

A paper of Marxist polemic and Marxist unity

# weekly worker



**ANC declines, but main beneficiary is Malema's black nationalist EFF**

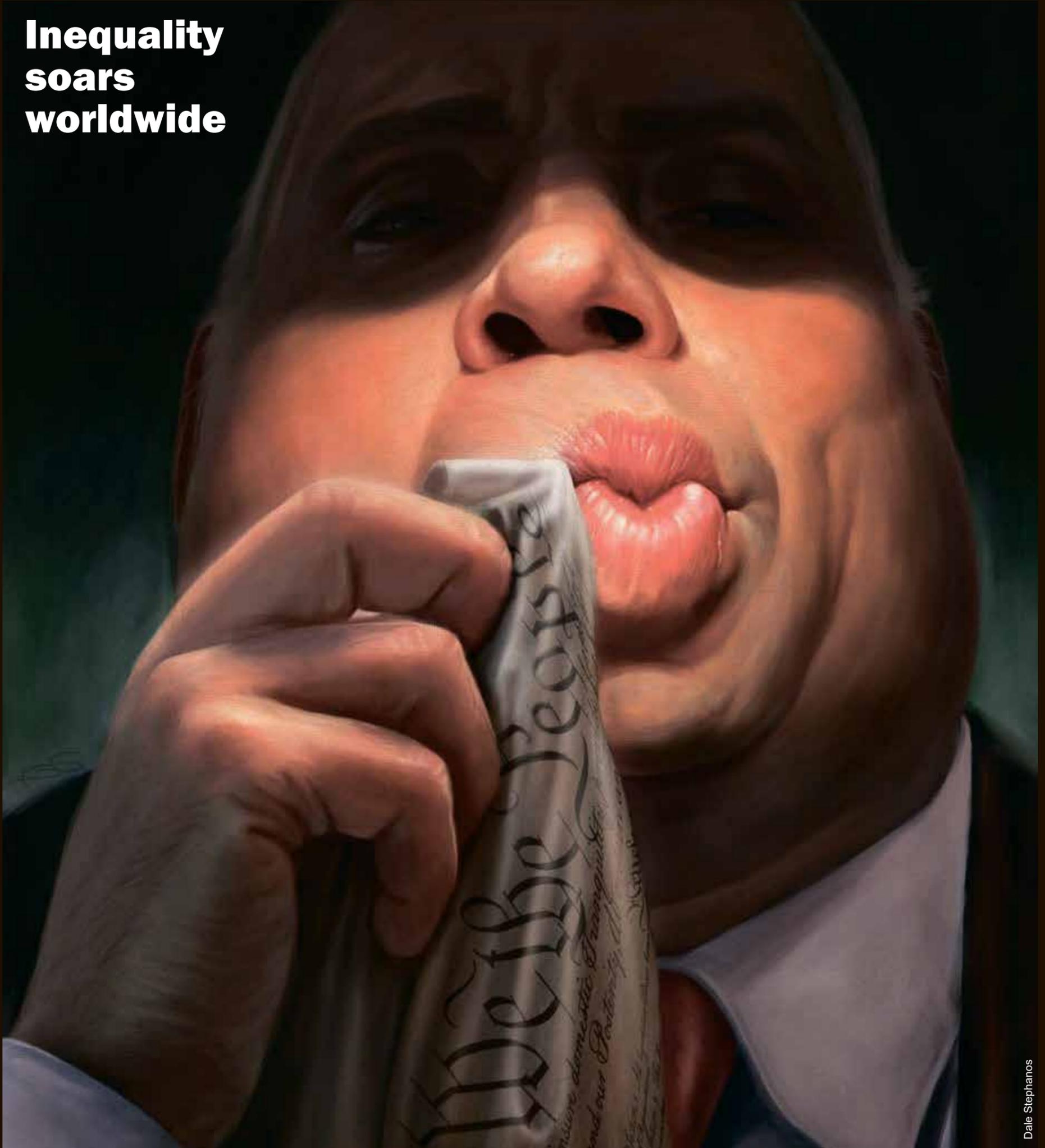
- Letters and debate
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- Cannabis and capital
- Holocaust misuse

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Towards a Communist Party of the European Union

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**Inequality  
soars  
worldwide**



# LETTERS



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

## Illusions

It is utterly pointless my trying to have a rational debate with Tony Greenstein on the nature of 'leave' voters - each response from him is more slanderous than the last (Letters, May 2). My political positions on almost everything can be found in this paper since its inception, together with many other papers and journals, and among hundreds of thousands of people I have worked and struggled alongside over the last 57 years.

What I have done and who I am speaks for itself, I would have thought. I have been an anti-racist and anti-fascist all of my life and confronted both racism and fascism in every aspect of my life. I have likewise been an Irish and Scottish republican socialist all my life, with no belief in the UK (or any other state, for that matter).

Tony has constructed a monolithic straw man of the Brexit voter. It confronts at every turn the bedrock of solidly socialist, labour and militant worker over generations in the Midlands, the north and the valleys, who also voted 'leave'. They do not and I do not fit his profile, yet he persists in trying to force us into that guise.

Tony refused to see the vote of the majority of the northern working class as an instinctive class response to the European Union and, perhaps more importantly, to the political class and social elite who are trying to ram it down our throats. You know, the five most deprived regions of the EU are all in the north of England, while the most wealthy and privileged is London. The north has been constantly shat on by the political system trying to sell us the EU, while the south-east and London benefited from it. The majority of members of the Labour Party and the big majority of new Corbynista young members of the LP are predominantly London and south-east-based. They support the EU, while traditional LP members and, more numerously, voters in the north, Midlands and Wales do not. The north sees itself as working class, still acts as a social class - albeit on this issue in a refracted way. Tony sees none of that.

I do not believe there is any such thing as 'independent British capitalism' - nor has there been since the days of empire and the industrial revolution. Capitalism is capitalism. If Britain leaves the EU, the capitalism we shall have and be living under will be the same capitalism as if we are forced to stay in today. This or that minor control or operation may alter, but it will still be the same social system, with the same players and the same overall perspectives.

The EU is not a liberating force. Tony's belief that it sets some base line protections really doesn't match its operation in Greece and Spain, to name but two. Without endlessly repeating the same thing, it's workers and workers' independent organisations that fight for rights, terms and conditions - no saviours from the commissioners' desk deliver, to coin a phrase from a little ditty I recall.

My point on Ireland once again: of course, Ulster workers voted to remain, for two reasons: the republican communities do not want to be geographically or politically further distanced from the rest of the island; and some workers in loyalist areas see the EU membership as personally favouring them and they enjoy the best of both worlds by this viewpoint. But I repeat: 'Brexit' is not the issue in

Ulster: it's not Britain's membership of the EU which is the central issue, but British domination and occupation of the Six Counties. Britain leaving the EU wouldn't make a bugger of difference to most Ulster folk if the UK would end its occupation, and that's the real point. Many of the sincere republican forces in Ireland do not favour membership of the EU either, but that's not the central issue.

I don't know why on earth Tony is shocked by my comments on the nature of organising migrant workers - a role I played for years after Hatfield Main coal mine closed (it opened again a year after I left) as an organiser in the northern region for the Transport and General Workers Union. Food processing was my chief target and this industry is heavily dominated by EU migrant labour. Now I don't know if Tony has ever been tasked with organising workers in today's climate. Let me briefly say, there are reasons why some workers may join a union and others are unlikely to.

One of these is they may see themselves as being in short-term employment - either enforced or by choice. Many young European migrant workers are not intending to lay down roots or stay in one particular place - some are short-term contracts, some are agency staff, some are casual workers by choice.

This doesn't apply to all migrant workers, or even all EU migrants: Polish long-distance lorry drivers are usually resident in Poland and are the most willing to join the union - sometimes before local workers. However, workers from non-EU countries, and the Indian sub-continent in particular, are likely to have made a long-term home here, identifying with an area for many generations, and have extended families both in the area and often in the plant or industry. Among such workers is often a tradition of union membership.

I'm not being derogatory or "chauvinist", for god's sake: I'm just telling you the impact of EU migration in many areas. It's had the effect of mitigating for a variety of reasons against union membership and in part that is what 'free movement' is intended to do. I rarely carried less than 40 different language membership forms with me on a daily basis, and bringing those workers into the union was my endeavour for years, but the role of 'free movement' (for EU workers only, of course) is to break local and regional union identities and cultures, particularly where the vast majority of workers in a plant are brought in for the job and locals need not apply.

Of course, we have to try and overcome this, and in many cases I successfully did so - after years of difficult organising campaigns. I wasn't talking about 'non-white' workers - where the hell did that come from? I'm talking about the EU, whose citizens tend to be white - it's got nothing whatever to do with skin colour. But this is becoming typical of the casual way Tony just flings accusations of crude racialism about.

It is also the reason why I am concluding my contribution to this debate such as it is. Tony believes the vast mass of previously internationalist, socialist and militant workers in the north and elsewhere have become racists, led by fascists; I can't dissuade him from that belief.

I don't know any workers with a nostalgia for the empire - how old does he think they are? If there is any nostalgia, it's for the days when Britain was a manufacturing-based economy and more than half the workforce was organised into powerful unions, who could halt government policy or bring it down. This has nothing whatever to do with 'Great Britain' in any

chauvinist sense.

Workers will *en masse* vote for the Brexit Party because there is no other way of registering a vote for 'leave'. It will be a one-off protest against the rest of the political establishment, and will have nothing to do with support for Farage or the Tory right. It has everything to do with Labour now being seen as a party of 'remain', and there being no left political alternative on offer. One would have thought that if Arthur Scargill's Socialist Labour Party had taken up the initiative it would have given Brexit a run for its money, but that's not on the cards, it seems. Brexit Labour MPs and party officials are not allowed to run as a faction in the forthcoming election and hence another alternative left Brexit door is closed off. Before Tony asks, I shall be putting a line through all candidates, with a suitable comment on the lot, as I did in the council elections - one of 40,000 such lines and comments, I am told.

Coming very briefly to Alan 'impatience' Johnstone (Letters, May 9), my letter on Easter commemorations and the republican movement had previously been written, which is why it contained no response to Alan. I missed the deadline for the April 25 edition, but, to be frank, I thought Alan's question on definitions of socialism was rhetorical.

Those of us who believe in a communist future for humanity - a stateless, propertyless, equalitarian, non-hierarchical commonwealth, based upon 'From each according to their ability, to each according to their needs' - know that this can only work realistically and for any length of time on a worldwide scale. But I am not a person who thinks that, unless and until the workers of the world synchronise their watches and launch a simultaneous, worldwide revolution, all efforts short of that are doomed. We have to respond to the challenges and opportunities that are dealt our way in whatever circumstances.

I was talking of the Provisionals in the mid-70s, whose anti-imperialist struggles were announced as in support of a 32-county socialist republic, based upon a federated, four-historic-provinces society, with the public ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange, with the separation of state and church, under the direction and control of the workers and small farmers, with full civil, social and religious rights for all (or words to the same effect).

I did then and still do consider those aims, in so far as they were totally embraced by the brave volunteers and especially the young members of Sinn Féin, to be sufficiently socialist to describe it as a republican socialist organisation fighting for socialism. That was then.

I consider the Irish Republican Socialist Party (who I do not speak for, by the way) to be likewise dedicated to the overthrow of Irish capitalism and British imperialism, and to the construction of a socialist republican Ireland to describe them as socialist too. I am aware and they are surely aware that such struggles and outcomes do not exist in a vacuum and are part of a world, revolutionary class struggle. And, yes, I do think anti-imperialist struggles led by the working class are part of the class war despite the immediate aim being fused with struggles for national liberation. I do not deem these to be simply 'nationalist', as opposed to internationalist, struggles.

**David John Douglass**  
South Shields

## Just as bad

I agree with Paul Demarty that the media want to use the local election results to bounce Corbyn into

supporting a second EU referendum ('Lying about the elections', May 9). As Paul outlines, the Tory-supporting media would then use Corbyn's Brexit 'betrayal' to crush Labour in a subsequent general election.

However, I disagree with his analysis that both the Tory and Labour local election results were *not* equally bad. In 1995, in my neck of the woods, Labour won 21 out of the then 40 seats on Fenland district council, with the other 19 seats going to the Tories. In 2019, out of the now 39 seats, the Tories have 26 (down from 37); independents 10 (up from 2); the Lib Dems 2; and the Greens one.

The change in Labour's fortunes from 21 seats in 1995 to none in 2019 shows how Brexit, together with the legacy of Blairism and Corbyn's appeasement, has poisoned all forms of political discourse in Fenland. This is also clearly shown in the neighbouring constituency of Peterborough, when last week the Brexit Party held a pre-parliamentary by-election rally with Nigel Farage, attended by 2,000 supporters.

Whilst Brexit has produced a crisis within the political class, it has led to the scandals of homelessness, food banks and universal credit being relegated to the backburner. In the 2016 EU referendum, 72% of Fenlanders voted 'leave'. Ironically, many of them in the local elections voted Lib Dem or Green - the latter defeating the only sitting Labour councillor in Fenland.

Interestingly, the new Tory-controlled Wisbech council has just chosen as the new deputy mayor a multi-lingual councillor, who arrived 15 years ago from Latvia.

**John Smithee**  
Cambridgeshire

## Only the SPGB

John Smithee wistfully talks of transforming the Labour Party into a "permanent united front of the working class" and equipping it with "solid Marxist principles and a tried and tested Marxist leadership" (Letters, May 9). Sorry, John, but there is not a snowball's chance of that happening.

I don't know what he means by "solid Marxist principles", but, the way I look at it, the essential point of Marxism is the need for the working class to consciously unite and overthrow capitalism from the bottom up (we don't need a "Marxist leadership"). By 'capitalism' Marx very clearly meant the system of wage labour - the mechanism and very signifier of working class exploitation. Hence his exhortation to trade unionists that - instead of the conservative motto, 'A fair day's wage for a fair day's work!' - they ought to inscribe on their banner the revolutionary watchword, 'Abolition of the wages system!' Genuine socialism - for Marx and modern-day 'Marxists' - has to be a wageless, classless, moneyless and stateless society, in which we produce wealth solely for need and not for market exchange.

Never has the Labour Party shown the slightest interest in pursuing this goal, nor will it ever. How difficult is it to understand that the Labour Party is, has always been and will always be a political organisation completely committed to the retention of the wages system - capitalism? A few supposed 'Marxists' in or around the Labour Party may pay lip service to the Marxian goal, but by perpetually putting it on the back boiler, consigning it to some distant, hazy future, where it can be effectively forgotten, they ensure the perpetual continuation of capitalism in the demonstrably false and naive belief that it can somehow be administered

"for the many, not the few" (to quote Labour's slogan).

But it can't. Capitalism is like a machine engineered to produce a particular outcome - namely, to advance the interests of capital against the interests of wage labour. It matters little how well intentioned you may be (and no-one is doubting Corbyn's good intentions) - as long as you strive to take over the administration of the wages system, you will inevitably find yourself having to promote the interests of the few against the interests of the many. Political disenchantment is built into the very nature of the reformist project; it is what underlies the constant merry-go-round of Labour governments, followed by Tory governments, and back again.

Some people here will not thank me for pointing this out, but there is only one political party that unequivocally stands for the abolition of the wages system and has done so ever since its formation in 1904 - the Socialist Party of Great Britain. It can be ignored as irrelevant because of its small size, but here we face a catch 22 situation - that, by continuing to ignore it, you continue to ensure that the Marxist goal of the abolition of the wages system is sidelined and forgotten about.

It is high time Marxists grasped the nettle and took their principles seriously by joining the only political party that is actually intent upon pursuing that goal.

**Robin Cox**  
SPGB

## Solidarity

Labour Against the Witchhunt was pleased to receive the following encouraging solidarity letter from down under, showing the worldwide reach of both the left breakthrough represented by the unprecedented election of a leftwing leader of the Labour Party, and the rightwing shenanigans attempting to put the socialist genie back in the bottle:

"I am an Australian supporter of Corbyn's transformative project, who has been appalled and angered by the smear campaign against him and his supporters in the UK Labour Party. I'm highly supportive of LAW's principled and courageous work.

"I recently lodged a complaint with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation over its radio coverage of 'Labour's anti-Semitism crisis'. ABC Radio broadcast four segments on this subject, in which the main speakers were, respectively, Margaret Hodge, Tony Blair, Blair's former principal private secretary, John McTernan, and a BBC "journalist", who asserted that Corbyn had made "decades of statements" (by implication, *anti-Semitic* statements). Vital and readily available information which contradicted the 'widespread anti-Semitism in Labour' narrative was omitted.

"The ABC's internal complaints unit dismissed my complaint, insisting that the corporation's coverage had been perfectly impartial! I suspect that the ABC sourced most of its coverage from the BBC."

Your solidarity is most welcome, comrade. Our struggle is your struggle.

**Stan Keable**  
LAW

## Unproductive

Jim Creegan's intervention in the 'Kautsky debate' would have been a lot more productive (and even perhaps persuasive) if he had engaged directly with the arguments on this issue made by Lars T Lih, by Ben Lewis, and by myself, which have previously been published in this paper (or, for that matter, my 2008 book *Revolutionary strategy* or my introduction to Ben and

Maciej Zurowski's 2013 translation, *Karl Kautsky on colonialism*).

Instead, he merely reproduces the orthodoxies he learned in his youth and supports them by a few references to Carl Schorske's 1955 cold war product, *German social democracy*. Schorske was chief of political intelligence for western Europe in the Office of Strategic Services, precursor to the CIA, in World War II. His narrative was the part of orthodoxy the US state was promoting in order to insist that the only true options were Stalinism, the coalitionist right wing of social democracy or a doomed romantic leftism (also found in Peter Nettl's work).

Comrade Creegan also makes use of Eurocommunist Massimo Salvadori's 1976 biography of Kautsky, but the result is rather a yawn, precisely because it merely repeats an old orthodoxy without engaging with the critics of this orthodoxy. It involves a good deal of simple falsification of the history of Bolshevism.

Ben Lewis will be writing a rejoinder to Creegan and intervening in the 'Kautsky debate' more generally in the near future. No doubt it will contain more of interest about what the other participants wrote as well.

**Mike Macnair**  
Oxford

## Bible quoting

I was very disappointed by the three responses to my letter about Extinction Rebellion (May 9). I promise you that if I'd been invited to write a reply under a pseudonym I could have put the *Weekly Worker* position rather more lucidly than any of your correspondents.

The most coherent reply comes from Emma Silva. Here at least there are some political arguments. But what struck me most about Ms Silva's letter was the quite incredible smugness. There is no need to learn from experience, because Ms Silva already has all the answers. So we are told XR is "a movement of the liberal middle class". Now I am in poor health and was unable to attend the demonstrations, but I saw a great many photographs and videos, and I must confess I am quite unable to determine the class position of those taking part. Perhaps Ms Silva has made a careful analysis of the relation of those demonstrating to the means of production. I suspect, however, that she is using the term "middle class" as so many self-professed Marxists do - to mean something they don't like or disagree with.

XR, we're told has "no regard for the police role under capitalism". Yes, Emma, I've read *State and revolution* too. But that doesn't resolve the relation of theory to tactics. Would it have been better if XR members had carried revolvers and killed the police officers trying to arrest them? Actually their tactics seem to have worked reasonably well in tying up and confusing the police. And Roger Hallam's recent acquittal on a charge of criminal damage suggests that their tactics can be effective.

Ms Silva tells us: "There is no short cut to saving the climate: it demands that the working class be organised for struggle." I agree, and have said more or less the same many times. But proclaiming this achieves nothing, and I see no sign of the CPGB or anyone else actually organising anything. Maybe XR will fail, but at least there will be lessons to be learned for the next phase of struggle. But the empty recital of doctrine is no more meaningful than a Jehovah's Witness reciting the *Bible*.

There is rather less to be said about Lawrence Parker, since he makes no political arguments, but contents himself with some rather cheap jokes directed at myself. He seems to find the idea of "extinction" a bit of a giggle. I should think very

carefully before involving myself with a political organisation that finds hundreds of millions of human deaths a subject for humour.

It is, of course, true that the Socialist Workers Party lied about its membership figures, and I freely acknowledge that I and others should have challenged this earlier. But it is also true that the SWP initiated the Anti-Nazi League and Stop the War. Now doubtless Parker will find some doctrinal point to justify sitting on his backside rather than involving himself in those movements. But they mobilised hundreds of thousands of people and achieved some results (the Nazis were set back for a generation; if the war on Iraq was not stopped, further invasions were made less likely).

As for Bruno Kretschmar, as ever with his garbled tirades, I didn't understand a blind word (can a structure be a cogwheel?).

I am not an uncritical admirer of XR. In fact I remain a pessimist - I think the destruction of human civilisation is considerably more likely than a proletarian revolution led by the CPGB. But if there is any hope, it will come from those willing to take to the streets, rather than those who prefer to sit in a corner quoting the *Bible* (sorry, works of Lenin).

**Ian Birchall**  
email

## Extraordinary

Yassamine Mather says, referring to a possible war between the US and Iran: "The Stop the War Coalition, weakened by contradictory positions on Syria and eager to ensure no damage is done to Corbyn, is unlikely to take any serious initiatives. That does not augur well" ('Threat of war is real', May 9).

This is an extraordinary claim and it is obvious that STWC would mobilise actively against any attack on Iran by US and/or Israel. Chris Nineham, a Stop the War national officer, has an article on this issue on the *Counterfire* blog.

There are different views on the complex Syrian civil war, but I have never heard anyone at an STWC AGM or national steering committee meeting in the last three or four years express any support for the Assad dictatorship. The STWC position of opposing all foreign intervention - either from US, UK or French imperialism, or by Russia or Iran - has been agreed unanimously

at a series of national meetings. The position argues that Syrian people only should determine the future of the country.

**Stuart Richardson**  
Birmingham STWC (personal capacity)

## Women's spaces

There was a predictable backlash to Amanda Maclean's excellent work ('Decoupled from reality', April 18). What trans activist apologists don't realise is there are different types of trans and they don't all agree. There are old-fashioned trans sexual, mostly minding their own business, usually accepted among women (with or without a gender recognition certificate or surgery) and accepting the need for women's spaces. Many of these now reject the label 'trans' and the claim that transwomen are women (see Miranda Yardley and supporting feminists). There are cross-dressers, transvestites, gay and straight, and there is no doubt that they are men.

There are and have always been feminine men, masculine women and androgynous people - they should not be harassed or abused. (Intersex is a different phenomenon - most also reject the 'trans' label). But there are also some seriously thinking, disordered people with the sexual orientation, autogynophilia - men who want to displace women and insist they are the real women. They have no dysphoria, are happy with their bodies, but are in love with and sexually aroused by the idea of themselves as a woman. If we let them into women's spaces they are disruptive and offensive, and where they go other men follow, harassing and abusing women; refusing debate, reinforcing stereotypes, until young lesbians and non-gender-conforming children think they too are trans.

They should not be abused (mostly by homophobic men), but they themselves should not abuse either. Live how you want, dress how you want, love who you want - everyone should be free to live as they wish. But women need safe spaces from all men, because we don't know which ones are going to hurt us. This is the law and we are defending it. There's no problem in trans people having refuge from violence (committed by men, by the way). Have your own spaces, raise money like we had to - good luck - and let's unite on issues that affect us all. But women's spaces for safety or decency are not up for grabs.

**Nicola Daniels**  
email

## Fighting fund

# Here's hoping

**O**ur May fighting fund suffered a bit of a setback this week - a mere £122 was received, taking the running total to just £642, with half the month gone. Yet we need £2,000, so we're well behind, I'm afraid.

Mind you, as regular readers will know, we've just passed that part of the month when standing orders are few and far between. We got just one of them this week - from BK, who paid us his usual £20. Then there was PM (£25) and DB (£7), our only contributors via PayPal - thanks go to all three comrades.

So things were looking pretty bleak until the postman delivered two cheques at the very end of the week - thank you, LC, for your £50 contribution; and, MN, for the £20 added to your subscription. LC was pleased, in particular, with the debate on gender our paper has carried over the past few weeks - "Typical *Weekly Worker*," she

writes: "not afraid to grapple with difficult and controversial issues." She hoped her donation would help us to "keep on keeping on".

Well, comrade, we certainly intend to do so, but we definitely need more readers like you to help us out. And I'm still hoping that the editor's appeal last month for more, or bigger, standing orders will meet with more positive responses - if they were timed to land in our account in the second week of every month, that would be even better!

Anyway, here's hoping that week three will see the usual flurry of regular donations - if not we're in big trouble! In the meantime, does anyone fancy filling in an SO form for week two?

● **Robbie Rix**

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

# ACTION

## London Communist Forum

**Sunday May 19, 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 3 (continued): 'The historic "betrayal" and the Bolshevik response'. 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 May 21, 6.30pm:** Series of talks on social and biological anthropology, Daryll Forde seminar room, Anthropology Building, 14 Taverton Street, off Gordon Square, London WC1. This meeting: 'Galton, eugenics, and the legacy of Anglo-Saxon nativism', Speaker: Joe Cain. Organised by Radical Anthropology Group: <http://radicalanthropologygroup.org>.

## With banners held high

**Saturday May 18, 11.30am to 5pm:** March and labour movement festival. Assemble Smyth Street, Wakefield WF1. Live speakers, music, poetry and drama. Organised by With Banners Held High: [www.facebook.com/events/1159025200917201](http://www.facebook.com/events/1159025200917201).

## Class struggles, the state and film

**Wednesday May 22, 7pm:** Women's struggle: film screening followed by discussion. Marx Memorial Library, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London EC1. Entrance £5 (£3). Organised by Marx Memorial Library: [www.facebook.com/events/392972168163097](http://www.facebook.com/events/392972168163097).

## Youth Strike 4 Climate

**Friday May 24, 11am:** UK-wide (and global) student and school student demonstrations. Take direct action on the climate crisis and ecological catastrophe - system change, not climate change! Organised by UK Student Climate Network: [www.facebook.com/UKSCN/events](http://www.facebook.com/UKSCN/events).

## Labour, value and exploitation

**Tuesdays from May 28 to June 18, 7pm:** Series of four classes, Marx Memorial Library, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London EC1. Beginners course in Marxist economics presented by Sorch Foster. Entrance £5 (£3). Organised by Marx Memorial Library: [www.facebook.com/events/331184307542225](http://www.facebook.com/events/331184307542225).

## Stop the far right across Europe

**Saturday June 1, 1pm:** International forum, NEU, Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London WC1. Speakers from anti-fascist organisations across Europe debate why the far right is on the rise and how to stop it. Organised by Stand Up To Racism: [www.facebook.com/events/1448957158579543](http://www.facebook.com/events/1448957158579543).

## Trump and transition

**Saturday June 1, 12 noon to 5pm:** Seminar, Marx Memorial Library, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London EC1. 'Are we entering a new stage of the post-World War II crisis?' Speakers: Hillel Ticktin and Mick Cox. Organised by *Critique: Journal of Socialist Theory*: [www.critiquejournal.net](http://www.critiquejournal.net).

## Protest against Trump state visit

**Tuesday June 4, 11am:** Assemble Trafalgar Square for march through central London - details to follow. Organised by Together Against Trump: [www.facebook.com/events/447620012676970](http://www.facebook.com/events/447620012676970).

## Stop the London arms fair

Events organised by Campaign Against Arms Trade. **Saturday June 15, 12.30pm:** Network organising meeting, St Hilda's East Community Centre, 8 Club Row, London E2. Planning the mobilisation against the global arms trade in London in September. [www.facebook.com/events/432514417493720](http://www.facebook.com/events/432514417493720). **Saturday June 22, 11am:** Training session, Bridge 5 Mill, 22a Beswick Street, Manchester M4. Skill up to stop the DSEI arms fair. [www.facebook.com/events/591596081307911](http://www.facebook.com/events/591596081307911).

## Bargain books

**Saturday June 15, 11am:** Book sale, Marx Memorial Library, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London EC1. Organised by Marx Memorial Library: [www.facebook.com/events/318713752161574](http://www.facebook.com/events/318713752161574).

## Miners' strike 35th anniversary

**Saturday June 15, 1pm:** Rally, Orgreave Lane, Sheffield S13. Demand truth and justice for miners brutalised by police at Orgreave in 1984. Speakers include Matt Wrack (FBU) and Steve Hedley (RMT). Organised by Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign: [www.facebook.com/events/2016964828402260](http://www.facebook.com/events/2016964828402260).

## Derby Silk Mill Rally

**Saturday June 22, 10am to 5pm:** March, rally and festival. Assemble Market Place, Derby DE1 and march to Cathedral Green. Celebrate Derby's historic general strike of 1833-34. Organised by Derby Silk Mill Rally: [www.facebook.com/DerbySilkMillRally](http://www.facebook.com/DerbySilkMillRally).

## National Shop Stewards Network

**Saturday July 6, 11am to 5pm:** Conference, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1. Join trade unionists and anti-cuts campaigners to debate how we take the fight forward in the workplaces. Entrance £6. Organised by National Shop Stewards Network: [www.facebook.com/events/377609106411016](http://www.facebook.com/events/377609106411016).

## Durham Miners' Gala

**Saturday July 13, 8am to 6pm:** Rally and labour movement festival, The Racecourse, Durham DH7. Organised by Durham Miners' Association: [www.facebook.com/events/1993862707314329](http://www.facebook.com/events/1993862707314329).

## 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.

**ECONOMY**

# Inequality soars worldwide

While the rich have never had it so good, writes **Michael Roberts**, the risks are increasing



**South Africa: golfing greens for the rich, shanty towns for the poor**

The US Federal Reserve governor, Lael Brainard, in a speech in Washington, recently revealed the extent of rising inequality in the US. Using the latest data, she outlined that the incomes and wealth of working class (the American establishments like to use the term, 'middle class') households in the US have been squeezed in the last 50 years - and particularly in the last 20 years.

Average American households have still not fully recovered the wealth they lost in the great recession, which began in 2007. At the end of 2018, the average middle-income household had wealth of \$340,000 (mainly a home), while those in the top 10% had \$4.5 million - up 19% from before the recession. The latter's rise was mainly due to the surge in the stock market.

According to the Fed's consumer survey, one third of middle-income adults say they would have to borrow money or sell something to be able to pay an unexpected \$400 expense. One fourth said they had skipped some kind of medical care in 2018 because of its cost and nearly three in 10 middle-income adults carry a balance on their credit card most or all of the time. Meanwhile the share of income spent on rent by middle class tenants rose to 25% in 2018 from 18% in 2007 - a rise of 40%. The Gini coefficient (the basic measure of inequality) for incomes is now at its highest ever in the US, at a record-breaking - 0.48, up from 0.38 in the late 1960s, which represents a rise of 30%.

Brainard suggested that, because this development is so pronounced, reasonable living standards for most Americans will never return:

In recent years, households at the middle of the income distribution have faced a number

of challenges. That raises the question of whether middle class living standards are within reach for middle-income Americans in today's economy.

Such a situation also threatened to weaken the economy with lower consumption per person:

Research shows that households with lower levels of wealth spend a larger fraction of any income gains than their wealthier counterparts. That has long-term implications for consumption - the single biggest engine of growth in the economy.

And it even risked 'democracy' itself: "A strong middle class is often seen as a cornerstone of a vibrant economy and, beyond that, a resilient democracy," said Brainard. Such are the fears of one of the members of the pillars of American capital, the Federal Reserve.

However, while the 'middle class' in the US and many other advanced capitalist countries is being squeezed, the top 1% and even more, the top 0.1%, have never had it so good. For them it is as though the great recession never happened. The wealth of the world's richest people did decline by 7% to \$8.56 trillion in 2018, according to Wealth-X, which cited global trade tensions, stock-market volatility and a slowdown in economic growth. And the number of billionaires fell 5.4% to 2,604 - the second annual fall since the financial crash a decade ago. But in America itself the richest were hardly affected - there was a slight rise in the number of billionaires to 892, even if their wealth fell by 5.8% to a mere \$3.54 trillion.

San Francisco has more billionaires per inhabitant in the world - with one billionaire for approximately every 11,600 residents - followed by New

York, Dubai and Hong Kong. And there has not been a fall in billionaires in Brexit Britain. According to the *Sunday Times* rich list just published,<sup>1</sup> there are a record 151 of them. And to be a billionaire is like a god in the sky, compared to the average wealth of households. If we measure the difference in time - say, days - it is staggering. While an NHS nurse's annual salary would be the equivalent of half a day, a billionaire's equals 11,500 - a 32-year gap!

## Tipping point

Like climate change and global warming, inequality around the world has now reached an irreversible tipping point. The House of Commons Library reckons that, if current trends continue, the richest 1% will control nearly 66% of world's money by 2030.<sup>2</sup> Assuming a 6% annual growth in wealth, they would hold assets worth approximately \$305 trillion - up from \$140 trillion today. This follows a report released earlier this year by Oxfam, which said that just eight billionaires have as much wealth as 3.6 billion people - the poorest half of the world.

And the Bank of England's chief economist, Andy Haldane, has produced an insightful study of how in Britain the rich and poor are spread across the country.<sup>3</sup> This shows that the UK has the worst regional dispersion of income and wealth in Europe - even worse than Italy. It is concentrated in London and the south-east - although long hours and travel time seem to make Londoners more miserable than their poorer fellow citizens in the north, according to surveys.

Rising inequality is creating conditions for rising risk and uncertainty in capitalist economies. That is because the main way that the inequality of wealth has increased is

through a rise in the price of financial assets. Marx called these assets fictitious capital, as they represented a claim on the value of companies and government that may not be reflected in the earnings and assets of companies or government revenues. Financial crashes are regular occurrences, often of increased severity, and they can wipe out the 'value' of these assets at a stroke. Such crashes can trigger a collapse, thanks to the underlying weakness in the productive sectors of the capitalist economy.

Meanwhile, the latest report of the US Federal Reserve on the financial stability in the US makes sober reading: "Borrowing by businesses is historically high relative to gross domestic product (GDP), with the most rapid increases in debt concentrated among the riskiest firms amid signs of deteriorating credit standards."<sup>4</sup> Interest rates for loans are near an historic low, so the borrowing binge among companies continues. According to the Fed, "Debt owed by the business sector, however, has expanded more rapidly than output for the past several years, pushing the business-sector credit-to-GDP ratio to historically high levels." Moreover, "The sizable growth in business debt over the past seven years has been characterised by large increases in risky forms of debt, extended to firms with poorer credit profiles or that already had elevated levels of debt."

And this borrowed money is not used to invest in productive assets, but to speculate on the stock market. Indeed, the main buyers of US stocks are companies themselves, thus driving up the price of their own shares (buybacks).

As long as interest rates stay low and there is no major collapse in corporate earnings, this scenario of corporate borrowing and stock market

buybacks can continue. But if interest rates should increase and/or profits fall, then this corporate house of cards could tumble badly. As the Fed puts it,

Even without a sharp decrease in credit availability, any weakening of economic activity could boost default rates and lead to credit-related contractions to employment and investment among these businesses. Moreover, existing research suggests that elevated vulnerabilities, such as excessive borrowing in the business sector, increase the downside risk to broader economic activity.

Naturally, the Fed's report concluded that things were going to be all right and the banks and corporations were resilient and healthy. But overall uncertainty about the future for the major capitalist economies is rising, according to the latest reading of the World Uncertainty Index - a device that supposedly measures the confidence of capitalist investors globally.

The latest measure of the WUI has risen sharply to a level higher than before the global financial crash. And the recent drop in share prices driven by the ongoing trade war between the US and China is an indication of what could happen in the very near future ●

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## Notes

- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sunday\\_Times\\_Rich\\_List\\_2019](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sunday_Times_Rich_List_2019).
- <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/?s=1%25+and+2030>.
- [www.bankofengland.co.uk/-/media/boe/files/speech/2019/is-all-economics-local-speech-by-andy-haldane](https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/-/media/boe/files/speech/2019/is-all-economics-local-speech-by-andy-haldane).
- [www.federalreserve.gov/publications/financial-stability-report.htm](https://www.federalreserve.gov/publications/financial-stability-report.htm).

## ELECTIONS

# Making plans for Nigel

While the Brexit Party surges in the polls, too much of the left lines up with one or another faction of the bourgeoisie, says Paul Demarty

As the dust settles after the local elections, so the first opinion polls taken from fieldwork conducted after them roll in; and the numbers are rather startling.

They are, of course, dominated by the looming European vote; and, as far as voting intentions in that poll go, there is one very clear winner - Nigel Farage's Brexit Party. ComRes has it on 27%, narrowly pipping Labour (25%) to the top spot. The headlines, however, are grabbed more by another survey, conducted by Opinium, which has Farage's party on 34% - way in the lead. If this were reflected in the final poll, he would have registered the best performance at least since 1999 (when William Hague's Tories managed 33.5% - within rounding distance of Opinium's numbers).

The Brexit Party has the dubious distinction of somehow having come out of nowhere, to nobody's surprise at all. To be sure, if God Himself was - as per the XTC classic - making plans for Nigel, He could hardly have done a better job. The Brexiteers have always mocked at how remote and worthless the putatively democratic institutions of the European Union actually are, but it has surely never been truer than it is today, with such British electors as can be bothered trudging to the polls to elect members of the European parliament solely because the despised Westminster machine has (in its own language) failed to deliver - or (in increasingly common parlance) betrayed the Brexit vote of 2016.

Meanwhile, Farage's former outfit, the UK Independence Party, is in fairly awful shape. To individual political organisations, timing is all-important, and for Ukip, the time is definitely out of joint. Theresa May's swift effort to take ownership of Brexit in the wake of the referendum result - an 'inspired' and 'professional' effort which, it is sometimes worth reminding ourselves, had us all under the impression she knew what the hell she was doing - decisively robbed Ukip of its initiative at the very moment of its triumph. It then endured a year and change of farcical chum in its leadership, and a series of splits. The last guy left standing was current leader Gerard Batten, who decided to steer the ship sharply towards the far right.

He sealed the deal by hiring Tommy Robinson - once of the English Defence League and now for the second time facing a contempt of court charge - as a personal advisor. He could do no more, for Ukip's standing orders - a product of a more genteel era - forbid former members of extreme-right organisations from joining and, while no doubt many old hands in British fascism are sneaking in, Robinson is too high-profile a figure to make it. The result is that he is standing against Ukip as an independent in the north-west, supported by counter-jihadist fruitcake Anne Marie Waters and her For Britain sect, but still casting a pall over Ukip by his association with Batten: the worst of all possible worlds for the latter.

Under these circumstances, and with Euro elections conducted by proportional representation in multi-member constituencies, the situation is ideal for a 'just get on with it' party to emerge, with no more than innuendo to offer so far as the associated political concerns (migration, Islam, etc) are concerned. This explains the ease with which Farage has managed to pluck a party out of the sleeve of his



He should have been a children's magician

blue blazer, like the children's party magician he should have been.

As with such a conjurer, the question arises as to what is being hidden from view. Certainly there are large sums of money sloshing around. The Brexit Party claims that most of it comes from small donations, but that all rather depends on your definition, and an assumption of good faith on the part of large donors, such that they will not try to conceal their largesse. In any case, several six-figure sums are known to have made it into the coffers. Yet dark mutterings from remainers on this point are rather rich (if you'll excuse the pun) when Change UK - the organisation of gaffe-prone, intellectually defunct, 'moderate' defectors from both major parties - is so scandalously opaque in its finances.

### Lexiteers

Farage's other party trick has been to get various figures associated, more or less closely, with the left on his lists. Some are relatively easily dismissed, like various members of the insular clique that once called itself the Revolutionary Communist Party.

It was only a matter of time before its infantile, mean-spirited hostility to *bien-pensant* liberals breached whatever final defences it had against formal political affiliation to the right, and so we find RCP diehards Claire Fox and James Heartfield standing. Both are quite capable of trading on their former associations, making that old renegade's lament that it was not she who betrayed the cause, but the cause who betrayed her. Given that post-RCP initiatives spend most of their energy on dishonest polemic against the left, however, we feel it rather unlikely that many on the left will fall for it. (How the more simple-hearted Colonel Blimps in Farage's voter base will react to the RCP's long record of deliberately shocking 'anti-imperialist' postures, meanwhile,

remains to be seen.)

George Galloway is a different matter. For all his many brushes with the wrong kind of notoriety - George dressed up as a cat is something, regrettably, impossible to unsee - he remains unabashedly a figure of the left. Galloway is a kind of historical relic - a Stalinist fellow traveller from the centre-left of the Labour Party, who refused to budge an inch, as Kinnock and Blair dragged his old co-thinkers to the right in their wake, and took genuinely courageous stances in the early stages of the Iraq war.

His support for Farage's party, then, is a disappointment, but not exactly a surprise. Brexitism is at the core of his politics, and in 2016 he even shared platforms with Farage, in a rerun of Enoch Powell's and Tony Benn's unlikely partnership in the first European referendum 45 years ago. His decision causes a certain awkwardness on the left and, though the condemnations are more or less universal, from some quarters they have a rather *pro forma* feel.

The Communist Party of Britain's *Morning Star*, for its part, does a certain amount of muck-raking so far as Nigel's merry men are concerned, with one article on the "far-right Tory rejects campaigning for [the] Brexit Party",<sup>1</sup> another on the six-figure donations, and so on. Yet we know that the CPB has taken the decision to boycott the election entirely. The comrades seem to have got themselves into a real bind on this: their fervent Brexitism must not be confused with that of Farage, so they talk up the neoliberal, reactionary character of the Brexit Party. The 'natural' position of calling for a Labour vote, however - which the CPB did throughout the Blair years - is complicated by the fact that the candidates actually on Labour's lists tend to be, in Galloway's words, "Euro-fanatics". So they are stuck with a "people's boycott" of the

"undemocratic" European parliament, which "cannot even initiate its own legislation".<sup>1</sup>

A superficially different approach is adopted by the Socialist Workers Party. We have mentioned in a previous article the SWP's objections to the Brexit Party - it notes that Farage's real aim is a permanent, stable, far-right party after the fashion of Europe's new 'populists', with him as a kind of pin-striped Beppe Grillo. Thus, for SWP theoretical leader Alex Callinicos, Galloway and the like are merely "useful idiots". For all practical purposes, however, the SWP's focus is entirely on the individual, Tommy Robinson, and Ukip, despite the latter's obvious replacement by Farage's outfit in the front running.<sup>2</sup>

And the SWP is not the only group trading on the odium of far-right creeps; a recent email circular from Momentum offers recipients various ways to stop Robinson. It also offers the utterly risible claim that "with the centre ground crumbling, only principled, socialist Labour candidates can beat Tommy Robinson". Assuming that we can count Labour's number one in the north-west, Theresa Griffin, as a principled socialist (she has at least put in the hard yards in the unions), that means that the Tommy Robinson list, consisting entirely of himself, will beat the Tories, Greens, Lib Dems, Ukip and Farage's crew, headed by the aforementioned and distinctly unprincipled Claire Fox. I am not inclined to put a tenner on that at Paddy Power, but perhaps 'Team Momentum' know something I do not.

More generally, the internet is alive with alarm that Robinson might need just 9% of the vote to get in, assuming turnout is exceptionally low; but the source of that seems to be dubious back-of-the-fag-packet calculations from Hope Not Hate, which is professionally dedicated to fear-mongering on this point. Meanwhile,

all serious opinion polls - as we stated at the outset - put the Brexit Party's chances of success very high.

The latter cases amount to silence on the Brexit issue. For Momentum, the problem is the carefully cultivated ambiguity of the Labour leadership on the matter, which it is doomed to tail in its bureaucratic fashion. For the SWP and CPB - both 'Lexit' organisations - it is an attempt to dodge the obvious lesson that Lexit was a fantasy, and that the political choice *actually posed* by Brexit is the distinction between 'enlightened' neoliberalism in its desperate extremity and its chauvinist-Thatcherite shadow. Their political choices in 2016 place both organisations by default in the latter camp, with a hope of wrenching the EU issue somehow out of the hands of the right.

### Wrong way round

The trouble is that doing so requires that Brexit be treated not as a 'single issue' on which there is a correct answer as such - in other words, in the misleading, Bonapartist terms of the referendum itself. Just as the left remainers are driven into the arms of Blair and Soros, in spite of themselves, so the different kinds of issue-dodging here end up playing into the hands of Nigel Farage. The 'people's boycott', as ably pointed out by Labour far-left lifer Mike Phipps, can only serve the purpose of taking votes *away from Labour*:

Imagine for a moment that the *Morning Star* had more support. Imagine it still enjoyed significant influence in the trade unions and the broader socialist movement. Its suggestion of a boycott could carry considerable weight with sections of the working class. It would be Labour voters who would be encouraged not to vote in these elections. Farage and co, the Tories and other parties would be under no such pressure.<sup>3</sup>

As for the SWP's hysteria about Ukip and Robinson, we argued already that the principal effect is to distract opprobrium away from Farage. In both cases, the need to be seen to take a 'strong line' leads straight into a trap - the trap of the referendum, which was designed as a piece of political theatre and, though it disastrously backfired, has merely exposed the reality that such things as treaty abrogations are the act of *governments*, not plebiscites. The CPB demanded a vote for Brexit in the referendum, and now demands a boycott of a vote between parties on the basis of the supposed sanctity of the plebiscite; in doing so, it gets things *exactly the wrong way round*. The SWP, meanwhile, by focusing entirely on incidental protests and strikes, treat everything as a 'single issue', decrying all deliberative high politics as demobilising, and in substance make the same mistake.

Thus are our Lexiteers disarmed before Farage. The SWP and CPB expect a socialist government to emerge from sufficiently dramatic strikes and protests - the inadequacy of this strategic-programmatic approach leads directly to their present paralysis ●

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### Notes

1. www.comunist-party.org.uk/britain/2509-communists-call-for-people-s-boycott-of-eu-polls.html.
2. See 'Anti-racism and "useful idiots"' Weekly Worker May 2.
3. <https://labourhub.org.uk/2019/04/29/vote-labour-unconditionally>.

**SOUTH AFRICA****Pointer to disillusionment**

ANC support continues to drop, writes **Peter Manson**, but the main beneficiary is the black nationalist EFF



**W**hile no doubt president Cyril Ramaphosa will be delighted that the African National Congress comfortably retained its parliamentary majority in the May 8 general election, the overriding message remains the same: there is ever-increasing disillusionment in the ANC on the part of South Africa's black majority.

Some 18 months ago, with Jacob Zuma still at the helm, there seemed to be a real possibility that ANC support would dip below the 50% mark, since a large section of its membership - not least one of the ANC's key components, the South African Communist Party - wanted him out because of his blatant and ongoing corruption. But the ANC received 57.5% of the vote on May 8 under Ramaphosa, giving it 230 seats in the 400-seat parliament under the completely proportional electoral system. It also retained eight of the nine provinces in the simultaneous provincial elections - the exception being the Western Cape, where the majority 'coloured' and white population have together consistently elected the opposition Democratic Alliance since the end of apartheid in 1994.

As for the national elections, however, the DA also lost ground - its support fell from 22.2% in 2014 to 20.8% this time round, resulting in a loss of five seats and taking it down to 84. The big winners were the left-populist Economic Freedom Fighters, whose votes almost doubled. They

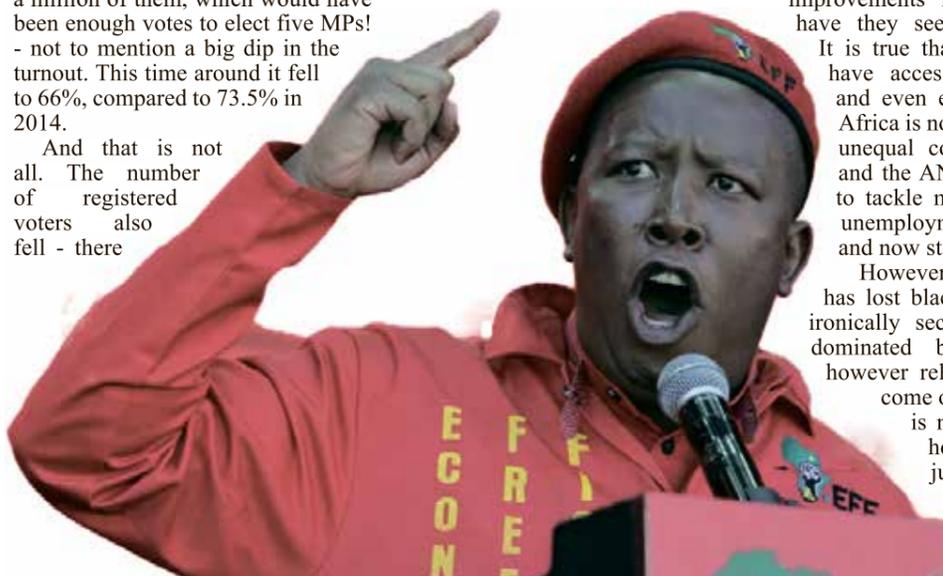
were up from 6.4% to 10.8%, giving them 19 extra seats (up to 44) - the same number that the ANC lost.

And that is no coincidence, of course. It is the EFF, with their red berets and radical calls for the seizure of land - combined with a black nationalism that sometimes spills over into anti-white racism - that have benefited from the mounting disillusionment. This has also been reflected not only in the continuing fall in ANC votes (last week was the first time its support fell below 60% in a general election), but in a large increase in the number of spoilt ballot papers - more than a quarter of a million of them, which would have been enough votes to elect five MPs! - not to mention a big dip in the turnout. This time around it fell to 66%, compared to 73.5% in 2014.

And that is not all. The number of registered voters also fell - there

**A short time ago, the ANC feared its vote would fall below 50%. Cyril Ramaphosa has revived its fortunes and even won the backing of big business**

**Julius Malema espouses a toxic mix of black nationalism and anti-white populism**



were just 26.8 million of them out of a population of 56.7 million. Leaving aside those aged under 18 and foreign residents, it is estimated that almost 10 million eligible voters did not register. Of course, things are rather different in South Africa than in, say, the UK, simply because over 12 million people live in 'informal settlements' - ie, shacks. They do not receive an invitation to register through the post - many shacks have no officially recognised address - and so it is up to the occupants to go and register themselves. Fewer and fewer now consider it worth the bother.

Who can blame them? What improvements in living conditions have they seen under the ANC?

It is true that some shacks now have access to running water and even electricity, but South Africa is now officially the most unequal country in the world and the ANC has done nothing to tackle mass poverty. In fact unemployment has increased and now stands at 27%.

However, while the ANC has lost black votes to the EFF, ironically sections of the white-dominated bourgeoisie have - however reluctantly - started to come over to it. Ramaphosa is now seen as the best hope for capital - not just in terms of ending state corruption, but in stimulating the economy and increasing profits.

Whereas previously the ANC was regarded as highly problematic because of its alliance with the Communist Party and Congress of South African Trade Unions, today both the SACP and Cosatu no longer enjoy the influence they once did. Cosatu is numerically much weaker than it was a decade ago, thanks to the expulsion of its largest component, the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (Numsa), and the subsequent departure of other unions. As for the SACP, yes, it still boasts government ministers, but this is of very little concern today. For example, Rob Davies has been minister for trade and industry since 2009 and is certainly regarded by capital as a safe pair of hands. And, ironically, under Ramaphosa the SACP's influence within the ANC seems to have diminished, even though the party backed him against Zuma.

This found reflection before the election in several prominent figures announcing that they regarded support for Ramaphosa as the best route right now. For example, Peter Bruce, the editor-at-large of the Tiso Blackstar media group, wrote an article two months ago headed: "If not Cyril Ramaphosa, then who?"<sup>1</sup> while Colin Coleman, the chief executive of Goldman Sachs in sub-Saharan Africa, declared last month in *The Economist* that Ramaphosa was "the last hope for democracy".<sup>2</sup> The magazine's own leader was headlined: "Good man, bad party", followed by: "To stop the rot in South

Africa, back Cyril Ramaphosa".<sup>3</sup>

As for the Democratic Alliance, any hope that capital may have had that it could eventually pose a serious challenge to the ANC has now all but evaporated. True, it now has a black leader, but its origins were in the liberal, whites-only Progressive Party under apartheid, and it was always improbable that such an organisation could win over the mass of blacks. But now the DA has been hit by its own corruption scandals and suffered a damaging split, while at the same time the EFF - a definite 'no no' for the bourgeoisie - has been picking up support. For many, then, the task now is to transform the ANC into a permanent, reliable, pro-capitalist force.

## SACP treachery

But it goes without saying that the SACP does not see things in quite that way. Despite the hard reality and bitter experience of the last 25 years, the party still insists that the ANC is heading the "national democratic revolution" (NDR), which, in case you were wondering, is apparently "the most direct route to socialism in South Africa".

Before Ramaphosa's election as ANC leader last year, the SACP had taken the decision to go for a "reconfigured alliance" by standing general election candidates under its own name - rather than under the ANC umbrella, as it always has up to now. But the dismissal of Zuma changed all that. As the leadership put it in its post-election statement, "The ANC-led government, however, began turning the corner against governance decay in 2018 under the leadership of comrade Cyril Ramaphosa as the president of the ANC and the republic."<sup>4</sup>

The SACP is not in the slightest concerned by Ramaphosa's actual politics, it seems. True, he started out as a trade union officer and was a leading figure in the ANC under Nelson Mandela, but his contacts in the post-apartheid establishment facilitated his transformation into a major capitalist and one of South Africa's richest men. He is, of course, notorious for the role he played in encouraging "concomitant action" by the police against striking miners in 2012, with the result that the very next day 34 of them were shot dead. But he did apologise, of course, so that's all right then.

And now, ever optimistic, the SACP states of the election result:

This is a mandate to move the national democratic revolution, our national transformation programme, on to a second, more radical phase. The immediate strategic task of this phase of our revolution is to complete our liberation and achieve social emancipation. This requires radical structural transformation to build a people's economy, create decent work and systematically eradicate economic inequalities, unemployment, poverty and social insecurity.

It omits to say that the above tasks were supposed to have been accomplished in the first, non-"radical" phase!

In view of the SACP's outright treachery in continuing to support the ANC, as it moved ever rightward and adopted a fully fledged neoliberal programme, it is hardly surprising that its insistence on the centrality of the ANC alliance and the forward march of the NDR began to erode its dominance within the unions. Following Marikana, it was Numsa, with its 340,000 members, that was the first to declare a breach, when its conference in 2013 agreed to break with both the ANC and SACP - for which it was expelled from Cosatu

the following year.

From the beginning the Numsa leadership announced its intention to establish an alternative party - one that would uphold working class independence on what it considered to be a principled Marxist basis - in reality one that trod in the 'official communist' footsteps learnt by Numsa leaders, such as general secretary Irvin Jim, in their long years in the SACP.

But for years nothing happened - until just over a month ago in April 2019, when at last the launch congress of the Socialist Revolutionary Workers Party was held. Jim and his comrades had been involved in a bitter dispute with former Cosatu general secretary Zwelinzima Vavi over the nature of any new party, with Vavi insisting that a much 'broader' working class formation was required than what Jim had in mind.

But this dispute appears to have had the effect of firming up Jim's ideas a little and the congress came out with a number of principled ideas - not least the centrality of class struggle in the fight for socialism and the refusal to see elections as an end in themselves. According to Shaheen Khan of the newly formed SRWP national working committee, rather than pursuing votes, the party must focus on "using every opportunity to raise the consciousness of the working class on the nature of the capitalist system and our need to organise independently outside of parliament and against it". The SRWP's aim is "merely to secure a presence in parliament, from which we can raise the working class voice and expose the capitalist nature of parliament itself".<sup>5</sup>

While the provisional leadership had previously registered the new party's name with the electoral commission, it had done next to nothing in terms of organisation. There is still no SRWP website, for instance, although the party does have a Facebook page.<sup>6</sup> From this it appears that there is a branch in Cape Town. But elsewhere? There were many complaints that the full election manifesto was inaccessible, although eventually it was made available online by a non-party source.<sup>7</sup>

The problem is that, for all its revolutionary rhetoric, the SRWP in reality resulted from a *trade union split* and could hardly be expected to lead a dynamic *party* campaign. And so it turned out to be prior to the general election - there seems to have been very little by way of campaigning of any sort.

## Disappointment

Nevertheless, I was not alone in assuming that the SRWP would emerge from that election with two or three MPs. After all, to gain a seat a party needs to pick up just a quarter of one percent (0.25%) of the national ballot - which this time round translated into around 44,000 votes. Yet the membership of Numsa - where Jim and co *had* been attempting to build support for the new party - was well over 300,000. And in addition a couple of single-issue campaigns had come out in support of the SRWP. For his part, Jim had stated that the aim was to gain more votes than the EFF.

So to say that the actual result was a disappointment is an understatement: the SRWP polled just 24,439 votes - a mere 0.14%. In response to this, Ronnie Kasrils, the former SACP and ANC minister, who had been plugging the need for a new party (although in practice he sided with Vavi on the form that party should take), stated:

Unless it acts seriously and honestly to admit its shortcomings and outlines a different strategic approach, with sustained practical work on the ground, rather than revolutionary phrase-mongering -

a sure sign of self-delusion - this disastrous result will give rise to immense disillusionment.<sup>8</sup>

But the last thing the SRWP leadership is willing to do is "admit its shortcomings", it seems. The May 11 post-election statement from newly elected SRWP general secretary Oupa Ralake began with the usual criticisms of the SACP and Cosatu:

The South African Communist Party ... and the Congress of South African Trade Unions ... in these elections openly supported and campaigned for the ANC and its billionaire leader, Mr Ramaphosa. Such historic betrayals of the working class by their own organisations work decisively against raising socialist consciousness among the working class.

Quite right. But what about the SRWP result? Ralake began by recapping the party's objective in contesting:

We did not fool ourselves that we would win overwhelmingly, nor was that our objective in these elections. We hoped to secure both provincial and national seats, so that we could use these platforms to advance our struggles for socialism.

However, he continued, "we find that it is impossible for us to scientifically accept the accuracy of the results of these elections":

In the light of the evidence available and our own knowledge of our weaknesses and strengths as the SRWP, we reject, quite contemptuously, the figures of the votes ascribed to us. While we had no doubts that our performance in these elections was not going to win us large votes, the figures ascribed to our votes are a joke and impossible to explain scientifically, other than that the system clearly dealt with us.

He went on:

We are not surprised that the ANC and the four or so main capitalist parties are carelessly overlooking the overwhelming evidence of extreme fraud and faults in the electoral machinery and processes. They, after all, have secured their positions as the mouthpieces of South African capitalism and imperialism - they got the results they wanted.

So what form did this "extreme fraud" take? Ralake claimed that several instances of people voting "multiple times" had been recorded and he listed numerous bureaucratic failings, such as voting stations opening late or closing early, or running out of ballot papers.

This is so pathetic, it is difficult to know where to start. How could people voting "multiple times" for, let us say, the ANC reduce the votes cast for the SRWP? And why would the DA and EFF consider this to be "the results they wanted" if it produced more ANC MPs? And why would it be only the SRWP that was adversely affected by the various "faults in the electoral machinery and processes"?

In truth, the deliberate falsification of the results of one party would have had to involve hundreds of people across the country and it is ludicrous to pretend that such blatant electoral fraud would not have been immediately exposed by, for example, some of those counting the votes.

## Where next?

In my opinion, this statement is an even bigger blow to the SRWP's prospects than the actual results. Of

course, no-one has taken the fraud allegations seriously and they were hardly covered in the mainstream press. But the point is that they have reduced to nothing the party's credibility.

As Kasrils said, it is essential for any party to "admit its shortcomings" and "honestly" attempt to explain what went wrong. The idea that the SRWP, despite its utter disorganisation, was regarded as a serious threat that had to be "dealt with" by "the system" is so absurd that no-one at all will believe it. In reality several commentators had welcomed its participation in the elections - it would give voters a wider choice and help legitimise the 'democratic process'.

And it had hardly been greeted by thousands wanting to sign up to it - or acclaimed by what exists of the South African left. For many, all this talk about socialism and revolution was "a major distraction" - as John Appolis claimed on the *Elitsha* website. For him, "the SRWP is premature, as it is not born of workers' struggle and lacks a clear programme of action". He wrote:

This abstract and almost religious phraseology on the need for the workers' party is symptomatic of a formulaic approach to the question of the party. Because Lenin once said that in order to overthrow capitalism and usher in socialism the working class needs a revolutionary vanguard party, the task is to build such a party regardless of time and context.<sup>9</sup>

Rather, according to Appolis, we need to prioritise "the building and strengthening of existing defensive organisations of the working class". After all,

the working class and its new movements have not won recognition among lower sections of the middle class, rural poor and other township dwellers as representatives of an alternative pole of power. Questions of alternative power arise in pre-revolutionary and revolutionary periods. Presently, we are far from both.

This is, of course, typical of the line taken by people across the world who once regarded *themselves* as "revolutionary", but have now in effect given it all up as a bad job.

The establishment of a

"revolutionary vanguard party" in every country is in reality a pressing need. Not, of course, because the working class is now ready to push for its own "alternative power" here and now. In fact, one of the many tasks of such a party would be "the building and strengthening of existing defensive organisations of the working class" - in the trade unions, for instance.

But even more important is the need to establish and encourage working class consciousness in the genuine sense. Only working class power can permanently liberate the masses from the economic oppression that is more pronounced in South Africa than almost anywhere else, which is why we need to stress constantly this necessity and the vehicle by which such liberation can be achieved.

So where does all this leave the fight for such a party in that country? In my view, we should not give up on the SRWP as a site for struggle just yet - assuming it does not die a death in the very short term. But that also applies to the SACP, which over recent years has seen a sharp increase in membership, coinciding with its stringent criticism of features of the Zuma government.

One of the weaknesses of Irvin Jim *et al* is that they did not fight first and foremost *within* the SACP for genuine Marxism and working class independence. If that had happened then we might have seen real lessons learnt, cadres steeled, arguments thrashed out, programmes and strategies developed and maybe, if necessary, a worthwhile split. Not a split between trade union officials, but a split between right and left ●

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**HEALTH**

# Legalise cannabis

The 'war on drugs' has very little to do with safeguarding the health of citizens, argues **James Linney**

**T**he cannabis sativa plant has been harvested for medical and recreational reasons for well over 3,000 years; along with alcohol and opium, it is one of the oldest psychoactive drugs used by humans - yet, unlike these other two substances during the era of late capitalism, cannabis has remained illegal in most countries.

The two exceptions are Canada, which legalised recreational use in 2018; and Uruguay (Portugal and the Netherlands have decriminalised its use). Both the US and UK still classify cannabis among the most dangerous of drugs and claim the threat of misuse is so great that its potential for therapeutic use should not even be considered. However, ever since its prohibition, doctors and researchers have been clear: the dangers of cannabis have been enormously exaggerated. It is, for example, far less harmful than alcohol and has none of the potent addictive properties of, say, tobacco or opioids. Additionally, there is growing body of evidence setting out the *benefits* of cannabis for certain medical conditions. Below I will look in more depth at the potential harms and benefits, and will also attempt to explain that it is ultimately a political agenda, not scientific evidence, which drives drug policies.

There has been some change in the tide in regard to cannabis in the past two decades. In the USA 10 states have now legalised its commercial sale for recreational purposes and in total 30 now allow it to be prescribed for certain medical conditions - the first was California back in 1996. Despite this though, federal law still classifies it as illegal for both uses; meaning that sellers and users remain vulnerable to lengthy jail sentences. The UK has been even more resistant to any change in the legal status of cannabis. Although it was temporarily reduced to a class C drug between 2004 and 2009, it was then reinstated as class B, contrary to the recommendations of the Advisory Council. Recently there has been a minor shift, caused largely by overwhelming public pressure to allow some forms of cannabis to be prescribed for a few, very strictly defined medical conditions. We will come to examine these changes in more detail - but first a brief look at the history of the drug's legal status in the US and UK will help explain how we got into this mess in the first place.

Like opium and cocaine, cannabis was widely available throughout the US and UK up until the first half of the 19th century, in the form of tinctures - tonics marketed and sold in general stores, promising to be a 'wonder cure' for a wide range of conditions: tetanus, joint pains, menstrual symptoms and nausea. The idea of prohibition developed in the US, motivated largely by anti-Mexican xenophobia. The Mexican Revolution (1910-20) resulted in large numbers of Mexicans entering the US in order to escape the violence. Anti-immigrant US politicians weaponised the use of cannabis within this population as a way of demonising them, inventing wild stories of cannabis-fuelled violence and debauchery. The term 'marijuana' (then 'marihuana') was used and still prevails to highlight the drug's foreignness.

This manufactured fear soon led to the Marihuana Tax Act (1937), and was effectively the beginning of the end for cannabis in the US. It was replaced by the Controlled Substances



**First legalised in California: now a \$10 billion market in the US**

Act in 1970, which classified cannabis as a schedule 1 drug - it was specified as one of the most dangerous, which allegedly had no medical benefits. Richard Nixon made its prohibition the main aim of his infamous 'war on drugs' - a war that benefited only the reactionary, fear-mongering politicians, together with the powerful drug cartels, whose huge profits are secured precisely because illegality allows them to charge extortionate prices. Caught in between are the communities who are terrorised by the violence of the cartels and the corrupt politicians they bribe; and the workers forced to toil in an illicit industry without the most basic union protection.

The drug laws were also a useful tool for the US state - they were wielded to weaken any political threat from within: namely the Black Panther Party and the increasingly radical anti-Vietnam war movement. The targeting of their leaders, through the use of long prison sentences for cannabis possession, often went hand in hand with the same racist propaganda that had been employed against the influx of Mexican migrants 60 years earlier. This time it was largely the poorer African-American urban population that was worst affected. Ronald Reagan fully embraced and expanded the 'war on drugs' and since the 1980s we have seen the legacy of this: mass imprisonment, largely of the poor blacks. Between 2001 and 2010 there were 8.2 million arrests relating to cannabis<sup>1</sup> - 88% of which being minor possession charges - equating to 52% of *all* arrests. Despite the changes in its legal status, arrests relating to possession continue to increase - 659,700 in 2017, compared to 653,249 in 2016.<sup>2</sup> And, although the use of cannabis by whites and blacks is about equal, black people are nearly four times more likely to be arrested for possession.

The legal status of cannabis in the UK has largely been determined by US lobbying for it to be banned internationally - hence the 1961 UN Convention on Narcotic Drugs, classifying it as a schedule 1

(fully prohibited) drug, which was consolidated into UK law in the Misuse of Drugs Act (1971).

## Medicinal

Unlike in some US states, the UK has continued to resist medicinal use of cannabis until very recently - let us take a brief look at how cannabis is used therapeutically and how these changes in UK law came about.

The cannabis sativa plant contains more than a hundred biologically active compounds, called cannabinoids, but the two most active and important in both recreational use and in medicines are tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD). In the central nervous system these bind with receptors within the body's own endocannabinoid system - a binding which triggers a cascade of chemical reactions and physiological effects. THC is the psychoactive component of cannabis and mostly binds to receptors in the brain - with multiple effects that, among other things, influence cognition, memory, appetite, pain perception, proprioception and mood; essentially it makes you feel stoned. CBD in contrast does not - it causes no psychoactive actions, and actually has more of an inhibiting, regulatory effect on THC. But it can have some potentially therapeutic uses - for example, in producing anti-inflammatory effects (similar to ibuprofen) and in treating some forms of rare childhood epilepsy.

Both THC and CBD have been developed as medicines, and there is still potential for utilising some of the other cannabinoids in the sativa plant. However, due to the severe restrictions on research in both the US and Europe, the evidence for their effectiveness is sparse and fragmented. There is evidence that cannabinoids produce benefits in some conditions. As anti-sickness medications they have been shown to be more effective than placebo and as useful as many others. In multiple sclerosis a THC-CBD mix has been proven to provide some benefits in muscle spasticity and pain. This medication called Sativex has until

recently been the only medication available, albeit in a very restricted way, in the UK. In chronic pain cannabinoids have again shown some benefit above placebo - although the studies have featured high drop-out rates due to side effects. CBD oils have been shown to have significant benefit for some patients with rare childhood epilepsy conditions, when used alongside other anti-epileptic medications. These medications are different from the CBD oils on sale legally in the UK in herbal shops, which essentially are only allowed to contain sub-therapeutic traces of CBD.

The case of Billy Caldwell, a 12-year-old boy with Dravet syndrome, recently forced the government to make a small shift in its cannabis policy. Dravet syndrome can cause hundreds of seizures a month, and the child responded remarkably well to CBD treatments while he was in Canada, where he was being treated. When his mother tried to bring his medication back to the UK, it was confiscated at the airport, resulting in him relapsing into severely uncontrolled, potentially fatal, seizures. The resulting public outcry forced a quick change in the law, allowing the prescribing of CBD in some exceptional cases. However, it is still severely restricted and only available in some specialist centres, meaning that many sufferers who could benefit are still being denied it.

So, there is a clear role for cannabis in some medical conditions and further research would surely confirm this, as well as finding new cannabinoids of therapeutic use. Like any medicine though, that use needs to be based on empirical evidence of benefits outweighing harms - ideally through carrying out large-scale, randomised trials, which are impossible under the current law.

Let us also be clear though: cannabis is not, as some say, a 'miracle drug'. Claims that it cures cancer or depression have no basis in evidence and are on par with the quackery of the 'wonder drug' label favoured by the sellers of the 19th

century tinctures. There are also some adverse effects arising from cannabis use, although these continue to be overblown for political reasons. Regularly smoking any chemical increases the risk of respiratory disease and cancer, although the risk is much less than with tobacco. There is also a continuing debate around the link between heavy cannabis use and psychotic illnesses, such as schizophrenia.

A recent peer-reviewed study published in *The Lancet* found that there was a fivefold increase in the risk of a single episode of psychosis following heavy use of skunk.<sup>3</sup> Skunk is a very potent strain of cannabis that has been manufactured by illicit growers due to the banning of traditional herbal cannabis. Historically cannabis contained no more than 10% THC, but skunk contains up to 67% and, of course, when bought on the street illegally, there is no way of telling what quality or concentration it is, or what impurities have been added. So, although there does appear to be a small increased risk of psychosis with heavy skunk use - particularly when taken from an early age - this risk is a direct result of cannabis's illegality in the first place.

## Political ends

As we have seen - from mass incarceration and criminalisation to the denying of valuable medical research and treatments - cannabis prohibition has never been deployed for the benefit of the general population, but for political ends, largely by demonising certain components of the working class. But capitalism's longevity is partly due to its adaptability and, as seen in the US, there is a lot of money that could be made through the legalisation of cannabis - legal sales exceeded \$10 billion in 2018 alone. If the US federal law is changed to allow medical or recreational cannabis use, it will be because of pressure from the likes of Walmart and Pfizer, which have so far missed out on the 'green rush' currently taking place in an increasing number of US states.

We obviously have no interest in creating new markets for transnational corporations and calls for the legalising of cannabis here in the UK should be made alongside the demand for its medical forms to be developed by a nationalised pharmaceutical service and prescribed for free, where proven to be beneficial. Growing should be allowed for individual use and should not be the privilege of large companies, thanks to huge licence fees. Any cannabis sold should clearly be subject to strict quality control and have its THC and CBD concentrations labelled - ending the sale on the street of harmful 'super-skunk'.

Above all else, though, is the need to put an end to the handing down of drug policies by a state that pretends to do so in the interest of its citizens, acting like a parent caring for a naive child. Rational, evidence-based debate and democratic decision-making must be the driving force behind drug legalisation - both recreational and medicinal ●

## Notes

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OPINION

# At what cost to humanity?

Capitalism's 'terminal crisis' cannot be resolved positively without a powerful left, says Rex Dunn

Today we find ourselves in a conjuncture which is unique in human history. This is a reflection of capitalism in terminal crisis, thanks to its internal contradictions, which are unresolvable. In addition, this has led to an existential crisis for humanity itself: ie, the real possibility of an ecological catastrophe.

Meanwhile, bourgeois democracy is becoming more authoritarian. Not only is it dependent on the decisions of a managerial bureaucracy - the World Trade Organisation, International Monetary Fund, etc, which direct the political elites at the national level, such as the Federal Reserve bank, the Congressional lobby industry and the politicians themselves. But now these institutions are being challenged by the US president and his cabinet, as the virtually unaccountable executive of the world's hegemon. Trump and his team are beginning to act in their own interests - even when they contradict those of America's traditional allies.

The world is becoming more unstable, and there is rising inequality everywhere - especially in Africa, parts of the Middle East and Asia. This is being exacerbated by wars and ecological devastation. The burning of fossil fuels shows no sign of slowing down - alongside new green energy, we have the development of the fracking industry, especially in the United States, which today is self-sufficient in fossil fuels. Add to this the destruction of the rainforests, desertification, acidification of the oceans (three fifths of the earth's surface); loss of habitats and the possibility of another mass extinction, including many species upon which civilisation depends.

This does not mean that all life is about to become extinct. Rather, as Marx pointed out a long time ago, the "productive forces [have received] under the system of private property a one-sided development only, [but] for the majority they become destructive forces".<sup>1</sup> In geological terms, we have entered the 'capitalocene' epoch, which within a short time is moving towards 'capitalist ecocide'. We are already living in a world where there is a scarcity of natural resources, upon which the many depend for their very existence. Alongside this we see an abundance of technology, which is controlled by the few, as a means to enrich themselves further.

## Populism

Yet the consciousness of the masses is at an all-time low. Instead of developing what Marx called "the consciousness of the need for a fundamental revolution", we have the rise of rightwing populism. In the United States, this led to Trump's victory in the 2016 presidential election. He won by repeating the mantra, 'Make America great again' (and continues to do so). He uses crude sensationalism, such as this, as a means to stir up old-style national chauvinism in a new form: nostalgia for 'the way we were'!

He is supported in this by millions of self-employed people, blue-collar workers, women as well as men, even a few black voters - despite the fact that he is a racist and a misogynistic bully; not just a demagogue, but a megalomaniac as well. The most powerful man in the world also conducts the affairs of state via Twitter (no-one would have believed this before Trump came along!). So far, his only major achievement has been a massive tax cut for the rich, whilst ordering an equivalent



Whole civilisations have collapsed

increase in America's defence budget. Therefore the US debt, which already amounts to trillions of dollars, will jump even higher. (Yet, given its huge surplus, China acts as creditor to the US; even though the latter is gearing up for a possible war against its rival; otherwise the dollar, upon which world trade depends, might collapse!) Meanwhile the masses continue to swallow the hype that Trump has created millions of new jobs. But many of these are in the self-employed sector (which will go bust, come the next downturn). The rest are low-paid jobs based on zero-hour contracts.

Trump's core support also includes millions of evangelical Christians. They believe that the president is an instrument of god's will, who will bring about Armageddon in the 'Holy Land', as a precursor to Christ's 'second coming', followed by the 'rapture'. His vice-president is an evangelical Christian; so is his secretary of state. It is hard to believe that such an insane ideology is being used to drive American foreign policy.

On the other hand, it dovetails neatly with the hegemon's geopolitical interests. Recently Trump gave Zionist Israel - a colonialist settler state and outrider for American imperialism in the Middle East - the green light to complete the dispossession of the Palestinian people (Trump has already flagged this up as the "deal of the century"). At the same time, he is stirring up a possible war with Iran, wherein Israel will play a proxy role.<sup>2</sup> After all, the US has to demonstrate its hegemonic status to the world. It is a demonstration of 'who's boss', especially to China. It also acts as a riposte to the latter's development of a new high-tech system to boost internet technology; not forgetting its new trade policy: ie, Beijing's 'belt and road initiative'. But the bottom line is the fact that the US economy is still driven by military Keynesianism (which it prefers to any Keynesian Green New Deal!).

This has been the default position of the US, ever since Dwight D Eisenhower embraced the military-industrial complex during the cold war, so the Democrats are unlikely to buck the trend. Therefore, despite the breakdown of neoliberal economics - in short, austerity on the one hand, and rising inequality on the other - Trump was able to win the support of the so-called 'left behinds', because their living standards have fallen

in real terms. His core support is holding up well and, come the next presidential election in 2020, there is every possibility he will make inroads into the Democrat's core base as well. Apart from 'Make America great again', he has also been able to tap into a rising tide of anti-immigrant sentiment (which is worldwide), whether it is a question of political refugees or 'economic migrants'.

Thus rightwing populism is poised to become mainstream. If that happens, neoliberalism - and the Democrats - will be fatally destabilised; even though Trump has appropriated the basic elements of their economic agenda. On the other hand, he is implacably opposed to neoliberalism's social agenda: identity politics. Therefore bipartisan politics itself is under threat.

Meanwhile bourgeois - as well as Marxist economists - predict there will be another financial crash in the next period, which will be worse than 2008. Yet the managerial bureaucracy is reluctant to abandon neoliberal economics in favour of a neo-Keynesian Green New Deal (GND), even though this would provide new technologies to create new jobs, as well as tackle the climate crisis. Instead, aided and abetted by Trump, neoliberalism continues to destroy people's lives by means of the 'free market', globalisation, outsourcing of investments, low wages, welfare cuts and permanent austerity.

Rather than face up to the challenge, the Democratic Party pinned its hopes on the Mueller enquiry into Trump's alleged misconduct. But, when this came up with nothing, the leadership appeared to be nonplussed. This is because the Democrats are tied to corporate America: most likely they will choose Jo Biden to challenge Trump in a year's time. But like Hillary Clinton before him, Biden's first priority is to prop up finance capital, along with the super rich (or 'the 1%'). Therefore the Democrats have nothing to offer the working class, other than a vague promise to raise the minimum wage and defend Medicare (but don't hold your breath). On the other hand, if the Democrats are to have any chance of winning in 2020, they would have to opt for a Green New Deal alternative. But, unlike Franklin D Roosevelt in the 1930s, they are incapable of doing that. If they do lose, it will be because they are unable to offer a real

alternative to the American working class. It is a case of paralysis versus regression, which is indicative of the decline of capitalism itself.

Under these circumstances, as long as nature is ruled by "some blind power" - ie, the market - the world is becoming increasingly irrational. Otherwise how do we explain the Trump phenomenon? As one critic said, if we were living in a *sane* world, then Trump would lose by a landslide - even if he was running against a potted plant!

On the other hand, whilst it does have a sane agenda (such as a commitment to a GND), the tiny American left is unable to break out of its isolation. It has nothing to offer the working class either, because it is tied to the apron strings of the Democratic Party, despite the fact that the latter remains wedded to neoliberalism. That is why traditional ideologies, such as sexism, xenophobia, racism, anti-Semitism and nationalism, continue to grow.

But now, thanks to neoliberalism and its social agenda, these reactionary ideas find expression in a new ideological form: *identitarian* politics, which focuses on group identity, rather than class issues. Hence we have fragmentation and social disintegration. Paradoxically, whilst alienation has been compartmentalised in this way, it is still able to spread itself across the political spectrum: from left liberalism to the fascist right; from bourgeois feminism (the 'me too' movement and LGBT+, wherein gays and the supporters of gender ideology are fighting each other), to white supremacy (angry white men, who want to save the 'white race' from the Muslim invasion); along with its mirror opposite, Islamist jihadists (save Islam from the Crusader Christians). Hence we are seeing an increase in terrorist outrages carried out by the far right: white supremacists, on the one side, and Islamist extremists, on the other, in a deadly tit-for-tat struggle. The Christchurch massacre and the bombings in Sri Lanka are just the latest examples.

Automation and artificial intelligence will continue to be used to create unnecessary wants or for destructive ends - eg, driverless cars, *surveillance* capitalism and war - not to shorten the hours of work. Therefore, given the absence of a real alternative, the direction of movement

for the mass of humanity is further to the right.

But what about the Extinction Rebellion against the threat of an ecological catastrophe? At last we have a climate change movement which cannot be ignored. But it had to be kick-started by schoolchildren, who feel betrayed by their parents' generation. At least they are aware that there is 'no planet B'! But this movement - like the Occupy movement before it - is likely to fade away, unless the working class decides to support it. But the latter is fragmented by identitarian politics.

## Dictatorship

Apart from another financial crash, political economists are also predicting that the trade war between Trump and China will deepen, because China is fighting back. A combination of Trump's tax cuts and tariffs (which is already raising prices) could trigger a new slump. If that happens, another dose of austerity will not be sufficient - there will have to be a shift towards a more authoritarian form of 'democracy'. In the United States things are already deeply corrupted by the corporate lobby. Perhaps the next step will be a one-party state to match that of China? Trump has already tweeted that he is entitled to an extra two years in office, because the Mueller enquiry hampered his promise to 'make America great again'.

Come the 2020 election, all he has to do is win control of both houses of Congress. He already has control of the Supreme Court. Cue a Trump dynasty and an elected dictatorship. But the problem for 'Trumpism' is the 'free market' model itself, which is beginning to falter. Therefore a move towards something like China's top-down state-regulated model of 'future capitalism' is possible (if not probable).

Trump is not just one of the most maverick presidents in the history of the United States. We could be witnessing the start of capitalism's necessary transition to a new form - but without the consciousness of a need to renew the social revolution. The foundations for this have already been laid: There is already a tendency to impose a scarcity of resources on the many, in order to ensure that there will be an abundance of riches for the few. But, in order to be completely successful, this will require a policy of *exterminism* for anyone who is surplus to requirements. (In this regard, the war in the Yemen, which is backed by Trump, offers a template for the future.)

Thus the chances of achieving socialism are becoming even more remote. Yet this is a necessary precondition for "the true realm of freedom", which, according to Marx, is the "final form" or condition towards which man, as a 'species being', is supposed to be developing.

Capitalism is coming to an end. But *how* will it end? What will be the cost to humanity and the rest of the planet? ●

## Notes

1. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 5, p87.  
2. As I was writing this, an American fleet was heading towards Iranian waters. At the same time, Trump has pledged to cut Iran's vital oil exports to "zero", in an attempt to bring the regime to its knees. This is an unalloyed provocation, wherein any response by Iran - eg, its announcement that it would start enriching uranium again - could be seen as a pretext for an attack on the country, initially by Israel. If that happens, we could see the outbreak of a new and much more dangerous war in the Middle East.

**ZIONISM**

# Reclaim the holocaust

The holocaust memorial industry is doing nothing to either remember or warn against other genocides, writes **Tony Greenstein**

**W**hat is remarkable is that, the further away we get from the holocaust, the greater is the desire to 'remember' it. You might have thought that in the years immediately following the end of the war American Jewry would be obsessed by nothing else. Not a bit of it.

The only group in American society who regularly warned people to "Remember the six million murdered" was the Communist Party, although in the era of McCarthyism communists were the last people that the Jewish establishment wanted to be seen with. And, as author Peter Novick writes, "on one point there was striking unanimity among the principal Jewish agencies: the danger that promoting a widespread consciousness of the holocaust would inevitably promote the image of the Jew as victim".<sup>1</sup>

On three separate occasions - 1946, 1947 and 1948 - the major Jewish organisations, including the American Jewish Committee, the Anti-Defamation League, American Jewish Congress, Jewish Labor Committee and Jewish War Veterans, vetoed the idea of a holocaust memorial in New York.<sup>2</sup> And, as Nathan Glazer, the American neoconservative, observed in 1957, the holocaust "had remarkably slight effects on the inner life of American Jewry".<sup>3</sup>

It was the same in Israel. Novick describes how Israel Gutman, a historian at the Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem and a survivor of the Warsaw ghetto resistance, told how Jews in Palestine listened to survivors' stories with "a forced patience" that was soon exhausted: "American Jews, or Jews in the Yishuv, would have been incredulous at the idea ... that survivors' memories were a 'precious legacy' to be preserved."<sup>4</sup>

In a 220-page Israeli history textbook published in 1948, just one page was devoted to the holocaust, compared to 10 on the Napoleonic wars.<sup>5</sup> The survivors were considered an embarrassment and Israelis described them as *sapon* (soap - this was based on the myth that the murdered were turned into soap).<sup>6</sup> Hani Brand wrote of how, when she settled in a kibbutz, the other members "talked about their war to avoid hearing about hers. They were ashamed of the holocaust."<sup>7</sup>

According to Novick, in Israel there was the constant theme of the "survival of the worst". In fact Ben Gurion described holocaust survivors as "people who would not have survived if they had not been what they were - hard, evil and selfish people, and what they underwent there served to destroy what good qualities they had left."<sup>8</sup>

## Secular religion

So what is it that has changed, such that we now have an abundance of holocaust memorials and artefacts? Even the bogus International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of anti-Semitism implies that it has a connection with the murdered Jews. Both Norman Finkelstein and Novick suggest that the holocaust industry sprang up only after the victory over the Arab countries in the war of 1967.<sup>9</sup>

Over 30 years ago Israel "exploded", in Daniel Blatman's words, when professor Yehuda Elkana published *The need to forget*. Elkana, a child survivor of Auschwitz, argued that the time had come to forget the



**Staged image: Jewish refugees from Buchenwald arrive in Haifa**

holocaust. It should no longer be commemorated on a national basis. Worship of the holocaust served nationalist and racist ends.

In 1999 Elkana became president of the Central European University, set up by George Soros. It is ironic that at the end of last year that university announced that it would close and relocate to Vienna, when Hungary's anti-Semitic prime minister, Viktor Orbán, refused to allow it to remain in Hungary. The campaign against Soros was supported - indeed initiated - by the Israeli government and Binyamin Netanyahu, who, like Orbán, saw Soros as an enemy.

Even the title of this article is likely to be subject to criticism since any mention of the holocaust must be accompanied by solemnity, awe and reverential distance. As befits any religion - and the holocaust has become a secular religion - its basic tenets cannot be questioned. It is an experience that must be mediated via holocaust scribes, academics and

organisations such as the Holocaust Educational Trust and Yad Vashem.

Above all, the holocaust can never be fully understood. According to Elie Wiesel, the Auschwitz survivor and arch-Zionist, "Auschwitz cannot be explained, nor can it be visualised ... The holocaust transcends history ..."<sup>10</sup>

If the holocaust cannot be explained and does not belong to history, then it carries no universal lessons. Its only explanation lies in the very existence of the Jews - in other words, eternal and unchanging anti-Semitism. That is why for Israel the holocaust has become a foundational myth, whose only purpose is colonial.

In a macabre re-enactment - only 59 years too late - Israeli fighter jets overflowed Auschwitz in 2003 to rub home the message that if only Israel had been in existence at the time there would have been no holocaust. The National Museum of Auschwitz-Birkenau deplored this crass display. As Ehud Barak, former chief of staff and later prime minister of Israel, stated,

"We have arrived 50 years too late."<sup>11</sup>

Zionism salvages its conscience about its record during the holocaust by fantasising about what might have been if Zionism had achieved its state earlier. What it does not ask is how and why the Zionist movement impeded rescue. The dead of Auschwitz have been summoned in a macabre parade in the cause of Israel's military might.

The use to which holocaust remembrance is cynically put is evidenced by the Israeli state's close connections to the far-right Polish government, which, when not actively encouraging anti-Semitism, engages in its own sophisticated form of holocaust denial. This is the meaning of the Polish government's holocaust law, which Netanyahu's sordid agreement legitimised. Israel's sanctification of the holocaust is intended to manipulate the past in order to shape the present and distort the future.

There are many lessons that can be learnt from the holocaust. One is to

be vigilant against the rise of racism and fascism. Another is to understand that if Germany, with its cultured society, could turn to racial fascism and genocide, then so can any people. All peoples, given the right set of circumstances, can become murderers and accomplices to genocide. And Jews are no exception.

Every year thousands of Israeli schoolchildren visit Auschwitz and take part in the 'March of the Living' just before Israel's Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day). The programme for this year's event states:

The International March of the Living is an annual educational programme, bringing individuals from around the world to Poland and Israel to study the history of the holocaust and to examine the roots of prejudice, intolerance and hatred.<sup>12</sup>

Wrapped in Israeli flags - which to

# What we fight for

Palestinians is what the swastika was to the Jews - these Israeli marchers represent Zionist military might and ethnic cleansing. It is in this way that Israel has subverted and corrupted the meaning of the holocaust. It is no wonder that all the evidence points to Israel's youth becoming even more racist and rightwing than their parents' generation.

In her article, 'Why are Israeli kids so rightwing?', Naomi Zeveloff quotes a 2016 survey, in which 40% of Jewish teenagers aged 15-18 and 44% of Jewish young people (21-24) said they "think that Arab citizens of Israel should be prohibited from being elected to the kneset".<sup>13</sup> Gideon Levy wrote:

I have yet to hear a single teenager come back from Auschwitz and say that we mustn't abuse others the way we were abused. There has yet to be a school whose pupils came back from Birkenau straight to the Gaza border, saw the barbed-wire fence and said, 'Never again'. The message is always the opposite. Gaza is permitted because of Auschwitz.<sup>14</sup>

Despite visiting Auschwitz on "patriotic brainwashing trips", Israeli schoolchildren know nothing of what led up to the Final Solution. "At most they can tell you it was because of anti-Semitism, an explanation that suits the victim identity nurtured from childhood."<sup>15</sup>

Far from combating racism, holocaust remembrance increases and reinforces the existing high level of racism in Israeli society. It provides Zionism's racism with a moral legitimacy.

As Richard Silverstein noted in his article, 'Yom HaShoah and its false premises', Israel's veneration and sacralisation of the holocaust is in inverse proportion to its treatment of Israel's living holocaust survivors.<sup>16</sup> Despite taking billions of dollars from the German government as reparations, Israel has kept them in abject poverty.

## Unique

The elevation of the Jewish holocaust above all other acts of genocide not only suggests that it is unique, but that it has nothing to tell us beyond the fact that it occurred. If the purpose of remembering and commemorating acts of genocide is to prevent their reoccurrence and to act as a warning against their repetition, why single out one act of genocide? The genocide of the gypsies and the disabled are all but omitted from holocaust museums, such as Yad Vashem and the Washington US Holocaust Museum. The genocide of Africans in the slave trade or of Armenians forms no part of Holocaust Memorial Day.

Indeed from the days of Herzl onwards there has been a determined refusal by Zionism to acknowledge the Armenian massacres and genocide. Lucy Dawidowicz, a prominent Zionist historian, went so far as to say that, unlike the Nazis, the Turks had a "rational" reason for massacring Armenians. Elie Wiesel, Alan Dershowitz and Arthur Herzberg, all prominent Zionists, withdrew from an international conference on genocide in Tel Aviv when the sponsors refused to remove sessions on the Armenians.<sup>17</sup> The Zionist lobby in the United States has repeatedly opposed any commemoration of the Armenian holocaust.

Yehuda Bauer, professor of holocaust studies at the Hebrew University Jerusalem, in a debate with Dr Sybil Milton, the senior resident historian at the US Holocaust Memorial Council, argued:

... the tragedy of the gypsies, whilst being no less poignant, and no less horrible, was nonetheless

not part of the holocaust. Whilst it happened at the same time as the holocaust, and there are, of course, many similarities, yet it appears to me that the holocaust is very much a unique case. If someone prefers to call it Judeocide, that is his/her privilege. It is exactly the same thing: it is the mass murder of the Jews at the hands of the Nazis.<sup>18</sup>

For Zionism the holocaust is a 'Jewish only' affair. Sybil Milton, who was herself Jewish, responded succinctly:

(The) Nazi genocide, popularly known as the holocaust, can be defined as the mass murder of human beings because they belonged to a biologically defined group. Heredity determined the selection of the victims. The Nazi regime applied a consistent and inclusive policy of extermination - based on heredity - only against three groups of human beings: the handicapped, Jews and gypsies.<sup>19</sup>

We are now living in an era where Israeli rabbis in an elite pre-military training school can tell their students that Hitler was right, even if he chose the wrong victims. For all their commemoration of the holocaust, even the most basic and elementary anti-racist and anti-fascist sentiments are missing in Israel. It is, after all, a state where the term 'leftwing' is a form of abuse and where Donald Trump is more popular than in any other country. Commemoration of the holocaust serves a wholly nationalist and militarist agenda.

Zionism has appropriated the holocaust and subverted it. When I was involved in the Anti-Nazi League - a mass, anti-fascist movement, which defeated the National Front in the late 1970s - our posters proclaimed: 'Never again'. This also became the slogan and title of a book by Rabbi Meir Kahane of the Judeo-Nazi Kach movement.

However, this focus by political elites on the holocaust has had no effect on the occurrence of genocide. In the late 1970s, as a direct consequence of America's secret war in Cambodia, there occurred the genocide of nearly two million Cambodians. In 1994 there was another genocide - in Rwanda, when up to one million Tutsis and moderate Hutus were murdered by the Hutu Interahamwe, as French troops stood by and even protected the murderers. This is the same France that has all but made BDS illegal in the name of 'anti-Semitism'.

Bill Clinton, who waxed lyrical about the Nazi holocaust when opening the US Holocaust Museum in 1993, refused to intervene the following year in Rwanda. The US administration was specifically warned about a "final solution to eliminate all Tutsis", but decided against intervention.

## Yad Vashem

What makes Israel's use of the holocaust particularly obscene is the role of Yad Vashem. It openly welcomes through its doors people like Viktor Orbán, who last July faced an unprecedented picket by holocaust survivors and others, when he visited the museum. Orbán, fresh from his campaign against Soros, praised as an "exceptional statesman" Miklós Horthy, under whom nearly half a million Jews were deported to Auschwitz.

Following him last September was Rodrigo Duterte, the Philippine president, who has compared himself to Hitler. And Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro paid a visit to Yad Vashem. He described the Nazis as "leftists", whilst 'forgiving' them for the holocaust. In 1976, South Africa's prime minister, John Vorster, who was interned during the war for his

support for the Nazis, visited Yad Vashem. This prompted professor Israel Shahak, a child survivor of the Warsaw ghetto and Belsen, to speak of the behaviour of such politicians at Yad Vashem as "vile and truly beneath contempt".

Daniel Blatman, a holocaust researcher at the Hebrew University described Yad Vashem as a "hard-working laundromat, striving to bleach out the sins of every anti-Semitic, fascist, racist or simply murderously thuggish leader or politician like Hungary's Viktor Orbán, the Philippines' Rodrigo Duterte and Italy's Matteo Salvini."<sup>20</sup>

Matti Friedman in the *New York Times* described the reaction of staff at Yad Vashem to the long list of far-right visitors. One staff member told him:

There is distress here, and even anger, because many of us see a collision between what we believe are the lessons of the holocaust and what we see as our job, and between the way Yad Vashem is being abused for political purposes.<sup>21</sup>

Of course, this should be taken with a pinch of salt, given its record.

Friedman described an incident last June, when Austrian chancellor Sebastian Kurz was told that the names of Austria's lost Jewish communities, which were on a wall he was passing, had recently seen anti-Jewish incidents involving members of the Austrian Freedom Party, whose first two leaders were former SS officers. Kurz's government is in coalition with the Freedom Party.

His guide, Deborah Hartmann, mentioned to the chancellor that some of his allies were people who "need to be informed what the holocaust was". The Austrian embassy "made a rare official complaint" and Yad Vashem issued an apology.

Blatman noted the absence of Yad Vashem from the 5th Global Conference on Genocide in Jerusalem in 2016. Why? It has nothing to say on anything bar the Jewish genocide. Blatman wrote of how

None of the hundreds of scientific events organised by Yad Vashem has been dedicated to the holocaust and genocide .... You have to look hard to find any reference to the destruction of other populations in the holocaust, and its chief aim seems to be to silence criticism. Similar museums in Paris and Washington hold regular activities on these topics.<sup>22</sup>

Whilst Yad Vashem studies what happened to the Jews in Polish or Ukrainian cities, "they rarely address Nazi atrocities against other ethnic groups". They study the minute detail of what happened to the Jews without ever seeing the wider picture. Yad Vashem "helps keep the holocaust in a narrow Jewish ghetto that serves the xenophobic manipulations Israel makes of it".

That is why Yad Vashem has never given birth to a comprehensive book on the holocaust, such as Gerald Reitlinger's *The final solution* or Raul Hilberg's *Destruction of the European Jews*. Holocaust research in Israel has done nothing to combat racism.

That was the conclusion of Professor Elkana in *The need to forget*. If what Elkana wrote was true 31 years ago, it is even more true now. For Zionism and the Israeli state, the holocaust functions not as a warning against the dangers of racism, but as means of silencing their critics. The holocaust is Israel's 'Get out of jail free' card. Elkana wrote:

Lately I have become more and more convinced that the deepest political and social factor

that motivates much of Israeli society in its relations with the Palestinians is not personal frustration, but rather a profound existential 'Angst' fed by a particular interpretation of the lessons of the holocaust and the readiness to believe that the whole world is against us, and that we are the eternal victim. In this ancient belief, shared by so many today, I see the tragic and paradoxical victory of Hitler. Two nations, metaphorically speaking, emerged from the ashes of Auschwitz: a minority, who assert: 'this must never happen again'; and a frightened and haunted majority, who assert: 'this must never happen to us again'.

Elkana cited Thomas Jefferson as having written that democracy and worship of the past are incompatible. Elkana's conclusion was: "For our part, we must learn to forget! ... They must uproot the domination of that historical 'remember!' over our lives." Gideon Levy similarly wrote:

We have to forget as quickly as possible and make others forget to the degree possible. The time has come to get past the past. We needn't erase it, but put it in its place; it's over.<sup>23</sup>

The holocaust cannot be forgotten. The question is how it is remembered, by whom and for what purpose. Zionism's abuse of holocaust memory has to be challenged. Under capitalism all memory serves a purpose and holocaust remembrance is no different. Levy wrote:

The legacy of the holocaust has caused Israel fateful damage: it solidified nationalism and validated militarism, instead of shaping humanism, justice, morality and compliance with international law, which in Israel 2019 are considered treason or weakness.

Levy argues that what drives racism and hatred of Arabs is "self-victimisation". That is because: "After the holocaust we are permitted to do anything and, of course, only with force."

The holocaust needs to be reclaimed by the left and anti-fascists. For too long the Zionist movement has got away with harnessing it to the chariot of racism and ethnic cleansing ●

## Notes

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■ 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

**Official anti-racism goes hand in hand with national chauvinism**

## Reinventing the monarchy

Danny Baker's sacking over his royal baby tweet symbolises the official anti-racism of ruling class ideology, writes Eddie Ford

Everyone reading this was doubtlessly delighted to hear about the birth last week of another royal baby, Archie Harrison Mountbatten-Windsor. The kid is actually seventh in line to the throne, so, alas, it is extremely unlikely that we will ever have a 'King Archie'. Of course, his parents are Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex, and Meghan Markle - now the Duchess of Sussex, but originally an American actor, whose mother is black.

The choice of names for the baby is interesting for a number of reasons - royal commentator Richard Fitzwilliams said the "individuality" shown by Harry and Meghan in their choice of non-traditional royal names was "marvellous" and would "rejuvenate" the monarchy. However, 'Mountbatten' is one of the names of Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh - it is an anglicised version of the German 'Battenberg' (as in the cake). Apparently, Philip threw a tantrum when his wife declared in 1952 that the royal family's surname from now on would be Windsor and not Mountbatten - he shouted, "I'm just a bloody amoeba", as he was the only man in the country not to have passed on his surname to his children.<sup>1</sup>

In reality, Philip is not really Greek at all - rather, he comes from a European-wide aristocracy that has existed for centuries in various shapes and forms. Indeed, the idea that Elizabeth II and her family are British in the way that people down the pub would normally understand it is quite dubious. Apart from the fact that the queen is married to a 'Greek', all you have to think of is Queen Victoria, "the grandmother of Europe" - tsar Nicholas II, kaiser Wilhelm II, Constantine I of Greece, etc. Victoria, of course, married her first cousin Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha - but the family surname was hastily changed in 1917 to 'Windsor' in order to sound British. Then the first rule of the royal game was that you married other members of this European aristocracy, having the unfortunate effect of spreading haemophilia and other unwanted conditions through several royal houses. Too much inbreeding is never a good idea.

Anyhow, as for 'Archie', it means 'bold' or 'brave'. Archie is also the heir apparent to his father's Dukedom of Sussex, Earldom of Dumbarton, and Barony of Kilkeel. Given that Harry is not the eldest son of Charles, the Prince of Wales, his son is neither a British prince nor entitled to the sobriquet, "royal highness" - no doubt upsetting or confusing some. True, his parents do have the option of using one of Prince Harry's subsidiary titles, such as 'Earl of Dumbarton'. However, they decided that their child would simply be styled as 'Master' Archie Mountbatten-Windsor, because they want him to grow up as a "private citizen" - good luck with that one. Being generous, kind-hearted souls though, communists will do everything possible to help



More than a family: it is a 'firm' (Philip Windsor)

the proud parents get their wish by fighting for a republic, in which Archie Mountbatten-Windsor - or whatever he cares to call himself in the future - will be a truly private and equal citizen rather than leading a privileged, alienated and unnatural existence.

### Race

In other words, this particular royal baby symbolises a change in British culture and identity - you can marry a commoner like Meghan Markle, without anyone making a big fuss, except for a very small minority of eccentric reactionaries and incurable bigots. But this would have been unthinkable 50 years ago - just look at the constitutional crisis when Edward VIII, the 'Nazi king', proposed in 1936 to the American divorcee, Wallis Simpson. He was forced to abdicate in order to marry her.

Now it is almost a different world. Not only is Markle a divorcee: she is also of 'mixed race' - hence the same goes for Archie. But, when Harry and Megan got married last year, almost 18 million in Britain watched it, with no less than 1.9 billion people following the "stunning" ceremony worldwide. It was a real coup for the establishment, which is keen to present itself as modern, liberal, forward-thinking and - last, but not least - anti-racist.

In fact, it went even further than that, with one commentator describing the wedding as a "rousing celebration of blackness" - also present at

like the BBC, he must have read the guidelines and attended the meetings about what you can and cannot say.

Yet he claims to have been unaware of the racist connotations of the tweet, limply saying, "Sorry my gag pic of the little fella in the posh outfit has whipped some up". But, apparently, it "never occurred" to him that it might be regarded as racist, because "mind not diseased" - which suggests that the real problem lies with those pointing out how obviously racist the image was - given the caption - rather than the person who idiotically posted it, regardless of his exact motivation.

In a later tweet - making things even worse, if anything - he said: "Would have used same stupid pic for any other royal birth or Boris Johnson kid or even one of my own. It's a funny image (though not of course in that context). Enormous mistake, for sure. Grotesque." He added: "Anyway, here's to ya, Archie. Sorry, mate". He even said at one point that he did not know it was Meghan Markle who had given birth, and so could not be guilty of racism. For someone so keyed in to popular culture, this is stretching credibility too far - please, Danny, give it a rest.

No wonder the BBC sacked him for a "grave error of judgment". But it goes without saying that he is not the only one to make such errors - last year US comedian Roseanne Barr had her newly resurrected show pulled for a tweet in which she likened a former black advisor to Barack Obama to a child of the "Muslim brotherhood & planet of the apes". More recently still, we had Amber Rudd's distinctly non-politically correct use of "coloured" to describe Diane Abbott and the reference of ex-Labour and now Change UK MP Angela Smith to people of a "funny tinge".

However, arguably, Baker's seeming indifference to the special sensitivities surrounding the birth of Archie Mountbatten-Windsor is on a different scale. As is more than obvious, the royal family is a historically white institution like no other in Britain - meaning that you should be careful, or at least not be stupid, about how you approach such an issue, even if your intention is to be satirical. On the other hand, you want to avoid fetishising or making absurdly exaggerated claims about 'black royalty' in the manner of Rachel Johnson, the sister of Boris - she went on about Meghan Markle's

"rich and exotic DNA" as a thickening agent to bolster the family's "watery, thin blue blood."

### Nationalism

In the photos of the happy royal couple and their new baby, you have not only the reigning monarch, but also Markle's mother from America - "overjoyed" at the arrival of her first grandchild, she is staying with her daughter at Frogmore Cottage, the new parents' home on the Windsor Estate. Anyone who looks at those photos and says there is no such thing as official anti-racism is not living in the real world. Of course, this is not the same as saying there is no racism in Britain, which would be stupid - there is a whole ideology of nationalism which goes mainly unchallenged, even by much of the left. But it is self-evident that the British state and its institutions - not to mention all major non-state organisations - are run according to an official anti-racist ideology.

That is why Danny Baker was instantly dismissed for an incident widely perceived to be racist, whilst protesting all the time that that he is not a racist. The left has to wake up to this profound change in official ideology if it is to have any impact in wider society - otherwise it is in danger of just echoing the liberal mantras of official ideology.

The SWP's Stand Up To Racism must be the easiest campaign in the world to run - it is like going outside a church and saying, 'We are against evil'. You might get a pat on the back for your good work, but so what? SUTR is reminiscent of Momentum's slightly crazy drive against David Icke, who is a ridiculous target - is he about to join the cabinet or form a government? But, as we all know, SUTR is really about rehabilitating the SWP after the Martin Smith/Delta scandal, which led to its stalls being attacked, copies of *Socialist Worker* being burnt, and all the rest.

It is surely about time that the SWP, and the left as whole, got to grips with official anti-racism - which is perniciously combined with British national chauvinism ●

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### Notes

1. www.express.co.uk/news/royal/1124988/prince-Philip-royal-baby-name-surname-last-name-Archie-Harrison-Mountbatten-Windsor.

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