

# weekly worker



## Road to Wannacry: how an amateurish cyber-attack took out the NHS

- Iran's elections
- CPGB: dual membership
- Labour's union laws
- Marx v Keynes

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Towards a Communist Party of the European Union

£1/€1.10

### WHAT THE NEW TRIDENT MISSILES WILL BE CAPABLE OF

**Trident II D5 ballistic missile**  
 Speed 13,400mph (Mach 17.4)  
 Range 7,500 miles  
 Weight 58.5 tonnes  
 Length 13 metres  
 Diameter 2m



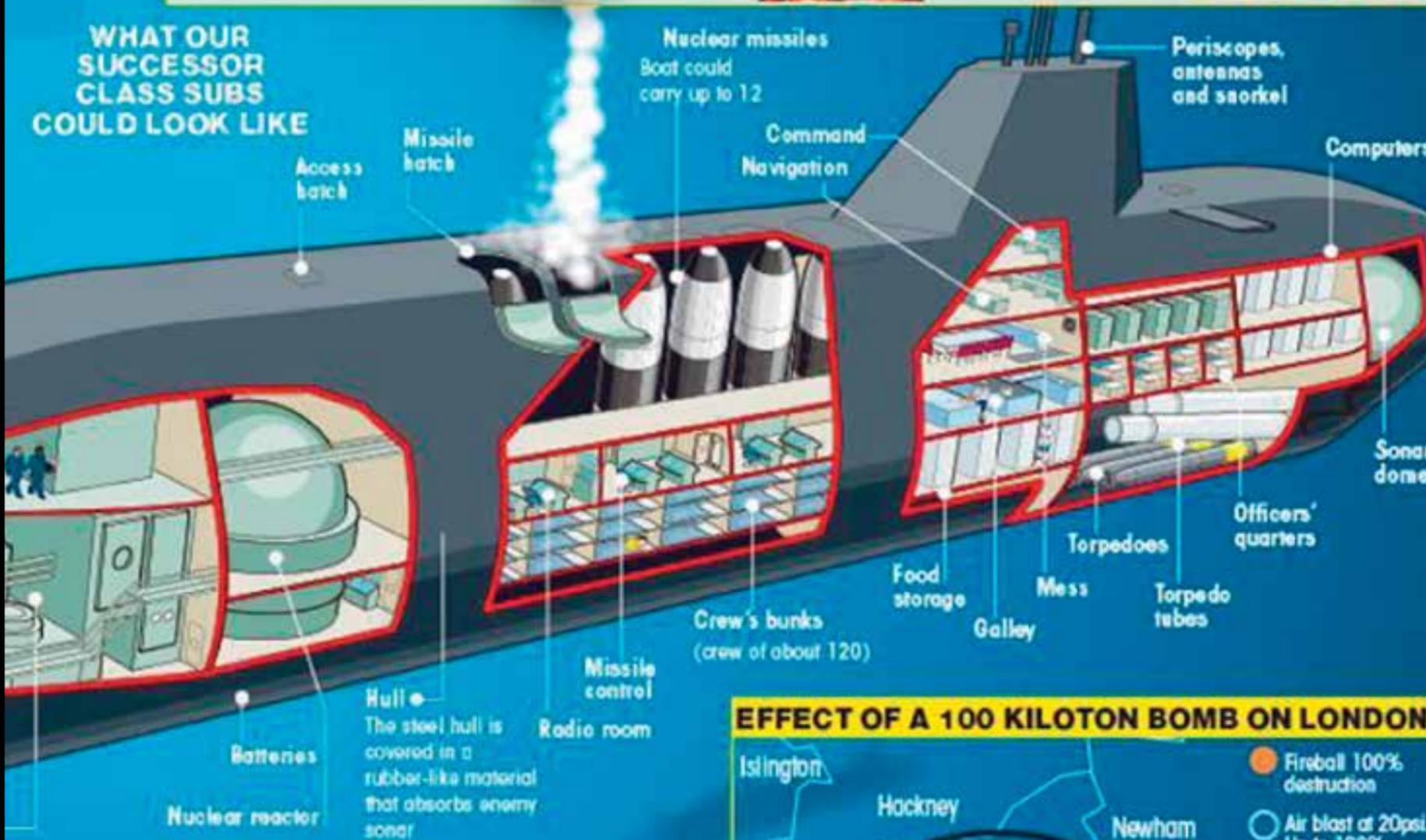
• A missile fired from the English Channel could reach North Korea



• A missile can carry up to 12 warheads. Each warhead has the destructive power of at least eight times the atomic bomb (15 kilotons) that was dropped on Hiroshima



### WHAT OUR SUCCESSOR CLASS SUBS COULD LOOK LIKE



### EFFECT OF A 100 KILOTON BOMB ON LONDON



NO THANKS, JEREMY. WE'D RATHER HAVE A POPULAR MILITIA

## LETTERS



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

## Historic PCS

It's not the fault of the *Weekly Worker*, which can only print what it gets, but there are far too many three-page articles arguing about who said what in 1917, far too many reviews of books hardly anyone will read and far too little on present-day trade union conferences - which should be the real litmus test of what is going on in the organised working class, as well as the internal civil war in the Labour Party.

So, here's my contribution to changing that, on the forthcoming Public and Commercial Services union conference. Its significance is twofold - it is being held just two weeks before the general election; and PCS is not affiliated to any political party. In May 2016 PCS debated three options - to immediately affiliate to Labour, to rule out affiliation, or to wait a year. After a full and fair debate, conference decided to wait a year to see the state of the Labour Party.

Over the following year we saw Momentum being greatly restricted from being any kind of movement to transform the Labour Party into a socialist organisation, as many members had envisaged. Mandatory reselection of the Parliamentary Labour Party traitors and saboteurs was quickly ruled out. Thousands of socialists have been barred from joining and the *Weekly Worker* has kept us informed of the witch-hunts being carried out by the Labour right, with not a word of protest from Corbyn and McDonnell - both even abandoned Ken Livingstone over spurious charges of anti-Semitism.

The PCS executive is dominated by the Socialist Party in England and Wales, with a few Socialist Workers Party and Scottish Socialist Party members, and PCS recently carried out a consultation with branches on the question of the relationship to Labour. No doubt to Mark Serwotka's intense disappointment, two thirds of the branches responding were dead against PCS affiliation.

I think there are three reasons for this. Firstly, the culture of expected civil service neutrality has quite a hold - the belief that the job of civil servants is to implement the policies of the elected government. There must also be a fear that, were PCS to align itself to any political party, we will pay for this if that party is not the government. Secondly, the treatment of civil servants by the last Labour government, which brought in office closures, benefit sanctions, thousands of job cuts, outsourcing and privatisations. Thirdly, Corbyn isn't the Labour Party and he (and his policies) will be attacked if Labour does not win the election. Most activists would only want to be affiliated to a Corbyn-led Labour Party.

That consultation result means PCS will not now be debating the question of affiliation. The NEC's motion A57 reaffirms the policy of standing or supporting candidates in line with the principles endorsed by the 2012 membership ballot. But, since the NEC drafted that motion, there has been the announcement of the snap general election and the very recent agreement of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition not to stand on June 8. I now expect an NEC emergency motion!

However, my branch has already sent in an emergency motion informing members of the Labour manifesto pledges that are in our interests and calling on PCS to recommend that members consider voting Labour on June 8. The NEC may support my motion or may take a different stance. Either way, it will be a historic PCS conference debate.

I would not have moved that motion, were Corbyn not the leader and if his manifesto wasn't so radical, compared to more recent Labour manifestos. I do not agree that any Labour government

is better than any Tory government. I registered and paid to be a Corbyn supporter twice, but even I can see that this leftwing manifesto will be it for another generation if Labour loses on June 8. Every vote counts and PCS needs to do its bit and get a bit of working class consciousness. Most members I have spoken to have fallen for the 'Corbyn is a weak leader and not prime minister material' narrative of the Tories and mass media. We have to get the policies across.

My branch has also put in an emergency motion calling on the NEC to issue a letter of support for Ken Livingstone - opposing his suspension and calling on PCS to oppose the redefinition of anti-Semitism to include criticism of the Israeli state. This was thanks to the *Weekly Worker's* articles and I can surely expect opposition from Alliance for Workers' Liberty members at conference.

Talking of the AWL, they dominate the PCS faction called Independent Left and last year managed to get, I think, three seats on the NEC. This year they only got one candidate elected - they stood 16 candidates against the 30 of the SPEW-dominated Democracy Alliance - a pact between Left Unity and the PCS Democrats. The rightwing faction called '4the members' are no more, so PCS is probably the only union where the NEC electoral contest is between left factions! '4themembers' unsuccessfully challenged for president and vice-president. Four independents, including myself, came bottom - we had no factional electoral machine to deliver votes for us.

This year's NEC elections had a lower turnout - just 8.3%. The left (of whatever faction) is not increasing their support amongst members. There has been no national industrial action involving major departments - the past two years has been devoted to keeping PCS in existence after the Tories withdrew check-off (members paying subscriptions via their wages). This forced us to sign every member up via direct debit and we lost 15% of members. But membership levels are now on the way up again.

On pay the NEC are not going for an industrial action ballot of the whole civil service. This might be because of the new anti-unions laws requiring a higher membership turnout and vote in support. The motion does, as usual for PCS, call for joined-up action with other unions.

One motion calls for disaffiliation from Abortion Rights. That will be very controversial and is hard to call. Motion A75 is about the EU referendum and the ramping up of racism, but seeks to redefine it. I am sick and tired of this disingenuous debate over Brexit, where groups like the SWP portray concern over unprecedented levels of immigration as being opposed to any immigration at all. In fact, polls show that 75% of people agree there has been too much immigration in recent years - 34% of black and minority ethnic people feel the same. Given all the major parties, including Labour under Corbyn, are in favour of more managed migration, that makes them racist, according to the SWP. So how can the SWP justify urging people to support Labour? Whenever I am at any left meeting where immigration comes up and I make this point I never get a reply.

However, I think the debates over supporting Labour and the supposed anti-Semitism in the party will make this a historic conference for a union not affiliated to Labour!

**Dave Vincent**  
Manchester

## Wreckers

With great surprise I find myself writing to defend the SWP. Sarah Stewart was mistaken in reporting to the CPGB aggregate that "SWP delegates at last month's conference of the National Union of Teachers had voted against a motion calling for NUT affiliation to Labour, which was as a result narrowly defeated" ('What happens after June 8?', May 11).

In fact, the motion in question sought

not to affiliate - a bogus sense of political 'independence' is so deeply ingrained in the culture of the union that such a motion would have been heavily defeated - but merely to review the political fund in a way which *considered the possibility* of affiliation. This was still too much for the national executive, which submitted a wrecking amendment and gave various pearl-clutching speeches. The SWP spoke against the wrecking amendment and thus in support of the main motion - while, of course, making clear that they would not support immediate affiliation. Even SPEW had the right line, along with the AWL and Communist Party of Britain - not that these groups did anything to highlight the importance of this debate in their conference materials.

Unfortunately, the wrecking amendment was passed by 50.63% to 49.37%, but that was far closer than had been anticipated by those proposing the motion and represents something of an advance in political consciousness in the NUT.

**Sean Carter**  
South London

## Pathetic

Lars T Lih continues his falsification of the history of the Russian Revolution ('All power to the soviets', May 4). And it becomes clearer that he is seeking to defend the politics of Stalin. Zinoviev, Kamenev and Kalinin and rubbish those of Lenin and Trotsky.

The April theses are imbued with internationalism. That is why Lenin proposed to change the name of the party to the Communist Party and to form a new international. The Third Communist International, the Comintern, was proposed for the first time here, because the goal he sought was world revolution.

We would cite the foreword that Lenin wrote to Nikolai Bukharin's *Toward a theory of the imperialist state* in 1915 and his own 1916 *Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism* as the two works that gave Lenin that fundamental understanding of the interconnectedness of the whole world economy, the struggle against imperialism as a truly global one and one which could not be won in a single country. That profound internationalism was the necessary theoretical preparation for the April theses that brought Lenin and Trotsky together theoretically and politically.

It is very telling that neither Lars T Lih nor Eric Blanc confuse this matter; theirs is a bogus international. The dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry - ie, a bourgeois revolution in Russia - would inspire workers' revolution in advanced capitalist countries, which would then assist Russia to have a socialist revolution after a whole historic period of development. No, Lenin claimed, we must have our socialist revolution now because the class-consciousness of the Russian working class is international and constitutes a part of the world revolution. This is part of their quest to discredit Lenin and Trotsky and rehabilitate the rightist Bolshevik opponents of the great socialist revolution of October 1917.

And now for what is perhaps the biggest lie of all from Lars in 'All power to the soviets!' (April 20): "The reception of the April theses by party activists can be divided into three categories. First are the positions that were *not controversial*, because they expressed a *Bolshevik consensus*. The goal of soviet power was definitely one of these widely-shared positions, along with the imperialist nature of the war, *no confidence in the provisional government, and rejections of 'revolutionary defensism'*. These positions - by far the most important - did not lead to any pushback. On the contrary."

Oh, but the upper-cased *section* did lead to the mother and father of a 'pushback' because when Lenin returned in April he found *Pravda* under new editors - Kamenev, Stalin and MK

Muranov. They had ousted Vyacheslav Molotov and Alexander Shlyapnikov, who had a strong anti-war position against the provisional government. The new editors produced their first edition on March 15 with strong "revolutionary defensist" support for the provisional government "insofar as it struggles against reaction or counterrevolution".

They followed through this capitulationist line with a call for a unification conference with the internationalist wing of the Mensheviks. Kamenev's first editorial said: "What purpose would it serve to speed things up, when things were already taking place at such a rapid pace?" and on March 15 wrote: "When army faces army, it would be the most insane policy to suggest to one of those armies to lay down its arms and go home. This would not be a policy of peace, but a policy of slavery, which would be rejected with disgust by a free people ... While there is no peace the people must remain steadfastly at their posts, answering bullet with bullet and shell with shell."

And that is outright political capitulation on the most crucial question of all for revolutionary Marxists: what attitude to take to our own imperialist bourgeoisie in war? Louis Proyect tells us that on March 16 Stalin wrote, "the slogan, 'Down with the war,' is useless".

"Obviously", says Proyect, "this position contrasted sharply with the views expressed by Lenin in his 'Letters from afar', and it is not surprising that *Pravda* published only the first of these and with numerous deletions at that. Among crucial phrases censored out was Lenin's accusation that "those who advocate that the workers' support the new government in the interests of the struggle against tsarist reaction (as do the Potresovs, Gvozdevs, Chkhenskis and, in spite of all his inclinations, even Chkheidze [all Mensheviks]) are traitors to the workers, traitors to the cause of the proletariat [and] the cause of freedom."

Kamenev and Stalin surely understood the target of his ire included them as well. So definitely a whopping lie here from Lars T.

In my next letter, I will deal with Kautsky in 1906 and the attempts by Zinoviev and Stalin to suppress the minutes of the Bolshevik conference of March 1917 before Lenin returned; and the devastating minutes of the meeting of Bolshevik central committee of November 1 1917, in which Lenin launched into a very angry denunciation of the treachery of Zinoviev and Kamenev and the 'conciliators', in which he accused them of treason. And Lars thinks this is "not controversial"?

In the 1937 introduction to his *Stalin school of falsification*, Trotsky assess Stalin's position in this crucial period thus: "How did the present centrists and, above all, Stalin conduct themselves on this question? In the nature of things, Stalin was a centrist even at that time. He occupied a centrist position whenever he had to take an independent stand or to express his personal opinion. But this centrist stood in fear of Lenin. It is for this reason that there is virtually no political trace of Stalin during the most critical moments of the ideological struggle - from April 4 1917 up to the time Lenin fell ill."

It is clear that Lenin and Trotsky led that revolutionary struggle and not Lars T's pathetic conciliators, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Kalinin, Lunacharsky, Stalin *et al*.

**Gerry Downing**  
Socialist Fight

## Peak ignorance

Before sounding off, Ted Hankin would be well advised to actually read what is in front of his nose (Letters, May 11).

He quotes this paragraph of mine: "The end of oil was always a complete nonsense. So was peak oil, for that matter. In fact the whole thesis - that there is a certain amount of oil in the ground

which will at some point begin to run out - takes no account of reserves, demand or price. Eg, if demand increases then one would expect the price to increase and that would make what are now totally unexploited or marginal fields viable. Exploration would also be stimulated and new sources discovered. Besides that you can make oil from a whole range of different substances - eg, tar sands, coal and methane - if you are prepared to pay the financial and environmental cost."

He then says: "Conrad completely misunderstands the concept of 'peak oil', which argues not that oil is about to run out, but rather that cheap oil - ie, easily accessible oil upon which capitalism was built and upon which it depends - is finite and therefore will run out at some time."

Well, quite clearly I know the difference between the "end of oil" and "peak oil". That can be seen in the first two sentences quoted above. They are two distinct, but related, concepts. I was, of course, criticising Tony Greenstein's hope that Middle Eastern oil would become so depleted that this would lead the US to lose interest in the region and thereby create the conditions for Palestinian liberation.

But, as I said in my 'Failed recipe' article, the "end of oil" is nonsense - and, yes, so is "peak oil". As I noted, the Victorians worried themselves over "peak coal". True, some pits became exhausted. But the idea that the coal industry has been run down because of "peak coal" is clearly an absurdity.

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

He implies that capitalism will run into the sands some time in the 2050s because supposedly there will be less and less easily accessible, cheap oil. But - and this is the point - there will still be plenty of it in the ground. If the demand is there, it will be extracted ... or substitutes found.

Hankin closes his letter by bluntly stating that "peak oil has absolutely nothing to do with Malthusianism". Well, I am afraid to say that this just goes to show that he needs to do a little more reading. Malthus insisted that land, being finite, could only feed a certain number of people. But, as the Wikipedia article on Malthusianism explains, "Many models of resource depletion and scarcity are Malthusian in character: the rate of energy consumption will outstrip the ability to find and produce new energy sources, and so lead to a crisis."

**Jack Conrad**  
London

## Green-washing

A couple of minor quibbles about the article on London's toxic air, where Eddie Ford wrote: "... the most obvious way of cutting emissions is to end the private car as a means of urban transport and make public transport free. Alongside that there would need to be innovation: hybrid buses, electric taxis, vehicle pools, bringing work nearer through the provision of inner-city public housing, etc" ('Standing idly by while Britain chokes', May 11).

Firstly, London already has a fleet of 2,307 hybrid buses. (Not that anyone would notice.) Secondly, if the *Weekly Worker* isn't taking unlikely backhanders from the motor lobby, it's unclear what business it has advocating electric cars, or any cars at all. Auto industry electric vehicle green-washing will do little to reduce environmental pollution - and nothing to reduce road congestion, the road death and injury toll or the countless other public health

problems that are inherent to car transportation.

**John Tyler**  
London

## Big crunch

Maggie Thatcher launched her 'Big Bang' in 1987, deregulating the financial sector and effectively privatising the money supply. Politicians could no longer be trusted with this responsibility because they kept using it to pledge more hospitals, more welfare and more social goods in order opportunistically to get elected.

Immediately the City of London and Wall Street became the centres of a global counterfeiting operation that was to infect every financial institution on the planet and which fuelled a consumer frenzy, the like of which history had never witnessed before. 'Enlightened self-interest' was supposed to prevent privateers from allowing the supply of money to get out of line with the demand and prevent the privateers from slaughtering the golden egg-laying goose. In reality, the bankers instantly set about building a Ponzi scheme of truly colossal proportions.

In 2008, just 21 years later, that scam collapsed, leaving the global financial system bankrupt and in tatters and making the boom a bust. The Big Bang quickly turned into the 'Big Crunch' and now the public money that had once been used to fund hospitals, schools, welfare and roads was being printed by the trillions in order to bail out the superrich and corporate creditors of ruined banking institutions. But states have not been able to cut spending quickly enough to make up for their loss of revenue and their own borrowing has spiralled as a result despite the eviscerating welfare cuts and eye-watering money printing that have taken place. Thatcher's little scheme, which was supposed to inject new life into a stagnant, sclerotic and dying capitalist system, merely succeeded in killing it off.

Since then politics has been catching up with the decaying economic reality. Mass revolutionary upheavals have broken out across the planet in response to austerity, to be replaced by proto-fascist reaction that will no doubt give way again to an even more all-encompassing revolutionary movement and so on until there is a decisive battle between workers and capitalists for the future of society. The political-economic relations established after World War II and summed up as Pax Americana are unravelling fast, having now become an absolute fetter on capitalism's further development. But there are no alternative political-economic relations available to capitalism that could possibly give it a new lease of life. This time the struggle is to the death.

Only two things can replace collapsing capitalist globalisation: world proletarian revolution or a new Dark Ages, from which our species is unlikely to escape with its life. Never has it been more true that the choice we face is - as was prophesied it must eventually be - between socialism or barbarism. Socialism or death.

**David Ellis**  
Leeds

## Smash unionism

About 15 years ago Leeds United went bankrupt and sold their ground, Elland Road, to a property business. The fans and the club have been paying for that mistake ever since. It has cost a small fortune in rents. It is like a private tax on supporters. Selling the 'family silver' is easy profit for the landlord class, but a disaster for 'consumers' - fans, students, patients and passengers, etc. We have all been screwed and we know it.

It is costing us a small fortune paying for the privatised gas, electricity, water, railways and postal services. Water is a basic monopoly yielding easy profits for the water barons. These profits are flowing abroad and mainly hidden in tax havens. We have to keep paying because we can't do without water or indeed lots of the other stuff they own.

With a democratic revolution we can get it all back for free. But otherwise we have to pay. Labour is quite right not to

include the cost of buying water back in their taxation and spending calculations. This is capital investment and, like all good capitalists, in planning to invest we have to borrow some or all of it. Donald Trump did not become a billionaire without massive borrowing.

But how much will the country need to take out a mortgage on all our reservoirs? We can't take out a mortgage on a house until we know the price of the house. We cannot know the price of these water assets until Corbyn has been elected. One current estimate is £42 billion. But the actual price is unknowable, not least because if Corbyn is elected the price of water assets will drop. Shares in water will dive, as the owners try to run away with as much loot as they can stash in their pockets.

So I hope Leeds United will buy back its football ground and the country takes back its water assets. It is a price well worth paying. Otherwise we will continue to be screwed by the water mafia, who can't believe their luck. But they are realists and know their licence to print money cannot go on forever and a day.

Now back to the self-appointed guardian angels of the water mafia. The Tories are appealing to voters with a simple three-point programme - Brexit, strengthening the crown, defending the union.

Brexit means Brexit: The Tories have grabbed the democratic mantle of the people's Brexit champions. It is the one issue that enables May to transcend all policy debates. In a Brexit election she has all the Ukip votes and the Tory votes in the bag.

Republican socialists have to challenge this head on. We must make the case for a 'democratic exit' against Tory Brexit. England and Wales voted to leave. Scotland and Ireland, including Northern Ireland, voted to stay in the EU. Every democrat in England and Wales must champion the rights of Ireland and Scotland to self-determination against Tory Brexit.

All power to the crown: The Tories are running this election as a plebiscite on the "strong and stable" leadership of 'president' May. Plebiscites are the classic tool of populist authoritarian demagogues. Vote for me for strong leadership, which will crush the saboteurs. Napoleon, Mussolini, Hitler and Erdoğan have all trod this path. In frightened societies 'strong' leaders are appealing.

May is one of the weakest, wobbly and opportunist leaders the Tories have ever had. Weak leaders are very dangerous because bullying is their *modus operandi*. If May wins her plebiscite she will be more ruthless in her use of the powerful levers of Britain's elected dictatorship. The crown will deploy even more power against a feeble parliament and defenceless people.

Republican socialists oppose the drift into a Tory dictatorship. The more fundamental problem is that a failed 'liberal democracy' has, since the EU referendum, become a busted flush. We need a democratic revolution, not authoritarian populism and dictators' plebiscites. If Corbyn doesn't beat the Tories, or even if he does, the country will have to mobilise a mass movement for radical democratic change.

Defend the British union: In Scotland the Tories are fighting a militant unionist campaign. With the union, the British crown is "strong and stable". Without it the UK's broken 'democracy' is no more. The true state will prove that the British empire, the British union and British nationalism are not only dead, but finally buried.

Republican socialists in England and Wales must take a hard line against the Anglo-British chauvinists in our movement. The anti-democratic Acts of Union must be repealed immediately. It is not a matter of socialists in England sitting on our arses, hoping that Scotland and Ireland will do it. We must smash unionism by acting ourselves.

**Steve Freeman**  
Left Unity and Rise

## Unrest

Twenty people attended a meeting on 'Syndicalism and the great unrest', organised by Wakefield Socialist History Group at the Red Shed in Wakefield on May 13.

The first speaker was Robin Stocks, author of *Hidden heroes of Easter week*. Robin spoke about his uncle's brother, Eddie Collins - a miner, communist and syndicalist, who lived until the 1970s. He was instrumental in making Denby Main one of the best organised and most militant pits in Yorkshire. And he stayed true to syndicalist ideas and principles throughout his life.

The second speaker was Alan Brooke, co-author of *Liberty or death*. Alan spoke about EJB Allen, who lived at Honley near Huddersfield and who made a great contribution to the syndicalist upsurge between 1910 and 1914. Alan emphasised that EJB Allen wasn't isolated in this respect. Industrial syndicalism was a "vibrant strand" deep rooted in the Colne Valley.

The final speaker was Rob Turnbull, the author of a new biography of Noah Ablett called *Climbing Mount Sinai*. Rob spoke of Ablett as the "ultimate organic intellectual" and said he had been one of the "most outstanding but controversial activists" in the south Wales coalfield in the years preceding World War I. Rob touched on all aspects of Ablett's life - including his later descent into alcoholism.

There was also time for questions and a lively discussion.

The group's next meeting is on Saturday July 1 at 1pm, again at the Red Shed, when the topic will be 'Democracy unchained: towards a real democracy movement?' All are welcome and there is no charge for admission.

**Alan Stewart**

Wakefield Socialist History Group

## Psychedelic vote

In an abstract universe (one in which anarchists and postmodernists sit feeding each other well-done marshmallows) defending Jeremy Corbyn's pale shadow of left reformism fills us only with a desire to smack ourselves with kitchen cupboards.

But we're living through an election campaign where increasingly the act of thinking has been banned. Even when Corbyn expresses a desire to deal with poverty he is treated as if he has started a George Galloway on *Big brother* tribute act. The look in the journalists' eyes seems to suggest the substance of his campaign has been to lap milk out of John McDonnell's pocket. Words are never neutral and we have become trapped in a whirl of concepts that only serve to mask reality. Middle England is a cage on British politics - nothing but the wet dream of centrists.

Defending Corbyn is a defence of the simplest of all ideas - the idea things could actually be different. This seems banal, but in a world where it is recommended that anyone mentioning taxing the rich should be sent to have their brain bleached with liquid aspiration, and any mention of Marxism is cause for a lobotomy, it seems the only way forward.

But at the same time sowing any illusions in left reformism is a road to despondency, so the idea of a 'critical vote' for Labour needs serious consideration. That is why the Psychedelic Bolsheviks will be spraying the walls of Sheffield with posters declaring: "It's better to rub dog shit in your carpet than rub dog shit in your eye". Corbyn should don his catsuit and endlessly move his bins, because this is a clear sign of his humanity.

We will be making a poetry-heavy defence of thinking on June 17 with our second annual day school from 12 noon onwards in Norfolk Park, Sheffield - six meetings over one long picnic in the park. We will consider CLR James, the migrant crisis, situationism v surrealism, the election, organisation and spontaneity in the wake of 1917 - all rounded off with some sweet, improvised music.

**Psychedelic Bolsheviks**  
Sheffield

# ACTION

## London Communist Forum

**Sunday May 21, 5pm:** Weekly political report from CPGB Provisional Central Committee, Calthorpe Arms, 252 Grays Inn Road, London WC1. Followed by open discussion and reading group: study of August Nimtz's *Lenin's electoral strategy from Marx and Engels through the revolution of 1905*. This meeting: chapter 1: 'What Marx and Engels bequeathed'.

Organised by CPGB: [www.cpgb.org.uk](http://www.cpgb.org.uk); and Labour Party Marxists: [www.labourpartymarxists.org.uk](http://www.labourpartymarxists.org.uk).

## Stand Up To Racism

Regional summits to keep racism out of the general election.

**Bristol:** Saturday May 20, 1pm to 5pm, Tony Benn House, Unite the Union, Victoria Street, Bristol BS1.

Organised by Stand Up To Racism: [www.standuptoracism.org.uk](http://www.standuptoracism.org.uk).

## Anarchist books

**Saturday May 20, 10am to 6pm:** Political bookfair, speakers and other events. Showroom Workstation, 15 Paternoster Row, Sheffield S1. Free admission.

Organised by Sheffield Anarchist Bookfair: <https://sheffieldbookfair.org.uk>.

## Silent killer

**Monday May 22, 6pm:** Discussion, Raynor Lounge, students union, Western Bank, Sheffield S10. The problems of air pollution, with an expert panel. Part of 'Festival of debate'.

Organised by Sheffield Friends of the Earth: [www.sheffieldfoe.co.uk/2017/04/the-silent-killer-air-pollution-q.html](http://www.sheffieldfoe.co.uk/2017/04/the-silent-killer-air-pollution-q.html).

## The housing crisis and the Co-op

**Wednesday May 24, 6.30pm:** Regional conference, Coin Street Conference Centre, 108 Stamford Street, London SE1. How to boost cooperative housing in London.

Organised by Co-ops for London: [www.coopsforlondon.org](http://www.coopsforlondon.org).

## Candidates against war?

**Thursday May 25, 7.30pm:** Panel Q+A with candidates from all political parties, Friends Meeting House, York Street, Bath BA1.

Organised by Bath Stop War: [www.bathstopwar.org.uk](http://www.bathstopwar.org.uk).

## Social histories of the Russian Revolution

**Thursday May 25, 6.30pm:** Discussion meeting, Birkbeck, University of London, 26 Russell Square, London WC1. 'Alexander Shlyapnikov and the Russian metalworkers in 1917'. Speaker: Barbara Allen.

Organised by Social Histories of the Russian Revolution: <https://socialhistories1917.wordpress.com>.

## Art for peace sake!

**Friday May 26, 7.30pm:** An evening of anti-war poetry, song and music. CB2 Cafe Basement, Norfolk Street, Cambridge CB1.

Organised by Cambridge Stop the War Coalition: [www.facebook.com/Cambridge-Stop-The-War-Coalition-301007410088989](http://www.facebook.com/Cambridge-Stop-The-War-Coalition-301007410088989).

## 2008 financial crisis

**Tuesday May 30, 7pm:** Marxist political economy discussion, Marx Memorial Library, 37A Clerkenwell Green, London EC1. Last of four classes on 'Labour, value and exploitation: an introduction to Marx's economics' with Simon Renton. Entry £5.

Organised by the Marx Memorial Library: [www.marx-memorial-library.org](http://www.marx-memorial-library.org).

## Red banner, green rosette

Launch of David Douglass's new book

**Tuesday May 30, 7.30pm:** Iona Club, Hebburn, Newcastle NE31. Followed by concert - music from Ireland and the Tyneside coalfield.

**Friday June 2, 6.30pm:** Tyneside Irish Centre, 43 Gallowgate, Newcastle NE1. Followed by music.

Organised by David Douglass: [djdouglass22@outlook.com](mailto:djdouglass22@outlook.com).

## Artists for Spain

**Thursday June 8, 7pm:** Historical talk and exhibition, Marx Memorial Library, 37A Clerkenwell Green, London EC1. Speaker: art historian Christine Lindey on the Artists International Association and the Spanish Civil War.

Organised by Marx Memorial Library: [www.marxlibrary.org.uk](http://www.marxlibrary.org.uk).

## Peace pagoda

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

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

## Tension, Trump and the two Koreas

**Wednesday June 21, 7.30pm:** Public meeting, committee rooms 3 and 4, Council House, Birmingham B1. Speaker: Billy Hayes.

Organised by Birmingham Stop the War Coalition: [www.facebook.com/BStWC](http://www.facebook.com/BStWC).

## Living on the edge

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

Organised by TUC: [www.tuc.org.uk](http://www.tuc.org.uk).

## Happy birthday, NHS

**Wednesday July 1, all day:** Street parties, followed by national day of action in support of the NHS nationwide. 'No cuts, no closures, no privatisation'.

Organised By People's Assembly: [www.thepeoplesassembly.org.uk](http://www.thepeoplesassembly.org.uk).

## It Starts Here!

**Saturday July 22 to Sunday July 23, 10am-5.30pm:** Weekend long human rights/anti-arms event.

Amnesty International Human Rights Action Centre, 17-25 New Inn Yard, London, EC2A 3EA. Details and tickets: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/it-starts-here-tickets-32928933326>.

## 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.



# IRAN

# Dictatorship and 'democracy'

Yassamine Mather reports on the final days of the presidential election campaign

In the last few days, as Iranians prepare to vote in the country's presidential elections on May 19, the atmosphere in Tehran and the main cities has changed dramatically. Security forces - some in civilian clothes - have once again appeared on the streets. Supporters of 'reformist' president Hassan Rouhani are warning people that if the conservative cleric Ebrahim Raisi - preferred choice of supreme leader Ali Khamenei - is elected, or the vote is close and Raisi can be declared president (implying cheating in the electoral process), these forces will become a permanent feature.

The question to ask is, why is the current president not doing anything about the threatening behaviour? Is he incapable of confronting them? In which case, why should people bother re-electing him? Or does he not want to confront them? Which again poses the question, what is the point of a 'reformist' president if he cannot stop the worst aspects of repression?

When the elaborate process of electing Iran's next president started a few weeks ago, it was assumed that Rouhani would be in for another four years. After all, with the exception of the Islamic Republic's first president, Abolhassan Banisadr, who fled to France after just over a year in office, and Mohammad-Ali Rajai, who was killed by a bomb within a month of his election in 1981, all other presidents have served two terms. The controversial former president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, has been told by the supreme leader that he should avoid standing and the conservatives did not seem able to unite around a viable candidate.

That assumption changed once Raisi - known to be a close ally of the supreme leader - joined the electoral campaign and now, a few days before the first round, the incumbent, Rouhani, claims he is facing a difficult task in winning a second term.

Although the Iranian constitution makes it clear that the supreme leader has overall control, the president does play a role in defining aspects of the country's economic and foreign policies in a system that should not be confused with a straightforward dictatorship. The political system is 'pluralist' - but within the confines of the Islamic Republic order, and the elections are real and combative

within the same limitations.

## Important issues

In a country facing severe sanctions, the internal economy and foreign policy are important issues and to a certain extent they have dominated the last two elections - the one Rouhani won against isolationist Saeed Jalili and Ali Akbar Velayati in 2013, and the current one. On the face of it Rouhani has moved the country's international policy of direct confrontation with the world's 5+1 powers regarding Iran's nuclear programme on to a deal. The problem is, however, that the deal and the subsequent lifting of European sanctions has yet to produce tangible results for the Iranian people.

The rate of inflation, which rocketed to 40% during Ahmadinejad's presidency, has dropped to 7.5%. But the country faces a major issue with mass unemployment, while new sanctions imposed by Donald Trump make a mockery of the nuclear deal. Now Rouhani could be in trouble, as many of the voters who supported him in 2013 (when he won more than 50% in the first round) are disillusioned both with the president's foreign policy (the failure of the nuclear deal to deliver economic improvement) and broken promises of liberalisation. The Rouhani administration's record on press freedom, tolerance of political opposition and the number of executions (mainly for criminal offences, but also including some political cases) is no better than that of previous administrations. He has also failed to deliver on another promise - lifting the house arrest of 'green' leaders Mir-Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karubi: he has not even managed to lift the ban on the portrayal or naming of former president Mohammad Khatami in the official media.

Ironically all six presidential candidates who participated in three live debates lasting three hours were adamant they would uphold the nuclear deal. However, there can be no doubt that the strident language of a more conservative president, such as Raisi, could play into the hands of a US administration which under Trump has already decided on confrontation with Iran.

If the winners of the first debate had been Es'haq Jahangiri and Mohammed Baqer Qalibaf, by the second debate it had become clear that in the end this would be a race between Rouhani and

Raisi - the two prime contenders used every opportunity to attack each other personally.

During the second debate Rouhani called his opponents within the conservative factions of the Islamic Republic power-hungry pawns of the Revolutionary Guards - he was relying on what he and his team believe to be popular amongst younger voters: avoiding confrontation abroad, more freedom inside Iran.

The tone of the second debate was fierce, with both sides exposing each other's shortcomings - to such an extent that the supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, subsequently asked the candidates to tone down their language - after all, the "enemy" was "preparing a plot" against the Iranian people. Khamenei's comments were seen as a warning to Rouhani in particular, who had levelled accusations against not only his rivals, but also the Islamic judicial establishment and the Revolutionary Guards.

Addressing Raisi, Rouhani said: "You can slander me as much you wish. As a judge of the clerical court you can even issue an arrest order. But please don't abuse religion for power." He added: "Some security and revolutionary groups are busing people in to your campaign rallies - who finances them?"

The attacks on the Revolutionary Guards were noticed beyond Iran's borders - in particular in the United States and Israel. The Israeli paper *Ha'aretz* reported:

Rouhani pointed to the March 2016 launch of a ballistic missile bearing the words "Israel must be wiped out" in Hebrew, accusing the Guard of trying to sabotage the nuclear deal. Rouhani kept up that criticism during a campaign visit this week to Iran's western city of Hamedan: "Tell the extremists and those who use violence that your era is over," he said.<sup>1</sup>

For his part, Raisi attacked Rouhani's economic record as president, claiming that 250,000 small businesses had closed down and demanding that cash payments to the poor should be raised. Rouhani responded by accusing Raisi of failing to pay taxes and, in a reference to the Revolutionary Guards, he said: "If we want a better economy, we should not let groups with security and political backing get involved in the economy."

When it came to repression, Rouhani has been even more forceful. He told a rally last week: "I am surprised. Those of you who talk about freedom of speech these days ... are those who cut out tongues and sewed mouths shut." He was scathing about Qalibaf, who as mayor of Tehran is proud of his record of repressing the student movement, and Raisi, who was one of four judges who ordered the mass executions of political prisoners in the 1980s. Of course, the problem for Rouhani is that his own minister of justice, Mostafa Pourmohammadi, was also a crucial judicial figure in the massacre of political prisoners. The conservative press and media were quick to publish a statement he made in 1980 calling for public executions:

"Conspirators should be hanged at Friday prayers where people can see them, to have more of an impact."

## Corruption

If the second debate was heated, the third and final debate, on 'the economy', became quite revealing - mainly because, contrary to the wishes of the supreme leader, the candidates showed no restraint in accusing each other of corruption, benefiting from their positions to enrich themselves and their relatives, as well as accusing each other of personal involvement in repression.

So what did we learn for this last debate? Well, all the candidates are in favour of helping the poor, yet their opponents exposed dubious aspects relating to their own personal wealth or that of their close family. They are all against the rentier economy, yet they all accuse each other of being beneficiaries of major income from 'rent'. Documents flourished during the debate and displayed later on the candidates' websites referred to wealth and privileges enjoyed by Rouhani, Jahangiri and Qalibaf, giving us a glimpse of the level of corruption engulfing the Islamic paradise that is supposed to be on the side of the poor and underprivileged.

All of them favour yet more privatisation to attract foreign investment, at the same time as supporting the 'resistance economy' - Khamenei's version of nationalist third worldism.<sup>2</sup> However, the reality is, contrary to the imagination of the supreme leader, that Iran's economy is locked into the *global* economy. There is no doubt, and there never has been any doubt, about 'reformist' involvement in global economic deals, nor about industries and services owned by the Revolutionary Guards that engage in international dealings. These were affected by US sanctions and were a factor in causing the supreme leader to change his position on nuclear negotiations.

Apparently some even have dealings with Trump's global empire. Referring to a five-star hotel in Azerbaijan which has Trump's name emblazoned on it. According to *Business Insider*,

the Trump Organization signed off on the deal with the powerful Mammadov family [which] has reported ties with

Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps ... Azerbaijan's transportation minister, Ziya Mammadov reportedly "awarded a series of multimillion-dollar contracts" to a construction company controlled by the IRGC in 2008, when development of the Baku Trump Tower first started.<sup>3</sup>

Raisi's claims to defend civil rights, and be concerned for the poor and disenfranchised, is quite a joke when you consider the fact that that former ministers under Ahmadinejad are among his closest allies. Four years after the end of Ahmadinejad's presidency the Iranian people have not forgotten the astronomical sums mentioned in corruption allegations made against his administration and the money-laundering carried out by a financier ally of Ahmadinejad, Babak Zanjani, who was subsequently sentenced to death for corruption. Zanjani played a key role in helping Iran get around sanctions to sell oil abroad during Ahmadinejad's presidency. This billionaire controlled a global network of more than 60 companies - the kind of 'resistance economy person' our supreme leader approves of.

While, of course, elections carried out under a dictatorship - even a multi-faceted dictatorial system as in Iran - can always be falsified, nevertheless I have no doubt that participation in the presidential elections will be high. It is possible that the first round will determine the outcome - if no candidate wins 50% of the vote on May 19, a second round run-off will be held a week later.

Irrespective of who wins, we can be certain that the new president will not keep his promises. Rouhani has no intention of confronting the Revolutionary Guards or the supreme leader, while Raisi has no intention of emancipating the poor and underprivileged. What has been said over the last few weeks has been election propaganda and nothing else ●

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## Notes

1. www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/iran/1.788534.
2. See 'Predictions amidst uncertainties' *Weekly Worker* March 16 2017.
3. http://uk.businessinsider.com/donald-trumps-azerbaijan-hotel-linked-with-corruption-iran-2017-3.

## Fighting fund

### Not complaining

Our May fighting fund has been boosted by an excellent contribution from comrade KB, who transferred a fantastic £280 to the *Weekly Worker* account. Apart from that there were four standing orders - from MM, with his usual generous £75, £40 from both DG and TR (DG seems to have increased his monthly payment without saying anything - not that I'm complaining!) and £5 from SP.

On top of that there were two PayPal donations - thanks to FM (£10) and DB (£7). They were among 2,729 online readers last week. But there were no cheque donations over the last seven days - the first time that's happened for quite a long time. I can't complain though - that

£280 from one comrade has done an awful lot to put us back on target. We need £1,750 each and every month and after April's shortfall I was hoping May would produce something better. Well, the £457 that came in this week has taken our running total up to £1,021, which means we still need £729 in just under two weeks - plus an extra couple of hundred would do nicely to make up for April!

Please help us get there if you can ●

Robbie Rix

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

Hassan Rouhani: worried



## LABOUR

# Aim to be a party of extreme opposition

That a Corbyn-led Labour Party would trail way behind in the polls was always eminently predictable. Nevertheless, says **James Marshall** of Labour Party Marxists, too many on the left are in a panic, are clutching at straws and are sadly deluding themselves about Labour's manifesto

If the pollsters are to be believed, the Tories are set for a June 8 victory. A recent ORB/Telegraph poll of polls puts them on 47%, Labour 29%, the Liberal Democrats 9% and Ukip 5%.<sup>1</sup> Explaining such a huge Tory lead is easy.

In 2015 Labour members had the temerity to elect Jeremy Corbyn as leader, and our party is, as a consequence, riven by civil war and faces unremitting media lies, mockery and attack. Such a leader was never going to be acceptable for the establishment. Corbyn's past statements on Marxism, the monarchy, Nato, nuclear weapons, the Soviet Union, Iraq, Zionism, Palestine, etc, rule him out as a trustworthy prime minister. No wonder, once he was elected Labour leader, there were stories of unnamed members of the army high command "not standing for" a Corbyn government and being prepared to take "direct action".<sup>2</sup> Prior to that, the normally sober *Financial Times* ominously warned that Corbyn's leadership damages Britain's "public life".<sup>3</sup>

Then, what a delicious irony, since the June 16 2016 referendum, Ukip support base has been undergoing a collapse. Having won the Brexit vote, it was bound to subsequently lose out. Half its 2015 voters are now saying that they will go over to the Tories. Theresa May's hard Brexit stance and appeals to working class national chauvinism have proved very effective. Her calculation being that Tory remainers have nowhere else to go. The modest Lib Dem revival - which I had presumed almost as a given - is yet to happen. Therefore the expectation of a Tory government with perhaps a majority of up to 150.

Under these circumstances, the economic left is dumbfounded. Over many, many years they have been advocating "bread and butter" demands, such as ending austerity, renationalisation, trade union rights, a house-building programme, etc. Through such basic demands, we were repeatedly told, lies the secret of winning millions of extra voters and securing a leftwing Labour government.

Well, what do we find in Labour's *For the many, not the few* manifesto? A promise to end "austerity", "invest in cutting-edge" industries and to "upgrade our economy", bring back into "public ownership" the rails, establish "publicly-owned water companies", no new "private prisons", "regain" control over "energy supply networks", "review laws on trade union recognition", "repeal the Trade Union Act", "ban zero-hour contracts", a programme to build a "million new homes", etc.

Nevertheless, Labour remains languishing in the polls and looks set to lose dozens of seats in what could well be a Tory landslide. Hence the delusions, clutching at straws and panic.

Writing in the soft-left *Labour Briefing*, Graham Bash insists that the Tories face "a volatile post-Brexit crisis" and, given the "unprecedented influx of members" into the Labour Party, we have the "chance of a lifetime". The journal's editorial calls for "Labour to power" and somehow manages to claim that this amounts to "a clear socialist message".<sup>4</sup>

The Labour Representation Committee, mother ship of *Labour Briefing*, welcomes the manifesto as a "a programme which would help begin the socialist transformation of Britain". The LRC even gives *For the many*

a subtitle: *A socialist manifesto for Britain* (although the word 'socialism' never appears in the actual text).

*Socialist Worker* welcomes Labour's manifesto as a "shift to the left" and insists that it "points to an alternative for Labour that could help it beat the Tories". Crazy, the SWP urges Corbyn to embrace the cause of Scottish independence.<sup>5</sup>

The *Morning Star* reassures its readers that the prime minister "has not chosen to call a general election because of political strength, but of weakness".<sup>6</sup>

Peter Taaffe, general secretary of the Socialist Party in England and Wales has announced that his Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition will not contest any seats on June 8. Instead it will be fighting "for a Jeremy Corbyn-led government with socialist policies". Here SPEW is, of course, trailing behind the RMT union.<sup>7</sup>

Paul Mason, once a leading Workers Power member, now a right-moving "Momentum activist", promises "campaign weekends", a "call for Labour" app, "revolutionary peer-to-peer" software and training sessions. With his "people-powered movement" we can "elect the Labour Party on a socialist platform".

Meanwhile, terrified by the prospect of another Tory government, Jon Cruddas, Clive Lewis, Helena Kennedy, Hilary Wainwright, Tulip Siddiq, Owen Jones and Paul Mason have been urging Labour to stand aside for the Greens in Brighton Pavilion and the Isle of Wight. The idea is that the Greens would reciprocate.<sup>8</sup> In line with this Compass - a "leftwing" pressure group, once aligned with the Labour Party, but now uniting "people across different political parties (and those with no party affiliation)" - has been promoting what it calls a 'Progressive Alliance'. This popular front involves tactical voting, with Labour, the Lib Dems, Plaid Cymru, the Scottish National Party, Women's Equality Party and the Greens getting together to "co-create a new politics".<sup>10</sup>

*Socialist Resistance* - otherwise known as Resisting Socialism - praises Corbyn for presenting a "radical alternative". However, Compass's "ambiguous concept" of a Progressive Alliance is rejected by SR, because it includes the Lib Dems. Instead there is the call for an "anti-austerity alliance" uniting Labour, the Greens and the SNP.<sup>11</sup> Class politics is a long forgotten concept.

### Reconciled

The hard right mirrors the soft left. Hence, we find *The Daily Telegraph* describing the Labour manifesto as "a tax raid on the middle class" and a recipe to "take Britain back to the 1970s".<sup>12</sup> *The Daily Mail* adopts a similar stance. When the draft was first leaked, it was branded "a socialist programme that is red in tooth and claw and dripping with class envy".<sup>13</sup> *The Sun*, *Express*, *The Times*, etc could be quoted along similar lines. However, in fact, there is precious little that is "leftwing" about *For the many*. Certainly it has nothing whatsoever to do with socialism. Not even reformist socialism... which temptingly holds out the prospect of ending capitalism and introducing socialism through piecemeal legislative change. *For the many* accepts capitalism, does not mention socialism and seeks to reconcile antagonistic classes.

For orthodox Marxism, socialism - being the rule of the working class and the transition to a classless, stateless, moneyless society - begins with a



**The working class does not need a government to make itself into a power**

fundamental rupture with capitalism.

In fact, for those who are willing to see, there are many tell-tale formulations in *For the many* designed to appease the pro-capitalist right. The opening section includes the revealing statement that Labour "will support businesses". Big capital is assured that a Labour government will keep corporation tax "among the lowest of the major economies". And there is the pledge to "put small business at the centre of our industrial strategy". When it comes to the government's deficit, we are told that Labour will set a "target" of "eliminating" it "within five years". So 'fiscal responsibility'. Almost an echo of former Tory chancellor George Osborne.

As for 'back to the 1970s' in truth it is more like back to the 1980s. Margaret Thatcher thought that rail privatisation was a step too far. What of prisons? Did she ever seriously consider privatisation? Indeed it is worth noting that *For the many* internalises many aspects of Thatcherism. Take the programme of building a million homes. Nine-tenths of them are projected to be private. Only one-tenth council and housing association. A Corbynite take on the Tory ideal of the 'property-owning democracy': a cynical attempt to undermine working class consciousness by getting mortgage slaves to imagine themselves little capitalists.

Nato membership goes unquestioned and there is the *boast* that the last Labour government "consistently" spent above the 2% benchmark. Indeed it is claimed that the Tories are putting "Britain's security at risk" by "shrinking the army to its smallest size since the Napoleonic wars". We are also told that the "scrapping of Nimrod, HMS Ark Royal and the Harrier jump-jets have

weakened our defences and cost British taxpayers millions". Naturally, *For the many* commits Labour to renewing the Trident missile system: however, bizarrely, this will be done in the name of fulfilling Britain's "obligations" under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. So building the next generation of four SSBN submarines, together capable of incinerating 40 cities, is meant to be a step towards "a nuclear-free world".

No genuine leftwinger, no genuine socialist, no genuine Marxist could possibly support *For the many*. Our motto remains 'For this system, not one man, not one penny' (Wilhelm Liebknecht speaking in the German Reichstag in 1871). The working class should, as a matter of elementary principle, oppose the standing army, not regret its reduced size. We are for a popular militia, not weapons of mass destruction. Nor are socialists admirers of Britain's "long established democracy". Britain's quasi-democracy is recently established. Every democratic advance has been won from below in the face of fierce opposition from above. Some male workers got the vote in 1867 - there were property qualifications. In 1918 those restriction were finally removed. Some women too got the vote. But universal suffrage only came about in 1928 with the representation of the people act. And, of course, the capitalist press, the media, the education system normally ensures that the majority vote for safe, bribable, candidates. The country remains a monarchy, where the privy council, the secret service, the bureaucracy, the army high command and the judges can legally depose an unacceptable government. Yet *For the many* innocently proclaims that "Democracy is founded upon the rule

of law and judicial independence." A classic liberal formulation. And, apart from calling for an elected second chamber, a "more federalised country" and a vague phrase about "inviting recommendations about extending democracy", the existing constitutional order is fully accepted.

The same goes for capitalism. *For the many* wants people to believe that capitalism, the economic system, can be managed so as to benefit "the many, not the few". But it simply cannot be done. Capitalism - not that it is named - is a system of exploitation based on the endless self-expansion of capital and generalised wage-slavery. Individual capitalists and top managers can have their dividends heavily taxed and their salaries capped. But capital has to expand through extracting surplus value from workers... without that capital would cease to be capital, stay as money, find its way abroad, etc. In fact, the "creation of wealth" is not, as *For the many* maintains, "a collective endeavour between workers, entrepreneurs, investors and government". Wealth is created not by so-called entrepreneurs, not by investors, not by government. No, wealth is created by workers... and nature.

Labour leaders typically promise fairness, justice and equality when they are in opposition, but, once in office, they always side with the interests of capital... typically disguised with the coded phrase, used by *For the many*, of putting the "national interest first". And in the "national interest" they keep down wage rises, attack irresponsible strikes and seek to involve trade union officials in schemes to increase competitiveness.

Therefore the real significance of *For the many* lies not in how leftwing it is. No, it encapsulates the complete surrender of Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell. Because they put the "national interest first" they have reconciled themselves to both the existing constitutional order and the existing system of capitalist exploitation. Obviously the same applies to the main writers of *For the many* - purportedly Andrew Fisher, a former darling of the LRC, and Seumas Milne, a former Straight Leftist.

### Programme

Clearly, today's left has completely lost sight of the classic Marxist perspective of the workers' party *not taking power* till it is in a position to realistically carry out its *full* minimum programme.

The minimum programme, it should be stressed, is not concerned with tinkering with capitalism, but rather readying the working class to become the ruling class. So the minimum programme is both the maximum the working class can achieve under capitalism and the minimum terms the workers' party sets for forming a government.

Hence demands such as genuine equality for women, extending popular control over all aspects of society, radically devolving power downwards, a federal republic, Irish unity, abolishing the monarchy, the second chamber and MI5, and disestablishing the Church of England. Judges should be not be appointed from above, but subject to popular election. The shortage of housing should be ended through a massive programme of council house building. Flats and houses must be of a high quality and rents set at a token level. Allocation should be on the basis of need. State secrets should be ended along with all forms of censorship. The pharmaceutical industry, the power,

water and transport infrastructure, land, the banks and financial services must be nationalised.

Marxists certainly oppose Brexit, instead we demand the democratisation of the European Union and going towards an indivisible Europe. And, while Marxists would advocate specific measures to protect small businesses and farms from exploitation by banks and monopolies, we have no wish to preserve this sector in perpetuity. Indeed its destruction is historically progressive.

For the sake of human survival we must put a stop to the degradation of nature. Native animal and plant species should be reintroduced. In short, the relationship between town and country must be put on a new footing. Huge farms and urban sprawl must be replaced by an urbanised countryside and cities full of gardens, local farms and open spaces.

Trade unions must be freed from state control. They are voluntary associations. When it comes to the armed forces, we demand that officers be elected, there should also be full trade union rights and rank-and-file soldiers must be encouraged to mutiny if they are given orders that run counter to the interests of democracy, the working class and the struggle for socialism. Of course, we want to see the end of the standing army and its replacement by a popular militia.

Unless we can carry out such a programme *in full* - which would, obviously, require international coordination - we cannot countenance forming a government. Meantime our task is to act as a party of extreme opposition. Hence our perspective of transforming the Labour Party.

## Ten-point platform

There has been much silly media talk of a PLP split if Labour does badly on June 8. Reportedly 100 MPs are "plotting to form their own breakaway group to force Jeremy Corbyn to resign".<sup>14</sup> Dan Jarvis, Yvette Cooper and Sir Keir Starmer have been mentioned. Their so-called plan would see MPs resigning the Labour whip and sitting as independents until Corbyn goes as leader. They would then descend to rejoin the Parliamentary Labour Party.

Frankly, it is unlikely to happen. If they resign the whip they put themselves outside the Labour Party and invite instant expulsion. One or two diehards - maybe John Woodcock and Neil Coyle - might go, but do not expect anyone much to follow them.

Let us engage in a mental exercise. Imagine a split. Most traditional Labour voters would be expected to remain loyal, not opt for some "new political party". Premising a *major* schism, a YouGov poll gave a Corbyn-led Labour Party 21% of the total vote and a "Labour right party" just 13%.<sup>15</sup> Doubtless, such crushing statistics explain why Ed Balls, former shadow chancellor and Yvette Cooper's husband, has dismissed the idea of a breakaway as "crazy".<sup>16</sup>

Moreover, to this day, the right remains haunted by the ghosts of Ramsay MacDonald and the Gang of Four. MacDonald, twice a Labour prime minister, led what he called the National Labour Organisation into a thoroughly unequal coalition with the Tories in 1931. The Gang of Four of Roy Jenkins, David Owen, Bill Rodgers, Shirley Williams broke away exactly 50 years later to form the Social Democratic Party. The NLO instantly became a Tory slave. It finally dissolved in 1945. As for the SDP, it merged with the Liberal Party in 1988 and shared the same richly deserved fate. From the early 1970s, even till the late 80s, of course, the political centre enjoyed something of a revival.<sup>17</sup> No longer. Despite May's hard Brexit stance providing an open goal, the Lib Dems remain, to this day marginalised and widely despised.

Given the punishing logic of the first-past-the-post system, we should therefore not expect Tom Watson to play Ramsay MacDonald, Sadiq Khan to step in for Philip Snowden or Iain McNicol make an appearance as Benjamin Musgrave.

Conceivably, yes, Yvette Cooper or Chuka Umunna will put themselves forward against Corbyn after June 8. That is widely rumoured. Then everything will depend on Labour's rank-and-file members, supporters and affiliates. It is worth noting therefore that some 2,500 joined the day May announced the general election.

Of course, a bad defeat will inevitably cause demoralisation and disorientation. The delusions of the soft left can only add to this. Nevertheless Corbyn has won two leadership elections and can win a third ... if the blame for defeat is placed where it belongs: on the right. They began a protracted civil war, with the full backing and active connivance of the media, beginning in the summer of 2015: ie, when Corbyn looked like he was going to get elected as leader. Obviously we have every reason to defend Corbyn against the right and urge him to stand firm. However, we must go beyond that. That is why LPM advocates this ten-point platform.

1. Fight for rule changes. All elected Labour representatives must be subject to one-member, one-vote mandatory reselection. MPs must be brought under democratic control - from above, by the NEC; from below by the CLPs.

Mandatory reselection, of course, terrifies the right. It was this, "even more than nuclear disarmament and membership of the European Community, that became the main catalyst for the launch of the breakaway Social Democratic Party".<sup>18</sup> Progress, Lord David Sainsbury's party within a party, furiously denounces mandatory reselection as "a weapon of fear and intimidation".<sup>19</sup> Yes, mandatory reselection is viewed as an affront by every wrecker, every hireling, every parliamentary bighead.

It is worth looking at the background. Interestingly, and with good foundation, we read on the Progress website that mandatory reselection carries "echoes of the Paris Commune, and of the Russian soviets, where delegates were subject to recall if they displeased their local citizenry. It rests on the idea that leaders will always be tempted to sell you out, once they get power."<sup>20</sup> Well, surely, that is what history actually shows.

For decades, sitting Labour MPs - certainly those with safe seats - enjoyed a job for life (or as long as no better offer came along). They might visit their constituency once or twice a year, deliver a speech to the AGM and write an occasional letter to the local newspaper. Meanwhile they lived a pampered, middle class life, frequented various London gentlemen's clubs and spent their weekends in the home counties countryside with Lord this and Lady that. Despite such evident moral corruption, they were automatically the candidate for the next election. Unless found guilty of an act of gross indecency or had the party whip withdrawn, they could do as they pleased.

With the insurgent rise of Bennism that situation was increasingly called into question. The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, founded in 1973, committed itself to a range of internal reforms - crucially mandatory reselection of MPs, finally agreed by the 1980 conference. What this saw, however, was not a Labour Party equivalent of the Paris Commune or the Russian soviets. There was no right to instant recall. Nevertheless, once in each parliament, our MPs had to get the endorsement of their local general management committee. Note, GMCs were made up of delegates elected by local party and trade union branches. They were sizable bodies, typically consisting of 80, 90, 100 or even more delegates.

At the prompting of the bourgeois media, Neil Kinnock, desperately seeking acceptability, sought to extract trade unions from the voting process altogether. He failed, but accepted a compromise. A local electoral college for the selection and reselection of candidates was introduced. Ordinary members were given a direct vote for the

first time, leaving GMCs with the right to nominate and shortlist only. This electoral college system gave unions and affiliated organisations up to 40% of the vote, with ordinary members having some 60% (the actual balance was different in each seat, depending on party and union membership).

Trigger ballots were a product of the 1990s. Formally honouring conference's "desire to maintain reselection", they made it significantly "easier for MPs to defend their positions".<sup>21</sup> Trigger ballots allowed for a sitting MP to be subject to a full-scale ballot of the membership. But only if they lost a trigger ballot.

2. We need a sovereign conference once again. The cumbersome, undemocratic and oppressive structures, especially those put in place under the Blair supremacy, must be rolled back. The joint policy committee, the national policy forums, etc, must go.

3. Scrap the hated compliance unit "and get back to the situation where people are automatically accepted for membership, unless there is a significant issue that comes up" (John McDonnell).<sup>22</sup> The compliance unit operates in the murky shadows, it violates natural justice, it routinely leaks to the capitalist media.

4. The stultifying inertia imposed on Momentum has proved to be an own goal. Jon Lansman has proved to be a competent autocrat. He blocked all Momentum attempts to oppose the 'anti-Zionism equals anti-Semitism' smears, he did nothing to get Momentum to fight the 2016 purge of leftwing supporters of Corbyn. It is now impossible to transform it into a democratic organisation, or one that can educate, activate and empower the rank-and-file membership. So there is an urgent need for the left to organise with a view of establishing a worthwhile alternative.

5. Securing new trade union affiliates ought to be a top priority. The FBU has reaffiliated. Excellent. Matt Wrack at last came to his senses and took the lead in reversing the disaffiliation policy. But what about the RMT? Let us win RMT militants to finally drop their support for the thoroughly misconceived Tusc project. Instead reaffiliate to the Labour Party. And what about the NUT? This year's Cardiff conference saw the executive narrowly win an amendment, by 50.63% to 49.37%, which ruled out affiliation at this moment. This can be changed ... if we campaign to win hearts and minds. Then there is PCS. Thankfully, Mark Serwotka, its leftwing general secretary, has at last come round to the idea. Yes, PCS affiliation will run up against the Trades Disputes and Trade Union Act (1927), introduced by a vengeful Tory government in the aftermath of the general strike. Civil service unions were barred from affiliating to the Labour Party and the TUC. The Civil and Public Services Association - predecessor of PCS - reaffiliated to the TUC in 1946. Now, however, surely, it is time for PCS to reaffiliate to the Labour Party. Force another change in the law.

6. Every constituency, ward and other such basic unit must be won and rebuilt by the left. Our membership has grown from 200,000 in May 2015 to over 525,000 today. Surely during and after the election campaign we can get to a million. However, the left must convince the sea of new members, and returnees, to attend meetings ... and break the stultifying grip of the right. Elect officers who support genuine socialism. Elect officers who are committed to transforming our wards and constituencies into vibrant centres of socialist organisation, education and action. As such, our basic units would be well placed to hold councillors and MPs to account.

7. Our goal should be to transforming the Labour Party, so that, in the words of Keir Hardie, it can "organise the working class into a great, independent political power to fight for the coming of socialism".<sup>23</sup> Towards that end we need rule changes to once again permit left, communist and revolutionary parties to affiliate. As long as they do not stand against us in elections, this can only but strengthen us as a federal party. Today affiliated organisations include

the Fabians, Christians on the left, the Cooperative Party ... the Jewish Labour Movement and Labour Business. Allow the SWP, SPEW, CPGB, Left Unity, the *Morning Star's* CPB, etc, to join our ranks. 8. Being an MP ought to be an honour, not a career ladder, not a way for university graduates to secure a lucrative living. A particularly potent weapon here is the demand that all our elected representatives should take only the average wage of a skilled worker - a principle upheld by the Paris Commune and the Bolshevik revolution. Our MPs are on a basic £67,060 annual salary. On top of that they get around £12,000 in expenses and allowances, putting them on £79,060 (yet at present Labour MPs are only obliged to pay the £82 parliamentarians' subscription rate). Moreover, as leader of the official opposition, Jeremy Corbyn not only gets his MPs salary: he is entitled to an additional £73,617.<sup>24</sup>

Let them keep the average skilled workers' wage - say £40,000 (plus legitimate expenses). Then, however, they should hand the balance over to the party. Jeremy Corbyn, John McDonnell, Dianne Abbott ought to take the lead here. 9. We must establish our own press, radio and TV. To state the obvious, tweeting and texting have severe limits. They are brilliant mediums for transmitting simple, short and sharp messages. But, when it comes to complex ideas, debating history and charting political strategies, they are worse than useless. Relying on the favours of the capitalist press, radio and TV is a game for fools. True, it worked splendidly for Tony Blair and Alistair Campbell. But, as Neil Kinnock, Gordon Brown and Ed Miliband found to their cost, to live by the mainstream media is to die by the mainstream media.

10. Programmatically, we should adopt a new clause four. Not a return to the old, 1918, version, but a commitment to working class rule and a society which aims for a stateless, classless, moneyless society, which embodies the principle, 'From each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs'. That is what socialism is all about. Not a measly £10 per hour "living wage", shifting the tax balance and a state investment bank. No, re-establishing socialism in the mainstream of politics means committing the Labour Party to achieving a "democratic republic".<sup>25</sup>

## Sidelines

Organisations such as SPEW, the SWP, the CPB and Left Unity are having a hard time of things at the moment. Not only are they haemorrhaging members: there is profound political disorientation.

Having dismissed the Labour Party as nothing more than a British version of the US Democrat Party, having fought for trade unions to disaffiliate, SPEW's general secretary, Peter Taaffe, is busily rowing backwards. But, if he wants his perfectly correct call for the Labour Party to be opened up once again to affiliation by socialist organisations to be treated seriously, it is obvious what he must do. Put an end to the farcical 'Labour Party mark two' Tusc project. Close it down ... permanently.

However, comrade Taaffe is a towering genius, compared with Robert Griffiths, the CPB's general secretary. When not promising to shop "entryists" to our witch-finder general, Iain McNicol, what he displays is a completely detached attitude towards Labour's civil war. He says there are more important issues ... like strikes and protest demonstrations. *Morning Star* editor Ben Chacko is even more small-minded. He sees "a task far bigger than the Labour Party". Fighting for a mass revolutionary party? No. Forging the links necessary for establishing a new workers' international? No. What comrade Chacko, laughably, wants is "organising at a local level in groups such as the People's Assembly, Keep Our NHS Public, Black Activists Rising Against Cuts and many more".<sup>26</sup>

Where we in LPM strive to elevate local struggles to the national and the

international level, comrade Chacko's sights are set on "saving an A&E or a youth club". That he does so in the name of Marxist politics and creating a mass movement on the scale of the Chartists shows an inability to grasp even the A in the ABC of communism.

Having rejected any active involvement in the Labour Party at its 2016 conference, what remains of Left Unity is also reduced to issuing its own thoroughly unremarkable list: Another Europe, Stand Up to Racism, People's Assembly demo, etc. No wonder its entire London membership now meets in the snug little space provided by Housmans Bookshop.

Then there is Charlie Kimber - showing the SWP's crisis of leadership, he is now *joint* national secretary of the SWP and editor of *Socialist Worker*. Anyway, as might be expected, comrade Kimber calls for a Labour vote, but the more members who leave the SWP, the more he too stresses localism, ephemeral demonstrations, economic strikes and fake fronts. In his 'Letter to a Jeremy Corbyn supporter', comrade Kimber warns that "there's a great danger that you could be drawn into endless internal battles". The "crucial arena" of struggle is not "the long slog" of "endless meetings to (perhaps) get rid of a rightwinger". No, according to comrade Kimber, the "best way" for Corbyn to win the general election is to "head up a much higher level of fightback in the workplaces and the streets".<sup>27</sup>

Comrade Kimber's claim that what *really matters* is not changing the Labour Party through the long, hard slog, but the "fightback in the workplaces and the streets", is a Bakuninist, not a Marxist, formulation. For the 19th century anarchist leader, Mikhail Bakunin, strikes and protests were the key to revolution. By contrast, Marxists have always placed their emphasis on programme, consciousness and solid organisation.

In Marxist terms, therefore, because the Labour Party is historically established, because it is a class party, because it involves all big unions, because it has a mass electoral base, because it has drawn in hundreds of thousands of new members, what is now happening in Labour is a far higher form of the class struggle than mere economic strikes, 'here today, gone tomorrow' protests, let alone fake fronts. In point of fact, the civil war raging in the Labour Party is a *highly concentrated* form of the class struggle.

## Notes

1. *The Daily Telegraph* May 15 2017.
2. *The Sunday Times* September 20 2015.
3. *Financial Times* August 14 2015.
4. *Labour Briefing* May 2017.
5. *Socialist Worker* May 11 2017.
6. *Morning Star* April 20 2017.
7. *The Socialist* May 12 2017.
8. Letters *The Guardian* April 30 2017.
9. www.compassonline.org.uk/about.
10. www.compassonline.org.uk/together-we-win.
11. http://socialistresistance.org/corbyn-presents-a-radical-alternative/10054.
12. *The Daily Telegraph* May 16 2017.
13. *Daily Mail* May 10 2017.
14. *The Daily Telegraph* May 10 2017.
15. yougov.co.uk/news/2016/08/02/who-gets-keep-voters.
16. *The Daily Telegraph* September 1 2016.
17. From a 1951 2.5% historic low point, the Liberal Party underwent a revival in the 1970s, which saw them win 19.3% of the popular vote in the February 1974 general election. Despite the Jeremy Thorpe scandal even in the 1979, 1983 and 1987 general elections, the Liberal vote stood up at well over 10%. See - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberal\_Party\_(UK)#Electoral\_performance.
18. http://thirdavenue.org.uk/a-beginners-guide-to-the-labour-party-rulebook-part-2-reselection-of-mps.
19. www.progressionline.org.uk/2015/09/28/the-price-of-a-seat-in-parliament.
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23. Independent Labour Party *Report of the 18th annual conference* London 1910, p59.
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25. *Labour Party Marxists* July 7 2016.
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27. *Socialist Worker* September 20 2016.

## OUR HISTORY

# Up close and personal

The CPGB's mass entry work in the Labour Party in the late 1930s has been partially obscured by delusions associated with popular frontism, writes **Lawrence Parker**

This two-part article deals with the experience of the Communist Party of Great Britain re-entering and then leaving the Labour Party in 1935-40. Although reasonably well known, this activity has partially been obscured by the idea among historians that this era of the popular front was a 'golden age' for the CPGB, in which a much softer form of politics reaped rewards in the form of the party's burgeoning influence. Therefore, attempts by the CPGB to militantly break Labour Party rules and 'infiltrate' a broader political body appear incongruous.

In fact, the idea of the CPGB's centrality to British political life in the 1930s is a significant delusion invented by subsequent generations of party leaders and writers to help the organisation face up to its historic marginality. Popular front politics - the subordination of communist and social democratic forces to 'liberal' and bourgeois allies in order to assist the Soviet Union's wooing of Britain and France in the cause of collective security against Germany in the run-up to World War II - were unpopular in Britain and proved to be spectacularly unsuccessful in preventing fascism and war. The notion that the CPGB was 'central' in this period more mundanely computes that it grew its influence in the second half of the 1930s, in contrast to the era of the Comintern's third period (circa 1928-33).

It is this intensely ideological view of the popular front as a period in which the CPGB renewed and fructified itself that continued to hold sway on the party and its leaders. Thus, in one later historian's words, the Comintern's Seventh Congress of 1935, which saw the popular front take centre stage in world communist politics, came to be seen by CPGB members as a "foundation congress".<sup>1</sup> As the party fell into the marsh of respectability in its latter decades, this popular front-omania became even more seductive. Thus, in 1985, Noreen Branson, who was by this time a CPGB 'house' historian, took great exception to the title of EH Carr's *The twilight of the Comintern 1930-1935*: "Not a very appropriate metaphor," she mused. "'Out of the shadows into the sunlight' would fit much better."<sup>2</sup> 'Into the sunlight' is an exceptionally weird way to think about an organisation - the Comintern - that was shortly to have many of its cadres liquidated by the Soviet bureaucracy (still, at least they had some nice weather for it). However, leaving that aside, Branson's objection to Carr's metaphor is because it implies that the era of the popular front following 1935 was not exactly up to much. In her fantasy world, this is where communists could leave behind all those fallacious ideas about revolutionary upsurge and begin to "face reality".<sup>3</sup>

While one might expect the CPGB itself to have engaged in this practice, it becomes less explicable why subsequent non-CPGB historians have emoted the same ideas about the party and the popular front. Thus, in Morgan's uplifting prose, the Comintern's popular front Seventh Congress initiated changes that were not just of "ephemeral significance, but amounted in many respects to a redefinition of the style and substance of communist politics".<sup>4</sup> I daresay that Noreen Branson could not have put it any better. This simple reproduction of the CPGB's own myths recurs on a number of occasions. Therefore, in a



1936: marching together

review article, Geoff Eley, discussing CPGB historian Eric Hobsbawm's view of popular front 'successes', simply reproduces some very questionable assumptions on Hobsbawm's part without challenge. Therefore, the pursuit of the popular front, we are told, without irony, was "opposed to a course of sectarian confrontation with the political system or the rest of the left" and that it involved a "reckoning with the official Leninist culture of the Third International during the 1920s and early 1930s".<sup>5</sup>

This is a hopeless perspective on the CPGB in the 1930s that simply illustrates the problems of swallowing historical myths. A case study of the CPGB's entry work in the Labour Party in the later 1930s - which accompanied unsuccessful CPGB attempts at affiliation to Labour, such as in 1935-36; and attempts to pull Labour in the direction of 'united front' and, later, 'popular front' campaigns - shows that communist politics had not changed in substance since the 1920s. The CPGB did behave in a sectarian fashion towards those perceived as its opponents, and towards the Labour Party as a whole, because this was precisely the obvious outcome of softening its differences with the labour movement and diluting its identity in the principle-free wasteland of the popular front.

To understand this we have to go back to the 1920s and the CPGB's foundation.

### Bureaucratic centralism

The main root for the CPGB's early oscillation between 'right' and 'left' was the hyper-centralised conceptions of the party regime in the infamous '21 conditions' agreed at the Comintern's Second Congress in 1920, which meant that the early CPGB eschewed positive conceptions of factionalism and was unable to formally concede notions of 'unity in diversity'. The subsequent 'Bolshevisation' of the Comintern in the mid-1920s only enhanced this semi-militarised culture.<sup>6</sup>

When the CPGB took this culture into the broader labour movement, opportunist adaptations and subsequent sectarianism blighted the work of its members. In other words, organisations that could not maintain 'unity in diversity' internally were very unlikely to be able to maintain it externally in the form of principled united fronts - where

minorities and majorities could openly debate and critique one another, rather than the more familiar Comintern (and subsequently Maoist/Trotskyist) cycle of adaptations punctuated by periods of sectarian denunciation.

In the British context, this outcome was built on earlier divisions between the organisations that fused to form the early CPGB and its early debate on affiliation to the Labour Party. Crudely put, there was a group from the British Socialist Party that tended towards adaptation towards the Labour Party and Labourism; while others, from organisations such as the Socialist Labour Party, tended towards a more sectarian stance. In the words of the CPGB's first chairman, Arthur MacManus, in 1923: "The struggle was that the non-Labour Party section in the [CPGB] felt that the ultra-Labour Party section in the [CPGB] were really reformist and opportunist. The reformist and opportunist section felt that the other section was impossibilist."<sup>7</sup>

All of these features are apparent in the CPGB's relationship with the Labour Party in the 1920s: for example, with the first minority Labour government of 1924 and the National Left Wing Movement in 1925-29.<sup>8</sup> Both of these episodes show sometimes the CPGB as a whole, and sometimes individuals and groups within it, veering between adapting themselves to elements in the Labour Party and moving towards a more dismissive, sectarian stance.<sup>9</sup>

The internal party culture of the CPGB of the popular front era had not substantially altered since the 1920s. A party training manual from 1937 made it clear that it was still the semi-militarised 'democratic centralism' of the early Comintern that was animating the CPGB's internal organisation. There were to be no "factional struggles" within the party and no unofficial factions in the form of "intrigues".<sup>10</sup> The manual added: "The party is not weakened, but strengthened, by removing members who are incorrigible (a) opportunists; (b) 'leftists'; (c) disruptive elements."<sup>11</sup> It went on to argue for the necessity of "subordination" of minorities and individuals inside the CPGB "based on conviction ... not ordering".<sup>12</sup>

At first sight, it seems that it is more reasonable to convince your comrades of something rather than just ordering them ... until you think about the ramifications - and impossibility - of subordinating all members of a large

organisation on the basis of an inner conviction. Sooner or later, some form of external compulsion is likely to come into play (although a decision to accept that might involve an inner conviction that such compulsion is necessary). To that end, this culture represented an aspiration to a monolith rather than its consummation; however, the CPGB was obviously an organisation that was not interested in any true notion of internal 'unity in diversity'.

It is unsurprising that when this type of organisation started working more closely alongside the Labour Party in the popular front era, it had exactly the same kind of impact on the CPGB as in the 1920s. A statement produced for the CPGB's London District Congress of 1938 complained of the "confusion arising in many comrades' minds ... where the pressure of reformism is considerable".<sup>13</sup> It concluded: "Such comrades begin to want unity at any price, without seeing the need to intensify the fight against reformism. Daily work becomes an end in itself."<sup>14</sup>

It is important to understand, of course, that such 'rightist' pressures did not just emanate from the CPGB itself, but from the Labour Party also. In August 1936, Bill Rust pointed out that "some very good friends" of the CPGB doubted that it could win affiliation to Labour and urged it to disband and "enter the Labour Party as individuals and in this way win the support of the rank and file".<sup>15</sup> But the CPGB had an internal mode of organisation - bureaucratic centralism, dressed up as 'democratic centralism' - spectacularly unsuited to deal with this type of pressure.

However, in 1938 the London District Committee reserved harsher criticism for what it saw as a sectarian tendency "carrying over the conceptions of a past period" in "some branches in the oldest Labour areas", seemingly content to "continue from year to year with a handful of members alongside Labour parties thousands stronger".<sup>16</sup> It added: "Under the screen of contemptuous references to the reactionary Labour leadership they neglect the work of encouraging the militant tendency in the Labour Party ..."<sup>17</sup> But, of course, this was not primarily the impact of third-period political conceptions, but a motion that had been embedded in the character of the CPGB since its foundation - one strand of members would adapt themselves to the Labour Party, while another would react to

such a development in an opposite, sectarian fashion.

In a similar vein to the above, London district secretary Ted Bramley outlined in late 1937 that some CPGB districts and branches were blighted by "sectarianism in practice", with another tendency permitting "comrades to work as individuals in mass organisations" without linking such activity to the party as a whole.<sup>18</sup>

The CPGB even seems to have unconsciously formalised the above division in its instructions to members working to support Labour candidates in elections. Party members were instructed to work with Labour materials and under Labour direction and "not take the *Daily Worker* or party literature round, unless by agreement with the [presumably Labour] election committee".<sup>19</sup> Another way of looking at this is to see it as an unnecessary surrender to the "pressure of reformism" noted previously by the CPGB London District Committee. Rather than assert their communist identity too forcefully in canvassing for Labour candidates, CPGB members were instead to hold "independent meetings" to state why they supported such candidates.<sup>20</sup> Presumably, it was here where communists could assert the party identity that they had kept under wraps during canvassing. It is little wonder, with such advice, that the CPGB was oscillating between opportunism and sectarianism.

### Dual membership

Already, the idea that the CPGB was engaged in some radical project to overhaul the substance of its political practice in the popular front era is looking a little fragile. The evidence in relation to the Labour Party shows that the CPGB had not really moved much beyond what MacManus back in 1923 had seen as a practical rendering of "opportunist" and "impossibilist" - this being the outcome of the Comintern's fundamental organisational precepts. This is, precisely, the "official Leninist culture of the Third International" - to recycle Eley's above phrase - invigorated, not repulsed, by the supposedly softer political imprint of the popular front.

The CPGB did not leave its contact with the Labour Party in the second half of the 1930s to chance meetings at labour movement events, street corners, in the factory or in the public house. Rather, it approached this in an organised fashion, partly through sending its members into Labour to work as disciplined communists.<sup>21</sup> By 1938, dual membership - where activists held both CPGB and Labour cards - was thought to amount to a fifth of the CPGB's entire membership, while there were communist fractions across nearly all of London's divisional Labour parties.<sup>22</sup> In 1937, the Labour NEC also noted that the CPGB was working in an organised fashion inside the Labour Party's women's sections.<sup>23</sup> Quantifying the membership gains that this tactic produced is difficult to assess in the absence of official figures, although the CPGB grew rapidly overall in this period, from 6,500 in February 1935 to 17,756 by July 1939.<sup>24</sup>

This type of organisational culture instantly threatens notions of popular front-style politics representing anything substantially new; rather it points backwards to the 1920s and the historical experience of the CPGB. Worse, it suggests the dread words of 'infiltration' and 'entrism' more commonly associated with the Trotskyist Militant Tendency of

latter years. In fact, the moral tropes of 'infiltration' are best left behind altogether, presenting as they do the proprietary outrage of the Labour right that its territory is being colonised by alternative ideas and forces.

Unfortunately, it is this notion of 'infiltration' that Morgan, Cohen and Flinn are lumbered with facing down when discussing CPGB entry into the Labour Party in the 1930s. They talk of "the construction of communism as an 'outside' presence, bringing in alien values and loyalties like a Stalinist version of *The Midwich cuckoos*".<sup>25</sup> The instinct of Morgan *et al* is to soften any such impression - I suspect because the authors subconsciously feel that such 'infiltration' jars with the much gentler "rekindling of progressive concerns"<sup>26</sup> that the popular front is supposed to represent. The emphasis is thus put upon existing Labour Party members defecting to the CPGB; and the "great majority of the CPGB's undercover members", who "appear to have joined the Labour Party either before or more or less simultaneously with their adherence to communism".<sup>27</sup> Morgan *et al* go on to suggest that such factors meant that the CPGB's intervention was more effective and that the common ground existing between the Labour left and the CPGB made it easier in many instances to openly express communist politics.<sup>28</sup> The CPGB's conscious direction is therefore downplayed and Morgan *et al* smooth the process into a much more organic theme of defection.

It is unsurprising that the CPGB was able to win over sections of the Labour rank and file, as the 1930s wore on, with the hot breath of war and fascism breathing down the movement's collective neck, and its official leadership doing little more than an ostrich act. By 1936, CPGB members inside the Labour Party were noting a "definite drift" to the left in many wards on the part of Labour's rank and file.<sup>29</sup> With issues such as Spain helping "to bring the Labour Party into public activity",<sup>30</sup> it is unsurprising that the CPGB could act as an outlet for the fears and militancy that such causes could inspire.

However, while this recruitment from inside may have had certain organic features, such occurrences would not have been possible without organised and directed entry into the Labour Party (infiltration in the positive sense of the word, considering that the leadership had no moral right to keep communists out; only a bourgeois proprietorial one). Morgan *et al* discuss the famous case of Douglas Hyde, who moved to Surrey in 1938, joined the Labour Party and quickly started recruiting to the CPGB, each new recruit thinking they were the only communist along with Hyde. He said:

... one night, I got [the hidden communists] together. I did not tell them the purpose of the gathering, but left them to assume that it was just an extended 'ginger group' meeting. When all had arrived, I revealed that everyone present was already a Communist Party member and suddenly they realised what had happened and just what strength the party already had in the local labour movement.<sup>31</sup>

Morgan *et al* are keen to emphasise that this was a process of existing Labour Party members joining the CPGB. But a communist from 'without and within' skilfully controlled the situation, so that the CPGB got maximum benefit. Even when joining the CPGB is portrayed as the natural result of communists being entwined with the Labour rank and file, such as in the example of Fred Westacott in Southampton in 1936-37, where he joined the Labour Party and was simultaneously given details of Southampton CPGB, someone was presumably on hand to ensure that the new Labour recruit got those details.<sup>32</sup>

Westacott then states that after joining the CPGB at the end of 1937 he proceeded to hold dual membership, which was accepted in the context of a Hamble and District Labour Party that was struggling to exist.<sup>33</sup> Again, this has been made to sound like a very natural common-sense development, but it is fairly inconceivable that Westacott would have been able to take this step without the direction of his CPGB branch. On top of this, the actions of Hyde, Westacott and others like them were reflective of more general communist political priorities.

## Coming together

Other pieces of evidence back up the view that the winning over of an organic section of the Labour rank and file was achieved through conscious CPGB intervention. In this vein, there is evidence that the CPGB had to overcome some passivity in its own ranks among those who may have perceived that the Labour Party would simply drift into a communist sphere of influence. Thus, in April 1936, 'Spartacus' talked of "a widespread belief that we can obtain affiliation to the Labour Party by persuading the reformist leaders we have become harmless".<sup>34</sup> He concluded by asserting that affiliation could only be secured "by winning over the rank and file ... to force the officials to accept us against their will".<sup>35</sup> Similarly, in May 1936 Clive Branson argued:

The great power of social democracy lies in the daily contact [that] exists between its individual members ... We have got to rub shoulders with the Labour Party people and [demonstrate we] ... have penetrated into every sphere of the lives of the working class.<sup>36</sup>

In July 1937, CPGB general secretary Harry Pollitt was also taking nothing for granted in advocating consistent work with local Labour parties, albeit with an inflection of opportunism: "We should try and end our tendency to take for granted that those grievances that specially interest us are of equal interest to other workers and their organisations."<sup>37</sup>

Neither was this state of readiness limited only to propaganda. The CPGB also reorganised itself away from street 'cells' and towards branch structures - a move that seems to have been mostly premised on developing its work with the Labour Party. RW Robson argued:

... weak street cells ... have clearly become a handicap to developing closer relations with Labour ward committees, etc, and the total absence of any party organisation other than basic units and sub-districts in London has presented practical obstacles in this district to the establishment of closer relations between divisional and borough Labour parties, trades councils, etc, and those of the Communist Party.<sup>38</sup>

But such a branch structure was also founded on the consolidation of organised fraction work in the Labour Party and other labour movement bodies, seen as the best route of working "consciously as organised members of the Communist Party".<sup>39</sup>

In reality, the CPGB growth in the Labour Party in the late 1930s represented the coming together of two tendencies: a Labour rank and file that was shifting to the left; and the organisation of communist cadres alongside and inside the Labour Party to direct and organise those forces. One tendency cannot be prised apart from the other and there are limited echoes of the more pugnacious methods the CPGB used in the 1920s.

This determination not to let the Labour Party right wing dictate the terms of who entered labour movement organisations was offset by the low-level politics that the CPGB took into such formations in the era of the popular front, which pushed it back into a cycle

of opportunist adaptation/sectarianism established in the 1920s. Yet there are still some vivid contrasts from the 1920s. The foundation period of the CPGB's *Sunday Worker* newspaper and what was to become the National Left Wing Movement in 1925-26 was marked by a relatively healthy process of ideological clarification in regards to the broader Labour left, which effectively ended with the differentiation of the communists and their supporters from the broader left.

To that end, in 1926 the National Left Wing Provisional Committee produced a programme - anti-imperialist, anti-militarist and anti-monarchical - that was precisely designed to differentiate the CPGB vision of a militant left wing from the rather flabby 'left' sentiment that it had found in the Labour Party around figures such as George Lansbury. By January 1936, Bill Rust had turned such conceptions on their head:

What are the issues around which unity can be achieved? We are not thinking in terms of a cut-and-dried programme, but those immediate and sometimes changing issues affecting the daily lives of the workers, small shopkeepers and professional people: wages, salaries, hours, conditions, taxation, democratic rights, armament expenditure, the threat of war, etc.<sup>40</sup>

## League of Youth

This did not mean that the CPGB eschewed making any programmatic demands on the Labour Party: rather that the scope of those demands had significantly diminished since the 1920s and that the element of sectarian vituperation around key parts of its identity (for example, supporting all actions of the ruling bureaucratic caste in the Soviet Union) continued unabated. This can be well illustrated by using the CPGB and the Young Communist League's work inside the Labour League of Youth as a case study.

The LLOY had emerged in 1926. However, by 1936, it seemed that the organisation had incurred the displeasure of the Labour national executive committee, which moved to discipline the LLOY. However, such manoeuvres only brought to prominence its YCL faction, led by Ted Willis (later Baron Willis, the creator of *Dixon of Dock Green*). The NEC had taken measures to curb any autonomy that the LLOY might aspire to and the league had no official national committee (only a national advisory committee); and its conferences were forbidden to discuss party policy.<sup>41</sup> Willis also claimed that LLOY branches which had attempted to work as sections of their local Labour Party had their funds confiscated and had been disbanded.<sup>42</sup>

In 1936, the NEC circulated a memorandum on the future organisation of the league, which rejected calls for its self-government; stressed the social aspect of the LLOY's activities; looked to lower the age limit of league membership from 25 to 21; and stated that its duty was to organise study of the Labour Party's policy, not elaborate criticisms of it.<sup>43</sup> Arthur Jenkins MP was given the unfortunate task of selling this package to the LLOY's 1936 Manchester conference: He said: "We cannot afford to have League of Youth conferences spending all their time criticising party policy and denouncing it ... The task of the league was first to support and to advocate party policy."<sup>44</sup>

This memorandum was unanimously rejected at the Manchester conference, which called for its withdrawal and asked the Labour NEC to meet with the LLOY's newly elected national advisory committee to discuss the future of the league.<sup>45</sup> The conference also sought freedom to criticise Labour Party policy; editorial freedom for its *The New Nation* journal; and a

united front of working class youth organisations - including, of course, the YCL.<sup>46</sup> The question of lowering the age limit was also rebuffed, with delegates arguing that such a decision would be the death of the league in rural areas and that it was between the ages of 21 and 25 when activists did their best work for the movement.<sup>47</sup>

As a result of this decisive reverse, the NEC disbanded the national advisory committee of the LLOY and cancelled its 1937 conference. The YCL faction rebelled against these incursions, sending Willis on a national speaking tour, establishing a provisional national committee and launching *Advance* as an unofficial organ of the LLOY.

The YCL approached the LLOY in 1936 to suggest a merger. This was slightly surreal, given that the YCL was by this point a leading LLOY faction, so it was advocating, in some senses, a merger with itself.<sup>48</sup> John Gollan of the YCL, closely supervising the work of Willis and others,<sup>49</sup> explained this in *Advance* in August 1936:

Some people are saying we want a youth league separate from the Labour Party. We don't. We want a Labour youth movement [that] is an integral part of the Labour Party but [that] has self-government, as the lack of self-government spells disaster for the youth movement.<sup>50</sup>

However, there was some insider opposition to the YCL faction controlling the LLOY and its course of opposition to the Labour NEC. Willis himself in August 1936 said: "Some people in our own ranks are attempting to break the solidarity of the league, by preaching 'complete loyalty to the NEC'."<sup>51</sup> Some correspondents of *Advance* also complained of the space being given to reviews of YCL publications.<sup>52</sup>

This policy of organised opposition to the NEC garnered some important results for the unofficial LLOY. By 1937, *Advance* supporters were dominant on the reinstated national advisory committee and Willis had become national chair of the league. In around 1936-37 (Willis does not offer a precise date in his memoirs), the provisional national committee of the LLOY was summoned to a meeting with the Labour NEC at Transport House, where the 'adult' party made an offer to reinstate the 'official' national advisory committee of the league and suggested it could advocate what policy it pleased. Also, the unofficial *Advance* could become the official journal of the LLOY, replacing *The New Nation*. The rider to this offer was that the LLOY should not associate with the CPGB/YCL or work in joint organisations with communists.

Willis said: "In the circumstances, it looked as though this was half a loaf, if not more, and we decided to cooperate."<sup>53</sup> Actually, given that the absurd instruction not to collaborate with the communists (Willis and others were effectively being asked to stop collaborating with themselves) was completely ignored, it seems as if this was very much the full loaf, and the YCL leadership of the LLOY was then in a position of some political strength.

We have covered thus far the positive side of the CPGB/YCL's involvement with the LLOY; the second and final part of this article will focus on more negative programmatic and ideological features; while also laying out the dramatic circumstances in which the CPGB extracted its members working in the Labour Party in 1939-40 ●

## Notes

1. K Morgan *Against fascism and war: ruptures and continuities in British communist politics 1935-41* Manchester 1989, p33.
2. N Branson, 'Myths from left and right' in J Fryth (ed) *Britain, fascism and the popular front* London 1985, p129.
3. *Ibid.*
4. K Morgan *Against fascism and war* (op cit). My emphasis.
5. G Eley, 'From cultures of militancy to the politics of culture: writing the history of British

6. communism' *Science and Society* spring 1997, Vol 61, No 3. The wholesale transposition of this ideology of the popular front into modern history writing is even more baffling when prominent supporters of the tactic in a general sense, such as Georg Lukács, have been able to discern some of its darker, sectarian side: "We must break with the false idea which arose in Stalin's popular fronts: ie, that people who didn't sign declarations were therefore totally reactionary" - T Pinkus (ed) *Conversations with Lukács* London 1974, p146.
7. Albeit with some important lacunas, as I have argued in a forthcoming paper, 'The *Sunday Worker* and the birth of the National Left Wing Movement'.
8. ECI British Commission, June 20 1923, RGASPI 495/38/2.
9. See L Parker, 'Too close for comfort' *Weekly Worker* May 19 2016; and 'Rattling the Labour right' *Weekly Worker* October 13 2016.
10. I would make a partial exception to this general tendency in the foundation period of the *Sunday Worker* newspaper and the National Left Wing Movement, which illustrates a relatively healthy political complexion; this I have argued in 'The *Sunday Worker* and the birth of the National Left Wing Movement'.
11. CPGB *The party and its work* London 1937.
12. *Ibid.*
13. London District Committee of the CPGB *London district congress discussion statement* London 1938.
14. *Ibid.*
15. W Rust, 'Problems of Labour policy' *Labour Monthly* August 1936.
16. *London district congress discussion statement* (op cit).
17. *Ibid.*
18. T Bramley, 'Our propaganda: the problem as I see it' *Discussion* (CPGB) October 1937.
19. CPGB *The party and its work* (op cit).
20. *Ibid.*
21. Branson suggests these members' party cards would have been held sometimes at CPGB headquarters in 16 King Street and more often by their district secretaries - N Branson *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain 1927-1941* London 1985, p157.
22. K Morgan, G Cohen, A Flinn *Communists and British society 1920-1991* London 2007, p131. See also N Branson op cit.
23. The NEC circular is cited in B Pimlott *Labour and the left in the 1930s* London 1986, p103.
24. A Thorpe, 'The membership of the Communist Party of Great Britain, 1920-1945' *The Historical Journal* Vol 43, No 3, 2000, p781.
25. K Morgan *et al* (op cit) p130. *The Midwich cuckoos* was a 1957 science-fiction novel by John Wyndham, in which women in an English village are impregnated through outside xenogenesis and give birth to alien life forms.
26. K Morgan *Bolshevism and the British left* part 1: *Labour legends and Russian gold* London 2006, p288.
27. K Morgan *et al* (op cit) p131.
28. *Ibid* pp131-32.
29. W McGuire, 'Why affiliate?' *Discussion* (CPGB) August 1936.
30. *London district congress discussion statement* (op cit).
31. D Hyde *I believed: the autobiography of a former British communist* London 1951, p65.
32. F Westacott *Shaking the chains* Chesterfield 2002, pp102-03.
33. *Ibid* p111. Morgan suggests that the phenomenon of CPGB entry into the Labour Party "was of considerable significance in many parts of the Midlands and south which lacked a resilient Labour tradition", focusing on the particular example of Oxford: K Morgan *Against fascism and war* (op cit) p36.
34. 'Spartacus', 'Build the mass party' *Discussion* (CPGB) April 1936.
35. *Ibid.*
36. CE Branson, 'New line - new methods of work' *Discussion* (CPGB) May 1936.
37. H Pollitt, 'The Communist Party congress and the next stage in the fight for unity' *Labour Monthly* July 1937.
38. RW Robson, 'On communist organisation' *Discussion* (CPGB) March 1936.
39. N Branson, 'On party organisation' *Discussion* (CPGB) April 1936.
40. W Rust, 'The Labour Party's future' *Labour Monthly* January 1936.
41. T Willis *Youth appeals to Labour* London 1937.
42. *Ibid.*
43. M Webb *The rise and fall of the Labour League of Youth* unpublished University of Huddersfield thesis, p67.
44. 'National conference report: Arthur Jenkins on the future of the league' *The New Nation: organ of the Labour Party League of Youth* May 1936.
45. *Ibid.*
46. M Webb op cit p67.
47. 'National conference report: Arthur Jenkins on the future of the league' op cit.
48. T Willis *Youth appeals to Labour* (op cit).
49. T Willis *Whatever happened to Tom Mix?* London 1970, p170.
50. J Gollan, 'Why the Young Communist League proposes the merger' *Advance* August 1936.
51. T Willis, 'We shall not surrender: for the merger against the memorandum' *Advance* August 1936. Some of this 'official' NEC-sponsored opposition to the communists can also be found in the files of *The New Nation* from 1936. However, this was a slightly desperate enterprise, given the failure of the NEC memorandum in 1936 and there were a number of complaints from activists about biased pro-memorandum reporting of the LLOY's 1936 conference in the June and July issues of *The New Nation*.
52. Letter from Nat Frayman, Manchester *Advance* January 1937.
53. T Willis *Whatever happened to Tom Mix?* (op cit) p165.

## LAW

# With a whimper

Labour's proposals on union rights amount to mere tinkering, writes Mike Macnair

On Tuesday May 16 the Labour Party launched its election manifesto. A draft of it was leaked on May 11, and promptly denounced in the media as "leftwing" and offering to "take Britain back to the 1970s".<sup>1</sup> Other commentators have claimed that the manifesto means that voters are finally offered a "real choice"<sup>2</sup> - this seems to be spin coming from Labour.

However, Greg Rosen's May 12 commentary in the *New Statesman* was headlined 'Forget 1983 - Labour's 2017 manifesto is a throwback to New Labour'.<sup>3</sup> Rosen's headline and story is a more accurate account of what is on offer. The manifesto's proposals for 'labour law' provide a striking example:

A Labour government will invest in enforcement through a new ministry of labour, and empower workers and their trade unions - because we are stronger when we stand together. So we will review the rules on union recognition, so that more workers have the security of a union.

The manifesto in several places talks of extending collective bargaining. But there is hardly any reference to rolling back the overweening power of employers' lawyers over the timing and conditions for industrial action. Labour, we are told, will "repeal the Trade Union Act and roll out sectoral collective bargaining - because the most effective way to maintain good rights at work is collectively through a union".

But the Trade Union Act (2016),<sup>4</sup> which includes elaborate measures to render trade unions incapable of action without employers' approval, is only the *most recent* in a long run of pieces of legislation aimed at weakening the trade unions. What about the rest?

The leaked draft included another proposal, which has not made it into the final version: "Labour will also consult with employers and trade unions on permitting secure online balloting for industrial action votes." It is a good thing that this proposal did not make it into the final version. It would have been perfectly ridiculous, since provision for pilot schemes of online balloting is already in the Trade Union Act 2016 (section 4).

But then, of course, the issue is posed: why did the *Tories* make this proposal? The answer is that online strike balloting would provide *more*, not less, excuses for the courts to issue 'labour injunctions' to illegalise any strikes which might actually inconvenience the employer. Introducing online strike ballots also *extends* the principle of the *Tories'* campaign since the 1970s for unions to operate forms of 'plebiscitary democracy', which give excessive power to media barons.

We might imagine that, having been visibly scammed by the *Tories* and the media barons using plebiscitary twice in the recent past (the Scots independence and Brexit referenda), Labour people might have begun to recall the old opposition of the labour movement to plebiscitary democracy. But no. (Indeed, we had already seen, *since* the Brexit referendum, Corbyn's co-thinkers playing in Momentum the same Cameron-Khomeini-Hitler-Napoleon III game.)

The manifesto has almost nothing to say about the anti-union laws. It 'talks the talk' of strengthening unions and collective bargaining - repeatedly. But it is completely unwilling to 'walk the walk'. Or, to use a different cliché: Labour, as supposedly 'led' by Corbyn

and his co-thinkers, is not prepared to grasp the political nettle of *actually reversing* the post-1970s experiment in giving employers, through their lawyers, the power to control the timing and effect of industrial action; and more generally of weakening unions by judicialising 'unfair dismissal' and so on.

## Absence

It is worth making a brief comparison with the proposals of the Institute for Employment Rights *Manifesto for labour law* (2016), since the *language* of the Labour manifesto shows clear influence from the IER's proposals: ministry of labour, extension of collective bargaining, promotion of 'sectoral' collective bargaining, and so on. The difference, though, is fundamental proposals in the IER *Manifesto* which are *absent* from Labour's manifesto. To quote some of these from Ciaran Cross's summary:<sup>5</sup>

- Reforms to the law on freedom of association should be made to ensure a better balance between trade union autonomy and trade union democracy (with trade union elections conducted in accordance with trade union rules and procedures).

- With regard to the right to strike, it should be lawful for everyone to be able to take collective action with others in defence of their social and economic interests in the workplace, and for their trade unions to organise such action. The *Manifesto* calls for the repeal of the existing statutory duty to give notice of an intention to take industrial action, as well as the duty to give notice of an intention to ballot for industrial action. It proposes that a simple duty to give no less than three days strike notice would be ample.

- Trade unions should also be permitted to take or to call for 'secondary' or 'solidarity' industrial action in support of any other workers in dispute (including industrial action involving another employer), where the primary action is lawful. There should be a 'presumption that solidarity action is lawful', because 'the whole point of trade unionism is not only collective strength, but mutual support in times of trouble'.

- Moreover, lawful industrial action should not be regarded as a breach of the contract of employment or service, but as a temporary suspension only. To this end, those participating in lawful collective action should have the right to be reinstated at the end of the strike, if it is their wish to be reinstated.

None of these points, which really *would* reduce the bias towards employer interests in the current law, has found a place in Labour's manifesto. Why not?

I would suggest that what is involved is three elements. The first is that the Labour right and 'centre' are, in fact, committed to anti-strike laws and radically weakened trade unions, though right now (as distinct from in the days of Tony Blair) it is only their lower-ranking ideological hangers-on, rather than their leaders, who can say so openly.

The second is the 'governmental illness' of the Labour left, who imagine both that the worst Labour government is better than the weakest Tory or coalition government, and that it is possible to sneak into governmental office by evading discussion of controversial issues.

The third is that the unions speak in Labour *through the full-time officials*; and the officials *imagine* the union

in terms merely of *their* jobs for the union. That is, they imagine a union which can function without membership mobilisation or autonomy at ground level, through legal powers conferred by the state on the officials.

## Labour right

The commitments of the Labour right are not just a matter of Blairism or even Thatcherism. They go back to Barbara Castle's *In place of strife* (1969), which originally proposed the requirement for compulsory strike ballots. The background is, of course, 'declinism': the recognition by the late 1960s that British industry was in decline relative to its competitors in western Europe and Japan.

I discussed two weeks ago how 'declinism' motivated the 'education reform' agenda.<sup>6</sup> I made the point there that the aspirations of capital and its supporters on this front are illusory, because the cause of British decline is to be found in geopolitical-economic dynamics leading to underinvestment in fixed capital and a dynamic towards financialisation and dominance of services (both of which imply lower productivity), not in an undereducated working class. The result of the illusory quality of the goal is that the aspirations to degrade education are endlessly unsatisfiable.

The same is true of 'trade union reform' (witness, indeed, the Trade Union Act 2016 as the latest step of the ratchet). The illusory end goal is something like the return to the law under which, in 1736, a group of workers could be criminally prosecuted for "conspiracy to refuse to work more than 16 hours a day, to the great loss and damage of their employers". But, even if this was achieved, British relative productivity would *still* decline.

Why did the Labour right become committed to the illusory goals of restoring 'British competitiveness', in spite of holding themselves out as the political representatives of labour? It is probably not a matter of *pure* corrupt careerism. Rather, the great schism between social democrats and communists as a result of 1914-18 was more than anything else about the social democrats' *nationalism and loyalty to the nation-state*: the idea that reforms are only possible if they are paid for by the relative success of 'our' state. But then the logic is inescapable that social democrats must bite the bullet of whatever is required to restore, or ensure, the competitiveness of 'national' business.

The social democrats do not, in fact, fully follow this logic. They can (for example) come under pressure from trade unions. Or they could come under pressure from an external left not committed to the 'national interest' - if that left was not so committed to 'moderate demands but militant action'. Indeed, *Theresa May* is not fully following the 'national competitiveness' logic in this election, but making various pseudo-left noises aiming to take votes off Labour (which led to grumbles in the rightwing press). Her choice to do so reflects the fact that the *outcomes* of attempting to apply the competitiveness mantra have turned out to be increasingly radical inequality and the rise of right-populist alternatives to 'establishment' parties across the world. The 'competitiveness' logic is nonetheless influential enough for the need for anti-union laws to be an unquestionable dogma of the British establishment since the late 1960s, including within the Labour right and

centre.

## Labour left

The Labour left has in fact routinely called for the repeal of the Tory anti-union laws for the last 35 years. It is then extraordinarily striking that it should *stop doing so* when Andrew Fisher had the opportunity to draft the manifesto. I make this point not in relation to the final manifesto. The final version *should in theory* be inevitably a product of left-right compromise, given the right's continued control of the parliamentary party, the full-time apparatus, and most Labour council groups and constituencies. The point is rather that Fisher's leaked *draft* - which the rightwing press complained reflects union wish-lists - was already extraordinarily weak on this front.

The explanation is a matter on which we have written repeatedly in this paper. The Labour left is indeed to the left of the Labour right and centre. But it is also a *Labour* left, committed to Labourism - on the 'social democrat' side of the great schism.

This does not play out as internalising the 'competitiveness requires anti-union laws' mantra. Rather, the Labour left remains nationalistic, but imagines the delusion that the 'national' part of the economy can be (largely) detached from its 'international' part; and that there are then various *substitutes* for cost-cutting to raise the rate of profit as a road to 'competitiveness'. Keynesian stimuli, or education spending, or improvements in worker participation in decision-making, or whatever, are all imagined sources of improved economic performance and productivity.

Further, the Labour left remains committed to the *constitutional* order. How this plays out is the belief that the fundamental task is to get a Labour *government*. Substantive policy wish-lists then fall to be sacrificed as necessary to the need to avoid division in the party - and 'scandalous' ideas, which the *Tories* can exploit. By homing in on a small number of policies potentially attractive to the electorate, it is imagined that Labour can sneak into office. Hence the manifesto draft is already radically watered down by the left, before it comes to be negotiated with the right. Proximity to office (mis-imagined as 'power') reduces the Labour left's willingness to confront establishment dogmas.

## Union officials

The union officials are no doubt affected variously by the ideas of the Labour right (that loss of 'competitiveness' means fewer and worse-paid jobs) and of the Labour left (that unity and avoiding confrontation with establishment dogmas will allow electoral victory). But there is also a *particular* poignancy about union officials in discussions in the Labour Party agreeing not to call for the abolition of the purely class-biased rules introduced over the last 46 years to weaken trade unions.

The explanation is probably that union officials - in spite of having presided over a gradual decline of the unions under this regime - think of the unions in terms of their own jobs: as administrators, but also as *representatives* in negotiation and lobbying. From this point of view every strike looks like a failure; and, in a sense, it is: it would be better to get a good deal by negotiation than to fight - and perhaps lose the fight, as well as the pay lost while striking.

Hence, to officials, it looks

like an attractive option to drop proposals to change the law to facilitate strikes and other industrial action (big no-no with the media), but retain proposals to change the law to increase the unions' negotiating role and the presence of the officials in consultations, and so on.

The problem is that the reasons for the employers to make concessions in negotiations (whether immediately on terms and conditions, or more generally on legislation and policy) are not out of the goodness of their hearts. The managers and representatives who do the negotiating owe duties to their shareholders, etc to maximise profits or minimise losses. The reason for them to make concessions is that the alternative to a deal is also worse for them.

Hence, without an improvement in the ability to take industrial action, the concessions made by employers will remain measly. And confidence in unions will continue to decline, and with it their membership - and so on in a vicious spiral. The officials may imagine that the right to strike is an optional extra: in reality, their role here is as turkeys voting for an early Christmas.

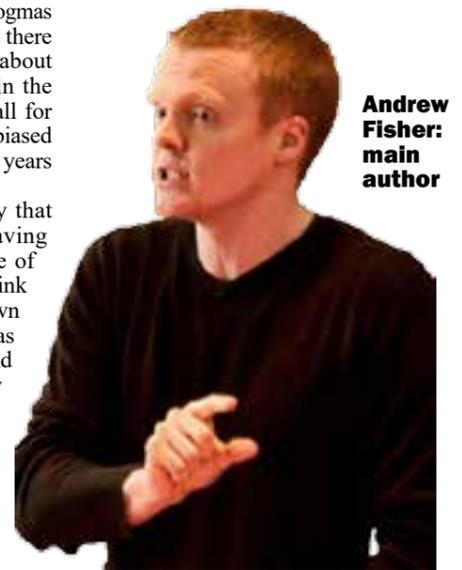
We may *hope* that, even if Labour is beaten as badly as the polls seem to be predicting, Corbyn will refuse to fall on his sword, and point to the saboteur role of the Labour right. But the Labour manifesto proposals on 'labour law' suggest, rather, that the 'Corbyn movement' will end not with a bang, but with a whimper, which has already begun. It will do so because the Corbynistas have sacrificed the chance of an effective *opposition* to the illusory hope of an 'anti-austerity' government.

An effective opposition remains the goal we actually need to pursue. Such an opposition could actually advocate the overthrow of the regime of employer-controlled labour law ●

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## Notes

1. 'Jeremy Corbyn's leftwing Labour manifesto leaked' *The Daily Telegraph* May 11.
2. Eg, Ian Lavery on LabourList: <https://labourlist.org/2017/05/lavery-a-manifesto-for-the-many-not-the-few>. But note that the same argument was offered by Dave Prentis in April 2015: [www.devoncountyunion.org.uk/news-events/labours-manifesto-gives-voters-a-real-choice-says-unison](http://www.devoncountyunion.org.uk/news-events/labours-manifesto-gives-voters-a-real-choice-says-unison).
3. [www.newstatesman.com/politics/june2017/2017/05/forget-1983-labours-2017-manifesto-throwback-new-labour](http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/june2017/2017/05/forget-1983-labours-2017-manifesto-throwback-new-labour).
4. The garbage contained in this act can be found in detail at [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2016/15/contents/enacted](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2016/15/contents/enacted).
5. I have not yet read the actual book, so rely here on the summary offered by Ciaran Cross in his review in *International union rights* Vol 23, section 2, pp10-13 (2016).
6. 'What kind of education?' *Weekly Worker* May 4.



**Andrew Fisher:**  
main author

ECONOMY

# Keynes or Marx?

What is capital's driving force? Michael Roberts explores the profit-investment nexus

The main themes of this year's *Historical Materialism* conference in New York<sup>1</sup> last month were the Russian Revolution and the prospects for revolutionary change one hundred years later.

But my main interest, as always, was on the relevance of Marxist economic theory in explaining the current state of global capitalism - if you like, understanding the objective conditions for the struggle to replace capitalism with a socialist society.

On that theme, in a plenary session, professor Anwar Shaikh at the New School for Social Research (one of the most eminent heterodox economists around) and I looked at the state of the current economic situation for modern capitalism. Anwar concentrated on the main points from his massive book published last year - the culmination of 15 years of research.<sup>2</sup> This is a major work of political economy, in which Anwar uses what he calls the classical approach of Adam Smith, David Ricardo and Karl Marx (and sometimes John Maynard Keynes) under one umbrella (not specifically Marxist apparently). His book is essential reading, as is the series of lectures<sup>3</sup> that he has done to accompany it.

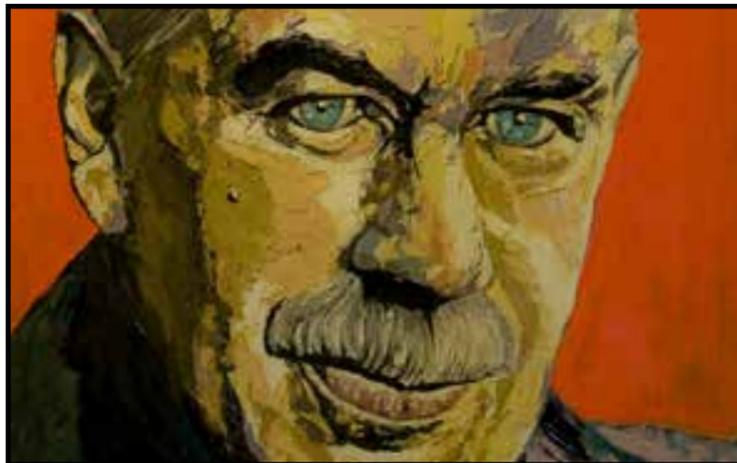
His main points at the plenary were to emphasise that capitalism is not a system that started off as competitive and then developed into monopoly capitalism, but it is one of turbulent "real competition". There has never been perfect competition (as mainstream economics implies), from which we can look at "imperfections" like monopoly.

Anwar went on to say that crises under capitalism are the result of falling profitability over time in a long down-wave. The neoliberal period from the early 1980s was a result of the rejection of Keynesian economics and the return of neoclassical theory and the replacement of fiscal management of the economy, which was not working, with monetarism from the likes of Milton Friedman. But even neoliberal policies could not avoid the great recession, he said. And since then there has not been a full recovery for capitalism. Massive monetary injections have avoided the destruction of capital values, but at the expense of stagnation.

In my contribution, I emphasised the points of my book, *The long depression*,<sup>4</sup> which also saw the current crisis as a result of Marx's law of profitability in operation. I argued that mainstream economics failed to see the slump coming, could not explain it, and do not have policies to get out of the long depression that has ensued since 2009, because they have no real theory of crises. Some deny crises at all; some claim they are due to reckless, greedy bankers; or to 'changing the rules of game'<sup>5</sup> by the deregulation of the finance sector, causing instability; or due to rising inequality squeezing demand.<sup>6</sup>

In my view, none of these explanations are compelling. But neither are the alternatives that are offered within the labour movement. Anwar was right that neoclassical economics dominates again in mainstream economics, but I was keen to point out that Keynesian economics is dominant as the alternative theory, analysis and policy prescription in the labour movement. And, in my view, Keynesianism was just as useless in predicting or explaining crises and thus so are its policy prescriptions.

Indeed, that was the main point



John Maynard Keynes: first invest

made in the paper I presented at another session at *HM*, at which Anwar Shaikh was the discussant. In my paper, entitled 'The profit-investment nexus: Marx or Keynes?',<sup>7</sup> I argued that it is business investment, not household consumption, that drives the booms and slumps in output under capitalism. For crude Keynesians it is what happens with consumer demand that matters, but empirical analysis shows that before any major slump it is investment that falls, not consumption, and indeed often there is no fall in consumption at all.

Moreover, what drives business investment is profit and profitability, not 'effective demand'. That is because profits are not some 'marginal product' of the 'factor of capital', as mainstream marginalist economics (that Keynes also held to) reckons. Profits are the result of unpaid labour in production, part of the surplus value appropriated by capitalists. Profits come first before investment, not as a marginal outcome of capital investment. In the paper, I showed that the so-called Keynesian macro identities used in mainstream economic textbooks fail to reveal that the causal connection is not from investment to savings or profit, but from profits to investment. Investment does not cause profit, as Keynesian theory argues, but profits cause investment.

Shaikh commented in his contribution that Keynes was also well aware that profits were relevant to investment. That sounds contradictory to what I am arguing. But let Keynes himself resolve how he saw it, when he says:

Nothing obviously can restore employment which first does not restore business profits. Yet nothing in my judgement can restore business profits that does not first restore the volume of investment.

To answer Keynes, my paper demonstrated that there is plenty of empirical evidence to show that profits lead investment into any slump and out into a boom - the Marxist view. And there is little or no evidence that investment drives profits - the Keynesian view.

## 'Profits of enterprise'

Shaikh argued at *HM* that it is the "profits of enterprise" that matter, not profits as such. By this he means that the interest or rent taken by finance capital and landlords must be deducted before we can see the direct connection between business profits and business investment. Maybe so, but the evidence is also strong that the overall surplus value in the hands of capital (including

finance capital) is the driving force behind investment. Interest and rent can never be higher than profit, as they are deductions from total profits made by productive capital.

Also Shaikh reckons that it is expectations of future profit on new investment that is decisive in the movement of business investment, not the mass or the rate of profit on the existing stock of capital invested. Yes, capitalists invest on the expectation of profit, but that expectation is based on what their actual profitability was before. So the profitability on existing capital is what matters. Otherwise, the expectation of profit becomes some ephemeral subjective measure, like Keynes's 'animal spirits'. Indeed, as I quote Paul Mattick in my paper,

What are we to make of an economic theory ... which could declare, "In estimating the prospects for investment, we must have regard, therefore, to the nerves and hysteria and the digestions and reactions to the weather of those upon whose spontaneous activity it largely depends" (Keynes)?

My paper concludes that different economic policy conclusions flow from the Marxist or Keynesian view of what drives investment. The Keynesian multiplier reckons that it is demand that drives investment and if consumer and investment demand is low or falling, a suitable boost of government investment and spending can compensate and so pump prime or boost the capitalist economy back on its feet.

But when we study the evidence of the efficacy of the Keynesian multiplier, as I do in this paper, it is not compelling. On the other hand, the Marxist multiplier - namely the effect of changes in the profitability of business capital on investment and economic growth - is much more convincing. Thus Keynesian fiscal and monetary stimulus policies do not work and do not deliver economic recovery, when profitability of capital is low and/or falling. Indeed, they may make things worse.

At the plenary I pointed out that Donald Trump plans some limited form of Keynesian stimulus by government spending on infrastructure programmes worth about \$250 billion - I have discussed these plans and their fake nature on a previous occasion.<sup>8</sup> But even if they were genuine increases in state investment, it will do little. Business investment as a share of GDP in most advanced capitalist economies is around 12%-18%, while government investment is about 2%-4% - some four to six times less. That is hardly surprising, as these are capitalist economies! But that means an increase

of just 0.2% of GDP in government investment, as Trump proposes, will make little difference, even if the 'multiplier effect' of such investment on GDP growth were more than one (and evidence suggests it will be little more).<sup>9</sup>

What matters under capitalism is profit, because the capitalist mode of production is not just a monetary economy, as Keynesian theory emphasises; it is, above all, a money-making economy. So without profitability rising, capitalist investment will not rise. This key point was the starting point of another session on Fred Moseley's excellent book, *Money and totality*, which explains and defends Marx's analysis of capital accumulation, his laws of value and profitability, from competing and distorting interpretations.<sup>10</sup>

Moseley shows there is no problem in reconciling Marx's law of value (based on all value being created by labour-power) with relative prices of production and profitability in a capitalist economy. There is no need to 'transform' labour values into money prices of production, as Marx starts the circuit of production with money inputs and finishes it with (more) money outputs. The law of value and surplus value provided the explanation of how more money results - no mathematical transformation is necessary.

But this also means that for Marx's law of value to hold and for total value to explain total prices (and for total surplus value to explain total profits), only labour can be the source of all value created. There cannot be profit without surplus value. That is why I disagree with Anwar Shaikh's view that Marx also recognised profit from 'alienation', or transfer.<sup>11</sup>

The danger of accepting that profit can come from somewhere other than the exploitation of labour-power is that it opens the door to the fallacies of mainstream economics - particularly Keynesian economics - that creating money or credit can deliver more income (demand) and is not fictitious, but real, value. If that were true, then monetarism and Keynesian policies become theoretically valid options for ending the current long depression and future slumps without replacing the capitalist mode of production. Luckily, the view that profits can be created out of money and by not exploiting labour is demonstrably false ●

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

## Notes

1. See <http://hmny.org/hmny-2017>.
2. A Shaikh *Capitalism: competition, conflict, crises* Oxford 2016. See my review at <http://isj.org.uk/real-capitalism-turbulent>; and commentary at <https://thenextrecession.wordpress.com/2016/04/04/capitalism-and-anwar-shaikh>.
3. [www.hgss.org/anwar-m-shaikh-capitalism-competition-conflict-and-crises](http://www.hgss.org/anwar-m-shaikh-capitalism-competition-conflict-and-crises).
4. M Roberts *The long depression* Chicago 2016.
5. <https://thenextrecession.wordpress.com/2016/03/02/changing-the-rules-or-changing-the-game>.
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7. <https://thenextrecession.files.wordpress.com/2017/04/the-profit-investment-nexus-michael-roberts-hmny-april-2017.pdf>.
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9. See [https://thenextrecession.files.wordpress.com/2017/04/leeper\\_ltw\\_fmnm\\_final.pdf](https://thenextrecession.files.wordpress.com/2017/04/leeper_ltw_fmnm_final.pdf).
10. F Moseley *Money and totality* Leiden 2015. See my review at <https://thenextrecession.wordpress.com/2016/04/29/fred-moseley-and-marx-macro-monetary-theory>.
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## What we fight for

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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# weekly Worker

**Modern Turkey  
is the inheritor  
state of the  
Ottomans**

## A route out of paralysis

Is Turkey 'on the road to fascism'? Such talk is utterly counterproductive, argues **Esen Uslu**

The heading of *Morning Star* editorial dated April 18 - 'Turkey on the road to fascism' - reflects a quite common leftwing outlook which is prevailing in Turkey and abroad.<sup>1</sup>

The *Star*, commenting on the outcome of the referendum on the constitutional amendment, held on April 16, lists didactically all the facets of president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's regime that are irritating liberal European Union politicians. And it concludes that, if the death penalty is reintroduced, Turkey will "face an even more dangerous future".

It is interesting to compare the *Star* editorial with some Turkish liberal articles. Before the constitutional amendment was passed by the Turkish parliament last year, an academic journalist wrote an article entitled 'It is written as "new Turkey", but pronounced as "fascism"'.<sup>2</sup>

On April 17 *The Guardian* published an article by well-respected liberal journalist Yavuz Baydar entitled 'Erdoğan's referendum victory spells the end of Turkey as we know it'.<sup>3</sup> Baydar wrote: "It's hard not to notice the striking resemblance to the sequence of events in Germany from 1933: the Reichstag fire, the Night of the Long Knives, the infamous referendum in 1934."

Such copy-and-paste comparisons of the situation in Turkey with Nazi Germany may work for disappointed liberals, but they cannot replace an informed historical analysis and - most important of all - cannot shed light on the prospects of struggle, which is the most important task of revolutionary Marxism.

The prime feature of this liberal approach has been its whitewashing of the Turkish regime up to now, as if it was previously a typical European liberal democracy - or at least as if it was better than today in relation to its respect for the 'rule of law', for human rights, etc. Such analyses see nothing but doom and gloom in prospect for the future.

When the liberals complain about the lost Turkey they knew, the working class - together with the Kurds, Alevis and the remnants of once well-established Christian communities - simply reply: 'We don't know what you're talking about! Yesteryear was no better for us!' The Turkish Republic has never been a democracy, not even in the common European usage of the word. Those who believed that this or that political development would usher in democratic advance have been disappointed many times.

The main reason for this is the fact that the republic was the continuation of the Ottoman state, in its most ancient as well as modern aspects, despite the contrary assurances of Kemalists - those who seek inspiration in the Mustafa Kemal Atatürk of the early 20th century - as well as the Soviet and Turkish communist movement in the past.

In the 19th century, the Ottoman empire was gradually losing its grip on the Middle East and Balkans in the face of nationalist movements, and became a bone of contention, when it came to the establishment of spheres of influence by the imperialist powers. The Ottoman 'solution' was to suppress rival

nationalisms, as well as promoting its own Turkish and Islamist nationalism, and creating a homogenous state at the expense of all alternatives.

That honour fell to the officers of the modern Ottoman army, developed in the 19th century on the Prussian model. Their putsches led to the formation of the Union and Progress Party - the blunt instrument used against the Armenian and Greek Orthodox population of Anatolia in the first decades of the 20th century during the creation of the Turkish Republic.

The so-called 'war of liberation' was led by a group of UPP officers after the blame for the World War I defeat fell on the former leaders of that party, which took the name, 'Republican People's Party' (CHP), after the formation of the republic in 1923. The Kemalists waged a bloody power struggle with the remnants of the UPP and suppressed them through the so-called extra-judicial 'liberation tribunals' that hanged more people than were killed during the 'War of Liberation'.

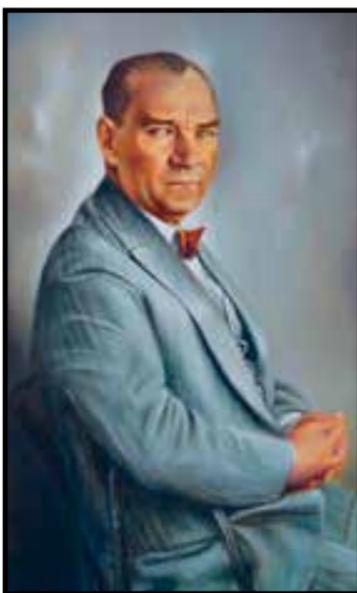
After obtaining recognition from the imperialist powers with the signing of the Lausanne treaties in 1924, the Kemalist republic dealt a heavy blow to Kurdish nationalist aspirations, as well as to the nascent Turkish communist movement. That onslaught against the Kurds has continued almost without cease to the present day - for example, the campaign to suppress the Kurdish Alevis of Dersim province started in the 1930s and lasted until the 50s. The passing of the 1924 'Law of Maintaining Peace' granted gargantuan powers to the executive, and parliament was reduced to a mere rubber stamp.

Even as late as 1934 the Jewish population living in Thrace was subjected to a pogrom. During World War II the Nazi sympathies of the CHP regime were quite apparent, and they treated the 'unauthorised' Jewish migration to Palestine brutally during the 'Struma disaster' of 1942.

### Post-war 'democracy'

More or less that type of unbridled rule under the single-party state lasted until the aftermath of World War II. But, in order to be accepted in the new world order that followed, a multi-party democracy was adopted, and a section of the CHP became the Democrat Party.

In 1950 the DP was elected by a landslide, while all attempts to establish legal leftwing parties were quickly suppressed through draconian laws



**Atatürk: hardly a democrat**

borrowed from Mussolini's criminal law, and fortified with the mandatory death penalty for the crime of "attempting to overthrow the constitutional rule of Turkey" during the initial stages of the cold war.

It was the DP government that launched the pogrom against the Greek Orthodox and Armenian populations that remained in Istanbul in September 1955, and in 1959 it staged a new campaign against Kurdish intellectuals, typified by the 'Trial of 49'.

The course of 'multi-party democracy' was disrupted by a military coup against the DP regime in 1960, which saw three DP leaders executed, and an offer to form a government was made to the CHP. However, in the first general elections after the ending of military rule in 1965, there was a reincarnation of the DP in the guise of Justice Party (AP), which dominated political life during the 60s.

The next crisis came in March 1971, when the army intervened once more, and a proxy civilian-technocratic government was formed - one of its first acts was to hang three revolutionaries. Military rule was ended mainly by the struggles of the working class - only to be met by another military takeover in September 1980.

For the first time in its history Turkey found itself under a truly fascist regime, in the sense of the counterrevolutionary terror of the bourgeoisie meted out against the working class through its army and other wings of the state. But even that regime could not rule for a

long period, and was gradually dissolved into something resembling a multi-party parliamentary democracy, under the not-so-secret tutelage of the military lurking behind the scenes. For a while the Islamist politics of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) succeeded in pushing the military back, but there were at least two veiled military interventions and one serious attempt at another military takeover.

That is a brief summary of the Turkey known to working people and communists before the April referendum. However, the 2013 Gezi Park demonstrations and the June 2015 elections have also shown to the working class of Turkey - as well as to the Kurds, Alevis and other national-religious minorities - that the onslaught of Islamist politics could be successfully resisted.

Nevertheless, over the 94 years that have passed since the formation of the republic, almost 70 have been under one form or another of military rule or some thinly veiled dictatorial regime. That is the past, as the working class experienced it. And, despite all the oppressive policies, the Kurdish freedom movement has gained strength since the 90s, and the regime has been uncertain as to how to suppress it - favourable conditions have emerged for the Kurdish freedom movement on the south-eastern borders.

### Working class

After the defeat suffered in 2015, the Erdoğan clique backtracked from the AKP's Islamist agenda and found solace under the nationalist wings of the military, which actually represents historical state thinking - no truce with the Kurds and an all-out war to obliterate the guerrilla movement. The so-called 'Sri-Lankan model' was put into practice by kicking away the table from under the bilateral negotiations to find a peaceful resolution of the 'Kurdish problem', which had reached an advanced level.

Since then Kurdish cities and towns - especially their working class core - have been subjected to a brutal onslaught. The Turkish airforce began bombing alleged guerrilla bases and installations, and thousands have been killed or imprisoned. The leaders of Kurdish political parties, as well as civic organisations, have been detained. Kurdish MPs have been deprived of parliamentary immunity, charged, convicted and imprisoned.

However, this change of tack put the AKP, which had brought together an election-winning coalition, under enormous pressure and it split down the

middle. It lost the support of the Gülen movement - a precursor of Islamist politics - and has been trying to cling onto power by purging old allies from state institutions by the thousand. It is now looking to ally with the likes of the nationalist-racist Nationalist Action Party (MHP) and the infamous Grey Wolves, in an attempt to resurrect the Nationalist Front governments of the 1970s.

However, the crucial question is, how can the AKP maintain such a delicate balancing act, while more than half of the population is clearly against it, as the results of the referendum demonstrated? Without addressing that question, any talk of impending fascism is nothing but an example of crying wolf. The Kurdish phobia prevailing among the CHP and Kemalists, as well as among the scattered groups and parties of the Turkish left, causes paralysis, preventing them from acting in unison against the AKP regime.

Any analysis that does not touch on such a simple, but fundamental, issue is as deceiving for the working class as the "bright future" discourse of the AKP. Far from helping the working class in its fight against the regime, this failing disarms workers and breaks their will to struggle. It also creates nationalist impediments to the development and deepening of working class consciousness.

Now is not the time for doom and gloom. Yes, during a retreat the drums cannot beat a victory march, but we need to stop and take a stock of the situation before moving forward. The left, together with the Kurdish freedom movement, could, and should, draw up a democratic programme aimed at uniting the progressive opposition - or at least bringing their respective movements into parallel motion. Talk of inevitable fascism, however well intentioned, is useless and counterproductive.

The lack of any coherent revolutionary Marxist leadership of the working class movement has meant that the vacuum left by the collapse of Soviet 'communism' is yet to be filled. However, despite that, the working class is quite capable of cutting a way through the clutter stacked before it by the liberals, old-style communists and other inconsistent democrats ●

### Notes

1. www.morningstaronline.co.uk/a-1aac-Turkey-on-the-road-to-fascism#.WRq32PmLShs.
2. www.diken.com.tr/yeni-turkiye-yazilir-fasizm-okunur.
3. www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/apr/17/erdogan-referendum-victory-end-turkey.

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