

A paper of Marxist polemic and Marxist unity



weekly  
**worker**



**Imperialist idol: the fabulous wealth, conquests and dreams of Cecil John Rhodes**

- Letters and debate
- NHS waiting times
- Trump's acquittal
- Labour Left Alliance

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**THE HUAWEI  
PANIC AND  
US DECLINE**

# LETTERS



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

## Capitalist Lexit

Even after Britain has left the European Union, the Communist Party of Britain is analysing a problem and coming up with a dodgy solution.

In an article in the *Morning Star* of February 1-2, CPB general secretary Rob Griffiths blames the Labour Party for “deny[ing] that the shift towards a pro-‘remain’ stance played a major part in Labour’s loss of ‘leave’-voting seats”. On the other hand, a few paragraphs down he says: “The majority (32) of the seats lost to the Tories were marginal before the 2019 election and 33 of them remain marginal.”

So maybe a pro-‘remain’ stance wasn’t the main reason for the results? Maybe it was the single-minded Tory lies about how wonderful life will be under their rule? ‘We’ll look after the NHS!’ ‘We won’t allow chlorinated chicken!’ ‘We’ll browbeat the EU into the deal that’s best for us!’

And in the speech on Monday last, Boris Johnson was promising great new deals with the Commonwealth and a Canada-like agreement with the EU. Maybe the marginals fell for the glorious promised future,

rather than the austerity of the past? (And, as a television commentators pointed out, Canada has never had a very close relationship with the EU and it is a long way away ...)

Comrade Griffiths goes on to say: “We need to renew and rebuild our trade unions, trade councils, People’s Assembly and CND groups, Stop the War, the National Assembly of Women, the labour movement and its Communist Party.” Ah yes - now that we are in our own little bunker, we will be able to rebuild our entire left (from right-left to left-left, so to speak), and each of these organisations, including the CPB, will be only too happy to join together in one “jolly industrial band” (to quote Joe Hill). And then what? Just where does the “labour movement and its Communist Party” go from there?

Interestingly, Griffiths points to the ‘progressive’ nature of Johnson’s ‘red lines’: “Before and during his meeting with EU Commission president Ursula von der Leyen on January 8, Johnson insisted that a post-Brexit trade deal must allow Britain’s rights to rescue failing industries with state aid; favour British business with public-sector procurement contracts; control UK fishing grounds; conduct an independent immigration policy, and exclude Britain from EU Court of Justice jurisdiction.”

He then points out that “the Tory government’s opening positions closely resemble longstanding policies promoted by the Eurosceptic left in Britain”! So that’s what EU withdrawal could do in the eyes of the pro-Brexit left: “allow Britain’s rights to rescue failing industries with state aid” and “favour British business with public-sector procurement contracts”. And here was I thinking that Brexit would open up the road to socialism.

You see, if only Labour had adopted a clear Brexit position and as a result won the general election, “Labour representatives in the Westminster, Scottish and Welsh legislatures could then have led the charge for the kind of Brexit that would empower those bodies to attack the basic economic and social problems besetting millions of their electors.”

Comrade Griffiths believes that the left can simultaneously rebuild itself and, amongst other items, fight to “devolve ... powers repatriated from the EU institutions to Scotland, Wales and other elected bodies in England” and challenge the Tory government to “introduce a non-racist [immigration] policy based on the principles of human rights and international solidarity”. What? Having made life in the UK more difficult for people from other lands, deporting people who have lived here for years and refusing to take in British children who are now homeless in other countries, the Tories are now going to stick strictly to human rights and “international solidarity”? And, having just withdrawn from any possibility of real solidarity with 26 other countries, just where is this “international solidarity” going to come from? Enjoying - if that is the word - the freedom now promised, does he really think Tories are going to start devolving? I have my doubts.

Those who have argued all along to remain in the EU precisely so that there could be a broad working class movement and an EU-sized Communist Party, are aware of the flaws in Rob Griffiths’ arguments. Of course, the CPB believes that socialism in one country is a possibility, as long as the left organises itself properly. It is a shame they do not see that withdrawing from the EU makes this more of an impossibility - not so great, even with the “Great” in Great Britain.

**Laura Miller**  
London

## UC must go

The announcement by the government that the full roll-out of universal credit, initially planned for 2017, will be delayed for a further year until 2024 is further evidence that the flagship Tory welfare reform is doomed to failure. The problems being caused by universal credit are too many and too inbuilt to be reformed: the benefit has to be replaced by a fair system of social security.

We have been campaigning against UC since Rugby was first chosen as a pilot area seven years ago. We regularly talk to claimants outside Rugby Job Centre, and many of them have been pushed into poverty as a direct result of the way it is administered.

Just last week we were given further evidence of the hardship universal credit is causing. A woman in her late 40s described how her daughter’s UC had been completely stopped for over two months because the department for

work and pensions claimed they had overpaid her, even though the daughter had shown them written evidence that was not the case. The DWP claims to still be ‘reviewing the case’. As a result, her rent was not being paid and her landlord had threatened eviction. The daughter, who is bipolar, had been working 16 hours a week to enable her to look after her own child, with UC supposedly enabling her to pay her rent and buy sufficient food. She had only managed to survive because her parents have helped her out - not everyone has parents able or willing to do that.

Separately, a man in his 40s told how he had been having problems with universal credit ever since he had left prison two years ago. The DWP did not seem to understand that he had no IT skills and could barely read or write, regularly withholding his benefits when he was unable to understand what was being expected of him by his work coaches. The latest problem, he told us last Friday, was that the DWP were withholding his payments until he could provide proof of address with a utility bill - he lives on a caravan site where the rent covers everything and there are no individual utility bills.

The problems experienced by these two claimants vividly illustrate why universal credit is a failure that must be replaced. It was set up supposedly to encourage people into work: how is it doing that, when wages are not high enough on their own, yet UC fails to make up the shortfall, as it is supposed to do? There are too many hoops to jump through. And, by insisting that all form-filling, including job applications, be done online, UC is a nightmare for those who do not have the technological skills, let alone those who cannot read or write. The more vulnerable a person is, the more likely they will be let down by universal credit.

These issues are in addition to the well documented minimum five-week delay all UC claimants face when first moved onto it - a

delay which pushes them into debt and rent arrears, starting a process that can lead to using food banks and even homelessness. Both have been increasing more rapidly in Rugby than in neighbouring areas, where fewer claimants have been moved onto UC. Now there is to be a further delay in the national roll-out, at a cost of a further £500 million. Enough is enough: universal credit must go.

**Peter McLaren**

Rugby Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition

## Cuts kill

Later in 2020, it will be 10 years since the Bowthorpe Mental Health Day Centre in Wisbech was closed by the Tory-controlled Cambs County Council, following instructions from Gordon Brown’s New Labour government. Brown really did believe that he had abolished ‘boom and bust’ and that there would be jobs for everyone, including the disabled and the mentally distressed.

I have Asperger’s syndrome (a form of autism), psychotic depression, mood swings, astynomiophobia (fear of the police), gynophobia (fear of women), and suicidal ideation. As such, between 1992 and 2010, I attended the Bowthorpe Centre, which was then based at Bowthorpe Hall, and then at the Carlisle Ward at North Cambs Hospital. In the last six years I’ve had 18 friends from the Bowthorpe die, including two suicides (one by hanging, the other by driving into a van) and one murder.

The late Dr Dennis Morgan (the Labour-supporting consultant psychiatrist for Wisbech between 1974 and 1999) set up the day centre in 1983 at the matron’s flat at North Cambs Hospital. Dr Morgan would be shocked that a ‘Labour’ government closed his beloved Bowthorpe Centre in 2010.

No wonder support for the Labour Party is in terminal decline.

**John Smithee**  
Cambridgeshire

## Meeting Donald Trump’s ‘Deal of the century’



Speakers

**Moshé Machover**  
**Yassamine Mather**

Sunday February 9, 5pm

**Calthorpe Arms**  
**252 Grays Inn Road**  
**London WC1**

Organised by  
**Hands Off the People of Iran**  
**hopoi.org**

## Fighting fund

### A little help

**G**ood news - in the last two days of the month we more than made the £21 we were lacking to reach our £2,000 for January. Just four donations did the trick - comrades SK (a brilliant £64) and JS (£21) came up with the goods on the 31st.

JS said his was a gift for “Brexit Day” - not that he’s celebrating it himself, you understand - and the amount he transferred matched exactly what we needed, of course. But don’t ask me the significance of SK’s £64 - I know he’s just started a new job, so maybe it’s the amount he earned on the first day! We also picked up two tenners from RL and VP - their usual monthly standing orders.

All that meant we received £105 in those last two days of the month, taking our total to £2,084 and reducing the deficit inherited from 2019 to just £43. So now we need to wipe it out altogether in February - which, of course, is a little short in days, compared to the other months. But at least 2020 is a leap year!

And we’ve made a reasonable

start. There were 13 standing orders, totalling £188, the most generous of which were from AC (£50) and CG (£30). Then there were the three PayPal payments that came our way - from MF (£50), plus PT and RC (£10 each). According to RC, “You comrades are doing a brilliant job” in arguing for the kind of united Marxist party that the working class “so desperately needs”.

Thanks also to comrade Hassan, who handed a £10 note to one of our comrades and, finally, to Irish comrade AM, who donated €50 (which works out at a little over £41), taking our running total to £309 after five days. But in fact that’s slightly below the going rate if we want to make that £2,000 target in February’s 29 days. We could do with a little help - any offers? ●

**Robbie Rix**

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

**NHS**

# On target for disaster

James Linney looks at the ever growing waiting times



Things can only get worse

You could be forgiven for thinking that the announcement this month by Matt Hancock, secretary of state for health, that accident and emergency waiting time targets within the national health service are to be abolished would have been welcomed by A&E staff. The four-hour target was introduced by Labour in 2004, setting as an operational standard the aim that at least 95% of patients attending A&E should be assessed, treated and then either admitted, transferred or discharged within four hours.

This has, to a large extent, always been an arbitrary, bureaucratic burden on emergency care staff - who have often been pressured by hospital managers to keep within the target or face disciplinary measures. Of course, it is generally a good idea to attend to people coming to hospital in an emergency as quickly as possible, but why four hours? There has never been any attempt to demonstrate that the four-hour target will provide an acceptable quality of care. Plus, it takes no account of the reason for the person attending A&E, meaning absurdly that someone with a broken toe and someone involved in a major, life-threatening, road traffic accident are both expected to be dealt with within the same time limit. Wherever you find top-down, punitive, arbitrary red tape, you will no doubt find workers able to invent ways to circumnavigate it in the name of common sense. A&E targets are no different and so patients are often officially booked in way after their assessment and treatment has started - or they are 'discharged' to holding rooms, whilst awaiting further investigations.

So why hasn't Matt Hancock's announcement been welcomed with cheers? Because, clearly, if the four-hour target is abolished, this will have nothing to do with trying to reduce NHS red tape - nor, as Hancock claims, will it be to set the "right targets" that are more "clinically appropriate". Any new targets will be set so as to try and make the government look good - or at least minimise further embarrassment. As Dr Simon Walsh, the British Medical Association's 'emergency medicine lead', said, "Targets are an important indicator when services are struggling, and there is a very real concern that any change to targets will effectively mask

underperformance and the effects of the decisions politicians make about resourcing the NHS."

So the real and obvious reason - and why we should oppose scrapping the target currently - is because the consistently falling number of patients being seen within four hours acts as a red flag for how a decade of Tory government is affecting the NHS as a whole. Since 2012 the number of A&E departments meeting the 95% target has been steadily falling - it has not been met since 2013. The latest set of performance statistics<sup>1</sup> reveal the worst situation since the recording began in 2004, with only 68% of people attending major A&E departments being seen within four hours.

A&E waiting times are a pretty good barometer for the health of the NHS generally, so it is no surprise that other performance measures are equally dire. For example, today the highest proportion of people are waiting over 18 weeks for non-urgent (but essential) hospital treatment since 2008, the target for treating cancer patients within 62 days of urgent referral by a general practitioner has not been met for over five years<sup>2</sup> and for the first time ever the average waiting time to see a GP has breached *two weeks*. GP surgeries and hospitals are like slowly sinking ships - despite all hands on deck working frantically to keep them afloat.

So these are worrying times, but things are only going to deteriorate, now that the NHS faces at least another five years of Tory government. Despite how it felt, the recent Tory general election campaign was not just an endless repetition of the phrase, "Get Brexit done". There was also some attempt to win over traditional Labour voters by peddling the idea that austerity is over. Never mind that the Tory government has spent the past 10 years shifting the burden of the financial crisis onto the working class - including by imposing huge cuts on the NHS budget and using the opportunity to open up large parts of it to privatisation. We are now expected to believe that the NHS is in safe hands and be grateful it is going to get an increase in its annual budget of £34 billion by 2023-24. We are also being promised 6,000 more GPs and 50,000 extra nurses by 2024. However, during a bizarre

interview on *Good morning Britain*, reminiscent of Orwell's 'doublethink' (where Tory MP Nicky Morgan pretends not to understand what the term 'more' means<sup>3</sup>), we learnt that 19,000 of these new roles are actually already filled by nurses.

Either way, the recruitment pledges are a fantasy and any extra money will come with the usual strings attached - namely that crippling 'efficiency savings' continue, along with the ever expanding privatisation of NHS services. So, for example, in order to meet its £1million deficit for the coming year, the clinical commissioning group where I work is shamefully considering restricting all elective surgery (apart from cancer treatment) for patients with a high body mass index or who smoke. And, even if the extra money was handed over condition-free, at this point it is a drop in an increasingly stormy ocean.

Meanwhile the queues of trolleys outside A&E departments will continue to grow, staff will become more despondent and patients will suffer and die. There are, however, small glimmers of hope - as the crisis in the NHS deepens the staff and patient resistance to the attacks on it will grow more radical, as witnessed by the 15,000 striking nurses in Northern Ireland last month - the first time the Royal College of Nursing has ever called for a strike. Of course, these are important developments, but the NHS can only be saved by a strong, organised working class - the immediate goal being to repel the post-Corbyn rightwing resurgence within the Labour Party.

The role of the left is to expand the issues beyond achieving NHS targets or getting a slightly bigger budget - the health of the working class is not ultimately a medical issue. The surge in mental health issues, obesity, increasing liver disease secondary to alcohol use, falling life expectancy, drug deaths and so on - all are a symptom of free market capitalism: an ideology that has always sacrificed working class health at the altar of profit ●

## Notes

1. [www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/01/Statistical-commentary-December-2019-v2-19sh7.pdf](http://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/01/Statistical-commentary-December-2019-v2-19sh7.pdf).
2. [www.health.org.uk/news-and-comment/blogs/nhs-performance-and-waiting-times](http://www.health.org.uk/news-and-comment/blogs/nhs-performance-and-waiting-times).
3. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=CpcY6HsGmAM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CpcY6HsGmAM).

## ACTION

### Donald Trump's 'deal of the century'

**Sunday February 9, 5pm:** Public meeting, Calthorpe Arms, 252 Grays Inn Road, London WC1. Speakers: Moshé Machover and Yassamine Mather. Organised by Hands Off the People of Iran: [hopoi.org](http://hopoi.org).

### Radical Anthropology Group

**Tuesday February 11, 6.30pm:** Series of talks on social and biological anthropology, Daryll Forde seminar room, Anthropology Building, 14 Taviton Street, off Gordon Square, London WC1. This meeting: 'Competition and prestige among 1950s New York teenage vocal groups'. Speaker: Mark Jamieson. Organised by Radical Anthropology Group: [radicalanthropologygroup.org](http://radicalanthropologygroup.org).

### Building the Labour Left Alliance

Pre-conference meetings organised by the LLA: [labourleft.org/lla-launch-conference](http://labourleft.org/lla-launch-conference).

**Birmingham and West Midlands:** Friday February 7, 6.30pm.

1st floor meeting room, The Wellington, 37 Bennett's Hill, Birmingham B2.

**Rotherham Left Momentum:** Tuesday February 11, 7pm.

Bridge Inn, 1 Greasbrough Road, Rotherham S60.

**East Lancashire:** Tuesday February 11, 7.30pm.

Canine Working Men's Club, 45-47 Abbey Street, Accrington BB5.

**Chester, Cheshire and North Wales:** Wednesday February 12, 7pm.

The Unity Centre, 17 Cuppin Street, Chester CH1.

### We can't afford London

**Saturday February 8, 10am:** Meeting for London teachers, Chadswell Healthy Living Centre, Harrison Street, London WC1. For National Education Union members to plan the campaign for a London pay rise linked to housing costs. Organised by Unofficial London NEU Network and Redbridge NEU: [www.facebook.com/groups/1264494740316255](http://www.facebook.com/groups/1264494740316255).

### Stand Up To Racism

**Saturday February 8, 11.45am to 4pm:** Trade union conference, Brunei Gallery, SOAS, Russell Square, London WC1. Bringing together trade unionists from different industries and sectors to promote anti-racism in unions and workplaces. Registration £12 (£6). Organised by Stand Up To Racism: [www.facebook.com/events/425078621764076](http://www.facebook.com/events/425078621764076).

### No war on Iran

Public meetings organised by Stop the War Coalition:

[www.stopwar.org.uk/index.php/events/local-stop-the-war-events](http://www.stopwar.org.uk/index.php/events/local-stop-the-war-events).

**Saturday February 8, 2pm:** Friends Meeting House, Ship Street, Brighton BN1. Speakers include Lloyd-Russell Moyle MP and Lindsey German (STWC).

**Saturday February 8, 5pm:** Labour North West conference fringe meeting, Water Front Suite Pod 4, Southport Theatre and Convention Centre, The Promenade, Southport PR9. Speakers include Richard Burgon MP and Chris Nineham (STWC).

**Monday February 10, 7pm:** Brent Trades Hall (Apollo Club), 375 High Road, Willesden, London NW10. Speakers include Judith Orr (STWC).

**Wednesday February 12, 6pm:** David Hockney Building, Bradford College, Great Horton Road, Bradford BD7. Speakers include professor Paul Rogers and Chris Nineham.

**Thursday February 13, 7.30pm:** Committee Room 6, Council House, Victoria Square, Birmingham B1. Speakers include Chris Nineham and Abdeen Shams (Birmingham Palestine Forum).

### Support arrested arms fair activists

**Monday February 10, 9am:** Protest outside Stratford magistrates court, 389-397 High Street, London E15. Over 100 people were arrested during the week of action against the DSEI arms fair last September. Bring banners, flags and placards to support the defendants. Organised by Campaign Against Arms Trade: [www.facebook.com/events/2521443001477369](http://www.facebook.com/events/2521443001477369).

### Fight anti-union laws, support the strikes

Repeat all the Tory anti-union laws. Defend union rights and the right to strike! Rallies organised by National Shop Stewards Network.

**Thursday February 13, 7pm:** Methodist Central Hall, Warwick Lane, Coventry CV1. Speakers: Jared Wood (RMT); Sharon McGuire (UCU); Des Arthur (CWU). [www.facebook.com/events/3328181503875294](http://www.facebook.com/events/3328181503875294).

**Tuesday February 18, 7.30pm:** Indian YMCA, 41 Fitzroy Square, London W1. [www.facebook.com/events/162991221698001](http://www.facebook.com/events/162991221698001).

### Global strike 4 climate

**Friday February 14, 11am:** UK-wide (and global) student and school student demonstrations. Take direct action on the climate crisis and ecological catastrophe - system change, not climate change! Organised by UK Student Climate Network: [www.facebook.com/pg/UKSCN/events](http://www.facebook.com/pg/UKSCN/events).

### Trade unions and the climate emergency

**Saturday February 15, 9.30am to 4pm:** Conference, The Quaker Meeting House, 22 School Lane, Liverpool L1. To discuss how trade unionists can organise around climate change. Registration free. Organised by Liverpool Trades Council: [www.facebook.com/events/518082688807452](http://www.facebook.com/events/518082688807452).

### Modern monetary theory

**Thursday February 20, 6pm:** Topical study session, Jack Jones House, 2 Churchill Way, Liverpool L3. Organised by Merseyside Socialist Theory Study Group: [study4socialism@outlook.com](mailto:study4socialism@outlook.com).

### Labour Left Alliance launch

**Saturday February 22, 10am to 5pm:** Delegate conference at a venue in Sheffield close to the railway station. To discuss structures, organisation and strategy for bringing together and strengthening the Labour left. Organised by Labour Left Alliance: [labourleft.org/lla-launch-conference](http://labourleft.org/lla-launch-conference).

### 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.

## TECHNOLOGY

# The Huawei panic and US decline

A dispute over the building of the UK's 5G network exposes the ambiguous role of military competition in capitalist progress, argues Paul Demarty

It seems now that the government has gotten away with allowing the Chinese electronics giant, Huawei, to supply parts for the UK's new 5G network, despite the objections raised by the United States in its new phase of Trumpian Sinophobia.

Not that getting this over the line has been without cost. Huawei has had to be designated a high-risk vendor, and fairly onerous conditions placed on the use of its equipment. It can, first of all, only be used in parts of the network deemed 'lower-risk', such as masts; and, secondly, it can only be used in 35% of transmitters (and transmit no more than 35% of the data).

On the face of it, this is a rather baffling compromise. Cybersecurity is all about threat modelling. There is little point constructing an elaborately secured network if the worst enemy you will ever face is a bored teenager with time to kill. At the top of the tree of potential adversaries are 'nation-state actors', and implicitly that handful of such actors with a substantial, organised offensive capacity in this new and worrying theatre of espionage and warfare. China is certainly among the latter group; worries about Huawei's involvement in the 5G build-out are predicated on the assumption that Huawei is - or may, with some reasonable probability, turn out to be - an agent of the Chinese state's espionage efforts.

The design of 5G may be sufficiently well-rounded out, such that keeping Huawei out of the data centres - trapped in 'dumb' equipment at the edges of the network - effectively minimises that risk. What on earth is going on with the 35% limit, however? Either the edges of the network are sufficiently secure or they are not; in the doomsday scenario here, where China hoovers up 35% of all the data that goes over 5G networks in this country, that will already be more than the spooks of the People's Republic are capable of making practical use of; and, if there was some sort of 'killswitch' that turned all their equipment off (another fear knocking around), it would still cause enormous and catastrophic disruption.

It smells a little too much like the result of the kind of fatuous, market-stall haggling, in which the mind of the US president is imprisoned without chance of parole. ("They wanted 50, but I got them down to 35.") It is perhaps unsurprising that Boris Johnson faces consternation on his own benches, given how *weird* these assurances actually are - though it must be emphasised that, for the spooks proper, it is not treated as a matter of serious concern (GCHQ closely monitoring the use of Huawei products, for example).

The story of the 35% has the virtue of highlighting the true significance of this whole affair, which is the complex nature of inter-state competition in contemporary capitalism. The 'original' meaning of the word 'complex' is intertwined, braided together; and it is in this strict sense that we mean it here. The competition between states is partly a military matter and partly an economic matter; but it is not in the end possible - as the 'Manchester' economists used to believe and the Alliance for Workers' Liberty seems to today - to separate them.

The 5G build-out was announced to much fanfare by the government of



A symbol of China's rise

David Cameron - blissfully unaware of the iceberg he had set course for in those happier times. His colleague in number 11, George Osborne, spent the same years on a charm offensive in relation to Beijing. There were to be great trade deals, jobs created, and all that jazz. One of the things China had that Britain needed was the capacity to produce essential equipment for the 5G project.

It should be said that there was immediate pushback from those parts of the establishment closest to the securocracy and the foreign office lifers; and we may assume that, behind those worries, lurked the long arm of the US state department, even under the less bellicose reign of Barack Obama. So a contradiction opened up, so far as Britain was concerned. Getting out ahead of the chasing pack with a 5G network would give some marginal economic advantage, compared to other European powers; but there was a risk of getting out of America's good graces, on which the scant power still enjoyed by this country ultimately rests.

### Military role

Computing is an industry more closely connected than most to the military imperatives of the international hierarchy. The history of computing machines proper begins with wartime code-breaking; and so it is for wide-area networking, with the earliest ancestor of the internet being created by the defence department's Advanced Research Projects Agency (Arpa, now known as Darpa for 'defence') initially to maintain lines of communication in the event of a Soviet nuclear strike. This needs to be emphasised; while it was obvious enough in the cold-war days, when the only computers were massive, punch-card-driven mainframes in well-connected university labs and think tanks like the RAND Corporation, today the overwhelming cultural profile of *consumer* technology tends

to obscure the fact that these links remain.

It was interesting that, according to unnamed US sources in *The Guardian*, it was not thought politic to destroy the special relationship over a few mobile phone networks, which really rather undersells things. In spite of the revolutions in communication, production and culture, brought about by the internet, and its increasing pervasiveness, availability remains a problem. Until wi-fi became common, a computer had to be tethered to a network cable to use the net; and afterwards you still had to be in range. The use of the mobile phone networks for data started a long while ago now, but was, until the roll-out of the 4G network in the first half of this decade, extremely slow, compared to the ADSL and cable connections powering most home internet connections. 5G has the potential to change all that, in cities at least; and this may represent a new step change, making practical for the first time truly *pervasive* networks.

This could be huge: though it is not the *only* missing piece in the self-driving-car story, it is surely a prerequisite for serious use of such vehicles on busy urban roads. A lot of the big promises made on behalf of the 'internet of things' depend on having a safe assumption of high-bandwidth connections most of the time. Great, also, are the opportunities for surveillance; and, needless to say, for intelligence and military agencies.

The US state knows this, and the UK - and the Chinese. It is hardly without interest, then, that the Chinese have done so much *better* than the Americans in actually getting this technology into production. Dominic Raab, during a Commons grilling, called the situation "market failure",<sup>1</sup> which rather makes the assumption that capitalism should ensure the triumph of the companies we like and the defeat of companies we do not, but there is something in it. Huawei

- close to the Chinese state core and backed for the same strategic reasons that there is no amount of passengers Boeing can kill that will see them allowed by the US to actually go bust - outlasted major competitors in North America, and vastly outranks the few European concerns in the space.

This may in the end be a matter primarily of the *dysfunction* of the financialisation that has taken place in the US, running down much of its industry over decades - a common feature of declining capitalist hegemony. Even where state control is strongest, things are extremely dysfunctional. The US military budget is so bloated it is starting to look like the final reel of *Akira*, but it is worth remembering how *colossally wasteful* it is. Darpa invented the internet, of course, but - as the historian, Edward Luttwak, noted in the *London Review of Books* - "the funds available [to it] ... are very modest by Pentagon standards", making up less than a half of one percent of the overall budget. Where does all the big money go?

Most of the money is reserved for the pseudo-innovations pursued by the uniformed services: the navy's supposedly ultra-new aircraft carrier that retains an unchanged 1960s configuration; the F-35 jet fighter that offers 30-year-old 'stealth' as its cutting-edge novelty; the new army tank that still looks very much like the 1944 German Tiger. The dominance of this sort of pseudo-innovation is a direct result of the composition of the US armed forces as an alliance of proudly separate services, each with its own traditions, institutional culture, career paths and - most important - iconic weapons.<sup>2</sup>

China, meanwhile, is still - just about - on the upswing of industrial development, and Beijing has serious military-industrial enterprises, private and public, it can call on to get things

done. It also has a domestic agenda of unabashedly increasing the level of surveillance that made sure the 5G rollout would not be messed up. No doubt the same petty departmental incentives cause havoc in China, as they do among the US chiefs of staff, but in relative terms it looks on course to beat the US to this milestone.

Communists have no truck with the 'outrage' of Tory backbenchers at the potential for 'the Chinese' to snoop on our communications, if only because there is scarcely a world power of any significance that isn't at it (we have recently had the eyebrow-raising tale of Mohammed bin Salman himself sending malware to Jeff Bezos). We look forward to the abolition of intelligence services altogether, and the military-industrial machine that so perverts the ingenuity and effort of countless scientists and engineers.

By the same token, however, we should not imagine the worry is wholly fake, and GCHQ is monitoring Huawei merely to kill time. Nor should we imagine that the decline of the US in *relative* terms will prevent it from causing its own share of chaos by undermining the world's computer systems - as indeed it already does and has - for instance with the extraordinarily ingenious Stuxnet worm cooked up between America and Israel. Britain has not yet suffered terribly in this new theatre of war; the weaponisation of cyberspace, however, continues, and true horrors await us, unless it can be decisively reversed.

The workers' movement must take this up, as it must all matters of war and peace ●

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### Notes

1. [www.theguardian.com/technology/2020/jan/28/boris-johnson-gives-green-light-for-huawei-5g-infrastructure-role](http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2020/jan/28/boris-johnson-gives-green-light-for-huawei-5g-infrastructure-role).
2. [www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v38/n23/edward-luttwak/platformitis](http://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v38/n23/edward-luttwak/platformitis). Luttwak's outlook is basically State Department, but he has the merit of honesty in his analysis.

US

# Stronger than ever

While it is good that Trump was acquitted, writes Daniel Lazare, the slide into authoritarianism is now set to continue

Now that Donald Trump has emerged from the impeachment fiasco bloody but unbowed, are Democrats justified in portraying his acquittal as an epic defeat for democracy? The short answer is yes - except that a conviction would have even been worse.

In an interesting op-ed that ran in the *New York Times* in November, a couple of Latin American specialists named Steven Levitsky and María Victoria Murillo observed: "Coups against elected governments - even populist ones with authoritarian tendencies - almost always push countries in a less democratic direction."<sup>1</sup> The reason is twofold: the inability of elected officials to work through problems on their own leaves them weaker than ever, while the military will find it all but impossible to leave once it succumbs to the temptation to intervene.

Levitsky and Murillo were talking about Bolivia following the overthrow of Evo Morales. But they could have been discussing the United States, where impeachment has been the culmination of a years-long effort to do the same to Trump. To be sure, Democrats did not call in tanks and artillery. Instead, they relied on the intelligence agencies. But the effects were otherwise the same. Rather than defeating Trump at the polls, their goal was to bring in a branch of the defence sector to remove him instead.

The process began during the presidential campaign, when Trump made a point of breaking the rules of America's limited democracy from the moment he announced his candidacy. He outraged liberals by calling for restrictions on immigration, he angered free traders by calling for economic retaliation against China, and he appalled anyone who believes in coherence and good sense by spewing out a mess of other proposals that could not have been more confused and contradictory. But mostly he outraged Washington's endlessly bellicose foreign-policy establishment by calling for rapprochement with Russia and a new policy toward Syria.

In October 2015, he said he had no problem with Russia intervening in Syria to combat Islamic State. "They don't respect our president. They really don't respect us any more. And that's why they're doing this," he told CNN. "At the same time, if they want to hit Isis, that's OK with me."

Two months later, he said of Vladimir Putin: "He's running his country and at least he's a leader unlike what we have in this country." When CNN news presenter Joe Scarborough asked about Putin's alleged killing of journalists and political opponents, he shot back: "I think our country does plenty of killing also, Joe, so, you know, there's a lot of stupidity going on in the world right now, a lot of killing, a lot of stupidity." When Scarborough asked about Russian intervention in the Ukraine, he said that Germany and other European powers should take the lead: "I think maybe we should do a little following and let the neighbours take a little bit more of an active role in the Ukraine," Trump declared.

Speaking nicely about Washington's latest *villain du jour*, refusing to take a hard line in defence of the Nazi-influenced government in Kiev, failing to be dutifully outraged by Russian intervention in Syria - Trump transgressed boundaries that were previously inviolable. If the



Trump's inauguration ... and already there were calls to oust him

range of acceptable debate had been broader, Hillary Clinton might have been familiar with such arguments and handled them with skill. But all she could do was summon up the ghost of Joe McCarthy by accusing him of selling out to the Kremlin. She said in the final presidential debate in October 2016:

It's pretty clear you won't admit that the Russians have engaged in cyber attacks against the United States of America, that you encouraged espionage against our people, that you are willing to spout the Putin line, sign up for his wish list, break up Nato, do whatever he wants to do, and that you continue to get help from him, because he has a very clear favourite in this race.

Since encouraging espionage - that is to say treason - is an impeachable offense, it was inevitable that Democrats would respond to the shock of a Trump victory by mobilising to throw out him as soon as he set foot in the White House. Just minutes after he took the oath of office on January 20 2017, the *Washington Post* posted an article on its website entitled 'The campaign to impeach president Trump has begun'. A flood of collusion stories followed - nearly all of them untrue and virtually all the result of leaks from what would soon be known as the Deep State.

## 'Interference'

Inevitably, the Democrats called on long-standing allies in law enforcement and the 'intelligence community' for assistance. In early January 2017, senator Chuck Schumer, a New York Democrat, said Trump was "being really dumb" by challenging the intelligence agencies' account of Russian interference in 2016, adding: "Let me tell you, you take on the intelligence community, they have six ways from Sunday at getting back at you." The clear implication was not only that the agencies would strike back at Trump, but that they *should*.

Three days later, FBI director James Comey personally confronted Trump with ex-MI6 agent Christopher Steele's bogus 'golden showers' dossier to see if he would tip his hand about Russian interference.<sup>2</sup> When Trump fired Comey in May

2017, acting FBI director Andrew McCabe met with deputy attorney General Rod Rosenstein to discuss wearing a wire to secretly tape his conversations and invoking the 25th amendment to throw him out of office - a clear misuse of the constitution, since the amendment deals only with presidents who are incapacitated by illness, injury or madness, which Trump manifestly was not. Finally, in October, a YouTube video began making the rounds. To the tune of the Rolling Stones' 'Gimme shelter', it showed FBI agents rounding up Trump, Jared Kushner and other White House personnel and hauling them off in handcuffs, as if they were so many Mafiosi.<sup>3</sup>

This was the Bolivian-style remedy that Democrats reached for almost instinctively - not a political solution aimed at defeating Trump at the polls, but a quasi-coup d'état, in which heavily-militarised law enforcement and intelligence would simply remove him from power and cart him off for good. Collusion, corruption - the specific charges were unimportant. The only thing that mattered was that he was gone.

The destabilisation campaign continued even after special prosecutor Robert Mueller announced last March that his investigation was unable to establish that the Trump campaign had colluded with the Russian government. Even if Trump had not conspired, Democrats announced, he had welcomed Russian interference, had profited from it and would undoubtedly do the same in 2020.

With little evidence other than a throwaway line at a July 2016 press conference - "Russia, if you're listening, I hope you're able to find the 30,000 [Clinton] emails that are missing" - Democrats concluded that Trump was incapable of playing by the rules and would rig any election in which he took part. Hence, Congress had no choice but to throw him out before the next election could occur.

Impeachment may seem democratic, because it is constitutional and "republican" in the 18th century sense. But it is not. The problem is not only that the US constitution is itself a pre-democratic document - one that nowhere mentions the d-word and hedges popular representation about with all kinds of checks, balances and restrictions. Rather, it is that impeachment represented

a continuation of the same close collaboration with the intelligence agencies, the same free-form, anti-Russian paranoia and the same belief that electoral politics are not a solution. Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi was unabashed in describing impeachment as Russiagate II: "This isn't about Ukraine," she said after the White House released a transcript of a July 25 phone call, in which Trump pushed Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to launch an investigation into former vice-president Joe Biden. "This is about Russia. Who benefited by our withholding that military assistance? Russia. It's about Russia ... Our adversary in this is Russia. All roads lead to Putin. Understand that."<sup>4</sup>

Other Democrats followed suit. A pro-impeachment legal scholar named Pamela Karlan told the House judiciary committee in December that it was in America's national interest to arm Ukraine, "so we can fight the Russians there and we don't have to fight them here" - as if Russia was planning to invade Washington any time soon. Adam Schiff, the Los Angeles neocon leading the impeachment drive, added in January: "Russia is not a threat ... to eastern Europe alone." He continued:

Ukraine has become the *de facto* proving ground for just the types of hybrid warfare that the 21st century will become defined by: cyber attacks, disinformation campaigns, efforts to undermine the legitimacy of state institutions, whether that is voting systems or financial markets. The Kremlin showed boldly in 2016 that with the malign skills it honed in Ukraine, they would not stay in Ukraine. Instead, Russia employed them here to attack our institutions, and they will do so again.

America and Russia were at war, in other words, and Trump was on the other side. Warming to the theme, a Colorado Democrat and ex-Army ranger named Jason Crow told the Senate a few days later:

Vladimir Putin couldn't care less about delivering healthcare for the people of Russia, about building infrastructure in Russia. Vladimir Putin ... gets up every morning and goes to bed every night trying

to figure out how to destroy American democracy, and he has organised the infrastructure of his government around that effort.<sup>5</sup>

Rather than a mere adversary, Putin was now a diabolic figure seeking to undermine entirely beneficial forces led by the US. George W Bush metaphysics were back in favour - this time with Russia as the new "evil-doer", as opposed to al Qaeda.

## Free rein

This is the imperialist war drive that, by early last week, appeared heading for certain defeat in the Republican-controlled Senate. This is all to the good. If it had been successful, the principle that presidential candidates must submit to a CIA-administered loyalty test would have become well established, while democratic self-government would have continued only within limits set by an all-powerful intelligence 'community'. Anti-Russianism would have become the first principle of US foreign policy, with powerful consequences in half a dozen hotspots, from Cuba and Venezuela to Syria and the Persian Gulf. Anti-imperialists would have wound up even more marginalised than they already are, if such a thing is possible.

This is not to say that a Trump victory is not nearly as dangerous. On the contrary, we have a choice between arsenic and cyanide. If Trump wins re-election in November, then impeachment will be a dead letter and his power will be unconstrained. After years of torment, he will have free rein to take revenge on a host of enemies ranging from liberals to the corporate media and the CIA, and there will be little that Democrats will be able to do in response. America's decrepit constitutional structure will give way to electoral despotism, headed by a Mussolini-style con artist and showman.

Conceivably, Bernie Sanders could halt this in its tracks. But not only has Sanders bought into the general anti-Russian paranoia - in 2018, the so-called socialist introduced a resolution calling on the Senate to endorse the intelligence agencies' findings of Russian interference<sup>6</sup> - but the Democratic establishment will undoubtedly do everything in its power to stop him from gaining the nomination.

This is despite the fact that he is the only candidate capable of beating Trump by winning over not only black and Hispanic workers, but white workers as well. But Democratic politicians are so terrified of the slightest whiff of 'socialism' that they would probably prefer to have Trump. One way or another, the slide into authoritarianism will continue ●

## Notes

1. S Levitsky and MV Murillo, 'The coup temptation in Latin America' *New York Times* November 26 2019.
2. According to the department of justice inspector general, Comey and his top aides "discussed Trump's potential responses to being told about the 'salacious' information, including that Trump might make statements about, or provide information of value to, the pending Russian interference investigation" (Office of the Inspector General report, August 2019, p17 - available at <https://oig.justice.gov/reports/2019/o1902.pdf>).
3. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=jixdTThayv](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jixdTThayv).
4. Pelosi's remarks are available at [www.c-span.org/video/?c4836121/user-clip-roads-lead-putin](http://www.c-span.org/video/?c4836121/user-clip-roads-lead-putin).
5. For Crow's remarks, see [www.youtube.com/watch?v=LzxyoPZSRE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LzxyoPZSRE).
6. 'Sanders introduces resolution to protect American democracy from Russian meddling', July 19 2018: [www.sanders.senate.gov/newsroom/recent-business/sanders-introduces-resolution-to-protect-american-democracy-from-russian-meddling](http://www.sanders.senate.gov/newsroom/recent-business/sanders-introduces-resolution-to-protect-american-democracy-from-russian-meddling).

**LLA**

# Two alternatives

James Marshall discusses the clear choice facing the Sheffield conference of the Labour left

**T**he idea of establishing the Labour Left Alliance was first mooted last year. Why? Because of the obvious failure of Momentum. Jon Lansman - sadly with the blessing of Jeremy Corbyn, John McDonnell and Diane Abbott - had carried out his anti-democratic coup. To all intents and purposes Momentum became the property - the plaything - of just one man.

Consequently, the left of the Labour Party has gropingly, hesitatingly, often falteringly, moved towards some kind of unity. The crucial question, of course, is what sort of unity?

The LLA boasts of having well over a thousand signatures to its appeal. Later this month, on February 22 in Sheffield, delegates from LLA branches and affiliates will decide upon the character of the organisation. The agenda looks massively overloaded. Nonetheless, we must hope that sufficient time is allotted for serious debate. Without that we will probably get a sad repetition of past dead ends.

Essentially there are two models on offer *vis-à-vis* the aims and constitution. The first comes under the name of London LLA. It advocates a membership organisation and politics and structures befitting a left opposition in the Labour Party.

The other proposals for aims and constitution come from Tees LLA, Dulwich LLA and the steering committee of Labour Against the Witchhunt (and Sheffield Labour Left).<sup>1</sup> Differences between Tees, Dulwich and LAW's steering committee are secondary and, from our viewpoint, politically unimportant. They amount to variations on a lowest-common-denominator theme. Unsurprisingly all of them are politically conservative and organisationally mimic the elaborate structures of the Labour Party.

Without doubt, the approach advocated by London is far superior.

Politically it is unashamedly bold. London wants to commit the LLA to "working class rule" and a transition to a stateless, moneyless society based on the celebrated principle, "From each according to their ability, to each according to their need."

London also recognises the necessity of breaking with capitalism and its ecologically destructive cycle of production for the sake of production. Note, the International Panel on Climate Change warns that we have no more than a couple of decades before the world's ecosystem experiences a series of devastating "tipping points".<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately, the London comrades have fluffed one of Marx's most famous - and surely urgently relevant - conclusions. Hence we have: "1.2. Opposition to capitalism, imperialism, racism, militarism and the ecological degradation of the planet through the ruinous cycle of production for the sake of production or profit."

There is no problem with opposition to capitalism, imperialism, racism and militarism. It is the "ecological degradation of the planet through the ruinous cycle of production for the sake of production or profit" which constitutes the problem.

Theoretically this formulation is illiterate. Production for the sake of production and profit are split apart, treated separately, counterposed.



**We need a bold political vision, not a bureaucratic maze**

For the philistine this might amount to just two short words. But that is really, really stupid. It is like saying there is nothing important separating the biblical command, "Thou shalt not commit adultery", and "Thou shalt commit adultery."<sup>3</sup> Only a single word distinguishes the two formulations. But there is a world of difference between them.

Marx should be read seriously and treated seriously. In *Capital* he logically began by defining the commodity. It is a use-value which also has exchange-value. He then painstakingly develops the category of exchange-value and eventually arrives at the equivalent form. Gold becomes money, the universal equivalent. From here he shifts from the formula C-M-C and reverses it with what we know from everyday capitalism: M-C-M.

Yet from the viewpoint of the capitalist this makes no sense whatsoever. Why engage in the trials and tribulations of production, why take the risks of having to find a buyer, when you end up with the same amount of money that you started out with?

No, the capitalist aims to realise a profit: M-C-M'. The capitalist ends with more money than they start with. According to their whims and fancies, the capitalist spends that augmented money on all manner of 'how to spend it' luxuries.

However, capitalism consists of many capitals. Competition forces the individual to plough the vast bulk of their profits back into production. Making bigger and bigger profits becomes a necessity in its own right. Production becomes a compulsion, driving the capitalist endlessly forward.

Hence we arrive at this passage in chapter 24:

Accumulate, accumulate! That is Moses and the prophets! ... Therefore save, save: ie, reconvert the greatest possible portion of

surplus-value or surplus product into capital! Accumulation for accumulation's sake, production for production's sake: by this formula classical political economy expressed the historical mission of the bourgeoisie, and did not for a single instant deceive itself over the birth-throes of wealth.<sup>4</sup>

Making a profit appears perfectly rational. The worker goes to work in order to secure wages, so as to be able to secure the means of subsistence - food, clothing, housing, transport, etc. The capitalist lays out money to hire workers in order to make a profit, with which they are able to purchase luxury food, luxury clothing, luxury housing, luxury transport, etc.

Upon investigation, however, capitalism turns out to have an *irrational* rationale. Because of competition, the desire to make a profit becomes a necessity which, by its own logic, crashes through every social, every natural barrier. Workers are treated as mere things; their trade union and political parties are controlled through numerous restrictive laws, neutered through corruption or simply overpowered using brute force.

Nature is pillaged, raped and used as a latrine. Ecological degradation is inevitable.

Capitalists prove not to be masters of their system. No, they are merely personifications of capital. The system controls them. As such capitalists are subject to externally imposed laws of accumulation. They are compelled to accumulate for accumulation's sake.

Clearly, therefore, the London formulation requires a little, but vital, cut.

Theoretically it only makes sense if it reads: "1.2. Opposition to capitalism, imperialism, racism, militarism and the ecological degradation of the planet through the ruinous cycle of production for the sake of production." In other words,

"or profit" should be removed.

That problem aside, London understands the necessity of linking the future we strive to achieve with the immediate programme needed to bring it about. The battle for democracy must be won. Abolish the monarchy, the standing army and the House of Lords. Establish a single-chamber parliament and disestablish the Church of England. In the same spirit of extreme democracy London calls for proportional representation and annual elections (one of the central demands of the Chartist movement). In short, the "democratic republic".

London is no less bold when it comes to the Labour Party. Conference must be sovereign. Labour MPs should no longer be self-serving career politicians. Towards that end, they must only take the average skilled workers' wage. A principle enshrined by the 1871 Paris Commune. LLA must oppose the very idea of career politicians. Nor must LLA become a vehicle for aspiring career politicians. A real and present danger.

Moreover, MPs must be subject to automatic reselection. The Parliamentary Labour Party must likewise be brought to heel. Subordinate the PLP to the national executive committee.

London not only envisages fighting for all pro-working class organisations to affiliate to the Labour Party: trade unions, political groups and campaigning organisations. The symbolic importance of equipping the Labour Party with a new clause four is fully appreciated. Not, it should be emphasised, an attempt to raise, Lazarus-like, Sydney Webb's clause four from its grave. Let it rot. No, instead, a clause four inspired by the teachings of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels.

Another excellent set of proposals from London: the LLA's annual conference must be the source of all authority. It decides policy, it elects a

leadership. It can also change policy. It can also change the leadership. True, London allows for trade union and other such affiliates to the LLA. But their role is strictly limited. The LLA is envisaged as a membership organisation firmly controlled by the membership.

No less relevant, the constitution presented by London is not prescriptive. What officers are needed, what they are expected to do, the setting of membership fees, how big branches should be before being given an official imprimatur - all such details are all left open-ended. Besides being clear, simple and easy to grasp, London's proposals have the great virtue of being mercifully short (690 words).

## Long and limited

By contrast, what is on offer from Tees LLA (1,870 words), Dulwich LLA (1,550 words) and the steering committee of LAW (1,245 words), is long-winded and hopelessly dated - eg, supporting the "Corbyn leadership".

Politically they are extraordinarily limited too. There is opposition to austerity, the 'Anti-Zionism equals anti-Semitism' witch-hunt, etc. Good, but hardly a transformative vision about what society we aspire to achieve. Capitalism, the state, wage-labour go without mention and therefore, albeit by absence, they are taken for granted, treated as natural. Nor does global warming, the climate emergency, the danger of ecological disaster rate a mention. Critics might fling accusations of climate-change denial. Unfair surely, but the comrades are undoubtedly suffering from tunnel vision.

When it comes to the Labour Party itself, perspectives are no less limited. There is the call for democracy. Once again, however, the lack of vision is obvious: eg, "bring" the PLP into line with "pro-Corbyn views". No, we want a PLP that stands far to the left of Jeremy Corbyn's timid politics. Leave aside his appalling record of throwing his own comrades to the wolves and appeasing the witch-hunters and the Labour right: Jeremy Corbyn's illusory programme of running capitalism in the interests of the working class amounts to sub-reformism. In effect it is social liberalism. The rule of the working class, the abolition of wage-slavery, a moneyless, stateless society, based on need, are foreign territory for him.

The LAW proposal - like those of Tees and Dulwich - in effect mirrors the Labour Party apparatus and its organisational fetishes. Inappropriate and totally myopic. Why should a left opposition in the Labour Party copy the elaborate federal structures, intricate rules, bureaucratic checks and balances and accept the ideological boundaries set by the contemporary Labour Party? Frankly though, this is the habitual approach of too much of the British left. It reveals an internalisation of the attitudes, assumptions and interests of the labour and trade union bureaucracy.

We must explain this constantly repeated pattern of behaviour in materialist terms. It cannot be put down to individual oddity, personal weakness or some congenital tendency to betray. The Labour Party, as presently constituted, is a bourgeois workers' party. The Labour left is the natural home for trade union militants, socialist campaigners and those committed to working class liberation. But Labour's position as the alternative party of government also means that the Labour left is a breeding

ground for careerists who, slowly or speedily, evolve to the right.

Common sense easily becomes that politics are about winning elections. Policies are put forward because they can be 'sold' to the electorate. Ultimately it is, of course, the press, the media, that decides what is sensible and what is to be dismissed as sectarian craziness. Anything that appears to get in the way of winning elections must therefore be avoided like the plague.

Hence debate has to be restricted, bureaucratic controls imposed and awkward minorities sidelined or otherwise silenced.

Worryingly then, Tees LLA wants to bar members of "other socialist political parties". Do we really want to impose our own version of the 1920s anti-communist bans and proscriptions? Dulwich proposes a "conduct and compliance unit". No, no, no. By contrast, London wants all good

communists and socialists to join the Labour Party ... and the LLA.

LAW's proposals can be taken as the main object of criticism. Tees and Dulwich are just slightly less dated, but longer, more complex, variations on the same dismal theme.

To all intents and purposes LAW's steering committee wants to see LLA as a two-tier, two-chamber organisation. Conference can pass whatever resolutions it wants. Meanwhile the

organising committee - made up of delegates from all manner of local branches and political and trade union affiliates, does the actual business ... and goes its own way. A recipe for confusion, conflict and failure.

In other words, conference is to be a talking shop. LAW proposes a cabinet, but one neither elected nor accountable to parliament (conference). London proposes no bifurcation, no split in the lines of authority. Conference must be sovereign ●

## Notes

1. To read all the constitutional proposals and other motions, go to <https://labourleft.org/uncategorized/all-motions-received-on-the-subject-of-our-structures-constitution>.
2. [www.ipcc.ch/sr15/chapter/chapter-3](http://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/chapter/chapter-3).
3. The *Wicked Bible*, sometimes called *Adulterous Bible* or *Sinners' Bible*, contained that wonderful mistake. Published in 1631 by Robert Barker and Martin Lucas, the royal printers in London, it was meant to be a reprint of the *King James Bible*. The compositors accidentally (?) omitted the word "not" from the 10 commandments (Exodus 20:14). About a year later, the publishers were called before the Star Chamber and fined £300 (equivalent to £50,322 in modern money).
4. K Marx *Capital* Vol 1, London 1970, p.595.

# Submitted by Labour Against the Witchhunt steering committee and Sheffield Labour Left

## 1. Our aims

The Labour Left Alliance was set up in July 2019 to bring together groups and individuals on the Labour left in order to build a democratic, principled and effective 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 and opposes the witch-hunt against Jeremy Corbyn and the left;
- 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;
- supports the free movement of people.

We believe in the free and open exchange of ideas and viewpoints. We do not have 'party lines'. But, once LLA has agreed a particular action, a campaign, a leaflet, etc, we ask that supporters do not sabotage or undermine it.

## 2. Individual supporters

We expect all LLA supporters to be members of the Labour Party and encourage all those not already

involved in local Labour Left groups to become active in one or help set one up. Our aim is to organise every single supporter in an active local or regional Labour Left group. We also welcome, on all levels of the organisation, those who have been suspended or expelled as part of the witch-hunt against the left and Jeremy Corbyn.

Individual supporters are requested to pay a minimum of £10/year to help secure the funding of the LLA.

## 3. The Organising Group

The OG is made up of representatives from all the groups whose affiliation to the LLA has been accepted by the OG. Affiliated groups can change their representative/s at any time with a vote by simple majority and should give notice to the LLA as soon as possible thereafter.

- All national trade unions can appoint up to three representatives, once they have paid the affiliation fee of £500/annum.
- Any local or regional trade union or Labour Party body can appoint one representative, once they have paid the affiliation fee of £100/annum.
- Every broad left national organisation or organisation representing special interests or particular groups of members with over 200 members can appoint up to two representatives, once it has paid the affiliation fee of £200/annum.
- Every broad left national organisation or organisation representing special interests or groups of members with under 200 members can appoint one representative, once it has paid the affiliation fee of £100/annum.
- Every *bona fide* local group (including Momentum groups) with a minimum of 10 signed up

LLA supporters can appoint one representative, once it has paid the affiliation fee of £20/annum.

All representatives on the Organising Group have to be signed up supporters of the Labour Left Alliance.

Groups/organisations/trade unions that are affiliated nationally may also affiliate their regional or local branches, but these cannot send representatives to the OG to avoid duplication and overrepresentation.

The OG should meet at least quarterly, in a face-to-face or an online meeting. It can also make decisions via email or other agreed communication channels by a simple majority of those voting within a given timeframe. It produces regular minutes/reports to LLA supporters. If possible, meetings should be scheduled well in advance (at least one month).

All decisions at all levels are made by a simple majority of those voting (excluding abstentions).

The OG can set up working groups and sub-committees on any particular subject. These work closely with the relevant officer on the SC.

## 4. The Steering Committee

The Organising Group, at its first meeting after conference and then annually, elects a Steering Committee of the size of its own determination and in order to fill *at least* the following positions, which have the following responsibilities:

- Secretary and assistant secretary: Overseeing the implementation of decisions made by SC and OG; drafting email bulletins and other communications with members; compiling and distributing minutes; assisting the OG in organising its meetings, etc.
- Chair: Prepares agendas and chairs meetings of the SC and, on agreement of the OG, meetings of the OG; assists

the secretary with overseeing the implementation of all decisions of the SC and OG, etc.

- National organiser: Main contact for affiliated local and national groups; helps to set up and run new local Labour Left groups, etc.
- Campaigns officer: Pulling together, sharing and publicising local experiences, motions and campaigns; seeing through any LLA campaigns agreed by the SC/OG.
- Treasurer: self-explanatory, etc.
- Social media coordinator: Overseeing the social media team; making sure there is a steady flow of content produced for public FB page and Twitter, etc.
- Trade union organiser: Organising LLA supporters in different unions; works to get local, regional and national unions affiliated to the LLA, etc.

The OG can elect and recall members of the SC at any time and by a simple majority. Where a position cannot be filled, the OG can coopt somebody from outside the OG.

The SC is in 'permanent session' and makes decisions via face-to-face meetings, or any other agreed ways of communication. All decisions are made by a simple majority of those voting within a given timeframe (ideally, between 24 and 72 hours).

The SC produces regular minutes and work reports for the OG. These should be produced at least monthly, but more regular at peak times.

If there is a serious disagreement on the SC, the issue should be brought to the OG to be resolved.

The SC will discuss any motions or proposals that have been submitted by affiliated, *bona fide* national or local groups and any motions or proposals submitted by a minimum of 10 individual members.

This includes motions and proposals on national campaigns and policy. The movers of those proposals will be informed in writing of the outcome of the discussion. Should the movers disagree with the way forward/the decision by the SC, they can submit their proposals to the Organising Group, which will have to discuss it at the earliest opportunity.

Proposals to change or amend the constitution should be directed to the OG, which will decide if the matter can be decided by the OG or if a special conference should be called.

The SC is accountable to the OG, which can overturn decisions made by the SC at any time.

## 5. LLA conference

LLA conference meets at least once a year, but the OG or a petition by 10% of individual supporters can call a special conference at any time and on any subject.

- Conference makes decisions on:
- political strategy;
  - campaigning priorities;
  - structures and constitution.

The OG establishes a Conference Arrangements Committee for the purposes of deciding speakers and the agenda and to determine whether motions are within the remit of LLA, etc.

The OG decides on the ratio for the election of delegates. It will allocate all members to a particular area where a democratic meeting will be held for the purpose of electing conference delegates and deciding on motions and amendments.

All affiliated local or national groups or any 10 LLA members can submit one motion and one amendment on each separate conference heading ●

# Submitted by London LLA

## 1. Our aims and principles

1.1. The Labour Left Alliance brings together organisations, groups and individuals with a view to pursuing these aims.

1.2. Opposition to capitalism, imperialism, racism, militarism and the ecological degradation of the planet through the ruinous cycle of production for the sake of production or profit.

1.3. The replacement of Labour's existing clause four with a commitment to socialism as the rule of the working class. We envisage a democratically planned economy and moving towards a stateless, classless, moneyless society that embodies the principle, "From each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs". Alone such benign conditions create the possibility of every individual fully realising their innate potentialities.

1.4. Towards that end Labour

should commit itself to achieving a democratic republic. The standing army, the monarchy, the House of Lords and the state sponsorship of the Church of England must go. We support a single-chamber parliament, proportional representation and annual elections. Labour needs to win the active backing of the majority of people and should seek to form a government only on this basis.

1.5. We seek to achieve the full democratisation of the Labour Party. All MPs, MEPs and MSPs should be subject to automatic reselection. All elected Labour Party members should be expected to take no more than the average skilled worker's wage. The Parliamentary Labour Party should be subordinated to the National Executive Committee.

1.6. We support Labour as the federal party of the working class. All trade unions, cooperatives, socialist societies and leftwing groups and parties should be brought together in the Labour Party. Unity brings strength.

1.7. We shall work with others internationally in pursuit of the aim of replacing capitalism with working class rule and socialism.

## 2. Structure

2.1. The Labour Left Alliance is a membership organisation. Members are required to accept our political aims and principles and pay an annual fee (to be set by the Organising Group).

2.2. We believe in the free and open exchange of ideas and viewpoints. But, once the LLA has agreed a particular action, we seek to achieve the maximum unity. That cannot be imposed - it has to be won.

2.3. We expect all LLA members to be in the Labour Party and encourage all those not already involved in local Labour Left groups to become active in one or help set one up. Our aim is to organise all members in local and regional LLA groups and branches. We also welcome, on all levels of the organisation, those who have been

suspended or expelled as part of the witch-hunt against the left.

2.4. LLA conference meets at least once a year. Conference will consist of either individual members or delegates from affiliated groups or LLA branches (at a ratio to be decided by the Organising Group). Conference debates aims and principles, agrees political strategy, votes on motions and elects a leadership.

2.5. If 30% of affiliated groups and branches or 30% of individual members so wish, there will be a special conference.

2.6. Affiliated groups, LLA branches or any 10 LLA members can submit one motion and one amendment to conference.

## 3. Organising Group

3.1. The OG functions as the leadership of the LLA. The OG is elected at conference. Conference decides on the size and functions of the OG.

3.2. The OG elects its own

officers on the basis of immediate recallability. The OG can coopt members, given particular needs. While coopted members shall have speaking rights, they will have no voting rights.

3.3. The OG should meet at least quarterly, in a face-to-face or an online meeting. It can also make decisions via email or other agreed communication channels by a simple majority of those voting within a given timeframe. It produces regular minutes/reports to LLA supporters. If possible, meetings should be scheduled well in advance (at least one month).

3.4. The OG decides on the level of affiliation fees for groups and organisations and needs to approve all requests for affiliation.

3.5. All decisions at all levels are made by a simple majority of those voting (excluding abstentions).

3.6. The OG can set up working groups and sub-committees on any particular subject ●

**HISTORY**

# Imperialist idol

Chris Gray considers the fabulous wealth, conquests and dreams of Cecil Rhodes

**C**ecil John Rhodes (1853-1902) was something of an iconic figure in Britain in the last decade of the 19th century. Arguably, his breed of opportunism is very much part of our age, as witnessed by his love of money and power; his ruthless use of business acumen; his elitism, emerging in a scheme for the creation of a secret society dedicated to the advancement of empire; his overall plan for British supremacy in southern Africa, financed by a string of companies (notably De Beers and the British South Africa Company); his readiness to use force to overthrow not only native African states, but rival imperialist ones as well; his support for a war against the Boer republics (the Orange Free State and the Transvaal) in 1899-1902. We end by considering his influence on some later writers: viz JA Hobson, VI Lenin and Oswald Spengler.<sup>1</sup>

Rhodes was the son of a Church of England vicar in Hertfordshire. It seems that he was dissatisfied with the grammar school education he got, and resolved to make money in order to pay his way as an Oxford undergraduate. He duly got a place at Oriel College, emerging in 1881 with a BA degree, which, as Flint notes, "opened up to him the prospect of a secure profession and a steady income".<sup>2</sup> Flint also records his being impressed by the imperialist faith of no less a person than John Ruskin.<sup>3</sup> What is remarkable is what this influence led to: in the words of JH Plumb, Rhodes

conceived of a secret elite of white Anglo-Saxons dedicated, like Plato's philosophers, to bringing authority and order to the whole world, ruling other peoples for their own good. These dedicated young men were to be drawn from Britain, North America and Germany, for Rhodes regarded these countries as being not only truly white [sic], but also destined for world rule.<sup>4</sup>

John Flint enlarges on this: Rhodes envisioned, in his own words

a Secret Society, the true aim and object whereof shall be the extension of British rule throughout the world, the perfecting of a system of emigration by British subjects of all lands, wherein the means of livelihood are attainable by energy, labour and enterprise, and especially the occupation by British settlers of the entire continent of Africa, the Holy Land, the valley of the Euphrates, the islands of Cyprus and Candia [Crete], the whole of South America, the whole of the Malay archipelago, the seaboard of China and Japan, the ultimate recovery of the United States of America as an integral part of the British empire ... and finally the foundation of so great a power as to hereafter render wars impossible [sic] and promote the best interests of humanity.<sup>5</sup>

Rhodes did not, it hardly needs saying, live to see the achievement of this utopian vision. Even so, the effect of his commercial and political activities in southern Africa was considerable.<sup>6</sup>

His initial focus was diamonds: eg, the mines in Griqualand. A relevant report shows the kind of industrial policy being practised, whereby "Africans must be prohibited from holding claims of their own, and even prevented by law from being employed to wash diamond-bearing debris. Africans must be restricted to labouring jobs alone."<sup>7</sup>

Griqualand West was annexed by Britain over the years 1877-80, and joined to Cape Colony; in 1880 the famous De Beers Mining Company was founded, with Rhodes as company secretary. Opposition to his initial plans came from three sources: the native African peoples (principally the Ndebele and the Tswana), rival colonial states (mainly the Orange Free State and the Transvaal, or Boer South African Republic) and rival commercial interests.

## Alliances

At this juncture Rhodes needed to manoeuvre and make alliances if possible. His most important initial deal was with Jan Hofmeyr (1894-1948), Dutch leader of the Afrikaner Bond in Cape Colony: Rhodes pledged to support protection for the Cape Boers' agricultural products, while Hofmeyr agreed not to oppose Rhodes's plans for the northward expansion of Cape Colony.<sup>8</sup> But this involved a potential breach with London: "Rhodes felt that Sotho, and other African states within or close upon the Cape's borders, should be controlled by the imperial government, and that [by contrast] the Cape should conserve its energies for true expansion, which the imperial government was unlikely to foster (my emphasis)."<sup>9</sup>

This suggests a certain parallel with a number of 19th century US politicians - in particular Andrew Jackson (1767-1845), and indeed with the whole thrust of US expansionist policy from the Atlantic to the Pacific from 1776 to 1848.

Against such endeavours the Transvaal Boer regime under Paul Kruger (1825-1904) could possibly cut across northward movement by the British by trading on an east-west axis, bolstered by the German takeover of Angra Pequena on the coast of what is now Namibia - control of which was acquired by Otto von Bismarck's German imperial government in 1884. If Rhodes was going to be able to oppose this threat effectively, the support of the Cape Afrikaners under Hofmeyr was useful, to say the least. But there appeared an additional complication: gold was discovered on the Witwatersrand in 1886, which led to an influx of foreign prospectors into the Transvaal. Flint summarises Rhodes's operations as follows:

In the Cape parliament he worked to bring his alliance with the Afrikaner Bond to fruition. In Kimberley [in the Orange Free State] he completed his control of the diamond industry. In the Transvaal he moved into the gold fields to make a second fortune. But, while working at all three objectives, he kept his eye on the Ndebele-Shona country in the north. His contacts with the British officials in Cape Town had to be used to forestall Transvaal expansion there and his own claims for a private venture of colonisation established before Transvaalers or even rival British groups could do so. Thereafter he had to secure the sanction of the British government for international protection and permission to establish the private empire that would eventually become known as Rhodesia. By 1890 he had won all these objectives.<sup>10</sup>

The Gold Fields of South Africa Company was formed in 1887:

The structure of this new company was a foretaste of what was to come on the diamond fields. Its trust deed gave the company wide powers to



**Edward Linley Sambourne 'The Rhodes Colossus' published in 1892 by Punch. This followed the announcement of his plan for a telegraph line from Cape Town to Cairo**

engage in activities little connected with gold mining, including the power to accept cessions of territory and establish government over them. A somewhat dubious provision entitled Rhodes himself to draw one third of the profits, regardless of his share holdings, a right he later sold back to the company for shares worth nearly £1,500,000. In future years Gold Fields ... provided him with a vast income and huge assets, worth twice those he won from diamonds.<sup>11</sup>

One individual who, perhaps, could have proved a really formidable opponent in the diamond industry was Barney Isaacs (1851-97, also known as Barney Barnato), who headed the Kimberley Central diamond company, having arrived at the Cape in 1873.<sup>12</sup> Flint gives us a lively pen-portrait of this young Jewish entrepreneur. He was clearly a gifted salesman - he arrived at the Cape carrying 60 boxes of poor-quality cigars, which he proceeded to sell in Kimberley, where they were in short supply. He then branched out into the provision of other commodities, and began to learn about diamonds. By 1876 he had some £3,000 to invest, and bought some claims:

... He left De Beers to Rhodes and Rudd<sup>13</sup> and concentrated on the Kimberley Central mine ... Barnato moved fast, forming the Barnato mining company before De Beers came into existence,<sup>14</sup> ... and in 1880 forming the largest amalgamation yet seen in Kimberley: the Kimberley Central Diamond Mining Company. By 1885, when Rhodes could boast an income of £50,000 a year, Barnato's was £200,000.<sup>15</sup>

In 1888 Rhodes and Barnato<sup>16</sup> clashed over control of Barnato's Company, with Rhodes, understandably, able to call on greater financial backing, including from the French Rothschild organisation. Rhodes' objective was to absorb Kimberley Central in such a way that

the resulting conglomerate would have power not only to mine, but to pursue various ancillary ends he considered necessary for his overall colonial project.<sup>17</sup> Rhodes solved the problem of potential opposition from Barnato by getting him admitted to the Kimberley Club, "which had closed its door to him hitherto" - a clear case of anti-Semitism.

Barnato was also appointed a life governor of De Beers. The amalgamation, De Beers Consolidated Mines, was finally registered in March 1888.<sup>18</sup> Some other Kimberley Club shareholders were unhappy, and appealed to the Cape Supreme Court, but Rhodes effectively got round that by putting Kimberley Central into liquidation and using De Beers to buy up its assets.

1888 was the year of the treaty with Lobengula, King of the Ndebele, in what anglophones then referred to as Matabeleland.<sup>19</sup> This treaty apparently gave the Ndebele protection against a non-British takeover or conquest, but did not bar private British or Cape colonial concession hunting. Rhodes moved to consolidate this by cultivating Westminster parliamentary support for the official establishment of a chartered company along lines pioneered earlier by the East India and the Hudson's Bay companies. The Irish party bloc of 85 MPs played a crucial role at this point, since they held the parliamentary balance of power following the British general election of 1885,<sup>20</sup> so Rhodes needed to square them. He made contact via the Irish Party's MP, Swift MacNeill, and the upshot was an agreement whereby Parnell's party benefited to the tune of some £10,000.

Rhodes's negotiators then succeeded in getting Lobengula to agree to the mineral concession he wanted. In the process a rival UK imperialist consortium was absorbed.<sup>21</sup> Despite some opposition from Christian missionaries, with whom Joseph Chamberlain had connections, a charter was formally issued to the emergent British South Africa Company in October 1889.<sup>22</sup> Within the BSAC Rhodes operated a private grouping, the Central Search Association, which retained crucial rights over the concession.<sup>23</sup> Coincidentally it appears that the notion of a linked strip of territory under the sovereignty of the UK imperial government - the notorious line "from the Cape to Cairo" proposal - surfaced also in public in 1889.<sup>24</sup>

## Prime minister

It is significant that Rhodes, on entering the Cape House of Assembly, chose to stand in the rural and mainly Boer constituency of Barclay West.<sup>25</sup> His parliamentary career climaxed in 1890 with his appointment as prime minister of Cape Colony - a position which he held from July 1890 to January 1896. Flint points out that "it was the Afrikaner Bond which made Rhodes premier" and Rhodes, apparently, was "the only man who could form a cabinet with Bond support".<sup>26</sup>

What Hofmeyr and his followers wanted was free trade between the Cape and the Transvaal - a demand which clashed with the necessarily protectionist laager being constructed by Kruger, who in March 1889 rejected Hofmeyr's request to cooperate: Hofmeyr then became more attracted to the idea of "developing the north as a Cape preserve", which Rhodes was suggesting. This gave Rhodes another opportunity to use his cheque-book, so to speak, by a distribution of shares in his company to Bond members at par value.<sup>27</sup> That was Rhodes' way: he was a behind-

the-scenes fixer more than a politician, using rhetoric as his main weapon.<sup>28</sup>

His long-term aim was to win over Afrikaner support in the Orange Free State and the Transvaal, for, basically, an extension of Cape colony and overall British control of a South African Federation. But Kruger and the descendants of the Voortrekkers (pioneers from 1836 onwards) were a tougher proposition, for obvious historical reasons plus the contemporary possibility of German imperialist backing. For a time Rhodes tried to absorb the Boer republics' economies via railway extension and pressure for a customs union, but in the face of stubborn resistance led by Paul Kruger at governmental level, an over-confident Cecil Rhodes decided to change course around the end of 1894 - which led to the notorious (and badly planned) Jameson raid.<sup>29</sup>

Plans were made for a coup d'etat in the Transvaal, involving action by a shadowy underground Transvaal "reform committee". These gentlemen were to be aided by Jameson, who would lead the British South Africa Company's police from a base over the border in Bechuanaland: Jameson's force would invade the Transvaal and link up with the internal rebels in Johannesburg. It was expected that, at this point, a stalemate would ensue, allowing the British High Commissioner to act as mediator, producing a satisfactory, pro-British settlement of the conflict.<sup>30</sup>

As first envisaged, the Rhodes-Jameson invasion plan required UK imperial governmental backing, as it was to be launched from the Bechuanaland Protectorate. It would help the cause if the BSAC could, with imperial backing, take over Bechuanaland. Rhodes and Jameson therefore sailed for England in December 1894, taking company secretary Rutherford Harris with them, with the double objective of (1) engineering the removal of high commissioner Loch (seen as an obstacle) and (2) obtaining control of Bechuanaland. Flint tells us that the transfer, which fitted in with colonial office plans to link Bechuanaland with Cape Colony, was held up because "Khama and other Christian chiefs in the protectorate had the support of missionary and radical lobbies in British politics".<sup>31</sup>

As regards the planned raid, PM Lord Rosebery merely warned Rhodes that it should *follow*, not *precede* the necessary Johannesburg uprising. Colonial secretary the Marquess of Ripon made no promises over the transfer of Bechuanaland to the BSAC, but the London authorities obligingly agreed to remove Sir Henry Loch as high commissioner, replacing him with the man he had *succeeded*, Sir Hercules Robinson. "Robinson was openly associated with De Beers and the chartered company, and widely known to be financially dependent upon Rhodes' enterprises."<sup>32</sup>

Flint summarises the obstacles facing Rhodes in his attempts to foment an uprising in the Transvaal:

The talk of the likelihood of a spontaneous rising was inaccurate and exaggerated. The white workingmen were well paid, and their prosperity was rising throughout 1895. They had no organisation whatsoever ... The middle-class National Union ... was not of the stuff to man barricades. The only way an uprising could be fomented was for the mineowners to pay the white

workers to defend Johannesburg against the government when the time came. But the mineowners were not in a revolutionary mood ... Few of them had any predilection for replacing the republic with the Union Jack, for the British government, in their eyes, was too prone to be influenced by 'nigger-loving' radicals and missionary interests, and this either upset the supply of black labour or made it more expensive.<sup>33</sup>

In the circumstances Rhodes had to rely on the support of his own Gold Fields company, plus the Anglo-French Company - contact man here being one George Farrar.<sup>34</sup>

## Chamberlain

The situation changed in the UK in June 1895, when the Liberal government was defeated in a parliamentary vote, giving way to a Conservative administration headed by Lord Salisbury. Joseph Chamberlain, the Liberal unionist, entered the cabinet as colonial secretary and Rhodes did all he could to get Chamberlain to authorise the transfer of Bechuanaland from UK imperial rule to BSAC rule, pleading the need to extend the Cape railway northwards.

Chamberlain, in deference to the wishes of the Bechuana chiefs, urged Rhodes to negotiate with the Africans so as to acquire for the BSAC a strip of Bechuanaland bordering the Transvaal - a compromise Rhodes was willing to accept because relations between Cape Colony and the Transvaal were reaching crisis point.<sup>35</sup> There was an interlocking tangle of interests, which served to intensify Kruger's resistance to the Cape railway:

The section of the line linking the Cape system to Johannesburg was controlled by the Netherlands Railway Company, which had now completed the link to Delagoa Bay in Mozambique and wanted to strangle traffic to the Cape. The Netherlands Company therefore increased the rates on the line southward to a prohibitive level. In response, the Cape government organised a system of ox wagons from the border at the Vaal River to take goods from the Cape line to Johannesburg at a competitive rate. On August 28 Kruger closed the drifts (fords) over the Vaal River to the ox wagons ... Chamberlain reacted with a protest to Kruger, which was virtually an ultimatum. Until ... Kruger reopened the drifts, war seemed a real possibility.<sup>36</sup>

The competitors were now at their starting blocks. The plan was for Jameson to ride in with 1,500 extra men. Meanwhile, three Maxim machine guns and a million rounds of ammunition would be smuggled into Johannesburg for the rising. The Transvaal state magazine at Pretoria, which held some 10,000 rifles and 12 millions rounds, would be seized by the rebels.

Chamberlain, Flint tells us, decided on November 6 1895 to transfer the border strip to the chartered company. He disbanded the British Bechuanaland police and sold their equipment to the British South Africa company. Chamberlain clearly understood that the strip would be used by the company to launch Jameson's force into the Transvaal if a "revolution" broke out.

The date of this "revolution" was fixed at December 28 1895. Jameson was provided with a covering letter, which alleged that "Thousands of unarmed men, women and children of our race will be at the mercy of well-armed Boers". This letter was to become notorious as the "women and children letter".<sup>37</sup>

As Flint records, the plotters then began to lose control of events: "By December 26 the Johannesburg plotters had altered their plans." Leonard's manifesto, calling for a "true republic", a new constitution, equal rights for Dutch

and English, independent courts and free trade with the rest of South Africa, and no mention of British overall rule, was published.

Unfortunately Jameson received *no direct word from Rhodes in writing* telling him not to move until further notice. Telegrams were sent, but Jameson did not regard them as authoritative. He decided to invade on December 29, informing Cecil Rhodes by telegram. Jameson was now set on action. He relied on the power of the Maxim gun to give him victory over the Boers, as it had over the Ndebele.

The invasion began immediately. An attempt to cut the wires to Pretoria was botched, so that, whereas Rhodes knew only that Jameson's force had crossed into the Transvaal, Kruger and the Transvaal government had detailed knowledge of its movements right from that point.

News of the invasion became public on December 31. Rhodes acted as if he were resigned to Jameson failing. Flint records a conversation between Rhodes and a cabinet minister, in which the commercial magnate said of Jameson: "I cannot hinder him. I cannot go in and destroy him."<sup>38</sup> But, in effect, Rhodes destroyed Jameson politically by *not* effectively hindering him when it became necessary. It was the end of a friendship which had lasted 20 years, in which Jameson had shown unwavering loyalty to the last - to the extent of not deciding to hold back from the raid unless he got orders directly from Rhodes himself.

Hofmeyr, on hearing the news, broke with Cecil Rhodes politically, and sent a telegram to Kruger wishing him success against the invasive raid. Rhodes, sensing the game was up, met Hofmeyr and Robinson, and offered to resign. Hofmeyr insisted: "Mere resignation is not enough. You must issue a manifesto repudiating Jameson, suspending him as administrator of Rhodesia, and declaring the law will be set in force against him."<sup>39</sup> Rhodes understandably balked, and as a result lost his political base in Cape Colony.

## Boer War

The logical outcome of all this mess was the conflict which is known in the UK as the Boer War (1899-1902).<sup>40</sup> Indeed, as Flint notes, to have shot Jameson and his men as traitors unless the Reform Committee rebels in Johannesburg surrendered unconditionally, as Kruger threatened, would have led to immediate war with Great Britain. It did not come to that, but, according to our biographer, the raid cost Rhodes some £400,000, which obviously increased his problems. On January 15, Rhodes sailed for England.

Rhodes' hidden weapon in defence of the BSAC was a dossier of 54 telegrams passed between the company's offices in Cape Town and London. Company solicitor Bouchier Hawkesley seized on these documents, which revealed the extent to which Chamberlain had sanctioned the original plan. But Chamberlain in fact quickly reached an accommodation with Rhodes.

It remains to consider the fate of the native African populations (Shona and Ndebele) in the emergent Rhodesia. The welcome Rhodes got when he landed at Beira took the form of an African uprising led by the Ndebele.<sup>41</sup> Anyone wishing to understand the effect of classic capitalist imperialism on 'underdeveloped' peoples will find in Flint's discussion of the causes of the rebellion a good starting point. You could call it a "jihad in miniature" (using the term as understood by the Donald Trumps and Osama bin Laden of this world).

The impact on traditional Ndebele institutions had been a devastating one: loss of land and herds, together with the absence of ways of enabling the native economy to survive in the imposed capitalist market. Further, cattle remaining in African hands were struck by a disease outbreak in 1896. Failure to cope by the traditional Ndebele ruling elite (effectively undermined by the BSAC) led to the emergence

of Messianic prophets, who sought to fill the institutional void. The Ndebele fought a guerrilla struggle and their Shona neighbours joined them in warfare, depriving the European settlers of the quick victory they thought was theirs by right.<sup>42</sup>

Rhodes seized the chance offered by the rebellion to shake himself free of his critics in London, sidestepping a request from Joseph Chamberlain that he and Alfred Beit should resign as BSAC directors with the terse telegraphic comment: "Let resignation wait - we fight Matabele tomorrow." He fought them in the most ruthless fashion, urging that African lives be not spared, as "that would teach the rebels a lesson."<sup>43</sup> The result, however, was a stalemate, which forced our white hero to open negotiations (July 1896 onwards). Talks were made possible by an African whose name was John Grootboom, who "insisted that Rhodes, accompanied by only four or five people, should come unarmed". This was the first time he had ever been exposed to African points of view in a discussion.

Following a series of indabas (assemblies), ending on October 13 1896, Rhodes appears to have reached an agreement with the Ndebele that they found acceptable. He grew attached to the Matopo Hills and expressed a wish to be buried there (after all, this was "Rhodesia" now).

Evidence that Cecil Rhodes had by now recovered his original brash self-confidence can be found in his support for the Cape-Cairo railway plan in the years 1897-99. By the end of 1897 there was a rail link between Cape Town and Bulawayo and a link between Bulawayo and Salisbury was created in 1899. He favoured a transcontinental Cape-Cairo route under British imperial control, but it was beyond the empire's resources: the idea "made no sense politically or economically":

German East Africa lay athwart the route and, although Rhodes' visit to Berlin [in 1899] ... charmed the kaiser into signing an agreement permitting the telegraph to be built through German territory, the Germans were more cautious about permitting a rail line ... The capital needed for such a vast scheme was beyond even Rhodes' ability to raise, and the British government predictably rejected his request for a guarantee of interest on the capital.<sup>44</sup>

Such scheming was interrupted by the Boer War. Rhodes plunged in, installing himself in Kimberley in the western Orange Free State. Kimberley's mayor and other residents were unhappy about him being there, as they argued it would invite a Boer attack on the city, but Rhodes's view was that his presence would aid imperial reinforcement - his capture would be a bad blow - and he could use De Beers financial resources to strengthen Kimberley's defence. Urban sites falling into the same category as Kimberley when the war broke out were Mafeking, in Goshen,<sup>45</sup> and Ladysmith, a rail junction some 200 miles north of Durban, where Jameson was in command. Flint gives a judicious summary of Rhodes' doings in Kimberley:

The siege of Kimberley lasted four months. On the British side Lieutenant Colonel Robert George Kekewich was in command, and soon he and Rhodes were at cross-purposes ... The city was in fact in no real danger, because the defending forces were strong enough to hold it, and the Boer attackers lacked the weapons to storm the defences. Kimberley, (with Ladysmith and Mafeking) thus performed a useful function in the early months of British strategy, for they detained large bodies of Boer troops while reinforcements steadily arrived from Britain. Rhodes, however, ... increasingly interfered in the military

sphere, using De Beers resources to build a fort on the outskirts of the city, which Kekewich thought a waste of effort ... At the same time much of his activity was useful and imaginative. He kept the African workers busy and in pay by employing 10,000 of them in public works around the city.<sup>46</sup>

From December 1899 the war swung in Britain's favour. Kimberley was relieved on February 15 1900, Ladysmith two weeks later. The siege of Mafeking ran from October 1899 to May 1900.

## Legacy

Cecil Rhodes died on March 26 1902 and it remains to consider his legacy, both testamentary and political.

His early conception of a secret white and mainly Anglo-Saxon intellectual elite bestriding the world led eventually to what we know as Rhodes Scholarships. These undoubtedly "enshrined and expanded Rhodes' image as the man of empire".<sup>47</sup>

Flint ends by arguing: "Ironically, Rhodes was to play a central role in the mythology [sic] of anti-imperialism."<sup>48</sup> In this context he mentions specifically JA Hobson (1858-1940), Lenin and Oswald Spengler. Flint says that for Hobson, whose book *Imperialism: a study* came out in 1902,

... imperialism, defined as the movement for territorial expansion in Africa and Asia, was in its root cause the work of small cliques of financiers who manipulated their wealth to influence the press, public opinion and British politicians to undertake territorial aggrandisement which benefited no-one but themselves.<sup>49</sup>

Flint also adduces Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, whose *Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism* (1917) became, as he notes, "the New Marxist orthodoxy":

In effect it was Hobson's thesis legitimised [Indeed?] and for Lenin, as for Hobson, Cecil Rhodes was the classic figure of the imperialist. The chartered company was seen as the institutional revelation of the financial taproots of imperialism, in which the financiers openly managed both the economic exploitation and the political administration of the colonial territory.<sup>50</sup>

Finally there is Oswald Spengler:

In 1918 the intellectual prophet of German Nazism, Oswald Spengler, published the first volume of a two-volume study completed in 1922, *The decline of the west ...* Spengler regarded Rhodes with almost mystical awe, as a prototype of the future world order. "Rhodes is to be regarded as the first precursor of a western type of Caesar. He stands midway between Napoleon and the force-men of the next centuries." ... He ... saw him as the precursor of a new Germanic revival: "in our Germanic world the spirits of Alaric and Theodoric will come again - there is the first hint of them in Cecil Rhodes."<sup>51</sup>

Flint goes on to assert that the Nazis of the 1920s and 1930s found a kindred spirit in Rhodes, especially in his love of power. Rhodes' obsession with his personal "idea" was equated with Hitler's. His companies operated as a state within a state, with their own police force and detectives, even keeping dossiers on prominent South Africans who has no connexion with the diamond trade, and Rhodes manipulated the press. Furthermore,

Like Mussolini after him, Rhodes felt himself Roman. He fancied he bore a likeness to the emperor Hadrian, commissioned dozens of busts and statues of himself, and even arranged for his own funeral to be like that of an emperor. Rhodes' views on race,

though not particularly anti-Semitic or unusual for his time, also seemed congenial to extreme rightwing thought in the years between the wars. For Rhodes the achievements of the British were the result of an inner dynamism contained in the 'British race'; all other peoples, except the Germanic, were in varying degrees inferior.<sup>52</sup>

When thinking about Cecil Rhodes, I am reminded of the wonderful series, *The wizard of Id*, by cartoonists Brant Parker and Johnny Hart. The king at one point addresses the peasants, insisting: "Always remember the Golden Rule": ie, "Don't do to other people what you wouldn't want done to yourself". One peasant asks his neighbour: "The Golden Rule - what does that mean?" and his companion says: "It means whoever has the gold makes the rules" ●

## Notes

1. A useful starting point for assessing Rhodes's political roles is John Flint's *Cecil Rhodes* (London 1976). This book is graced with an introduction by the distinguished British historian, JH Plumb.
2. J Flint *op cit* p22.
3. *Ibid* pp27-28.
4. *Ibid* pxvi.
5. *Ibid* pp32-33.
6. Rhodes landed in South Africa when he was 17 years of age, sent out by his parents in the hope that the move would improve his health (see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cecil\\_Rhodes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cecil_Rhodes), accessed 2/11/2019).
7. Quoted in J Flint *op cit* p45.
8. *Ibid* p54.
9. *Ibid* pp55-56.
10. *Ibid* p78.
11. *Ibid* p81.
12. His Wikipedia entry says he was born Barnet Isaacs in Aldgate, London on February 21 1851.
13. CD Rudd was an early associate of Rhodes, partnering him in the De Beers Mining Co. and later in the Niger Oil Co ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cecil\\_Rhodes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cecil_Rhodes)).
14. De Beers Consolidated Mines was founded on March 13 1888.
15. C Flint *op cit* pp46-47.
16. See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barney\\_Barnato](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barney_Barnato), accessed 15/12/2019.
17. "... including the building of railways and the founding and governing of new colonies. Such powers were probably *ultra vires*, and if Barnato refused to agree he could become a formidable obstacle" (C Flint *op cit* p89).
18. C Flint *op cit* pp89-91. A case of a rich thief buying out a lesser thief?
19. The Ndebele were of Zulu stock, and they lived to the south of the Shona. The latter were agriculturalists in a tributary relationship to the Ndebele, but inhabiting an upland region suitable for white farming.
20. See the short summary of the political outcome of the 1885 vote in J Bardon *A history of Ulster* (Newtownards 1992), pp373-75.
21. See C Flint *op cit* pp102, 103, 107 and 109-11.
22. *Ibid* p117. See also pp118-56.
23. *Ibid* pp120-21.
24. *Ibid* p113.
25. See note 13.
26. *Ibid* p158.
27. *Ibid* p159.
28. "His concept of debate was to expound his own thoughts, at length and with much repetition, before the House, and to stifle coherent reply by prior arrangements with potential opponents. During the years of his premiership, from 1890 to 1895, the Bond [enjoyed] a maturity and confidence born of its shared power (*ibid* pp160-61).
29. "The decision was a calamity for Rhodes, and it ruined his political career; for South Africa's white population it was a catastrophe that led directly to the Boer War" (*ibid* p176).
30. For Flint's summary of Rhodes's plan see *ibid* pp180-81.
31. *Ibid* p182.
32. *Ibid* p183.
33. *Ibid* pp183-84.
34. *Ibid* p184.
35. *Ibid* p186.
36. *Ibid* pp186-87.
37. *Ibid* pp189-90.
38. *Ibid* p196.
39. *Ibid*.
40. Official UK title: the Second South African War.
41. Flint recommends TO Ranger, *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia: a study in African resistance 1896-1897* (Evanston 1967).
42. Here the Ndebele showed their Zulu mettle.
43. Surely there is a parallel here with Jacob Rees-Mogg's alleged comment regarding the salutary effect of confinement in a concentration camp.
44. C Flint *op cit* p212. Is there now such a transcontinental rail link? No, there are still gaps, in Egypt, south Sudan and Uganda.
45. Goshen was an erstwhile Boer republic sandwiched in between British Bechuanaland and the Transvaal.
46. C Flint *op cit* p220.
47. *Ibid* pp243 and 227.
48. *Ibid* p228.
49. *Ibid*. Flint adds: "For the British Labour Party, steadily gaining in electoral strength, Hobson's concept of imperialism became an orthodoxy."
50. *Ibid* p229. His analysis of Lenin's book on imperialism is questionable, in as much as it does not mention Lenin's focus on interstate debt and on the expansionist tendencies of industrial capital.
51. *Ibid* p232.
52. *Ibid* p233.

## ITALY



Forza Nuova: anti-Jewish, pro-Israel

# Salvini, Israel and anti-Semitism

In Italy IHRA-style propaganda is linked to anti-migrant racism, writes Toby Abse

The conference on 'New forms of anti-Semitism' organised by the Lega leader and former deputy premier/interior minister Matteo Salvini in Rome on January 16 was probably the most grotesque embodiment of the alliance between the Israeli state and the European far right yet seen in the public realm.

After all, Binyamin Netanyahu's cordial relationship with the Hungarian premier, Viktor Orbán, and his Polish equivalent can be presented as an intrinsic part of state-to-state relations, and thus of a different order to overt support for an opposition leader like Salvini. Moreover, such dealings with the anti-Semitic governments of Hungary and Poland do not involve ludicrous conferences to redefine anti-Semitism - perhaps because both of these eastern European governments have domestic opponents even further to the right (eg, Jobbik in Hungary), which would doubtless criticise any softening of the stance towards Jews, however dishonest such a hypothetical retreat might be.

Perhaps the disgraceful Israeli state endorsement of absurd Polish claims that the Germans alone were responsible for all Jewish deaths on Polish soil between 1939 and 1945 could be seen as the historiographical equivalent of the recent Israeli-sponsored conference with Salvini.<sup>1</sup> Arguably, the Israeli approval of Salvini is in some ways more shameless than its approval of the Polish Law and Justice Party, which was an ally of the superficially respectable Boris Johnson in the European parliament's Conservatives and Reformists group.<sup>2</sup> Even the Israeli endorsement of Fidesz could be explained away by the fact that these Hungarians are members (albeit suspended) of the European People's Party, whose origins were mainstream, centre-right Christian Democratic.

The case of the Lega is much more revealing and, one would have thought, embarrassing from an Israeli point of view. Whilst at a pinch the Lega's alliance with the French Ralliement National (formerly Front National) can be ignored by disingenuous Zionist diehards on the grounds that

Marine le Pen has publicly repudiated the views on the Holocaust expressed by her father, Jean-Marie Le Pen, even the most unscrupulous Israeli propagandists must still have a problem with Salvini's other principal ally, the Alternative für Deutschland, with its scarcely concealed links with anti-Semitism and neo-Nazism.

Moreover, it is not just a question of Salvini's unsavoury allies at the European level. The Lega's willingness to work with the more extreme end of the Italian neo-fascist spectrum - as opposed to the more 'moderate' neo-fascists (or "post-fascists", as they call themselves) in the Fratelli d'Italia - has increased since Salvini became Lega leader in December 2013.<sup>3</sup> In February 2015 Salvini had held a joint rally in central Rome with CasaPound, the self-proclaimed "fascists of the third millennium" (and as recently as October 19 last year he had no problem with CasaPound's very public participation in the Lega-led 'centre-right' demonstration in Rome's Piazza San Giovanni against the government.) One assumes that even the most dim-witted Israeli intelligence officer in the Rome embassy would have grasped that an avowedly fascist organisation, named after the notorious anti-Semitic Ezra Pound, would be itself rabidly anti-Semitic.

Salvini himself has a rather longer personal association with the anti-Semitic and hard-line fascist milieu than many have realised. His closest friend at the school he attended between the ages of 14 and 19 was Marco Carucci, a fervent neo-fascist as a teenager, who later became a leading figure in Forza Nuova - CasaPound's chief rivals amongst neo-fascist groups engaged in street fighting. This friendship continued for years after they had both completed their schooling and Salvini acted as Carucci's best man at the latter's wedding in 2006. Given the closeness of this duo, it is not so surprising that Salvini's history teacher remembers him remarking in a classroom discussion of the Final Solution that "The Jews must have done something to have been treated that way". Furthermore, in early 1991, when both Carucci and Salvini were

pupils, the following slogans were spray-painted on the outer wall of their school: "Death to the Jews. Long live Saddam". This was accompanied by a Celtic cross - one of the key emblems of hard-line Italian neo-fascist groups. Obviously it is possible that this was done by outsiders, not pupils, but Carucci's views were widely shared amongst their classmates.<sup>4</sup>

More recently Salvini has become obsessed with George Soros. For example, in a press conference held in Moscow in July 2017, Salvini explained:

My objective is to ... make an agreement between three political movements, not on the payroll of the likes of Soros, who put at their centre the interests of 500 million Europeans and not the interests of some bankers, some speculators or some multinationals ... - the union that homogenises everything, cancelling the real differences.

In December 2014 he informed a radio station: "I don't accept the IUS Soli [the law that gives anyone born in Italy citizenship]. It is the replacement of peoples, planned in the name of profit under the god of money [so] it is not the European Union that I want to leave to my children."<sup>5</sup> Salvini was far too shrewd to utter the word 'Jews', but the implication would have been grasped by any anti-Semite. The same can be said of his slightly coded references to the 'Great Replacement', in which the Jews are using blacks and Muslims to destroy white, Christian Europe. In August 2015, he said: "An attempted genocide of the population that has inhabited Italy for centuries is afoot and somebody wants to replace them with tens of thousands of people who are arriving from other parts of the world."<sup>6</sup>

## Hypocritical

Needless to say, the conclusion reached by the 'New forms of anti-Semitism' conference - indeed its only real purpose - was to equate anti-Semitism with anti-Zionism. So far, in domestic terms, this belated and hypocritical attempt to present

Salvini and the Lega as the friends of the Italian Jews has proved a manifest failure. Not only had 89-year-old Auschwitz survivor and life senator Liliana Segre rejected Salvini's invitation to attend the conference - for reasons that I will explain later - but the seat set aside for the official leaders of the Italian Jewish community also remained empty.

Here the point needs to be made that, although the leaders of that community are in a broad sense Zionists, they are not uncritical Netanyahu fans, anxious to prostrate themselves at every function attended by the Israeli ambassador, as this conference was. The contrast with their British equivalents (the Board of Deputies, the Jewish Leadership Council, etc) needs no underlining. Moreover, although in the early years of the Berlusconi era, a number of Jewish leaders had closely identified with the political right, in recent times the current leadership has publicly opposed government measures against migrants and gypsies, seeing the connection between general racism and xenophobia, on the one hand, and specific hostility to the Jewish community, on the other. On several occasions they have drawn the obvious parallels with Mussolini's racial laws of 1938. The collective memory of the community that experienced first persecution between 1938 and 1943, and then deportations to the death camps, as well as some killings on Italian soil, in the last years of World War II, clearly influences their perceptions of the present day.

Two of the three prominent Jews in attendance at Salvini's conference on anti-Semitism were Israelis, not Italians. These were the Israeli ambassador, Dror Eydar, and the president of the Jerusalem Centre for Public Affairs, Dore Gold. The only Italian Jew mentioned in the relatively brief mainstream reports of the conference,<sup>7</sup> and very probably the only one present, was Fiamma Nirenstein. Nirenstein was for many years associated with Forza Italia and continues to write editorials for Silvio Berlusconi's daily paper, *Il Giornale*, even if in recent times, seeing the

changing balance of forces on the Italian right, she has become Salvini's chief advisor on Israeli affairs.

The Forza Italia speaker of the Senate, Elisabetta Alberti Casellati, made the opening speech and remained present throughout the proceedings.<sup>8</sup> She was observed having a friendly chat with Salvini at the end - although whether, as he claimed in a subsequent interview, they were discussing the conference or instead were discussing a possible meeting of the senate committee dealing with parliamentary immunity from prosecution, as many cynics in the centre-left Partito Democratico (PD) believed, is far from clear. It is perhaps no coincidence, as Italian Jewish journalist Gad Lerner could not resist implying,<sup>9</sup> that both Netanyahu and Salvini are hoping to use parliamentary immunity to avoid criminal proceedings in their respective countries. But whether the fellow feeling of two corrupt politicians had anything to do with it is rather debatable.

The somewhat negative outcome of the conference in terms of the organisers' objectives cannot really be understood in isolation from an earlier dramatic incident in the Italian Senate in October 2019. Liliana Segre - the elderly Holocaust survivor referred to earlier - made a speech proposing the creation of a Senate committee of inquiry into anti-Semitism, racism and other forms of hatred. This proposal was supported by the PD, Movimento Cinque Stelle (M5S - Five Star Movement) and the minor parties involved in the current coalition government. It was opposed by the parties of the 'centre-right' - the Lega, Giorgia Meloni's Fratelli d'Italia (FdI) and Forza Italia. This division was dramatised by the reaction to Segre's speech: the governmental senators rose to their feet at the end of Segre's speech and gave her a standing ovation, while the opposition remained seated and silent. Given that Segre's stance was in part motivated by the fact that she was receiving hundreds of death threats - mostly online - from far-right sympathisers, who were annoyed that

# What we fight for

president Sergio Matherella had in 2018 appointed a Holocaust survivor as a life senator and by her criticisms of Salvini's anti-migrant stance, the behaviour of the opposition, relayed to millions on national television news, gave the impression of a lack of human sympathy.

It is clear that some of the Forza Italia senators were genuinely embarrassed by the consequences of behaving like a united opposition, alongside the Lega and FdI, and could see some distinction between the proposal with which they may have disagreed and the proposer, for whom they may have had some respect.<sup>10</sup> However, what was glaringly obvious was the underlying hostility of both the far-right parties - Lega and FdI - towards a Jew who dared not only to speak out against anti-Semitism, but also opposed anti-immigrant racism and hostility to other minority groups.

## Green light

Obviously Salvini's public justification did not in any way reference the 'Great Replacement', but took the form of alleging that Segre's proposed committee threatened freedom of expression - essentially the 'political correctness gone mad' line we are so familiar with in the UK. Giorgia Meloni, the leader of the FdI, ranted about dangers to the family - which presumably needed to be protected by implying homophobic insults, as so many of her followers were in the habit of doing.<sup>11</sup> Unsurprisingly, the behaviour of these parliamentarians was seen as a green light for extra-parliamentary hostility to Segre, which increased in subsequent days, with the display of threatening banners by the neo-fascist group, Forza Nuova. So it came about that an elderly Holocaust survivor had to be given a police escort for her own protection - something that was widely reported outside Italy.

Both Salvini and Meloni were sufficiently media-savvy to feel compelled to attempt some sort of hypocritical reconciliation with Segre. Meloni telephoned her, offering a half-hearted apology, laced with cryptic remarks about her deep concerns for the family. As Segre subsequently explained in an interview, she responded to the neo-fascist by pointing out that she had been married to the same man for 50 years.<sup>12</sup> For the benefit of British readers I feel compelled to point out that Meloni has not married the father of her children, so does not practise the traditional Catholicism she preaches.

In other words, Segre's response to her pontificating was even more barbed than might first appear. Salvini had had a private meeting with Segre in November - in which, one presumes, some degree of formal courtesy was maintained on both sides (otherwise it is hard to see how he had the chutzpah to invite her to his anti-Semitism conference). She responded to this invitation, belatedly issued in mid-January, by pointing out that she was very busy in late January, having already committed herself to participation in a variety of events around the time of Holocaust Memorial Day (January 27). However, she did not limit herself to stating these very genuine demands on her time, which the narcissistic Salvini had probably not thought about. She also made it crystal-clear that in her view the consideration of anti-Semitism could not be detached from discussing other forms of racism - she knew full well that this was what Salvini was trying to do.

Never a man to show any self-restraint when his whims were thwarted, Salvini proceeded to insult Segre by implication at the conference. To quote his exact words:

"I am disappointed that somebody is not here today because 'We ought to have spoken about everything'. It is classic Italian methodology to use this alibi not to engage with the topics." He added: "Liliana Segre has so much to teach us; Carola Rackete has not", knowing perfectly well that Segre would not have shared his hostility towards Rackete (captain of the German ship which rescued drowning migrants in defiance of Salvini's anti-migrant laws - she was arrested for doing so).

Salvini added to the appalling impression he was making on anybody who was not already either a Lega supporter or a slavish adherent to Israeli government policy by losing his temper with journalists at the end of the conference. They quite understandably asked him questions about his immigration policy and the accusations of racism that had arisen from them. He clarified his position by asserting: "We do not confuse the legitimate control of the frontiers and immigration with the barbarism of the Shoah and of hatred towards Israel. It is absurd to accuse me of racism for having done my duty in controlling the frontiers." Since the president of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities, Noemi Di Segni (who had not attended the conference), had in an official statement qualifying her approval of the idea behind it by adding, "Salvini must take note that he is a reference point for groups on the extreme right", journalists asked Salvini about his relations with CasaPound and Forza Nuova. The Lega leader claimed, "No relationship exists" - seemingly oblivious to the photographs of him alongside leaders of CasaPound that have often appeared in the mainstream press. Admittedly Simone Di Stefano, a keen leader of CasaPound, has recently remarked: "The drama of the sovereignists is their psychological subjection [to the Jews]. [Salvini] has voted against the Segre commission? Good. One sticks to this position. No, one rushes to apologise, one pushes to make her an honorary citizen, one invites her to conferences."<sup>13</sup>

## Pro-Zionist?

It seems probable that the anti-Semitism conference may well be the preliminary to Salvini pushing the Israeli agenda on the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance agenda on anti-Semitism and outlawing the boycott, divestment and sanctions campaign in Italy - if and when he ever has the time to devote himself to anything other than electoral campaigning and his own judicial problems. However, even here things may not go so smoothly. Interestingly, the Italian representative of the IHRA, Milena Santerini, has some doubts about the definition. As she explained to *La Repubblica*, "The theme is complex. I have already received some criticism for having argued that anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism do not coincide perfectly" (January 17).

She has also said: "I am committed to fighting anti-Semitism in the same spirit with which I denounce Islamophobia and

**Matteo Salvini: hand in glove with fascist right**



*antiziganismo*: that is, the prejudice that strikes the Muslims and the Roma." This is precisely the attitude that Salvini denounced at his conference. Santerini, who teaches at the Catholic University of Milan, and has worked with Segre since 1994, is clearly the kind of Catholic who shares the anti-racist views of Pope Francis, who Salvini detests. As Lerner emphasises, Salvini has joined the current of "Christian Zionists" being "at the same time pro-Israeli and anti-Semitic".<sup>14</sup> In one sense Santerini may also be both a Christian and a Zionist, but not in the same sense as Salvini - as Conte's recently appointed "national coordinator of the struggle against anti-Semitism", she is not going to be an obedient servant of Netanyahu and Salvini.<sup>15</sup>

Ruth Dureghello, the president of the Jewish Community of Rome, also took a distance from Salvini in the days after the conference. Asked whether she agreed with his claim in an interview with an Israeli newspaper that anti-Semitism in Italy was the fault of Muslim migrants, she responded:

It's a partial vision - one part of the phenomenon that adds nothing to what we know already. Anti-Semitism is coming back. From the United States to Australia to Europe, we are seeing phenomena of the extreme right that deserves serious attention, because in Italy, as has already happened in Hungary and Poland, they are moving in structured forms. Every country has its own history, its own traditions, and its own Jews. Although it should take account of the American academics of that conference, the reasoning about anti-Semitism in Italy ought to be done with the Italian Jews.

The emphasis of the rest of her statement was on fascist salutes in football stadiums, Holocaust denial and people who invoke the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, not on criticisms of Israel.<sup>16</sup> This was particularly significant, given that the Roman Jewish community has in the past had a number of conflicts with pro-Palestinian leftists over events to mark Italy's Liberation Day on April 25, which have sometimes led to two separate commemorations taking place.<sup>17</sup> In short, even the most Zionist of Italy's Jewish communities has not succumbed to the kind of hysteria whipped up by figures like the chief rabbi in the UK and makes its assessment of where anti-Semitism is coming from without much reference to the Israeli government or American Zionists.<sup>18</sup>

An anti-Semitic incident during the night of January 23-24 had the effect of further undermining Salvini's credibility as a friend of the Italian Jews. The German words "Juden hier" (There are Jews here) and a Star of David were spray-painted onto a door of a house in the Piedmontese town of Mondovì, which had belonged to Lidia Rolfi (1925-96) and had been inherited by her son Aldo. Lidia Rolfi had been one of the relatively small number of women in Ravensbrück concentration camp who had managed to survive until it was liberated by the Russians at the end of the war. As Aldo pointed out, his mother had not been Jewish, but a political prisoner deported to Ravensbrück as a result of her role in the Italian resistance.

Since Lidia had written a number of books about her experiences, this assumption that she was Jewish suggests that the individual responsible for the offensive slogan was probably ignorant about

the historical events of 1943-45, but it is, of course, possible that a hard-line neo-Nazi would identify the Italian resistance with the Jews as part of some 'Jewish Bolshevik' conspiracy against the patriotic followers of Mussolini.

Lidia had been a member of the Italian Socialist Party after the war and, although Aldo emphasised in a *Corriere della Sera* interview (January 25) that he was not a member of any political party, he also told *Repubblica*: "As a result of hating everybody, always hating, you get to this. How can I not think of Salvini's intercom?" (January 25) - a reference to the episode a day or two earlier in which Salvini had pressed the intercom of a Tunisian family in Bologna and accused the son of being a drug dealer.

Referring to his mother's intellectual legacy, Aldo added: "Anybody who has been the victim of racial or political persecution knows that history can repeat itself." Santerini, the national coordinator of the struggle against anti-Semitism referred to earlier, when asked about the incident, warned people, "Beware of the slogans of nationalism and populism", and even explicitly condemned Salvini's "equation" of 'drug dealer' and 'foreigner' ●

## Notes

1. See JT Gross *Neighbours: the destruction of the Jewish community in Jedwabne, Poland* (Princeton 2001) for evidence to the contrary. Zeev Sternhell, the prominent Israeli historian, denounced the Israeli endorsement of the Polish claim as a betrayal of Holocaust survivors on Radio 4's *Today* programme on January 22 2020.
2. Johnson's lack of literary and commercial success as a novelist meant that the prominence of anti-Semitic stereotypes in his book *72 virgins* was generally overlooked. In any event, Johnson had long since become a Zionist hero because of his two successful contests for the London mayoralty against Ken Livingstone.
3. There had been a little noted long-term deep entry into the Lega from 1989 onwards by some hard-line neo-fascists, such as Gianluca Savoini, but, with the exception of the Lega MEP, Mario Borghezio, they were not very influential within the Lega, because Salvini took it over instead. For the earlier history of this grouping see C Gatti *I demoni di Salvini: I post-nazisti e La Lega* Milan 2019.
4. For further details, see *ibid* pp71-86.
5. *Ibid* p189.
6. *Ibid* p177.
7. *La Repubblica* and *Corriere della Sera* January 17.
8. In theory the speaker of the Senate holds the second office of state, just below the president of the republic.
9. *La Repubblica* January 20.
10. Apart from a small number of parliamentarians with a past in the neo-fascist movement, Forza Italia senators were unlikely to be ideologically anti-Semitic or racist.
11. Whilst this was most obvious when they had opposed the law introducing civil partnership, it was also a regular occurrence in any political clash with gay or lesbian politicians on the left or centre-left.
12. Segre has outlived her husband.
13. *La Repubblica* January 15. This Facebook comment from CasaPound is rather reminiscent of the extreme anti-Semites who accused Oswald Mosley of being a "kosher fascist" in the 1930s.
14. *La Repubblica* January 20. Lerner was born in Lebanon and had some difficulty obtaining Italian citizenship, which has given him a greater understanding of the predicament of migrants than the average Italian journalist. In his youth he was a member of the revolutionary organization, Lotta Continua. He is now a left liberal rather than a Marxist and is certainly not an absolute anti-Zionist. But his life experience, as well as the anti-Semitic abuse he was subjected to last year at the Lega's annual Pontida festival, mean that he is fairly aware of the links between the European anti-Semitic far right and the current Israeli government. In short, whilst *La Repubblica* is the Italian equivalent of *The Guardian*, the contrast between Lerner and Jonathan Freedland, *The Guardian's* leading Jewish 'expert' on such matters, is pretty stark.
15. The contrast with Lord John Mann, the ridiculously titled 'anti-Semitism tsar' of the UK, could not be more obvious.
16. Dureghello interview *La Repubblica* January 24.
17. Some extreme left groups have expressed hostility towards the banner of the Jewish Brigade, a group that did participate in Italy's liberation, while some Zionists have refused to participate in a march with people carrying Palestinian flags.
18. It is perhaps worth noting that the Israeli president, Reuven Rivlin, who made a point of snubbing Salvini as interior minister on his visit in 2018, told the Italian president how pleased he was about Segre's Parliamentary Commission on Anti-Semitism at their meeting at the January 23 Israeli commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. So it would be wrong to assume that Netanyahu's project of favouring the anti-Semitic far right is universally applauded, even amongst the Israeli establishment.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# weekly worker

**EU 27  
will prove  
tough**

# Here we go again

Red lines, cliff edges, friction, no deal, hard Brexit ... Eddie Ford gets a sense of *déjà vu*

**F**inally, it has happened - Britain has left the straightjacket of the European Union and can bestride the world again as a free and independent nation. Or that is how the script goes, according to the Brexiteers and the rightwing press.

In some respects it is quite incredible that we are where we are. As far as the establishment and the sensible bourgeoisie is concerned, David Cameron should not have even called a referendum - let alone stupidly lost it - and parliament should have done its job by stymying Brexit by one means or another, or at the very least enforced a 'Brino' upon the government. But everything went hideously wrong. The system malfunctioned.

We are now in a situation where the British government wants to be seen playing hardball over the negotiations with the EU - which apparently will be done and dusted by the beginning of 2021, a claim that has been met with near universal scepticism. Sajid Javid set the tone the other week by bluntly declaring that there will be *no* alignment between the UK and the EU - which on the face of it is an astonishing thing to say, because as a general rule *all* trade agreements involve a measure of regulatory alignment or convergence, and the biggest pressure in this particular case is the requirement to maintain a 'level playing field' after the end of the transition period (especially on state aid). The EU does not want a race to the bottom.

Therefore the EU is demanding that the UK "dynamically aligns" on state aid and competition regulations to prevent the British government from subsidising elements of the economy and thus gain an undue advantage. The bloc also wants "non-regression" on current environmental, workers' and social standards and for the European Court of Justice to be the final arbiter in trade and other disputes. As Barnier and other EU officials have made perfectly clear, the absolute precondition for a "zero-tariffs, zero-quota" deal is a "level playing field" - with a further condition being the maintenance of "reciprocal access" to fishing waters, which would be "inextricably" linked to the wider trade deal and must be "stable" (ie, long term). Other vitally important issues for the EU are that the UK complies with the European convention on human rights, which pre-dates the EU, and ensures "adequate" standards on data protection.

Summing everything up, Amélie de Montchalin, France's minister for European affairs, told journalists in Brussels that "free trade is not the absence of control". Team 27 will play a very tough game.

## Canada

Of course, most of these demands by the EU will be like a red rag to a bull for Boris Johnson - especially when it comes to the ECJ, the *bête noire*



**Charles Michel (council president), David Sassoli (parliament president), Ursula von der Leyen (commission president)**

of the Tory right. At the beginning of the week, the British government finally published its negotiating objectives via a written ministerial statement, essentially outlining a bare-bones trade agreement, with a security treaty bunged on the top. On the same day Boris Johnson gave a speech on "unleashing Britain's potential" that revealed he was going for broke on some sort of ultra-hard Brexit that would have kept Theresa May awake at night. Whether this is mere posturing to please his audience remains to be seen, but he could be serious if the stories in the *Telegraph* or *Financial Times* are anything to go by.

In the speech, Johnson reiterated there was "no need" for the UK to follow the rules set down by Brussels on competition policy, subsidies, social protection, the environment, etc, "any more than the EU should be obliged to accept UK rules" - a rather bogus comparison. Instead, he called for a Canada-style free trade deal, or perhaps something "more like Australia's" - which bemused EU officials, because no deal has yet been agreed with the Canberra government, but the British government appears to have decided that Australia sounds much more attractive than the World Trade Organisation. In either case - Canada or Australia, or anywhere else - Johnson declared that Britain "will prosper mightily". Thanks for the reassurances, Boris.

Naturally, the prime minister will seek "a pragmatic agreement on security, protecting our citizens without trespassing on the autonomy of our respective legal systems". The UK was ready, according to

Johnson, to agree a deal with the EU on fishing and suggested there could be annual negotiations on this. In the "very unlikely" event that he does not manage to strike a deal with the EU, then trade will have to be based on the existing withdrawal agreement - raising the prospect yet again of the cliff edge and the UK reverting to World Trade Organisation terms. If the British government did seek an Australia-style deal involving tariffs on some goods, various EU sources have said it would be "impossible" to reach an agreement by the end of 2020.

When asked by the BBC's Laura Kuenssberg whether he accepted that leaving the EU with no comprehensive trade deal could significantly damage the economy, Johnson pooh-poohed the idea as "prophecies of doom" that he has heard many times before - "I don't believe in them". In the absence of a comprehensive deal, it seems Downing Street might be prepared to accept as a fallback a sector-by-sector agreement that would allow pacts on vital national interests such as security and aviation, if talks on other issues break down. But that would inevitably mean that negotiations could drag on for years, which neither London nor Brussels would find very palatable - Boris Johnson being adamant that the transition period would not be extended under any circumstances.

Whilst on one the side of the English Channel Canada might be flavour of the month, on the other side it is quite different - you must be kidding. Canada is a very long way away, but the UK shares seas and airspace with the European continent. Under the EU-Canada deal signed in

2016, import tariffs on most goods have been eliminated ('sensitive' food items like eggs and chicken are not covered), though there are still customs and VAT checks. This means that public contracts are opened up to each other's contractors - for example, Canadian companies can pitch to build French railways. It also means Canadian products going to the EU have to comply with EU standards (for example on food and product safety) and vice versa.

However, the flow of services, such as banking, between Canada and the EU is much more restricted - which poses a big potential problem for the UK, as its service industry accounts for more than 80% of British jobs. UK-based banks would not be able to serve clients in the EU without licences from individual countries. Maybe the Canadian model is not so peachy after all. As for trade between Australia and the EU, it is based on a limited 'partnership framework' agreed in 2008, covering cooperation in a wide range of economic areas and agreements on things such as mutual recognition of product standards. Negotiations on a fully-fledged free trade agreement began in 2018, with a long way still to go. Notwithstanding all these obstacles, a government insider predicted that "there are only two likely outcomes in negotiation" - a free trade deal like Canada or a looser arrangement like Australia, "and we are happy to pursue both."

Whatever exactly happens, it looks like we are going to get something that Boris always denied - not frictionless trade, but *frictional* trade. One consequence of this is that it is almost all over for the British car industry, but that was possibly the case even before Brexit, due to the trade deal between EU and Japan - plus the advent of electric cars and massive consolidation at a *global* level. Japanese car firms opened up in Britain not just because of supine trade unions, thanks to Margaret Thatcher, but also - more importantly still - as it represented a gateway to Europe. This is no longer case, with a hard Brexit acting as the final nail in the coffin.

## Disunited

Interestingly, some Tories - at least in terms of their grand strategy - are positively encouraging the break-up of the EU, flowery phrases about

'liberty' and 'self-determination' abound, along with waving the flag for places like Catalonia. In a development that would have been unimaginable only a year or two ago, the British government is acting almost like a champion of Catalan separatism. The world turned upside down.

Looking at the EU, something has to give. It is a creaking confederacy that cannot do anything decisive, paralysed by the fact that it consists of 27 members and hidebound by consensual voting. Then again, the UK is looking increasingly disunited. What sort of impact would a hard Brexit and friction have on the Democratic Unionist Party and its electoral base - which will be hammered economically. Then there is Scotland. Last month Holyrood backed by 64 votes to 54 a motion expressing support for "a referendum taking place on a date and in a manner determined by the Scottish parliament, which the Scottish government proposes should take place in 2020". Having said that, as things stand now, Nicola Sturgeon is determined to stick within the law, as she does not want to end up in exile in Brussels - therefore a second referendum or even UDI is unlikely, as the reality is that the Johnson government will never grant a section-30 order. But this is causing tensions within the Scottish National Party, so you cannot entirely rule out a rank-and-file rebellion or a leadership challenge.

At the moment, Britain might be mischievously throwing its weight behind Catalonia - not to mention Poland and Hungary, hoping to inflame tensions within the bloc. But two can play at that game. Hence Donald Tusk's remarks about how Brussels would be emotionally "enthusiastic" if Scotland applied to rejoin the EU after Brexit. We also hear that the EU is now going to look more "sympathetically" at Spanish claims to Gibraltar, as the British overseas territory would not be covered by the terms of any deal struck with the UK - Michel Barnier noted that Spain "will have to be involved and give its agreement to a specific agreement on Gibraltar". Perhaps it is only a matter of time before the European Research Group demands the government sends a gunboat to the peninsula ●

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