

A paper of Marxist polemic and Marxist unity



weekly **worker**



**Carla Roberts reports on
Momentum's conference
and its Duracell bunnies**

- Article 50 triggered
- Tony Greenstien on CAA
- Turkey's referendum
- Italy's corruption

No 1148 Thursday March 30 2017

Towards a Communist Party of the European Union

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**The threat
of ecocidal
capitalism**

David La Chapelle

LETTERS

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

What we need

I found Paul B Smith's letter (March 23) and thinking on the Labour Party to be interesting, although towards the end he managed to shoot himself in the foot again with his daft and unfocused comments about "Stalinism". It unfortunately seems the case that a significant proportion of the socialistic left in the United Kingdom has been and continues to be contaminated, distorted and diverted by Trotskyism.

Lenin argued that, as the oldest capitalist and imperialist country in the world and with an original labour movement largely formed before the development of the ideas of revolutionary Marxism, there existed the strong material basis for not only buying off relatively privileged sections of the labour movement, but instilling the whole of the movement with the politics and ideology of class-collaborationist social democracy.

The flipside of this rightwing reformism and accommodation and acceptance of capitalism in the 'advanced' imperialist nations is ultra-leftism, which has the appearance of radicalism, action and rage against all things, but itself lacks the basic capacity to be of and from the working class, to connect with the class where it is at, and through the basic ideas and concepts of organisation, discipline, collective action, advancing the whole of the class, not sections at the expense of others.

The fragmentation, internalisation and destructiveness of ultra-leftism, by discrediting genuinely class-based politics and organisation, ultimately serves the same purpose as rightwing reformism: to accommodate the working class to capitalism.

When Paul refers to "Stalinism" - as he does at each and every opportunity - I think what he really means is Marxism and communism. Paul has a wonderful

intellectual grasp of Marxism, it is true, but it always seems a little detached from the real world, and that is not so surprising.

The problem of the Labour Party is rather more simple and straightforward than Paul's convoluted analysing. It is politics. As he rightly says, the Corbyn leadership hardly ever mentions the word 'socialism', let alone show any understanding of it as a future system of society and economy which will replace the current capitalism. It therefore barely meets the old definition of left social democracy, which did see socialism as a progressive replacement of capitalism, but thought this could be achieved through steady reforms and through parliament.

Efraim Nashe was absolutely spot on to point out that Lenin's famous call for the Communist Party of Great Britain to attempt to affiliate to the Labour Party had as its aim "to win workers *en masse* away from Labour in order to build an independent working class party" ('Labour and the left', March 16). To think that Lenin was ever arguing for the revolutionary Marxist organisations to become a part of and subordinate to what was essentially a bourgeois political formation is fantastical.

The Labour Party was created in order to provide an independent working class voice within parliament - no more, no less. For the voice of organised labour to be heard and to ameliorate the worst impacts of capitalism on working people's lives. What has this got to do with the aims and objectives of revolutionary communism?

Rather than pontificating about "what is to be done" about the Labour Party, surely we should be focusing on what we actually do need - ie, a mass communist party, uniting within it the great majority of Marxists, socialists, communists, revolutionary democrats, radicals, greens and anarchists, projecting and being united on the basis of socialism being an urgent necessity to replace and supersede capitalism, and that this requires revolutionary, mass, democratic action to bring it about.

Yes, of course, this will and should include large sections of the membership of the current Labour Party, as Efraim indicates in his quote and understanding of Lenin, but by breaking them away from current Labour and to become part of a new mass communist party.

The *Weekly Worker* is to be highly commended for projecting the basic case for such a mass communist party, but I really struggle to see how this is to be progressed through liquidation of Marxist organisations and assimilation into the Labour Party. I find that completely unprincipled and dishonest. It is completely typical Trotskyism, counterproductive and doomed to failure.

Equally, the current Labour Party is most unlikely to want to accept the affiliation of revolutionary socialist parties. At most, this would bring about an additional few thousand members, in a party with a mass membership of circa half a million, and they would get slaughtered by the mass media - something Corbyn and McDonnell are incapable of standing up to.

Let the Labour Party look after itself. It may or may not win future elections. It may or may not bring about useful reforms and palliatives. We might in elections advocate voting for Labour candidates. Or not.

If we did really start to succeed in creating and growing a mass communist party - mass in terms of members, votes in elections, influence within the structures, institutions and organisations of the working class, influence and authority in wider civil society - then I am sure we would see large sections of the Labour Party either coming over to the communist party and/or the Labour Party becoming exceptionally keen to encourage the Communist Party to affiliate to it, but more on the terms of the latter than the former.

Andrew Northall
Kettering

On the ball

I write this at a time when we have the most rightwing, reactionary government in history. I also write after having watched on France 24 TV a Communist Party rally held in Paris, at which a crowd of at least 30,000 were in attendance. But from the CPGB? Not a peep. Why is this so?

I have just read your so-called 'manifesto'. It was just the usual litany of measures that could have been written - and probably was - 50 years ago. I found nothing of relevance to people today. I could, off the top of my head, offer you subjects which have real meaning and relevance to the nation now - not the pointless platitudes that you lamely call your 'manifesto'.

Did you note the Bank of England chief's forecast that, due to the continual improvements in robotics, by 2025 Britain will have 15 million unemployed? What plans have the CPGB got to (a) warn the people and (b) have a programme that will protect the workers from this onrushing calamity? Left as it is, British manufacturers will turn out their robot-made goods for next to nothing and make millions exporting them, whilst in Britain millions of workers will have nothing.

So, where is your young, energetic leader to bring your case to the people? Where is this brilliant orator who will capture the public's attention?

Get on the ball, for heaven's sakes. Corbyn's half-assed, boring policies are a waste of time. The stage is clear for a re-energised, modern, relevant CPGB.

David Lee
email

Indy ref

Below is my response to some questions from a left Scottish nationalist.

The British working class movement exists and has been created in over 200 years of joint struggle against British capital. The highest form of workers' unity is in a socialist party struggling for socialism. The nationalist left reject the idea of building a common socialist party

with our comrades south of the border. The socialist movement in Britain traditionally fought to unite all workers in Britain to fight for pro-working class reforms and a workers' government in Britain.

The Scottish nationalist left reject that political struggle in favour of uniting with a section of the Scottish establishment to fight for a Scottish capitalist state and to put 'Scotland first'. Such a nationalist perspective is obviously opposed to working class unity and is subservient to the forces of capital.

We can expect the Scottish nationalist perspective to provoke a 'stronger for England' narrative down south - indeed this is already happening. Nationalism begets nationalism.

In a period of heightening international tension, we can expect any Scottish divorce proceedings to become quite nasty. Chauvinists on both sides of the border will be arguing over the division of assets and liabilities. Workers will be dragooned into supporting their own bosses against the other - Scotland first, England first, etc. National traitors will be denounced.

The divorce proceedings will tend to split the working class into nationalist fragments, each supporting their own bosses.

I support the right of national self-determination for Scotland and Catalonia, etc, but that does not mean that I support the call for independence for the reason stated above. Often nationalists seem blind to the fact that the support for the right of national self-determination does not necessarily mean support for independence. As Lenin says, socialists support the right to divorce, but do not advocate that everyone who is married should separate.

Of course, the Scottish parliament should have the power to call an independence referendum when it so desires and socialists throughout Britain should support that right.

Sandy McBurney
Glasgow

Pacifist hotbed

Wakefield Socialist History Group are holding an event, 'British socialism and World War I', on Saturday April 1 at 1pm in the Red Shed, Vicarage Street, Wakefield WF1 1QX. The speakers are Dr Martin Crick and Paul Bennett. Admission is free and there will be a free

light buffet, plus a bar with excellent real ale. All are welcome.

Here are my thoughts about one aspect we'll be discussing: the campaign against conscription - in this case in Huddersfield.

On February 3 1917, *The Worker* reported that Philip Snowden - later a Labour chancellor - had spoken at a packed anti-war meeting in Victoria Hall, Huddersfield. Snowden, a member of the Independent Labour Party, was under special branch surveillance and an attempt was made by 20 men in army uniform to break up proceedings. The attack was quickly repelled and this proved to be the only serious attempt to disrupt any gatherings in the town.

Pearce (2001) reflects that this revealed a great deal. Big anti-war rallies - in St George's Square and Market Square, for instance - were generally tolerated. What's more, in Huddersfield patriotic displays were muted. There were no anti-German riots. And recruitment soon tailed off by 1915.

Granted, many had queued at first to volunteer. A new battalion of the West Riding Regiment was founded at the town hall as early as August 1914. But Pearce says this was due to many factors other than patriotism.

Firstly, unemployment was bad. When war came, sections of the local textile trade were already in difficulty. John Crowthers, the Milnsbridge wool textile firm, had already laid off workers and the uncertainty caused by the looming conflict further hit orders.

Secondly, there were inducements to sign up - ie, "supplements to pay, jobs held open, free rent".

And, finally, there were social and workplace pressures. Recruiting teams went to "factory gates, into canteens and all sorts of public places". Yet, despite this, opposition to the war remained resolute. It came not just from the local labour and socialist movements, but also from the town's "dominant non-conformist liberal elite".

Little surprise then that, in 1915, Will Thorne, the Labour MP, trade unionist and pro-war recruiting campaigner, disdainfully described Huddersfield as a "hotbed of pacifism".

Alan Stewart
Wakefield Socialist History Group

Fighting fund

Most serious

After last week's excitement, when the running total for March's fighting fund not only shot past the £1,750 monthly target, but smashed right through the £2,000 barrier as well, things have slowed down a bit over the last seven days. But despite that another £197 has come in, taking us to £2,219, with two days still to go!

Pride of place this week goes to comrade RG, who doubled his annual subscription payment, meaning that £60 is added to the total. As is his custom, RG didn't write a covering letter, but I suspect he agrees with comrade LC, who donated £25 via PayPal. Her accompanying message reads: "This is for the most serious paper on the left. Keep up the good work!"

Another PayPal donor was KN (£10), although the two of them were the only ones among our 2,742 online readers last week to click on that button. But we did get five monthly standing order donations - JT's £50 being the

most generous. Thanks also to BB and GT (£15 each), DC (£12) and SS (£10).

So we look certain to end the month with a much needed extra £500 over and above our target. That's good news, helping to ease a few of my more or less permanent worries in the fight not only to produce, but greatly improve the *Weekly Worker*. We need more pages, at least on an occasional basis in the shape of supplements, more colour features, and articles carrying analysis across a whole range of topics which we haven't yet covered in depth.

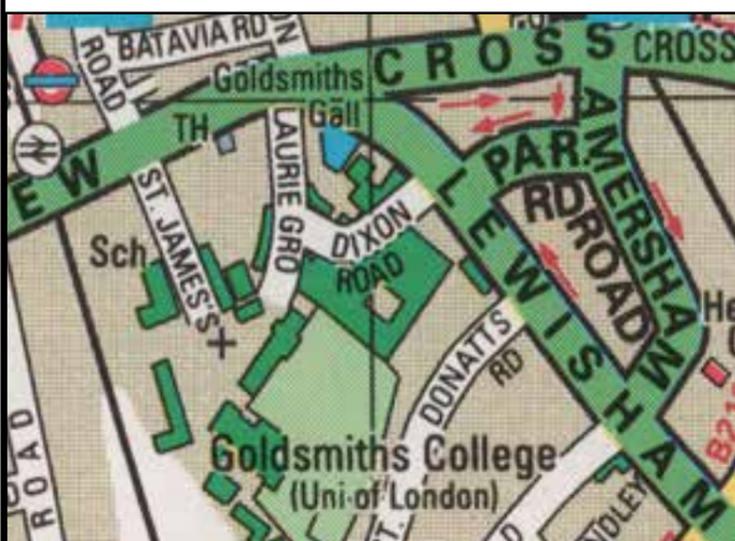
But, most of all, we need to continue our ongoing campaign for Marxist unity around a principled political programme within a single democratic-centralist party. Your ongoing support is essential in that work ●

Robbie Rix

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

Communist University 2017

100th anniversary of the Russian Revolution



A week of provocative and stimulating debate sponsored by Labour Party Marxists and CPGB
Saturday August 12 to Saturday August 19 (inclusive)
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1917



Burning symbols of tsarist power

Join us to achieve peace

‘1917: the view from the streets’: leaflets of the Russian Revolution, No9

One hundred years ago, on March 27 (14) 2017, the Petrograd soviet issued the following appeal, calling for a restoration of workers’ unity in the cause of peace. The moderate socialists who dominated the Petrograd soviet until September 1917 pursued a policy of ‘revolutionary defencism’, which advocated defending Russia and its revolution against German aggression, while calling upon European socialists to pressure their governments to bring about peace.

This policy toward the war would not be consistently defined until the return from Siberian exile of Irakli Tsereteli and other Menshevik leaders on April 2 (March 20) 1917. Therefore, the document below reflects the views in the soviet at a time when moderate socialists were still open to making concessions to their radical counterparts regarding the soviet’s position on the war and other issues. Discussions in the soviet were crucial to the realignment of left forces

that occurred in the wake of the February revolution. Leaflets No10 and 11 of this series will take up how the ‘revolutionary defencism’ policy worked out in practice. For a Bolshevik response to this policy, see ‘Mandate for soviet elections’.¹

This series is edited by **John Riddell** and the leaflets have been translated and annotated by **Barbara Allen**. First published at <http://johnriddell.wordpress.com>.

Petrograd Soviet of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies

To the peoples of the entire world

Comrades, proletarians and labourers of all countries!

We Russian workers and soldiers, united in the Petrograd Soviet of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies, send you our heartfelt greetings, while announcing a great event. Our Russian democracy has extinguished the centuries-old tsarist despotism. We now join your family as a member with full rights and as a formidable force in the struggle for our mutual emancipation. Ours is a great victory for worldwide freedom and democracy. The ‘policeman of Europe’ and the chief buttress of world reaction is no more. Indeed, it has been buried, never to rise again. Long live freedom! Long live the international solidarity of the proletariat and its struggle for final victory!

Our cause has still not fully triumphed. The vestiges of the old order have not yet dispersed. Enemies of the Russian Revolution are gathering their forces against it. Nevertheless, our gains are enormous. The peoples of Russia will express their will in the constituent assembly, which will be convened very soon, based on universal, equal, direct and secret suffrage. Already, we can predict with confidence that a democratic republic will triumph in Russia.

The Russian people possess full political freedom. They can now speak authoritatively about the country’s domestic and foreign policy. Appealing

to all the peoples who have been ruined and destroyed in this horrific war, we declare that the time has come to struggle resolutely against aggression by governments of all countries. The time has come for all peoples to resolve the question of war and peace.

Cognisant of its revolutionary strength, Russian democracy declares that it will oppose by all means the ruling classes’ aggressive policy. It calls upon the peoples of Europe to speak and act out jointly and resolutely to foster peace.

We appeal to our brothers, the proletarians of the Austro-German coalition, and above all to the German proletariat. From the very beginning of the war, we were convinced that by taking up arms against Russian autocracy you were defending European culture from Asian despotism. Many of you believed that this justified your support for the war. Now this justification no longer exists. Democratic Russia cannot threaten freedom and civilisation.

We will firmly defend our own freedom from any kind of reactionary encroachments, whether internal or external. The Russian Revolution will not retreat from the bayonets of the conquerors and will not be crushed by foreign military force. We call upon you to throw off the yoke of your semi-autocratic order, just as the Russian people shook off tsarist

despotism. You should refuse to serve as a weapon of invasion and violence in the hands of kings, gentry landowners and bankers. Together in friendship we will put a stop to the terrible slaughter, which disgraces humankind and casts a shadow over the great days of the birth of Russian freedom.

Working people of all countries! Across mountains of our brothers’ corpses, across rivers of innocent blood and tears, across smoking ruins of towns and villages, and across lost cultural treasures, we extend to you a fraternal hand and summon you to a renewed and strengthened international unity. This will secure our future victories and the full emancipation of humanity.

Proletarians of all countries, unite!

First published in *Izvestia* No15, March 28 (15) 1917 and reprinted in *AG Shlyapnikov, Semnadsaty god Vol 2, 1925, p291. On Shlyapnikov’s role in the 1917 events, see Barbara C Allen Alexander Shlyapnikov 1885-1937: life of an old Bolshevik Chicago 2016. See also RA Wade *The Russian Revolution 1917 Cambridge 2000, pp67-70.**

Notes

1. <https://johnriddell.wordpress.com/2017/03/23/pravda-draft-mandate-for-soviet-elections>.

ACTION

London Communist Forum

Sunday April 2, 5pm: Weekly political report from CPGB Provisional Central Committee, followed by open discussion and reading group. Calthorpe Arms, 252 Grays Inn Road, London WC1. Study of Ralph Miliband’s Parliamentary socialism. This meeting: postscript, section 1. Organised by CPGB: www.cpgb.org.uk; and Labour Party Marxists: www.labourpartymarxists.org.uk.

Radical Anthropology Group

Tuesday April 4, 6.45pm: ‘How narco-trafficking constitutes a coastal Nicaraguan society’. Speaker: Mark Jamieson. Organised by Radical Anthropology Group: <http://radicalanthropologygroup.org>.

British socialism and World War I

Saturday April 1, 1pm: Public meeting, Red Shed, Vicarage Street, Wakefield WF1. Speakers: Dr Martin Crick (author of *The history of the Social Democratic Federation*) and Paul Bennett (Socialist Party of Great Britain). Admission free. including light buffet. Organised by Wakefield Socialist History Group: www.theredshed.org.uk/SocialHist.html.

Another Europe is Possible

Saturday April 1, 11am to 5pm: National conference, Museum of Science and Industry, Liverpool Road, Manchester M3. Organised by Another Europe is Possible: www.anothereurope.org.

Remember Tony Benn

Sunday April 2, 7pm: Remembrance night, Seven Dials Club, 42 Earlham Street, Covent Garden, London WC2. Organised by Let’s Celebrate Corbyn’s Birthday: www.facebook.com/Lets-celebrate-Corbys-birthday-278287529172743.

Justice for Maruti workers

Tuesday April 4, 1pm: Protest, India House, Aldwych, London WC2. Free the 13 Indian trade unionists sentenced to life imprisonment on trumped-up charges. Event page: www.facebook.com/events/1869959023244381.

No to spy cops

Wednesday April 5, 9am: Demonstration, Royal Courts of Justice, The Strand, London WC2. Oppose undercover policing outside public inquiry. Organised by Campaign Opposing Police Surveillance: <http://campaignopposingpolicesurveillance.com>.

Yemen: rise of a chaos state

Wednesday April 5, 7.30pm: Public meeting, Friends Meeting House, Lechlade Road, Faringdon SN7. ‘What’s going on in Yemen Today?’ Speaker: Jonathan Puddifoot (ex-director, Care International). Organised by Stop the War Coalition: www.stopwar.org.uk.

A more dangerous world?

Wednesday April 5, 6.30pm: Public meeting, Wrexham Glyndwr University, Room B26, Mold Road, Wrexham. Speaker: Daniel Jakopovich (writer and anti-war campaigner). Organised by Stop the War Coalition: www.stopwar.org.uk.

A Marxist history of Ireland

Thursday April 6, 7pm: First of a three-part series of talks, Brent Trades and Labour Hall, 375 Willesden High Street (Apollo Club), London NW10. ‘The development of the Irish working class under British colonial oppression up to 1916’. Organised by Socialist Fight: <https://socialistfight.com>.

Inside the global arms trade

Friday April 7, 7pm: Film screening, student cinema, University of Bradford, Richmond Road, Bradford. Showing of *Shadow world* followed by Q&A. Organised by West Yorkshire Campaign Against Arms Trade: <https://en-gb.facebook.com/WestYorkshireCAAT>.

Drop bass, not bombs

Friday April 21, 8pm to dawn: Music event, CLF Art Cafe, Bussey Building, 133 Rye Lane, London SE15. Organised by Stop the War Coalition: www.stopwar.org.uk.

Banners for Spain

Friday May 5 to Saturday July 8: Display of socialist/republican banners plus a programme of related activities and events, Islington Museum, 245 St John Street, London EC1. Organised by Islington Museum: islington.museum@islington.gov.uk.

Critique conference 2017

Saturday May 6, 9.30am to 5.30pm: Annual event sponsored by *Critique* journal, University of London student central, Malet Street, London WC1. Speakers include: Savas Michael-Matzas, Hillel Ticktin, Raquel Valera, Yassamine Mather. Organised by *Critique* journal: www.critiquejournal.net.

Britain and the Spanish civil war

Tuesday May 9, 6.30pm: Talk, Islington Museum, 245 St John Street, Clerkenwell, London EC1. Speaker: professor Tom Buchanan, University of Oxford. Organised by Marx Memorial Library: www.marxlibrary.org.uk.

CPGB wills

Remember the CPGB and keep the struggle going. Put our party’s name and address, together with the amount you wish to leave, in your will. If you need further help, do not hesitate to contact us.

EUROPE

Price of divorce

Theresa May might have triggered article 50, writes **Eddie Ford**, but the future is uncertain for both Britain and Europe

Hardly inspiring faith in its future, the UK Independence Party's only MP quit the party last week to sit as an independent. Explaining his decision, Douglas Carswell, who used to be the Tory MP for Clacton before his defection in 2014, said that now Brexit is "certain", he can leave Ukip "amicably" and "in the knowledge that we won". Carswell, a slightly eccentric right libertarian, also said there was no need for a by-election, as he is not switching parties this time nor crossing the floor to the Conservatives.

The mood music says something different, however, as in recent weeks the Tory whips - eager for a reverse defection to bolster Theresa May's slim majority - have been actively courting Carswell at every opportunity. Adding to the suspicion about his intentions, Carswell told the *Sunday politics* show that he felt "pretty comfortable" sitting as an independent, but, when asked if he would fight as an independent at the next election, he replied: "Let's wait and see." Furthermore, in a separate interview on ITV's *Peston on Sunday*, Carswell remarked that he wanted to support the government "as a critical friend".

Of course, he had been involved in a long-running public feud with the former Ukip leader Nigel Farage - which earlier this month saw claims that the MP helped to block a peerage for Farage. Leaked emails showed Carswell joking that Farage should be given an OBE instead "for services to headline writers", which for the easily hurt Nigel proved that the Clacton MP was "consumed with jealousy and a desire to hurt me".

Similarly, though rather ungratefully in some respects, the current Ukip leader, Paul Nuttall, declared that the party has not "benefited financially or organisationally" from Carswell - which is indeed true. However, some are saying that the party faces bankruptcy. Arron Banks, Ukip's main donor, gave £1 million in the run-up to the last general election, but has now sent an invoice demanding £200,000 for services he gave the party - saying he wants to set up a "new political movement", perhaps modelled on Italy's Five Star Movement.

In the same interview for Sky News, Farage insisted that Ukip's role in British politics was "not over by a long shot" despite Carswell's resignation and the disappointing by-election performance last month in Stoke Central. In reality though, ever since the June 23 referendum, a large question mark has been hanging over Ukip - with Theresa May making a naked pitch for its voters, starting to talk about the "working class" (of all things), not to mention the "forgotten", "left behind", and so on. Hence it is not the Socialist Workers Party's Stand Up To Ukip or Stand Up To Racism that can claim the credit for Ukip's likely demise, but the Tory Party - and Ukip itself, with its self-destructive tendencies.

More generally, there is no real political space for an essentially ephemeral organisation like Ukip. It was never going to be a replacement for Labour, a mass party based on the trade unions. As Douglas Carswell perhaps realises, Ukip is doomed to be an historical footnote, especially with the 'first past the post' electoral system.

Henry VIII

In what should have been a moment of triumph for Ukip, Theresa May finally



Middle class on the march ... backed by anti-Brexit establishment

triggered article 50 on March 29. Sir Tim Barrow, the UK's permanent representative in Brussels, personally handed over a six-page letter from the British government to the European council president, Donald Tusk, to provide formal notification of Britain's intention to leave the European Union. The evening before, May called the German chancellor, Angel Merkel, the president of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, and Tusk himself to update them ahead of the actual letter.

Tusk issued a short statement acknowledging receipt of the letter and the next day he circulated among the remaining 27 member-states a draft copy of the EU's negotiating guidelines, which will provide a broad response. These guidelines will not be formally adopted by the 27 until a special summit on April 29 in Brussels, with the commission issuing more detailed directives on the EU's negotiating stance shortly afterwards - but these will need to be adopted by a meeting of EU ministers in May, before negotiations with the UK can properly begin.

At the same time, the pompously labelled 'great reform bill' will be published on May 30, setting out how the government intends to repeal the 1972 European Communities Act and transfer (or re-transfer) back into domestic law current legislation that has force only because of the UK's membership of the EU - a far from simple task. It is widely expected

harm the UK economy. Davis told her that a new "comprehensive free trade agreement and a comprehensive customs agreement" would deliver "the exact same benefits as we have [now]" after the UK leaves.

But, in a typical Corbynite fudge, the Labour leader on *Peston on Sunday* denied that the party was now "committed to voting against Brexit" - perish the thought. "No, we are not," he replied. Rather, "we respect the result of the referendum" and are "not in a position of knowing what the deal is yet": so this is a "pretty high level of speculation when we are two years away from that particular vote". Yes, Jeremy, but when the time comes will you vote against a 'hard' Brexit or not?

One possible early sticking point for May is likely to be the status of EU citizens living in the UK and of British nationals living on the continent. However, predictably, she is already facing warnings that the European parliament will veto any Brexit deal that prevents EU citizens who move to the UK during the next two years from having the same rights to live and work in Britain as those already in the country. A five-page resolution detailing the European parliament's 'red lines', which will be voted on next week, was subsequently amended specifically to rule out any "degradation" of the rights of EU nationals arriving in the UK over the next two years. It insisted on "equity, reciprocity, symmetry and non-discrimination" for all EU citizens as long as Britain remains a member-state.

Another big bone of contention will be about the 'divorce bill', which could see the UK paying €60 billion or more, depending on what assets and liabilities are included - driving Tory backbenchers and the rightwing press mad with indignation.¹ Only when that is resolved, the European Commission seems to be saying, will the remaining EU countries be prepared to embark on substantive negotiations on a future trading relationship. Liam Fox, the UK trade secretary, has previously described the idea that Britain will be faced with a large bill at the start of article 50 negotiations as "absurd" - with some backbenchers urging May to walk out on talks rather than engage in discussions about heavy liabilities.

Instead, the British government argues that there should be parallel discussions on the terms of the UK's withdrawal and the future trading relationship - a timeline key to May's hopes of completing a free trade agreement by the end of the two years allowed for negotiations under the Lisbon treaty, even if most commentators think there is next to no chance of the prime minister keeping to this schedule. However, in recent days the French prime minister, the Italian minister for EU affairs and senior German diplomats have said this will not happen - echoing the EC's position that the financial settlement must be dealt with first.

Branding

More discontent with Brexit was expressed at the Unite For Europe demonstration on March 25 - which also happens to be the 60th anniversary of the EU's founding.² Organised by what you could call the anti-hard Brexit and anti-Brexit wing of the establishment, with the sponsorship of five affiliated organisations, the London march had 50,000 in attendance, according to

police estimates.

Naturally enough, the demonstration itself was overwhelmingly middle class and respectable - exactly as intended. This was highlighted by a slightly amusing spat which saw the organisers of the march accused of peddling "watered-down pap" and "going mushy" - some were particularly annoyed that the original slogan, "Stop Brexit", was changed almost at the last minute to the rather more ambiguous "Make your voice heard".³

Speakers at the demonstration included the Green co-leader, Jonathan Bartley, Labour MP David Lammy, Alastair Campbell, Tim Farron and Nick Clegg. In effect it was the Blairites uniting with the Greens and Liberal Democrats. Obviously, it is hard - if not near impossible - to know exactly how things will pan out, but we should expect this anti-Brexit alliance (whether in the shape of Unite For Europe, Open Britain or whoever) to get louder and bigger. The negotiations will almost certainly last longer than two years, and May will not get the deal she wants - nor will supporters of UFE or OB get the deal they want.

However, irrespective of the June 23 referendum results, we should not expect the will of capital to be easily cheated in a country like Britain. Having said that though, the existence of the Donald Trump administration obviously makes things more complicated - the anti-Brexit fightback will not be smooth or straightforward. But the establishment has a battle on its hands. Theresa May might have triggered article 50, but the future is uncertain for both Britain and Europe.

Meanwhile, to mark the EU's anniversary the member-states renewed their marriage vows. Unsurprisingly, there were pious declarations about how the bloc is "undivided and indivisible" - the EU would proceed at "different paces", while "moving in the same direction". (Apparently the Polish government was upset by suggestions from Angela Merkel and Juncker that Europe might accelerate moves to becoming a "multi-speed union", which Warsaw feared would see richer, core EU states leaving newer members like Poland marginalised and out of pocket.⁴)

Of course, France and Germany - the two main drivers of the EU - have elections this year, and the spectre of a Le Pen presidency haunts proceedings, whatever the polls might be saying at this moment. As this paper has often pointed out, it was the US that insisted that Britain enter the European Economic Community - not to further unity or "ever closer union", it goes without saying, but precisely to prevent it. Britain consistently championed expansion, through the accession of eastern European states, as a means to undermine Franco-German plans for a tighter and more effective EU. All part of the American plan for Europe, not the original intention of either France or Germany. ●

eddie.ford@weeklyworker.co.uk

Notes

1. www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/feb/24/eu-politicians-back-brussels-call-for-uk-to-pay-60bn-exit-bill-before-trade-talks.
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MOMENTUM



Wasted opportunities galore

Carla Roberts of Labour Party Marxists was appalled by Momentum's 'inaugural conference' and its Duracell bunnies

Momentum's March 25 "inaugural conference" was without doubt the worst leftwing event I have ever attended. I do not often agree with bourgeois journalists' take on the left, but a sarky scribe from *The Independent* does sum up the day quite neatly:

Tom Watson and his allies who fear Momentum should relax ... They're not capable of plotting. In a draughty old, cold ex-factory in Birmingham, no policies were being formulated - far from it - beyond the usual devotionals for Corbyn.¹

It really is astounding that the best an organisation with 22,000 members and a database of over 250,000 supporters should come up with is such a lame, apolitical and tiny gathering. Who would have thought 18 months ago that the incredible energy, enthusiasm and pure joy created by the election of Jeremy Corbyn as leader of the Labour Party would be so criminally wasted?

Momentum might claim that 600 people attended the event in a freezing former factory a mile from the nearest train station in Birmingham. But unless they counted people twice as they went in and then left again (for quite a few not a great deal of time passed between those two moments), they have clearly applied the creative counting method so beloved by sects like the Socialist Worker Party. No more than 350 people shivered in the graffiti-covered hall with its (literally) shitty toilet facilities.

Socialist Resistance - which in its usual Johnny-come-lately fashion only recently and only half-heartedly turned its back on Left Unity in order to join the Labour Party and Momentum² - has published a rather hyped-up report, according to which there were about 500 people present, which meant "it was standing room only at the plenary sessions".³ But the author fails to mention that the organisers had only put out 100 chairs.

Maybe some young, trendy east London hipsters would have felt at home here. But virtually the only young people present were the two dozen or so Momentum employees and volunteers running the thing. For the rest, I would say, that 50-plus was the average age.

On paper there might be many young Momentum members, but visit any local Momentum meeting and you will see who is really active within it.

No Grassroots

Mind you, the 'opposition' to Jon Lansman's autocratic rule is not faring much better. I am afraid to say. The steering committee of Grassroots Momentum has so far not managed to meet and it looks like its first gathering will not happen before April 22 - a whopping six weeks after it was elected. And, although the SC continues to squabble over such weighty issues as how long its lunch break will be, a majority did manage to agree on one thing: *not* to make an organised intervention on March 25. There might have only been 350 people there, but clearly not all of them were loyal and unthinking Lansman supporters. They could and should have been engaged with, at the very least by handing out a leaflet, intervention from the floor and perhaps at a fringe meeting. There certainly was plenty of political space to fill.

But only three SC members (Tina Werkmann, Simon Hannah and Nick Wrack) agreed with the proposal to produce a leaflet, based on the decisions agreed at the Grassroots conference. The rest of the SC opposed or did not comment. This is probably going to be the only time the opposing sides on the SC (anti-Zionism campaigner Jackie Walker and the pro-Zionist Alliance for Workers' Liberty) will agree on anything. At the Momentum 'conference' itself, the day began and ended with a plenary session held in a big hall in the centre of the factory, with three one-hour-long workshops sandwiched in between. All the rooms for the group sessions had at least one wall missing - curtains were used as substitutes. This meant the noise from other sessions and the stalls area made it difficult to hear people speak.

And, when you did hear them, you often wish you had not. A majority of the workshops were run by outside organisations, without being labelled as such. For example, Labour Party Marxists supporters attended workshops that were run by The World Transformed, Talk Socialism and even Hope Not Hate. They were clearly based on 'training sessions' that these organisations run

Patronising the politically experienced with Duracell bunnies put in charge of 'training sessions' demoralises, not galvanises



on a relatively frequent basis - utterly devoid of any real politics, focusing only on 'method' and run by young, overly eager people who reminded me of Duracell bunnies.

They included icebreakers like telling the person sitting next to you what you had for breakfast, shouting "one-word answers" about what you liked or disliked about the European Union 'leave' or 'remain' campaigns and writing "objectives" on paper plates, then sticking post-it notes onto a flipchart grid. You get the drift. It was really, really grim. Worst of all, any of these workshops could just as easily have been presented to Progress or Labour First.

Turn the other cheek

The speeches in the plenary sessions were hardly more inspiring, although I suppose you could say they did contain some politics - of a certain type.

Speaking in the first plenary, shadow chancellor John McDonnell was - as is now unfortunately the norm for him - more than underwhelming. He claimed that he and Corbyn had transformed the Labour Party into "an anti-austerity party". I do not know how he squares that with the fact that thousands of Labour Party councillors up and down the country are enforcing the draconian cuts imposed by the Tory government - under the clear instruction of Corbyn himself, who wrote to them in December 2015, asking them to continue to set "balanced budgets" and not rock the local government boat.⁴

McDonnell went on to complain that he was being hammered by the media, "although I'm putting forward the same things that Ed Miliband stood for". He is right, of course - his ideas for a "national investment bank", a "cap" on energy price rises and "more council houses" are hardly radical. But worse was to come.

He reserved much of his speech for the need to "work in unity" with the right in the Labour Party and thought it was "striking to see members of Momentum and Progress putting their differences to one side and campaigning together for Labour". He said he wants Momentum

members to "work comradely with everybody else, listen to their views patiently". He added:

Many people are fed up with all the divisions and splits. I am fed up with all the divisions and splits. If I can offer to have tea with Peter Mandelson, then surely we can all work together in Labour Party branches, whatever groups and political backgrounds we come from. And when you are being provoked, then meet this provocation with comradeship and solidarity.

There is so little that divides us politically. There were hardly any political differences in the leadership campaigns, for example.

So there you have it. A statement of utter capitulation to the pro-capitalist Labour right. Such a course totally rules out campaigning for the kind of programme needed to transform the Labour Party into a weapon of and for the working class. A programme that would, of course, include the mandatory reselection of MPs (needed to curb the power of the right), rescinding the barring and expulsion of thousands of leftwingers, the abolition of the compliance unit, making conference Labour's sovereign body, etc.

Instead, everything has to be subordinated to winning the next election - no matter on what programme of half-baked reforms. We in Labour Party Marxists believe that, unless we are in a position to implement the full minimum programme of Marxism, socialists can achieve much more when we organise as a strong party of opposition. We envisage the taking of power not just in Britain in isolation, but as part of a worldwide movement of working class self-liberation that has Europe as its decisive point of departure ●

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ZIONISM



Behind the charitable mask

Not only Theresa May, but Jeremy Corbyn too, have lent their support to an entirely bogus definition of anti-Semitism. This can only benefit Zionist outfits such as the Campaign Against Anti-Semitism, writes **Tony Greenstein**

The Campaign Against Anti-Semitism is a British propaganda organisation and registered charity¹ that specialises in defaming Palestine solidarity campaigners and groups. When I launched a petition² calling for the group to be deregistered as a charity, it responded in a hostile manner.

It first tried to persuade the website, change.org, to take the petition down.³ When that failed, its supporters attacked the petition in an article published by the *Daily Mail*⁴ - a paper which once supported Hitler for having "saved Germany from Israelites of international attachments".⁵ Originality not being its strong point, the CAA then alleged that I was a "notorious anti-Semite".⁶

The CAA was formed⁷ in August 2014 - during Operation Protective Edge, Israel's attack on Gaza in that year. Its purpose was to paint Palestine solidarity campaigning and opposition to Zionism as anti-Semitic.

There was massive opposition to the attack on Gaza among the British public; an estimated 150,000 people took to the streets of London.⁸ Such was the climate of opinion that Sayeeda Warsi, then a foreign office minister, resigned from the government, describing its support for Israel as "morally indefensible".⁹

For some time, there had been a constituency within British Zionism which felt that establishment groups such as the Board of Deputies of British Jews were not active enough in defending Israel. So in late August 2014 the CAA organised a demonstration outside the Royal Courts of Justice in London, which it claimed was 4,500-strong.¹⁰ Its purpose was to link the protests against

the attack on Gaza to anti-Semitism. Ephraim Mirvis, Britain's chief rabbi, spoke at the event, as did Vivian Wineman, then president of the Board of Deputies. Wineman was loudly booed.

If it was true that there was an increase in anti-Semitism as a result of the attack on Gaza, then the obvious thing to do would have been to dissociate Britain's Jewish community from Israel's actions. But the CAA had no interest in doing so. The CAA is chaired by Gideon Falter¹¹, a board member of the Jewish National Fund UK, which has a long history of supporting ethnic cleansing in Palestine.¹²

One of the campaign's stated objectives is to "promote racial harmony". In practice, its activities are designed to achieve the exact opposite. The CAA consistently targets Muslims. A search of the campaign's archive reveals just two articles that mention Britain's main fascist organisations - the British National Party, the English Defence League and the National Front. By way of contrast, there are some 77 articles¹³ attacking Jeremy Corbyn.

There are also 32 articles in the archive attacking Shami Chakrabarti, who is now shadow attorney general.¹⁴ In a 2016 report, she concluded that the Labour Party was "not overrun by anti-Semitism",¹⁵ while acknowledging that a small number of its members had made offensive comments.¹⁶ That conclusion did not confirm the prejudices of the Campaign Against Anti-Semitism.

The CAA has reserved special venom for Gerald Kaufman, the father of the House of Commons and an original member of Harold



Flinging accusations of anti-Semitism at leftwing anti-Zionists should not be regarded as legitimate charity work ... along with the tax relief

Wilson's kitchen cabinet, who died recently. In 2009, he compared the tactics of Israelis then attacking Gaza to those of the Nazis who killed his grandmother.¹⁷ No less than 22 articles in the campaign's archive attack Kaufman.¹⁸ The latest one, 'Sir Gerald Kaufman MP's words have left a rotting stain on our institutions'¹⁹, shows that even death does not prevent the Campaign Against Anti-Semitism deploying all its black arts.

There is no-one the CAA hates as much as a Jewish opponent of Israel.

Serving the right

The campaign is above all at the service of the right. Rebecca Massey, a member of Hove Constituency Labour Party, has been accused of anti-Semitism for tweeting articles critical of Israel.²⁰ Ivor Caplin, a former defence minister who supported the illegal invasion of Iraq,²¹ is among those who have slandered Massey.²² Her real offence? She is a Corbyn ally, who is not only chair of Peter Kyle MP's own ward, Central Hove and Brunswick and Adelaide, but has now been elected treasurer of Hove CLP. And in its attack on socialists in the Labour Party, the CAA, as a matter of course, talks about "racist Labour", thus demonstrating that the lack of political neutrality expected of a charity.

Far from promoting racial harmony, the CAA has sought to stir up conflict between Muslims and Jews. Last year it published a report entitled *British Muslim anti-Semitism*,²³ which included a "profile" of the kind of person that the campaign was making allegations against. The profile was highly racist and offensive: according to the report, the typical Muslim anti-Semite was likely to be a first-generation immigrant living in social housing. If someone had

posted a similar portrayal of Jews, the campaign would have been the first to cry anti-Semitism.

The report alleged that "many British Muslims reserve a special hatred for British Jews". It added: "On every single count, British Muslims were more likely by far than the general British population to hold deeply anti-Semitic views." The conclusions were based on a poll conducted for the Channel 4 TV.²⁴ Even the Community Security Trust, a staunchly Zionist group, raised doubts about the conclusions to which the CAA jumped.

In a blog post for the CST website, Dave Rich wrote: "This latest poll showed something else that is interesting, and is not specific to Muslims: that people who believe anti-Semitic things about Jews rarely think of themselves as anti-Semitic."²⁵

He added: "What is perhaps curious, though, is that this is not reflected in a more basic question that was asked in the same poll about how favourable or unfavourable Muslims feel towards Jewish people as a religious group." Asked what their feelings were towards Jews, on a sliding scale from 0-100, where 0 is the least favourable - British Muslims scored 57.1 in their feelings towards Jews. This hardly suggests rampant anti-Semitism.

The CAA specialises in distorting statistics. In its annual 'Anti-Semitism barometer report' for 2015, it claimed that an opinion poll showed that "almost half (45%) of British adults believe at least one of the anti-Semitic statements shown to them to be true".²⁶

The questions were carefully chosen to elicit the required answers. As Anshel Pfeffer from *Ha'aretz* observed, regarding the statement that Jews talk about the holocaust too much in

order to gain sympathy, “too many Jews ... are often too quick to bring up the holocaust in order to make a point ... Holding that opinion doesn’t necessarily make you an anti-Semite.”²⁷

Another statement was that “Jews’ loyalty to Israel makes them less loyal to Britain than other British people.” Is it surprising that one in five people believe this, given that Jewish anti-Zionists are regularly accused of being “traitors”?

Clearly, the first loyalty of many Zionists is to Israel. That was why Israel’s ministries for foreign affairs and immigrant absorption distributed a questionnaire to American Jews a few years ago, asking where their loyalties would lie in the event of a crisis between the two countries.²⁸

Pfeffer’s conclusion was that the CAA has created “its own definition of anti-Semitism, which is more a reflection of what is impolite to say in public than what is actual bias against Jews”. Anti-Semitism is hostility to Jews as Jews, not the holding of ephemeral beliefs.

The Institute of Jewish Policy Research in London found that the CAA’s ‘barometer’ report was “littered with flaws” and the group’s work “may even be rather irresponsible”, which for the IJPR is quite strong stuff.²⁹ It criticised the way that the CAA has used data collected by the polling agency YouGov to make the “rather sensationalist claim that almost half of all British adults harbour some sort of anti-Semitic view”. YouGov had been commissioned to undertake the poll by the CAA.

According to the IJPR, “a far more accurate and honest read” of the data would “highlight the fact that between 75% and 90% of people in Britain either do not hold anti-Semitic views or have no particular view of Jews either way, and only about 4% to 5% of people can be characterised as clearly anti-Semitic”.

Bordering on hysteria

The CAA has claimed that one in four British Jews had considered leaving the country in the past few years because of rising anti-Semitism. However, even *The Jewish Chronicle*, a vehemently pro-Zionist rag, poured cold water on that claim. The newspaper’s own poll concluded in 2015 that 88% of British Jews had no intention of emigrating.³⁰

The CAA also claimed that more than half of all British Jews felt that anti-Semitism echoed that of the 1930s. Anshel Pfeffer wittingly observed that if the Campaign Against Anti-Semitism and most British Jews “actually believe that, then it’s hard to take anything they say about contemporary anti-Semitism in their home country seriously”.³¹ Pfeffer added that the conclusion showed “a disconnect bordering on hysteria ... not only are they woefully ignorant of

recent Jewish history, but have little concept of what real anti-Semitism is”. Which just about sums up the CAA.

The CAA has claimed, too, that 84% of Jews believed boycotts of businesses selling Israeli products to be intimidation. Contrast this ‘finding’ with a rigorously controlled, academic survey of British Jews by the sociology department at City, University of London.³² That 2015 survey found that 24% of British Jews would support some sanctions against Israel if they thought it would encourage Israel to engage in the “peace process”. A “sizeable minority” (34%-41%) among the young, the highly qualified academically and those who were not affiliated to a synagogue were in favour of sanctions under such circumstances, according to the survey. The City survey also found that, while 59% of British Jews identify themselves as Zionists nearly a third - 31% - did not.

Other ‘findings’ that have alarmed the CAA were that 45% of Jews felt their family was threatened by Islamist extremism, that 77% of Jews have witnessed anti-Semitism disguised as a political comment about Israel and that 82% of respondents said that media bias against Israel fuels persecution of Jews in Britain.

These were not only replies to loaded questions, but ideas planted in the heads of people with the object of obtaining the ‘right’ answer. No attempt was made to put a question based on countervailing assumptions, such as ‘Do you agree that criticism of Israel is not the same as anti-Semitism?’ The result of such an approach would have been interesting, but it was not on the agenda of the CAA.

However, the campaign is no doubt unconcerned with the criticisms that have been made of its work. The purpose of that work is to make Jewish people feel insecure and ‘encourage’ them to leave for Israel.

Zionism is, after all, founded on the “negation of the diaspora” - the belief that Jews do not belong in a non-Jewish society.³³ After the killing of four Jews in a Paris kosher supermarket two years ago,³⁴ Binyamin Netanyahu, Israel’s prime minister, flew to France and told French Jews to emigrate.³⁵ Fighting anti-Semitism has never been part of the Zionist agenda.

The CAA has stated from the beginning that it was formed to tackle anti-Semitism of “both a classical ethno-religious nature and also a political nature related to Israel”.³⁶ In fact, the campaign devotes virtually all of its time to the latter and what it calls the “international definition of anti-Semitism”.³⁷

This definition is virtually identical to a working definition of anti-Semitism drawn up by the European Union’s Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (now the Fundamental Rights Agency) in Vienna. The definition was not formally adopted by the EU and was removed from the website of the Vienna-based agency several years ago.³⁸

But, like Dracula’s undead, the ‘definition’ has come back to life. Originally drawn up in consultation with the pro-Israel lobby,³⁹ it has now been given a veneer of respectability, because it has been endorsed, with minor amendments, by an intergovernmental body, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance.⁴⁰ Not only Theresa May, but Jeremy Corbyn too, have lent their support to this bogus definition of anti-Semitism.⁴¹ All Britain’s major political parties are signed up to it and the CAA is one of the beneficiaries.

Our task is clear. Palestine solidarity activists have to build a campaign against this definition, just as they did with its predecessor, the Working Definition of Anti-Semitism.⁴² ●

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Petition

The so-called Campaign Against Anti-Semitism is a McCarthyite Zionist propaganda organisation, whose aim is to smear and libel opponents of Israel’s apartheid regime.

Ever since its formation during Operation Protective Edge in the summer of 2014, when over 2,000 Palestinians, including 551 children, were murdered by Israeli missile attacks and shelling of civilian areas, it has sought to tarnish supporters of the Palestinians and anti-Zionists with the label, ‘anti-Semitism’.

The fact that the CAA is officially a registered charity is outrageous. It provides no public benefit, the test of any charity, nor are its activities remotely charitable. It is a nakedly rightwing political, Zionist organisation.

The CAA’s purpose is to limit freedom of speech by attacking as ‘anti-Semitic’ opponents of the Israeli state. Please support this petition.

This petition will be delivered to the Charity Commission and can be found at:

<https://www.change.org/p/the-charity-commission-to-get-the-charity-commission-to-deregister-the-zionist-campaign-against-anti-semitism>

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TURKEY

A watermen's fight

Esen Uslu reports on the pandemonium created by Erdoğan in the run-up to next month's referendum

In Istanbul slang the phrase, 'watermen's fight', refers to the staging of a mock scuffle in a busy street, allowing the pockets of bystanders to be picked. The term originated with boatmen ferrying passengers between the old walled city and the European quarters across the Golden Horn. In these staged fights oars would be thrown and a passenger or bystander would be 'accidentally' hit on the head. After the melee had subsided and the victim had gathered his senses, he would discover that his wallet or pocket watch had disappeared.

But streetwise people in Turkey are quite accustomed to such events - if a fight breaks out, their first instinct is to take a step back and hold onto their valuables. However, those same streetwise people are quite prone to fall for the staged acts of nationalist and Islamist politicians, and often allow themselves to be duped by their claims to be battling to defend Turkey's Islamic dignity and pride in the face of foreign, Christian enemies.

Which is why the Justice and Development Party (AKP) and its leader, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, like nothing more than creating their own watermen's fight with European leaders. There is much chaos and not a little grunting and groaning, but in the end it is the ordinary people who get hit on the head and duped.

However, no matter how hard they try, Turkish politicians cannot create such a hullabaloo unaided - they need a partner or two overseas. And the recent general election in Holland provided such a partner: when Erdoğan attacked the Netherlands for its treatment of Turkish immigrants, the ruling VVD was only too pleased to make use of the insults hurled by Turkey to wield against its rightwing opponents.

Reeling from the unexpectedly sharp response from VVD leader Mark Rutter, the Turkish side dug deep to find dirt to hurl at the Dutch and mobilised their Islamist and nationalist supporters. The Dutch consulate in Istanbul was surrounded and, under the benign gaze of the police, an activist climbed onto the roof, replacing the Dutch flag with a Turkish one to the delight of the protestors.

The anti-Dutch sentiment prevailed for a couple more days and there were a couple of bizarre incidents. As the Dutch football team is known as 'the oranges', rightwing thugs made a great show of 'stabbing' several oranges in front of the consulate. And a prominent politician who owns a dairy farm to great publicity sent his Holstein-Friesian cattle to the slaughterhouse!¹

When Rutter barred a Turkish foreign ministry spokesperson from entering the Netherlands to speak at a rally organised by AKP supporters in Rotterdam, she tried to sneak in over the German border. After she was turned away there were more demonstrations, fully covered by the Turkish media, of course.

Just before the row with the Dutch flared up, Erdoğan had been at loggerheads with German chancellor Angela Merkel. It turns out that Germany has been refusing



Taking it out on oranges ... that'll show 'em

to sell weapons to Turkey for some time, because they "could be used in the internal repression campaign". While the substantial cash received from Germany in exchange for the agreement to prevent refugees leaving Turkey for western Europe was more than welcome in Istanbul, the AKP desperately needed arms for its ongoing campaign against the Kurds.

Added to this, Turkey's application for EU membership, which was emphasised by Erdoğan in the early years of his administration, has now become a bargaining chip, as he attempts to award himself draconian powers as a Bonapartist president in the forthcoming referendum on the Turkish constitution.

The hopes of the Erdoğan clique were raised when it was thought that the new US administration under Donald Trump would quickly enter the Middle East china shop with all the subtlety of a bull. However, Trump was bogged down with its own troubles and those hopes were dashed.

Then there was the public relations calamity when it was revealed that Turkey had paid a cool half a million dollars to a company owned by the disgraced US national security advisor, Michael Flynn.² The former head of the CIA, James Woolsey, who was part of Trump's election campaign team, revealed in a CNN interview that he had participated in a meeting with Flynn, along with Turkey's minister of foreign

affairs and minister of energy (who just happens to be Erdoğan's son-in-law), in a New York hotel in September 2016. They were discussing ways of subverting US extradition procedures in order to bring Fethullah Gülen, the cleric who has been a thorn in the backside of Erdoğan, back to Turkey.³

Disasters

All seasoned observers of Turkey's foreign affairs can list numerous disasters, as diplomatic relations between Turkey and Europe in particular continue to nosedive.⁴

On the Syria-Kurdish front, Trump's promise to support the Turkish army in its push towards Raqqa in order to defeat Kurdish fighters failed to

materialise. The US pursued its own previously laid plans, involving US forces on the ground. US troops were sent to the no man's land between Turkish forces advancing towards the Kurdish-town of Menbij and an important junction on the west side of Euphrates river. The US also airlifted fighters of the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces to the west of Taqba, a town which straddles the road crossing the Euphrates further south.

And Vladimir Putin has followed suit by sending a Russian armoured column to cooperate with the SDF in Afrin to the west of al-Bab, which is held by the Turkish forces and its allies, to prevent a Turkish-led foray into Afrin. So the Turkish operations in northern Syria have ground to a halt - its troops are unable to move east or west, while they face Syrian government forces to the south.

Meanwhile, Turkey is wielding the worsening humanitarian situation of Syrian refugees as a possible weapon against EU countries. The minister of internal affairs has openly threatened to open the gates to refugees who wish to travel west. In a parallel development, Istanbul is engaged in a row with Tehran along similar lines - the border region of Iran contains thousands of Afghan refugees waiting to cross into Turkey.

The official Turkish policy seems to be one of creating pandemonium in neighbouring countries and at present only Georgia and Azerbaijan have remained unscathed - Turkey's own internal politics have resulted in a marked deterioration of relations with allies and enemies alike. This has coincided with a renewed wave of atrocities committed against refugees.

Time running out

As the April 16 constitutional referendum approaches, opinion polls suggest that - despite Erdoğan's last-ditch attempts to rally support around a nationalist and Islamist platform by presenting a crude but potent picture of the need to defeat 'Christian and Shia enemies' abroad - the 'no' campaign is in the lead. What is more, it is thought that a substantial number of undecided voters could be won at the last moment to reject Erdoğan's power grab.

In this desperate situation, he is aware that, even if he uses every trick in the book to pull off a narrow victory in the referendum, he could still be finished. The coalition around him is in crisis and he may no longer be able to hold it together.

At last week's Newroz demonstrations celebrating the Iranian new year in Turkey's Kurdistan and western Turkish cities, it was clear that the popular opposition is mobilising against massive odds. All progressive people hope that Erdoğan can be prevented from taking a final gamble that could involve war.

However, the danger of such a last-chance hurrah is still looming. Erdoğan must be stopped in his tracks before a new calamity falls upon the Middle East ●

Notes

1. www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/03/turkey-netherlands-dispute-animals-sanctions-europe.html.
2. www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/03/michael-flynn-ekim-aptekin-us-turkey-contract.html.
3. www.washingtonpost.com/politics/federal-government/ex-cia-chief-flynn-firm-discussed-removing-cleric-from-us/2017/03/25/0a1574d0-1179-11e7-aa57-2ca1b05c41b8_story.html?utm_term=.761596dafa1.
4. www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/03/turkey-europe-netherlands-germany-rally-crisis.html.

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ITALY

Hit by corruption scandals

Beppe Grillo and the right-populist Movimento Cinque Stelle are making gains, writes Toby Abse

Matteo Renzi's path to triumphant re-election as secretary of the Partito Democratico (PD) in the primary on Sunday April 30 has met an unexpected obstacle. There is now an ongoing judicial investigation into alleged 'influence trafficking' by his 65-year-old father, Tiziano. Renzi senior has repeatedly asserted his innocence in the media, and continued to do so during an interrogation by magistrates on March 3, but he still remains a suspect.

As for his son, he is still the front runner in the PD primary, but the question of whether he can gain over 50% of the vote has been seriously raised by journalists in both the centre-left daily *La Repubblica* and its centre-right counterpart, *Corriere della Sera* - and not just by his rivals for the nomination, who might have an interest in talking themselves up. If Renzi does not gain an absolute majority, as opposed to a mere plurality of votes, the final run-off contest will be decided by the PD delegates elected on the three candidates' lists, not by the hundreds of thousands of self-proclaimed PD sympathisers who will vote in the primary itself.

If the third-place candidate instructs his delegates to vote for the second-place candidate rather than for Renzi, the current leader might well lose. As things stand, this scenario is dependent on justice minister Andrea Orlando coming second and Michele Emiliano, the president of the Puglian region, coming third - Emiliano would instruct his delegates to vote for the social democratic Orlando to stop Renzi, whilst there is no guarantee that Orlando would reciprocate, given his low opinion of the erratic populist, Emiliano.

Meanwhile, Tiziano Renzi is allegedly at the centre of a massive corruption scandal involving hundreds of millions of euros' worth of state contracts. Whether or not the allegation of 'illegal influence trafficking' being investigated by magistrates results in a trial, let alone a conviction (which in the Italian system would still be subject to two possible appeals, including to the supreme court, the Cassazione), this scandal will have enormous implications for his son's political career, and could potentially be extremely damaging for the PD as a whole in the forthcoming general election - especially if Matteo is re-elected PD leader on April 30 and so becomes PD candidate for premier.

The parallel with recent corruption scandals involving 'influence trafficking' by figures close to president Jacob Zuma in South Africa, and former president Park Geun-hye of South Korea, seem obvious, even if no Italian observer seems to have drawn them. This is not the first time that Tiziano has been the subject of a criminal investigation into a financial matter (and he claims he has been the victim of politically motivated elements of the judiciary anxious to attack his son¹). On the earlier occasion - in 2015 (during his son's premiership), the charge of fraudulent bankruptcy related to his own long-standing newspaper distribution business (set up before his son entered politics), not government contracts. As senator Miguel Gotor of the Movimento Democratico e Progressista (MDP) put it,

It would have been better if Tiziano Renzi had avoided the risk of influence, having a prime minister as a son. The saying, 'Caesar's wife must be above suspicion', applies here.²

Whilst Gotor - a distinguished professional historian before his entry into parliament - made his point with a certain amount of tact, Beppe Grillo, the leader of the right-populist Movimento Cinque Stelle (M5S - Five Star Movement), has, as



Beppe Grillo: benefiting from divisions in the Partito Democratico

ever, shown no such inhibitions. Renzi junior said, perhaps unwisely: "If my father is guilty, he should have a double penalty" - which led a jubilant Grillo to proclaim on his blog: "He has ditched his dad."³ Renzi used his own blog to respond to Grillo with phrases like "You act the Jackal, but the truth will arrive" - rashly getting drawn into the kind of flame war that the crude comedian adores.

Official secrets

Embarrassing as the allegations about his father are, perhaps the more immediate threat to Renzi junior comes from another allegation being made by the same investigating magistrates about the 34-year-old Luca Lotti, currently minister of sport under prime minister Paolo Gentiloni. Whilst Renzi senior was until very recently secretary of the local PD branch in the village of Rignano, where the Renzi family comes from, Lotti's public role is rather more important. Lotti, a very close friend of Matteo - some have claimed Renzi treats him like a younger brother - was Renzi's under-secretary throughout his premiership. It is widely believed that Gentiloni, dependent on Renzi's backing for his own appointment as premier, had little choice about including Lotti in his government, and therefore gave him a minor post, which minimised his influence.

Needless to say, the allegation relates to the period when Lotti was in daily contact with his old boss, and hostile observers have suggested that he was unlikely to have engaged in any political action without the former premier's knowledge or authorisation. Lotti is alleged to have tipped off the leading figures in Consip - the body overseeing the efficient use of public resources, which now handles the buying of all goods and services for the public administration - that its head offices were being bugged.

On March 15, Lotti easily survived the senate vote of no confidence in him tabled by M5S - it needs to be stressed that, if this motion had been passed, Italian parliamentary procedure dictates that the whole government would have fallen. Keeping Lotti in office was an indication of Matteo Renzi's personal favouritism rather than any consistent stance based on the legal presumption of innocence (*garantismo*, as Italian politicians have called it⁴). On previous occasions, Renzi has sacrificed ministers when the personal involvement of an individual in a scandal - regardless of whether criminal charges were even brought - threatened to tarnish the whole government's reputation. Indeed, in marked contrast to his recently adopted *garantismo*, Renzi had harshly criticised his predecessor, Enrico Letta, for not sacking Anna Maria Cancellieri as minister of justice over a friendly phone call to a long-standing female friend under criminal

investigation.

This inconsistency was not the worst aspect of the PD's behaviour in this case. Nor was the predictable and successful appeal to the loyalty of other coalition partners, such as the Nuovo Centro Destra (NCD - New Centre Right) of foreign minister Angelino Alfano, and assorted centrist fragments, most of whom had at least some parliamentarians in their ranks, who had had a chequered relationship with the criminal justice system. Whilst the pro-Lotti votes of the 14 followers of the recently convicted fraudster, Denis Verdini - still facing criminal investigation on numerous other counts yet to come to trial - stank to high heaven, it was the collusion with Forza Italia that should have served as a warning of the following day's events - the vote against barring the convicted criminal, Augusto Minzolini, from the senate, which I will discuss after concluding my survey of the Consip scandal.

The vote in the senate on March 15 was 161 for Lotti, 52 against and two abstentions. Both Forza Italia and the MDP walked out before it was taken. In theory, Forza Italia is supposed to be an ally of the rightwing Lega Nord, the largest force other than the Grillini themselves backing the M5S motion.⁵ On the surface, the Forza Italia walkout might have seemed merely a sign of continuity with more than two decades of hostility to the judiciary, or *garantismo* as they would prefer to describe it. The MDP walkout has a rather more honourable motivation - hostile as its members are to Lotti, they could not vote for a motion that might have brought down the Gentiloni government and precipitated an early general election, especially since their split from the PD had been provoked by Renzi's desire to move in precisely that direction.

Although the MDP absented itself from the vote, the harshest and most effective speech against the minister of sport was made by the above-named MDP senator, Miguel Gotor. It culminated in the demand: "You ought to resign, or Gentiloni should suspend you from office. Be a sportsman - protect the executive."⁶ Looking directly at Gotor, an incandescent Lotti responded:

The political forces that are asking me to take a step back are culturally subaltern and politically incorrect. You call into question my most precious possession, my morality. I never warned Marroni - whoever claims that I did slanders me.⁷

While Lotti is the only politician facing accusations of revealing an official secret and favouring a crime in the Consip case, similar allegations are being made against no less a figure in the Italian state apparatus than general Tullio Del Sette. The 55-year-old del Sette, who

joined the national gendarmerie, the *carabinieri*, as a very young man in 1970, was promoted to his current post as the national commander by the Renzi government in December 2014 - though some maliciously inclined observers might suggest he had a personal debt of gratitude to Renzi and his inner circle, including Lotti, which might lead him to sabotage attempts to collect incriminating wire taps on corrupt officials with whom they might have had some connection. General Emanuele Saltalamacchia, the commander of the Tuscan *carabinieri* legion, is also under investigation on the same grounds.

Lotti, Del Sette and Saltalamacchia deny all wrongdoing, but it is worth emphasising that the claims about leaking official secrets (against Lotti at any rate) do not only come from Consip executives (particularly Luigi Marroni, the current CEO of the company, and Marco Gasparri, the Consip official accused of taking a large bribe), who might perhaps have something to gain by discrediting government or Carabinieri figures if they wish to avoid prison, or at least get shorter sentences. Filippo Vannoni, the president of Publiacqua, the Florentine municipal water company, who is a witness rather than the object of criminal investigation, has also told the magistrates that Lotti told him about the bugs in the Consip office.

Whilst the general gist of the allegations against Lotti, Del Sette, Saltalamacchia and the shady Neapolitan entrepreneur, Alfredo Romeo - the man accused of bribing Consip executive Marco Gasparri and various possible intermediaries, who might have influenced Consip on his behalf - has been known since December 2016⁸, until March 2017 the coverage in mainstream papers such as *Repubblica* and *Corriere* had been relatively low-key. Only *Il Fatto Quotidiano* had fastened on to such small fragments of information as it could gather, with what often appeared as such obsessive concern as to seem no more than a desperate effort to divert attention from M5S's Roman antics.

Backhanders

It was Romeo's arrest on March 1 that precipitated events. The police search of the wastepaper basket in Romeo's office uncovered the method the conspirators had resorted to after they had been tipped off about the magistrates' wire-tapping - the use of bits of paper known in Sicilian Mafia circles as *pizzini*. Whilst one can see this method may have appeared more secure than telephone calls after Romeo became aware that the Consip office had been bugged (and one assumes Romeo was aware that all forms of electronic communication could be hacked into), it seems very strange that Romeo did not invest in a shredder, but just tore the *pizzini* into rather large pieces that could easily be fitted together by the *carabinieri*, rather like a child's jigsaw.

The *carabinieri* assume that the words "€30,000 for T" were a reference to payments to Tiziano Renzi, and that "€5,000 every two months for RC" denoted backhanders for the younger Florentine entrepreneur and close Renzi family friend, Carlo Russo. Interestingly, Alfredo Romeo, who refused to talk to the magistrates on March 6, despite his imprisonment, has never suggested that the *pizzini* are forgeries; he denies all wrongdoing, but his lawyers have resorted to the rather bizarre technical argument that, since the *pizzini* were found and reassembled in the absence of Romeo or any defence lawyer, they cannot be used as evidence against him in any possible trial.

Romeo has some deep experience of such matters and is probably a very shrewd tactician. In 1993, he was

acquitted in a trial after pointing the finger at some corrupt politicians and, although he spent 79 days in prison awaiting trial in 2008, he was acquitted on all charges as a result of his appeal to Cassazione. The one undeniable connection between Alfredo Romeo and Matteo Renzi is the €60,000 donation made to Renzi's Fondazione Big Bang (now renamed Fondazione Open) by the Neapolitan entrepreneur early in his premiership. Doubtless, this was an act of pure philanthropy, and we would not dream of suggesting that anything was required in return. Nonetheless, such obvious lack of judgement in his choice of donors to his factional foundation may prove a useful weapon in the hands of Renzi's internal and external opponents.

The damage done to the PD by Renzi in his handling of the Consip scandal was compounded on the day after the vote in defence of the beleaguered minister of sport. On March 16, the votes of PD senators were decisive in saving the former director of news on RAI Uno (the main state television channel) - Forza Italia senator Augusto Minzolini - from prison. For all the pompous talk in the senate of the *fumus persecutionis* allegedly displayed by Minzolini's political enemies, the crime in question was not remotely political, but a straightforward €65,000 credit card fraud, misusing a RAI company credit card for personal expenditure.

The senate vote to allow Minzolini to continue in parliamentary office (and thus automatically remain at liberty for the rest of his term) represented blatant defiance of the provisions of the same Severino law which had expelled Silvio Berlusconi from the senate on November 27 2013. Under the Severino law, any parliamentarian sentenced to more than two years in prison should be barred from office - Minzolini's sentence is two and a half years. Despite the strident denials of Renzi and his clique, the vote in favour of Lotti on March 15 and the vote to protect Minzolini on March 16 looked like a *quid pro quo*. On this occasion, one is compelled to accept that the judgement of Grillo's blog - "The caste saves the caste"⁹ - is a fair summary of the events in the Italian senate.

The PD seems to have moved a lot closer to Forza Italia, and the repeal of the Severino law (or some other stratagem aimed at the political rehabilitation of Silvio Berlusconi) cannot be ruled out. Inevitably, the public reaction to the PD's suicidal course has given M5S its highest ever opinion poll score - it now leads the PD by 32.3% to 26.8%.¹⁰

Notes

1. Renzi junior appeared to repeat this claim in a recent edition of the television programme *Porta a Porta*, according to *Corriere della Sera*. Until recently, Matteo had avoided the crude judge-baiting regularly engaged in by Bettino Craxi and Silvio Berlusconi, two felons amongst his predecessors as prime minister, but now the mask seems to have slipped.
2. *La Repubblica* March 3 2017.
3. "Ha rottomato il babbo."
4. This term came into favour during the Tangentopoli scandals of 1992-93. It should be noted that many of its proponents in Italian parliaments have no such deep concern about the civil liberties of ordinary citizens - as opposed to any of their own colleagues who might be under investigation.
5. The no-confidence motion was also supported by the soft-left Sinistra Italiana (a grouping largely made up of the hard-line remnants of the now dissolved Sinistra Ecologia Libertà), which is anxious to appear more oppositional than the MDP.
6. *La Repubblica* March 16 2017.
7. *La Repubblica* (March 16 2017).
8. However, Tiziano Renzi's alleged connection has only surfaced very recently.
9. The term 'La casta' was originally invented by two rightwing journalists associated with *Corriere della Sera*, in a best-seller with that title published about a decade ago, but it has become the standard M5S description of the political class.
10. This Ipsos poll, carried out between March 13 and 16, appeared in *Corriere della Sera* on March 21 2017.

NATURE



Toxic capitalism: artwork by David LaChapelle

Karl Marx and 'eco-Marxism'

The threat of 'ecocidal capitalism' is linked to the absence of a class-conscious international proletariat, writes **Rex Dunn**

Benjamin Kunkel is a 44-year-old American with a degree in creative writing from Columbia University. He has written an excellent review of four recent books about the ecology of the planet in the *London Review of Books* (March 2 2017). The last two belong to the category of 'eco-Marxism' and offer some important new insights. Therefore I shall focus my attention on these. If I make any errors along the way, I am happy to be corrected by other, better informed *Weekly Worker* readers.

First up is Jason Moore's *Capitalism in the web of life: ecology and the accumulation of capital* (London 2015). The second one is Andreas Malm's *Fossil capital: the rise of steam power and the roots of global warming* (London 2015).

But, before I can proceed, the first big question to be considered is the meaning of the term 'Anthropocene'. Kunkel agrees with Moore's argument that it is ill-conceived from a Marxist perspective. For Moore, the defect in "the Anthropocene argument", associated with the Greens, is that it "presents humanity as a 'homogeneous acting unit'", whereas human beings live in "particular historical forms of society", characterised by specific "property relations" that lead to certain "dispositions towards 'extra human nature'". Therefore, Moore argues, the 'Anthropocene' should be renamed the "Capitalocene", corresponding to the rise of capitalism after 1450 (which also marks a turning point in the history of man's relationship with the rest of nature). By contrast, Malm locates the origin of the present ecological crisis several hundred years later: ie, global warming was set off by modern capitalism - the age of coal-burning industrialisation.

Kunkel is right to argue that "there can be no ecologically sound capitalism". He also urges us not to be complacent about the next mode of production freeing us from pollution, citing the Soviet bloc as an example. Of course, he fails to point out that the latter was a mode of production *sui generis* - ie, neither fish nor fowl - and therefore could not last for long in historical terms, but it was long enough for "the USSR to drain away the Aral Sea and let the Chernobyl reactor melt down", while "the GDR emitted the most sulphur dioxide per capita of any country", etc (*LRB* p23). On the other hand, he is right to reappraise 'Anthropocene' in historical materialist terms, implying that, once man has achieved a classless society, then we will live in a truly Anthropocene world: ie, one in which humanity is able to regulate its interchange with nature rationally, bring it under our common control, etc.¹

Impediments

This argument immediately raises the notion of *instrumentalism*, or means-end necessity, regardless of the human cost or the damage that this might do to the environment. Initially this can be attributed to the empiricism of the bourgeois political economists. For them, knowledge is the product of the rational observation of the world, leaving no room for speculative thought. This led to Ricardo's "heartless indifference to the suffering propertyless classes" - compare this to German idealism, such as Schiller's aesthetic criticism of reality, whereby he argues that the "mechanical pressure of wants", this "realm of necessity ... cannot serve as the soil for genuine artistic productivity", which is the essence of man.² Almost before it began, the 'dark' side of the

enlightenment had replaced the hopes of its authors for a new social order based on reason and natural law, in the name of 'universal humanity'.

For classical Marxists this is inextricably linked to the period of generalised commodity production/commodity fetishism, along with the market mechanism - as opposed to earlier periods, when the commodity was "a particular, isolated, non-dominant form".³ On this basis, therefore, in terms of the argument about the periodicity, then one would have to agree with Malm. But this is not to decry Moore's argument as a whole. On the other hand, although both of them recognise the role of private property in human alienation, Kunkel, Moore and Malm tend to underplay the role of alienated wage-labour, the bourgeois hierarchical division of labour, along with the role of commodity fetishism. (But perhaps this is because they assume that the reader already understands the role of the 'big four' *vis-à-vis* alienation/false consciousness in general?)

Malm is certainly right to argue that the Green version of climate change is "relocated from the sphere of natural causes to that of human activities", only to be "renaturalised" a moment later as the excrescence of "an innate human trait". He continues: "Capitalists in a small corner of the western world invested in steam, laying the foundation of the fossil economy; at no moment did the species ... exercise any sort of shared authority over its destiny and that of the earth system." Similarly today, "In the earliest 21st century, the poorest 45% of humanity generated 7% of CO₂ emissions, whilst the richest 7% produced 50%." Kunkel adds: "For both Malm and Moore, capitalism [is] the overriding determinant of

humanity's recent ecological career." Hence, Kunkel continues:

... human beings have fundamentally shaped life on earth for thousands of years, a fact that the term 'Anthropocene' refers to. [But the] unprecedented scope and pace of such change is better evoked by the term 'Capitalocene' ... 'Anthropocene' is here to stay, but just how it unfolds over coming generations will be decided whether, politically, it remains true 'Capitalocene' ("privileging the endless accumulation of capital", as Moore puts it) or becomes for the first time a properly political Anthropocene, in which the interests of humanity as a whole chart our ecological course (*LRB* p23).

Kunkel now turns to the term 'eco-Marxism' itself: "In classical Marxist terms, modes of production can be described in terms of the relations of production (among human beings) and forces of production (human labour applied to the means of production, such as tools and machines, and raw materials)" (p23). He stresses the fact that neither Marx nor Engels had a narrow, productivist bias towards progress (as attributed to them by their bourgeois critics). Rather Marx was at pains to point out that "all progress in capitalistic agriculture is a progress in the art, not only of robbing the labourer, but of robbing the soil".

Engels later generalised Marx's concern for soil exhaustion into something like a law of environmental blowback:

Let us not ... flatter ourselves overmuch on account of our human victories over nature. For each such victory nature takes its revenge on us ... Thus at every step we are reminded that

we by no means rule over nature like a conqueror over a foreign people, but that we ... belong to nature, and exist in its midst, and that all our mastery of it consists in the fact that we have the advantage over all other creatures of being able to learn its laws and apply them correctly.⁴

Rosa Luxemburg in *The accumulation of capital* (1913) goes on to argue that capitalism can only expand by dragging "into the orbit of the commodity economy" ever more of 'the natural economy' outside capitalist exchange, and Horkheimer and Adorno in *Dialectic of enlightenment* (1944) lamented the instrumental reason that sought to control and quantify nature to no purpose beyond the automatic pursuit of profit" (p24).

For Kunkel, the rise of eco-Marxism is also part of the inheritance of Marx's and Engel's thought. He writes: "In 1988, James O'Connor, founding editor of the American journal, *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism*, proposed that the 'capital-nature relation' is no less fundamental to the capital-labour relation in analysing how capitalism reproduces and, ultimately undermines itself." In his book, *Marx's ecology* (2000), Bellamy Foster reminds us of "Marx's critique of the unsustainable metabolism (*Stoffwechsel*), by which capitalist agriculture extracts from the soil more nutrients than it replaces"; hence the rift between "capitalist humanity [surely the rule of capital] and nature: the compulsion to accumulate ever more capital rules out the metabolic equilibrium that would allow a society to maintain indefinitely the environment from which it indefinitely takes its livelihood". (At this stage, Kunkel does not raise the related problem of environmental

What we fight for

pollution: ie, the over-use of fertiliser or chemical pesticides to expand agricultural production, which eventually is washed into the rivers and even the oceans.)

Kunkel reminds us that it is often forgotten that Marx and Engels were also aware that capital accumulation is an ecological process as well. But, from the start, bourgeois political economists compartmentalised nature and society, undialectically implying that nature exists outside of society. Therefore nature can “be coded, quantified and rationalised to serve economic growth”: ie, an instrumental end, which is production for production’s sake. This amounts to the naturalisation of capitalism itself. On the other hand, Moore - and Kunkel - envisage capitalism not as “an economic system”, but “a way of organising nature”. Equally this is also an undialectical view of the capitalist mode of production and its negative effects *vis-à-vis* man and the rest of nature.

‘Cheap natures’

According to Kunkel, Moore goes on to “a standard reading of Marx’s law of value”:

... capital strives to get ever more commodity production from an hour’s labour, while paying the labourers less for that hour as a share of its costs ... the effort to boost labour productivity in the workplace [is] united with another imperative. Capitalism “must ceaselessly search for, and find ways to produce, cheap natures” as inputs to commodity production. These belong to four categories: food, labour-power itself, energy and raw materials. Staple foods must become cheaper, because household expenditure on them accounts for much of the base cost of hiring workers (pp24-25).

As for energy, the aim is to make it more efficient and cost-effective. This led to improvements in the design of watermills, to windmills, sailing ships, making propulsion by water and wind cheaper. Energy from fossilised fuels “enabled motorised transport and drove industrial production”, bringing down costs. “Finally raw materials too must become cheaper”, in order to lower the costs of building construction and the manufacture of goods. But:

The trend over recent centuries has been for labour-power to become more expensive, while the price of energy and raw materials has tended to fall ...

“The Dutch Republic was the 17th century’s ‘model capitalist nation’ - in Marx’s phrase - because it organised and led a world ecological regime that delivered cheap grain (from Poland), cheap energy (from domestic peat), and cheap timber (from Norway and the Baltic) to the northern Netherlands.” To the degree that the ‘four cheap’ can be secured, both the efforts of labourers and the cruder components of the labour process can be cheaply had. The productivity of an hour’s labour will therefore rise, and the opportunity for profit to expand.

According to the logic of ‘cheap nature’, Moore argues that “more and more extra-human nature [external nature] attaches to every quantum of socially necessary labour time”. [Kunkel adds:] “Capitalism’s ecological project, in other words, is to enlarge the quotient of ‘unpaid nature’, like that of unpaid labour, in the total value of saleable commodities.”

He also states that

most writers on Marx’s value theory ... typically concentrate on machines and other infrastructure (‘fixed capital’) in the means of production to the neglect of energy and raw

materials (‘circulating capital’). As Moore points out, “circulating capital is the forgotten moment in Marx’s model”.

In other words, they are reluctant to admit

the full import of non-human energy and raw materials, when these are obviously not products of human labour. But, as Marx himself insisted, “labour is *not* the source of all wealth. Nature is just as much the source of use values ... as labour, which itself is only the manifestation of a force of nature”.

Can capitalism come by cheap nature indefinitely? Moore identifies a counter-tendency, which he calls “the tendency of ecological surplus to fall”.

The latter may be described as the

contribution that the flood of non-human ‘work/energy’ into the economy makes capital accumulation over and above the cost of procuring it. The ecological surplus will fall whenever capital can’t maintain or boost the quotient of ‘unpaid nature’ in the sum of commodity values.

Moore gives four reasons for this process:

1. “... the law of entropy stipulates that using compact and versatile energy-dense materials (say precious metals or fossil fuels) yields less serviceable and energy-dense materials (cans in the recycling bin) if not outright waste (discarded batteries) and pollution (power-plant emissions). Over the long run, transforming useful resources into useless waste rules out economic growth.”

2. This is a more immediate problem, because “the capitalisation or money-cost of the ‘four cheap’ rises faster than their contribution to labour productivity, as might happen should increased demand for unfinished commodities like wood, copper or wheat - or [lack of?] cooperation among the countries that export them - drive up prices”.

3. “... natural resources may, for technical reasons, become harder [to exploit; for example,] petroleum production [as a] declining ‘energy returned on energy invested’: a century ago it took far less effort to extract a barrel of oil from the great Texas oilfields than it does now to get, through fracking, another barrel from [the new sources of fossil fuel].”

4. This is the “last barrier to perpetually increasing ecological surplus - and “arguably the most cumulatively significant” - the “degradation of the biosphere through carbon emissions, soil degradation, biodiversity loss, chemical toxicity and so on. A sufficiently tattered web of life will yield ‘negative value’ rather than any positive plenty: no application of capital or labour, in any amount, will be able to produce anything but goods of generally inferior quality and quantity. Capitalism would then have finally destroyed the natural preconditions for continually raising labour productivity and endless capital accumulation, never mind the welfare of non-capitalist humans and other bystander organisms.”

Kunkel acknowledges the scope of *Capitalism in the web of life*: ie, Moore provides us with a “bravura sketch of historical capitalism across five centuries”. I need not go into this here, apart from the briefest of outlines. He moves from the period of the Dutch republic, as well as its own empire in south-east Asia, to the Spanish empire in the new world; then onto Britain’s own industrial revolution based on coal/steam power, with the merest of hints here that this was financed by the modern slave trade (the ‘plantation revolutions’); finally bringing us into the present period: American hegemony, based on new oil frontiers and the industrialisation of agriculture. In each case, “The ecological surplus falls as the capitalisation of nature rises”.

Simply put, British capital, by

comparison with Dutch, could get more out of the natural world for less, just as American capitalism could later do by comparison with the British. The old regime gives way to the restored and enlarged reign of ‘cheap nature’, enthroned in a new imperium, until the line comes to an end ...

Historically, ‘capitalism’s basic problem’ - namely that its ‘demand for cheap natures’ tends to rise faster than its capacity to secure them - could always be temporarily relieved by opening new commodity frontiers. But a truly global capitalism presents a last frontier, beyond which lies only the cold of space. Already for more than a generation oil companies have tended to spend more on exploration than production for every barrel of crude they extract, while exhaust emissions exacerbate global warming. [The latter] - together with soil exhaustion, aquifer depletion, the vulnerability of monocultures to invasive species, and the collapse of bee colonies - portends declining gains in agricultural productivity. Precious metals may also become scarcer and more costly (p25).

‘Ecocidal’

According to Kunkel, Moore’s conclusion is that “it is difficult to see that the global economy’s annual drain on the earth can go on increasing, at whatever price in dollars, for many decades longer”. Given its very nature as a system, capitalism is not capable of turning things around in the interests of humanity as a whole. As a result of a partial collapse, it might opt for a new lease of life: that is, return to an ecological surplus again - albeit one which is “derived from an absolutely smaller material input. A smaller body of labourers ... employed to furnish a growing mass of commodities to a reduced company of consumers, realising an acceptable rate of profit in the process.”

This scenario is similar to one of Peter Frase’s *Four futures* for the 21st century: namely exterminism - ie, “a combination of ecological scarcity with aggravated class society: guarded enclaves for the rich in an ocean of the superfluous poor” (p26). It would then be up to the oppressed and their ability to fight back, if we are to save what is left of civilisation.

Shortage of space dictates a summary of Andreas Malm’s book, *Fossil capital*: suffice to reiterate my earlier comment: that he focuses on the 18th-19th centuries and the rise of industrial capitalism in Britain (which some ‘wags’ have dubbed ‘the Anglocene’, based on steam power and cotton production, leading to the rise of towns and the creation of the modern proletariat, along with the rapid rise of CO₂ emissions. *Vis-à-vis* Moore’s ‘Capitalocene’ thesis, which argues that “the rise of capitalism after 1450 marked the turning point in the history of humanity’s relation with the rest of nature”, once again, perhaps the most interesting question here is the role of generalised commodity production and commodity fetishism, which clearly did not arise until the ‘Anglocene’ period. But here we are really talking about the way in which modern capitalism was able to create new forms of alienation (alienated wage-labour, fragmentation and atomisation, leading to self-alienation): in a word, new forms of false consciousness rather than anything else.

But Malm’s book certainly concentrates the mind with regard to the role of fossil fuels, which are so inimical to the future of humanity; yet capitalism’s dependence on fossil energy is just as entrenched as ever, despite the looming consequences. This does not auger well for the future, certainly in the age of Trumpism. The new president has pledged to withdraw from the Paris climate control agreement, which was signed only last year. It

committed the nations of the world

to preventing a rise in mean global temperature greater than 1.5 degrees centigrade. A rise of two degrees centigrade is generally considered dangerous, but may already be a lost cause. In November [2016] a paper in the journal *Science Advances* projected that average temperatures will increase between 4.78 and 7.6 degrees centigrade by 2100 under what is tellingly called a “business-as-usual” scenario.

Thus, “The signal traits of contemporary capitalism are fantastic economic inequality and ecological devastation.”

Conclusion

Kunkel raises the question as to which theory is capable of bringing about a “sustainable universal prosperity”: “eco-socialism/solar communism” or classical Marxism? Surely it is a question of using the former to develop the latter. Isn’t this what ‘eco-Marxism’ means? Hence he continues:

A constantly more numerous and better-organised [as well as better informed] working class, its identity cohering, as proletarian experience becomes more uniform across industries, regions and countries, would need only to perceive its shared strength in order to wield it, and the workers as a body would seize the world they’d made ...

But this has lost its persuasiveness so far as the working class remains divided by nationalism, chauvinism and xenophobia, as well as identity politics. Hence we are not likely to see a “class-conscious international proletariat”, let alone a “species-conscious planetary humanity” in the near future - which is a categorical imperative, since “ecocidal capitalism” is already upon us.

This is especially true in the wake of the 2008 financial crash. As a result capitalism continues to rely on the strategy of neoliberalism, combined with austerity, because - Trump or no Trump - it is afraid to venture down the Keynesian road of economic expansionism; it has not forgotten the lessons of the post-war boom, which led to the Événements of 1968, etc. Therefore we are stuck with low growth, whilst inequality continues to increase across the world. Thus multinational companies are even less likely to invest in long-term solutions to the dangers of global warming, etc.

Given the impossibility of ‘ecocapitalism’, ‘eco-socialism’ is the only answer. But, as Kunkel points out, the achievement of something like an “enlightened species being” anyway “would likely emerge in a handful of embattled ... countries”, long before “attaining anything like the universality” which is required. Thus we face a

drawn-out battle against capitalism dead-set against any such thing. This means, tragically, that by the time the Capitalocene concludes, capitalism will only have a ... badly despoiled world to bequeath to us.

Thus we can update Marx and Luxemburg’s prognosis: ie, as either “ecosocialism or ethno-barbarism”. As Kunkel states, “In the political sense of the term, then, the question about the Anthropocene isn’t when it began, but whether it ever will, and, if so, where first - Godspeed!” (p28).

Rather, speed the revolution! ●

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Notes

1. See K Marx *Capital* Vol 3, Moscow 1966, p820.
2. See M Lifshitz *The philosophy of art of Karl Marx* chapter 1, London 1973.
3. G Lukács *History and class consciousness* London 1967, p85.
4. F Engels, ‘The part played by labour in the transition from ape to man’: www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1876/part-played-labour.

■ 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

**Saudi Arabia
is a major
source of
finance**

Understanding Khalid Masood

We cannot explain atrocities like the Westminster attack through individual psychology, argues Paul Demarty

To the list of Islamist atrocities in Europe, we may now add Khalid Masood's assault on Westminster, which has left five dead and 10 times as many injured.

Perhaps the only surprise is that it took so long for this wave of attacks to produce a major incident in London - the last truly comparable event being the July 7 bombings nearly 12 years ago. The carnage wrought in the vicinity of parliament on March 22 is dwarfed by the events of that day, of course; yet for the civilian population, it is an uncomfortable reminder that they remain a legitimate target in the eyes of a very real (if numerically small) layer of the world's population, however far (geographically and socially) they may be from Raqqa.

The question of the response to Masood's attack is, likewise, peculiarly familiar in form and content - despite the spectacular violence at issue, it is almost a matter of going through the motions. Various silly Ukip types immediately connected the issue to immigration and Middle Eastern asylum-seekers, when anyone with an ounce of historical memory can bring to mind the small fact that such people are often (like the 7/7 bombers) native-born Britons - as turned out to be the case with Masood. At least they did not blame it on Brussels bureaucrats.

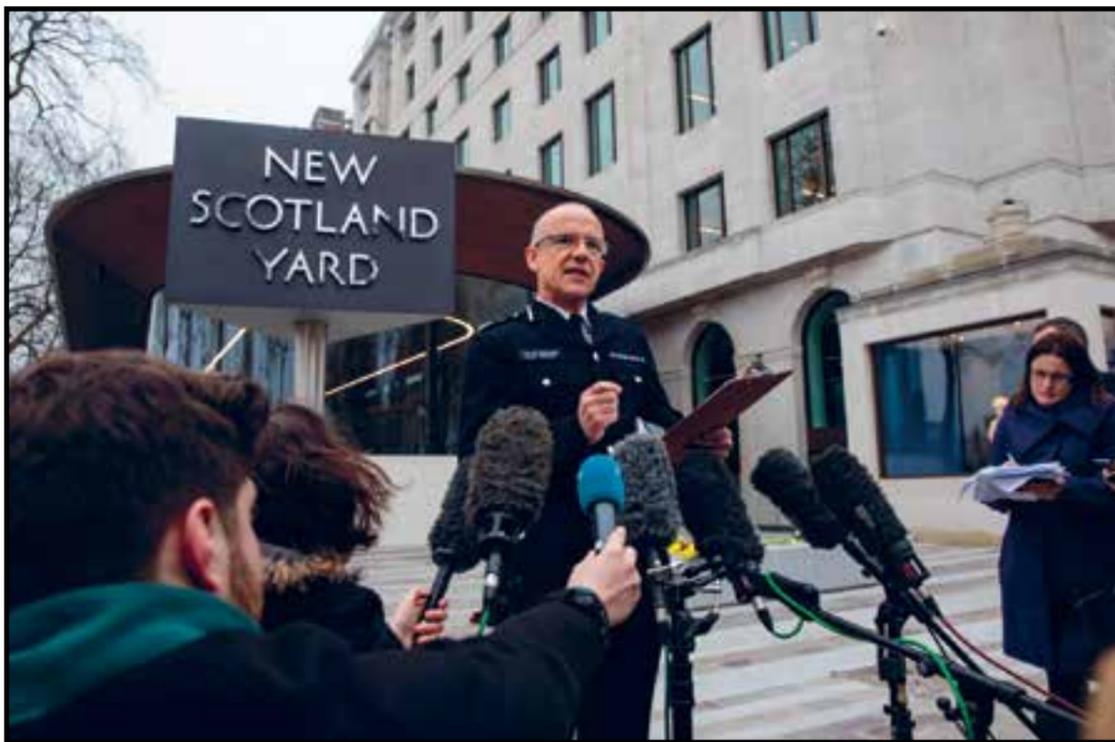
Similarly opportunistic are the spooks, for whom this is yet another knock-down argument for drastically extending their powers. Home secretary Amber Rudd followed the lead of her predecessor and boss, Theresa May, by using the whole thing as an opportunity to decry the modern convenience of encrypted messaging. After all, Masood sent an encrypted message only moments before his attack. Something must be done!

Alas, exactly *what* is another matter. Rudd insists she *only* wants to backdoor WhatsApp in extreme circumstances, with a proper process and warrant and all that; but that would not have helped in the current case (Masood had been peripherally investigated by MI5 years before, but was not in the state's crosshairs as of March 22, and thus there would have been no warrant). Maybe (OK, definitely) she is lying and actually intends to bulk-collect all the messages ever; but that has proven to be a dubious benefit so far due to information overload, with most useful intelligence coming from old-fashioned spycraft. Masood's assault has not advanced the case in substance, then, but only provided a spurious sense of urgency.

Weighing Hitler's brain

To leave the demagogues and self-promoters behind is to arrive at the studious efforts to understand Masood himself. What were his motivations? What makes a more or less 'normal' individual become a terrorist?

The biography is well-rehearsed at this point: Khalid Masood was once Adrian Russell Ajao, who led a peripatetic existence, frequently in trouble with the law. According to some accounts, he emerged from a prison



Mark Rowley, assistant commissioner of the met: more powers

spell a changed man - more serious, calmer, with a new-found faith in Islam. He later moved to Saudi Arabia, to teach English. He had a wife and three children. All express their surprise and horror at his final actions.

There are many aspects of this that seem to point in the direction of such an outburst. He was clearly an alienated individual. His most serious stretch inside was for grievous bodily harm, when a racially-charged argument turned violent. Prison is a fertile ground for Islamist proselytisation - the Kouachi brothers and Amedy Coulibaly, likewise, became committed to the cause of al Qaeda in jail, later perpetrating the *Charlie Hebdo* shootings and contemporaneous anti-Semitic rampages in Paris. Masood's long time in Saudi Arabia does not look good in retrospect. And so on. He fits the profile: a life of frustration and rage, an opportunity to stand tall and die a martyr, not a common criminal ...

The seduction of this explanatory framework is that it seems to be very concrete, very focused on the real motivations of the individual who carried out the attack. Yet the overall effect is akin to looking through the wrong end of the telescope. An analogy can be drawn with those who explain the holocaust not with reference to the Treaty of Versailles or the 1929 crash

or the divisions of the left, but by Adolf Hitler's childhood trauma, his over-fondness for his mother, or even the weight of his brain.

It appears that a vast agglomeration of random circumstances conspired together to deliver Masood to Westminster, a combination that cannot reasonably be expected to recur. Yet not only may it well recur - in a sense *it already has* - for Masood is merely the latest in a very strict pattern. The question is not 'Why did he do it?', but 'Why do people keep doing it?'

Unintended consequences

The answers are still many, but few of them have their primary loci in Britain, or even Europe. This story, in the end, is about the Middle East. The first aspect of relevance is the general chaos wrought by a decade and a half of near continuous and ever more complex wars and insurgencies. The failure of the Iraqi state after the American-British invasion of 2003 provided both a new battleground to the world's jihadi fanatics and a new recruitment base - ex-Ba'athist officials purged by the coalition in the immediate wake of victory, and Sunni Muslims troubled by the increasingly Shia-sectarian character of the US- and Iranian-backed (work that one out ...) Baghdad government. When

civil war broke out in Syria, the theatre of operations expanded.

In this fertile ground of bloody chaos, Islamic State grew to outstrip its progenitor, al Qaeda, in power and international prestige. Further state failures - notably in Libya, after French and British forces helped topple the dictator, Muammar Gaddafi, to the benefit of various warlords and Islamist militias - followed.

This is one sense in which the recent spate of massacres is the unintended consequence of western policy in the Middle East - a succession of calamitous military interventions have created conditions most amenable to warlordism, which is what Islamic State's so-called caliphate amounts to as a state formation; yet it is not *only* a warlord's fiefdom, but also a transmitter of a particular ideology, and one with the elan of (apparently) successful resistance about it.

That success, indeed, seems miraculous, given the circumstances - no wonder it attracts wannabe martyrs! As with all miracles, however, the success of IS has its vulgar material reality, which is where we meet the *second* sense in which western policy brings forth atrocities. Guns do not grow on trees. Food does not come cheap in a war zone. These things require money. Where does the money

come from? The answer - by one tortuous route or another - is a country on the very short list of places Khalid Masood taught English as a foreign language. The Saudi monarchy - whether *as such*, or via some of its crazier princelings - props up IS, perhaps through direct subsidy, or perhaps by laundering Iraqi oil on its behalf.

Whatever the precise nature of its dealings with IS, the Saudis are undoubtedly the principal material force promoting Wahhabi fundamentalism the world over. Shiny new mosques spring up everywhere, funded with Saudi money. Foundations, community organisations, even vast political movements (the Muslim Brotherhood, until recently): all have their operational capacity considerably enhanced by Saudi oil money. This vast operation, however, only works because the Saudi regime is propped up by the United States and its allies. (The latter also, it must be said, assisted the cause of Islamist fanaticism more directly by funnelling arms to the Syrian opposition long after the point where it was entirely dominated by religious factions.)

The result is a phenomenon whereby western societies are trapped in a cycle, due to the increasingly dangerous diplomatic contortions of the various states. A terrorist atrocity brings forth, most immediately, a further ratcheting up of repression; which drives people to seek explanations, which they find in the doctrines of reactionary radicals, which drives them in turn to the 'real' resistance, which inculcates the strategic view that it is necessary to provoke the west into wars and repression, which leads to more violent actions, and to more repression ...

There is no end of bourgeois worthies lining up to solemnly intone that an alternative to Islamism must be offered to those at risk of joining its wilder fringes. Yet it is they precisely who are incapable of offering it, propping up as they do the global capital of their ideological enemies, and apologising as they do for the increasingly destructive adventures of their governments in the Islamic world. Any serious political alternative - which means no more than something that *explains the world better than radical Islamism* (a low bar nonetheless *not* cleared by capitalist state apologetics) - will have to break decisively with this disastrous legacy ●

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