

A paper of Marxist polemic and Marxist unity



weekly **worker**



John Ware's *Panorama* hatchet job on Corbyn examined, dissected and demolished

- Letters and debate
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- Ireland and Brexit

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Towards a Communist Party of the European Union

£1/€1.10

Is there a pending constitutional crisis?
Lessons from the 1640s and Charles I



LETTERS



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

Frank talking

Readers may be interested in these 2017 quotes from the former head of the Labour Party's disputes department, Mike Creighton. They are publicly available on his blog (<https://chalkhill.digital/post/politics>) - as is a picture of his retirement party, which appears to include many of those who appeared on the recent controversial *Panorama* programme.

Creighton writes:

"I no longer work for the Labour Party. Almost unbelievably, I have retired ... But I don't apologise for having retired. One of my proudest moments was to look at the team I leave behind to deal with the governance and legal issues of the Labour Party.

"And, contrary to popular belief, that's not just about expelling Trots from the Labour Party - although they will continue to do that. Militant, Socialist Appeal, Alliance for Workers' Liberty have no more place in the Labour Party than the BNP or the EDL.

"No, the team I leave behind will spend the overwhelming majority of the time, as they always have, making sure that ordinary party members, the hard-working activists who organise the party, run elections, raise the money, have the tools and expertise to do that job within the law and to the best of their ability ..."

And:

"The failure of leadership over anti-Semitism - it took five hours and three tortuous phone calls to persuade the leader's office that Livingstone should be suspended in the first place - means that anti-Semitism has air to breathe in the Labour Party. And the Jew-haters and Jew-baiters pretending that they are merely criticising the actions of the Israeli government have gained ground today. Not only is this an abject failure of justice in this case, but it gives *carte blanche* to the anti-Semites of the left and right - and mainly the Trotskyite left - to raise their evil standards on the parapets of the Labour Party. Apparently with Jeremy Corbyn's calm indifference.

"The question was posed today by [Mail journalist] Dan Hodges that 'It's now morally indefensible to be a member of the Labour Party.' I responded, saying it was difficult to disagree."

I think it is important that these quotes are more widely known, so that people can be more informed about what is going on in the party.

Chris Knight
London

Traitor or coward

I was amused to read Brian Kugelmann having a swipe at me as an "obvious crank", because I have taken an ultra-democratic approach to the Brexit crisis destabilising our politics (Letters, July 11). As matters come to a head, the volume of attacks on 'anti-Semites' and 'cranks' of every type will grow. Like all witch-hunts, don't expect to find truth, facts or evidence.

Of course, I don't take it personally, not least because Brian doesn't know me. I accept he is making a concealed political attack through the well-tested Stalinist method of dismissing an argument rather than enlightening us with concrete criticisms. Already we can learn more about Brian's politics than that he hates and despises Rex Dunn.

Two things seem obvious to me. Brian is an ultra-remainder and is irritated by the case made for Corbyn's

'remain'-democrat stance. It has to be repeated because the *Weekly Worker* and *Labour Party Marxists* have gone 'absent without leave' on the Europe issue in the face of the onslaught by Tom Watson and his allies.

As reported in the *Daily Mail* (August 26), Watson was at a party, hosted by Peter Mandelson, planning to overthrow Corbyn by continually attacking him over Europe and anti-Semitism. Watson has been working hard ever since. Corbyn is now under siege, with even his erstwhile allies deserting him.

I have been critically supporting Corbyn's European policy against the Tories, Watson and his Marxist allies. Corbyn has to be defended on this, not least because it is one of the keys for the Labour right to defeat him. We have to defend him on Europe every day, even if - or especially if - Watson and Kugelmann condemn this as "ultra-repetitive".

The same is true over the 'anti-Semitism' slanders. I congratulate the *Weekly Worker* for their ultra-repetitive fight against it. We can never say too much against the enemies of the working class or repeat it too often.

While Watson is the right face of the ultra-'remain' camp, socialists like Brian are its ultra-left face. Lenin was rightly hostile to infantile leftism as a childish disorder. Hence I see no other conclusion except Watson and Kugelmann are two peas from the same pod - one a traitor and the other a coward.

Steve Freeman
London

Twins and sneers

Steven Johnston sneers at my efforts to get Edinburgh twinned the Gaza (Letters, July 11). He is preoccupied with socialism, clearly. But I question his sense of history, of honour, or duty. Civic relationships matter. We live in a world where Zionist forces have far more power than their numbers warrant, who spread the narrative that Israel is theirs by right and Mr Johnston thinks that has nothing to do with socialism. A political creed - a nationalist project - takes the right to a decent life away from millions of Arabs, and he thinks we must wait for utopia before we begin to address historic wrongs.

So why does our twinning proposal matter more than waiting for the socialist nirvana? Through twinning, rich, liberal cities like Edinburgh can build bridges with poor, oppressed ones. We have to raise awareness at every level to try and undo the damage our British empire has done.

Mr Johnston claims cities do not belong to the people who live in them - that cities belong to the capitalist class. I wonder, does he know what every city's municipal authority even is? It collects money - local taxes - from residents to pay for schools, roads, waste collection, etc. This is not some remote capitalist entity, but the body that keeps Mr Johnston going - for surely some civic body is looking after the roads and pavements he travels along, the schools he or his kids went to, the council houses some of the poor people he seeks to liberate live in. He and the other people living around him get to vote in who runs these facilities. And he thinks some rich capitalist class owns all this? Mr Johnston needs to take a look at his council and if they are not his dream lefties then he needs to try and fix that.

But he also needs to heed where the wealth that built his public buildings come from. It came from working people and through local democracy - and that is controlled by working people, not by some rich bankers. The world is more democratic than Johnston thinks and it is our duty as

campaigning lefties to get our fellow citizens thinking about how we might use our civic bodies as a force for good.

We have to remember that the UK created Israel. The Balfour Declaration gifted it them and then we deserted the Arabs in 1947, when our Zionist plantation got nasty. Racism in Israel flourishes. A racism which we facilitated. The fight for a just socialist society must embrace the fight against racism if it is to have any meaning. Twinning can help show we care and provides a mechanism for councils to address historical wrongs, rather than wait for Marxists to take over Downing Street.

Mr Johnston asks what twinning would do for the working class in Palestine. Is he aware that 95% of the water in Gaza is undrinkable? That all is polluted by sewage? Our councils in the UK have the know-how and staff to help address that. And there is much we can learn from them - Gazans excel in cuisine and textiles: in embroidery, and weaving. And in pottery, soap-making and carving too. Let's help their tourist industry - yes, even Gaza still gets tourists. And let's help them with IT. The sad fact is that most Gazans today, thanks to Israel's ring of steel, have never been more than 30 miles from their homes. One route out of their isolation is the internet - I know, because over the past two months I have found over 200 friends on Facebook from Gaza. These people are calling for us to help them. Some are starving. IT is one field where physical isolation can be overcome through the internet. Companies such as Gaza Sky Geeks train young Gazans in coding and would be hugely boosted through mentoring with Edinburgh's IT professionals.

We can all make a difference. We can all help atone for our sins of the past.

Waiting around for a socialist revolution lets lefties like Johnston be complacent about our civic powers. We all need to wake up to the fact that there are many ways we can seek to address the misery we have created around the world. Twinning is one of them - see more reasons why at tinyurl.com/whytwinn.

Pete Gregson
Labour Against Zionist Islamophobic Racism

For himself

Many thanks to Eddie Ford for his incisive piece on the UK's possible constitutional crisis ('Time to reorient', July 11).

However, I feel a reminder is needed on Mr Johnson's equivocal position on the great matter in hand. It is never remarked upon in the main stream media. Johnson, in his own words, "agonised" over his decision to campaign to leave the European Union. *The Independent* summed up his choice pithily with their headline, 'Out for himself!' Johnson's aim was to shaft his old Etonian chum, Dave Cameron, through the ruse of being a 'leaver'. As a committed European during his tenure as London mayor, he had no intention of taking the UK out of the EU. He categorically stated that a 'leave' majority in the referendum would not mean the UK leaving the EU. Rather it would be a strong bargaining chip to force EU reform - after which the Great British public could "think again". This political manoeuvring seems to have been struck from the public record - it's not even mentioned by Jeremy Hunt.

Mr Johnson is a supreme Machiavellian - the slipperiest of slippery characters pursuing power for its own sake. He's actually worse

than that. Machiavelli intended his 'prince' to use his supreme power for the common good. Mr Johnson pursues the premiership for no-one other than himself.

Robert Leslie
email

Turn to youth

In the early 1980s when I joined the Revolutionary Socialist League - better known as the Militant Tendency - its guru, the late Ted Grant, was very fond of quoting Trotsky.

His favourite quote was Trotsky's call for Marxists to "devote the most attention to the youth" - something Ted's followers today in Socialist Appeal do very successfully in Marxist student societies in universities. Similarly, Lenin devoted much energy and resources to winning young people to the Bolshevik Party in the years leading up to the October revolution. Not for nothing did Lenin's opponents accuse his Bolshevik Party of being a party of schoolboys (and girls).

I think there are lessons here for communists in 2019 - a turn to the youth is vital. This is doubly so, as members of the CPGB - especially

of its Provisional Central Committee - are not getting any younger. Although - as the Socialist Workers Party often come out with - "we live in exciting times", we need to pass on the political capital accumulated by the CPGB over the last 30 years to the younger generation.

I think the PCC should take a leaf out of the book of the SWP and Counterfire, who are both carrying out systematic work within Extinction Rebellion across Britain. At the same time, Labour Party Marxists should make a turn to the youth and carry out systematic work within Young Labour and Labour Students.

The Corbyn 'surge' of 2015 was made up of those aged 18-25 and those aged 50 and over - the latter being mostly returnees to the Labour Party who had left during the Blair years, especially following the Iraq war debacle. These 18-25-year-olds are now aged 22-29. My experience locally says that these young people are wide open to the ideas of Marxism and communism.

So I say to the PCC - please take note - make a turn to the youth.

John Smithee
Cambridgeshire



Costing an arm and a leg?

It is important to flag up a feature of our Summer Offensive that has not been highlighted so far.

The success or otherwise of the CPGB's annual fundraising drive is not simply measured by the bundles of fresh money that comrades drop into the pot. We also think of this (give or take) two months-long campaign as a gauge of the SO-participating comrades' intensity of work, engagement with the movement and the required commitment and hard graft needed to advance our organisation's core aims. Serious activists will be very aware of the dent that consistent political work makes in a working class bank account.

Those who lack real political commitment are incapable of even understanding what it takes. In addition to the various wild stories I listed two weeks ago, I was tickled when a comrade got in touch to remind me of possibly the most wacky explanation of the success of our Summer Offensives - certainly the goriest. According to this fantasy, a source of our SO funds in the past might have been via the sale of our comrades' organs. To be accurate, the charge was levelled against our comrades of the *İşçinin Sesi* trend within the Communist Party of Turkey - a serious political organisation from whom we took the idea of holding a Summer Offensive in the first place. In those far-off days, however, a single accusation against either organisation would suffice to malign both, given how closely we worked with these comrades.

In fact, the key political lesson we learned from these exiled comrades was political, *not* surgical. Specifically, that political independence was predicated on financial independence. Too much of the 'official' world communist movement of the time was characterised not simply by political corruption, but by actual financial dependence of one sort or another on various Stalinist governments - which would have stymied their ability to formulate any meaningful critique of these monstrous regimes ... even if they had been politically capable of formulating one.

This corruption has not been confined to Stalinism, of course. In the past, we have had the grisly example of Gerry Healy and his Workers Revolutionary Party - in hock to a variety of foul Middle Eastern regimes and political parties. On our contemporary political scene, we have more modest, but equally distasteful, dupes who got on board for the Another Europe is Possible con ... and the lucrative pay cheques that went with it.

This week, the comrades who have helped keep our organisation free to tell uncomfortable truths to - and *about* - the contemporary left have included comrade KB for his £280; AS for a sturdy £300 and JS for his £185. Our total was augmented by £2,006 this week, bringing it to a very healthy £13,882 towards our minimum target of £30k by August 24 ●

William Sarsfield

ELECTIONS

Volatile times ahead

We are heading for a constitutional crisis, writes **Peter Manson**, and certainly an early general election



Boris Johnson: unleashing a Pandora's box of demons

Readers may have noticed that opinion polls are finally starting to return to something reflecting the normal division between support for Britain's two main parties.

In the May 23 European Union elections, we saw the mass of voters desert the Conservatives and Labour. According to their views on the EU, they switched in huge numbers to either Nigel Farage's Brexit Party, which won 32% of the votes, or the Liberal Democrat remainers (20%). Meanwhile, Labour support shrunk to just 14%, while the Tories slumped to an amazing 9% - less support than for the Green Party.

But last week three separate opinion polls recorded a slight revival in the fortunes of the Tories and Labour. First there was YouGov, in a survey taken on July 9 and 10, which saw the Tories come out on top with 24%. That, in comparative terms, is a tiny proportion for the leading party, but, as against the pathetic 9% in real votes won on May 23, it marked a huge improvement. Labour was not far away on 20%, but it was still behind the Brexit Party (21%), while the Lib Dems were on 19%.

However, the YouGov survey was followed almost immediately by two other polls, conducted over July 10-11, and both of these saw a further move towards 'back to normal'. This time it was Labour which came out on top, with 29% (according to Survation) and 28% (ComRes). In second place were the Tories (on 23% and 24% respectively), while Brexit fell to 20% in both surveys, and the Lib Dems to 19% (Suration) and 15% (ComRes).

Of course, the EU is still the dominant issue, with both major parties seeming to move towards a clearer pro or anti-Brexit position. As the *Daily Express* puts it, the Conservatives have been "buoyed by the prospect of Boris Johnson as the next Tory leader" - Johnson's insistence that a withdrawal will definitely take place on October 31, with or without a deal, will certainly eat into Brexit Party support.

Meanwhile, on July 9 Jeremy Corbyn confirmed that a Labour government would hold a second referendum on a renegotiated deal with the EU and that 'remain' would be an option in that referendum. This followed the position proposed by the Trade Union and Labour Party Liaison Organisation on July 7 - either a 'better Brexit deal' than that agreed by Theresa May or (more likely) remain.

There is still a large element of 'studied ambiguity' in this, in that it continues to face both ways in an attempt to appeal to both leavers and remainers, but no doubt it will help win back a proportion of Labour defectors to the Liberal Democrats. However, the right in particular wants the party

to ditch its commitment to abide by the result of the 2016 referendum and come out right now for a clear-cut 'remain' stance.

Our assessment of the 2016 referendum was perfectly clear:

1. We oppose referendums as a matter of principle.
2. David Cameron thought he would win. He thought he would remain prime minister.
3. He called his referendum to fend off the UK Independence Party and tame his own parliamentary right wing. There was no need to save his bacon.
4. There was no majority in the House of Commons for 'leave'.
5. The interests of big capital were for 'remain'.

Hence, despite our commitment to oppose demands for a withdrawal from the EU, we urged an active boycott. And it has to be said that, while the 'leave' result came as a surprise, our fears have been realised. It is not only the political class that is divided by the EU. So is the working class. Half has lined up behind Boris Johnson, Michael Gove and Nigel Farage, while the other half is with Chuka Umunna, Anna Soubry and Vince Cable.

So, yes, we are utterly opposed to the nationalist agenda of 'leave' - including when it is proposed by the likes of the *Morning Star's* Communist Party of Britain, which believes that a post-Brexit UK would enable Jeremy Corbyn to start introducing 'socialism' in a single country. Even worse is the Socialist Workers Party, which opposed continued EU membership on the grounds that the capitalist establishment is overwhelmingly pro-'remain' and what is bad for them must be good for us.

It is true that David Cameron's decision to go for a referendum backfired spectacularly and has led to the current impasse, with the possibility of a huge constitutional crisis. But will this result in the re-emergence of principled working class politics? Hardly automatic.

No, our position must be for a workers' Europe, in which principled working class organisations cooperate in the drive towards a new, post-capitalist world. That means, of course, that the splintering of the EU into individual, nationalist states is something to be strongly opposed: while we must not offer support to the current EU of the bankers, we should make use of its cross-continental institutions and links with international workers' organisations as best as we can to fight for a totally different kind of Europe. Neither the current pro-capitalist EU nor the current semi-democratic constitutional monarchy state known as the United Kingdom. Returning to the question of current opinion polls, what is clear is the

extreme volatility of the electorate and the sheer unpredictability of the situation. It goes without saying that, following Boris Johnson's election by Tory members as party leader (and therefore prime minister), which will almost certainly be confirmed next week, a general election will become a real possibility. We can expect him to build on his pro-Brexit support to try and gain a parliamentary majority that does *not* depend on an alliance with the Democratic Unionist Party. He might also be forced to 'go to the country' earlier than expected if the current parliament somehow manages to stymie an immediate Brexit.

Our position will be for the biggest possible vote for Labour in order to strengthen Corbyn's position, as against that of the Labour right, while at the same time opening up the possibility of a big boost in the campaign to transform Labour into a genuine party of the working class - in Leon Trotsky's words, a "united front of a special kind". And yes, despite the recent huge increase in support both for the Brexit Party and the Lib Dems as a result of the Brexit crisis, it is completely possible that Labour - to the dismay of Johnson and the Tories - will win the most seats in a new election.

That, however, will not, of course, be the end of the matter. It is by no means certain that Corbyn will be permitted to form the next government. While, on paper, he might have a majority consisting of Labour MPs alone or in alliance with, say, the Scottish National Party, we have no doubt that a substantial bloc of the rightwing-dominated Parliamentary Labour Party - assuming that the majority have not been removed by the trigger-ballot process - would be more than willing to vote for a different sort of majority under a different prime minister.

As we have pointed out on numerous occasions, this could easily be facilitated by the monarch - following the recommendation of her close advisors - declining to call the leader of the largest parliamentary party to Buckingham Palace, and instead going for a 'more reliable' MP (not necessarily from the Labour benches), who would be certain to gain a cross-party majority, thanks to the betrayal of the pro-capitalist PLP right.

All this means that, as well as working for the largest possible Labour vote, we must step up the fight to remove those traitors of the Labour right by demanding the full implementation of the trigger-ballot process with immediate effect ●

peter.manson@weeklyworker.co.uk

Notes

1. www.express.co.uk/news/politics/1152942/brexit-party-news-poll-latest-lib-dems-latest-nigel-farage.

ACTION

London Communist Forum

Sunday July 21, 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): 'Leninism after Lenin'. Calthorpe Arms, 252 Grays Inn Road, London WC1. Organised by CPGB: www.cpgb.org.uk and Labour Party Marxists: www.labourpartymarxists.org.uk.

Remember the Tolpuddle Martyrs

Friday July 19 to Sunday July 21: Annual commemoration festival, Tolpuddle Martyrs Museum, Dorchester Road, Tolpuddle DT2. Tickets £15 to £42. Organised by Tolpuddle Martyrs: www.tolpuddlemartyrs.org.uk.

General election now - Tories out!

Monday July 22, 6pm: Rally, Downing Street, London SW1. As the new Tory prime minister takes office, demand a general election and an end to austerity. Organised by People's Assembly Against Austerity: www.facebook.com/events/411580909446906.

Defend and build the Labour left

Monday July 22, 7pm: Public meeting, Friends Meeting House, 22 School Lane, Liverpool L1. Speakers include Chris Williamson MP and Lesley Mahmood. Organised by Supporters of Liverpool Labour Left: beankevin1955@gmail.com.

Jeremy Hardy versus the Israeli army

Tuesday July 23, 6.30pm: Film screening, Greenwood Theatre, 55 Weston Street, London SE1. Remembering Jeremy's unstinting support for Palestine. Followed by a discussion panel, including producer/director Leila Sansour. Tickets from £15. Organised by Open Bethlehem and Medical Aid for Palestinians: www.facebook.com/events/471539300086929.

Popular resistance in Palestine

Hear Palestinian environmental and political activist Mazin Qumsiyeh.

Tuesday July 23, 7.15pm: Irish Cultural Centre, 5 Blacks Road, Hammersmith, London W6. Tickets £3 (£0). Organised by Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions and West London Palestine Solidarity Campaign: www.facebook.com/events/625133317993514.

Wednesday July 24, 7.30pm: All Saints Church, 63 East Sheen Avenue, East Sheen, London SW14. Admission by free ticket.

Organised by Richmond and Kingston Palestine Solidarity Campaign: www.facebook.com/events/444346529680179.

Thursday July 25, 7pm: Friends Meeting House, 6 Mount Street, Manchester M2.

Organised by Manchester Palestine Solidarity Campaign: www.facebook.com/events/2299360016942902.

Friday July 26, 7pm: Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution, 16-18 Queen Square, Bath BA1. Tickets £5 (£3).

Organised by Bath Friends of Palestine: www.facebook.com/events/2407442582649976.

Monday August 12, 7.30pm: St Nicolas Church Hall, Bury Street, Guildford GU2.

Organised by West Surrey Palestine Solidarity Campaign: www.westsurreypsc.org.uk.

Don't attack Iran

Public meetings organised by Stop the War Coalition. Oppose British government support for Trump's military brinkmanship.

Wednesday July 24, 6.30pm: Deptford Town Hall, Goldsmiths University, New Cross Road, London SE14. Speakers: Abbas Edalat (Campaign Against Sanctions and Military Intervention in Iran) and Chris Nineham (Stop the War Coalition).

www.facebook.com/events/2470719522948508.

Thursday August 15, 7pm: Friends Meeting House, 22 School Lane, Liverpool L1. Speakers tbc.

www.facebook.com/events/615383922282701.

Saturday August 17, 11am: Bold Street Methodist Church, Palmyra Square North, Warrington WA1. Speakers include Billy Hayes (ex-general secretary CWU, now STWC national officer.)

www.facebook.com/events/377086566274616.

Marx at the arcade

Wednesday July 31, 7pm: Book launch, Housmans Bookshop, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1. *Marx at the arcade: consoles, controllers and class struggle*, a study of the video games industry with author Jamie Woodcock. Tickets £3.94.

Organised by Housmans: www.facebook.com/events/334579524139114.

Human rights as focus of struggles

Thursday August 15, 6pm: Study session, Jack Jones House, 2 Churchill Way, Liverpool L3.

Organised by Merseyside Socialist Theory Study Group: study4socialism@outlook.com.

Peterloo march for democracy

Sunday August 18, 11.30am: March from 10 locations near central Manchester to rally in Albert Square at 1pm. Commemorate the Peterloo massacre of 1819, when 70,000 peaceful protestors were attacked, leaving 18 dead and hundreds seriously injured.

Organised by Peterloo Democracy: www.peterloodemocracy.com.

Resisting war in the 21st century

Saturday September 7, 9.30am to 5pm: Stop the War Coalition AGM, Bloomsbury Baptist Church, 235 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2.

Decide the next actions for the campaign. Entrance £11.37 (£5.98).

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

CPGB wills

Remember the CPGB and keep the struggle going. Put our party's name and address, together with the amount you wish to leave, in your will.

If you need further help, do not hesitate to contact us.

LABOUR

A new mood dawns

William Sarsfield reports from the Durham Miners Gala 2019, where the 'Appeal for a Labour Left Alliance' was very well received

July 13 saw something like 250,000 people gather for this year's Durham Miners Gala - the 135th. For many comrades - veterans of previous galas - there would have been much that was familiar in the event this year. There was its 'family day out' aspect; the burgers and booze fest; the labour movement worthies on the main stage; the raucous flirting of gaggles of youth and the political tents and stalls. It is an inspiring and enjoyable working class festival and everyone in the movement should attend this iconic event at least once in their life.

However, many comrades reported that there was a different feel this year. Concretely, a sense that an important political shift was taking place: a new mood of defiance and more focused anger - not simply against the Tories and their reactionary agenda, but also the right wing of the Labour Party, and in particular the treacherous gang that dominates the Parliamentary Labour Party. The political element of the crowd on July 13 reflected a hardening of attitudes in the Labour Party and - auspiciously - this has coincided with the joint initiative of Labour Against the Witchhunt and the Labour Representation Committee to promote the newly launched 'Appeal for a democratic Labour Left Alliance'.

It has been clear for years that the privately owned Momentum organisation is not fit for purpose. However, the recent treacherous comments from its proprietor, Jon Lansman, demanding the expulsion of Chris Williamson MP from the party, have focused the minds of many. The Labour left needs a democratic, militant organisation to fight the attacks on itself, from with the party and without - and our best opportunity is presented by Labour Left Alliance (though it is not just defensive, but campaigns to "radically transform and democratise the Labour Party and the trade unions", and fights for the implementation of trigger ballots).

I think there were three features in this year's gala that suggest strong support for a change.

First, there was the crowd itself. I got a taste of this harder mood when I joined comrades distributing the *Labour Party Marxists* paper, plus the leaflet on the Labour Left Alliance initiative and - most encouragingly of all - the Labour Against the Witchhunt leaflet on Chris Williamson's victimisation. For hours, a mass of people streamed past us and - with the frequent delays, given the sheer numbers, particularly compacted around the narrow entrance - it was difficult to engage with people properly.

When we were able to interact, however, I was enormously encouraged both by the level of recognition comrade Williamson had from the crowd and, crucially, the numbers who took the leaflets (even if it meant a perilous journey back, against the flow of the crowd!); the angry comments against the witch-hunters; and the fact that a good number took bundles of leaflets to distribute to their own comrades and political contacts.

Hundreds responded in that active, partisan manner (quite apart from the many more who took the leaflet without making a comment). In many hours of this work I received exactly three negative responses. In fact, they were such a rarity that I allowed myself the luxury of challenging each



Marching past Labour's great and good

one individually. When questioned more closely, a pattern emerged. Very quickly, the anti-Williamson hecklers (they were all Labour Party members) found that they could not substantiate their initial, knee-jerk slur of "anti-Semitic". (I cunningly achieved this by asking them what, exactly, had Chris said that was anti-Semitic? They seemed stunned by the very question, as if I had asked them if they believed in gravity.)

All three then quickly reverted to a version of 'not liking his general views'. In other words, he has no place in the Labour Party because of his leftwing politics, not his alleged 'racism'. Out of the mouths of children and naive Labour rightwingers ...

This is hardly a scientific survey, but it seemed to me that the composition of the crowd changed during the day, as less political (more 'family day out') types turned up. Even less scientifically, I think a measure of the mood of the crowd was reflected in the look on the face of the small number of paper-sellers the Alliance for Workers' Liberty turned out. We made a special effort to make sure they got Chris Williamson leaflets and - as anxious and despondent they looked - we could not find it in our hearts to engage them in an argument. It would have been like clubbing baby seals.

Second, it was good to see Chris Williamson take his place behind the LAW stall in the 'Politics Tent'. The comrade was literally swamped with supporters and well-wishers, eager to shake his hand, wish him well and take a photo. No doubt it will further infuriate Labour rightwingers that the comrade posed with a pro-Jackie Walker poster - something he did for long stretches of time, just to make sure that no-one could confuse the message.

Third, there was the militant speech from Labour MP Laura Pidcock

(although, for the sake of balance, we must remember she - like every single Labour MP - has failed to publicly support Chris). Without a doubt, however, her contribution was the most rousing, best delivered and best received of the day. Len McCluskey of Unite lit no fires (apart from when he called Tom Watson "a fucking disgrace"). Jeremy Corbyn himself was adequate - although he gave full rein to his habit of trying to sex up mild palliatives from the Labour manifesto by shouting at the top of his lungs in places where the actual words do not warrant the volume.

On the anti-Semitic provocation, the man simply repeated his passive, uber-Gandhian advice to the crowd that Labour would "not allow or tolerate in any shape or form whatsoever anti-Semitism, Islamophobia or racism anywhere in our party or our movement or our society" and thus, the plan must be: "Do not allow our message to be distracted. Keep your eyes on the prize of getting rid of this government and getting a Labour government dedicated to the redistribution of power and wealth in our society."

As if the filthy smear of racism is not one of the means - and so far, the most successful - by which the ruling class and its venal media are toxifying the Labour Party and making it unelectable; establishing as 'common sense' the idea that Corbyn and the left are "institutionally racist" and present an "existential threat" to the Jewish population in the UK, as has been alleged.

In comparative terms, Pidcock was excellent. She called on the crowd to face up to "one fundamental truth - that it is the capitalist system that is at the root" of the injustices and the existential challenges before us. We need not only a new government, but a fight for a "different system"; of course, it is "exhausting, battling the

press" and their lies; but we must not use our time on those who are "fickle and flighty, but use our energy on defeating the evils of exploitation, greed and the unfettered power of the ruling class". She also seemed to come out in support of Chris - without naming him - when she spoke about how outrageous it was "for anti-racists, who have been fighting injustice and racism all their lives, to be labelled as racists".

There are things in her speech that we could take issue with, but that would miss the point. The significant factor was the response of the crowd.

People were on their feet to give the woman the longest, loudest round of applause of the day. She clearly struck a pugnacious chord with these thousands of working class partisans.

This explains the encouraging fact that the aforementioned joint call from LAW and the LRC - 'Appeal for a democratic Labour Left Alliance' - has attracted nearly 500 signatories in its first few days and that dozens of local left organisations are now exploring with the appeal's drafters opportunities for closer ties and joint work towards a unified alliance. We urge readers to support this vital initiative ●

Appeal for a Labour Left Alliance

The degeneration of Momentum has reached a critical point. Jon Lansman's attack on Jewish Voice for Labour as "not being part of the Jewish community" and his demand that Chris Williamson MP should be expelled from the Labour Party are indefensible. Sadly, Momentum at a national level has become an organisation that has now fully joined the witch-hunt against Jeremy Corbyn and his supporters.

It is not good enough to call for people to join this or that existing group. We have to be honest: none of our existing Labour left organisations are, by themselves, the answer. But they can be part of the solution.

We therefore believe there is now an urgent need to build a democratic, transparent and socialist Labour Left Alliance that:

- organises democratically and transparently;
- both supports Corbyn against attacks by the right and is independent

and able to criticise the leadership when necessary;

- opposes racism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and all other forms of discrimination and is consistently internationalist - a stance which by definition includes support for the democratic and national rights of the Palestinians;
- opposes attempts to conflate anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism;
- campaigns to radically transform and democratise the Labour Party and the trade unions;
- campaigns for the implementation of trigger ballots (as a step towards mandatory reselection), so that the Parliamentary Labour Party better reflects the pro-Corbyn views of the vast majority of members;
- supports and encourages struggles now against austerity and all forms of oppression.

For more information, go to <https://labourleft.org>.

CIVIL WAR

The politics of offence

Eddie Ford thinks everybody should be open to political criticism - even those who are pregnant or receiving treatment for illness

For some time now the ongoing civil war in the Labour Party, which still has a long time to run, has revolved around the slander that anti-Zionism equals anti-Semitism. From this it automatically follows that criticising the foundational basis of the state of the Israel, or even its core governmental policies, is also anti-Semitic - or, in the words of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, claiming that the existence of Israel is a "racist endeavour".

This is a notion peddled endlessly by the Labour right and the mass media, especially the BBC - which is not called the *British Broadcasting Company* for nothing: it patriotically serves the interests of the establishment, whilst pretending it is a neutral and objective arbiter. Aghast BBC reporters comment on the 'anti-Semitism' crisis in the same breathless way that god-fearing folk in the 17th century must have muttered about the menace of witchery. The fact that a visit to a local Labour Party meeting almost anywhere in the country would immediately demonstrate that such an accusation has no basis in reality makes no difference, of course. When a lie is this effective - and so useful as part of the campaign against Jeremy Corbyn and the left - you want to keep it going for as long as possible; just as the persecution of 'witches' helped the elite impose social control and divert attention from their own failings. For example, it was a victory for the right - within the Labour Party and in society as a whole - when the Labour leadership finally accepted the IHRA's "working definition" of anti-Semitism, even if they grumbled bitterly about Corbyn not committing himself to the full text (ie, all of the implicitly pro-Israel examples). Zionism had scored a hugely symbolic victory.

One distinctly noticeable trait or offshoot of the 'anti-Zionism equals anti-Semitism' slander campaign has been the flourishing of the politics of offence - certain things, of which there are more by the day, are deemed beyond the pale. They cannot be said or written, unless you enjoy being the object of ritual condemnation. This new weapon is not the result of mere accident, it goes without saying:

a certain morbid sensitivity is being deliberately promoted in order to shut down rational political criticism and debate. You cannot say anything which might offend *The Jewish Chronicle* or the Jewish Labour Movement. Even worse is to offend the 'Jewish community', as if we are dealing with a single monolithic entity in which all share the same views - an idea which itself crosses over to genuine anti-Semitism: presumably we are meant to believe that all Jewish people are Zionists or harbour loyalty the Israeli state, which is palpably ridiculous.

Unfortunately, as commented upon before in this publication, large sections of the left have internalised the politics of offence - this presumably happened via the soft-Maoism which influenced the far-left in the United States, the municipal socialism of the 1970s, second-wave feminism, the group-think imposed by the rival leaders of Trotskyist micro sects, no platforming political opponents, etc. But, whatever its exact origins or political composition, the politics of offence now runs deep on an ideological level for many on the left - provoking a Pavlovian outrage whenever this or that is said.

Hence last year Owen Jones - still nominally a leftwinger the last time I checked - condemned Pete Willsman in the pages of *The Guardian* for damaging "the struggle against the disgusting disease of anti-Semitism" - merely for making the observation on Labour's national executive that some people disseminating "duff information" about Labour's supposed 'anti-Semitism' problem - including senior rabbis and writers for *The Jewish Chronicle* - were "Trump fanatics". The fact that this had a certain truth was irrelevant: Willsman had offended the Board of Deputies of British Jews and the JLM - therefore his comments were unacceptable. You can say exactly the same about Chris Williamson, of course, and near countless others. The right not to be offended overrides the right to free expression or plain speaking.

Having said that, there is a large degree of hypocrisy in all this. Margaret Hodge can call Jeremy Corbyn "a fucking anti-Semite and

a racist", whilst others compare the Labour leader to Hitler without batting an eye, but that is fine - part of the 'normal rough and tumble of politics'. The right can say what the hell they like - but the left is supposed to be 'respectful' and 'moderate'.

Narrative

However, the politics of offence has mutated into something even more degenerate - the politics of *personal* offence, where aspects of everyday life are also weaponised. It is doubtful whether those in the late 1960s and 70s who went round saying 'the personal is political' meant it in quite the way that it is now being used by figures in the Labour Party and the labour movement generally.

Speaking at the Durham Miners' Gala over the weekend, Unite boss Len McCluskey attacked Labour's deputy leader, Tom Watson, and his friends in the media, for being a "fucking disgrace" - to loud cheers.¹ This was a reference to the hullabaloo following the *Panorama* predictable hatchet job on the Corbyn leadership concerning "political interference" in the investigation into alleged anti-Semitism within the party. Watson had written to Labour's general secretary, Jennie Formby, expressing outrage at the way former staff members had been treated and also suggesting that she might have been involved in the deletion of emails dealing with various awkward cases yet to be addressed - ie, that she was part of a cover-up. In reply, Formby said she was "very disappointed" by Watson's approach, adding that "traducing" her reputation when she was undergoing chemotherapy for breast cancer was an "inappropriate way" to discuss this issue.

Now, I strongly suspect that most in the crowd at Durham were not standing up for common decency when they cheered McCluskey - they were actually taking a stand on the ongoing civil war in Labour, by siding with those daring to fight back against the slanderous attacks on Jeremy Corbyn, as opposed to those who take a craven position. For communists this is only to be applauded, of course. But there is also the issue of the politics of offence. McCluskey's anger focused primarily on Formby's health - saying: "The attacks on Jennie would be wrong in normal circumstances, but when they are in the circumstances where she is battling cancer, they are unacceptable". Beyond the pale. Meaning that Watson, as McCluskey put it, "should be fucking well ashamed" of himself.

Diane Abbott, Emily Thornberry, John McDonnell, etc have all piled in behind the verdict of the Unite general secretary, saying how wrong and disgraceful it was for Watson to say what he did at such a time. One Labour activist ('Rachael Swindon #ELAC' - aka Rachael Cousins from Swindon) even advocated on Twitter that Watson be suspended "pending an investigation under the disability discrimination Equality Act".

In other words, they were not criticising Tom Watson for his

foul, rightwing politics or systematic attempts to undermine Jeremy Corbyn - feeding the media narrative of an 'institutionally racist' Labour Party and all that garbage. That might risk saying something controversial. No, rather they were expressing outrage at his ungallant behaviour towards a lady in distress - ie, an experienced woman politician currently receiving treatment for a serious medical condition. She becomes instead a victim who needs special protection.

We saw the same sort of approach, this time more overtly from the right, when it came to Ellie Reeves - sister of fellow Labour MP, Rachel Reeves, and wife of John Cryer, chair of the Parliamentary Labour Party. On July 3 the *Evening Standard*, London's Tory-lite free sheet, had a scoop about an "explosive row" within Labour over the "bullying" of the then 22-weeks-pregnant Ellie Reeves.² This "bullying" turned out to be a putative attempt to deselect her by a local party member in Lewisham West and Penge, who was unhappy that she was one of the 120 MPs and peers calling upon Jeremy Corbyn to "immediately" remove the Labour whip from Chris Williamson after his suspension over totally unfounded allegations relating to anti-Semitism was lifted on June 26 (Williamson was suspended again two days later).

The local party chair suggested that a proposed vote of no confidence against Reeves should be submitted in time for the Constituency Labour Party's next meeting on July 6 - only for Labour HQ to swoop in like a hawk and bring a halt to the move, on the basis that it would be "wrong" to make such a move against a pregnant MP soon be on maternity leave. A spokesperson for Corbyn said the guidelines on reselection would be "clarified" to make sure that MPs like Reeves are exempt.

Naturally, *The Sun* could not resist running a story

about a "bullying" Corbynista ditching his bid to deselect Reeves - reporting that the threat had "sparked absolute fury among Labour moderates, who had demanded pregnant MPs are protected from leftie bids to purge them" (July 4). Understated as always, Tom Watson said the move to deselect Reeves was "disgusting" and an example of "mob rule". He went on to tweet that it was an attempt by activists to "bully another pregnant MP out of the party". He was alluding to Luciana Berger, who almost certainly would have been deselected, had she not defected in February to Change UK - from which she soon resigned and is now sitting as an independent. At the time, as *Weekly Worker* readers will remember, the Labour right and media presented her as a victim of intolerant anti-Semitism - nothing to do with the fact, of course, that her local CLP was getting totally fed-up with her rightwing politics ... and that she had refused to undertake *not* to defect.

We are now in a situation where an early general election is very likely. Presumably Reeves's CLP are well aware of this fact too, and they should have the right to deselect her if they think she is not suitable. Apparently though, her pregnancy means she should automatically be reselected as the candidate - pregnant women cannot be held accountable. Maybe the Labour right would extend that 'principle' to the electorate. Should the "mob" not be allowed to vote in a general election if their sitting MP happens to be pregnant? The idea of the "mob" voting out such an MP is surely "disgusting". Well, no, it is not. It is called democracy.

Obviously, we all wish Jennie Formby well in terms of her medical treatment - and the same goes for Ellie Reeves and her pregnancy. But at the end of the day, both should be open to political criticism and subject to democratic accountability - even if Len McCluskey, the Labour right and *The Sun* find that unacceptable. Normal politics should not be suspended because someone is suffering from an illness or is expecting a child - any suggestion to the contrary can only be described as patronising, sexist and dangerous ●

eddie.ford@weeklyworker.co.uk

Notes

1. <https://morningstaronline.co.uk/article/b/mccluskey-calls-watson-disgrace>.
2. www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/row-over-bullying-of-pregnant-labour-mp-ellie-reeves-rocks-party-a4181316.html.

Fighting fund

Doing well

This week's *Weekly Worker* fighting fund saw us shoot up by £737 towards our £2,000 monthly target - the running total now stands at £1,542.

In addition to the £425 received in standing orders - thank you, SN, BK, TR, KB and MM - two comrades made a one-off donation by bank transfer: BB paid an excellent £100, while JS came up with a further £30 to add to his earlier contribution towards July's fighting fund.

No cheques came our way over the last seven days, but we did receive four very useful donations via PayPal. Two of them were from regular donors PM (£25) and JB (£7), but we also picked up two sizable gifts from MS (£100) and RL (£50).

And both of these last-named comrades had something to say about the quality of our paper. MS

was particularly impressed by our coverage of the ongoing split within the Committee for a Workers' International, of which he was once a member, while RL had kind words to say about the overall quality of our articles. At first we thought he had accidentally added a zero to a £5 monthly subscription payment, but he soon put us right - no, it was definitely a donation!

Anyway, we are doing rather well, with only £468 still needed, and just under two weeks to go. Let's see if we can build up a reserve just in case later months don't go quite as well! ●

Robbie Rix

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



Len McCluskey: "fucking disgrace"

DEBATE

Constitutional or political?

Mike Macnair asks whether talk of a 'constitutional crisis' following the election of Boris Johnson as Tory leader is real or illusory

This article does not express an official Communist Party of Great Britain or Provisional Central Committee position. Indeed, it is in part a critique of Eddie Ford's article, 'Time to reorient', in last week's paper (July 11). Comrade Ford's article is, in my opinion, insufficiently sceptical of the talk of 'constitutional crisis' coming from elements of the 'remain' camp and of the media - and in consequence does not get all the way to the *Realpolitik* considerations which lie behind this, or to the actual constitutional issues that these pose.

On July 23, barring some totally unexpected accident, it will be announced that Boris Johnson has won the vote for the leadership of the Tory Party. Assuming all goes to plan, on July 24 Theresa May will go to the palace to resign, then Johnson will go there to be formally appointed prime minister. On July 25, parliament will go into recess, returning (in theory) on September 3.

Given the scale of Johnson's notorious dishonesty and opportunism, what will follow is not certain. But Trump's equally notorious dishonesty and opportunism did not prevent him from following a policy whose *main outlines* had been indicated in his election campaign. Provided that Trump's electoral crocodile tears for the plight of the 'American middle class' were disregarded, and instead Trump was assumed to share the *actual* commitments of the Republican Party to tax cuts and ease regulations for the rich and the corporations, to restore male and white supremacy under the cover of religion, and to wage aggressive war in the Middle East contrary to the principles of the Nuremberg war crimes trials,¹ the upshot was predictable: Trump signalled he would pursue a right-populist nationalist policy, and that is what has been delivered.

By the same token, *Johnson's* right-populist and nationalist policies expressed in his campaign for the party leadership should be taken seriously. He has indicated that he intends to play brinkmanship with the European Union, and to do whatever it takes to get EU leaders to believe Britain is willing to go for a no-deal Brexit if they are not willing to capitulate on breaking the link between the 'four freedoms' - free movement of goods, capital, services and labour - to allow British financial and legal services firms free access to European markets without free movement of labour.

To that end, he has announced that he will seek a US-UK trade deal agreed *before* the exit date, however implausible this seems to others (even the Brexiteer, Liam Fox).² The point is to show that Britain under Boris will be willing to accept whatever Trump demands in order to have an alternative to EU trade.

For the same reason, Johnson has also refused to rule out adopting Dominic Raab's suggestion of proroguing parliament (that is, using the royal prerogative to prevent parliament meeting before the October 31 exit deadline) to ensure that the only obstacle to a no-deal exit is the EU capitulating.

Protect

Former prime minister John Major and current chancellor of the exchequer Philip Hammond have suggested that they will litigate to prevent a prorogation, on the ground that they would be "protecting the queen" from



Anthony van Dyck: 'Charles I' (1635-36)

becoming involved in a "constitutional crisis".³ These statements in fact indicate the *weakness* of the political position of the Tory remainers and opponents of 'no-deal Brexit'. There is not the slightest likelihood that the courts would be willing to enjoin the prime minister against advising the queen to prorogue.

Alongside this, Rory Stewart has offered fantasies of an 'unofficial session',⁴ patterned on the occasion of March 2 1629, when MPs held the speaker of the House of Commons down in his chair to prevent an adjournment, while the Commons passed a series of motions protesting against Charles I's recent actions. The king promptly dissolved parliament by proclamation (left unpublished for a few days),⁵ and did not call another one until he was forced to do so in 1640 by the Scots uprising ('First Bishops' War') and inability to pay for the army.⁶

Much the same was true of Charles II's extensive use of the prerogative of proroguing parliament between 1660 and 1681. Charles was only forced to call fresh elections in 1678-81 when Louis XIV, king of France, temporarily cut off his subsidies to Charles' government, and even in that period Charles used prorogations to prevent unwelcome parliamentary actions. Opposition MPs and peers grumbled, but they had no means of preventing prorogation. James II's only parliament met only in May-November 1685 and, after it started to raise awkward issues, was prorogued repeatedly from November 1685 to July 1687. What followed was a Dutch invasion (demanding a "free parliament...").

Charles II's and James II's repeated use of prorogations led the 1689 parliament to adopt - among the provisions of the Declaration of Right

(February 1689), and Bill of Rights (December 1689) - provisions to the effect:

(article 4) That levying Money for or to the Use of the Crowne by pretence of Prerogative without Grant of Parlyament for longer time or in other manner then the same is or shall be granted is Illegall.

(article 6) That the raising or keeping a standing Army within the Kingdom in time of Peace unlesse it be with Consent of Parlyament is against Law.⁷

To give these provisions effective teeth to prevent prolonged prorogations in the style of Charles II and James II, the Mutiny Acts, which authorised the keeping of a standing army, were until 1879 passed only on an annual basis. The subsequent Army and Armed Forces Acts require annual renewal by parliamentary resolution (the Blair government in 2005 unsuccessfully proposed to remove this requirement, which remains in place).⁸ Income and Corporation Taxes also require annual authorisation, by passing new Finance Acts each year, though some other taxes have been made permanent.⁹

The 1689 parliament were not satisfied with purely legal teeth. The 1689 Bill of Rights (article 7) provides "That the subjects which are Protestants may have arms for their defence suitable to their conditions and as allowed by law" - denouncing thereby the James II government's seizure of weapons and equipment for full regiments from prominent opposition aristocrats.¹⁰ In 1709 'Williamite Tory' chief justice Holt ruled in the 'Case of the Reforming Constables' that unlawful arrest,

being an invasion of constitutional rights, was sufficient provocation to reduce the ensuing killing of the constable who made the arrest from murder to manslaughter, instantiating the right of forcible resistance to unlawful government action.¹¹ (These principles have since disappeared, with the 'Reforming Constables' ruling already abandoned by the 1750s, while the right to bear arms was abolished by the Firearms Act 1920.)

These were political judgments which reflected the fact that stopping the royal executive summoning parliament only when it was convenient to the executive had required a Scots invasion in 1640, a full-dress civil war in England in 1642-49, and a Dutch invasion (with insurrectionary support in England) in 1688.

The first problem with these constitutional mechanisms is that Boris Johnson is not, in fact, proposing to govern without parliament until February 24 2020 when the legal authority for the armed forces expires, or until April 6 2020 when the authority for the main direct taxes expires. He merely wants to use prorogation to postpone the re-assembly of parliament for two months, from September 3 to November 5 or thereabouts.

The *politics* of this course of action are what makes it problematic. It would certainly be possible for Johnson, after securing a no-deal Brexit by prorogation, to come back to parliament early in November and say, 'Now let's have a general election to break the deadlock.' The Labour Party could not possibly vote against an early general election, which it has been demanding for months. And after delivering a no-deal Brexit, Johnson would certainly see off both the Brexit Party, and

the rag-tag remnants of the UK Independence Party. The Labour Party would be more likely to be split, by its right wing hostile to Corbyn and complaining that he did not do enough to stop Brexit. The Tories *should* be a shoo-in for a clear majority (which is what polls for 'Johnson as leader' pointed to at the outset of his campaign). *The Times* (July 17) headlines: "Johnson plans early election to hit Corbyn."¹²

The problem is that in 2017 the polls seemed clear that Theresa May would get a stronger majority by going to the country. In fact, the Tories lost their majority. We can push a little further back as well. Remember 'Cleggmania' and the exultation of the press about polls showing Labour being pushed into third place in 2010 - and the reaction to this threat, the large turnout in working class districts at the last minute? Today, the polls are all over the place - but they are certainly *unclear*. What if the upshot was *not* a Tory majority, but a Labour victory due to the peculiarities of 'first past the post', or even Labour as the largest minority?

The talk of 'constitutional crisis' from Major, Hammond and Stewart and others is all excitable stuff, but like Major's threat of litigation, it strongly suggests that the proponents of this view do *not* have a parliamentary majority - contrary both to their threats, and to their 17th-century constitutional precedents. If they had a parliamentary majority, they do not need to litigate, or to have an 'alternative parliament' meeting. They could on July 23 or 24 suspend the standing orders of the Commons (if necessary) and pass a vote of 'no confidence' in the government. The problem is just that they do not

seem to have a majority for doing so - as has already been shown in a succession of votes on alternatives to Theresa May's deal.

Political crisis?

It is, of course, *possible* that discussions will result in the opponents of 'no deal' assembling a majority to defeat Johnson on July 23 or 24. To do so would imply bringing down the government, splitting the Tory and Labour Parties, and assembling a 'national government' coalition. Even a single 'no confidence' vote and an extension of the parliamentary session beyond July 25 would point in that direction.

If it happened, this would not be a *constitutional* crisis - a crisis in which the failure of the constitutional order is posed. It would be a *political* crisis, a crisis of political management, working through the normal, but rather rusty, constitutional machinery of votes of no confidence and the reassembly of a parliamentary majority.

But in fact, as I have just said, on every occasion on which this issue has been posed, the Tory remainers have bottled it, and so have the Labour right (with the exception of the micro-groups from both sides who went with the doomed Independent Group/Change UK project).

Underlying this inability to assemble a majority is the same problem which makes Johnson's early general election idea risky. It is a common understanding both of Tories of all stripes and of the mainstream media (including the 'quality' press) that a Corbyn government is a *worse* threat than a no-deal Brexit. The problem for the Tory remainers is, then, how to defeat no-deal Brexit without risking a Corbyn government.

After the 1809 'Walcheren debacle', some wit wrote, in relation to the failure of the General John Pitt, Earl of Chatham, and Admiral Sir Richard Strachan to cooperate effectively enough to take Antwerp before the French reinforced the city:

Great Chatham with his sabre drawn
Stood waiting for Sir Richard Strachan.
Sir Richard, longing to be at 'em,
Stood waiting for the Earl of Chatham.¹³

On this sort of analysis, the Tory remainers have kept bottling a proper split from the Brexiters because they are waiting for the Labour right to make a proper split from the Corbyniters; meanwhile, the Labour right are waiting for the Tory remainers to make a proper split from the Brexiters before they are willing to move.

There is a sound basis for this approach. David Cameron in 2014 employed the Labour right to 'do the statesmanlike thing' and defeat the Scottish independence campaign - and, on the very morrow of the result, knifed them in the back with an English nationalist speech, procuring a Labour wipe-out in Scotland in 2015. The consequence of this piece of dishonesty is that the Labour right cannot trust the Tory left not to do the same thing again over Brexit. And the Tory left have to fear that, if they split their party in the hope of avoiding a no-deal Brexit, the Labour right will respond in kind for 2014 by *not* splitting from Corbyn, with the result that (whatever else happens) the Tory left will abruptly find themselves in the political wilderness.

The plain failure of the Independent Group/Change UK, and Labour's victory in the Peterborough by-election in the *worst possible* circumstances (in the midst of the anti-Semitism witch-hunt; after the removal of the sitting Labour MP, jailed for perverting the course of justice; in a Brexit-voting constituency), and the continued severe

uncertainty in the polls,¹⁴ reinforce the pre-existing grounds for hesitation on both sides.

For Johnson to prorogue parliament requires that the queen should agree. It is, in fact, completely normal for the monarch to agree to such proposals from the prime minister - assuming Johnson becomes prime minister. By convention she is *required* to act on the advice of ministers.

It is not at all clear that she invariably has to do so. In 1975 the then governor-general of Australia, Sir John Kerr, refused Labour prime minister Gough Whitlam's request for Senate elections, sacked him and instead installed Malcolm Fraser, leader of the Liberal/Country Party opposition, as caretaker prime minister to run a general election (which, unsurprisingly, Fraser's party won). The last UK use of prorogation to achieve a legislative manoeuvre was by the Attlee government in 1948 (to pass the Parliament Act, further reducing the powers of the House of Lords).¹⁵ But the queen would need a pretty good reason to refuse to act on the advice of the prime minister, and this really *could* be a 'constitutional crisis'.

Override

There is a constitutional *issue* here, in that the supposedly 'advisory' Brexit referendum is being made to override the will of the parliamentary majority - but if the Tory remainers again bottle bringing down the government, there will be no actual will of the parliamentary majority, but merely conflicting Commons resolutions; and *technically* the act of parliament passed in response to Gina Miller's litigation requiring a parliamentary decision on article 50 means that the *legal default position* is no-deal Brexit on October 31.

Equally, the queen could perfectly well, without creating a constitutional crisis at all, insist that Johnson face a vote of confidence in parliament before he is appointed prime minister. The constitutional case for appointing him to the premiership is that he leads the largest party in the House of Commons and commands a majority by virtue of the Tories' coalition agreement with the Democratic Unionists. If there is *actually* a big enough split in the Tory Party, this case fails. So, in spite of the short time-scale before the scheduled recess, there would be nothing at all unconstitutional or crisis-making about putting Johnson to a vote of confidence before he is appointed as prime minister.

Suppose the queen insists on a vote of confidence before Johnson is appointed premier. If the Tory remainers are finally willing to bring down the government, he loses, and this takes us back to *political* crisis, not *constitutional* crisis, as I discussed earlier. Suppose - which seems to me most likely - the Tory remainers again bottle it, Boris gets his vote of confidence (for the moment) and is appointed PM. The result is then actually 'business as usual'.

If Johnson gets a vote of confidence and is appointed PM, there would be nothing 'anti-democratic' or unconstitutional in the queen accepting his request to prorogue parliament - because the Tory remainers, having given him a vote of confidence, would have given him a mandate to conduct the Brexit negotiations as he thinks fit, up to and including a no-deal exit on October 31. I have to say that I think this is actually the likely outcome, for reasons already given.

We would then see a few months of 'Boris brinkmanship' leading up to some sort of Brexit on October 31: ie, more of what we have already seen under Theresa May. It might well be the case that some sort of amendment to the 'Irish backstop' is, in fact, agreed in order to provide a covering *appearance* of compromise - such last-minute pseudo-compromises are the normal coin of EU negotiations.

The effect would be to kick the actual can - the negotiations for the longer-term relationship - down the road for another two or three years. Since the main concern of the media is to keep Labour out of office, at least until it has got rid of Corbyn and purged the left, and preferably permanently, the fact that there was no real agreement would not bar the celebrations of Johnson's 'achievement' - any more than any significant section of the media has cast the slightest doubt on the 'anti-Semitism' campaign of defamation.

In this scenario, crisis-talk serves a real purpose. Back in 2015-16, David Cameron thought he could rely on Labour to deliver a majority for 'remain' in the referendum - and then dump on them with English nationalism, as he had done over Scotland in 2014-15. It would be *Labour's* fault, not the Tories, that there was no Brexit, and Ukip would also be marginalised (except in Labour 'leaver' constituencies).

This idea failed. Corbyn won the Labour leadership in 2015, and retained it in 2016. The vote went for 'leave'. But Cameron's successors have had no idea *what else* to do with the result. They have kept on plugging away at the idea that 'Labour needs to get off the fence' over Brexit. At the same time they have deployed with ever-increasing media intensity the US-originated campaign of defamation round 'anti-Semitism', originally devised as a fightback against the anti-war sentiment round the Iraq war (and still employed for that purpose in France and Germany). They are still trying to force Labour into the position of the responsible remainers who can be damned for the eventual failure of Brexit. Crisis talk serves to pull the Labour right in behind the Lib Dems and the Tory remainers and provide yet another reason for a coup against Corbyn, and so on.

Johnson *perhaps* represents a change here: that is, if he *actually* goes for a no-deal Brexit on October 31. The result would then be a real crisis, and the government will need to make *real* plans not just for reopening ports other than Dover, and so on, but also for rationing of food, electricity, etc, transport control, internment of EU citizens resident here, and so on. The question of a national government would be posed again and in a new and much more serious way than it would be posed if Johnson is defeated in a vote of confidence on July 24. This would, however, still not be a crisis of *the constitution*: it would merely be the application of the war/emergency powers, which have been deployed before (particularly in 1914-18 and in 1939-45 - and continued to 1951). That might be an attractive option for Johnson, with his fondness for Churchillian rhetoric ...

Constitution

An equally important question is why we have had over Brexit a succession of *charades* of 'constitutional crisis', starting with the Miller litigation and the claim that the judges were 'enemies of the people', and going on to the present Major and co hot air - but no *actual* constitutional crisis which sets the parts of the constitution (monarchy and executive, parliament, judiciary, etc) against each other in real conflict.

There are, I think, two basic reasons for this. The first, which I have already discussed, is that for the Tories in particular (but also the Lib Dems, as is seen in Vince Cable's 2011 tribunal fees scam¹⁶) the *primary* job of government is to hold the working class in effective subordination. The fear of a Corbyn government is mainly a fear of millions of workers taking matters into their own hands (as has happened on several occasions in the past, when governments believed to be leftist have taken office). Brexit is therefore secondary and not worth a real fight.

The second is that MPs generally - and here including the Labour left as well as the Labour right and the large majority of the Tory Party (I except David Davis and a few others) - have lost all sense of what the constitutional role of MPs *is*. In consequence, they make little or no serious effort to defend this role, against the executive; against the judiciary; or against the 'fourth estate', the corrupt media (in Karl Kautsky's apt phrase, the *käufliche Presse* - the venal press), and its instruments, notably referenda.

The constitution based on parliamentary sovereignty grew up on the basis that the consent of the large property-owners in the House of Lords (including the bishops), and of representatives of smaller property-owners in the House of Commons, was necessary for two sorts of decisions: imposing taxes and making new laws. It was on the basis of these very elementary tasks that parliament, taking political power against the Stuart monarchy, insisted on some control of what the taxes were spent on, and hence a degree of veto power in relation to concrete policy and in relation to who the monarch employed as ministers. The mechanisms for preventing prolonged prorogations, which I discussed earlier, were part of this system.

MPs represented either counties or boroughs (urban local authorities). In the unreformed system there were usually two MPs for a constituency; the City of London had four, Westminster two and Middlesex two. MPs were paid, if at all, by their constituencies, and some of these expected fairly full reports from their MPs.¹⁷

This was the basic shape of parliament as long as the property franchise was in place. Letting the unwashed masses - the 'democracy' - in to *vote* resulted in a series of 'modernising' changes, whose purpose is to reduce both the answerability of MPs to their constituents and their power over the unelected parts of government.

We now operate single-member constituencies, which increase the anti-representative quality of 'first past the post' voting, and cast the MPs not as representatives, but as patrons or ombudsmen for the particular concerns of their constituents. The MPs, meanwhile, are handsomely paid - currently £79,468 a year - by the state, not by their constituents. A significant part of their time is devoted to activities aimed at running for re-election, rather than at collective decision-making.

The *taxing power* is effectively delegated wholly to government, as the level of parliamentary scrutiny of tax proposals is low and largely focused on the headline spin: here, as with referenda, the role of the fourth estate (this time in electoral spin) undermines the elective-representative principle. The *law-making power* is now largely delegated either to the civil service (and its particular branch - the parliamentary draftsman's office) or to the Law Commission: originally set up by the Wilson government as a project of codification of the law, this has been 'captured' by the legal profession and the lobbyists, creating legislation not really scrutinised by MPs (in so far as it is not merely used by government to kick law reform demands into the long grass).

MPs, then, are there merely to be counted for the purpose of the election of a prime minister, who will in turn appoint a cabinet and other ministers. Our 18th-century ancestors engaged in some effort through the 'Place Bills' to restrict the number of salaried ministers allowed to sit in the Commons - the 'payroll vote' - but the number has been allowed to creep up and now stands at 109 - or 35% of Tory MPs.

The underlying constitutional issue in Brexit is precisely the conflict between forms of elective representative democracy and referenda steered by fraudulent operations of the 'fourth

estate', producing 'decisions' which then somehow have to be made into real decisions. Would the public have voted, even by 52%-48%, if they had been told that what was on the table was a 'no-deal Brexit'? We have no idea.

But the MPs have not defended their formal constitutional role as elected representatives - and the reason is that they have completely internalised the constitutional role of the corrupt media, as well as the limitations of their own constitutional role created by the single-member constituency, pay from central government, the 'political career', and so on.

A *real* constitutional controversy about Brexit - or anything else - therefore remains unlikely. For one to arise, we would need a Labour Party which aimed not for winning *government*, but for constructing an effective *opposition* and - hence - for fighting for an actual constitutional role for elected representatives ●

mike.macnair@weeklyworker.co.uk

Notes

1. http://legal.un.org/ilc/texts/instruments/english/commentaries/7_1_1950.pdf, principle VI: "The crimes hereinafter set out are punishable as crimes under international law: (a) Crimes against peace: (i) Planning, preparation, initiation or waging of a war of aggression or a war in violation of international treaties, agreements or assurances; (ii) Participation in a common plan or conspiracy for the accomplishment of any of the acts mentioned under (i)."
2. 'Boris Johnson to seek Trump trade deal in first move as leader' *The Times* July 15; 'UK trade secretary: Johnson's pre-Brexit US trade deal won't work' *Politico* July 15: www.politico.eu/article/uk-trade-secretary-johnson-pre-brexit-us-trade-deal-wont-work; see also *NBC News* June 6. 'This is what the US wants from the UK before it will sign a trade deal': www.nbcnews.com/news/world/what-u-s-wants-u-k-it-will-sign-trade-n1013081 (essentially, a bonfire of food regulations and the right of US companies to buy parts of the NHS).
3. 'Ex-UK PM Major vows to protect queen and avoid constitutional crisis in Brexit row' *Reuters* July 10; 'Hammond warns of "constitutional crisis" as Grieve attacks Johnson' *The National* July 13: www.thenational.scot/news/17768093.hammond-warns-constitutional-crisis-grieve-attacks-johnson.
4. 'Rory Stewart describes plans for "alternative parliament" to stop new prime minister in event of no-deal Brexit' *i News* July 8: <https://inews.co.uk/news/brexit/roly-stewart-alternative-parliament-boris-johnson-no-deal-brexit>.
5. www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1604-1629/survey/parliament-1628-1629.
6. A convenient summary is on Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bishops%27_Wars.
7. www.legislation.gov.uk/aep/WillandMarSess2/1/2/introduction. Spellings original.
8. On the Mutiny Acts see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mutiny_Acts; see also Hansard HL, February 20 2019, 'Armed Forces Act (Continuation) Order 2019': [https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2019-02-20/debates/D3BFB488-8BF8-4CE5-A69F-C58E1C5EB6BC/ArmedForcesAct\(Continuation\)Order2019](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2019-02-20/debates/D3BFB488-8BF8-4CE5-A69F-C58E1C5EB6BC/ArmedForcesAct(Continuation)Order2019).
9. Finance Act 2019, sections 1 and 2. Thanks for this reference, and for the point about other taxes made permanent, to professor Glen Loutzenhiser.
10. Bill of Rights - see above, note 7. For seizures, see LG Schwoerer *The declaration of rights 1689* Baltimore 1981, pp76 and 326.
11. *Tooley and others* (1709) (various reports); M Macnair, 'Revolution principles and the revolution bench' in C Macmillan and C Smith (ed) *Challenges to authority and the recognition of rights* Cambridge 2018, pp111-14.
12. The suggestion is an election *after* October 31, when Brexit is expected to have been delivered. "Mr Johnson has made clear that holding an election before Brexit has been delivered would be an 'absolute folly'."
13. According to the *Oxford dictionary of quotations*, this is usually attributed to Joseph Jekyll (1754-1837).
14. <https://britainelects.com/polling/westminster/shows-polls-down-to-july-11>.
15. www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/explainers/proroguing-parliament. The same source tells us that in 2008 the Canadian government prorogued the Canadian parliament to delay an intended vote of no confidence.
16. 'Government sets out proposals to reform employment tribunals' *The Guardian* January 27 2011: "Earlier today, the business secretary, Vince Cable, said the current system served as a 'major impediment' to small businesses hiring people. He told BBC News: "The process of going through tribunals [is] a very costly and time-consuming process and all the feedback we get from employers' groups - particularly small business groups who are absolutely key to hiring people and getting us out of the economic mess we're in - is that the fear of a tribunal is a major impediment to them hiring people."
17. Eg, the poet and politician, Andrew Marvell, and his Hull constituency: www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1660-1690/member/marvell-andrew-1621-78.

MEDIA

BBC's war on Corbyn

Panorama's 'Is Labour anti-Semitic?' would have made Pravda proud, argues Tony Greenstein

As John Pilger has long argued, the BBC is the most refined propaganda service in the world.¹ Its reputation for 'impartiality' is what has helped make it so effective.

However, the BBC was born in the womb of the British state. In 1926 Lord Reith, its first director-general, banned the Archbishop of Canterbury from broadcasting an appeal for compromise in the General Strike.² The ruling class was determined to defeat the unions and they did not want any such messages. At Orgreave during the miners' Great Strike of 1984-85 the BBC deliberately reversed the order of its footage, showing miners throwing stones and police baton-charging them, so as to make it appear that the police were responding to miners' violence rather than the miners responding to police brutality.³

For 20 years, despite commissioning it, the BBC refused to show *The war game* on the horrors of nuclear war.⁴ Apparently it would "undermine morale" for people to see what would happen to them in a nuclear war. The BBC used MI5 to vet members of staff. Until *The Daily Telegraph* ferreted it out under the Freedom of Information Act it simply lied and denied that this was happening.⁵

It should not be a surprise then that the BBC has joined enthusiastically in the campaign to remove the only genuinely leftwing leader the Labour Party has ever had. That is the context for *Panorama's* 'Is Labour Anti-Semitic?' programme screened on July 10. The answer to this, of course, was never in doubt. For *Panorama* it really was a rhetorical question.

However, it needs to be said that Jeremy Corbyn and much of the Labour left have brought the 'anti-Semitism' problem on themselves. It was obvious from the start that this was a state-directed campaign of destabilisation that had nothing to do with anti-Jewish prejudice. You only had to look at the main protagonists - the *Daily Mail* and other Tory tabloids - anti-racists none. Then there was the evidence provided by the Al Jazeera programme *The lobby*.⁶ Anyone with any understanding of similar political destabilisation in South America must have known what the ruling class is capable of.

It was also obvious that the attempt to pervert the conclusions of the 1999 Macpherson inquiry into police racism - by suggesting that 'victims' of anti-Semitism would be the judge and jury in deciding the 'guilt' of their attackers - could only but help open the way for false claims. Corbyn and his director of strategy, Seumas Milne, both knew that supporters of Israel have a long history of equating anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism. Yet despite this Corbyn unilaterally accepted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance 'definition' of anti-Semitism - truly Corbyn made a rod for his own back. This opened the doors to the exorcence of the ruling class, such as the presenter of 'Is Labour Anti-Semitic?', John Ware.

One you concede your opponents' arguments, you are left arguing over the extent of the 'problem'. Corbyn's promise to do better is like a man running upstairs on a downward escalator. However hard you run, you can never escape. This is a nightmare of Corbyn's own making, because it should have been obvious from the start that the only solution acceptable to the Zionists was Corbyn's own resignation.

Panorama went overboard on July



John Ware's crude hatchet job

10 with an unrelenting barrage of propaganda. Allegations were treated as fact, however outlandish. There was no attempt to provide any background or context to those making the allegations nor was there any attempt by Ware to cross-examine them.

It is no wonder that the BBC has sent a standard response to all the many complaints it has received, refusing to answer any specific points. Indeed, so awful and one-sided was it that only the likes of Tom Watson, Labour's racist deputy leader, could take any solace from it. You could not hang a cat on the 'evidence' provided. The programme did not even bother to hide its intention to mislead and deceive viewers.

Racism

The BBC's interest in 'anti-Semitism' stands in sharp contrast to its studied disinterest in other forms of racism. Windrush has barely featured in its schedules, with just one investigatory programme.⁷ There has been no attempt to discern what has happened and why, despite hundreds of black British citizens having been deported - some ending up dying penniless in the West Indies.

There has been no witch-hunt of Theresa May - the home secretary responsible for the "hostile environment" policy (which, let us not forget, New Labour under Alan Johnson inaugurated).⁸ According to former head of the civil service Sir Bob Kerslake, it was seen by some Tory ministers as "almost reminiscent of Nazi Germany".⁹

Can you imagine *Panorama* doing a programme on Tory attitudes to migrants and asking whether or not people thought that Theresa May was a racist? Has it even asked this question of Boris Johnson, given his well known remarks about black people being "piccaninnies" and having "water melon smiles"?¹⁰ Yet the question Ware repeatedly asked was 'Is Labour anti-Semitic?': the only form of racism the BBC and the Labour right is interested in is 'anti-Semitism'.

The left bears a great deal of responsibility for this. In a racist society people will have racist ideas in their heads. To believe that you will eliminate racism by monitoring social media posts is crass. Racism is

not about the ideas in people's heads, but what happens in practice. That is why those on the Labour right who endorsed the "hostile environment" policy and thus Windrush are the same people who claim to be 'concerned' about Labour's anti-Semitism.

British Jews live in a golden age. No British Jews have been subject to deportation or police violence - nor had their encampments evicted by hundreds of police thugs, as happened at Dale Farm in 2011 and happens continually to travellers. Anti-Semitism has become the false anti-racism of the right. That is why the BBC has fallen over itself to accommodate itself to an 'anti-racism' whose purpose is to uphold racism - in Israel. Given that Islamophobia is four times as prevalent as anti-Semitism, and that anti-gypsy feelings are over six times as common,¹¹ the BBC's concentration on anti-Semitism raises obvious questions.

At no time did *Panorama* even ask the question in the programme title: ie, whether or not the Labour Party was "anti-Semitic". This was taken as given - and no attempt was made to define what that question meant. For example, is the Corbyn leadership attempting to actually foster anti-Jewish hatred within the party or is anti-Semitic prejudice somehow 'institutional' (eg, part of Labour's standard procedures)?

I was braced for the bias that we have come to expect from the BBC, but even so the relentless exclusion by John Ware of any sliver of evidence that the case for Labour anti-Semitism might have been overegged was astonishing.

Raed Salah

Just one example of Ware's lies was when he claimed that "Corbyn campaigned to allow a notoriously anti-Semitic preacher, Raed Salah, into Britain, who had called Jews the 'germs of all time' and blamed them for 9/11."

This was a litany of falsehoods. Salah was already here and Corbyn campaigned against his deportation. The allegations of anti-Semitism against him were shown in court proceedings to be untrue. It was alleged that Salah had made a series of anti-Semitic statements in sermons and

a poem, but in reality Theresa May was "determined to find a reason to exclude him, before the evidence against him had been verified".¹² This was despite the fact that she had been warned that the case against Salah was very weak.

All four charges were thrown out by the vice-president of the Upper Immigration Tribunal, Justice Mark Ockelton, who ruled that May "was misled as to the terms of the poem written by the appellant - a matter on which there is now no room for dispute". May's officials had relied on a version of Salah's poem published in the *Jerusalem Post* in 2009, which the Zionist Community Security Trust had produced. The words 'You Jews' had been inserted into it to make it appear anti-Semitic.

According to David Hearst, writing on *The Guardian's Comment Is Free* website, "The principal source for the decision to ban him, according to witnesses who testified in court for the home office, was a report compiled by the CST [Community Security Trust]."¹³

This is the same CST whose deputy director, Dave Rich, was one of two expert witnesses. Raed Salah wrote:

The evidence she [May] relied on (which included a poem of mine which had been doctored to make it appear anti-Jewish) was not, he [Justice Ockelton] concluded, a fair portrayal of my views. In reality, I reject any and every form of racism, including anti-Semitism.¹⁴

Salah went on to write, prophetically:

I have no doubt that, despite this, Israel's cheerleaders in Britain will continue to smear my character. This is the price every Palestinian leader and campaigner is forced to pay.

John Ware is one of those "cheerleaders". It seems that Ware got his information on this from Wikipedia!

JLM

The average viewer would assume that those making the allegations of anti-Semitism were ordinary members of the Labour Party with no connection with each other or grudge to bear,

bar the fact that they were Jewish. It would no doubt come as a surprise to people to learn that all those making complaints were not only members of the same Zionist group, the Jewish Labour Movement - which had been refounded in 2015 specifically to oust Corbyn - but they were also JLM officers.¹⁵ This is what is called a 'put-up job'. Those falsely accused of crimes usually call it a frame-up.

It is crystal-clear that the BBC deliberately hid the fact that those who were interviewed were officers in the JLM - a pro-Israel group, which is affiliated to the World Zionist Organisation. The BBC therefore engaged in a carefully calculated act of deception. Equally the BBC made no approaches to any anti-Zionist Jews or organisations such as the anti-Zionist Jewish Voice for Labour.

Those making the allegations included the following JLM officers: Stephane Savary and Joe Goldberg (joint national vice-chairs); Izzy Lenga (international); Alex Richardson (membership); Adam Langleben (campaigns); Ella Rose (equalities) and former national director Rebecca Filer (political education); and Joshua Garfield (local government). Rachel Megan Barker and Phil Rosenberg are also members of the JLM. In other words, to call it a conspiracy would be an understatement.¹⁶ The JLM is quite open about its close connections with the Israeli embassy.¹⁷

Opening the programme was Ella Rose, who was quivering with emotion, as she spoke of her horrendous - but completely vague and unsubstantiated - allegations of anti-Semitism. The average viewer would not have dreamt that this fragrant innocent had featured in *The lobby*, where she was seen threatening violence against Jackie Walker, whom she boasted she could "take out" using her martial-arts skills. Nor was her work in the Israeli embassy or her role as director of the Jewish Labour Movement mentioned.

Quite remarkably none of those making allegations of anti-Semitism were even captioned. Viewers would have had no idea who many of them, were still less their background. Their heartfelt testimonies had been rehearsed many times to perfection in the BBC's studios in order to inject the right amount of pathos.

Izzy Lenga, for instance, claimed that holocaust-denial was a staple of her Labour Party meetings. No detail was provided, such as which Constituency Labour Party she was talking about. This was an obvious lie - the idea that Labour meetings would debate whether the holocaust had happened or declare that Hitler did not go far enough is pure fiction. In John Ware's *Panorama* Zionists were given *carte blanche* to make up any allegation they saw fit, without ever once being challenged.

Already the 'evidence' cited in the programme has begun to come apart at the seams. Ben Westerman, who had been sent by Labour to investigate complaints of anti-Semitism in Liverpool Riverside CLP, either misheard, misunderstood or lied when he said that he had been asked during one of the six interviews he conducted if he came from Israel (he implied that this was anti-Semitic). Unfortunately for Westerman, the interview in question was recorded. He was actually asked which branch of the Labour Party he was from, not whether he was from Israel!¹⁸

The programme began with footage of the Zionist 'Enough is Enough' demonstration outside the Houses of Parliament. The demonstration was called in the wake of the 'mural affair', which had remained dormant for seven years before being pulled out of a hat by Luciana Berger.¹⁹ There was no mention of the JVL counter-demonstration or indeed the curious fact that Norman Tebbit of the 'cricket test' and Ian Paisley of the sectarian Democratic Unionist Party were present, offering their support. The BBC focused on a group of far-right Zionists, which included Jonathan Hoffman and Harry Markham of the fascist Young Herut.²⁰

Ware interviewed Kat Buckingham, the person who 'investigated' Brighton and Hove Labour Party when it was suspended in July 2016. The left had won all the positions on the local executive at an AGM attended by around 600 members; and the right, led by former leader Warren Morgan (now of the 'Funny Tinge' party - ie, Change UK), had made allegations of spitting (!) as a pretext to have the vote annulled. When video evidence emerged demonstrating that the allegations were bogus, Buckingham simply refused to look at it, because that might breach data protection laws!

'Experts'

The second 'expert witness' was none other than Alan Johnson.²¹ Although he is not Jewish, he is the editor of *Fathom*,²² the journal of the British Israel Communications and Research Centre (Bicom) - the main pro-Zionist propaganda organisation in Britain.²³ Curiously Ware did not see fit to mention this. Perhaps Johnson was the only academic he could find.

It was the sheer duplicity and dishonesty of those on the programme which struck me. In particular Sam Matthews, Labour's witchfinder general, was a good actor, but that is all. Those who have had dealings with him know that he was an inveterate leaker - malicious and extremely hostile to anyone on the left. Anti-Zionism to him is the equivalent of anti-Semitism.

In *The Jewish Chronicle* this week Matthews claims that he was driven to the brink of suicide because he was being "asked to do things I'm fundamentally not comfortable with" by Labour officers in relation to allegations of anti-Semitism.²⁴ He did not specify what they were. I have no doubt that this is just another piece of acting designed to elicit sympathy. In fact Matthews' treatment of Carl Sargeant - the Welsh minister who was suspended from Labour and did actually commit suicide - has been mentioned as a contributory factor in what happened at Sargeant's inquest.²⁵

Mike Creighton also figured

prominently in the programme. He has been around for decades in the party, though he has now retired. I have personal knowledge of just how incompetent he was through a legal action I brought against Labour.

So useless was he that when I made a 'subject access request' in 2016, a bundle of documents arrived (albeit a few weeks late). However, as no records were apparently kept of his having sent off anything to me, a further bundle was sent several months later. What was worse - they were sent to an address I had not lived in for two decades (it was where I lived when I was suspended from Labour for my part in the poll tax rebellion)! The reason his lawyers gave for the confusion that resulted was Creighton's incompetence. I believe them!

What the programme did not even hint at was that far from these conscientious staff members seeking to root out anti-Semitism, what actually took place was a witch-hunt by Blairites at Labour's HQ of members suspected of being Corbyn supporters. Thousands were suspended and barred from voting.

My own experiences are an example. In March 2016 I was informed by letter that I had been suspended "for remarks you are alleged to have made". No further information was provided and, despite repeated emails to the compliance unit, no details were forthcoming.

The next month I found out that I had been suspended as part of the fake anti-Semitism witch-hunt, when *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Times* printed stories detailing my 'crimes'.²⁶ I had compared Israel's marriage laws to the Nazi Nuremberg laws and said that Israel was waiting for the holocaust victims to die, so that it could save money! If I was anti-Semitic, then so was Hannah Arendt, a refugee from Nazi Germany, who has also pointed to the discriminatory nature of Israel's marriage laws. Likewise the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz*, which published an article entitled 'Israel is waiting for its holocaust survivors to die', was also anti-Semitic!²⁷

Reporting

If ever there was a reporter unfit to present a documentary on racism then it is John Ware - an Islamophobe and all-round reactionary.

Arzu Merali has documented how Ware's 2005 *Panorama* programme, 'A question of leadership', attracted over 600 complaints protesting about its hostile and one-sided nature.²⁸ One senior ex-*Panorama* journalist described the programme as "the most disgusting *Panorama* that I have ever seen. The presenter was acting like a prosecuting attorney, not a journalist." The documentary, which dubbed all Muslims as "extremist", was called "McCarthyite" by *The Guardian's* Madeleine Bunting.²⁹

Ware does not so much investigate as substitute his own prejudices for what is normally called reporting. He termed Ken Livingstone's description of Hitler 'supporting' Zionism a "cranky" version of history. Since when is it a presenter's job to pass judgement on a particular view of history? Livingstone's phrasing was certainly clumsy, but the Nazis' collaboration with German Zionists is a historical fact. One wonders what Ware would call the memo that the German Zionist Federation sent unsolicited, on June 21 1933, to Hitler. It can be found in Lucy Dawidowicz's *Holocaust reader*:

On the foundation of the new state, which has established the principle of race ... fruitful activity for the fatherland is possible. Our acknowledgement of Jewish nationality provides for a clear and sincere relationship to the German people and its national and racial

realities ...

Zionist historian David Cesarani wrote in *The final solution*; "The efforts of the Gestapo are oriented to promoting Zionism as much as possible and lending support to its efforts to promote emigration" (p96). Maybe Cesarani was also a 'crank'. Or perhaps the crank is Ware?

He is a relic of the days of empire and the belief that we have to civilise the natives. He wrote of his "horror" that "some migrants to this country had brought with them a lot more than just their possessions". They did not understand democracy and dissent.³⁰ One can only wonder where they got their misapprehensions on these questions from! Britain's former colonies were not exactly models of democracy.

Racism oozes out of everything Ware writes. He describes Islam as an "ideology", which is the argument of Tommy Robinson and the far right. Since we are told by Britain's chief rabbi that Judaism and Zionism are intertwined, does not the same apply to Judaism?³¹

Ware writes of western civilisation being "based on Christianity, which enshrines individualism and freedom". One can only wonder whether the victims of Torquemada would have agreed. Perhaps Martin Luther's fulfilment that "the Jews are our misfortune" is part of Ware's civilisation?³² Julius Streicher emblazoned this on the masthead of the Nazi paper *Der Sturmer*.

Ware is of the opinion that the alternative to British values is "a diffuse mush with nothing particularly special to defend at all". Islamophobia is just "powerful ammunition" for discrediting Prevent. But it is in the final paragraph that we understand Ware's motivation when he lambasts the Tories, who "risk letting in a Labour leader whose entire political career has been stimulated by disdain for the west, appeasement of extremism, and who would barely understand what fighting for the revival of British values is really all about".

This is the man who the BBC believed was the most suitable person to present a programme on 'Labour anti-Semitism'. The Muslim Council of Britain got it right when they described Ware as "an agenda-driven, pro-Israeli polemicist".³³

Writing in *The Jewish Chronicle*, Ware demonstrated that not only is he an 'expert' on Islam, but he is also well briefed on Zionism. He opined that "any suggestion that ethnic cleansing was a principal war aim by the Jews in 1948 ... is highly contested. The Jews had accepted the UN partition plan. The Arabs had not." After all, "The Arabs' war aim was the destruction of the Jews' emergent state, fuelled by a religious jihad. Survival was the Jews' war aim."³⁴ You will note that Ware is incapable of making any distinction between Zionists, Israelis and Jews. Ware is clearly unaware of the Israeli 'New Historians', such as Benny Morris or Ilan Pappé - otherwise he would not have written such junk.

In the same article Ware makes his own views crystal-clear: "So deeply into Labour's left has anti-Zionism morphed into anti-Semitism - itself a Corbyn legacy - that Jewish Labour members are avoiding meetings."

Self-evidently then, when Ware embarked on the *Panorama* programme his mind had long been made up. Even New Labour's David Blunkett once castigated Ware and *Panorama's* 'The asylum game', which he presented, for having "repeated unchallenged" the claims of "the rightwing anti-immigration pressure group, Migration Watch".³⁵

In another article for *The Jewish Chronicle* Ware defends the notorious Islamophobe, Douglas Murray, associate director of the Henry Jackson Society³⁶ and board member of the

far-right Gatestone Institute. Gaby Hinsliffe in a review of Murray's *The strange death of Europe* described how "The rightwing journalist and commentator cites Enoch Powell and wants to protect white Christian Europe from 'outsiders'".³⁷

Murray wrote that he considered the term 'Islamophobia' to be "a meaningless idea - a crock". He also explained the difference between anti-Semitism and what he termed authentic Islamophobia: "The former is entirely irrational, the latter reactive." In line with this, Ware blames Muslim radicals, "who have brought it on their fellow Muslims - by their promotion of Islam as a political ideology".

What is surprising is that if the BBC and *Panorama* were seriously interested in racism in British political parties - and the same goes for the Equalities and Human Rights Council, which has launched an investigation into Labour 'anti-Semitism' - then there is plenty of scope for a programme about the Tory Party. More than half of Conservative members questioned for a new poll believe Islam is a threat to British life.³⁸

Socialist Worker gives the example of how, in 1987, Ware tried to discredit former army intelligence officer Colin Wallace on *Panorama*. Wallace - part of a black propaganda 'psy ops' unit in Northern Ireland - had exposed a 'dirty tricks' campaign against Labour prime minister Harold Wilson. "Ware claimed Wallace was a fantasist. But as investigative journalist Paul Foot wrote, Ware's own report was riddled with obvious errors."³⁹

In 2015 Ware produced a precursor to the last week's *Panorama* programme when he claimed that a Corbyn victory would lead to leftwing "thuggery and intimidation".

The *Socialist Worker* article noted that Ware has produced a number of films attacking Muslims and Palestinians. One suggested that the Palestinian charity, Interpal, funded terrorism. Others have targeted the Muslim Council of Britain and Muslim Engagement and Development (Mend). Interpal has recently successfully sued the *Daily Mail* and recovered £120,000 for alleging it funds terrorism.⁴⁰ Ware's recent attacks on Mend accuse it of anti-Semitism due to its members' criticisms of Israel.

As Robin Ramsay of the *Lobster* magazine explained, Colin Wallace, who was framed for the murder of a man in Arundel (and later cleared), was subject to a concerted attempt at discrediting him. He was portrayed as a fantasist. But for Paul Foot's investigation this would have stuck.

Special effects

One of the most curious aspects of *Panorama* was how anyone on Corbyn's side appeared not as themselves, but with vertical lines or a grid effect superimposed on them. The effect was to make Corbyn and others appear as aliens - disembodied, not really human. This was not done with members of the JLM or members of staff: just people like Ken Livingstone and Jackie Walker. This kind of cheap and tawdry special effects is symptomatic. The aim was clearly to introduce the subliminal message that they are 'the enemy'.

In my view, Corbyn should have 'interfered' far more often with the work of the witch-hunters. It is the right of the Labour leader to prevent the attempts of Labour's Blairite staff to use 'anti-Semitism' as a means of suspending or expelling socialists.

However, given that Corbyn denies having done any such thing, one can only marvel at how *Panorama* and Ware edited one such email to give a completely erroneous impression.⁴¹ According to Ware, an email from Seumas Milne to Labour staff read:

"... something's going wrong, and we're muddling up political disputes with racism ... I think going forward we need to review where and how we're drawing the line."

In fact Milne was responding to a request from a former Labour staff member for a view on a complaint. Milne wrote, having identified the subject of the complaint, Glyn Secker, as a "Jewish activist, the son of holocaust survivor": "if we're more than very occasionally using disciplinary action against Jewish members for anti-Semitism, something's going wrong and we're muddling up political disputes with racism."

The degree of Ware's dishonesty is staggering. The BBC is responding to the sheer volume of complaints with a standard response. It is important that people do not accept this and continue putting in their complaints ●

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IRELAND

Brexit and reunification

James Harvey considers the consequences in the Six Counties if the United Kingdom really does leave the EU

In these dying days of Theresa May's Tory government leading ministers have been queuing up to warn of the dangers a 'no-deal Brexit' poses for the future of the United Kingdom.

In contrast to the insouciance of the two leadership contenders, Boris Johnson and Jeremy Hunt, about the possible impact of a 'hard border' in Ireland, the prime minister's *de facto* deputy, David Lidington, has argued that Northern Ireland's place in the union was under threat.¹ He suggested that demands for a border poll could grow as a result of the serious economic impact a hard Brexit would have on the Six Counties. As reported in *The Financial Times*, Lidington told the cabinet:

There is a real and genuine conversation going on the island of Ireland about a future border poll ... A no-deal exit, in which direct rule must necessarily be introduced, would sharpen this further.²

He went on to stress that the narrow unionist majority amongst Northern Ireland's electorate could not be taken for granted: one outcome of a border poll could be Irish reunification, as "moderates attracted by social liberalisation in the republic" and others fearful of the economic damage unleashed by Brexit might choose to vote to stay within the European Union by reuniting with the Irish Republic.³ Lidington's warnings not only echo those of Theresa May in relation to the impact of Brexit on Scotland, but also reflect an assessment widely held in Ireland on the ways that Brexit could result in the disintegration of the UK and begin the process of the reunification of Ireland.⁴

In my previous articles I considered how the political and economic development of the Irish Republic since the 1950s has shaped the 26 counties' relationship to the European Union and its response to Brexit. In my conclusion I will look at the political impact of Brexit on Northern Ireland and whether the possible future scenario outlined by Lidington has any validity.

Stasis

The 2016 Brexit referendum in Northern Ireland was conducted in a highly polarised atmosphere. Although the power-sharing institutions established by the Good Friday agreement were still up and running, signs of tension within the executive between the Democratic Unionist Party and Sinn Féin, which were to result in the suspension of devolution in January 2017, were already evident. Thus the referendum campaign in the Six Counties reflected these underlying political and communal divisions, making it rather different in form and content from the debates in the rest of the United Kingdom.

The DUP, as unionists who wanted to maintain both the sovereignty of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland's place within it, were naturally strong advocates of 'leave'. The chauvinistic rhetoric of the 'leave' campaign, and its calls to 'take back control' and assert British independence as a global economic power, chimed well with unionist politics.⁵ In contrast the parties that drew support from the nationalist electorate, Sinn Féin and the Social Democratic and Labour Party, called for a 'remain' vote. Sinn Féin



A nation once again ... but not so soon

argued that "the island of Ireland had benefited greatly through peace and structural funding from the EU". Martin McGuinness in particular linked the EU to the peace process and argued during the campaign that "the future of Ireland, north and south, is within the European Union".⁶

The campaign's focus on the constitutional status of the Six Counties after Brexit and the eventual result largely reflected these communal divisions, with most unionists voting 'leave' and most nationalists 'remain'.⁷ However, the final outcome - 'remain' 55.8%, 'leave' 44.2% - was not a simple mapping of existing unionist and nationalist constituencies. Whilst nationalist areas voted heavily to remain, they were joined by some unionist areas in Belfast and North Down to give 'remain' a majority.

Since 2016 the significance of this result and what it portends have been endlessly debated.⁸ Two quite contradictory tendencies seemed to be at work following the referendum. One was the continued polarisation of Northern Ireland's politics, heightened by the DUP's support for the May government following the 2017 general election. This brought unionist concerns about Northern Ireland's constitutional status to the heart of the British government and provided a useful red line for hard-line Brexiters on the Tory back benches to rein in the compromising tendencies in the May government.⁹ The nature of the border and 'the backstop' increasingly became central questions during the protracted Brexit process, moving both DUP concerns and political influence seemingly to the centre of the debate.¹⁰

This linking of unionist interests with Tory politics produced a predictable response from Sinn Féin and other nationalists, who argued that this was a revival of an historical coalition that was inimical to the interests of nationalists in the Six Counties and could fatally undermine the 'peace process'.¹¹ Sinn Féin's argument that the DUP was calling the shots was reinforced by a prolonged political hiatus following the suspension of Stormont in January 2017.¹² Consequently during the various negotiations to re-establish devolved government, Brexit increasingly became a symbol of the basic constitutional conflict which lay at the heart of Northern Irish politics.¹³ These deeper political and communal tensions were revealed by the assembly elections held in March 2017: whilst remaining the largest party, the DUP ended only one seat and 0.2% of the vote ahead of Sinn

Féin.¹⁴

The second tendency, it was suggested by a number of commentators, was that Brexit produced dynamics that might facilitate Irish reunification. A series of post-referendum opinion polls seemed to suggest that "Brexit made a united Ireland a more likely prospect" because, it was argued, some unionists were now "thinking the unthinkable" about reunification if it meant Northern Ireland staying in the EU.¹⁵ Much of this type of analysis turned on the existence and nature of so-called 'liberal unionists' and the growth of a new segment of the population and electorate who eschewed the old 'sectarian labels' and looked instead towards a new 'Northern Irish' identity.¹⁶ This "new and potentially inclusive national category in a divided society" was identified with the young and socially mobile and seemed to explain the recent growth of electoral support for the 'non-sectarian'/liberal unionist Alliance Party and the Greens.¹⁷

Whilst it may be true that amongst sections of the petty bourgeoisie "the two tribes are receding in the wake of Brexit", it is, however, far from clear whether this development will give any real impetus towards reunification. Likewise, although there are serious concerns about the Tory government's handling of Brexit and the severe economic impact a 'no deal' would have on the Six Counties, it seems very unlikely this could translate into support for a border poll - much less a majority for reuniting with the south. Opinion polls and electoral evidence suggests that whilst 'liberal unionists' are strongly anti-Brexit, their preferred option overwhelmingly remains the constitutional status quo and power-sharing rather than any form of united Ireland.¹⁸

Underpinning much of this debate about the impact of Brexit are a number of demographic and political assumptions about identity and constitutional preferences. Put crudely - and it is a very crude form of demographic determinism - unionist fears and nationalist hopes for the future turn on the likely communal balance within the population of the Six Counties. If the Catholic population continues to grow at its historic rate, then, within the foreseeable future, nationalists will secure a majority and vote to reunite Ireland.¹⁹ This simple sectarian equation of 'Catholic' and 'nationalist' is further complicated by evidence that not all 'nationalists' favour immediate or even eventual reunification in the long term.²⁰ The 2019 local government elections saw

a small fall in the Sinn Féin vote and a loss of seats, both to independent republicans and the SDLP.²¹ Has the seemingly inexorable forward march of the Shinners been halted?

The political and economic success of the Catholic middle class, first noted during the 1980s and consolidated in the post-1998 new dispensation, has created a social group whose political and economic interests have been met by power-sharing and the end of the most obvious unionist discrimination.²² Although many of them are Sinn Féin voters, backing the most effective 'ethnic tribunes' who defend their interests in the communalised polity of post-1998 Northern Ireland, the current status quo suits them very well: they do not want real change - much less the "32-county socialist republic".²³

Interests

As my previous articles showed, Brexit is not in the interests of either the Irish or British capitalist classes. Given the degree of economic integration, supply chains and cross-border trade, a no-deal or hard-border Brexit is not in the interests of capitalists in Northern Ireland either.

Commercial and manufacturing groups, along with agri-business interests in the Six Counties, have loudly declared against Brexit and lobbied for the status quo or the softest of borders after October 31. Farmers and rural business - traditionally a strong base for the DUP - have described a no-deal Brexit as "a calamity for Northern Irish agriculture".²⁴ Similar alarms have been raised by retailers and hauliers about the impact of customs checks on cross-border trade.²⁵ Likewise, official estimates talk of 40,000 job losses north of the border and a contraction of the Six County economy across all sectors.²⁶ Although the chorus of opposition to a no-deal Brexit grows louder, the nearer we approach Halloween, the DUP's position of support for the hardest of Brexits has not shifted. If a no-deal Brexit happens, it will not be a Boris Johnson-led Tory government, but Dublin, that will be to blame, according to the DUP.²⁷

For Sinn Féin the growing integration of the economy in both jurisdictions, combined with what could be presented as 'the withering away of the border', were important dynamics for the reunification strategy they sold to many of their supporters in the 1990s and early 2000s. Even many capitalists believed that the border would become irrelevant, as the dynamism of the 'Celtic Tiger' and strengthening partnership of the Irish and British states within the EU brought north and south together.²⁸ Combined with the arguments that the Good Friday agreement opened up the possibilities for a period of transition towards a united Ireland, the Sinn Féin leadership invested a lot of electoral capital in these political and economic mystifications.²⁹

However, Brexit is just the latest event that has thrown these strategic calculations into disarray. Sinn Féin's response has been to identify strongly as a 'remain' party and to argue that the only way that both the political and economic gains of the peace process on both sides of the border can be preserved is to stop Brexit through a border poll.³⁰ The leadership hopes this strategy will consolidate its northern electoral support, whilst helping to rebuild its shattered base

in the 26 counties.³¹ The recent local government elections and the European elections in the south were a major political setback for the party and refocusing on the Six Counties and Brexit might allow it to reassert its republican credentials in a 'new site of struggle' for reunification. However, given the political dynamics created in Ireland by Brexit these hopes are unlikely to be realised.

For both governments and other political actors in Ireland and Britain, the imminence of Brexit has upset a common desire to maintain the political and economic status quo in the Six Counties. Dublin does not want reunification, Sinn Féin can only posture in demanding it, whilst the British appear to press on towards no deal and a hard border.

What nobody seems to want looks like it will happen - and with a final outcome nobody can yet predict ●

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TURKEY

A vizier or a jester?

As Erdoğan plays the US off against Russia, Esen Uslu asks if his optimism is misplaced

The Turkish airforce base at Mürted near Ankara had an interesting history. The name means 'renegade', and it has been associated with the Battle of Ankara fought between the Ottoman army and Tamerlane's Mongols in 1402. The Ottoman army was defeated by Tamerlane's forces, according to some, because the troops holding the flank on the plain rebelled and went over to his side. The plain has been named after such 'renegades' ever since.

After World War II, when the USA introduced jet fighters to the Turkish airforce, a new airfield near Ankara became a necessity, and the most obvious site was the Mürted plain. Following the construction in the late 1950s of the Mürted airbase, in 1984 the production facilities of Turkish Aerospace Industries (TAI) were built alongside, where CASA CN-235 transport planes and F16 jets were produced. In 1995 its name was changed to Akıncı airbase to nationalistic acclaim - Akıncı means 'raider' and refers to the border tribal forces of the early Ottoman state who took over the Balkans.

All this clearly means that Turkey's rulers believed that people would forget the failures of the recent past and bask in the glorious victories of a bygone era. Changing place names is a useful tool of the nationalist regime to erase the memory of ancient Christian societies that once lived in Anatolia - eradicated during and after World War I.

However, this time the name change had ominous consequences. The Akıncı base was the headquarters of the junta, from where it attempted a coup in July 2016. Eventually it was defeated by loyal sections of the airforce, who bombed the base's airstrip. In the aftermath of the attempted coup, the rebel forces were disbanded or dispersed, and the base reverted to its 'renegade' name.

Arrival

The Mürted airbase and TAI production facilities, while visible in the distance from the motorway between Ankara and Istanbul, have been off limits for ordinary citizens. No photographs or videos are allowed, and if a person is invited to visit, cameras and phones are removed on arrival.

Suddenly that rule was turned upside-down, when the base became the destination for the S-400 missile system - it suddenly marked the arrival point of the air bridge between Russia and Turkey, where a stream of giant Russian cargo jets flew in supplies. Turkish TV channels broadcast live the arrival, unloading and departure of each and every cargo plane, and paraded the Russian equipment before storing them in the Nato-approved bomb-proof jet shelters, which used to house nuclear bombs in special vaults dug deep underground, during the cold war years.

The fanfare was orchestrated to drum up nationalistic fervour, employing the cheap anti-Americanism of the Islamists once more. Our great leader, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, was defying US dictates and doing what was required for the benefit of our nation!

The timing of the arrival was also important, because the entire state propaganda machine was used to celebrate the third anniversary of the failed coup. And the arrival of the S-400 missile system provided such a background that ingenious supporters of Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) made their own admiring imitation with plastic pipes, draped in flags and paraded at night.¹

Day in and day out, planes came



What the fuss is about: Russian S-400s

and went, while state TV continued its coverage. However, the reality of international diplomacy was starting to show its face. At a meeting in Osaka during the recent G20 summit, Donald Trump told the international press, while sitting alongside Erdoğan, that it was unfair to Turkey not to sell it Patriot missiles or threaten it with sanctions, just because Turkey had brought in the Russian system. That bit of Trump's speech was presented as a major diplomatic breakthrough in the Turkish media and created a degree of unfounded expectation.

After the arrival of the S-400 system Trump played for time for a couple of days - and then declared that (while it might be 'unfair') the sale of F-35 jets would be withheld and the already suspended pilot training scheme would not be resumed. He did not mention the options available under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA).

Some observers have claimed that, because the agreement with the Russians was signed before August 2 2017, when Trump signed the CAATSA, it is not applicable. Be that as it may, any sanctions applied would have drastic consequences for Turkey's arms industry, as it would disrupt the supply of raw materials and components.

However, there are also those who claim that a US arms embargo would actually be beneficial to the Turkish defence industry, which has been making serious development strides over the last three years, while another group says such an embargo would further Turkey's steps to have more of a home-grown industry. And it appears that the thesis, 'If an embargo is applied, then the defence industry will become more independent and stronger', is the widely accepted opinion in Ankara.²

Meanwhile, the US Congress passed a bill lifting the arms embargo on weapon sales to Cyprus, which has been in place since 1974. Also a bill was introduced by the Democrats to impose sanctions on Turkey with some Republican support. According to the *Wall Street Journal*,

Reflecting bipartisan opposition in Washington to Turkey's move, the Republican and Democratic leaders of the Senate Foreign Relations and Armed Services committees called on Mr Trump last week to impose sanctions on Ankara and end Turkey's participation in the F-35

programme.

The US decision to withdraw the F-35 order is a setback for Mr Erdoğan, who had bet heavily on a direct relationship with Mr Trump to resolve the issue and persuade the US president to disregard his own administration's repeated calls for punishing Turkey.

In addition to not receiving F-35s, for which it has forked out hefty downpayments, Turkey risks losing its share of industrial workload - about 6% of the value of each plane.³

The fact that Russia has sold a sophisticated weapons system to a Nato member has also found its critics in Moscow. When they become too vocal, the editor-in-chief of *Eksport Vooruzheniy* (Arms Export) wrote:

The systems that Russia supplied to Turkey are an export version of the S-400, which significantly differs from what Russia itself uses. Besides, the S-400 is an older system and Russia is now working on a more advanced system.⁴

So, despite all fanfare, what is going on? Is Turkey buying an outdated system, yet still creating havoc with its relationship with the USA and Nato? It seems that there are turbulent waters ahead.

EU and Cyprus

As if one major diplomatic problem was not enough, Turkey has jumped head-on into another huge dispute involving the European Union. Despite several warnings and requests for patience and quiet diplomacy, Turkey sent two drilling vessels in to Cyprus's 'exclusive economic zones'.

A meeting of EU foreign ministers in Brussels decided to suspend about \$164 million in aid to Turkey and shelve talks on an aviation accord. They also asked the European Investment Bank to review its lending to the country, which amounted to nearly \$434 million in 2018. And contacts between high-level officials will now be suspended. The aviation agreement that was under negotiation would have led to more passengers using Turkish airports - in particular the new international airport in Istanbul - as a transit hub.

Turkey responded to these measures with a display of bravado, by sending another ship - this time a deep-sea seismic survey vessel - to the same area.

So now Turkey has four ships operating in the disputed zones - two survey ships and two drilling ships - under the protection of its airforce and navy.

The Turkish government is clearly acting in this way because it believes the EU measures are toothless. A previous set of such measures had been introduced to limit the export of German weapons to Turkey because of Ankara's human rights violations. They were effective for one year, with the intention of reducing the level of exports to €62 million in 2017.

However, those measures were easily bypassed through a loophole allowing fulfilment of already-approved sales. In fact German arms exports to Turkey - mostly items related to submarines being built in Turkey with German licences - were more than tripled to €202 million in 2018. The same goes for arms exports from Spain and Italy as well.

Especially as a change is taking place at the helm of the EU, the Turkish government believes it now has a lot of space to play around in. So turbulent times with the EU also await.

Iran and Kurds

It was recently revealed that four Iranian Kurdish opposition groups have been meeting with Iranian officials in Oslo, through the good offices of the Norwegian Centre for Conflict Resolution, since May. An unprecedented event. The third round of talks is to be held in August. Absent from the meetings, however, is the Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK). Other Iranian Kurdish parties have rejected PJAK, as it has links with the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) of Turkey.

The Iranian Kurdish groups believe that Tehran's aim in these talks is to persuade the armed Iranian Kurdish opposition not to collaborate with the United States in any military action. The big stick was in plain sight: the head of the Iranian delegation threatened the Kurdish side with "unpleasant consequences" if they failed to heed Tehran's advice.⁵

The Kurds in Iraq are torn between Iran and Turkey. By its military operation in Iraq, 'Claw-2', Turkey is practically creating a new border by grabbing a large zone to its south, and building bases controlling river valleys and roads. One of the undeclared aims is to cut off Iran's most convenient supply route to Syria.

Practically the only thorn in the side of this plan is Rojava, the Kurdish region in Syria. Amongst all the fanfare around the purchase of Russian military hardware, Turkey has been building up its forces along the eastern border of Rojava. An attack by Turkish forces on the city of Membij seems imminent. Despite various international warnings, Ankara appears to believe anything is possible in the region, while it can play Russia off against the US.

Such a course of action, as an old Turkish saying goes, can make you *ya vezir ya rezil* - either a vizier or a jester - in the court of humanity. We will shortly see which of these two fates will befall the Erdoğan government ●

Notes

1. See <https://cdntr2.img.sputniknews.com/images/103968/07/1039680761.jpg>.
2. www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/07/turkey-russia-united-states-s400-how-ankara-handles-crisis.html.
3. www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-to-withhold-f-35-fighters-from-turkey-trump-says-11563304669.
4. www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/07/russia-turkey-s400-us-technology.html.
5. www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/07/iran-court-kurdish-opposition-groups-talks-washington.html.

What we fight for

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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weekly worker

**Split tactics
bring
discredit to
whole of left**

Taaffe counts his shekels

The two sides in the CWI dispute are engaged in a tawdry wrangling over cash, writes Paul Demarty

More unpleasant news reaches us from the Committee for a Workers' International, which is busily cleaving itself into two parts.

Readers will know that the CWI is the oil-slick international of the Socialist Party in England and Wales, which once enjoyed considerable success, by the standards of British Trotskyism, as the Militant Tendency within the Labour Party, but has more recently endured 29 lean years under the blundering helmsmanship of Peter Taaffe. The London leadership fell out with its Irish comrades last year, and proved unable to discipline the latter; Taaffe thereupon decided to force through a split, founding a faction and effectively constituting its opponents as one by the same action (the latter are called the 'non-faction' or NFF in these disputes).

The NFF has a majority on the international executive committee - in theory the CWI's highest body between conferences - but Taaffe retains his grip on the smaller full-time international secretariat, which provides day-to-day leadership, and has shamelessly wielded it as a factional weapon against the NFF. The two NFF members on the IS were immediately excluded from all administrative activities, which are essentially given over to Taaffe's quest for blood. We now learn that part of these two comrades' wages have been withheld by the IS, apparently to force the (NFF-supporting) Belgian section to hand over a rather larger sum of money to the IS, which clearly wants to get its hands on the main part of the CWI's assets, as they are crudely bisected in the coming weeks.

We do not suppose, in spite of the rhetoric used by NFF comrades about these two members' family commitments and general need for the money, that they will soon fall into dire poverty (surely their factional comrades will not let them starve ...). The story is interesting, however, as a bellwether of how sharply divided things are, how utterly cynical the Taaffeites' conduct has become, and how destructive it is of what remains of their legacy.

Here, we would like to correct an exaggeration in our last article, concerning SPEW's travails in the Public and Commercial Services union. We claimed that SPEW's strong position in that union was "the only thing left to connect the 1980s Militant and the post-millennial SPEW". There were clearly other leftovers. In the current context, one other thing springs to mind.

In the 1980s, BBC journalist Michael Crick published a barely competent hatchet-job book about Militant. The chapter on the sources of its funding, having gone through various decreasingly plausible sources of vast wealth, concluded by dismissing the idea that it might be funded primarily by the self-sacrifice of its members on an 'if you'll believe that, you'll believe anything' basis. All we learn from that is that Crick cannot have actually bothered to go to any meetings of the organisation (and



Peter Taaffe: CWI treated as his private property

that the servants of the bourgeoisie are incapable of understanding self-sacrifice). The Militant/SPEW tradition has always had a very strong practice of fundraising. Barely a meeting of theirs goes by without a bucket being passed round, and more than small change is tossed in. Punchy subs are requested of members on top of that.

All things being equal, this is a very admirable thing. The communist movement ought not to turn away blank cheques from eccentric ruling-class traitors, but it would be foolish to rely on them; in order to compete with the subsidised paid persuaders of the enemy, we have only one reliable method, and that is the willingness of people to reach into their pockets until it starts to sting a little. But, of course, all things are not equal. Members have the right to see - indeed, the duty so far as is possible to ensure - that the money is spent wisely, and does not turn into an obstacle to the political accountability of the leadership.

So, having seen where the money

comes from, we ask, where does it go? The main line item on the outgoings in that tradition has been the party workers' wage bill. Famously, at its peak, Militant had more full-timers than Labour HQ. Today, SPEW's rivals in the Irish SP - thanks to the bounties on offer to members of the Dáil - have, by some estimates, 25% of the admittedly small membership on the payroll.

The dangers ought to be obvious. Who disburses the wages of these full-timers? Why, the leadership - as the two NFF-supporting unfortunates on the IS are now discovering. Without compensating mechanisms, this can have a profoundly distorting effect on the overall political culture. This is perhaps clearest, in the British context, in the case of the Socialist Workers Party, which has a strict hierarchy of full-timers answerable to the central committee and in particular at the disposal of the national organiser. A series of petty tyrants occupied that position over the years - one, Chris Bambery, was reportedly nicknamed

Bilko, after the venerable comedy drill sergeant - and it was accusations of rape against another, Martin Smith, that plunged the SWP into crisis six years ago.

In the SWP, full-timers are appointed centrally. This contrasts with, for example, the 'official' Communist Party of Great Britain, which - in spite of its Stalinist and anti-democratic character - at least enabled districts to elect their own. This had the effect of allowing the factions (almost none of which, of course, admitted their existence) to fight for adherents and partially contest the bureaucratic management of the organisation's political approach. It cannot be stressed enough that the internal norms of the SWP are *far worse* than those of the old CPGB, even as the latter reached the stage of Eurocommunist hacks searching prams for copies of opposition papers at party congress.

Where SPEW and the CWI fall on that scale is hard to tell, but it is certainly between the two. This

particular dispute highlights, for a start, something very much in common with the latter days of the 'official' CPGB: the tendency for parts of the party machinery to be coopted wholesale as factional property. The two IS comrades are shut out because the IS is Taaffe's base of operations in the present unpleasantness, and Taaffe supporters openly declare it legitimate for the IS to be used this way, even as they denounce the NFF for doing the same with the international executive committee. So while, in formal terms, these particular full-timers on the IS are elected and accountable to higher bodies, in practice Taaffe and co refuse to accept any accountability whatsoever, and exercise a form of 'central appointment' in the shape of a veto against 'troublesome' colleagues, as at present.

In truth, having decided on the course of forcing through a split, it was quite inevitable that Taaffe would resort to this sort of awful behaviour. In any divorce, there is the question of who gets the antique dining table, and who gets the Japanese peace lily; the division of assets will be most telling. A notable example of this - again - involves the SWP, which decamped from the Respect alliance they had formed with George Galloway and others, apparently unaware that it had thereby lost the right to the Respect name, since Galloway ally Linda Smith was the organisation's returning officer. The SWP central committee refused to admit this to its membership for months, after which it was suddenly announced that the SWP would be standing as the 'Left List' in the 2008 London mayoral elections.

So today, we approach an international split which hews one leadership body from the other; no surprise that there is a scramble for whatever cash is at hand. Meanwhile, the CWI brand - for all that's worth - may end up devolving to whichever side is quicker to delete the others' admin accounts on the website. It is going to be a mess; and after it is done, Taaffe - and especially his loyal flock of SPEW members - will have to think long and hard about whether it was worth it.

Should any other forces succeed in regrouping amid the wreckage, it will fall to them to examine closely the roots of this awful political culture, and build a healthier and robustly democratic one for the future ●

paul.demarty@weeklyworker.co.uk

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