



weekly  
**worker**



**Bolshevism: learn the lessons  
and fight the economic  
downplaying of high politics**

- Letters and debate
- Brexit worries
- Italy and racism
- Turkey and racism

No 1215 Thursday August 9 2018

Towards a Communist Party of the European Union

£1/€1.10

# Friend of Israel and a Zionist

... but Labour's  
Kafkaesque  
disciplinary  
procedures are  
no less a problem





# LETTERS

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

## Labourled

The fact that the proletariat is always central to the class struggle is one thing. But in Britain, of course, the problem has always been how to defeat reformism: concretely the Labour Party and its affiliated trade unions. To paraphrase Lenin in *State and revolution* (1917), both espouse the idea that the state can be used to 'end class antagonisms' and even to 'liberate the working class from class rule' (or they once did), by means of subordinating direct action to parliamentarism.

By contrast Marx was the first to argue that the bourgeois state has to be overthrown; otherwise it is impossible to build a new socialist society. In chapter 3 of *State and revolution*, Lenin quotes from Marx's *Civil war in France* (1871). He noted that, after the 1848 revolutions, the "centralised state power" became "the national war instrument of capital against labour". Hence the need for the commune as the "specific form" of "a republic that was not only to remove the monarchical form of class rule, but class rule itself ...")

Yet in the CPGB's *Theses on the Labour Party*, we find the argument that "The Labour Party can be made into a real party of labour" by means of transforming it into "a united front for all pro-working class partisans and organisations", provided

that "all undemocratic bans and proscriptions" are rescinded and "all communist, revolutionary socialist and left groups [be allowed] to affiliate" (thesis 18). This implies that the latter can go a long way towards winning political control of the Labour Party and begin to transform it into a revolutionary one.

Further this position is derived from Lenin himself: "In 1920 Lenin urged the newly formed Communist Party of Great Britain not only to seek affiliation, but work to put the Labour Party into government" (thesis 10). It would seem that Lenin had contradicted himself. But in 1920-21, whilst the British working class was dominated by reformism, the majority of the workers were organised collectively. Moreover Labour had yet to come to power. Therefore Lenin's position may be seen as a necessary strategy for exposing reformism *at that time*: ie, the workers had to go through the experience of a Labour government, which would be a valuable political lesson. This was preferable to the infant Communist Party substituting itself for the working class in the hopes that the latter would follow its lead in an armed uprising (cf Germany in 1919).

But today none of this applies. Basically this is because we are stuck within the epoch of capitalist decline, as a result of repeated defeats and betrayals of the proletariat at crucial moments in the history of the 20th century; firstly by social democracy (Germany

in 1914 and again in 1919); then by Stalinism from the mid-20s onwards. Today the consciousness of the working class of itself, let alone as the revolutionary class, is at an all-time low. Yet the need for this has never been more urgent. The rise of Trump has suddenly turned the world upside-down. The capitalist class has not been so deeply divided since the rise of fascism in the 1930s. Moreover another economic crisis on the scale of 2008 is not out of the question.

As if this were not bad enough, automation is just around the corner, which will replace millions of unskilled, low-paid jobs. What then?

As I noted earlier, the CPGB's present strategy to transform the Labour Party into a 'real party of labour' is based on Lenin's position in 1920. Yet this is *at odds with* the position of Marx, Engels and Lenin - not forgetting Trotsky. I believe that there are three reasons for this apparent anomaly:

1. The CPGB either misunderstands or rejects the nature of the epoch outlined above.

2. It therefore assumes that the period we are living in today is comparable to the situation in Britain circa the early 1920s.

3. Whilst it is correct to point out that Lenin himself advocated such a strategy, it has to be stressed that this was a *sui generis* position on Lenin's part: ie, germane to that particular period. So the strategy cannot be repeated today.

Theses 1-3 state that the newly formed Labour Party, however "distorted", established "working class independence from the parties of the bourgeoisie". It was "conceived as a means to divert the class struggle away from sympathy with the Russian Revolution". Thesis 4 states that Labour is "a bourgeois party with a working class base". Thesis 10 reminds us that "in 1920 Lenin urged the newly formed Communist Party not only to seek to affiliate, but to work to put the Labour Party into government". Thesis 14 tells us: "Even when it was dominated by Stalinism, the CPGB continued to influence the Labour Party" - ie, it "reinforced reformism and nationalism".

Thesis 15 goes on to say that "The formation of the CPGB in 1920 and the National Leftwing Movement are highly relevant today." Thesis 18 states that Labour today "can be made into a real party of labour", although thesis 21 states that it "must be reorganised from top to bottom". The final theses, 22-24, are an adaptation of Marx's analysis of the Paris Commune, whereby Labour stands in for the Commune.

However, the situation today is *not* comparable to the 1920s for the following reasons:

(i) Then the British working class was also becoming increasingly combative, which culminated in the General Strike of 1926.

(ii) As I have stated, Lenin advocated working to put Labour into government when the opportunity to expose its reformism had yet to arise.

(iii) Whilst it is true to say that Labour is a bourgeois party with a working class base, history shows that, the longer this goes on, the more wedded Labour becomes to parliamentarism, given all the perks of the latter. Therefore it cannot be seen as a primary arena for the class struggle today.

(iv) Likewise the newly formed Labour Party, beginning with the trade union bureaucracy, wanted to establish "working class independence from the parties of the bourgeoisie" only at the level of

parliamentarism, which undermines its real independence: right from the start, the party was ready to sow illusions in the idea that Labour can introduce reforms in the interests of the working class - even socialism - once it has gained control of the executive/legislative arm of the bourgeois state.

(v) Today there is no equivalent to the birth of the CPGB in 1920 or the rise of the National Leftwing Movement during that period. On the one hand, the CPGB is only a "microscopic force" (to quote comrade Mike Macnair); on the other, the rise of half a million Corbynistas cannot be compared to the rise of the leftwing movement back then.

(vi) This is because we are living in the epoch of capitalist decline, which also includes the decline of reformism itself. With hindsight, in the *Transitional programme*, Trotsky was premature when he argued that social democracy had degenerated into "reformism without reform". He failed to anticipate the aftermath of World War II: ie, a devastated world, wherein the bourgeoisie, via social democracy, had to accept Keynesian-style reforms, in order to get the economy back on its feet. But Trotsky would be right to say it now! The Corbyn leadership is only too aware that it has very little room for manoeuvre. As long as Labour is wedded to parliamentarism and the state, to go for a left alternative would be a form of political suicide.

(vii) The fact that Stalinism reinforced "reformism" and "nationalism" within Labour is an aspect of its poisonous legacy, which must be overcome, but this can only be done by building a new Marxist party, however difficult this task will be.

As for the CPGB itself, along with any support it might have within Labour, such as the Labour Party Marxists, given the fact that the latter is only tiny, it cannot be seen as an effective "material force", capable of transforming the party into a united front of the left. Either it will be defeated by the bureaucracy or it will succumb to revisionism. It is one thing to espouse the strategy; it is another to persist with this, despite growing evidence to the contrary.

Already, in the course of its struggle, LPM has become enmeshed in the bureaucratic structures of the party. Conceivably the demand for the mandatory reselection of parliamentary candidates might be achievable, but this is still a long way from the idea that the party's elected representatives should be "revocable at any time". Labour cannot be transformed into the Commune! Readers need not be reminded that far-left comrades have already been expelled from the party by means of a McCarthyite witch-hunt, based on trumped-up charges of 'anti-Semitism'. But the Corbyn leadership is going along with it! The tragedy is that, as far as I know, LPM has not been able to recruit tens, let alone hundreds and thousands, of comrades to the revolutionary programme. Where have all the Corbynistas gone? Moreover there is no sizeable communist party for such comrades to join.

In conclusion, the CPGB's theses on the Labour Party are ahistorical: ie, they bear only a superficial relationship to the past. In the epoch of capitalist decline, it is impossible to transform social democratic parties into a united front of the left. In every crisis, social democracy has provided proof that it is tied hand and foot to the centralised state

power, because its historic role is to mediate between capital and labour. On the rare occasions when it tries to step outside this role, it is smashed by 'special bodies of armed men', etc. Given the devastation which ensued after World War II, the reforms carried out by the Labour government in Britain are the exception that proves the rule.

The CPGB's strategy towards the Labour Party is not only wrong: it will lead to defeat and demoralisation for the group - which would be bad for the far left as a whole, which is already tiny.

But what is the alternative? Firstly, *the struggle for revolutionary continuity against reformism and revisionism is ongoing*, although now we have to swim even harder against the stream. Yet this is the *only* way in which we can save the far left before it is irretrievably lost. Secondly, we need to look at the past, yet again (but this time only as far as 2006). That was when the supporters of *Critique* started the Campaign for a Marxist Party.

Rex Dunn  
Bedford

## Chauvinism

Steve Freeman argued last week that "we should strongly oppose a *second* referendum and support a *ratification* referendum", on the basis that this could heal the divide between working class 'leave' and 'remain' voters. Yet he agrees with the CPGB that the first EU referendum has done nothing for the working class but sow division and stoke anti-migrant feeling. He acknowledges that a Tory Party in disarray has achieved little in talks with the EU, while Labour have been content to watch May squirm, so there will quite possibly be nothing - or nothing much good - to ratify anyway. EU figures talk about the possibility of the UK remaining as not being outside the realm of possibility.

Under those conditions, the most likely referendum could even be a straight rematch. Even if a deal is struck, why would another vote not become an even more bitter fight between a liberal wing of capital (and presumably the Labour Party), desperate to get whatever deal they can, and increasingly confident Brexiteers, for whom any probable deal would be selling the UK down the river? How could the left use such a vote in a revolutionary, and "not a reformist manner"?

The appeal for healing also sits oddly next to Steve's defence of his position during the last referendum: to advocate a 'remain' vote in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and "a mass abstention" for workers in England. For a moment he considers that a bigger 'leave' vote in England might have resulted in "an English 'Brexit'", which would "make a revolutionary breach in the walls of the old constitution". The argument seems analogous to that of 'any defeat for imperialism is a victory for the working class' - except that Scotland and Wales have never been oppressed nations. On the contrary, they have been integral parts of the monarchical UK state for centuries.

Has he learnt nothing from the left's tailing of the Scottish National Party? The nationalists simply do it better - and, once in power, the SNP's left posturing wore off quick. Even their ardour for independence cooled when it became clear that an independent Scotland may enjoy neither automatic EU membership nor a vibrant, oil-fuelled economy.

Communists favour more devolution - a federal republic

## 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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of England, Wales and Scotland (and, yes, a united Ireland) - not *dividing* the historically constituted working class in mainland Britain with new borders. Comrade Freeman substitutes his 'democratic revolution' for the sometimes thankless task of arguing for a united, republican and communist party. He really seems to believe that hiving off two new capitalist mini-states will, via some unspecified (and presumably long, winding) road, get us closer to working class unity in Britain. Therefore, anything that is bad for the UK state is good for us. But it is a dangerous game, pitting "reactionary" nationalisms against - what, progressive ones? Such talk feeds chauvinism on all sides.

**Dave Macauley**  
email

## Climate science

Eddie Ford in last week's article, 'Scorching weather and climate', says, "when all is said and done, human industry is a hugely important factor, when it comes to global warming" (August 2). I would ask Eddie, how does he know it is a hugely important factor? What scientific articles does he base that statement on?

Eddie Ford appears to have fallen for the notion that human-made climate change is all there is to discuss. It's perhaps not the writer's problem, as there appears to be a consensus that we read about in the news that human factors are the cause of climate change - the debate has been skewed towards human influence. Why is there not a discussion about natural climate change? Eddie does mention this, but does not expatiate. It cannot be doubted that humans cause climate change, but what is the relationship to natural climate change? Where are the scientific studies about this?

The precursor to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, states: "The ultimate objective of this convention and any related legal instruments that the conference of the parties may adopt is to achieve, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the convention, stabilisation of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. Such a level should be achieved within a time-frame sufficient to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change, to ensure that food production is not threatened and to enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner" (UNFCCC article 2).

All that can be said about article 2 is that it is a political mandate to study human effects to the exclusion of natural forces. But how strong are those effects? Carbon dioxide is a trace gas that makes up about 0.04% of the atmosphere and we know that it has increased in concentration by 80-90 parts per million since pre-industrial levels. Is that enough to make the substantial changes claimed by the advocates arguing for a reduction?

And the claim is also made that levels of carbon dioxide held steady up to the industrial revolution for thousands of years. The basis for this is the IPCC's use of ice core data. But those ice core data may not be a true representation of total global atmospheric concentrations of the time they were measured.

Ice cores are extracted under extreme pressure and can suffer hairline cracks, leading to an outpouring of gas, which raises questions about the amount of gas measured being a true reflection of pre-industrial levels. The data

could be said to misrepresent pre-industrial levels and they could be higher than what is concluded from such measures. There are other proxy measures, including the chemical composition of the atmosphere over the past 200 years, that should be examined more thoroughly.

It is assumed that there is a consensus, but that derives from the cherry-picking of the articles produced by the approximately 1,500 scientists who produce the papers for the IPCC. There is no consensus among those scientists - and they don't include the scientists who work outside the IPCC, whose conclusions cover the entire spectrum of perspectives. Science is not based on consensus in any case.

Eddie Ford worries about Russian forests being no longer able to absorb carbon dioxide - he notes that these forests absorb 500 tonnes of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere each year. But this is miniscule, compared to the gigatons of carbon dioxide that is transferred between the various reservoirs, such as the soil, atmosphere, plants and ocean.

So, yes, let's bring some Marxism into the debate and base our understanding of Earth's climate on that science.

**Simon Wells**  
Manchester

## Not an example

Your correspondent, Bruno Kretzschmar, suggested the other week that Jared O'Mara, who recently resigned from the Labour Party, should stand as an independent in order to put forward true socialist and working class credentials (Letters, July 26). The reported and uncontradicted facts suggest that O'Mara is not exactly a good example to socialist workers who should maintain good standards as examples to colleagues, whilst ensuring they fight for rights.

In his year in parliament he has not made a maiden speech in the house. It is said that he rarely had surgeries for his constituents, because he regarded Friday nights as a lads' night out, followed by a lay-in on Saturday to recover. It hardly shows him up as a good example

to fellow workers. He is now using his disability and working class background as grounds for claiming he was ostracised. Whilst parliament might be a system that is alienating to working class MPs, you have to turn up and do your job.

**Gerry Glyde**  
Gateshead

## Discrimination

Marcia Carty, a Metrolink driver at the Perivale garage, has been told that she is not allowed to wear a head-covering in the colours of her Rastafarian belief (red, gold and green).

We think this is discrimination - in the same way that we would if a Muslim woman driver was told she could not wear a headscarf. Marcia feels that for her to practise her religion she needs to wear her colours - we support her in this choice. Multiculturalism is something to be celebrated, not hidden.

Marcia had to face a grievance meeting with the company, which she sadly lost. It is time for drivers who support her to take a stand. We call on London mayor Sadiq Khan to intervene to help Marcia. Marcia should not be forced to choose between her religious beliefs and her job - that's discrimination. We support her and call for her immediate return to work.

Marcia Carty needs the full support of all bus workers, trade unionists and progressive people in London and beyond. She is being victimised as a black Rastafarian woman whose only crime is to wear her colours. She has worn them for years, but now she is being prevented from starting work each day.

This clearly contravenes Unite's equalities policy and is possibly illegal. Unite needs to take firm action here. A key objective of the union is: "To promote equality and fairness for all, including actively opposing prejudice and discrimination on grounds of gender, ethnic origin, religion, class, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, disability, caring responsibilities; and to pursue equal pay for work of equal value".

**Gerry Downing**  
email

# Summer Offensive

## Now's the time

**W**ith just over two weeks to go before the end of our Summer Offensive fundraising drive, we are just about halfway there. Thanks to donations this week totalling £1,107, we now have £12,194 towards our £25,000 target.

You may well think that raising half the target after three-quarters of the time has already elapsed is nothing much to shout about and in a sense you'd be right. But things aren't that simple. The final week of the SO is when the CPGB holds its annual school, Communist University, and that is when a very large proportion of donations come in.

Comrades who come to the school often hand over a good part of what they have pledged in that final week and, on top of that, we also raise quite a lot during CU - from stalls, catering, social evenings and in particular our Summer Offensive celebratory meal, which this year will take place on August 24. CU begins on Saturday August 18 and ends a week later on August 25 (see the ad on p2).

Nevertheless, for those who won't be at CU, please note that you now need to come up with your contributions pretty quickly.

Don't leave things to the very last moment.

The largest donations this week came from MM (£300) and YM (£200), while comrade RC chipped in with £75. Then there were the standing orders to the *Weekly Worker*, which included four lots of £30 - thanks to SW, AC, CG and NH.

But next week's issue is the last until September (after that we have CU, where you will find all those who help produce and regularly write for this paper) and, following that, our week-long August break. So I'd really like to report a whole lot of big donations in my column next week.

There's still time to post us a cheque, payable either to the CPGB or *Weekly Worker*, at BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX. A rather quicker way to get us your contribution is via PayPal - on either website. But, best of all, in terms of both speed and cost, is to make a bank transfer (*Weekly Worker*: sort code 30-99-64; account number 00744310. CPGB: sort code 08-92-99; account number 65109991).

Now's the time, comrades! ●  
**Peter Manson**

# ACTION

## London Communist Forum

**Sunday August 12, 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: final review of the literature.  
Calthorpe Arms, 252 Grays Inn Road, London WC1.  
Organised by CPGB: [www.cpgb.org.uk](http://www.cpgb.org.uk); and Labour Party Marxists: [www.labourpartymarxists.org.uk](http://www.labourpartymarxists.org.uk).

## 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](http://www.redspokes.co.uk/thebigride).

## No to Islamophobia

**Thursday August 9, 6pm:** Demonstration outside Boris Johnson's office, Uxbridge and South Ruislip Conservatives, 36 Harefield Road, Uxbridge, Middlesex.  
Organised by Stand Up To Racism: [www.standuptoracism.org.uk](http://www.standuptoracism.org.uk).

## Back Bookmarks

**Saturday August 11, 2pm:** Solidarity event, Bookmarks, 1 Bloomsbury Street, London WC1. Following last Saturday's far-right attack, celebrate radical bookselling.  
Organised by Stand Up To Racism: Bookmarks the socialist bookshop: [www.facebook.com/events/261731234427517/](https://www.facebook.com/events/261731234427517/)

## South Yorkshire solidarity

**Sunday August 12, 11am to 5pm:** Festival, Wortley Hall, Sheffield S35.  
Organised by TUC: [www.tuc.org.uk/yorkshire-and-the-humber/events/south-yorkshire-festival-2018](http://www.tuc.org.uk/yorkshire-and-the-humber/events/south-yorkshire-festival-2018).

## Education for Labour

**Wednesday August 22, 6pm:** Summer training academy, Venue Cymru, The Promenade, Penrhyn Crescent, Llandudno LL30. Single sessions £5, full course £25.  
Organised by Welsh Labour Party: [www.welshlabour.wales/summer\\_training\\_academy\\_north\\_wales](http://www.welshlabour.wales/summer_training_academy_north_wales).

## Derby Transformed

**Saturday September 1, 9am to midnight:** Day of debate, St Peter's Church, 10 St Peter's Churchyard, Derby DE1. Hosted by Chris Williamson MP.  
Organised by Momentum: [www.facebook.com/events/544102699319978/](https://www.facebook.com/events/544102699319978/).

## Health, safety and wellbeing

**Monday September 3, 10.30am to 3.30pm:** Conference, Salisbury Rugby Football Club, Castle Road, Salisbury SP1.  
Organised by South West TUC: [www.tuc.org.uk/south-west/events/health-safety-and-wellbeing-work-tuc-south-west-conference](http://www.tuc.org.uk/south-west/events/health-safety-and-wellbeing-work-tuc-south-west-conference)

## 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: <https://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](http://www.tuc.org.uk/tuc-congress-2018).

## National Shop Stewards Network

**Sunday September 9, 1pm:** TUC rally, Manchester Mechanics Institute Conference Centre, Princess Street, Manchester M1.  
Organised by National Shop Stewards Network: <http://shopstewards.net>.

## The World Transformed

**Saturday September 22 to Tuesday September 2:** Momentum's festival of politics, art and music, running alongside the Labour conference, Liverpool, various venues.  
Organised by The World Transformed: <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](http://www.stopwar.org.uk).

## Confronting racism and fascism

**Saturday October 20, 10am to 5pm:** International conference, Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1. Entrance £11.37 (£5.98).  
Organised by Stand Up To Racism: [www.standuptoracism.org.uk](http://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. Organised by SPEW: [www.socialism2018.net](http://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.



**EUROPE**

# Project Fear or Project Reality?

Everyone from the governor of the Bank of England to the National Farmers Union is getting worried about a no-deal Brexit, writes **Eddie Ford**

In what has been regarded by Brexiteers as yet another attempt to undermine the June 23 referendum, the governor of the Bank of England, Mark Carney, expressed forebodings about what lies ahead. Speaking before Theresa May's August 3 meeting with French president Emmanuel Macron to "save Brexit", Carney said on the BBC's *Today* programme that a no-deal outcome was "highly undesirable", but warned that its chances were "uncomfortably high" - or "60:40", to use the recent calculation of the international trade secretary, Liam Fox.

Carney highlighted how damage had already been inflicted, saying that the UK had gone from the fastest to the slowest-growing economy in the G7 - it was only last week that the bank's monetary policy committee finally felt confident enough to raise interest rates above the 0.5% 'emergency level' it had fixed in March 2009. Meaning practically, the governor explained, that the British economy had grown by a percentage point less up to spring of this year than had been "projected prior to the referendum", with a "real pay squeeze on British households".

Getting even darker in tone, Carney emphasised how a no-deal would cause "disruption to trade as we know it" - adding that as a consequence, there would be "higher prices for a period of time". We will get poorer. Not much sign of the "Brexit dividend" then. He also compared his efforts to stabilise the financial system for the coming huge shock with the ongoing stockpiling of food and medicine by governmental agencies and companies. Something that might be uncomfortable for the government, seeing how just a few weeks ago Dominic Raab, the freshly installed Brexit secretary, told parliament that it would be "wrong" to say the government was stockpiling - rather, it was taking steps to ensure that there are "adequate" food supplies for Britain in the event of a no-deal departure. A big difference, you understand.

Anyway, you will be reassured to know that the banks (if nobody else) are ready for house prices crashing by a third, interest rates soaring by more than 4%, unemployment rising considerably and the economy as a whole going into recession for god knows how many years - at least according to the bank's "robust" testing of Britain's financial institutions, which have tripled their capital and increased their liquidity by 10 times in recent years. Don't panic or worry about your money in the bank, or whether you can get a loan or mortgage: things are under control.

However, showing how jittery nerves are after both Carney's warnings, the pound fell to a 11-month low of \$1.2954 - with Capital Economics predicting that it could slide back to \$1.20 if the UK cannot agree a deal with the EU (though its "baseline assumption" for the time being is that a deal will be reached, pushing the pound back to \$1.40 by the end of 2018).

Clearly this was not the outcome the Bank of England was hoping for from last week's interest-rate increase - all other things being equal, higher rates tend to encourage investors to buy the pound, and that reduces inflationary pressure by making the cost of imports cheaper. But so far this does not appear to be the case - the pound now looks weaker after



**Mark Carney: warning**

the quarter-point increase in rates to 0.75% than it was before the move. This is mainly because the financial markets had assumed for a while that a rate rise was a done deal and thus had already adjusted the price of sterling against other currencies accordingly. Arguably, to have given the pound a real upward boost, the monetary committee would have needed to twin higher interest rates with hawkish language about the possibility of further monetary tightening in the months ahead - something it is not prepared to do at the moment, not wanting to scare the horses.

## High priest

Needless to say, some were not happy with the governor's message or reassurances. Right on cue, Jacob Rees-Mogg accused Carney of being the "high priest" of Project Fear - though he would say that, being himself the high priest of hard Brexit. Others would say that the governor is part of Project Reality.

But, for Rees-Mogg, Carney's "inaccurate and politically motivated forecasting" has damaged the reputation of the Bank of England - this coming from a man who recently told us that we might have to wait 50 years to get the benefits of Brexit. Coming to the support of his fellow Brexiteer, Iain Duncan Smith remarked not very convincingly on the BBC that that a no-deal actually "doesn't exist". The "reality", Duncan Smith argued, would be a deal under World Trade Organisation terms - the UK "already operates under the WTO, as does the EU".

However, Mark Carney is not the only "high priest" of fear, it seems - there is also the National Farmers Union. Minette Batters, NFU president, warned that Britain would *run out of food* by August next year if it were asked to be wholly self-sufficient - the hot temperatures of the past few weeks had put Britain's food production capabilities into sharp focus.<sup>1</sup> Changing eating habits have meant perishable items, such as tomatoes, lettuce and citrus fruits, are now expected to be available all year round - hence Britain has become increasingly reliant on food

grown overseas. Statistics from the department for environment, food and rural affairs show that the next most vulnerable food category after fruit is fresh vegetables, with 57% of UK requirements produced in Britain, followed by pork at 61% and then potatoes, of which 25% are imported. Britain imports more milk and cream products than it produces, and imports almost three times as much cheese as it exports, almost twice as many eggs and almost 20 times as many fresh vegetables.

Batters points out that farming "has the potential to be one of the most impacted sectors" from a bad Brexit - a frictionless free-trade deal with the EU and "access to a reliable and competent workforce" for farm businesses is "critical" to the future of British farming, she said. Batters believes the consequences of no-deal could be mitigated if the government took immediate action and gave domestic production its "unwavering support". We shall see. Last week the Centre for Food Policy (University of London), released a briefing paper looking at British food security post-Brexit. Amongst other things, the study pointed out that the US is currently only the 10th largest exporter of food to Britain. Therefore, we read, for the US - once a magical free-trade deal has been concluded - to replace the combined food imports from the other nine of the top 10 "would require a vast food flotilla and logistics operation exceeding that of the 1940-45 Atlantic convoys".

But, for the Moggites, the NFU and the University of London are doubtlessly part of the conspiracy against Brexit - terrifying us with the worst-case scenario to make parliament accept Theresa May's Chequers plan/white paper to turn the UK into a "vassal state" that signs up to the EU's "common rule book": a rule-taker, not a rule-maker. A 'Brexiternity' of slow-motion non-separation involving an extended transition, long-term bridging arrangements, continued jurisdiction from the European Court of Justice, and so on. More sovereign on paper, but less so in practice. Probably not what most people had in mind on June 23 2016, when they voted to

'take back control' and leave the EU.

The referendum was a con and the CPGB was quite correct to call for an active boycott - and will do so again if there was a second referendum or 'People's Vote', no matter how unlikely that seems as things stand now.

## Refocus

Theresa May obviously wants a deal with the EU, which is precisely why she went to see Macron at his very nice summer retreat in the south of France. The visit is all part of the not-so-cunning plan by the British government to 'divide and rule' the EU - the idea being to circumvent the European Commission and appeal directly to European leaders; hoping to pit them against the EC, especially in the shape of Michel Barnier, and in general undermine the EU's (more or less) collective stance on Brexit.

Unsurprisingly, European leaders seem to have seen through this ruse. Before the two leaders' meeting, an Elysée Palace official ruled out Macron breaking ranks to help the UK, insisting the meeting was "not a negotiation" and "not a substitute for the negotiations" led by Brussels - adding that the French president had "full trust" in Barnier, and "that's how it will remain". Indeed, the French press has widely viewed May's visit as a "cry for help", not a bold diplomatic initiative. The centre-right *Le Figaro* had an especially colourful editorial which portrays Theresa May trying to wrest the steering wheel of the Brexit car from different factions of her party back home, as it "jolts over the London potholes and skids on the oil slicks of Brussels". The conclusion is: never mind "take back control" - Britain has lost control of Brexit.

But some members of the prime minister's cabinet, of course, would be more than happy if there was no deal and Britain defaulted to WTO rules - particularly Liam Fox, an apostle of Atlanticism who is unfortunately hardly an irrelevance, when it comes to the whole Brexit process. Almost masochistically, Fox told *The Sunday Times* that it is "essential" that a no-deal "looks credible" to the EU - after all, he chirpily remarked, "if it's causing some anxiety in Britain, think

what it's causing in Brussels". Using this logic, we can only presume that, the worst things get, the better they get: threatening suicide is the way forward. We also find out from Fox that Barnier had dismissed the Chequers plan, because "we have never done it before", making "the chance of no deal greater". In fact, Fox declared, if the EU decides that "the theological obsession of the unelected is to take priority over the economic wellbeing of the people of Europe, then it's a bureaucrats' Brexit, not a people's Brexit" - in which case, "there is only going to be one outcome": ie, the one he wants. The international trade secretary could not make his agenda more explicit.

The dishonest Brexiteers, of which there are many, would have us believe that our sceptered isle would flow with milk, honey and extra cash for the national health service, once we cast off the shackles of Brussels - which was always a total lie, and they knew it. But the more honest Brexiteers - a rarer breed - admit that Britain will take an economic hit. Yet ultimately Brexit will be worth it, whether it takes 50 years or not, as it will enable the UK to refocus the economy. Yes, a lot of industry will go, especially the likes of the car industry, but in the end the City will triumph, as Europe - and the world - needs the City. If the plan goes well, the British economy will be reorientated towards financial and businesses services, introducing or imposing a truly low-wage economy and big tax cuts for the rich and other so-called wealth-creators - whilst getting rid of silly and wasteful things like social services, cracking down on trade union and workers' rights and to hell with the environment. A lean-and-mean, competitive, economy ready to take on the world.

Though this strand of thought might represent a small section of the capitalist class or even the Tory Party, they know what they want - for Britain to become an enormous rainy Singapore off the coast of Europe ●

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## Notes

1. www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/aug/07/uk-run-out-of-food-no-deal-brexit-national-farmers-union.



## LABOUR

# Stand up to your enemies

The more Corbyn retreats, writes **David Shearer** of Labour Party Marxists, the more the Labour right grows his enemies grow in confidence

No doubt Jeremy Corbyn was relieved that for a couple of days the media was focussing on former foreign secretary Boris Johnson's remarks about the burka and temporarily relegating the latest fake news about Labour 'anti-Semitism' from the main headlines.

But, unfortunately, it will not last long. Johnson may have compared women wearing the burka to "bank robbers" and "letter boxes", but no-one should expect the media to start digging up previous Islamophobic remarks he may have made, let alone start a campaign to expose the "severe and widespread" Islamophobia affecting the entire Tory Party (although, of course, there is no doubt that this would be much more productive in terms of finding genuine examples than the 'anti-Semitism' nonsense has been).

I am afraid to say, Jeremy, that the attacks on you are not going to stop any time soon. They are, after all, predicated on two interconnected aims: ensuring that support for Israel - imperialism's key ally in the Middle East - is not undermined; and helping to win back control of the Labour Party for the right wing, so that the ruling class will have a 'responsible' alternative to the Conservative Party, should it become temporarily unelectable. That is why no end of apologies or unprincipled retreats will stop the onslaught. In reality, the more Corbyn does that, the more the onslaught will intensify. Everyone can see that it is paying off.

Take last week's article by Corbyn in *The Guardian*, entitled 'I will root anti-Semites out of Labour - they do not speak for me'.<sup>1</sup> In this piece the Labour leader went along with the absurd notion that anti-Semitism is a major problem within the party and that people like Pete Willsman, who strongly denied this at the July 17 meeting of Labour's national executive committee, are effectively aiding and abetting the anti-Semites: "... no-one can, or should, try to dismiss or belittle the concerns expressed by so many Jewish people and organisations about what has been happening in the party I am proud to lead."

In the video on Labour's website, sent out by email to all members shortly after the *Guardian* article was published, Corbyn went further: "Anyone who denies that this has surfaced within our party is clearly actually wrong and contributing to the problem."<sup>2</sup> And in the article he states:

Denying the continuing problem doesn't help. Labour staff have seen examples of holocaust denial, crude stereotypes of Jewish bankers, conspiracy theories blaming 9/11 on Israel, and even one individual who appeared to believe that Hitler had been misunderstood.

This is worse than pathetic. There is no doubt that among the more than half a million members that the Labour Party now has there is a minority with all kinds of weird views - and some of them will find their way onto social media. But, as Corbyn himself admits, they account for only a tiny percentage of the membership, most of whom will be inactive. There is no evidence of such people exerting any influence whatsoever.

Of course, much has been made of a small number of high-profile cases - Ken Livingstone,

Jackie Walker, Marc Wadsworth, Tony Greenstein, Moshé Machover... But in none of them has anti-Semitism been established. For the most part the original allegations were withdrawn for charges such as the catch-all "bringing the party into disrepute". In the case of comrade Machover, all the preposterous claims made against him were withdrawn after a rank-and-file campaign, while comrade Walker's case has yet to be heard almost two years after she was suspended.

### Honourable

It is true that Corbyn states: "there are also many non- or anti-Zionist Jews who should not be branded as anti-Semites simply because they are not part of the Zionist tradition" - that applies to comrades Walker, Machover and Greenstein. But then he adds: "Both traditions have always had honourable proponents in our movement" (my emphasis). So the tradition of Zionism is "honourable", is it?

I am sorry, Jeremy, but Zionism is a *reactionary* ideology (as you once knew) - based on the notion that Jews everywhere will always be oppressed unless they establish their own state. True, it emerged as a reaction to widespread anti-Semitism and pogroms in many countries, but it was opposed by the majority of Jews, who regarded themselves first and foremost as German, Russian, British, French... Indeed Jews have always played a prominent role in the internationalist working class movement, which calls for a united struggle against oppression, as opposed to Zionist separatism.

But now the Labour leader seems to accept that the Zionists are *bona fide* representatives of the "Jewish community". He still has not met with representatives of the anti-Zionist Jewish Voice for Labour, despite JVL's constant requests. (By the way, JVL organised a 100-strong protest on August 7 outside the BBC against its biased coverage of this whole business, but, true to form, the corporation did not report it - and neither did any other

media outlet.) On the other hand, he begs Zionist groups like the Jewish Labour Movement to have another meeting with him to help 'smooth out' the difficulties - which, of course, JLM is declining to do.

In his article Corbyn does take issue with the absurd claim that "a Labour government would represent any kind of threat, let alone an 'existential threat', to Jewish life in Britain, as three Jewish newspapers recently claimed". But he excuses the blatant dishonesty involved, declaring: "That is the kind of overheated rhetoric that can surface during emotional political debates."

Does anyone seriously believe that a Corbyn government would open the way for Nazi-type death camps? If not, in what way do the Zionists believe that the very existence of Jews would come under threat? But, of course, he goes out of his way to pander to the Zionist agenda: "I accept that, if any part of our national community feels threatened, anxious or vulnerable, not only must that be taken at face value [sic], but we must all ensure those fears are put to rest." After all, "The holocaust was the greatest crime of the 20th century. Jewish people who are feeling concerned must be listened to."

### IHRA definition

A central feature of the ongoing campaign is, of course, the demand that the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of anti-Semitism, plus all the attached examples, are adopted by Labour in full. As everyone knows, the overall aim of the definition, combined with the examples, is to conflate anti-Semitism with anti-Zionism. Two of the examples in particular stand out:

- "Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination: eg, by claiming that the existence of a state of Israel is a racist endeavour"; and
- "Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis."

The first of these is blatantly pro-Zionist - implying that Jews in each and every country share a common nationality and as such have the right to "self-determination". What is more, the Zionist

colonisation of Palestine of necessity involved racist laws and practices against the Palestinians. It is absurd to claim that pointing out these straightforward facts is a form of prejudice or hatred against Jews.

The same applies to the second example quoted. In fact, it is common in Israel itself for such comparisons with Nazi Germany to be made - the most recent case being over the knesset's adoption of Binyamin Netanyahu's Nation-State law, which enshrined a 'blood and soil' version of nationalism; it has been compared in Israel not just to apartheid legislation, but to German fascism.

As for the IHRA definition itself, it reads in its entirety:

Anti-Semitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of anti-Semitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.<sup>3</sup>

This clearly cannot be the basis of any reliable definition. The fact that it states that anti-Semitism "may be expressed as hatred toward Jews" indicates that it is incomplete. You do not have to 'hate' Jews to be an anti-Semite. For example, throughout the first half of the 20th century, it was easy enough to encounter the expression of all manner of low-level forms of prejudice directed against Jews. As for the second sentence, it is obviously accurate, but it in no way helps define what anti-Semitism is.

### Willsman

Let me turn now to the slurs directed against Pete Willsman - the latest in a long list of false accusations, which in this case conveniently targets an NEC member. His intervention at the July 17 NEC meeting was secretly recorded and given to the *Jewish Chronicle*. In this he noted the letter signed by 68 rabbis, which was published in that morning's *Guardian*, who stated: "... anti-Semitism within sections of the Labour Party has become so severe and widespread that we must speak".

In his online report of the meeting posted two days later, he stated: "In 50 years I have never seen any anti-Semitism in the Labour Party"<sup>4</sup> - a sentiment that the majority of Labour activists would no doubt echo. On the recording he can be heard saying: "Ask the rabbis, where is your evidence of severe and widespread anti-Semitism in this party?" He also claimed that some of the people posting "duff information" were "Trump fanatics".

Interestingly, his report did not give the impression that anyone on the NEC was outraged by these statements. He wrote:

This NEC meeting was dominated by a very lengthy, very informed and very thoughtful discussion regarding the anti-Semitism code of conduct. In my 37 years on and off national committees, I can hardly remember a more sensitive and thoughtful debate. Almost every NEC member provided contributions. There was no attempt at point-scoring and every participant spoke frankly and sincerely.

However, a couple of weeks later, the recording was made available, and comrade Willsman was the target of the most malicious smears. Because he had criticised some Jews, he just had to be an anti-Semite. Some called for him to be immediately expelled, while Labour deputy leader Tom Watson stated: "For the avoidance of doubt, Peter Willsman is and always has been a loud-mouthed bully. He disgusts me." It is, of course, quite acceptable for members of the Labour right to use such language.

It was clear that comrade Willsman was leaned on to apologise and he told the BBC:

Not all of what I said has been accurately reported. But I accept that what I did say, and the way I said it, fell short of the requirement, which I accept, for discussions of contentious issues to be conducted in a fully civil and respectful way. I deeply apologise for any offence caused to those present and those to whom my remarks were reported.<sup>5</sup>

In other words, he may have been a bit rude. But this obviously fell far short of what the Labour right was demanding and what, appallingly, Momentum insisted he should say. So, within hours, he was reduced to grovelling:

I recognise the offensive nature of my comments and that, in diminishing the experiences of those who face anti-Semitism in our party and society, I showed a lack of the sensitivity required for discussions around racism. I will be referring myself to receive equalities training, so I can better understand how to approach discussions of such issues in a respectful way.

Comrade Willsman was, of course, dropped from the Momentum slate of recommended candidates for the NEC, but hopefully the majority of Labour members will ignore this disgraceful decision and vote for him, together with the other eight Corbynite candidates.

It is clear too that Corbyn's comment about the denial of "severe and widespread" anti-Semitism "contributing to the problem" was in part directed against comrade Willsman. The implication is that anyone who now repeats this will themselves risk disciplinary action. Pretend that you agree with the smears or face the consequences.

The lesson of the 'anti-Semitism' campaign is clear: the more Corbyn retreats, backtracks and apologises, the more the Labour right grows in confidence. Backed up by virtually the entire media, their attacks will only intensify. It is time for the Labour leader to stand up to his enemies instead of conceding more and more ground. ●

### Notes

1. August 3: [www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/aug/03/jeremy-corbyn-antisemitism-labour-party](http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/aug/03/jeremy-corbyn-antisemitism-labour-party).
2. <https://labour.org.uk/no-place-for-antisemitism/#video>.
3. [www.holocaustremembrance.com/working-definition-antisemitism](http://www.holocaustremembrance.com/working-definition-antisemitism).
4. [http://grassrootslabour.net/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=317:peter-willsman-reports-from-labours-july-executive-nec-meeting-july-17th-2018&catid=36:nec-reports&Itemid=56](http://grassrootslabour.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=317:peter-willsman-reports-from-labours-july-executive-nec-meeting-july-17th-2018&catid=36:nec-reports&Itemid=56).
5. [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-45014771](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-45014771).



**Jeremy Corbyn: constantly giving ground**



**STRATEGY**

# A failure of definition

Jack Conrad argues that the left is crippled by its fixation on economic struggles and the downplaying of high politics

**N**o-one can discredit Marxism as long as we do not discredit ourselves. A maxim that surely applies to the confusion still reigning over Brexit and the European Union.

As the reader well knows, one ill-assorted pack of the left tailed behind the 'leave' campaign headed by Boris Johnson, Michael Gove and Nigel Farage (eg, the *Morning Star's* Communist Party of Britain, the Socialist Workers Party, Socialist Party in England and Wales, Counterfire and the New Communist Party). Another ill-assorted pack of the left tailed behind David Cameron's Stronger in Europe. And, having seen the most inept Tory prime minister in 50 years suffer a disastrous defeat, albeit by a narrow margin, the same left now clutches at the People's Vote and its call for a second referendum (eg, Alliance for Workers' Liberty, Socialist Resistance and Left Unity).

Naturally, the leftwing Brexiteers - the so-called Lexiteers - paint the referendum result as delivering a devastating body blow against the Tories, which, totally unconvincingly, can now end "neoliberal integration" and "restore" [sic] democracy and popular sovereignty.<sup>1</sup> The politics of hopeless hope. Meanwhile, the leftwing advocates of a second referendum espouse the politics of fear. Fear that Brexit will "wreck the British economy"; fear that a Singaporean Britain "will commit us to a series of long-term trade deals which will enforce American-style deregulation"; fear that "the rights, freedoms and protections currently enshrined in EU law" will be undermined.<sup>2</sup>

What neither the Lexiteers nor the left 'remainers' understand, teach, let alone programmatically champion, is the principle of working class political independence, the struggle for extreme democracy and bringing the European Union under the rule of the working class. Instead, on the one hand, there is collaboration with this or that fraction of the bourgeoisie and, on the other hand, a strategic reliance on trade unionism and economic strikes.

Indeed, the endless conflict between worker and boss, crucially at the 'point of production', has long been proclaimed to be the 'primal battleground of class struggle' by wide swathes of the left. Here is the mainspring of the class struggle, here is their ideal habitat, here is what distinguishes them from concerned liberals, academic socialists, enlightened reformers and each and every fraction of the bourgeoisie. Consequently, as a matter of common sense, the principal task of socialists is seen as promoting strikes and, stage by stage, providing them with an ever more political character. Eg, first a strike over pay and conditions, then strikes by others with similar grievances, then solidarity strikes, finally a general strike which challenges both employers and the government. Supposedly the working class then stands on the threshold of state power.

Inevitably, given such an outlook, economic strikes are deemed to be far more important than building a mass Communist Party, communist electoral activity, the fight to transform the Labour Party, demands for a federal republic, a people's militia and the ideological struggle

to defeat the influence of social-imperialism, bureaucratic centralism and left nationalism in our movement.

## Economism

Marxism has a well established category for this approach - economism. A term, of course, originally coined in pre-revolutionary Russia. Naturally, having a little history, modern-day economists have no wish to call their economism, economism. After all, we all know that, in the name of orthodox social democracy, *Iskra* - the celebrated paper edited by Vladimir Lenin, Jules Martov, Alexander Potresov, Georgi Plekhanov, Pavel Axelrod and Vera Zasulich - took on the foremost advocates of economism grouped around the rival publication *Rabochaya Mysl*; moreover, Lenin and the Bolshevik leadership subsequently fought anything that smacked of, hinted at or tended towards economism.

Hence, in our tradition, economism is considered a 'bad thing'. Therefore, nowadays, economists refuse to admit their economism, refuse to examine their economism, refuse to treat their economism - a complacency justified, excused, at least to their own satisfaction, by defining economism in a selective, pinched and misleading fashion.

Five representative samples:

- According to Tony Cliff, the founder-leader of the SWP, economism means that "Socialists should limit their agitation to purely economic issues: first to the industrial plant, then to inter-plant demands, and so on." Economists believed that from "narrow economic agitation" workers would learn, "through experience of the struggle itself, the need for politics, without the need for socialists to carry out agitation on the general political and social issues facing the Russian people as a whole."<sup>3</sup>

- Next an 'official communist' dictionary definition: "Its proponents wanted to limit the tasks of the working class movement to economic struggle (improving labour conditions, higher wages, etc). They held that political struggle should be waged by the liberal bourgeoisie alone."<sup>4</sup>

- Bob Jenkins, can speak for the Trotskyism of the Ernest Mandel variety: economism is "orientating to daily trade union struggles" and this "leads them to underestimate the important new political issues and movements unless they are to be found in the unions."<sup>5</sup>

- Then there is the Alliance for Workers' Liberty's Pete Radcliff. He supplies a definition from the camp of social-imperialism: "'Economism' was the term Lenin used to describe the politics and approach of revolutionaries who exclude themselves from the political struggle ... and merely concentrated on trade union agitation."<sup>6</sup>

- Last, but not least, there is Jim Creagan, a Trotskyist friend of the CPGB based in New York. The "economism" that Lenin decried "consisted in the belief that socialists need do no more than follow and support the spontaneous trade union activity of the working class in its struggle with employers in order to arrive at socialism."<sup>7</sup>

Yes, selective, pinched and misleading.

Even against the "old economism" of the 1890s Lenin fielded the term in the "broad sense".<sup>8</sup> According

to Lenin, the principal feature of economism is the tendency to lag behind the spontaneous movement and to downplay or belittle the centrality of democracy. So, there is narrow economism and broad economism. Narrow economism might be described as the politics of trade unionism or strikism. But broad economism shuns, neglects, veers away from the Marxist conception of politics. Either way, Russian economism circa 1900 did not ignore politics, "nor was it part of the orthodox case to argue that it did so".<sup>9</sup>

The *Rabochaya Mysl* economists declared themselves to be mightily impressed by Eduard Bernstein's *Evolutionary socialism*, questioned *Iskra's* opposition to acts of individual terrorism and presented a "kind of gradualist socialist pluralism". Their long-term strategic proposition was that, as the bourgeoisie gradually made encroachments on the prerogatives of the autocracy, the workers would, in due course, themselves gradually "assume self-governing functions in a democratic state".<sup>10</sup>

We see the same shunning, neglect and veering away from the Marxist conception of politics today. So-called Marxists - ie, economists of the broad kind - follow, flatter, even staff, all manner of political organisations, campaigns and causes: CND pacifism, George Galloway's Respect, Stand Up To Racism, greenism, feminism, black separatism, left Scottish nationalism, etc. Hence economists by no means limit themselves to "purely economic issues". Rather, economism is a variety of opportunism which relies on spontaneity and downplays consciousness.

Unsurprisingly, all too many leftwing personalities, groups and 'parties' suffer from a collective amnesia, when it comes to the broad definition of economism. What goes for those outside the Labour Party goes for those inside the Labour Party. Despite numerous references to Marxism, Lenin, Bolshevism and the October revolution, *Socialist Worker*, *The Socialist*, the *Morning Star*, *Labour Briefing*, *The Clarion* and *Red Flag* - all of them downplay the centrality of democracy. No wonder *organised* Marxism is widely seen as narrow-minded, exhausted, discredited.

## Russia

Let us examine economism in Russia in a bit more detail.

Its growth from 1894 onwards was aided by five main factors.

- Firstly, in the early stages of their movement, Marxists in Russia "restricted themselves merely to work in propaganda circles". When they took up the work of agitation amongst the masses, they were "not always able" to restrain themselves "from going to the other extreme". Their leaflets fearlessly exposed the terrible factory conditions in the industrial cities and thereby aroused a certain admiration from amongst workers. But they did little more than that.

- Secondly, the early Marxists were struggling against the Narodnik socialists, who understood politics as activity isolated from the masses and often resorted to terroristic conspiracies. Alexander II was blown up by a Narodnik bomb in March 1881. Yet, in rejecting this sort of politics, the early Marxists often "went to the extreme of pushing politics entirely into the background".

- Thirdly, in conditions of the small circles of workers and revolutionaries, the early Marxists "did not devote sufficient attention to the necessity of organising a revolutionary party, which would combine all the activities of the local groups and make it possible to organise the revolutionary work on correct lines".<sup>11</sup>

- Fourthly, there was the arrest and exile of Lenin, Martov and other theoretically talented comrades in December 1897, and the success the new, younger, generation of leaders enjoyed in influencing mass strikes.

- Fifthly, on top of all that, as already mentioned, there was the publication of Bernstein's *Evolutionary socialism* (1899). Anticipating the bourgeoisification of the western labour movement, the basic thesis of Bernstein's book - much acclaimed in its day by left academics and liberals alike - was that national capitalism, through the growing organisation of the productive forces, was inexorably widening the democratic space in society and gradually leading to its transformation into a socialism from above.

Wars, crises and violent revolutions were dismissed as phenomena of a bygone age. Bernstein also proposed that the Social Democratic Party in Germany would greatly strengthen itself by discarding antiquated notions and phraseology: eg, 'dictatorship of the proletariat' and 'class war'. Instead it should concentrate on the real business at hand: parliamentary elections and the day-to-day improvement of the overall condition of the working class.

Bernstein included the infamous statement: "the final aim of socialism" is "nothing"; it is the movement itself which "is everything".<sup>12</sup> By the "movement" he meant the existing institutions, elected representatives and routine economic struggles of the working class; not historically accumulated theory, fighting capacity and revolutionary consciousness. As to the "final aim" being "nothing", that, he claimed, referred not so much to socialism itself: rather "indifference" to "the form of the final arrangement of things".<sup>13</sup> Be that as it may, Bernstein's revisionism admirably suited the economists in Russia.

Despite their popularity with some groups of workers, the problem with the economists - not least those grouped around *Rabochaya Mysl* - was that they attempted to elevate the one-sidedness of the movement into a "special theory", which they bolstered with reference to the "fashionable" Bernsteinism and the "fashionable" refutations of Marxism - in reality old bourgeois ideas dressed in new packaging. The danger of economism was that the necessary unity between the working class and the struggle for democracy would be weakened. By contrast, Lenin declared that the "most urgent" task of Marxists in Russia is "to strengthen that connection" in order to quickly bring about the overthrow of the "autocratic government".<sup>14</sup>

The economists considered the "final aim" of replacing tsarism with a democratic republic as having no immediate practical significance. It was for the comparatively distant future. The democratic republic would be achieved by the grandchildren, not the children, of the present generation. Only the liberal bourgeoisie and intelligentsia were interested in such

faraway matters. Not the workers. Hence there was no leverage in anti-tsarist agitation. But helping to organise in the workplace, printing leaflets, sponsoring collections, providing sympathetic lawyers - all that promised "palpable results".

Consequently, the economists argued, in true tailist fashion, that the job of the workers' party, when eventually formed, was to assist workers in their efforts to build trade unions and give their demands a 'socialist coloration'. Trade unionism supposedly has an inexorable socialist logic. With accumulated experience of strikes, stronger organisation and steadily improved conditions, workers gain confidence and thereby become conscious "of the possibility and necessity of socialism".

Lenin agreed with Karl Kautsky: this was "absolutely untrue".<sup>15</sup> It is Marxism, not the economic struggle, which brings the working class movement consciousness of its position in society and its historic tasks. Marxism, of course, has its roots in the conditions of capitalist exploitation and emerges in the struggle against capitalist exploitation. But, while Marxism and the class struggle arise side by side, they are hardly the same thing. Marxism requires "profound scientific knowledge": eg, dialectics, historical materialism and political economy. There would be no need for Marxism if socialist consciousness arose spontaneously through trade unionism and the economic struggle.

Lenin and his comrades launched a ferocious assault on the economists and joined in the international campaign opposing Bernsteinism. In the hands of the economists Marxism was being "narrowed down" and the attempt was being made to turn the party of revolution into a party of reform. Lenin warned that "the working class movement" is in danger of "being sundered from socialism". Yes, the workers are being "helped to carry on the economic struggle", but "nothing, or next to nothing, is done to explain to them the socialist aims and political tasks of the movement as a whole". And self-fulfillingly the economists were beginning to talk "more and more" about the struggle against the tsarist government having to be "carried on entirely by the intelligentsia, because the workers confine themselves to the economic struggle".<sup>16</sup>

Lenin defined the party as the living combination of the working class movement and the aim of socialism. The party should therefore not merely serve the working class movement at its various stages. No, the party had to constantly strive to represent the interests of the working class movement as a whole. In other words, make propaganda about its ultimate aims and meanwhile ensure its political and ideological independence. Without being won to the leadership provided by the Marxist party, the working class movement becomes "petty and inevitably bourgeois". Hence, trade unionism as trade unionism "means the ideological enslavement of the workers by the bourgeoisie".<sup>17</sup>

In waging only economic struggles the working class movement is doomed to sectionalism and going round in the same endless circles. In all countries there have been periods, longer or shorter, where the working class movement and Marxism have gone their separate ways, to the



massive detriment of both. The thing to do is to fuse them together - not just in words, but deeds.

Suffice to say, by 1903 economism had been defeated, above all due to the hammer blows rained down by *Iskra*. Yet, in the years that followed it reappeared in new forms and guises. For example, the Mensheviks found themselves inescapably pulled in the direction of economism. Having rejected the Bolshevik strategy of the working class taking the lead in the fight for democracy, aligning with the peasantry and striving to form a post-tsarist worker-peasant government, the Mensheviks turned more and more to highlighting the economic struggles ... that and forlornly urging support for the liberal bourgeoisie against the tsarist autocracy.

Not that the Bolsheviks themselves were immune to economism. During World War I a 'left' faction emerged around Nikolai Bukharin and Georgy Piatakov. Amongst other things, it counterposed the right of nations to self-determination to the aim of socialism. Self-determination was branded as illusory and damaging. Capitalism, at its imperialist stage, could never grant such a right and under socialism it would anyway be unnecessary, because nations had long ago become anachronistic. Class unity, not national rights, is what really matters.

Lenin called this trend within Bolshevism "imperialist economism". He wrote a series of devastating polemics.<sup>18</sup> Demanding national self-determination was neither illusory nor damaging. On the contrary, the working class would commit the gravest mistake if it left national self-determination to petty bourgeois and bourgeois forces. No, on the contrary, the working class had to win allies amongst the oppressed nationalities by taking the lead in offering a positive, democratic solution to national questions *where they exist*. Without that the working class could never become the ruling class.

So in Russia there was the economism of *Rabochaya Mysl*, the economism of Menshevism and the economism of Bukharin and Piatakov. I could add other examples, but I think the point has been made. Economism is not something we Marxists equate with industrial militancy. That would be dumber than dumb. Certainly no-one who counts themselves as a Marxist would denigrate, let alone denounce, striking workers and the attempt to improve their position under capitalism. To do so would be criminal. No, we are dealing with an 'ism'. Economism is an approach, a debilitating disease that affects the left - a left which denies, dismisses or just downplays the necessity of democracy.

## Trotsky

That is why I feel obliged to criticise Leon Trotsky - specifically his 1938 *Transitional programme* (otherwise known as *The death agony of capitalism and the tasks of the Fourth International*). Not just because Trotsky tried to make up for the real organised forces he so obviously lacked in the late 1930s. Not just because he fell back onto a programmatic reliance on the unconscious, the untheorised movement of the working class in defence of pay and conditions. Not just because Trotsky claimed that 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".<sup>19</sup> Not just because Trotsky reduced the question of democracy to merely upholding *existing* rights and social gains (except when it came to the fascist countries).

True, some of Trotsky's heirs and successors treated the *Transitional programme* as holy writ and refused to admit the reality of the long boom

of the 1950s and 60s. Nowadays what remains of them - the sects of one, micro-groups, oil-slick internationals - constitute the curios, living fossils, the political equivalent of the Amish and the Plymouth Brethren. However - and this is the point - the more intelligent, the more influential, the more promising amongst Trotsky's heirs and successors imagine that, with the return of mass unemployment and the renewed onset of economic crises, the conditions are once again ripe to apply the *Transitional programme*, or at the very least the 'transitional method'.

The underlying assumption being, firstly, that Trotsky correctly applied the lessons of Bolshevism and the early Comintern; secondly, that he was basically right about the tasks in 1938; thirdly, that periods of economic growth and rising living standards hinder, deflect or at worse derail the socialist project; fourthly, that alone capitalist crises, instability and threats of war allow us to organise and gain a wide hearing.

Most present-day followers of Trotsky show very little real understanding of the history of Bolshevism. Instead of studying the *whole* of its history, there is a blinkered concentration on the February-October 1917 period - and that they get radically wrong.

By contrast, Lenin stresses - eg, in *Leftwing' communism* (1920) - the necessity of undertaking a "profound analysis" of the Bolshevik Party, from its inception in 1903 through every stage of its struggle; including the compromises, retreats and manoeuvres.<sup>20</sup> Only then can one grasp the lessons of Bolshevism. Lenin chided those on the left who could only see the armed demonstrations, the soviets and the overthrow of Kerensky's provisional government.

Lenin urges, instead, that Comintern affiliates take on board the Bolsheviks' countless *open* polemical struggles against opportunism, their minimum-maximum programme, their alliance with the peasant masses, their consistent championing of democracy, their successful participation in tsarist elections, the speeches of its *duma* deputies, the patient building of their hugely popular press, their recruitment and training of tens of thousands of cadre. All such developments built, steered and established the Bolsheviks as the majority party of the working class. A position first established in 1905 and amply confirmed in successive *duma* elections, the circulation of their press and leadership of trade unions. The Bolsheviks achieved this position because they were able to provide the consistent, the correct leadership, under the *most varied* conditions: repression, revolution, reaction, imperialist war, democratic freedom, etc.

The idea that communists can only win the majority of the working class under conditions of extreme economic stress, when incremental progress is no longer possible, when systematic reforms are ruled out, is belied by the history of Bolshevism. There is also the little matter of social democracy in Europe. From its founding in 1875 the German Social Democratic Party grew to become not only the biggest fraction in the Reichstag, but a 'state within the state'. Marxists in Austria, France, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, etc copied the German model ... and social democracy won a clear majority of the working class.

It is clear that the early Comintern had a variety of views, when it came to drafting the programmes of its national sections. Some wanted to follow Rosa Luxemburg and replace the minimum programme with the blunt demand for overthrowing capitalism, cancelling the foreign debt and workers' power. Others wanted to maintain the relevant immediate or

partial demands of the old minimum programme, but with the addition of what later became known as 'transitional' demands. What is not in doubt, though, is that the leadership of Comintern saw the absolute necessity of its national sections becoming mass parties and winning the majority of the working class.

When it comes to 1917, there is, of course, the most outrageous myth-making. Supposedly Lenin discards the history, programme and perspectives of Bolshevism and undergoes a conversion to Trotskyism. A claim promoted by Trotsky himself, of course, in various books and pamphlets. However, with the invaluable help provided by Lars T Lih, we have comprehensively shown this version of history to be nonsense from beginning to end. Lenin, Kamenev and Stalin were able to resolve their *minor* differences in April 1917 because they were fundamentally united when it came to the history, programme and perspectives of Bolshevism. The Soviet Republic of workers, soldiers and peasants was not a break with the revolutionary dictatorship of the workers and peasants outlined by Lenin in 1905 in his *Two tactics*. It was its concrete realisation.

## New times

To repeat my argument, Trotsky developed his own kind of economism. He substituted spontaneity for mass consciousness and mass organisation. With his *Transitional programme*, 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, workers are objectively revolutionary because of the reality of capitalism's terminal decay and imminent collapse.

In these 'new times' it is no longer necessary to educate and organise the working class, so that it is committed to the overthrow the capitalist system and replacing it with socialism. Fighting to maintain existing conditions is all that is required. The constant tussle over wages and hours, putting in place safeguards against the corrosive effects of inflation and state-funded job creation were painted in the reddest or red hues. Surely a case of elevating trade union struggles to the level of socialist politics.

That is why it does not surprise me in the least to read Trotsky's sympathetic biographer, Isaac Deutscher, and his scathing assessment of the *Transitional programme*: "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".<sup>21</sup>

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, nudged in the direction of forming picket-line defence guards and then pushed towards demanding the 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 the hearts and minds of the majority organising them into a political party was dismissed as a 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 an ascending stairway.

After five years, or maybe 10, 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 re-invented the Blanquist putsch or the anarchist general strike 'road to socialism'.

In explaining his programme of transitional demands, Trotsky takes to task the minimum-maximum programmes of "classical" social democracy. But he 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".<sup>22</sup> 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.

## Economism and capitalism

Modern-day economists, just like their Russian ancestors, sincerely talk of the global fight against capitalism and the final aim of socialism. However, the practical effect of their approach is to maintain the workers as a slave class. Wages, hours, conditions, social services, etc are what are deemed to be really important for the workers. This implicit or explicit emphasis on the 'base' of capitalist society is, of course, nothing but an unconscious, ideological reproduction of capitalism itself and its unique bifurcation of social life into two apparently separate spheres: the economic and the political. That is why economism constantly reappears.

Let me elaborate. In pre-capitalist society - Asiatic, slave, feudal, autocratic, etc - the extraction of the surplus product was pretty much unproblematic. Typically it was naked and undisguised. Exploiters took and were not in reality obliged to give anything in return. Brute force, or the threat of brute force - ie, extra-economic means - were used to extract surplus product from the immediate producers (tithes, taxes, labour services, etc). This historically established ability to deploy commanding military force was reflected, legitimised and glorified in the exploiters' elevated legal position: high priests, senators, mandarins, barons, bishops, kings, emperors, etc. Ditto the lowly, despised position of the common people. As a result - be they helots, slaves, coloni or villeins - no-one was in any doubt that they were both oppressed and exploited. Hence, the class struggle spontaneously runs straight to the political.

Capitalism, however, exploits indirectly through the generalisation of wage labour and the market. A social form which apparently equalises the relationship between exploited and exploiters - workers themselves ask for a 'fair day's pay' in return for a 'fair day's work'. Exploitation is thereby hidden and mystified within a sphere which bourgeois ideologists seal off from the rest of society under the rubric of 'the economy'. The economy is treated ahistorically as a mere technical arrangement and drained

of all social content. In reality the economic is thoroughly political and the political is thoroughly economic.

Capitalist exploitation certainly begins with a defining political act - the bloody separation of the producers from the means of production, as harrowingly detailed by Marx in the last section of *Capital* volume one - and continues to rely upon a political relationship. Exploitation, and the reproduction of the conditions of exploitation, would be impossible without the state - supposedly a neutral arbiter, but in reality completely partisan - holding a monopoly of the means of force. Though, wherever possible, it remains in the background, state power exists in the final analysis to guarantee the law, property rights and hence the fundamentally unequal relationship between capital and the propertyless class of workers (by 'property' we mean, of course, the means of production, not personal property like your clothes, your toothbrush or even your house).

Capitalism not only apparently separates economics from politics: it also separates economic militancy from political consciousness. Class conflict under capitalism spontaneously finds its first expression at the 'point of production', in the workplace, and the relationship between employee and employer. Not the exploited against the state. That means class conflict under capitalism is spontaneously downgraded from the political to the economic and therefore to the "local and particularistic".<sup>23</sup> The struggle of medieval peasants against feudal lords - over rents, tithes or labour duties - had an overtly political content. The feudal lord was the state. By contrast, the permanent wages struggle that rages within capitalism, no matter how militant, leaves the wage relationship itself untouched. This is true even if workplace militancy impinges upon management's right to manage.

That need not, however, present an intractable dilemma. Capitalist progress does not go hand in hand with a systemic decline in political consciousness. There is no reason to look back fondly at pre-capitalist societies. The historic significance of Bolshevism is not merely due to the application of Marxism to a backward country. No, the real historic significance of Bolshevism lies in its ability to overcome the separation between economic militancy and political consciousness ... this is what allowed the working class to exercise hegemony over the peasant masses and look to rousing Europe to make socialism revolution. Without combating, without defeating economism that would have been impossible ●

## Notes

1. [lexit-network.org/appeal](http://lexit-network.org/appeal). When exactly Britain was "democratic" and the people were "sovereign" is a nonsense I shall leave aside here.
2. [socialistresistance.org/oppose-tory-brexite-and-win-a-radical-labour-government/12818](http://socialistresistance.org/oppose-tory-brexite-and-win-a-radical-labour-government/12818).
3. T Cliff *Lenin* Vol 1, London 1975, p59.
4. I Frolov (ed) *Dictionary of philosophy* Moscow 1984, p118.
5. B Jenkins *Socialist Outlook* January 2001.
6. P Radcliff *Weekly Worker* January 11 2001.
7. J Creegan, *Letters Weekly Worker* August 2 2018.
8. VI Lenin *CW* Vol 5, Moscow 1977, p317.
9. N Harding (ed) *Marxism in Russia: key documents 1879-1906* Cambridge 1983, p28.
10. *Ibid* p29.
11. VI Lenin *CW* Vol 4, Moscow 1977, pp367.
12. E Bernstein *Evolutionary socialism* New York 1961, p202.
13. *Ibid* pxxiv.
14. VI Lenin *CW* Vol 4, Moscow 1977, p368.
15. VI Lenin *CW* Vol 5, Moscow 1977, p383.
16. VI Lenin *CW* Vol 4, Moscow 1977, pp366-67.
17. VI Lenin *CW* Vol 5, Moscow 1977, p384.
18. See VI Lenin, 'A caricature of Marxism and imperialist economism' *CW* Vol 23, Moscow 1977, pp28-76.
19. *Ibid* p114.
20. VI Lenin *CW* Vol 31, Moscow 1977, p24.
21. I Deutscher *The prophet outcast* Oxford 1979, pp425-26.
22. L Trotsky *The transitional programme* New York 1997, pp114-15.
23. E Meiksins Wood *Democracy against capitalism* Cambridge 1999, p45.



**SECRETS AND LIES**

# Hodging their bets

Kafkaesque disciplinary procedures are part of the ongoing attacks on free speech, writes **Mike Macnair**

On August 7 the Labour Party bureaucracy withdrew its investigation into Margaret Hodge for (allegedly) shouting abuse at Jeremy Corbyn. This would be excellent news - if it had been done for the right reason. The use of party disciplinary procedures against people who get angry and shout is an extremely bad idea.

In fact, however, this seems not to be what has happened. While 'Labour sources' have briefed that Hodge has expressed regret for losing her temper, she has issued through her lawyers an explicit denial that this is the case (peculiar, since it can hardly be imagined to be defamatory to claim that someone has expressed regret for losing their temper, given that there does not seem to be any dispute that Hodge *did* shout at Corbyn). What Hodge wants us to believe - and may well be true - is that the Labour Party apparatus has been induced to back off by legal threats.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile, Ian Austin, MP for Dudley - in the past one of 'Gordon Brown's boot boys' and a man who had to apologise in 2012 for making a false allegation of Holocaust denial against a Palestinian rights campaign<sup>2</sup> - has published his own lawyers' letter to Labour HQ in relation to an allegation of 'abuse' similar to that against Hodge. Austin's lawyers claim - certainly rightly - that the Labour Party's disputes procedures are "Kafkaesque" and failing to "observe the most rudimentary principles of natural justice".

The problem, of course, is the stunning double standards involved. Of course, neither Hodge's nor Austin's lawyers can be blamed for pointing out that their clients are being victimised by a disciplinary regime which violates the elementary principles of natural justice, and which constitutes attacks on freedom of speech. That is their job. It is whoever has advised that this "Kafkaesque" system is acceptable - or who has stood up in court to defend employers' Kafkaesque disciplinary procedures and develop the precedents which purport to support this regime - who is in violation of the duties lawyers *ought* to owe to the integrity of the legal system.<sup>3</sup>

But *Austin and Hodge themselves* - and their political and media backers - are *positively calling for* allegations of "anti-Semitism" speech to be dealt with more summarily - that is, *more* in violation of the principles of natural justice. Indeed, several 'anti-Semitism' cases already dealt with have been characterised by the party bureaucratic prosecutors abandoning such charges in mid-stream, only to proceed on wholly different grounds.

And the anti-Corbyn 'anti-Semitism' campaigners' agenda is itself for a systematic violation of freedom of speech. It attempts to use the so-called "internationally agreed" definition of anti-Semitism to prohibit in the UK forms of criticism of the Israeli state which are commonplace in the Israeli press (comparisons with apartheid, and so on). Hodge's and Austin's arguments through their lawyers thus involve them in obvious double standards.

The problem is that the Labour apparatus's response to this double-standards attack - to try to discipline Hodge and Austin for 'abusively'

**With the expletive deleted**

attacking the leadership - is to jump on the *wrong side* of the double standard and try to hold a line which is indefensible.

**Big lie**

The stunning unanimity of the British media in promoting the 'big lie' campaign about 'anti-Semitism' in the Labour Party makes it clear that this campaign is neither just a product of Tory electioneering nor just of lobbying by the Israeli state (let alone any idea that it is the work of British Jews, *some of whom* have persuaded themselves of the big lie and got het up about it). To get such unanimity there *must* be briefings and pressure from the state core (the armed forces, security services and home and foreign offices) - most probably delivered particularly by some part of the security services.

Nor is it *simply* a campaign against Corbyn; though it is certainly the case that the securocrat core of the British state and the politicians and journo this group briefs believe that Corbyn is an unacceptable prime minister on national security grounds.<sup>4</sup> But the idea that anti-Zionism is *ipso facto* anti-Semitism began to be used in the USA as a device to restrict free speech on the Israel question from the 1980s,<sup>5</sup> and the IHRA 'definition' spun for this purpose dates back to June 2015, so that the project was in progress before Corbyn 'won' the Labour leadership TV debate on June 16 that year.<sup>6</sup>

Nor is it just about the UK. By 2014 'anti-anti-Semitism' had had a

powerful influence on Die Linke in Germany; by 2016 the pro-Israeli line had won over Syriza.<sup>7</sup> A very similar campaign about 'rising anti-Semitism' based on a limited number of real incidents, but again blaming 'new anti-Semitism' allegedly due to hostility to Israel, and demanding more support for Israel, is being waged in France and by US media outlets about France.<sup>8</sup>

The source of this campaign is not that there is a rising tide of anti-Semitic incidents and attacks. There is at the most a *slight* rise within an overall low level. The exceptions are the overtly anti-Semitic policies and 'holocaust guilt revisionism' of the Hungarian Fidesz and Polish Law and Justice parties (in both cases immunised from criticism thanks to their *support* for the Israeli regime. Rather, the 'new anti-Semitism' campaign responds to and is primarily focussed on countries which failed to back the US in the invasion of Iraq (France, Germany) or experienced a mass anti-war movement (the UK).

What is demanded is blank-cheque support for the 'right to exist' of the state of Israel. This blank-cheque support will be cashed in demands for blank-cheque support for Israeli action against 'existential threats'. For Corbyn's Labour right opponents, these 'existential threats' already include Hamas in Gaza and any attempt to break the illegal siege of that territory. They will very soon include the Iranian regime - already claimed by both Israeli and US politicians to be an 'existential threat' to Israel.

In short, the USA has a geopolitical interest in retaining 'blocking control' of the Middle East at the expense of potential rivals (France, Germany, Russia, China). It will retain this interest as long as the current shape of military technology - armoured vehicles and aircraft at the sharp end, and trucks for logistics - continues; because this shape of military technology makes access to oil supplies fundamental to military capability. Israel is pivotal to this blocking control, but there are other independent US interests - against Iran, against the Syrian Ba'athist regime and its willingness to give Russia basing rights, and so on.

Because US interest is *at the expense* of the European, Russian and Chinese states, there is a logic in which these states attempt to develop their own Middle East policy. The US has an interest in trying to make such independent policies politically illegitimate. It is this interest which is reflected in the 'IHRA definition' and in the Europe-wide campaign around 'new anti-Semitism'.

It is an interest which is shared by the British state core, which long ago accepted a role as a subordinate ally of the USA. The British state was embarrassed by the open divisions over Iraq. It has more recently been deeply embarrassed by the failed and fatuous 2011 intervention in Libya, which both exposed total British military dependence on the USA and produced merely a failed state; and by the consequential 2013 failure

to win a parliamentary vote to join US operations in Syria. All the more need for the British state to hype up the Europe-wide 'new anti-Semitism' campaign.

Corbyn is a *particular* target because of his role as a public leader of the Stop the War Coalition at its height; and because his winning the leadership of the Labour Party was a disaster for British capitalist and state political management. Further, the 'anti-Semitism' campaign has *worked*: like the leaderships of Die Linke and Syriza, the Labour leadership round Corbyn has responded to this smear campaign by giving more and more concessions and hostages to fortune.

The fundamental character of the Labour leadership's response has been to give ground all along the line, throwing embarrassing supporters to the wolves, in the hope of defusing the issue and winning a general election on issues of economics alone.

Bringing disciplinary proceedings against Hodge and Austin appeared as a partial shift from this line. It seemed to 'call out' Hodge and Austin on the right wing's double standards: that is, that whenever anyone gets angry at them, this is 'abuse' and 'intimidation'; but, when they get angry at other people, it is merely 'free speech'.

But, as the decision to back off seems to show, this is not a defensible line. The problems are that the Labour Party's disputes procedures are systematically unfair, and therefore not defensible against anyone who can afford lawyers (and who will not be condemned by the judiciary's political biases); and that the double standards are already built in to the idea of demanding 'civility' in political argument.

**Unfair procedures**

The fundamental objection of both Hodge's and Austin's lawyers to the Labour Party's disciplinary investigations of their clients are that these proceedings are unfair because they fail to set out openly the charges against them - the rule which is claimed to have been breached, and how. This issue is inseparable from the issue of *open or secret trials*, which has a long history. It may go back as far as Old Kingdom Egypt (c 2649-2150 BCE) and the Old Assyrian period of Assyria (c 1950-1840 BCE).<sup>9</sup> But the first point at which we have extensive evidence is in classical antiquity.

Trials in ancient Athens (400s-300s BCE) were unambiguously public, before large juries of citizens.<sup>10</sup> In late republican Rome criminal trials, inheritance cases and *repetundae* trials, where public officials were accused of extortion, were also public before juries of citizens. Ordinary civil disputes had a bifurcated structure: the first stage, usually before the *praetor* (the judicial magistrate) formulated the issue in dispute, and appointed a *iudex* (judge) chosen by the parties; the second, before the *iudex*, established the disputed facts and the outcome. Process before the praetor was certainly public; process before the *iudex* is less certain, but it was certainly public enough for the advocate, Cicero, to publish his speeches before *iudices* as well as those before juries.<sup>11</sup>

Towards the end of the 1st century BCE the Roman republic collapsed and was replaced by a military dictatorship, originally under Augustus: the 'Empire'. At first the dictatorship took a disguised form, with republican con-



stitutional forms partially maintained: the 'Principate'. Later, from around 300 CE, the monarchical character of the regime was openly accepted: the 'Dominate'. Under the Empire there was a gradual tendency for first open criminal trials before juries, and then also civil procedure before the *praetor* and *iudex*, to be replaced by private investigations conducted by imperial bureaucrats or by the provincial governor or his deputy: the *cognitio* procedure. The shift seems to have started in connection with treason and spread outwards (just as in modern times special procedures for anti-terrorism cases tend to be generalised).<sup>12</sup>

The fall of the western Roman empire in the 400s CE produced a return to public trials before lay collective local or central courts for all sorts of claims.<sup>13</sup> The 1100s CE, however, saw what RI Moore has called *The formation of a persecuting society* (Oxford 1987); and in this context secret *cognitio* procedure was revived, initially for treason and heresy cases (heresy being argued to be 'treason against God'), but, as in the Roman empire, spreading outwards to encompass broader fields.<sup>14</sup>

The secret character of the church court heresy procedure became controversial in England in the early 1500s, after the 1512-14 case of Richard Hunne, who was accused of heresy after he challenged in the secular common law courts a church court decision in a dispute with his local parson. Hunne "committed suicide" in the Bishop of London's prison.<sup>15</sup> In *A treatise concerning the division between the spirituality and temporality* (1532), common lawyer Christopher St German objected to the private character of the church's heresy jurisdiction as inconsistent with the right to know the charges against you and your accusers (which is in the *Bible* ...). In 1533 'Saint' Thomas More responded with his *Apology*, St German replied to this with *Salem and Bizance* (Jerusalem and Byzantium), and More came back with *The debellation of Salem and Bizance*. More's core argument was that without the use of secret trials, unidentified accusers and so on, "heretics would swarm the streets". How true ... after the Heresy Act 1534, which transferred trials to the *public* common law courts, heretics, and even atheists, pagans and so on have indeed eventually come to "swarm the streets".<sup>16</sup> But perhaps we prefer it this way ...

Secret trials were thus the hallmark of the Inquisition, whether Spanish or papal. They were also the hallmark of the early modern European witch-hunts: the secret examination of witnesses, and the use of torture to force the defendant to confess and implicate others, were essential to the spread of the contagion of the suspicion of witchcraft. Their *absence* in English common law produced the *relative* infrequency of witch trials in England in the period when they were at their height in Europe (and Scotland).

A particular *species* of secrecy, which was adopted by the European laws, but only by some aspects of English law, was the secret examination of witnesses by judicial officers in the absence of the parties. The results were not usually *permanently* secret; rather, the witnesses' statements were written down as 'depositions' and later 'published' to the parties, and commonly read out in open court at the public hearing.<sup>17</sup> Nonetheless, early modern common lawyers objected to this procedure, fundamentally on the ground that witnesses were more likely to lie in private than in public, but also on the ground that public oral adversary cross-examination was more likely to bring out inconsistencies in the witness's statement or facts favourable to the adverse party than examination by a judicial officer on

pre-written interrogatories.<sup>18</sup>

The infamous Court of Star Chamber, abolished in 1641, used this procedure - and in its *ore tenus* procedure did not disclose to the accused the charges against him until *after* he had been interrogated with a view to obtaining a confession to *some crime*. But the Star Chamber did not go so far as to hear cases wholly in private.

The issue of secret trials resurfaced from the 1760s, when the British government used vice-admiralty courts (using European-style procedure with secret examination of witnesses) to prosecute cases involving the Navigation Acts (requiring trade to pass through London) and its unpopular revenue laws.<sup>19</sup>

The result of this history, together with the drafters' consideration of earlier rights documents and debates, the adoption of the sixth amendment to the US constitution, requiring:

In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury of the state and district wherein the crime shall have been committed, which district shall have been previously ascertained by law, and to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation; to be confronted with the witnesses against him; to have compulsory process for obtaining witnesses in his favour, and to have the assistance of counsel for his defence.

In the French Revolution, the issue of public trials was also posed as a political issue, at least as far as criminal trials were concerned, by the secrecy of the procedure of the *ancien régime*, and the revolutionaries very early adopted a system of public criminal trial partly modelled on the English system. It was the Thermidorean reaction and the Bonapartist regime which partially restored 'inquisitorialism' in this field in France.<sup>20</sup>

Between then and the recent past, public trial has been the basic norm. But secret trials have been creeping back in. Surprise, surprise, the 'war on terror' and anti-terrorism legislation is a central disputed area.<sup>21</sup> Other areas are 'super-injunctions', which prohibit reporting even the existence of the judicial decision, used by celebs and corporations to avoid embarrassment; and the family courts, where secrecy in the name of protecting children also protects ... judges from public criticism.<sup>22</sup>

There are two patterns in this long history. First, there is a historical pattern. Ascendant ruling classes tend to limit the powers of the bureaucratic-coercive state; they rule successfully *themselves* because they are driving the development of the society forward. As they begin to lose this authority, they become more statist and more power is conceded to the state. We have entered into the period of decline of capitalism, and with this decline comes increased statism. The increased use of secret trials and the fact that 'confidentiality' and 'privacy' are increasingly normalised arguments are one and the same phenomenon.

Second, secret trials are *normally* an instrument of bureaucratic-coercive state (or church) authoritarianism, and the demand for public trials is a demand for *accountability of those above to those below*. For Labour to try to defend its unfair disciplinary procedure leaves the party identifying itself politically with the later Roman empire, the Papal and Spanish Inquisitions, the French *ancien régime*, Thermidor and Bonapartism, the contemporary British security service and the elite users of superinjunctions.

Of course, it may be argued that the Labour Party's disciplinary procedure is about the party's internal affairs,

and so completely different from the question of trials in the public courts. This argument would be profoundly mistaken.

In the first place, judgment against a defendant in a criminal or civil proceeding expresses the society's collective disapproval of the defendant's conduct - even if it is merely holding onto a thing which the court decides belongs to the claimant. At minimum this requires that the *outcome* must be public - the principle violated by 'superinjunctions'.

Moreover, the society delegates this decision to judges and juries, but - rightly - does not entirely trust them: there is too long a history of abuse of the judicial power for personal (bribery, etc) or political ends.<sup>23</sup> Society has therefore insisted on public trial as a safeguard against this abuse. It is *not* merely a safeguard against people being wrongly jailed.

These principles *obviously* apply with equal force to the internal disciplinary procedures of a political party. A disputes decision against a member expresses *the party's* collective disapproval of that member's conduct. The party delegates that decision to disciplinary bodies. Again at minimum this requires that the outcome must be public. The accountability of the committee requires that the proceedings be public - not necessarily in the sense of courtroom trial, but at least in the sense that there is no norm or requirement of confidentiality. And it is fundamental to basic fairness that the accused should know the case against them.

As I said earlier, whoever assured the Labour machine that these procedures were defensible was giving stunningly bad advice. Though the courts are moving towards secret and unfair trials for the benefit of the *state* (terrorism), and of business and the rich (superinjunctions) the Labour leadership cannot expect such favours.

## Civility

The demand for civility requires us to think, briefly, about the figure of the polite bully. I guess everyone will recognise this character from their schooldays: the boy, or girl, who does not *themselves* and *directly* issue threats, and so on, but uses their position as prefect, or whatever - or merely their own popularity and their victim's unpopularity - to make life intolerable for their target. A common outcome is that the *target* - the person bullied - ends up 'cracking', shouting at or attacking their tormentor, and then being disciplined by the school.

The polite bully should also be familiar from workplaces, working in the exact same way. In this context, the polite bully is usually someone who holds a position of power. Rude and violent bullies can also be found at work, of course; but not every workplace bully is even a David Brent. Polite bullying by policemen is also a commonplace.

In the Labour Party, polite bullying by elected representatives and full-time officials has been utterly normal for the last 20 years or perhaps longer. It has served to enforce the right wing's monopoly control over the selection of candidates and over whose views can be permitted to be expressed - which, in turn, is a monopoly *on behalf of* the firms who pay lobbyists and contribute to MPs' activities.

In this context, legislation - or party rules - to enforce 'civility' and 'respect' are apt to produce exactly the common result in school bullying cases: that the bully's victim is penalised rather than the bully him- or her- self. Consider, for example, the 'Unison monkey trial' victimisation of Socialist Party activists over a leaflet;<sup>24</sup> or the ejection of Walter Wolfgang from 2005 Labour Party conference for heckling Jack Straw over the Iraq war.<sup>25</sup>

Why? The answer is that the ability

to bully comes not from the expression of anger, but from *holding a position of power*; whether it is an institutional position of power, as in the case of officials or elected representatives, or arises merely from relative popularity or the ability to manipulate, as in the case of class bullies.

The expression of anger makes a moral claim on the person to whom anger is expressed. This may be a claim *against* that person; or it may be claim for solidarity from the person being addressed against a third person or group. Whether it is morally justified to express anger depends, in essence, on whether the underlying moral claim is justified.

It may be *tactically ineffective* to express anger, yet morally justified; this is commonly the situation of the victim of polite bullying. It is, on the other hand, possible - and, indeed, true in a great many cases - that *all that is possible* is to express anger, and hope that this anger will either shame the bully or shame other people into solidarising with you. For an extremely important example, the Tory anti-union laws (maintained by New Labour) have made almost all *coercive* use of the strike weapon impossible, so that most strike action is exactly a protest which aims to shame the employer and evoke broader solidarity by displaying the anger of the strikers about how the employer is treating them.

The demand for 'civility' and 'respect', enforceable by disciplinary proceedings, is a demand that *there be no expression of anger*. The consequence is that it is, inherently, a demand that *the existing social hierarchies of power* should be maintained.

This point is not new. It was made by James Q Whitman in 2000 in his article, 'Enforcing civility and respect: three societies', comparing Germany, France and the US.<sup>26</sup> Whitman argues that speech regulation on the basis of 'dignity' and 'respect' in Germany and France *grew out of* aristocratic claims that they be shown more respect than others. "American incivility," Whitman concludes, "is woven into the cloth of the American egalitarian tradition."

The history equally shows a persistence of 'intimidation' as a form of class struggle; and of objections to 'intimidation' as a means of protecting the boss's right to threaten his or her employees with adverse economic consequences, but to penalise employees' threats to the boss. Thus, for the 1700s, EP Thompson's 1975 study of 'The crime of anonymity'.<sup>27</sup> Thus in 1807 MPs were intimidated into voting for the abolition of the slave trade.<sup>28</sup> Thus in the early 1800s, 'Nedd Ludd' and 'Captain Swing', and in south Wales 'Rebecca'. Thus the employers' arguments, episodically through the 1800s and into the early 1900s, for keeping trade unions illegal on the ground that they 'intimidated' scabs.

Thus the decision in *Rookes v Barnard* (1964) to invent a loophole in the Trade Disputes Act 1906 for the benefit of employers under the name of 'intimidation'; and thus the themes of the early stages of Heath's, Wilson's and Thatcher's anti-union legislation, given to them by the legal profession.<sup>29</sup>

I do not mean by any of this to argue that threats and intimidation are to be the preferred means of political struggle. The point is, rather, that by illegalising most effective forms of collective action, whether by anti-union laws, or by central government and 'judicial review' control of local authorities, or by seizing control of the Labour Party through its right wing, the capitalist class have succeeded in restoring the politico-legal order of the restricted franchise (OK, you may vote, but only for the employers' chosen candidates) and the Combination Acts. That is, that they have left only forms of intimidation as means of fighting effectively for collective interests.

Hence for the Labour leadership to try to enforce speech controls, designed to impose civility and respect, is to accept the whole principle of the anti-union laws and the regime of capitalist control. The double standard which Hodge and Austin rely on is *built into the idea*.

Labour needs to move in the opposite direction. It needs to openly defend free speech, including free speech on Israel - and thus including Margaret Hodge's and Ian Austin's rights to get angry and shout - but also the rights of those below to get angry and shout (whether orally or the online equivalent) ●

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## Notes

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## ITALY

# Minister of the Underworld

Who is responsible for instigating the recent spate of racist attacks? Toby Abse points the finger at interior minister Matteo Salvini

The first two months of the rightwing coalition government of the Five Star Movement (M5S) and the Lega have produced a new wave of racist shootings - an escalation which president Sergio Mattarella described in his July 26 annual address to parliamentary correspondents, as a "Far West".<sup>1</sup>

On July 28, Lega interior minister (and deputy prime minister) Matteo Salvini dismissed the notion that there was any such wave of racist violence as "an invention of the left", before adding fuel to the fire the next day by saying: "I remember the 700 crimes committed by immigrants in Italy every day - a third of the total ... this is the only real alarm against which I am fighting."<sup>2</sup> Salvini's attitude of total denial of the existence of any racist emergency was endorsed by M5S deputy prime minister Luigi Di Maio and M5S infrastructure minister Danilo Toninelli, both of whom claimed such notions were being used "instrumentally" against the government. M5S premier Giuseppe Conte claimed that an attack on the Italian champion athlete Daisy Osakue<sup>3</sup> did not have a "racist matrix" and disgracefully proclaimed: "No to the psychosis that where there is a black person [under attack], there is racism" - doubtless fired up by his friendly meeting with Donald Trump in Washington earlier in the day.

Arguably, the precedent for the wave of racist shootings had been set during the campaign for the March 4 general election, with Luca Traini's shooting spree against six Africans in Macerata in February. Although a racist murder of a Senegalese man by gunfire in Florence immediately after the election may have been triggered by the political climate, hate crimes in the next few months seem not to have involved firearms, so it is hard to believe that the recent wave of shootings following the installation of the M5S-Lega government on June 1 was purely coincidental.

As *Repubblica* (July 28) pointed out, there were nine such incidents involving firearms reported between June 3 and July 27.<sup>4</sup> These shootings have not been confined to any one town or city, or even any one region. In none of these cases was the shooting the result of any quarrel that got out of hand - they were all unprovoked attacks, generally on random victims.<sup>5</sup> A number of the attacks were 'drive-by' shootings by young men in cars, and a large proportion made use of air-guns, rather than conventional firearms. In all but one instance, the victims were people of African origin,<sup>6</sup> and the variety of countries of origin is an indication that the assailants were picking people at random on the basis of skin colour.

A report in *Corriere della Sera* (July 28) indicated that the police acknowledged a pattern in the eight incidents that had occurred between June 11 and July 27 - although their principal hypothesis was one of "emulation" (ie, copycat crimes), even if they did acknowledge that "some attacks" could have been motivated by racial hatred. The authorities are concentrating their investigations on the possibility that somebody could have been fomenting the attacks via social media, and are examining profiles and websites in search of clues that might lead to a single instigator.

## Prime instigator

Whilst there is no reason to doubt that far-right activists have made very extensive use of social media - just as



Here is the cause

they have in the UK, the US and many other European countries - to whip up racial hatred, the prime instigator is nearer at hand: the man in charge of law and order, Italy's interior minister and deputy prime minister, Matteo Salvini.

The acquiescence of the M5S premier, Giuseppe Conte, in putting Salvini in this immensely powerful position, was equivalent to a British prime minister agreeing to appoint 'Tommy Robinson' home secretary. Salvini's regular - often more than daily - venomous Tweets against migrants, NGOs, and gypsies make Donald Trump's daily outbursts on Twitter seem quite moderate, and were bound to provoke violence on the part of his more fanatical followers. We have already seen this with the self-confessed Nazi, Luca Traini, a former Lega candidate who was photographed with Salvini. In the case of the shooting of two young men from Mali in Caserta on June 11, there is absolutely no doubt that Salvini was the attackers' inspiration - the three white men in the car from which the shots were fired were rhythmically chanting, "Sal-vi-ni, Sal-vi-ni", as if they were in a football stadium.

The indulgence shown by many politicians of the official 'left' towards Salvini - a man who very deliberately cited Mussolini's famous phrase, "So many enemies, so much honour", on the Duce's birthday (July 29) this year is positively nauseating. Former Partito Democratico (PD) leader Matteo Renzi refused to endorse Roberto Saviano's description of Salvini as "the moral instigator" of Traini's shooting spree in Macerata, and such figures expressed excessive concern for the welfare of neo-fascist leader Giorgia Meloni when a few plastic bottles were thrown at her in Livorno. There has been no fundamental shift in attitude since the formation of the M5S-Lega government - of which, in practice, Salvini, not Conte or Di Maio, is the leading figure.

This slavish adherence to the conventional courtesies of the parliamentary game is best illustrated by the reactions of the PD and the left social democratic Liberi e Uguali (LeU) to a recent incident in Florence. On July 28, three men whom the Florentine Lega described as "extremists", came up to a Lega street stall and shouted, "You are racists! Nazis!", tore up their posters

and threw their leaflets into the street. It should be stressed that the anti-fascists did not physically attack the *Leghisti*, and were in any event rapidly arrested by a police patrol. Whilst expressions of solidarity from various prominent Lega politicians towards their Florentine members were predictable, the reactions of the official representatives of not only the PD but also LeU were rather shocking, given the weeks of anti-migrant and anti-gypsy actions<sup>7</sup> - not just inflammatory statements - by the Lega's leader. Dario Nardella, the PD mayor of Florence and a close crony of Renzi, pompously proclaimed: "In politics, as in life, the important thing is respect for others. Full solidarity to the victims of aggression" - as if the Lega showed any respect for "others", even those drowned in the Mediterranean.

As for Enrico Rossi, the self-professed 'socialist' who is LeU regional president of Tuscany, he issued a statement which declared: "Actions like these must be condemned. Always and regardless of whom they are aimed at. Those responsible ought not to have any legitimacy, and are outside democratic culture." Presumably, the leaflets with such charming slogans as "Sign for the closure of the Roma camps", which the Florentine Lega regularly brandishes at passers-by on their Saturday stalls, are part of "democratic culture" in the eyes of Rossi.<sup>8</sup>

To be fair, president Sergio Mattarella has shown more guts - in a speech about the 80th anniversary of Mussolini's racial laws on July 25, he was clearly aiming his remarks at Salvini when he mentioned fascist discrimination and the subsequent genocide aimed against gypsies, as well as against Jews. In the 'Far West' speech referred to earlier, Matarrella specifically referred to the attack on the gypsy baby on July 17 as marking a descent into "barbarism".

## Intransigent

The most intransigent opposition to Salvini has not come from either the PD or LeU, but from sections of the Catholic church and from Roberto Saviano. Saviano is an anti-Mafia writer and journalist who gained an international reputation from his book *Gomorrhah* (and the subsequent film of the same name) about the Neapolitan Camorra, one of Italy's main criminal

organisations, which had previously received far less international attention than its Sicilian counterpart. The book's publication led to serious death threats from the Camorra, and Saviano has been under constant police protection for more than a decade.

Saviano has not only been forthright in his criticism of Salvini's racist policies towards migrants and NGOs (whilst at the same time, unlike many centre-left writers, not hesitating to point out the extent to which former PD interior minister Marco Minniti paved the way for him by his own attack on NGOs and his disgraceful deal with Libya's rival politicians, warlords and militias), but has also labelled him the "Minister of the Underworld". Salvini threatened to withdraw Saviano's police protection some weeks ago, but this has only reinforced the writer's opposition, since he understandably regards such a threat as a Mafia tactic. Salvini has subsequently issued a writ on ministerial notepaper, suing Saviano for defamation, which in Italy is a criminal rather than a civil offence.

The reason Saviano has labelled Salvini 'Minister of the Underworld' is the apparent link between key figures in Salvini's 2018 election campaign and the Calabrian Mafia, the 'Ndrangheta, which is probably now more important than the Sicilian Cosa Nostra in terms of the international drug trade and some other fields of criminal activity. Anybody who has followed Italian politics in any detail will realise that there is something very odd indeed about a leader of a party formerly known as the Lega Nord (Northern League) and, until 2012 at least, notorious for its rabid hostility to southerners, managing to get elected in a constituency where the Lega had got a derisory vote in the 2013 general election, since the region of Calabria is in Italy's 'deep south'.

A series of articles in *Repubblica* in early June (and one in *The Guardian* more recently) have provided details about various local politicians in Calabria previously associated with other parties transferring their allegiance to the Lega in 2018. It is suggested that they did so on the prompting of the 'Ndrangheta, which felt its old links with other sections of the right (Forza Italia and, over a much longer period, neo-fascists of various stripes) no longer yielded a dividend in terms of political protection from the attentions of the police. It is certainly the case that figures linked to the 'Ndrangheta were sitting in the front row of at least one of Salvini's election rallies.

*Repubblica* also hinted that these gangsters may have been behind the murder of Soumaylo Sacko on June 3, two days after Salvini's appointment as minister of the interior. Sacko had been an effective trade union organiser amongst grossly exploited black agricultural labourers in Calabria, and came into conflict with unscrupulous employers, widely believed to have links with the 'Ndrangheta. Therefore it seems a little unlikely that Sacko was shot merely for collecting scrap metal from a disused factory, with which the man charged with his murder had some previous connection. Since the accused man denies any involvement in the crime, he is very unlikely to furnish the police with any details of a wider conspiracy; any hit man connected with the 'Ndrangheta would be expected by his superiors in the organisation to observe a similar code of silence (*omertà*) to that current amongst the Sicilian Mafia, on pain of

death.

Sections of the Catholic Church have also adopted a more robust attitude towards Salvini than that associated with the PD. The most notable instance of this was the very striking front cover of the magazine *Famiglia Cristiana* (July 29), which proclaimed: "Vade retro, Salvini" (Get thee behind me, Salvini). Needless to say, Salvini took offence at the obvious comparison with Satan, but the more progressive sections of the Italian church have been provoked not only by the obvious inhumanity of his policy of letting refugees drown, but also by his repeated use of rosaries and copies of the *New Testament* as props at his election rallies. In this he is clearly aping his counterparts in Hungary and Poland - countries in which the local clergy are more inclined to look very favourably on ultra-nationalism and regard the pro-refugee stance of the Argentinean pope with barely concealed hostility.

The July 29 issue of *Famiglia Cristiana* quoted criticisms of Salvini made by six bishops (those from Milan, Bologna, Palermo, Turin, Noto and Perugia - the last of whom is the president of the Italian Bishops Council). Salvini has claimed that large numbers of the clergy have privately endorsed his views, but, regardless of whether this is true or not, the only one who has publicly endorsed his views about "Christian identity" - which in essence conflates Christians and white Europeans - is an obscure defrocked priest closely associated with Steve Bannon.

The PD is now talking of a national anti-racist demonstration in September, but, unless it adopts a more forceful oppositional stance and dumps Renzi (who, despite Maurizio Martina's official election as secretary in early July, still dominates the party apparatus) and his zombie-Blairite neoliberal policies, it stands little chance of undermining the government of Salvini and his M5S accomplices, who collectively command around 60% support in the opinion polls ●

## Notes

- This English phrase has been used by Italians in the place of 'Wild West' for decades.
- Salvini, since his appointment as interior minister, has been pictured on social media wearing a T-shirt saying, "Offence is the best defence" - a slogan associated with hard-core neo-fascist thugs.
- She received a black eye as a result of an egg thrown from a speeding car. This is rather less serious than most of the recent violent attacks on black people, but received far greater media attention because of her celebrity status.
- It is likely that this figure is incomplete, since those without legal immigration status would be reluctant to have dealings with the police.
- Although the killing of Soumaylo Sacko on June 3 was undoubtedly a targeted assassination of a trade union activist. Shots were also fired at his companions - two other migrants whom he was helping to collect scraps of metal from a disused factory in order to create a dwelling with more security than a wooden hut, vulnerable to arsonists.
- The exception was a 13-month-old gypsy baby being carried in her mother's arms. The attacker, who fired from his balcony, claimed that his gun went off accidentally.
- Eg, the Aquarius episode (see 'Age of Aquarius' *Weekly Worker* June 25) and the more recent forcible closure of the 'camping river' gypsy camp in Rome, which Salvini personally coordinated with the enthusiastically compliant M5S mayor, Virginia Raggi, in defiance of a European Court of Human Rights ruling that attempted to block it.
- Given that LeU was essentially an electoral cartel, and has not yet cohered into a party, it is not at all clear whether its more leftwing component, Sinistra Italiana, shares the sentiments of somebody like Rossi, who until 18 months ago was a leading figure in the Tuscan PD. Sinistra Italiana leader Nicola Frattoianni has put himself in the front line against Salvini by sailing on board NGO vessels trying to pick up refugees in defiance of Italian government policy.



**TURKEY**

# Shameless hypocrisy

The coming crisis will be both political and economic, predicts **Esen Uslu**

Last week I was visiting several old comrades in central Anatolia, when the *Weekly Worker* editor asked me to write about the Mesut Özil affair. I gave my apologies and promised to write something for this week's issue. However, in Turkey nothing goes to plan and the agenda changes very quickly.

I did actually gather some information about racism in football and the stance adopted by officialdom. While the Özil affair is no longer the story it was, it would be a pity not to pass on what I found to *Weekly Worker* readers, as it may provide some insight into the workings of society in Turkey. The lesson to be drawn is that society and officialdom in Turkey are racist, extreme nationalist and Islamist - but try to conceal this beneath the veil of democracy and human rights.

In April 2016, the parliamentary group of the People's Democratic Party (HDP) submitted a proposal for an investigation following an incident when a bus carrying the Diyarbakırspor football team was pelted with stones, shot at and chased by thugs chanting racist and anti-Kurdish slogans after a match. A passage from the proposal was as follows:

Shooting at the team bus of one of the largest clubs of Turkey; beating up referees on the pitch; stopping the match after the incident; and continuous fighting between the supporters of both teams outside the stadium - all indicate that a resolute investigation with a broad scope is required ... In this bleak tableau one of the prime instigators is the Turkish Football Federation.

In this context we call for a parliamentary investigation to ascertain the reasons for increased racism and discrimination in Turkish football and on-the-pitch incidents; it should also aim to ascertain the tensions created between the spheres of politics and sport - especially the role played by the Turkish Football Federation, its shortcomings, mistakes and negligence in increased racism and discrimination with a view to finding a solution to the problem.

The proposal was signed and submitted by Dr İdris Baluken, one of the parliamentary group's leaders. As a matter of course it was not carried, but Dr Baluken was arrested in November 2016 on charges of "undermining the unity of the state and the entirety of the country". In January this year he was found guilty and sentenced to 16 years imprisonment.

## Crocodile tears

After Mesut Özil complained about the racism he encountered when he participated in the notorious photo-opportunity designed to garner support for Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's presidential bid, and after his below-par performance for Germany during the World Cup, Turkish officialdom and their mouthpieces in the media had a field day. Let me give you a few samples:

- Erdoğan: "Your [Özil's] stance is national and indigenous. I embrace you."
- İbrahim Kalın, the spokesperson of the president: "I congratulate Mesut for his noble stand. Think what pressure he was subjected to. Where was the courtesy, tolerance and pluralism?"
- Youth and sports minister Mehmet



**Down, down, down**

Muharrem Kasapoğlu: "We heartily support the honourable stand of our brother, Özil."

● Minister of justice Abdulhamit Gül: "Özil scored his best goal against the virus of fascism by refusing to play for the German national team [in protest after the World Cup]. I congratulate him and wish him well."

I could quote the rantings of various important (!) sports commentators in the same vein. But instead let me describe some of the racist incidents that have infected Turkish football over the years.

Last year French national Bafétimbi Gomis, who was the top scorer for Galatasaray in the 2017-18 season, was called a "monkey" in social media - nothing happened.

In 2002 Haim Revivo, an Israeli playing for Fenerbahçe, was met with chants of "We understand Hitler" during a flare-up of the Gaza crisis - nothing happened.

In 2008 supporters of Trabzonspor mounted a protest against Servan Oğuz, the president of the Central Referees Council, and chanted: "Genocide in Trabzon against Armenian Oğuz" - nothing happened.

In 2010, Trabzonspor supporters by chance passed a procession marking the assassination of Armenian journalist Hrant Dink, and chanted "Olé Oğün Samast!" (the self-confessed hit man) and "Bomber Yasin!" (referring to Yasin Hayal, the instigator of the assassination plot) - nothing happened. The white woolly cap worn by Samast when he carried out the assassination suddenly became very popular among Trabzonspor supporters travelling to away games.

In 2009 when Diyarbakır was playing at Bursaspor, home supporters' banners read: "How happy is he who can say, 'I am a Turk!'" (the notorious nationalist slogan attributed to Kemal Atatürk) and "We are soldier Mehmeds, we are the Turks!", but such behaviour was not considered excessive.

Complaining about the unfair racist treatment his team encounters across Turkey, the president of Diyarbakırspor football club wailed: "We are a team neither from Uganda nor from Armenia, so why do they do this to us?!"

In 1999 the president of Trabzonspor football club, who later went on to head the Turkish Football Federation, criticised the performance of Kevin Campbell, a black British player, by saying: "We bought our cannibal as a goal machine, but he turned to be a washing machine!" When objections were raised, he replied: "We use the term 'cannibal' in Turkey jokingly, not as a racist term." This too was considered normal by officialdom and nothing happened.

In 2014 Fenerbahçe supporters hurled bananas at visiting Galatasaray players Emmanuel Eboué and Didier Drogba. A Fenerbahçe spokesman said: "Enough has been said. The matter should be closed here and now"; while the Galatasaray president said: "Racism is alien to Turkey - what happened was an unfortunate happenchance." Again nothing happened.

However, in 2012 the Fenerbahçe player, Emre Belezoglu, insulted Didier Zokora by calling him a "fucking negro" and in the ensuing court case he was given a suspended sentence of two months imprisonment. That was the only case where something did happen!

Deniz Naki, a successful German Turkish-Kurdish player, who was playing for Amedspor (formerly Diyarbakırspor, now reconstituted with a new Kurdish name), was disciplined by the Professional Football Disciplinary Council for speaking out against the Turkish invasion of Afrin province in Syria. He was banned for three years and fined for "disseminating discriminating and ideological propaganda". Naki was attacked by rightwing thugs and shot at while in Germany and he refused to return to Turkey.

Naki sent a message to Özil, asking,

If you are sincere in criticising racism in Germany, why did you not support my case in Turkey? A racist or fascist is the same wherever he is. You should stand against fascism, racism, despotism - any behaviour degrading human dignity, wherever it may be.

He also said about Turkish officialdom: "They supported Özil, as he was a discriminated Turk, but they turned a blind eye to the treatment meted out to me."

## Looming crisis

With this brief foray into the Turkish football scene I hope I have shed some light onto the prevalent racism, nationalism and Islamism in Turkey. However, today's agenda consists of the economy - more precisely the bottomless pit into which the Turkish lira seems to be falling.

The pre-election public spending spree and the delaying of decisions to increase crucial prices, such as energy, has resulted in a monetary crisis. Erdoğanomics - which opposes interest payments as a sin according to the Islamist outlook on usury - could be applied as long as cheap hot money continued to flow in. On that basis Erdoğan had called a halt to the central bank's independent decision-making on interest rates.

After the period of quantitative

easing had ended, hot money started to pour out, looking for higher yields elsewhere. The only way to stop this was by raising the interest rate. Erdoğan grudgingly approved an increase before the elections, and in May the rate was fixed at 16.5%. That was not sufficient to stop the run on the lira, and in June it was raised again to 17.75%. Turkey now had the fourth highest interest rate after Argentina, Venezuela and Iran.

In July the central bank was back under Erdoğan's control, and has refused to raise interests further. As a result the downward drift of the Turkish lira became a headlong fall. It has lost 40% of its value since the beginning of the year. The central bank changed the rules on the foreign currency holdings of banks and \$2 billion were released onto market, but that was also not sufficient. Today the US dollar stands at 5.3 Turkish lira, while sterling is at 7 lira. There are reports of unpublicised negotiations with the International Monetary Fund, aiming for a new stand-by agreement.

Turkish private companies and banks owe about \$6.9 billion to be repaid to foreign creditors in September, and another \$9 billion in October. Only a very small proportion is guaranteed by the state, but most of the companies involved operate within key sectors and it is believed Erdoğan will not allow them to go under, so a rescue package is expected. There could also be a massive rescheduling of debt.

Erdoğanomics is now banking on new sources of credit from China and Saudi Arabia. However, almost every expert believes such hopes are baseless, especially as the president is now at loggerheads with the Trump administration. Two ministers of the Erdoğan cabinet have been sanctioned by the US for their role in the continuing detention of an evangelical pastor who was charged with aiding and abetting terrorism, and their assets in the US have been frozen.

Now new sanctions against Iran are also coming into effect - in particular petroleum and gas, as well as gold trading, will be affected. The political uncertainties are surely going to force Erdoğanomics to face up to realities despite the anti-western rhetoric.

Many factories are halting production, putting their workers on unpaid leave, suppliers are not being paid and trade is grinding to a halt. Unemployment is rapidly growing and its effects will be more visible in a couple of months, when the workers currently on unpaid leave are expected to be made redundant. Bankruptcies among small firms have already reached record levels.

At present the docile trade unions have no answer, but, as the crisis deepens, we will surely see increasing militancy amongst the working class. At present the organisations of the left are unable to develop any coherent plan of action, but things are gathering pace.

Economic and democratic demands may well come together, but that will require action right now. However, my recent trip to central Anatolian towns and cities did not leave me with much hope. The left still suffers from too many national-statist blind spots, together with dire illusions in the so-called social democratic opposition, for any atmosphere conducive to joint action to be created. However, as history has taught us, when crises deepen, anything is possible ●

## What we fight for

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



# weekly WORKER

There needs  
to be a  
break with  
nationalism

## Imprisoned within the national

Comparisons with Donald Trump are dishonest - but that does not mean Corbyn's industrial strategy will actually work, warns Paul Demarty

To read the latest headlines about Jeremy Corbyn - at least those that are not basically accusing him of building gas chambers on his allotment - he has turned himself into a new Donald Trump. Both it seems, are guilty of "economic nationalism", which - according to the wise old sages of the Institute of Directors and suchlike, amounts to attempting to turn the clock back on decades of "progress".

Corbyn finds himself chained up in this particular pillory for launching his 'Build it in Britain' campaign, which aims to spend more of the hundreds of billions of pounds the state contracts out to the private sector on firms that operate and employ workers in this country.

Naturally, Corbyn demurs from comparisons to his purported transatlantic equivalent - "I suspect it is a surprise to both of us", he said. It is, certainly, a malicious lie - Abraham Lincoln was a protectionist, but that comparison would hardly have the desired effect ... But, like most such pieces of 'fake news', it is not wholly false either.

It is true that Corbyn has in his sights, in this speech, certain matters that impinge especially on national pride. Why are British passports to be made in Europe? Why is a contract to build three new navy support ships being farmed out overseas?

Yet the underlying point is more classically left-Labourite. Again we learn that Britain needs an "industrial strategy". Financialisation has worked out splendidly for City fat cats over the last few decades; however, all but the largest and internationalised industrial firms have suffered, as have the working class communities around the old factories - "a lack of support for manufacturing is sucking the dynamism out of our economy, pay from the pockets of our workers and any hope of secure well-paid jobs from a generation of our young people".<sup>1</sup>

The wider context is clear. Though Corbyn ducks away from the 'B' word, the question of Britain's future existence after Brexit is finalised (or finally defeated) looms over any 'strategic' economic doctrines just now. All the more so, the more Britain looks on course for a cliff-edge exit. Among those who are insouciant about such a prospect are people who have some sort of strategy - viz, that Britain should complete its deindustrialisation and commit itself fully to mastery of global financial services, a north-Atlantic Singapore ... Here we have the exact inverse: the idea (albeit implicit) that freedom from the stringent regulations against state aid in the common market (bluffly ignored by right-on remoaners) will allow the rebuilding of Britain as an industrial powerhouse, with a consequent amelioration of economic inequality and suchlike.

Is it viable? The evidence in favour, such as it is, is that these things are presumably being manufactured somewhere, and - if we accept the



Even the passports are going to be made in Europe

desirability of a British industrial revival - there is surely no necessary reason they could not be "made in Britain", in the old style. This is the basic lie of the Trump comparison. As Larry Elliott points out in *The Guardian*, a decision to award contracts like this internally would make a putative Labour government no more protectionist than Frau Merkel's Christian Democrats (Germany builds its own rolling stock), never mind America's long-standing use of the defence industry as a Keynesian stimulus package.<sup>2</sup>

There is additionally the old scare story about going (or being taken) 'back to the 1970s', whereby the political-economic changes wrought since that time are identified wholly with progress, and objections to the same dismissed as so much Canutian folly. But that is a spectacular lie - there has, of course, been great technological progress in many branches of industry, but the modern regime of permanent mass unemployment and underemployment, casualisation and domination of 'services' is the result primarily of a deliberate political project, and at bottom a matter of 'class against class'. The Institute of Directors and its friends in the press gallery do not want this recognised not because it cannot be reversed, but because it can.

### Nation or class

Can it be reversed like this? Alas, we must answer in the negative. There are a number of reasons for this.

The first of these follows directly on from the latter point. The economic transformation of which Britain's deindustrialisation is a part is a class offensive, but class as such is suspiciously absent from Corbyn's musings on the topic - he wants to help small businesses and ordinary working people, apparently (who wouldn't?) but the means he has principally chosen to do so is to funnel money into mega-projects (the boats, but also rail modernisation), which will principally benefit what remains of big British industrial capital. The small businesses that do, of course, swarm around these major industrial concerns are dominated and exploited by them.

As for the workers, the one feature of the 1970s that would really help out would be stronger trade unions. On this point, Corbyn's Labour remains remarkably timid. We have a commitment to repealing the especially egregious 2016 Trade Union Act, but not the 30 years of salami-slicing that led up to it. Shadow transport minister Andy McDonald claims that the point is "to promote 21st century manufacturing, and to defend jobs and the communities that depend on them".<sup>3</sup> But this is to assume either that there is a common interest of labour and capital in creating jobs, or a common interest of industrial capital and labour in resisting the exploitation of finance capital. Both are untrue, although the latter is a particularly attractive myth to left Labourites like Corbyn: they believe it means erasing the memory

of the brutal suppression of labour organisations by industrial capital in this country before they established themselves sufficiently no longer to be so treated; but it involves wilful blindness to the brutality of capitalist production in its present industrial heartlands.

This brings us to the second and more profound difficulty, and also the grain of truth in the bourgeois criticism of the plan. 'Build it in Britain' is nationalist in its assumptions - not in the 'vulgar' sense of chauvinist ideology, in assuming that a government in Westminster can be the agent of transformation. We are confronted, as we often are, with the 'sources and component parts' of British left-Labourism - trade union sectionalism, middle class radicalism and half-digested Stalinism - that are all united in their imprisonment within the national frame.

The primary problem is that our enemies are not. The class offensive of the post-1970s era was international in scope. It was not a matter, as is often assumed by Labourite wonks, of Thatcher and her confrères suffering from extraordinary ideological fanaticism. It was the form in Britain of the US-led capitalist order's attempt to bury, rather than contain, the Soviet Union. That unity of purpose is - to put it mildly - not so much in evidence today among the international bourgeoisie; but the weakness of global order relative to its power in 1991 should not be confused with weakness relative to the international

workers' movement.

Furthermore, world order has a form as well as a purpose: countries have their places within it, and jostle for position for better ones. Britain has done well, as expiring imperial powers often do, building up a position as a centre for excellence in financial skulduggery. Its remaining industrial base is a sort of weird, useless appendage, and we can hardly blame the hard Brexiteers from simply wanting to lop it off. We said that this is not necessarily true, and indeed it isn't. A serious British industrial policy, however, ultimately must mean more than merely giving state contracts to British firms, and instead competing with the incumbent industrial centres - Germany, China and whoever else - for capitalist investment, from a very poor starting point. Either British workers must be won to accept 'Chinese' wages, or else the Germans must be, ah, knocked off their high horse ... somehow. The history of the 20th century presents a bloody picture of where this kind of competition can lead; but, short of that, sanctions and aggression in trade relations are possible, and bode ill for a country like Britain, which is so dependent on imports not only of industrial goods, but of food.

Inter-state competition forms a system, which must be confronted systematically. The problems we have mentioned would not be faced nearly as dauntingly by a European industrial policy. The EU has never been a body capable of such a thing, however (not least due to British sabotage). Only authentic internationalism - which must, in the end, escape the antagonistic drives of capitalist competition - can offer a rational organisation of production, alive to the needs of people at large, as well as the dangers of environmental degradation, and able to abandon useless sources of waste (like - alas! - those navy boats) without thereby casting people into penury. To achieve such ends, we must leave the bourgeoisie - including its industrial fraction - behind ●

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### Notes

- www.ukpol.co.uk/jeremy-corbyn-2018-speech-on-build-it-in-britain.
- www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jul/24/corbyn-build-it-in-britain-public-contracts-manufacturing.
- https://labour.org.uk/press/labour-build-britain-campaign-disastrous-exporting-rail-manufacturing-end-labour.

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