

# weekly **worker**



**Despite Trump's contradictory pronouncements war threat must be taken seriously**

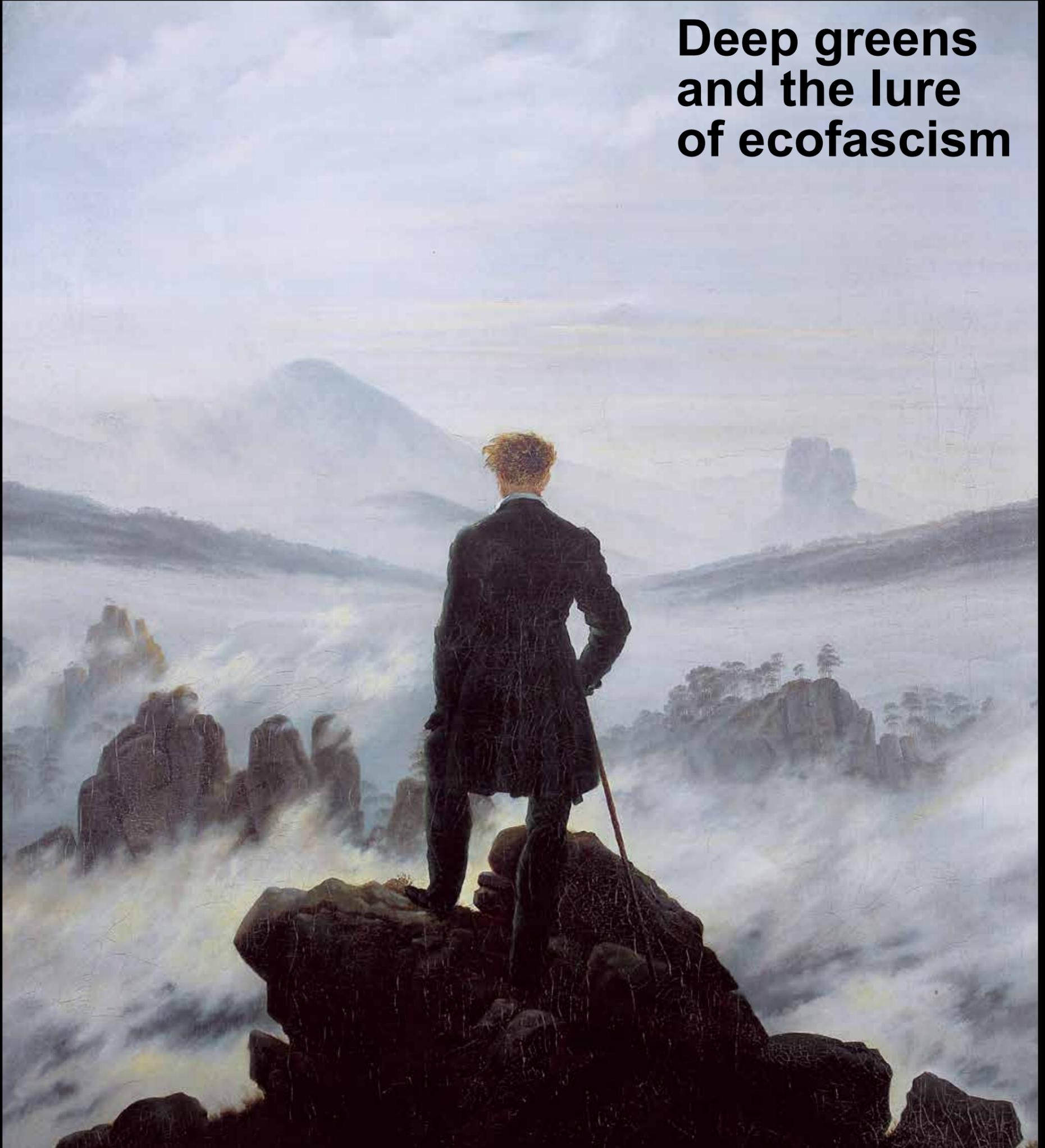
- CPGB aggregate
- CWI splitters and splits
- Tories: blue on blue
- Labour: AMMs or GCs?

No 1256 June 20 2019

Towards a Communist Party of the European Union

£1/€1.10

## Deep greens and the lure of ecofascism



## LETTERS



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

## Climate hysteria

In April the streets of London were brought to a standstill in a protest in support of the demand to recognise an alleged 'climate emergency'.

For those of us with a lifetime of protest and political action behind us, the reaction of the Metropolitan Police and the government was suspicious, to say the least. Contrast the treatment of these by-and-large middle class hordes - some from swish London flats and mansions - with that of the miners and their families, when we came to London to protest against our own impending environmental disaster. Contrast, for example, the indulgence with which the cops treated all those nice middle class folk stopping people going to work, to school, to hospital appointments, to catch holiday flights. Contrast the jovial and 'all good fun' attitude of the Met to the measures meted out to miners when we tried to stop strikebreakers going to work. Contrast the TV and liberal media sympathy and unchallenged presentation of their hysterical propaganda that we are all doomed - doomed to burn and drown or starve or die of drought. When did the media even attempt to present the case of the striking miners and our communities, or of firefighters or railworkers? Never. Why do I get the clear impression that the ruling class has no objections to all this?

Dr Gail Bradbrook, one of the founders of Extinction Rebellion, in an exchange with Adam Boulton on Sky TV about whether they were causing chaos, revealed that XR had run the whole thing past junior ministers and advisors *prior* to the protest. They were assured, she said, that the government "needed a social movement" just like Extinction Rebellion. That the government needed a movement to create an atmosphere allowing it to bring forward "highly unpopular measures". The media in these situations are singing from the same script and will not draw the obvious conclusion. When the 1984-85 miners' strike looked like it could roll all before it, the government needed a movement such as the 'back to work' Union of Democratic Mineworkers - and, hey, one happened.

On the XR protest thousands were arrested, but were then released without conditions, allowing them to return to the action. But during 1984-85 arrested strikers were given bail restrictions which not only banned them from picket lines and demonstrations, but any premises owned by the National Coal Board or at which coal was processed or sold! Breaching such conditions got you a prison sentence.

The more I have reflected on this, the more I see collusion between the state and those eco-stormtroopers, who I get the impression are unconscious agents softening us up for deep and swingeing attacks on our standards of life and social freedoms.

XR demands net zero emissions of carbon dioxide by 2025. This apparently means that, whatever volume of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions we produce, the same volume has to be removed from the environment - or presumably offset by, for example, planting millions of new trees and restoring the rain forests. To demand that this be accomplished in six years time, when none of the technical and scientific infrastructure to achieve anything like this exists even in Britain, is frankly ridiculous.

Only 1%-4% of the world's CO<sub>2</sub>

emissions come from here, so even if we did all that, we would not dent the global picture. Is such an industrial (and it would have to be industrial) transformation possible? Maybe, if we embraced carbon capture for power, steel and cement production. You would need to do that to manufacture your electric cars, using windmills, solar energy or any other renewable energy system, but what you could not do is stop using gas, coal, oil or steel. That is the part I do not think XR grasp.

Coal production worldwide is rising and, with the standard of life for developing countries resting on that, will continue to do so. The answer is carbon capture and storage (CCS) and clean-coal technology - anathema to the greens, of course, who want shot of miners and mining, never mind emissions. Carbon capture applied to steel production is technically easy, although steel production only accounts for less than 4% of Britain's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. But that includes 1% caused by the transportation of coal or coke for steel.

The answer to that is so obvious - stop transporting it from Appalachia and the socially most devastating form of mining on earth (strip mining) and dig the coal here - a quarter of all the world's prime coal is in Britain. Good god, open coal mines? St Greta - ie, Greta Thunberg the 16-year-old Swedish starlet of the international school strike movement - denounced the opening of our one and only new deep mine, in her submission to the Climate Change Select Committee. It should be noted that the crippling bill which pushed British Steel over the brink is the huge CO<sub>2</sub> levy imposed by the European Union - although, turning the truth on its head, BS bosses blamed not the EU for their plight, but the decision to leave it. The fact is that steel prices have dropped by more than 25% worldwide, mainly through the climate extinction panic about CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and consequent attacks on industry and manufacture, resulting in closures and the loss of markets.

No attempt whatever is made to look strategically at what can be done without halting civilisation, such as through CCS or, more importantly, stopping the decimation of the world's forests. This alone would directly reduce by one third world CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and, if the process was reversed, would start to rebalance the climate and atmosphere from CO<sub>2</sub> conversion to oxygen. Trees and vegetation, of course, love CO<sub>2</sub> - inasmuch as they can handle it, they thrive on it. It is disproportion which is the problem. This feature is directly linked to increasing meat consumption and production, which necessitates deforestation, on the one hand, and animal-produced methane emissions - a far more damaging greenhouse gas than CO<sub>2</sub> - on the other.

There is something utterly repugnant about well-heeled, public-school-educated, rich and posh people laying down the law as to how the rest of us should live and what we have to do. I have no doubt they with all their wealth will buy their way around any restrictions they enforce on the plebs - be that electric cars, solar panels, private wells - while telling us the very important reasons why we must do as they say (not as they do).

Nowhere is this more demonstrated than in the lifestyles of the leaders and founders of the 'rebellion'. We are told holidays abroad are a luxury we cannot allow to continue. Air travel is for emergency only and families should not fly more than once every five years and only then if absolutely necessary.

Robin Boardman-Pattison, a co-founder of the campaign, stormed

out of a Sky News interview when confronted by his own Facebook page, which showed him on a skiing holiday in the Alps and his earlier seaside holiday in Italy this year. Emma Thompson, a leading supporter of XR, arrived at the protest *by plane* from Los Angeles. Her emergency? She had her 60th birthday bash to go to, so how else was she to get there and back? It is, she said, the only means of trans-global travel at present. Yes, Emma, that's why the rest of us use it too, but your supporters are planning to ruin our long awaited holidays by blocking the airports.

But it is worse than that. She argued that the use of planes would continue to be an essential part of her profession as a film star. But coalminers, power station workers, lorry drivers, etc will just have to bite the bullet in the cause of the 'climate emergency' and lose their professions. As if that was not bad enough, she flies 'business class', which allows her far more room on the plane and thus leaves a carbon footprint per air mile the size of a yeti - unlike the rest of us on our occasional holiday flight.

The protestors stuck a pink yacht in the middle of the road bearing the slogan, "Tell the truth", but the truth was the last thing they wanted to hear - all arguments or demands for reality were shouted down. I do not delight in the promise by Labour that they will introduce compulsory climate change awareness lessons for primary kids. One wonders what level of scientific fact and evolutionary history will be presented against the 'sky is falling in' panic one hears at every turn these days.

There has recently been great excitement among anthropologists at the discovery of ancient tools and weapons on 'Doggerland', the submerged peninsula which linked what is now Britain to the continent. Doggerland became Doggerbank, as rising sea levels engulfed it 10,000 years ago, due to climate change. But this was not man-made climate change: it was a perfectly natural process of the kind which long predates our brief advent onto the planet and, despite our woefully destructive lack of caution, still accounts for at least 50% of modern climate change. 11,700 years ago the last great ice age ended and the polar caps started to melt due to climate change - we didn't do that either. So one gets the impression that natural and unstoppable climate change will not be the focus of the curriculum - we can't let the kids form the wrong impression, can we?

When Greta Thunberg came over from Sweden to tell the school strikers they were brilliant, she also talked to a hushed meeting of MPs, as if she was speaking words of profound wisdom. One would have thought she was the Dalai Lama dispensing rare words of insight and guidance, instead of frankly ignorant dross. She is the most indulged and patronised teenager in history. 'Nobody is doing anything' is her theme, so we, the young, must do it instead. Those of us who see the worldwide panic over global warming, on the one hand, and the complete destruction of our mining industry, our steel industry, the end of aluminium production, the crippling of construction, on the other, beg to differ.

Now that we have mass importation of power station ash to make breeze blocks, the dearest fuel prices in the world, a rising death rate from hyperthermia each year, the destruction of our industrial communities, and regions turned into drug-smitten centres of social deprivation, we know how stupid a remark that is. She also took time to denounce the decision of Cumberland

County Council to approve a new coal mine, because the world needs to stop mining coal. She is ignorant of the fact that no renewable energy can be supplied without steel and coal, to make coke to manufacture windmills or solar panels, or power the trains and track on which she sat week after week on her grand tour.

So, what's it all about? The state is set for the most draconian of anti-carbon laws and taxes which will restrict the life styles of the working class population in a way greater than the enclosure acts and the Highland clearances, or the 'dictatorship of the clock', as Engels described the war on labour freedoms in the early years of the industrial revolution. Wee Greta is, I fear, destined to become 'regretta' - the cuddly, poor, hippy tribute band of middle class ecism is the social stun gun aimed at softening us up, with 'common sense' and 'unavoidable' social conclusions aimed at rolling back our social and personal freedoms and introducing an austerity of fundamental and, for us, catastrophic proportions.

David John Douglass  
South Shields

## No Hebrew nation

I am grateful to comrade Machover for his correction of my error regarding the entry for religion in the Israeli ID card (Letters, June 13). However, on the substantive points I cannot agree with Moshé.

It is true that in most cases a nation is defined by common language, territory and economy - although, as Moshé points out, in the case of, for example, the Kurds then this is clearly not so. However, I stand by my assertion that Israeli Jews, being an *active* settler people, have not formed a nation. It is precisely for this reason that Israeli Jews themselves are divided on how they see themselves. Are they Israeli first - that is, defined by the territory in which they reside, or Jews who are part of a greater Jewish nation? This confusion is a reflection of the artificial nature of the Israeli state itself.

What Moshé refers to as the Israeli Jewish or Hebrew nation is defined by 'the other' - in this case their antagonism to the Palestinians. If Moshé wishes to call the Israeli settlers a nation, fine, but it doesn't change the reality that this is a 'nation' held together through the oppression of another.

A nation is not simply a matter of ticking a box. This is the Stalinist method. It is also a matter of consciousness of being a nation and in Israel there is no such consciousness. It is not a matter of Zionist ideology, but a belief that runs from the establishment of Israel as a state that they are part of the Jewish people. There is no separate Israeli nation or even Israeli Jewish nation.

The whole aim of Zionism was to transform Jews as a religion into Jews as a nation. It was a collective form of assimilation, yet it was not to be. That is why many Israeli Jews consider they are Jewish by nationality, but not by religion. It also explains the deep hostility to those who are not Jewish.

I fundamentally disagree with Moshé over the question of Israeli nationality. Moshé states quite correctly that "*Nationality/Nationalité* is used to specify the citizenship status of the bearer" in a passport. However, this is *not* the case with Israel. Israeli citizenship does *not* confer Israeli nationality. That is why the entry for nationality in Israeli passports is a lie.

When Moshé states that "Israel is no exception in this respect: there is an Israeli nationality, which is listed as such in the passport ..." he is simply wrong. He refers me to the Wikipedia entry for 'nationality'. I therefore took

his advice and looked it up. What Wiki says is that "in most modern countries all nationals are citizens of the state, and full citizens are always nationals of the state". In Israel, however, non-Jewish citizens are clearly *not* full nationals of the state, *because it is a Jewish state*. That is why citizenship can be removed so easily from, for example, the Bedouin of the Negev.

In *The unJewish state* by Moshé's late comrade, Akiva Orr, he writes, in respect of the case of Oswald Rufeisen, that "The actual controversy was about the entry for 'nationality' (which in Hebrew means 'membership of a nation' and not, as in Britain, 'citizenship')." Akiva goes on to say that in the population registry a Palestinian Arab can enter 'Israeli' for citizenship, 'Arab' for nationality and 'Christian' for religion. In other words, unlike Britain and most other states, citizenship and nationality are *not* coterminous.

Nor is this a matter of opinion. This has been subject to rulings by Israel's supreme court in the cases of George Tamarin v State of Israel in 1972 and Uzi Ornan v State of Israel in 2013. In the former case, chief justice Shimon Agranat ruled: "... the desire to create an Israeli nation separate from the Jewish nation is not a legitimate aspiration. A division of the population into Israeli and Jewish nations would ... negate the foundation on which the state of Israel was established." The court decided: "There is no Israeli nation separate from the Jewish people. The Jewish people is composed not only of those residing in Israel, but also of diaspora Jewry."

Israel is remarkable and exceptional in that there is no Israeli nationality. In which other country is there no nationality? The entry for nationality in the population register is Jewish, Arab, Muslim and indeed there are hundreds of 'nationalities'. That is what makes Israel different from all other states.

It is also incorrect that I deny the existence of a Hebrew nation, which would include members of all religions and none, because it accords with Zionist ideology! I deny it because it accords with reality. Nor do the majority of Israelis reject it because of conditioning or indoctrination. They deny it because that is how they see the reality of their own position. No amount of indoctrination could persuade people not to recognise their own membership of a nation.

Tony Greenstein  
Brighton

## Here we go again

Of course, the first question one has to ask is, what is Steven Johnston's definition of a "safe space"? (Letters, June 13).

Those of us who occasionally listen to 'real life' will have heard on *Desert island discs* that more women were killed by their partners during the troubles in Northern Ireland than other people were killed during the entire time. Do we, as communists, ignore the plight of women who are being abused because they do not have the correct 'line'?

It should be a source of outrage that anyone needs safe spaces because of abuse from others, no matter who they are. Denial or belittling of that need is not helpful. Does comrade Johnston not believe that women of all classes are disadvantaged economically and socially, compared to their male peers? Of course, it is true that working class women in abusive situations have fewer options in terms of escape than middle class women, so do we only allow working class women into shelters?

What Steven Johnston appears to be saying is an argument I have heard

many times over the years: women's issues are a deviation from the *real* struggle (akin to 'Black issues are a deviation from the *real* struggle', which I heard starting in the 1950s). The 'real struggle' being, of course, what men *say* is the real struggle - other struggles not being important enough to deal with. As a friend of mine once said, "Oh, I see, men won't give up their power until they can take on somebody else's."

Without active and united support of women and other oppressed groups it is ultimately easy for the ruling class to divide and conquer. Residual misogyny in working class organisations can hold back tackling the class enemy. Comrade Johnston needs to learn the lessons of the Dagenham machinists, who had to fight the local union bureaucracy as well as the bosses for equality. Enough with the 'horny-handed sons of toil' mythology!

How do we win over others, comrade, speaking only to ourselves? Or maybe we should be speaking only to men, because they have the time and energy to engage in politics, while many women do not? If one believes that women are doubly exploited, surely we need to help encourage the doubly exploited into the movement? And if that is the case, how do we bring women into a movement, if not by supporting the struggles they might have in progress?

Capitalism will use any type of exploitation it can find - gender, race, nationality, religion, colour of clothing, bra size, whatever. It does us no good to believe that we can stay in a bubble and ignore other struggles going on around us.

And, yes, some abused men actually do need safe spaces too. Just not the same ones as women.

**Gaby Rubin**  
London

## Studied ambiguity

Carla Roberts reports on the Peterborough by-election, which highlighted the crisis in the Labour Party over the Brexit referendum, anti-Semitism and trigger ballots to recall Labour MPs ('From Peterborough to Pompeo', June 13). She describes Corbyn's policy on the referendum as "studied ambiguity" - which Labour Party Marxists have also signed up for.

Carla says: "From a limited electoral perspective Corbyn's position still makes a lot of sense. Coming out firmly on either side of the binary debate will do nothing to increase Labour's chance in the ballot box." She adds that "while Corbyn quite rightly refuses to pick a side, he has also not attempted to break out of his false 'in or out' dichotomy".

Corbyn has taken sides. He has refused to side with ultra-'leave' or ultra-'remain', but has taken his stance as a 'remain-democrat'. He is somebody who campaigned to remain, but accepted the decision to leave. This is what the Labour Party did in 2016 and in the 2017 election manifesto. He has tried to find a version of 'leave' which protects working class interests.

This is an honourable approach to take. More than this, it is political good sense - not least because of the divisions in the working class, the Labour Party and amongst Labour voters. My criticism is not about compromise, but that he has not found the *right kind* of compromise. He should have looked more carefully at the democratic mandate from 2016 and married this with the interests of the working class.

However, this is not simply about Corbyn. It is Labour policy that should be examined, not least because Corbyn doesn't stray far from it. Labour's 2018 Brexit resolution includes the following: "Conference accepts that the public voted to leave

the EU"; and "Conference believes we need a relationship with the EU that guarantees full participation in the single market."

Then there is: "Conference also believes a no-deal Brexit should be rejected as a viable option and calls upon Labour MPs to vigorously oppose any attempt by this government to deliver a no-deal outcome." A number of Labour MPs did not act in line with this policy recently in parliament. They should be called to account and face a trigger ballot.

Along with the Zionist-inspired 'anti-Semitism' campaign, the key issue to oust Corbyn and defeat the socialist movement is the liberal demand for a second referendum with a 'remain' question. This is being pressed by Alastair Campbell, Tom Watson, Emily Thornberry, Paul Mason, Lloyd Russell-Moyle and Another Europe Is Possible, etc.

This ultra-'remain' attack cannot be defeated or even beaten back without deploying the weapon of working class democratic demands. The Labour Party conference, influenced by working people through their trade unions, spells out the answer: "Conference notes that, when trade unions have a mandate to negotiate a deal for their members, the final deal is accepted or rejected by the membership." It adds that, if the government gets a deal which benefits working people, "they should not be afraid to put that deal to the public".

Trade unions enable working people to vote to ratify or reject negotiated deals. The people voted 'out', say the ultra-leavers (Farage, Rees-Mogg, etc), but 'out' only means 'out' when the people (ie, a majority) decide what 'out' means by voting on it. We have to be able to debate and vote on the actual deal we have been offered, not the vague fantasy Brexit from 2016.

Carla praises Corbyn for refusing to "pick a side" between ultra-'leave' and 'ultra-remain', but criticises him for not attempting to break out of this "false 'in or out' dichotomy". I blame Labour Party Marxists, who have done nothing to help Corbyn break out of this trap. The democratic trade union practice of ratification replaces this "false 'in or out' dichotomy" with a democratic dichotomy between 'yes' and 'no'.

Carla and the LPM have offered us a false choice between the Stalinist opposition to the working class having the right to vote in a referendum and the liberal demand for a second referendum slogan to overturn the first, masquerading as democracy. Neither Stalinism nor liberalism has the answer to the democratic problem posed by the 2016 referendum.

The 2018 Labour conference never called for a second referendum with a 'remain' question. The resolution said: "Should parliament vote down a Tory Brexit deal or the talks end in no deal, conference believes this would constitute a loss of confidence in the government. In these circumstances, the best outcome for the country is an immediate general election."

It adds: "If we cannot get a general election, Labour must support all options remaining on the table, including campaigning for a public vote." There is no reason for "studied ambiguity" on this. A public vote is no more than a ratification referendum. It was Keir Starmer and the right wing of the Labour Party who have tried to turn "remaining on the table" into a 'remain' question.

The Labour Party Marxist policy - whether it is Stalinist opposition to the working class having the right to ratify or merely "studied ambiguity" over different kinds of referendum - helps the right wing of the Tories, the right of the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats, who are already aided and abetted by socialists like

Paul Mason and Another Europe, acting as their 'useful idiots'.

**Steve Freeman**  
London

## Forget Labour

I found Paul Demarty's article about the approaching split in Peter Taaffe's Committee for a Workers' International most interesting ('Fiasco nears conclusion', June 13).

I think at the root of this split is the failure of the left to grow following the credit crunch of 2007-08. This is a failure of theory, policy, programme and method - particularly the bureaucratic centralist method of organising of the CWI. This bureaucratic centralism has also led to the recent dissolution of the International Socialist Organization in the US.

At the same time, many radical organisations are in retreat and ceasing to produce hard-copy newspapers and magazines and relying entirely on the internet instead. For example, Socialist Resistance has ceased publication of its monthly *Socialist Outlook* newspaper. Its Fourth International co-thinkers have ceased publication of the quarterly magazine *International Viewpoint*. Revolutionary Socialism in the 21st Century (RS21) has also ceased publication of its quarterly magazine. Similarly, the Green Party has ceased publication of its magazine *Green World* and is now a monthly online newsletter.

With the Socialist Party in England and Wales and the Socialist Workers Party now each having less than 1,000 members, I would guess that their respective weekly publications - *The Socialist* and *Socialist Worker* - are a financial black hole. The same could be said for the Communist Party of Britain's daily, *Morning Star*. I wouldn't be surprised if it soon goes weekly - unless it is in receipt of Chinese gold or money from a rich member.

Whilst Marxists must now have a presence online, a hard copy revolutionary newspaper is essential for any serious revolutionary organisation. The internet has many problems for Marxists. Facebook is now becoming more and more non-political and censorship can only get worse in the coming years.

Google has recently changed its algorithms so that leftwing websites no longer appear in the top 10 of searches. A good example of this is the World Socialist Web Site. Since Google changed its algorithms, web traffic has fallen from a peak of 60,000 a day to just 25,000 a day.

It is therefore very satisfying that the *Weekly Worker* continues to be a hard-copy newspaper. This is a result of having correct theory, policy, programme and method. It is also due to the hard work of the production team and its supporters.

Like many disillusioned Corbyn supporters, I don't want to be associated with a Corbyn-led Labour Party. The Corbyn surge has exhausted itself. The Labour Party will soon go into oblivion just like the German SPD, the French Socialist Party, the Italian Democratic Left, Spain's Podemos, the Greek Pasok and Syriza, the Swedish Social Democrats and the Irish Labour Party.

Lenin famously wrote in his *Leftwing communism* that the newly formed CPGB should apply for affiliation to the Labour Party, fully knowing it would be rejected and hence exposing the bourgeois nature of its leadership. Whilst the CPGB did carry out some work within the Labour Party in the 1920s and 1930s, its main area of work was in building the membership of the CPGB and its paper, the *Daily Worker*.

In 2019, instead of trying to build Labour Party Marxists and the Labour 'left', the CPGB should be building its membership and the circulation of the *Weekly Worker*. I gather many CPGB members agree with me on this?

**John Smithee**  
Cambridgeshire

# ACTION

## London Communist Forum

**Sunday June 23, 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): 'All power to the soviets'.  
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 June 25, 7pm:** Series of talks on social and biological anthropology, Daryll Forde seminar room, Anthropology Building, 14 Taviton Street, off Gordon Square, London WC1.  
This meeting: 'The origins of radical anthropology', Speaker: Anthony Auerbach.  
Organised by Radical Anthropology Group:  
<http://radicalanthropologygroup.org>.

## Youth Strike 4 Climate

**Friday June 21, 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).

## Arise - Labour left

**Friday June 21 and Saturday June 22:** Various venues in central London. Over 20 sessions with prominent Labour movement speakers. Tickets from £5 to £18.  
Organised by Labour Assembly Against Austerity:  
[www.facebook.com/events/2292650817431675](http://www.facebook.com/events/2292650817431675).

## Palestine: the next generation

**Saturday June 22, 9am to 5pm:** Conference, Resource for London, 356 Holloway Road, London N7. Organising young people to become involved in Palestine solidarity activism. Tickets £7.50 (members £5).  
Organised by Palestine Solidarity Campaign:  
[www.facebook.com/events/325615014815876](http://www.facebook.com/events/325615014815876).

## Derby Silk Mill rally

**Saturday June 22, 10am to 4.30pm:** 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/events/232199550654799](http://www.facebook.com/events/232199550654799).

## Stop the London arms fair

**Saturday June 22, 11am to 5pm:** Training session, Bridge 5 Mill, 22a Beswick Street, Manchester M4. Skill up to stop the DSEI London arms fair in September.  
Organised by Campaign Against Arms Trade:  
[www.facebook.com/events/591596081307911](http://www.facebook.com/events/591596081307911).

## The past in the present

Three new Palestinian short films, followed by discussion with directors.  
**Saturday June 22, 5pm:** Showroom Cinema, 15 Paternoster Row, Sheffield S1.  
**Monday June 24, 5.50pm:** Home Cinema, Tony Wilson Place, Manchester M15.  
Organised by Cinema Palestino: [www.facebook.com/CinemaPalestino](http://www.facebook.com/CinemaPalestino).

## Shadow world

**Friday June 28, 7pm:** film screening, St John's Church, Stratford Broadway, London E15. Based on the book *The shadow world: inside the global arms trade* by Andrew Feinstein, who will introduce the film and answer questions.  
Organised by Newham Against The Arms Fair:  
[www.facebook.com/events/2292825427475134](http://www.facebook.com/events/2292825427475134).

## Marxism festival 2019

**Thursday July 4 to Sunday July 7:** Summer school, People's Palace, Queen Mary University, Mile End Road, London E1. Over 100 sessions. Tickets from £20 (£10).  
Organised by Socialist Workers Party: <https://marxismfestival.org.uk>.

## Stop Trump in Latin America

**Thursday July 4, 6.30pm to 8.30pm:** Rally, Unite House, 128 Theobalds Road, London WC1. Speakers from Venezuela, Argentina, Brazil and Bolivia. Entrance by free ticket.  
Organised by Venezuela Solidarity Campaign:  
[www.facebook.com/events/379649595978779](http://www.facebook.com/events/379649595978779).

## 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. Entry £6.  
Organised by National Shop Stewards Network:  
[www.facebook.com/events/377609106411016](http://www.facebook.com/events/377609106411016).

## Class struggle in the East End

**Saturday July 6, 1pm to 3.30pm:** Political walk, starting at Poplar DLR station. Includes a workhouse, the matchgirls' strike, Poplar rates rebellion and suffragettes' headquarters. Voluntary donation £5.  
Organised by Socialist Appeal Leytonstone:  
[www.facebook.com/events/323855581870164](http://www.facebook.com/events/323855581870164).

## 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.

**AGGREGATE**

# Responding to uncertain times

Peter Manson reports on the joint meeting of CPGB and Labour Party Marxists comrades

**O**n June 15, a CPGB-LPM aggregate was held in London, which discussed three topics. The first item was introduced by Jack Conrad of the Provisional Central Committee, who spoke about the current situation of flux within British politics.

Comrade Conrad said it seems an “absolute certainty” that Boris Johnson would be elected leader of the Conservative Party and so we would have a premier committed to Brexit by October 31. Whereas he had previously been convinced that somehow the ruling class would find a way of avoiding withdrawal from the European Union, that was no longer the case. Now Brexit is more than a possibility.

Of course, there were still problems. There is still no parliamentary majority for a no-deal Brexit and proroguing parliament against its wishes would be a high-risk strategy, as it is considered unconstitutional. But Johnson could call a general election, where he would surely be expected to see off the Brexit Party.

But what about Labour? If, Jennie Formby gave the go-ahead for the reformed trigger ballots and there was time to deselect a large number of rightwing MPs, it is possible a leftwing Labour government could be elected. In those circumstances, Mike Pompeo told us what we already knew - the US, backed by international capital, would “push back” against it in order to bring it down. If necessary they would be prepared to support an army coup, just as they did in Chile in 1973. Yet, when we demand the abolition of the standing army, comrade Conrad pointed out, we are ridiculed by most of the left (even though the Green Party stood on just that demand in the 2016 general election).

If, however, there were no reformed trigger ballots and Corbyn won with the same overwhelming rightwing majority in the Parliamentary Labour Party, it is more than possible that the monarch would select someone other than him to be the prime minister. A Tom Watson perhaps, who, unlike Corbyn, might be able to command a parliamentary majority.

True, in such a situation there would be protests, but hardly a revolution. Who would win over sections of the armed forces in order to split them? That points to another key question. Yes, Labour is winnable in the long term - it is not a question of everything relying on Corbyn. But for that we need a revolutionary party. Yet the left has never been so weak and incompetent. It does not treat democracy seriously, believing that trade unionism is the “highest form of class struggle”. The left needs a radical renewal.

## Debate

First to speak from the floor was a non-CPGB/LPM guest, Marilyn Sterne, who said that, while she agreed with the politics of the CPGB, she thought that the *Weekly Worker* (supported perhaps by a monthly theoretical journal) should be broader in its appeal in these times. It was not a question of dumbing down our politics, she thought, but of writing in language understood by workers.

Bob Williams gave the example of Chuka Ummuna to indicate the nature of the Labour right. Only three years ago he was intending to stand as Labour leader, but now he has joined the

Liberal Democrats. He said that the Brexit Party result in EU elections has shaped the current situation as far as the Tories were concerned. But there were big problems for Labour too because many of its voters have been tricked into putting ‘remain’ or ‘leave’ above loyalty to class and party.

Carla Roberts of LPM said that the monarch could well appoint Corbyn as premier because he had become so “lame” that nothing needed to be done. On trigger ballots, she pointed out that their reform was not the original plan - it had been put before the 2018 Labour conference at the last minute in order to defeat mandatory reselection. And now it was only the likes of Labour Against the Witchhunt that were campaigning for the reformed trigger ballot to be introduced. On the *Weekly Worker*, she thought that there was a space on the left for a newspaper that is “a bit challenging” and she knew from experience that leftwing, principled politics went down well with many delegates at Labour conference.

In my intervention I also responded to comrade Sterne by stressing that the *Weekly Worker* was aimed at the left, not the mass of workers, for a reason: we need to win a large section of the revolutionary left over to the idea of a single Marxist Party based on genuine democratic centralism. I also pointed out, in reply to comrade Roberts, that, no matter how much Corbyn compromised with the right, he would never be considered trustworthy by the bourgeoisie because of his past anti-imperialism and pro-worker positions. Even today, for example, he is condemned for refusing to take allegations against Iran at face value.

On this point comrade Conrad agreed - a ‘responsible’ Labour leader is one who must be on board for any US-led military intervention in the Middle East. But it was not just Corbyn’s politics, past or present. There was a real fear that a Corbyn government might provoke a “crisis of expectations”. That is why both the City and MI5 could be expected to move against a Corbyn-led government.

He agreed with comrade Roberts, however, who had said that the Corbyn movement had not resulted in recruitment by the revolutionary left. Therefore it would be a big mistake to abandon our strategy of exposing the left’s mistakes and weaknesses, which was what comrade Sterne was effectively proposing. Of course, if the working class started to move into political action in huge numbers, then we would need to radically change the nature of the *Weekly Worker*. But that is not the situation at present: that is why advanced workers, including new recruits to Labour, need to be educated on, say, the failings of Trotsky’s transitional programme.

For her part, Sarah Stewart agreed on the possibility of a crisis of expectations if a Corbyn administration was formed. For instance, if he moved so far in the direction of the Labour right that he began to implement cuts, there could be a mass revolt. That is why the left must stop acting as cheerleaders and treating Corbyn as the “saviour”. Instead it must hold him to account. However, Phil Kent disagreed: he said that Corbyn had compromised so much, it might be considered better to let him take office - the right would in reality be in control.

James Harvey, for his part, broadened the discussion by discussing the “international political crisis” - the old accepted ways are dying and instead we have the growth of rightwing populism. As for holding Corbyn to account, at the same time as acting against the Labour right, he reported how those wanting to move a vote of confidence against their local MP had been urged by John McDonnell not to do so, because “the time isn’t right”. However, large sections of the party’s rank and file still “have faith in Jeremy”. For much of the Labour left “self-limitation comes naturally” and there is widespread conciliationism.

William Sarsfield was next to speak and he pointed out, in response to the debate on the nature of the *Weekly Worker*, that during the miners’ Great Strike of 1984-85 the forerunner of our paper, *The Leninist*, was indeed aimed at militant workers. At that time the miners had organised “hit squads”, which ironically some on the ‘revolutionary’ left denounced. In other words, there is a need for flexibility, he said.

Stan Keable of LPM agreed it was important to “deal with the existing revolutionary left”, because Corbynites usually cannot tell the difference between the various groups. While the Corbynite surge within Labour

was gradually having an effect, the practical impact - replacing rightwing representatives with those of the left - was very slow. And the question arose: would those replacements be up to the job? That is why journals like *Labour Party Marxists* and the *Weekly Worker* were so essential.

In response to the debate, comrade Conrad agreed with James Harvey on the crisis affecting the way the bourgeoisie is able to rule. In relation to Brexit, for instance, the election of Boris Johnson would solve nothing in Britain, where the crisis had taken the form of a nationalist upsurge against the EU. After Johnson was elected leader, there would either be a general election (with what result?) or a move into “unconstitutional territory”. But the biggest fear amongst the bourgeoisie is not related to Brexit directly - it is a fear of a Corbyn government. In these circumstances, a transformation of the Labour Party into a united front of a special kind, though important, is not in itself the answer. Not only must the form change. So too must the content. We need to replace rightwing Labour MPs with *communist* MPs, not left-reformist MPs.

## Iran

The afternoon session began with a discussion led by comrade Yasmine Mather on the latest crisis in the Middle East, which had been provoked by allegations that Iran had been responsible for the attack on tankers in the Gulf of Oman last week.

Since we are publishing in this issue an article by comrade Mather based on her talk, I will not go into great detail about what she said. She pointed out that, while “no-one in Iran in their right mind wants a war”, the Tehran regime “needs a crisis” in order to strengthen its position internally. Similarly, for the likes of the US, a military conflict, as with Donald Trump’s trade war, might divert attention from his economic problems.

But the view of several comrades was that Iran was very unlikely to be responsible for the Gulf of Oman attacks. Bob Williams reiterated that Japan’s prime minister, Shinzo Abe, was in Iran at the very time a Japanese tanker was targeted, so why would Tehran act in that way? Comrade Kent stated that Iran actually

“needs a deal” with the US and I also thought that, while Tehran might benefit from a crisis, it also needs to strike a balance: it does not actually want to be on the receiving end of a US military attack.

Comrade Harvey said that, while war could sometimes provide a solution for internal problems, it often arises “by accident”. Jack Conrad agreed that Iran *could* be responsible for the attacks - as could a whole number of other state actors, as comrade Mather had pointed out. He added that, as in Britain, what was missing in Iran was a powerful left.

In reply to the debate, comrade Mather agreed that the Iranian left - unlike in 1979, when it organised huge demonstrations - was virtually absent. She said that, in a way, the regime was already in crisis mainly because of sanctions. Many were going hungry and people were seriously suffering. In such circumstances the supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, might be aiming for a military government in order to rid himself of the regime’s tiresome ‘reformist’ faction. That is why Iranian responsibility for the attack on the tankers was “not beyond the realm of possibility”.

Either way, we need to take the threat of war seriously. After all, the US long-term aim seems to be to divide Iran in order to rid itself of this ‘rogue state’ in the Middle East.

## Summer Offensive

After this debate, the last item on the agenda was the launch of the CPGB’s Summer Offensive - our annual fundraising drive. This was introduced by Farzad Kamangar from the Provisional Central Committee, who explained that the CPGB has set an SO target of £30,000, to be reached by the end of our summer school, Communist University, in August.

She pointed out, however, that it is not just about money. We need to mobilise our periphery and draw more people into the fight for a single Marxist party. The influence of the *Weekly Worker* needs to be expanded and we need a better presence on the internet and on social media. These were among the many reasons why we need to take the Summer Offensive seriously.

Each CPGB member has a minimum individual target of £650, and comrades were asked to state what figure they would attempt to raise. LPM comrades also pledged individual targets and agreed to mobilise LPM supporters and sympathisers to contribute. Incredibly, despite the absence of several comrades, a total of £21,000 was pledged by those present and those who contacted the PCC despite their absence.

From next week, this paper will be carrying a weekly update on the progress of the SO campaign ●

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**US secretary of state  
Mike Pompeo promises to  
“push back”  
against Corbyn**



CWI

# What will be left?

The split in the Committee for a Workers' International ought to put paid to its delusions of grandeur, writes Paul Demarty



The 'great helmsman' leads a dwindling band

So, again, to the civil war in the Committee for a Workers' International.

We have mentioned before that the internet is aflood with 'internal only' documents of the proceeding split - with names politely truncated, so that her majesty's security services will never work out that 'Peter T' is really Peter Taaffe. In the week since I last wrote on this matter,<sup>1</sup> the pace of leaks has increased still further, as morale drops in wider circles in the CWI.

I do not propose to repeat that last article's political analysis, but rather fill out a few details. Firstly: the split in the Socialist Party in England and Wales, the pre-eminent and largest CWI section, led by Taaffe, is very serious. We noted last week that Taaffe's pseudo-left faction won 75% in a vote on SPEW's large national committee (NC), as against 20% against and 5% abstentions. The smaller executive committee, at the same time, was purged of its two members who supported the international majority, the so-called 'Non-Faction Faction', including Sarah Wrack, editor of the *Socialist* (but no longer). A letter of protest gathered some 127 initial signatures and, while we expect that Taaffe will carry the day on the home front by sheer bureaucratic crudity, it is clear that the international split reaches deep into SPEW.

The shape of things in Ireland, moreover, is interesting. It may be remembered that the scratch that, today, widens into schism was on the Irish limb of the CWI. The leadership of the Socialist Party in Ireland had some success positioning itself as a sort of socialist-feminist trend, for which purposes it created a front organisation called Rosa. This turned out to be quite a good move, as the referendum campaign around the 8th amendment (which prohibited abortion until sensationally rejected by an overwhelming majority last year) kicked into gear.

Some members of the Irish SP, however, believed this approach to entail too many concessions to bourgeois feminism; this faction, led by Paul Murphy, was supported by the CWI's International Secretariat (IS) - the small day-to-day leadership dominated by Taaffe's cronies - and a dispute between Murphy and the leadership majority in Ireland led to a mysterious 'breach of protocol', which in turn led to a meeting of the International Executive Committee (IEC), the larger body to which the IS is accountable in theory

(but not, as we have subsequently seen, according to its own opinion). The defeat of the IS motion censuring the Irish leadership precipitated the push towards an international split.

## Justifications

It is worth bringing up what seems, now, like ancient history, merely to make the point that among the members of Taaffe's 'In Defence of a Working Class and Trotskyist CWI' faction (it turns out that IDWCTCWI is actually longer than the word 'Taaffe', so let us call it the Taaffe faction), we do *not* find a certain Paul Murphy. He, and a number of co-thinkers, instead formed their own faction in Ireland, out of an almost touching attachment to - you know - the actual substance of their original political criticisms.

This casts an even more unflattering light on the Taaffe faction's notional justifications for a split. It accuses the IEC majority/Non-Faction Faction of preparing a split, and that its demand for a meeting of its numbers, to be called in August, is a pretext for 'regime change' on the IS. The fact that the statutes of the CWI say that the IEC has a right to demand such a meeting is, apparently, to obey the letter of the law rather than the spirit, which is to defend 'Trotskyism'. And, since it is an article of faith that the NFF represents an anti-Trotskyist trend, it therefore loses its rights altogether. (An email to all SPEW members, advertising a special congress of that organisation, makes clear that the leadership considers any participation in any meeting of the IEC in August to be an expulsion matter.)

Yet, if we look at the actual situation in Ireland, by far the largest section of members who made congruent political criticisms of the national leadership find the use of those criticisms as a means to bludgeon through a split unacceptable and distorting. Their documents are now quite critical of the conservatism of the Taaffeites, although their main enemy remains at home. Taaffe loyalists in Ireland, according to our sources, are keeping a relatively low profile.

If the political justification is threadbare (never mind the small matter of the flagrant opportunism of SPEW in the whole period of its existence under Taaffe's hapless leadership - on which point we refer readers to our last article), something like an explanation for the accelerated timetable for the split becomes clear. Taaffe has lost a host of his Irish allies. He has lost the Spanish and Portuguese

sections from the CWI altogether, and it seems that the Venezuelans and Mexicans will follow. If this battle goes on for much longer, it will be a matter of Taaffe and Tony Saunois frothing at each other in a London cupboard about the need to defend a working class, Trotskyist Committee for a Workers' International. We note, in passing, the formal justification for a split from the Spanish comrades, which includes the accusation that the Taaffe faction resorted to diplomatic fudging with its hated adversaries so as to avoid showing up its lack of support:

The adoption of a 'diplomatic' resolution agreed with the 'Non-Faction Faction' - a manoeuvre presented as a 'skilful tactic', but that was in reality intended to avoid opposing the IS on a vote in the English and Welsh section Congress [sic] - alarmed us. The policy of defending 'prestige', of not speaking clearly, of seeking organisational short cuts to face a debate that, theoretically, had principled bases, was one more argument for the CEE of the Spanish section ... to report their opinions and criticisms.<sup>2</sup>

## Dream on

There is a certain subplot of this whole story, which is only reinforced by recent disclosures. That is the fact that the CWI has had its own irrelevance disclosed to it.

At the beginning of it all, it was common enough to read its boast of being "the largest Trotskyist international". This is an almost comically modest boast, of course - as the American conservative icon, William F Buckley, once put it, like being the tallest building in Topeka, Kansas. Even on the face of it, however, the claim was false to begin with. It seems quite certain that the CWI is smaller than the Mandelbrot Fourth International, for example. We can only assume that the latter are excluded from consideration on account of not being *real* Trotskyists.

The very form that the dispute has taken, however - with one faction dominating one international committee, and the other dominating another - has led to increasingly rebarbative argument about who *actually* represents the majority in the wider membership. The result is that the two sides end up bidding each other *down*. The rhetoric of the decisive

importance of the CWI, the 'biggest international', is increasingly drowned out by the exchange of reality checks. The NFF comrades, in their most substantial statement, quote Taaffe at a SPEW national committee discussion back in January:

Comrades have been moaning ... we are the biggest international and if we are the biggest international what a pity it would be for us to lose certain sections ... Let's have a sense of proportion about what we represent ... relatively small, mostly propagandistic, interventionist groups, but that is nothing compared to what is coming. That's what exercises me ...<sup>3</sup>

And that was very much the picture painted in the IS majority statement that made clear the Taaffeites consider the August IEC meeting a split issue:

[The IEC] 'majority' in no way represents the overall balance of the CWI membership, as a whole, in which the NFF is clearly in a minority. The NFF argue they are in a 'majority' on an IEC in which the Russian section has two full members with a claimed membership of only 25; the Israeli section has two full members and 45 members, and the Cypriot section has one full IEC member with a claimed membership of 21. The Polish section has one alternate IEC member. Five members attended the recent debate on the CWI crisis!<sup>4</sup>

We have considered the seriousness of the Taaffeites' claims above - and, indeed, at length in earlier articles. But this is the state of the "world's largest Trotskyist international". It was only a matter of time before the NFF reached for the nuclear option, and questioned how big the mothership in England and Wales really was nowadays; but they were left with little choice after the sort of accounting quoted above. So, in the response to the IS majority's ultimatum, the comrades finally let fly:

The distorted and dishonest narrative of the [Taaffe] faction to try and deny its minority status in the CWI is mostly based on the idea that the biggest section, England and Wales, with 2,000 members on paper, supports the faction. This idea is completely fictitious. Let us look at the facts. About 300 comrades

attended the 11 regional all-members debates in the England and Wales section (including overlapping comrades who attended more than one and about 50 full-timers). At the time of writing 127 England and Wales comrades from over 30 branches have signed an open letter opposing the [Taaffe] faction.<sup>5</sup>

There is a little prestidigitation going on here, to be sure - 127 *signatories* does not equal slightly less than half of 300 *participants in aggregates*. That 300 figure is extremely low, however; and we wonder how many signatories the SPEW leadership could mobilise. (Wonder is all we can do, as they do not seem to want to get into that particular competition.) It does, however, fit a wider pattern among bureaucratic centralist sects of this sort of size: the number of people taking an active role of any sort in the life of the organisation is always rather lower than the notional dues-paying membership. And so it seems today: only 300 members of SPEW can be bothered to take part in a life-or-death factional battle.

This, essentially, is what the two sides are fighting over - control of a single central organisation supposedly numbering 2,000 but with an active membership of less than half of that at best; an American organisation of 800 or so, 'activist' composition unclear; an Irish organisation whose electoral success belies a cadre base of barely more than 100; a whole series of tiny sects of that kind of size; and a bunch more microscopic sects of a lesser order of magnitude. To the outside world, it projects an image of monolithic unity and vigorous common purpose, and puffs itself up to look bigger than it actually is. Internally, people bitch at each other about which faction's 'base areas' have the most inflated membership numbers.

The self-image of the "world's largest Trotskyist international" was always a fantasy; but dreams also may die, and this one will not survive next month's butchery ●

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## Notes

1. 'Fiasco nears conclusion' *Weekly Worker* June 13.
2. <https://weeklyworker.co.uk/assets/ww/docs/spanish.pdf>.
3. [https://cpgb.org.uk/assets/docs/iec\\_majority\\_doc\\_signatories.pdf](https://cpgb.org.uk/assets/docs/iec_majority_doc_signatories.pdf).
4. <https://telegra.ph/Split-in-the-CWI-is-imminent-06-08>.
5. <https://weeklyworker.co.uk/assets/ww/docs/degen.doc>.

**GREENS**

# Drawn to the flame

Jack Conrad shows why primitivists and other such deep greens are more than predisposed to the lures of ecofascism

**G**reenism likes to imagine itself as appealing to the “ecologically aware” and going beyond antiquated modes of “debate” such as “left/right, poor/rich, north/south”.<sup>1</sup> While green intellectuals were doubtlessly in the forefront of those warning of an ecological crisis, they fail - and miserably too - when it comes to offering a realistic social agent capable of carrying out the complete social transformation needed to achieve a sustainable balance between nature and human society.

As we saw in the second part of this series of articles, faced with the challenge of ecological degradation, greenism can easily slip over into neo-Malthusianism.<sup>2</sup> People, especially poor people, become the problem. Population numbers must be cut, if necessary using coercive legislation. Worse, from first-hand experience, Derek Wall, joint principal speaker of the Green Party in England and Wales, 2006-08, warns that greenism is “ripe for *reappropriation* by softly-spoken Nazis who articulate a rhetoric of decentralisation, justice and the rural, while seeking to build insular authoritarian communities based on atavistic notions of blood and soil and anti-Semitic hatred”.<sup>3</sup> Presumably, in immediate terms, he had David Icke in mind - until 1991 one of four Green Party spokespersons. Nowadays Icke insanely babbles on about planetary alignments, shape-shifting reptiles and a global Jewish conspiracy.

Leave aside the sad, delusional, pitiful, David Icke. Wall’s statement might appear strange. Even very strange. After all, today the Green Party of England and Wales preaches from the fluffy book of fairness and equality, wants to abolish the standing army in the name of global peace and calls for a Green New Deal to put an end to the horrors of austerity. But, in terms of ideological background, specific history, class location and latent tendencies, there are innumerable connections between greenism and pulls towards the right and far right.

## Primitives

Let us begin our discussion with the green primitivists. A worldview which probably finds its highest expression in the writings of John Zerzan. Drawing on Theodor Adorno (1903-69), amongst many others, he depicts human society as following a negative dialectic downwards to ever greater degrees of alienation.

Nonetheless, basing himself on solid anthropological evidence, Zerzan depicts life before the domestication of animals and sedentary agriculture as being “largely one of leisure, intimacy with nature, sensual wisdom, sexual equality and health”. Abundance ruled. “This,” he says - and I agree - “was our human nature, for a couple of million years prior to enslavement by priests, kings and bosses”.<sup>4</sup> Living fossils provide ample confirmation. Studies of the !Kung in Namibia and the Mbuti in the Congo reveal “economic, political and gender egalitarianism”.<sup>5</sup> Nor is there organised violence. Before, the Upper Palaeolithic societies were, in all probability, “warless”.<sup>6</sup> It is the domestication of animals, the growing of crops and the resulting social hierarchy which brings about territorial conflict, slavery and mass killings.

A Maoist student radical in the 1960s, Zerzan arrived at anarchism in the 1970s. While he does not dismiss Marx entirely, Zerzan has no liking for “liberals, Marxists, members of left

parties, Noam Chomsky, the anarchist left, the syndicalists, the Wobblies, all those people who think technology is fine and it just depends on how you use it; and that there’s nothing wrong with development and the industrial system - it just depends who’s running it”.<sup>7</sup>

Zerzan is one of quite a range of deep greens who refuse to condemn Theodore Kaczynski, the notorious Unabomber. The two regularly correspond. Not that Zerzan approves of Kaczynski’s violence against fellow living beings. Between 1978 and 1995 this Harvard graduate and mathematical protégé was responsible for a campaign of letterbombs targeting people involved in high tech. Three died and another 23 were injured. Kaczynski thought he was about to trigger a revolution against industrialisation and ecological destruction. He issued a 35,000-word manifesto, *Industrial society and its future* (1995). Politically naive, it goes without saying. He has no time for “leftists”, dismissed as “oversocialised” and suffering from “low self-esteem”.<sup>8</sup> Quite rightly though, Kaczynski refused to plead insanity. He took full responsibility for his actions. I do not know what sort of public danger he now represents. But, if that danger is minimal, as I would expect, we can only but side with those urging his release ... albeit on parole. He was sentenced, in 1998, to life imprisonment ... without the possibility of parole. We believe in redemption.

Zerzan shot to fame in the aftermath of the 1999 Seattle World Trade Organisation protests. He is now widely read, is sought after by mainstream journalists and even does international speaking tours (otherwise he lives simply - he does not own a car, a credit card or a computer). Not that he relies upon fleeting protest demonstrations to usher in radical change. Amongst his models of how to ‘crack the system’ are the Cynics of classical Greece and Rome. They ate discarded or begged food, slept in the open and defecated in public. Other inspirations include the pantheistic Brothers and Sisters of the Free Spirit of the 12th-15th century, the 17th century Levellers and Diggers and the 19th century Luddites.<sup>9</sup>

Recoiling from wage-slavery, the dehumanising kitsch of commercialism and capitalism’s drive to ecocide, Zerzan, together with other green primitives, seeks salvation in a return to prehistory. This is part an echo of Martin Heidegger and his critique of technocratic reason, part a lamentation for a lost golden age, part a ghastly future threat.

The promised land of deep greens is the endless wilderness. Suitably humbled, a repentant humanity returns to the Palaeolithic ways of our ancestors and lives in perfect harmony with nature. The goal is a near zero ecological footprint. Industry and even peasant agriculture are damned as unsustainable and unnatural.

To achieve their future, deep greens concoct various plans for a stage-by-stage escape from the “10,000 years of darkness and captivity”.<sup>10</sup> Zerzan proposes abandonments. The international trade in food gives way to local production; urban centres to living in the countryside; cold northern zones to migrating to warmer southern climes; ending the division of labour to self-reliant individualism; agriculture back to hunter-gathering.

Purportedly, humanity’s fall from grace began with “symbolic culture” - language, art, religion, mathematics, etc.<sup>11</sup> So one madcap schema is to get



**Casper David Friedrich: 'Wanderer above the sea of fog'**

back to when our species was not human - ie, cultural - but animal. Implementing such a complete evacuation from the modern human condition, in anything like a meaningful time frame, would, however, necessitate a reduction of the global population not by a half or two-thirds - pale green timidity. Rather what the green primitivists appear to have in mind is more like a 99.9% cull. Estimates, when it comes to the distant past, can only but be heroic guesses. That said, it is estimated that in the Palaeolithic there were no more than between 100,000 and 300,000 individuals globally.<sup>12</sup>

Undaunted, green primitives ask us to open our minds to vistas of the past and make it our future. Air without a hint or trace of industrial pollution; seas teeming with plankton, squid, fish, whale, dolphin, seal and turtle. Forests once again covering vast tracts of Eurasia and North America - home to abundant deer, elk, wild pig, bear and, at the top of the feeding chain, packs of wolves, prowling tigers and other big cats. In the African Savannah, grasslands are roamed by millions of elephants, rhino, hyena and lion and packed full of zebra, wildebeest and antelope. In the lowland areas of Eurasia, stretching as far as the eye can see, reedy marshlands and, each spring and autumn, huge flocks of migrating birds turning the sky black with their uncountable numbers.

Wandering through this earthly paradise, organised in little tribal bands, are the descendants of the primitives. Maybe 10 million, maybe 20 million of them. Living in tune with their environment, they are physically fit, consume a tremendous variety of different plants and animals and know none of our modern ailments, such as measles, smallpox or the common cold (in order to spread and therefore survive, the pathogens responsible for such diseases require a host population that is sufficiently numerous and sufficiently concentrated<sup>13</sup>).

Hunting and gathering occupy the band only for comparatively brief periods of time. Most of the day is taken up with eating, relaxing, sleeping and playing. Numerous dangers confront them. While life is on average relatively short, the pleasures and compensations are many.

However, what about those billions of missing human beings? The unchosen. Suddenly, it is not idyllic images that come to mind. Instead it is Dachau, Belsen and Auschwitz. Attempting to impose a primitivist solution on the unchosen, retracing even the first steps back to “Edenic beginnings”, require hell.<sup>14</sup> A strong state would have to be made or captured, a fanatical cadre

recruited. Forced sterilisation and surely mass extermination follows. All the crimes of the murderous 20th century pale into utter insignificance. Without such a concentrated moment of horror, the utopian dreams of the primitives will, after all, forever stay unrealised.

What can usefully be added here is that some 73,000 years ago we humans would surely have qualified for inclusion on a World Wildlife Fund list of endangered species. The Mount Toba volcanic mega-eruption, in Sumatra, sent *10 billion tons of ash* pluming into the upper atmosphere. That is 40 times bigger than the 1815 Tambora eruption, the largest recorded in historic times, and perhaps the “second largest explosion eruption over the last 450 million years”.<sup>15</sup> Across the whole planet sunlight was either blotted out altogether or substantially dimmed. Temperatures plummeted for some six or seven years. Because of the dank, chillingly cold and bleak years of volcanic winter that followed, almost all life forms suffered decimation. Our species, which might have reached some 100,000-300,000 globally, was brought to the brink of extinction. After Toba, it is reckoned that there were only 10,000 Homo sapiens remaining alive. We teetered on a knife’s edge.

In other words, nature can turn deadly and produce an altogether precarious ‘natural’ population figure. Such fragility, precisely because humanity belongs to and relies upon nature, is why Marxists argue that we must strive to enhance - not lessen, let alone abandon - our ability to alter nature. By that we mean working alongside nature, understanding the laws of nature, enhancing the riches of nature. Not conquering, dominating or robbing nature.

Barry Commoner (1917-2012), a deep green, famously said, “Nature knows best.”<sup>16</sup> But without human beings nature knows nothing. Humans are nature taken to the level of consciousness. Hence what we surely want is a ‘good Anthropocene’.<sup>17</sup>

Of course, what is required, is not a desperate clutching at technological Prometheism - a new generation of nuclear power stations, artificial bees, CO<sub>2</sub> sequestration, satellites blocking the sun’s rays, giving up on Earth for Mars colonisation, etc. That would be a tragedy. What is required is the revolutionary Prometheism of total social transformation.

## Fascism

According to orthodox Marxism, especially in the seminal writings of Leon Trotsky, the category ‘fascism’ specifically defines those parties or movements which recruit, or actively aspire to recruiting, a desperate, enraged and disorientated plebeian mass - crucially in order to fashion them into a counterrevolutionary battering ram; the overriding strategic target being the organised working class. A social madness paid for and directed by “big capitalist powers”.<sup>18</sup>

Other usages are more casual - far too casual. Donald Trump, Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, the Vlaams Blok in Belgium, Australia’s One Nation, Alternative für Deutschland, the Folkeparti in Denmark - all are routinely labelled fascist. Nigel Farage’s Brexit Party is just as stupidly attacked as fascist by overwrought leftists. Along the same slippery slope even the police and leftwing opponents become fascist. The raw emotion, the desire to shock and gain attention - all that is unmistakable. But it hardly counts as Marxism.

In my considered opinion, as a category fascism needs to be put back onto a proper, scientific footing. Fascism can well involve standing and doing well in elections. But - and this is vital - fascism carries with it the threat, and perhaps the reality, of non-state violence, with the objective aim of destroying the organised working class. Towards that end there can be all manner of surrogate targets: Jews, Freemasons, Muslims, etc.

So, looking around the world today, it is hardly controversial to categorise Golden Dawn, the Grey Wolves, the English Defence League, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and similar such organisations under the term ‘fascist’. But what of the suggestion that greenism can evolve into ecofascism?

Derek Wall has already been quoted. Then there is Kevin Smith, former editor of *Green Pepper* in the USA. According to him, the chauvinist right in Europe is in the process of greening itself. He worriedly notes that these movements are “invoking ecological themes” to update their ideology and now “speak” the “new language of ecology”. Hence we find that some “fascist groups emphasise the supremacy of the Earth over people and evoke ‘feelings’ and intuition at the expense of reason”.<sup>19</sup> It is a two-way street: fascists can embrace green ideas and greens can embrace fascist ideas.

In particular Smith singles out what he calls ‘Deep Ecology’ (or what I call deep greenism). Subjectivism is the main narrative. The origins of the ecological crisis facing the planet lie in human belief systems, be they religious, philosophical or scientific. Deep greens picture the Judeo-Christian worldview, Cartesian philosophy and western science as “fostering a mindset that seeks to dominate nature”. Having located the origins of the ecological crisis in the sphere of ideology, deep greens dismiss the possibility of social causes as being the result of “shallow” analysis.

Deep greenism is deeply anti-human. Population control must go from contraception to calculated neglect, fostering a “permissible” degree of famine. Albeit with a heavy heart, starvation - even Aids - is welcomed: supposedly nature’s way of counteracting human overpopulation.

Deep greenism, in the form of Earth First and Deep Green Resistance, seeks to dismantle industrial civilisation. There can be no slow or soft shift to a sustainable future. Mainstream ecological activism is dismissed as largely ineffective. Instead there is an emphasis on direct action. Blowing up pipelines, disrupting logging companies, taking out generator stations and hitting industrial projects.

What about fascism itself? There is, of course, a long history of feudal and conservative greenism tipping over into the politics of counterrevolution, including overt fascism. The Soil Association in Britain counted Jorian Jenks amongst its founding members. He edited its journal *Mother Earth* until his death in 1963. Indeed he is considered something of a founding figure of the green movement in Britain. However, in the mid-1930s he became a regular contributor to *The Blackshirt* and stood as a candidate for the British Union of Fascists. He served as the BUF’s advisor on agriculture: “fascism alone could make agriculture prosperous again”.<sup>20</sup> Jenks advocated autarchy and import controls. Owners who misused the land would find it subject to compulsory purchase. And throughout the rest of his life Jenks remained a disciple of Oswald

Mosley.

Arthur Kenneth Chesterton was likewise closely associated with far-right environmentalism during the 1930s. However, he concluded that Mosley had gone soft on the Jews and decided to go his own way. In 1938 he helped found the National Socialist League. Fittingly he was elected chair of the National Front on its foundation. His uncle, Gilbert Keith Chesterton - a Catholic convert and author of the Father Brown books - invented the theory of distributionism along with Hilaire Belloc. They claimed to offer a third way between capitalism and communism, and upheld the 'green' panacea of "three acres and a cow".

As for today's far-right Britain First, it experiences not the least trouble in presenting a green face. It declares that it is "committed to the revitalisation of our farming and fishing sectors and supports policies geared at maximum agricultural self-sufficiency". Britain First goes on to demand "resolute action to protect, nurture and preserve our native environment, countryside and areas of natural beauty".<sup>21</sup> The British National Party even claims to be:

this nation's only true green party, which has policies that will actually save the environment ... Unlike the fake 'greens', who are merely a front for the far left of the Labour regime, the BNP is the *only* party to recognise that overpopulation - whose primary driver is immigration, as revealed by the government's own figures - is the cause of the destruction of our environment.<sup>22</sup>

## Wandervögel

Not surprisingly, the example of Germany is instructive. In the late 19th century the country underwent a process of rapid industrialisation. That resulted in massive social dislocation and the ruination of a whole layer of the petty bourgeoisie: farmers, tradesmen, small businesses. One response was a 'back to nature' movement - anti-capitalism melded with nature worship, rightwing Volk politics and even ideas of a revived paganism.

Young men, particularly students, joined the German Youth Movement, the Wandervögel (roughly 'free spirits' or 'rovers'), which had its origins in the 1890s. Membership rapidly grew and soon reached the tens of thousands. Trekking through forests and climbing hills and mountains, these petty bourgeois rebels sought deliverance in a mystical oneness with nature. Camping under the stars, they linked arms and sang old German songs. There was a strong undercurrent of homoeroticism. In this spirit they instituted the custom of greeting each other by proclaiming 'Heil'.

All in all, a hopeless attempt to escape from the alienation of urban life; a protest against capitalism, but also a protest against society itself. The stress was on individual transformation. No wonder some wags have characterised supporters of the Wandervögel movement as 'rightwing hippies'.

Wandervögel was "a hodgepodge of counter-cultural elements, blending neo-romanticism, eastern philosophies, nature mysticism, hostility to reason and a ... search for authentic, non-alienated social relations". That said, on the positive side, its 'back to the land' cult "spurred a passionate sensitivity to the natural world and the damage it suffered".<sup>23</sup>

Many contemporary concerns were anticipated by the movement's theoreticians - Ludwig Klages being particularly notable. The extinction of species, upsetting the global ecological balance, deforestation, the destruction of natural habitats, urban sprawl, the increasing alienation of people from nature and how 'civilisation' was finishing off aboriginal people in Australia, Polynesia and Africa were all condemned. He even rounded on the "destruction" wrought by the "tourist

trade".<sup>24</sup> All of this before 1914.

But, as already hinted, there was another, much darker side to Wandervögel. Most were overt racists and many viciously anti-Semitic. Klages's outrage against capitalism's degradation of nature certainly ran alongside an obnoxious anti-Semitism. Not without justification, he has been credited with being the intellectual precursor of the Third Reich. Like the Nazis Klages philosophically rejected reason and rational thought itself.

Peter Staudenmaier - along with Janet Biehl, author of the Bookchinite *Ecofascism: lessons from the German experience* - argues that such a "wholesale indictment of reason cannot help but have savage political implications".<sup>25</sup> By definition the door is slammed on democracy and any prospect of consciously reconstructing society and its relationship with nature. At the same time such irrationalism is prone to the most brutal anti-humanism.

Naturally, once World War I began, patriotic youth flocked to the colours and what they saw as a glorious national crusade. Wandervögel fragmented - along religious and political lines - but continued after the cataclysm. A few strands gravitated towards Marxism. There were social democratic and communist youth movements in the 1920s. However, most were stranded on the hard right and eventually fell within the orbit of Nazism. Nature worship combined with Führer worship.

Wandervögel left a deep ideological imprint in the collective imagination, which Adolf Hitler both psychologically internalised and successfully harnessed. He too spoke in the language of conservative greenism. The German Volk had to subordinate itself to the iron laws of nature, which alone guides us "on the path of progress". Hitler argued that it was necessary to know these laws - in order to obey them. To act otherwise "would be to rise in revolt against heaven".<sup>26</sup>

## Nazi greens

Hitler took it for granted that humanity was biologically divided and destined to an eternal struggle of race against race. Biological categories blurred over into social categories. History thereby became part of the "eternal struggle for existence". Logically then, politics has to be based on the direct application of nature's laws - only the strongest survive; the weak must perish or be exterminated. For Hitler, that is the inescapable "law" which unites humanity and society with nature. As soon as the human mind is fooled into believing that it is "superior to nature and its laws, then it destroys the real substance, which is the bearer of the mind".<sup>27</sup>

The ethnocide perpetuated against the Jews was also justified through biological determinism. Supposedly, the Jews were uniquely adaptable wherever they settled and were ideologically equated with bacteria. Once a people rids themselves of the Jews, then it can "return spontaneously to the natural order".<sup>28</sup>

Let us note that in the late 19th century and the first half of the 20th, there was, especially in Europe, a pernicious and widespread scapegoating of Jews. They were charged with exploiting the 'proletarian' nations through the banks and held responsible for the retrogression of civilisation - the former being a distorted form of the class struggle; the latter a distorted recognition of capitalist decline.

Undoubtedly the most sophisticated exponent of rightwing greenism was the philosopher, Martin Heidegger (1889-1976). He is widely celebrated as a precursor of modern ecological thinking. On the basis of his rejection of the cult of technology as an index of progress and denial of anthropocentric humanism, deep greens in particular have placed Heidegger on the pantheon of their greats.

A jaundiced critic of the

enlightenment, Heidegger preached the virtues of 'authentic being'. His critique of humanism, his call to "let things be", his notion that humanity is involved in a 'play' or 'dance' with earth, sky, and gods, his contemplative thoughts on the authentic modes of dwelling, his protest against industrial degradation of the planet, his stress on the importance of the local and the 'homeland', his call for humanity to protect and preserve nature, instead of dominating it - all these aspects of Heidegger's thought have been used to support the claim that he is a foundational deep green.

That despite the fact that in 1933 he became a card-carrying member of the Nazi Party! No calculated avenue designed to further an academic career. Tom Rockmore damningly points out that Heidegger stands absolutely alone "amongst the major thinkers of the 20th century" in being a "voluntary adherent of Nazism".<sup>29</sup> He insists that Heidegger's philosophy and his Nazism were "inseparable".<sup>30</sup>

Hitler both fuelled and fed off such rightwing philosophising. He claimed that western civilisation obscured the true relationship between humanity and nature. Somewhere in the course of history, our knowledge and understanding of nature had supposedly gone astray. In Hitler's mind the culprit was located in Christianity (and by inference, of course, Jews and Marxism). He viewed the last two millennia as a denial of nature and the irrefutable fact that humanity is part of nature.

Privately Hitler railed against - often during one of his tedious vegetarian dinner parties - the evils of Christianity and expressed his longing for a new religion rooted in nature. He fervently believed that humanity - authentic Aryan humanity, that is - must eventually break with Christianity and fully merge with nature. His alternative religion would at last realise the unity between nature and the master race: "From now on in, one may consider that there is no gap between the organic and the inorganic world." Hence salvation was to be found in the close study of nature and a religious veneration of all its manifestations and beauties. It is only "possible", insisted Hitler, "to satisfy the needs of the inner life by an intimate communion with nature".<sup>31</sup>

Hitler's agricultural expert, and later a *Reichsminister*, Walther Darré, was also a nature worshipper. No ignorant Nazi bonehead, Darré was a highly qualified agronomist and in that capacity he advocated organic farming and a balanced relationship with nature. A kernel of rationality. After 1933 he initiated a widespread campaign to introduce organic farming techniques, which involved both big estates and many tens of thousands of smallholdings.

Under circumstances of a pending war and the urgent need to boost food production, this experiment met with some stiff resistance from other members of the Nazi hierarchy. Inevitably there existed a tension between the 'battle for production' and 'keeping the soil healthy'. Significantly, Darré, with the backing of Rudolf Hess and others, was able to maintain his policy until 1942, when he resigned as Reich agriculture minister (ostensibly for private reasons; in reality because he dared question Hitler's order to further reduce rations to labour camps).

Darré packaged the Nazi agrarian programme with propaganda around the theme '*Blut und Boden*' (blood and soil). A slogan which implied the unity of the race, the Volk and its natural environment. Anti-working class, anti-liberal and anti-modern, Darré was, though, decidedly pro-nature. Anna Bramwell perceptively writes of Hitler's "Green Party", but her biographical account is marred by a general downplaying of Darré's Nazism - she sees him as a misguided green. Revealingly she has even referred to him as the "father of the greens".<sup>32</sup> He

was, of course, an ecofascist - or, put another way, a Nazi green.

Darré came to Hitler's attention after writing *The peasantry as the life source of the Nordic race* (1928) - a book which combined social-Darwinist racial theories with an idealisation of rural life. Darré advocated an organised exodus from the swollen, heaving, suffocating cities, which were "destroying" the "organic link" between the Volk and nature. Other neo-pagan figures in the Nazi leadership, such as Heinrich Himmler, Rudolf Hess, Fritz Todt and Alfred Rosenberg, depicted cities in similarly negative terms. Urban life meant rootlessness, the intermixing of races and the fostering of class struggle. Hence for Darré there had to be a systematic return to the countryside. The Nazis envisaged a re-agarianisation of greater Germany and their European empire.

Peasants were lauded as the backbone of the German race. Hitler actively sought to resuscitate this historically doomed class. Agricultural prices were fixed. Aryan farms were decreed as unalienable. Then there was Hitler's policy of territorial expansionism.

In December 1942 the Nazi regime issued a characteristic decree: 'On the treatment of the land in the eastern territories' - a reference to the newly annexed portions of Poland. It read in part: "The peasant of our racial stock has always carefully endeavoured to increase the natural powers of the soil, plants and animals, and to preserve the balance of the whole of nature." For him, respect for divine creation is the "measure of all culture". Unwilling to break up the great Junker estates in Prussia, Hitler promised still further *Lebensraum* (living space) in the east. This would extend Germany deep into Russia (Germany's India, according to Hitler).

Conquered lands would be cleared of Slavic *Untermenschen* and seeded with a new generation of Aryan farmers. According to Nazi ideology, this would guarantee the naturalism and racial regeneration of the German nation.

## Left, centre or right

The experience of Germany amply illustrates the volatility of ecological politics. It is not that concerns for the environment inevitably result in rightwing or fascist conclusions. There is a long history of leftwingers and progressives stressing the vital importance of nature for humanity. Eg, Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, William Morris, Peter Kropotkin, Murray Bookchin, John Bellamy Foster. Nevertheless, without the grounding provided by working class politics, even progressive greens can suddenly find themselves yanked to the right.

Even if they naively claim to eschew the standard categories of left, centre and right, green philosophies, pressure group campaigns and political organisations which put nature first, which paint humanity as the problem, are drawn to the flame of coercion and ecofascism.

From 'objectively' or 'commonsensically' prescribing population reduction and demanding an immediate end to immigration to taking up the methods of compulsion is but the next logical step. Here is the programmatic stairway which leads from feudal, conservative and primitive greenism to ecofascism. It is also a logical next step from compulsion to mass sterilisation and extermination.

As the effects of global warming and ecological degradation become more and more marked, it would be foolish in the extreme to dismiss the possibility that even mainstream greens cannot be drawn to the most horrible solutions.

Deep greenism is certainly predisposed to absorption by the far right in a similar way that the Wandervögel movement was absorbed by the Nazis. This, of course, is not

inevitable. But those movements which claim to have transcended left and right, which reject the class struggle as the means of achieving a sustainable society and venerate, not simply respect, nature, are more than prone to anti-human conclusions. Dave Foreman, once a leading spokesperson of Earth First!, springs to mind. He is one of those who gleefully welcomed the Ethiopian famine as a means of limiting the human population. Similar statements have been issued by deep greens *vis-à-vis* the Aids pandemic. Humans are deemed no more important than any other species.

Protests against the degradation of nature can be led from the left, centre or right. But no protest takes place within a vacuum. There is always a political and social context. Ecology as a thing in itself is an illusion. Refusal to recognise this elementary fact is, as Peter Staudenmaier says, "the hallmark of reactionary ecology".<sup>33</sup>

Those who propose to change society, so that it is brought into line with the eternal laws of nature, or the natural order - often based on pseudo-scientific gobbledegook - actually demand that humanity undergo retrogression. As with Thatcherism and the market, all contrary agreements are *a priori* ruled out of order. There is no alternative. Supposedly no-one can buck the iron laws of nature. Complexity is flattened out. Such wilful ignorance discounts the fact that all conceptions of nature are socially constructed.

Meanwhile, the real causes of ecological degradation go undiagnosed ●

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**IRAN**

# Threats must be taken seriously

Yassamine Mather looks at the US-Iran conflict against the background of Donald Trump's contradictory pronouncements



**Damaged Japanese oil-tanker Kokula Courageous**

The June 13 attack on two oil tankers marked a serious escalation in the current conflict between Iran's Islamic Republic and the United States. Dozens of crew members were rescued when they had to abandon ship, and both Iran and the US claimed they were involved in the rescue operation.

There were also two versions of the incident itself. According to the US navy, mines from small boats caused the blasts in the Gulf of Oman, one of the world's busiest oil routes. The US central command later released a grainy video showing what they claimed is a small Iranian boat, removing an "unexploded limpet mine" from the hull of one of the tankers. However, Yutaka Katada of Kokuka Sangyo, owner of the oil tanker, contradicted the American version: "The vessel was struck by a projectile and not by a mine. We received reports that something flew towards the ship." Both tankers were on their way to Japan and this was certainly an interesting development, given the presence of Japanese premier Shinzo Abe in Tehran for a meeting with Iran's supreme leader, Ali Khamenei.

The war of words soon escalated. US secretary of state Mike Pompeo used the video to blame Iran, while a senior Iranian official told the BBC: "Iran has no connection with the incident ... Somebody is trying to destabilise relations between Iran and the international community." In fact oil prices rose by 4.5% from a near five-month low following the incident, although they have subsequently come back down.

Khamenei told Abe: "We don't trust Trump and we will not talk to him." Although one can sympathise with the idea that Trump cannot be trusted - after all, he frequently changes his mind about major decisions several times - it is not quite true that Iran is not talking to the United States. There are many signs that secret negotiations (albeit through intermediaries) have taken place in recent weeks.

Unlike Trump, who is normally looking for a photo-opportunity, Iran's leaders are quite ready to negotiate, as long as the talks are secret. Iran's only open talks with the US - over

the nuclear deal - ended badly and it is unlikely to repeat that mistake in the near future. However, there are clear signs that, at least until the latest incident, the US and Iran had come to some agreement (maybe negotiated through intermediaries) to reduce the tempo of the propaganda war.

Those following Trump's comments about Iran have been surprised at how he suddenly changed his tune regarding Iran around mid-May. Subsequently an article in *Asia Times* stated:

It all has to do with the Strait of Hormuz. Blocking the Strait could cut off oil and gas from Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and Iran - 20% of the world's oil ... An American source said a series of studies hit president Trump's desk and caused panic in Washington. These showed that in the case of the Strait of Hormuz being shut down, whatever the reason, Iran has the power to hammer the world financial system, by causing global trade in derivatives to be blown apart ....

And Trump himself seems to have given the game away. He's now on the record essentially saying that Iran itself has no strategic value to the US ... He really wants a face-saving way to get out of the problem his advisors, Bolton and Pompeo, got him into. Washington now needs a face-saving way out. Iran is not asking for meetings. The US is.<sup>1</sup>

Irrespective of what we think of the above argument, there is a definite shift in US policy towards Iran. Just days after the alleged Iranian attack of June 13, the US president called the incident "very minor".<sup>2</sup>

In late May, speaking in Japan, Trump was quoted as saying: "Iran can be great again under its current leadership" - to the horror and fury of Iran 'regime change from above' advocates, including royalists and the formerly leftwing cult, Mojahedin-e Khalq (MEK).

In addition to the above statement we have seen some significant moves in terms of reducing the US propaganda war against Iran. There

was the abrupt end to funding for the Iran Disinformation Project, which claims it "brings to light disinformation emanating from the Islamic Republic of Iran via official rhetoric, state propaganda outlets, social media manipulation and more".

Back in 2018, when Donald Trump was telling the world why the US had to abandon the Iran nuclear deal, which was, according to him, "very bad", he used the excuse that Iran had subsequently increased its military budget. When the *Washington Post* asked for a source for this, the White House quoted an article published in *Forbes* business magazine by a writer named Heshmat Alavi.

Yet, according to *The Intercept* website, "Heshmat Alavi is a persona run by a team of people from the political wing of the MEK". This "fake persona has been managed by a team of MEK operatives in Albania, where the group has one of its bases, and is used to spread its message online". Apparently "Alavi is known inside Iran to be a 'group account' run by a team of MEK members" and "Alavi himself does not exist".<sup>3</sup>

Before the June 13 incident, it seems that Khamenei, addressing crowds gathered for the end of Ramadan, was doing his best to moderate outright opposition to US *estekbar* (global arrogance). When they chanted, "We will fight *estekbar*", he replied: "We don't want to fight anyone - we will resist global arrogance."

## Sanctions

Before looking at some of the reasons why the Trump administration is threatening war one day and promising negotiations the next, we should remember that punitive sanctions are crippling Iran's economy. Medical staff in Iran have raised concerns about infant mortality, as well as the rate of growth of infants born since the imposition of new sanctions. Iranians complain of the shortage of basic food items and the economy is in freefall - inflation is running at around 40%.

However, in a clear sign that the elite made up of the various factions of the regime does not have a clue about the suffering of ordinary people, last week the country's

information minister made the bizarre claim that Iranians are now suffering from sanctions because they usually "consume too much".

In the first year and a half of the Trump presidency Iran's leaders kept talking of how they would be able to survive for another two to three years - after that Trump would no longer be in office. Most of us knew at the time and know now that this was just wishful thinking. But in more recent times Iran's supreme leader has concentrated on Trump's personal failings: "The fate of more than 300 million humans is in the hands of a person with such characteristics. This is a sign of America's political decline."<sup>4</sup>

In this recent speech Khamenei went further and predicted that the world hegemon power will be replaced by clusters of smaller powers. Of course, this is nonsense: the decline of a superpower starts almost as soon as it reaches its peak and the process leading to its replacement by one or a number of other powers can take decades, even centuries. At a time when the United States has succeeded in paralysing Iran's economy, at a time when there is a serious, imminent threat of military attack, it is criminal to create illusions about US decline - and imply that as a result we will soon see the end of hunger, poverty and the threat of war.

Iranians have suffered badly from the devastating effects of sanctions. They will not believe such nonsense, when the US's unilateral withdrawal from the nuclear deal has had such a devastating effect on Iran's economy - most European firms have been forced to leave Iran, fearful of colossal penalties for circumventing US sanctions. Iranians holding accounts in international banks face daily problems, because the banks dread being prosecuted by US authorities.

However, Iran's supreme leader has a point when he says Trump's claims of wanting to talk to Iranian leaders are not worthy of a reply. In the last few months alone, the US president has walked out of trade deals with a number of countries (before changing his mind and returning to them). He has imposed tariffs on China, under

the slogan 'Let us make America great again', only to find that such tariffs have negative consequence for the US economy. A president who, according to mainstream US media, delivers dozens of lies daily in his tweets and speeches, a president who talks of dismantling the very organisations that ensure the US remains the current superpower - Nato, the European Union, the United Nations, etc - and then reverses his opinion about them on a regular basis.

Contrary to Trump's claims, all the indications are that the US economy is slowing down and the rate of growth is falling. US tariffs have meant that China's industrial output hit a 17-year low in May. But this has affected Chinese purchasing power, with direct consequences for the world economy. In other words, Trump's nationalist, protectionist efforts have not gone exactly to plan. When China's middle classes stop buying foreign cars, workers are made redundant in the US. It is difficult to "make America great again" under such circumstances!

This is a president who still faces the threat of impeachment at home. In fact, if I understand it correctly, the Democratic-led Congress has not initiated such a move, partly because it would not get through the Senate, but also because it believes the current situation will help the Democratic candidate in the 2020 presidential elections.

All this makes Trump very vulnerable and therefore very dangerous. That could be one explanation for the apparently contradictory policy of threatening military intervention, while calling for talks. By 2020 Trump will need an escalation of the conflict in the region - or perhaps a photo-opportunity, demonstrating he has made a 'good deal' with Iran, as opposed to Barack Obama's "very bad deal" ●

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# TORIES



Pledged to deliver

# Blue-on-blue fight

Boris Johnson is cruising to victory - but then what? Eddie Ford looks at the various possibilities

**P**redictably - almost boringly - Boris Johnson looks like a shoo-in for the Tory leadership contest. Unless he spectacularly blows it at the last minute and snatches defeat from the jaws of victory - never impossible for someone with such a runaway mouth - he will be the next prime minister of Britain. Not exactly a cheery thought, but at least it will make Donald Trump happy. The result will be announced, of course, in the week beginning July 22.

At one point, dark rumours were swirling in the corridors of Westminster that the Johnson camp might 'lend' some votes to Jeremy Hunt to make sure he made it through to the final two rather than Michael Gove - considered by some to be more of a threat. Naturally, Johnson and his supporters have totally dismissed the rumour - but you never know.

Of course, on June 18 we had the keenly anticipated live BBC leadership debate between the five candidates who were still in the contest at that time - the former mayor of London finally breaking his near purdah. The general consensus is that Boris Johnson, having spurned the Channel 4 event held two days earlier, came across as defensive and evasive in this blue-on-blue bun fight - especially when he was asked by an imam from Bristol whether he accepted that "words have consequences". Johnson awkwardly claimed that his notorious comment comparing Muslim women in burqas to "letterboxes" was taken out of context. During the debate Johnson insisted that his factually incorrect remark that the imprisoned British-Iranian citizen, Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, was teaching in Iran "didn't make any difference" - both she and her husband, now on hunger strike together, might beg to differ.

More significantly, he dodged the question of whether he can "guarantee" to deliver Brexit by the October 31 deadline - his main sales pitch to Tory MPs and the wider public. Johnson merely remarked that it was "eminently feasible". He also suggested there was

no issue with continuing free trade after Brexit - citing, like Nigel Farage has done many times before, article 24 of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). But the key point is that you need a trade agreement in order to make use of this article and the EU would be under no obligation to agree anything with the UK in the event of a no-deal Brexit - therefore Britain would have to fall back on the very basic rules of the World Trade Organisation.

## Tax

Johnson looked uncomfortable when questioned about his promise to cut taxes for the three million earning more than £50,000 a year, claiming that he needed to help 'middle earners' who have been "captured in the higher rate by fiscal drag" - a move that would cost around £9.6 billion a year and would apparently be paid for partly from "savings" in Brexit no-deal preparations. This seems an odd thing to say from someone purportedly committed to no deal and surely makes a nonsense of his repeated claim to be a 'one-nation' Tory. Johnson has also advocated cutting corporation tax despite the UK already having one of the lowest rates among developed economies, with successive reductions taking it from 28% in 2008 to 19% now.

After the BBC debate, Michael Gove said he had won because of his "detailed answers" and "clear plan" on Brexit - something that passed everyone else by. Has he been snorting again? As for Hunt, he stepped up the attacks on Boris Johnson by wondering whether his predecessor as foreign secretary has the "necessary grasp of detail" to do the job of prime minister - heavily implying that Johnson cannot be trusted to deliver Brexit, or anything else.

Still, it is hardly surprising that Boris Johnson is way ahead. It is not simply because he is popular with the Tory rank and file, though obviously that is true. Nor is it the case that his colleagues in the House of Commons

adore his eccentric persona - in fact, many of them despise Johnson personally. Rather, when they look at him, they see someone popular with a swathe of the electorate, who will help them keep their job - maybe even get a promotion. In other words, he is supposed to be a *winner* who can sweep Jeremy Corbyn into the dustbin of history and put Nigel Farage back in his box.

To that end, we have read various articles about the 'liberal' Boris Johnson who once ran London - many are still flabbergasted that he was ever elected mayor in the first place, let alone re-elected. Then, of course, there are all the articles about the 'Brexititeer' Boris Johnson, who will deliver the goods where all the others failed - most notably the egressing prime minister.

Clearly, however, he is constructing a highly unstable coalition. A series of tweets from the ultra-Brexititeer and Johnson-backer, Steve Baker of the European Research Group, made very clear that nothing short of tearing up virtually every aspect of Theresa May's deal will satisfy him and his caucus. Baker's ally, Mark Francois, also made the same point - he is supporting Johnson, as he is the only candidate to say the May deal is "dead". Indeed, another story circulating is that if Johnson does not deliver Brexit by October 31, the ERG will defect *en masse* to Nigel Farage's Brexit Party. Yet, strangely, another Johnson backer, Matt Hancock, appears convinced that his man will "strain every sinew" to achieve a deal with the EU.

I am now experiencing a sense of *déjà vu* - this is reminiscent of a certain prime minister who convinced one wing of her party that she was serious about no deal being better than a bad deal, and another wing that she was definitely going to wholeheartedly back a customs union in the end. Things did not end too well for that prime minister.

But the main division in the Tory Party is not between 'leavers' and

'remainers', but between those who are committed to Brexit *at any cost* and those who want some sort of deal - Johnson says the UK will depart by October 31 "deal or no deal". What is surely obvious to everyone is that, no matter who the Tories choose as their replacement for Theresa May, the arithmetic in parliament will not have changed - meaning that under Johnson there is a high likelihood of an early general election, despite various leadership candidates saying that would be a disaster for the Tory Party. On the other hand, there has been excitable chatter about proroguing parliament: with parliament suspended, the executive would just run the clock down to October 31, with no need to hold a vote.

## Queen

But there are plenty of alternative scenarios, like one in which Labour - faced with a Johnson leadership hell-bent on no deal - moves an *immediate* no confidence motion in the government, which seems more than likely. Kenneth Clarke, for one, has said that if there was no other way to stop a prime minister acting like a "dictatorial president" by trying to force Britain out of the EU against the will of the majority of MPs, "then you've got to bring that government down". Dominic Grieve apparently agrees.

Under the terms of the Fixed-Term Parliaments Act, there needs to be two no-confidence votes to trigger a general election. Under these circumstances, one solution is for Boris Johnson to act boldly and take preventive emergency measures - asking the queen to suspend parliament, thus effectively coming to his rescue. She is, we are told, a Brexititeer of some description, which is hardly astounding for a person of her age and background (needless to say, it is the privy council and the establishment which will get to decide). If the monarch and the privy council go along with prime minister Johnson's request - which is a mighty

big assumption, of course - then we will find ourselves engulfed by an enormous constitutional crisis, the likes of which we have not seen in centuries (1649 and all that). There will be the executive on one side and on the other the legislature in the form of parliament - with a determined speaker of the House of Commons, John Bercow, saying he will not allow the government to get away with its hot-headed action. In the event of a prorogation, former leadership contender Rory Stewart has raised the possibility of MPs and Bercow sitting across the road in the Methodist Central Hall as a rebel 'parliament' - an extraordinary prospect.

In a different variation of this scenario, prime minister Johnson loses the first vote of no confidence - but does not wait around for a second defeat. Instead he calls a snap Brexit election, just like his hapless predecessor, on the basis that he needs not just a working parliamentary majority, but also the backing of the country - protesting that the EU refused to budge on the Irish backstop or the £39 billion divorce bill, and warning that Jeremy Corbyn does not really want to leave the European club. Only Boris can be trusted.

The result of such an election would be impossible to predict, especially in the light of the example of only two years ago, when Theresa May was at one stage ahead by 20% in the opinion polls and nearly everyone assumed that Labour would be wiped out, thanks to its ongoing civil war. Maybe Johnson would perform disastrously, or Corbyn shine brilliantly again - everything is in the balance.

As the old Chinese curse goes, we live in interesting times. But, unlike the forebodings of a conservative peasant, there are some grounds for working class optimism - their crisis could be our opportunity ●

**LABOUR**

# AMMs or GCs?

Labour First, the LRC and the CLPD all vigorously oppose all-members meetings, while Momentum is in favour. But it really is a question of tactics, argues **Carla Roberts** of Labour Party Marxists



**A** rule change snuck through at last year's Labour conference has led to some rather heated debates. It allows Constituency Labour Parties to switch easily from a delegate-based general committee (GC) to an all-members meeting format (AMM) - and vice versa. A number of CLPs have recently used the rule to abandon their GC and establish meetings where every single member can show up and vote. Many more CLPs are in line to follow soon, as it is immensely popular, seen by many as a measure to support the Corbyn leadership.

Critics warn, however, that the AMM structure "undermines the rules of trade unions, abandons the spirit of collectivism and breaks the principle of representative democracy that Labour has held dear for a century". This could have been written by the Labour Representation Committee (LRC) or the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD), which both oppose the rule. But it is actually part of an article by Matt Pound, organiser of Labour's most rightwing faction, Labour First.<sup>1</sup> Something that unites the extreme right of the Labour Party with traditional Labour left organisations certainly deserves a closer examination.

At the 2018 conference, few people

paid much attention to this rule change. That was mainly down to the fact that delegates and visitors had little time to study in full detail the proposals contained within the Democracy Review: the party's national executive committee, meeting a week before conference, had gutted the document of most of the constitutional changes originally proposed by Katy Clark (ie, Jeremy Corbyn and his allies). The first that delegates saw of the proposed rule change was on the morning of the first full day of conference: it was one of the 57 such proposals presented over 35 pages in the report of the conference arrangements committee (CAC). A travesty of the kind of democracy we need in the workers' movement.

The focus at conference was very much on the proposals to reduce the nominations needed to stand in any leadership election and, crucially, the question of how parliamentary candidates are selected. While the vast majority of delegates were clearly in favour of the reintroduction of a system of mandatory reselection of all candidates (aka open selection), the NEC pushed for a far less democratic reform of the trigger ballot instead.

Now even this reform

**Corbyn  
needs  
Len McCluskey,  
but he also needs  
Jon Lansman**



seems too radical for the NEC to actually implement. In January, Jennie Formby was commissioned to produce guidelines and a timetable, without which no such ballots can take place. But then Chuka Umunna and co split from the party and the leadership got cold feet. Despite the fact that the departure of Umunna *et al* can hardly be described as unfortunate, the mere possibility of further splits, perhaps led by Tom Watson, is regarded as a threat by Corbyn. Despite all the evidence to the contrary, he still seems to believe that he can win over the right.

In our view, the sooner those saboteurs in the Parliamentary Labour Party are gone, the better. As long as they dominate the PLP, Corbyn has very little chance of doing anything. More importantly, we need to get rid of the right if we actually want to be able to make some of the radical and democratic changes that are so desperately needed to transform the party into a powerful weapon of the working class.

However, it seems that this is not the only one of its own rule changes that the NEC has had second thoughts about.

For decades, CLPs were organised

*exclusively* on the basis of the general committee, which is still how about half of them operate today (we are guessing here, as there are no official figures on this): local Labour branches elect delegates according to their membership figures, while trade unions and socialist societies can send one delegate for each of the branches that is affiliated locally. Trade unions have made full use of this rule, affiliating several of their branches, even if they do not actually meet or do anything - it seems that sometimes such branches have been set up explicitly for this sole purpose.

For example, since Corbyn's election, the GMB has made huge efforts to affiliate at least one of its branches to every single Labour branch in the country, while the Jewish Labour Movement is trying to affiliate to every CLP. The purpose is clear: to oppose the left at every opportunity and support those MPs and local politicians who support the affiliate's particular political agenda. The GC structure gives affiliates a good deal of power.

This started to change under Tony Blair in the late 1990s. Proposals to introduce all-members meetings were presented as a way to "empower the members", when in reality they were part of the efforts to curtail the power

# What we fight for

of the unions throughout the party. Understandably, the unions strongly opposed the proposals - in this they were supported by Tony Benn and the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD).

In 2012, Ed Miliband introduced reforms that allowed a CLP to switch between CG and AMM at its annual general meeting, where the change to the local constitution was subject to a two-thirds majority vote. This was mainly down to the fact that under Tony Blair the Labour Party not only lost tens of thousands of members; but many of those who had retained their membership did not bother showing up at meetings any more. Most CLP meetings were poorly attended, boring and utterly uninviting (yes, they were even worse than today's).

The survey carried out by Katy Clark at the beginning of the Democracy Review in 2018 showed that, out of the 208 CLPs who participated, 141 already had an all-members structure, while 67 were based on a general committee. She reported that, "In general, in most cities" CLPs tend to have a GC structure, while "in some areas where there are AMM structures" no local branches exist.<sup>2</sup>

## Delegates

According to the rule change passed at the 2018 conference then, any party unit (ie, either a branch or an affiliated organisation) can move a motion proposing to change the method of organisation - ie, to switch either to AMM or GC (the *Labour Party rulebook* actually allows for alternative methods beyond that, but that is very uncommon). A special CLP meeting then has to be called, in which all local members and delegates of affiliated organisations can participate. The decision to switch now requires only a simple majority of all those present.<sup>3</sup>

The vast majority of union delegates at conference 2018 - as always, under strict orders from their leaderships - voted *in favour* of this rule change, as part of the NEC's tame reform package. However, it seems that it then started to slowly dawn on the unions that this was, in fact, potentially a rule change that could reform them out of any meaningful existence, when it comes to CLPs.

And it is true: in all-members meetings, the role and power of a delegate from a local union is *dramatically* reduced, compared to their role in a delegate-based GC. In fact, a union delegate has the same rights and voting power as any local party member, when previously a single union delegate could hold as much power as a whole Labour branch.

In November 2018, two months after conference, Unions Together (previously the Trade Union and Labour Partly Liaison Organisation - TULO), which represents the 12 affiliated unions, came out against the rule change in a short statement:

Trade unions support delegate-based structures for CLPs, because they allow TU branches that have affiliated to a CLP to be formally represented and take part in the CLP's decision-making processes. All-member meetings do not allow affiliated TUs to be represented in CLP decision-making, and this weakens the relationship between the party and the unions at the local level.<sup>4</sup>

We also believe that the unions are playing a part in delaying the implementation of the reformed trigger ballot, as this would further reduce their power in the party. For the first time, the trigger ballot has been split into two - one for all organisations affiliated to the CLP and one for all branches. That means

Labour members can choose to challenge the sitting MP (if one third of all local branches vote in favour of doing so) and cannot be blocked by delegates from local affiliates. However, affiliated organisations are unlikely to initiate a trigger ballot. Their role in this process has tended to be mainly a *negative* one - ie, often it has been local union bureaucrats who have voted *against* challenging a sitting MP.

This does rather beg the question as to how, firstly, those two rule changes made it into Katy Clark's Democracy Review and then, secondly, got past the NEC, which gutted it of many other suggestions. After all, 13 of the 39 members of the NEC are representatives from the affiliated unions, with a couple of other members (like treasurer Diana Holland) having been 'seconded' by them. They represent a hugely important bloc and usually vote together (just as they do at conference). Did they simply take their eye off the ball?

And who had been pushing for these changes in the first place? Katy Clark was working closely with Jeremy Corbyn - did they really set out to take on the unions? Yes, the union bloc has often acted as a barrier to progressive change in the party. But the biggest affiliate is still Unite and Len McCluskey remains a loyal supporter of Corbyn. Corbyn and Clark surely would not have pushed for these two changes without McCluskey's say-so.

Perhaps this move indicates a split within the unions between those who support Corbyn and those who are currently led by rightwingers, such as the GMB, Unison and Community. That would be very welcome indeed. But we are guessing here. As is unfortunately often the case in the labour movement, these arguments are not fought out in the open, in front of the membership, but treated like a dirty secret and kept away from the working class.

We *do know*, however, that a certain Jon Lansman has certainly set out to curb the power of the unions in the party - no doubt in order to increase his own. The less power the unions have, the larger Momentum looms. This became most obvious when his then ally, Christine Shawcroft (whom he made director of Momentum on January 10 2017: ie, the day of his coup within the organisation), publicly supported his short-lived campaign to run against Unite's Jennie Formby for the position of general secretary:

I was supporting Jon Lansman for general secretary before today's NEC subcommittee meetings, but after today I am even more determined. Only someone from his tradition will support the rights of rank-and-file members in the CLPs. It is time to support disaffiliation of the unions from the Labour Party.

The reason she gave for that last comment was because they "always stick it to the rank-and-file members, time after time after time."<sup>5</sup>

Shawcroft clearly thought she was doing Lansman a favour by repeating what he had no doubt been going on about behind the scenes. Our Jon, however, was not best pleased and - despite dumping her like a hot potato straightaway (like he has done with so many former political friends and allies) - he was forced to withdraw his candidacy.

Momentum is, as far as we can see, the only Labour organisation that is supporting the move towards AMMs. True, among the pro-Corbyn membership this is considered 'common sense' - after all, the members should be in charge, right? Many local members who are pushing for AMMs are undoubtedly on the left and are doing so out of a real desire to support Corbyn's leadership and break the ongoing hold of the right over many CLPs. In many areas, the same

old bureaucracy has been running things for years and seems to have an unbreakable hold over the branches.

Local branch meetings, which select the CLP delegates, are often so boring and bureaucratic, without any debates or real life to them, that many of those inspired by Corbyn turn up once - and cannot bring themselves to go again. It is very difficult to turn around a rightwing branch that has been run by the same local clique for decades; it takes patient work and a huge amount of effort to organise the local left.

## Pros and cons

The AMM structure does seem the easier way to turn things around. After all, CLP meetings are larger, you only have to attend a meeting once a month and they are more likely to feature a political discussion of some sort. It is much easier to persuade disconnected, atomised Corbyn supporters to come to a monthly AMM. This is, of course, exactly the reason why Labour First opposes the move (although Matt Pound tries to pretend that it has to do with its concern for the "gender balance" of CLP delegates, which would not be guaranteed in AMMs). In other words, in some areas it can be a good idea to push for AMMs - especially in smaller CLPs.

But there are very good reasons to be critical of them too:

- AMMs can further atomise the membership. The average size of a CLP is 850 members, but the actual local membership figures vary massively. In a small CLP, an AMM structure can allow you to meet and organise with other lefties when there might not be many or any in your branch (if there even is a branch). But in CLPs with many hundreds of members, AMMs can easily become too big to allow for any real democratic debate or decision-making. If the chair is on the right, they may not be willing to call in somebody from the left to speak, for example, making discussions very one-sided. The AGM is likely to turn into a huge jamboree, where members are supposed to vote for candidates that many might not have even heard of. This structure has the potential to make the CLP executive incredibly powerful and almost untouchable for the rest of the year. Not surprisingly, in some areas it is the local right that argues in favour of AMMs. Any AMM that involves more than, say, 70 members is clearly too big.

- AMMs undermine representative democracy. Jon Lansman is a big fan of 'digital democracy' and online decision-making using 'One member, one vote'. That should tell you why real democrats must oppose it. These methods might look democratic on paper, but dig a little deeper and you will find that they are designed to keep

members atomised and the leadership all-powerful. CLP delegates, like conference delegates, are - at least in theory - accountable to the people who elected them. They are supposed to represent and argue for a particular political point of view. Good delegates report back on how they voted and are then faced with criticism or support, which allows for good political debate and the education of the whole membership.

- AMM structures can demobilise the membership. They may make it more difficult for members to get involved in the day-to-day decision-making within the party. If you go to an AMM, you do not need to get involved in the local branch structures, you do not need to stand for delegate elections, you do not need to defend your voting records or your point of view. But we need our comrades to learn how to run things, to take charge, to organise and to be accountable and hold others to account. This is a crucial part of training our side up to run society in the not-so-distant future.

- AMM structures weaken the trade union link. This is where the LRC focuses its criticism: It "seriously dilutes the input of union delegates into CLPs, a dangerous step ... With some on the left even questioning the union-party link at any level, it is incumbent on socialists to argue for retaining that link, while taking up the cudgels for democratisation of that union input."<sup>6</sup>

While LRC comrades are wrong to elevate support for GC structures into a principle, they are quite right to raise the need to campaign for the "democratisation of the union input", as they put it. In fact, the whole union movement - just like the Labour Party itself - is in need of a radical, democratic transformation. Many delegates from affiliated unions and socialist societies are playing such a negative role - for example, by supporting the local rightwing MP or stopping the CLP from supporting progressive campaigns - that many Corbyn supporters are understandably tempted to throw the baby out with the bathwater.

This issue really underlines how weak the left is in its campaign to democratise the unions. This is visibly demonstrated by the fact that both the CLPD and LRC have managed merely to come out against AMMs: they are not in a position to *campaign* against it ●

## Notes

1. <https://labourlist.org/2018/10/a-switch-to-all-member-meetings-heres-why-thats-a-bad-idea>.
2. [http://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Democracy-Review\\_.pdf](http://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Democracy-Review_.pdf), p33.
3. *Labour Party rule book 2019*, clause IV, point 1.C (p40): <http://labourpartymarxists.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Rule-Book-2019.pdf>.
4. [www.clpd.org.uk](http://www.clpd.org.uk).
5. [www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/momentum-labour-trade-unions-affiliate-christine-shawcroft-party-members-nec-a8243466.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/momentum-labour-trade-unions-affiliate-christine-shawcroft-party-members-nec-a8243466.html).
6. <https://labourrep.com/conference-2019>.

## Fighting fund

# Compliment?

**S**tar of the show this week was new supporter SN, who tried out a bank transfer for £10 just to see if it worked - and then, a few days later, when he knew it did, added another £100! That was the amount he had pledged to pay the *Weekly Worker* to mark the CPGB's 2019 fundraising drive, the Summer Offensive - watch out for news of that from next week.

Apart from that, we received six standing orders totalling no less than £515 - thanks go to FL, BK, TR, MM, KB and GB - plus a single PayPal donation: US comrade PM's regular £25. All that takes our running total for June to £1,332 towards our £2,000 monthly target.

We didn't receive a single cheque this week though. But comrade JB has promised to deliver one very soon. She writes: "I've only recently started to read the *Weekly Worker* online - and I thought you revolutionaries were supposed to be so boring and predictable!" I'm not sure whether that's a compliment or not, but I suppose we'll find out if she's as good as her word and that cheque lands on our doormat! ●

**Robbie Rix**

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

- 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

**Attack on  
Huawei is  
just the  
start**

## The heroes of finance

Despite the efforts of central banks the risk of a new global recession continues to rise, argues **Michael Roberts**

**A**t last week's G20 meeting of finance ministers and central bankers in Japan, the world's finance leaders tried to put a brave face on the situation. Tension over the intensifying trade war between China and the US was the biggest talking point, but officials also wrangled over the wording of the final communiqué on how to describe their concerns for world growth. While they flagged that it appears to be "stabilising", they also warned that the risks were tilted to the downside: "Most importantly, trade and geopolitical tensions have intensified. We will continue to address these risks, and stand ready to take further action," the communiqué said.

But where is this "action" to avoid a new global recession going to come from? The world's central banks, it seems. "Central banks are heroes," Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development secretary general Angel Gurría told Bloomberg Television in an interview during the meetings. "The question is: how much armoury do they still have, how many bullets - particularly silver bullets?"

In other words, what monetary policy weapons do the major central banks have left after 10 years of keeping policy interest rates near or even below zero, and after massive injections of money through 'quantitative easing', buying up all the debt of governments and corporations from banks in order to encourage them to lend for investment? Well, we are about to find out in the US. The Federal Reserve, led by Jay Powell, having gradually raised its policy rate for the last four years, is now indicating that it will reverse this policy and take its rate down again in order to boost the American and world economy. Powell told markets and the G20 ministers that the Fed stood ready to cut interest rates, saying it would "act as appropriate to sustain the expansion".

A 'put' is financial jargon for betting on a rise in financial assets in futures markets. In the mid-1990s the then Fed chair, Alan Greenspan, reduced interest rates to boost the stock and property markets. The 'Greenspan put' took the stock market to a new peak in 2000 (but it was followed by the huge 'dot.com' bust). We are about to have the 'Powell put' to do the same. Financial markets are now betting that the Fed will cut rates and keep the cost of borrowing really low in order to speculate further in financial markets. Jay Powell is set to be the new hero.

Thus the fantasy world of financial markets may be extended.<sup>1</sup> But will cutting interest rates avoid a recession in the 'real' economy? Everywhere the 'hard data' are showing a sharp slowdown in economic growth, a collapse of the world car industry, and outright slumps in many large so-called emerging economies. Above all, there is a significant contraction in world trade, as the trade and technology war instigated by the US against China heats up.

US economic growth had accelerated (from 2% to 3% a year) in 2018 after the Trump corporate tax cuts boosted profits - and unemployment dropped to post-war lows. But last Friday's May



**Smiling ... but things look bleak**

employment growth figures were the lowest in years and wage growth that had been accelerating also dropped off. So there are signs that Trumponomics has been exhausted. Now Jay Powell must step up to the proverbial baseball plate (after being 'encouraged' by Trump).

Elsewhere in the world, two key G7 economies continue to show a significant slowdown in economic growth. German industrial production plunged 1.9% from a month earlier in April. That was the biggest drop in output since August 2015. Year-on-year industrial production dropped 1.8% over April 2018, following a 0.9% fall in March. Manufacturing output dropped 3.4% over the year! Both German exports and imports fell. German growth is now the slowest in five years. As a result, the Bundesbank cut its gross domestic product growth forecast for this year to just 0.6% - down from 1.6% at the beginning of 2019.

At the same time, the G20's host, Japan, announced that wages had fallen for the fourth consecutive month and overall household spending slowed sharply. Unemployment, currently at record lows, was now set to rise. And, most important, China's economic growth rate is at its lowest level in over a decade - even if the rate of 6%+ is around three times the average in the rest of the G20 economies.

### Hidden

In its semi-annual report on global economic prospects,<sup>2</sup> the World Bank cuts its forecast for economic growth (ie, for all countries, including China and India) for this year by 0.3% percentage points to 2.6%. "There's been a tumble in business confidence, a deepening slowdown in global trade and sluggish investment in emerging and developing economies," said new (Trump-appointed) World Bank president David Malpass. "Momentum remains fragile."

World trade growth is expected to fall to its lowest level since the global

financial crash of 2008. The bank also warned that risks are skewed "firmly" to the downside, citing reignited trade tensions between the US and China, financial turbulence in emerging markets and sharper than expected weakness in advanced nations, particularly Europe. Hidden at the back of their report is this statement by World Bank economists:

A sharper than expected deceleration of activity in systemically large economies - such as China, the euro area and the United States - could also have broad-ranging repercussions. The probability of growth in 2020 being at least one percentage point below current projections is estimated at close to 20%. Such slowdown would be comparable to the 2001 global downturn.

Another sign that the world capitalist economy is turning sour comes from the smaller G20 economies. Growth in the Australian economy fell to its weakest rate in almost a decade in the first three months of this year.<sup>3</sup> The economy grew by just 1.8% year on year in the first quarter, and down from 2.3% in the preceding fourth quarter. This is Australia's worst quarterly growth showing since the end of 2009.

Among the so-called Brics (Brazil, China, India, Russia and South Africa), it is looking even worse. The South African economy is now suffering its worst slump in a decade.<sup>4</sup> Output in Africa's most industrialised nation dropped by an annualised 3.2% in the first quarter - its largest quarterly fall since 2009. Power-intensive industries such as manufacturing and mining recorded the biggest drops in activity in the quarter. Mining activity fell by more than 10%, while manufacturing dropped 8.8%.

Turkey went into a recession earlier this year under its own 'Donald Trump', president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

Argentina was already in a slump in 2018 under the governance of the rightwing administration of president Mauricio Macri. The country is now experiencing vicious austerity measures at the behest of the International Monetary Fund, which is bailing out the government with the biggest loans in its history.

But the likely trigger of a new recession is the ongoing and intensifying trade and technology war between the US and China.<sup>5</sup> Neither side appears to be ready to back down and, as a result, world trade growth is diving, and there is the prospect of increased tariffs and protectionist measures. Bloomberg economists reckon that if tariffs expand to cover all US-China trade in the next few months, then global GDP will take a \$600 billion hit in 2021.<sup>6</sup> With 25% tariffs on all bilateral trade, GDP would be down 0.8% for China, 0.5% for the US and 0.5% for the world economy, compared to no trade war. That spells global recession.

And Trump seems bent on widening the trade war to other economies. He has temporarily delayed introducing a range of tariffs on Mexican imports, including imports of car and car parts that American companies make inside the Mexican border with the US. The world car industry is already in major crisis, driven by the end of diesel and slowing demand in China, Europe and Japan. Now American car companies face new problems with Trump's plans.

Thus, while financial markets may be set to boom with the 'Powell put', that is likely to have little effect on the struggling world economy. The recovery since the great recession ended in mid-2009 has reached its 10th year, making it the longest following a slump in 75 years. But it is also the *weakest* recovery since 1945. Real GDP growth and business investment remains well down from the rate before 2007.

The trade and technology war is settling in for the long haul.<sup>7</sup> What makes it likely that things will not be resolved amicably, in order to avoid a global recession, is that the battle between the US and China is not just over 'unfair trade': it is much more an attempt by the US to maintain its global technological superiority in the face of China's fast rise to compete. The attack on Huawei, globally organised by the US, is just the start.

US investment bank Goldman Sachs has noted that, since 2010, the only place where corporate earnings have expanded is in the US. And this, according to Goldmans, is entirely

down to the super-tech companies. However, even global technology profits are only moderately higher than they were prior to the financial crisis, despite having moved sharply upwards (mainly reflecting the impact of large US technology companies). And now it is just this sector that will suffer from the technology war. The risk of a new recession, as measured by various methods, continues to rise.

Then there is the supposedly reliable indicator of the inverted yield curve in bond markets. Normally, the interest rate of long-term bonds (ie, 10 years or more) is much higher than the short-term interest (less than one year). So the 'curve' of interest rates from three months to 10 years is up (or steep). But when the 10-year rate drops below the three-month rate, this has invariably heralded a new recession within a year. Why? Because it implies that investors are so worried about the future that they want to hold 'safe' assets like government bonds rather than invest, to the point that the long-term interest rate on these bonds falls below even the rate set by the Federal Reserve for short-term loans.

The yield on benchmark US government bonds hit new 2019 lows near 2% before the G20 meeting, while those on 10-year bonds in both Germany and Japan were below zero! About \$11 trillion of bonds around the world, concentrated in Europe and Japan, carry negative yields and now account for about 20% of all debt worldwide.

And US yield curve has now inverted. The inversion has only just happened and it needs to continue for a few months to justify its reliability as a recession indicator. So watch this space. Maybe the central bank heroes can save the day ●

**Michael Roberts blogs at <https://thenextrecession.wordpress.com>.**

### Notes

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