

A paper of Marxist polemic and Marxist unity



# weekly **worker**



**Carlsen versus Caruana:  
competition and cooperation  
form a dialectical unity**

- **Zionism and free speech**
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- **Iran and sanctions**

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Towards a Communist Party of the European Union

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**After Theresa May  
- a government of  
national unity?**

# LETTERS

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

## Brighter light

I found Jim Creegan's article, 'The Bolsheviks and democracy' seriously bizarre (November 1). Surely, any attempt to defend Trotsky's *Lessons of October* would try to draw upon the vast amount of documentation to be found in the book *Trotsky's challenge*, published by Brill in 2015. This reproduced, in English, all of the polemics between Russian and other communists around Trotsky's work and offers a wealth of interest. It's not really good enough any more to simply quote Trotsky and Isaac Deutscher on the topic, despite their many merits.

To be clear, I write this as someone who would generally be more sympathetic to Trotsky's position in the Comintern at the time, although I can see, after reading Lars T Lih's careful documentation, that Trotsky's picture of 1917 didn't rest upon particularly strong historical evidence, however dramatically gripping and beautifully expressed it may have been.

True, there were large amounts of horseshit in the response of some of Trotsky's Bolshevik interlocutors in 1924, as the debate had started to be expressed in the bureaucratic language of 'Leninism' (which Trotsky himself felt obliged to pay due obeisance to). Therefore, we had Zinoviev, claiming that there was no way that Bolshevism could possibly have a 'right wing' in 1917: "There could not have been one, because the very founding Leninist principle of the structure of the Bolshevik Party excludes any possibility of a right and a left wing. There could not have been one, because Leninism is a monolithic party, a party cast from one mould." So, that was all right then.

But others were more illuminating. Old Bolshevik I Stepanov wrote in opposition to Trotsky: "But Vladimir Il'ich did not arrive in a desert in April 1917: he returned to an organisation with which he spoke a common language ... The cadres of the Leninist party were homogenous to an extent that was perhaps rare up to that time. But this does not, of course, mean that the party passively watched the moves of the marshal's staff: in our party, there never have been and never will be any staff-bearers of marshals."

Part of this is being expressed in a deadening tone, but, on balance, and having read Lih's account of 1917 (which, contrary to Creegan, explores a dialectic of difference and unity), I'm inclined to think Stepanov has a more accurate impression of April 1917 than Trotsky.

Bukharin had been a major opponent of Trotsky's 'deviation' in 1924, but he was intelligent enough to realise that the cacophony of the debate was leading in dangerous directions. In a confidential letter to the central committee in 1924 (subsequently raked up and used to tar its author with the charge of 'Trotskyism' in the grotesque show trials), Bukharin rejected Zinoviev's bleating about '100% unity against Trotsky', stating that it was "artificial" and said: "We incessantly solve problems according to the principle, 'Whatever does not help Trotsky'. But we do not even indicate how exactly we are helping Trotsky and all the other deviations, since we are artificially curbing our own laboratory of ideas."

I don't hold any brief for Trotsky's opponents in 1924, but it is obvious that, despite the 'Leninist' horseshit, we are not dealing with a bunch of village idiots and Trotsky's views need to be seen as contested ones. And that contest wasn't simply one-sided.

But I am not confident that Jim Creegan would be at all impressed by any of this. Such people would rather

live in the half-light and I suspect that it would be easier for Creegan if the bright illumination of uncovered documents and the study of history - which Trotsky noticeably welcomed in the very first lines of *Lessons of October* - were shut off in favour of darker pleasures.

**Lawrence Parker**  
London

## Frankfurt school

Betrayal of the 1919 German revolution by the social democrats is not an explanation of the failure of the revolution (see 'Storming the fortress', supplement *Weekly Worker* November 1). Why did the social democrats betray the revolution? Because they were social democrats is not a satisfactory answer, not least as it relies on a circular logic. This betrayal by the social democrats, however, was instrumental in Stalin's subsequent rejection of a 'united front' against the Nazi's, so splitting the left and allowing Hitler to win 'democratically'.

Vulgar Marxism reifies the analytic distinction between base and superstructure and then imputes a problematic - because non-existent - causal relation between them: the well known problem of (bourgeois) metaphysics. Synthetically (totality) money is both 'base' (Capital = M-C-M') and 'superstructure' (private property relations).

So the reason why the social democrats betrayed the revolution is to be found in the process of reification - the subject - that liquid mercury of living time - is reified as the object, that known-to-exhaustion dead end, when use-value 'labour' is reified as exchange-value 'labour-power' in the commodity ('socially necessary labour time'). The age of capital as the age of Absolute Alienation.

Adorno equates exchange-value and the processes of abstraction in a critique of reason itself (dialectic of enlightenment and negative dialectics, as opposed to the positive dialectics of bourgeois thought from Plato to Hegel) ... The social democrats were formed/beguiled by abstraction into a 'Tina' position of 'There is no Money (exchange value), but Exchange Value (money), and Plato was his prophet'.

NB: Marx wrote a 'critique' of bourgeois political economy - a negative dialectics, in that he did not posit anything positive, thereby avoiding reification. Hegel's 'identity of identity and non-identity' (knowing and being, for instance) relies on abstraction unto death. Mortals are doomed to non-identity and, the sooner they accept that, the sooner they will stop torturing and butchering each other in our daily merry-go-round ...

Discuss ...  
**Nick Elvidge**  
email

## Shit pump

On Sunday December 2 at TUC HQ in Fitzrovia, London, a special shitty event is planned for 2pm.

Several big unions in the TUC have adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of anti-Semitism and are now using it to silence members. The big three on Labour's NEC - Unison, Unite and the GMB - bear particular responsibility for facilitating the witch-hunt at Labour. This means that every Labour politician in the UK is fearful of speaking out - even against racist acts, such as pumping shit into a school (see 'Israel settlers dump sewage on Palestinian school in Qalqiliya' at [tinyurl.com/settlershit](http://tinyurl.com/settlershit)). These unions adopted the IHRA without reference to their members.

On Sunday, I and others who support my "death-wish" petition ([tinyurl.com/israelihra](http://tinyurl.com/israelihra)) invite Zionists to bring their shit, so that they can pump it into a model Arab school we shall provide for the occasion (ie, a cardboard box). If Zionists fail to show, shit will be

provided (expanding brown, polystyrene foam). Netanyahu and Trump will push the plunger (or their avatars). We'd like your readers and the media to come too. Union bosses are also invited to attend and watch - on the condition that they silence any of their members who protest, by calling them 'anti-Semites'.

Trade unionists who want to put a stop to shit-spreading can do something to help from the comfort of their own home. They can email a motion of their own to their local branch; a model version condemning the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism can be downloaded at [tinyurl.com/unionihra](http://tinyurl.com/unionihra).

Action is needed, for any Labourist or trade unionist who points out the racist nature of Israel for allowing such actions by settlers faces expulsion. I am a steward presently suspended by the GMB for my petition; my hearing is next week (see [tinyurl.com/gmbnat3](http://tinyurl.com/gmbnat3)). Labour thinks me anti-Semitic too. And that's pretty crappy.

Thus far it seems the unions and Labour are bound to tacitly support the settlers. Can we help them change sides? I desperately need the help of Labour Against the Witchhunt to do that, so I'm pitching my motion at [tinyurl.com/lawihramotion](http://tinyurl.com/lawihramotion) to them on Saturday December 1. I hope readers will support it.

**Pete Gregson**  
Edinburgh

## Canada's role

Members of the International Migrants Alliance (IMA) met from November 5-7 for its 4th general assembly. We, the Canadian delegation, made up of grassroots organisations of migrants, refugees and their allies, express our solidarity with the members of the caravan of migrant people - especially women and children - who arrived in Mexico City in the last few days. This massive exodus comes mainly from Honduras, as well as from other Central American countries.

We are deeply concerned about the dangers facing the members of this caravan, as well as all migrants in Latin America. Kidnappings, extortions, disappearances, sexual assaults and killings have been reported, with women and children being particularly vulnerable to violence. The delegation witnessed the terrible living conditions in the refugee camp, where almost 5,000 migrants were staying.

We stand together in protest to the threats made by US president Donald Trump to militarise the US-Mexico border and to act with aggression toward the caravan - in total violation of international human rights standards toward asylum-seekers.

Most importantly, IMA's Canadian delegation deplores the silence of the Canadian state and prime minister Justin Trudeau on this matter. Canada has played a serious role in creating the current crisis situation in Honduras and in Latin America, as well as in many countries around the world.

For example, in 2009, shortly after the military coup that ousted the government of Manuel Zelaya, representatives of the Canadian embassy and Canadian investors met with the new putschist government of Lobo Sosa. Canada was the first country to formally recognise this government. In exchange, Honduras adopted an institutional reform that facilitates foreign investment and mining in the country, and neutralises the opposition to mining projects by the affected communities. This new piece of Honduran legislation closely mirrors the Canadian Mining Act - one of the most lax mining policies in the world - thus explaining how Canada has become a safe haven for the world's mining companies, with 75% of these registered on the Toronto Stock Exchange. Furthermore, a free trade agreement signed in 2013 between the

two countries also promotes Canadian tourism and resource extraction industries in Honduras, and today mining by Canadian-based companies accounts for approximately 90% of all foreign investment in Honduras.

The case of Honduras is just one example of the role of Canadian state policies that result in the destruction of territories, particularly those of indigenous, peasant and Afro-descendant communities. These resource extraction megaprojects across Latin America and the world affect people's livelihood, culture and traditions, and are responsible for generating forced displacement, a climate of insecurity, persecution, as well as many forms of systemic and individual violence, including disappearances, rape and murder.

We therefore wish to emphasise Canada's key role in the creating the root causes of the massive exodus of people from Latin America, where Canadian companies are wreaking havoc, plundering resources, contaminating nature, threatening and murdering individuals who oppose these projects, and destroying the social fabric upon which people's livelihoods and wellbeing are built. Indeed, all of these atrocities occur with impunity.

It is clear that, while Canada continues to build its wealth by exploiting the resources and people in the global south, it also takes advantage of the workers who are forced to flee and arrive in Canada in search of livelihood, entering under temporary foreign-worker programmes. Such programmes exploit migrant workers of many different sectors, including farmworkers, domestic workers and other so-called 'low-skill workers' as a pool of cheap and disposable labour. The Canadian government must take responsibility for its role in cultivating and promoting the systemic conditions that allow for employers to abuse, exploit and deny migrant workers rights.

Considering Canada's responsibility, we demand that the government of Canada immediately take a stand to protect these asylum-seekers and displaced people, and work with the Mexican government to offer those that wish to stay in Mexico safe refuge. We demand a stop to the destructive practices of Canadian industries in Latin America and in the world. Canadian companies abroad must be held accountable for their activities, not only in indigenous territories of Canada, but also elsewhere

in the world where they are operating.

Since the majority of the migrants are travelling without formal documents, we also demand that the embassies and consulates of Honduras in Mexico, the United States and Canada provide, upon demand, passports and any other of support to their citizens in transit, as is their duty.

We believe it is more important than ever for us, as Canadians, to show our full solidarity with the people of the caravan and migrants of the world, and to organise to oppose the government policies that contribute to their ongoing plight.

Together, the signatories of this statement, remind you that no human being is illegal, and that all people have the right to self-determination, to seek asylum and to live free from social, political, economic and gender-based violence!

**International Migrants Alliance**  
Toronto

## Scrap the crap

Miracle of miracles - it seems there's now a window overlooking sanity from their capitalist lunatic asylum (or is it just cage-cleaning time in the parliamentary zoo?). Grassroots members of the Labour Party are now beginning to push their leadership to back a second referendum - most notably one with a categorical option to stay in the European Union. Actually, why the hell bother with a second referendum aka 'People's Vote', when far more effective - and certainly most efficient - would be to outright scrap that Brexit crap.

Even more to the point, who's to say Marxists can't be building both domestic and international socialism, whilst British capitalism continues to busy itself with redesigning those poxy little national borders of theirs? Anyway 'Better in than out!', whilst doing so, with more associated pluralism in our communities, and thereby more generalised diversity available to a developing consciousness of our co-citizens. More dynamic, vibrant, free-spirited and freethinking multiculturalism being provided, so as to dilute that 'sovereign state' primitivism and other such vomit as spews from the gullet of both our petty bourgeoisie and sections of power elite!

In this context, the naming of names is entirely unnecessary; however, for some peculiar reason 'Nigel, Boris and Jacob' ram straight into any sensible person's head!

**Bruno Kretzschmar**  
email

## Fighting fund

## Another success

**G**ood news, comrades - you did it again! Over the last seven days £255 came in, which means that our November fighting fund now stands at £1,825. In other words, we have exceeded our £1,750 monthly target by £75, with two days still to go.

We got £145 by way of standing orders - thanks go to DG, who has upped his monthly donation to £60, as well as to JT (£50), GT (£15), SS and AR (£10 each). On top of that BC made a bank transfer for £25, while comrades CT (£20), FN (£10) and NR (£5) clicked on our PayPal button.

Finally comrade LC posted us a cheque for £50. He writes: "This is to help you get over your printing difficulties." Speaking of which, we have now come to a permanent arrangement with the new printers - and without incurring the drastic increase in costs we

feared. Hopefully things will now settle down after the initial teething problems, and readers of the hard copy will approve of the quality.

Anyway, we need to keep the funds coming in to help cover the extra expenses incurred over the last few weeks - I wonder how far we can get towards the £2,000 that came our way in October! Would you like to chip in before the weekend? If so, please use our PayPal facility or - better still - make a bank transfer to account number 00744310 (sort code: 30-99-64).

Let's build on another month's success! ●

**Robbie Rix**

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

# ZIONISM

## IHRA and free speech

The Zionist movement in Britain today is a threat to free speech. It is also a danger to Jews, since every atrocity it defends is *in the name of Jews*, not Zionists. For example, the Board of Deputies of British Jews - a tame establishment body that has repeatedly advised Jews *not* to mobilise against anti-Semitism when it comes from the far right - actively supports Israeli war crimes, whilst claiming to represent all Jewish people.<sup>1</sup>

The Board of Deputies took great exception to a recent post by me concerning a North-West Friends of Israel demonstration against anti-Zionism (which they call 'anti-Semitism').<sup>2</sup> The BoD claimed it was untrue that fascists were present. However, my understanding is that there were supporters of Tommy Robinson present, not least from amongst the ranks of the Zionists themselves.

My post featured solicitor Robert Festenstein starring in a promotional video with Tommy Robinson. Festenstein is the founder and sole member of the misnamed Jewish Human Rights Watch, whose purpose is to ensure that Palestinians do *not* gain full democratic rights in Israel. Festenstein is also a member of the Board of Deputies. There was also a video showing the NW Friends of Israel openly cooperating and organising with the EDL in opposition to a picket of a shop selling Israeli products. There is a long history, as I have repeatedly posted, of cooperation and joint work between Zionists and fascists.<sup>3</sup>

The Board of Deputies moved quickly. Not to ensure that fascists were barred from its demonstration against 'anti-Semitism', but to get my story taken down. The result was that my blog on Medium was closed down. The Zionist press even boasted of its achievements.<sup>4</sup> What kind of gutter press is it that takes delight in closing down free speech?

*Jewish News* reported that, "following a complaint from the Board of Deputies", my posts were removed after I had "alleged that the anti-Semitism rally in Manchester last month was supported by the far right".<sup>5</sup> The truth clearly hurts when it comes to the close cooperation that exists between the Zionist movement and its activists in this country and the fascists.<sup>6</sup>

A BoD spokesperson is quoted as saying of my allegations: "This is a complete lie with no factual basis ... There was absolutely no involvement of the EDL and Tommy Robinson. Indeed the organisations involved have denounced Tommy Robinson multiple times." This is totally untrue. The board has members like Festenstein who support Robinson, who is an avid supporter of the Israeli state. People like Robinson hold that Israel is the ideal ethno-nationalist state.

The *Jewish Chronicle* also led with a full-page report, which stated that "An article by a Jewish anti-Israel blogger was removed from the Medium website after he alleged that a demonstration against anti-Semitism in Manchester was orchestrated by far-right figures." This was after "the Board of Deputies lodged a complaint".<sup>7</sup>

It would appear that the Board of Deputies, which has been in the forefront of the false 'anti-Semitism' campaign against Jeremy Corbyn and the Labour left, has become hypersensitive to charges that the people working with anti-Semites are primarily to be found within their own ranks. It is an open fact that large sections of the Zionist movement support white nationalists for similar



Tommy Robinson: backing Israel

reasons to the support that the Zionist Organisation of America openly gives to pro-Zionist anti-Semites like Steve Bannon and Donald Trump.<sup>8</sup> Bannon was accused by his own wife, during divorce proceedings, of having objected to his children going to school with Jewish children. According to Mary Louise-Picard, "He said he doesn't like Jews and that he doesn't like the way they raise their kids to be 'whiny brats'".<sup>9</sup>

Picard said, according to the court papers, "That doesn't, however, stop American Zionists working with him, as he is an ardent Christian Zionist."

In the past week, the Zionist campaign against me has been extended to Twitter. A complaint was made by Jack Mendel, who, according to his own description,<sup>10</sup> is a "so-called" journalist at *Jewish News UK*. It is not a description I would disagree with.

When Zionist mouthpiece Mendel defended Israel's murder of over 200 unarmed demonstrators at the Gaza fence, I compared the siege of Gaza to the siege of the Warsaw Ghetto and condemned his defence of the bombing of Gaza by the Israeli military. At this point he complained to Twitter. Clearly my remarks so infuriated this Zionist lapdog that, instead of attempting to rebut my comparisons, he demanded that Twitter censor me.

In doing this Mendel was pushing at an open door - Twitter closed down my account for "hateful conduct". This is how the language of equalities is used and abused to protect the powerful against the powerless. By putting everything under the rubric of 'hate speech', racism and sexism is depoliticised. In other words, if you criticise Zionism, that is 'hate speech' - anything they do not like is defined in that way.

If you criticise a society which makes the few wealthy at the expense of the many, then that too is "hate speech" apparently. So it is the racists and the imperialists who can turn round and complain that they are hated, because hate - or what is called 'hate' - works two ways. And, yes, people have every right to hate Zionism and racism.

Ironically two years ago I complained when a Zionist, George Yousef, sent me a delightful message, wishing that my family and I had ended up in a concentration camp. When I complained to Twitter, I was told there was no breach of the rules! When this year another - particularly stupid - Zionist, Mark Haringman (aka 'Newsdude'), called me a variety of names, including "child abuser" and "criminal", I made another

complaint. This too was rejected.

We therefore have the crazy situation that responding to racist Jack Mendel's vilification of the Palestinians is a breach of Twitter rules, but telling someone who is Jewish that they should have died in a concentration camp is all right!

This comes on top of the recent suspension of Paul Jonson, an anti-social behaviour worker with Dudley council, for daring to state that Israel is a racist state.<sup>11</sup> Since Israel is a racist state - the neo-Nazi founder of America's alt-Right, Richard Spencer, describes himself as a "white Zionist", for example<sup>12</sup> - it means that the truth has been outlawed. What is equally disturbing is that the GMB union, which is notoriously rightwing and corrupt, has suspended Edinburgh shop steward Peter Gregson, who has put up on the web a petition stating that Israel is a racist state.<sup>13</sup>

Although you would not know it, Liberty (formerly the National Council for Civil Liberties) overwhelmingly rejected the IHRA at its last conference. However, its rightwing executive has sat on the successful motion, as its majority does not agree with it.<sup>14</sup>

All this means that it is now essential to make opposition to the Zionist attack on free speech a priority ●

Tony Greenstein

### Notes

1. See, for example, <https://5pillarsuk.com/2018/04/01/board-of-deputies-of-british-jews-criticised-for-supporting-israel-over-gaza-massacre>.
2. See <https://azvsas.blogspot.com/2018/09/nw-friends-of-israel-tommy-robinson-and.html>.
3. <https://azvsas.blogspot.com/2017/12/exclusive-we-name-gang-of-31-zionists.html>
4. See <https://azvsas.blogspot.com/2018/10/medium-censors-remove-my-blog-outing.html>.
5. <https://jewishnews.timesofisrael.com/tony-greenstein-posts-pulled-over-claim-antisemitism-backed-by-edl>.
6. See, for example, <https://azvsas.blogspot.com/2018/08/exclusive-more-revelations-about.html>.
7. [www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/tony-greenstein-antisemitism-rally-manchester-claim-led-by-tommy-robinson-edl-1.470719](http://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/tony-greenstein-antisemitism-rally-manchester-claim-led-by-tommy-robinson-edl-1.470719).
8. See <https://zooa.org/2017/09/10374485-zoasklein-steve-bannon-loves-israel-and-the-jews-really>.
9. [www.haaretz.com/world-news/ex-wife-trump-campaign-s-bannon-didn-t-want-daughters-to-go-to-school-with-jews-1.5429759](http://www.haaretz.com/world-news/ex-wife-trump-campaign-s-bannon-didn-t-want-daughters-to-go-to-school-with-jews-1.5429759).
10. <https://twitter.com/mendelpol?lang=en>.
11. See <https://azvsas.blogspot.com/2018/11/the-ihra-definition-of-anti-semitism.html>.
12. [www.haaretz.com/israel-news/richard-spencer-to-israelis-i-m-a-white-zionist-respect-me-1.5443480](http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/richard-spencer-to-israelis-i-m-a-white-zionist-respect-me-1.5443480).
13. See the statement from Labour Against the Witchhunt: [www.labouragainstthewitchhunt.org/suspensions-and-expulsions/law-statement-lift-suspension-of-peter-gregson-from-labour-party-and-gmb](http://www.labouragainstthewitchhunt.org/suspensions-and-expulsions/law-statement-lift-suspension-of-peter-gregson-from-labour-party-and-gmb).
14. <https://azvsas.blogspot.com/2018/10/why-are-officers-and-employees-of-civil.html>.

# ACTION

### London Communist Forum

**Sunday December 2, 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 1907 to the October Revolution of 1917*. This meeting: chapter 1 (continued): 'The Finnish question'. 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).

### Radical Anthropology Group

**Tuesday December 4, 6.30pm:** Series of talks on social and biological anthropology, Daryll Forde seminar room, Anthropology Building, 14 Taviton Street, off Gordon Square, London WC1. This meeting: 'Human evolution: where are we now?' Speaker: Chris Stringer. Organised by Radical Anthropology Group: <http://radicalanthropologygroup.org>.

### Stop arming Saudi, stop bombing Yemen

**Public meetings**  
**Norwich, Friday November 30, 7pm:** Norwich Quaker Meeting House, Upper Goat Lane, Norwich NR2.  
**Sheffield, Tuesday December 4, 7.30pm:** Central URC Church, 60 Norfolk Street, Sheffield S1.  
**Liverpool, Friday December 7, 1pm:** LTC A, Lecture Theatre Complex, Hope Park, Liverpool Hope University, Liverpool L16.  
**Protest**  
**Edinburgh, Saturday December 8, 12 noon:** Wellington Statue, east end of Princes Street, Edinburgh EH1. Organised by Stop the War Coalition: [www.stopwar.org.uk](http://www.stopwar.org.uk).

### Together for Climate Justice

**Saturday December 1, 12 noon:** Protest. Assemble near Polish embassy, 47 Portland Place, London WC1. Organised by Campaign Against Climate Change: [www.campaignccc.org](http://www.campaignccc.org).

### Labour Against the Witchhunt

**Saturday December 1, 1pm to 4pm:** Members meeting, London Welsh Centre, 157-163 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1. Including plans for our forthcoming conference, updates on disciplinary cases, the speaking tour for Jackie Walker's film *The witchhunt*.  
**Friday December 7, 5pm:** Silent protest, Dudley Library, St James's Road, Dudley DY1: Support free speech on Palestine and Paul Jonson - suspended from his job at Dudley council after attending a pro-Palestine lobby of Ian Austin MP's surgery.  
**Saturday February 2, 10am to 5pm:** LAW conference, Askew Road Church, Bassein Park Road, London W12 9RN. Organised by Labour Against the Witchhunt: <http://www.labouragainstthewitchhunt.org>.

### Latin America 2018

**Saturday December 1, 10am to 6.30pm (registration 9.15am):** Conference, Congress House, 23-28 Great Russell Street, London WC1. Speakers include: Tariq Ali, Chris Williamson MP, Jon Lansman (Momentum), Lindsey German (Stop the War Coalition), Kate Hudson (CND), plus guests from Latin America. Tickets £10 (£8). Organised by Latin America Conference: [www.latinamericainconference.co.uk](http://www.latinamericainconference.co.uk).

### Economics of Brexit

**Tuesday December 4, 7pm:** Meeting, committee rooms 3-4, Council House, Victoria Square, Birmingham B1. Speaker: Michael Roberts. Organised by Birmingham Socialist Discussion Group: [ser14@btinternet.com](mailto:ser14@btinternet.com).

### Build Stop the War

**Wednesday December 5, 7pm:** Christmas fundraiser dinner, Urfa Ocakbasi Restaurant, 85 Stoke Newington Road, London N16. Special guest: Brian Eno. Tickets: £25-£40 - order at 020-7561 4830. Organised by Stop the War Coalition: [www.stopwar.org.uk](http://www.stopwar.org.uk).

### Women fighting austerity today

**Thursday December 6, 7 pm:** Public meeting: 'Celebrating 100 years since the victory of the suffragettes', Unite offices, Heneage Street West (next to Aston University), Birmingham B7. Speakers include Helen Pankhurst, author and granddaughter of Sylvia Pankhurst. Organised by Birmingham TUC: [btucsec@hotmail.com](mailto:btucsec@hotmail.com).

### Hands Off Venezuela

**Saturday December 8, 2pm to 6pm:** Conference, Birkbeck, University of London, Malet Street, London WC1. £5 waged, £3 unwaged. Register at [www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/hands-off-venezuela-conference-2018-tickets-52478465503](http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/hands-off-venezuela-conference-2018-tickets-52478465503). Organised by Hands Off Venezuela: [www.handsoffvenezuela.org](http://www.handsoffvenezuela.org).

### Stop Tommy Robinson

**Sunday December 9, 11am:** Counterdemonstration, Downing Street, London SW1. Organised by Stand Up To Racism: [www.facebook.com/events/3239772886837](https://www.facebook.com/events/3239772886837).

### Bargain books

**Saturday December 15, 11am to 3pm:** Book sale, Marx Memorial Library, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London EC1. Organised by Marx Memorial Library: [www.marx-memorial-library.org](http://www.marx-memorial-library.org).

### 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.

**UKIP**

# Politics of the street

The Ukip leader's embrace of Tommy Robinson shows how the 'great Brexit betrayal' could lead to the growth of a populist far-right movement in Britain, writes **Eddie Ford**

In what is clearly an interesting development, Gerard Batten, the latest leader of the UK Independence Party, has appointed Tommy Robinson (real name - Stephen Yaxley-Lennon) as his "special advisor" on "grooming gangs" and "prison reform". These are areas in which Robinson, former leader of the English Defence League, claims some sort of expertise, having been jailed for mortgage fraud and using someone else's passport to travel to the US. And he is now awaiting a decision on his contempt of court retrial (which was referred last month to the attorney general for review), concerning his attempt to live-stream videos to Facebook of defendants in a rape-cum-grooming gang trial.

His appointment followed months of often heated debate and deliberation, as under current Ukip rules Robinson is disqualified from joining because of his past membership of proscribed organisations - the EDL, British National Party and British Freedom Party. Last week Batten announced that he had formally sought to begin the process to allow Robinson to become an actual member, not just his *personal* advisor - describing the former EDL leader as a "tremendously brave man" - even if he has "done a lot of things that I'm happy to say I don't approve of". But in "the great scheme of things", mused Batten, "he's a very heroic person, who stands up for the victims of industrialised sexual abuse in this country". Indeed, Batten has previously compared Robinson to Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela (though you would think that Jesus would also be deserving of a mention).

Naturally, Batten's move has not gone down well with many Ukip members. It was resisted by the party's national executive committee, which argued that any decision on the issue should be postponed until after 'Brexit Day' in March (a rather optimistic assumption, it has to be said). Rather, senior party figures and others have urged Batten to focus instead on campaigning against Theresa May's ailing Brexit plan, which is almost certain to be voted down by parliament - opposition which has helped push Ukip support up to 8% in some polls, such as Opinium (November 14-15).

Showing the disquiet in the party over Batten's courtship of Robinson,

three MEPs have already resigned in protest. The latest deserter, Patrick O'Flynn, who represents the East of England region, said Batten's "apparent and growing fixation with Tommy Robinson" had been the final straw - the leader was now steering the party to the far right - "without any mandate" from either the membership or the party's elected ruling body. O'Flynn has now defected to the Social Democratic Party, the successor party to the original SDP, founded in 1981 (this writer admits he had no idea it still existed).<sup>1</sup> Curiously, given its origins, the SDP is very pro-Brexit, has two elected town councillors and picked up a massive 469 votes at the last general election.

## Farage

Another person furious at Batten's embrace of Tommy Robinson is Nigel Farage, of course - Ukip's leader up until November 2016. For him, Robinson's appointment was "dragging us in a shameful direction", with the decision going "against all the things I did as leader". After all, Farage said, if he had "one real achievement" in politics it was that he "did pretty much single-handedly kill off the BNP". But Batten now wanted to turn Ukip into a "sort of a street activist party", right at the very moment "when we have a betrayal of Brexit" by both the Tories and Labour Party, meaning Ukip's potential reach is "the highest it's ever been". When Farage was leader, Ukip talked about Islam and immigration in a "non-racist, non-sectarian" way, he said, and Batten's love-in with Robinson "blows a hole in all of that". For this reason, on November 24 Farage submitted a letter of no confidence in the Ukip leader to the party's NEC, as it is "time we got rid of Gerard Batten and reclaimed the party".

Batten responded to Farage's avalanche of criticism by noting that he had shown "0% interest" in Ukip since "walking away" two years ago - being far more interested in the Leave Means Leave campaign group and cuddling up to Donald Trump. So who was Farage to talk? In fact, according to Batten, he himself had saved the party from potential financial collapse - the legacy of Nigel Farage.

Under Gerard Batten then, as is clear from these latest developments, Ukip has shifted considerably to the

right, with a virulent Islamophobia being the driving force - even if Batten claims that "Islamophobic" is a made-up word and "I don't have an irrational fear of Islam". He has called Islam a "death cult" - presumably in contrast to life-affirming Christianity - and has suggested that UK Muslims should be asked to sign a declaration "renouncing" elements of the *Quran*. He has also described Muhammad as a "paedophile", mooting a possible halt on immigration from Islamic countries and separate jails for Muslim prisoners. He has also marched alongside the far-right thugs of the Football Lads Alliance. Bigot? Me?

You could say that by appointing Robinson as his advisor, Batten has made official Ukip's new-found fascination with the politics of the street and the alt-right. Obviously, Robinson has a strong base of support within the FLA/alt-right/far-right milieu, which defended and crowdfunded him when he received a 13-month prison sentence in May. These include charming individuals, such as Paul Joseph Watson, an editor at the US conspiracy site *Infowars* (owned by the raving lunatic, Alex Jones) and Mark Meechan (aka 'Count Dankula'), now notorious for his YouTube video teaching a dog Nazi salutes by repeating to it, "Want to gas the Jews?" - something that has been viewed over three million times.<sup>2</sup>

It almost goes without saying that the Socialist Workers Party calls Tommy Robinson a "Nazi" - a word the SWP robotically slap onto virtually anyone with reactionary or rightwing opinions. However, it is extremely rare for British people - no matter how rightwing - to sign up to Nazism, which was a form of *German* nationalism that glorifies *Germans* as the master race: the vast majority of British people were brought up to regard it as the epitome of evil. Hating Hitler and the Nazis is almost the very essence of being British in the post-World War II world.

True, Tommy Robinson can be categorised as a fascist - which does not mean therefore that he is a follower of Benito Mussolini or anything like that. For us fascism is the anti-working class politics of the street, which is usually intent on demonising this or that minority section of the population - in this case Muslims. From that perspective, the

EDL and FLA fit the description of fascism - opposed equally to the left and 'the elite' - with their obsessive promotion of national myths, irrational prejudices, and so on.

The fact that Gerard Batten has recruited someone like Tommy Robinson says a *lot* about Ukip and where it is going - and also a great deal about British contemporary politics. In reality, Ukip was *the* Brexit party: that is what it existed for, even if it did develop other policies and ideas over time. But, thanks to David Cameron and the EU referendum, there was now much less space for a specifically anti-EU party and Ukip has slid right down in the opinion polls. That is why, under Batten, Ukip is clearly reorientating itself to the streets and away from electioneering.

If you look at the UK's 'first past the post' electoral system, you can see another reason. Ukip was able to come first in the 2014 European parliamentary elections under a system of proportional representation, despite getting only 27.5% of the vote, giving it 24 MEPs (it now has 15). But it was unable to get any MPs elected - although it did attract two rather eccentric defectors from the Tory Party, who unsurprisingly did not hang around very long when they saw the bitter reality of Ukip's internal life. In that situation, the street looks like the best bet, it seems.

## Embittered

Perhaps partially disproving Nigel Farage's criticism that Ukip is obsessing about Islam when it should be concentrating its guns on Brexit, Tommy Robinson - no doubt with Gerard Batten's blessing - has called for a 'Great Brexit Betrayal March' on December 9, just two days before the planned 'meaningful vote' on Theresa May's deal.

This is exactly the sort of development that communists would expect. If you are a true Brexiteer - which, it needs to be mentioned, includes the likes of the *Morning Star*/Communist Party of Britain - under May's plan Britain is still going to be subordinate to European Union rules and regulations: that is just a fact. European law would still apply to the movement of capital, the City, and a whole host of other things - meaning that Britain's ability to strike trade deals here, there and everywhere is going to be severely restricted.

Another unforgiving fact. From a hard Brexit position, May's deal *is* a betrayal - or 'Brino' ('Brexit in name only') - there is no getting around that. It does not make you Jacob Rees-Mogg to recognise this obvious political-economic reality. Thus it is easy to imagine 'Brexit betrayal' politics, of the sort envisaged by Tommy Robinson on December 9 and afterwards, having a real effect amongst many who believe they have once more been stabbed in the back by liberals and the metropolitan elite.

In other words, Ukip is evolving fast - with Robinson acting as a catalyst. On the other hand, what is Nigel Farage doing? In recent years he has expressed admiration for the Five Star Movement in Italy - which is a classic Bonapartist organisation running numerous electronic plebiscites, where members can vote for various propositions from the safety of their computer or laptop. It is not hard to see why that appeals to Farage - obviating the need for all those boring meetings and exhausting election work. But where and how to take such a project in Britain without a proportional representation system: is it a movement or a party?

Nevertheless, under present conditions, it is reasonable to think that we will see a growth of the populist far right in Britain - just as we have had a growth of the left in the form of Jeremy Corbyn. But the worst thing that could happen to the left is a Corbyn minority *government* of the sort seemingly imagined by John McDonnell - but which has a "majority position in parliament" with regards to its alternative Brexit plan and other matters. Under those circumstances, what sort of *programme* could such a government carry out, dependent as it would be on the support, and votes, of MPs from the Scottish National Party, Liberal Democrats, Plaid Cymru, Greens ... and Tories? Labour's rank-and-file and activists should rebel against such a notion. It could only lead to disaster and the discrediting of the party for untold years ●

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## Notes

- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social\\_Democratic\\_Party\\_\(UK,\\_1990%E2%80%93present\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_Democratic_Party_(UK,_1990%E2%80%93present)).
- [www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/count-dankula-nazi-pug-video-appeal-refused-youtube-court-case-gross-offence-a8483201.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/count-dankula-nazi-pug-video-appeal-refused-youtube-court-case-gross-offence-a8483201.html).

## MIGRATION

# Ignoring the problem

Fighting for open borders means facing up to the reality of mass migration, argues Paul Demarty

**B**uried among reports of all the more significant goings-on at the present moment, we find a few stomach-churning items in *The Guardian*.

Britain's most cowardly paper - the liberal rag that reminds us why liberal politicians favour the colour yellow - is taking it upon itself to deliver a great torrent of musings on the rise of 'populism', the ogre neoliberal shills find crouched under every bed. A starry cast of disgraced centrist politicians have swung by Kings Place to displace some blame. Tony Blair is one of them: he has recently shifted from stellar achievements in the pursuit of peace in the Middle East to 'fixing' the problem of anti-Semitism in Europe - an appointment which ought to strike fear into the heart of every Jew west of the Urals.

Another is Hillary Clinton, as she tries to glue her shattered political career together again. Can she be thinking of running again in 2020 - can she really? Of course she can, for if she has one thing in common with her victorious opponent in 2016 - apart from a high-baseline level of viciousness - it is a tendency to see what she wants to see, rather than what is actually there. Mr Tony and Ms Clinton sing from the same hymn sheet. "Europe needs to get a handle on migration because that is what lit the flame," says she; "You've got to deal with the legitimate grievances and answer them, which is why today in Europe you cannot possibly stand for election unless you've got a strong position on immigration," says he.

There is something especially malignant about the sight of these self-styled 'progressives' taking this sort of line. There is an obvious contempt for the people with such 'concerns' at work, a sense of there being a great tinderbox of crude hatred just waiting for someone to 'light the flame'. Such great confidence in Schlesinger's "vital centre" on display here! At its first real reckoning, the functionaries of the liberal bourgeoisie have no better idea than to throw meat to the oiks in the hope of keeping them quiet. We can well imagine the grimace on the faces of Blair and Clinton, as they condescend to touch the "legitimate grievances" of the people they despise, but the stench is only of their own hypocrisy.

### Evidence

Such is also the opinion of comrade Alistair Farrow over at *Socialist Worker*, who is agreeably nasty about Clinton's "blaming anyone for her loss to Donald Trump but herself". Yet we cannot simply stop at 'shooting the messengers', however richly they deserve it. Migration is a live political issue among broad masses, which is one reason why these decadent opportunists wade into it. Comrade Farrow wheels out the traditional Socialist Workers Party line:

There is no evidence that migration has a negative impact on wages, housing costs, or any other of the "legitimate grievances" he thinks people have. The people responsible for low wages are the bosses, who have slashed and held them down for a decade of austerity.

This means that "When Blair, Clinton and the like point the finger of blame at migrants, they are fuelling the far right, not undermining it."<sup>1</sup>

On the face of it - at least among



March to US border: illegal or legal, they will find their way in

those of us on the left who hew to the traditional Marxist position of categorical opposition to immigration controls - this argument seems easy to swallow. It is the sort of thing we hear from the podium at any given well-meaning protest march in solidarity with migrants of one sort or another.

We have been on very many of those marches, and a lot of them have been organised by Farrow's comrades in the SWP; yet it seems the idea that migration has a "negative impact" on various quality-of-life metrics for native workers is more entrenched than ever. Anti-migrant chauvinism is clearly on the march in the entire imperialist world, and its immediate periphery in eastern Europe and the like. Are all these people just stupid, as Clinton's remaining fans and the centrist fighters against 'populism' seem to believe - or perhaps blinded by racism or other prejudices?

In truth, comrade Farrow's argument is a false one. Worse than that - it is false in a way that renders his article contradictory, for, while he aims his fire at establishment liberals, he lets their worldview in by the back door.

### Supply and demand

Understanding why will require a closer look at his claims.

The source he cites for "no evidence" is ... himself, when he did a little myth-buster piece for the same paper back in February. This turns out to be a rather scattergun affair.<sup>2</sup> We have firstly a discussion of agricultural wages, with an attempt to rebut the claim that a reduction in the number of seasonal migrant workers on farms has led to a rise in pay. Farrow claims, first of all, that the "tiny" rise in wages dates back to 2014, before the purported cause of the labour shortfall (the Brexit referendum). He seems to have gotten a little tangled up here - or is he really

claiming that a huge labour shortage has no effect on wages in an industry?

There follows a series of shorter items, which are all of a piece. First of all, workers have faced a real-terms pay-cut across the board, so any such effects of migration are minimal at best. Next, a "study" - by the department for work and pensions (DWP), though Farrow does not mention it - of the results of the expansion of the European Union in eastern Europe and the corresponding wave of migrant labour found that there was no negative effect on native workers. Finally, "Research based on four reports commissioned by the home office in 2003 found that immigration has 'if anything, a positive effect on the wages of the existing population'."

The trouble with these studies is that they are inherently counterfactual. Suppose that wages went up and migration decreased in a given period - correlation is not causation. Wages might have gone up more if migration had increased; the two quantities may be completely unrelated. We cannot rewind history, dispatch a few extra thousand jobseekers across the Channel and see what happens. The devil is always in the detail: what assumptions are made? What is the underlying theoretical model of employment? Is it perhaps assumed that there is large-scale unemployment (here including fiddles like putting people on the sick)? The authors of the DWP study, for example, include a lengthy section on their statistical assumptions (§5.7).<sup>3</sup> From Farrow's presentation, you would never know there was any ground for disagreement.

One assumption shared by all bourgeois economic studies of the matter - both those that find a correlation between native workers' living standards and net migration, and those that do not - is that, all things being equal, massively

increasing the supply of a commodity will reduce its price. There is no reason for any Marxist to demur from the bourgeois economists on this point. Yet Farrow gets a bit sniffy about it: "assumptions involved in supply and demand economics" ignore the "reality in which markets are rigged and can be altered". He cites the example of nurses - in short supply and grotesquely underpaid by government fiat. Yet the argument he objects to, when it comes from union leaders like Len McCluskey - that large numbers of cheaper workers are imported in order to drive down wages and conditions - is hardly a denial of such initiatives to rig markets. It relates precisely to a mechanism by which markets are rigged.

Farrow, quite correctly, writes a great deal about the importance of workplace struggle in setting wages and, of course, poses the united workplace struggle of native and migrant workers as the 'real' answer to stagnant and declining wages. What he misses is that the class struggle is not limited to the workplace, and precisely involves attempts by both sides to systematically distort the labour market in their favour. He misses therefore the essence of effective trade unionism, which is that it wins for the labour movement some limited ability to 'rig' the labour market.

Adding these two things together gives us the contradiction at the heart of trade unionism in embryo. For it must build a fortress around the conditions of union members; but one of the attacks against which it must defend is the continual attempts of the bosses to replace expensive, restive union workers with cheaper, more pliable alternatives. Great floods of such workers may be obtained both from an 'internal' reserve army of labour, or by means of migration; alternatively, the 'mountain may go to Muhammad', in the form of moving production away.

### Sectionalism

The temptation of sectionalism, then, is ever-present - 'we' must defend 'our' jobs, for a suitably exclusive definition of 'we' - the participation of the United Auto Workers in 'buy American' campaigns in the 1980s, to defend themselves at the expense of Japanese workers, is a case in point. That somehow never seems to work, however - just take a look at Detroit. By accepting the division in the class, the result is quite invariably that offshoring, social dumping and the like become more effective, as union density declines (in part because sectional hostility to incomers has cut activists off from the super-exploited sections of the workforce). Making something illegal, meanwhile, does not make it impossible. What often happens is that migration continues, but the lives of migrants are far more precarious, and thus their conditions of labour far worse, and the downward pressure on the surrounding labour market becomes even more acute.

It is this dimension that is missing in comrade Farrow's articles. The falsity of sectional working class hostility to migrants is not in its formal premises, but its conclusions. Of course, influxes of lower-paid workers exert downward pressure on wages and conditions, and no amount of statistical voodoo in the DWP will change that. That is why the capitalist class and its agents keep on bloody doing it (note that the Confederation

of British Industry's sole explicit objection to Theresa May's speech to them a few weeks ago was that she proposed to limit migration from the EU). But tighter immigration controls invariably fail to deliver the desired result, and instead make things worse.

There is by the same token the potential reaching-out of the trade union struggle in the opposite direction, towards unions becoming the "schools for communism" envisaged by Marx and Engels, if good enough political leadership is on hand to get out of this vicious cycle. It is presumably this which is the objective of the SWP. It argues, in Farrow's words, that "fighting for higher wages means stronger unions, organisation and strikes over pay that can unite all workers". However, ignoring the reality that differences in labour-market clout among the workers are actively exploited and exacerbated by the ruling class acts as a barrier to achieving such unity. Instead, it unites the SWP with the official ideology of the liberal bourgeoisie. (How close it comes to arguing that a rising tide lifts all boats!) It chides the reprehensible servants of the same - Blair and Clinton - basically for not holding the line.

This is the contradiction. The SWP divides its activity between increasing, to the best of its ability, the number of strike days and likewise increasing the number of protestors on the streets of major British cities - in which regard it has focused ever more monomaniacally on the fight against racism. In the former activity, it must find allies in the union bureaucracy; in the latter, among *bien-pensant* liberals; in both, alliances are secured with the maximum of diplomatic politesse. Here is the point at which they divide. "Strikes over pay" are deemed good enough - indeed, the main objective - when it comes to union activity. But when that sort of sectional struggle rubs up against the concrete methods of the class enemy, the very arguments of the class enemy are employed - migrants are in some serene manner 'good for the economy'. And our fire must be directed at 'the bosses', but without reference to those of the bosses' tactics that demand any subtlety of argument and agitation to fight.

Suitably oppressed and superexploited, migrants certainly are good news for the economy - so far as the CBI is concerned. However, suitably absorbed into combative battalions of the working class as cadres and leaders, migrant workers are an incomparable boon - the living embodiment of the international nature of our class and a living link from one 'national' movement to the next. This is a salient point, to which the whole history of our movement attests.

But we cannot have the best of this battle by denying altogether that the other side is fighting, or by restricting our industrial objectives to 'more pay' ●

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### Notes

- [1. https://socialistworker.co.uk/art/47542/Hillary+Clinton+launches+poisonous+attack+on+migrants](https://socialistworker.co.uk/art/47542/Hillary+Clinton+launches+poisonous+attack+on+migrants).
- [2. https://socialistworker.co.uk/art/46063/After+new+pay+figures+released+++bosses%2C+not+migrants%2C+are+to+blame+for+lower+wages](https://socialistworker.co.uk/art/46063/After+new+pay+figures+released+++bosses%2C+not+migrants%2C+are+to+blame+for+lower+wages).
- [3. http://cream-migration.org/files/Working\\_paper\\_291.pdf](http://cream-migration.org/files/Working_paper_291.pdf).

## EUROPE



There is a distinct whiff of a national government about things

# New stage of Brexit politics

In or out of the EU, argues **Mike Macnair**, we need a united workers' movement on a European scale

The publication of the draft 'Withdrawal agreement'<sup>1</sup> and 'Political declaration setting out the framework for the future relationship between the European Union and the United Kingdom'<sup>2</sup> has opened a new stage in the politics of Brexit. This article introduces a short motion - to be put before the CPGB membership - on the politics of Brexit in the light of this new stage. Though the motion is commissioned by the Provisional Central Committee, this article expresses my individual opinion of the present situation of the politics of Brexit, not a collective PCC view.

What is the new stage? In the first place, the 'Withdrawal agreement' unsurprisingly amounts for most purposes to the UK continuing to comply with EU law, without a vote on how it is made, for the transition period. The UK government has simply failed to achieve what it claimed it could: conditionality of the exit agreement on some sort of permanent free-trade agreement.

The 'Political declaration' is no more than an agenda for future negotiations - or, as *The Times* sketch commented, "Pings can only get better, as PM kicks another can down the road" (November 23).

Theresa May's government *tried* to kick another can down the road by appealing to the UK supreme court against the decision of the Scots court of session to refer to the European court of justice whether the article 50 withdrawal notice can be revoked. The only possible point of such an appeal was to delay proceedings and preserve uncertainty about the issue

for as long as possible with a view to political advantage.

It did not work: on November 20 the supreme court refused leave to appeal, on the fairly simple ground that it only had jurisdiction to entertain an appeal if the court of session's decision to refer the issue to the ECJ was "a decision constituting final judgment" - which it clearly was not. The ECJ has now heard oral argument, which has been reported in the British press on November 27. The arguments are themselves politically important, but the 'agreements' need to be discussed first.

### 'Agreements'

The hot-potato issue of free movement receives plain contradictory statements in the 'Political declaration,' paragraph 4:

The future relationship will be based on a balance of rights and obligations, taking into account the principles of each party. This balance [must] ensure the autonomy of the Union's decision-making and be consistent with the Union's principles, in particular with respect to the integrity of the Single Market and the Customs Union and the indivisibility of the four freedoms. It must also ensure the sovereignty of the United Kingdom and the protection of its internal market, while respecting the result of the 2016 referendum, including with regard to the development of its independent trade policy and the ending of free movement of

people between the Union and the United Kingdom.

On this basis the UK would exit from the transition arrangements in 2021 with no agreement for the future, since the EU and UK positions stated here are plainly irreconcilable. But on the other hand, the 'Withdrawal agreement' as published, in article 132 (1), gives the EU-UK Joint Committee, which is to be created by the agreement, power, until July 1 2020, to extend the transition period until "20XX": that is, for up to 80 years. This may have been amended in the version actually agreed by the EU council, but we have not been told so ...

Overall, the *shape* of the agenda of the 'Political declaration' points very strongly towards a permanent relationship to the EU which will look like Norway's. The agenda covers, in essence, creating 'special relationships' along the lines of all the existing EU legislation and common projects.

The common characterisation of this result as 'vassalage' is misleading: a feudal lord was expected to consult his vassals before making decisions. It will be closer to 'taxation without representation' - the power of the 18th century British parliament to legislate for the colonies, without their representation in that parliament.

This shows, as far as those Brexiteers who are willing to back the May proposals are concerned, the completely fraudulent character of claims that Brexit was about democracy or national sovereignty:

they are willing to settle for *less* democracy than existed with EU membership, while *still* losing national sovereignty. The whole exercise, from David Cameron's referendum on, is displayed as being *merely* about party political advantages for the Tory Party.

### Backing the deal

The core of the Tory Party and a large part of big capital seems to have coalesced round the promotion of the idea that this is the best possible Brexit deal and should be supported for fear of 'chaos' as the alternative. The Confederation of British Industry and other business bodies have made direct statements in support (though briefing privately that the deal is a bad one).<sup>3</sup> The Rothermeres had already moved behind May, with the replacement of Paul Dacre by Geordie Greig as *Daily Mail* editor.<sup>4</sup> The *Daily Express* has toned its Brexiteering coverage down substantially since November 14, and so has *The Daily Telegraph*. Little has been heard since November 17 from the 'gang of five' (Fox, Gove, Grayling, Leadsom, Mordaunt), who were supposed to be arguing within the cabinet for May to demand further concessions from the EU side.

The supporters of the draft deal and declaration argue to the Brexiteers that the alternative is no Brexit at all, or a Corbyn government; to remainers they argue that the alternative is a no-deal Brexit. That this rather obvious doublespeak has not so far been punished by sharp criticism in the media again illustrates

the appearance of the beginnings of a ruling class consensus on the issue.

Capital, after all, rules mainly through lobbying, bribes and litigation, not through getting its open agents elected. And a May-style deal, while denying British *voters* any voice in European affairs, will not deny 'British' *companies* access to lobbying the European institutions, bribing officials or litigation in the European courts.

Some EU officials, briefing British journalists, have held out the possibility that the March 2019 Brexit date might be delayed if there was to be a new referendum with the option of 'remain' on the table. Rerunning the referendum on slightly different terms would be a traditional EU way of doing things, as in Denmark on the Treaty of Maastricht in 1993, and Ireland on the Treaties of Nice in 2002, and of Lisbon in 2009. But British politics practically rules it out. Diane Abbott has rightly said that a new referendum *under present conditions* would probably be won by 'leave' again.

Meanwhile, however, the remaining EU states have been taking a pretty hard public line on the issue. On November 25, after the EU council meeting, ministers and officials were lining up to take their turn to say that they regretted the UK leaving, but nothing other than the May deal is or can be on offer.<sup>5</sup>

The underlying point was made explicit in the November 27 oral arguments in the ECJ, where lawyers for the EU council and commission argued that it would be intolerable for member-states to be allowed to

endlessly threaten withdrawal to extract concessions, and then reverse themselves.<sup>6</sup> It would from this point of view be better for the EU for the UK to actually leave and, if it wanted to rejoin, apply in the regular way (and therefore, incidentally, accept Schengen and the euro and lose its various other opt-outs negotiated with threats of withdrawal between 1975 and now). The fact that the commission and council have been prepared to commit to arguing this point openly (the UK government's lawyers, in contrast, tried to postpone any decision being reached)<sup>7</sup> strongly suggests that we are now past the Brexit point of no return, as far as the remaining EU members are concerned.

Though technically the Brexit referendum decision could be reversed, the fact that big capital and senior parliamentary Tories seem to have fallen in behind the current proposals as the 'least worst' option means that reversal is now very unlikely.

## Parliament

At the date of writing, there is still no obvious parliamentary majority for the proposals, since the Democratic Unionist Party, a good many Tory Brexiters and the Labour Party have all announced that they will vote against them.

The arguments of the supporters of the deal have been to considerable extent addressed to Labour 'remainer' MPs. Statements that 'The alternative is no deal' and 'the alternative is chaos' are in reality demands that these MPs should provide the parliamentary backing which the government lacks without them.

Since the DUP has announced that if this agreement passes it will reconsider its 'confidence and supply' support for May's government generally, the logic of such a vote would very plainly be towards either a snap general election or some sort of 'government of national unity'. "Senior Tory" negotiations with "some" Labour MPs for the latter have already been reported in *The Sun* (November 16).

Without actually committing the government to anything very definite beyond the transition period (except to new treaty commitments to further entrench neoliberalism), the new proposals potentially impale the Labour Party on a four-way political fork, or caltrop.

If the Labour leadership sticks with voting against the proposals, the Tories may be able to entice a large number of Labour rightwingers into voting for them: hence into a split in the Labour Party which would - as in 1982-83 - give the Tories another 14 years in government, and perhaps into a 'government of national unity' to see through Brexit or to 'deal with the Brexit problem'.

If the Labour Party stays united in voting against the proposals and they are defeated, the Tory Party could dump May and unite for a snap general election, in which Labour is accused of obstructing Brexit and thereby the will of the people - and, specifically, the will of those Labour constituencies which voted 'leave'. Such an election could achieve for England what Cameron achieved for Scotland in 2014 - the representation of Labour as the party of the metropolitan elite, which had betrayed its class roots.

If the Labour Party bites the bullet and votes for the proposals, the Tory Party could not play this card. But a new populist party led by Nigel Farage (who is right now bidding against the current UK Independence Party leadership over the 'Tommy Robinson' issue) could run effectively in Labour 'leave' constituencies.

The fourth spike of the caltrop has been in operation for the last 18 months, and has so far proved blunt: that is, that failing to draw the Labour Party leadership into clear 'remain' or 'leave' commitments, which could be used against them to accuse Labour of betraying the working class ('remain') or the youth ('leave'), the BBC and capitalist media have gone on and on about Labour failing its voters and the country by not intervening decisively. This spike seems blunt, in the sense that Labour's standing in the polls has not been seriously damaged by this long-running campaign.<sup>8</sup>

But the pressure from Labour 'remain' campaigners has recently intensified;<sup>9</sup> May has embarked on intensive lobbying of Labour MPs;<sup>10</sup> and panic might produce tipping the thing over onto one of the sharper points, where it would do more damage.

If the Labour Party could be lamed by the caltrop, then, once it has been clearly defeated (whether by a national unity government, a split, or defeat in a general election after a right-populist campaign), British capital and the majority of the Parliamentary Tory Party could comfortably settle for a 'May-style' deal which preserved the entrenchment of neoliberalism by the Single European Act and treaties of Maastricht and Nice, while denying the British electorate any votes as to European policy.

What will now happen is undoubtedly very uncertain. This uncertainty has in a sense characterised the whole process since the 2016 referendum delivered its unexpected result. However, the motion which follows is framed on the assumption that it has now become not only possible, but quite likely, that the UK will in fact exit the EU, through the transition period and, ending with some sort of 'May-style deal', a very prolonged transition period, or a Norway-style deal. How, in these circumstances, is it possible to pursue a working class politics which does not reduce the movement to a tail for the nationalists ('Left exit' or 'Lexit') or a tail for the liberals and Blairites (left 'remain')? ●

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## Notes

1. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/756374/14\\_November\\_Draft\\_Agreement\\_on\\_the\\_Withdrawal\\_of\\_the\\_United\\_Kingdom\\_of\\_Great\\_Britain\\_and\\_Northern\\_Ireland\\_from\\_the\\_European\\_Union.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/756374/14_November_Draft_Agreement_on_the_Withdrawal_of_the_United_Kingdom_of_Great_Britain_and_Northern_Ireland_from_the_European_Union.pdf).
2. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/759021/25\\_November\\_Political\\_Declaration\\_setting\\_out\\_the\\_framework\\_for\\_the\\_future\\_relationship\\_between\\_the\\_European\\_Union\\_and\\_the\\_United\\_Kingdom\\_.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/759021/25_November_Political_Declaration_setting_out_the_framework_for_the_future_relationship_between_the_European_Union_and_the_United_Kingdom_.pdf).
3. Eg, 'CBI president to endorse Theresa May's draft Brexit deal' *The Guardian* November 19; but, on the other hand, 'Theresa May's Brexit deal sparks concern among business leaders, leaked emails reveal' *The Independent* November 23.
4. See 'So now will MPS listen?' *Daily Mail* November 28. Here the paper claims a narrow majority (41%-38%) in favour of May's deal and an overwhelming one (52%-19%) in favour of the idea that it is the "best on offer".
5. <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-britain-eu/eu-leaders-urge-britons-to-back-mays-brexit-deal-idUKKCNINS2DY>.
6. 'European court to rule on whether article 50 can be reversed' *The Guardian* November 27; 'Brexit reversal bombshell: EU warns plot to stop article 50 could plunge bloc into chaos' *Daily Express* November 27.
7. According to the reports (see note 5), the lawyers for the UK government, opposing the claim that article 50 can be reversed, have avoided taking a clear position by arguing that the legal issue cannot arise until the UK parliament votes to reverse it. Neither this nor the UK government's legal arguments in the Millar case and other Brexit litigation hitherto gives me a strong impression of the ability of the government's lawyers, but it is probably just that their brief asks them to defend the untenable in order to keep the hands of the prime minister and cabinet as free as possible.
8. Polls published on November 18 show Labour in the lead, albeit within the margin of error: <http://ukpollingreport.co.uk>.
9. Eg, 'Final say: Tony Blair claims Labour moving towards backing new Brexit referendum' *The Independent* November 25.
10. 'Theresa May invites Labour MPs to special Brexit briefings in last-ditch bid to get her Brexit deal through the Commons' *Daily Mail* November 27.

# Motion

1. The CPGB from the outset characterised Cameron's Brexit referendum as a scam. The outcome, assuming the present proposals or something like them are adopted, will turn out to be most of the features of EU membership, but with reduced political democracy. Our view that this was a scam will be confirmed if this does turn out to be the result.

Equally, we argued that neither 'Lexit' (left Brexit) nor 'left remain' would allow the left to develop a political line which would promote working class political independence. This too has been confirmed. The *Morning Star's* 'Lexitism' has not promoted any concrete agenda beyond hostility to Labour Party 'remainers'. The Socialist Workers Party and Socialist Party in England and Wales have been quite quiet about their lines on the issue, as if ashamed of it. The Alliance for Workers' Liberty, which has most vigorously defended a 'left remain' perspective, has been led to prettify the EU's neoliberal aspects and airbrush the treatment of migrants by 'fortress Europe'; and has itself recently admitted that 'Another Europe is Possible' has turned into 'NGO politics' - in effect, astroturf for a neoliberal 'remain'.

2. It appeared at first sight that the 2016 referendum result was an accident, which could be relatively easily reversed. The election of Donald Trump as US president in November 2016 made it clear that it was, on the contrary, part of the general trend towards rightwing nationalist populism, directed against the neoliberal elites of 'financial globalisation', which had begun elsewhere well before these events. The UK and US merely came late to this party.

It is this background which has made both the Labour leadership and Tory remainers understandably cautious about being seen to be 'enemies of the people' (as Dacre tagged the senior judiciary in November 2016) by openly championing reversal of the decision.

In reality, forms of rightwing nationalist populism have been growing since the late 1990s, for two reasons:

The first is that the true character of neoliberalism has gradually become clear. That is, it creates radical insecurity, and *not* rising prosperity - except temporarily for places to which production is for a while moved in search of cheap labour and other forms of regulatory arbitrage.

The second is that the left has remained committed to forms of politics which self-identify the left with the dead end of Stalinism - bureaucratic centralism, nationalisation, downplaying constitutional issues, broad-frontism and people's frontism, desperation to get into government, and so on - and hence sterilise any leftward radicalisation. With the left crippling itself, what remains as a (so-called) radical opposition to neoliberal financial globalism is rightwing populism.

The result is the one seen in the political incapacity of both 'Lexit' and 'left remain'. A people's front with the liberals (left remainism) tags the left with responsibility for the policies which have called forth rightwing populism. Vote Clinton - get Trump. A people's front with the nationalists (Lexiteering) is merely to tail the rightwing populists. In fact, we know perfectly well that these latter do not deliver on the

'anti-capitalist' element of their promises. Vote Trump - get tax cuts for the rich.

3. The same issues explain the inability of the left on a European scale *actually* to campaign for the idea that 'another Europe is possible'. This European left is divided into two groups. On the one side are elements of surviving 'official' communism, which cling to 'socialism in one country' against the idea of European unity, seeking instead unity with local rightists, or merely providing astroturf for European support for the foreign policy of the Putin administration. On the other side are groups of Eurocommunist origin - or of far-left origin, but influenced by Eurocommunist ideas - which cling to alliance with the liberals and to the *constitutional orders* of the EU and the member-states, thus ending as apologists for the EU itself and its policy.

The political institutions of the EU - in particular the parliament and, all the more, the direct parliamentary elections which started in 1979 - created the *possibility* of common political action of the workers' movement on an EU-wide scale. It was this possibility which the workers' movement *could* have exploited to develop a political challenge to the rule of capital on a European scale. Any *real* 'left remain' policy would have depended on the European workers' movement having sufficiently pursued this agenda before 2016, for it to have appeared in 2016 as a real policy alternative to nationalist populism. As it is, it is in Europe as well as in Britain that the left ends up tailing either nationalism or liberalism.

4. Socialist construction in a single country, and even a left-nationalist or national-reformist break in a single country from the iron cage of the diktats of US imperialist capital and its international institutions (International Monetary Fund and so on), is illusory. The crisis in Venezuela and the liberalising turn in Cuba are examples of this. *Production* is now too much internationally integrated to be carried on at any level beyond the marginal without access to trade. Through the control of finance, and the elaboration of sanctions against the supply of 'strategic' capital goods, the US can effectively choke the economy of any single nation-state. *In Europe*, the Greek tragedy shows the ability of the EU and its controllers to do the same to any single country. The inability of the Tory Brexiters to offer a realistic alternative to May's agreement is yet another symptom of the same thing - eg, Dominic Raab's failure before he became Brexit minister to appreciate the dependence of UK production on the port of Dover.

It thus remains true that, whether the UK is in or out of the EU, we need working class political action on a continental scale - meaning, for this country, on a European scale - to pose the possibility of an alternative to the choice between neoliberalism and rightwing populism.

On a continental scale, it is possible to pose the possibility of an alternative - because Europe as a whole, unlike Venezuela, Greece, or even the UK, *could* face down the financial markets, the sanctions and the threats of US military action which would meet such an alternative. But the condition of doing so is to be *willing* to pose the alternative of radical democracy (and hence the overthrow of the

treaties) and socialist reconstruction (and hence extensive socialisation and planning *in natura* of production). It requires a break with the people's front policy and constitutional loyalism.

Being out of the EU will act as a disadvantage to pushing such a policy (shared with the Swiss and Norwegian movements) - but a rather marginal one, given the paralysis of the European left by its people's frontism. Given the condition of the European left, this real disadvantage is not worth the cost of lining up behind the liberals to attempt in the last ditch to reverse the referendum result. Rather, we need to promote the idea of workers' action on a European scale *both within and beyond* the EU institutions.

5. The Labour Party is *also* faced with this problem. As 'Labour remainers' have argued, Labour's 2017 manifesto did not involve any violation of European Union law. It did not do so because it was, in fact, extremely timid - at most slightly to the left of the 2015 manifesto. Labour's current expressed policy combines elements of nostalgia for a purely national economic solution, reflected in proposals to improve national 'competitiveness', with unwillingness to face up to the extent of neoliberal commitments in the current European (and British) legal regimes or to confront the constitutional issues. Labour thus stands Janus-faced in relation to liberalism and nationalism, unwilling to break with either. It does so because the Labour leadership hopes to win 'power' (meaning governmental office) without actually persuading a majority to change their minds. This position is reflected in its extreme difficulty in expressing any clear position in the face of the Tory attempts to manoeuvre Labour into a false position.

A Labour government led by Jeremy Corbyn is a relatively unlikely option unless the present parliament runs its full term until 2022 and in the interim a good deal more reselection takes place, without there being a large enough split to hand victory to the Tories. A snap election in the near future, which produced a Labour majority, would result in a *rightwing* parliamentary party, and would therefore be more likely to lead to a 'national unity' government of the labour right with some part of the Tories. An actual Corbyn government would, however, be a *worse* outcome for the workers' movement. Contrary to its claims to bring austerity to an end, its constitutional, national and economic commitments would mean that it would be as much imprisoned by the demands of the bankers as was the Syriza government in Greece. Britain is *larger* than Greece - but as much dependent on trade. The result would be nothing but demoralisation and a further boost for the nationalist right.

If, however, Labour were to break with its constitutionalism and nationalism, and its aspiration to hold office without winning the political support for real change, it *could* fight for a policy of common action on a European scale for socialism. To set out on the road of building a real and effective *opposition*, rather than aspiring to immediate governmental office, could be a road to building in the medium term a movement which could challenge for real power Europe-wide ●

**POLEMIC**

# Left tails of liberal bourgeoisie

He who pays the AEIP piper calls the AEIP tune, says Jack Conrad

**P**eople's Vote is less a campaign for a second referendum: more a campaign for a national government that will rescue Britain from the chaos of Brexit. Such a national government, with or without an early general election, could conceivably conduct a second - rigged - referendum and secure the required majority for some form of 'remain' deal.

Such an outcome is, at the moment, a mere outside possibility, but one earnestly desired by key sections of the capitalist class. However, a second referendum would surely deliver a wide body of the population straight into the hands of the far right. In the name of ending Britain's "vassalage", Boris Johnson, David Davis, Jacob Rees-Mogg, European Research Group Tories, Nigel Farage, Tommy Robinson, Ukip, Arron Banks and Britain First would rail against the political elite's "great betrayal". A category-five reactionary storm would be whipped up. Conceivably, therefore, Britain could join the growing list of countries run by democratically elected 'right populist' governments: US, Brazil, Philippines, India, Italy, Turkey, Austria, Poland, etc.

To praise, to cooperate with, to promote a People's Vote is to praise, to cooperate with, to promote the interests of big capital and bourgeois politicians, such as Chuka Umunna, Vince Cable and Anna Soubry. Organisations such as the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, Socialist Resistance, Left Unity, etc, do exactly that. To all intents and purposes they constitute themselves the extreme left of liberal opinion.

Despite Marxism's long-standing and well-founded principled opposition to referendums, they advocate a rerun of June 2016. They claim that the interests of the working class lie with continued UK membership of what is a capitalist bloc. Instead of recognising, both in theory and practice, the necessity of establishing working class independence from both wings of the bourgeoisie - Brexiteers and Remainers alike - they advocate what appears to them as the lesser evil. A hopeless and self-defeating form of politics.

The embodiment of such abject opportunism is Another Europe is Possible. Its perspectives are thoroughly reformist; its attitudes tailist and accommodating.

Formed in February 2016, the AEIP's stated aim is to "work across party lines" on the basis of campaigning for "democracy, human rights, and social justice". "Brexit," says AEIP, "is a national disaster for Britain." In that bipartisan spirit, AEIP bemoans what it considers to be a loss of "faith" across Europe for the "project of unity" and the ability of "European democracies to deliver social justice by working together for the common good". AEIP wants to "rebuild this hope".

Reviving illusions in the capitalist states of Europe combines with a strikingly naive endorsement of the EU's supposed "core values" of "peace, democracy and ever closer union". Konrad Adenauer, Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman would have approved.

Communists, by contrast, strive might and main to expose the class reality of the capitalist states of Europe. How what passes for democracy serves as a means of mass deception. How democracy is limited, hollowed out and always countered

by all manner of checks and balances. How the EU capitalist states act to uphold wage-slavery and the global system of exploitation.

Naturally, communists advocate reforms. Struggles to win them organise and train the working class. But the objective is to overthrow each and every capitalist state through closely coordinated revolutionary action. Suffice to say, that means defying, violating and junking - certainly not perfecting - the European constitution. Only working class rule can unite Europe and begin the global transition to communism.

AEIP promotes a range of anaemic establishment politicians, charity-mongers, liberal journalists, Keynesian economists and trade union functionaries. Recent examples include Greek finance minister Euclid Tsakalotos, António Costa, Portugal's prime minister, *The Guardian's* Zoe Williams, Green Party MP Caroline Lucas and Asad Reham, executive director of War on Want.

Interestingly, there are bitter opponents of the CPGB who share some of our assessments. The AWL's Martin Thomas describes AEIP as an "NGO operation" and dismisses the "mostly rubbish speakers they choose". Then there is the "head honcho", Luke Cooper, "who is only very soft left, if left at all" (AWL-external list [Amongourselves]), "What we do with Left Against Brexit".

AEIP provides a "progressive left" flank for People's Vote and the interests of anti-Brexit big capital. Unsurprisingly, given the invaluable nature of such a service, AEIP has received some substantial financial grants and donations.

Figures for February 2016 to May 2017 reveal £45,000 from the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust, £2,000 from a certain C Lucas, £4,000 from LUSH Ltd, £5,000 from N Marks, £5,000 from Open Democracy and £2,000 from Unison.

Note, the "values" of the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust "are rooted in liberalism and Quakerism". Its board of directors is stuffed full of Liberal Democrats. LUSH Ltd is a privately owned cosmetics company committed to 'ethical' capitalism. Open Democracy is a political website funded by a number of "philanthropic" organisations, including George Soros' Open Society Initiative for Europe, the Mott Foundation, Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, Ford Foundation, David and Elaine Potter Foundation, LUSH, Andrew Wainwright Trust and the Network for Social Change.

From June 2017 to May 2018 the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust topped its AEIP contribution to £75,000 ... and more recently still George Soros chipped in with £70,000.

## Guilty dupes

The more stupid amongst AEIP's paid employees, partisans, allies and dupes claim that taking such money is essentially no different from the Bolshevik leaders, Lenin and Zinoviev - along with a range of other leftwing Russian émigrés - negotiating with the German authorities to travel from their Swiss exile back to revolutionary Russia in 1917.

There is, in fact, no such parallel. The Bolshevik leaders did not agree to opt for Germany over Russia in the inter-imperialist war. Getting Lenin and Zinoviev back to Russia suited the German high command - that much is true. But the only condition the Russian revolutionaries agreed to was trying to secure the release of a corresponding number of captured



**Paid for services rendered**

Germans (a common practice between the belligerent powers).

And, needless to say, Lenin and Zinoviev in no way compromised their commitment either to a democratic peace or the overthrow of Europe's crowned heads. No German gold was accepted - that despite the numerous offers made by Alexander Parvus (a leading figure on the German far left, who became a key conduit for regime-change funds provided by the kaiser government).

Accepting money from individual capitalists is not automatically wrong, corrupting or treacherous. The cause of working class self-liberation wins all manner of fine people to its ranks. Eg, the reluctant capitalist, Frederick Engels. The Bolsheviks too had their rich donors. What counts, what decides the matter is whether or not there is an unbending commitment to uphold the Marxist programme. True for the Bolsheviks, but hardly the case with AEIP.

AWL leader Martin Thomas concludes that "the [AEIP] operation is run so as to get money from Soros". In other words, AEIP exists for the sake of AEIP. In receipt of a "lavish supply of money", AEIP boasts a "relatively large paid staff". Amongst those on a "lot of money for short hours" are, though, he admits, AWL chums such as Michael Chessum and Ed Maltby.

The *Weekly Worker* has rightly rounded on the acceptance of Soros money. It shows that AEIP is more than acceptable to bourgeois liberal opinion. Yet, revoltingly, descending to the level of the gutter press, defensively, wracked by guilt, AEIP paid employees, volunteers, allies and dupes have responded with utterly baseless accusations of conspiracy-mongering and anti-Semitism. Just like Viktor Orbán, Breitbart News and Glenn Beck, AEIP paid employees, volunteers, allies and dupes highlight Soros's Jewish background (he was born in 1930 in Hungary to well-off anti-Semitic Jewish parents).

In the context of Brexit, Soros's Jewish heritage is totally irrelevant, except in so far as his horrendous experiences of the 1940s informs his liberal world outlook and heartfelt

detestation of blood-and-soil nationalism and Stalinite 'official communism'. In London he was famously a devoted pupil of the anti-Marxist philosopher, Karl Popper. What matters to us, though, is that Soros is one of the world's richest men: he is a capitalist magnate and currency speculator with a personal fortune estimated at some \$8 billion (his foundation at some \$18 billion).

Since the 1970s Soros has been channelling huge sums of money to chosen political causes: eg, Solidarność in Poland, Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia and Andrei Sakharov in the Soviet Union. In 1984, Soros founded his Open Society Institute in Hungary, providing an annual budget of \$3 million. Similar sums have gone to an ever-widening range of NGOs.

Needless to say, as anyone who cares to read our press will find, we consider anti-Semitism vile, diversionary and stupid. Whenever necessary, we have ensured the political exclusion of those peddling modern-day versions of the socialism of fools. Accusations of conspiracy-mongering and anti-Semitism are therefore clearly unfounded - a desperate attempt to prevent, to close down, to head off critical discussion of the AEIP's politics and finances.

## Witch-hunt

This is particularly unsavoury, particularly unforgivable, because today there is not only the question of Brexit and so-called socialists promoting politics approved of and financed by liberal capitalist individuals and institutions. Over the last two or three years there has been a huge, unprecedented campaign to equate anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism. A campaign carefully crafted, hatched and skilfully promoted by the US right, the Israeli government and the British establishment. The AWL and its *Clarion* outriders provide a useful 'left' cover.

To state the obvious, the Labour Party is not riddled with anti-Semitism. Inevitably there are examples of real anti-Semitism - after all, there are 570,000 individual Labour Party members. But such examples are

isolated and extraordinarily rare. However, much to the fury of the Israeli government and political establishment, the Labour Party's rank-and-file activists, as wonderfully demonstrated by the 2018 Liverpool conference, are overwhelmingly, militantly, anti-Zionist and pro-Palestine.

Because of his historic championing of the Palestinian cause Jeremy Corbyn has been a particular target. But there have been many victims of what is a skilfully executed, immensely well resourced and relentless witch-hunt, designed to delegitimise criticism of Israel as a state - and, along with that, the whole Zionist settler-colonial project. Good comrades have been expelled, suspended and even sacked from their jobs. Not insignificantly, many victims are anti-Zionist Jews.

The witch-hunt is not only aimed at ousting, taming or turning Corbyn and defeating the Labour left. The witch-hunt is a blatant attempt to rewin public opinion for another war in the Middle East. Israel is the number-one US ally in the Middle East and the UK state core desperately wants Britain to remain the number-one US global ally. The Iraq war was a public relations disaster. In that sense, the 'Anti-Zionism equals anti-Semitism' witch-hunt is a continuation of the Bush-Blair war on terror ... only by other means.

The witch-hunt scored a huge victory in getting the Labour Party's NEC to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's so-called definition of anti-Semitism - along, of course, with all its 11 attached examples. Geoffrey Bindman QC describes the IHRA's so-called definition as "badly drafted" and leading to the "suppression of legitimate debate".

Ironically, it is quite conceivable that Soros would himself be found guilty of anti-Semitism under the IHRA's so-called definition and its 11 examples. When asked what he thought about Israel, Soros said this: "I don't deny the Jews a right to a national existence - but I don't want anything to do with it." And, according to hacked emails, Soros's Open Society Foundation has a self-described objective of "challenging Israel's racist and anti-democratic policies" in international forums. Israel's much vaunted claim to be a democracy is questioned too. Soros has also funded NGOs which campaign for boycott, disinvestment and sanctions.

There are, inevitably, those in the workers' movement with all manner of sectionalist, nationalistic and xenophobic ideas, including anti-Semitic ideas. Unless this takes organisational form the best policy is patient education, inculcating elementary class-consciousness and encouraging participation in joint struggles. The slogan, 'zero tolerance', is politically misconceived.

Note, some deluded individuals believe they have an anti-racist duty to search out every victim of fake news, every ill-considered blogger, every sadly confused muddlehead and shop them to Labour's thoroughly discredited compliance unit. The practitioners of such heroic methods kill themselves as socialists. They count amongst the living dead.

Clearly, to concede ground to the witch-hunt, to call for opposition to the witch-hunt to be toned down, to surrender before the witch-hunt is political suicide for socialists, leftwingers and communists.

The witch-hunt must be fought with all the strength at our command ●

# CHESS

# Sport and common endeavour

Is there something more to chess than the desire to win? Peter Manson thinks there is



**Y**ou may not have noticed, in view of the rather meagre media coverage, but the world chess championship final - played in London between Magnus Carlsen from Norway and Fabiano Caruana from the USA - finally ended on November 28 with a victory for the Norwegian. Carlsen, the champion since 2013 and current world number one, defeated Caruana, the world's second-ranked player, who qualified as the world's youngest ever grandmaster just a few days before his 15th birthday.

The only time I know of when a chess event made consistent headline news was way back in 1972, when another US player - a certain Bobby Fischer - won the world championship by seeing off Boris Spassky from the Soviet Union. The reason for that, of course, was that it took place at the height of the cold war and - what is more - the USSR had provided all the previous world champions since 1948. In fact Fischer's three-year reign was followed by another unbroken run of Soviet victors, which only ended with the collapse of the USSR in 1991.

This time around, however, most of the media scarcely covered the event - the main exception being *The Guardian* - with just an occasional feature in other papers and the likes of Radio 4. That despite the fact that the establishment claims to admire the skill, imaginative thinking and intellectual insight of top chess players. For example, Theresa May's proposed deal with the European Union elicited the following comment from hard Brexiteer Allison Pearson in *The Daily Telegraph*: "We need a new leader - a chess grandmaster to wrangle with Brussels, not the runner-up in the 1973 Towcester tiddlywinks competition" (November 16).

Speaking as a keen player myself (one whose chess ventures are now, unfortunately, limited to friendly online matches), I gained huge satisfaction from the game during my years as a serious competitor. The reason for that derived, in particular, from having taken part in some outstanding games against strong opponents, where it sometimes seemed to both players that we were jointly engaged in the creation of something approaching a work of art.

That may seem surprising, because, after all, the idea is to outplay and defeat your opponent, isn't it, not collaborate with them in some combined, constructive enterprise? Well, things are not quite so simple. Yes, you adopt all sorts of long-term strategies and tactics that will hopefully deliver eventual victory, but what frequently happens between two evenly matched players is that your opponent cottons on to what you are up to. Both may resort to attempts

to disguise and obfuscate, but what results is a kind of coded endeavour, shared between these two alone, where both are largely aware of all the possible outcome of every manoeuvre. At the end of such a game - whether it results in a win, loss or draw - both know that it has not just been a question of competition: they have also been engaged in a joint enterprise, of a kind that may deliver something of outstanding beauty.

Of course, it is only when such games are played at the highest level that they are shared by many others - keen chess players will follow online or in specialist publications all the ins and outs of top games played between grandmasters. They will often gain from the insight of expert commentators, who explain exactly what has been transpiring beneath the surface - in the shape of possible moves that were not actually played, for example.

This duality between competition and cooperation also exists in other games of skill, including sport (although in my opinion in chess it reaches its zenith). Have you ever watched a tennis match between top players, involving a high degree of tactical finesse on both sides of the net, where there is a large element of foresight and pre-emption? Perhaps it involves attempts to wrong-foot the opponent by switching between forcefully struck passing shots and delicate lobs - and that opponent will equally try to mislead. Once again, what results is a thing of beauty - jointly produced by two individuals, who, on the face of it, are striving only to do down the other.

This contradiction totally exposes the folly of those on the left who write off sport as merely an example of capitalist competition. As Chris Bambery, formerly of the Socialist

**Magnus Carlsen and Fabiano Caruana fought 12 games and each ended in a draw. A tie-breaker eventually decided that victory would go to the favourite**

Workers Party, once put it, "under socialism there will be physical recreation, but not sport" ('Marxism and sport' *Socialist Review* December 1996). Yes, goes the argument of such comrades, we will still attempt to develop and extend all kinds of human achievements, physical as well as mental. The ability to run faster than before, for instance, will be a cause for celebration, yet the element of competition in achieving this will be removed. However, once again, when top sprinters attempt to break the world 100-metre record, they usually do so in circumstances where competition is actually combined with a form of cooperation - that very competition serves to achieve what could probably never be accomplished by an individual acting alone.

## Computers

Returning to chess itself, how is all this affected by the advent of computer technology? I remember reading an interview conducted by *Chess* magazine back in the early 1960s with then world champion Mikhail Botvinnik. Having pointed out to the interviewer that it was not correct to refer to the Soviet Union as a "communist country" ("We call the USSR a socialist state"), he went on to explain why a computer programme could never reach the standard achieved by top grandmasters.

While it could easily be programmed to counter a threat to capture your queen or prevent checkmate, he argued, how could it come up with a move aimed at "consolidating your position", for instance? Such a concept is so abstract that it cannot be expressed mathematically, claimed Botvinnik, and only the human mind could translate it into reality. How wrong can you be?! Today the best

chess programmes are more than a match for everyone but a handful of the very top grandmasters.

What was overlooked by 'comrade Botvinnik' - who had three spells as world champion from 1948 to 1963 - was that, if humans are capable of envisaging a means of 'consolidation', eventually they will be able to devise a programme capable of carrying it through. It is not just a question of making a move aimed at countering a threat - either immediate or long-term - or posing you own. For example, if you begin the game by advancing a central pawn two squares, there is no threat of any kind involved in that. It is merely a question of creating space for the placement of other, more powerful pieces later on. Yet such moves have been programmed in from the very start of chess computing. In reality, computers can be an aid to the advancement of chess artistry, which, of course, always emanates from humans in its original form.

The fact that chess has now been played for more than 1,300 years (the game originated in India in the 7th century and came to Europe a couple of centuries later) says a lot about its enduring attraction. It was, of course, coloured by the various forms of class society in which it was played - which is why we ended up with pieces named kings, queens, bishops, knights and castles (rooks). There are also those pathetic pawns - infantrymen who can only advance one or two squares at a time and by the rules of the game may never retreat under any circumstances! It is, however, interesting that the queen is by far the most powerful piece on the board, while the king is by contrast a virtual cripple - the entire game is based on capturing the opponent's king, while prioritising the protection of your own.

Nevertheless, as I have already implied, it was officially and extensively promoted in the Soviet Union and other 'official communist'-controlled states. In the summer of 1970 I was in Sochi on the Black Sea, where a row of around a dozen chess tables were laid out in a park. I was able to play a couple of games against a local man, but, as the sun began to go down, the park attendant called a halt: "It's a draw, comrades!" he said, as he went round taking away the pieces from unfinished games.

It was notable that all the tables had been occupied - in the USSR, as just about everywhere in the world, chess was hugely popular. And, despite what the likes of comrade Bambery say about competitive pastimes, it will flourish and continue to develop in the socialist future too ●



**IRAN**

# Resistance grows

Both Trump's threats and the regime's neoliberal policies are being forcefully opposed by the working class, reports **Yassamine Mather**



**P**redictions made by more hard-line members of the Trump administration, including John Bolton and Rudy Giuliani, that Iran's Islamic republic would collapse days after the imposition on November 5 of the latest wave of sanctions have failed to materialise.

Partly that is because some state department officials campaigned for and won exemption from the ending of the sale of Iranian oil to eight of its most important customers. As a result, Iran's income from oil exports has been reduced only because of the current fall in oil price - a consequence of the glut created by the stepping up of Saudi production, at a time of reduced demand. But Iran's economy is facing major difficulties, because international firms, including European companies fearful of US sanctions, have withdrawn from the country.

Yet government officials are upbeat. Foreign minister Mohammed Javad Zarif has dismissed the threat of secretary of state Mike Pompeo to

"starve" Iranians by insisting that the Islamic Republic would survive and even advance despite US sanctions.<sup>1</sup>

On November 20, in response to Trump's bizarre tweet on the execution of Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, which started by condemning Iran, Zarif stated:

Mr Trump bizarrely devotes the *first* paragraph of his shameful statement on Saudi atrocities to accuse *Iran* of every sort of malfeasance he can think of. Perhaps we're also responsible for the California fires, because we didn't help rake the forests ...<sup>2</sup>

In the same statement Trump refers to the Iran as terrorist - a bit rich, given the Saudis' historic connections to jihadi terrorists. But this was not mentioned, even though it might be considered pertinent in the light of the current accusations about Saudi crown prince Mohamed Bin Salman's involvement in the Khashoggi affair.

**Miserable though it is, the US remains hegemonic when it comes to culture. And militarily the US is unequalled ...**

All this made for good publicity for Iran, whose leaders claim that the economy has now stabilised. They say the Islamic republic has survived the Iran-Iraq war, two Gulf wars, the war in neighbouring Afghanistan and decades of economic sanctions and so will also survive the next "two years". Presumably they are assuming - wrongly, in my opinion - that Trump will not be re-elected in 2020. While their triumphalism is understandable, they fail to mention, of course, the growing poverty in Iran, or the increased strikes and protests. I will say more about such manifestations of workers' resistance later.

## Decline

In the second part of his statement, Zarif added: "There's a key fact here: in this 40-year challenge, the defeated is the US and the victorious is the Islamic Republic." This echoes what was said by supreme leader Ali Khamenei a few weeks ago:

This new US president ...

has disgraced the remnant of America's prestige and that of liberal democracy. America's hard power - that is to say, their economic and military power - is declining, too. The challenge between the US and Iran has lasted for 40 years so far and the US has made various efforts against us - military, economic and media warfare.<sup>3</sup>

The comments relating to the decline of the United States have now been picked up by president Hassan Rouhani and his ministers. When Khamenei first made the comments, some of us joked that he must have been reading the Marxist journal, *Critique*, and its comments on the decline of the hegemon (unlike Trump, Khamenei is known to be an avid reader of scholarly books and journals).

However, if he had studied decline more thoroughly, he would have known that in the case of hegemonic powers and empires, it can take

# What we fight for

decades to fully take effect. And, just like during their ascendancy, such powers can and do inflict disastrous damage on states which challenge or resist their rule.



At sea

Of course, the Marxist left is not alone in talking of the decline of the US empire - many bourgeois commentators have made similar comments. For example, Jeet Heer, writing in *The New Republic*, analyses some of these comments:

As a porn star sues president Donald Trump over a deal to keep her quiet about an alleged affair, and his White House is drained of everyone but his family, it's hard not to think that America is entering into a period of decadence that rivals imperial Rome in luridness. Even before the Daniels news, some historians and journalists compared Trump to famously degenerate Roman emperors.<sup>4</sup>

And in *The New Yorker*, David Remnick tells us:

Future scholars will sift through Trump's digital proclamations the way we now read the chroniclers of Nero's Rome - to understand how an unhinged emperor can make a mockery of republican institutions, undo the collective nervous system of a country, and degrade the whole of public life.<sup>5</sup>

However, all this fails to take into account the important fact that the US remains the world's number one economy - China is still a long way behind and both its dependence on US trade and increasing protectionism will hinder its progress. In addition, the US's military strength - in particular its air power - is by far the most dominant and, despite Trump, the power of its cultural hegemony has not been hindered dramatically either. In fact, faced with the economic advance of China, the US government is planning to increase spending on the military, as well as on protectionism and surveillance.

In the long term - I am talking about decades or even a century - these policies might aggravate the situation and precipitate US decline. However, in the short term it will be countries such as Iran, which have dissed the US, and impoverished migrants - victims of the economic policies of US-led capital in the third world, as well as refugees from wars started by the hegemon power - who will suffer most. In some ways the return of rightwing political forces in the US and the acceptance of Trump's presidency are signs that sections of the US population are nervous about the future of their country as the world hegemon. The slogan, 'America first', is actually about US *dominance* and it will take a lot more than an end to Trump's presidency before we see a change in this trend both inside and beyond the United States.

In summary, US pressure will not be reduced in the foreseeable

future - not after the new Congress is in place in January 2019, or even if a Democrat or a more moderate Republican wins the US presidency in 2020.

## Death to America

It is understandable that Iranian leaders are frustrated by continued US hostility. After all, since 1988 and the end of the Iran-Iraq war, they have embarked on a major reconstruction of the economy along neoliberal lines. As the International Monetary Fund keeps telling us, when it comes to privatisation, restructuring the economy and abolishing subsidies year after year, Iran wins first prize amongst all the 'third world' countries.

However, when it comes to the slogan, 'Death to America', first of all let me stress this is meaningless. Of course, Iran's clerics do not want to see the death of all Americans, but the slogan sounds aggressive and cruel. Furthermore, after Irangate, after Iran's secret negotiation with



On land

the US prior to the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, after the Iran nuclear deal, it is hard to believe that, even in the most hard-line of religious circles close to the regime, anyone really agrees with this stupid slogan.

It has become an empty gesture, aimed at providing a good story for the foreign press, but is a source of ridicule inside and outside the country. Iranians know the history of this slogan: the clergy which had manoeuvred itself into a position of leadership of the anti-shah protests of 1978-79 knew how much ordinary people were opposed to both the shah and his US backers. They knew that Iranians rightly blamed the US for the 1953 coup that brought the shah back to power. However, the last thing the clergy wanted to do was to mimic the anti-imperialist slogans of the left: they did not want to be 'tainted' by leftist terminology, which was associated with an anti-capitalism that would have alienated the bazaar allies of the clergy. That is why they adopted 'Death to America' - late in the day and in direct competition with the left.

A government whose economy is totally dependent on western imports, investments and trade cannot seriously be against the United States in any meaningful sense. Forty years after coming to power, the regime has failed to present a model capable of replacing the trashiest forms of US cultural dominance.

In the height of the cold war it was extremely difficult to survive as a politically independent country - non-aligned states managed to distance themselves from the USA by buying arms from and negotiating major economic deals with both east and west, while avoiding anything deemed to be insulting to either. Their aim, although doomed to fail, was to balance their economic dependence between east and west and today it is Iran's economic dependence on the US and the west that has enhanced the dramatic effects of the current

sanctions, paralysing sections of the economy.

Occasionally Khamenei tells the Iranian people that they will survive punitive sanctions if they adopt the principles of the "resistance economy". What is proposed is the reliance on locally produced goods instead of imports, a reduction in the dependence on oil exports, attempts to safeguard domestic industries from foreign competition and an increase in barter trade.

Again, these are impossible goals, as those who know the role of various sections of the Islamic state in creating an economy dependent on foreign imports will be aware. Even as far as basic food items such as tea, sugar or rice are concerned, at least for the last two decades privatised companies (often with connections to the ruling clergy) have been allowed to import goods and sell them at a much lower price than the locally produced produce - to such an extent that local concerns have often been made bankrupt. The import of 'western' electronic or luxury goods is largely controlled by religious financial conglomerates: for example, the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee imports luxury cars! Added to which, embezzlement and corruption are so widespread that no-one can take claims of building a "resistance economy" seriously.

## Our resistance

If a country wants to stand up to a global superpower, lesson number one is to be able to rely on its own people. It should do its best not to alienate its own working class. Yet the Islamic republic's wholehearted adoption of a neoliberal economic doctrine means that inside the country it faces a challenge far more serious than the one posed by Trump: that of the Iranian proletariat. Never more so than now, when, in the face of foreign threats and sanctions, the working class remains vigilant and combative.



In the air

Take the example of the Haft Tapeh sugar mill in Khuzestan province, where workers have been on strike and waging protests for almost a year. In the last few weeks many of the workers, accompanied by their families, have staged marches in the city of Shush and regularly gathered near the governor's office to highlight their demands. Their protest is against privatisation, which has resulted in delays or even the failure to pay salaries.

The sugar plant was once a profitable state-owned company and it was privatised under suspicious circumstances. The company, set up in 1962, employs about 4,000 workers and the city of Shush depends on the continued functioning of the plant. The current owner owes a large amount of money to the government for the substantial loans it has made.

As for the workers, in March they were demanding the payment of salaries for the months of January and February, together with better conditions for contract workers and the payment of pensions on retirement. Since then their salaries have never been paid on time and

today workers and their families have been carrying banners saying they are hungry. Their representatives have proposed either a takeover of the company by the workers or joint ownership with the state, where they would have a voice in the day-to-day running of the business.

A number of labour activists from Haft Tapeh have been arrested during recent protests and five of the imprisoned workers are under investigation for alleged "national security offences". So far the authority's response has been to send units of riot police to all the company's entrance and exit gates. Last week the Workers Syndicate at the sugar mill reported that two of its representatives - Esmail Bakhshi and Mosslim Armand - had been arrested.

But Haft Tapeh is only the most prominent of current disputes. In October Iranian teachers went on a nationwide two-day strike demanding better working conditions, and more spending on education. The protest was repeated in November, as teachers demanded educational reforms and an end to mismanagement.

Faced with continuing workers' protests, the government is also trying to strengthen its own so-called workers' organisations as part of a long-term policy of divide and rule. The syndicate of Tehran bus workers recently issued a statement condemning a "government security-inspired project" to create yellow syndicates. Activists associated with these projects claimed on social media that I was one of the leading figures (amongst others on the left) behind such 'unpatriotic' attitudes at a time of national crisis. For the record, neither I nor, as far as I know, any of the left activists outside Iran named have had any role in the wave of current workers' protests engulfing the country. Rather than looking for the enemy abroad, security forces trying to divert workers' struggles should look to their real cause: the neoliberal economic policies that have led to the current levels of dissatisfaction.

The regime should be made aware that these strikes will not go away. They demonstrate the determination of a working class which remembers how it played a crucial role in the overthrow of the shah's dictatorship. A class that remains independent of capitalist and imperialist funding - funds that have corrupted, indeed destroyed, so many political, human rights and women's organisations, as well as those associated with national minorities. This is a class that understands politics, knows the importance of organisation and programme and, even when it is weak and deprived of basic rights, emerges as a force challenging both the Islamic state and its neoliberal economic policies, as well as being determined to resist Donald Trump and any imperialist aggression. However, for these workers imperialism cannot be resisted by shouting empty slogans about the United States.

We must show solidarity with this class, which alone has the potential to stand up to both their own regime and the threats posed by the US president ●

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## Notes

1. www.presstv.com/Detail/2018/11/10/579645/Zarif-Pompeo-Twitter-starvation-sanctions.
2. https://af.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idAFKCN1P2BO?feedType=RSS&feed-Name=worldNews&utm\_source=feed-burner&utm\_medium=feed&utm\_campaign=Feed%3A+reuters%2FAFRICAWorldNews+%28News+%2F+AF-RICA+%2F+World+News%29.
3. https://thehill.com/policy/finance/414686-khamenei-trump-has-disgraced-us-prestige.
4. https://newrepublic.com/article/147319/witnessing-fall-american-empire.
5. https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/01/15/the-increasing-unfitness-of-donald-trump.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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# weekly Worker

**Second referendum could well have same result as first one**

## No cross-class coalition

The move for a special Labour conference on a 'People's Vote' is designed to smooth the path to a national government, warns **Carla Roberts** of Labour Party Marxists

According to *The Observer*, a motion is starting to do the rounds in "Constituency Labour Parties and affiliated organisations" that seeks to force the Labour Party to hold a "special conference" that would adopt a clear position in favour of a second Brexit referendum.<sup>1</sup> We have not seen the full motion yet and have to trust *The Observer* when it specifies that there would be only one item on the agenda of this conference - namely the following statement:

This conference believes that the citizens of the UK must have the final say through a people's vote on the deal proposed by the government for leaving the European Union, with an option to remain in the EU on the ballot paper. This conference calls on all members and our elected representatives to campaign for a people's vote with urgency and vigour.

This campaign, which we presume is the latest in the armour of the pro-establishment People's Vote, will have some traction in the Labour Party and we would not be surprised if a fair number of CLPs voted for it. There will be increasing pressure to adopt a position for a second referendum, as the government - mired in civil war and behind in the polls - is unlikely to call an election that it is unlikely to win. The call for a general election was, of course, the main demand of the Brexit 'supermotion', cobbled together between remainers and leavers at Labour's conference in September.

But this was only ever a poor compromise. After all, an election cannot actually solve anything when it comes to Brexit. Neither can a second referendum, for that matter. Despite the almost universally shared perception that Theresa's May's Brexit deal is a failure and will in all likelihood be voted down by a majority of MPs from all parties on December 11 (at least she is 'uniting the country' there!), the public's opinion on Brexit has hardly changed: it is still split almost exactly down the middle.

Even according to a new YouGov poll commissioned by People's Vote, just 53% of people "think there should be another nationwide vote if the Commons rejects Theresa May's Brexit deal in a crunch vote due next month" - which is at least how *The Times* reports the result.<sup>2</sup> The presumption, of course, is that those 53% would then proceed to vote 'yes' to the UK remaining in the EU after all. Crucially, among Labour Party voters, 60% would be "upset if the party enabled Brexit", writes Murdoch's rag. The rest would presumably be "upset" if he *does not* enable Brexit. If we bear in mind that results of such commissioned polls are always tilted towards the paymaster, the real division between remainers and leavers is likely to be even closer than this poll indicates.



Addressing the CBI ... and promising to protect big business

Should Corbyn come out strongly in favour of a second referendum, he will be punished badly in the ballot box. His position of 'studied ambiguity' frustrates those with strong views on either side of the Brexit debate, but it has allowed the Labour Party to take a lead in the polls.

It will be of no political advantage to the Labour Party to push for a second referendum, which could well have the same outcome to the first one. Would a Labour government get a better 'deal' than Theresa May if the majority again votes to leave the EU? Maybe, it would have different red lines. A Norway plus deal would also suit big business. But that would amount to Brino. Even if Brexit was reversed this time, with a small majority voting in favour of remaining, that would not really solve the current political crisis and the huge political dissatisfaction with 'those above' (which includes the Labour Party) - especially as Corbyn and John McDonnell are insistent on staying wedded to the EU *as is* and

have not even begun to develop a programme for European unity from below.

Those financing and leading People's Vote - across the different parties - have one thing in common, of course: they (often viciously) oppose Jeremy Corbyn. They have no desire to serve under him as prime minister and are now toying more or less openly with the plan for a cross-party national government that can 'save' Britain from the chaos of a no-deal Brexit. Needless to say, there will be no room at the inn for the 'proven anti-Semite', Jeremy Corbyn. He therefore does well to stay clear from this outfit. From his point of view, getting behind the People's Vote would be political suicide, at least in the short term - unless there is massive change in society in favour of staying inside the EU.

### Pressure

It therefore seems *unlikely* (though not impossible) that the motion for a special Labour conference will gather enough support to force the

leadership's hand. According to the party rules, only Labour's national executive committee can "convene special sessions of party conference when it deems necessary".<sup>3</sup> Clearly, the idea of the People's Vote is that so many CLPs and affiliated organisations will vote this motion through (and then leak this to the press) that the NEC will feel under pressure to act upon it. This seems, for the moment, not a very likely scenario. After all, it is not just Jeremy Corbyn - and pretty much the whole current Labour leadership - who are against a second referendum: Unite's general secretary, Len McCluskey, has also spoken out against it. That should secure enough votes on the NEC.

However, having said all of that, the political strategy of the Labour leadership remains focused on getting into government at all costs. We have only recently seen the political collapse over mandatory reselection at this year's annual conference and, of course, the NEC's adoption of the so-called 'Working definition on anti-Semitism' published

by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, including all of its 11 disputed examples, which labels entirely justifiable criticisms of Israel as "anti-Semitic".

And it looks as if the pressure is getting to John McDonnell at least. When confronted by the media, he had to admit to a "secret meeting" with Tom Baldwin and Alistair Campbell - the former spin doctors and enforcers of Ed Miliband and Tony Blair respectively, and now leading figures in People's Vote. According to *The Times*, he "simply" met them to "map out what options are available to us based upon conference policy, which includes the option of a public vote."<sup>4</sup> But at an event organised by *The Guardian* on November 28, he explained that representatives of the party had also met with the Scottish National Party, the Liberal Democrats and Caroline Lucas of the Greens: "If we can't get a general election, People's Vote is on the table and that might be an option we seize upon," he reportedly said. It remains to be seen if this is indeed a "shift" in his perspective or just another bit of wishful thinking concocted by *The Guardian*.<sup>5</sup>

We also understand that Momentum's second in command, Laura Parker, attended "a rally this month in support of a new referendum".<sup>6</sup> For the moment, Momentum owner Jon Lansman remains supportive of Corbyn's purposefully ambiguous position: the recent 'consultation' of Momentum's membership was designed to achieve exactly that outcome - ie, vote down Theresa May's deal, push for a general election and keep all other options open.<sup>7</sup> But it is not difficult to imagine Lansman - along with McDonnell and a few other opportunists in the leadership - collapsing into open support for Keir Starmer's clear preference for a second referendum. ●

### Notes

- The Observer* November 25.
- The Times on Sunday* November 25 - although the result does not seem to be fully available online.
- Rule III.1.A, page 15, Labour Party rule book 2018: <http://labourpartymarxists.org.uk/labour-party-rule-book-2018>.
- The Times on Sunday* November 25.
- [www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/nov/28/labour-seize-second-brexit-vote-option-john-mcdonnell](http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/nov/28/labour-seize-second-brexit-vote-option-john-mcdonnell).
- Ibid.*
- <https://peoplesmomentum.com/2018/11/06/brexit-consultation>.

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