

A paper of Marxist polemic and Marxist unity



weekly
worker



**Calls for 'reconfigured alliance' with ANC:
SACP divisions mount**

- Letters and debate
- National government
- Anti-Semitism slurs
- Women and computers

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Towards a Communist Party of the European Union

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**Leon Trotsky
sowed dragon's
teeth and
reaped ...**



Maxfield Parrish 'Cadmus sowing dragon's teeth' (1908)

LETTERS



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

Ratification

On September 16 Tory MP Justine Greening came out in favour of a second referendum. She proposed three questions and a system of preferential voting. The Labour Party is not in favour, but did not rule it out. Theresa May said it would not happen under any circumstances. Politicians and parties are split between 'yes', 'no' and 'maybe'.

There will be a Tory deal with the European Union. There will be a process of ratification. The only question is, who will be able to vote to ratify or reject it. It could be ratified by the crown - perhaps by the privy council. It could be endorsed by the Westminster parliament with its 1,450 MPs and lords having a 'meaningful vote'. It could be ratified or rejected by 46 million people in a 'people's referendum'.

Opposing a people's vote means supporting the authority of the crown-in-parliament. There may be a case to oppose a ratification referendum, but it is not based on general principles. This would find the *Weekly Worker* automatically opposing the Irish referenda on gay marriage and abortion and the Scottish referendum on self-determination and separation. We cannot hide from the working class behind a big wall of 'principles'.

We are not dealing with any old referenda at any old time, but specifically in relation to the fight over the United Kingdom leaving the EU. It is essential to distinguish 'repeat referendum' from 'ratification referendum'. The term 'second referendum' is often used to confuse or obfuscate. We need to cut through that.

A repeat referendum means asking the same question from 2016 - "Do you want to leave the EU?" It is claimed by the right that 'leavers' in the ruling elite want to overturn the result by running it again. The Irish case is cited. After the Treaty of Lisbon was voted down, the Irish government ran it again to get the result they wanted.

In principle there is no reason why a given nation should not be asked the same question again. People are then free to give the same answer or change their minds. Democracy is a process which involves learning more of the truth and thinking again. Elections every five years could be annual events. They are not 'once in a lifetime', as Cameron described the 2014 Scottish referendum. Scotland's IndieRef2 would be a repeat referendum asking the same question as in 2014.

A ratification referendum is different. It is not seeking to repeat the first EU referendum. It is asking a different question for the first time: 'Do you support or reject the deal negotiated between Her Majesty's government and the EU?' The 1976 Common Market referendum was in effect a ratification of Ted Heath's actual agreement to join the EU on known terms and not a decision to join in principle.

In England, 'leave' supporters often describe a ratification referendum as a 'second referendum' to suggest it is an attempt by anti-democratic forces to run the same event for a second time and get a different result. In January 2018 Nigel Farage mischievously called for a "second referendum". He wanted to repeat the same question to put an end to the "moaning of politicians who had not accepted the previous vote" (*The Independent*

January 11 2018).

Recently the University and College Union circulated its members to consult on a 'second referendum'. General secretary Sally Hunt explained: "At its recent meeting the national executive committee (NEC) agreed to my recommendation that the union consult members on whether to support a *second referendum* on the *final Brexit deal* negotiated by the UK government." Since there has not been a first referendum on the final deal, this displays a Faragean level of confusion.

We must be absolutely clear. Our slogan must be 'No to a second or repeat referendum - yes to a ratification referendum'. Justine Greening called for a second referendum, containing both repeat and ratification-type questions. It must be opposed, but not on the grounds that we oppose every referendum on principle, everywhere, on every occasion.

In England there is a democratic case to oppose a repeat referendum and support a ratification referendum. The 2016 EU referendum divided the working class in England. A repeat referendum would deepen that divide and play into the hands of the Tory right, Ukip and the fascists. Jeremy Corbyn is correct to rule out a repeat referendum, but wrong to oppose a ratification referendum.

In Scotland the argument is different. A majority voted to remain - an important distinction between 'leave'-voting England and 'remain'-voting Scotland. There is no reason for Scottish 'remain' supporters to repeat this - although Scottish 'leave' supporters may have a reason to call for a repeat, hoping Scotland may have changed its mind.

At the end of the day the issue of a referendum is a tactical question in a struggle that has divided the country into 'leave' and 'remain'. We need to locate the case for a referendum in the struggle between reactionaries and ultra-lefts, on one side, and liberals and democrats, on the other.

Steve Freeman
London

Generalisations

If one relies on an incorrect method, the temptation to misrepresent the position of another increases, especially if the latter relies on the correct method: ie, dialectical and historical materialism.

Comrade Mike Macnair is not always dialectical. In his article, 'Irrational optimism' (July 12) - an extended reply to my article of June 14 ('Trotskyism and May 1968') - he tries to discredit my position by misrepresenting me. Apropos May 1968, I did *not* say that the Parti Communiste Français could have taken power. As he correctly points out, this was impossible because the PCF "had been educating the French working class for 20 years in cross-class coalitionist, pacifism and gradualism".

Later he asks the primary question: why was Stalinism the dominant material force for most of the 20th century? But he doesn't answer this one, so I will: in response to the October revolution, imperialism imposed the counterrevolution from outside, aided and abetted by the reformist parties of the Second International. After the German social democrats voted for war in 1914, came the revolution of 1919. This was smashed by the Freikorps, under the orders of a Social Democratic government. That defeat, in turn, led to the ultra-left uprising of 1921, wherein a handful of revolutionaries substituted themselves for the masses, who no longer had an appetite for

war of any kind. The betrayals of social democracy during this period left the Soviet Union backward and isolated. During the civil war, it was forced to transform itself into an 'iron dictatorship', in order to defend the revolution. Altogether these factors created the conditions for the Stalinist counterrevolution from within.

In his account of the post-war far left, comrade Macnair relies too much on generalisations. For him, the degeneration of the Fourth International is part and parcel of the rise of the new left, whose 'charter' was a commitment to Bakuninist politics. But this ignores the real situation: in 1968 the student revolt and the subsequent uprising of the working class in France was a spontaneous event - nine million workers were on strike; tens of thousands of them had occupied their factories. The far left had no option but to support the uprising and do what it could. The Fourth International was forced to place the working class at the epicentre of the revolution again.

We must not forget that, during this period revolutionaries did try to build revolutionary parties, despite the overwhelming social and ideological weight of Stalinism and social democracy. First came the attempt to build new revolutionary parties "in the tradition of Lenin and Trotsky"; then came defeat and degeneration. This is what comrade Macnair leaves out.

Despite his denial, his original 'colours' article certainly gives the impression that post-war Trotskyism and the far left were all of a piece. Therefore, from the standpoint of dialectical materialism, the "vast bulk" of my June 14 article, discussing the post-war history of the Trotskyist movement, is *relevant* to the argument which he had offered in his original piece, 'May 68 to colour revolutions' (May 31).

I stand by my defence that Mandel's call for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from eastern Europe in 1947 was based on rational optimism, because, how else could the Fourth International distinguish its revolutionary politics from that of Stalinism and capitalism, even though such a withdrawal would have led to the immediate occupation of eastern Europe by US imperialism and its allies?

Comrade Macnair is right when he says that I extend the rational optimism argument to the May events of 1968. But at no stage did I argue that the working class could take power by means of "a general-strikist policy". Rather I argued that the task of the far left should have been to encourage workers to build factory committees under their own control, as the precursor to workers' councils, as well as the need to form their own workers' defence militias (via an attempt to split the French armed forces: ie, by appealing to conscript soldiers to join the uprising).

But this would not lead to another October revolution, since there was no revolutionary communist party in place; hence the need for other demands, such as calling for an end to the fifth republic, the setting up of a constituent assembly to decide a new constitution for France, which could then become a forum for raising the minimum-maximum programme, etc.

Now the world has been turned upside-down. Trump's bandwagon is gathering pace and threatens to upset neoliberalism's appellation, which has ruled for nearly half a century: 'Make America great' via protectionism and anti-immigration policies, versus globalisation, which relies on outsourcing of capital, on the one side, as well as immigration (both legal

and illegal), on the other, to maximise profits and depress wages. Who will win? Rightwing populism seems set to trample all over neoliberalism; the masses have had enough of austerity, which can no longer be covered up by a bogus neoliberal social agenda; albeit they put their trust in a maverick billionaire businessman (or Brexit here in Britain). Meanwhile left populism has no answer to the growing crisis and will wither away. It remains to be seen whether another crash like 2008 will produce a new radicalisation of the masses (such as in 1968) or lead to social meltdown and the emergence of a capitalist strong state.

But, to return to 1968, I disagree with Macnair's analysis. Once again this is based on sweeping generalisations: "But at the end of the day, when we - the post-60s far left - could have engaged in a serious project of building parties and an international movement to the left of the 'two internationals' in the service of imperialism", we did not do so. Instead we collectively engaged in endless efforts to be the single spark that ignites the prairie fire."

Here he appears to be tarring the International Marxist Group, circa the 1970s, with the same brush as the International Socialists and Workers Revolutionary Party. But, as I have already said, for all of its mistakes at that time, the IMG was not such a group.

I must now ask comrade McNair, precisely what is the "serious project of building parties" today? We are living in a period following the historical defeat of the British working class. On the one side, this started under the Labour government (1974-79), which culminated in 'the winter of discontent'. On the other, this laid the basis for Thatcher's victory in 1979. This opened the way for the ultimate defeat of the miners, which ended with the severe degradation of the trade union movement, as well as the loss of working class communities.

Of course, I agree with Macnair's remark that "the task of building a real communist party still faces us". No doubt he supports the idea that the struggle for a Communist Party can be achieved on the basis of the CPGB's current strategy towards the Labour Party, which roughly translates as join it in order to transform it into a "real party of labour".

On the one hand, comrade Macnair argues that "to call for the withdrawal of Soviet forces from eastern Europe [in 1947] ... could lead the masses to power [amounts to] irrational optimism". On the other, what about the CPGB's strategy towards Labour, whereby "the microscopic forces" of its own supporters live "in the hope" that they can somehow transform it into a united front of the left, whilst at the same time withstanding the enormous pressures of opportunism and revisionism. But the party has already got the better of all previous attempts to defeat its bureaucratic leadership; both in the party and in the unions - not just the right, but the left also!

Rex Dunn
London

Conference?

London to Durham was a long journey so that I could attend Momentum's one-day "conference" on July 15. Especially as it was not a conference at all - no motions to debate, no elections, no plenary session, in fact no voting whatsoever. Just 20 separate meetings, or 'workshops', in four categories: political discussion, activist training, skills training and networks, climaxing at 4pm with the "World Cup Final on

a massive screen". Each session was "led" by an MP or other well-known figure, followed by three-minute contributions from the floor - each of which gave a fresh opportunity for more platform comment. Very frustrating!

Unfortunately I missed most of the "Momentum's Story" session with Richard Burgon MP and Laura Parker, so I don't know how they described the murder of Momentum's budding democracy in Jon Lansman's January 10 2016 bureaucratic coup. The developing regional committees were abolished at a stroke (I was a Hammersmith and Fulham delegate to the London committee) and the promised first (real) conference was scuppered to suppress embarrassing debate, with Jeremy Corbyn's blessing. The silencing worked, disorganising the left and hobbling what might have been an effective fightback against the ongoing witch-hunt of Corbyn supporters, in which the neutered Momentum has become complicit. The ensuing "digital democracy" has predictably proved its worthlessness. Local groups may continue to organise, but Momentum's "leadership", the national coordinating group, seems to be no more than a rubber stamp for Jon the owner.

Nevertheless, there were some detectable signs of recognition that blind loyalty to Corbyn and McDonnell might be a blind alley (pun intended) for Labour's rank and file. Richard Burgon, reminding us of Tony Benn's "fundamental shift in wealth and power", warned that "the nearer we get to office", the more intense will be the media attacks. Laura Parker MP timidly suggested that we might go from "unadulterated" backing for Jezza and John to the role of "supportive friends", being careful not to damage them (and, of course, a true friend is critical of one's faults).

Emma Lewell-Buck MP, speaking on 'The first 100 days of a Labour government', claimed naively that the 2017 Labour manifesto had been "very radical" and promised that the first queen's speech under Labour will include "something" that will put clear water between us and the Tories. She promised "immediate recognition of Palestine" and "no second referendum on Brexit" - Jeremy is talking to our European friends. But when Scott Reeve (Fulham, and Labour Republic) suggested that the queen might not ask Jeremy to form a government, Emma responded that she quite likes the queen and does not want to abolish the monarchy.

In the session on "people's public ownership", Tony Kearns of the CWU - one of four trade unions affiliated to Momentum - indulged in some competitive recruiting from the chair. Arguing for the nationalisation of BT and Royal Mail, he quoted Noam Chomsky ("Privatisation always undercuts democracy") and urged *everyone* to join CWU, which "wants to be the union for the fourth industrial revolution". He proclaimed the CWU's call to "repeal all the anti-trade union laws" (ie, not just the most recent one, as promised by Corbyn). Boasting of the CWU's special relationship with Momentum, "the union which backed Corbyn from day one," comrade Kearn proudly proclaimed that CWU's decision to affiliate to Momentum had been taken by a "full delegate conference" of the union - not realising the contrast with Momentum's non-conference.

The Momentum membership now stands above 42,000. At the registration desk I learned that 200

people had registered to attend, and around 150 attended. And these are individuals representing only themselves, not delegates.

Stan Keable
Hammersmith

Real communism

Weekly Worker readers may be interested to read this letter to *The Guardian*, which was not published.

Suzanne Moore writes ('Fun communism' *The Guardian* July 24) about the issues with 'communism' - cults, authority, centralisation; never mind gulags, secret police, rape, the imprisonment of intellectuals and mass killings. The Socialist Party of Great Britain has opposed these (principally Leninist) conceptions for over a century. We do not even believe that any party could lead to communism: only that a class-conscious working class wanting socialism will establish this for themselves - most expediently, and least precariously, accompanied by electing the Socialist Party to parliament.

What communism is, who it killed and seeing that as a moral equivalence with the deaths caused by capitalism hasn't been glossed over by us, but we have been glossed over by Moore. Nonetheless we look forward to her application, since she writes, "When communism connotes liberty, I will sign up." There will be no refusal to criticise Putin, or see the misery of Cuban peasants, Chinese workers or those starving in Venezuela, but equally there will be no brooking of our permanent opposition to the Labour Party.

Jon D White

Socialist Party of Great Britain

Freethinking

It seems clear that Labour are busy driving away good members, whilst simultaneously chasing their illusory Shangri-La of parliamentary so-called power.

Having waited for more than nine months for a decision, then having been readmitted to Labour after the disputes panel on the party's ruling national executive committee found that his case did not meet their 'threshold' required for it to be referred for expulsion, MP Jared O'Mara has quit Labour, saying he was "made to feel like a criminal".

In his letter to his constituents, O'Mara said: "I would be lying to those of you whom I represent ... if I continued under the pretence that I feel there is a place of acceptance and empathy for me as a working class, underprivileged, disabled man within the Labour Party. I have experienced little to make me feel welcome, understood and accepted during this last year. There is no doubt that I made mistakes as a young man, using distasteful language as a clumsy attempt at satire and sarcasm online. But that does not mean that is who I am today."

If by some strange twist of fate I had found myself in the situation of this young man, for my part I'd have added something along the lines of this to any such statement:

"Both shame and ignominy lie thick as well as poisonous within the very fabric of our British so-called Labour Party. Neither petty bourgeois morality nor its imposition via small-minded/arbitrary methods of enforcement will have any attraction whatsoever for genuine socialists. What an utterly hideous mentality they possess - one which will project less than zero appeal towards sophisticated, history-informed, modern-minded fighters, who have at heart the rights and values - and indeed the 'iridescent spirit' - of Planet Earth's working people!"

If by some further twist of

fate I were to have the ear of this freethinking as well as intuitively 'unshackled' young man, I'd urge him to stand as an independent but true socialist at the next general election. Not necessarily with any hopes for immediate parliamentary 'success', but rather with the overriding purpose of connecting with working people on an honest basis; with the sole and essential intention of presenting our socialist truth in an undistorted, uncompromising, indeed an unpolluted manner. A truth that contains appropriate humility, but one formulated from what we know to be its unique blend of Marxist and thereby solidly scientific analyses in harmony with soulful humanitarianism.

'Our truth: a universally magnetic iteration of soulful, communistic opalescence', as it could be expressed in distinctly more poetic language.

Bruno Kretzschmar
email

Russian rights

Pressure and overt repression against activists of independent, militant trade unions is not new in the world today, certainly not in Russia. Even so, the situation of Maxim Balashov, professor of higher mathematics and chairperson of the Universitetskaya Solidarnost union (an affiliate of the Confederation of Labour of Russia), at the Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology (MIPT), stands out for the extraordinary cynicism of the administration. Moreover, this case poses the broader issue of labour relations in Russia's institutions of higher learning, in which repression of various sorts is the sad norm today. The recent action of the administration of MIPT against him is noteworthy for the fact that the rector made his motives very public and clear.

In a public letter, the chair of the department of higher mathematics, Grigori Ivanov, gave clear expression to the rector's dissatisfaction. He cited the active relations the union has entertained with the press and its allegedly insufficiently constructive position: it defends not only its individual members, but also the collective interests of MIPT's teaching staff.

Particularly offensive was Ivanov's ultimatum to Maxim Balashov, calling on him to resign as chair of the union, to withdraw the union's lawsuit against the administration (undertaken against consistent violations of union rights), to apologise and to forego any further relations with the press. There is no doubt that this text relayed the position of rector Nikolai Kudryavtsev. Missing only was the demand to repent on bended knee.

As one could expect from the foregoing, the procedure for filling the post of professor of higher mathematics - a post occupied for five years by Balashov (who has worked at MIPT for 19 years in various capacities) - which had to be renewed through a formally competitive procedure, took place amidst gross violations of various local normative acts, the constitution of the Russian Federation, and the federal law on trade unions, not to speak of common decency. During that meeting, the rector, former assistant rector Volkov, and others close to the administration expressed their many criticisms of professor Balashov, including talking to the press and being active as head of the union locally.

It should be emphasised that the decision of the academic council, despite the administration's extraordinary pressure, was adopted by a slender majority: Balashov's competitor for the post received 51% of the votes. And it is no coincidence that the votes for Balashov coincided closely with the number of active

scientists and teachers on the academic council, as can be judged by the number of its members holding the degree of doctor of science. Moreover, since the professor chosen to replace Balashov is 80 years old, an additional person had to be appointed to the department of higher mathematics to give Balashov's lectures.

The union has for several years now been fighting for the rights of MIPT teachers. Under union pressure, salaries at MIPT have risen significantly from their former miserable level. The union has blocked inordinate increases of professors' teaching loads, as well as the introduction of the so-called 'effective contract' - a measure that has had catastrophic consequences in universities across Russia. The union has also actively fought the rector's initiative to end the election of department and faculty heads (a right provided by article 332 of the labour code). It is especially the union's resistance to the latter authoritarian tendencies of the administration that has aroused the rector's ire.

We urge you to send the following declaration to the rector of MIPT, N Kudryavtsev, at rector@mipt.ru, plus a copy to the union at mipt@unisolidarity.ru:

"We declare our solidarity with Maxim Balashov, professor of higher mathematics at MIPT and union leader. We express our profound protest against the blatantly unjust treatment of a colleague. We demand an end to persecution of union activists and the reinstatement of M Balashov as professor, with a contract of unlimited duration, as provided by the law of the Russian Federation."

We would also ask you to request your university to limit any contacts with the administration of MIPT and its rector until this conflict is positively resolved.

Universitetskaya Solidarnost
mipt@unisolidarity.ru

Kafkaesque

Thanks for the report of Stan Keable's sacking ('A Labour council's inquisition', July 18). That is an appalling decision of the disciplinary committee.

It appears that if anyone is offended by something it is ground for dismissal, regardless that equal numbers of people might not be offended. In any event nothing in the evidence could possibly lead a person to say that Zionists collaborated with the holocaust. Half of the BBC would have been sacked in the 1960-70s with the antics of Mary Whitehouse's narrow view of the world.

A worker can get sacked for expressing an opinion forcefully. An MP (Margaret Hodge) does the same and her solicitor sends a seven-page letter demanding retractions and claiming she has been victimised. Kafkaesque.

Pass my support and good wishes to Stan.

Gerry Glyde
Gateshead

Rabid dogs

The laughs keep on coming.

Earlier this year the CPGB was boasting about the amateurish *Weekly Worker* being a "peacock" and its supposed high quality. Last week we read the editor saying: "Due to a technical error, footnote numbers were inadvertently omitted from all articles last week. We apologise and are trying to ensure that this error is not repeated" (July 12).

If the *Weekly Worker* is a peacock, then it is one that has been mauled by rabid dogs on at least three occasions. Perhaps the editorial team should cut down on Night Nurse and brandy cocktails. Or take up watercolours.

Victor Jenkins
email

ACTION

London Communist Forum

Sunday July 29, 5pm: 'The dead end of intersectionality'. Speaker: Mike Macnair.

Sunday August 5, 5pm: Weekly political report from CPGB Provisional Central Committee, followed by open discussion and reading group: study of August Nimtz's *Lenin's electoral strategy from Marx and Engels through the revolution of 1905*. This meeting: appendix C.

Calthorpe Arms, 252 Grays Inn Road, London WC1.

Organised by CPGB: www.cpgb.org.uk;

and Labour Party Marxists: www.labourpartymarxists.org.uk.

Arise: Labour left ideas

Friday July 27 to Saturday July 28: Two-day political festival and conferences, various central London venues.

Organised by Jeremy4PM

www.facebook.com/events/226915667862647.

Seven men of Jarrow

Saturday July 28, 10.30am: Commemoration of transported miners.

Assemble Jarrow colliery deepshaft, John Street, Jarrow NE35, for march to Viking statue, Salem Street, Jarrow NE32.

Organised by Durham Miners Association: www.durhamminers.org.

No place for hate

Saturday July 28, 1.30 pm: Counter-demonstration. Assemble opposite fountain, corner of Dovecot Street and High Street, Stockton-on-Tees TS18. No to the far-right racists of For Britain.

Organised by Teesside People's Assembly:

www.TeessidePA.tumblr.com.

A future without nuclear weapons

Wednesday August 1, 7pm: Meeting, Friends Meeting House, St Helen's Street, Derby DE1. Speaker: Kate Hudson.

Organised by Derby Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament:

<https://enduk.org/events/unforgettable-fire-cnd-and-hope-for-a-future-without-nuclear-weapons-public-event-in-derby>.

The shock doctrine of the left

Wednesday August 1, 7pm: Book launch, Housmans Bookshop, 5 Caledonian Road, King's Cross, London N1. Speakers: Graham Jones and Alex Williams. Entry £3 (redeemable against purchase).

Organised by Housmans: www.housmans.com/events.php.

Big Ride for Palestine

Friday August 3 to Sunday August 5: Cycling solidarity, leaving Birmingham on August 3 and arriving in London two days later. Fundraising in particular for the Middle East Children's Alliance's work in Palestine.

Organised by the Big Ride: www.redspokes.co.uk/thebigride.

Justice for Windrush victims

Saturday August 4, 10am to 3pm: Legal strategy roundtable, Unite The Union, 128 Theobalds Road, London WC1.

Organised by BME Lawyers for Windrush:

www.eventbrite.com/e/windrush-legal-strategy-roundtable-tickets-48406183197?aff=erelexpmlt

Stop the War Coalition

Saturday September 8, 9.30am to 5pm: Annual general meeting, Arlington Conference Centre, 220 Arlington Road, London NW1.

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

TUC Congress

Sunday September 9 to Wednesday September 12: TUC Congress, Manchester Central Convention Complex, Windmill Street, Manchester M2.

Organised by TUC: www.tuc.org.uk/tuc-congress-2018.

National Shop Stewards Network

Sunday September 9, 1pm: Rally, Trades Union Congress, Manchester - details to be announced.

Organised by National Shop Stewards Network:

<http://shopstewards.net>.

The World Transformed

Saturday September 22 to Tuesday September 25: Momentum conference, Liverpool. Details to be announced.

Organised by Momentum: <https://theworldtransformed.org>.

Why we need an anti-war government

Monday September 24, 5pm: Labour Party fringe meeting, suite 3, Jurys Inn, 31 Keel Wharf, Liverpool L3.

Speakers: Chris Williamson MP, Lindsey German (Stop the War), Andrew Murray (Unite).

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

Confronting racism and fascism

Saturday October 20, 10am to 5pm: International conference, Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1.

Organised by Stand Up to Racism: www.standuptoracism.org.uk.

Socialism 2018

Saturday November 10 and Sunday November 11: Socialist Party school, Institute of Education, 20 Bedford Way, Bloomsbury, London WC1. Details to be confirmed.

Organised by Socialist Party in England and Wales:

www.socialism2018.net.

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.

LABOUR**Scorched earth and statesmen**

Mike Macnair looks at the continued efforts of the Labour right to procure an electoral defeat

Last week there was a 24-hour flurry of interest when Tory MPs, 'remainer' rebel Anna Soubry and 'grandee' Nicholas Soames, separately called for the formation of a 'government of national unity' (GNU) to deal with Brexit. Accusing the Labour shadow cabinet of being Trots, she "personally would abandon the Labour front bench and I would reach beyond it", to include "eminently sensible" Labour backbenchers" and "Plaid Cymru, the SNP and other sensible pragmatic people, who believe in putting this country's interests first and foremost".¹

Commentators in the broadsheets were quick to rubbish the idea.² And this week a quick look shows that petition.parliament.uk on July 18 rejected a petition for a GNU on the ground that there was an existing petition on the same issue. That petition has received ... 20 signatures, as of July 24. Evidently the idea is not greatly exciting the public.

Meanwhile, however, talk has continued about a split in the Labour Party. Vince Cable of the Liberal Democrats is *allegedly* threatened with a leadership contest, due to his missing a Brexit vote on the 'customs union' on July 16. This vote was so tight that the Tory chief whip urged cheating on 'pairing' arrangements,³ so that the absence of both Cable and Tim Farron was rather notable. Cable's excuse is that he was engaged in confidential discussions about the possibility of a new centrist party.⁴

Also on July 18, Barrow MP John Woodcock resigned from the Labour Party to sit as an independent, issuing a resounding attack on the supposed takeover of the party by the 'hard left'.⁵ His case is inevitably weakened by the local party's request to Labour HQ to start reselection proceedings,⁶ and by the context of "#MeToo" allegations against him about inappropriate text messages to a female aide. Woodcock in his resignation letter says that the procedure used against him on these is unfair. This last claim is almost certainly true: the Labour Party's disciplinary procedures are clearly in violation of the principles of natural justice. But it is stunningly hypocritical, since, like the rest of the Labour right, Woodcock demands that the principles of natural justice should *not* apply to allegations of anti-Semitism.

This, of course, brings us to Margaret Hodge's decision on July 19 to bring the campaign of defamation about anti-Semitism home to its actual target: Jeremy Corbyn.⁷ Together with her July 22 reaffirmation of her position, the right have demanded that Corbyn staffer Seamus Milne retract his criticisms of the Israeli state.⁸

Until now, this campaign of defamation has been careful to target lesser figures (with the exception of the right's most famous hate-figure, Ken Livingstone), creating a temptation for Corbyn and his immediate allies to throw people to the wolves in the hope of neutralising the issue. The Labour leadership has succumbed to this temptation. Now the wolves, undistracted, are catching up with the troika - as must have been planned all along.

Hodge now faces disciplinary proceedings herself - which, if the accusations are upheld, will be a convenient excuse for a split. Meanwhile, on Monday, the Parliamentary Labour Party took a preliminary vote to adopt the so-called 'full' IHRA definition of anti-Semitism - which *inter alia*, by

prohibiting comparisons between Israeli state policies and the Nazis, would make the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz* an organ of 'anti-Semitism' (a view held, in fact, by some Netanyahu supporters ...).⁹ The issue will now go to a ballot of Labour MPs. Again, what is involved is not an *immediate* split, but a *threat of a split* in the short term.

Polls

In reality, the probability of a new centre party is low. Recent polls have shown the Chequers Brexit proposals and the resulting resignations leading to a sharp drop in Tory support, but no significant rise for the Lib Dems; rather, the corpse of Ukip has temporarily risen from the grave, and Labour has a poll lead. The YouGov poll for *The Times* (July 18) shows 41% for Labour (+2%), 36% for the Tories (-1%), 9% for the Lib Dems (-1%) and 8% for Ukip (+1% - reaffirming an increase in its support found in earlier polls).¹⁰

On July 22, YouGov (again for *The Times*) found 38% would support a new rightwing Brexiteer party, 24% a new far-right, anti-immigrant and anti-Islam party (like the Hungarian Fidesz); 33% would consider backing a new anti-Brexit centre party - down from 49% on April 21.¹¹ All these figures are almost certainly journos' fantasies converted into questions for pollsters - spun to suggest more support than actually exists for one or another 'new party'.

On the other hand, it is clear that the Labour right has never given up on its campaign to get rid of Corbyn and win back control of the party, so Labour's significant lead in the polls is a disaster for this political trend. It thus galvanises them into 'media spectaculars' - talk of a new centre party, Woodcock's resignation, Hodge's anti-Semitism slander, the PLP initiative to prohibit anti-Zionism ...

These initiatives are all designed in the last analysis to restore the Tory lead in the polls - with the eventual aim of another coup against Corbyn. The prohibition of anti-Zionism is merely code for prohibiting criticism of US policy in the Middle East, on the ground that (for example) the Iranian regime is said to pose an "existential threat" to Israel.¹² If that is the case, then opposing the bombing of Iran must be 'anti-Semitic'.

It is, in fact, likely that that if the Labour right actually succeeded in getting rid of Corbyn and his allies, the party's standing

in the

the

polls would *fall*. The Tories attempted last year to run a Brexiteer-populist campaign which targeted 'leave' voters in northern and Midlands Labour constituencies. This approach failed - partly because, in spite of the timid manifesto, the smears against Corbyn led voters to think Labour was returning to its roots; and partly because the Labour leadership round Corbyn has carefully avoided committing itself to 'remain'.

Brexiteer-populism is still a 'live' Tory policy: witness the (alleged) boost to NHS funding announced in June, the suggestion that the government would give back a little security to private rented tenants announced on July 1, and the latest public-sector pay announcements¹³ - all clearly intended to defuse the Labour Party's appeal to voters on health and wages. A return to Labour right leadership and an explicitly pro-'remain' policy would open the door to the Tories running a Brexiteer-populist campaign against Labour as representing the metropolitan elites against the working class - this time successfully.

Scorched earth

There is a cynical interpretation of this stuff, which is to say that it is a 'scorched earth' policy. This military policy - rendered obsolete by modern military supply techniques - consists of devastating *your own* country, as you retreat, in the hope that the invaders will starve as they advance. The political equivalent here would be for the Labour right to take the view that it would rather destroy the Labour Party than see it fall into the hands of the left.

This is not a completely implausible story. The Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) consists, after all, of career politicians and 'realists'. And, as such, they may recognise that, even though they owe their election to claims to represent the working class, their actual sponsors are in the capitalist class, through media and lobbying operations.

The capitalist class does not, in general, rule by direct participation in politics. Active business leaders are not like aristocratic rentiers, whose claim to their rents is based on their role as a governing class.

Business leaders are too busy making money (and making money in competitive markets is the basis of the social legitimacy of their wealth and status). They act through agents - meaning lawyers, lobbyists and 'professional' politicians -

and they tend to put more effort into blocking policies perceived as threatening than into steering policies positively.

The PLP are professional politicians - which means that they are committed to being open to business sponsorship and business lobbying operations. They displayed as much under the Blair and Brown administrations.¹⁴ If Labour *ceased to be open* to business control in this way, they might well share the view that it should also cease to exist.

The disadvantage of this view is that the upshot is likely to be fatal to these politicians' individual careers. It is, of course, true that Tony Blair has been munificently rewarded for services rendered as Labour leader and prime minister. Lesser figures are unlikely to attract so much - or even to be selected as Conservative or Lib Dem candidates after they have wrecked the Labour Party.

Statesmanship

A better explanation is that members of the Labour right have deceived themselves into the belief that they are doing the 'statesmanlike' thing for the benefit of the country as a whole. There must, of course, be an element of simple self-deceit by repetition of the unfounded claim that anti-Zionism is anti-Semitism, in order more effectively to persuade others of the lie (as 'evolutionary psychologist' Robert Trivers has suggested¹⁵). But there is a larger pair of repeated media narratives that Labour rightists may 'buy into', which may persuade them that defeating Corbyn, even at the cost of destroying the Labour Party and their own careers, might be the 'statesmanlike' thing to do.

The first is the Brexit issue. The complaint that a 'responsible' Labour Party leadership would be explicitly pro-'remain' and overtly fight against Brexit has been incessant in the liberal press (*The Guardian*, *The Independent*), in the Tory, but more or less pro-'remain' *The Times*, and in BBC coverage of the issue. Clearly a 'no deal' Brexit would be a very bad idea for British capital (unless this caused the European Union itself to break up). But what looks more likely (and the basis of May's Chequers proposal) is some sort of 'Norway' or analogous deal, in which Britain retains single market access from outside the EU by accepting binding rules - very undemocratic, and potentially disastrous *in future* if the EU changed the rules adversely to British interests, but not in itself immediately disastrous to business interests.

The second is a widespread view among capitalists that a Corbyn government would be a worse threat to 'business' than Brexit.¹⁶ This is odd, given, on the one hand, the (realistic) blood-curdling threats being issued about the possible consequences of Brexit; and, on the other, the extremely timid quality of the proposals in Labour's 2017 manifesto and in Corbyn's and McDonnell's policy speeches.

In reality, however, it is not stupid. Corbyn became Labour leader because an accident gave the large element of the working class opposed to neoliberalism, which has been denied any political voice since the 1990s, an opportunity to speak. Hence, no matter how responsible Corbyn and his close advisors are willing to be, if a Corbyn-led Labour government was *elected*, this class would see it as legitimising an offensive over wages, job conditions, housing, and so on.

The 'statesmanlike' thing to do, then, would be both, if possible to secure the defeat of the Brexiteers and *definitely* to secure the defeat of Corbyn by one means or another. Some on the left are tempted by such ideas - the Alliance for Workers' Liberalism effectively promotes both 'remainism' and the 'anti-Semitism' witch-hunt.

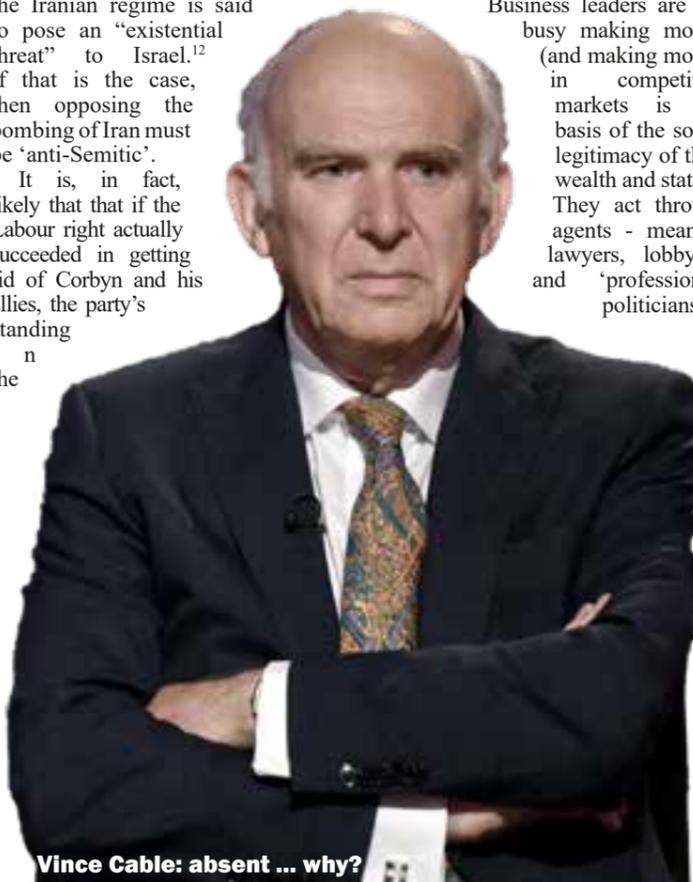
Anyone tempted should contemplate the 'statesmanship' of Alistair Darling, Gordon Brown and co in 2014 and its consequences. They swung the vote for 'no' to Scots independence - and on the morning after the referendum David Cameron knifed them in the back by proposing English nationalist 'reforms'. The result was to wreck the Labour Party in Scotland, hand the Scottish National Party a landslide victory north of the border in 2015, and give Cameron a (slim) majority at Westminster. Labour so discredited itself that Scots *Toryism* has revived from its previous marginality.

The equivalent in England would be to hand over Labour 'leave' constituencies - probably not to Ukip, but to some new further-right populist-Bonapartist formation. The 'anti-Semitism' campaigners would then have been exposed as promoting not only the destruction of the Labour Party and the limited political representation of the working class it allows, but also the parliamentary representation of *real* racists and anti-Semites. Some statesmanship ●

mike.macnair@weeklyworker.co.uk

Notes

- ¹ *The Sun* July 18; *Politics Home* July 18.
- ² A national unity government? A second referendum is more likely' *The Guardian* July 18; 'A government of national unity? Forget it' *The Times* July 19; 'A national unity government to tackle Brexit? Don't make me laugh' *The Daily Telegraph* July 19.
- ³ Theresa May supports the chief whip at the centre of "pairing" cheat claims' *The Sun* July 21.
- ⁴ 'Sir Vince Cable slams "ridiculous" claims his Lib Dem leadership is under threat' LBC Radio July 23: www.lbc.co.uk/radio/presenters/tom-swarbrick/sir-vince-cable-slams-leadership-question; 'Sir Vince Cable "made mistake" in missing Brexit vote' *BBC News* July 22: www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-44917347.
- ⁵ 'MP John Woodcock quits Labour with attack on "hard left"' *BBC News* July 18: www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-44871628.
- ⁶ 'Barrow MP "saddened" by email plot to oust him' *NorthWest Evening Mail* July 18.
- ⁷ 'Hodge stands by comments accusing Corbyn of antisemitism' *Guardian* July 23.
- ⁸ 'Corbyn aide Seumas Milne told to take back his attacks on Israel' *The Times* July 23.
- ⁹ 'Showdown averted as Labour MPs defer vote on antisemitism rules' *The Guardian* July 23. *Ha'aretz*: see, for example, www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/216179.
- ¹⁰ <http://ukpollingreport.co.uk/>, July 17.
- ¹¹ <https://inews.co.uk/news/politics/brexit-deadlock-majority-of-voters-would-now-vote-for-a-new-party>; www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-04-21/almost-half-of-u-k-voters-want-new-centrist-party-poll-shows.
- ¹² 168 hits from Google within the last year. Eg. (Israel) Naftali Bennett reported in the *Jerusalem Post* (September 12 2017) 'Bennett: Iran is Israel's number one existential threat'; (US) 'Schumer says he opposed the Iran deal because of "threat to Israel"' *Mondoweiss* March 19 2018: <https://mondoweiss.net/2018/03/schumer-opposed-because-recent-will-israel-and-iran-go-to-war-leaders-warn-of-imminent-threat-during-netanyahu-s-trip-to-europe/> *Newsweek* June 5 2018.
- ¹³ '£20bn-a-year funding boost for NHS branded a "missed opportunity"' *Financial Times* June 25; 'Renters would get longer tenancies under government plans' *BBC News* July 1; 'Public sector workers: Pay rises announced for a million people' *BBC News* July 24. The debunking arithmetic has not yet been done on this one.
- ¹⁴ Documentation of the early stages in D Osler *Labour Party plc* Mainstream 2002.
- ¹⁵ It is interesting in this context that Zionist narratives are one of the examples used in Trivers' 2014 book *Deceit and self-deception* (which argues that self-deception has evolved to serve more effective deceit).
- ¹⁶ Eg. 'Corbyn becoming PM is "worse threat to business than Brexit", says bank' *The Guardian* November 27 2017; 'The City should fear Corbyn much more than Brexit' *City AM* February 21 2018; 'Who speaks for business?' *The Sunday Times* March 18 2018.



Vince Cable: absent ... why?

ANTI-SEMITISM

Not fit for purpose

Margaret Hodge's attack on Jeremy Corbyn demonstrates why the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism must be ditched, writes Tony Greenstein

When it was announced last week that Labour had taken a 4% point lead over the Conservatives I remarked on Twitter that we would soon face a new batch of false anti-Semitism allegations. Little did I know that at that very moment Margaret Hodge was preparing to accuse Jeremy Corbyn of being "a fucking anti-Semite and a racist".

Three years ago, Stephen Pollard, the editor of the *Jewish Chronicle*, in a front page article in the *Express*, spared no adjectives when describing how it was "difficult to imagine a more blatant, shameful and utterly contemptible piece of two-faced hypocrisy than the behaviour of Margaret Hodge".¹

What Pollard was attacking was Hodge's role, as chair of the public accounts committee, in attacking tax dodgers, whilst being one herself. Today, however, Hodge is Pollard's hero. She can do no wrong.² Indeed she is the victim of a witch-hunt!³ There has been unanimity in the media that Hodge was right to attack Corbyn - from *The Sun* to *The Guardian*, the British press has spoken with one voice.

It is almost like the days of *Pravda* and *Izvestia*. We are witnessing what Chomsky called the "manufacturing of consent". The big lie technique writ large. Simon Kelner was a good example of this:

Who is, in fact, better qualified to judge? An understandably sensitised community on one side, or an apparently disinterested party on the other? Does the chief rabbi believe that if a Jewish person feels he or she has been on the receiving end of anti-Semitic behaviour, that is - by definition - anti-Semitic behaviour?⁴

The same heading about listening to the Jewish community was to be found in *The Guardian's* letters pages.⁵

According to these representatives of liberal opinion, we should surrender our judgement to religious leaders. Perhaps the ayatollahs are right after all. One wonders what would have been the reaction to 60 letters from imams on Islamophobia? The idea that we should be listening to the most politically backward sections of the Jewish community is a symptom of the debate on 'anti-Semitism'. That it is seriously suggested that we should listen to religious leaders on political questions such as racism is a measure of how debased the debate has become.

Contrary to the myth that the 'Jewish community' has a settled view on the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of anti-Semitism, it is doubtful if before the present crisis one percent had even read it. The idea that the only thing standing between the Jews and pogroms is the IHRA is what makes this debate ludicrous.

The Zionist argument that any community or group should be able to 'define' their oppression is completely reactionary. Oppression is objective, not subjective. To allow any group to say they are oppressed, which is what identity politics does, is to confuse the powerful with the powerless, the rapist with the raped, the child abuser with the child, the



Weak? Yes. An anti-Semite and a racist? Obviously not

racist with their victim.

Champions of identity politics talk about oppression, as opposed to exploitation. They look to a frozen past in order to prevent future change. They ignore power and class relations and thus disadvantage the most oppressed. Because they ignore class and class analysis there is no means of distinguishing between the oppressed and the oppressor. Thus we end up with groups indulging in a game of false victimhood.

Supporters of Israel, which is who we are really talking about, are the real proponents of the IHRA. They are not oppressed. Jews in this country do not suffer from state racism. They are not pulled over by the police because they are Jewish, nor are there large numbers of Jewish deaths in custody or deportations of Jews.

If some members of the Jewish community choose to define their identity as support for Zionism and the oppression of the Palestinians, then they should be criticised, not flattered. If some Jews in this country support a racist project they should be condemned, not allowed to pass it off as opposition to anti-Semitism.

Insofar as a majority of Jews identify with the state of Israel, then that is a reactionary identity. The Jewish community today is not the same as the one that lived in the East End of the 1930s - a Jewish community that was part of the labour movement. Today the Jewish community is a relatively prosperous and privileged white community and that is the main reason why many Jews identify with the Zionist state. It is also the reason why since the 1950s many Jews have voted for the Conservative Party.

Zionists have made their stand around the IHRA - a definition that the anti-Semitic Hungarian and Polish governments have no qualms in endorsing. There are many amongst British Jews who disagree with Zionism and the IHRA, yet they are ignored because Jewish community

leaders are in bed with Netanyahu and Trump.

Right to define

Much is made of the MacPherson report, which recommended that the perception of victims of racial incidents should be accepted. However, that was in the context of forcing the police to record an incident as racially motivated: it did not mean that this negated the process of investigation.

The debate on the IHRA has taken place just as Israel officially declared itself an apartheid state. The knesset passed the Jewish Nation-State Law this week. In the words of Bradley Burston of Israel's *Ha'aretz* newspaper, this is:

a law which effectively repealed and superseded the equality and democracy provisions of Israel's Declaration of Independence as a guide for the future of the country. Gone is any mention of equality. In its place, directives that veer Israel towards genuine apartheid, including a downgrading of the status of the Arabic language and therefore of Arab citizens of Israel.⁶

This is the context of the attempts by the Zionists to impose the IHRA definition on the Labour Party. No longer is there even any pretence that the false anti-Semitism allegations which have been made for the last three years are not about Israel.

The argument that everyone has the "right to define" their own oppression is a nonsense. It begs the question, who is oppressed? Anti-Semitism is not difficult to define. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, it is "Hostility to or prejudice against Jews" - all of six words. The IHRA definition of anti-Semitism is over 500. In the words of Sir Stephen Sedley, a Jewish former court of appeal judge, the IHRA "fails the first test of any definition: it is

indefinite".⁷

However, Jeremy Corbyn has yet again made a rod for his own back. His fatal mistake was in adopting the IHRA definition to begin with. Its sole purpose is to conflate criticism of Israel with anti-Semitism. By going along with the anti-Semitism accusations and accepting it *without any debate*, Corbyn has been the author of his own misfortunes.

The false anti-Semitism allegations were never aimed at expelling me, Marc Wadsworth or Jackie Walker. That is why it was stupid for Corbyn to give these bogus allegations the time of day. That is why Zionist MPs like Luciana Berger and Ruth Smeeth are in the forefront of the attacks on Corbyn. Appeasing these racists has not helped his situation - quite the contrary. The more you appease racism, the more it grows and the Labour Zionists have felt emboldened.

Last week we had people like Wes Streeting MP calling for sanctions on Israel because of the proposed demolition of the Bedouin village of Khan al-Ahmar. This week he does his usual bowing and scraping whenever the word 'anti-Semitism' is mentioned.

What Streeting and others refuse to understand, to put it charitably, is that allegations of anti-Semitism are used to undermine support for the Palestinians. If Streeting was genuinely outraged over Israel's actions then he and others would not be supporting an attempt to conflate criticism of Israel and support for the Palestinians with anti-Semitism.

We also had other Labour rightwingers jumping on the bandwagon, such as Chuka Ummuna, whose concern over 'anti-Semitism' stands in stark contrast to his indifference over the Windrush scandal. In the latter case he supported the 2014 Immigration Act, which introduced the policy of making Britain a "hostile environment" for migrants. Ummuna argued that because Hodge had lost relatives in the holocaust she was therefore right to defame Corbyn.⁸ By that logic I should be able to accuse Chuka Ummuna of being a racist. There are very few Jews in Britain who did not lose relatives in the holocaust.

The Zionist focus on the IHRA definition is itself a diversion. Hugh Tomlinson QC described it as having "a potential chilling effect on public bodies". While the definition itself is 38 words, it goes on to use 11 'examples' of anti-Semitism, seven of which relate to Israel. It is a model of ambiguity. Professor David Feldman of the Pears Institute for the Study of Anti-Semitism described it as "bewilderingly imprecise".⁹ In so far as it defines anti-Semitism as hatred, as opposed to hostility, it actually raises the bar. All 11 examples in reality should only apply when they are motivated by hatred of Jews. In short it is a junk definition.

Brian Klug, an Oxford don, argues quite convincingly that the Labour Party's anti-Semitism code is far more rigorous than the IHRA definition.¹⁰ I think he is right. Which raises the question, why all the fuss then? The simple answer is that the IHRA is metonymic - a totem for something else.

Viktor Orbán, the anti-Semitic prime minister of Hungary, has just completed a visit to Israel. Orbán not only waged an overtly anti-Semitic election campaign against George Soros, but he described the pro-Nazi dictator of Hungary during the war, Admiral Horthy, who presided over the deportation of nearly half a million Jews to Auschwitz, as an "outstanding statesman".

Eva Balogh describes in *Hungarian Spectrum* how "In the last eight years the Hungarian government has made a serious effort to rewrite the history of the holocaust and many other aspects of Hungarian-Jewish history."¹¹ Yet there is not a whisper of complaint from those who are so keen to fight anti-Semitism. The visit of a holocaust revisionist to Israel is simply not mentioned. Also unmentioned is the close relationship of Israel to the Polish government, despite its passage of a law which makes it an offence to suggest that some Poles were complicit in the Nazi holocaust.

This is the holocaust industry that Norman Finkelstein first wrote about. We see Israel, on the one hand, hosting vile far-right leaders of anti-Semitic regimes, while, on the other hand, their chorus of supporters in Labour Friends of Israel and the Jewish Labour Movement bleat about a non-existent 'anti-Semitism'.

It is clear that at a time when the government is going from crisis to crisis panic is setting in amongst the establishment. What the Labour right and their allies in the Zionist movement are doing is waging the fight against Corbyn by other means. Hence Hodge's outburst. At this time we have talk once more of a centrist party and breaking the mould of British politics. Hence why Vince Cable missed a crucial Brexit vote. He was busy in talks with those who would like to set up such a party.

The failure to adopt the IHRA undigested is being used as a thinly disguised excuse to try to remove Corbyn. What better means of so doing than 'anti-Semitism'? Those like Jon Lansman of Momentum, who believe that the IHRA has anything to do with fighting anti-Semitism, are the useful stooges of an establishment which wants to be rid of Corbyn. We can expect the volume of propaganda from the mass media to be turned up even further ●

Notes

- 1 www.express.co.uk/comment/expresscomment/574065/Margaret-Hodge-hypocrisy-STEPHEN-POLLARD-Lichtenstein-Disclosure-Facility.
- 2 www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/dame-margaret-hodge-jeremy-corbyn-antisemitism-1.467346.
- 3 www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/margaret-hodge-faces-disciplinary-labour-jeremy-corbyn-antisemite-1.467340?highlight=hodge.
- 4 Simon Kelner, the 'i', 24.7.18., Labour's leaders must listen to the Jewish community.
- 5 www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/jul/16/labour-party-must-listen-to-the-jewish-community-on-defining-antisemitism.
- 6 www.haaretz.com/opinion/premium-the-israel-you-know-just-ended-you-can-thank-netanyahu-1.6292343.
- 7 www.lrb.co.uk/v39/n09/stephen-sedley/defining-anti-semitism.
- 8 https://twitter.com/ChukaUmmuna/status/101934974922317504.
- 9 www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/dec/28/britain-definition-antisemitism-british-jews-jewish-people.
- 10 www.opendemocracy.net/uk/brian-klug/code-of-conduct-for-antisemitism-tale-of-two-texts.
- 11 http://hungarianspectrum.org/2018/07/18/viktor-orban-visits-his-good-friend-benjamin-netanyahu.

PROGRAMME

Sowing dragon's teeth

Is Leon Trotsky's *Transitional programme* the last word when it comes to the Marxist programme? Or does it represent regression in Marxist terms? **Jack Conrad** argues against the economism of Trotskyism

Most comrades on the left that I come across - sadly including those whom I hold in high regard: rank-and-file cadre generally, letter-writers to the *Weekly Worker* often, refugees from this or that confessional sect sometimes, current members of editorial boards and central committees occasionally - take it as axiomatic that they must reject out of hand, almost as a sacred duty, the programme of classical Marxism: ie, the minimum-maximum programmes of the German Social Democratic Party, the French Workers Party and the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party.

But these comrades feel compelled to do more - instinctually; almost as a Pavlovian reflex. They attack the programmes of classical Marxism and thereby, if only by inference, the *Draft programme* of the CPGB, as if they were historically anointed Van Helsing, tasked with ridding the workers' movement of the curse of the minimum-maximum programme.

Supposedly the minimum-maximum programme directly led to that fateful vote for war credits by the SDP Reichstag fraction in August 1914; and, though it is dwarfed by that act of treachery, the same minimum-maximum programmatic structure is blamed for the alleged adoption of revolutionary defensism by the Kamenev-Stalin leadership of the Bolsheviks in early 1917 - according to the myth brought to a swift end by Lenin's return from Swiss exile and his 'April theses'. (Thanks in no small part to the work of Lars T Lih, we have shown that the differences between Kamenev and Stalin, on the one hand, and Lenin, on the other, were minor and quickly resolved. No less to the point, we have also shown that Lenin's 'April theses' were a concrete application of the programme of the RSDLP and the standing strategy of the Bolshevik Party. Not a break.)

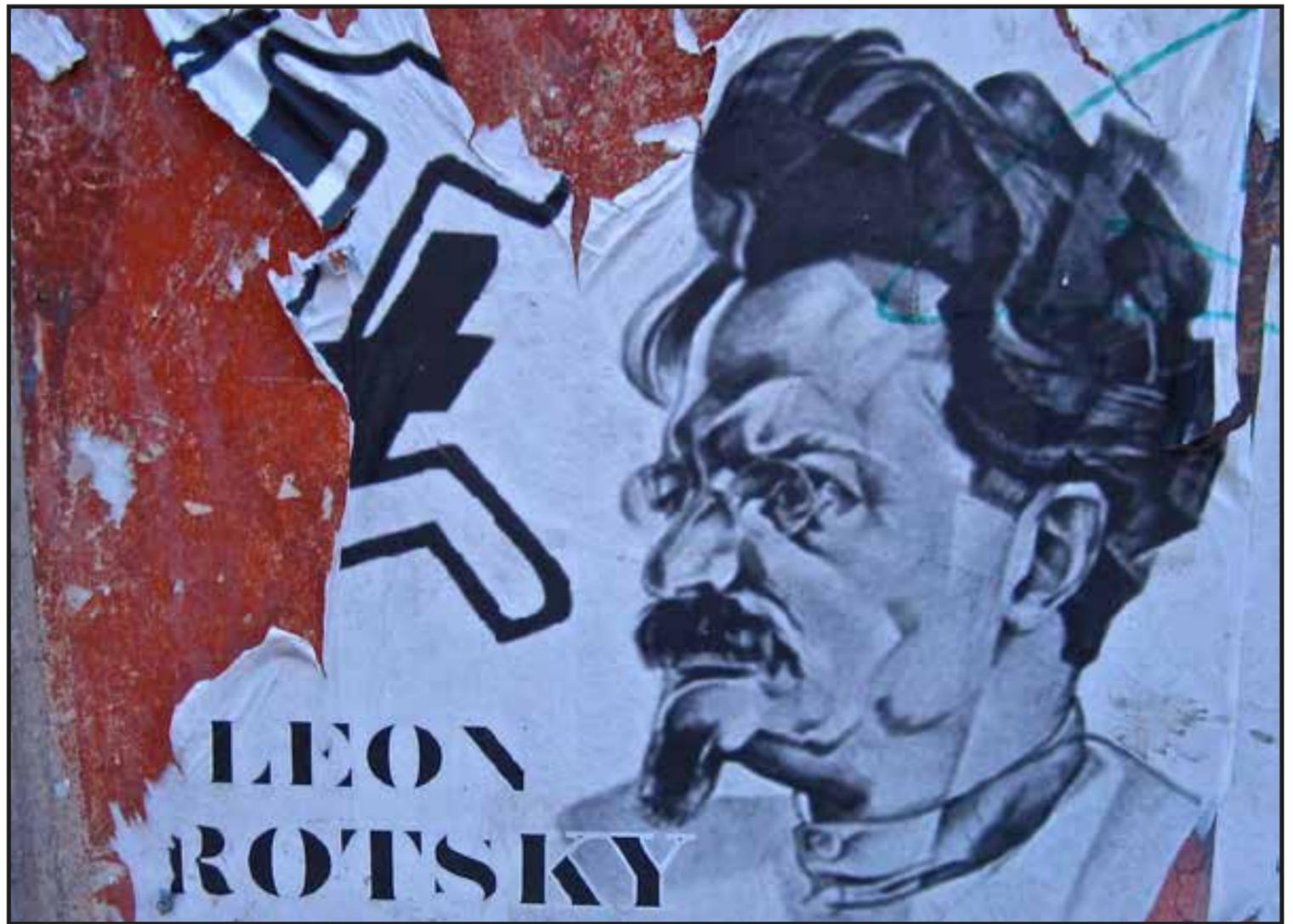
Sadly, too many comrades on the left believe that they have been bequeathed something far more precious, far more valuable than the minimum-maximum programmes of classical Marxism. I refer, of course, to Leon Trotsky's 1938 *Transitional programme* - otherwise known as *The death agony of capitalism and the tasks of the Fourth International*.

Note, since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Trotskyism, certainly in Britain, has become something near to the common sense of the revolutionary left - but in a form I doubt Trotsky himself would recognise. Indeed, I expect Lev Davidovich would be mortified. Having sown dragon's teeth, including in his *Transitional programme*, the fact of the matter is that we are today plagued with all-manner of right-opportunist groups, fronts, campaigns and coalitions. All justified, albeit only to inquiring minds and the initiated few, by invoking Trotsky's *Transitional programme* ... and the transitional method.

To the right

Let us look at some typical examples.

- **Socialist Workers Party:** In 2004 John Rees saw to it that the SWP took the lead in forming Respect. An organisation which not only united the SWP with George Galloway: it united the SWP with the Muslim Association of Britain - the British branch of the Muslim Brotherhood founded in Egypt by the Islamic scholar, Hassan



Leon Trotsky would be horrified by his latter-day followers

al-Banna, in 1928. Respect was a popular front given party form. In other words, its manifesto commitments were intended, in the last analysis, to be carried out in the form of a Respect government - which, one presumes, would have included SWP ministers. Showing how backward Respect was programmatically (and therefore how backward programmatically the SWP was and is too), its October 2004 conference voted down a motion that would have committed Respect to proletarian socialism: "a socialist society where the working class is the ruling class".¹ No member of the SWP's national council objected. No member of the SWP's central committee rebelled.

- **Socialist Resistance:** The official British section of the so-called Fourth International constituted itself as a loyal lieutenant of the SWP in the Respect project. Alan Thornett, SR's historic leader, was the main architect of Respect's hopelessly eclectic, left-populist 2005 general election manifesto. Unfulfillable Keynesian promises, mixed with Labourism and vague anti-capitalist statements - all designed to fudge the difference between socialism and political Islam. To his eternal shame, John Rees ensured that this nonsense was further watered down (reportedly at the insistence of George Galloway). Missing from the final version - the one that was actually circulated to electors - was the elementary commitment to homosexual equality. And, due to the same fear of offending Islamic sensibilities, a woman's right to choose to have an abortion had been sneakily clipped back to a "woman's right to choose" ... To choose what? To wear the veil?² SR

went on to take part in Left Unity and, of course, did its best to steer it to the right. The comrades wanted to shun commitments to working class rule, socialism, a democratic republic and the replacement of the standing army by a people's militia. Hence SR earned an unenviable, but all too accurate, nickname: Resisting Socialism.

- **Socialist Party in England and Wales:** This organisation took the lead in founding the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition in 2010, where it united with trade unionists such as Bob Crow (RMT) and Brian Caton (POA). Tusc advocates Keynesianism, tinkering reforms and trade union militancy. Based on the principle of federalism, Tusc was intended to replace the Labour Party (but not Labourism). Apparently the Labour Party had with Tony Blair become unreformable and indistinguishable from the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats. Labour was supposedly nothing more than a British version of the US Democrats. SPEW comrades wanted trade unions, including Unite, to disaffiliate from Labour and line up with Tusc. Indeed SPEW recently played a regrettable role in blocking moves for the PSC and RMT unions from pursuing Labour Party affiliation (that despite the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn and the ongoing bitter civil war in the Labour Party).

Unsurprisingly, the fragmented Trotskyite groups in the Labour Party are even more overtly Labourite. Their handiwork can be seen in the Labour Representation Committee and in the pages of *Labour Briefing*, *Labour Briefing (Original)*, *The Clarion* and other such publications.

Our Trotskyites guiltily hide away their 'Marxism' and compete with each other in concocting various ways to bring about a reformist Labour government under Jeremy Corbyn.

Hence, their ideological victory - which was not a product of their own strength, but of the virtual collapse of 'official communist' Stalinism - ironically resolves into a repetition of the old 'official communist' British Road to Socialism programme, only with less coherence and more national narrow-mindedness. Yet another case of 'First time tragedy, second time farce'.

After all, the various versions of the *BRS* - produced between 1950 and 1978 - were premised on the claim that the international balance of forces was decisively shifting in favour of 'socialism': ie, away from the imperialist countries and in favour of the Soviet Union, eastern Europe, China, the national liberation movements and the non-capitalist road of development. In 1961 Nikita Khrushchev predicted with all the confidence of a technocratic buffoon that the Soviet Union would overtake the United States by 1970 and then build the material and technical basis of communism: "Thus a communist society will in the main be built in the USSR" - by 1980!³ Obviously nothing to do with authentic socialism or communism. Absurd in retrospect ... and something we sought to systematically disprove.⁴ But it did not seem that way to many at the time, however, including wide swathes of the Labour and trade union left.

Hugh Scanlon and Tony Benn, Jack Jones and Michael Foot were not in the 'official' CPGB. Nonetheless, they effectively adhered

to and followed the 'official' CPGB programme. Claims about the tilting balance of class forces served to explain why socialism would, or at least could, come via the Labour Party, state-capitalist nationalisation and defence of the British nation-state.

The programmes of Respect, Tusc and Left Unity might differ from that of the Labour Representation Committee over the nature of the Labour Party - crucially the likelihood of 'reclaiming' it for clause four socialism. Nevertheless, when it comes down to it, all are agreed that the main task of 'Marxists' is to replace New Labourism with one or another version of old Labourism.

Given the small size of the groups concerned and their shallow roots in the working class, what they actually produce often amounts to less than the sum of their parts: that is, hollow and insubstantial 'united fronts', which do not unite the vanguard with the broad masses of the working class - that would be a real united front. Rather what we get is fake fronts - uniting this or that Trotskyite sect with trade union functionaries, soft-left journalists and career politicians, who, formally speaking, are well to their right: Unite Against Racism, People's Assembly, Labour for a People's Vote, etc. From nothing to nothing.

With what justification? Not the international balance of class forces. That is for sure. These comrades find justification in the *method* of Trotsky's *Transitional programme* ... sadly a claim not without foundation.

Productive forces

In the late 1930s Trotsky became firmly convinced that capitalism was

more than just decadent and moribund. Capitalism faced immediate extinction, was experiencing its writhing "death agony".⁵ As a system it could no longer develop the productive forces - an idea he took, of course, from Marx's well known 'Preface' to *A contribution to the critique of political economy* (1859):

At a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production or - this merely expresses the same thing in legal terms - with the property relations within the framework of which they have operated hitherto. From forms of development of the forces of production these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins the period of social revolution.⁶

Though Marx's 'Preface' is flawed in some important respects and goes against the grain of what he wrote elsewhere (it can, after all, be read to mean that the productive forces, not the class struggle, are the locomotive of history) such an assessment coming from Trotsky - that capitalism had turned into an absolute fetter - was perfectly understandable, given the circumstances of the time.

Before him Vladimir Lenin and Rudolf Hilferding had already laid the foundations by writing influential studies of finance capital and the "last stage of capitalism". And it was not only the left that saw capitalism as being in decline. Bourgeois intellectuals often despaired of further progress under their own system. Pessimism was rife. Eg, the German historian, Oswald Spengler - conservative, Nietzschean and anti-democratic - authored the widely read *The decline of the west* (1918-22). By way of analogy he argued that capitalism had entered its last winter. The soul of western civilisation was dead. The age of caesarism had begun. A theme taken up in Britain by Arnold Toynbee (*A study of history* 1934-61).

The 1929 Wall Street crash, the global slump, the forced abandonment of the gold standard, soaring unemployment, the coming to power of Nazi gangsters in 1933 and the fragmentation of the world economy into rival, antagonistic zones conveyed an ever mounting sense of pending doom. Humanity was living at the end of times. For Trotsky, capitalism was disintegrating. Spain, Abyssinia, China were for him but heralds of a general conflagration. Not even the large-scale introduction of new consumer goods, means of transport and technologies, such as vacuum cleaners, telephones, cars, aeroplanes and electronics, could overcome the chronic malaise: "Mankind's productive forces stagnate".⁷ All that got Germany, USA, Japan, Britain, Italy and France - the main capitalist powers - moving economically in the late 1930s, putting the unemployed back to work, was preparation for the slaughter of another world war. Fifty million were to die.

Conditions for socialism, said Trotsky, were not only ripe, but overripe. Without a global socialist revolution all the gains of civilisation were in danger. The main problem being not so much the consciousness of the masses - rather the opportunism and cowardice of the 'official' communists and social democrats: "The historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of the revolutionary leadership."⁸

But, whereas the parties of 'official communism' and social democracy each counted their members in the tens and hundreds of thousands, even the millions, Trotsky's forces were in comparative terms isolated, untrained and miniscule. Perhaps a couple of

thousand worldwide. This was a problem Trotsky solved, at least in his mind, by falling back on what Marxists call 'spontaneity'.

What he lacked in terms of organised forces in the real world he made up for with a programmatic reliance on the unconscious - the untheorised movement of the working class around everyday issues, such as pay and conditions. Desperate hope substitutes for harsh reality. The nature of the epoch "permits" revolutionaries to carry out economic struggles in a way that is "indissolubly" linked with the "actual tasks of the revolution".⁹ The "existing consciousness" of workers is not only the point of departure: it is now to all intents and purposes regarded as unproblematic. In the mind, subject and object are blurred one into the other. Though in 'normal times' most are not subjectively revolutionary - ie, educated in Marxism - workers are objectively revolutionary because of the reality of capitalism. But in these 'new times' no longer was it necessary through education and organisation to win the masses to consciously grasp the need to "change forthwith the old conditions". Fighting to maintain existing conditions was all that was needed to "win the prize". The constant tussle over wages and hours, demands for safeguards against the corrosive effects of inflation and the introduction of state-funded job creation - these were painted in revolutionary colours. A classic case of elevating trade union struggles to the level of socialist politics.

Trotsky reasoned that in general there can, in the epoch of "decaying capitalism", be no systematic social reforms or raising of the masses' living standards. Objective circumstances therefore propelled the masses - or so Trotsky believed - to overthrow capitalism, simply because every time the system conceded one spoonful it was forced to take back two. It was in an advanced state of decay. Therefore, he concluded, simple defence of existing economic gains through demanding a "sliding scale" of wages and hours, etc, would provide the initial trigger needed to launch the final, apocalyptic collision with capitalism.

Frankly, it does not surprise me in the least to read Trotsky's sympathetic biographer, Isaac Deutscher, characterising the *Transitional programme* as "not so much a statement of principles as an instruction on tactics, designed for a party up to its ears in trade union struggles and day-to-day politics and striving to gain practical leadership immediately".¹⁰

The *Transitional programme* is certainly marred by all manner of ephemeral facts, figures and personalities. It reads more like an antiquated manual for American SWP trade union activists than a programme for Marxist tribunes of the people.

Trotsky insisted that - if the defensive movement of the working class was energetically promoted, freed from bureaucratic constraints, and after that nudged in the direction of forming picket-line defence guards, then pushed towards demanding nationalisation of key industries - it would, little leap following little leap, take at least a minority of the class towards forming soviets and then, to cap it all, the conquest of state power. Or, as Trotsky put it almost religiously, they would "storm not only heaven, but earth".

Winning over the majority intellectually and organising the workers into a political party was dismissed as the gradualism that belonged to a previous, long dead, era: the era of competitive capitalism. Now, in the era of final collapse, the meagre, squat but semi-militarised

forces of Trotskyism will lead the masses as if by stealth, steer them in their elemental movement towards a series of pre-set transitional demands - which, taken together, are meant to serve as a system of directional arrows or a kind of ascending stairway.

After five years, or maybe ten, they might flock to join the Fourth International in their millions. Winning state power and ending capitalism internationally will, though, be revealed to them as the real aim only during the course of the rising spiral of struggle. Not quite, but almost, socialism as conspiracy. In essence, Trotsky, from a position of extreme organisational weakness, had reinvented the Blanquist putsch or the anarchist general strike 'road to socialism'. This time the Trotskyites would be the educative elite - the tightly knit, highly disciplined minority, operating as the command centre. They would drive the entire juggernaut of world revolution through their cogs and wheels of transitional demands, using trade unions and other such levers they had managed to get their hands on.

In explaining his programme of transitional demands, Trotsky takes to task the minimum-maximum programmes of "classical" social democracy. But Trotsky warned his band of followers that it would be a terrible mistake to "discard" the programme of old "minimal" demands, "to the degree to which these have preserved at least part of their vital forcefulness".¹¹ Trotsky was therefore prepared to defend existing democratic "rights and social conquests". He did not, however, view them as having any particular purchase in and of themselves. No place, then, for high politics, demands for a democratic republic and extreme democracy in the *Transitional programme*.

True, in fascist countries, such as Germany and Italy, Trotsky conceded that his Fourth International would uphold "democratic slogans" in order to mobilise the masses. However, once the movement assumes something resembling a mass character, then democratic demands (press freedom, the right to form independent trade unions) will be "intertwined" with "transitional ones".¹² In effect Trotsky combined 'Bolshevik-Leninist' elitism with an apocalyptic version of economism: ie, the workers would, through strikes and other such elementary struggles, discover the "bridge" to the seizure of power.

Conclusion

No matter how we excuse Trotsky in terms of how things appeared on the eve of World War II, there is no escaping from the fact that he was wrong in method and periodisation. In an of themselves trade union struggles are not hegemonic: they tend towards sectionalism; they do not lead to socialist consciousness. Nor was the 1930s capitalist slump permanent.

Suffice to say, after World War II capitalism experienced its highest and longest boom. By organising a further deformation of, or retreat from, the law of value with Keynesian welfarism, nationalisation and the cold war arms economy, conditions were laid for the American century and a sustained and unprecedented spasm of capital accumulation. More than that, especially in western Europe, reformism - both of the Labourite and 'official communist' variety - was given a new lease of life. Hence, instead of the tactics of insurrection and frontal assault being the order of the day, patient propaganda, deep organisation and the long war of manoeuvre surely fitted the bill.

The problem was, however, that

Trotsky's epigones either refused to acknowledge the capitalist boom of the 1950s and 60s or, when they finally admitted the truth that Trotsky's 1938 prognosis no longer applied, they dogmatically stuck to what they Talmudically liked to call the transitional method. In practice that amounts to sprinkling routine trade union struggles, left Labourism, black civil rights, the feminist movement and pacifistic anti-war protests with socialistic fairy dust. The magic never works. Trade unionism doggedly remains trade unionism, etc. However, the magician manages to change something.

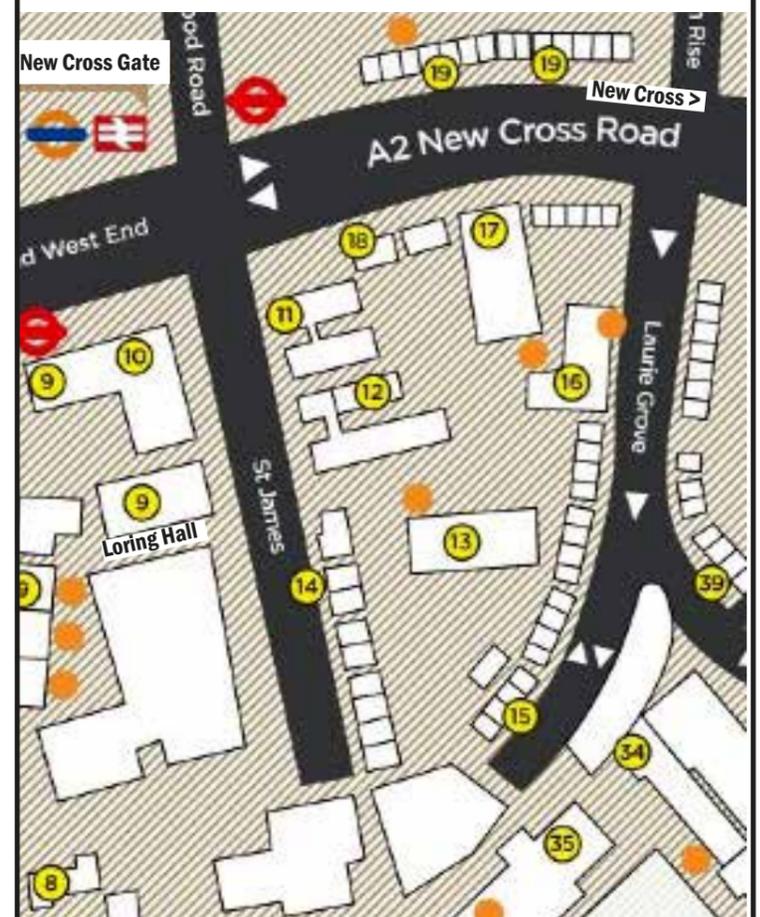
The transitional method amounts to recruiting subjective revolutionaries and turning them into routine trade unionists, left Labourites, black

separatists, feminists and pacifists. Thus Respect, Tusc, Left Unity and the rainbow coalition campaigns are not aberrations. They are the logical outcome of the much vaunted transitional method ●

Notes

- 1 See *Weekly Worker* October 28 2004.
- 2 See *Weekly Worker* November 24 2005.
- 3 CPSU *The road to communism* Moscow 1961, p512.
- 4 See J Conrad *Which road?* London 1991.
- 5 L Trotsky *The transitional programme* New York 1997, p111.
- 6 K Marx and F Engels CW Vol 29, London 1987, p262.
- 7 L Trotsky *The transitional programme* New York 1997, p111.
- 8 *Ibid* p112.
- 9 *Ibid* p114.
- 10 I Deutscher *The prophet outcast* Oxford 1979, pp425-26.
- 11 L Trotsky *The transitional programme* New York 1997, pp114-15.
- 12 *Ibid* p141.

Communist University 2018



It's different from other 'educational' organised by left groups - most of which resemble student trade fairs rather than the forums for open, critical and robust debate that we encourage. You won't hear pre-prepared sycophantic interventions from the floor at CU. Instead there are often sharp clashes of opinion. At the same time, the collective aspect of CU is very important to us: everybody helps out with preparing food and organising the event. And in the evenings we chill out together, often carrying on discussing some of the things we debated during the day. It is, without a doubt, the highlight of our political year. Be part of it!

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EUROPE

Cliff edges and parachutes

The Brexit crisis is deepening and almost anything can happen, writes Eddie Ford

Significantly, we are hearing more and more talk about the possibility of a no-deal Brexit. For example, on July 23 Jeremy Hunt, the much despised health secretary and now foreign secretary, warned of the “very real risk” of a no-deal “by accident” - because, he argued, “many” in the European Union believe that if they wait long enough, Britain “will blink”. But, he sternly remarked, “That’s not going to happen.” We are prepared to go over the cliff edge without a parachute. Or, to use Hunt-speak, a no deal would be “challenging”, but the UK would still “thrive economically”.

Though some might complacently dismiss it as just another operation by Project Fear, there is reasonable speculation that a no-deal could see up to a million workers or more lose their job as the UK suddenly finds itself trading under World Trade Organisation rules - slapping 10% tariffs on UK-made cars, up to 50% on dairy products, and so on. Indeed, the Dairy UK chairman, Paul Vernon, told the environment, food and rural affairs select committee in 2016 that a no-deal would effectively annihilate the dairy industry.¹ And the food sector in Scotland too, which is responsible for around £1 billion worth of exports each year mainly to other EU countries, has talked about the “terrifying” consequences - the industry could be “close to wiped out” unless new trading terms are in place on the day the UK leaves the EU.²

As we are beginning to find out, companies and the government are stockpiling essential supplies like foods and medicines now. Testifying to the Brexit select committee on July 24, Dominic Raab, the hapless Brexit secretary, finally admitted that the government is taking steps to ensure that there are “adequate” food supplies for Britain to cover the eventuality of a no-deal departure - though, of course, it would be “wrong” to “describe it as the government doing the stockpiling”. Yes, if you say so, Dominic. On the same day the new health secretary, Matt Hancock, perhaps not hearing what Raab had said, told MPs that the department of health and social care is working with industry to stockpile various drugs and medical devices. Naturally, Hancock was “confident” that a deal could be reached in time, but added that it was “responsible” to prepare for a range of outcomes. Reassured now?

In other words, contingency plans are being urgently drawn up by virtually every governmental department and agency. It is surely no accident that Theresa May declared on July 24 that from now on she is personally taking “control” of negotiations, with the Europe Unit led by senior civil servant Olly Robbins having “overall responsibility for the preparation and conduct” of EU talks - Raab has been sidelined before he even had the chance to get his feet warm under the table. The reckless David Cameron, of course, never drew up any contingency plans when prime minister, as it never occurred to him that the referendum could be lost - no wonder he has virtually disappeared from public life. Philip Hammond, the chancellor, has already set aside £3 billion for contingency planning - that sum is bound to go up, putting a hole in the budget.

Quite extraordinarily in some respects, though logically in other ways, the government is now openly talking about turning a 10-



Airbus wings: made in Britain, but for how much longer?

mile stretch of the M26 in Kent into a “lorry park” to help cope with tailbacks from Dover if customs checks have to be implemented by the EU - up to 10,000 lorries a day pass ‘frictionlessly’ through the port. There have also been suggestions that the ministry of defence is looking into how the armed forces could be deployed to carry out various civil functions, including using RAF planes to transport food supplies across the country. Showing you the potential scale of the problem, the UK imports just over 50% of its food, mainly from the EU - with 90% of it going through Dover.³ Various EU countries are now actively planning to hire more customs officials to handle the anticipated post-Brexit backlog, the *Financial Times* estimating that the UK will need up to 5,000 new customs officials to cope with a no-deal scenario - on top of the extra 3,000 that are already been employed.

Adding to the tense atmosphere, Amazon’s viciously anti-union and tax-dodging boss in the UK, Doug Gurr, has warned that Britain would face “civil unrest” within weeks of a no-deal Brexit - though obviously a huge degree of self-interest is served by issuing such dark prophecies. He does not want to see a dent in his profits. Nevertheless, it would be foolish to treat his comment as entirely fanciful - same goes for Tory MP Dominic Greave, the pro-EU rebel who never was, telling Sky News that a no-deal Brexit would leave the country in “a state of emergency”, as basic services might no longer be available.

With perfect timing, Jacob-Rees Mogg - who heads the European Research Group of Brexit ultras - has confessed that we will not know the full economic consequences of Brexit “for a very long time”. When repeatedly pressed on this point, Mogg said the “overwhelming opportunity” for Brexit will be “over the next 50 years” - not exactly a comforting thought for us mere mortals.⁴ A few months ago, Mogg

warned about “perpetual purgatory” when May reluctantly signed up to the EU’s ‘backstop’ plan to avoid a hard Irish border. Now, however, Mogg seems to be envisaging 50 years of “purgatory”.

Don’t panic

Clearly, the Brexit crisis is deepening and almost anything can happen when MPs return from their summer holidays in September - if not earlier. William Hill is giving 7/4 odds of a general election in the autumn and 9/4 odds for next year.⁵ There is near permanent talk of a leadership bid, as our readers know, but what that would achieve is hard to see, given that any new Tory leader would face exactly the same problem as Theresa May - a divided party, the same unfavourable parliamentary arithmetic and an EU playing hardball.

Having said that, there is no panic yet. May obviously has no interest in promoting Project Fear, which is essentially aimed at getting a second referendum - something that she has totally ruled out, and there is no special reason to believe that she is being duplicitous or dishonest. The prime minister is not trying to get us to go to the next People’s Vote march or a sign a petition demanding another referendum. No, all this recent talk of contingency planning is intended to reassure business that ‘measures are being taken’. Business, needless to say, wants the softest deal possible - preferably no Brexit at all. Thus it has become increasingly alarmed by the way things appear to be developing. Capital broadly welcomed May’s Chequers plan and subsequent white paper for a “common rule book” with the EU, seeing it as an opening gambit in terms of negotiations. But there is always the possibility that the EU rejects the plan, or Theresa May refuses to compromise. Then talks break down - the nightmare scenario.

We are now not far away from the March deadline. But a last-minute deal, as happens so often with the

EU, would be too late for business - at the *very latest* it needs need to know what is going on by December, or it will start to take emergency decisions (ie, relocate out of Britain). So far the government has drafted 70 “technical notices” that will be sent to companies and households over the summer to help them prepare for a no-deal. Remember - don’t panic. When you consider May’s wafer-thin majority in parliament, support for these “notices” is by no means guaranteed - quite unlikely actually. Then what the hell happens? No-one knows, but if you are a capitalist you *need* to know - or you will set up shop elsewhere if you can.

Interestingly, the EU has just signed a massive free-trade deal with Japan - you might have noticed how many Japanese firms there are in Britain making cars. Now, it might be that British car plants and their workers are so efficient - or the transport links are so brilliant - that these Japanese-owned companies can make cars cheaper in the UK than in Japan. But if not, they will simply close down your British operations and make them in Japan instead, then ship them over to Europe with no tariffs to pay - bit of a no-brainer really.

Meanwhile, the representatives of capital have had another get-together with the government on July 20 at Chevening House. Doubtlessly there are ‘rogue’ sections of the capitalist class - like Tim Wetherspoon and hedge-fund managers - who think that a hard Brexit would be marvellous. But those present at Chevening consider such an outcome as potentially catastrophic. The Confederation of British Industry, the Federation of Small Businesses, Institute of Directors, BMW Mini, Barclays, Santander, Shell UK, Amazon UK, US-owned Morrisons, Lloyds of London, National Grid, etc are all singing from the same hymn sheet - either the softest of softest Brexit or no Brexit. They want to

remain within a customs union and single market.

This is why the likes of the *FT* have repeatedly pointed out the central *contradiction* now at play in the whole Brexit saga. Here you have the historic ‘party of business’, the Tories, which is *no longer serving the interests* of business. Yes, there are legal reasons for this - since 2000 a company wanting to make a donation to the Conservative Party would need the agreement of shareholders. But the central reason is that at least half of the FTSE 100 companies are owned abroad - ie, *transnationals* - and therefore do not have the same relationship to the Tories as UK capital did in the 1950s and 60s.

Consequently, we get a lot of contradictory rhetoric from those saying we cannot just close the doors - hence we need an ‘open and controlled’ system of immigration. But how can it be ‘open’ and ‘controlled’ at the same time? Yet the immigration system has to have the “trust” of the British people - in other words, come out with some flowery phrases that satisfy - or hoodwink - them. Anything to get a very soft Brexit that still serves the interests of business (even if it is not as good as the status quo).

Realignment

Last week, upping the stakes, we saw the latest move from ‘Project delegitimise the June 23 referendum’. Vote Leave, the official Brexit campaign fronted by Boris Johnson and Michael Gove, was fined £61,000 after an electoral commission probe said it broke electoral law - exceeding its £7 million spending limit by funnelling £675,315 through the pro-Brexit youth group, BeLeave. As for the founder of BeLeave, Darren Grimes, he has been fined £20,000 and referred to the police, along with another Vote Leave official, David Halsall. MPs from all parties were especially outraged when Vote Leave’s director, Dominic Cummings, refused to appear before the digital culture media and sports committee - saying lawyers had told him to “keep my trap shut” until the EC completes its investigation into Vote Leave this summer.

What was noticeable about the scandal was the extremely well-coordinated nature of the attacks on Cummings/Vote Leave. This reminded me of the ‘anti-Semitism’ slander campaign against the Labour Party and Jeremy Corbyn - one story after another hitting the headlines almost like clockwork. Last week, we also had John Major doing his bit for ‘Project Delegitimation’, arguing that there was a “moral case” for another referendum - Vince Cable joined in as well, naturally enough. Furthermore, some within Labour and the Tory Party have been calling for a government of ‘national unity’ - or at least raised the prospect, perhaps to see how much support it gets ●

eddie.ford@weeklyworker.co.uk

Notes

- 1 www.fginsight.com/news/news/falling-back-on-to-wto-rules-will-stop-uk-eu-dairy-trade-says-dairy-uk-45086.
- 2 www.scotsman.com/news/politics/general-election/food-sector-faces-terrifying-tariffs-after-hard-brexit-1-4345486.
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- 4 www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/jacob-rees-mogg-economy-brexit_uk_5b54e3b5e4b0de86f48e3566.
- 5 <http://sports.williamhill.com/bet/en-gb/betting/e/11219866/UK+General+Election>.

TECHNOLOGY

Where are the women?

Yassamine Mather looks at one area where gender inequality looks set to continue



Dilution refrigerator of an IBM Q quantum computer

These days it is rare for a day to go by without hearing about capitalism's efforts in support of gender equality. Business programmes on radio and TV tell us about the drive to have more women on the board of major companies. Political parties compete with each other over the number of female MPs. In most cases quotas are expected to deliver equality and if - you are not concerned about that unfashionable notion, class - at least on the surface women in the middle and upper-middle classes seem to be achieving equality on many fronts.

However, this hardly tells the full picture. First of all, the main concern remains achieving gender equality amongst the elite. Working class women are told, day in, day out, that the success of women on the board of the FT's 500 top companies demonstrates equality. Nothing could be further from the truth. Women at the top of capitalist transnationals are just as ruthless as men, when it comes to the exploitation of the working class - why else would they want to be on board in the first place? And, rather than increase women's pay, they reduce that of men to the often already casualised, contracted female employees. In the real world (beyond the media bubble) women's wages remain lower than men's. As everyone knows, the much heralded pay increase demanded by the BBC's China editor, Carrie Gracie, would not have translated into a decent wage for women cleaners, working for unscrupulous contractors in that august institution.

However, even as far as gender equality amongst the educated and the elite is concerned, women are disadvantaged in one area where no amount of positive discrimination or use of quotas can make a difference: that is computing science and in particular in areas that will affect our future: parallel processing, high-performance and quantum computing, and code writing associated with these sectors.

Recent advances in computing are based on the use of newer hardware - in particular graphics processing units (GPUs) and the evolution of quantum science. Mastering GPUs and the parallel programming of GPU nodes (servers), the understanding of algorithms in high-performance clusters - these things require a good background in mathematics. Such machines are now used extensively in all aspects of scientific computing, including the 'machine learning' associated with artificial intelligence and programming computers to perform specific repetitive tasks.

Such programs progressively improve machine performance, the idea being that this will eventually pave the way for the automation of mundane tasks. For example, whereas current automated tills fail to work eight times out of 10, the latest models have 'learned' how to deal with almost any situation, including customer errors.

Quantum computing, which will probably become the dominant form in the future, is based on the intersection of maths, physics and computer science. Using quantum-mechanical phenomena, such as superposition and entanglement, a new generation of devices are coming into existence that will outperform existing machines. Unlike existing digital computing, where the data is coded into ones and zeroes (binary), quantum computation uses quantum bits or 'qubits', and these can be in several states, which can be 'superimposed' on top of each other! While no-one fully understands the physical laws involved in these effects, the implication is that complex problems with many potential solutions - climate modelling, orbital mechanics, or protein folding in cells - can be worked on very quickly in comparison with digital computers.

What does all this mean for women? MIT's minimum requirements for entry to a course on quantum computing lists high qualifications or expertise in quantum mechanics,

linear algebra and probability, random matrix theory and asymptotic analysis, to name just a few.

And here lies the problem. In all of such subjects women account for only 10%-12% of the undergraduate population, and that percentage drops further at the postgraduate and post-doctoral levels. No amount of artificial quotas or positive discrimination can make up for that. In most spheres the proportion has not improved over the last three to four decades - in some cases it has actually got worse.

Yet women have been among the pioneers in some fields of computing science, such as code writing - where Ada Lovelace in Bletchley Park and Grace Hopper in Harvard became prominent during World War II. In fact the number of women studying computing science was growing until the mid-1980s, when the proportion got as high as 37% - before dropping back to 11% in 2017.

The sad reality is that for decades generations of young girls have been discouraged from perusing maths and physics. According to one study, published in 2016, the problem starts at a very young age:

... there is a tiny gender gap when kids start school (albeit larger among the very top performers) and that it widens, across all ability levels, through third grade. That's a critical time frame, as past research shows that early math achievement determines a child's interest and confidence in the subject during elementary and middle school, and strongly predicts how good at math she'll be later on.¹

At secondary school those who do well at maths or physics are often encouraged to choose other subjects at degree level. That is because teachers often underestimate girls' mathematical abilities - even when they have similar or identical capabilities to male pupils.

In a *Planet Money* podcast, Caitlin

Kenney and Steve Hen explain what has happened:

it was in the early 1980s that the narrative first emerged that computers are for boys. The first personal computers weren't much more than toys and they were marketed almost exclusively to boys and men. Computer geek culture also began to emerge during this period and TV shows, movies and video games all reaffirmed that computers were the domain of boys.²

So we have ended up with a situation where women make up a very small

percentage of software developers - a mere 11.2%, according to one 2013 survey. The women who choose to work or research in this industry face discrimination in an industry that remains male-dominated. Once they start a career as code writers, that discrimination intensifies.

In February 2018, a story about GitHub - the giant repository used by more than 12 million code writers - made the news headlines. Researchers at a US university found: "GitHub approved code written by women at a higher rate than code written by men, but *only if the gender was not disclosed*" (my emphasis). Out of three million 'pull requests' submitted on GitHub, "code written by women was approved at a higher rate (78.6%) than code written by men (74.6%)".³ So clearly, once given the opportunity, women are capable of writing good code, yet they account for less than 12% of code writers.

Why does all this matter? It matters because of the developments I mentioned earlier. We are moving towards a period when mundane tasks will be automated, once machine learning and artificial intelligence using new hardware allows developers to iron out the current deficiencies. Once that happens, repetitive jobs, including many in the clerical and service sectors, will be automated. Most such jobs employ a high proportion of women, which means their economic future will be bleak under capitalism.

Of course, those code writers who determine aspects of this automation - within the confines of global capital's requirements - will prosper, but, for all the talk of gender equality, very few of them will be women ●

yassamine.mather@weeklyworker.co.uk

Notes

- <https://qz.com/826748/the-math-gender-gap-between-girls-and-boys-starts-in-kindergarten-and-is-largely-driven-by-teachers-biases>.
- www.facebook.com/amightygirl/posts/for-decades-women-were-leaders/937481559621491.
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Summer Offensive

Payments in kind

As I write, there is exactly one month to go before the end of the CPGB's Summer Offensive fundraising drive. We have set ourselves a target of £25,000, to be raised by August 25, and we currently have £9,482 in the kitty. I am pretty confident we can do it - so long as we keep up the momentum.

Among the big donors this week were JC, who paid £300 towards the CPGB's Communist University, which runs from August 18-25 (see p7), and SK, who donated £230 to the *Weekly Worker*. Another £160 paid to the paper came from comrade BB - that's an extra £100 on top of his annual subscription.

Then there was BG, who for the moment has made a bank transfer of just £10, but he's promising to send us £50-worth of stamps very soon. Payments in kind are accepted, comrade! All in all, an extra £1,231 came our way over the last seven days.

That's quite a bit below the

asking rate, of course, but usually there's a huge acceleration right at the end of the SO, especially at CU, our annual school. Which is why I'm so confident we can reach that much-needed target. As well as helping us carry out our regular work and publish our paper, we are planning to do some repairs and renovations in the *Weekly Worker* office. A couple of replacement computers with upgraded programs would not go amiss either!

Anyway, we have four and a half weeks left to raise the remaining £15,518. Whether you donate to the CPGB or the *Weekly Worker*, it all gets added to the total. You can do so by sending a cheque, payable to one or the other; by using PayPal on either website; or - best of all - by making a bank transfer (CPGB: 08-92-99, 65109991; *Weekly Worker*: 30-99-64, 00744310).

Don't keep us in suspense - help us make that target well before the final day of CU ●

Peter Manson

SOUTH AFRICA



Growing, but deeply divided

Demanding a consensus

What will result from the SACP's call for a 'reconfigured alliance' with the ANC? Peter Manson reports on the party's continuing divisions

It is not well within the South African Communist Party, it seems. The SACP is the best organised component of the African National Congress, and before Jacob Zuma's resignation as both ANC leader and South African president at the beginning of the year, it had been openly campaigning for him to step down. But, far from Zuma's departure allowing the SACP to build momentum, deep divisions remain about the road ahead.

In one sense, this is perhaps surprising, because, at the same time as ANC electoral performances have been getting worse and worse, support for the SACP is rapidly growing. At its 2017 congress the party announced that its membership had almost doubled to 284,000. Of course, most SACP comrades are also members of the ANC and some of them occupy very senior positions. In fact, ever since the first post-apartheid government was elected in 1994, SACP members have occupied important ministerial posts (there are six of them at present).

The reason the ANC's electoral support is plummeting - to such an extent that there is a serious possibility it will lose its overall majority in next year's general election - is that, far from seeing the eradication of poverty, everyone knows that South Africa is now a *more* unequal society than it was under apartheid. Unemployment now stands at 27% - 5.9 million people of working age out of a total population of 56 million are officially unemployed. Out of those 56 million, approximately 10 million live in shacks.

In these circumstances, the SACP - along with the likes of the left-populist Economic Freedom Fighters - has gained support. That has happened despite the fact that the party must take a good share of the responsibility for the rising inequality and increasing desperation. But the SACP's radical, anti-capitalist rhetoric has seemed to count for more than its political practice. For example, it insists that what is now happening in South Africa is a "national democratic revolution" (NDR), leading to the abolition of "racialised inequality",

and that the NDR is the "shortest route to socialism". You may think that SACP ministers have been helping to run (a particularly neoliberal form of) capitalism, but, no, they have been ensuring that the NDR remains on course.

Towards the end of Zuma's presidency, the SACP had been pointing not only to the increased corruption, but also to what it labelled "state capture" - the fact that small groups of capitalists said to be very close to the president seemed to be able to dictate government appointments and hugely influence particular policies. In these circumstances, the party openly stated that it might no longer be possible to 'save' the ANC. But, in any case, what was now needed was a "reconfigured alliance" - one possibility was that SACP members would no longer stand in elections as part of the ANC, but that the party would contest under its own name and join the ANC in a coalition afterwards.

And now the leadership has circulated to members a document entitled 'Reconfigure the alliance: drive the second, radical phase of the national democratic revolution'. Although every page of it is headed "Internal discussion - not for circulation", it has nevertheless been forwarded by Dominic Tweedie, the party's main internet hack, to all the pro-SACP email groups he runs - even though they do not consist exclusively of party members.

The reason he has done that is because he wanted also to circulate his own brief statement rejecting the leadership's proposals for a "reconfigured alliance" - Tweedie's statement is headed: "Rescue the party! Reject this document!" I will look at what he has to say below, but first let us deal with the leadership's own document.

Contradictory aims

The SACP starts by reminding members that the July 2017 congress adopted "the objective of forging a popular left front, as well as a widest possible patriotic front", and "the focal point of this paper is therefore on the reconfiguration of the alliance".

Congress had "decided that the SACP must actively contest state power through elections, and that this may or may not be within an umbrella of a reconfigured alliance".

By way of reassurance to the doubters, the document goes to great lengths to explain that the 'reconfiguration' of this particular alliance - whose principal components are, of course, the ANC itself, the SACP and the largest union federation, the Congress of South African Trade Unions - has not exactly been an unusual occurrence. For example, there have been components that today no longer exist (such as the United Democratic Front under apartheid), while others now have different names.

But it claims, without giving anything resembling a convincing reason, that now "the *modus operandi* of the alliance is outdated". It does not explain in what way the operational method used by the ANC for the past 30 years is no longer valid. *Why* should SACP members no longer stand for election as ANC candidates?

But things get worse when it comes to the theoretical justification for the ANC-led alliance - which is, after all, a cross-class popular front, consisting of components with aims that are (in theory at least) directly contradictory.

It is reasonable to state, as the SACP does, that from 1910, when South Africa became a dominion of the British empire, it was a "colony of a special type", in that, although the country was independent, the former colonialists and their descendants continued to rule as a minority - and this situation continued, of course, under the apartheid system that was established after World War II.

It was therefore also correct to establish a cross-class alliance, in which communists played a major role, in order to defeat the imperialist-backed ex-colonial regime - the SACP leadership quotes the Second Congress of the Communist International, which recommended such alliances in order to drive out the colonialists. But it goes on to say that the Second Congress resolution

should be "read in conjunction with our post-1994 alliance reality" - ie, after apartheid (and with it the "special type" of colonisation) was no more. It states:

The main question is whether the characterisation, 'national-revolutionary' (as outlined in Lenin's presentation), that, since its adoption, guided the formation of most alliances by communists in various colonies had not become the victim of domination by bourgeois reformist tendencies after the respective liberation alliances dislodged colonial regimes - in our case the apartheid regime - and, headed by nationalist formations, ascended to government.

Is the SACP seriously suggesting that either Lenin or the Communist International was recommending that such anti-colonial alliances should continue indefinitely after the purpose for which they had been established had been achieved?

In fact within a couple of years of the defeat of apartheid it was clear that even the SACP's social democratic aims - laid out in the ANC 'Freedom Charter' and partially carried into its first governmental programme, the short-lived Reconstruction and Development Programme - had been abandoned by the ANC. The RDP was replaced by the progressive-sounding, but thoroughly neoliberal, Growth, Employment and Redistribution strategy (Gear) in 1996 - the date which gave rise to what the SACP calls "the 1996 class project". In fact,

The marginalisation of the alliance post-1994 dates back to the 1996 class project. This was coupled with an illusionary and mechanical separation of the NDR from socialism, underpinned by the rejection of the latter, but not capitalism as the strategic objective of the ANC.

Yet, incredibly, at the same time as stating this, the party wants us to believe that the NDR had still been on course and that the alliance had to

continue - even though the SACP more or less admits that the ANC by this time was programmatically dominated by bourgeois aims. However,

What compounded our situation is that what we had been faced with, and which did indeed achieve dominance, is not merely a bourgeois reformist tendency ... As we said, it is a parasitic bourgeois tendency - and, it must be added, of a lumpen type.

So well before Zuma's election the process of "state capture" was underway, it seems.

However, by 'reconfiguring' the alliance, that process can be halted, we are meant to believe:

It is very crucial to emphasise from the point of view of the historical background of our alliance that its reconfiguration is not merely about changing its *modus operandi*. Equally, if perhaps not more important, it is a matter of democratic policy substance, direction and collective leadership of the NDR to resolve the contradictions the South African society is faced with: the class, race and gender contradictions.

The document explains:

Key decisions affecting the NDR were and are in many respects still being made unilaterally at different levels. This is the context in which authoritarianism found its way and took root, and caused serious problems to the unity and cohesion of the alliance. While all alliance partners have their highest decision-making bodies - their congresses, conferences, national and central executive and central committees - it is the outcome only of one alliance partner, the ANC's highest decision-making bodies, that is regarded as a mandate.

But wait a minute. Both the SACP and Cosatu were not, and are not, just in alliance with the ANC - their cadre were and are ANC *members*. So how

What we fight for

can the SACP claim that these two junior partners, who generally enjoy the same rights within the ANC as all other members, should be given some kind of veto and treated as *equal* partners?

Consensus

That power bordering on a veto is further spelled out when it states:

There must be restructuring of councils, provincial legislatures and parliamentary content to give play to the voice of the SACP, if not the alliance as a whole, on the basis of the principles of democratic, consensus-seeking consultation and collective leadership, with the alliance acting as the political centre of the NDR.

In other words, within the ANC majority decisions should be replaced by the "consensus" of the three main components. And this applies to the "selection process" for election candidates, "which should no longer be an ANC-only process".

Interestingly, the document quotes the SACP constitution, which lays down the expected behaviour of party cadre:

Members active in fraternal organisations or in any sector of the mass movement have a duty to set an example of loyalty, hard work and zeal in the performance of their duties and shall be bound by the discipline and decisions of such organisations and movements. They shall not create or participate in SACP caucuses within such organisations and movements designed to influence either elections or policies. The advocacy of SACP policy on any question relating to the internal affairs of any such organisations or movements shall be by open public statements or at joint meetings between representatives of the SACP and such organisations or movements.

It adds: "From the above it follows that the party prohibits entryist methods of work in fraternal organisations."

So is the party leadership seriously saying that its comrades should not, and do not, attempt to lay down the direction of travel of, say, Cosatu? Everyone knows that the federation effectively 'belongs' to the SACP. The party determines, and has always determined, Cosatu policy - just as it has always attempted to win those parts of the ANC where it exerts influence to the SACP line. But it wants us to believe that its comrades are not under discipline to carry out that party line. Presumably the leadership's "open public statements" are for guidance only.

The document ends with a section entitled 'Practical programme towards a reconfigured alliance', but it is nothing of the sort. It merely repeats the conclusions it has already drawn - such as: "There can be no doubt ... that the manner in which the alliance functioned for the most part after 1994 is outdated and has to be reconfigured both organisationally and programmatically" - and comes out with generalities.

How about this? "The importance of building programmatic unity of organised workers through forging unity within Cosatu and labouring everywhere and at all times for wider trade union unity cannot be overemphasised." Is this the same SACP which ensured that the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa was expelled from Cosatu in November 2014? Numsa's crime? It agreed that it should end support for the ANC and try to form

a genuine working class party (albeit one that implements the kind of social democratic policies outlined in the 'Freedom Charter') to replace the SACP.

At that time Numsa was already South Africa's largest union, so I wonder how its expulsion helped the process of "forging unity within Cosatu", let alone "labouring everywhere and at all times for wider trade union unity". What actually resulted was the formation of a rival union centre: the South African Federation of Trade Unions with its 700,000 members, as opposed to Cosatu's 1.8 million.

Rescue

How does Dominic Tweedie respond to all this in his 'Rescue the party, now!' response (July 19)? First of all, let me explain that, at the time of writing, his very brief statement - like the SACP paper that provoked it - cannot be found on the internet. While he emailed his own response to those who subscribe to all the groups he runs,¹ he has carefully ensured that neither document appears on their respective websites.

To begin with, he is completely dismissive of the notion that there is ever any need to 'reconfigure' any alliance:

Unity in action by allied class forces for national liberation has been the line of march advocated by the communist parties since the *Communist manifesto* was published, 170 years ago. This line of march has never been 'reconfigured' in all of that time, and it does not need to be reconfigured now.

So this particular alliance should continue as it always has? Apparently, yes, because "This alliance must have a common goal, which for the time being remains national liberation - as opposed to imperialism and its local allies and agents."

Does that mean apartheid has still not been defeated? He does not say, but he seems to think that there is still the need for some kind of national liberation struggle:

This struggle for national sovereignty is a tangible necessity, understood as such by masses of South African people. It therefore continues to be the only viable basis for united class alliance in South Africa.

And in fact,

The achievement of national sovereignty, in a world still dominated by imperialism, demands external, as well as internal, alliances of power. It means another showdown with 'the west'. This conflict is inevitable, whether we like it or not.

So exactly what form is this struggle supposed to take? Is there an occupying power to drive out? Or are the descendants of the colonisers (like himself) still running the country? How should imperialism be confronted, if Tweedie is not advocating immediate working class power (and he is not)?

Well, I am afraid it is all a mystery. While the leadership at least gives a reason why an alliance is needed - to complete the national democratic revolution, of course! - Tweedie does not even spell out his differences on the aims of such an alliance. Instead, like the SACP itself, he comes out with an unspecific, unsubstantiated conclusion:

The current draft discussion document of the SACP attempts

to draw wrong historical conclusions from right historical documents. It attempts to sell reformism. It attempts to change the signposts on the correct, revolutionary road. It attempts to put 'reform' where there should be 'revolution'.

He ends by appealing to the SACP rank and file: "Rescue the party! Reject this document!"

Readers may be surprised to hear that, despite this leftwing-sounding conclusion, Tweedie was outspoken in his opposition to the SACP leadership's call for Zuma to resign. So is he seriously suggesting that this corrupt, pro-capitalist president was somehow leading South Africa along a revolutionary road? He does not explain why the previous form of alliance was 'revolutionary', whereas the proposed 'reconfiguration' would be 'reformist'.

If anything, a decision that the SACP should stand candidates under its own name would be an advance, in that it could be a step towards the ditching of the ANC-led popular front and objectively a move towards recognising the need for working class independence.

Many comrades previously influenced by the SACP have already come to the conclusion that such a break is necessary. Numsa is not the only union to have (eventually) rejected the ANC-led alliance and many that used to belong to the SACP milieu are hoping that Numsa's May Day call for the formation of a "Socialist Revolutionary Workers Party" will be realised very soon.²

At the British Socialist Workers Party's Marxism school in London earlier this month, former SACP senior figure and ex-government minister Ronnie Kasrils stated that the new party would be launched in October, although Numsa itself is keeping quiet about it for the moment, it seems.

I am pretty sure that Tweedie will not be part of such a new party - and in fact there is still a major fight to be fought within the SACP itself. The creation of an SRWP would be a welcome development, but that would not negate the need for any remaining Marxists within the SACP to fight for working class independence within that party too. There needs to be a two-way fight for a single, genuinely Marxist party.

Father and son

I have made my doubts about Dominic Tweedie very clear, but readers may be interested to hear that he is not the only member of the Tweedie family to come out with very leftwing-sounding noises. His son, James, has been based in London for several years and until the end of last year was international editor of the *Morning Star* (it is not clear whether he jumped or was pushed from that post, which is now occupied by Steve Sweeney³). His articles on South Africa seemed to echo the line of Tweedie senior - in distancing themselves from the SACP's opposition to Zuma, for instance.

But now Tweedie junior - the day after his father put out his own statement - has come out with a leftist-sounding critique of the *Morning Star*'s Communist Party of Britain. The CPB has recently published a new draft of its programme, *Britain's road to socialism*, inviting comments and proposed amendments, and James Tweedie's contribution takes the form of a short piece entitled 'The BRS: revising revisionism'. This is something that Tweedie senior has published - it has found its way onto the Young Communist League of South Africa's website.⁴

James Tweedie states:

Part 5 of the *BRS*, which has not been significantly altered in decades, envisions "the election of a leftwing government at Westminster, based on a socialist, Labour, communist and progressive majority at the polls" ...

This is pure wishful thinking. The Labour Party has, and has only ever had, a handful of leftwing MPs who are willing to even associate with communists. Labour will never allow the CPB to affiliate to it, even if the party forswears standing in elections for a generation. The CPB is not, and should not be, an electoral party. Now approaching its centennial year, the Communist Party has only ever had three MPs.

It is more than stupid to write off the possibility of transforming Labour into a genuine party of the working class - a "united front of a special kind", to use Trotsky's phrase. Nonetheless, Tweedie is correct to state that no Communist Party worthy of the name should be a mere "electoral party". However, he goes on:

... there is no parliamentary or constitutional road to a workers' state. We communists must not delude ourselves or the working class that there is. Instead, we should be building parallel organs of popular democracy and raising class-consciousness among the masses ...

The *Communist manifesto* characterises the state as "a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie". Yet many communist parties across the world have, in recent years, fallen into the error of contesting political power within the capitalist state - seeking to become the central committee of the capitalist class ...

"The communists disdain to conceal their views and aims," states the *Communist manifesto*. We must be honest with the people. We must be crystal-clear that the only road to working class emancipation is the revolutionary overthrow of the entire capitalist state. To do otherwise is to abdicate our historical role as the revolutionary vanguard and succumb to revisionism, reformism and liquidation.

It is, of course, totally principled for genuine communist parties to contest elections and attempt to use parliament as a platform, as Lenin advocated. Indeed we aim to win a clear majority ... but not with a view to tinkering with the existing constitution, state, bureaucracy, etc. No, the existing constitution, state, bureaucracy, etc, must be swept away and replaced with a working class semi-state. Whether that happens peacefully or violently depends on the balance of class forces, not least internationally.

Having been the loyal servants of a now deposed 'national liberation' kleptocrat, the Tweedies have become totally disorientated. Their flip to Stalinite revolutionism is facile, banal and hopeless. But maybe their call to confront imperialism and the 'west' will go down a treat in Beijing ●

peter.manson@weeklyworker.co.uk

Notes

1. These include 'Communist University', 'CU South Africa', the Young Communist League and the 'political education forum' of the South African Democratic Teachers Union.
2. See www.politicsweb.co.za/documents/socialist-revolutionary-party-to-be-launched-his-y.
3. www.responsesource.com/bulletin/news/steve-sweeney-goes-international-at-the-morning-star.
4. <https://groups.google.com/forum/#!topic/ycls-a-eom-forum/yvPO7fhEzGQ>.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

weekly WORKER

**Instability
is good for
America**

Europe and the Trump Doctrine

If Donald Trump is such a disastrous president, why is America not suffering, wonders Paul Demarty?

Last week was yet another, of many, when the question was asked: has Donald Trump finally lost it? As usual, the answer is 'no'.

Readers cannot, of course, have missed the drama. Having spent most of his European tour insulting his hosts and briefing against them in the media, the time came for the president to visit his Russian counterpart. Trump, as is his wont, has blown hot and cold in his relations with the Kremlin, but likes to be seen as having successful meetings with foreign leaders, and so - after hours alone with only an interpreter each - the two presidents came out to announce unspecified breakthroughs in Russo-American relations.

From the point of view of Trump's enemies, Putin is not just another world leader. He is the evil genius, who suborned American democracy in order to get his man - one DJ Trump - into the White House. So there then ensued the event that caused such a farrago - Trump was asked directly what he thought of the opinion, unanimously held in the 'intelligence community', that the Russian state had interfered in American elections. He replied that he had heard it said, but then Putin had just denied it at length in their private conversation, and he "didn't see why" the Russians "would have" behaved in that way. The whole universe went apeshit for a moment, until the president's office 'clarified' that he had meant to say "wouldn't have". This seems to be good enough for congressional Republicans, although not anyone else. It looks, for all the world, like Trump has braced this one out too.

Nobody ought to be surprised. We have been 'saying goodbye', relieved, to The Donald more or less since the moment in June 2016 when he first descended the Trump Tower escalator to the press conference to announce his candidacy, capping the event off with an absurd racist tirade against Mexicans that had the punditocracy quite convinced that his presidential ambitions were stillborn.

So much for that; and for the subsequent hundred supposed meltdowns on the primary campaign trail; and for the attack on bereaved soldiers' families, and 'Pussygate', and the other things that were supposed to deny him the presidency; and the equivocation over neo-Nazi rallies, and the internment of children ... It is almost as if the American political mainstream is completely adrift from the actual state of the body politic. Trump is not popular on the left, of course, or among liberals. Elite conservatives, also, find him distasteful. His approval ratings among Republican voters, however, remain high. 'Decent' anti-Trump candidates for office - even sitting congressmen - find themselves in danger of losing primaries if they take a stand against him. With many prizes up for grabs this autumn, Republican tongues are easily stopped. (It is not off the point, also, that the latest barrage of indictments related to 'Russian interference' - of Maria Butina, Paul Erickson and others

- suggest that the Putin regime's interest in the American right long predates Trump's rise to power, and puts many more Republican figures in the frame.)

Consequences?

It is easy - too easy by half - to take the epiphenomena of the electoral cycle at face value. It so happens that Trump is popular, all things considered, among the people who matter. Why? Are they simply stupid? Racist? Are 63 million Americans actually, as it turns out, merely Russian Twitter spam bots? Or is there something else going on here - something with its own rationality?

Let us return to the world stage, where the president is such a striking performer. Trump has spent the last fortnight doing the wrong things, according to the collective folk-wisdom of the state department/intelligence apparatchiks whom Barack Obama nicknamed The Blob.

The Blob is focused on maintaining America's global supremacy, as it currently exists. That means hegemony over western Europe, control of global petrochemicals and strategic dominance of 'the heartland' - principally via the management and encirclement of Russia.

Obama was too 'sensible' for his own good, and so it got its way most of the time, but nowadays The Blob faces off against The Donald - a walking, tweeting, ranting disproof of every game-theory exercise the Rand corporation ever put on. The interesting thing is that the negative consequences have not come to pass. There are no meaningful signs that Europe is able to pursue a foreign policy independent of the US, even as the latter treats the former with insults and contempt.

As to the fears of Putin running rings around Trump, perhaps that will come to pass, but we doubt it. At the end of the day, Russia is not a real or potential military threat to the United States. Even its cyber-warfare capability, with tales of which Brookings wonks scare their children, are trivial compared to America's.

The swingeing trade tariffs, meanwhile, are supposed to decimate the US economy. Yet jobs, wages and growth are all up.

It seems that Trump was right all along, as he fumed about "bad deals" like a shopkeeper scorning a child for paying over the odds for a pint of milk. The US-led world order turns out not to be in the interests of



Insults work

the US. Trump, inasmuch as he is capable of grand strategy, pursues a world in which the grand military and economic alliances that held the 'free world' together under American dominance against the Soviet foe have been replaced by a hub-and-spokes system, in which America maintains separate bilateral relations with everyone. This, so the thinking goes, will leave everybody individually weaker than they presently are, and allow the US to bully everyone more effectively. Remarkably, the Trump doctrine - pithily summarised by some anonymous White House aide as "We're America, bitch" - is already paying dividends.¹

And, indeed, why shouldn't it? Trump's diplomatic antics have the effect of, to use the jargon of macroeconomics, scaring the shit out of the markets. Money flows to where it is safest - which is to say, to the place with the biggest guns - Trump's America. The original rationale for the pre-existing diplomatic infrastructure - keeping the Soviet Union at bay - is clearly gone today, so it is not entirely implausible that keeping Nato, the European Union and all the rest afloat represents 'good value for money' for the American state. The laughable mismatch between the defiant words of European leaders and their feeble deeds tells a story. We could not do a better job than Yanis Varoufakis did, commenting on last month's G7 meltdown:

[Trump] cannot possibly lose a

trade war against countries that have such high surpluses with the US (eg, Germany, Italy, China), or which (like Canada) will catch pneumonia the moment the American economy catches the common cold.²

America's allies can huff and puff, but as long as the United States controls the reserve currency and the military capability to reduce anyone to irradiated dust, they will just have to suck it up.

Meaning of Trump

There was a brief fad in left letters for short books seeking 'the meaning of' some proper noun or another - Alain Badiou, at the height of his modishness, sought *The meaning of Sarkozy*, and Richard Seymour followed up with *The meaning of David Cameron*.

If there is a 'meaning of Trump', it is something like the return of the repressed. What was concealed under genteel professionalism, religiosity and patriotic bromides in various proportions under Obama, Bush and Clinton goes naked in the Trump era. Mass deportations of migrants are no longer a dirty secret, but a game of ostentatious cruelty. Communalist-patriarchalist ideology no longer comes in the garb of the southern Baptist preacher, but in a red trucker hat and a confederate-flag tattoo.

So it is with Trump's global strategy of tension. His open insults to world leaders are more or less without recent precedent (although John Bolton did a pretty good job of it under Bush). However, the net effect of at least the pointy end of US global policy in this whole period - its series of wars of intervention - have achieved nothing except the spread of chaos and anarchy. Trumpism merely introduces the spirit of Fallujah - if not yet the exact methods - into the courtly dance of imperial diplomacy. Where there currently stands a punch-drunk EU, Trump wants to see a pack of disaggregated nations fighting like hungry dogs for the scraps from America's table. The greatness to which he wishes to restore his country is a very relative matter - it is enough to reign in hell.

If Trump is, in that sense, the truth of neoconservatism and the Laputan 'realism' of The Blob - those ideologies pulled inside out, to hide the utopian and pseudo-scientific bullshit and reveal the bloodlust and violence within - there arises

the question of why nobody tried it before. Here we must at least admit the grain of reality in the mainstream critique of the Trump doctrine. It may work well enough for a good Republican outing in the midterms, or even a second glorious term for the great helmsman himself in 2020. Yet the economic stimulus on offer is a *short-term* bonus. Likewise, it is absolutely certain that the other major powers are not *now* in any position to challenge American supremacy. But those powers have had no reason even to try terrifically hard to challenge American supremacy, for it was a 'good deal' for them.

If Germany and other Nato laggards cough up 4% of GDP towards their militaries, in response to Trump's demands, he will no doubt hail it as another great victory for the 'master of the deal', but there is a paradox there, for a build-up of military strength *reduces* the bullying leverage America has. Admittedly, the Germans and such will have to put a lot more than that into their military budget to even irritate the Pentagon; but rising powers need not fight hegemony head on to cause difficulties. As Blob-realism would no doubt remind the geniuses around Trump, the western Roman empire did not fall to any rival that had exceeded it in military strength: it collapsed because its near abroad contained *enough* potentially hostile powers with *good enough* military capability that fighting them all at once was impossible.

A 'Roman' end to the American empire, of course, is hardly an attractive prospect - not least due to the unimaginably greater destructive power of modern weapons. Yet, within the zero-sum game of interstate rivalry under capitalism, no other end is imaginable, and even that one is far enough off. A breakthrough for the proletariat, especially in a global region capable of sustaining itself, like Europe, provides a different way out, and the possibility of a 'better deal' for American workers - even that sliver of them targeted by the Trumpites - than the current occupant of the White House can presently offer ●

paul.demarty@weeklyworker.co.uk

Notes

1 www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/06/a-senior-white-house-official-defines-the-trump-doctrine-were-america-bitch/562511.

2 www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jun/11/trump-world-order-who-will-stop-him.

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