

# weekly **worker**



**Russian revolution 100th anniversary: Karl Kautsky's April 1917 'Prospects'**

- Leo Varadkar
- AWL polemic
- Trump dumps Paris
- Gulf tensions

No 1158 Thursday June 8 2017

Towards a Communist Party of the European Union

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## **LEFT SHOULD NOT STAND ON THE SIDELINES**

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# LETTERS



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

## Dogma

In his letter (May 18) Jack Conrad continues to use the law of supply and demand to try and negate the concept of peak oil: "Ted Hankin seems to imagine that capitalism and the oil industry are synonymous."

Well, actually they more or less are. Oil is not just any other commodity that can be replaced, but is a primary commodity, on which many other products rely. Apart from the obvious case of transportation, oil is essential to the manufacture of plastics, cosmetics, chemicals, agriculture and many other industrial sectors too numerous to mention here.

"He [Ted Hankin] implies that capitalism will run into the sands some time in the 2050s because supposedly there will be less and less easily accessible, cheap oil," writes Conrad. This is a simple lie. I was simply stating that the texts on peak oil which I have so far read roughly argue that peak oil has already begun. What the *consequences* of peak oil will be are another matter. Some argue that very little effect will be seen, as capitalism will be able to replace conventional oil with 'unconventional oil' rapidly - although most acknowledge with extra costs, both financial and environmental. On the other end of the spectrum, a concept such as peak oil is bound to attract catastrophe theorists, who view the end of cheap oil as the inevitable decline of industrial capitalism. (Marxism itself has attracted such people: Posadas and Gerry Healy, to name only two well-known ones.)

Conrad says: "He writes that 'capitalism was built' and 'depends' on cheap, easily accessible oil. Would that include North Sea oil? Alaskan oil? Or only Saudi oil? And capitalism 'built' on cheap oil? When does Ted Hankin think that capitalism began? In the 19th century? No, what capitalism was built upon, and what it depends on, is not this or that particular raw material. It is generalised wage-labour that is crucial."

This is a typical Conrad attempt at obfuscation, where he conflates a mass of banal ideas in the hope that they will appear profound. Conrad will be aware that "easily accessible oil" is becoming increasingly difficult to find. Nobody knows how much there really is, simply due to oil-producing countries overestimating their reserves for political reasons. Because oil is a primary commodity, on which many other industrial sectors depend, any rise in price will concatenate through the economy. Indeed, we have had empirical experience of this before with the initiation of Opec, when the price rises were obviously due to the creation of an artificial scarcity by a cartel.

Conrad asks: "When does Ted Hankin think that capitalism began? In the 19th century?" I might wish to argue that capitalism began to go global with the invention of the Newcomen engine, precisely because it promoted "generalised wage labour", although that is problematic, but in fact it is a completely irrelevant question as far as peak oil is concerned and can only have been asked as a point of obfuscation. The point is we are dealing with capitalism as it is now with its reliance on oil and all the rhetoric about peak coal, etc, has nothing relevant to illustrate.

In order to illuminate his prejudice that peak oil employs some kind of Malthusian methodology, Conrad supplies us with a quote from the ever-reliable Wikipedia. There are many texts on peak oil and I am sure that from the corpus of these one could find some employing a 'Malthusian method', but most do not and the only ones arguing that supply and demand will overcome peak oil are from oil company executives and the like.

Conrad's dismissal of peak oil as a theory which we should not even bother considering is symptomatic of the 'left' attitude to many of the 'big' questions, such as population growth, environmental degradation, animal rights, artificial

intelligence, immigration movements *ad infinitum*. Conrad is absolutely right to assert that strategic thinking is required, but if that is simply denouncing everything that is not included in classical Marxism, it really reduces - and I use that word purposefully - the doctrine to a dogma based on the past.

**Ted Hankin**  
email

## Merry-go-round

By way of absolute proof that a picture can speak louder than a thousand words, this past week presented us with the following gut-wrenching (as well as downright soul-churning) juxtaposition of imagery.

Within the pages and websites of our mass media, we saw a close-up photo of pop star Ariana Grande making a hospital bedside visit to a female child victim of the Manchester Arena bombing. There was also an identically framed photo of a female Afghani healthworker tending to a bomb-blasted victim in a Kabul hospital (someone who'd either been caught up in the green zone attack, which killed nearly 100 and injured a thousand, or otherwise in the 'security forces' shooting of anti-government protestors at a subsequent funeral).

And if any final proof of that well-worn adage was still needed, we had photos of the glistening Shard towering over the streets where young people had just died in the latest 'car-ramming and stabbing' attack at London Bridge. Of course, the Shard is owned by Qatar 'sovereign fund' investors amongst very similar others, with both its commercial and residential accommodation occupied by the ultra-super-rich of our planet.

Surely no voter in the UK general election will have needed any more encouragement before rejecting Theresa May's rabid capitalism, alongside its inherent imperialist attitudes. Surely Corbyn's Labour Party will have become finitely more attractive? Certainly, no communist can draw anything other than the obvious conclusion from these various photos. Namely, that state-organised terror, including via 'interventionist' war - running hand in hand with all other systematic subjugation of populations around the world - almost inevitably produces equivalent terror in response.

Even if not a whole or complete explanation, then at least those facts and factors have a core and fundamental role in the entire and massively horrible 'merry-go-round'!

**Bruno Kretschmar**  
email

## Vote Corbyn

On June 8 people in England and Wales should go out and vote against the Tories in every constituency and against the unionists in Northern Ireland. People should vote for Corbyn's Labour in England and Wales, although I would not vote for rightwing Blairite Labour MPs who actively sabotaged Corbyn - for example, Neil Coyle in Bermondsey.

In Scotland we should support anti-unionist candidates, as long as they support the democratic right of the Scottish people to have a self-determination referendum. No support should be given to Kezia Dugdale and her Scottish Labour Party candidates.

The Tories have been doing their desperate 'Campaign Fear' trick. England is a frightened country and ratcheting up the fear factor should help put May (the weakest and most wobbly leader we have seen) back in Downing Street. We've heard stories about Diane Abbott, Nicola Sturgeon, the IRA and Hamas to gather up the votes of all the misogynists, racists and chauvinists.

Flip Flop May has tried to show how tough she is by promising to take away our human rights and civil liberties. Corbyn has run an excellent campaign and confounded all his enemies, but I don't think he will win. I think the die was cast after the European Union referendum. Divided parties don't win. I hope I am

wrong and Corbyn is the next PM. But the Tories will be set back if they don't take many more seats than the current majority of 12.

The bigger picture, whoever wins the election, is the urgent necessity for the UK to undergo a democratic revolution. The country needs a new democracy and a new constitution and this requires people to organise themselves into a democratic movement. Ireland and Scotland, and to a lesser extent Wales, are in the front line of the battle. England has to wake up and catch up.

Democracy provides the way out of the hole that neoliberals have dug us into. Corbyn's socialism is an alternative to democratic revolution. Labour has a programme to restore or revive the UK's 'social monarchy' as represented by the 'spirit of 45'. It is a project which is well past its 'sell by' date, not because of ideas about public ownership, but because Westminster 'democracy' is a busted flush.

Democracy must have a *republican programme* if it is to take itself seriously. In this 'British exit' election it would be a good idea to start with: 1. Democratic Exit from the EU. 2. Repeal the 1707 Act of Union. 3. For a parliament for England. 4. For local people's assemblies. 5. For an 'Agreement of the People' or written constitution. 6. For a commonwealth of England.

The best way to prove our case is to have Jeremy Corbyn standing outside Downing Street, smiling and waving to the cameras, with Sinn Féin and the Scottish National Party having done well in Northern Ireland and Scotland. In the post-EU world get ready for a rough ride. It will be exciting.

**Steve Freeman**  
Left Unity and Rise

## No support

Lars T Lih continues his project of falsifying the history of the Russian Revolution ('All power to the soviets!', April 20 and May 4).

Karl Kautsky was a Darwinian, mechanical evolutionist and no revolutionist, who illegitimately took Engels' work, *The dialects of nature*, developed a one-sided understanding of the law-driven process that is the class struggle, stripped these laws of motion of the class struggle of the dialectical interaction between the subject, (revolutionary leadership) and object (the necessity for the socialist revolution) and presented it as an inevitable development. This is the most important, the most fought over and most decisive ideological question for Marxism and he got it wrong.

In this way Kautsky became the chief author of the mechanical materialism of the Second International. He opposed both the earlier dialectical materialism of Marx and Engels and that of Lenin and Trotsky when he confronted those. And, whilst Lenin and Trotsky might have appeared soft on Kautsky in 1905, Rosa Luxemburg had identified the problem of reformist objectivism in his politics from the turn of the century. John Rees, in the chapter, 'The first crisis of Marxism', in his *The algebra of revolution*, explains the problem with Kautsky well by this quote from his works:

"The future is certain and inevitable in the sense that it is inevitable that inventors improve technique, that capitalists in their greed revolutionise the economic life ... that it is inevitable that wage-earners aspire to shorter working hours and higher wages, that they organise themselves and struggle against the class of capitalists and the power of the state ... That it is inevitable that they aspire to political power and the abolition of the capitalist domination. Socialism is inevitable because the class struggle and the victory of the proletariat are so too" (quoted in J Larrain *A reconstruction of historical materialism* London 1986, p53).

Rees comments: "There is clearly an intellectual continuity between this kind of general formulation and the passive reformism, the rejection of revolution, that became the hallmark of the leaders

of the Second International. If socialism is inevitable, after all, why endanger its progress by revolutionary adventures? Why not wait for its inevitable progress to register in a parliamentary majority for the SPD?"

It is true that when Trotsky wrote the foreword to *The permanent revolution and results and prospects* in 1929, he went back over the three revolutions - 1905, February and October 1917 - to explain where everyone stood and he does not explicitly refer to Kautsky and his claimed coming together with Lenin's democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry and Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. The differences did not appear great then because their resolution was never posed - the 1905 revolution did not advance to the degree where the question, 'Which class ruled in what kind of revolution?', posed the life or death of the revolution. And Lenin and Trotsky were sensible enough to understand that their schemas were algebraic and why fight to the last over a problem not yet sharply posed?

Trotsky, who chaired the Petersburg soviet in 1905, explains: "I formulated the tasks of the successive stages of the revolution in exactly the same manner as Lenin; he [Radek] would have learned that the fundamental appeals to the peasants that were issued by the central press of the Bolsheviks in 1905 were written by me; that the *Novaya Zhizn* [New Life], edited by Lenin, in an editorial note, resolutely defended my article on the permanent revolution, which appeared in *Nachalo* [The Beginning]; that Lenin's *Novaya Zhizn*, and on occasion Lenin personally, supported and defended invariably those political decisions of the soviets of deputies which were written by me and on which I acted as reporter nine times out of 10; that, after the December defeat, I wrote while in prison a pamphlet on tactics, in which I pointed out that the combination of the proletarian offensive with the agrarian revolution of the peasants was the central strategic problem; that Lenin had this pamphlet published by the Bolshevik publishing house, *Novaya Volna* [New Wave], and informed me through [Bogdan] Knunyants of his hearty approval; that Lenin spoke at the London Congress in 1907 of my 'solidarity' with Bolshevism in my views on the peasantry and the liberal bourgeoisie. None of this exists for Radek; evidently he did not have this 'at hand' either."

When these questions were posed point-blank for immediate resolution after

February 1917, they had to be resolved, and were resolved, by the April theses, as we have explained in earlier letters. The worst falsification is the attempt to wipe from the historical record the struggle within the Bolsheviks. The minutes of the March 1917 party conference, on the attitude to the provisional government, were resurrected by Trotsky after there was a determined effort to bury them. Here is the report by comrade Stalin:

"In so far as the provisional government fortifies the steps of the revolution, to that extent we must support it; but in so far as it is counterrevolutionary, support to the provisional government is not permissible ... We must bide our time until the provisional government exhausts itself, until the time when in the process of fulfilling the revolutionary programme it discredits itself ... We, on the other hand, must bide our time [again - GD] until the moment when the events will reveal the hollowness of the provisional government; we must be prepared, when the time comes, when the events have matured, and until then we must organise the centre - the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies - and strengthen it. Therein lies the task of the moment."

This was precisely the conciliatory attitude Lenin came back to combat. "In so far as the provisional government fortifies the steps of the revolution, to that extent we must support it" and "We must bide our time until the provisional government exhausts itself, until the time when in the process of fulfilling the revolutionary programme it discredits itself" is directly counterposed to Lenin's April thesis, No3: "No support for the provisional government; the utter falsity of all its promises should be made clear, particularly of those relating to the renunciation of annexations. Exposure in place of the impermissible, illusion-breeding 'demand' that this government, a government of capitalists, should cease to be an imperialist government."

**Gerry Downing**  
Socialist Fight

## What we need

When I was a kid, people struggled for a better world; now similar such people fight for a stronger position in the competitive world we have. Che Guevara and Angela Davis have been replaced by kick-ass and martyrdom. What we need is a movement for a better society, not a mightier 'identity'.

**Mike Belbin**  
email

## Fighting fund

# Strange publicity

Last week saw a sudden surge in *Weekly Worker* online readership - up to 4,243, compared to a mere 2,585 the week before.

It seems clear to me that the explanation for this lies in the publicity coming our way from the final anti-Corbyn scare story before June 8. In 2002 our paper reported on a London demonstration organised by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, when Corbyn was one of many speakers. We noted the presence of a couple of hundred Al Muhajiroun Islamists amongst approximately 25,000 marchers - little did we realise that their presence was enough to damn Corbyn (and presumably everyone else there as well) as being sympathetic to suicide bombers. It is apparently of no relevance that our report stated: "They ought to have no place on our demonstrations - we must organise to exclude them" ('Build on success', May 22 2002).

But let's be grateful for the

publicity - maybe a proportion of those first-time readers will want to come back for more and, you never know, some of them may even donate to our fighting fund!

Speaking of which, our June fund has got off to a good start, with no fewer than 22 comrades supplying us with their usual standing orders, totalling £392. In addition, we received cheques from CT (£50) and VC (£20), while JP added a fiver to his resubscription. And among those 4,243 online readers PM (£15) and MN (£10) decided to click on the PayPal button.

So our June fund starts with £492 towards our £1,750 target. Not bad, but we could do with some of last week's newcomers showing their appreciation too! ●

**Robbie Rix**

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

# IRELAND

## No victory for progress

The new taoiseach is anything but progressive, writes Anne McShane. He opposes abortion and women's rights

The selection of Leo Varadkar, the gay son of an Indian immigrant, to replace Enda Kenny as the new leader of the ruling Fine Gael party elicited excited headlines in the liberal media. *The Guardian* hailed it as "another significant step forward for equality in the country, after 2015's gay marriage referendum".<sup>1</sup> The BBC proclaimed that Varadkar personified "the liberalisation of a country which was once regarded as one of Europe's most socially conservative nations..." He was trumpeted as one of the key figures in the marriage equality referendum in 2015 - which resulted in 62% of the population voting to amend the constitution to allow marriage to be contracted by two persons without distinction as to their sex.<sup>2</sup>

But Varadkar is no progressive. He is a deeply conservative politician who is simply furthering his ambitions. True, the election of a gay man has symbolic importance. However, rather than a step forward for equality in Ireland, his election is part of attempts to derail the persistent demands for secularism and women's rights. He has made it clear that he is deeply bound to the traditionalist politics of Fine Gael and the Irish state. Most certainly he wants no rift between church and state. Immediately he will be seeking to guard his party from the controversy around abortion rights - an issue that beyond all others has the potential to cause a major crisis within the theocratic state.

Despite all its efforts to silence them, demands for a woman's right to an abortion continue. The sops which had been legislated by way of appeasement have been treated with the derision they deserve. It is still the case that there can be no abortion unless a woman's life is at imminent risk unless it is carried out. This means that virtually no abortions are carried out and women continue to travel or seek illegal backstreet abortions or obtain online pills. In 2016 the United Nations once again condemned the Irish state as "cruel, inhuman and degrading in its treatment of women with non-viable pregnancies". Enda Kenny set up the Citizens Assembly of 100 people to reflect a "cross-section of the nation" in an attempt to stall the calls for change. The assembly heard submissions from all sides, including medical practitioners, and then - to the horror of its creator - came out firmly in support of abortion rights in a wide range of situations. It has proposed that terminations be allowed up to 12 weeks into the pregnancy for socio-economic reasons and thereafter for health reasons, rape or foetal abnormalities. This has clearly been a major blow to the government, which has since been trying to dig itself out of that particular hole.

Varadkar is primed to assist with this difficult process. He has made it clear that he does not support abortion except in exceptional circumstances of fatal foetal abnormalities

(when there is no chance of the foetus surviving) or when the health or life of the woman is at serious risk. He has indicated that the recommendations from the Citizens Assembly are likely to be ditched when the matter comes back before the Dáil. For Varadkar,

... abortion is a matter of sincerely held and different views within society and Fine Gael. It is essential that the debate ahead is conducted in a manner respectful of these different points of view. There will be no three-line whip on this issue.<sup>3</sup>

Indeed he objects to the controversial word 'foetus' being used: "It is yet to be explained to me why people use a medical word to talk about what is a form of human life, if not a person." At his patronising best, Varadkar, who is a trained GP, is clearly anxious that there be no challenge to the pro-life campaign, which insists on using photographs of full-term babies in its propaganda materials.

As well as the movement for women's rights, Varadkar will have to deal with the continuing objections to the involvement of the Catholic church in health and education, along with the never-ending exposures of abuses against women in mother-and-baby homes. One such has been over the involvement of the Bon Secour nuns in the operation of a new national maternity hospital. The controversy was provoked by the refusal of leading doctors to work within a framework where religion would play any role in their decisions. These objections led to demonstrations and petitions for the exclusion of the nuns.

Arguments also continue to run over the role of the church in schools, with more and more parents objecting to religious education. The debate on the separation of church and state is no longer an abstract one. There is a new generation of Irish people who are not prepared to live under church domination.

It was obvious that something was afoot when it was announced that Varadkar, then minister of health, would be the guest on Miriam O'Callaghan's Sunday morning radio show. Apparently she was surprised to be interviewing a serving politician, being more used to

lining up various worthies of the Irish establishment for our delectation. It was his birthday. O'Callaghan innocently (sic) enquired of him in her usual saccharine manner: "You are 36 today. You are by all accounts very eligible, but you haven't settled down yet, have you?" There was a little bit of stumbling and radio blushing before Varadkar informed the nation that he was gay. We were then treated to an in-depth account of Leo Varadkar - the man, the son, the partner. But the most important part was Leo, the politician. This was his official bid for the leadership of Fine Gael.

Varadkar seeks to blend what he believes to be his own 'personal appeal' with a bid to renew the conservatism of Fine Gael. In his leadership acceptance speech he declared that "prejudice has no hold in this republic". An absolute lie.

Not only is he is no friend of those seeking equality, but he is an avowed enemy of the poor and unemployed. His most recent initiative to 'name and shame' dole cheaters is a disgusting attempt to further oppress the poorest and most desperate of the population. As health minister he was known for his complete lack of empathy with the plight of those stuck in hospital corridors waiting for treatment. He prides himself on not giving in to the unions and has plans to outlaw strikes in some essential services. In all respects Varadkar is as bad, if not worse, than his predecessor.

On a final note, it is instructive to compare his enthusiasm for the marriage equality referendum in 2015 with his negative attitude to same-sex couples in 2010. In a Dáil debate on the civil partnership legislation he argued that it was inappropriate for them to adopt children. He stated:

Every child has the right to a mother and father and, as much as is possible, the state should vindicate that right. That is a much more important right than that of two men or women having a family. That is the principle that should underline our laws regarding children and adoption. I am also uncomfortable about adoption by single people regardless of their sexual orientation. I do not believe I as a single man should adopt a child. The child should go to parents, a mother and father...<sup>4</sup>

The Irish theocratic state is safe in his hands. Leo Varadkar's attempt to wrap himself in the colours of the struggle for gay liberation in Ireland is deeply cynical and must be rejected ●

anne.mcshane@weeklyworker.co.uk

### Notes

1. www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jun/02/leo-varadkar-becomes-irelands-prime-minister-elect.
2. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thirty-fourth\_Amendment\_of\_the\_Constitution\_of\_Ireland.
3. https://campaignforleo.ie/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/TAKING-IRELAND-FORWARD.pdf.
4. www.glen.ie/attachments/D%3%A1il\_Debates.PDF.



Leo Varadkar: nasty

# ACTION

### London Communist Forum

**Sunday June 11, 5pm:** Weekly political report from CPGB Provisional Central Committee, Calthorpe Arms, 252 Grays Inn Road, London WC1. Followed by open discussion and reading group: study of August Nimitz's *Lenin's electoral strategy from Marx and Engels through the revolution of 1905*. This meeting: chapter 1, 'What Marx and Engels bequeathed' (continued).

Organised by CPGB: www.cpgb.org.uk; and Labour Party Marxists: www.labourpartymarxists.org.uk.

### Music for Palestine

**Sunday June 11, 4pm:** Concert, United Reformed Church, 83 Portsmouth Road, Guildford GU2.

Middle Eastern music performed by Sama. Organised by West Surrey Palestine Solidarity Campaign: www.westsurreypsc.org.uk.

### The UK election and military intervention

**Monday June 12, 7.30pm:** Public meeting, Brent Trades Hall (London Apollo Club), 375 High Road, Willesden, London NW10.

Organised by Brent Stop the War: https://en-gb.facebook.com/BrentStoptheWar.

### Where is Putin going?

**Monday June 12, 7pm:** Public meeting, committee room 1, Council House, Victoria Square, Birmingham B1. Speaker: John Rees (Stop the War Coalition).

Organised by Birmingham Socialist Discussion Group: ser14@btinternet.com.

### Plants for Palestine

**Tuesday June 13, 11am to 4.30pm:** Money-raising sale of plants for Palestinian causes, Metro Cafe, 4 Junction Road, London N19.

Proceeds to Palestine Trauma Centre and Olive Harvest Trust. Organised by Palestine Solidarity Campaign: www.palestinecampaign.org.

### Impact of the Russian Revolution

**Thursday June 15, 2pm:** Lecture, Marx Memorial Library, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London EC1. With professor Mary Davis and Tommy Hodgson. £5 waged, £3 unwaged.

Organised by Marx Memorial Library: www.marx-memorial-library.org.

### Reimagining Rochdale

**Saturday, June 17, 10am to 2pm:** 'Pop-up', Rochdale town centre - exact location tbc. Rochdale today and its history in the cooperative movement.

Organised by Manchester Metropolitan University Cooperative Network, Rochdale Pioneers Museum: www.uk.coop/uniting-co-ops/events-calendar/cooperative-city-reimagining-rochdale.

### Renewables are here

**Saturday June 17, 10.15am to 5pm:** Conference, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London, WC1R 4RL. Anti-nuclear, pro-renewable event with high-profile speakers.

Organised by CND: www.cnduk.org.

### Transform Labour!

**Saturday June 17, 2pm to 5pm:** Meeting of Labour left, Student Central, Malet Street, London WC1.

Organised by Red Labour and Grassroots Momentum: info@grassrootsmomentum.com.

### People's Assembly

**Saturday June 17, 12 noon to 4pm:** National Assembly, Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London WC1.

Organised by People's Assembly: www.thepeoplesassembly.org.uk.

### Myths of war

**Sunday June 18, 7pm:** Live anti-war performance with Mark Rylance, Park Theatre, Clifton Terrace, Finsbury Park, London N4.

Organised by Stop the War Coalition: www.stopwar.org.uk.

### No to war

**Sunday June 18, 6.30pm:** Peace festival, All Saints Parish Church, Victoria Terrace, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire.

Organised by Leamington Peace Festival: http://peacefestival.org.uk.

### Peace pagoda

**Sunday June 18, 10.30am:** Cross-cultural peace ceremony, Brickhill Street, Willen, Milton Keynes MK15.

Organised by Peace Pagoda: http://stopwar.org.uk/index.php/events/other-anti-war-events/2549-18-june-milton-keynes-peace-pagoda.

### Tension, Trump and the two Koreas

**Wednesday June 21, 7pm:** Public meeting, committee rooms 3 and 4, Council House, Birmingham B1. Speaker: Billy Hayes.

Organised by Birmingham Stop the War Coalition: www.facebook.com/BStWC.

### Living on the edge

**Monday June 26, 9am to 4.30pm:** Conference, Congress House, London WC1. 'The rise of job insecurity in Britain.'

Organised by TUC: www.tuc.org.uk.

### Social histories of the Russian Revolution

**Thursday June 29, 6.30pm:** Discussion meeting, Birkbeck, University of London, 26 Russell Square, London WC1. 'The working class and the first five-year plan, 1928-32'.

Speaker: Don Filtzer. Organised by Social Histories of the Russian Revolution: https://socialhistories1917.wordpress.com.

### 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.

## POLEMIC

## Self-deception and apologetics

The AWL cannot bring itself to condemn imperialist interventions *in principle*, writes **Mike Macnair**

**A**nother week, another terrorist attack. It is becoming almost like the 1970s ...

A product of the June 3 London Bridge atrocity is hand-wringing of one sort or another about the failure of the government's 'anti-radicalisation' strategy.<sup>1</sup> Another associated effect is that a June 5 poll found that 75% of respondents "agreed with Corbyn" that the various British military interventions made terrorist attacks in the UK more likely.<sup>2</sup>

Clive Bradley of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty (or Alliance for Foreign Office Liberty, as some of us refer to it) has written on this issue in the May 31 issue of the AWL paper *Solidarity*. Like AWL articles on these issues generally, Bradley's is characterised by weasel words. He rightly concludes:

But what [Corbyn] has actually said is right, as far as it goes. And the Tories' attempts to attack him for it should be denounced for the dishonest, demagogic scandal they are.

But this 'right'-ness is, for Bradley, extraordinarily narrow. It is not the obvious *injustice* of the 'western' interventions in the Middle East which is to be imagined as motivating terrorists. That would call into question the AWL's own neutral to positive evaluation of these interventions - 'neither support nor oppose'. Rather, he says,

There were many aspects to western policy which fuelled the growth of what was to become [Islamic State] - principally the utter lack of any sort of plan for what would come after the fall of Saddam, the decision to destroy the bureaucracy of the Iraqi state, driving thousands of Sunni Arabs into the arms of the jihadists, and the decision to back a Shia-sectarian government, which made this worse.

Libya, where Salman Abedi was born, was in some ways a repeat of the same thing on a smaller scale.

The completely arbitrary selection of *some* tyrannical regimes to be bombed, invaded, etc - while other, equally tyrannical, regimes are treated as friends of the 'west' - evidently could not, according to Bradley, explain the desire to take armed action against the mad western bombers - but *inefficiency* in 'regime change' could. A remarkable colonialist assumption.

On Libya, indeed, in spite of the evident *close* connection of the attacker, Abedi, to the jihadis the UK government backed against the Gaddafi regime, and the obvious failed-state outcome, Bradley *continues* to defend the AWL's refusal to oppose the intervention:

It is the opinion of this writer, for instance, that, though the outcome of military intervention in Libya was predictable up to a point, at the time - March 2011 - the only real alternative was to allow Gaddafi to survive and immediately massacre his opponents. Moreover, the rebel movement was calling for intervention. The proper socialist response was not to march in opposition to military intervention - as Stop the War did, if ineffectually, but to support the revolution against Gaddafi and warn about likely future problems.

Still today, to reduce a critique of western policy in Libya to the fact of intervention is to miss a lot of the point.

This argument is, in fact, also inconsistent with Bradley's prior explanation of IS. For there to have been "a plan for what



**Afghan mujahedin and US supplied Stinger missile**

would come after the fall of Saddam", and a decision to preserve "the bureaucracy of the Iraqi state", it would have been necessary that this state was allowed the military capability to destroy its enemies in arms; and what would have been left afterwards would have been in Iraq a sub-Ba'athist regime; in Libya a sub-'Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya' regime.

### Not war

On what basis are we asked by Bradley to believe that the terrorists are *not* trying to bring a little of the death and destruction which the 'west' has rained on the Middle East back home?

Bradley offers three objections:

the vast majority of Muslims, for instance, don't, despite these foreign policy outrages, feel motivated to blow up teenagers; ... often the terrorists aren't personally from the countries affected (even in the Manchester case, it's unclear if Salman Abedi's action was specifically in reference to events in Libya); ... the terrorists' aims are so unspecific, even apolitical, but rather just an expression of general hatred.

The first of these points is quite senseless. Looking back to the 1970s, the vast majority of Six Counties Catholics did not become IRA fighters; the vast majority of Basques did not become ETA fighters; the vast majority of even German *Maoists* did not become Red Army Faction fighters. But these facts do not license us to suppose that the Irish or Basque nationalism or the Maoism was not the primary motivation of the fighters.

The second is almost equally irrelevant. It is an attempt to argue that you are not permitted to be concerned about an injustice which does not affect you personally, and still less about an injustice in some foreign country. It is, however, obvious that the wish to give aid and assistance to the downtrodden is a matter of elementary human sympathy, which under the regime of modern mass media leads vast masses of people to take small actions to attempt to help people in faraway countries. 'Radicalisation' into salafism commonly *begins* with involvement in Muslim charity work, and this was part of the strategic conception of the Muslim Brotherhood and of Hamas.

The third is just untrue. The jihadis have perfectly clear aims. There is masses of information available in print and on the web on different conceptions of an Islamic regime as an alternative to 'western' social and political order. The fact that these aims are, in liberal or leftwing eyes, utopian-reactionary, and that there are various versions (Hezbollah's version is different from Da'esh's) does not disqualify them from

being aims.

Libya, in fact, demonstrated most clearly the AWL's true character. Once, it used to argue that Islamism was a form of reactionary anti-capitalism which grew up independent of issues of 'western' policy, as a response to capitalist development in the Middle East, and was a more serious enemy to the workers' movement than 'western' ('modern' capitalist) policy. But then the US turned to the attack on Iraq - an attack on a *secular nationalist* regime, which was *predicted* to strengthen both Islamist forces in Iraq and the Islamic Republic of Iran - and it turned out that the AWL thought it was a bad idea to unequivocally oppose *this* attack. Then Libya, where the UK and France were in *explicit alliance* with Islamists against secular nationalists - and *still* the AWL thought opposing the attack was a bad idea, for reasons Bradley *still* defends.

It has thus become clear that what is at issue is not the reactionary character of the Islamists, but the AWL's weaselling forms of support for UK foreign policy.

Perhaps *Solidarity's* editors found Clive Bradley's arguments against the line that terrorism is partly a 'blowback' from the wars not strong enough. They combine it on the same page with a shorter piece by Colin Foster, which begins:

Andy Burnham, now Labour mayor of Manchester, probably wanted to cover for his votes in favour of the invasion of Iraq. But, as it stood, his comment on May 28 was right: "Obviously, the actions of governments can then contribute and help the terrorists to add to their cause, but let's remember that the appalling atrocity of 9/11 happened before interventions anywhere."

Modern-era suicide bombing dates from the 1980s, not from 2003 ...

Foster's suggestion that Burnham was *right* to say that "9/11 happened before interventions anywhere" is equally extraordinary. What about the 1991 Gulf War and the 'turkey shoot' of retreating Iraqi forces? What about the continuing occupation of the West Bank and the continuing process of (illegal) expropriation of the inhabitants for the benefit of settlers?

Foster, indeed, goes on to say that "Modern-era suicide bombing dates from the 1980s ..." But he carefully does not tell us the context in which it arose: *Israel invaded Lebanon* in order to attack the Palestinian refugee camps there (and with an aim of acquiring long-term control of south Lebanon). Through their Lebanese Christian militia proxies, the Israeli occupiers committed a genocidal massacre at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps. The United States then *intervened* with troops as a "peacekeeping" force (just as Britain

and France did in Suez in 1956), but in fact in the Israeli interest as well as for its own ends.

It was in this context that the Lebanese Shia Islamist party-militia, Hezbollah, invented the modern form of 'suicide bombing'. And it was the apparent partial success of this tactic in 1983 - the US did, in fact, withdraw its troops from Lebanon - that has promoted its more widespread use since then.<sup>3</sup>

Suicide bombing, in short, *was and is* a means of carrying on warfare under conditions of violent asymmetry of the military means available.

We can go a little further than this. The AWL, like other left or ostensibly left formations, carries in *Solidarity* historical articles which invite the reader to recall and think on the basis of events going all the way back to the early history of the socialist movement in the later 19th century. This year, of course, there is a predominance of articles about 1917. They expect this history to motivate and educate their readers.

But then Bradley's and Foster's arguments demand that Arab or Muslim people should *forget* the fraudulent lending backed by armed robbery which enmeshed later 19th century Egypt and turned it into a British-operated creditors' protectorate; or the Ottoman Debt Administration of the same period and down to 1914; or the post-1918 partitioning of the Ottoman empire under the Sykes-Picot agreement, and the Balfour Declaration; or the *Nakba* ethnic cleansing of 1947-48; and so on, and on ...

They are supposed to forget these events because, according to the AWL, imperialism has changed into an "imperialism of free trade", which merely polices the boundaries of regular competition, unlike the "paleo-imperialism" of the 1991 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Tell that to the British, French, German and Russian companies who were ousted from Iraqi contracts by the US invasion of Iraq: a piece of blatant late 19th century-style imperial protectionism. This in turn may have motivated Britain and France to take the lead in attacking Libya, to get their own national firms' trotters in this trough (it turned out they did not have the military resources to do the job without US aid).<sup>4</sup>

In short: Bradley and Foster are deluding themselves if they imagine that their arguments do anything more than put a pseudo-leftist spin on the fashionable media products promoted by the US state department and UK foreign office.

### War

However, the jihadist terrorists are *also* deluding themselves.

Their starting point, as I already said, is 'no justice, no peace': the radical and obvious injustice of 'the west's' operations in the Middle East and the 'Islamic world' more generally. However, as I have already said, that injustice is no novelty; and between the 1900s and the 1970s, radical responses to it were more likely to be communist or left-nationalist than Islamist. Already by 1900 the successes of the US, Germany, Italy and Japan in escaping from subordination to Britain made state-led and protectionist development an attractive strategy. The Russian Revolution added 'developmental socialism in one country' to the menu.

1975 was the high point in this trend, with the fall of Saigon and decolonisation of the Portuguese overseas empire. But at the same time, it was already clear to those who actually spent time in the USSR or China as students, as opposed to doing Potemkin-village tourism, that these countries harboured their own

chauvinisms (Great Han, Great Russian) towards 'third world' students; and also that these were seriously poor countries compared to the west. In this context, the appeal of the 'developmental socialism' model was weakened.

Moreover, the 1973-74 'oil price shock' moved resources from pretty much everywhere else to Saudi Arabia. The Saudis then began to spend the money, with the backing of the US, in promoting their Wahabi-salafist version of Islam through charities, mosque-building, etc; a process which has gone on to the present day.

It was under Jimmy Carter (1976-80) that Israeli security agencies began to back the Islamists and their Saudi-funded charities to undermine the Palestine Liberation Organisation, leading to the later creation of Hamas; and that the US began to back mujahedin opponents of the Afghan regime of Daoud Khan. General Mohamed Zia ul-Haq, who in 1977 (with US backing) overthrew the Pakistan People's Party government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, also postured as an Islamist and was heavily involved in promoting the Afghan mujahadeen.

In short, the emergence of Islamist jihadism from the later 1970s was a *turn of US policy*, through the Saudi kingdom as a mechanism.

The point is sharply illustrated by the differences between the Manchester attack - using a bomb by someone who was tied into military training and supplies through a Libyan group ultimately, if indirectly, linked to Saudi funding (and funded by the UK in the period of the struggle to overthrow Gaddafi), and killing 23 at the cost of one terrorist life - and the amateur operation in London, using everyday items (van, knives) and killing eight for three terrorist lives (a very unfavourable rate of exchange for the terrorists). Horrible as the event is, repeated attempts of the London Bridge variety would exhaust the supply of jihadis.

It is also sharply illustrated by the inability of the British (or US) state to run an actual campaign to control the *preaching* of jihad, or to distinguish people who are merely political Islamists from potential jihadis. They cannot do either, because what is being preached is precisely orthodox wahhabism promoted by Saudi charities, and the attempts at terrorism are merely carrying this doctrine into action.

The terrorists may *imagine* that they have found a new mechanism for 'bringing the war back home', fighting the deep injustice of the world order. But, if so, it is a complete delusion. In launching terror attacks, they do not bring the war home to its actual promoters in the 'western' states, but merely *serve* these promoters, for whom the jihadis on the ground are useful idiots ●

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### Notes

1. Eg, A Biencoff, 'Theresa May is "responsible" for London terror attack and must resign, says top David Cameron aide' *Business Insider* June 5; A Lusher, 'British Muslim "industry" accused of undermining deradicalisation efforts' *The Independent* June 3; and so on.
2. 'Majority of British voters agree with Corbyn's claim UK foreign policy increases risk of terrorism' *The Independent* June 6.
3. I Overton and H Dodd, 'A short history of suicide bombing' (2013) is useful: <https://aoav.org.uk/2013/a-short-history-of-suicide-bombings>. On the US withdrawal of troops from Lebanon, Wikipedia's '1983 Beirut barracks bombings' is well-documented.
4. I do not mean to say that these trivial advantages to US companies were the primary motivations for the invasion of Iraq. The point is merely that this sort of 'non-tariff barrier' protectionism is *default behaviour* for the 'advanced capitalist' states, so that the idea of an actual 'imperialism of free trade' in the American Federation of Labour's sense is a delusion.

## RUSSIA 1917

# A forgotten strategist

Ben Lewis introduces Karl Kautsky's article of April 1917

As part of our ongoing commemoration of the centenary of the Russian Revolution, we felt that it would be useful to reprint an article by Karl Kautsky - the 'pope of Marxism' later turned 'renegade' - which was first published in English translation by the *Weekly Worker* eight years ago.

Originally it appeared in the journal of the Social Democratic Party of Germany, *Die Neue Zeit*. The article, 'Prospects of the Russian Revolution', sheds important light on the undercurrents of the Russian revolutionary process and offers both analysis and predictions regarding its next stage: ie, following the overthrow of the tsar and the establishment of the provisional government. What is striking is that, despite the fact that Lenin and the Bolsheviks had long broken with Kautsky, there is an obvious overlap between Kautsky's thinking and that of the Bolsheviks.

It is impossible to say with certainty whether, and to what extent, the article may have influenced Lenin's approach in 1917. But it is undeniably the case that Lenin, whose study (now a museum) still boasts a complete collection of *Die Neue Zeit*, would have read the piece. Moreover, Kautsky had been something of an authority on Russian politics and the nature of the coming revolution for some time. His ideas were keenly read in Russian Marxist circles from at least the turn of the 20th century.<sup>1</sup>

Recently, the *Weekly Worker* ran a translation of an article of his from 1906, which bears a similar title: 'The driving forces and prospects of the Russian Revolution'. This article had an enormous impact and was described by Lenin as no less than "a brilliant vindication of the fundamental principles of Bolshevik tactics".<sup>2</sup> Much water passed under the bridge between 1906 and 1917, of course, but even a cursory glance at the two pieces reveals an underlying similarity in their arguments regarding the forces and dynamics behind revolution in Russia: the importance of democracy, the weakness of the Russian bourgeoisie (thus discounting it as any kind of a reliable ally), and the possibility of a worker-peasant regime. What is novel about the 1917 article is the prospect of taking "considerable steps" towards "socialist development" through the nationalisation of large firms, the railways, church estates, etc. Lenin too comes out with a similar formulation in his 'April thesis' ... though it did not feature in the political battles leading to the October rising. Of course, moving towards socialism was contingent upon events in Europe, crucially Germany. And Europe, Kautsky argues, will be shaken up beyond recognition by the remarkable and rapidly changing events happening in Russia.

We hope that by making these texts available we are able to convey how the October revolution of 1917 was not merely the outcome of an outpouring of anger and defiance on the part of a brutalised, war-torn Russian population, but resulted from a clear programme of revolution, mass organisations and deeply-rooted Marxist consciousness. All of these, after all, were patiently built, and expanded upon, in the course of decades, not days. Bolshevik strategy is thus inseparable from the achievements of the Second International (1889-1914), of which Kautsky was, of course, a pioneering thinker.

### Renegade

In the introduction to the reprint of this piece, I do not wish to outline in any more detail the content of Kautsky's 1917

article: those who are reading the piece for the first time would be well-advised to read Lars T Lih's original introduction<sup>3</sup> or his recent piece on Kautsky and the "axiom of the class ally" in this paper.<sup>4</sup> Instead, I wish to take a step back from and briefly explore an apparent paradox at the heart of Kautsky's legacy: why is it the case that a thinker who was so patently pivotal to the development of Russian revolutionary Marxism has come to be understood by the contemporary left as somebody who represents everything that the Bolsheviks supposedly had to overcome in order to carry out a successful revolution?

Today, after all, Kautsky is mainly remembered for his polemics against the young Bolshevik regime or as the 'renegade' in Lenin's *The proletarian revolution and the renegade Kautsky* (1918), which pillories him for his wavering stance in opposing World War I and his (later) outright hostility to the Russian Revolution of October 1917. Understandably, therefore, Kautsky's authority as a Marxist theoretician was seriously called into question ever since Lenin's polemic. Indeed, anecdote has it that not only Lenin's critique of Kautsky, but also the very title of his anti-Kautsky pamphlet, has moulded historical consciousness. The Kautsky scholar, Hans-Josef Steinberg, for instance, recalls - or claims to recall - hearing from his colleague, Georges Haupt, that at various history conferences across the globe in the 1970s and 1980s students and academics actually thought that Kautsky's forename was 'Renegade'.<sup>5</sup>

Be that as it may, Lenin's choice of the term is worth bearing in mind when considering Kautsky's legacy today. For to call somebody a renegade is to assert that this somebody, for whatever reason, has *reneged* on, or turned away from, what he once held dear - not that what he believed in was useless from the outset. Seen in this light, Lenin's charge against Kautsky is *not* that the latter had always been a traitor to the cause of socialism, but that at a certain point he had flinched back from the perspectives he had formulated earlier. Indeed, following the outbreak of World War I, Lenin recommended to a comrade that he should "Obtain without fail and reread (or ask to have it translated for you) *Road to power* by Kautsky [and see] what he writes there about the revolution of our time! And now, how he acts the toady and disavows all that."<sup>6</sup> Lenin tried to explain Kautsky's renegacy in the realm of *politics*. Clara Zetkin, the leading German revolutionary who was a close friend of the Kautsky family in Stuttgart, adopted a similar approach. In 1920, she wrote:

Nobody disputes Kautsky's great and enduring service of teaching the most advanced workers the ABC of scientific socialism, of historical materialism. Nor does anybody dispute that he fought to shed further light on Marx's world of thought, to develop this thought and to make a cadre of advanced proletarian fighters feel at home within it. But it is precisely this which makes his 'fall from grace' all the more inexcusable.<sup>7</sup>

Later on in the 1920s, however, many of those writing in defence of the Russian Revolution and against Kautsky, such as Karl Korsch and Georg Lukács, sought to locate Lenin's split with Kautsky *philosophically*, not in

the realm of particular political choices. Jules Townshend has helpfully coined the term, "neo-Hegelian interpretation", for this approach, which has exerted a huge - albeit often unconscious - influence on the left's understanding of Kautsky through to this day.<sup>8</sup> For Korsch and Lukács, Kautsky's errors lay in his *philosophical* development and his articulation of a purportedly positivistic, Darwinist vulgar Marxism,<sup>9</sup> which reduced human consciousness to an expression of economic interests and downplayed the role of active human agency in bringing about socialist revolution, with Kautsky assuring his followers that they could sit by and wait for the revolution to ripen almost like a natural process.<sup>10</sup>

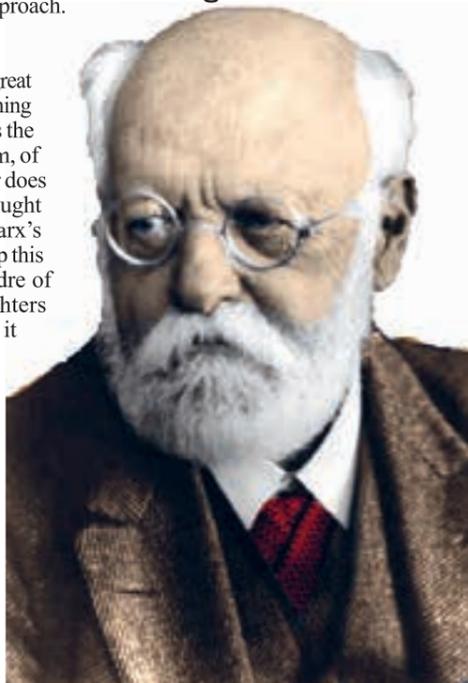
The real break between Lenin and Kautsky, according to this view, occurred when Lenin, angry at Kautsky and the political capitulation of the Second International in the face of war, *reread Hegel* in Swiss exile<sup>11</sup> and abandoned the non-dialectical, Kautsky-inspired world outlook he had once held dear. This view became influential in German academia following the publication of *Kautsky und der Kautskyanismus* in 1928 by the prominent historian, Erich Matthias. For Matthias, Kautsky's verbal radicalism was a mere façade for the SPD's political passivity and quietism, which paved the way for that party's gradual integration into the structures of the German empire, as expressed most clearly in the *Burgfrieden* [civil peace] policies of August 1914.<sup>12</sup>

### Stalinism

The gulf between Kautsky and Lenin, between 'revolutionary social democracy' and Bolshevism, was widened even further with the rise of Stalinism in Russia. Basing itself on an ahistorical and quasi-religious cult of Lenin, Stalinist historical output contended that the views of Kautsky and those of Bolshevism were worlds apart. As Stalin himself put it in his notoriously fabricating *Short course* of 1939, "*The party strengthens itself by purging its ranks of opportunist elements* - that is one of the maxims of the Bolshevik Party, which is a party of a new type fundamentally different from the Social Democratic parties of the Second International."<sup>13</sup>

The corollary of this approach was the marginalisation of Kautsky's ideas in the eastern bloc. In the early Soviet Union, however, plans were afoot to produce a multi-volume collection of Kautsky's pre-1914 works in Russian

**Karl Kautsky: a Marxist before he reneged**



translation. In 1923, the Marx-Engels Institute in Moscow decided to publish a series of the most important works of the 'early Kautsky', for which Lenin had such praise. Fourteen volumes were planned, but by 1930 only four had actually been published. With the removal of David Ryazanov from the institute, the project collapsed altogether.<sup>14</sup> In his short obituary of Kautsky, written in 1938, Trotsky's criticism of the Stalinist marginalisation of Kautsky is essentially correct (and almost universally ignored by those who invoke Trotsky's name today):

The attempts of the present historiography of the Comintern to present things as if Lenin, almost in his youth, had seen in Kautsky an opportunist and had declared war against him, are radically false. Almost up to the time of the world war, Lenin considered Kautsky as the genuine continuator of the cause of Marx and Engels.<sup>15</sup>

In the west meanwhile, and alongside the neo-Hegelian interpretation of the left, a *bourgeois* school of thought came into existence, which was essentially a mirror image of the Stalinist interpretative framework. The only major difference was that this school of thought placed minus signs where the Stalinist school placed plus signs and *vice versa*. A huge literature emerged which basically agreed with the Stalinist approach: social democracy and Bolshevism, Kautsky and Lenin - it concluded - had little in common. To the extent that this literature engaged with Kautsky, its conclusion was the same as that of the Stalinists: the Czech-German thinker and the Russian revolutionary were worlds apart. The later Kautsky in particular thus came to symbolise decent, civilised, 'western' thought, whereas the semi-Asiatic despotic hordes of Russian Bolshevism had never had anything to do with such 'western' Marxist views.

During the cold war, a peculiar consensus thus emerged. From different angles, and for different reasons, the three main schools outlined above tend to suggest that Kautsky's views of democracy, organisation and revolutionary change had little or nothing to do with the political practice of Russian Bolshevism and the Russian Revolution of 1917. The cold war is long gone, but this consensus continues to exert a profound influence on the contemporary left's (mis)understanding of the underlying political ideas of the Russian Revolution.

Needless to say, bad history begets bad politics - and vice versa. It is hoped that, by making available to a contemporary audience this and other similar texts, we can provide a more rounded appreciation of the Russian Revolution and its underlying programmatic DNA. Rereading 'Prospects of the Russian Revolution', one hundred years on, it is striking just how *wrong* the consensus on Kautsky is: he is no passive fatalist, but a profoundly political writer with a keen strategic eye and - as his musings on France and England in this piece underline - a rigorously historical approach to working class self-liberation.

Of course, particularly with the benefit of hindsight, a whole host of criticisms can be levelled at Kautsky for his tendency to smooth over disputes in the name of unity and so on,<sup>16</sup> but this should not blind us to his impact - warts and all<sup>17</sup> - on Bolshevism. He may have eventually come to despise the revolution he had once predicted in some detail, but

this was due to his own 'fall from grace' *politically*, not a preordained result of inherent flaws in his appropriation of the Hegelian dialectic.

If we are to begin to grasp the genuine legacy of Bolshevism, free from all the ideological baggage of the 20th century, then this necessitates breaking with the dominant consensus outlined above. In short, we must avoid throwing out the Second International's Marxist baby with the renegade bathwater ●

### Notes

1. Cf M Donald *Marxism and revolution: Karl Kautsky and the Russian Marxists 1900-24* New Haven 1993.
2. Quoted in LT Lih, 'All power to the soviets' *Weekly Worker* May 4 2017.
3. Cf LT Lih, 'Lenin, Kautsky and the April thesis' *Weekly Worker* January 14 2010.
4. Quoted in LT Lih, 'All power to the soviets' *Weekly Worker* May 4 2017.
5. J Rojahn, T Schelz-Brandenburg and H-J Steinberg (eds) *Marxismus und Demokratie: Karl Kautskys Bedeutung in der sozialistischen Arbeiterbewegung* Frankfurt am Main 1992, p19.
6. Cf LT Lih, "'The new era of war and revolution': Lenin, Kautsky, Hegel and the outbreak of World War I", in A Anievas (ed) *Cataclysm 1914: the first world war and the making of modern world politics* Leiden 2014, p372.
7. C Zetkin *Der Weg nach Moskau* Hamburg 1920, pp9-10.
8. J Townshend, 'Reassessing Kautsky's Marxism' *Political Studies* Vol 27 (1989), pp659-64.
9. Kautsky's response to Korsch, which focuses on what he sees as some of the latter's brash exaggerations and crudities, appears to have been consigned to historical oblivion. I translated this response into English in 2012, almost 90 years after it was first published. See Karl Kautsky, 'A destroyer of vulgar Marxism' *Platypus* 43: 2-4.
10. This reading of Kautsky dovetailed with the notion, prevalent in academic circles, that Engels himself was responsible for the flattening and simplification of Marxism, removing its dialectical edge. The classic account of this is in Leszek Kolakowski's three-volume history of Marxism. His chapters on Kautsky and what he terms the "golden age" of Marxism in the Second International also make claims along these lines (L Kolakowski *Main currents of Marxism: its origin, growth and dissolution* Oxford 1978, pp1-57).
11. Writing in 1924, Grigory Zinoviev provides a slightly different take on Lenin's purported Damascene conversion. Zinoviev recalls how utterly *bored* Lenin was in Swiss exile: "Vladimir Ilyich ... 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 [my emphasis] but to sit around in the libraries." Cf G Zinoviev, 'Lenin's arrival in Russia' *Weekly Worker* April 6 2017.
12. E Matthias *Kautsky und der Kautskyanismus: die Funktion der Ideologie in der deutschen Sozialdemokratie vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg* Tübingen 1957 [1928].
13. JV Stalin *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks): short course* Moscow 1939, p142. The Lenin cult is expressed in these comments: "However, these brilliant ideas of Marx [on the necessity of an alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry] were not developed subsequently in the works of Marx and Engels, while the theoreticians of the Second International did their utmost to bury them and consign them to oblivion. To Lenin fell the task of bringing these forgotten ideas of Marx to light and restoring them to their full rights" (*ibid* p75).
14. Werner Blumenberg suggests that the plan for the publication of these works may have even contributed to Ryazanov's removal (W Blumenberg *Karl Kautskys literarisches Werk: eine bibliographische Übersicht* The Hague 1960, p9).
15. L Trotsky, 'Karl Kautsky' *New Internationalist*, 2: 50-1, pp50-1. Nonetheless, in this article and elsewhere, Trotsky also contributes to a different kind of marginalisation along the lines of 'Lenin was fooled by Kautsky; his influence was a mistake of his youth' (something which also underplays Trotsky's own devoted remarks about Kautsky at various points in his early career). Following a speech by Lenin in Zurich in October 1914, for instance, Trotsky found it absurd that Lenin repeatedly called Kautsky a traitor in the light of the latter's behaviour regarding German social democracy's approval of war credits; cf LT Lih, 'The new era of war and revolution' *op cit*.
16. Such as in the resolution on government participation drawn up by Kautsky for the Paris Congress of the Second International in 1900. The *Iskra* editorial board mockingly referred to this as the 'rubber resolution' on account of its political malleability.
17. In this respect, it should be recalled that Rosa Luxemburg, irrespective of the conclusions she drew, was pointing out some of these very flaws from around 1910 onwards. Probably because of her underlying differences with thinkers such as Lenin, her protests largely fell on deaf ears in the Russian movement.

## RUSSIA 1917

# Prospects of the Russian Revolution

Kautsky saw the events of spring 1917 as having a global significance. Even though now a renegade, he was still capable of considerable foresight

Naturally, the first question that arose at the outbreak of the revolution in Russia was how it would affect the arrival of peace. We already dealt with this in an earlier article ('The ice palace' in No26 of the previous volume)<sup>1</sup>. But, just as the violence of the current war goes far beyond that of the Russo-Japanese war, the current revolution also promises to revolutionise the Russian empire far more than that of 1905.

If the revolution holds its ground, then its effects will reach far beyond Russia and will see the beginning of a new epoch for the whole of Europe. For, in spite of all the nationalist fervour, the international interdependence of state life for the peoples of Europe has already made too much progress for such a tremendous event as the transformation of the tsarist empire into a democratic republic to occur without repercussions for the other states.

If democracy holds its ground in Russia, then both the Austrian and the Polish problems immediately acquire new facets. The idea of Polish independence and the preservation of Austria amongst the peoples living there drew their strength from the hatred and the fear instilled by the despotism of neighbouring Russia. This idea changes when it takes on the form of the united states of eastern Europe. With this, the Balkan problem becomes quite a different one too.

Domestic politics in the whole of Europe will be subject to even more profound change than the foreign politics of eastern Europe. The necessary consequence of this is a tremendous upswing in the political power of the working classes in the entire capitalist realm.

But, of course, this all presupposes that the revolution holds its ground and does not succumb to a counterrevolution. The fate of the 1905 revolution, as well as that of 1848, elicits anxious doubt in some. Those of us not adhering to this perspective need to be clear about the prospects of the revolution.

Because it broke out in the middle of the war, the prospects of the revolution are first of all dependent on how the war continues and concludes, and not least on the individual warring powers' stance on the revolution and whether they show themselves inclined to make an agreement with the revolution or to combat it. A military catastrophe for the Russian commonwealth could also become a catastrophe for the revolution. In this respect its prospects depend on the attitude of the warring states' governments, but also on their social democratic parties - above all on that of the German party.

But is the revolution not already condemned to fail from the outset due to Russia's economic backwardness?

In an article about the revolution on March 18, *Vorwärts*<sup>2</sup> asked the question, "Has the Russian people's situation improved through the revolution?" and it gave the following answer: "Time will tell! For the time being it has merely exchanged the rule of absolutism for that of the bourgeoisie!" One could just as well say, "What did the French people achieve in their great revolution?" Back then they merely "exchanged the rule of absolutism for that of the bourgeoisie".

First of all, it is vulgar to compare the reign of absolutism with that of the bourgeoisie. Absolutism is a form of government. The bourgeoisie is a class which can rule under the most diverse forms of government. If we do not draw a nonsensical comparison between the existence of a form of government and the reign of a class, but if we instead compare different forms of government,



Global impact predicted

then we arrive at this result: the Russian people have exchanged absolutism for democracy. Does such an exchange deserve the predicate "merely"? In the same article, *Vorwärts* even underlines how "we need democracy!"

Nor is it correct to say that "for the time being" we have the "rule of the bourgeoisie" in Russia. Rather, the bourgeoisie has taken a fairly helpless attitude toward the events by which it is being carried away. But this is, of course, a situation that cannot last for long. The consolidation of the new state formation's conditions is closely related to answering the following question: the rule of the proletariat or the rule of the bourgeoisie?

There is no bourgeois revolution which would have taken place without the active participation of the proletariat. But in the first bourgeois revolutions from 1642 to 1848, the mass of the proletariat joined the revolutionary struggle without pronounced class-consciousness. Only in the course of revolutionary development - only after years in the first English revolution and the great French revolution, and then only to a limited extent - did the proletariat begin to see its specific interests and gain specific understanding of state and society, as opposed to that of the bourgeoisie.

But, in comparison to previous bourgeois revolutions, the proletariat has now developed a sharply pronounced class-consciousness, and this has not been restricted to the most economically developed countries: it has also spread to the economically backward countries, just so long as they have attained a modern capitalism and a modern proletariat. The urban workers in Russia possess a strong class-consciousness, and their socialist leaders are armed with 20th century knowledge.

But this indicates that they join the revolution in strong opposition from the outset to any bourgeois rule; they do not develop this opposition only after the revolution is in progress.

At the same time, the hitherto existing form of government in Russia was such that it did not merely hugely inhibit proletarian development: equally it inhibited bourgeois development and led the state to ruin. Overthrowing absolutism was also urgently necessary for the bourgeoisie, but the violent overthrow of absolutism was not possible without the participation of the proletariat, which under the given circumstances instilled extreme fear in the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie thus offered the absolutist regime only the weakest opposition; tsarism had to first bring Russia to the brink of the abyss before the bourgeoisie would oppose it more energetically - obeying necessity, not their own inner drive. But all the more was the revolution that eventually broke out a proletarian one from the very beginning.

Will it be able to maintain this

character in the face of the empire's economic backwardness? And does a victory of bourgeois forces have to undo everything that the revolution has achieved?

These are the questions forcing themselves on us. Here, of course, we cannot prophesise or say with certainty whether the revolution will hold its ground or not. We can say nothing on this. But from the data available to us we can perhaps draw some conclusions in answering the question of whether the revolution is condemned to fail from the outset.

### Socialism

Above all we must be clear about the tasks that arise for a revolutionary proletarian regime.

There are two things that the proletariat urgently needs: democracy and socialism. Democracy means extensive freedoms and political rights for the mass of the people, and transforming the institutions of state and municipal administration into mere tools of the people. And then socialism, which means transforming private production for the market into social - ie, state, municipal or cooperative - production for the needs of society. Both require the proletariat in equal measure. Social production without democracy could become one of the most onerous shackles. Democracy without socialism does nothing to abate the proletariat's economic dependency.

Of the two great demands of the proletariat, the demand for democracy is not specific to it alone. Other classes can represent it too. Yet today it is, of course, the only class which - as the lowest of all classes - demands (and has to demand) it with the greatest energy in all circumstances and to the greatest extent.

On the other hand, the demand of socialism is its specific demand. All other classes' points of view are based on private production. For them, socialised factories are at most isolated implements of private production, not a general way of overcoming it.

The two demands also differ, in that democracy can be attained with a single blow and can be realised where the mass of people has gained political interest - thus, everywhere where the mass of the people is demanding it - whereas socialism can never be attained at once and the extent that it can be realised is dependent on the level of capitalist development.

There can be no doubt that, as of yet, Russian capitalism offers very little in terms of starting points for socialist development. However, considerable steps could be taken in this spirit through the nationalisation of: large firms; railways - to the extent that they are not already (excluding Finland, the Russian empire's railways total more than 74,000 kilometres, and of that 54,000 kilometres are state-owned);

the mines, above all the mining of coal, gold and oil; as well as large individual firms in heavy industry. Further, through state confiscation of the goods of the dethroned dynasty and the monasteries, through state acquisition of large land holdings and finally through giving over property to the cities - both to build cheaper and healthier housing and to produce food for their inhabitants.

For the time being, the main thing will have to be defending workers' interests within private production: extensive measures to protect the workers. Especially important amongst these is unemployment benefit and the provision of cheap food. Finally, the costs that fall to the state from these and other causes should be covered exclusively by progressive taxation on the property-owning classes.

One might call that a bourgeois programme of reform and not a workers' programme of revolution. Whether it is one or the other depends on quantity. Here too, when quantity is increased accordingly, it must transform into a new quality.

It is in the nature of things that the proletariat will strive to use its revolutionary power in the direction I have outlined here as soon as it feels solid ground under its feet, and that in so doing it will meet the resistance of the capitalists and the large landowners. How much it achieves will depend on its relative power.

Russia's economic backwardness will also manifest itself in the extent of proletarian power. Capitalism forms the preconditions of socialism, not only insofar as it creates the material conditions for it, but also in that it creates the people who have an interest in bringing it into being: the proletariat.

Now, numerically speaking, the urban industrial proletariat in Russia is certainly still quite small. This can be elucidated from the negligibility of the urban population. In 1913, almost 150 million of the Russian empire's 174 million people lived in the country and only something over 24 million in the cities.

That said, precisely because of the state's backwardness, the lack of communications and the great intellectual isolation of the rural population, the political weight of the latter, as compared with the urban population, is less than suggested by the quantitative relationship. This disparity can be observed in all states, but it is greater in undeveloped ones than it is in advanced ones. Today, Paris does not at all mean what it meant to France a hundred years ago. The political significance of Constantinople to Turkey is much greater than that of Berlin to Germany.

It is, however, in Russia's cities, especially the large ones, that the proletariat is today already playing a decisive role.

Indeed, the numerical predominance of the rural population is too great. They will decide whether and to what extent the proletariat will maintain the strong position it currently holds. Whether democracy will be upheld at all also depends on them.

### Democracy

For the moment, democracy is still more important than the proletariat's economic elevation. No doubt it would soon helplessly hover in the air, were it not to quickly find the means to considerably improve the situation of the working masses, but this momentary outcome is not its most important one. Rather, this consists in democracy providing the basis for the possibility of the proletariat's permanent ascent.

Democracy is significant in this, not merely in that it enables the proletariat to win positions of power. Although offering them no immediately obvious advantages in terms of *Realpolitik*, it is invaluable to the proletariat.

In order to liberate themselves, the workers not only need certain material preconditions at their disposal and to be numerically strong: they also have to become new people, imbued with the abilities that are required for the reorganisation of state and society. They only attain these abilities through class struggle, which requires democratic rights and freedoms if it is to be carried out by the masses ruling themselves and not conducted by secret committees.

Whatever the new Russian state formation may currently offer the proletariat in material achievements and positions of power, this question takes second place to the significance of holding onto democracy. This is by far the most important aspect of today's Russian Revolution. The most energetic battles will be fought over this issue. We have to anticipate attempts at a counterrevolution. What are its prospects?

### The lessons of revolution

We have to take into consideration that the revolution Russia is going through is the second within just a few years. But revolutions are strict masters. Every people coming into contact with them learns a tremendous amount; not just the ruled and exploited classes, but also the ruling classes.

The extraordinary political cunningness of the classes governing England is well known: their attentive study of the needs and demands of the working people; their ability, whilst stubbornly holding onto privileges and property they have gained through exploitation, to actually recognise when one of these can no longer be sustained, and to then sacrifice these or part of them in order to salvage their rule and exploitation as a whole. Thanks to these cunning politics, England's political development in the 19th century has been much more constant than on the continent. This cannot be ascribed either to racial characteristics or the higher intelligence of the English, but to the fact that - as a result of the attempt to violently suppress the people - it went through three revolutions earlier than others did in the capitalist epoch. The least thoroughgoing was the second of them: the removal of James II in the 'glorious revolution' - which appeared 'glorious' to bourgeois thought precisely because it did not emanate from the mass of the people, but from a faction of the ruling classes. The two great popular uprisings - those of 1642-48 which led to the execution of Charles I in 1649 - were of a quite different nature, as were those revolutions in Britain's colonies in America, which began in 1774 and ended in 1783 with the recognition of their independence.

The English republic of the 17th and the American republic of the 18th century had a profound influence on the whole of the English people. They raised the confidence of England's subordinate classes as much as they taught the upper classes foresight and caution in opposing them.

For the second time in 12 years, Russia is now being taught the same lessons. These lessons will definitely have an impact on Russia's upper as well as its lower classes similar to the impact of the English revolution on the English, and in this way these lessons have already raised a strong barrier

against a counterrevolution.

## The army

Of course, this barrier cannot yet be said to be insurmountable. The French ruling classes repeatedly received these same lessons since 1789, and yet that did not prevent a counterrevolution. This stems from the significance that the army had achieved there.

The strong and early imprints of the English revolutions alone would not have been sufficient to instil enough concern in the English ruling class to dismiss any attempt at a violent suppression of a strong, popular movement if, on top of this, they had not also been lacking a large standing army.

After its revolution England one-sidedly developed its naval power, and the other European peoples put up with this because England was lacking any significant land power which could have been threatening to them on the continent. But a fleet can only be dangerous abroad, not at home.

On the other hand, the other great powers primarily developed their armies, and in so doing they created a means of building up their power not only abroad, but also at home - against their own people. Through this - as long as they were sure that the army would obey their command just as blindly at home as it did abroad - the governments of the continental powers were as good as invincible in the face of the rise of democracy. On the other hand, through this the government's position in the face of a popular uprising becomes untenable as soon as the military becomes unreliable or even goes over to the side of the masses. From the storming of the Bastille to the Paris Commune, the French people are victorious when the army vacillates. The counterrevolution is victorious when the government is sure of its troops.

The same is true of Russia. Together with the high tide of mass strikes, the dissolution of Russia's armies following the defeats of Manchuria in 1905 saw the victory of the revolution. The counterrevolution set in as soon as the government had reliable troops in its grip.

Will it go that way this time too? Will the counterrevolutionary cliques once again succeed in winning over the army and defeating the revolution with its support? That is the vital question of this revolution. Fortunately, the situation is quite different to that of 1905. Although back then the revolutionaries managed to force the tsar to climb down on the question of the constitution, they did not overthrow his regime. Thus, command over the army remained in his hands, and he could use it to concentrate the reliable elements of the army on the areas that were threatening his rule.

This time around, the revolutionaries have conquered executive power and preside over the army. Now a counterrevolution would at first not mean the government crushing the people, but the army leaders overthrowing the government in a *coup d'état*: what Napoleon I carried out in the 18th Brumaire. Were the war to continue and be enthusiastically fought by the army, then the situation could become favourable for a coup. This assumes that Russia's enemies would threaten to destroy its newly won freedom. Through this the army would, of course, be forged into a strong and united will.

Yet even this need not yet make the army into the tool of a Napoleon. Above all, where is this Napoleon to come from? The epoch of fairy-tale wars of suppression [*Niederschlagungskriege*] is over, not least that of the great advantages that have hitherto accrued to officers and even the common man from the spoils of victory.

The mentality of soldiers created by today's warfare is quite different to that of the Napoleonic armies, and for this reason Russia's armies will not lightly grant a general the overwhelming power necessary for him to carry out a coup.

We cannot forget, by the way, that

even the powerful Napoleon never dared to lose sight of the revolutionary character of his army. He could make it subservient to his purposes by being the bearer of the revolution and destroying feudal, monarchical Europe. So using the army for counterrevolutionary purposes in Russia today is not as simple as it may first appear.

But what if one day the revolutionary government (which is predominantly in the grip of the bourgeoisie) were to become wary of proletarian influence and itself seek to get rid of it with the army's assistance? In June 1848 it was the revolutionary government itself that mobilised the army against the proletariat in Paris. This can certainly happen again.

But two things have to be borne in mind here. Firstly, due to the millions of new recruits it has rushed in, the Russian army in this war is much more of a people's army and much less of a standing army than that of the French conscription army in 1848 with its long terms of service. And also the classes of the population from which the French army was recruiting were not indifferent to what was happening. This is even truer of today's Russian army.

Here as elsewhere, however, we find that the class of the population which is decisive in the army is the peasantry. To this day, the peasantry is more strongly represented in the army than it is in the population. The peasant is considered to be the best soldier, the core of the army. While the peasantry makes up the large majority of the population, it completely determines the character of the army.

## The peasants

Indeed, the mood of the common man runs parallel with that of the peasantry in the revolutionary epochs of both France and Russia.

Here we come to the third factor which has hitherto forced the English ruling classes to adopt more intelligent tactics towards the masses - tactics which have been less geared towards violent suppression than on the continent. For centuries in England a great counterweight in the face of the industrial proletariat - the peasants - has been lacking. It was the peasants who sealed the fate of the continental revolutions.

As long as feudal conditions predominate, the peasant has a tendency to identify with the urban democracy of the petty bourgeoisie and the proletariat. In this it is economic reasons that are decisive for him. He wishes to get rid of feudal burden and to take possession of feudal landed property. In order to achieve this he allies himself with the democrats of the cities - and has done so from the time of the great peasants' war to the great revolution.

On the other hand, modern democracy - which wishes to subordinate the government of the whole state to the people - is not initially so close to his heart. For a long time the illiterate, economically self-sufficient peasants of the individual villages and districts - devoid of constant communication with the big wide world and of an interest in or understanding of politics - placed little emphasis on state democracy. Local democracy was sufficient for parish politics.

In the French revolution the peasants joined with the revolutionaries of the cities in the struggle against the feudal lords and their paladins to reclaim the goods of the church and the émigrés. On the other hand, they left the struggle for state democracy almost completely to the cities. They formed a rampart against the counterrevolution, insofar as it threatened a restoration of feudal conditions. On the other hand, they left republican freedom in the lurch. Napoleon was their man. He protected the economic gains of the revolution and spurned its democratic gains in equal measure.

The peasant proved to be an energetic champion of the economic revolution, and a half-hearted friend of

the democratic revolution. At this time, a third factor had already come to light. Where politics exercised the decisive influence on the price of foodstuffs, the peasant immediately showed the beginnings of direct hostility to the cities.

In general, this issue was not a prominent one in the times of the great revolution or for a few decades thereafter. The peasant's farming was for the large part based on his own consumption. He did not buy much and thus did not need to sell much if his taxes were low. Low taxes were more important to the peasant than the price of food. But, when relations set in where the price of food acquires significance for him, and when at the same time politics become a means of reducing this price, a trenchant political contradiction looms between the cities and the peasants.

This became evident in 1793, when France was harried on all sides by enemy armies and cut off from foreign supplies. Democracy in the cities felt pressed into a policy of fixed prices, which the peasants revolted against, causing a cleavage in the unity of the revolutionary forces.

Back then this was a temporary affair, which disappeared with the superiority of the enemy armies. But, ever since, commodity production has developed quickly. The peasant produced less and less for his own consumption and increasingly for the market. If, simultaneously, industry developed to such an extent that food production in the country no longer sufficed to cover the industrial population's needs, then the pricing of food on the home market became greatly dependent on the type of trade policy. A great contradiction between the peasantry and democracy in the city emerged in the struggle around this policy - a contradiction that is now constant.

It is an anachronism if under such conditions a social democratic party still seeks to renew an alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry inherited from past revolutionary times, and creates an agrarian programme for this purpose. In states where development has blossomed as much as specified here, the strength of the proletariat does not lie in an association with the peasantry, but in its own superior numbers. In the country it draws its strength from the fact that the class separation between the propertied and the propertyless sets in there too, even if in many cases this separation is weaker than in the cities. In countries that are as economically advanced as these, the fate of democracy no longer depends on the peasantry.

This is quite different in a country like Russia. Here, the peasantry is the decisive factor. Nobody can yet say what the final outcome of this factor will be, because in the last decade the Russian peasant has gone through a great process of transformation, the effects of which are not yet known.

## The modern Russian peasant

Until the revolution of 1905 the Russian peasant's situation had much in common with the French peasant of 1789. Although the Russian peasant was rid of serfdom, he entered the realm of freedom in such poverty and ignorance that he was incapable of rational, intensive agriculture. His farm degenerated more and more, whilst his average land share decreased due to the quickly growing population. His most urgent need had become land - more land.

As long as illiteracy and insufficient communication made state power appear to him as something unachievable and intangible, he was less moved by democracy on the state level. The typical thinking was: 'Heaven is high, the tsar far away'.

Just as with the storming of the Bastille in 1789, when in 1905 the urban proletarians forced tsarism to its knees,

this was the signal for revolutionary uprisings by the peasants, who demanded the property of the nobility and the church, and who recognised that they had to support the urban proletariat. But the isolation of the peasants was still too great for them to rise up as one all over the country. Just like in the peasants' war of 1525 in Germany, the peasant movement got bogged down and dissipated into local, incoherent upheavals, which were partly violently suppressed one after the other by troops who had remained loyal, and partly pacified by cunning promises. Thus the proletarian uprising in the cities was deprived of necessary support. It was defeated.

Yet for the nobility and absolutism the threat posed had been a terrible one. They understood the warning. On the one hand, they sought to provide a safe outlet for the peasant's hunger for land by promoting emigration to Siberia, and, on the other, they sought to render it meaningless by giving the peasants the opportunity to switch to intensive farming. To this end they employed methods such as the abolition of the remnants of village communism and promoted the immense cleavage of the rural population between the wealthy and the propertyless.

Absolutism hoped to use this in order to create a reactionary guard amongst the wealthy part of the population, or at least to paralyse the revolutionary tendencies of the rural population. The ascendance of this wealthy layer and the intensification of peasant farming were made easier by something absolutism could neither bring about nor foresee: the increase in the price of grain on the world market, which came about precisely after the first Russian Revolution of 1905.

At the moment we cannot foresee how these changes have penetrated and influenced the goals and thinking of the Russian peasantry. But we can be sure that they will not satisfy the peasant's hunger for land. They could only increase that of the proletarianised peasants. Whilst the wealthy peasant's hunger for land is not strong enough to drive him to revolution, it is strong enough to make exploiting an already completed revolution for this purpose appear attractive to him.

But if the peasants are granted land by the revolution, then this chains them to it and thus they will oppose any counterrevolution that threatens them with the loss of their newly won soil. Here is another point where the peasants find their closest allies in the socialists. The liberals (who have so many landowners in their ranks) will not very willingly satisfy the peasant's hunger for land - let alone the conservatives.

The peasants will no doubt support democracy at the state level with less intensity. Yet even here we should not look at things in too bleak a fashion. The spread of popular education and of the means of communication, of journalism and the mail system, is making progress everywhere and awakening the peasantry's interest in politics. Army conscription draws many into the city, and using the vote further animates its interest in politics.

The peasantry is still not so advanced in any European country as to seize the political initiative, but its interest in and understanding of political questions is expanding everywhere. And this means that the peasantry's interest in democratic rights and freedoms is growing - not just at the parish level, but at the state level - because they give it the possibility of throwing a weight onto the scale appropriate to its numbers.

All this leads us to expect that the peasants will remain faithful to the revolution in so far as it brings them economic advantages, and that equally they will not abandon democratic achievements, even if they should not be expected to champion these as enthusiastically and unanimously as the proletariat. The young republic's army

will also be recruited from the peasantry and formed into the republic's protective barrier. In this sense the revolution has better prospects of stability than the French republics of 1792 and 1848.

But if we expect the new revolutionary regime to be well protected against a counterrevolution, the peasants to join it and remain faithful to it, then this by itself says nothing about how they will behave when it comes to a conflict within the regime between the bourgeois and proletarian elements. These are two quite different questions. A defeat of the proletariat does not yet need to mean the downfall of the republican form of government, as the history of post-1871 France shows us. On the other hand, the peasantry's dependence on the revolution does not mean that they will support a further revolutionary advance of the proletariat. We must reckon on the possibility that they will become a conservative element as soon as their hunger for land is satisfied and their freedom of movement secured: enemies of any counterrevolution, but also of any further revolution.

The jagged contradiction which has developed in western Europe in the course of the last few decades between agriculture and city, and between peasants and proletarians, will not need to come about in Russia, as it is one of the food-exporting countries. Its prices depend on the world market, are not determined by the domestic market and, as such, are for the most part independent of domestic policy. Therefore this stands out as the cause of a contradiction between the peasants and the proletarians. At least in normal times.

Now, during the war, Russia has ceased to be a food-exporting country. The domestic market is the decisive factor in determining prices - in fact it is the only one. All ties to the world market have been cut. All relations with the world market turned off. This made the struggle for food prices a political question, and one which appears in the most direct and acrimonious form as a struggle for and against fixed prices - something which deeply stirs the working masses of town and country and which is capable of splitting them apart. This can result in a vicious conflict between the proletariat and the peasantry. But it can only be a momentary one. In times of peace this contradiction - which has been so influential in Russia - loses its material basis.

If one is able to roughly, if not exactly, place the tendencies and needs of the other classes in Russia in parallel with the same phenomena in western Europe, this way of looking at the situation breaks down with the Russian peasant. His material circumstances and historical traditions are quite unique, and at the same time have been in the process of colossal change for three decades.

The peasant is the 'x' - the unknown variable - in the equation of the Russian Revolution. We are still unable to insert a figure for it. And yet we know that this figure is the crucial one, the decisive one. For this reason, the Russian Revolution can and will spring tremendous surprises on us.

But, just as in summer's struggle with winter, storms might thunder over our country without us having to fear that the streams could freeze over again, we may in spite of all possible vicissitudes confidently expect that the Russian people will henceforth know how to permanently fend off absolutism.

Come what may, we hope that the essential rights and freedoms of democracy - and with them the most secure basis for mass proletarian mobilisation and advance to the conquering of political power - are at least as well established in eastern Europe as they are in the west ●

## Notes

1. 'Der Eispalast' in *Die Neue Zeit*, March 1917.  
2. *Vorwärts* (Forward) was the central organ of the German Social Democratic Party published daily in Berlin from 1891 until 1933.

# LABOUR



'Bystander' by Jane Lee

## Left should not stand on sidelines

Help defeat the Blairite right by winning all unions to affiliate to Labour, urges Peter Manson

In the run-up to the general election the left was just about unanimous in its support for Labour and, in particular, the Jeremy Corbyn leadership. But what has been lacking is any consistent *strategy* in relation to Labour - what is the party's future and how can it be transformed into a coherent working class force?

Of all the left groups the *Morning Star's* Communist Party of Britain has been the most uncritical in its backing for Labour - indeed the *Star* has been reading increasingly like an official Labour paper recently, with every policy and statement reported approvingly, and criticism of the Labour right being virtually abandoned in the run-up to June 8.

The best example of this came with the June 1 edition of the *Star* - or June 1-8, as it is dated. This general election special is being distributed free and, according to the *Star* itself, is available in "hundreds of supermarkets" across the country. At first sight it has the appearance of a regular edition, even down to the letters column and sports page. But *everything* in it is dedicated to bigging up Labour - the single sports article informs us that under a Corbyn government funding for sports would be significantly increased, for example.

However, I am not so sure that Corbyn will be very pleased by the reprint, in this edition, of his *Morning Star* column from October 21 2008, in which he advocated a socialist transformation and stated: "We have to ... conquer the global hunger and poverty brought about by the madness of free-market global capitalism." Not something that the Blairite right - with which Corbyn and John McDonnell are trying to campaign unitedly - would approve of.

What he wrote a decade ago stands in sharp contrast to today's vacuous generalities, as demonstrated by the *Star's* "Q&A with Jeremy Corbyn", published in the same issue. How about this?

**Question:** You're a socialist - that hasn't been in fashion for a long time. What ... motivated you to keep going for all the decades when your own party had turned its back on these ideas?

**Answer:** I have always stood up for

what I believe in - the principles of equality, peace and social justice. This is what keeps me going and is exactly what I'll do as prime minister.

How about *Socialist Worker*? We are told in the June 6 edition that "Jeremy Corbyn has promised to break with Theresa May's policies of austerity, racism and war" and that "This radical, socialist message has put a firm dividing line between the main parties ..."

I'm not sure that expressing a belief in "the principles of equality, peace and social justice" can be described as a "radical, socialist message". As a Labour voter tells *Socialist Worker*, "In years gone by there wasn't a lot of difference between Labour and the Tories. But Jeremy Corbyn talks about fairness and justice."

The same article concludes by declaring: "We have to vote for Labour in *England and Wales*" (my emphasis). Is the Socialist Workers Party advocating a vote for the Scottish National Party north of the border then? That would be consistent with its continued highlighting of the demand for Scottish independence - although, of course, the SNP itself played that down in the run-up to the election.

At least, unlike the *Star*, *Socialist Worker* comments on Labour's ongoing internal battle. In an article headed "The Labour right remains a millstone around Corbyn's neck", editor Charlie Kimber writes: "Pressure from Labour's right has seen Corbyn make concessions over Trident nuclear weapons and the rights of migrant workers." But simultaneously the Labour leader is coming out with that "radical, socialist message", it seems.

What about the Socialist Party in England and Wales? According to *The Socialist*, SPEW has been "an active participant in the campaign to elect a Jeremy Corbyn-led Labour government, elected on his manifesto that gives a real choice to voters for the first time - from one of the main parties - in decades" (May 31). However, unlike the SWP, SPEW notes that the Labour manifesto "does not offer the full socialist programme necessary to transform society. It is a mistake that these policies ... haven't been made official party policy".

The same article refers to the TUC call for a meeting of public-sector unions on June 14 and the comment from Mark Serwotka, general secretary of the Public and Commercial Services union, "for that to be a 'council of war' in the event of a Tory victory". *The Socialist* comments:

But the meeting should also be utilised in the case of a Labour victory. For example, if there is any attempt to derail a Corbyn government, whether from inside or outside Labour, the meeting has to call immediate action to ensure the implementation of the policies that challenge the pro-market consensus of the last 38 years ...

### Affiliation

SPEW urges that:

the battle within Labour between the 'two parties' must be brought to its conclusion. To carry that out effectively, Jeremy must open up Labour to all socialist fighters, such as the Socialist Party, to help remove the Blairite, pro-capitalist agents from the party.

This is all well and good. But how, in the meantime, can groups like SPEW further the working class cause in Labour's internal battle? What about the role of the trade unions mentioned above, for example - not least PCS itself? SPEW has consistently *opposed* its affiliation, along with that of other unions, to the Labour Party. True, for the quarter-century before Corbyn's election as leader, SPEW (and its forerunner, Militant Labour) had declared that Labour could no longer be described as a working class party - it was a "bourgeois party" pure and simple.

Obviously SPEW has now abandoned that position in practice, even if it is yet to publish any self-criticism of the old line. Now it believes that Labour can indeed be transformed from its current status as "two parties" (surely a code for its continued reality as a 'bourgeois workers' party') into a vehicle for the working class. But how in practice do we aid that transformation?

Groups like SPEW are, of course, denied the right to affiliate, but that does

not apply to the unions. And PCS - along with the National Union of Teachers and the Rail, Maritime and Transport union, to name two other major unions - could throw their weight on the side of our class within Labour if they were prepared to do so. So why did SPEW (or the SWP, for that matter) not rally behind comrade Serwotka and fight to win members for Labour affiliation at last month's PCS conference?

Writing in last week's *Weekly Worker*, Dave Vincent (who is not a member of any left group) explained why he was for a Labour vote on June 8 but against PCS affiliation:

I made the point that if Labour loses on June 8 we would not get another leader like Jeremy for a generation, nor would we get a manifesto like the current one for a long time. A PCS recommendation for a Labour vote would really be a significant boost to *Jeremy* - everyone knows that Labour-affiliated unions will recommend any Labour leader/policies to their members, but PCS, which is not affiliated, was only doing so whilst Jeremy is leader and on his manifesto (Letters, June 1).

But it does not seem to occur to comrade Vincent that PCS (not to mention the NUT and RMT) could do something more than watch from the sidelines. He writes: "there is no point talking of affiliation until we see the state of the Labour Party after the general election". Don't you think that militant, fighting unions could help play an active role in determining Labour's "state", Dave?

### Open borders

By the way, comrade Vincent uses the occasion of the PCS conference to push his particular, British sectionalist line on immigration and to rail against open borders. He writes, in relation to a conference motion advocating "the free movement of workers":

I argued that freedom of movement of workers is the means by which bosses import cheap labour to undermine trade unions and the rate for the job. Having a limitless pool of cheap labour as competition is the enemy, not ally, of

organised workers. I mentioned I was with Bob Crow and Arthur Scargill on this and it was not the case that all socialists support free movement.

Well, comrades Crow and Scargill were "socialists" of a particular type: they were *national* socialists, who in practice advocated 'socialism in one country': we can establish it here in Britain alone. That is very much in line with the sectionalist notion that our job is to defend the conditions of *workers in Britain*, while those elsewhere can go hang.

Comrade Vincent is right in "opposing the persistent attempts to redefine racism" - mainly by the SWP - to include anyone like him who wants to curb immigration. Of course he is not a racist. However, he *is* a sectionalist - sectionalism being a largely spontaneous failing amongst trade unionists, who believe that their role is to defend and advance the pay and conditions of a particular *section* of workers. Usually that section will be those in a given trade or workplace, but in comrade Vincent's case it applies to those who happen to be in Britain, as opposed to those outside.

This leads him to deny workers the basic right to live and work wherever we choose - when it comes to different countries, at any rate. Would he, for example, deny the right of workers in a poverty-stricken area of Britain to migrate to a more prosperous area? After all, many of them might be so desperate for work that they would be prepared to "undermine trade unions and the rate for the job" in their new locality.

It is self-evident that we are opposed to such scabbing. But, as comrade Vincent himself would surely agree, the answer is not to deny the right of workers to move to a different town or city, but to fight for workers' rights and defend their jobs, wages and conditions everywhere by winning them to join the common struggle within a trade union.

The same principle applies internationally. The world belongs to all its peoples and our long-term aim as communists is to abolish all borders and achieve universal emancipation within a single global entity ●

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ENVIRONMENT

# Growth for the sake of growth

US withdrawal from the Paris agreement demonstrates a contempt for the future of the planet. However, Eddie Ford argues that only socialism, not capitalist techno fixes, can prevent ecological degradation

As promised, Donald Trump has broken ranks with other world powers by announcing on June 1 that the USA is pulling out of the Paris accord on climate change. Indeed, this might be one of the few election pledges that he will actually uphold. Nobody seriously believes, including most of those who voted for him, that he will build a vast and impenetrable wall along the border with Mexico - let alone get that country to pay for it. Anyone remember Trump's demand that Saudi Arabia and other countries supply the US with "free oil for the next 10 years or we will not protect their private Boeing 747s"?

The only other countries not signed up to the United Nations-brokered Paris agreement - passed in December 2015 and formally ratified by the United States and China the following September - are Syria and Nicaragua. The former for obvious reasons, as the overriding priority is just to stay alive, while the latter opposes the accord not because it is a climate change denier, but because it does not go anyway near far enough, since it is based on *voluntary* targets and action. In November 2015, Nicaragua's lead envoy to the Paris negotiations, Paul Oquist, said his country would not be "an accomplice to taking the world to 3 to 4 degrees and the death and destruction that represents". The notion of "universal responsibility" - that "everyone is responsible" - is a "spin on historical responsibility because everyone didn't create this problem". Nicaragua's share of global emissions (0.03%) pales beside that of China (20.09%) or the US (17.89%), yet it is fourth on a list of countries most affected by climate change between 1996 and 2015.

Of course, much of the left, including the CPGB, made exactly the same point as Paul Oquist. The agreement, now signed by 196 countries and ratified by 146, came to a woolly consensus about "holding the increase" in the global average temperature to "well below" 2°C - compared to pre-industrial levels - and to "pursue efforts" to limit warming to 1.5° (rather than the 2° agreed six years ago at Copenhagen).<sup>2</sup> There is a general scientific consensus, regardless of what Donald Trump might think, that 1.5° and above marks the "tipping point", whereby there is a serious danger of runaway global warming - disrupting existing agriculture, changing weather patterns and perhaps triggering mass extinction. But for this goal to have any sort of realistic chance of being achieved there would have to be "net zero emissions" by the second half of this century - with a UN climate science panel arguing that this must happen by 2070 at the very latest to avoid ecological disaster. As things stand now, unfortunately, this looks like pie in the sky - especially if the US has turned rogue.

As well as being non-legally binding, the solemn promises made at Paris to cut carbon emissions (intended nationally defined contributions, or INDCs) are totally insufficient - despite article 3 of the agreement, which requires them to be "ambitious", "represent a progression over time" and set "with the view to achieving the purpose of this agreement". In fact, according to several analyses, even if the plans were kept to they would still lead to a 2.7°-3° rise in temperature - which would be potentially catastrophic.<sup>3</sup> The European Union, for instance, has an INDC of cutting emissions by 40% by 2030 on 1990 levels, and the US - before it pulled out - by



Pittsburgh Trump rally

up to 28% by 2025 compared with 2005: obviously inadequate. Hardly inspiring confidence, there will also be a "review mechanism" every five years, kicking off with a "facilitative dialogue" next year and the first full "evaluation" or "stock take" in 2023 - at which, in theory, new NDCs could be made or revised. Naturally, the US insisted upon a clause guaranteeing that it would not face claims for "any liability or compensation" with regards to the financial losses of particularly vulnerable countries hit by climate impacts (like extreme weather).

Indeed, this points to a key difference between the 'bottom-up' consensual structure of the Paris agreement and the 'top-down' approach of its predecessor, the Kyoto protocol - which aimed to produce targets that had legal force and far more scope generally. The protocol differentiated between developed and developing countries, recognising that there had to be quite separate and discrete tasks, goals and aims. By contrast, the Paris deal deliberately blurs this distinction - whilst acknowledging the principle of "common but differentiated responsibility and respective capabilities", it does not provide a specific division of obligations between developed and developing states. The poorer countries have the same responsibility as the richer and more powerful.

Rather pathetically, the final text of the Paris agreement aims only to "reach global peaking of greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible" - no detailed timetable or country-specific goals for emissions are laid out. Far too little, far too late - and now made virtually useless by the US's withdrawal from the process.

## Nationalism

According to Donald Trump, the US is out "as of today". Instead he wants to "renegotiate" a fairer deal for the US that would not "disadvantage" US businesses and the US economy. The president went on to remark that he was making "making America great again" and was "elected to represent the citizens of Pittsburgh, not Paris" - a nationalist pitch that was reinforced by swipes at India and China. He complained that India makes its participation in the Paris deal "contingent on billions and billions of foreign aid" and lamented about how China "can double" coal production, "but we have to reduce ours". Apparently the Paris agreement has won "praise from the very foreign capitals and global activists that have long sought to gain wealth at our country's expense". Here we have Donald Trump's own version

of victimology, in which an innocent US is preyed upon by a perfidious coalition of other states.

During the presidential election campaign, Trump repeatedly claimed that the Paris accord would cost the US economy "trillions" of dollars and 2.7 million jobs by 2025 - of course, he did not mention that the renewable energy industry has grown by leaps and bounds over the last few years. According to the US department of energy, in 2015 renewables to the tune of \$350 billion supplied nearly 64% of all new electricity generating capacity constructed in the country. Trump's prediction of millions of job losses thanks to Paris is equally specious, not taking into account 'normal' job rate loss and creation, jobs shifting towards more 'green' sectors, and the tangible benefits of cleaner air and water, and less risk of natural disasters along US coastlines. But this is Donald Trump we are talking about, who would have us believe that climate change is a "Chinese hoax".

In reality, it is very unlikely that the US is freed from its Paris obligations - such as they are - "as of today", as the agreement's built-in time delay means it cannot happen until the next presidential election year in 2020. Trump's renegeing of the agreement is reminiscent of earlier Republican attempts to stymie a climate deal, like in 2005, when George W Bush's administration adopted a 'twin-track' approach, allowing it to appear concerned, whilst blocking every possible move towards a deal. This caused a frustrated Papua New Guinea delegate at Bali in 2007 to bellow at a procrastinating American representative: "If you're not willing to lead, get out of the way!" Well, in a certain sense, the US has now done that.

Needless to say, Germany, France and Italy issued a stern statement declaring the Paris deal to be "not renegotiable". Quite laughably, the EU and China are now posing as a "green alliance" to save the planet from ecological destruction. According to a statement prepared before the June 1-2 EU-China summit in Brussels, the new alliance is determined to "lead the energy transition" toward a low-carbon economy. The joint declaration also called on all parties "to uphold the Paris agreement" and signal their "highest political commitment" - describing the climate change pact as a "historic achievement" and "irreversible". China is clearly determined to take ruthless advantage of Trump's 'isolationist' turn on the question of climate change, though its reinvention as a 'green' power is pure hypocrisy - its reckless dash

for growth at any cost has produced an environmental and ecological nightmare. Look at the appalling levels of 'killer air' in Beijing.

Exactly which way the US goes at this point is hard to tell, but it might not be all plain sailing for the Trump administration. California, with its population of nearly 40 million, has said it will defy the US president and stick by the Paris agreement. Jerry Brown, the state's governor, has said he will sign his own "international" agreement on climate change with China if necessary. He is flying out to Beijing to discuss merging China's and California's carbon trading markets. This is essentially a scheme in which large sources of carbon are given a cap on emissions, beyond which they cannot go unless they buy an allowance - and the allowances are then sold by companies that reduce emissions below their cap, creating a double incentive to make cuts. In a form of environmental UDI, Brown has even suggested that California might launch its own satellites to monitor climate change. New York state has been making rebellious noises too.

## Disaster

What seems to be going on is that the US under Trump is retreating not from its global hegemonic position - as if - but rather from the way it has exercised its hegemony since the end of World War II, when it put in place the United Nations, international law and institutions such as Nato, and made the strategic decision to turn the Soviet Union and its satellites into enemy number one. This was done, fairly obviously, in order to cohere not just allies, but former enemies too, and generally subordinate them to the interests of US imperialism. But this post-war architecture is being unpicked and remoulded, though whether that will ultimately succeed or not is an open question.

Whatever the exact case, however, it represents a total ecological disaster for the planet - which is running out of time fast. July last year was the warmest month since 1880, when records began, and this year might break that unwanted record. Indeed, 15 of the 16 warmest years have occurred in the 21st century and each of the past 14 months has broken the global monthly temperature record. Some scientists calculate that a US regression to "business as usual" emissions could result in up to three billion tonnes of additional carbon dioxide in the air a year or a further 0.3° by 2100 - enough to cause punishing heat waves, a rise in the sea level, displacement of millions of people and the loss of ecosystems

such as coral reefs.

A recent report on global climate by the National Centers for Environmental Information scarily tells us that the combined global average temperature over the land and ocean surfaces for April 2017 was 0.9° above the 20th century average of 13.7° - the second highest April temperature we have ever seen.<sup>4</sup> April 2017 also marks the 388th consecutive month that the globally-averaged temperature was above the 20th century average. Meanwhile, the global land and ocean surface temperatures for the first four months of the year were 0.95° above the 20th century average of 12.6° - representing the second highest such period since 1880.

In other words, the trend is perfectly clear - the planet is *frying* and weather is becoming more extreme. India has been hammered by cycles of drought and flood, as withering heat parches the soil and melts glaciers in the Himalayas, while coral reefs around the world are bleaching and dying. Meanwhile, rainforests are retreating even further and deserts are spreading. Recent Nasa research shows that sea levels worldwide have risen an average of nearly eight centimetres since 1992 due to warming waters and melting ice - a report published in January by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration suggested a global mean sea level rise ranging from 0.3 to 2.5 metres during the 21st century. Unless drastic action is immediately taken, cities like London, New York and Tokyo could eventually disappear beneath the waves.

As the CPGB has consistently argued, capitalism is a system *uniquely* unfit to cope with the ecological crisis that is so obviously gripping the planet. Given its very nature, predicated on production for production's sake - not on the basis of satisfying rational human need - it is constantly throwing more fuel on the fire. Due to this inescapable inner logic, capitalism can never be trusted to preserve the environment - the best it can come up with is 'green' technological fixes. No, it is a system pre-programmed to inflict ecological degradation. No matter how incredible the scientific advances under capitalism, we will still see the same monstrous waste of resources - the same assault on planet Earth and despoliation of nature.

Marx and Engels wrote in the *Communist manifesto* that the need to constantly expand "chases the bourgeoisie over the entire surface of the globe" - a frenzied need that sends it drilling a mile down in the Gulf of Mexico for oil, when that very same substance is virtually oozing out of the ground in countries like Saudi Arabia. But a profit can be made, so damn the consequences, whether environmental or human. Irrationality reigns. Marxism, on the other hand, is supremely ecological in its world outlook - hence we must fight for the sustainable use of nature's resources because it is necessary for the common survival of all life on this planet, human and non-human. For communists, the struggle to protect the environment and the struggle for human emancipation (communism) are indivisible ●

## Notes

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## MIDDLE EAST



Long diversions

# So much for the 'Arab Nato'

What lies behind the Saudi-Qatar split? Yassamine Mather investigates

If there was any doubt that we live in a post-truth world, the events of the last few days in the Middle East have proved that false news is winning out. Saudi Arabia, the birthplace and sponsor of jihadi/Salafi fundamentalism, has broken relations with Qatar, a supporter of a different brand of jihadism, accusing it of supporting 'terrorism'. And the president of the United States claims he initiated all this. You know you live in a post-truth world when lies are considered truth, stupidity is considered smart and failure is considered success.

Saudi Arabia claimed it had taken the decision because of Qatar's "embrace of various terrorist and sectarian groups aimed at destabilising the region", including the Muslim Brotherhood, al Qa'eda, Islamic State and "groups supported by Iran". Now anyone with a basic knowledge of the Middle East would tell you that this list of 'terrorist groups' put out by the Saudis (and presumably supported by Donald Trump) makes no sense. While the Muslim Brotherhood, IS and al Qa'eda are staunch enemies of Iran and its supporters in the region (Hezbollah, Syria, etc), there is ample evidence for both Saudi and Qatari support for a plethora of Sunni jihadi groups in the region - mainly in reaction to Shia ascendancy following the ousting of the secular dictator, Saddam Hussein. Many would argue that if George W Bush and Tony Blair had listened to bourgeois academics in 2003, warning about the potential threat of a Sunni backlash, the world would not be facing the kind of daily terror attacks we are now seeing. If only Nicolas Sarkozy, Silvio Berlusconi and David Cameron had not pursued personal ambitions when it came to regime change in Libya and Obama had not followed them in this endeavour, maybe the world would have been a safer space for all of us.

Let us be clear, contrary to what Trump may tell us, the Saudi-Qatari conflict has nothing to do with supporting jihadis. On that score both of them are guilty.

According to Patrick Cockburn, writing in *The Independent*,

Most fascinating ... is what reads like a US state department memo, dated August 17 2014, on the appropriate US response to the rapid advance of Isis forces, which were then sweeping through northern Iraq and eastern Syria.

At the time, the US government was not admitting that Saudi Arabia and its Sunni allies were supporting Isis and al Qa'eda-type movements. But in the leaked memo, which says that it draws on "western intelligence, US intelligence and sources in the region", there is no ambivalence about who is backing Isis, which at the time of writing was butchering and raping Yazidi villagers and slaughtering captured Iraqi and Syrian soldiers.<sup>1</sup>

On Qatar, according to *The Daily Telegraph*, "The fabulously wealthy Gulf state, which owns an array of London landmarks and claims to be one of our best friends in the Middle East, is a prime sponsor of violent Islamists."<sup>2</sup>

This is not the first conflict between the two states. In fact tensions with Qatar's Gulf Arab neighbours have grown in recent years as part of a race for regional leadership. Qatar has refused to obey Saudi diktats and has faced sanctions. However, none of the previous squabbles were as serious as the current one.

In the last few days, Qatari citizens, including journalists working for *Al Jazeera*, have been expelled from a number of pro-Saudi countries (Persian Gulf emirates and Egypt). These states have closed their airspace to Qatar Airlines, forcing its planes to take huge diversions via Iran and Turkey. The immediate imposition of sanctions resulted in long queues. The country imports 80% of its food.

So what is Qatar's defence? Its minister of foreign affairs stated that

these measures are unjustified and based on false claims and assumptions. The state of Qatar has been subjected to a campaign of lies that have reached the point of complete fabrication. It reveals a

hidden plan to undermine the state of Qatar.<sup>3</sup>

### Causes

If the conflict is not about terrorism, what has created the current divisions in the Gulf Cooperation Council?

After Trump's visit to the region and the launch of a Nato-style anti-Iran alliance, some countries, including Qatar, expressed mild reservations about the summit's animosity towards the Islamic Republic. Those reservations are not ideological, but are mainly based on economic and financial reasons and to a lesser extent a wish to remain independent of the Saudi line and an unwillingness to bow down to Riyadh. There are also allegations, based on leaks of an audio file from May 24, that the Qatari emir had expressed "concerns about Saudis inflaming the sectarian divide between Sunnis and Shiites".

Then, on June 7, we had the first jihadi attack in Tehran, claimed by IS. In what was clearly a coordinated plan, men opened fire at both the Iranian parliament and the shrine of ayatollah Khomeini in the capital, causing at least 12 deaths and leaving dozens injured. In the last few months IS has stepped up its propaganda in Persian and the Iranian intelligence service claim they have foiled a number of Da'esh plots.

On the economic side Qatar lifted a self-imposed ban on developing the world's biggest natural gas field, over which it shares ownership with Iran, in April. This was part of an attempt to stave off an expected rise in competition. In the same way that the United States does not accept anyone opposing its policies, Saudi Arabia expects obedience from fellow Arab countries. So, when Sheikh Tamim bin Hamid Al Thani, the emir of Qatar, broke ranks over the Saudi hard line on Iran after the summit, it was inevitable that the country would face an angry reaction.

Not that Qatar is totally innocent. The excuse repeated by news agencies concerns a ransom paid in exchange for the release of kidnapped members of the Qatari royal family in Iraq. According to some reports, the 'hunting expedition' was kidnapped by an Iraqi militia with strong ties to Iran and one billion dollars was handed over. Other versions of this

story claim that Qatar paid pro-Iran Shia militias to free the royal party from the Sunni jihadists and, in a third version of the same story, the Qatari emir himself paid the kidnappers.

According to one report,

Commanders of militant groups and government officials in the region told the *Financial Times* that Doha spent the money in a transaction that secured the release of 26 members of a Qatari falconry party in southern Iraq and about 50 militants captured by jihadis in Syria. By their telling, Qatar paid off two of the most frequently blacklisted forces of the Middle East in one fell swoop: an al Qa'eda affiliate fighting in Syria and Iranian security officials.<sup>4</sup>

It is this incident that is cited by the Saudis as an example of Qatar's support for Iranian-backed terrorism. Clearly the story here is more complicated - we all know that France, Italy and a number of other European countries, not to mention the USA (during Irangate), have paid ransom to kidnappers in exchange for the release of their citizens. So Qatar is not an isolated case. However, the incident provides a good excuse.

The best part of all this is Trump's support for the Saudis.

According to Fareed Zakaria, writing in the *Washington Post*, "Trump has adopted the Saudi line on terrorism, which deflects any blame from the kingdom and redirects it toward Iran." A more nuanced and realistic approach to the region would avoid adopting any "line" on matters of such urgency. For example, Iran is supporting both the Iraqi and Syrian governments against IS and other terrorist organisations: according to a study summarised by Global Terrorism Database at King's College,

more than 94% of deaths caused by Islamic terrorism since 2001 were perpetrated by the Islamic State, al Qa'eda and other Sunni jihadists. Iran is fighting those groups, not fuelling them. Almost every terrorist attack in the west has had some connection to Saudi Arabia. Virtually none has been linked to Iran.<sup>5</sup>

Recent terrorist incidents - all of them

following Trump's visit to the Riyadh summit - point to the fact that, although Iran's Islamic Republic is unleashing repression against its own citizens, there is no evidence that it is involved in current threats against civilians in Europe and Afghanistan. On the contrary, groups opposed to Shia Iran are in the forefront of these actions. Tehran's main enemy, Islamic State, which has suffered defeats in Iraq and Syria, has taken responsibility for three terrorist attacks since the summit: at the concert in Manchester on May 22; in a predominantly Shia district of Baghdad on May 29, when 22 were killed, including women and children; and at London Bridge on June 3, when at least eight civilians were killed. This is in addition to the killing of 29 Coptic Christians in Egypt on May 26 by an al Qa'eda-linked group based in Libya.

Of course, in some respect Iran's Islamic Republic is the winner in all this. First of all, the Arab unity 'alliance' formed against it less than a month ago is in disarray, with rumours that the sultan of Oman was expressing doubts similar to those of the emir of Qatar before this week's events. The Iranian regime is mobilising support for the Qatari population, with Iranians being urged to send food parcels, and no doubt the emirate will continue to need Iran's help unless it can resolve its differences with Riyadh quickly.

Once more US intervention in the Middle East - this time in the form of Trump's Nato-style alliance - has created further conflict and uncertainty ●

### Notes

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FRANCE

# Difficult times ahead

Macron appears to be hankering after some form of Gaullist rule. But what of the left? René Gimpel looks at the programmes, prospects and divisions in the run-up to the June 18 elections

**W**ith the liberation of France in 1944, the Vichy government disappeared and a Provisional Government of the French Republic was instituted, mostly made up of Gaullists and communists - other political parties having been tainted by active or passive collaboration with the Nazis.

General Charles de Gaulle led the Provisional Government for two years, but, when a new constitution was voted in, he resigned in 1946, after failing to get the strong presidential system he favoured. A parliamentary system was put in place and, although important social reforms were enacted (women gained the vote in 1945 and first steps were taken towards a European union), weaknesses in the constitution, combined with the crises of French decolonisation - notably the French military defeat of Dien Bien Phu in Indochina (Vietnam) in 1954 and, critically, the Algerian crisis of 1958 - led to the Fourth Republic's collapse.

The collapse was hastened by de Gaulle returning to the political scene after his long absence. In an uncanny echo of his wartime role, he assumed the position of prime minister, ordered the Fourth Republic to vote through its dissolution and drew up a new constitution. This constitution established a dual-executive system, in which the prime minister was head of government, while the president became head of state with wide powers to rule by decree. This being the stronger position, de Gaulle vacated the premiership and assumed the presidency.

France is still in its Fifth Republic and the importance of its constitutional arrangements is that the new president, Emmanuel Macron, is moving fast to assume the Gaullist mantle, manoeuvring to split the left and right parties into internally riven factions, while inserting his new so-called centrist party - En Marche la France (EMF) - to act as a rubber stamp for his decrees. The left has woken to this fact, though the coming general election will be a difficult one. Current opinion polls do not quite give EMF a majority in the 577-seat national assembly, but close enough that, along with the right (François Fillon's Les Républicains), Macron will govern easily.

## Decline of PS and PCF

The Parti Socialiste appears to be heading for a meltdown - between 28 and 43 seats; if true, the once majority party in the assembly is paying the price for the years of president François Hollande's mediocracy and backtracking on pro-working class pledges. The Front National could pick up as many as 25 seats, compared to its current two, while the Front de Gauche (FDG - Left Front), the umbrella group of the Parti Communiste Français, along with France Insoumise and Lutte Ouvrière, are projected to get 10-15 between them. Macron's final count could depend on French overseas voters, who appear keen on EMF and who have their own representatives in the assembly.

The French Communist Party (PCF), founded in 1920, has been a junior partner in French governments on three occasions. In the Provisional Government 1944-46; at the beginning of Mitterrand's presidency 1981-84; and in cabinet under prime minister



Mélenchon: holographic projection

Lionel Jospin, from 1997 to 2002. Each time the experience ended dismally, as the PCF was either excluded from participation or withdrew when austerity measures were introduced. Initially the largest left party in France and still boasting its daily paper, *L'Humanité*, the PCF was overtaken by the Socialists (Parti Socialiste - PS) during Mitterrand's presidency. The PCF claims around 60,000 paid-up members and a similar number of sympathisers. It has 10 deputies in the national assembly, 18 in France's upper house, the Senate, and one in the European parliament.

In the university student uprising of May 1968, which soon extended to secondary schools, the PCF was caught off guard and refused to give the students its backing. However, when millions of industrial workers went on strike in support of the students, the PCF was dragged into endorsing those strikes. As a result of this recalcitrance and of its rigid structure and ideology, the PCF found itself outflanked on the left. It had become ossified and despite the renown of a few high-profile party intellectuals like Louis Althusser (whose views the PCF demanded he recant), it lost ground to a number of Trotskyist groups like Lutte Ouvrière (LO - Workers' Struggle) and the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire, along with Maoist groups like La Gauche Prolétarienne (GP - Proletarian Left), a small ultra-left group which became famous after its bi-monthly newspaper, *La Cause du Peuple* (People's Struggle), was repeatedly closed by de Gaulle. Though disagreeing with the political line adopted by GP, Jean-Paul Sartre assumed its editorship and, along with Simone de Beauvoir, was arrested and imprisoned for selling the newspaper on the street. De Gaulle ordered Sartre's release with a remark which became legendary: "One does not imprison Voltaire."

In the recent presidential campaign, the PCF called on its members and sympathisers to vote for Jean-Luc Mélenchon, of the radical France Insoumise (FI - France Unbowed), but the two organisations have fallen out and, rather than act in unity to present candidates under a common front, PCF and FI will

contest the same seats in three out of four constituencies.

If the PCF is a party with a long history, the opposite is true of FI. Founded last year, it characterises itself as ecosocialist and draws inspiration from Spain's Podemos and Bernie Sanders in the US. It has attracted the support of Jérôme Kerviel, one-time controversial trader from the bank, Société Générale. Though it is registered as a political party for electoral purposes, Mélenchon claims otherwise and says that FI is a grouping of 'like-minded individuals'.

FI is on the populist left, but in some ways is iconoclastic. In large part this is due to Mélenchon's extremely combative, but charismatic, leadership. During the presidential campaign, in which Mélenchon scored well, he appeared simultaneously at rallies in two cities. This feat - or trick - was enabled by use of a hologram-like system, so that, when he appeared on stage at a rally in Lyon, he also appeared on stage in Paris, in photographic effigy. As Mélenchon walked back and forth on one stage, his hologram did likewise on the other and he even had two flesh-and-blood comrades seated close to his likeness on the Paris stage.

The FI programme is radical in one particular sense. Had its candidate won the presidency, one of its first acts would have been to proclaim a Sixth Republic and to abolish the post of president. The party is not Eurosceptic, but it wants a complete overhaul of Brussels, a dismantling of the European Central Bank and various eco-policies put in place. FI's leader has been its asset, but now he might be its problem. Apart from the fact that Mélenchon, like Macron's new minister of justice, is facing defamation charges, he is looking to contest a seat in Marseille, a city which gave him a good tally in the presidential race, because, as Mélenchon says, he is a *méridional* - from the south. Because Mélenchon does not want to operate under the Left Front federation, which would have distributed seats to allow all left groups a chance of winning (across France there are 7,882 candidates for 577 seats), in effect, the FI will divide and weaken the left - the very aim of Emmanuel Macron.

## High stakes

Another high-profile left organisation will be contesting seats. Lutte Ouvrière (LO - Workers' Struggle) which arose out of the student struggles of May 1968, is a Trotskyist group which has contested every presidential and parliamentary election since 1973. Its best known presidential candidate was Arlette Laguiller, who contested seven elections. Occasionally linking up with another Trotskyist grouping, the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire, following the events of 68, LO continues to field thousands of candidates for municipal elections. In relation to the coming parliamentary contest, LO's bi-monthly journal (which goes by the same name), in an editorial dated May 11 dissects Jean-Luc Mélenchon's presidential bid and looks to the coming struggles. It points out that Mélenchon failed by only 600,000 votes to be the other candidate in the run-off to face Emmanuel Macron and concludes that Mélenchon is smarting from this defeat - an opinion shared by mainstream commentators.

LO then looks at FI's electoral base. It believes that FI drew enormous support from erstwhile Parti Socialiste voters and this explains Mélenchon's success and the PS collapse. LO characterises Mélenchon and FI as "anti-system", but in no way revolutionary. Correctly, LO points out that FI's programme is reformist and is prepared to accommodate existing capitalist institutions by, for instance, reducing corporation tax from 33% to 25%, in order to stimulate French business. Mélenchon blames Brussels and the European Bank for austerity, rather than capitalism, revealing a nationalism that does not engage with the structure of capitalism, but rather seeks to reorientate it in a benevolent direction.

FI's gamble on obtaining sufficient seats in the forthcoming election to sideline the socialists and marginalise the PCF is a high-stakes game. Triangulation - a term much used by French media - concerns the competing and shifting alliances of left and right, along with Macron's out-and-out bid to remove any and every political opponent, either as individuals or as a political party, and rule by decree.

The results on June 18 will certainly be worth analysing ●

## What we fight for

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# weekly WORKER

**Theresa May  
killed Ukip by  
stealing its  
programme**

## Bitter taste of victory

Can Ukip recover from its present decline? Paul Demarty thinks not

One of the disadvantages of publishing on Thursdays, if you are a political journal, is the damn-nigh inevitable conflict with British elections. Communists are frequently parodied in vulgar bourgeois critique as thinking they know better than everyone else what is good for them, but on this point we certainly cannot pretend to know better than our readers, with the benefit of exit polls and early results (and, in posterity, later results) what the top-line outcome of this campaign will be.

Of one item in the overall bill of goods, however, we can be more or less certain - the terminal crisis of the UK Independence Party. No poll has been published, from the initial announcement of the election until today, which has put Ukip's rating above 8%, and typically it is in the range of 4%-6%. In other words, between a half and a third of what it achieved at the last time of asking - in 2015, indeed, Ukip came third in the popular vote, but was denied meaningful representation by Britain's undemocratic electoral system. The year before that, it topped the polls in the European parliament election.

Its greatest triumph, of course, was the majority vote for Brexit in last year's referendum - an event for which Ukip deserves the credit and David Cameron the blame. Yet the party has performed abysmally since. It has burned through leaders at a worrying clip. It has descended into fratricidal warfare. Its one MP has resigned the whip. And - as noted - it is cruising for a bruising in today's election. The question is really whether it can survive.

The answer, surely, is no.

### Birth

The reasons go back, in the end, to the very roots of the party, when it was founded in 1991 by the eccentric neoliberal academic, Alan Sked, and was one of a clutch of minor Eurosceptic single-issue parties to spring up in the period. Its most notable rival in this regard was the Referendum Party, founded by the cracked billionaire, James Goldsmith, in 1994; but the latter fell apart after Goldsmith's death, and by the turn of the millennium Ukip was well-established in this niche.

Sked was ousted by a faction - led by (among others) the promising young City boy, Nigel Farage - which wanted to dispense with the founder's liberalism and align politically with the Tory hard right - the mainspring of Euroscepticism. A real breakthrough would have to wait a while, partly because at that time the field was not clear. Nick Griffin had had some success reorienting the British National Party from straightforward fascism to an ethnocentric Poujadism, inspired by France's Front National. Ukip's first major tilt at the big time had to wait until Robert Kilroy-Silk - once a Labour MP, but by the mid-aughts more famous for his racially intemperate tabloid broadsides against Arabs - took up the purple and yellow standard as his own, before falling out spectacularly with the established leadership and flouncing



The party is nearly over

out to form his own outfit, Veritas (likely conceived, it was quipped at the time, after a glass too many of *vino*), from which in turn he was hilariously ousted after both groups suffered a poor showing in the 2005 general election.

Partly this was a matter of the times - the slow and steady tilt of a Labour government into decline, drastically exacerbated by Tony Blair's enthusiastic participation in the 'war on terror' and the contradictions it highlighted in Labour's voting base, which looks very different in London's Banglatown than it does in Burnley. So far as parties pushing national chauvinism were concerned, that meant a crisis of confidence in Labour heartlands, and Griffin's BNP in particular thrived in the sort of lumpenised, wrecked working class communities that Margaret Thatcher left littered across England's northern rustbelt. The Ukip appeal, already at that time, was rather to the suburban petty bourgeois, the retired major, those who believe what they read in the *Daily Mail*.

### Rise

In 2009, with Gordon Brown's government in disarray and denuded of the bourgeois press support enjoyed by Tony Blair, with acute economic crisis at home and abroad, and with the establishment parties humiliatingly exposed by the expenses scandal, these contradictions came to a point of rupture. The first casualty was the BNP, which - almost immediately upon its great breakthrough in that year's European elections - was torn apart.

The BBC and wider establishment took the hint, and ruthlessly exposed

the shady background of the BNP's core leadership in fascist esotericism, finding Griffin in particular fatally unable either to fully distance himself from that past (at the risk of alienating his allies) or owning up to it (alienating those of his voters who wanted only to stop immigration, and not to listen to rants about Aryan blood or the 'holohoax'). The English Defence League arose to lure away the boot boys, and the whole thing descended into farce.

At the same time, circumstances brought David Cameron's Tories to power in coalition with the Liberal Democrats, propelling Labour back to the opposition benches. The Tory assault on Labour voters (about the best description of the last seven years of 'austerity' that could be attempted) firmed up Labour's vote (excepting in Scotland); and it was the Tory hard core whose turn it was to be betrayed by a government on (from their point of view) the 'wrong side' of many hot-button culture war issues, drawn particularly from the pro-European wing of their party, and in coalition with the most flagrantly pro-European party in Parliament to boot. Ukip thrived.

It also found a leader with whom it could go places: Nigel Farage, a smooth operator with a bit of edge; a man who grinned like a horse, drank like a fish and smoked like a chimney, but was never less than able to bat away impertinent press questions, who knew how to make opponents suffer and seemed to enjoy doing so as much as his audience enjoyed watching. As Ukip's share of the vote increased, Cameron came under more pressure: a

big Ukip vote at a general election was unlikely to translate into many seats (as spectacularly demonstrated in 2015), but it *could* nonetheless deprive the Tories of many, by splitting the vote in swing constituencies. So Cameron, in the hope of stemming the tide, committed the Tories to holding an in-out referendum on European Union membership.

### Apotheosis

When the general election rolled around, of course, it turned out that coalition government had dealt a body-blow to the Lib Dems, while obedient subordination to the Tories in the Scottish independence campaign had handed Scotland to the nationalists, and Cameron was landed with a majority he probably did not even want - dependent on a larger than ever faction of Eurosceptic head-bangers on the benches behind him to get things done. So he called the referendum; and lost it. Thus with one stroke he handed Ukip its coveted victory - and destroyed it.

The paradox stems ultimately from the particular character of Ukip, of which two aspects are pertinent here. The first is that, ultimately, Ukip is a single-issue party. Yes, its manifestos have whole swathes of policy in them, but there is one overriding concern, the reason for its founding, the very name of the thing. Ukip exists to get Britain out of Europe. Sure, that has *not* yet been achieved; but Theresa May has done a sterling job at looking likely to follow through with a suitably 'hard' Brexit. Like Farage, she understands the value of political pantomime. Without that *raison d'être*, what hope does Ukip have of survival?

Secondly, Ukip has lost Farage, perhaps this time for good; it is no better equipped to survive without him than the Referendum Party could outlive Jimmy Goldsmith. The internal connection between these two factors has to do with the fact that, of all the many single-issue campaigns that stood candidates (and even won, here and there) over this period, it is Ukip that became a serious force, for a time, in British high politics. *Why?* Britain's role in Europe has always been to sabotage efforts at tighter unification, in dutiful service to the United States, which does not want a serious great-power rival to arise from that quarter. This requires a peculiar doublethink - Britain must rail against European federalism, but *from within*: it is a matter of being inside the tent, pissing in. Thus a presence as a nigh-

permanent feature of British politics of a hysterical Euroscepticism in the rightwing press, which has the effect of suturing together the anxieties of parts of the popular masses, especially the petty bourgeoisie, and the interests of the Anglosphere, *by exaggerating the costs of EU membership*.

Ukip was able to make the link between Europe, anxieties about Britain's decline and the impact of immigration *because that link was already made* in every press broadside against Brussels bureaucrats. It was 'common sense'. But 'common sense' cannot be merely the abstract product of an editorial line: it must be embodied - there must be a person who is 'talking sense', who can stand in for the 'man in the street'. Common sense is that which cannot be expressed in academic treatises, but must be recognised in the other. Who is the other? Perhaps he likes a beer. Perhaps he smokes ... Here is the phenomenon of demagogy: the elite are out of touch with the masses, but the masses, while unable to represent themselves, must be represented. Ukip politics is fundamentally Bonapartist, and thus Farage is indispensable.

But indispensable individuals have a corrosive effect on the organisation as a whole. The remarkable feature of Ukip is how hollow its organisation is, how strikingly untalented even the layer of people directly below Farage. For the single-issue campaign to become a serious force in general politics, it had to operate on the *Führerprinzip*; but that very mode of existence is brittle and transitory.

Ukip's demise should not be celebrated too enthusiastically, mostly because things we hate about it - national chauvinism, extreme reaction - will not die with it. There is a structural role for far-right politics in capitalist society that we too often exhaust with our single stereotype of fascist bands goose-stepping in the streets. It seems likely that this broader social force will move into the Conservative Party in the coming years - indeed it already has, as it periodically does: the Tories are more hospitable to the far right than many continental Christian Democratic and conservative parties, and 'first past the post' encourages cranks to take shelter in 'big tent' parties (pissing optional).

Yet - whatever the wider political outcome - we may feel justified in raising a pint of warm, flat beer to the demise of British chauvinism's awkward squad ●

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