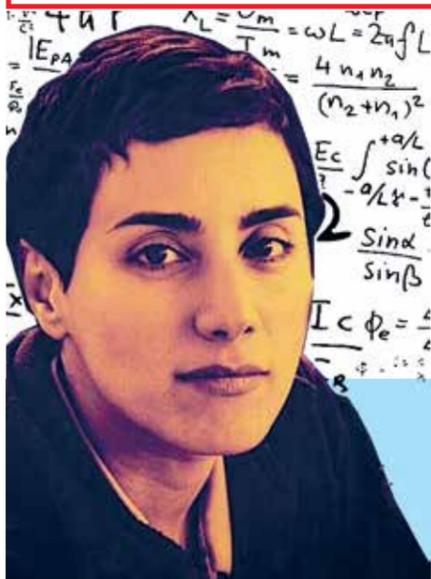


A paper of Marxist polemic and Marxist unity



weekly **worker**



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CRIMINAL LAW & CLASS SOCIETY



Caravaggio, 'The cardsharps', c1595

LETTERS



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

Peak questions

Writing on peak oil (his favourite, not to say, obsessive, subject), Tony Clark worries that Jack Conrad believes that peak oil is “basically a myth” (Letters, July 13). Correct. Comrade Clark further worries that Jack Conrad thinks that “there is no danger of oil production peaking any time soon”. If by that is meant that oil production is about to decline due to meeting insurmountable geological limits - again correct. From this, however, comrade Clark draws the radically false conclusion that Jack Conrad is of the view that “We can therefore continue our love affair with oil into the indefinite future.”

In fact, Jack Conrad issued this urgent warning:

“Primary energy consumption is set to increase and, therefore, anthropogenic CO₂ emissions - the main cause of global warming - are unlikely to be capped ... There is a real danger ... that by 2100 the rise [in temperature] could be ... 4°C - and with that will come severe disruption to agriculture systems and food supplies, mass plant and animal extinctions, substantial and permanent polar ice losses, higher sea levels ... and the distinct possibility of an abrupt shift in the climatic pattern.”

Jack Conrad’s article, ‘Fossil fuel era continues’, concludes with this emphatic declaration: “As I have repeatedly argued, the only hope for humanity lies not in so-called green politics, but fundamentally breaking with the destructive logic of capital and refounding society on the basis of the communist principle of production for use” (July 6).

Comrade Clark goes on to maintain that the problem with Jack Conrad’s thesis is that it only “refers to the peaking of conventional oil production”. Wrong. Jack Conrad dealt with conventional oil, unconventional oil, conventional gas, unconventional gas ... and the whole range of alternative sources of primary energy: eg, wind, solar and nuclear power.

Obviously, comrade Clark believes that *conventional* oil has peaked, or is about to peak. For him this explains the turn to “unconventional oil supplies like oil from tar sands, shale oil, not to mention drilling for oil from deep under the seabed”. He naively asks, “Why turn to these sources if we were not depleting conventional oil?”

Well, as Jack Conrad explained, the “turn” can be explained as part and parcel of the ongoing scientific and technological revolution. Crudely put, under capitalism, what was unprofitable yesterday becomes profitable the day after. Hence, remarkably, despite the recent massive falls in oil prices, the US shale oil industry not only survives, but prospers. The cost of producing a barrel of shale oil has significantly reduced.

Comrade Clark tells us that Jack Conrad “misses” the crucial point that “modern capitalism was made possible by cheap energy”. Well, I do not know what comrade Clark means by “modern capitalism”. But, let us say that “modern capitalism” - ie, what Marxism calls mature capitalism - came into existence with the late 18th and early 19th century industrial revolution and the widespread introduction of factory production, steam power, etc.

Was this epochal shift from the “formal” to the “real” subsumption of the labour process by capital made possible by “cheap energy”? Posing the question in this way (ie, x joules = so many pounds, shillings and pence) does indeed spectacularly miss the crucial point.

We also have to ask our own question: what is “cheap energy”? In and of itself it is just an empty abstraction. No, what decides things, in this context, is what

is profitable for capital. Eg, when it became profitable to dig deep-mined coal, deep-mined coal was dug. And, as the coal industry advanced, so did the necessary pumping, tunnelling and transport technologies.

But for the *widespread* introduction of factories, steam power, etc to happen, the social conditions had first to be in place. Free workers - free, that is, from the means of production - had to be available *as a general condition*. Without labour-power itself becoming a commodity that is readily available on the market, capitalism would never have been able to take off, become self-sustaining and triumph as the dominant mode of production.

Comrade Clark considers it axiomatic that capitalism “cannot exist on the basis of rising energy costs”. Why? Energy costs might well rise. So might the price of cotton, iron ... and labour-power. That said, with improved labour productivity, with technological innovations and with competition between capitalist and capitalist and between worker and worker, we should expect production costs to fall over time. Be that as it may, in the final analysis, what decides the matter is profit and self-expansion: ie, capital accumulation.

If capital cannot expect, *as a norm*, to realise surplus value, through selling commodities *at a profit*, money will remain as money. It will, therefore, cease being capital. Note, the sole *source* of surplus value is the exploitation of labour-power.

Comrade Clark seems to imagine that feudalism came to an end *in England* because of the depletion of woodlands and therefore a consequent rise in prices. The rapid growth of shipping and the systematic enclosure of land in the 16th and 17th centuries did serve to deplete England’s once extensive woodlands. But this was the consequence of the rise of mercantile and agricultural capitalism, not the cause of feudalism’s decline.

Feudalism is an exploitative social relationship fundamentally based on coercion. Serfs, the vassals, were obliged to supply goods and labour services to the fief-holding nobility (including the church bureaucracy). A form of exploitation which fell into decay, pivotally, during the 14th century. Not because of lack of firewood though. Feudalism reached its limits both in terms of available land and in terms of population numbers. Add to that a sustained period of hugely costly wars, the associated drive to increase the exploitation of peasants and the outbreak of a whole series of social revolts, then, yes, there was an absolute decline in agricultural productivity.

However, an industrial revolution also occurred during the late Middle Ages. While some enterprises were undoubtedly feudalistic in nature, an increasing portion were run along unmistakably capitalist lines. In terms of prime energy, there was wood, of course, but characteristically it was wind and water power which constituted the prime movers: eg, with iron smelting, tanning and milling.

Comrade Clark claims that coal “unleashed the real power of the industrial revolution, which was being held back from lack of energy”. True - well, at least in part. However, it should be stressed that the industrial use of coal dates back to classical antiquity. Eg, the Romans mined outcropping coal for iron smelting and burning lime. The real point, though, is that it was capitalism that led to deep-mined coal, not that deep-mined coal led to capitalism. Certainly coal and capitalism are not synonymous. An elementary error.

Comrade Clark says: “Marxism teaches that the development of the productive forces led to the decline of feudalism, but in fact it was the opposite: the decline of the productive forces started the whole process.” Did

Marx deny the crisis of feudalism in the 14th century? Hardly. Indeed in the *Grundrisse* he writes of the “decline and fall of the feudal system”, crucially with the emergence of a relatively free peasantry, as providing the vital precondition for the subsequent growth of capitalism (K Marx *Grundrisse* Harmondsworth 1973, p510). In places as diverse as northern Germany, northern Italy, the low countries, but above all in England, the general wealth available *to the ruling classes* therefore increased by leaps and bounds. Cities grew, trade grew, agricultural productivity grew, industrial production grew.

Fixated as he is on prime energy sources, comrade Clark says feudalism could not survive “rising energy costs, nor should we expect capitalism to do so. Cheap energy - first coal and then oil - gave birth to capitalism.” He then rhetorically asks: “Is anyone seriously suggesting that capitalism will survive rising energy costs indefinitely?”

We shall leave aside the eccentric idea of the decline and fall of feudalism *in England* being due, not to the combination of socio-economic limits and peasant class struggles, but the rising price of firewood. As explained many times before, capitalism was not born through “cheap energy - first coal and then oil”. Capitalism can be traced back to ancient times, and it then developed within the belly of feudalism.

What about expensive oil killing off late capitalism? Well, imagine, for the sake of the argument, that because of peak *conventional* oil - not because of stock market speculation, not because of international conflicts, not because of rentier state cartels - that the current price of oil tripled overnight, and returned to something like the \$138 a barrel it reached back in 2008 (we must also, once again, for the sake of the argument, have to disappear tar sands oil, shale oil, natural gases, solar power, nuclear power, etc, from the equation). Even if the price of oil were to reach \$200 a barrel, why on earth would this bring capital accumulation to a halt? Why would this stop capital extracting surplus value from workers? Any such proposition is clearly an absurdity.

Comrade Clark condescendingly tells us that “19th century economics, including Marxism, ignored the primary role of energy in society. Energy was treated as just another commodity, while money made the world go around. This found its classic expression in Marx’s M-C-M’ formula.”

And yet Jack Conrad quoted that *very* 19th century economist, William Stanley Jevons, and his *Coal question* (1865). Using the same Malthusian method as comrade Clark, Jevons predicted the end of Britain’s imperial hegemony. Why? Because coal production was bound to peak and then rapidly decline. Suffice to say, Britain’s imperial hegemony ended ... but not because of the depletion of coal deposits.

What of Marxism? It was not Karl Marx who treated energy - and other natural resources, for that matter - “as just another commodity”. Nor did he consider that it is “money that makes the world go round”. No, it was, and is, capital - ie, its personifications - who think that way. Profit is their overriding aim and money their measure of worth. For Marx, on the contrary, there was an elemental two-fold source of wealth. Human labour ... and nature.

Those who serve capital are more than prone to treat nature as a ‘free gift’ (apart from the labour-power necessary to exploit it). But Marx was of the view that human society should guard, cherish and where possible ensure the regeneration of nature: that would include, of course, native animal and plant species, the seas, rivers, lakes, forests, the soil, the air we breathe, etc. Marx was insistent that we should seek to heal the metabolic rift that had opened up between society and nature

(we humans are, of course, not only reliant on nature: we are part of nature).

Nor did Marx adhere to the view that money, and money-making, “makes the world go round”. To make such a statement is just to display one’s profound ignorance. After all, Marx famously proclaimed: “The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles” (the opening statement of chapter one in the *Communist manifesto*). Above all though, Marx based his world-historic outlook on human nature, our “species being” and the human striving for freedom and full personal and collective development (inextricably linked with valuing nature).

Jack Conrad
London

Robot wars

The unintended and indeed ironic consequence of capitalist competition is that, whilst it gives the individual capitalist a temporary competitive advantage and profit boost, thanks to automation ultimately it results in an ever-declining general rate of profit, as the new production techniques become widespread.

The use value of a commodity is largely obvious, but the exchange value is a more abstract thing. It is based on the amount of socially necessary labour time invested in each individual commodity’s production. With no labour-power expended in the production of a commodity, then it has no exchange and therefore monetary value and so cannot realise a profit.

The owners of the robots, if they were to remain a privileged elite, would have nobody to buy their commodities and would therefore have a massive surplus population that they would need to dispose of via a series of massive genocides. It could give the masses a small universal basic income that it could spend on necessities like food, but what would be the point of that? Surely the recipients of this UBI would soon wonder why it was that any particular person should be an elite owner of robots, whilst the rest of us languish on some UBI, doing nothing - after all the pretence of meritocracy and social mobility would be long gone. There would be no obvious reason why one person should be an owner and another not. The robot owners would choose the kill option for the billions of non-robot owners, leaving only robot owners - which would be a *de facto* form of communism. And then one asks, what on earth was the point of killing all those billions of people? They might as well have just initiated communism for all.

So, if you don’t want to die, not at the hands of the robots, but the robot owners, even though it would be the robots doing the actual killing, then it’s time to rise up against a dead and decaying capitalist system and socialise the means of production.

David Ellis
Leeds

Falsification

Once again, we are faced with another falsification by Lars T Lih (*Weekly Worker* supplement, June 29).

Here we learn that “The Petrograd Bolsheviks nudged Lenin’s letter [from afar - GD] in the direction of the *April theses*”. To summarise the Lars T theses here, Lenin was utterly clueless on the real situation on the ground in Russia, and Kamenev and Stalin had to edit his first *Letter from afar* so as not to make him look a complete idiot.

Lars gives us a list of who was on the editorial board, with the ousted Shliapnikov and Molotov first and third, and the editor-in-chief, Kamenev, and his close allies, Stalin and Muranov, fourth, fifth and sixth, as if the turnabout had not happened. And that board contained Lenin’s sister and Aleksandra Kollontai,

who were so supportive of Lenin that they would surely never betray him. And he might have added Lenin’s own wife, Krupskaya, did not support him on this in the beginning:

“No prominent Bolshevik leader supported his call to revolution, and the editorial board of *Pravda* took the extraordinary step of dissociating themselves and the party from Lenin’s proposals. Bogdanov characterised the April theses as ‘the delirium of a madman’; Nadezhda Krupskaya concluded: ‘I am afraid it looks as if Lenin has gone crazy’” (Slavoj Žižek, quoting Hélène Carrère d’Encausse’s *Lenin*, in the *London Review of Books*).

Pravda under Shliapnikov and Molotov was absolutely anti-war, but the line immediately changed in mid-March to support for the war and the Provisional Government: “Under Kamenev’s and Stalin’s influence, *Pravda* took a conciliatory tone towards the provisional government - ‘insofar as it struggles against reaction or counterrevolution’ (Stalin) - and called for a unification conference with the internationalist wing of the Mensheviks. On March 14, Kamenev wrote in his first editorial: ‘What purpose would it serve to speed things up, when things were already taking place at such a rapid pace?’” (Marcel Liebman *Leninism under Lenin*).

According to EH Carr (*The Bolshevik revolution*, Vol 1, p75), on March 15 he (Kamenev) supported the war effort: “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.” On March 16 Stalin wrote: “The slogan, ‘Down with the war,’ is useless”.

We must suppose Lars T chooses to ignore this evidence - or else perhaps he wishes to deny their authenticity because I have not checked the original Russian, as he has done?

“Kamenev led the opposition to Lenin’s call for the overthrow of the government. In *Pravda* he disputed Lenin’s assumption that ‘the bourgeois democratic revolution has ended’, and warned against utopianism that would transform the ‘party of the revolutionary masses of the proletariat’ into ‘a group of communist propagandists’. A meeting of the Petrograd Bolshevik Committee the day after the April theses appeared voted 13 to 2 to reject Lenin’s position” (<http://spartacus-educational.com/RUSApril.htm>).

Trotsky reminded us that *Permanent revolution* and the April theses were viewed as absolutely complementary while Lenin lived:

“My books, *The year 1905* (with the criminal foreword [Radek had found great errors in the foreword in his desperate attempts to appease Stalin in 1927 - GD]) and *The October revolution*, played the role, while Lenin was alive, of fundamental historical text-books on both revolutions. At that time, they went through innumerable editions in Russian as well as in foreign languages. Never did anybody tell me that my books contained a counterposing of two lines, because at that time, before the revisionist volte-face by the epigones, no sound-thinking party member subordinated the October experience to old quotations, but instead viewed old quotations in the light of the October revolution.”

Lenin himself accused Kamenev and Zinoviev of treason four days after the successful revolution on October 25: “And now, at such a moment, when we are in power, we are faced with a split. Zinoviev and Kamenev say that we will not seize power [in the entire country]. I am in no mood to listen to this calmly. I view this as treason. What do they want? Do they want to plunge us into [spontaneous] knife-play? Only the proletariat is able to lead the country.”

Five times mention of Kerensky is

ACTION

cut from Lenin's original, so determined were the rightwingers to defend their relationship with him. As proof, Lars T tells us Stalin was proud of the role he played because he allowed the authentic *Letter from afar* to appear in Lenin's *Collected works* in 1949: "If the usual story of Stalin and Kamenev's censorship of Lenin is true, Stalin's publication of Lenin's draft would be equivalent to a guilty man returning to the scene of the crime and planting new evidence of his own guilt. How plausible is this account of Stalin's motives? Shouldn't we assume that, surprising as it may seem, Stalin was proud of the job he and others did in preparing Lenin's article for publication?"

Do we really have to point out that in 1949 no-one dared to criticise Stalin about anything and he was quite free to say black was white and everyone immediately agreed with him, or else execution or exile to the gulag quickly followed? And are there some examples of the earlier editions of Lenin's *CW* being falsified? The 1949 volume 31 did not have its English translation until 1965, for some strange reason. Stalin was really proud of having executed every critic or potential critic by then.

Having cut out all mention of "the Potresovs, Gvozdevs, Chkhenkelis, 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", there can be no doubt but that the motivation was not to upset the Provisional Government, whom *Pravda* was now supporting in the war, against Lenin's furious opposition. And not to make the obvious comparison with the almost identical political position of the *Pravda* EB.

And if that is not historical falsification, I don't know what is.

Gerry Downing
Socialist Fight

Not so quaint

John Masters (Letters, July 13) professes to be amused by the fact that, "after all these years of plugging away at their quaint little version of socialism", the Socialist Party of Great Britain has never registered as an organisation of any influence.

I don't know how familiar he is with the SPGB or, indeed, with Marxist thinking on the subject, but there is one fact that even its most hostile critics would have to acknowledge - that this "quaint little version" of socialism that the SPGB has been plugging away at is none other than the classical version of socialism propounded by people like Marx, Engels, Morris, Kropotkin, Bebel, Kaatsky and numerous others in the late 19th and early 20th century. Namely, a non-market, stateless and classless commonwealth. In other words, a society in which voluntary labour has replaced wage labour and free goods and services have replaced commodified exchange.

Even the Russian Social Democrats in the late 19th century cleaved to this particular version of socialism and Stalin himself in his 1906 work, *Anarchism or socialism*, described socialism exactly as the SPGB do today - as a society without buying and selling, without classes and without a state. It was this same Stalin who, in the 1930s, asserted that the Soviet Union was now a fully-fledged "socialist state" controlled by the working class when he had previously excluded both the state and classes from his earlier conception of socialism. The point being that it was largely (though not entirely) due to the influence of Lenin and the Bolsheviks that the very definition of socialism itself underwent a fundamental transformation, effectively derailing, and setting back by decades, the struggle to achieve socialism in the original Marxian sense.

The SPGB represents one of the very few revolutionary survivors of the pre-Leninist era and its voice, though it might appear faint amongst the din and clamour of reformist demands, is not to be scoffed at or lightly dismissed.

The comprehensive collapse of the state-capitalist bloc that had so brazenly usurped the mantle of socialism, and to which the SPGB had been implacably opposed from the outset, gives those critics of the SPGB reason enough to at least reconsider their criticisms. On so many matters the SPGB has proved to be uncannily correct in its analysis.

John Masters is, of course, entirely at liberty to reject the full-blooded, classical vision of socialism tirelessly promoted by the SPGB as "quaint" and in so doing place himself outside of, and opposed to, the whole Marxist tradition. That's his prerogative. However, he might have come across as slightly less unconvincing had he bothered to give some substance to his rhetoric and to back up his barbed comments with something recognisably approaching an argument. For example, by "quaint" he presumably means that Marxian socialism, though a "nice idea", is essentially unattainable - a utopian dream. So here was his opportunity to present some grounds for coming to this conclusion. But, alas, he turned this down, preferring to indulge himself in the less challenging task of issuing lazy insults.

And finally - let us not play the numbers game. No-one on what is called the 'far left' comes out of this looking good. Agreed, the SPGB - although arguably it punches well above its weight - has achieved very little. The obstacles to its growth have been formidable, not the least of which is the fact that it has faced an uphill struggle in having to explain more often than not what socialism is *not*, rather than what it is, in the face of mainstream media misrepresentation, and to disassociate itself from those regimes that have cloaked themselves in the rhetoric of socialist emancipation.

But, in the end, what vindicates a particular political position is not the number of adherents it attracts, but the soundness of the arguments it presents. If John Masters thinks otherwise, then I suggest he reflects on the fact that more workers voted for Mrs May's Conservative Party than Mr Corbyn's Labour Party and then draws his own conclusions.

Robin Cox
SPGB

Same template

Following on from your report last week of the Socialist Workers Party's Marxism event ('Stumbling over Labour', July 13), I went to a session on Sunday morning of the Marxism event, 'Is human nature a barrier to socialism?' with Jenny Sutton.

The session was well attended and the speaker pointed out that there were numerous examples in everyday life that showed human nature was cooperative - not just present-day examples, but going back to our human origins and the beginnings of egalitarianism. However, this is as far as it went in terms of theory or providing a deep understanding about human nature.

As for the discussion, there were well intentioned contributions from the floor about the cooperativeness of rent strikes, including from one comrade who told us that all we need in the world was more love and empathy. Given that speakers were limited to three minutes, my contribution questioned why we were cooperative, and what it is about language that makes us trust each other. In the end, the session was unsatisfactory and did not live up to the potential of the title.

However, the title of this talk was not some randomly chosen topic - it has featured a few times in the past couple of years and a Google search brings up a pamphlet of the same name by SWP comrade John Molyneux, published by Bookmarks in 1993. The date of the pamphlet is no coincidence either for historians of the SWP. It was in 1991 that Chris Knight of the Radical Anthropology Group had published his book *Blood relations: menstruation and the origins of culture*.

At the time, there were several close

comrades of Knight's who were in the SWP and were taken with his thesis of a human revolution. What followed at the subsequent 1991 SWP Marxism was a fierce polemical battle way ahead of the debate I attended on Sunday. Knight's book had been warmly received at SWP branch level, as it vindicated the followers of the journal *Women's Voice*, which had been closed down a decade earlier. The SWP hierarchy did not want to encourage the idea that a human revolution, led by a coalition of women - 'feminists', so to speak - could give rise to what it means to be human, and that a class struggle is replaced by a male-female conflict to understand human origins. To quote from a RAG pamphlet aimed at those attending the 1991 conference, "Some comrades might find the idea of comparing gender struggles with the class struggle difficult - perhaps because it seems dangerously reminiscent of feminism."

It was so difficult that leading theoreticians and scientists, SWP members and comrades of Chris Knight were summoned to a star chamber and told to give up Knight or give up the SWP. The counteroffensive started shortly after. Chris Harman, in his review of *Blood relations*, called it "menstrual moonshine".

And this takes us back to John Molyneux's 1993 pamphlet. It provides the template that the SWP have been using for the past couple of years for their talk at Marxism, 'Is human nature a barrier to socialism?' And not just at Marxism, but up and down the country, Molyneux's template is the standard reference for SWP talks. For the SWP nothing has moved in their understanding of human origins and they would have nothing to say to a recent paper in *Current Anthropology* by Knight and fellow comrade Jerome Lewis, 'Wild voices: mimicry, reversal, metaphor and the emergence of language', which a leading Oxford academic has said was especially welcome for our understanding of human sociality and the emergence of language.

No doubt the SWP will continue to use the Molyneux text - until there is a women's revolution within the organisation, when gender conflict is properly addressed and there is a grown-up discussion about sex.

Simon Wells
East London

Leap frog

Even though seemingly revealing inconsistent, bordering upon highly dubious, thinking on my part, I have now changed my mind from my earlier position. I now believe all communists should proactively support the UK remaining in a capitalist European Union, insofar as it will allow a continued, 'quasi-communistic' free movement of working citizenry of whatever skills level or educational status.

OK, it's not a perfect scheme providing finite advantages by any stretch of the imagination; but it is at least a small step along the way to the fully unrestricted system that will be available under socialism. In any event, whichever way the cake is cut, the EU will thereby continue to be providing all communists with what I'd describe as the immediately useful 'stepping stone' of their semi-progressive egalitarianism; something which can be utilised as an equivalently helpful 'leap frog' quasi-democracy.

Bruno Kretzschmar
email

Pleading

Every week your letters page is clogged up with tedious, long-winded guff by Steve Freeman and Gerry Downing.

Can we please have a moratorium on this until I'm dead. My son will contact you when the inevitable happens. If I have to read any more of their crap, that day will be a lot sooner. Please!

Doug Lowe
email

London Communist Forum

Sunday July 23, 5pm: Weekly political report from CPGB Provisional Central Committee, Calthorpe Arms, 252 Grays Inn Road, London WC1. Followed by open discussion and reading group: study of August Nimitz's *Lenin's electoral strategy from Marx and Engels through the revolution of 1905*. This meeting: chapter 1, 'What Marx and Engels bequeathed' (continued).

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

Stop the arms trade

Saturday July 22, 2pm: Protest against arms fair, Conference centre, Carrs Lane, Birmingham B4.

Organised by Stop the Arms Fair: www.stopthearmsfair.org.uk.

It starts here!

Saturday July 22 to Sunday July 23, 10am to 5.30pm: Weekend-long human rights/anti-arms event, Amnesty International Human Rights Action Centre, 17-25 New Inn Yard, London EC2.

Organised by Campaign Against Arms Trade: www.facebook.com/campaignagainstarmstrade.

Democracy unchained

Saturday July 22, 1pm: Public meeting and discussion, Red Shed, Vicarage Street, Wakefield WF1. Speakers include Corinna Lotz, Paul Feldman and Steve Freeman. Admission free.

Organised by Wakefield Socialist History Group: www.theredshed.org.uk/SocialHist.html.

Profits of destruction

Saturday July 29, 2pm: Protest against arms fair, Quaker Meeting House, 74 Mutley Plain, Plymouth PL4.

Organised by Stop The Arms Fair: www.stopthearmsfair.org.uk/events/stop-the-arms-fair-comes-to-plymouth.

Remembering Hiroshima

Sunday August 6, 4pm: Peace picnic, East Greenwich Pleasance, Chevening Road, London SE10.

Organised by Lewisham and Greenwich CND: www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=128147993881224.

No to the arms fair

Saturday August 12, 10am to 4pm: Workshop, Friends Meeting House, 188 Woodhouse Lane, Carlton Hill, Leeds LS2.

Organised by Stop the Arms Fair: www.stopthearmsfair.org.uk/events/leeds-stop-arms-fair-workshop.

Das Kapital and Marx's economics

Thursday August 31, 7pm: Educational, Marx Memorial Library, 37A Clerkenwell Green, London EC1. With professor Ben Fine.

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

Stop arming Israel

Monday September 4, 9am till late: Protest, Western Terrace, Excel Centre, Royal Victoria Dock, 1 Western Gateway, London E16.

Organised by Palestine Solidarity Campaign: www.palestinecampaign.org/events/stop-arming-israel-arms-fair-protest.

Radical bargains

Saturday September 9, 11am to 3pm: Book sale of radical left and Marxist literature, Marx Memorial Library, 37A Clerkenwell Green, London EC1.

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

No to the arms trade

Saturday September 9, 10am: Art exhibition, ExCeL Exhibition Centre, London Docklands, Royal Victoria Dock, 1 Western Gateway, London E16.

Organised by Art The Arms Fair: <https://artthearmsfair.org>.

Scrap the pay cap

Sunday September 10, 1pm: Rally at TUC Congress, Arundel Suite, Holiday Inn, 137 King's Road, Brighton BN1. Confirmed speakers: Mark Serwotka (PCS), Steve Gillan (POA), Ronnie Draper (BFAWU), Sean Hoyle (RMT), Amy Murphy (Usdaw).

Organised by National Shop Stewards Network: <http://shopstewards.net>.

No to war

Wednesday September 20, 6.30pm to 8.30pm: Rally, Marx Memorial Library, 37A Clerkenwell Green, London EC1.

Organised by North London Stop the War: www.facebook.com/nlondon.stwc.7.

Social histories of the Russian Revolution

Thursday September 28, 6.30pm: Discussion meeting, Birkbeck, University of London, 26 Russell Square, London WC1. 'Taking power: remaking the family, levelling wages, planning the economy'. Speaker: Wendy Goldman.

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

Make it right for Palestine

Saturday November 4, 12 noon to 4pm: National march and rally, central London - details to be confirmed. Demanding justice and equal rights for Palestinians.

Organised by Palestine Solidarity Campaign: www.palestinecampaign.org/events/national-rally-central-london.

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.

TORIES

Brexit reality wall

Eddie Ford does not find it impossible to imagine a national government emerging from an EU-induced crisis

Her authority shot to bits, Theresa May is obviously living on borrowed time - dependent on the extremely unreliable Democratic Unionist Party and the continued sufferance of her traumatised party. There are swirling rumours of an autumn coup, the weekend seeing a frenzy of anonymous briefings and counter-briefings by various allies of cabinet ministers. All squaring up for a bloody leadership contest.

Hence the claim from one source that at a recent cabinet meeting the chancellor, Philip Hammond, said public-sector workers were "overpaid" and, oddly, that driving modern trains was so easy that "even a woman can do it" - with a later report in *The Daily Telegraph* quoting an anonymous minister who complained that Hammond was trying to "fuck up" Brexit and viewed 'leave'-supporting colleagues as "pirates who have taken him prisoner".¹

Unnamed supporters of Hammond immediately hit back, saying in *The Sun* that Michael Gove was behind the leaks - which sounds eminently plausible, as he is a notorious serial leaker. Remember the "queen backs Brexit" front-page headline last year in the same newspaper, which quoted a "senior source" as saying that people who heard their conversation "were left in no doubt at all about the queen's views on European integration".² Another source from within the Tory Party has pointed the finger of blame squarely at Gove, together with foreign secretary Boris Johnson, as the two men are "so obsessed with a hard Brexit that they're prepared to run the economy off a cliff". Hammond himself has openly said that some of his colleagues are out to get him, because they are "not happy with the agenda that I have" on Brexit, which essentially is to strike a lengthy 'transitional' or 'interim' exit deal - that could turn out to be permanent.

Getting desperate, the prime minister 'ordered' her ministers to stop leaking details of their infighting over Brexit. It is widely reported that at a drinks reception she pleaded with MPs to "have a proper break and come back ready for serious business: no backbiting, no carping". Sounding particularly cross, home secretary Amber Rudd told her colleagues to "get on with the job in hand" - the problem being that many of them think the "job in hand" is finding a way to ditch May as soon as possible without triggering a general election that could lead to the election of a Corbyn government: the nightmare scenario.

But the plotting continues. By all accounts there is a letter of no confidence circulating amongst the parliamentary party, though so far few have signed it. According to the rule book, it requires 48 Conservative MPs (15%) to trigger a vote of no confidence in her leadership. Perhaps also telling you something, a poll conducted by the influential ConservativeHome website found that 65% thought the prime minister should go.³

One senior Tory MP has told press contacts that his colleagues divide into three main categories regarding May: "she made her bed and should lie in it"; "she is our prisoner and is serving at the leisure of the party"; and she must be "gone by Christmas". Of course, MPs now have to be convinced that there is a better candidate available - none of the current contenders are especially appetising, it has to be said. Summing up the dilemma, one pro-Brexit MP has refused to sign the letter of no confidence because of extreme doubts



Banksy mural in Dover: timely

about who would actually take over - the party could end up with an anti-Brexit leader almost by accident (another nightmare scenario). "If there was someone credible to take over I'd probably back them," he remarked, "but I'm not convinced that where we are now is tenable" - frankly, "there is not a winning situation at the moment".

Interestingly, this very same MP said that at the moment his preferred choice was the Brexit minister, David Davis. But the latter is less than popular with some, including Dominic Cummings, former head of the Vote Leave campaign and responsible for the brilliant PR masterstroke of claiming that Brexit could fund the NHS to the tune of £350 million a week. Less than flatteringly, Cummings said that the Brexit secretary - who was part of the rival Grassroots Out organisation - was "thick as mince, lazy as a toad and vain as Narcissus".⁴

True, Davis has acknowledged that Brexit makes "the Nasa moon shot look quite simple".⁵ In which case, Rafael Behr responded cruelly in *The Guardian*, Britain has put a "schoolboy in charge of the moon landings" - maybe "not all the early signs point to the Brexit secretary being a reckless bluffer who is wildly out of his depth, but most of them do".⁶ In reality, Behr writes, Davis is "an amateur trying his (and his country's) luck against professionals", and is now on a "collision course with a wall of reality in Brussels".

Rough ride

Fantasy politics about having your cake and eating it now over, the British government and its negotiators are up against this stubborn "wall of reality". In a statement to parliament on July 13, the British government finally admitted that the UK has financial "obligations" towards the European Union - Brussels will not have to "go whistle" for the money, as stupidly suggested by Boris Johnson, another arch-bluffer.

Michel Barnier, the EU's smooth chief negotiator, has diplomatically declined to put a number on the UK's 'divorce bill', but estimates have ranged from €20 billion to €100 billion gross - a "Brussels paper" speculating that the sum will be €70 billion. However, the final Brexit bill is unlikely to emerge until the last hours of negotiations, with

veteran Brussels watchers thinking a deal is most likely to emerge at a late-night summit of EU leaders in the autumn of 2018.

Needless to say, whatever the eventual figure, it will be far too much for many on the Tory back benches - plus quite a few in the cabinet. That could bring down the May government, let alone a vote on this or that clause of the so-called Great Reform Bill - which in the feverish context of contemporary Brexit politics would effectively be a vote of confidence. Or maybe the DUP will have enough of internal Tory squabbling and start a campaign against post-Brexit custom posts in Ireland.

Gus O'Donnell, who served as cabinet secretary under three prime ministers of different political colours, has warned that the UK faces a "rough ride" unless ministers unite and back a long transition deal to soften the impact of Brexit - "there is no chance all the details will be hammered out in 20 months". Similarly, Sir Nigel Sheinwald, former ambassador to the EU, told *The Observer* that there was now a "one in three" chance of Brexit talks collapsing unless the UK drastically "reset" its plans - though this writer would put the odds a lot higher. Like O'Donnell, Sheinwald thinks there needs to be a "very substantial transition period".

Now, Theresa May's recent invitation to the Labour Party "to come forward with your own views" and help create or share policy ideas for the UK's post-Brexit future may have been near universally derided - with Jeremy Corbyn offering to send her a copy of Labour's election manifesto. But with a Brexit crisis about to hit the country sooner rather than later - that could be more of a rough crash than a rough ride - communists should try to locate something else behind it, not just engage in Pavlovian mockery. That does not necessarily mean that there was a cunning plan hatching in May's mind when she made the call - far from it, but it is certainly worth noting that in ruling class circles the idea of a national government (or something along those lines) is a *serious* one; not just something dreamt up on the spot by a floundering prime minister running

out of options.

For instance, Justin Welby, the archbishop of Canterbury, has vigorously backed a *cross-party* Brexit commission, which "could draw much of the poison from the debate". The future of this country, implored Welby, should not be a "zero-sum, winner-takes-all calculation", but instead "must rest on the reconciled common good, arrived at through good debate and disagreement".⁷ You can hear very similar noises from the likes of Lord Peter Mandelson.

Now Tony Blair has intervened in British politics again, in his own way and for his own reasons, making the point that the rules of the game have been overturned - he now accepts that Jeremy Corbyn "could become prime minister" on an "unreconstructed far-left programme": something that only a year ago he thought was "impossible" (though in his opinion Brexit followed by a Corbyn government would leave Britain "flat on our back" and "out for a long count").⁸ Brexit has changed everything, generating sharp contradictions and paradoxes. From Blair's point of view, traditionally, it was always about producing a 'moderate' manifesto and then single-mindedly targeting Mondeo Man⁹ or Worcester Woman¹⁰ or whatever infernal focus group-construction it was at the time: ie, you triangulate into the centre and basically separate yourselves from the Tories by the proverbial thickness of a cigarette paper. Therefore you had to present or disguise your programme as rightwing, meaning that you did not highlight or boast about how actually the Blair and Brown governments spent large amounts of money on the NHS and education, as that would not be politically expedient: distinctly off-message. A logical correlation of this approach was that you *had* to be in power, not opposition - also a tenet of common sense on the Labour left, of course.

Obviously, we do not think for a minute that Labour's *For the many, not the few* manifesto was an "unreconstructed far-left programme" - the idea is a joke. If only. Then again, it is certainly not Blairite - just ask the man himself. It represents a Keynesian wish-list that was nevertheless previously deemed electoral suicide by the Blairite right and other concerned members of the establishment - but who now recognise aghast that it is conceivable that Corbyn could soon be leading some sort of government.

The latest opinion polls have Labour consistently ahead of the Tories. On July 18 Survation had Labour on 45%, six points ahead of the Tories and a swing of eight points since the general election. YouGov on July 17 put Labour on 45% and the Conservatives 40%, whilst a survey it conducted a few weeks earlier had 35% saying they would prefer to have Corbyn in Number 10, as against May's 34%. This shows a humiliating fall from grace for the Tory leader, who up until the last week of the general election campaign enjoyed a massive personal ratings lead over the Labour leader.

More modestly, an ICM poll taken on July 18 has Labour only one point ahead on 43% to 42%. Yet the overall trend is clear: we had a Corbyn surge during the election and then a Corbyn bounce after the election - the 'Oh Jeremy Corbyn' chant could be heard everywhere from Glastonbury to the Durham Miners' Gala. On the other hand, whatever Theresa May does is wrong - and gets more wrong by the day. She is a zombie

prime minister.

Emergency

OK, imagine this scenario - another general election is called and Labour ends up with the most seats, but fails to win a majority. By convention, *not law*, the queen is meant to call the leader of the largest party in the House of Commons, and ask them if they can form a government. But, under conditions of an EU crisis, talks collapsing into the dust, it should not be taken as automatic that the queen would summon Jeremy Corbyn to Buckingham Palace. Rather, she might take advice from the privy council or other establishment bodies and - given the emergency situation - call upon the far more respectable Sir Kier Starmer or Tom Watson instead to form a *national government* with the Tories and any other party prepared to play ball. Needless to say, opinion polls always show that national governments - or at least the idea of one - are highly appealing: they mean everyone pulling together, community spirit, stop the squabbling, etc.

We raise this possibility not only in the context of May's offer of cross-party discussions on a post-Brexit Britain, but also to underline the point that - while we utterly reject the patriotic platitudes about Dunkirk, the Blitz, Battle of Britain, etc - it is nevertheless true that in terms of *peacetime* politics a Brexit-induced crisis would be of the same sort of epochal importance. Thus we really should not be too surprised if the ruling class, under these highly abnormal circumstances, would actually think it advisable to go for a government of national unity and pull the strings to make it happen. Labour might win the general election and Corbyn could still be leader of Labour Party, but not necessarily the leader of the government. Stranger things have happened.

Having said that, it is also quite possible that Jeremy Corbyn will end up forming a government of some description. The most likely outcome then would not be a Chile-style coup, but when he tries to implement *For the many* he will be forced by the very nature of the international capitalist system - like Syriza in Greece - to attack the working class despite himself. Imagine the 'iron chancellor' of the day saying that Britain cannot afford a pay rise due to the worsening situation and that people going on strike are being irresponsible, playing straight into the hands of the Tories. For the British left to constitute itself as a Corbyn fan club - exactly how Jon Lansman sees Momentum - would be to betray the working class. We need to be on our guard against that possibility ●

eddie.ford@weeklyworker.co.uk

Notes

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SAFE SPACES



Get used to it

Attempts to insulate MPs from insults are laughable and doomed to failure, argues Paul Demarty

We observe with increasing frustration the latest moral panic concerning the torrent of so-called 'abuse' directed at members of parliament.

Theresa May, no doubt feeling the heat out on the dark side of the internet just at the moment, with her cabinet barely restraining itself from open mutiny and the European Union piling on the punishment, has appointed the Committee on Standards in Public Life, led by a certain Lord Paul Bew, to investigate the vitriol faced by our good representatives in today's hostile climate. We await his findings with very little interest, mainly because he has taken every opportunity to exploit the publicity that has momentarily attached itself to his role by prejudicing his own inquiry - asserting that as a result of 'abusive' language democracy is in danger and other such nonsense. Various parliamentarians have made themselves available to grumble about how awful it all is.

His brief in this regard includes making recommendations on whether the law needs to be tightened up - last we checked, threatening people with physical violence was already illegal, but as usual the point of the exercise seems to be to kick British society down the slippery slope. The name of St Jo of Cox is mentioned often, despite the fact that she was murdered by a man who had not only apparently never engaged in online abuse, but had been an admirer of violent neo-fascism longer than the worldwide web has existed. As usual, dead innocents are made the tool of unscrupulous demagogues, regardless of anything so vulgar as

the facts.

Committee men

Such initiatives always founder upon the inconvenient truth that MPs are not very much the flock of blameless lambs they pretend so very hard to be among these periodic fits of crocodile tears. Indeed, no better illustration of all this is available than the history of Paul Bew's committee itself.

The CSPL was founded by John Major in October 1994, which keen minds will recall as the most acute period of the 'cash for questions' scandal, when *The Sunday Times* and especially *The Guardian* discovered that numerous Tory MPs were happy to take bribes in return for asking particular questions in parliament - most notoriously from Mohamed al-Fayed, the eccentric owner of Harrods, who dropped most of them in it. When a prime minister is in trouble, and something needs to be done, that something is often the very public setting up of a committee. Thus the CPSL, a quango born to advise the government of the day how to keep public servants - in parliament and in Whitehall and, more recently, even in 'third sector' organisations dependent on taxpayers' money - in good order.

And that's about it. The exact terms of reference are tweaked every now and again. Since then, we have had the Hinduja's and their passports, Tony Blair's cosiness with Lakshmi Mittal, the MPs' expenses affair, the phone-hacking business, and lobbying scandals at a rate similar to football World Cups. No amount of 'advice' seems enough to defend decency in public life. No amount of committees, either - since CSPL was founded, the advisory committee on

business appointments (Acoba) has had its remit extended to cover the jobs taken by ministers after they leave office, ostensibly to seal up the most usual means of post-hoc bribery; and the parliamentary standards and privileges committee, after the disaster of MPs' expenses, was split into two. Some good it does, as can be seen from the lucrative post-treasury career of George Osborne and the utterly toothless behaviour of the Parliamentary Standards Committee (nicknamed the 'double standards committee' by the cruel minded).

Why on earth should the 'little people' of the internet find fault with such selfless public servants? We cannot imagine.

Decorum

Bew, an ex-member of the pro-imperialist Maoist group, the British and Irish Communist Organisation, got his ermine for helping to rig up the dysfunctional Good Friday regime in Northern Ireland, and no doubt feels most at home in a political regime defined likewise by stitch-ups, graft and clientelism. It is no surprise to find him brazenly traducing the purported mission of his quango, which consists among other things in promoting accountability in public offices, by making them even less responsible to their electorate than they currently are.

In the end, we home in on a very telling comment from Bew. "We are in a bad moment and we have to respond to it," he told Radio 4. "We cannot afford to lose people of quality in our public life and we may be approaching a tipping point." The assumptions necessary to utter such a banality are exactly the root of the matter, and upon examination are profoundly

anti-democratic.

Bew wants to make sure parliament is a 'safe space' for "people of quality". As such, one could hardly disagree - nobody wants people of no quality whatsoever as politicians, and indeed we can't help but notice that, among those presently working away at their tiny violins, nonentities and blathering idiots are distinctly overrepresented. If people of such 'quality' could be run out of Westminster, even by the rough means of online hectoring, it would be no great loss to the cause of human progress.

Yet the point is rather that, by accepting such terms for the selection of our politicians, we also tacitly accept the conception of political life as a profession, and thereby as the preserve of a restricted caste. "We cannot afford to lose people of quality," says Bew, with the assumption that they might all go on a kind of capital strike, like a petulant crowd of John Galts. Indeed they might, if their mode of existence is as a closed-shop skills monopoly, policing their own boundaries by establishing and enforcing the protocols of initiation for new members. In such a mode of organisation, who determines who is a 'person of quality'? Why, the pre-existing 'people of quality', for who else is properly qualified to judge? (The result of such a marking-your-own-homework set-up is, of course, graft and corruption - hence the laughable performance of Acoba and the double-standards committee.)

So, while the online abuse pseudo-scandal seems to be admirably cross-partisan, with not only Tories complaining, but also a Labour left warhorse like Diane Abbott, what is actually on display is a more profound kind of political solidarity between

politicians *as a caste*. This idea of politics is inimical to democracy, for it carries with it the necessary consequence that meaningful political decision-making on the part of ordinary people is incompatible with good governance. We must pick only between approved members of the caste. When they betray our trust, we must swallow our anger, and accept that it is all for our own good.

Once people at large are thus expropriated of their political power, and they observe the consequences, however, the result is not mute obedience, but rather anger. This feeling may find its outlet in radical or far-right politics; or perhaps merely calcify into atomised cynicism and resentment. Thus we find exactly the three kinds of 'abuse' directed at our poor politicians - forcefully expressed political criticism from left and right, and malicious trolling. There are plainly overlaps, particularly between the so-called 'alt right' and the trolls for trolling's sake; but the rhetorical strategy at work in the present moral panic is instead to make a ghastly amalgam of all three, so that legitimate anger at treachery is smeared by association with random drive-by rape threats. Thus it can be made to seem that a malignant 'other' - the far left or right - generates the 'problem', when it is merely a necessary excrescence of the technocratic vision of politics.

Solutions

We observe, then, that even the most nihilistic diatribes against MPs are not expressions merely of criminal insanity or evil, but merely the pus on the scab on the infected wound of bourgeois political culture. Paul Bew is thus doomed to failure - no combination of changes to the law will stem the tide.

The remedy is there, but, unfortunately for our cowering MPs, is altogether more drastic. Partly it is a matter of ripping up the existing constitution and bringing something worthy of the name, democracy, to bear on society - an end to monarchy, however 'constitutional', and to 'first past the post' and its rotten boroughs, to the upper house that seats Paul Bew and fills his wallet; a new dawn of republican democracy, with a proportional, unicameral parliament elected annually (among countless other things).

The advantage of proportional representation in its purest form in this regard is that it hands power to *parties* to determine their representatives. Yet that power is all too often under-utilised even where it exists, which is the other side of the problem: the lack of a mass party with an engaged membership base prepared to exercise discipline. This is quite as true on the right as the left, but, seeing as the right can govern quite happily as a Bonapartist overlord in relation to its constituents, there is no fatal contradiction. For the left and the workers' movement, however, things are different: concessions we make to the generation and reproduction of a permanent professional political caste are directly counterposed to our objectives.

We have, in today's Labour Party, a mass party once again, its ranks replenished with hundreds of thousands of people to the left of its apparatus, its MPs and even the leadership who inspired them. But they are not yet sufficiently organised and politically educated to subordinate these other forces to their general will. A Parliamentary Labour Party subject to mandatory reselection and restricted to a worker's wage, a swift exit for Murdoch's mercenaries in the compliance unit - all would be real steps towards a world where parliamentary office had honour worth defending ●

paul.demarty@weeklyworker.co.uk

REVIEW



Even with Holmes and Watson the state gets away with murder

Criminal law and class society

Robert Reiner *Crime: the mystery of the common-sense concept* Polity, 2016, pp246, £15.99

There is a sense in which it is particularly appropriate to review Robert Reiner's *Crime* this week, in spite of the fact that the book came out a year ago. This is because the book is largely about processes of 'criminalisation' and their limits: how some forms of conduct get to be 'crimes', while others, equally damaging to 'victims' or 'society', do not. And this week we can see working before our eyes one of the common dynamics of criminal justice systems, in the form of the high-profile of 'acid throwing' attacks.

The first stage of this particular dynamic is a shift in *fashions of victimisation* (among perpetrators). Acid-throwing was in fashion in Victorian England, and subsequently went out of fashion, though it has occasionally surfaced in the context of sexual jealousy. For some reason it has recently come back into fashion.

The second stage is *causes célèbres*: high-profile attacks getting a lot of publicity. The third stage is an agitation in the legislature both for more severe sentences for existing crimes and for some new form of regulatory rules to make it more difficult for attackers to acquire corrosive substances. The regulatory rules will then imply new crimes.

It may be merely coincidental, or perhaps a result of the attention of reporters, that, just as proposals to increase the regulation of sales of corrosive substances are under discussion, it is reported that existing recent regulations to control the sale of knives (prompted by similar dynamics) have failed, and new and more restrictive rules are needed.²

As I said, this is by no means the only dynamic of criminalisation. A wider range is discussed by Reiner. There are, pretty certainly, other dynamics which do not quite fit into his theoretical scheme - we will need to return to this point later.

But thinking seriously about the concept of crime, criminalisation and the underlying social dynamics is to address an issue which constantly recurs in politics: acid, knives, gangs,

gun control, the 'war on drugs', whether there should be new laws to protect members of parliament from 'intimidation', whether it was an 'outrage' for John McDonnell to say that those who died in Grenfell Tower were "murdered" ... the list is endless.

The Polity 'Key concepts' books are advertised as "a series of concise and accessible textbooks exploring core concepts in the social sciences. The books focus on concepts that have a high degree of complexity surrounding them, and they get to the heart of debates about meaning and usage."³ From this point of view, Reiner's contribution to the series does 'exactly what it says on the tin'. It is a clear introductory textbook for social science undergraduates, which introduces some of the difficulties of the concept. The book is well worth reading as an introduction to thinking about these issues.

I flag the point that it is a textbook for social science undergraduates for two reasons. The first is that it assumes that the reader will have taken a basic 'social science 101' methodology course, including (for example) explanation of the basic ideas of Émile Durkheim and Max Weber. The second is that it uses unmodified 'Harvard citation' of whole books and articles in the body of the text to support points.

The books and articles cited in this passage vary between empirically grounded historical studies (Thompson and Linebaugh) and theoretical interventions on the *concept* of 'social crime' referred to here (Hobsbawm, here intervening in the theoretical debate started by his more empirically grounded 1969 book, *Bandits*). This is, as I said, standard social science citation method; but, unless one is used to it, it takes a bit of extra mental effort to disentangle what is being said.

Reiner nine years ago published *Law and order: an honest citizen's guide to crime and control* with the same publisher, and following very approximately the same line of argument, if in a different form. No doubt the new book is more up to

date, and it also focuses more clearly on crime as a concept; but the older one, written for the lay reader and with the references in endnotes, is an easier read.

Structure

The structure of the book is very clear: each chapter approaches the debatable concept of crime from a different angle. After an introduction, chapter 1 deals with 'Legal conceptions of crime' - unavoidably, since at its core crime is certainly a legal category. Chapter 2 considers 'Moral conceptions of crime': the idea that underlying the criminalisation of some forms of conduct is at root a moral judgement. Chapter 3 could, from its content, be called 'Sociologists' conceptions of crime', but is, more ambiguously, titled: 'Everybody's doing it: social conceptions of crime and deviance'.

Chapter 4, 'How do they get away with it? The non-criminalisation of the powerful', is not directly a discussion of an aspect of the concept of crime. Rather, by looking at how various more or less elite groups' harmful conduct is not criminalised even when it is illegal, it sets up the background to the issues addressed in chapter 5: 'The criminal justice process and conceptions of crime'. This focuses on how what counts as crime is defined by the 'criminal justice process' and agencies: ie, police, courts, the home office and other statistics agencies (the chapter is largely concerned with the understanding of 'crime statistics').

This leads, in turn, to chapter 6: 'Media, crime and the politics of law and order' (but in the 'running heads' the content is perhaps more accurately described as 'Media and political misconceptions of crime'). Chapter 7, perhaps surprisingly, shifts the ground to consider 'Whodunnit and why? Criminological conceptions of crime'. The chapter surveys the evolution of criminological theories (beginning in the 18th century before the invention of the term 'criminology' in the late 19th century), and then covers the presently debated problem of why recorded crime figures have across the western world

fallen since the 1990s (though *fear* of crime, stoked by media and politicians, has continued to increase).

Finally, the conclusion is titled 'Crime: a capital concept', returning to a theme already addressed in the introduction and chapter 1. This is that "a particular modern conception of crime, distinguished from other forms of wrongdoing and troublemaking, emerged hand-in-hand with the development of capitalist nation-states" (p186).

And:

The project of constructing crime, the perennial phenomenon of censure and condemnation of conduct, into its modern criminal law conception involved profound social transformation. It aimed to convert the use of coercive power to buttress economic social and political elites into an apparently impartial, technocratic, neutral exercise of reason on behalf of the democratically expressed popular will. This was an important element in the development of more integrated, centralised capitalist states which required high degrees of predictability in everyday conduct in labour and goods markets, and disciplined mass urban workforces for industrial production (p191).

Modernity

As I said, the point goes back to the introduction and to chapter 1, on legal conceptions of crime, where Reiner writes:

The development of specifically 'criminal' law, as distinct from other forms of order maintenance, adjudication and enforcement of norms, is associated with the advent of modernity. To clarify this, it is helpful first to construct an ideal-type of 'criminal law' as it has come to be understood in modern industrial capitalist societies since the late 18th century ... (p19).

This claim about the historical modernity of 'crime' and 'criminal law' - its

association with not merely *capitalism*, but also *industrial production* - thus plays a fundamental role in Reiner's argument as a whole.

There are practical modern political implications of the point, which I referred to before. Reiner's explanation of the present dynamics of criminalisation and non-criminalisation is driven by the theory of 'crime' as particularly linked to capitalism as an apparent system of depersonalised power. Hence, if this conception is mistaken or - more likely - seriously incomplete, there may well be causes of criminalisation and non-criminalisation dynamics which fall outside the framework of the theory. This has implications for political approaches to particular 'criminalisation politics' which should be adopted by communists, or the workers' movement, or merely 'leftwingers' or 'radicals' (take your pick).

The modernity claim is made more theoretical and less directly historical by Reiner's use of the Weberian concept of the 'ideal-type'. But in fact its plausibility still *does* depend on its historicity. If it was plainly the case that there were legal categories of 'crime' and 'criminal law' - or categories which plainly corresponded to Reiner's concept of 'crime' and 'criminal law' without the exact name - in antiquity and the Middle Ages, the structure of the argument would fall to the ground and need to be rethought.

The point is not quite as clear as that. But the argument is profoundly problematic.

I should say that behind Reiner's argument here lies principally John Lea's *Crime and modernity* (London 2002), which is a more elaborated argument on the issue. And behind Lea lies Michel Foucault's *Discipline and punish* (1977) and *History of sexuality*, volume 1 (1979).⁴ Behind some other authors Reiner cites can similarly be found Foucault's other (later) work on 'governmentality' and 'biopolitics'.

I do not, however, mean to embark here on a long polemic against Foucault. I observe merely that Foucault's emphases on power and

on 'knowledge' as a form of 'power', as opposed to political economic and class analyses, are now spectacularly dated, having grown out of the themes of the anti-managerialist 'new left' of the 1960s. On Foucault's *methodological assumptions* and his links with the shift of part of the left from an 'anti-authoritarian' or anti-managerialist leftism to what became after his death 'social liberalism', the essays in Daniel Zamora and Michael C Behrent's edited collection, *Foucault and Neoliberalism* (Cambridge 2016) are useful. So too, in a very different way, is James Miller's discussion of Nietzschean influence on Foucault in *The passion of Michel Foucault* (Yale 1993).

These methodological issues are posed because, for Foucault's followers in the academy and in Eurocommunist, Blairite, 'social movement' and so on, politics, Foucault's methodological claims act as an intellectual closure against alternative views. They thus bar consideration of even the possibility that Foucault's historical claims about 'modernity', beginning as early as with the 1961 *Folie et deraison* (abridged in English as *Madness and civilisation*), might be simply false - grounded on an arbitrary selection of sources which could be more or less forcibly bent into shape to support his narrative.

It is tempting to pursue these issues further. But here I simply make the point of (indirect) dependence. I do so because, if we stand aside from the *assumption* that Foucault and similar authors give us a reliable idea of the nature of the 'modern' and its differentiation from the 'pre-modern', the possibility opens up of a more complex view of the past development of the phenomena (of crime, criminalisation, and so on) and their evolution into the recent past (commonly called the 'present'). This will in turn give a wider range of possible political interventions in the 'present' (meaning, into the very near future). And this is as true of 'crime' and 'criminal law' as it is of insanity, sexuality and so on.

Medieval crime

The English word 'crime' comes from the Latin 'crimen', whose origin is in ancient Roman law. It is there *cognate* with the modern 'crime' in the sense that it is about wrongdoing. But it is substantially broader than modern crime - there is, for example, the *crimen suspecti tutoris*, which is about who can and cannot be guardian of an orphan and is in modern terms 'civil', not 'criminal', law. And it is also substantially narrower: for example, *furtum*, theft, is a 'delict': the subject of a private claim by the victim for double the value of the stolen thing (or higher multiples in a different context), not (usually) called a *crimen*.

Andrew Riggsby, who has recently written usefully on the subject, divides the Roman law of wrongdoing into three classes. The *iudicia publica* (public judgments) correspond to our 'crimes', in the sense that the prosecution was brought in the name of the *res publica*, the state, though by a private prosecutor, and conviction leads to more or less severe punishment of the person convicted. The stereotypical cases are ones like treason, bribery in elections and extortion by public officials, though by the late republic (*iudicia publica*) extended further to - for example - *sicarii* (knife gangs). Alongside these were the *delicta* (delicts), unambiguously about wrongdoing towards individuals: theft and robbery; damage to property; insult. Here usually the individual affected had to sue (though a father could sue for insult to his children, a husband for insult to his wife). A third class was the *actiones populares* - regulatory offences carrying a fixed penalty, like damaging the public highway, or keeping wild animals where they might escape and so cause damage; in these, anyone could sue, but persons directly affected had priority. It is reasonably

clear that *iudicia publica*, *delicta* and *actiones populares* were distinct categories, rather than sub-categories of a broader class corresponding to modern 'crime'.⁵

So far, so good for the idea of 'crime' as a product of modernity.

It is, however, reasonably clear that the generalisation of *crimen*, as a legal category contrasted both with 'civil' or 'private' matters and with sin (*peccatum*) is the product in the first place of the generalising and systematising tendencies of *medieval university lawyers* from the 1100s onwards,⁶ and very probably especially of the canonists (who worked on the law of the church) rather than the civilians (who taught the Roman law, and tended to stick to the Roman texts, albeit modifying their meanings).⁷ Indeed, a recent study by Wolfgang P Müller of the criminalisation of abortion in the Middle Ages uses this particular case as an exemplar of the invention of *criminalisation as such*, beginning in the 1100s.⁸

Perhaps we can segregate England from this process? After all, late medieval and early modern English lawyers *mainly* did not use the term 'crime' for what is now 'criminal law', instead talking of the 'pleas of the crown' - and, among these pleas, treasons, felonies and *transgressiones* (from around 1500 called 'misdemeanours'). The terminology of 'pleas of the crown' persisted as late as the 19th century.⁹

That said, the 'crime' terminology was not unknown: the author of the treatise called *Glanvill*, writing around 1190, tells us at book 1, section 1: "*Placitorum aliud criminale aliud civile*" ("Pleas are either criminal or civil"), and goes on at 1.2. to list *crimes* which belong to the crown, as opposed to the sheriffs in their county courts: being treason, fraudulent concealment of treasure trove, breach of the king's peace, homicide, arson, robbery, rape, forgery and similar offences.¹⁰ The treatise called *Bracton*, written and edited in the 1230s-50s, uses both the 'civil and criminal actions' formula, and the 'pleas of the crown'.¹¹

By the late 1200s there was a separate treatise called *Placita corone* ('pleas of the crown').¹² The topics covered are wounding, the widow's prosecution of her husband's killer, rape, robbery, aiding and abetting robbery, receiving stolen goods, theft, and petty treason in the form of parricide.

The terminology is thus *commonly* different from modern 'criminal law'. And references to 'crime' in the Law-French reports of cases in the 1400s, and down to around 1660, are mainly on matters of ecclesiastical law (though arising in secular courts), where *crimen* had clear technical meanings. It is from around 1660 that 'crime' seems to begin to be used by common lawyers widely as a term which covers all the three classes of treason, felony and misdemeanour.¹³

However, when we look at the lists of what are 'pleas of the crown' in *Glanvill* or *Bracton* or in *Placita corone* - or in the later treatises, such as William Staunford's *Les plees del coron* (1557) - what we find is a list of offences, capable of public prosecution, of pretty much the same shape as those which are the core of the modern criminal law. And if we consider the context of the lists in *Glanvill* and later authors, it is in essence one about forms of public prosecution - indictment by a grand jury, leading to trial before itinerant judges - in contrast to 'civil actions'.

The pleas of the crown are not the same as classical Roman law *crimina*. They are not the same in *content* as either Roman *iudicia publica*, or the canon lawyers' broad *crimina*. But the concept is pretty clearly parallel in conception to the *iudicia publica* and to canonist *crimen*. These are 'pleas of the crown' not because of the

king's *personal* interest, but because of his role as dispenser of justice and protector of public peace.

And, as far as English law is concerned - I carefully do not make any larger claim - it is clear that the core concept of what really counts as a 'crime' remains even today defined by the list of felonies of medieval origin.

Ideal type

Going back to Reiner's 'ideal type' of criminal law, it has four characteristics:

- close procedural association with the state;
- punishment, not compensation, as the outcome of cases;
- the notion of individual responsibility;
- a tacit background assumption of a reasonably stable and peaceful society (p19).

The first three are all unambiguously present in medieval English pleas of the crown - unless you stipulatively define the royal government as not a 'state'.¹⁴ As far as the fourth is concerned, we might, on the one hand, say that it is not at all clear that this assumption is actually present in *modern* criminal law: the criminal justice system is in modern times expected to operate in wartime (as illustrated by the 1944 Nazi deportation of the Copenhagen police, leading to large increases in property crime). And it is not clear that the modern US would count as 'reasonably peaceful' by modern European standards ...

On the other hand, if we do not set an unreasonably high standard for 'reasonably peaceful', the assumption is also present in medieval English criminal justice. In 1278-79, it was possible for a defendant sued (in civil proceedings) for trespass to plead in his defence that there was no breach of the king's peace, because the acts complained of took place in time of (civil) war. But not enough: he had to add that the claimant was assisting the king's enemies, and that the case had already been settled.¹⁵ Peace is assumed, unless the contrary is shown.

Here I divert slightly to Lea's argument (in *Crime and modernity* chapter 2), which is more elaborate on this front. But it depends on assuming as generally correct an account of pre-modern society as characterised by intense localism, and a royal 'sovereignty' which sits loosely atop society and does not reach very far at all into everyday dispute-settlement. The source is Foucault, and behind Foucault, contemporaneous French authors, and further back, Marc Bloch's *Feudal society* (1939). The account is possible, though perhaps overstated, for France. It certainly does not work for pre-modern England, which had by medieval standards a strong state power from an early date. Already by the 14th century it is possible to detect the 'moral panic' criminalisation dynamics of a 'modern' type in the decisions of the English parliament.¹⁶ It also probably does not work for the more urbanised parts of Europe (parts of Italy, Netherlands), where there were active city governments.¹⁷

Modernity revisited

I am *not* arguing that nothing changed or that modern criminal justice can be simply reduced to the perennial - thus Reiner's peculiar Durkheimian comment that "All societies, perhaps all relationships, are characterised by deviance" (p16), or Lea's (debatable) assertion that "People have inflicted violence on one another and appropriated one another's personal effects since the beginning of time" (p24).

On the contrary, I have already said that the categories of ancient Roman law, as they affect what moderns (and medieval canonists) call 'crime', are *not* those of 'crime' in this modern and canonist sense, but ones which, as Riggsby argues, have very a different focus.

Again, Lea's picture of the pre-modern in terms of local customary dispute-settlement only lightly touched by sovereignty works quite well for *early medieval* dispute-settlement, if private vengeance needed to be made more prominent in it and the timescale needed to be pushed radically back.¹⁸

In short, there is a *transition to elaborated law and an increased role of states* in Europe in the period around and after 1100, which builds on Roman sources and concepts, but significantly changes them. It affects Italy in the first place, England not long after, France and Germany more gradually (this is, of course, itself schematic).

Within these terms, the transition to 'criminal law' can indeed be part of the transition to capitalism. It has, however, to be read *together with* the transition to 'civil law' as the other side of this coin. And we have to read the transition to capitalism as itself a centuries-prolonged process of declining feudalism and rising capitalism, filled with contradictory forms.

It is not, *contra* Weber, about 'modern industry'. Rather it is about the transition - *through* large-scale shipping as an industrial form, on the one hand, and the putting-out system, on the other - from peasant and artisan household production to wage-labour. For exactly the same reason, it is not, *contra* Foucault, about managerialism, 'governmentality' and the will to knowledge as a will to power. It is related to urbanisation and to shifts into monetised economy, also progressing in the same later medieval period.

The idea of the 'modern' is itself a part of this transition: writers of glosses (marginal notes) on the north Italian law-book called the *Liber Papiensis* (the 'book of Pavia') around 1100 referred to themselves as '*moderni*' and their predecessors as '*antiqui*'.¹⁹

Present

The historical roots of 'criminal law' are considerably deeper than Reiner and similar authors argue. Reiner's account and those of authors he relies on involve a schematic contrast between the 'modern' and the 'pre-modern'. What are the present-day political implications of these issues?

I am not going to go into this in depth at all, because I think that I have said enough to make the point that Reiner's argument connecting 'crime' to 'industrial capitalism' needs rethinking. I will give, however, two examples, both connected with the problem of 'elite impunity', to which both Reiner and Lea refer.

The first is the relative absence of prosecutions for financial frauds. But, if we compare the UK with the USA, while the crash of 2009 has not produced many prosecutions in the US, large-scale financial fraudsters certainly have much *less* impunity in the US than they have in the UK: for example, the Enron fraudsters probably could not have been convicted in the UK, and Bernie Madoff would certainly have got a much less severe sentence.²⁰

The second is more immediate. On July 11, Theresa May announced an enquiry into the 'contaminated blood scandal', relating to the purchase of commercial blood supplies in the 1970s and 1980s from US companies without adequate testing, leading to large numbers of patients being infected with hepatitis C and HIV.²¹ The pretty much identical scandal in France gave rise far more rapidly to two trials. In 1992, several managers in the blood transfusion service were convicted and jailed for the homicide offence equivalent to English gross negligence manslaughter.²² In 1999, three government ministers were tried for the same offence, though impunity was here delivered in the sense that two were acquitted and one convicted, but given no penalty.²³

Impunity, then, is inconsistent. It is not that *the limits of the crime concept*

itself necessarily imply impunity for managerial elites. In these two cases, what is visible is something specific to *British* (and perhaps even to *English and Welsh*) judicial, prosecutorial and governmental approaches.

In politics, these points have two meanings. On the one hand, getting rid of capitalist rule does not imply immediately getting rid of crime and criminal law. There will be a transition out of capitalism, as there was one into capitalism; though we can hope for a quicker one.

On the other hand, we should not be led to fatalism about the possibilities of reform of the criminal law by the connection to capitalism. There can be different varieties of criminal law under capitalism, and we can fight for a version which is more favourable to the working class ●

Mike Macnair

mike.macnair@weeklyworker.co.uk

Notes

1. KD Watson, 'Is a burn a wound? Vitriol-throwing in medico-legal context, 1800-1900', in I Goold and C Kelly (eds), *Lawyers' medicine, the legislature, the courts and medical practice, 1760-2000* Cumnor 2009.
2. 'Checks failing to stem knife crime, says Rudd' *The Times* July 18.
3. http://politybooks.com/serieslanding/?subject_id=88&series_id=1.
4. M Foucault *Discipline and punish* from the French *Surveiller et punir* Paris 1975; *History of sexuality* from the French *Histoire de la sexualité: la volonté de savoir* Paris 1977.
5. A Riggsby, 'Public and private criminal law' in PJ du Plessis, C Ando and K Tuori (eds) *The Oxford handbook of Roman law and society* Oxford 2016, chapter 24. For the point about the *crimen suspecti tutoris* see C Donahue junior, 'The emergence of the crime-tort distinction in England' in WC Brown and P Górecki (eds) *Conflict in medieval Europe* Farnham 2003, chapter 11 (pp220-21).
6. On these generalising tendencies see the essays in JW Cairns and P du Plessis (eds) *The creation of the ius commune: from casus to regula* Edinburgh 2010.
7. CFRH Helmholtz *Oxford history of the laws of England* Vol 1: *The canon law and ecclesiastical jurisdiction from 597 to the 1640s* Oxford 2004, chapter 12.
8. WP Müller *The criminalisation of abortion in the west: its origins in medieval law* New York 2012; I have so far only looked at snippets on Google Books and a couple of reviews that are available online.
9. Eg, Edward Hyde East *A treatise of the pleas of the crown* (two volumes), 1803. But this is a late example.
10. GDG Hall (ed) *The treatise on the laws and customs of England commonly called Glanvill* Oxford 1993, pp3-4.
11. GE Woodbine (ed) *Bracton* Harvard 1968, at pp290-91, 297-98 (civil and criminal), 327-449 (tractate de placitis corone).
12. JM Kaye (ed) *Placita corone* London 1966.
13. This is the result of searching for the terms, 'crime' and 'criminal', in David Seipp's online index to the medieval reports called the Year Books (www.bu.edu/law/faculty-scholarship/legal-history-the-year-books) and in the Jutta-Hart CDROM version of the printed *English reports*. To report the search results in detail would be inappropriate here.
14. The Weberian definition in terms of a 'monopoly of violence' to distinguish the modern state from pre-modern sovereignties is plain nonsense, since it entails that the USA is not a modern state. Dilution to assert that the modern state uniquely claims a monopoly of 'legitimate' violence is circular, since it says merely that the state's law defines what is legal.
15. *Gundred of Strickland v Thomas of Musgrave* (1278-79), P Brand (ed) *Earliest English law reports* Vol 122, pp63-65. The case was settled.
16. Some examples in WM Orrod and A Musson *The evolution of English justice: law, politics and society in the fourteenth century* Basingstoke 1999.
17. See, for example, G Ruggiero *The boundaries of Eros* Oxford 1989; T Dean *Crime and justice in late medieval Italy* Cambridge 2007.
18. Eg, W Davies and P Fouracre (eds) *The settlement of disputes in early medieval Europe* Cambridge 1986; WI Miller *Bloodtaking and peacemaking* Chicago 1990. P Hyams *Rancour and reconciliation in medieval England* (New York 2003) makes the point that this vendetta framework persists into the later Middle Ages, alongside the development of formal law and 'downwards' justice.
19. CM Radding and A Ciaralli *The corpus iuris in the Middle Ages* Leiden 2007, pp80-84.
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21. 'Theresa May orders contaminated blood scandal inquiry' *The Guardian* July 11.
22. 'French convict three in case of Aids-tainted blood' *Los Angeles Times* October 24 1992: http://articles.latimes.com/1992-10-24/news/mn-715_1_blood-products.
23. 'Blood scandal ministers walk free', BBC news March 9 1999: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/293367.stm>.

SOUTH AFRICA

Under pressure to stand

While the SACP has finally agreed to contest elections independently, writes Peter Manson, its leadership is still fully committed to class collaboration

Following its July 10-15 congress, the South African Communist Party has finally confirmed that it is now prepared to contest elections under its own name - in opposition to the African National Congress.

Ever since the fall of apartheid SACP members have stood as ANC candidates locally and nationally - after the 2014 general election 17 of the 249 ANC MPs were party members - and, of course, the SACP has always accounted for a rather higher proportion of government ministers than its parliamentary representation might warrant.

The ministries its comrades head are by no means unimportant. While general secretary Blade Nzimande, as minister for higher education, has fronted the government's assault on students and met mass opposition in 2015-16 in the shape of the 'Fees Must Fall' movement, other SACP members occupy even more important posts, crucial to the running of South African capitalism. For example, Rob Davies is trade and industry minister and Ebrahim Patel is minister for economic development, while Aaron Motsoaledi (health) and Senzeni Zokwana (agriculture) are also in significant positions. Although SACP deputy chair Thulas Nxesi is now sports minister, he was actually in charge of public works at the very time R246 million (£14.6 million) was being spent on improvements (that included a swimming pool and amphitheatre) to president Jacob Zuma's private residence, allegedly for 'security reasons'.

But recently a number of factors have placed the SACP firmly in the anti-Zuma camp. Not only were there allegations of corruption directed at the president, but the exposure of the huge influence exerted by individual capitalists - such as the brothers, Atul, Atul and Rajesh Gupta - over government appointments and decisions (referred to by the SACP as "state capture"). Added to this, the party membership has become more assertive, and, as a result of all those factors, the leadership publicly called on the president to resign earlier this year. Zuma was 'uninvited' to the congress - it was the first time since 2009 that he had not addressed such an SACP event.

However, the possibility of the party standing its own candidates - and, along with the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu), in effect abandoning the ANC-led alliance - has been under discussion in one form or another for many years. For example, the most recent version of the SACP programme, *The South African road to socialism* (2012), states:

The modalities of the SACP's participation in elections are not a matter of timeless principle. As an independent political party, the SACP has every right to contest elections in its own right - should it so choose. Whether the party does this and how it does this are entirely subject to conjunctural realities and indeed to engagement with our strategic allies.¹

And before last week's congress the central committee issued a document, which included this sentence: "We absolutely cannot rule out the prospect of the SACP contesting elections in its own right."² So it came as no surprise when the leadership declared that the



Jeremy Cronin and his replacement, Solly Mapaila

party had decided to do just that.

Pressure at top

The CC announced with great pride that 1,819 delegates had gathered for the congress in Ekurhuleni, just east of Johannesburg. According to the leadership, they were representing "over 7,000 branches" and no fewer than 284,554 individual members: "Five years ago, at our 13th National Congress, we proudly announced that our membership had grown massively to over 150,000. We have nearly doubled once again."

Just over a decade ago the official membership figure was said to be 30,000, and it hit 50,000 in 2009. So, while no doubt the figures are exaggerated - especially when you consider that, as with the Socialist Workers Party in Britain, 'members' are required to do no more than fill in a form - it is clear that there has been a huge surge in support for the party.

This has coincided with the gradual falling away of electoral support for the ANC itself. At the 2014 general election its vote had dropped a little to 62.1%, but in the 2016 municipal elections it plummeted down to 53.9%. As a result the ANC lost control of several urban centres, including Johannesburg. Of course, everyone knows that the SACP has been closely associated with the entire apparatus, but its militant language and Marxist jargon have led many to believe that the party could force through radical change. Expectations have risen and the leadership has been forced to respond.

This pressure was reflected inside the congress hall. For example, one of the favourite songs sung by delegates included the refrain: "Have you heard the good news? They say Zuma is leaving."³ Then there was the response to general secretary Nzimande's rhetorical question relating to 'state capture' - "Do we have a state? What is to be done?" - during his address: "Contest elections!" came the rejoinder.⁴

The pressure had also been reflected in the run-up to congress in calls for Solly Mapaila, then the party's second deputy general secretary, to replace Nzimande as SACP number one. Mapaila had been the most consistent amongst the leadership in insisting that the congress should decide to contest elections, and he had also been the most forthright in calling on Zuma to resign immediately. However, following the CC's hostile reaction to this display of 'disunity' - at one stage during his address Nzimande was heckled by some delegates - comrade Mapaila said

he would not stand for any leadership position.

But then, out of the blue, the first deputy general secretary, Jeremy Cronin, announced he was stepping down. Cronin, who is deputy minister of public works in the government, has been relied upon to draw up key SACP statements and strategic documents. But he gave no real explanation for his decision and this, together with the fact that he has not resigned from the government, leads one to conclude that Cronin was not exactly happy with the new orientation.

This development led Mapaila to immediately reverse his earlier statement and announce his candidacy for deputy general secretary - he was elected unopposed to replace Cronin. As for Nzimande himself, he was hardly delighted either. Afterwards he said: "We are in a very difficult political situation in this country ... If I had my personal preference, I would be joining comrade Cronin and retire."⁵

Reconfigured

So where does all this leave us? Will the SACP oppose the ANC in 2019? According to the CC,

After considerable debate at Congress, we have resolved that, while the SACP will certainly contest elections, the exact modality in which we do so needs to be determined by way of a concrete analysis of the concrete reality and through the process of active engagement with worker and progressive formations.⁶

In fact, "The SACP remains committed to *strengthening and consolidating our ANC alliance*" (my emphasis). But that would now "require a significant reconfiguration" of that alliance. And the party admits it does not know if that is even possible: "Whether the ANC has the capacity to lead its own process of renewal, and whether it will be able to once more play the critical role of uniting itself and its alliance, remains uncertain." But "the SACP will continue to play a leading role in consolidating a popular front of working class and progressive forces to advance, deepen and defend our democracy and our national sovereignty".

But how could the SACP still be in "alliance" (however 'reconfigured') with the ANC, while at the same time opposing it at the next general election? Voting is based on the party list system and MPs are elected completely proportionally - each party is awarded one of the 400 MPs for each 0.25%

of the national vote it wins. So there is no question of candidates agreeing to stand down in favour of an alliance partner. According to Nzimande, "It happens in many parts of the world that allied formations contest independently and decide to come together after elections."⁷

However, things will not be quite that easy. In the words of the *Morning Star's* John Haylett, the SACP "has pledged to consult its alliance partners and other progressive forces before standing separately" and - despite the headline to his article, which reads, "Communists widen split from ANC" - he reckons it is "unlikely to contest the 2019 general election".⁸

The SACP in its post-congress declaration, while restating once again its opposition to "the deep threat of wanton parasitic looting of public resources associated with 'state capture'", reaffirmed its "strategic commitment to a radical second phase of the National Democratic Revolution as the most direct route to a socialist South Africa".

However, having listed a number of proposals for anti-corruption, anti-monopoly, anti-discriminatory and pro-worker reforms, its pre-congress political report frankly admitted: "None of these measures in themselves, or in isolation, amount to socialism. All of them are open to being coopted into the capitalist system."⁹ In fact the report also unwittingly pointed to the hopelessness of the SACP trajectory, when it stated: "Statistics SA's most recent data indicate that in the first quarter of 2017 a further 48,000 jobs were lost, adding to the nine million unemployed. The narrow definition of unemployment is now 27.7%." The so-called "national democratic revolution", for which the SACP has been cheer-leading since 1994, is not quite pointing in the direction of a "socialist South Africa" just yet.

But now, states *Business Day*, "The SACP wants to create a broad front that will include progressive sectors of society to contest future polls."¹⁰ And incredibly, according to Cronin, this was "part of the reason" why the newly created rival to the SACP-led Cosatu, the South African Federation of Trade Unions (Saftu), was invited to attend the congress. I say "incredibly" because it was the SACP that was behind the expulsion of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (Numsa) - the country's largest trade union - from Cosatu in 2014 and as a result Saftu was formed. Likewise

its members were responsible for dismissing Zwelinzima Vavi from the post of Cosatu general secretary. What was the 'crime' of Numsa and Vavi? Why, calling for the workers' movement to break with the ANC!

And then, in its political statement, the CC had the gall to write:

The formation of the latest union federation, Saftu, is unfortunately compounding the fragmentation of the labour movement at a time when we need to be working towards maximum unity and towards organising the millions of unorganised workers rather than cannibalising membership from each other.

Collaboration

On behalf of Saftu, its general secretary - none other than Vavi himself - responded by explaining "Why we are unable to honour the invitation to your Congress". He wrote: "Only if, and when, the SACP decisively and publicly breaks with the politics of positioning, patronage and class collaboration will organisations like ours be able to accept an invitation to witness your deliberations."¹¹

Such "class collaboration" was epitomised by the SACP's choice of ANC speaker to replace Zuma at the congress - a certain Cyril Ramaphosa. Sure, not only is Ramaphosa deputy president of both the ANC and South Africa: he has also been making noises in line with the party's criticism of Zuma. But it was Ramaphosa, as one of the country's richest capitalists who sent out several emails on the eve of the 2014 Marikana massacre demanding that firm action be taken against striking mineworkers - 34 of whom were shot dead by police the very next day.

But Ramaphosa has not forgotten the SACP jargon he learned back in the days when he was general secretary of the National Union of Mineworkers. At the congress, he spoke about "the need to weave together the revolutionary-democratic, socialist and trade union strands of the broad liberation movement into a tight alliance of formations that share a common approach towards the national democratic revolution and its objectives".¹² Well, one thing is for certain: those "objectives" have nothing whatsoever to do with working class interests.

The SACP, in part driven by the pressure from below, could indeed be heading for a break with the ANC. But it is still committed to a "popular front" along with wanton enemies of the working class like Ramaphosa. The question is, who in the SACP can lead a movement for a fundamental change of course? ●

peter.manson@weeklyworker.co.uk

Notes

1. www.sacp.org.za/main.php?ID=4940.
2. www.sacp.org.za/docs/conf/2017/political-report.pdf.
3. *Business Day* July 11.
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GENETICS

Born loser: is destiny biological?

Did the notion of biological superiority bite the dust following the racism of the Nazis? In this first article in a four-part series, **Mike Belbin** traces the reformulation of an ancient idea of human character

“From the hour of their birth, some are marked out for subjection, others for rule” - Aristotle

Someone once said that no-one holds people accountable for their inherited characteristics any more. Nor are there many, we are told, who believe that your character results from a particular biological group, race, gender or sexuality. Those who target people by such group definition are dismissed as prejudiced and even Nazi.

Yet society still relies on filling positions due to the difference between those who command or initiate and those who follow orders and serve - a difference which these days is discovered through educational or other tests. However, such talents are often referred to as having their origin in something inherent in the person. For, while overt racial or sexual advantage is no longer acceptable - unjust, arbitrary and unscientific - there is a growing movement, supported by research funds, for ‘geneticism’: the belief that, whatever the colour or religion of the individual, it is their biological make-up - in other words, their genes - which is the source of their character; the origin of stupidity, of violence, of greed.

Of course, not everyone has to believe in genetic determinism to make a difference to the treatment of others. A few with power and influence will suffice, like those at the top of the criminal justice system, those supplying healthcare and those promoting medicinal drugs. After all, the last defence of the current world system is that anyone can better themselves (low taxes and a good idea permitting), while those who cannot, or drop down, must have something wrong with them.

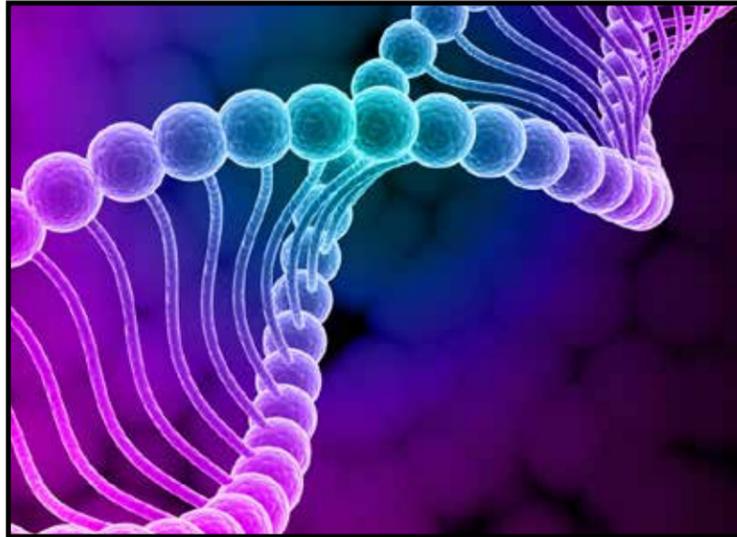
This is not to say that biology is the only justification these days for structural inequality, but, along with eugenics, it seems to be making something of a comeback, as the world system becomes shakier and less justifiable in terms of fair competition and rewards.

So what are the claims and assertions about there being inherent disposition? Do we come out of the womb winners or losers, stable or obnoxious, good or evil? Where does the concept of an inborn disposition come from?

First, it is a very old one. Most cultures have their rulers - their pharaohs, kings or chiefs - descended from or sanctified by the gods at birth. The ancient Greeks, having rejected kings, developed the ideology of the *natural slave*, a biological concept articulated by Aristotle, as quoted above. Their successors in empire, the Romans, thought an inherent slave was proved by slavish behaviour - like the Persians serving under a king or the Gauls going down to defeat in battle. This notion was inherited by the feudal system in Europe, though it was combined with the different rights of social orders - lords subject to kings, as well as ruling their own retainers - and a basic Christian equality of souls before god.

In any social formation the conservative tendency is provided by stabilised social forms - the *relations of production* - while the revolutionising tendency derives from the *forces of production* - including human beings with their wants and inventiveness, as well as, within capitalism, the commercial imperative.

From the 14th century feudalism



In the DNA?

began to break up, when the expanding practice of trade made some people richer than their forefathers. As various princes became richer, they entered into conflict over the resources that already existed, such as land and gold, especially in the newly discovered Americas - an economic approach known as mercantilism. The Catholic church found itself poorer in comparison and, to maintain its splendour, started to sell ‘salvation’, offering entry into heaven at death: that is, by Christians paying to have holy mass or buy pardons. The latter were called ‘indulgences’.

Christian doctrines

With the *Reconquista* (reconquest) of Muslim Spain in 1248, Spain and Portugal took over the north African slave trade. This was justified by reference to the Biblical injunction only to enslave “the heathen around you” or “the children of strangers”.¹

This was initially taken to mean that western Christians could enslave Muslims and later eastern Orthodox Christians. Though Christians were forbidden to enslave Christians, they were granted permission by a succession of popes to enslave prisoners of war. In 1452 pope Nicholas V granted the king of Portugal the right to “invade, search out, capture and subjugate the Saracens and pagans and any other unbelievers and enemies of Christ ... to reduce their persons into perpetual slavery”.² A crusade had already begun against Africa in 1418 and so it was the war against the Moors, African Muslims, which justified first Portugal and then Spain acquiring and selling slaves in the New World of the Americas.

With the discovery of the Caribbean by Columbus in 1492, and with the mining of gold and silver in America, vast reserves of labour were needed and these were obtained from Africa. However, as heathens they should be converted and as good Christians they became unenslavable. More justification being necessary, the *Bible* was consulted and this time the slavers fixed on the story of Noah in Genesis: Noah’s son, Ham is deemed unworthy, because he saw his father naked and therefore had become “the servant of servants”.³ Ham soon came to be seen as black: racism was born.

Christian intellectuals though were divided over the general question of whether people were fated to commit evil or not: that is, predestination. In 1465 a scholar at Louvain, Peter de Rivo, argued that prediction as to future action need not be true or false.

He took the *New Testament* example of Jesus telling Peter that “You will deny me three times”. There could be a third truth-value, said de Rivo: true or false to be confirmed - Peter still had the freedom not to do it. Unfortunately in 1471 a new pope, Sixtus, denied such an idea - only miracles could contradict ‘actual truth in the articles of faith’. What Jesus had foretold *must* occur. Peter *had* to utter three denials: the pope had said it.

Over the 15th century the European Christian church had faced criticisms from various reformers over such innovations as indulgences. These reformers broke with the church (now known as Catholic) and formed their own ‘Reformed’ or ‘Protestant’ sects - based purely, they said, on interpretation of the *Bible*. These ‘puritans’ were supported by certain princes, in Germany as well as in England (Henry VIII), who for various reasons asserted themselves against church authority.

One of the major reform thinkers was French: John Calvin (1509-64), who went on to govern the reformed church of Geneva. Calvin did indeed agree with other Protestants that the church had gone against the gospels and that grace was granted by god alone. But he went further: to the logical conclusion that, if grace could therefore not be something granted during the individual’s lifetime in exchange for a mass or a pardon, souls must therefore be born predestined to be saved or damned. As Calvinists later declared, some were “predefined to everlasting life”, while there are others whom god “pleaseth, for the glory of His Sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by; and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin”.⁴ The individual soul was predestined for either a good or bad end.

Other reformers like Martin Luther and Erasmus also believed that grace could not be earned, but did not go as far as Calvin. For them the individual soul was like a town - a place that could be laid siege to and taken by either god or Satan. Free will played a part in the struggle, but god ultimately decided the result by delivery of grace. “If God,” wrote Luther, “is absent, Satan is present and only an evil will is in us”.⁵ But awareness of sin helps - like a sentry who alerts others to danger, but cannot win the battle on their own. Erasmus, a more sophisticated Dutch scholar living in England, wrote that the good in us was supported by ‘reason’. However, evil could “obscure” reason: “the power of the will was not completely extinguished”, but it was “unable to perform the

good”.⁶ The conscious sinner still needed help from god’s grace: they could not achieve it alone. In atheist terms, this intervention from outside might stand for something like the transformative effect of circumstances, luck, or the action of others, including new ideas or political movements. The mind is not an island.

Later bourgeois Protestants, though not free of god’s judgement, wanted to be free from earthly monarchs. Political freedom became a valued possession. Just as no cleric could tell you how to read the *Bible* (now in the vernacular), so authority in the state was suspect too, especially if associated with Catholics - as in England, where King Charles I had a Catholic wife. Protestant artisans, male and female, were especially oppositional.

After the anti-monarchical civil war (1642-51), philosophers began to develop theories of human freedom. One such was John Locke (1632-1704). Locke argued that people were born without ‘innate ideas’: that is, their knowledge in life was based on experience through their senses. The mind started as a ‘blank slate’, which took in skills and impressions. No-one was destined to be able to ride a horse, write a great poem or commit a murder.

However, Locke did believe in evil acts and that criminals should be punished: having to learn things did not preclude responsibility. As his disciple, Thomas Jefferson, put it in the Declaration of Independence, all humans were “created equal” and free, “endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights”.⁷ On the other hand, slavery was permitted in one part of the United States, where black humans were neither equal nor free. Disagreement over this led to a civil war and in the end that contradiction had to be resolved - if it ever was.

English slavery

The classification by ‘race’ - which could mean by colour or ethnicity, as opposed to nation or religion - is a defining characteristic of the modern period in Europe. But when the Englishman, Francis Drake, stole African slaves from the Spanish on behalf of Queen Elizabeth I, he composed no treatises or racial tables.

The first English slaves were in fact white: a law under Edward VI was designed to handle the vagabonds created by peasants being turned off the land, so that sheep could be introduced.⁸ From 1547 anyone found without work could be adopted as a slave. Justices of the peace were allowed to hunt these vagabonds down and make them slaves of the parish - a practice that lasted well into the late 19th century. This was then what a Protestant state did to white English people.

It was, however, far away - in the Caribbean, on the island of Jamaica, acquired by Cromwell’s forces in 1655 - that the practice of slavery grew in volume. English plantation slavery was set up without sermon or proclamation, but assumed like a new fashion - a way of Protestants getting one over Catholics (the Spanish and Portuguese) and a business conducted by traders, pirates and planters that started small but grew like Silicon Valley. A major turning point occurred in 1662, when Charles II granted trading rights to the Royal Africa Company. The plantations and the trade in Africans expanded, as sugar consumption rose from 4lbs per person in 1700 to 20lbs in 1800.

In the 18th century, with rebellions by the slaves themselves and a growing abolitionist movement, arguments had

to be marshalled to define why whites could rule blacks without even paying them. The fact that transported Africans had to be trained and acclimatised in ‘seeding camps’ showed that there was nothing natural about Africans working in the heat of the Americas. Africa had only been picked as the source of supply because the supply was so large, not because Africans were particularly fitted for this work. In fact many of those taken did not survive the conditions of the passage over the Atlantic, let alone the work in the fields.

The law itself had not changed that much - except for the Navigation Acts under Cromwell, which restricted the slave trade and consequent goods arriving at British ports to British ships alone. If justification, apart from profit, had to be offered for slavery, there was always the *Bible*: Leviticus 25 and the punishment of Noah’s ‘black’ son, Ham - ‘wild’ blacks needed to be disciplined. But throughout the 17th century, as the profitability of the slave trade and plantations grew, parliamentarians in England fought civil wars. Those free English in the Caribbean would defy the same parliament if it tried to interfere with their rights over the slave.

It was only when the abolitionist movement got going in the 18th century that a more ‘learned’ response was required. Philosophers David Hume and Charles-Louis de Secondat (Montesquieu) mused on the character of Africans and Edward Long, a historian and from a line of slave-owners, wrote his *History of Jamaica* (1774). In 1771 the House of Assembly parliament in Jamaica had taken steps to ban sexual relationships between black and white and forbade mixed children inheriting white men’s property. Long’s book adopted a racial hierarchy from the taxonomies of Linnaeus (1760s), where in every mental and moral way blacks were supposed inferior to whites - childlike, lazy and dangerous.

It was the mission of ‘free-born Englishmen’, as the planters declared themselves, to civilise the *negroes*, the planters’ name for slaves. (Incidentally, the term ‘white’ for Europeans first came into use on Jamaica.⁹) Long asserted that plantations were a mild institution anyway, and in some parts of the world slavery was inevitable. Other writers in the ‘Age of Enlightenment’ also categorised the *negro* as marked by an animalistic and immature character, which might benefit from the right cultural institutions on an island in the sun.

Fortunes continued to be made and duly passed on to families and companies in the UK. Britain was flooded with money, wages rose relative to the rest of Europe and there came a need in the heart of Empire for cheaper labour-saving technology. This led to investment in what became known as the industrial revolution.¹⁰

In the next article of the series I will discuss the faux-science of racism - from the various kinds of race classification to eugenics ●

Notes

1. Leviticus, 25, 44-46.
2. Papal bull *Dum diversas*.
3. Genesis, 9:25.
4. *Westminster confession of faith* (1646).
5. Luther *On the bondage of the will* (1525).
6. Erasmus *On the freedom of the will* (1525): www.sjsu.edu/people/james.lindahl/courses/Hum1B/s3/Erasmus-and-Luther-on-Free-Will-and-Salvation.pdf.
7. www.ushistory.org/declaration/document.
8. See K Marx *Capital* Vol 1, chapter 27.
9. D Olusoga *Black and British: a forgotten history* London 2016.
10. See RC Allen *Global economic history* Oxford 2011.

OBITUARY

Overcoming misogyny

Yassamine Mather tells the story of a woman whose achievements were made against all the odds

Maryam Mirzakhani, who died on July 14 at the age of 40, was a professor at Stanford University, a mathematician who obtained the quadrennial Fields Medal in 2014. The award, which is often compared in stature to the Nobel Prize, was given to Mirzakhani for her work in theoretical mathematics.

Sanaz Moazezi, writing on the website of the Organization for Defending Victims of Violence, has this to say about her childhood in Iran:

She wanted to be a writer. She read any book she could get her hands on ... Their house was near a street filled with bookshops. She was not allowed to look through the books because she ended up turning the bookstore upside down until she got the book that she wanted, and would make the proprietor angry ...

Her brother was the one who got her interested in science ... One day he told her a story about a German mathematician called Carl Friedrich Gauss, who when he was a student had in just a few seconds got the answer to the total of the numbers 1 to 100 in an ingenious way. This was the first time that she found the joy of getting a beautiful answer ...¹

Her school principal stressed the importance of her female students having equal opportunities with the boys and, with her interest in mathematics aroused, Maryam went on to become a student first at Farzanegan School and then at one of Iran's best universities, Sharif University in Tehran.

The Iranian government has always claimed that her achievements are testimony to the country's educational system, while the opposition points out that in order to pursue her studies as she wished she had to leave the country. The reality is that for the kind of innovative work she was involved in very few institutions, even in Europe and the United States, would have been able to accommodate her. That is why she did her doctorate in Harvard, then moved on to Princeton and since 2008 has worked in Stanford.

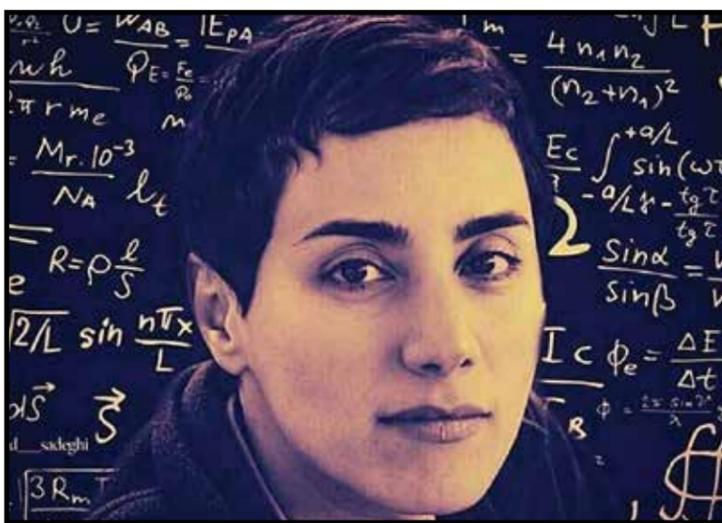
The achievements of pupils from Farzanegan School (where most are from middle class families) only highlights the inequalities in the Islamic republic's educational system; and the fact that most, if not all, of those who qualify at the school and then graduate at university end up working outside Iran is testimony to the country's serious deficiencies when it comes to research in institutions of higher education.

There is also controversy regarding Maryam Mirzakhani's portrayal in the media inside Iran. She was married to a fellow academic - a Czech-US citizen - and has not been photographed wearing a hijab outside Iran. Yet the official media (with the exception of a photo shown on the Twitter account of president Hassan Rouhani in 2014) insist on using images that have been Photoshopped to cover her hair, or in the case of some newspapers showing her head against a dark background so you cannot see she is not wearing a headscarf - an insult to the intelligence of the Iranian people.

A campaign is now underway over the citizenship of her daughter, Anahita. Children born to Iranian women married to non-Iranians do not get Iranian citizenship, and there has been much speculation, inside and outside Iran, about Anahita's nationality. There are reports of a petition signed by over 60 members of the Majles (Islamic parliament) to grant her Iranian citizenship - while at the same time keeping in place the misogynistic regulations for the thousands of other Iranian women married to non-Iranians.

Before Iranian royalists try to claim superiority over the current clerical dictators in Iran, let us remind everyone that (1) women's legal rights, such as the right to travel abroad granted only with the consent of a husband or guardian, were no different under the shah; and (2) during the latter years of his rule state propaganda seemed to have one aim: to encourage girls to become Miss Universe contestants.

For all its many misogynistic laws, probably the one and only positive thing one can say about Iran's Islamic Republic is that it has saved young Iranian women from sexist US cultural imports such as Miss Universe pageants,



Maryam Mirzakhani: claimed by all Iranian factions

whereas the shah thought women were clearly "inferior to men", as they had "not produced a decent chef!"²

The royalist nostalgia, repeated *ad nauseam* this week, for the good old days of the shah, when women held ministerial and managerial posts, is also nonsense. All such women were from the ruling circles - to give one example, the less than talented sister-in-law of the shah's minister for agriculture was appointed a deputy minister, who revealed her ignorance of basic geography every time she was interviewed. The same thing occurs under the Islamic republic, where female relatives of senior clerics are promoted - very few hold such posts on merit.

Research

When Maryam Mirzakhani won the Fields award in 2014, fellow mathematician Jordan Ellenberg explained her research as follows:

Her work expertly blends dynamics with geometry. Among other things, she studies billiards ... She considers not just one billiard table, but the universe of all possible billiard tables. And the kind of dynamics she studies doesn't directly concern the motion of the billiards on the table, but instead a transformation of the billiard table itself, which is changing its shape in a rule-governed way; if you like, the table itself moves like a strange planet around the universe of all possible tables ...

This isn't the kind of thing you do to win at pool, but it's the kind of thing you do to win a Fields Medal. And it's what you need to do in order to expose the dynamics at the heart of geometry.³

In the last few days everyone has been asking about the practical use of her work - as if advances in mathematics are supposed to be like waving a magic stick. The reality is such advances are multifaceted and it will take a long time before physicists and experts in dynamics will be able to put her equations to practical use, so we might not benefit from her discoveries in the short term. However, we have to remind ourselves that every time we get in a car, take a train or fly in a plane we are benefiting from the work of mathematicians and physicists who devised the equations making the various dynamics possible. In other words, it might take a few years - or even decades - before her mathematical discoveries are put to practical use, but there is no doubt that hers were ground-breaking formulations.

Mirzakhani's PhD work dealt with hyperbolic geometry - the study of curved surfaces. Mathematicians are

shortest paths - called 'geodesics' - on curved surfaces, among many other remarkable results in geometry and beyond.⁵

Mirzakhani's unique approach to geometry and dynamical systems covered a number of specialised fields in mathematics, from hyperbolic geometry and complex analysis to topology and dynamics.

She studied and developed theories around Riemann surfaces, which are considered the natural setting for studying the global behaviour of functions - especially multi-valued functions, such as the square root and other algebraic functions, or the logarithm. Mathematicians are interested in Riemann surfaces because they can be arranged topologically, by a single number following g (the genus of the surface).

Her work will be of great significance for decades to come and she will be a source of inspiration to many young female students. However, the reality is that in Iran - and indeed the rest of the world - from a very young age girls are discouraged from studying mathematics and physics, to the detriment of us all. No fewer than 94% of maths professors in British universities are men. The group, Women in Mathematics, which holds annual events to encourage women to take up mathematics, has set itself the goal of achieving 18% participation by women in its programmes (currently they make up just 13%). Males also dominate undergraduate degrees in engineering and technology (86%) and in computer science (83%).

But Maryam Mirzakhani proved through her own example that things do not have to be like that - even if you were brought up in a clerical dictatorship ●

Notes

1. www.odvv.org/blog-583-From-Dreams-of-Writing-to-Getting-the-Fields-Mathematics-Prize.
2. <https://newrepublic.com/article/92745/shah-iran-mohammad-reza-pahlevi-oriana-fallaci>.
3. www.slate.com/articles/life/do_the_math/2014/08/maryam_mirzakhani_fields_medal_first_woman_to_win_math_s_biggest_prize_works.html.
4. www.quantamagazine.org/maryam-mirzakhani-is-first-woman-fields-medalist-20140812.
5. www.newyorker.com/tech/elements/maryam-mirzakhani-pioneering-mathematical-legacy.

Summer Offensive Much needed

"Superb coverage of Corbyn, Momentum, the Labour Party and the election," writes comrade DV about the *Weekly Worker*. "And easily the best, most open letters page on the left." No wonder he thought our paper was worth a £20 donation - which, of course, very much counts towards the CPGB's £30,000 Summer Offensive fundraising target.

But the star of the show this week was comrade KB, who in total came up with no less than £340, made up by the booking of a stall in addition to a direct donation. But that was only just ahead of TB, whose £300 came from what she spent on provisions for, amongst other things, KB's stall! Meanwhile VP paid £200 for a relative to attend the CPGB's Communist University, which takes place in London from August 12-19.

BP came up with a more than handy £120, while RG made one of his regular donations - this

time for £75 - to our paper. As it happens, that sum was matched exactly by comrade MM. And FG also deserves a mention for his £50 PayPal gift to the *Weekly Worker* - he was one of 2,412 online readers this week. Finally there was the £20 donated by comrade Hassan.

All in all, our Summer Offensive was boosted by £1,732, which takes the total raised so far to £9,770. Which means that we're just about one-third of the way there, with a little over four weeks to go. While we expect to raise several thousand during Communist University week, it would be very useful to be within, say, £5,000 before CU starts.

So, if you fancy helping us raise that much needed total, you know what to do! ●

Peter Manson

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

Communist University 2017

100th anniversary of the Russian Revolution

A week of provocative and stimulating debate, sponsored by Labour Party Marxists and CPGB

Saturday August 12 - Saturday August 19 (inclusive)

Goldsmiths, University of London
St James Garden Room
8 Lewisham Way, New Cross,
London SE14 6NW

Nearest stations:
New Cross, New Cross Gate

Confirmed speakers:

August Nimtz, Hillel Ticktin, Neil Davidson, Moshé Machover, Marc Mulholland, Michael Roberts, Jack Conrad, Kevin Bean, Tony Greenstein, Ian Birchall, Mike Macnair, Yassamine Mather, Paul Demarty, Anne McShane, Lawrence Parker, Chris Knight, Camilla Power

Accommodation: Loring Hall, St James Full week, including accommodation in en suite single rooms: £250 (£150 unwaged) Solidarity price: £300.

First/final weekend, including one night's accommodation: £60 (£30).

Full week, no accommodation: £60 (£30).

Day: £10 (£5). Single session: £5 (£3). Reservation: £30.

Cheques: Make payable to CPGB and send to: BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX.

PayPal: Go to the CPGB website: www.cpgb.org.uk.

Bank transfer: email tina@cpgb.org.uk for details.



1917

Soviet leadership clashes with ranks

‘1917: the view from the streets’ - leaflets of the Russian Revolution, Nos 14-15

One hundred years ago this week, between July 16 and 20 [3 and 7] 1917, a protest movement of workers and soldiers in Petrograd was repelled by military and police attacks, with hundreds of casualties.

The July uprising - or July Days - came about due to the failure of the Russian military offensive in June, a worsening of the crisis in Petrograd's food and fuel supply, and a crisis of confidence in the government after two liberal (Cadet) ministers resigned over

their opposition to Ukrainian autonomy. In the wake of the offensive's collapse, massive unrest arose in the Russian army, which could no longer fight effectively. The uprising began among soldiers in the Petrograd garrison, who feared transfer to the front, but it also involved workers who were already on strike over low wages. Workers and soldiers demanded "All power to the soviets" and raised other radical slogans.

Members of the Bolshevik Military Organisation, anarchists and Left Socialist

Revolutionaries encouraged the soldiers' revolt. The Bolshevik CC originally opposed the uprising, but quickly changed its position to one of support after tens of thousands of demonstrators surrounded the Tauride Palace, where the soviet met.

The defeat of the July movement temporarily checked the revolution's impetus, as the Provisional Government drove the Bolshevik movement semi-underground and arrested Leon Trotsky and many other revolutionary leaders.

The first document below represents the position toward the uprising of the moderate socialists who then held a majority in the soviets. The second document provides the Bolshevik point of view.

This series is edited by John Riddell and the leaflets have been translated and annotated by Barbara Allen from AG Shlyapnikov Semnadsatyi god Vol 4 (1931), pp259-60, 263.

First published at <http://Johnriddell.wordpress.com>.



Slaughter: Petrograd's Nevsky Prospect, July 1917

Protests strike blows against our brothers at the front

July 16-17 (3-4) 1917

To all workers and soldiers of the city of Petrograd.

Soldier and worker comrades! Despite the clearly expressed will of all socialist parties without exception, unknown people are calling upon you to go out armed onto the street. This is how they propose that you should protest against the disbanding of regiments which dishonoured themselves at the front by criminally abandoning their duty to the revolution.

As the authorised representatives of all Russia's revolutionary democratic forces, we declare to you:

- Army and front organisations demanded the disbandment of regiments at the front, which was carried out by the order of war minister, comrade AF Kerensky, whom we chose.
- The protests in defence of the

disbanded regiments strike blows against our brothers who are spilling their blood at the front.

- We remind the soldier comrades that not one military unit has the right to go out armed without the permission of the commander in chief, who is acting in full agreement with us.

- We declare that all those who violate this decision during this so critical time for Russia are traitors and enemies of the revolution.

- We will implement this decision by all the means at our disposal.

Bureau of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies
Bureau of the All-Russian Executive Committee of Soviets of Peasants' Deputies

Let the All-Russian Soviet take all power

July 16-17 (3-4) 1917

Worker and soldier comrades of Petrograd! Given that the counterrevolutionary bourgeoisie has obviously come out against the revolution, let the All-Russian Soviet of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies take all power into its hands.

This is the will of the revolutionary population of Petrograd, which has the right to bring its will, by means of peaceful and organised demonstration, to the attention of the executive committees of the All-Russian Soviet of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies, which is now in session.

Long live the will of the revolutionary workers and soldiers! Long live the power of the soviets!

The coalition government has failed. Unable to carry out the tasks for which it was created, it collapsed. The revolution faces enormous and extremely difficult tasks. A new authority is needed that would, in unity with the revolutionary

proletariat, the revolutionary army and the revolutionary peasantry, resolutely fortify the people's conquests. Only the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies can be such an authority.

Yesterday, the revolutionary garrison of Petrograd and workers came out to advance the slogan, "All power to the Soviet!" We call for the transformation of this movement, which flared up in the regiments and in the factories, into the peaceful, organised expression of the will of all of worker, soldier, and peasant Petrograd.

Central Committee of the Russian Social Democratic Workers Party (RSDWP)
Petersburg committee of the RSDWP
Inter-district committee of the RSDWP
Military Organisation of the CC RSDWP
Commission of the workers' section of the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies

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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**Rule by decree
extended for
another three
months**

Unbridled state power

Esen Uslu reports on the first anniversary of the failed coup attempt

A few days after the mass demonstration called to mark the end of the march led by Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, leader of the Republican People's Party (CHP), in Istanbul,¹ president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) attempted to outdo it with a commemoration of the first anniversary of the failed coup. The whole apparatus of the government and Istanbul municipality was put to work. The suspension bridge spanning the Bosphorus was selected as the backdrop and Erdoğan's speech the intended highlight.

During the day there was a special session of parliament. Kılıçdaroğlu had declared that the CHP would participate in all events organised to commemorate those killed resisting the attempted coup (the bridge has been renamed the July 15 Martyrs Bridge). However, he attacked the AKP's actions since the attempted coup, claiming that the prime culprit lives in the "palace" - referring to the recently built presidential palace in Ankara. After this speech all invitations to other parties for commemoration events were withdrawn.

However, despite all the efforts of the state, the crowd was nowhere near as large as Erdoğan had hoped, and his frustration was reflected in his speech, when he reiterated his commitment to the reintroduction of death penalty. The phrase he employed was that he would "chop off the heads of those traitors". On the other hand, he attempted to portray the Turkish state as liberal and democratic by telling an anecdote: after the attempted coup some representatives of the 'international community' had asked what the fate of those who had participated would be. His reply was that nobody in Turkey was buried in an unmarked grave. Apparently that was enough to prove his point.

He used the occasion to attack Kılıçdaroğlu by claiming he was marching in step with the Islamist "terrorist" movement led by Fethullah Gülen. Erdoğan added that the AKP government and the state had displayed their democratic credentials by allowing the Ankara-to-Istanbul protest to go ahead unhindered. But he added that justice should not be sought on the streets: it is handed down to us by the "independent" courts.

He criticised Ahmet Türk, the former MP of the People's Democratic Party (HDP), who had been released from prison, where he was remanded on charges of terrorism, on the grounds of old age and ill health. Yet he had made a brief appearance at Kılıçdaroğlu's march to show his support. Erdoğan claimed this meant that Türk had lied about his health - even though his medical report had been provided by a state hospital.

This led the president on to another court case, where a former officer, who was on trial for participating in the attempted coup, arrived from prison wearing a T-shirt emblazoned with the word "Hero". The judges stopped the session and forced him to change his attire. Erdoğan suggested that from now on all prisoners should wear uniforms



Backdrop: Istanbul's Martyrs Bridge

similar to the orange jump-suits worn by Guantanamo inmates.

Of course, that suggestion evoked Islamic State, which has forced its hostages to dress in a similar way for its propaganda videos. It also brought to mind the military courts and torture chamber prisons of the military junta of the 1980s, where attempts to make political prisoners wear uniforms provoked naked court protests and resulted in severe beatings. In the end the junta retreated.

Everywhere

The organisers of the commemorative events used every available channel. At mosques across Istanbul, special Salawat prayers were broadcast via loudspeakers attached to the minarets for hours on end. The Salawat is only supposed to be chanted as a call to noon prayers before a funeral ceremony, but now, it seems, it has become the AKP means of making use of Islamic sentiment for political purposes.

And, most striking of all, throughout the evening anybody who attempted to make or receive a call on their mobile phone was first treated to a recording of Erdoğan commemorating the "martyrs

of July 15" before the call could begin. All mobile companies had their arms twisted into providing this 'service' to their customers.

The photos of fearful soldiers used in the posters advertising the meetings were later found out to have been plagiarised from US military sources and Photoshopped to falsely represent those who took part in the attempted coup. There are ample gruesome photos taken during the coup, so why the AKP propaganda machine opted for such trickery baffled many.

Erdoğan obviously believes he has artistic prowess, as video clips of him reciting patriotic poems were repeatedly shown on state TV. But, when it came to his actual speeches, they were full of unspecified bogeymen. He seemed to be accusing Turkey's European and North American allies in Nato, without saying so directly, of being the puppet masters controlling both Gülen and Kurdish guerrillas. Such convoluted claims where nothing specific is said seems to have become a habit in Turkey. In this way Erdoğan hopes to avoid further embarrassment in the international arena, even though everybody knows who he is talking

about.

The only open criticism made of the US is for supplying arms and ammunition to Kurdish forces in Syria for the operation to liberate Raqqa from IS. Erdoğan claims such supplies had been passing over the Turkey-Syria border despite hundreds of miles of state-of-the-art imaging equipment and five-storey-high watch towers.

State of emergency

Amid all this hullabaloo, in parliament MPs from the AKP, supported by the far-right MHP, passed without too much discussion the government's proposal to extend the state of emergency for another three months. This enables the government to avoid the niceties of parliament and rule by decree.

And the judiciary has taken its lead from the AKP: 12 human rights activists, including the director of Amnesty International in Turkey and a member of its executive, were arrested during a meeting they were holding near Istanbul. They were kept incommunicado for 12 days and brought before a special court in

the early hours. Eight of them were remanded in custody on charges of aiding and abetting a terrorist organisation. Which organisation was not mentioned on the charge-sheet. That is how the judiciary in Turkey works nowadays - what was normal in Kurdistan now applies across the whole country.

This unbridled state power is, of course, not sufficient to maintain Erdoğan's control in the long term. Meanwhile alarm calls are sounding in relation to the economy. Budget overspending and the extension of state credits to small and medium businesses before the April constitutional referendum for a while seemed to ease hardship. However, now the AKP insists that the budget deficit, together with reserves of foreign currency and gold, must be kept under control in order to avoid a crash. This will mean a new austerity package which will be highly unpopular.

The 'hot money' created by the quantitative easing policies of leading economies can no longer be used to support the 'spend and hope for the best' economic policies of AKP. The only state still committed to support the AKP's economic policy seems to be Qatar, which is facing its own serious difficulties.

So there is not much room to manoeuvre for Erdoğan. It is all or bust. However, the opposition still seems unable to take any real advantage of his troubles.

Postscript

As I write, on Tuesday July 18, Istanbul has suffered a deluge - the post-truth society got another wake-up call. Despite all the skyscrapers and gated residential developments, all the roads, tunnels and bridges built using cheap credit and held up as great achievements of the AKP, today the failings of Turkey's infrastructure are all too apparent. The roads and tunnels opened to great fanfare have been flooded, as has the underground. Roads now look more like rivers. There have been power cuts, while internet and cable networks stopped working. And all this happened despite prior warnings by the meteorological services. The municipalities under AKP control have been exposed as miserable failures, while government representatives could only resort to hapless - and hopeless - speeches ●

Notes

1. See 'Kemalists seize the moment' *Weekly Worker* July 13.

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