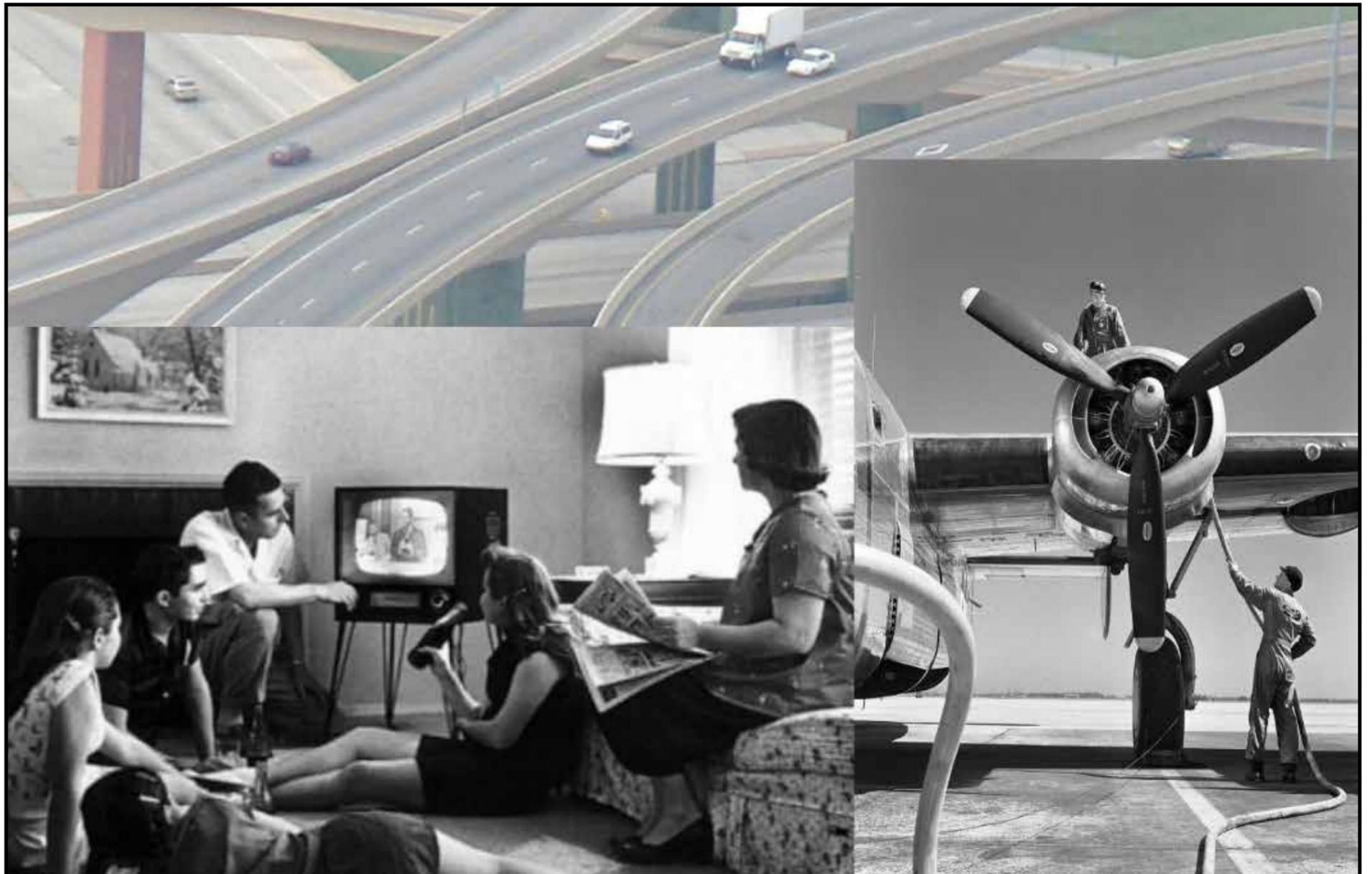
13. Pavel Milyukov (1859-1943) was a leader of the liberal Constitutional Democrat (Cadet) party, who was foreign minister under the provisional government.

14. Zinoviev's highlighting of these two particular non-exiled Bolshevik leaders may or may not be reflective of his factional position in the Bolshevik party at the time.

## ECONOMICS

## Civilisation and the 'long run'

Will the Keynesian radicals become mainstream conservatives when the long depression ends? It is capitalism itself that is the problem, argues **Michael Roberts**



The 1950s Keynesian utopia

Keynesian economics dominates in the labour movement. Keynes is the economic hero of those wanting to change the world; to end poverty, inequality and continual losses of incomes and jobs in recurrent crises. And yet anybody who has read the posts on my blog<sup>1</sup> knows that Keynesian economic analysis is faulty and empirically doubtful, while its policy prescriptions to right the wrongs of capitalism have proved to be failures.

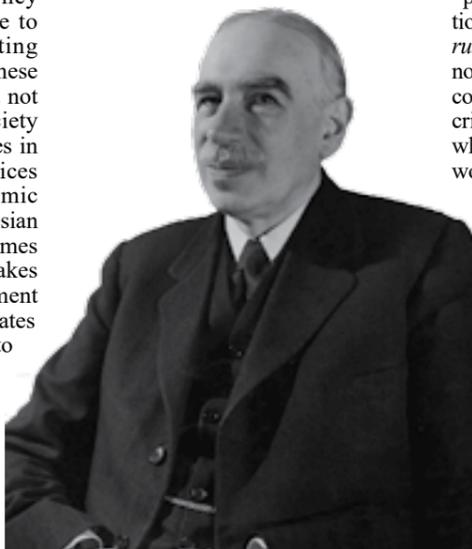
In the US, the great gurus of opposition to the neoliberal theories of the Chicago school of economics and the policies of Republican politicians are the Keynesians, Paul Krugman,<sup>2</sup> Larry Summers and Joseph Stiglitz<sup>3</sup> or slightly more radical Dean Baker and James Galbraith. In the UK, the self-proclaimed socialists around Labour Party leaders Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell look to Keynesian economists like Martin Wolf, Ann Pettifor or Simon Wren Lewis for their policy ideas and analysis. They bring them onto their advisory councils and seminars. In Europe, the likes of Thomas Piketty rule.<sup>4</sup>

Those graduate students and lecturers involved in Rethinking Economics,<sup>5</sup> an international attempt to change the teaching and ideas away from neoclassical theory, are led by Keynesian authors like James Kwak, post-Keynesians like Steve Keen or Victoria Chick or Frances Coppola. Kwak, for example, has a new book called *Economism*, which argues that the economic fault line in capitalism is rising inequality and the

failure of mainstream economics is in not recognising this. Again the idea that inequality is the enemy, not capitalism as such, exudes from the Keynesians and post-Keynesians like Stiglitz, Kwak, Piketty or Stockhammer,<sup>6</sup> and dominates the media and the labour movement. This is not to deny the ugly importance of rising inequality,<sup>7</sup> but to show that a Marxist view of this does not circulate.

Indeed, when the media wants to be daring and radical, publicity is heaped on new books from Keynesians or post-Keynesian authors, but not Marxists. For example, Ann Pettifor of *Prime Economics*<sup>8</sup> has written a new book, *The production of money*,<sup>9</sup> in which she tells us that "money is nothing more than a promise to pay" and that, as "we're creating money all the time by making these promises", money is infinite and not limited in its production, so society can print as much of it as it likes in order to invest in its social choices without any detrimental economic consequences. Through the Keynesian multiplier effect, apparently, incomes and jobs can expand. And "it makes no difference where the government invests its money, if doing so creates employment". The only issue is to keep the cost of money - interest rates - as low as possible, to ensure the expansion of money (or is it credit?) to drive the capitalist economy forward. Thus there is no need for any change in the mode of production for profit: just take control of the

**John Maynard Keynes: from radical bourgeois to conservative bourgeois**



money machine to ensure an infinite flow of money and all will be well.

Ironically, at the same time, leading post-Keynesian Steve Keen gets ready to deliver a new book<sup>10</sup> advocating the control of debt or credit as the way to avoid crises.<sup>11</sup> Take your pick: more credit money or less. Either way, the Keynesians drive the economic narrative with an analysis that reckons only the finance sector is the causal force in disrupting capitalism.

### 'Third way'

So why do Keynesian ideas continue to dominate? Geoff Mann - director of the Centre for Global Political Economy at Simon Fraser University, Canada - provides us with an insightful explanation. In a new book, entitled *In the long run we are all dead*,<sup>12</sup> Mann reckons it is not that Keynesian economics is seen as correct. There have been "powerful left critiques of Keynesian economics from which to draw; examples include the work of Paul Mattick, Geoff Pilling and Michael Roberts" (p218 - thanks!), but Keynesian ideas dominate the labour movement and among those opposed to what Mann calls "liberal capitalism" (what I would call just capitalism) for political reasons.

Keynes rules because he offers a third way between socialist revolution and barbarism: ie, the end of civilisation, as we (actually the bourgeois like Keynes) know it. In the 1920s and 1930s, Keynes feared that the 'civilised world' faced Marxist revolution or

fascist dictatorship. But socialism, as an alternative to the capitalism of the great depression, could well bring down 'civilisation', delivering instead 'barbarism' - the end of a better world, the collapse of technology and the rule of law, more wars, etc. So he aimed to offer the hope that, through some modest fixing of "liberal capitalism", it would be possible to make capitalism work without the need for socialist revolution. There would be no need to go where the angels of 'civilisation' fear to tread. That was the Keynesian narrative.

This appealed (and still appeals) to the leaders of the labour movement and 'liberals' wanting change. Revolution was risky and we could all go down with it. According to Mann, "the left wants democracy without populism, it wants transformational politics without the risks of transformation; it wants revolution without revolutionaries" (p21).

This fear of revolution, Mann reckons, was first exhibited after the French revolution. That great experiment in bourgeois democracy turned into Robespierre and the terror; democracy turned into dictatorship and barbarism - or so the bourgeois myth goes. Keynesian economics offers a way out of the 1930s depression, or the long depression now, without socialism. It is the third way between the status quo of rapacious markets, austerity, inequality, poverty and crises and the alternative of social revolution that may lead to Stalin, Mao, Castro, Pol Pot and Kim Jong-Un. It is such an attractive 'third way' Mann professes that it even appeals to him as an

# What we fight for

alternative to the risk that revolution will go wrong (see his last chapter, where Marx is portrayed as the Dr Jekyll of hope and Keynes as the Mr Hyde of fear).

As Mann puts it, Keynes reckoned that, if civilised experts (like himself) dealt with the short-run problems of economic crisis and slump, then the long-run disaster of the loss of civilisation could be avoided. The famous quote that makes the title of Mann's book, that "in the long run we are all dead", was about the need to act on the great depression through government intervention and not wait for the market to right itself over time, as the neoclassical ('classical' Keynes called it) economists and politicians thought. For

this long run is a misleading guide to current affairs. In the long run we are all dead. Economists set themselves too easy, too useless a task if in tempestuous seasons they can only tell us that, when the storm is long past, the ocean is flat again (Keynes).

You need to act on the short-term problem or it will become a long-term disaster. This is the extra meaning of the "long run" quote: deal with depression and economic crises now or civilisation itself will come under threat from revolution in the long run.

Keynes liked to consider the role of economists as similar to dentists fixing a technical problem<sup>13</sup> of toothache in the economy ("If economists could manage to get themselves thought of as humble, competent people on a level with dentists, that would be splendid"). And modern Keynesians have likened their role as plumbers,<sup>14</sup> fixing the leaks in the pipeline of accumulation and growth. But the real method of political economy is not that of a plumber or dentist fixing short-run problems. It is of a revolutionary social scientist (Marx), changing it for the long term. What the Marxist analysis of the capitalist mode of production reveals is that there is no 'third way', as Keynes and his followers would have it. Capitalism cannot deliver an end to inequality, poverty, war and a world of abundance for the common weal globally, nor can it avoid the catastrophe of environmental disaster, over the long run.

Like all bourgeois intellectuals, Keynes was an idealist. He knew that ideas only took hold if they conformed to the wishes of the ruling elite. As he put it,

Individualism and *laissez-faire* could not, in spite of their deep roots in the political and moral philosophies of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, have secured their lasting hold over the conduct of public affairs, if it had not been for their conformity with the needs and wishes of the business world of the day ... These many elements have contributed to the current intellectual bias, the mental make-up, the orthodoxy of the day.<sup>15</sup>

Yet he still really believed that a clever man like him with forceful ideas could change society, even if it was against the interests of those who controlled it.

The wrongness of that idea was brought home to him in his attempts to get the Roosevelt administration to adopt his ideas on ending the great depression and for the political elite to implement his scheme for a new world order after the world war.<sup>16</sup> He wanted to set up 'civilised' institutions to ensure peace and prosperity globally through international management of economies, currencies and money. But these ideas of a world order to control the excesses of unbridled *laissez-faire* capitalism were turned into institutions like the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and the UN Security Council, used to promote the policies of imperialism, led by America. Instead of 'civilised' leaders sorting out the problems of the world, we got a terrible

eagle astride the globe, imposing its will. Material interests decide policies, not clever economists.

## Radical turned conservative

Indeed, Keynes - that great idealist of civilisation - turned pragmatist at the post-war Bretton Woods meetings, representing not the world's masses, or even a democratic world order, but the narrow national interests of British imperialism against American dominance. Keynes told the British parliament that the Bretton Woods deal was not "an assertion of American power but a reasonable compromise between two great nations with the same goals; to restore a liberal world economy". Other nations were ignored, of course.

To avoid the situation where in the long run we are all dead, Keynes reckoned that you must sort out the short run. But the short run cannot be sorted to avoid the long run. Deliver full employment and all will be well, he thought. Yet now, in 2017, we have near 'full employment' in the US, the UK, Germany and Japan and all is not well. Real wages are stagnating, productivity is not rising and inequalities are worsening. There is a long depression now and no end to apparent 'secular stagnation'. Of course, the Keynesians say that this is because Keynesian policies have not been implemented. But they have not been implemented (at least not fiscal spending) because ideas do not triumph over dominant material interests, contrary to Keynes. He had it upside down - in the same way that Hegel had it upside down. Hegel reckoned that it was the conflict of ideas that led to conflict in history, when it was the opposite. History is the history of class struggle.

And anyway, Keynes's economic prescriptions are based on fallacy. The long depression continues not because there is too much capital keeping down the return ('marginal efficiency') of capital relative to the rate of interest on money. There is not too much investment (business investment rates are low) and interest rates are near zero or even negative. The long depression is the result of too low profitability and so not enough investment, thus keeping down productivity growth. Low real wages and low productivity are the *cost* of 'full employment' - contrary to all the ideas of Keynesian economics. Too much investment has not caused low profitability, but low profitability has caused too little investment.

What Mann argues is that Keynesian economics dominates the left despite its fallacies and failures because it expresses the fear that many of the leaders of the labour movement have about the masses and revolution. In his new book, James Kwak quotes Keynes:

For the most part, I think that capitalism, wisely managed, can probably be made more efficient for attaining economic ends than any alternative system yet in sight, but that in itself it is in many ways extremely objectionable. Our problem is to work out a social organisation which shall be as efficient as possible without offending our notions of a satisfactory way of life.<sup>17</sup>

Kwak comments: "That remains our challenge today. If we cannot solve it, the election of 2016 (Trump) may turn out to be a harbinger of worse things to come."<sup>18</sup> In other words, if we cannot manage capitalism, things could be even worse.

Behind the fear of revolution is the bourgeois prejudice that to give power to 'the masses' means the end of culture, scientific progress and civilised behaviour. Yet it was the struggle of working people over the last 200 years (and before) that got all those gains of civilisation that the bourgeois is so proud of. Despite Robespierre and the revolution's "devoiring of its own children" (a term used by

pro-aristocrat Mallet du Pan and adopted by the British conservative bourgeois, Edmund Burke), the French revolution opened up the expansion of science and technology in Europe. It ended feudalism, religious superstition and inquisition, and introduced Napoleonic laws. If it had not taken place, France would have suffered more generations of feudal profligacy and decline.

As it is 100 years since the Russian Revolution, we can consider the counterfactual. If the Russian Revolution had not taken place, then Russian capitalism may have industrialised a little, but would have become a client state of British, French and German capital and many millions more would have been killed in a pointless and disastrous world war, in which Russia would have continued to participate. Education of the masses and the development of science and technology would have been held back - as they were in China, which remained in the grip of imperialism for another generation or more. If the Chinese revolution had not taken place in 1949, China would have remained a client comprador 'failed state', controlled by Japan and the imperialist powers and ravaged by Chinese war lords, with extreme poverty and backwardness.

Keynes was a bourgeois intellectual *par excellence*. His advocacy of 'civilisation' meant bourgeois society to him. As he put it, "the class war will find me on the side of the educated bourgeoisie". There was no way he could support socialism, let alone revolutionary change, because "preferring the mud to the fish, it exalts the boorish proletariat above bourgeois and the intelligentsia, who, whatever their faults, are the quality in life and surely carry the seeds of all human advancement".<sup>19</sup>

Indeed, economically, in his later years, he praised the very *laissez-faire* 'liberal' capitalism that his followers condemn now. In 1944, he wrote to Friedrich Hayek, the leading 'neoliberal' of his time and ideological mentor of Thatcherism, in praise of his book, *The road to serfdom*, which argues that economic planning inevitably leads to totalitarianism: "morally and philosophically I find myself in agreement with virtually the whole of it; and not only in agreement with it, but in a deeply moved agreement".

And Keynes wrote in his very last published article:

I find myself moved, not for the first time, to remind contemporary economists that the classical teaching embodied some permanent truths of great significance ... There are in these matters deep undercurrents at

work - natural forces, one can call them, or even the invisible hand - which are operating towards equilibrium. If it were not so, we could not have got on even so well as we have for many decades past.

Thus classical economics and a flat ocean returns. Once the storm (of slump and depression) has passed and the ocean is flat again, bourgeois society can breathe a sigh of relief. Keynes, the radical, turned into Keynes, the conservative, after the end of the great depression. Will the Keynesian radicals become mainstream conservatives when the long depression ends?

We shall indeed all be dead if we do not end the capitalist mode of production. And that will require a revolutionary transformation. A tinkering with the supposed faults of 'liberal' capitalism will not 'save' civilisation - in the "long run" ●

Michael Roberts blogs at <https://thenextrecession.wordpress.com>

## Notes

1. Eg, <https://thenextrecession.wordpress.com/2016/05/02/explaining-the-last-ten-years-keynes-or-marx-who-is-right>; and <https://thenextrecession.wordpress.com/2015/11/11/keynes-marx-and-the-effect-of-qe>.
2. See <https://thenextrecession.wordpress.com/2012/04/21/paul-krugman-steve-keen-and-the-mysticism-of-keynesian-economics>.
3. <https://thenextrecession.wordpress.com/2016/03/02/changing-the-rules-or-changing-the-game>.
4. <https://thenextrecession.wordpress.com/2015/01/06/assa-part-one-the-rise-in-inequality-and-the-fall-in-piketty>.
5. See <https://thenextrecession.wordpress.com/2014/06/30/rethinking-economics>.
6. <https://thenextrecession.wordpress.com/2014/03/11/is-inequality-the-cause-of-capitalist-crises>.
7. <https://thenextrecession.wordpress.com/2017/02/19/inequality-after-150-years-of-capital>.
8. [www.primeconomics.org](http://www.primeconomics.org).
9. A Petifor *The production of money: how to break the power of bankers* London 2017.
10. H Keen *Can we avoid another financial crisis?* Oxford 2017.
11. See <https://thenextrecession.wordpress.com/2011/10/07/ricardo-bellofiore-steve-keen-and-the-delusions-of-debt>.
12. G Mann *In the long run we are all dead: Keynesianism, political economy and revolution* London 2017.
13. See <https://thenextrecession.wordpress.com/2013/08/16/its-a-technical-malfunction>.
14. <https://thenextrecession.wordpress.com/2017/01/11/assa-2017-part-2-economists-and-the-state-of-economics>.
15. JM Keynes *The end of laissez-faire* (1926): [www.panarchy.org/keynes/laissezfaire.1926.html](http://www.panarchy.org/keynes/laissezfaire.1926.html).
16. <https://thenextrecession.wordpress.com/2016/04/23/keynes-and-bretton-woods-70-years-later>.
17. JM Keynes *The end of laissez-faire* (1926): [www.panarchy.org/keynes/laissezfaire.1926.html](http://www.panarchy.org/keynes/laissezfaire.1926.html).
18. <https://economism.net>.
19. JM Keynes *Critical responses* London 1998, p239.

## Fighting fund

### Firm footing

Not too much to crow about, when it comes to the last two days of March - just an extra £20 came in (thank you, comrades RL and VP for the £10 you each donated).

But, when it comes to the month as a whole, it's a different story, of course. Not only did we meet our £1,750 target. We reached our best ever monthly total of £2,239 - just £11 short of a £500 'overfulfilment'! Congratulations to all those readers, friends and supporters who helped ease my financial worries (at least for a while!).

That puts us in a good position, as we embark on our April fighting fund, so let's try to consolidate our gains and keep the *Weekly Worker* - which depends entirely on those readers, friends and supporters - on a firm footing.

And we've got off to a reasonable start in the first five days of April, with £312 coming in. Most of that

came in the shape of the usual batch of start-of-the-month standing orders - no less than 20 of them, totalling £262. The most generous were SD and CG (£30), FK (£25) and DC and II (£20). But even the regular fivers from DC, GW and PBS helped to increase the total.

There were also three PayPal donations - thanks to JH (£25), PM (£15) and DF (£10). That's three out of exactly 3,333 online readers last week! But we didn't receive any cheques - not because no-one sent any, I hasten to add, but because the comrade who was supposed to be collecting the mail didn't quite manage it! Never mind - next week? ●

Robbie Rix

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

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

**Conservative  
factions would  
welcome  
sanctions**

## War is a real danger

An open letter to all supporters of Hands Off the People of Iran

The election of Donald Trump signals the beginning of an ominous and unpredictable period in world politics.

In the Middle East specifically, the new US administration is targeting Iran. It looks eager to rip up the painfully negotiated nuclear deal Tehran agreed with the P5+1 group of world powers - the US, UK, France, China and Russia plus Germany.

In exchange for major Iranian concessions on the reduction of its uranium stockpile by 98% and what Washington dubbed "extraordinary and robust monitoring, verification and inspection" of the country's declared nuclear sites, the crippling economic sanctions were eased and the prospect of military action receded temporarily.

However, with a toxic narcissist now ensconced in White House, all bets are off:

- Throughout his presidential campaign, Trump had denounced the Iran nuclear agreement as "stupid", the "worst deal ever negotiated", a "lopsided disgrace" and - in a December 2016 tweet (significantly, in a "stay strong" message to Israel) - he again disparaged the "horrible Iran deal".

- During the presidential election campaign, he told the American Israel Public Affairs Committee that his "number one priority is to dismantle the disastrous deal with Iran". He views it as "catastrophic for America, for Israel and for the whole of the Middle East".

- In March 2017, the United States started a process that will lead to the setting up of a Nato-like alliance against Iran. At a time when under a new president, less antagonistic to Russia, the US is considering its position vis-à-vis Nato, we could be witnessing the start of a new cold (or maybe not so cold) war against Iran.

- Israel has taken the change in the White House as a green light to ratchet up its threats. In January, Israeli prime minister Binyamin Netanyahu addressed the Iranian people directly in an open letter that was widely interpreted as an 'apology' in advance for a military strike. His estimation is that the nuclear deal with Iran "threatens Europe; it threatens the west; it threatens the world".

Even the gentle restraints imposed by the Obama administration on the bellicose inclinations of the Zionist regime have been removed. Iran's regional adversaries, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, are encouraged by the new US administration's relaxation of arms sales. Saudi Arabia, Israel, the US and Canada are doing what they can to finance, organise and mobilise the disparate forces of the Iranian opposition outside the country. Farcically some sections of the exiled left have actually been stupid enough to be lured by these assurances of financial support.

Inside Iran, the government's promises to the people that economic prosperity would be an inevitable consequence of the climbdown on pursuing a nuclear programme have been shown to be hollow. The removal of sanctions and the increase in the price of oil have only benefited corrupt



**Binyamin Netanyahu: itching for an attack**

officials within the factions of the Islamic state or the higher ranks of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards. Factory workers, teachers and pensioners are protesting daily, demanding payment of their wages and pensions. Working people are having to rally to defend their conditions and job security. Unlike their rulers, they saw no concrete benefit from the nuclear deal.

The more conservative factions of the Islamic republic never supported this deal and considered it a humiliation. These elements are keen to launch a provocation that would be serious enough to bait the west into a new raft of sanctions - a return to the 'good old days' when this part of the theocracy amassed huge profits, thanks to the black market.

These groups, together with those degenerate sections of the Iranian opposition that have been bought by imperialism, hope the bellicose threats of the Trump administration - coupled with new sanctions - will provoke an Iranian military retaliation. This

could come in the Persian Gulf, Syria or Lebanon. The essential point is that it might pave the way for an all-out Israeli military intervention, dressed up for the 'international community' as a justifiable defensive measure by the Zionist state.

The truth is that the confrontation could take the form of a military strike, the re-imposition of severe sanctions on Iran to slowly strangle the country - or perhaps a combination of both, with the new sanctions significantly ratcheted up in terms of scope and brutality compared to those recently lifted.

Either way, the situation is menacing and demands an immediate response from principled anti-war activists.

That is why we are contacting comrades and friends who answered the call of Hopi when it was founded in 2007 and those who subsequently rallied to its support as we campaigned hard over the following years on our founding principles:

- No imperialist intervention, no war

and no sanctions on Iran!

- No to the theocratic regime! Victory to the people of Iran!
- Opposition to Israeli expansion and aggression!
- For practical support and solidarity to all working class and progressive struggles in Iran against poverty and repression!
- For a nuclear-free Middle East as a step towards a nuclear-free world!

These challenging times demand that we reinvigorate and refocus our campaign.

What we wrote in 2007 in Hopi's founding statement remains valid and compelling:

The contradictions between the interests of the neo-conservatives in power in the USA and the defenders of the rule of capital in the Islamic republic has entered a dangerous new phase.

US imperialism and its allies are intent on regime change from above and are seriously considering options to impose this - sanctions,

diplomatic pressure, limited strikes or perhaps bombing the country back to the Stone Age.

We recognise that effective resistance to this war can only mean the militant defence of the struggles of the working class in Iran and of the rising social movements in that country. We want regime change - both in Iran and in the imperialist countries. But we know that change must come from below - from the struggles of the working class and social movements - if it is to lead to genuine liberation.

The main enemy is imperialism. The Iranian regime does not represent a progressive or consistent anti-imperialist force.

Supporters of Hands off the People of Iran need to rally again. Sign up to help the campaign to fight the new drive to a disastrous war in the Middle East! ●

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