

A paper of Marxist polemic and Marxist unity

weekly **worker**



The political significance of the cult of monarchy and the necessity of fighting for republican democracy

- Letters and debate
- Media and monarchy
- Cromwell as inspiration
- Iran's interrupted dynasties

No 1441 May 4 2023

Towards a mass Communist Party

£1/€1.10

HIDDEN BEHIND THE CROWN



LETTERS



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

Confusion

I appreciate comrade Macnair's report on the 2023 Platypus International Convention ('History and anti-history', April 20). In part, however, the report reads like a 'notes to self', and Macnair seems to have misheard what was said when he writes: "Later DL Jacobs from Platypus argued that the spectacular rise of the DSA was merely a result of the left being frightened by the 'Tea Party' and circling the wagons round the Democrats."

Macnair is confusing two different things. I said: "The Tea Party and the 2010 midterms frightened the left to circling the wagons around the Democrats. In 2009, Newt Gingrich spoke of Obama's 'European socialism transplanted to Washington'. [The left] merely wished this was true."

The anti-war left had collapsed into the Obama presidency and, when they saw the Tea Party, treated it as driven by racism against the first black US president - in fact, even in retrospect, that is still assumed. This is not the same as the 'Trump Bump', which, in retrospect, is treated as a phenomenon of Bernie. Thus, as was said later in the same remarks: "For the doldrums of the present would have likely happened if Clinton won in 2016. While Sanders was called a 'socialist gift from the gods', it really was Trump that delivered the goods. People joined DSA because of the promise that Bernie would have defeated Trump, after they were promised this by the 'pragmatic, progressive' Hillary Clinton."

DSA national director Maria Svart said of the new members: "You could literally see the moment when Trump was declared the winner." In 2017, Joseph Schwartz acknowledged this in his retrospective of the history of DSA: "DSA veterans and national staff were shocked to see that on the day after Trump's victory one thousand people joined DSA (in our best past year maybe 1,200 new members joined over 12 months). From November 9 2016 to July 1 2017, over 13,000 people - mostly between the ages of 18 and 35 - joined DSA."

Trump did speak at Tea Party rallies, but the Tea Party was truly dead before Trump ran in 2016. Trump was able to connect up the demands of both Occupy and the Tea Party, whereas Ted Cruz, for instance, simply thought one could not draw a "starker contrast between Occupy and the Tea Party". The left shared Cruz's opinion.

Trump and Sanders were a dual phenomenon of the crisis in capitalist politics and their affinity was not accidental. Trump would say that Sanders had "some very good material" and welcomed Sanders supporters with open arms (one in 10 Sanders voters accepted the invitation, according to Paul H Jossey, writing in *Politico* on August 14 2016). Collapsing Trump into the Tea Party loses the qualitative change in capitalist politics he represented.

"The good intentions of being a socialist do not rule out a bourgeois-democratic essence," Lenin once remarked. It should not be surprising that I stated capitalist politics *is* socialist.

For, as I continued in my opening remarks, what made socialism *potentially* emancipatory was *proletarian socialism* (hence, the Kautsky 'fusion' formula!). It is not the *what*, but the *how*. Only proletarian socialism could potentially overcome the self-contradiction of labour by taking the poles (labour and capital) to their extreme.

What gave rise to the modern idea of communism was this self-contradiction. Engels would later recount that Marx and his views had converged in the early 1840s precisely on the point that communism "now no longer meant the concoction, by means of the imagination, of an ideal society as perfect as possible, but insight into the nature, the conditions and the consequent general aims of the struggle waged by the proletariat" ('On the history of the Communist League', October 5 1885). The proletariat struggles just as much with the *unconscious* socialisation of society as it does with private property.

The same necessity impresses itself on capitalist politics, not just in the recent government enforced socialisation of banks, but also with democracy. Marx's image of Louis Bonaparte hobbling together different classes to build a railroad shows just how effective democratic and socialist demands can be to weld the masses to the capitalist state. The classic characterisation of capitalist production as the contradiction of private property and socialised production means that the problem cannot be reduced to 'free markets'; one is mistaken in believing that state interference is any more anti-capitalist than the other side of the contradiction!

Indeed, Rosa Luxemburg responded to Eduard Bernstein well over a century ago that the further socialisation of society and the extension of democracy can be the means to further strengthen "private property" and the "open capitalist exploitation of the labour of others". Why? The socialisation of production, set in motion by bourgeois property relations after the industrial revolution, is also the cause of proletarianisation or the destruction of bourgeois social relations. 'Private property' is really demanded by the resultant industrial reserve, who seek to be recognised by society - whether through exchange of their labour power or the exercise of their rights as citizens to demand the state find a stopgap. This only further sets in motion the self-contradictory dynamic, retarding both the possibility of completely realising either labour or capital.

Hence, the necessity of the dictatorship of the proletariat as a means to master this self-undermining dynamic, so that it does not continue in an obscure and estranged manner. So, yes, *capitalist politics is socialist*, but only proletarian socialism could be emancipatory.

DL Jacobs
USA

Decisive shift?

Anne McShane's review of People Before Profit's pamphlet, *The case for a left government*, suggests that in Ireland there is now a decisive theoretical shift in the Socialist Workers Network towards coalitionism, perhaps even 'ministerialism' ('Chasing after cabinet seats', April 27).

However, unlike comrade McShane, I think this is a welcome

development. It at least confirms that a significant force on the Irish left is committed to a road to socialism which runs through a democratic republic, in which a revolutionary party contends in elections, as well as through the more traditional arenas of struggle.

This commitment will force comrades in and around PBP to contend with the history of social democracy, from the debates within the Second International on ministerialism to the experience of the constituent assembly in Russia, post-war revisionism, Eurocommunism.

And this political shift is of relevance to revolutionary politics in Britain, given the dominance within the PBP of the Socialist Workers Party's sister organisation. It cannot be the case that PBP has published this document without broad agreement within the SWN. Thus the approach of the SWN is perhaps a break with the syndicalism and movementism of the SWP.

Given their continued affiliation with the British SWP as part of the International Socialist Tendency, it is not be unreasonable to assume a high degree of agreement on their direction of travel. To prove their commitment to PBP, the Socialist Workers Party in Ireland has become the Socialist Workers Network. Does this set a precedent for the British SWP?

Certainly, when the question of a new workers' party is raised, leading figures in the SWP won't rule out participation. But will they go as far as the SWN?

Ansell Eade
Lincolnshire

Spider-writing

Anne McShane writes: "... SF's vice-president and leader in Northern Ireland has just announced that she will be attending the coronation of Charles III and Camilla on May 6."

At least the founder of Sinn Féin, Arthur Griffith, proposed a 'dual monarchy' à la Austria-Hungary, but SF now bends the knee to the murderous foul rag, the royal standard, and the spider-writing power behind 'British democracy'.

Meanwhile, the tame British 'republicans' prudently praise modern presidencies ... Frankly, give me today's *Woman's hour* anecdote, claiming that, since Elizabeth I, the monarchist Brits are not so much 'regalists' as 'reginalists' (all feminists now). They quote a little Brit boy: "Does the coronation of Charles mean that now a man can be queen?"

Jack Fogarty
email

Terrorism

David Douglass uncritically supports the strategy and tactics of the Provisional IRA in their fight against the British state (Letters, April 27).

I will refer to the pamphlet, *Marxism opposes individual terrorism*, produced by Militant in the early 80s, which opposed the strategy and tactics of the Provos. It refers to the famous saying by Leon Trotsky that "terrorists are just liberals with bombs". Terrorists believe, like the liberals, that a change of personnel at the top of the capitalist state is all that is necessary to bring about change. Just supposing Margaret Thatcher was killed by the Brighton bomb - an equally vicious politician would've been put in her place.

As Eddie Ford correctly points out, the Provos, like the leaders of Extinction Rebellion, were accountable to nobody, apart from themselves. In the early 1990s they realised that their acts of individual terrorism against the British state would never work. The result was that the Provos replaced the gun and the bomb with the comfort of ministerial cars in a power-sharing Northern Ireland assembly, which institutionalised sectarian divisions.

The 1960s civil rights movement in Northern Ireland was influenced by members of the Communist Party, who had a policy of popular frontism rather than a class approach, which could unite both the nationalist and unionist working class in a struggle for socialism in the island of Ireland and in Britain. Its members were influenced by the Maoists, whose policies of individual terrorism were a dead end in 1960s Latin America and Africa.

In an advanced capitalist state, such as Northern Ireland, the methods of individual terrorism could never overcome the far greater forces of the British state. A guerrilla struggle cannot work in an advanced capitalist state - Northern Ireland is not Cuba. The policy of individual terrorism by the Provos was shown to be a dead end, leading to death and injury and the incarceration of the flower of the working class in Northern Ireland.

David Douglass would be well advised to read *Bolshevism - the road to revolution*, where the author, Alan Woods, explains that Lenin's Bolsheviks came to prominence through a long theoretical battle against the Narodniks, who practised individual terrorism in tsarist Russia in the same way that the

Provos did in Northern Ireland and the mainland. Lenin's brother was hung for an act of individual terrorism against the tsarist state.

Lenin's Bolsheviks came to power by winning the leadership of the workers, soldiers and peasants, through working class politics, and not through the policy of individual terror.

John Smithee
Cambridgeshire

Settler-colonial

Andrew Northall, the *Weekly Worker's* resident Stalinist letter-writer, tells us that "we can all join up the dots" - and then demonstrates why the last thing he is capable of is joined-up thinking (April 20).

Northall implies that, because I have written extensively on Zionist relations with Nazi Germany, I am therefore implying that the Israeli state is a Nazi state. Why? The fact that the Zionist movement collaborated (and worse) with the Nazi state, and anti-Semitic forces more widely, does not imply that Zionism itself was a Nazi entity. Using the same 'logic', the fact that Stalin collaborated with Hitler as a consequence of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact should also make Stalin a Nazi.

The Zionist movement and its leaders collaborated with the Nazi state because they saw that this was in their interest. There was certainly an ideological congruity between the two, but they remained distinct political phenomena. One of the problems with Stalinism has always been its ideological crudity and Northall is certainly an adept practitioner in this regard.

His main beef is with the characterisation of Israel as a settler-colonial state by Moshé Machover and myself. This analysis, pioneered by Matzpen,

Online Communist Forum



Sunday May 7 5pm

Republicanism and the coronation's pomp and circumstance - political report from CPGB's Provisional Central Committee and discussion

Sunday May 14 5pm

György Lukács's *History and class consciousness*
Speaker: Mike Macnair

Use this link to join meeting:
communistparty.co.uk/ocf-register

Organised by CPGB: communistparty.co.uk and Labour Party Marxists: www.labourpartymarxists.org.uk
For further information, email Stan Keable at Secretary@labourpartymarxists.org.uk

A selection of previous Online Communist Forum talks can be viewed at: youtube.com/c/CommunistPartyofGreatBritain

is now largely accepted by anti-Zionists and Palestine solidarity supporters the world over. However, if you are trapped into defending the twists and turns of Uncle Joe, then the ability to see beyond crude slogans is indeed a Herculean effort.

Zionism from the start was a colonial movement and, because it sought to settle the land with its own people, as opposed to merely exploiting the indigenous population, it was a *settler-colonial* movement. The fact that most Israelis today are born in Israel does not change that fact. Settler-colonialism describes the society that Zionism created, which is why the 2018 Jewish Nation State Law defined Jewish settlement as a "national value".

Instead of a society based on equality, regardless of ethnicity, one section - Jews - are encouraged to settle areas of the state where Arabs form a majority or a large minority. It is settler-colonialism, the most racist form of colonialism, which defines Israel's character as an apartheid state, where your most important characteristic is whether or not you are Jewish.

Northall is nothing if not a crude 'Marxist', whose economism blurs issues of race and class. That is why he understands nothing of the Israeli Jewish working class or why it has failed to form even its own social democratic Labour Party. It is difficult enough to see the revolutionary potential of the European working class, let alone that of Israel. Its trade union confederation, Histadrut, is now led by members of Likud, which is a capitalist and free-market party!

It is a sad fact that the settler working class, everywhere it is formed, identifies first and foremost with its own ruling class, as Ireland and South Africa demonstrated. It is why the Israeli working class votes predominantly for parties of the right: ie, against its own class interests. What Northall calls "the basic class contradictions between working people and capital" are subsumed by the national question: ie, the oppression of the Palestinians, in which the Israeli Jewish working class actively participates. One of the reasons why Israel has become one of the most unequal western economies is precisely because of the political weakness of the Jewish working class and its identification with its own ruling class.

Obscuring as he does the settler-colonial nature of the Israeli state, Northall substitutes pious wishful thinking for the present-day reality. As Israeli society heads even further towards an openly pogromist state led by fascists, Northall simply relies on slogans devoid of all meaning.

Stalinism never opposed Zionism. On the contrary it was the Soviet Union which was responsible for the adoption by the United Nations of resolution 181, which partitioned Palestine and in the process weakened the communist parties of the whole region, as communists were seen to side with those who had created the Israeli state by transferring 85% of the Palestinians across the borders and massacring thousands in the process.

Even within the settler population there are, as the present-day demonstrations show, irreconcilable differences between religious Zionism and secular Zionism. Of this Northall neither knows nor understands anything. Crude sloganeering with a veneer of Marxism is his only explanation.

Yes, we all want maximum

unity of the working class across the Middle East. However, in allying with its own ruling class, the Israeli Jewish working class is unlikely to be a partner of the exploited and oppressed of other countries.

Tony Greenstein
Brighton

Not Nazi

When your correspondents (particularly the anti-Israel trifecta) reference the Ben-Gvir proposed Israeli National Guard, a very particular terminology is used: 'SA' or 'SS' (Letters, April 20).

They could have used 'Blackshirts' (Britain, Italy or Albania), 'Blueshirts' or 'Greenshirts' (Ireland), 'Iron Guard' (Romania), 'Red Shirts' or 'Silvershirts' (United States), and many other disreputable organisations.

But, in spite of there being such a large choice, somehow it is always linked to Nazi Germany. Peculiar? Or maybe not so peculiar.

John Davidson
email

Class rump

Daniel Lazare's reply to Moshé Machover and Tony Greenstein betrays his own political origins in the Spartacist cult (the International Communist League) of James Robertson in the US (Letters, April 27).

Robertson developed a unique theory about 'interpenetrated peoples' as a universal 'Marxist' principle covering initially the conflict in the north of Ireland and then Israel/Palestine. The entire 'Spart family' continue to defend this capitulation to imperialism, where 'communal conflicts' were described as where different racial/ethnic/nationalist groups got mixed up together in the same space and the problem was to be solved by simply explaining to them that they have to stop being 'sectarian', recognise their common interests as workers and join up together against their capitalist oppressors. Tellingly their 1977 'Theses on Ireland' outlining this approach designated the conflict as between Catholics and Protestants - not between anti-imperialist nationalists and pro-imperialist loyalists/unionists.

Those old reformists, Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, sharply differentiated between the nationalism of the oppressors and the nationalism of the oppressed - between imperialism and anti-imperialism. Marx and Engels did so after their famous 'Irish turn', as seen clearly in Marx's letter to Engels in 1867. This 'Irish turn' followed Engels' visit to the west of Ireland in 1866 and the absolute devastation he saw there following the Great Famine (or genocide, as it is more properly termed). Previously they had seen colonialism as somewhat progressive in transferring advanced technologies, industries, railways, etc to them. Now Engels saw the brutal reality - confirmed the following year in the Sepoy Mutiny, India's first war of independence from 1857-59. Marx and Engels went on the give unconditional, but critical, support to the Fenian movement - always trying to unite it in struggle with the English radicalising workers.

Contained in the Oath of Allegiance to the Orange Order was the pledge to "counter revolution". It was a cross-class alliance between privileged workers against the far more oppressed nationalist workers. Similarly, as applied to Israel/Palestine and the conflict there:

Robertson designated it simply as a disagreement between interpenetrated peoples; we had to knock their heads together and get them to see their common interests.

The working class only really operates as a class for itself when its strongest, best organised sections, the 'aristocracy of labour', defend its weakest and more oppressed. The current demonstrators against the far-right Israeli government are overwhelmingly white, Ashkenazi, secular and middle class - a privileged section of society, which does not include or fight for the rights of the two million Palestinian Israeli citizens, let alone those appallingly oppressed in the West Bank and Gaza, nor indeed the diverse Sephardi Jews, who comprise some 55% of Israeli Jews.

Comrade Lazare writes many excellent articles, but he has this appalling blind spot and is a victim of his own early political miseducation, which he has not yet overcome; he is orienting to the rump of the working class, those under the influence of a supremacist ideology, as in the north of Ireland, South Africa and the US Jim Crow Deep South 'poor whites'. We have to direct our propaganda to the natural vanguard of the class to win leadership and advance class consciousness.

Look at where the Sparts have ended up now; supporting the neo-fascist Canadian Truckers 'Freedom Convoy' just over a year ago, along with Donald Trump, Fox News and every Nazi in Canada and the US.

Gerry Downing
Socialist Fight

Either-or

The monarchist and the republican cases are both rubbish, but the monarchy is what we have. Monarchists claim that the monarchy embodies things that they spend the rest of their time complaining are not there, backed up by fanciful suggestions about tourism and soft power. Republicans claim that a republic would be a step towards the classless incorruption that characterised no existing republic in the world, backed up by a fatuous remark about hereditary surgeons, as if there would be elected surgeons. The case for the status quo is weak, but the case for change has not been made.

The last person to win a general election was Boris Johnson, so republicans must want him as head of state. There would have to be a nomination process. Candidates would certainly require nomination by one 10th of the House of Commons, 65 MPs, and very probably by one fifth of that house - 130 MPs. Even in the first instance, in the wildly unlikely event of more than two candidates, then the house would whittle them down to the two, who would then be presented to the electorate. Almost certainly, only two parties are ever going to have 65 MPs. Certainly, only two are ever going to have 130. In practice, they would probably arrange to alternate the presidency between them.

Nor should those of us who strived for economic equality and for international peace wish to abolish the royal prerogative. Rather, we should be working for someone of our mind to exercise it, and to do so in its fullness. No-one like that would ever make it onto the ballot paper for president.

David Lindsay
County Durham

ACTION

Muslim and Jew tour: beyond Israel

Nationwide public meetings with Rabbi Yisroel Dovid Weiss, spokesman of the Neturei Karta USA; broadcaster Dr Azzam Tamimi and One Democratic Palestine chair Pete Gregson. Friday May 5: Leicester; Sunday May 7: Coventry; Monday May 8: Birmingham; Tuesday May 9: Derby; Wednesday May 10: Manchester; Friday May 12: Sheffield; Sunday May 14: Glasgow. Organised by One Democratic Palestine: bogusantisemitism.org/rabbi-on-the-road-beyond-israel.

Walsall welcomes refugees

Monday May 8, 1pm: Counter-protest outside Park Inn Hotel, Bescot Crescent, Walsall WS1. Stand with refugees and asylum-seekers. Stop fascists and the far right. Organised by Black Country Stand Up To Racism: www.facebook.com/events/617292016554869.

What it means to be human

Tuesday May 9, 6.30pm: Talks on social and biological anthropology. Daryll Forde seminar room, Anthropology Building, 14 Taviton Street, off Gordon Square, London WC1 and online. This meeting: 'Educating for the Anthropocene: schooling and activism in the face of slow violence'. Speaker: Peter Sutoris. Organised by Radical Anthropology Group: www.facebook.com/events/1192774658082883.

Nakba 75

Saturday May 13, 12 noon: Demonstration. Assemble BBC, Portland Place, London W1. This marks the 75th anniversary of the Nakba, when over 750,000 Palestinians were driven into exile and more than 500 towns and villages were destroyed. Today there is continuing colonisation, apartheid and military occupation. Organised by Palestine Solidarity Campaign: www.palestinecampaign.org/events/nakba-75-national-protest.

Sizewell C site walk

Sunday May 14, 2pm to 5pm: Five-mile guided walk through the proposed Sizewell C nuclear power station construction site, starting at The Eel's Foot Inn, Eastbridge, Leiston IP16. Expensive new nuclear reactors here will take decades to reduce carbon emissions. Organised by Stop Sizewell C: stopsizehellc.org/walks.

End the war in Ukraine - peace talks now

Wednesday May 17, 7.30pm: Public meeting, Friends Meeting House, Hill Street, Coventry CV1. Oppose nuclear threats in Europe and the Pacific. Increase wages, not weapons. Speakers include Lindsey German (Stop the War) and Sophie Bolt (CND). Organised by Coventry and Warwick Stop the War Coalition: www.stopwar.org.uk/cities/coventry.

World at war and the movement for peace

Saturday May 20, 10am to 4pm: Conference for union members, Brunswick Methodist Centre, Brunswick Place, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1. Working people are the main victims of war. The slogan, 'Welfare, not warfare', should be taken up by the whole of the trade union movement. Tickets free (registration required). Organised by Newcastle Stop the War: www.facebook.com/events/563473509218535.

Nazis out of Newcastle

Saturday May 20, 12 noon: Counter-protest against the neo-Nazi 'North East Frontline Patriots', outside a Newcastle hotel (details to follow). Organised by Stand Up To Racism - North East: www.facebook.com/events/884124336148416.

Stop US nukes coming to Lakenheath

Saturday May 20, 1pm: Rally and workshops outside RAF Lakenheath, Brandon Road, Lakenheath IP27. Oppose the presence of US nuclear bombs at Lakenheath, which increase global tensions and put Britain on the front line in a Nato/Russia war. Organised by Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament: cnduk.org/events/lakenheathmay20.

Show me the bodies - how we let Grenfell happen

Tuesday May 23, 6.30pm: Online and in-person book event, Bookmarks, 1 Bloomsbury Street, London WC1. Peter Apps, deputy editor of *Inside Housing* discusses his acclaimed book, which covers the horror of the fire and how housing, economic and political systems facilitated the tragedy. Entrance free (registration required). Organised by Homes for All: www.axethehousingact.org.uk.

The world at war: a trade union issue

Wednesday May 24, 12.30pm: PCS conference fringe meeting, Syndicate Room 3, Conference Centre, Kings Road, Brighton BN1. Speakers include Claudia Webbe MP, Austin Harney (PCS NEC), Lindsey German and Andrew Murray (Stop the War). Organised by Stop the War Coalition: www.stopwar.org.uk/cities/brighton.

Jesus: a life in class conflict

Thursday June 1, 7pm: Online and in-person book launch, Marx Memorial Library, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London EC1. James Crossley and Robert Myles discuss their new book, which provides a materialist take on the historical Jesus. Registration £5 (£3). Organised by Marx Memorial Library: www.marx-memorial-library.org.uk/event/429.

Oppose Nazis in Leeds

Saturday June 3, 12.30pm: Counter-protest against the neo-Nazi 'Yorkshire Patriots', Victoria Gardens, The Headrow, Leeds LS1. Organised by Leeds Stand Up To Racism: www.facebook.com/events/3455053531400025.

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.

CORONATION

Powers hidden in reserve

This Saturday, says Eddie Ford, should remind us that the role of the monarchy is not only about pomp, circumstance and providing popular entertainment

In the spirit of the *Morning Star*, which in the past has restricted its coverage of events regarding the monarchy in this way, I will start by reminding readers that this weekend will see 'major traffic disruption' in central London due to a lot of fuss about a 74-year-old man.

Yes, it is the coronation of Charles Windsor - the oldest person ever to accede to the throne, after having been the longest-serving heir apparent and Prince of Wales in British history. It seems that this particular coronation of King Charles III and his consort, Camilla, is going to be different. The "new tradition", as *The Guardian* put it, replaces the homage of peers that has been used for centuries and will involve those watching the coronation on television or online - in pubs and parks - being urged to say out loud their loyalty to the monarch in a "chorus of millions of voices". Therefore we will be invited to chant the words: "I swear that I will pay true allegiance to your majesty, and to your heirs and successors according to law. So help me, God."

Quite rightly, this innovation has attracted widespread derision - as if it was deliberately designed to alienate the maximum number of people possible. Are people in pubs expected to stand to attention too, while reciting this crap? At least it would be a comic spectacle. If this is the new king's idea of a monarchy "more befitting" of the 21st century, it has got off to a bad start. Those defending it say MPs already pledge allegiance to the monarch on taking their seats, so what is the problem with extending the practice? Lambeth Palace, the official London residence of the Archbishop of Canterbury, said it was intended to be a moment of "joy and celebration" - both in the abbey and in homes across the country and beyond. It will bring the world together, apparently. By contrast, the liberal anti-monarchist Republic group said the new oath was "offensive" and "holds the people in contempt" - which may well be true. But Republic wants to replace the monarchy with a presidential system, meaning we would end up with an *elected monarch* instead.

Innovations

The coronation will include some other innovations. True, Charles himself will not be altering his oath, despite causing controversy in 1994 by suggesting he would prefer to be regarded as defender of *all* faiths - not just the Protestant one. But that was obviously too much for elements within the establishment, so Charles will stick to the old formulae of declaring himself a "faithful Protestant" (though he probably is not) and pledging to "uphold and maintain" the Protestant succession to the throne. On the other hand, it is true that the archbishop, Justin Welby, will preface the coronation oath by saying the established church, which the king swears to maintain, "will seek to foster an environment in which people of all faiths may live freely". Alongside him will be representatives from the Jewish, Sunni and Shia Muslim, Sikh, Buddhist, Hindu, Jain, Baha'i and Zoroastrian communities, who will form the first procession inside the abbey - anyone missed out? Female Anglican bishops will feature prominently as well. Rishi Sunak (a practising Hindu!) will



Put in place in 1899 after a bitter political struggle

give a reading from the *Bible* in his capacity as prime minister.

Approximately 2,000 guests have been invited, whilst the number of political attendees has been reduced significantly. Indeed, Buckingham Palace initially considered inviting as few as 20 MPs and 20 peers, but after an outcry those numbers were more than doubled. As a state occasion, of course, the coronation is paid for by the British government - that is, the long-suffering taxpayer. This is despite the fact that Charles was recently estimated to have a personal fortune of £1.8 billion by using numerous tricks and wheezes, mainly not having to pay inheritance tax.¹

As for Sir Keir Starmer, leader of His Majesty's extremely loyal opposition, we hear that he is having trouble deciding on what to wear at

the coronation - a "posh" morning coat, his trusty "Sunday best" or "uniform"? Last June, of course, he insisted that it was your "patriotic duty" to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Now, sycophantic again, he has said that the coronation is a chance for the country to come together and "renew what it means to be headed by a monarchy" - which for him can only be a good thing, as it had saved the country from "extremism".

Anyhow, what do the general public think of all this? A YouGov poll published in April revealed that 64% do not care very much - or at all - about the event, while only 9% care "a great deal".² A survey by the National Centre for Social Research found that 45% of respondents said of the monarchy either that it should be abolished or was not very

important. By averaging out all the various polls, you can guesstimate that around 15% are positively republican - especially amongst the young - which is a relatively sizeable minority.

This stuff matters, as we have not had a revolution in Britain for a very long time. You can certainly imagine that, if you did have a revolutionary situation, with the army moving against a potential or actual anti-establishment government of one sort or another, then the role of the monarchy would be crucial in that respect. The monarchy is a key block against democracy - along with the army and the mandarin civil service (not to mention the trade union, as well as the Labour Party, bureaucracy).

As far as Charles Windsor is concerned - as he argued when still

'HRH Prince of Wales' in 2010, in *Harmony: a new way of looking at our world*, which he co-authored - the enlightenment was a terrible thing, and the French Revolution was even worse. His ideal is some sort of imaginary state, where you have - in the words of the Anglican 1848 hymn - "The rich man in his castle, the poor man at his gate; God made them, high or lowly, and ordered their estate." This encapsulates neatly the vision of Britain that this individual has. He is instinctively anti-democratic to his very core - as, of course, is the monarchical institution he heads.

Cromwell

In reality the break with feudalism came through two revolutions. The second, the Glorious Revolution, which brought William of Orange over from the Netherlands, completed what the first began. To this day if you go to parliament - where the monarch passes by on their way to many state occasions - there is the impressive bronze statue of Oliver Cromwell designed by Hamo Thornycroft and cast by Singer of Frome.

Cromwell, of course, presided over the military defeat of the royalist army, established a republican Commonwealth and ensured that the tyrant, Charles Stuart, was executed.

Ironically over the road from Cromwell's statue there is a little noticed bust of the beheaded king. Understandably the statue caused considerable controversy when it was first proposed in the second half of the 19th century. Irish nationalists indignantly protested, their members of parliament voting against - Cromwell's conquest of Ireland was bloody, brutal and left bitter memories. Naturally the Conservative Party and the Ulster Unionists opposed the statue too - but for other reasons. Revolution, republic and regicide were outrages against God's natural order. Nonetheless, the Liberal government got its way and the statue was erected in 1899.

Then as now, though, the statue acts as a reminder to monarchs about who is supreme. The monarch is sovereign, but only *in* parliament. He has no *executive* powers. Once, the monarch had constituted a separate authority alongside the House of Lords and the House of Commons. No longer.

True, the monarch has all manner of other powers, hovering between reality and disuse, which would cause heated legal argument if Charles III tried to exercise them. Constitutionally this is undoubtedly a defect. Every power ought to be known. But precisely in the ambiguity lies not the charm, the mystery, the magic of monarchy, but powers that would be used in an extreme emergency to counter, circumvent and undermine democracy. That is why the ambiguities of the constitution, which were hated by the reform-minded statesmen of the 19th century, are now loved and venerated, not only by Rishi Sunak and Sir Keir, but the whole political class ●

eddie.ford@weeklyworker.co.uk

Notes

1. theguardian.com/uk-news/ng-interactive/2023/apr/20/revealed-king-charless-private-wealth-estimated-at-almost-2bn.
2. yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/survey-results/daily/2023/04/13/b7aff71.

MEDIA

A manufactured illusion

Today's monarchy is not a precious inheritance dating back to the Saxons. It is a product of the mass media, argues **Paul Demarty**

An image has been circulating on social media, lifted originally from *The Daily Telegraph* - an annotated photograph, or perhaps photomontage, of Charles Windsor, in his full royal regalia. The creators helpfully distinguish the dozens of medals and baubles, the sashes, sporrans and dress swords.

On the surface, it, like all images of regal gewgaws, hints at a vast historical inheritance - indeed, in some mystical way, at the Eternal itself. Yet the annotations give the lie. Apart from the orders of the garter and the thistle - established in 1348 and 1687 respectively - none of the honours signified by the clanking of precious metals are terrifically old. Mostly, indeed, they refer to various military regiments, and therefore point us to the 18th and especially 19th centuries - because empires do not maintain themselves.

This image, despite its cloying servility, thus contains an important truth. It is not the crown of Alfred the Great that Charles will formally inherit on May 6; or that of William the Conqueror, or even of William of Orange. Instead, he will become the latest in a rather shorter line of kings and queens, shaped above all by the coterminous rise of the mass media.

Nuisance

We begin, then, in 1688. The Stuart restoration collapsed, already unable to manage the political and religious divisions before James II revealed himself to be Catholic. Prominent Protestant members of the gentry combined with the urban bourgeoisie and even the nascent urban working class in opposition to the Stuarts; William of Orange was invited to invade, and duly did; James was put to flight; and royal decision-making was decisively limited by the rights of parliament thenceforth.

Of course, this coalition did not spring up spontaneously. A crucial accelerant was the most important invention of the early-modern era: moveable type. From the mass production of vernacular bibles to the first newspapers and journals, hot lead was a nuisance to rulers all over the continent, and Britain was no exception. In 1662, Charles II's parliament passed the Licensing of the Press Act, which restricted who could and could not use printing presses, enabling the crown to operate a censorship regime; but it could only limit, not prevent, the production of seditious materials.

The post-1688 regime allowed press licensing to lapse; it also largely concluded Britain's transition to capitalism - with the foundation of a national bank, international expansionism and mass proletarianisation following. The new political regime was somewhat unstable, with the Tories and Whigs emerging both as parliamentary parties and broad trends of political allegiance throughout the country. The monarch would have to pick his or her way through this division; and the press represented an increasingly important arena where this would be fought out.

As the house of Orange gave way to the previously obscure Hanoverians, the relationship between the press and monarchy could be friendly or hostile, according to the prevailing politics. Even when friendly, it could be irreverent - George III, before his famous psychological frailties took hold - was often portrayed in cartoons of the era as an honest



Power of print

farmer, cleaning out the stables. William IV's habit of producing illegitimate children and cheerful 'life in sin' with an actress energised the forerunners of today's tabloids.

It was the long reign of his successor, Victoria, that set the pattern still in place today: though her popularity waxed and waned, by her death in 1901 her cult was immovable. This was not a mere accident, or an achievement of Victoria's *per se*, but a question of wider politics. In this time, after all, the Whigs and Tories became the Liberal and Conservative Parties, with their more formalised existence and membership structures. The Conservatives deliberately promoted the royal cult as a point of British unity. Victoria's title of Empress of India, after all, was an initiative of Benjamin Disraeli's. Liberals were queasy about this overt imperialism, but it is notable that they came up with their own wizard wheezes to achieve such unity - for example in Matthew Arnold's *Culture and anarchy*, which supposed that the construction of an English literary canon could integrate the masses.

Contradictions

But it was hardly surprising that the great and the good of the Victorian age should be so vexed. The empire reached its greatest extent, and thus the incidence of colonial revolts quickened, from Ireland to India. Domestically, the long period of enclosure and scouring of the shires gave way to the industrial era, and immediately to a nascent political consciousness among the mass of the workers. Chartism and trade unionism terrified the ruling class. (It was a demonstration of the pro-suffrage Reform League in 1866 that motivated Arnold to write *Culture and anarchy*.)

In the long run, it was the Disraelian

Tory-imperialist-monarchist approach to the problem that had the most legs. And further transformations of the media helped it along. One consequence of the long struggle of the working class for some political voice - in the first place through alliances with Liberals - was the extension of literacy ever further into the mass of the population. That in turn created the market for the popular press. The Harmsworths first published the *Daily Mail* in 1896, and made it a stunning success by combining tittle-tattle, jingoism and - if absolutely necessary - journalism. Inevitably it spawned imitators; simultaneously the labour movement produced competitors like the *Daily Herald* and, later, the *Daily Worker*, and so the mass media became another front in the battle between capital and labour.

The monarchy was a great asset to the reactionary popular press; and vice versa, at least some of the time. The love of king and country stood as the content of good old English common sense; opposed to it were an army of fanatics, socialists and Bolsheviks (often of, let us say, *cosmopolitan* extraction). At the same time, radio took off as a mass medium, under the rule of the high Tory, John Reith; little enough dissent was to be permitted to the paternal elitism of the BBC's founding director general. That said, even the most fanatical royalist editor would have struggled to keep the yellow press in line, given the chaos that afflicted the palace in the 1930s. The abdication crisis badly damaged the monarchy; Edward VIII's profascism was, of course, shared by the *Mail* and the *Mirror* at the time, but, as Britain geared up for war with Germany, the papers retreated from 'hurrah for the Blackshirts!' material, and Edward was gotten far out of the way to avoid any security risks.

Suspended unsteadily during wartime, the social contradictions that demanded a celebrity cult of the monarch re-erupted shortly after victory over Hitler was achieved. Winston Churchill was dispatched from office, replaced with a Labour administration that retained the wartime state ownership of key industries and built a new welfare state. The empire crumbled (though the British made sure the process was as bloody as possible, notably in the partition of India). In this period, the 'celebrification' of the monarchy was completed. Elizabeth II's coronation was the first to be televised in full, and was a success in spite of the relative rarity of television sets - roughly 17 people watched each TV. In the 1960s, the decision was made to market the *whole* royal family. Parasocial identification with the monarch herself was no longer enough - they had to be visibly an ordinary family, like yours or mine (except, somehow, not).

In its own way, this was a pioneering move. The last 60-plus years have effectively been a continuous 'reality TV' show, and it is sobering to think how much is owed to the Monarchy Show by, say, *Keeping up with the Kardashians*. More recently, you would have to say that the media has had a better deal than the Firm. The Charles and Diana saga, Diana's death, Andrew's sweat glands, Harry's Californian exile - all are catnip to tabloid editors and the social media ranters who follow them. Yet the portrait unavoidably develops of a family, alas, all too like yours and mine - a pack of bitter divorcees, alienated children and creepy uncles.

The accession of Charles III is, of course, a chance to reset the clock somewhat. He has mended fences enough with Harry that the latter will be present, at least. The

media will not like that; a large part of the opprobrium directed at the notorious spare seems likely motivated by revenge on the part of the yellow press he so obviously and justifiably despises. His memoir described Rebekah Brooks - long-time Murdoch tabloid editor and CEO during the phone-hacking crisis - as "an infected pustule on the arse of humanity, plus a shit excuse for a journalist" (go off, king!) and made plainly clear that he blames the tabloids for the death of his mother. Last Tuesday, he resumed his endless civil battles against the Murdoch papers: he seeks £200,000 in damages related to phone hacking. (It was, specifically, the hacking of his phone that was first discovered and led, ultimately, to the whole scandal.)

Tensions

There is a tension, then, as there always has been, between the immediate interests of the newspaper proprietors as *individual proprietors* (or anonymous bodies of institutional investors, as the case may be) and the *collective* interests of the bourgeoisie *per se*. The latter demands, for its continued rule, some measure of consent from the governed and the mass media are a crucial lever for doing this. Yet the *commercial* interests of the tabloid press, US cable news and so on lie fundamentally in sensationalism. The bourgeoisie needs little tricks like popular monarchism to marginalise its enemies as unpatriotic vermin; but the tabloid as a *particular business venture* cannot help itself from transcribing the new king's skin-crawling sex talk, the sordid details of his infidelity, the conspiracy theories about his ex-wife's death, and so on.

It is perhaps not surprising that it does not work terribly well. The proportion of republicans in Britain hovers between 20% and 25%, and among the young rises to 41%. Small wonder: nobody under 45 can remember the fairytale wedding of Charles and Diana (another great TV event, and the model for the pile-up of ceremonial occasions of the last 15 years). We can only remember the tampon fantasy, the tell-all interviews, and the paparazzi flashbulbs in the Paris road tunnel.

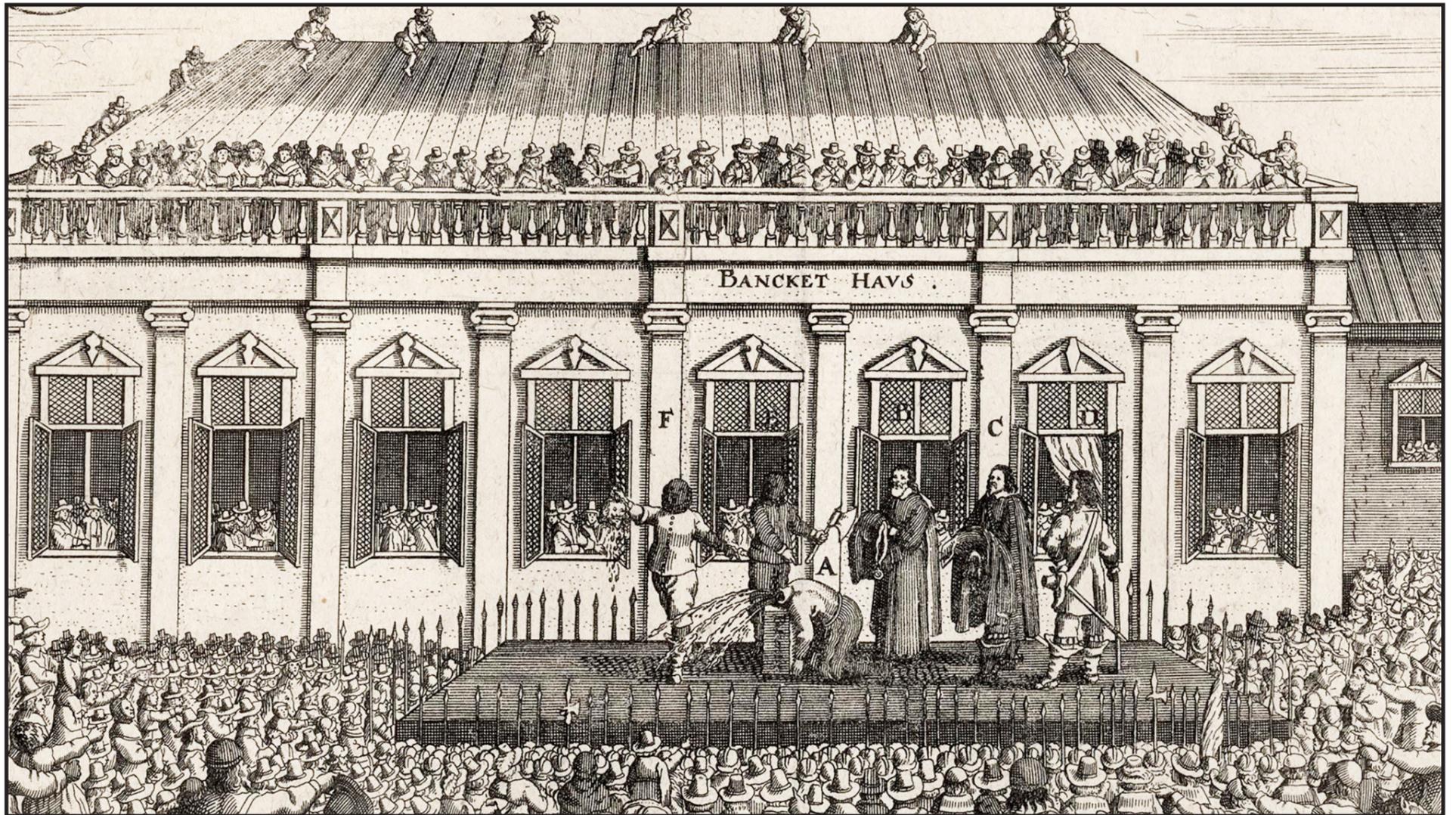
Yet this sentiment is essentially invisible this weekend. The blanket uniformity of media coverage of the coronation; the popular celebrations, enforced by bribery (an extra bank holiday) and implied threat ('*Why aren't you joining in the pledge of allegiance, exactly?*'); the sheer tonnage of bunting and memorial tat in every shop - all conspire to give an impression of totally undivided monarchical patriotism that would be thought a little gauche even by the first queen called Elizabeth.

That is, in the end, because the 20% (let us lowball it for the sake of argument) is a mere statistical aggregate of individuals, liberals and socialists and social democrats - indeed no doubt some rightwing libertarians who merely resent the tax subsidy. An organised left with any real roots in wider society, ie, a Communist Party, might not be able to capture that sentiment in whole, but it would be able to give it form and direction; crucially, it would be able to give it media to equal those of the bourgeois monarchists ●

REPUBLICANISM

Take inspiration from Cromwell

Enough of platonic republicanism, enough of fickle republicanism, enough of egg-throwing republicanism, says **Jack Conrad**. We need a militant fight for republican democracy



Execution of the tyrant, Charles I

Generally it is agreed that the total cost for the May 6 jamboree will be a staggering £100 million (plus £150 million for police and protection squads¹) - a huge increase in real terms compared with 1953, when Elizabeth Windsor was crowned. This has been the cause of much complaint by the economic left, small-state libertarians and liberal anti-monarchists alike, not least the Republic campaign group: the coronation is branded a “pointless piece of theatre” and a “slap in the face” for people struggling with the cost of living crisis.²

Of course, for communists the question of costs is entirely secondary. What matters for us is our principled objection to monarchy and monarchism. However, for the British ruling class it is an entirely different matter. The coronation of Charles and Camilla is taxpayers’ money well spent.

Not only will the great and the good take their seats in Westminster Abbey and bask in their success and self-importance. Millions - and not only from the UK - will line the route, watch the spectacle on TV, put up bunting and attend concerts and street parties. Hardcore royalists will, surely, go along with Justin Welby’s badly judged and widely mocked innovation: after the archbishop cries “God save the King”, true subjects will be asked to reply: “God save King Charles, long live King Charles, may the King live for ever.”

Whether Charles Windsor lives forever is doubtful. He is 74 and appears to be in good health. If he is lucky he has a couple of decades more in him. But the life expectancy of *this* monarch is beside the point. What Welby is really asking his god for is that the monarchy as an *institution* lives forever.

There are those on the left

who take comfort from the notion that somehow, over time - with generational replacement - we will inevitably see a decline in the popularity of the monarchy and eventually its demise. Certainly, younger people are less likely than their parents and grandparents to say that the monarchy is ‘very important’: 14% of under-35s took this view in 2021, compared with 44% of those aged 55 and over. Nonetheless, the thing about young people is that they do have an unfortunate habit of getting older and the tendency is for them to get drawn into the dominant ethos. Note, according to the National Centre of Social Research, when it comes to the monarchy the gap between the young and not so young is much as it was in 1994.³

Another similarly comforting delusion is that the death of Elizabeth Windsor would bring us to the threshold of a thoroughly modern bourgeois republic (an updated version of the Tom Nairn-Perry Anderson thesis promoted by *New Left Review* back in the 1970s). Hence we had Simon Basketter and Sophie Squire, writing in *Socialist Worker* at the time of Elizabeth Windsor’s jubilee: “That we have been inundated with royalist propaganda is not a sign of the strength of the monarchy, but of its weakness. It’s an ailing industry ... there will be a crisis when she dies”.⁴ Well she’s dead now, yet we still await the crisis.

Either way, the underlying thesis is that the stiff, unpleasant, narrow-minded Elizabeth Windsor was widely popular, but because Charles Windsor is stiff, unpleasant and narrow-minded he will become widely *un*popular. This is the cockeyed logic that, in effect, informed Jeremy Corbyn’s two

‘socialist’ general election manifestos in 2017 and 2019. The result is a thoroughly platonic, cowardly, put if off till tomorrow republicanism, which completely fails to appreciate the political, the constitutional, importance of the monarchy.

The argument is obviously stupid. What made Elizabeth Windsor widely popular was the press, TV, radio and the carefully choreographed round of royal receptions, military parades, tree plantings, openings, garden parties and Church of England services. That and the whole cult of deference, honours and gongs. As an individual Elizabeth Windsor was a typical product of the inter-war high aristocracy. Home educated and never having had a proper job, her only genuine interests seem to have been corgis, race horses and getting her disgraced second son out of trouble.

Despite inevitable wobbles and bumps, there is every reason to believe that The Firm will continue to play its allotted role under Charles III ... because it is in the interests of the ruling class. Walter Bagehot explained long, long ago - in 1867, to be precise - that the use of the monarchy “in a dignified capacity” is of “incalculable” value for the state. He even argued that without the monarchy the government would “fail and pass away”. An obvious nonsense, brought about by ongoing fears of government “by the many people” - the spectre of Chartism still haunted official Britain.⁵

Bagehot warned that a “political combination of the lower classes, as such for their own objects, is an evil of the first magnitude; that a permanent combination of some of them would make them ... supreme in the country”.⁶ That outcome could, thankfully, be avoided if the “higher classes” acted with the

“greatest wisdom” and, on the one hand, made substantial concessions and, on the other hand, cultivated the arts of deception.

People, are, according to Bagehot, “ruled by their imaginations” or, more accurately, by the “weakness of their imaginations”. The intricacies of constitutional law, parliamentary language and procedure, votes on motions, amendments and bills, the jockeyings of rival ministers, the horse trading done by rival political parties, the cynical manufacturing of public opinion - all are complex matters beyond the ken of simple minds. But, with the help and encouragement of the “higher classes”, the naive and gullible “lower classes” can be persuaded to, firstly, vote for their masters, and, secondly, to identify with a single person, a figurehead, a presidential prime minister, a monarchical president or - best of all - a constitutional monarch who stands above trifling party disputes and embodies majesty, country, stability and inspires awe.

Corbyn

However, there is more to the monarchy than the supposed “weakness” of the popular imagination. The monarch is one of those whom Robert Lowe, the Whig MP, called, “safeguards against democracy” that were put in place during the much resisted rise of universal suffrage during the 19th century and well into the 20th century.⁷ That is how to understand other such constitutional inventions: prime ministerial-dominated cabinet government, the professional civil service, the centralised police force, MI5, the state-controlled education system, single-member parliamentary constituencies, the bureaucratisation of the labour movement, etc, etc.

Imagine, for a moment - though it is a tall order - that something very strange happened in December 2019 and Jeremy Corbyn led Labour to a stunning majority in the House of Commons. What would have happened next? Unless there was an almost complete cull of sitting Labour MPs, and maybe a revolutionary situation gripping the country, the Privy Council would have advised Elizabeth Windsor to call somebody else to form a government. Someone trustworthy like Sir Keir Starmer, on the basis that he could command a majority among MPs (after all in June 2016 the Parliamentary Labour Party voted by 172:40 against a confidence motion in Corbyn).

So, now imagine, just for the sake of the argument, that there were 350 Labour MPs after the December 2019 general election and that they were Corbynistas one and all. Jeremy Corbyn is then called to Buckingham Palace and asked to form a government. But what next? It will be pushback time. The Americans arrange a run on the pound, there is a flight of capital and prices rocket. Mass strikes demanding compensating pay rises follow. Rubbish piles up in the streets, there are power cuts, even the dead go unburied. Bomb explosions rip through crowded night clubs in London, Manchester and Leeds. Dozens are killed. Muslim terrorism is blamed by the media. Riots break out with the heavy involvement of the far right. There are rumours of an army-MI5-royal cabal readying to restore sanity and rescue the nation from chaos. Much to his shock and horror, Jeremy Corbyn finds himself under arrest. Elizabeth II, using the royal prerogative, proclaims a state of emergency and promises fresh elections after law and order has been restored.

Not a complete fantasy. There were whispers in 1968 of Louis Mountbatten - great uncle of Charles - being involved in a conspiracy, along with Lord Cecil King, Hugh Cudlipp and Sir Solly Zuckerman, to oust the Labour prime minister, Harold Wilson. King wrote a *Daily Mirror* front page calling for extra-parliamentary action. In Wilson's place there would be a government of 'experts', headed by Mountbatten. Similar plot stories resurfaced in 1974. The army briefly occupied Heathrow Airport - taken by Wilson as a "show of strength" or a "warning".⁸ All background for Chris Mullin's novel *A very British coup* (1982).

Even when Corbyn was first elected Labour leader, there were all manner of threats - not only from former heads of the intelligence services, but serving generals too. One of them told *The Sunday Times* that "the army just wouldn't stand for it" - "they would not allow a prime minister to jeopardise the security of this country and I think people would use whatever means possible, fair or foul, to prevent that". The general concluded: "... you can't put a maverick in charge of a country's security".⁹

It should never be forgotten that the armed forces swear loyalty to the monarch, not the government, and they would have acted, if needed, to 'save the country' from an inveterate peacemonger such as Jeremy Corbyn.

Besides the threats there was, though, the attempt to tame. When he attended his first ceremonial event after being elected Labour leader, the press made a big fuss about how Corbyn remained silent during the singing of the national anthem at the Battle of Britain memorial service at St Paul's. Typically Sir Nicholas Soames complained that Corbyn was being "very rude and very disrespectful" and "needs to make his mind up whether he is a grown-up or not". Nigel Farage chipped in by describing Corbyn as a "hardcore republican to his fingertips" - obvious nonsense. But the real significance of the event was the fact that Jeremy Corbyn was there at all - dutifully participating in the royal-church-state ritual.

That he ended up joining the Privy Council, swearing loyalty to Queen Elizabeth II and her "heirs and successors" and urging on the 'anti-Zionism equals anti-Semitism' witch-hunt shows just how successful the establishment was in domesticating Corbyn. Not that this has stopped Sir Keir from casting this pathetic little figure out into the wilderness.

There are plenty of other platonically republican in the Corbyn mould: John McDonnell, Ash Sarkar, Owen Jones, Robert Griffiths and Diane Abbott come to mind. All would loyally serve capitalism, if only asked.

Reinvented

Without doubt, the monarchy is constantly made and remade. In the 1983 collection of essays, *The invention of tradition*, David Canadine usefully points out that, if you go back before Victorian times, what we take for granted now in terms of the "great and splendid monarchy", largely did not exist.¹⁰ In other words, The Firm is not something that goes back uninterruptedly to 1066 or even Georgian times. The modern monarchy was invented in the 19th century, with the fusing of the throne with the British empire, the crowning of Victoria, Empress of India, the ever-extended royal family, the great occasions attended by prime ministers from the Dominions and resplendent ranks of colonial troops.

Then reinvented with World War I, as the house of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha became the very British sounding house of Windsor. Then reinvented yet again after 1952, as the empire rapidly dissolved and was replaced by the altogether more insubstantial Commonwealth.

Charles III - in close cooperation with Justin Welby - is likewise doing a bit of reinvention in order to appeal to contemporary Britain. Hence the involvement of women bishops, the verses sung in Scottish Gaelic, Welsh and Irish Gaelic, the blessings from Catholic, Greek Orthodox and Free Church of Scotland clerics and the role of Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Sikh and Hindu "neighbours in faith".

An essentially Victorian coronation ceremony thereby mixes modern technology and current ruling class sensibilities with cod borrowings from medieval Catholicism and ancient Judaism. Yet, significantly, though everything else will be filmed in glorious colour, the re-enacting of Solomon being anointed by Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet happens behind a richly decorated screen (the man is 'converted' into a monarch). This secret moment lies at the very heart of the coronation and probably has its source in deep pre-history, original communism, women's magic and how girls are 'converted' into women with their menarche - their first period (such was their ritual power, they were secluded from men).¹¹

After his transmutation, Charles returns as a new man, and, along with Camilla, is draped in ermine trimmed robes. Each has a diamond, ruby, sapphire and pearl-encrusted crown placed on their head and they are handed their orb and sceptre power symbols. Camilla will not, of course, wear the Crown of Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, with at its centre the fabulous Koh-i-Noor diamond - it is too controversial nowadays (a painful reminder of foreign conquest, industrial-scale plunder and murderous colonial exploitation). Gifted to Queen Victoria by the East India Company after it annexed the Punjab in 1849, the 105.6-carat jewel has been claimed variously by Iran, Afghanistan, India and Pakistan - so it will remain safely locked away in the Tower of London.

Off-message

As the Prince of Wales, Charles Windsor was known for promoting his often esoteric causes with ministers and allowing his opinions to become known - whether over architecture and planning, agriculture, education, the arts, and most recently his distaste for government plans to send small-boat migrants to Rwanda.

Five years ago, though, in an interview for the BBC, he made clear that he would behave differently as monarch. Something reinforced in his formal address to the nation and Commonwealth on September 9 2022, when he first became king: "My life will, of course, change, as I take up my new responsibilities. It will no longer be possible for me to give so much of my time and energies to the charities and issues for which I care so deeply." From now on, his first and foremost obligation would be to "uphold the constitutional principles at the heart of our nation".¹²

Conceivably, however, Charles Windsor could go off-message. He is known not only for his temper tantrums and furious rages: according to *Spare*, the memoir authored - with help from JR Moehringer - by Harry Windsor, "Pa was deeply religious - he prayed every night."¹³

This takes us to Baudouin in 1990. This king of the Belgians refused to sign into law a bill that liberalised

abortion laws. A devout Catholic, at his own request, the government suspended him as head of state for a day, enabling prime minister Wilfried Martens to sign off the legislation and then ask parliament to restore him as constitutional head of state. Funnily enough, society did not collapse.

At a push, you can just about imagine something like this happening under Charles III. For a British version of the 'Belgian scenario', there is the Mike Bartlett's play *King Charles III* which transferred to London's West End in September 2014. The basic concept is that the king is facing an authoritarian government, which gets a bill through parliament that would severely restrict press freedom. Our imaginary Charles III objects and will not sign it into law, therefore triggering a constitutional crisis (as a sub-plot, both Charles and Prince William have seen the ghost of Princess Diana promising each that he will become "the greatest king of all").

However, given Charles Windsor's family background and undoubted rightwing prejudices, it almost goes without saying that this is a rather daft inversion of reality. Far from being a defender of free speech, the real man probably would favour double and triple censorship.

If in any doubt his anti-democratic outlook, have a read of his book - co-authored with Tony Juniper and Ian Skelly - *Harmony* (2010). He begins boldly by declaring: "This is a call for revolution." Against what? Well, nothing less than "the current orthodoxy and conventional way of thinking - much of it stemming from the 1960s, but with its origins going back over 200 years".¹⁴ A barely concealed call for the counterrevolutionary restoration of feudalism.

Part of that, yes, is about capitalism's criminal despoilisation of nature. However, Charles also objects to the Enlightenment and anything smacking of genuine democracy. He longs for some form of green feudalism, whereby everyone knows their place, and everyone is *in* their place. Naturally, it is the job of those at the top of society to look after the less well-off - *noblesse oblige* demands nothing less. But it is their birthright to be at the top and this is the sort of society that this obnoxious creature actually dreams about after saying his prayers.

Respect

Let us return to the Socialist Workers Party. Naturally enough its slogan of the day is 'Stuff the coronation'. The latest *Party notes* urges branches to organise meetings using that title (though so far there appears to have been no takers).¹⁵ Before that it was 'Stuff the jubilee', 'Stuff the wedding', etc.

Socialist Worker duly leads with an 'Off with his head' front page and tells us all about Charles Windsor's tax-free £1.815 billion fortune, his Clarence House residence, his real-estate empire, income from the Duchy of Lancashire, his cars, paintings... even his stamp collection. However, Isabel Ringrose ends her two-page feature with the sterling call for *Socialist Worker* readers to "take inspiration from the protestors who egged their new king last year".¹⁶ Individual terrorism for wimps.

However, we should never allow the SWP to forget about when it was at least trying to be politically serious by standing candidates in elections. Along with allies such as George Galloway, George Monbiot, Ken Loach, Alan Thornett, Salma Yaqoob, Nick Wrack and Yvonne Ridley, the SWP joined with the

Muslim Association of Britain - a branch of the Muslim Brotherhood - to establish Respect.

This was a popular front of the unpopular kind, which inevitably dragged the SWP to the right. Nevertheless, we in the CPGB decided to support Respect like 'the rope supports the hanging man' - Alex Callinicos denouncing us as "poisonous".¹⁷

Not unexpectedly the MAB vehemently objected to Respect's pledge to uphold the "right to self-determination of every individual in relation to their ... sexual choices" - a formulation introduced in the aftermath of our polemical broadsides against SWP top Lindsey German. She notoriously announced at Marxism 2003, the SWP's annual flagship event, that women's and gay rights should not be treated as "shibboleths".¹⁸ When we protested about her attempt to appease Islamic conservatism by dumping elementary principles, the SWP leadership set its goons on our comrades to surround, threaten and snatch leaflets.

It was the same over the monarchy. The name 'Respect' stood for 'Respect, Equality, Socialism, Peace, Environmentalism, Community and Trade Unionism'. In the spirit of 'the rope supporting the hanged man', we called for the founding conference in 2004 to change the first 'R', from 'Respect' to 'Republicanism'. To their eternal shame, the SWP-led majority voted down the proposal.

Why? The SWP's chosen speakers objected on the grounds that republicanism would put off royalists! As we pointed out, in the same way, advocating socialism will put off anti-socialists. But, now, of course, with the SWP no longer standing in elections, with it taking inspiration from egg-throwers, we hear that "we need class war that can abolish the monarchy" - even though, back in the days of Respect, the SWP voted *against* republicanism. True, that was under the leadership of John Rees and Lindsey German - but no-one in the SWP rebelled or protested. They all behaved like sheep and voted as instructed.

Dead lion

When the young Elizabeth Windsor became queen in 1952, it was heralded as the supposed birth of the second Elizabethan era. She was just 25 and, with strong trade unions and a booming economy, official Britain was committed to the post-World War II social democratic settlement - that included Winston Churchill's Tories. Not least in terms of rhetoric, they claimed to be fully behind the national health service, building council houses, full employment, and so on.

However, at this historic juncture, the new Carolean era looks decidedly inauspicious and dismal. The social democratic consensus has long gone. Brexit Britain is the sick man of Europe. The United Kingdom is wracked by national divisions. The NHS is grossly underfunded, plagued by chronic staff shortages and half-privatised; council housing has been replaced by generation rent and buy-to-let landlords, and full employment by precarious employment.

Our hope lies, though, not in Charles III being a bad king because of bad circumstances - a hopeless perspective. No, we need to do exactly what Walter Bagehot dreaded: combine the "lower class" around "their own objects". In our Marxist lingo, organise the working class into a mass Communist Party on the basis of a minimum programme of republican democracy and a maximum programme of realising universal human liberation. That "evil of the first magnitude" for the bourgeoisie would indeed make the working class "supreme"... and not

only in this little country.

Towards that end, when it comes to the monarchy, we prefer to take inspiration not from egg-throwers, but Oliver Cromwell, the leader of England's bourgeois revolution. In his splendid essay, *Where is Britain going?* (1925), Trotsky lambasted the Keir Starners of his day - Ramsay MacDonald, Philip Snowden and Sidney and Beatrice Webb. Not that he spared the Jeremy Corbyns of his day - Keir Hardie, George Lansbury, etc. They too were lambasted for being craven, irresolute and vacillating. Instead Trotsky upheld the example of Cromwell. This "lion of the English revolution" was a "pioneer of the labour movement", because of his forward thinking, revolutionary boldness and willingness to give his all to the cause.¹⁹

Cromwell responded to the royal tyranny of Charles I not by throwing eggs. No, he raised a troop of cavalry in his native Huntingdonshire that soon became a regiment - and then the famous Ironsides, who defeated prince Rupert's aristocratic Cavaliers in one battle after another. Due to Cromwell, recruits were carefully chosen. Though they tended to come from the middling sort, what marked them out was their ideological commitment to the gospel, parliament and the promise of liberty. Discipline was strict. Swearing and drunkenness forbidden. Officers were chosen on merit, not birth. Something which represented a shocking break with the rigid hierarchies and social norms of his day.

The storm of the civil war split parliament time and again. But what decided matters at the end of the day was not its passing majorities and minorities. No, it was the New Model Army and its Ironsides. Having emerged as leader of the war party, primarily because of his remarkable abilities as a "soldier and military organiser", Cromwell went on to preside over the tribunal which pronounced the death sentence on Charles I.²⁰

On January 30 1649 the head of this divinely appointed monarch was separated from his shoulders before thousands of spectators gathered in front of the Banqueting Hall - an act of regicide which sent shock waves throughout Europe.

Cromwell was a great revolutionary of his time who knew how to pursue the "objects" of his class without holding anything back. We must learn this from him. The dead lion of the 17th century is of immeasurably greater value to us than all the living sheep of platonically republican put together ●

Notes

1. *Daily Mirror* April 29 2023.
2. *Morning Star* April 19 2023.
3. natcen.ac.uk/news/british-social-attitudes-monarchy.
4. *Socialist Worker* May 28 2022.
5. W Bagehot *The English constitution* London 1974, pp30-31.
6. *Ibid* p272.
7. R Lowe *Speeches and letters on reform* London 1867, p55.
8. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harold_Wilson_conspiracy_theories.
9. *The Sunday Times* September 20 2015.
10. E Hobsbawm and T Ranger (eds) *The invention of tradition* Cambridge 1992, p119.
11. See C Knight *Blood relations: menstruation and the origins of culture* London 1991.
12. www.royal.uk/his-majesty-king's-address-nation-and-commonwealth.
13. Prince Harry *Spare* London 2023.
14. HRH Charles, T Juniper and I Skelly *Harmony - a new way of looking at our world* London 2010.
15. *Party Notes* April 24 2023.
16. *Socialist Worker* May 3 2023.
17. J Conrad, 'Respect and opportunism' *Weekly Worker* January 22 2004: weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/512/respect-and-opportunism.
18. *Weekly Worker* July 10 2003: weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/488/marxism-2003-rees-lays-it-on-the-line.
19. L Trotsky *Collected writings and speeches on Britain* Vol 2, London 1974, p85.
20. C Hill *God's Englishman: Oliver Cromwell and the English revolution* Harmondsworth 1975, p61.

ROYALISM

Stuff 'single person' leadership

Despite its ostensible archaism, the coronation of Charles III reflects the thoroughly modern practice of one-man management, argues **Mike Macnair**



In March 1649, after the execution of Charles I, parliament passed "An Act for the abolishing the Kingly Office in England and Ireland, and the Dominions thereunto belonging":

... whereas it is and hath been found by experience, that the Office of a King in this Nation and Ireland, and to have the power thereof in any single person, is unnecessary, burthensom and dangerous to the liberty, safety and publique interest of the people, and that for the most part, use hath been made of the Regal power and prerogative, to oppress, and impoverish and enslave the Subject; and that usually and naturally any one person in such power, makes it his interest to inroach upon the just freedom and liberty of the people, and to promote the setting up of their own will and power above the Laws, that so they might enslave these Kingdoms to their own Lust;

Be it therefore Enacted and Ordained by this present Parliament, and by Authority of the same, That the Office of a King in this Nation, shall not henceforth reside in, or be exercised by any one single person; and that no one person whatsoever, shall or may have, or hold the Office, Stile, Dignity, Power or Authority of King of the said Kingdoms and Dominions, or any of them, or of the Prince of Wales, Any Law, Statute, Usage or Custom to the contrary thereof in any wise notwithstanding.¹

On April 20 1653 - just over 470 years ago - Oliver Cromwell dissolved the 'rump parliament' which had passed this act. After some discussions and negotiations, the 'Instrument of Government' - or written constitution

adopted by the army officers' council on December 15 1653 - provided:

I. That the supreme legislative authority of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland, and Ireland, and the dominions thereunto belonging, shall be and reside in one person, and the people assembled in Parliament; the style of which person shall be the Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland, and Ireland.

Cromwell himself was appointed as the "Lord Protector" - the "single person" of this scheme - and retained the title until his death on September 3 1658, though various constitutional schemes were improvised in between. Cromwell had the power to nominate his successor, but may not have done so - secretary of state John Thurloe 'manufacturing' a nomination of Oliver's son, Richard, after his death.² Richard, who had no military and limited political experience, lasted only nine months, before being deposed by the army - followed by a confused period, which ended with the restoration of the monarchy under Charles II in 1660.

The English republic returning to a 'single person' in Cromwell was by no means unique. The US 1777 Articles of Confederation did not provide for an executive presidency, but made the Congress the governing authority;³ the 1789 constitution, in contrast, gives the presidency most of the powers of an 18th century English king (a lot more than those of Charles III today). In the French Revolution, the Committee of Public Safety answerable to the convention was replaced by the indirectly elected directory, and that in turn by the 1799 coup of Napoleon Bonaparte - initially as 'First Consul', later as emperor. The revolution of 1848 produced as its eventual outcome the

The notion of 'government of a single person' is ideology, not reality. Life is far too complex for one individual to be in charge of everything. When any such thing is attempted, the result is chaos

'Second Empire' of Louis Bonaparte (Napoleon III). The Third Republic was characterised by Engels as "the empire of 1799 without the emperor". De Gaulle's 1958 coup against the Fourth Republic created an executive presidency. The Weimar republic in Germany (1919-33) similarly involved a presidency with strong reserve powers.

Modern constitutions are commonly monarchies, including recreated ones (eg Spain - re-established 1978); or else they have executive presidencies; or, even where the monarchy or presidency is ceremonial, involve the 'single person' in the form of the prime minister, with the media promoting cults of the personalities of party leaders as a normal element of 'constitutional' politics.

Ideology

The notion of 'government of a single person' is ideology, not reality. Cromwell was engaged under the Protectorate in a balancing act between 'civilian' and 'military' factions on the Protector's Council, and was unable to get much actually implemented in domestic policy due to lack of a broad political support beyond the army. James VII and II found in 1688 that he could not implement his policies, or defend the country against a Dutch invasion (with English and Scots dissident support), without the practical support of people 'out of doors' who were prepared to take positive action to implement his decisions.⁴ This phenomenon underlies Marx's early point that "democracy is the resolved mystery of all constitutions": monarchs can only be monarchs with support from those below them.⁵

Even in terms of the control of information and decision-making at the centre, real one-man decision-making is unworkable. Witness the dependency of early Roman

emperors on various sorts of advisors and deputies (and the extraordinary burden on emperors, discussed by Fergus Millar); witness the chaos of the first years of Bolshevik government, which was over-dependent on personal interventions by Lenin, as discussed by Laura Douds.⁶ Witness the incoherence of Boris Johnson's administration, discussed in the media extracts from, and reviews of, Anthony Seldon's and Raymond Newell's *Johnson at 10: the inside story*. The king or leader who cannot commit to effective delegation for fear of losing control cannot take effective decisions.

The basis of the ideology is in part military. Decision-making on the field of battle requires that *some* decisions be made very quickly; it is commonly as bad for no decision to be made at all as for a wrong decision to be made. This means that authority has to be given to an individual to decide. The same is true of other forms of emergency management operations, and of some other sharply time-controlled decisions. Fairly clearly, however, this will not justify a *general* principle of one-man or single-person management.

Rather, the 'single person' *ideologically represents* the right of private property: a right which is, like military command, given to such a single person, (even if they may be corporations, that is, fictitious individuals), but which does not have the practical justification of sharp, temporal urgency of decision-making.

For the artisan or artist - or the hobbyist - *small* private property may be justified on the ground of freedom to choose in creation; but this will hardly justify the large property of the landlord or capitalist. Indeed, this latter under capitalism is founded on the expropriation of the petty producers, and is the

“negation of individual private property, as founded on the labour of the proprietor”, as Marx remarked in *Capital*.⁷ By making the principle of ‘single person’ or ‘one-man management’ into a general principle, monarchist and presidentialist constitutionalism, as well as prime ministerialist media-politics, offer a concealed justification for the rights of the landlord and the boss.

‘Moderate’ and later royalist MP Edmund Waller made the point in debating bishops - another form of ‘single person’ - in 1641:

I look upon Episcopacy, as a Counter-scar[p], or outwork, which if it be taken by this assault of the people, and withall this Mysterie once revealed, that we must deny them nothing when they aske it thus in troopes, we may in the next place, have as hard a taske to defend our propriety [property], as we have lately had to recover it from the prerogative.⁸

Political democracy thus implies economic ‘levelling’. It was the rejection of ‘levelling’ which led men like Waller to join the royalist side; it was also the rejection of ‘levelling’ which supported the return of the idea of the ‘single person’ in the Instrument of Government (and which in turn led to the Restoration of 1660) - and the various other instances of constitutional commitments to the ‘single person’.

The British monarchy very strikingly combines the figures of military command, and of the legitimacy of unlimited and absolute property. We endlessly see the royal menfolk in military uniform at public events. Nor is it merely their extensive honorary posts; great play is made in the media of their (limited) actual military service.⁹ Meanwhile, the British monarchy, perhaps to a greater extent than other European monarchies, is an actual celebration of extraordinary *rentier* wealth. The left commonly imagines that this is a weakness of the monarchy (imagining that complaining about royal wealth will undermine the institution). The reverse is the case: the open display of royal wealth leads to *rentier* wealth in general the *cachet* of the constitutional celebration of the institution of the ‘single person’.

Modern

It is easy to imagine that the

monarchy, because of its self-conscious, archaising imagery, is in fact a ‘survival’ of the pre-modern; or that the creation of the French Second Empire in 1852 was a symptom of capitalist decline - and hence the persistence of monarchies, presidencies and wider forms of the ‘single person’ institution are also symptoms of capitalist decline. The argument would be the standard ‘permanent revolution’ story of ‘uncompleted tasks of the bourgeois revolution’: that is, the failure to deliver ‘bourgeois democracy’ displayed by the continuation of monarchism. Regular *Weekly Worker* writer Dan Lazare offers a variant form, in which the constitution of the USA is another *ancien regime*, with the centralised (absolute) state legislator of French Jacobin republicanism figured as the modern.¹⁰

I wrote about this issue at considerable length in 2021,¹¹ and will not repeat here the elaborate arguments I made then. (My critics then did not *respond* to my historical or theoretical argumentation, but merely reasserted their existing views.) I will repeat only the point made in the fifth article in that series (September 30 2021): the fundamental test of ‘modernity’ is the test of war and, in that test, the Anglo-American constitutional models in the 20th century *defeated or outperformed* their ‘modernist’ Bonapartist rivals in not only the French regime, but also those of the German Kaiserreich and the Nazis, as well as the post-1921 Soviet model.

They succeeded because the Anglo-American models - complete with their apparently ‘pre-modern’ features - more perfectly expressed the interests of *actual* capitalist modernity. In contrast, the *ideological* apparent modernity of Bonapartism in all these French, German and Russian forms actually rested on the artificial preservation both of peasant agriculture and of bastard-feudal clientelism in the state bureaucracy.

It is worth flagging, however, a particular aspect of the monarchy - its celebration of *rentier* wealth - as more than just a ‘survival’. It might be imagined to be surprising that (except Singapore¹²) no capitalist state has moved towards the ‘Ricardian’ or ‘Georgist’ idea of funding the state through land nationalisation, charging rent to the users, while leaving manufacturing, merchant and financial capital ‘free’.¹³ The point is that the sanctity

of property is *more* important to the regime of capitalist rule than it was to feudal rule.

The underlying reason for this is the difference between the proletariat as a class, on the one hand, and feudal (or other pre-capitalist) peasants and artisans, on the other; or, conversely, between the capitalist class and feudal, etc, classes and castes. Peasants and artisans possess their own means of production. Feudal and similar landlords claim shares of the social surplus product on the basis of their surplus inherited skills at government and war (reflected in the literary figure of the ‘lost heir’, whose nobility comes out in the wash). Priests, monks (Christian or Buddhist), ‘Ulama’, and so on, claim shares of the social surplus product on the basis of their individual or corporate sanctity.

In contrast, proletarians are forced to work for wages by their *exclusion* from possession of the means of production. And capitalists claim their share of social surplus product *merely by virtue of their ownership of the means of production*. Pro-capitalist ideologues may from time to time talk about entrepreneurship as a skill or about the rewards of risk-taking. But this story fails to account for the fact that “the first million is the hardest”, the role of inheritance, and other sources of capital.¹⁴ The claim to a right to flows of social surplus product *merely* by virtue of ownership of assets is not a claim that capitalists can ever discard in favour of entrepreneurship as a skill or profit attributable to risk.

In consequence, neither the Georgist policy nor JM Keynes’s “euthanasia of the *rentier*” is acceptable to capital. Just as Waller saw the bishops as an outwork to gentry property rights, so the pure *rentiers* - like the British royal family and so on - are a necessary outwork to *capitalist* property rights. The constitutional figure of the ‘single person’ commits the constitutional order to this interest.

Monarchist left

Government by a ‘single person’ is an ideology, not a reality. And the constitutional figure of the ‘single person’ - whether king, president or prime minister - is the banner under which capital brings the lower orders under control after their mobilisation in a revolution (in England, in the USA, in France). In routine politics, the ‘single person’ - the prime minister or party leader - as well as the media cult of the personalities of individual leaders, is an instrument of capitalist control through corruption and the forced choice between rival gangs of bribe-takers: we are asked to pay attention to the choice between ‘Rishi’ and ‘Keir’ (or whatever the current offer is) and told that anything else is a wasted vote.

In war and foreign affairs it is the same story: the media ask us to back the US and its British yap dog against ‘Putin’ (the Russian police regime), just as earlier it was ‘Assad’ in Syria, ‘Gaddafi’ in Libya and ‘Saddam’ in Iraq, who were to justify the massive destruction inflicted by the US and its vassals. Go back to the 1790s, and the British press’s target was ‘Tipu’ (Tipu Sultan of Mysore) ...¹⁵

In this context what is remarkable is the extent to which the left has internalised the idea of the ‘single person’. Leave aside the very common practice of *tailoring* the capitalists’ media on the characterisation of regimes our state opposes in the shape of their individual leaders. The cult of the personality of Jeremy Corbyn was a recent example on a large scale. But all those leftists who promote directly-elected officials of parties and campaigns are part of the same problem.

And, indeed, there is already such

a problem in 1920-21 (and later) ‘Leninism’. The problem is that the *theory* of the party adopted at the second and third congresses of Comintern were generalised on the basis of the Bolsheviks’ minority-rule emergency measures in 1918-21 (treaty of Brest-Litovsk; Red Terror; one-man management; and so on). The generalisation argued that the proletariat as a class is necessarily *represented* by the party, which is the ‘advanced’ minority, against the ‘backward’ majority. But then it follows from the logic of the argument for this role that the party itself is necessarily represented by the ‘advanced’ minority which is the central committee, against the ‘backward’ membership. And the CC, in turn, is necessarily represented by the ‘advanced’ minority, which is the politburo. And, at the end of the day, the politburo is necessarily represented by the ‘advanced’ minority, which was, from 1929, ‘comrade Stalin’; in modern ‘Leninist’ far-left groups a wide variety of *lider maximo* types have wound up playing the role. British examples include Gerry Healy, Tony Cliff, Ted Grant, Peter Taaffe ...

In short, the 1920-21 Comintern theory of the party, because it is minoritarian, logically tends to resolve itself back into the capitalist principle of the ‘single person’. The left makes *itself* ‘monarchist’.

The idea had already been invented by Ferdinand Lassalle in the structure of the 1860s Allgemeiner Deutscher Arbeiter-Verein (ADAV), and continued by Lassalle’s successor, Jean Baptista von Schweitzer: the need for strict unity of will required one-man rule by the ADAV’s president. Unity of the ADAV with its ‘Eisenacher’ rivals became possible at Gotha in 1875, when this organisational conception was abandoned; and the result of the unification was the explosive growth of the German social democrats.

The effect of left monarchism is not, usually, to make the left group into an instrument of corruption like the two-party system (though there have been such cases). It is, rather, to disable the left itself from both unifying its own forces and from creating a party which permits the ranks in the localities and sectors to self-organise and grasp the party as *their* instrument. The resulting

grouplets (even quite large ones) cannot effectively serve as instruments of the proletariat as a class.

We should, then, take the opportunity of the coronation of Charles III to reflect a little on - and reject - the general principle of government by a ‘single person’ ●

mike.macnair@weeklyworker.co.uk

Notes

1. CH Firth and RS Rait (eds) *Acts and ordinances of the interregnum, 1642-1660* London 1911 pp18-20.
2. J Fitzgibbons, ‘Not in any doubtfull dispute? Reassessing the nomination of Richard Cromwell’ *Historical Research* Vol 83, pp281-300 (2010).
3. www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/articles-of-confederation.
4. B Coward *The Cromwellian protectorate* Manchester 2002, chapters 4 and 8; T Harris *Revolution: the great crisis of the British monarchy* London 2006.
5. www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1843/critique-hpr/ch02.htm.
6. F Millar *The emperor in the Roman world* Bristol 1992; L Douds *Inside Lenin’s government* London 2018.
7. www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch32.htm.
8. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*: ‘Waller, Edmund, poet and politician’.
9. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_service_by_British_royalty; www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-11958461/The-late-Queen-wanted-Harry-William-fight-Afghanistan-new-documentary-claims.html (April 11).
10. Recently in ‘Their militia and ours’ *Weekly Worker* April 27: weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1440/their-militia-and-ours.
11. ‘Constitutions ancient and modern’ *Weekly Worker* September 2 2021: weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1361/constitutions-ancient-and-modern. See also ‘Artificial antiquity’, September 9 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1362/artificial-antiquity); ‘Class, state and constitution’, September 16 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1363/class-state-and-constitution); ‘Enlightened constitutions’, September 23 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1364/enlightened-constitutions); ‘Decline and decay’, September 30 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1365/decline-and-decay). Plus the reply to critics in ‘Modern ancient constitutions’, October 28 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1369/modern-ancient-constitutions); and my transcribed talk on the issue: ‘In modern times’, November 18 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1372/in-modern-times).
12. Singapore: A Haila, *Urban land rent: Singapore as a property state* Chichester 2016.
13. ‘Ricardian’ from David Ricardo, 1772-1823; ‘Georgist’ from Henry George, 1839-97.
14. Inheritance: G Clark *The son also rises* Princeton 2015. Compare also ‘original accumulation’ in K Marx *Capital* Vol 1, chapters 26-31.
15. W Dalrymple, ‘An essay in imperial villain-making’ *The Guardian* May 24 2005; www.thequint.com/voices/how-did-tipu-sultans-worst-enemies-the-british-see-him-an-exhibition-explores-dag-museum.

Fighting fund

Second time unlucky

More bad news, I’m afraid. For the second successive month, we failed to reach the *Weekly Worker*’s £2,250 fighting fund target.

At least this time things weren’t as bad as in March, when we were £253 short, but in April we missed the target by £168. That was despite some brilliant last-minute bank transfers from comrades responding to my appeal last week - in particular JC and RG, who each donated £100, and BK, who contributed £50.

There were other transfers or standing orders from JT and MD (£25 each), OG (£14), GB (£11), VP (£10) and AR (£5). AR also made his usual PayPal contribution of £5, while comrade DB used the same method to donate £50. Finally, comrade Hassan made his usual cash donation (this time for a tenner) and all that came to £395 for the week and a final total for April of £2,082.

Well, at least we got past the

£2K mark this time! But we really do need to make amends in May, so I hope a good few more comrades will play their part in helping us to get there.

As usual, the first three days of the month saw us make a useful start, as a result of the batch of standing orders or other transfers that come our way during that time. Thanks go to AC (£60), TG (£25) and BK (£20), as well as comrades AN, CP, BG, MT, TM, JS, YM, DI and MM, who contributed various amounts between £6 and £15.

So after those three days our running total stands at £205, but we need to not only keep up that pace, but increase it. We must make sure that in May we not only reach that £2,250 barrier, but go crashing through it! Can you help us do that? ●

Robbie Rix

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

Order online

Protests, strikes, occupations and sabotage alone cannot deliver the system change we need.

Revolutionary organisation and a revolutionary programme are required.

£6.99
112 pages

www.lulu.com/shop/jack-conrad/the-little-red-climate-book/paperback/product-6pvpq7.html

the little red climate book

IRAN

Dynasty after dynasty

The last shah liked to boast of a history that made the House of Windsor look like mere parvenus. But, as **Yassamine Mather** shows, there were numerous breaks, conquests and regime changes brought in from the outside

Until 1979 and the overthrow of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, Iran - before 1935 generally known as Persia - supposedly had an almost uninterrupted 2,700-year history of royal dynasties. Clearly, by contrast, the House of Windsor are mere parvenus.

Most Iranians know about the Achaemenid dynasty (705-329 BCE), which presided over an empire that, by the time of Cyrus II (559-530 BCE), stretched from Egypt and south-eastern Europe in the west to the Indus Valley in the east. The Sasanid dynasty (224-651) is also familiar to them, since, although it existed in the pre-Islamic period, many of the traditional customs and traditions of Shia Islam date from this period.

Its last ruler was Yazdegerd III, who came to the throne when he was just eight years old. However, this was a time of major conflict between courtiers, army and powerful members of the aristocracy. It was inevitable that a weakened, divided empire would not be able to withstand the Arab-Muslim revolution that first erupted in the mercantile wadis, trading posts and desert expanses of an entirely peripheral Arabia. By the year 651, what began in Medina and Mecca had conquered the fabulously rich Sasanid empire. The death of Yazdegerd III marks the end of the pre-Islamic era in Iran and, after a relatively short interval, the beginning of what became a distinct version of Islam. In a sense, therefore, the more advanced Iranians conquered their conquerors.

However, although local governors oversaw various parts of Iran, in the period up to 750 the country was ruled by Islamic Arabs - the Rashidun Caliphate, followed by the Umayyad Caliphate. We then have a period of dynasties, starting with the Abbasid Caliphate (750-1258) and ending with the Qajar dynasty (1794-1925) and finally the Pahlavi dynasty (1925-79).

Here, though, in this article, I want to concentrate on the last two of these dynasties and introduce the contradictory role of the Shia clergy, which at times opposed the 'modernisation/westernisation from above' espoused by both dynasties. But I will also deal with the collaboration between sections of the clergy and the ruling monarchs in suppressing the anti-dictatorial, democratic struggles of the Iranian people.

Qajar

The Qajar dynasty had a Turkic origin and it was one of the Qajar tribe's chieftains, Agha Mohammad, who founded the dynasty - replacing the Zand dynasty, which was weakened by infighting and incompetence in 1794. Agha Mohammad's aim was to reunify Iran. However, the dynasty's reign, lasting over 130 years, saw both territorial losses and gains. It lost control of large areas of central Asia as a result of the expansionism of the Russian empire, which had been very much in competition with the British Raj in India. However, the Qajars had also at times been able to exploit the tensions between Britain and Russia to their advantage.

Agha Khan, who was known for his cruelty and was assassinated in 1797, was succeeded by his nephew, Fath-Ali Shah, who was in power during the Napoleonic war. At that time Iran held territory in Georgia, Armenia and North Azerbaijan. Russia tried to use Iran as a buffer against the British in



Modestly turned out as always: Mohammed Reza Shah Pahlavi, with his son and wife in 1967

India, but failed to persuade Iran to join the war on its side.

Supporters of the Qajar dynasty emphasise the role of its initial rulers, who united Iran after years of internal war. However, historians will remind you of the Treaty of Gulistan, as well as the rebellion by Ulama religious scholars that led to a Russian victory after a two-year war (1826-28). The subsequent Treaty of Turkmanchai conceded territory to Russia, as well as substantial trade benefits.

Probably the most important ruler of the Qajar dynasty was Naser al-Din Shah, who reigned for almost 50 years (1848-97). Naser al-Din Shah appointed, as his first minister, Amir Kabir, who later became known as a 'reformer'. He is still celebrated for his attempts at 'modernisation', the creation of an arms industry, setting up western-style military and civil service training schools, the Dar al-Funun. Amir Kabir had his opponents within the royal court, and these included the powerful queen mother. They convinced the shah to remove him from office in 1851 - and to have him killed in 1852. His reforms were reversed and, during the rest of Naser al-Din Shah's rule, dependence on Russia and Britain increased.

The shah's next first minister, Mirza Hosein Khan Sepahsalar, who took office in the early 1870s, was also called a reformer and moderniser, as he too tried to reorganise the ministries and the military. However, he was very much in favour of dependence on various colonial powers and believed that they could help develop Iran economically. He and another senior royal advisor, Malkom Khan, convinced Naser al-Din Shah to accept the wide-ranging Reuter Concession of 1872. This gave control of most of Iran's assets to Baron Julius de Reuter, a British banker and businessman, who as a result had an extraordinary degree of control over roads, the extraction of resources, various factories and public works in exchange for a stipulated sum for five years and 60% of all the net revenue for 20 years. Nationalists as well as clerics opposed the deal.

Eventually the British government cancelled the deal, considering Reuter's ambitions unrealistic, and Naser al-Din Shah was assassinated by a follower of the religious clergy in 1896.

His successor was Muzaffar ad-Din Shah, whose bizarre and complicated funding by Russia of an extravagant tour of Europe caused much opposition. This included bazaar merchants and their allies in the Shia clergy, who argued that tax breaks on imports, exports and manufactured textiles were destroying the country's economy. A small group of radicals opposed to the shah's rule claimed that he was selling the country to pay for the foreign debts he had accumulated.

Iran increasingly became a semi-colony, but not of one great power but of two rival powers.

In the summer of 1906, around 12,000 men camped in the gardens of the British embassy in what was called a "vast open-air school of political science". The British foreign office was supporting the call for a parliament (majles) for their own political and economic interests. Britain was concerned about countering Russian influence, and support for the constitutionalists was a way to do that.

On August 5 1906 the shah was forced to issue a decree granting a constitution and the creation of an elected majles. But the new order that limited royal powers only lasted for a few months. By 1907 the new king, Muhammad Ali Mirza, was renouncing his father's concessions. However, this triggered huge protests across the country.

Russia and Britain might have gone to war over Iran. The British ruling class and the foreign office were acutely aware of their vulnerability in India, the jewel of their global empire, and therefore tried to constitute Afghanistan, Nepal, Iran and Ottoman Turkey as buffer states which could block Russian expansionism. However, living on borrowed time after the 1861 'freeing' of the serfs, humiliated by

defeat in the Russo-Japanese war and the subsequent 1905 revolution at home, tsar Nicholas II was more than willing to agree a compromise. In September 1907 the imperial rivals agreed to become allies and divide Iran into two spheres of influence. Their respective ambassadors duly notified the shah... and popular anger and rage against outsiders treating the country as a mere object of exploitation undoubtedly contributed towards the formation of a definite national consciousness.

Not surprisingly, the Qajar dynasty saw a period of massively increased international trade. Iranian merchants who were exporting agricultural products and later carpets to Europe became rich. The period was also marked by urbanisation, an end of the legal slave trade in the country and, as would be expected, a decline in tribal nomadism. Eager European missionaries, both Protestant and Catholic, arrived, claiming to be pioneers of health and education; but, of course, what they were really interested in was souls... and, objectively, readying minds for colonial domination. No less to the point, oil was discovered in 1908, increasingly a vital strategic asset. Britain's royal navy, under First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill, oversaw the transition from cumbersome coal-powered warships to the much faster, longer-range, oil-powered Dreadnaughts. In 1914 the British government took a majority stake in the Anglo-Persian oil company.

For the majority of Iranians, this was a period of major economic upheaval, famine, but also revolt. At the end of the day, the so-called 'constitutional revolution' was suppressed following the intervention of Russian and British military forces. Iran was occupied throughout World War I. And it almost goes without saying that, after the 1917 Bolshevik revolution, the British were left as the sole occupying power.

By this stage the Qajar king was a mere puppet, and in 1919 the

British negotiated a treaty with three ministers, granting what amounted to protectorate status for Iran - but the majles refused to ratify this *de facto* incorporation of the country into the British empire. However, the commander of the British troops in Iran, major general Lionel Charles Dunsterville, encouraged an eager young colonel in the Cossack Brigade, Reza Khan, to lead a military coup. After forcing out his predecessors, in 1925 he got the majles to approve the ending of the Qajar dynasty and declared himself the new shah - ending the century of the Qajars, who, while hardly illustrious, had reluctantly agreed to partial constitutional reforms.

Pahlavi

Reza Khan, who was by now Reza Pahlavi, appointed himself as the shah, and ruled the country from December 15 1925 until 1935, at which time he changed the name of the country to Iran.

According to *The New York Times*:

At the suggestion of the Persian Legation in Berlin, the Teheran government, on the Persian New Year - March 21 1935 - substituted Iran for Persia as the official name of the country. It has been suggested that this decision was the result of the Nazi revival of interest in the so-called Aryan races, cradled in ancient Persia. As the ministry of foreign affairs set forth in its memorandum on the subject, 'La Perse', the French designation of Persia, connoted the weakness and tottering independence of the country in the 19th century, when it was the chessboard of European imperialistic rivalry. 'Iran', by contrast, conjured up memories of the vigour and splendour of its historic past... The very name, 'Iran', means 'Land of the Aryans'.

Reza Shah's rule was a period of major structural developments, including industrialisation, road construction projects and the Trans-Iranian railway, plus the establishment of the first institutions of higher education and state-sponsored European education (mainly for sons of elite families).

In his drive to modernise Iran from above, he banned traditional clothes for men, as well as the chador (long black veil) and hijab (headscarf) for women. This dictatorial rule caused intense dissatisfaction amongst the Shia clergy throughout the country. The clergy gave its support to women who resisted compulsory *unveiling* (in most cities women had their veils forcibly removed by the police or local gendarmes - exactly the opposite of what we saw after the 1979 revolution).

But Reza Shah did not tolerate any opposition: troops were sent to massacre protestors at mosques. Newspapers publishing critical articles were closed down and liberals were imprisoned. He also used the salient of state power to accumulate a massive fortune, becoming one of the country's biggest landowners. It is reported that by the end of his rule he owned nearly 3,000 villages, as well as a whole range of lucrative enterprises ●

Notes

1. See www.cs.mcgill.ca/~rwest/wikispeedia/wped/wp/r/Reza_Shah.htm.

OUR HISTORY



Rosa Luxemburg knew the inspirational value of annually demonstrating internationalism

The meaning of May Day

First published on May 1 1907 in Clara Zetkin's *Die Gleichheit* ('Equality'), this article by Rosa Luxemburg skilfully explains the significance of International Workers' Day - launched at the founding congress of the Second International in 1889

May Day is a living historical element of the international proletarian class struggle and therefore it has faithfully reflected for almost 20 years all the phases, all the factors of the class struggle. From the outside it might seem to be the same monotonous repetition of the same speeches and articles, of the same demands and resolutions. And those whose glance cannot penetrate beneath the meaningless surface of things, and grasp their essence, believe that through constant repetition the celebration of May Day has lost its entire significance, that it has become practically an 'empty demonstration'. But under the apparently similar external circumstances May Day reveals within itself the constantly changing pulse of the proletarian struggle! It is part of the life of the labour movement. It therefore changes with it, and reflects - in its spiritual content, in its sentiment, in its tenseness - the changing situation of the class struggle.

Phases

The inner history of May Day has passed through three great phases. In its early years, when it had to force the way open before it, it was greeted with the tense expectations and elevated sentiments of the proletarians of all countries. The workers had won a new weapon for their arsenal, and the first attempts to use this weapon intensified the feeling of power and the joy of struggle of the millions of exploited and oppressed. On the other side, the new demonstration of the class struggle evoked in the bourgeoisie of all countries the deepest hatred and fear. The idea of an international socialist demonstration appeared to it as the returning ghost of the old [First] International, and the eager response to a simultaneous world celebration of labour, as the death-knell of the entire rule of capital. This accounts for the insane preparations made in the early

years to overcome the dangers of May Day with the most brutal police and military violence.

And the place of the vanguard in the armed battalions of the terrified bourgeoisie was taken by the 'free republic' of France - only second to tsarist absolutism. The first blood shed by the proletariat in the name of May Day flowed in 1891 in Fourmies (France) and in 1902 in Łódź, in Russian Poland.

But it did not take long before the rulers grew calmer and began to recognise the purely demonstrative character of May Day. Of course, this was associated with the long period of primarily parliamentary struggle and the quiet development of political and trade union organisations, that now set in within the labour movement. In Germany, the first May Day was marked by the collapse of the Anti-Socialist Law. In 1893, the Belgian proletariat won access to parliament; in 1896, the Austrian followed. At any rate, the 90s were a decade of active trade union work and irresistible growth of the parliamentary representation of labour. The demonstration on the part of the labouring masses themselves retreated before the action of the representatives of labour; the idea of the international community of the proletariat retreated before the positive activity and the extension of the workers' parties in every country. Gradually, May Day became a peaceful folk-festival, regarded with considerable equanimity by bourgeois society.

In recent years, a noticeable change in the situation of the labour movement has set in. A fresh wind blows over the fields of battle. In the east, the great Russian Revolution. In Germany, a sharpening and intensification of the political and economic struggle: extensive lock-out activities against the workers in industry and the consolidation of all bourgeois parties for the parliamentary lock-out of the

working class. In France, a brutal crusade of the 'radical' government against the trade unions and a series of bitter wage struggles. Aroused by the powerful growth of the proletarian organisations during the last 15 years, terrified by the Russian Revolution, the international bourgeoisie becomes nervous, savage, aggressive ...

Arises anew

And May Day thereby enters into a new phase. As the immediate demonstration of the masses - their only direct political action hitherto outside of elections - it becomes filled with a new content, with a new spirit, to the degree that the sharpening of the class struggle again pushed to the foreground the role of the proletarian masses. The more that reaction - that the rule of naked violence of the bourgeoisie contests every step forward in the interests of the proletariat in the economic and political sphere - the more do we approach the time in which the masses will take matters into their own hands, in which the masses will be called upon to defend in their own person the interests of their class emancipation. To prepare ourselves to meet these inevitable times, to arm ourselves in the expectation of these times with the consciousness of our duty and our power, that is today the task of the proletariat - and May Day, as the direct demonstration of the masses, is a means towards this end.

At the same time, another factor steps into the foreground with vigour: the internationality of the cause of the working class. As long as the class struggle had the least bit of democratic elbow-room and as long as the day of positive parliamentary work lasted, the labour movement was dominated by the peculiarities of its national surroundings, by its national dispersal. But, as soon as the fundamental forces of the class struggle arise from the depths of capitalist society to the

surface, as soon as the struggle throws the masses sharply up against the ruling powers, then the idea of the world proletariat, one and indivisible, again revives. The preparations of the bourgeoisie of all countries for May Day this year recalls to the proletariat that its struggle for emancipation is one and the same in all countries.

Today, at the head of the army of world labour stands the *Russian proletariat* - the proletariat of the land of revolution. And the revolutionary struggles of the proletariat of this country - its experiences, its problems - constitute the great historical school for our coming great struggles. May Day this year again arouses - as it did in its early days - the hatred and fear of the bourgeoisie; the working masses, however, greet it with determination and the joy of battle. From the very beginning a proletarian demonstration for the eight-hour day and against war, it has gradually become a demonstration for the *proletarian revolution*.

Not the decline, but the tremendous rise, of May Day lies ahead of us, for it is borne aloft by the same storm-wind that is already sweeping over the surface of bourgeois society and that will lead us to bitter struggles and to final victory! ●

This is a slightly modified version of the translation which appeared on May 1 1931 in *The Revolutionary Age*, the paper of the Jay Lovestone faction - originally called the Majority Group - which had been expelled from the Communist Party of the USA in 1929 at the prompting of JV Stalin. The translator was probably Bertram Wolfe. Thanks to Bill Wright of the Marxist Internet Archive for locating the article and providing information

Notes

1. www.marxists.org/history/usa/pubs/revolutionary-age/v2n22-may-01-1931.pdf

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.

The *Weekly Worker* is licensed by November Publications under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International Licence: creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/legalcode. ISSN 1351-0150.

weekly worker

Dominating the media may not be enough

Hangings on a knife's edge

Though the opposition appears to have a narrow lead ahead of this month's general election, the regime has plenty of dirty tricks up its sleeve. **Esen Uslu** reports on Erdoğan-style campaigning

With the May 14 election fast approaching, the last furlong of the long-drawn-out campaigning is becoming more and more intense and hectic. Opinion polls, if you trust them, suggest that the first round of the presidential election will be inconclusive, with no candidate winning the required 50%. Most of the polling companies are biased towards a certain political party, so their predictions are to a large extent manipulative. The projections of a few respected and neutral pollsters suggest a very small difference, irrespective of the inevitable three percent margin of error.

The second round - between the two candidates who gain the most votes in the first round - will be held on May 28 and a majority of respected pollsters are predicting that sitting president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, is likely to lose by a narrow margin.

How the votes for MPs are distributed is considered of secondary importance (at least for the time being), with everything focused on the presidential election. The People's Alliance (Cumhur İttifakı), set up by Erdoğan's AKP (Justice and Development Party) seems to be on course to lose votes, while the pro-establishment parties in the Nation Alliance (Millet İttifakı) should perform better than they did last time.

Party and state

Erdoğan's campaign started well even before the election date was announced. Since last autumn he and his ministers have been clearly going all out to try and win another term of office. Not to mention the (Erdoğan-appointed) military top brass, as well as civil servant bureaucrats, who have been in full swing in a supporting role.

The two-pronged thrust of Erdoğan's campaign has been, firstly, to placate working people suffering under the stresses of rampant inflation; and, secondly, to herd undecided voters into Erdoğan's fold by fanning up age-old anti-Kurdish sentiments.

Occasional hiccups, such as the devastation of the recent earthquake (and the woeful response to it and lack of preparation of the state that was plain for everyone to see), or the unexpected shift in relations with China, Iran and Saudi Arabia, did not change the main thrusts of his campaigning, but did give them new dimensions.

All state bodies, including the judiciary, are playing their part in helping his election campaign. As things gain momentum, the speeches by Erdoğan and his ministers have become more and more venomous. In a passably democratic state, some of those speeches might be interpreted as either a confession of guilt or a declaration of intent to commit further misdemeanours, but in Turkey there is no leading judicial figure willing to question their behaviour.

Two MPs representing CHP (Republican People's Party), who serve on the Turkish Radio and Television Supreme Council, which oversees all public broadcasting



Yet another media opportunity

services, gave a press conference and presented their findings regarding the use of public media as Erdoğan's propaganda vehicle. They calculated that TRT broadcasted 32 hours of Erdoğan's speeches in April, while his principal opponent, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu of the CHP, had only 32 minutes. Erdoğan's principal ally, the head of MHP, has got 25 hours, while the second party in Millet İttifakı bloc has had just 10 minutes.

Top officers of the police, the director general of security and the vice-commander of the gendarmerie, have been touring the provinces and principal cities under the pretext of reviewing security measures to be implemented during the elections. Everywhere they meet up with governors, vice-governors, district administrators, local police and gendarmerie commanders, and in fact have been acting as purveyors of Erdoğan's campaign.

Their private talks in the eastern and south-eastern provinces have been oriented to pulling the reins of the bureaucracy: "If the Millet bloc wins, only passport holders will be able to come here"; "The Millet bloc is in collusion with the [Kurdish nationalist] PKK - don't let it win"; "Tell everybody that the PKK supports the opposition candidate, while the state supports the chief [ie, Erdoğan]. Imbue everybody with this message".

Splitting the opposition bloc and its Kurdish supports has been one of Erdoğan's main preoccupations. His team has clandestinely supported minority presidential hopefuls - private companies that receive millions of dollars' worth of public tenders have provided the required finance to ensure they are on the ballot. The third and fourth presidential candidates will not be able to get more than a few percentage points of the vote - but

whatever they get will be beneficial for Erdoğan, since that will almost certainly ensure that his principal opponent could not win outright in the first round.

He also attempted an underhand move via a contact of Abdullah Öcalan, founder of the PKK, who has been imprisoned incommunicado for much of the time on Imrali prison island in the middle of Marmara Sea since 2002. The contact was a member of the judiciary, according to rumours. We do not know exactly what was offered, but apparently Öcalan refused to play ball.

It was Selahattin Demirtaş, the jailed former president of the HDP, who revealed the attempted contact, and reminded what Öcalan had instructed the HDP delegation that was allowed to visit him on Imrali during 2015 peace process. Öcalan said to them:

You are the elected representatives; you represent the will of the people and you are free. I am attempting to do my best to further the peace process through my very limited resources within the confines of this island. I am doing my best - I am sincere and serious on this issue. But, if you realise that the government is attempting to deceive me, to deceive you and the people, that their approach is insincere and oriented to utilise the process to further their selfish aims, you have a responsibility. You may not be able to contact me again, but you must prevent them deceiving the people.

The HDP, as the principal Kurdish party, kept its cards close to its chest until the last possible moment. The Constitutional Court was supposed to hear the defence of the HDP on

April 11 in a case where prosecutors were demanding the party's closure and the banning of its principal leaders from legally participating in politics. But the HDP declined to submit a verbal defence, and the case file was transferred to a special rapporteur. At any moment his report could be presented to the members of Supreme Court to make a judgment.

Meanwhile, the HDP has decided not to take part in the elections under its own name. Instead its candidates are on the lists of the Green Left Party. But this move does not protect all of them. Some of the current leading members are there and, if the HDP is closed down, they would become ineligible. Similarly the HDP cannot be represented on the local election committees which oversee the contest.

HDP election campaign offices and volunteers have also been targeted in violent attacks, especially in the previous strongholds of the AKP-MHP coalition. That bodes ill for volunteer observers in many areas, where security officers, bureaucrats and Cumhur bloc members are in collusion.

Glad tidings

On the economic side of the election campaign, winning the hearts and minds of ordinary working people is not an easy task. Since last autumn Erdoğan has been conceding nominal wage increases, creating 2.5 million new pensioners by reducing the retirement age at a stroke and providing financial giveaways to farmers and petty traders in towns and cities, not to mention generous subsidies to small and medium-size enterprises.

Erdoğan's spending spree is, of course, countered by the current rampant inflation rate - all the nominal increases awarded have already been wiped out by price and tax rises. However, all this has still been presented as good news to many facing financial hardship.

The central budget has already meant a \$13 billion deficit in the first quarter of this year. The projection is that the annual deficit will reach 6% of GDP. In addition, the massive effect of the earthquakes will be felt for years to come and, irrespective of who wins the elections, a review of policy and a supplementary budget will be required.

But the apparently carefree Erdoğan is acting as the harbinger of glad tidings almost every day of the week. On the day Turkey's Black Sea

gas fields started pumping natural gas to a land terminal, there was a televised ceremony with much fanfare to celebrate. His glad tidings that time were the provision of gas free of charge for one month to all domestic users, plus a reduction in invoices for the rest of the year.

Then there was the delivery of nuclear fuel pellets from Russia for the first nuclear reactor for generating electricity. Erdoğan announced with much fanfare that Turkey is becoming a 'nuclear power' - even though the power generation plant, with its four nuclear reactors, is actually being built by the Russians and is years away from producing any electricity.

And so the 'glad tidings' go on. Earlier this week it was the opening of "Europe's largest solar energy farm" in central Anatolia, that will supply all the electricity needs of two-million people. However, it is mainly the military-industrial complex that is to benefit. Every day a new drone, new plane, new helicopter, new warship, new tank, new artillery... is either reported to be ready for production or is being commissioned. Of course, each and every one them requires a televised ceremony with much fanfare.

The Technofest - the brainchild of Erdoğan's son-in-law, who himself designs and produces drones - is an air show which brings together aviation enthusiasts, industrialists and the military to present their wares each autumn. This year it was brought forward to the end of April, providing yet another televised ceremony.

The laying of foundations for the housing of earthquake victims is providing more opportunities for televised celebrations. But the time available was too short to make comprehensive designs for such an endeavour, so simulated - or plainly fictitious - foundations have been laid in many cities. In Turkey we are accustomed to the government's fictive schemes: so long as there is a backdrop with cranes, girders and suitably attired construction workers, a ceremonial pouring of concrete can be filmed. Afterwards the simulated project will be put on hold until 'an appropriate time'.

That is exactly how fictive democracy works - and, if the opposition's support is clearly increasing, there is a chance that the coming elections may be simulated too. What would follow that, should it happen, is anyone's guess ●

Subscribe			Name: _____	
	6m	1yr	Inst.	
UK	£30/€35	£60/€70	£200/€220	
Europe	£43/€50	£86/€100	£240/€264	
Rest of world	£65/€75	£130/€150	£480/€528	
Address: _____				

Tel: _____				
Email: _____				
Sub: £/€ _____				
Donation: £/€ _____				
Standing order				
To _____			Bank plc _____	
Branch address _____				
Post code _____ Account name _____				
Sort code _____ Account No _____				
Please pay to Weekly Worker, Lloyds A/C No 00744310 sort code 30-99-64, the sum of _____ every month*/3 months*				
until further notice, commencing on _____ This replaces any previous order from this account. (*delete)				
Date _____				
Signed _____ Name (PRINT) _____				
Address _____				

New UK subscribers offer: 3 months for £10

UK subscribers: Pay by standing order and save £12 a year. Minimum £12 every 3 months... but please pay more if you can.

Send a cheque or postal order payable to 'Weekly Worker' at:
Weekly Worker, BCM Box 928,
London WC1N 3XX