

A paper of Marxist polemic and Marxist unity



weekly **worker**

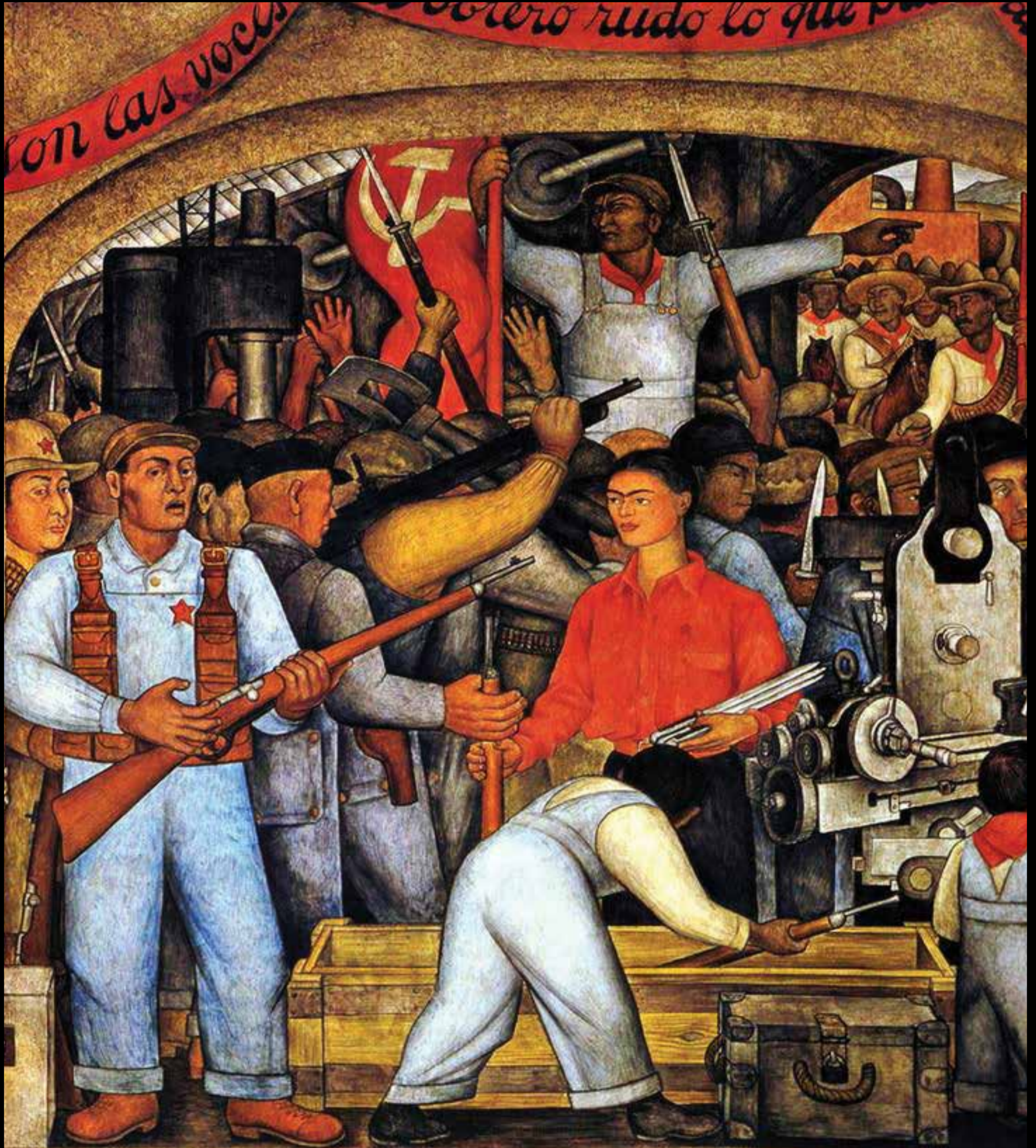
In terms of strategic thinking Left Unity has its head up its ...

- LRC special general meeting
- Cameron's EU referendum
- Bernie Sanders campaign
- Scrap all nuclear weapons

No 1095 Thursday February 25 2016

Towards a Communist Party of the European Union

£1/€1.10



LETTERS



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

Down the plughole

Jack Conrad and Yasmine Mather of the CPGB and Left Unity's Communist Platform proposed a motion at the Left Unity national council calling for "an emergency national conference ... as a matter of extreme urgency. The emergency national conference must happen within one month".

At the last LU national conference in 2015 I moved a resolution that made the same call for an early 2016 conference. The 2015 conference decided that LU should continue, but caused confusion by deciding not to stand candidates. Serious problems about programme, strategy and orientation remained unresolved. So I support the CPGB call for an early conference.

The first time that I and the rest of the rank and file LU members heard of this resolution was when it was reported it had been voted down and the CPGB had left! This shows one or both of the following. The CPGB are contemptuous of the rank and file and could not be bothered to seek our support, or it was simply a 'provocation' as a smokescreen for exit. Either way it does not show the CPGB in a good light.

Unlike many in LU, I am disappointed in the CPGB decision to leave. The Communist Platform showed that communists should be supporting the building of an independent socialist party, in which democratic socialists and communists could work together to further the political struggle of the working class. The Communist Platform turned the 'halfway house party' from a theory into a fact. LU adopted a kind of inner party democracy that made this possible.

The CPGB and the Communist Platform say "that the idea dominant in Left Unity that there was a large political space to the left of Labour for a 'broad party' on a broadly left-Labourite platform and organisational principles was illusory". Republican socialists have argued this since the founding conference, but identified the fatal flaw in LU's "broadly left-Labourite platform".

I agree that "Jeremy Corbyn's victory in the Labour leadership election blew up this illusion" and that "since Corbyn's victory a part of Left Unity's members, including leading comrades, have 'voted with their feet to leave LU and join Labour'. The CPGB says: "Those who remain have been unwilling to address seriously the complete falsification of their perspective by the events in the Labour Party". This is true of Labourite socialists, but not republican socialists.

Left Unity's Labourites screwed up on the Scottish referendum, continued the 'economist' policy of avoiding the democratic revolution and the fight for democracy and are now backing the Cameron-Corbyn popular front on the European referendum. LU's attitude to the Acts of Union shows that they learnt nothing from the Scottish referendum. But now the acid test is the European referendum.

The CPGB demanded an emergency conference on (a) how to change the Labour Party, (b) adopting democratic centralism and (c) adopting a min-max communist programme for world revolution. Republican socialists have a very different perspective and agenda. We should be addressing (a) the European referendum, (b) standing candidates in elections, (c) the (minimum) social and democratic programme for UK and (d) building an alliance with the Scottish left gathered round Rise.

The CPGB conclude that rejection of their motion by the NC and the absence of any alternative proposal for serious rethinking shows that Left Unity is unable or unwilling to adopt a different

strategy and programme. Left Unity is locked into a failed strategy and will continue to decline.

In summary the CPGB went wrong because, although they embraced the so-called 'halfway house' party in practice, they did not accept it in theory. Instead of fighting for a militant minimum programme of republican democracy, a social republic and self-determination, they turned the weapon of the minimum programme into a programme about weapons. It is sad to see their shift from maximalism to Labourism - the magnet of Corbyn has now finally sucked them down the plughole of the Labour Party.

Steve Freeman
Left Unity and Rise

Peculiar

In 'The real Iowa coup' (February 4), Tom Munday argued for critical support to capitalist politician Bernie Sanders: "It was and remains correct to give critical support to Jeremy Corbyn, knowing full well that he is a left reformist, for we appreciate that he creates a space for our arguments to be heard. This is likewise true of Sanders".

The critical support tactic can sometimes be used to expose reformists within the workers' movement, but extending it to a Democrat - one of the twin parties of the American imperialist bourgeoisie - stands in stark contradiction to the basic Marxist principle of working class political independence.

The CPGB claims to uphold "the principle of working class political independence from the parties of the bourgeoisie" ('Theses on the Labour Party'). Evidently we understand the word 'principle' differently. Your political support for Sanders is only the latest in a long line of abandonments of the Marxist principle of working class political independence (see, for instance, the relevant section of the IBT's 'Bolshevism vs CPGB-ism').

Supporters of the CPGB should ask themselves why it is that the principle of working class political independence means so little in practice, while the organisational principle that the CPGB invokes to distinguish itself from other groups - ie, its peculiar definition of democratic centralism - is non-negotiable.

Alan Gibson
Cork

Ethnic ties

In an earlier letter (February 4), I referred to the dustbowl westward migration. But there was also another migration of six million African-Americans out of the rural southern states between 1910 and 1970. In sheer numbers it outranks the migration of Italians, Irish, Jews or Poles to the United States.

The pull of jobs in the north was strengthened by the efforts of labour agents sent to recruit southern workers by northern businessmen. Because so many people migrated in a short period of time, the African-American migrants were often resented by the European-American working class (more often than not immigrants themselves) who felt threatened by the influx of new labour competition. White workers couldn't hope to win unless they united with African-American workers and that wouldn't happen unless they organised on the basis of equality.

But African-American workers seeking union membership were blocked by exclusionary policies. Instead of integrating them into the union with other white workers, the unions established separate, auxiliary locals specifically for African-Americans. These were controlled by their parent locals and exercised no power. They had no vote or representation at national conventions. They were intended to maintain the status quo and were in a subservient position compared to the white union. White union members applauded union officials for implementing

discriminatory policies against African-Americans. Racism came not just from the top, but from the bottom, creating a system of divide and rule policed by white workers themselves.

In 1924, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People issued an open letter to the AFL, which read: "The negro movement as a whole is outside the ranks of the organised labour movement ... If we come to allow the formation in America of a powerful bloc of non-unionised black workers - workers who would be entitled to hate the trade union idea - all workers, black and white, will suffer the consequences."

In 1929, the NAACP again appealed to the American Federation of Labor to fight racial discrimination. In both instances, the AFL did not even bother to respond. It was not until the Congress of Industrial Organizations came into being that the position began to shift: "Negro workers, join the CIO union in your industry ... The CIO unites you with fellow workers of all races and all creeds in a common struggle for freedom, for democracy, for a better life."

Class oppression is inevitably racialised and ethnicised. If ethnic ties prove more powerful than class solidarity, employers will use ethnicity to pit one faction against another and there are those who will be gullible enough to fall for it.

Alan Johnstone
SPGB

Support Keith

We urge all socialists and trade union militants to support Keith Henderson in his case at the Trade Union Certification Office on Tuesday March 1 at 9am in front of Acas, Euston Tower, 286 Euston Road, London NW1. Following the picket, those who are free may attend the hearing at 10am.

In December 2012, Keith was dismissed from his employment with the GMB union, following his actions in carrying out the wishes of members. Keith had organised a picket of parliament on the day of action in the public-sector pensions' dispute on November 30 2011, which followed a democratic decision of GMB members employed in the House of Commons, who had voted to take strike action and to organise picket lines on the day of the strike.

In the election for general secretary, the GMB issued 610,023 ballot papers, out of which only 26,658 members returned their ballot paper, meaning that the turnout of 4.4% set possibly an all-time low for engagement in a union election. Tim Roache, the winning candidate, got 15,034 votes, meaning he obtained a mighty endorsement of 2.46% of the membership. Some mandate! The bureaucratic centralism of the GMB leaders, and particularly under the most recent leadership of Sir Paul Kenny, has led to mass alienation.

The GMB operates its general secretary election far removed from democratic considerations. The byelaws are laid out so as not to allow any chance of a lay member getting on the ballot paper. Keith was dismissed as a union officer, but he put himself forward for nomination for general secretary as early as February 2015, standing on an agreed and thorough democratic socialist manifesto.

Keith received only one nomination - that of his own branch - as a result of which the branch president and secretary, Steve Forrest and Maris Begona, were removed from office and banned for three years. This was overturned on appeal on February 2. Their crime? Non-compliance with an instruction by the regional secretary to withdraw a newsletter notifying their branch of the date of the relevant meeting and that he had declared he was seeking nomination. This victory against

the worst bureaucrats enormously strengthens Keith's case to the TUCO.

Keith was forced to go to the Certification Officer because all his avenues of appeal were exhausted within the GMB. Keith's barrister is of the opinion that they are practically certain to win the case and the GMB will have to re-run the election.

But the picket is vital. We need to know that it will be supported and that the entire left is absolutely opposed to these filthy, bureaucratic manoeuvres to prevent a lay activist from standing on a socialist rank-and-file platform for the general secretary election in the GMB.

Please contact Keith on 07450 056548 or email Keith.Henderson19@hotmail.com to promise your support.

Gerry Downing
Secretary, Grass Roots Left

War room

On February 4, the BBC ran a *Newsnight* special on Trident. In it, diplomatic and defence editor Mark Urban stated that the sole military purpose of Trident was to penetrate and overwhelm the anti-missile defence system around Moscow.

Paul Ingram of the British American Security Information Council said Trident "is about politics and it is about being able to strike at the heart of the Russian system". This is the so-called 'Moscow criterion' and it remains absolutely central to British nuclear and security policy. So, when MPs vote to renew Trident later in this parliament, they should ignore all the guff about Trident being necessary 'to keep Britain safe', to guard against unknown and unforeseeable 'threats' decades into the future or even to fend off an alien invasion, as Ronald Reagan once claimed for his Strategic Defence Initiative. The 'sole purpose' of Trident is to provide the capability to devastate Moscow and incinerate its 14 million inhabitants.

It is hardly surprising that the Russian state and indeed the Russian people can feel threatened by the capitalist powers of the west. Following *Newsnight* was *Inside the war room*, where former British military and diplomatic leaders wargamed a hypothetical 'hot war' in eastern Europe, arising from alleged Russian provocations in the three Baltic states, now members of Nato, and related to the fact there are significant ethnic Russian populations in these states.

What I found particularly shocking was the blind aggression and even basic stupidity of many of the participants, which systematically ratcheted up the tension and levels of intervention and retaliation, culminating in a tactical nuclear exchange in which the United States exploded a bomb over Russian territory.

The conclusion of the programme was interesting, surprising and revealing. The chair of the war room, former diplomat Sir Anthony Meyer, presumably acting as the prime minister/commander-in-chief, gave the news that following the US tactical nuclear strike over Russian territory, Russian intercontinental ballistic missiles appeared to be preparing for launch. Given there would only be a matter of minutes between their launch and their arrival, Sir Anthony wanted the war room to decide now what they should do if they became subject to a massive nuclear strike by Russia.

Amazingly, the majority of the war room voted not to authorise a retaliatory mass strike on Russia using Trident, on the grounds that nothing they did would be able to save the lives of millions of Brits who would be about to die; and what would be the point of then murdering tens of millions of innocent Russian civilians? That would truly be one of the most

pointless and dreadful acts in history. We never found out if the Russian ICBMs were in fact launched.

It was a shame there was no discussion or reflection by the participants after the programme. They might have considered how they as 'leaders' had blindly and stupidly managed to get into such an atrocious situation where millions would be about to die in a massive nuclear exchange. They might also have considered why in the war game the Russians had not been deterred from preparing a mass nuclear strike following the nuclear attack on their own people.

Andrew Northall
Kettering

Sad and old

If memory serves me well, during the course of the past 12 months or so that I've been a regular reader of *Weekly Worker*, you've published letters from a variety of correspondents expressing heartfelt opinions and fervent evaluations which could be summarised as follows.

That people on the Marxist-Leninist/Trotskyist wing of politics, most pertinently members of CPGB, spend their time impotently expounding hard-leftist principles without any chance whatsoever of attaining power, thus occupying the role of sad old revolutionaries dreaming in never-never land. And that all such activity constitutes nothing more than an ocean of sectarian posturing from a drowning bunch of losers.

But objective and demonstrable truth is the *only* truth worth investing in. Precisely by that same token, Marx, Lenin and Trotsky did nothing more than expose fundamental and indeed immutable socio-economic and political truths (albeit in their own particular personal contexts and historical setting). Would those various and indeed variously misguided correspondents of yours look Albert Einstein in the eye, so to speak, and tell him that he was entirely wrong?

I'd ask your correspondents whether they wish to be associated with the establishment, where precisely such a ruling force of thinking led Galileo to be designated as a vicious and disgraceful heretic (when all he did was describe the functioning of our solar system after fact-based observation resulting in an incontrovertible understanding).

Maybe more simply, more straightforwardly, I'd ask those irate and disgusted correspondents of yours to look around at the world and then justify their 'gradualist' beliefs to those refugees and migrants from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, etc. Explain their position to those butchered, bombed, impoverished and made destitute by the intrinsic and inborn imperialist urges of our capitalist nations. Console those disabled and working class UK benefits claimants now being chucked out of their accommodation, essentially in order to pay for 'austerity' and the bail-out of bankers and other elite.

Indeed, I'd ask those various correspondents of yours to go and try to sell their soft-peddling gradualist/gently-gentle reformist viewpoint to Vietnamese mothers - innocents who, still to this very day, are giving birth to babies grotesquely deformed courtesy of Agent Orange, Dow Chemical, B52s, Henry Kissinger and other such glorious elements of those arch-capitalist/high-tech proto-fascist and terrorists *par excellence*: the USA (of course, with our own nation-state tucked up cosily in bed, right there beside them).

Bruno Kretschmar
email

BDS

In the cause of imperialism

What lies behind moves to outlaw boycotts? Tony Greenstein investigates

The government recently announced that councils or other “public bodies” which engage in the boycott of goods from Israel when procuring goods or services will face “severe penalties”. The purported reason is that this undermines “community cohesion” as well as “international security”.



Simon Schama: junk history

Procurement boycotts on ethical grounds will effectively be illegal.¹ Ironically the foreign office’s ‘overseas business risk assessment’ for Israel states that the government does “not encourage or offer support” to business with the occupied territories. Its latest policy will therefore mean that following its own advice and boycotting the Jewish settlements on the West Bank will be illegal!

This decision of the government could be far wider than boycotts of Israel, however. It will affect environmental campaigns and, no matter how repressive or murderous a regime, it will be unlawful to operate any sort of ethical boycott. Refusing to trade with Saudi Arabia will be illegal, although the government itself was recently forced to pull a prison contract.

Why therefore is it proposing to ban boycotts now? Less than six years ago David Cameron described Gaza as a “prison camp”,² so why the change - not only in rhetoric, but substance? Cameron made his comments during a visit to Turkey, whose president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, had just seen nine of his citizens murdered on the ship, the Mavi Marmara, by Israeli naval commandos as the Gaza Freedom Flotilla tried to break the blockade. Relations then between Turkey, a key member of Nato, and Israel were at an all-time low. Today the situation is completely different and we have an informal alliance over Syria between Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Israel.

The British move is neither unique nor exceptional. In France the situation is even worse. BDS (boycott, divestment and sanctions) has effectively been rendered illegal following a decision of the constitutional court: those who organise boycotts of Israel are apparently guilty of inciting racial hatred or discrimination.³

In Germany there is a virtual consensus, especially on the left, around the idea that support for BDS or opposition to Israel’s military occupation is equivalent to anti-Semitism.⁴ Volker Beck, a leading Green MP, has pressed the Christian Democrat administration of Angela Merkel to declare supporters of a boycott anti-Semitic. Indeed Beck went even further. He asked whether the German BDS campaign was under observation of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution: ie, subject to the attentions of the German security police.⁵

Nor are *Die Grünen* alone. The Left Party, Die Linke, and its MPs, with a couple of exceptions, have taken a similar stance. In December 2014 the party’s leader, the former Stalinist, Gregor Gysi, attacked two Israeli anti-Zionists, Max Blumenthal and David Sheen, who were visiting the Bundestag, as “anti-Semitic”.⁶

The question is, why is all this happening and in what context?

The Middle East is in a vortex of instability, with the conflict in Syria having become a proxy war, sucking in the imperialist powers and their protégés, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States, as well as Russia, Iran and Hezbollah. Israel has been quietly giving support to the jihadi groups, al-Nusra, Ahrar al Sham and Jaish al-Islam.

At a time when the Middle East is more volatile than ever, when the Saudi regime is under threat and bleeding financially, with IS strong in Iraq

and destabilising Libya and with the murderous Egyptian regime also facing mounting opposition, Israel is a source of stability in an unstable region.

Although lip-service is paid by the leaders of the United States and Europe to a two-state solution, nobody of any importance actually believes that it is possible any more. Occasionally people like Daniel Shapiro, the US ambassador to Israel, will raise the problem of maintaining indefinitely a military occupation over millions of Palestinians and two systems of law - one for Palestinians and another for Jewish settlers. It is a way of politely hinting that Israel might possibly want to think of the problems that maintaining an apartheid society might create if the situation continues indefinitely. Shapiro was rewarded with an anti-Semitic outburst from Netanyahu’s former adviser, Aviv Bushinsky, who called him a “little Jew-boy”.⁷

Of course if the proponents of boycotting Israel had used such language, then we would have reams of denunciations from rent-a-mouth MPs such as John Mann or Louise Ellman. Learned articles would have been written by Zionist scribes. We would have been told how this proved that opposition to Israel is motivated by anti-Semitism. But because this comes from a prominent Zionist such matters are passed over in polite silence.

One of the leading exponents of the ‘new anti-Semitism’ is the BBC’s very own junk historian, Simon Schama. In an article, ‘The left’s problem with Jews has a long and miserable history’,⁸ Schama focuses on Oxford University Labour Club, whose co-chairperson, Alex Chalmers, resigned last week because the club had decided to support Israel Apartheid week. This was, it seems, convincing proof that the club was full to the brim of anti-Semites.

Even by the BBC’s standards, Schama’s article is mediocre, lumping in the murder of French Jews in a kosher supermarket by Isis gunmen with the BDS movement, without even bothering to explain what the connection is. It is not even the McCarthyite technique of guilt by association - more smear by association. Schama falsely complains that the left ignores Saudi Arabia, when it should be obvious that it is the right and David Cameron (and formerly Tony Blair) who defend trade with and bolster the credentials of that regime. “Why,” he asks, “is the rage so conspicuously selective? Or, to put it another way, why is it so much easier to hate the Jews?”

This encompasses two of the favourite techniques of Zionist apologists. Why is Israel singled out? The answer is, of course, because Israel is a Jewish state, in which Jews have privileges over Palestinians and non-Jews, in much the same way as whites did in South Africa.

There was a time when the left

campaigning against South Africa, because it, like Israel, was an apartheid state. Were we being racist then? Indeed if you campaign against any country’s human rights violation, according to this ‘logic’ you are clearly singling it out. Those of us who oppose Turkey’s genocidal massacres of the Kurds are presumably died-in-the-wool anti-Turkish racists.

Note the seamless elision between campaigning against Israel and hating Jews. Schama is a ruling class historian who presented the six-part *History of the Jews* for the BBC. Inaccurate, biased and factually wrong, it was a Zionist version of history.

The affair of Oxford University Labour Club is symptomatic of how imperialism uses the right’s false anti-racism, in the guise of opposition to anti-Semitism, in order to defend and perpetuate Zionist racism. Opposition to racism becomes, in a conjuring trick worthy of the most deceptive magician, support for anti-Semitism.

It is somewhat unfortunate that the *Morning Star*, in a muddled leader entitled ‘No place for anti-Semitism’,⁹ welcomed the decision of the Labour Party to hold an inquiry into alleged anti-Semitism at Oxford Labour Club. There is nothing to investigate and this inquiry is nothing more than an attempted witch-hunt. Unfortunately Jeremy Corbyn, who has himself been the subject of accusations of anti-Semitism, has decided to keep his head down rather than supporting those who are being vilified at Oxford.

Socialists, however, should be clear. The tactic of boycott is one which has historically been used to highlight oppression. From the boycott of slave-grown sugar in the Caribbean in the 18th century, to the boycott of the English land agent, Captain Boycott (who at least gave us the name), by Irish tenant farmers, to the Jewish and labour-movement boycott of Nazi Germany in 1933 (which the Zionists scabbed on), to the boycott of apartheid in South Africa, this weapon has been an expression of solidarity with the oppressed.

All of the above boycotts were opposed in their time by the right. It is no accident that the Tories are seeking to make the boycott illegal and equally it is no surprise that New Labour would like to outlaw comparisons between Israel and South Africa. However, four Jewish groups have come together to condemn the Tories’ proposals in a letter to *The Independent*¹⁰ and another letter was sent to *The Guardian* by 22 Jewish people protesting at the witch-hunt against Oxford University Labour Club.¹¹ It is incumbent on Jewish socialists, in particular, to reject those who purport to speak in their name ●

Notes

1. www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/the-governments-ban-on-boycotting-israel-contradicts-its-own-advice-on-doing-business-with-israel-a6881146.html
2. www.theguardian.com/politics/2010/jul/27/david-cameron-gaza-prison-camp
3. http://forward.com/news/breaking-news/323207/france-court-upholds-bds-is-discrimination-ruling
4. www.i24news.tv/en/news/international/europe/63723-150309-germany-says-bds-is-not-anti-semitic
5. See http://azvsas.blogspot.co.uk/2015/11/germanys-racist-green-mp-volker-beck.html
6. http://azvsas.blogspot.co.uk/2014/12/the-cowardice-of-gregor-gysi-die-linke.html
7. www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/daniel-shapiro-aviv-bushinsky_us_569fa497e4b0875553e26b9e
8. *Financial Times* February 19 2016
9. www.morningstaronline.co.uk/a-5785-No-place-for-anti-semitism-1-2#.VsvS7sv0xjX18.2.16
10. www.independent.co.uk/voices/letters/letters-boycott-ban-tories-side-with-oppressors-again-a6877531.html
11. www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/23/antisemitic-or-just-against-the-israeli-governments-oppressive-actions

ACTION

CPGB podcasts

Every Monday we upload a podcast commenting on the current political situation. In addition, the site features voice files of public meetings and other events: <http://cpgb.org.uk/home/podcasts>.

London Communist Forum

Sunday February 28, 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: chapter 3 (‘Parliamentarism v direct action’), section 2: ‘The fear of action’. Organised by CPGB: www.cpgb.org.uk.

Radical Anthropology Group

Tuesday March 1, 6.45pm: Introduction to social and biological anthropology, Daryll Forde seminar room, Anthropology Building, 14 Taviton Street, off Gordon Square, London WC1. ‘A special world of time: lived myths of the Bayaka Pygmies of central Africa’. Speaker: Jerome Lewis.

Organised by Radical Anthropology Group: radicalanthropologygroup.org.

Who is watching you?

Friday February 26, 7pm start: Public meeting, Chats Palace, 42-44 Brooksby’s Walk, London E9. No to state infiltration of protest groups. Speakers include John McDonnell.

Organised by Undercover Research Group: <http://undercoverresearch.net>.

Stop Trident

Saturday February 27, 12 noon: National demonstration. Assemble Marble Arch, London W1 for march to Trafalgar Square, London WC2 for mass rally.

Organised by Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament: <http://cnduk.org>.

Revolutionary or dreamer?

Saturday February 27, 1pm: Public meeting, Red Shed, Vicarage Street, Wakefield. The life of William Morris.

Organised by Wakefield Socialist History Group:

www.theredshed.org.uk/SocialHist.html.

A cooperative agenda

Saturday February 27, 10am to 2pm: Public meeting, YHA Manchester, Potato Wharf, Castlefield, Manchester, M3. Free entry.

Organised by Cooperatives UK: www.uk.coop/uniting-co-ops/events-calendar/devo-manc-co-operative-agenda-greater-manchester.

Support Keith

Tuesday March 1, 9am: Picket, Trade Union Certification Office, Euston Tower, 286 Euston Road, London NW1. Support Keith Henderson in his case against the GMB union.

Organised by Grass Roots Left:

<http://grassrootsleftunitie.blogspot.co.uk>.

Defending adult education

Saturday March 5, 10.30am to 5pm: Conference, School of Oriental and African Studies, Thornhaugh Street, London WC1.

Organised by London region UCU: www.ucu.org.uk/londoncommittee.

Organise the unorganised

Saturday March 5, 10am: Yorkshire conference of National Shop Stewards Network, Ebor Court, Skinner Street, Leeds LS1.

Organised by Yorkshire Shop Stewards Network:

www.facebook.com/Yorkshire-Shop-Stewards-Network-156443814473411.

Imperialism, war and the Middle East

Saturday March 5, 10.30am: Public meeting, Institute room, Liverpool Quaker Meeting House, 22 School Lane, Liverpool L1. Speaker: Yasmine Mather.

Organised by local socialists: study4socialism@gmail.com

The Corbyn effect

Monday March 7, 7.30pm: Debate - ‘Dream or nightmare for Labour?’ Phoenix Centre, 26 Malling Street, Lewes. Debated with Zoe Williams and Neal Lawson.

Organised by Lewes Labour Party: gill@leweslabour.org.uk.

Corbyn for PM

Wednesday March 9, 7.30pm: Evening out, Edinburgh Festival Theatre, 13-29 Nicolson Street, Edinburgh EH8. Line-up of comedians, singers, campaigners and poets for Jeremy Corbyn. Part of national tour.

Organised by JC4PM tour: www.jc4pmtour.com.

Stop scapegoating Muslims

Thursday March 10, 6.30 pm: Public meeting, Bloomsbury Baptist Church, 235 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2. Speakers include: Salma Yaqoob, Lindsey German, Moazzam Begg.

Organised by Stop the War Coalition: <http://www.stopwar.org.uk>.

National march for homes

Sunday March 13, 12 noon: Assemble Lincoln’s Inn Fields, London WC2. Organised by Kill the Housing Bill: <https://killthehousingbill.wordpress.com>.

EU referendum debate

Sunday March 13, 1.30 pm: Public meeting, Cock Tavern, 23 Phoenix Road, London NW1. Speakers: Graham Durham (Leave); Gerry Downing (Remain); Ian Donovan (Active boycott).

Organised by Socialist Fight: <http://socialistfight.com>.

Corbyn for PM

Tuesday March 15, 7.45pm: Artists, activists and celebs for Jeremy, Tyne Theatre and Opera House, 117 Westgate Road, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1.

Organised by JC4PM-TOUR: www.jc4pmtour.com.

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.

LEFT UNITY**Strategic bankruptcy confirmed**

Localists score a practical victory. A directionless leadership blows it with Momentum. Communist Platform makes its final bow. **Jack Conrad** reports on an eventful February 20 meeting of the LU national council



Politically the organisation has its head up its ...

Only 19 NC members attended the Birmingham meeting. A disappointing turnout, but then Left Unity is at an advanced stage of organisational and political decomposition.

The main debate centred on elections and the relationship with Momentum and the Labour Party. Leaving aside the Communist Platform minority on the extreme left, there were two opposed camps.

The first camp was fronted by Richard Farnos - Croydon Left Unity and LGBT caucus. His motion maintains that, with Momentum excluding members of other parties, it is set to become "just another internal lobby inside the Labour Party". This will make defeat for an already weak, embattled and ineffective Corbyn leadership "more likely".

The operative conclusion being that LU should reverse the decision of the November 2015 national conference to put election work on hold. Actually the agreed resolution was a classic bureaucratic fudge: it means different things to different people. Suspending "national election" work left the door wide open for those who wish to interpret it as business as usual when it comes to local elections.

The Farnos motion not only declared that branches "shall be free" to field candidates against the Labour Party in this year's local elections. It went a step further. Westminster by-elections will be considered too - if the branch is committed, if the NC approves.

The second camp was fronted by Doug Thorpe - Haringey Left

Unity and one of the London region reps. Basically he fielded two killer amendments:

1. Momentum's local membership criteria is "not yet clear".

2. "Until the next national conference, Left Unity will not stand candidates in national, regional or local elections."

The comrade wants to establish a friendly working relationship with Momentum. Anything interpreted by the Labour left as a hostile act should therefore be avoided. LU's election work has never been marked by success. Hence, the best thing for LU to do is bide its time and concentrate on campaigning work.

The debate showed an NC divided down the middle.

Those backing the Farnos motion included Felicity Dowling, LU's sole remaining principal speaker. Despite occupying a crucial national position, her contribution focused almost entirely on her native Liverpool. Various Labour councillors are awful when it comes to the cuts. The mayor is even worse. The same localist spirit informed comrades Sharon McCourt, Mathew Caygill, Stephen Hall and Pete McLaren. There was a corresponding tendency to downplay developments in the Labour Party and to write off Momentum. Eg, the Labour Party has not changed and Jeremy Corbyn is trapped in a bureaucratic machine dominated by the right. A number of comrades hoped that when Corbyn "predictably falls" there will be a mass influx into Left Unity.

Jack Conrad disagreed. Political strategy begins with international

and national tasks, circumstances and interests. Not blinkered individual experience and petty local concerns.

True, Momentum has been unclear

about who can be a member. However, the fact that Jill Mountford, a prominent member of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, was elected onto Momentum's national committee, speaks for itself (true, she has since been expelled from the Labour Party by the right-dominated compliance unit, but an appeal to the NEC will surely follow). Moreover, it was both inevitable and politically correct for Momentum to adopt a clear Labour Party orientation. It is foolish to write off Momentum. It has not even had its founding conference.

As for the Labour Party, of course it has changed. Historically the Labour right has studiously built up the Bonapartist powers of the leader. Corbyn is now using that extraordinarily elevated vantage point against a right which is demonstrably on the back foot. Eg, Momentum supporters swept the board in elections for Young Labour's leadership. Moreover, Labour's membership has doubled in size. Every constituency Labour Party is now a battleground. The right in the Parliamentary Labour Party knows that if it triggered a leadership contest, no matter who they stood, their candidate would be utterly crushed and humiliated.

A number of supporters of the Thorpe amendments admitted that much of what Jack Conrad said was accurate. Amongst them Andrew Burgin, national treasurer, and Terry Conway of Socialist Resistance. Moreover, these comrades were adamant: Left Unity is not a loose federation - localism is a recipe for disaster. Kate Hudson, national secretary, adopted a rather more diplomatic tone. But she too favoured the Thorpe amendments.

When it came to the vote, there was some considerable confusion. At first it appeared that the Farnos motion had succeeded. Albeit by a single vote. But, after the chair, Fred Leplat, agreed that the politics involved ought to be clarified, the scales tipped. There were eight votes for the Farnos motion and nine for the Thorpe amendments. Jack Conrad and Yasmine Mather abstained.

Somewhat bizarrely we then saw a coming together of the localist faction and the leadership faction around the localist agenda: LU will back anti-cuts candidates against Labour! Hence LU members simultaneously bar themselves from Momentum, while not reaping the rewards of public name recognition. Surely the worst of both possible worlds. Once again Jack Conrad and Yasmine Mather abstained.

The NC then arrived at the motion submitted in the name of comrades Conrad and Mather on behalf of the Communist Platform. Both of us spoke.

LU models itself on Europe's soft left anti-austerity parties. But there can be no middle course between a capitalism in crisis and a historically delayed socialism. Such projects are bound to come to grief. Moreover, LU was founded on the false assumption that Labour had become virtually indistinguishable from the Tories and Lib Dems.

The November 2015 national conference woefully failed to undertake a radical reorientation. That despite the abject capitulation of Syriza and the stunning success of Corbyn.

Therefore our call for an emergency national conference.

As expected, the Communist Platform motion lost. There were two votes in favour, one abstention and 16 against.

Because of this final declaration of strategic bankruptcy, I made a brief statement. Our four members of the NC are resigning from LU with immediate effect. We urge all Communist Platform members to follow suit. As for the Communist Platform, with the prior agreement of its steering committee, it is now dissolved.

While comrade Mathew Caygill welcomed our decision to resign, other comrades were much more generous. In turn we made the point that, though our engagement with LU is at an end, it had many positive features ●

Our motion

Left Unity modelled itself on soft-left anti-austerity organisations, such as Die Linke, Syriza and Podemos. This went hand in hand with claims that the Labour Party was irreformable, had to all intents and purposes become just another capitalist party, etc. The operative conclusion being that there was a wide space on the left of the Labour Party for an organisation committed to the 'spirit of 45'.

Because of the victory of Jeremy Corbyn, because of the decision of Momentum to emphasise internal battles and changing the Labour Party, because of the decision of Momentum to bar members of organisations which stand candidates against Labour, it is clear that Left Unity is now hopelessly adrift strategically.

Since the foundation of Left Unity, national conferences have voted down motions sponsored by the Communist Platform that in their totality would have provided the vital elements of a Marxist programme. The last national conference soundly rejected the Communist Platform's perspective of fighting for affiliation to the Labour Party and transforming the Labour Party: ie, into a permanent

united front of the working class. The last national conference also soundly rejected moves to reorganise Left Unity so as to base it on the principles of democratic centralism.

At the last national council meeting we were informed that only national conference can alter Left Unity policy. That between conferences the national council exists merely to implement agreed policy (this was in the context of debating our attitude towards the EU referendum: ie, the call for an active boycott was in effect ruled out of order).

Hence, if Left Unity is to have any worthwhile future, an emergency national conference must be called as a matter of extreme urgency.

The emergency national conference must happen within one month. To ensure the maximum attendance of Left Unity members, the emergency conference should be held in London.

There should be three main items on the agenda.

1. Labour: The existing attitudes towards the Labour Party and Momentum were always mistaken. Fudging on whether or not to stand candidates against Labour is no longer sustainable. Left Unity

should join those calling for the Labour Party to change its rules so as to once again allow political parties of the working class to affiliate. Left Unity must commit itself to radically democratising the Labour Party and equipping it with a genuine socialist programme (not a revival of the old clause-four state capitalism).

2. Organisation: Left Unity must be reorganised on the basis of the principles of democratic centralism: ie, unity in action, freedom of criticism. As part of that, the direct election of principal speakers, media officer, national secretary, treasurer, etc, would be ended. National conference would elect the national council and the national council would appoint and replace officers as it sees fit.

3. Programme: Left Unity must arm itself with a Marxist programme: ie, something along the lines of the classic minimum-maximum programmes of the German Social Democratic Party, French Workers' Party, the Russian Social Democratic Party, etc.

Jack Conrad
Yasmine Mather
On behalf of Communist Platform

LRC

Uncritical support for Corbyn

David Shearer of Labour Party Marxists reports on last weekend's LRC conference

The February 20 'special general meeting' of the Labour Representation Committee was a strange affair, not least because of the poor attendance of only around 150 comrades. The leadership had gone out of its way to insist that there could be no annual general meeting - the 2015 AGM should have been called in November - because of the election of Jeremy Corbyn.

The new circumstances apparently meant that no motions from members or affiliates could be entertained, and there could be no elections for the executive or national committee. But, apart from that, the meeting had all the features of an AGM - officers' reports and constitutional amendments, for instance.

The reason why only the leadership's own motions were permitted was obvious. You and I might propose an 'extremist' policy or course of action that might embarrass comrade Corbyn and his number two, John McDonnell, at a time when they are under constant scrutiny and attack in the media. So the membership was permitted only to move amendments to the leadership's own motions.

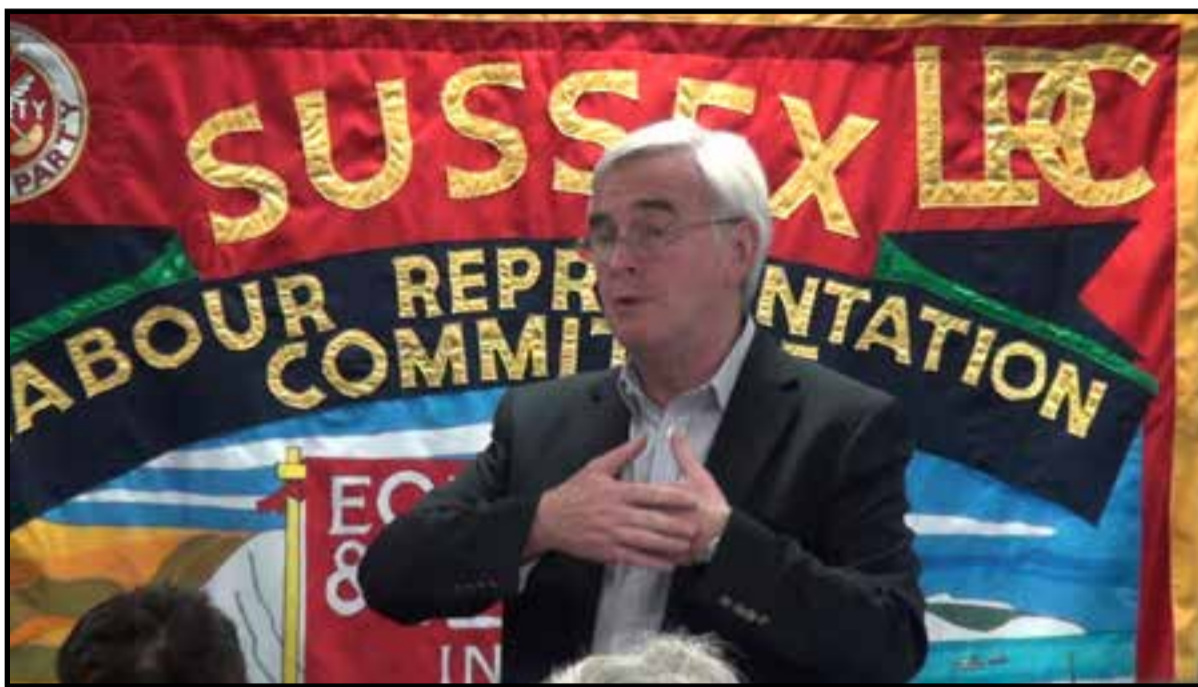
Having said that, however, the NC's statement - 'After Corbyn's victory - building the movement' - contained some useful points. For example, it correctly stated: "While participating in, and encouraging, industrial and social struggles, at the present time the LRC has to emphasise the internal battles in the movement." It also declared: "... we need to work at every level in the unions to encourage participation, democracy and transparency ..." Once again, quite correct - although the leadership was not best pleased by the attempt of Labour Party Marxists to add some meat to the bones when it came to union democracy (see below).

However, there was certainly some ambiguity over the LRC's original and continued purpose. The statement claimed that, unlike others on the left, the LRC had always accepted that "the radicalisation of working people will at some point attempt to create a mass left wing within Labour".

However, NC member Mike Phipps usefully pointed out that the "origin" of the LRC actually lay in the possibility of an "alternative to Labour" during the days when the right was firmly in control. In fact I seem to recall comrade McDonnell himself hinting on more than one occasion that such a possibility was not ruled out. But let's not talk about that!

Nevertheless, taking into account such an "origin", what today is the LRC's purpose, now that the mass-membership Momentum has come into being? The statement read: "There is no contradiction between the LRC participating fully in the creation of a national network of local and internet-based Momentum groups and maintaining the existence of our own organisation - for the time being." Indeed it foresaw a time when the LRC "has outlived its usefulness". This point was also made by comrade McDonnell himself in his address to the conference. He thought that "maybe in the future" there will be "just one organisation", but apparently we are "not ready for that yet".

Mick Brooks, in presenting the leadership's statement, said that Momentum was a "genuine mass movement" and we "have got to be in there". The LRC has a "critical political role to play", he continued - it is our job to help shape Momentum's politics, it seems (even though the NC wants to keep those politics within safe bounds - ie, bounds determined by the rightwing media and its eagerness to blacken the



John McDonnell: left, centre and right

name of the new Labour leadership in whatever way it can).

As the statement put it, our aim is to "advance the Corbyn agenda in the party as a whole" (my emphasis). The overwhelming majority at the meeting favoured more or less uncritical support for Corbyn - there was a clear consensus that the most important thing was to get him into No10 in 2020. According to Jackie Walker, speaking for the NC in the afternoon session on Momentum, we should "go to meetings, knock on doors" to "get Jeremy elected as prime minister". There were several other such comments. Many were couched in the language of socialism - including the Labourite 'socialism' of the 1945 Attlee government.

Despite this, the meeting accepted an amendment to the statement, moved by Sacha Ismail of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, which called on Corbyn and McDonnell to be "politically bolder" - it specified "taxing the rich, nationalising the banks, reversing all cuts" and explaining how such demands fit into a vision of a "different society from capitalism". Within Momentum, the amendment proposed, the LRC should fight to go "beyond 'progressive' and 'new politics' towards a clearer political programme based on class politics, working class political representation and socialism".

One comrade said the amendment "misunderstands where we are" - Corbyn and McDonnell are in a "precarious position". We shouldn't tell them "we know better", that "they're not being bold enough". Our task is not to advise - "our task is to build".

Together

While there were guest speakers from the junior doctors and Heathrow 13 campaigns, the star speaker was undoubtedly the shadow chancellor. John McDonnell was pleased to bring a message of "solidarity and thanks" from Jeremy Corbyn - who had, after all, been a "founder member" of the LRC.

Comrade McDonnell stated that the shadow cabinet was an example of the Labour "left, right and centre working together" - the implication being that this can only be a good thing. But the left was gaining ground: "When they realised we had momentum, they started taking some of our ideas." According to him, most of the Labour right had now "bought into our idea of Labour becoming a social movement again".

So Labour as a whole, it seems, is now attempting to "transform the social

and economic system" and establish a "radically fairer and more equal economy". And the LRC's role should be "to the fore" - that of "campaigning to develop policy". We should "aim for the election of a socialist government" in 2020. It was the "opportunity of a lifetime" - what he had been waiting for all these years: "Now it's here, let's grab it with both hands."

Following a standing ovation, it was announced there would be questions from the floor, although only three were taken. In response, comrade McDonnell stated, among other things, that if there was a challenge to the Corbyn leadership, the left would "organise just as hard" as last time - but it would "do it in a way that holds the party together". Answering a question from Pete Firmin on the party's attitude to the European Union and the coming referendum, comrade McDonnell said that Labour should be "working with socialist and social democratic parties across Europe" in order to achieve "a workers' Europe, a social Europe". Otherwise we would be left with a "capitalist club".

He ended by saying: "Now we are the Labour Party. We're the mainstream!" Which earned him a second standing ovation.

Following this, Mick Brooks presented the leadership's statement. He began by stating that we were attending a special general meeting, rather than an AGM, because it "was not a question of business as usual". Since the 1980s Britain had been dominated by rightwing politics, where the situation for socialists was unfavourable. But now there is "radicalisation to the right and to the left". In contradiction to McDonnell's claim of a growing unity, comrade Brooks said that within Labour Corbyn is "surrounded by enemies". Our job was to mobilise his potential support and "channel it into the Labour Party".

Liz Davies spoke next from the platform. She was delighted to be "back in the Labour Party" after a couple of decades in organisations like the Socialist Alliance and Left Unity. Then she had thought that Blair and Brown had "changed Labour irrevocably", but "I am delighted I was wrong." Now Labour was once again opposed to the "wicked" Tory policies on welfare, housing, migration and so on.

Bolt-on

The first amendment to the NC statement was moved by Pete Firmin representing Brent Trades Council. This mandated the NC to "call the overdue

2015 AGM within three months". The last AGM had been in November 2014 - when comrade Firmin himself had been elected political secretary - and there was no real reason why we should not now have a proper conference, where a full range of motions are heard and the leadership is elected/re-elected.

The excuses given by a range of NC and EC speakers opposing this were truly abysmal. The intention was to "call an AGM as soon after the Labour Party conference as possible" - didn't comrade Firmin know that an AGM "takes time and money to organise"? It had been "a difficult year" and now was not the time for "the usual resolution-passing" (unless they are resolutions from the leadership, of course). It would be "an enormous distraction" to organise a "second major event".

But Graham Bash, LRC treasurer and editor of *Labour Briefing*, was the most embarrassing: "For goodness sake, in the next three months there are local elections", plus lots of local Momentum meetings, he said. Organising the AGM would "take the LRC out of politics" and we shouldn't let such things "get in the way of the struggle outside".

Other comrades, including Andrew Berry, pointed out that democracy was not a "bolt-on extra" and there was no reason why we could not fully engage in politics while preparing for an AGM. Although the amendment was defeated, the vote was close enough to necessitate a count - there were 35 in favour and 57 against.

This was followed by the LPM amendment mentioned above. This stated: "The fight to democratise the Labour Party cannot be separated from the fight to democratise the trade unions." It was essential to ensure that both Labour and union officers are fully accountable and recallable, and are paid only the average wage of a skilled worker. The amendment put forward several other concrete proposals - we should, for example, aim to abolish the Bonapartist post of Labour leader.

In introducing the amendment, Stan Keable insisted that democracy must be seen to be implemented. Democracy was our best weapon against the class enemy, in that it could help to transform our movement into a genuinely powerful force. That applies to the trade union movement as well as to the Labour Party.

Once again there were some very weak arguments against such a basic proposition. One comrade said that it was "not for us to tell our affiliates how they should organise", while another

said that at last we have our own leader and yet here we have Labour Party Marxists making the "mad" proposal to abolish the post! Surely everyone knew it was our job to "get behind Jeremy's agenda"? And you would have to be "bonkers" to expect him to get by on a worker's wage.

LPM's Jim Grant argued that if it was wrong for us to tell the unions how to organise, presumably we should not 'interfere' in their affairs by calling on them to support the junior doctors, for example. But it was to no avail: the amendment was defeated, with about 25 comrades voting in favour.

Unpleasant

After the lunch break NC members Michael Calderbank and Jackie Walker introduced the session on Momentum. Comrade Calderbank said that Momentum was "crucial to the Corbyn movement" and to "getting Labour elected" in 2020, while comrade Walker stated that the aim must be to double Momentum's membership. She was very enthusiastic about her local Momentum group and its 'consensus democracy' - "and, you know, it works!" What is more, "If you say something unpleasant, we ask you to leave!"

Comrade Walker also thought it was better to have "more people who don't have experience" coming into Momentum than members or ex-members of the organised left. But there were "too few blacks and too few women" - which was all down to people (like members of the experienced left no doubt) "saying unpleasant things" and others (like herself, it seems) "being intimidated".

In a similar vein Andrew Berry had raised a point of order in an earlier session objecting to the use of certain words - he specified "losers", "mad" and "bonkers" - the last two being directed against LPM. We don't mind, Andrew, honestly!

The final session dealt with organisational matters, which revealed the poor state of the LRC. As Norrette Moore for the executive said, "Last August we got down to about £100 in the bank." This was one of the reasons why the "very large national committee" had to be streamlined. The 'streamlining' consisted, amongst other things, of a constitutional change that would end the current two-tier structure, whereby the executive committee "takes proposals to a national committee". Instead there would be a single national executive committee. The NC was proposing that the AGM (when it is eventually called) should elect not only the NEC, but eight individual officers (at least four of whom "should identify as female"), including a "treasurer", "web manager" and "administrator".

Our amendment called for all officers to be elected by the NEC itself, not the AGM. In moving it, I pointed out that very few LRC members knew which of those standing for election would make a good "web manager", for instance. What is more, if the comrade elected turned out to be a total incompetent, then, under the current method of electing officers, there would be nothing anyone could do - they had been elected by the membership and could not be removed until the next AGM.

But comrade Moore said that if we elected the committee as a whole and gave them the job of allocating the various responsibilities from amongst themselves, that would make them a "clique". No, I'm not sure how she worked that one out either. In any case, the amendment was lost, with, once more, around 25 voting for it ●

EUROPE

A carnival of reaction

Neither side in the EU referendum campaign deserves leftwing support, argues **Paul Demarty**

**David Cameron: why support him?**

What a show David Cameron is putting on for us! I last wrote about his peacock-display of 'renegotiating' Britain's obligations to the European Union a few weeks ago ('Cameron's chauvinist chicanery' *Weekly Worker* February 4), but in the intervening time the dramatic pace has barely let up, as we proceeded through the final negotiations to the fixing of an in-out referendum for June 23.

In doing so, Cameron has succeeded, if nothing else, in inventing a whole new genre of drama, combining the staged combat of professional wrestling, the inevitable betrayals of Shakespearean tragedy (*et tu, Boris?*) and the rowdy audience participation of a Christmas panto. As in the run-up to Donald Tusk's initial offer, we were again treated to a fabricated 'race against time', as the 'negotiations' reached a 'crucial stage'. Cabinet meetings were cancelled, although perhaps only to delay slightly the government's down-the-middle split on the small matter of whether the exercise was worth a damn.

Sure enough, the big names have fallen into one camp or the other. Michael Gove, a sophisticated reactionary eccentric, is for leaving, and so is Iain Duncan Smith, the 'quiet man'. But most spectacular was, of course, Boris Johnson's decision to plump for the 'out' side. Johnson is himself a man with a theatrical air, no doubt gleaned from all that training in the classics he likes to rub in our faces. After a series of failed attempts on Cameron's part to convince him of the wisdom of staying, he engineered a media scrum outside his front door, and told them that, with a heavy heart, he had decided to go for Brexit.

Johnson has faced persistent accusations that all this is part of a scheme to get the top job himself. Indeed, the shortest possible route to vacating the position of Conservative Party leader, short of murder, is Brexit. We may commend the patience of the two other likely candidates in that event, George Osborne and Theresa May, who have stuck with Cameron. The trouble for them is that they have sold *themselves* a faulty bill of goods. Cameron's negotiations are worthless, and

are seen to be worthless.

An official spokesman for No10, in the bland way of these people, asserted in response to Johnson's apostasy: "We want Britain to have the best of both worlds: all the advantages of the jobs and investment that come with being in the EU, without the downsides of being in the euro and open borders." Yet Cameron's 'deal' is nothing of the kind. The euro is just noise - nobody is joining that embattled currency any time soon. As for open borders, what has Cameron got to show off on that score? Merely his emergency brake, whereby, with the permission of sufficient numbers of other member-states, he will be able to reduce in-work benefits to levels comparable with a migrant's country of origin.

It is hardly surprising, then, that the anti-EU forces in the British establishment are rampant, even though their forces are disorganised. Currently there are three campaigns: Vote Leave, Leave.EU and Grassroots Out - the latter two of which are Ukip front organisations and the former riven with bitter infighting. (vote Leave's main problem seems to be Dominic Cummings, a former spin doctor for Gove and a man so overtly determined to fight a hard, dirty campaign that he is nicknamed 'Colonel Kurtz'). Yet they cannot fail to do well out of Cameron's silliness, and indeed they have done.

Underlying this is, first of all, the fact that the Eurosceptics have long cottoned onto Cameron's dilemma: anything that can be agreed without a treaty change is barely worth having. Encroachment on free movement within the EU is definitely the stuff of treaties. The other much-trumpeted 'success' of the negotiations - the exclusion of Britain from any clauses relating to 'ever closer union' - is likewise a promissory note due at the next treaty change.

At this point in time, however, it is difficult to even imagine a new treaty. The Lisbon treaty scraped through by the skin of its teeth, after the Irish initially rejected it in a referendum. That was six years ago - six years in which populism of the left and (mostly) right has entered very definitely into the ascendant in the EU, and in which

the EU project has been badly scarred by the calamitous effects of global economic woes on many of its member-states. Suffice to say, things will have to calm down a lot before that particular circus tours again.

Secondly, there is a particular wing of the establishment that has been rabidly anti-EU for decades, and that is the rightwing press. It is difficult to think of a paper anywhere on the right half of the spectrum that supports continued membership. Pick up a paper these days and you could be forgiven for thinking Panzer tanks had been parked on every lawn in Surrey.

We expect that most capitalists and City pinstripes will support continued EU membership, with a beady eye on the year-end bonus. One who will *not* is Rupert Murdoch, who has been a fervent and vigorous opponent of European unity since the early days. We do not expect his papers to change their line. Perhaps the French-resident Jonathan Harmsworth, who owns

the *Daily Mail*, may take a different view; but his paper's entire business model is based on exaggerating the common fears of the petty bourgeoisie to the point of psychotic delirium: if the paper were to call suddenly for remaining in the EU, having previously even run pieces supporting Marine Le Pen in elections over that issue, it would probably cause riots all over the home counties.

Marginal left

In amongst all this, the left is pretty marginal. In the 'stay' camp, we have most prominently the Labour leadership, and it has to be said that Jeremy Corbyn has made a pretty good fist of it. He has made the obvious point that the outcome of Cameron's negotiations is utterly immaterial to the case for or against EU membership, and pointed to longer-term attempts to cooperate with European social democrats and 'socialists' to get an EU reformed in a more progressive way. From within the parameters of left Labourism, this is a perfectly reasonable position, but we doubt he would have any more success in this venture than Cameron has had with his.

In the 'out' camp, we have the Labour Leave campaign headed by the idiosyncratic rightwinger (and former International Marxist Group member) Kate Hoey. We also saw George Galloway take the stage with Nigel Farage, in a bizarre rerun of the Enoch Powell-Tony Benn alliance that fought in the last referendum on Europe to take Britain out in 1975, almost as soon as we had got in.

Further down the bill, the left is more sharply divided, although we must note that many who previously would have been sympathetic to Euroscepticism have taken such a fright from the odious character of the 'out' campaign as it actually exists that they have swung behind an 'in' vote. Chief among these is Socialist Resistance, that degenerate Trotskyist remnant; trust these comrades to find only negative reasons for doing anything.

Others are keeping the nationalist flag flying. As far as the *Morning Star's* Communist Party of Britain goes, that is hardly surprising; the 'official communists' historic opposition to the EU and its predecessors was based on the geostrategic objective of moving European countries into political neutrality *vis-à-vis* the Soviet Union, and ultimately into Comecon and the Warsaw Pact. This is no longer on the table, but the zombified corpse of this policy shambles on, today justified only by the need to protect 'our' industry and 'our' jobs, etc.

The Socialist Party in England and Wales imbibed this politics indirectly through its accommodation to left Labourism over many decades, which in turn took its political influence somewhat from the old Communist Party.

Tying itself in more ludicrous knots is the Socialist Workers Party, which has headlined an editorial thus: "Finish off David Cameron - vote to leave the EU" (*Socialist Worker* February 16). As ever, any hint of strategic reasoning is utterly subordinated to the task of inconveniencing whoever happens to be the prime minister at the time. Yes, comrades, Brexit will finish off David Cameron. *Who will replace him?*

"Rather than surrender the terrain of the referendum to David Cameron and Nigel Farage, the left must present its own distinctive case for an exit," the comrades write, "based on genuine internationalism, anti-racism and opposition to the neoliberal offensive being conducted by the EU against ordinary people in Europe." Fighting for genuine internationalism by surfing a tidal wave of reactionary chauvinism - this is alchemy, not politics, comrades. We sometimes get the feeling that the left thinks it can put a 'progressive' spin on something merely by *saying* that we ourselves aren't racist, or nationalist, or whatever, and that is certainly the case here. *Socialist Worker*, a paper with 0.1% of the influence of Nigel Farage, thinks it can make an 'out' vote into an expression of internationalist anti-racism. Good luck with that.

The comrades are nonetheless right to ask, "why should any of the left or the workers' movement be saving Cameron's bacon"? Indeed, what's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. The honest truth of it is exactly what Corbyn understands it to be - we are faced, on June 23, with the grubby result of a mind-blowingly short-termist domestic political gambit on the part of Cameron.

At the last Left Unity conference, the 'in' position won on the argument that Brexit would lead to a "carnival of reaction". Too late, comrades - there is *already* a carnival of reaction, and both sides are poisoned by narrow chauvinism. Either we vote for 'Fortress Europe' plus a few reactionary 'concessions' to Cameron's dignity, or we vote for Farage, for a miserable, small-minded Albion, criss-crossed with privet hedges and ringed with barbed wire.

To use the appropriate Marxist terminology: fuck the lot of them ●

paul.demarty@weeklyworker.co.uk

CPGB statement

1. The lesson of the 20th century is that socialism must be international, or it will become its opposite. Communists therefore oppose all variants of 'socialism in one country', which are exposed as reactionary utopias. We take as our starting point the conquest of power by the working class *throughout Europe*, abolishing capitalist rule in much of the capitalist core, and ultimately throughout the world.

2. The European Union as it exists is a mechanism for capitalist exploitation. Its institutions are overwhelmingly unelected and uniformly pro-capitalist. It is, in addition, 'Fortress Europe', whose inhumanity has recently been clearly exposed by the fate of refugees fleeing the Syrian war. We wish to overthrow and replace these institutions with radical democracy across the continent, tear down the

barbed wire and sink the gunboats.

3. Communists oppose plebiscitary 'democracy', which is in reality nothing of the kind. It is a Bonapartist tool which *excludes* the masses from effective control over policy, instead offering them a loaded question whereby they can rubber-stamp something already decided. Voting in referenda is a matter of tactics, but that tactical judgement must be informed by the understanding that referenda are, contrary to appearances, inherently anti-democratic.

4. David Cameron has called a referendum on EU membership for June 23. He argues that he has gotten a 'good enough deal' for Britain, but in reality his negotiations were wholly theatrical. The whole exercise is an attempt to outflank his rightwing opponents with chauvinist demagoguery,

which may yet dangerously backfire on him. His arguments, when they are not wholly specious, are focused solely on the health of British finance capital, and the peace of mind of petty bourgeois reactionaries.

5. The 'out' campaign is likewise dominated by noxious chauvinism. The advantage of leaving, according to Michael Gove, Nigel Farage and the like, is closer relations with the United States (a fantasy) and tighter border controls - that is, replacing 'Fortress Europe' with a stronger 'Fortress Britain'.

6. Cameron's referendum is thus a cynical manoeuvre that pits reactionaries against more-reactionaries. We call on all communists, socialists and partisans of the working class to *boycott* this referendum, and actively propagandise against its legitimacy ●

USA

Possibilities and pitfalls

The job of socialists is to channel the opportunities opened up by the Sanders campaign into the fight for class independence, argues Jim Creegan

Since the presidential campaign of Bernie Sanders has received support in the pages of the *Weekly Worker* from Tom Munday¹ and the campaign itself has gathered a wider following than many expected, I think a few comments are in order.

I did not, as Munday implies, argue against supporting Sanders out of a reflexive leftwing horror of endorsing a Democrat. I think the Sanders bid must be assessed in terms of what I regard as the main socialist objective in the electoral arena: the political independence of the working class from the twin parties of capitalism. Given this objective, however, the campaign should be seen in its specificity, and not dismissed with ritualistic denunciations of the Democrats.

In my previous (and, until now, only) *Weekly Worker* article on the Democratic primaries,² I predicted that Sanders would lose the nomination contest to Clinton, whom he would then endorse. I still think this is the likely outcome. News of the Clinton victory in the Nevada caucuses, coming in as I write, adds weight to this prediction. I do, however, believe that the Sanders campaign has revealed certain fissures in the contemporary political landscape that one would have to be blind to ignore.

'Realism' rebuffed

Ever since Sanders announced his candidacy, his potential supporters were set upon by numerous paladins of practical 'progressive' wisdom, from the left-Keynesian economist, Paul Krugman, and the editorial pages of *The New York Times* and *Boston Globe*, to myriad celebrities and prominent liberal elected officials, such as New York mayor Bill De Blasio and Ohio senator Sherrod Brown. Bernie Sanders, they incant along with Hillary, has some admirable goals, but the country is not ready to elect a Brooklyn-born (Jewish) socialist.

If nominated, Sanders is sure to go down to catastrophic defeat, just as George McGovern did when he ran against Richard Nixon in 1972 on an anti-Vietnam war platform. And, even if elected, Sanders stands no chance of getting his proposals for universal government health insurance, free public-university education and breaking up the big banks through a Congress of any party make-up, let alone the current Republican-controlled one. Especially in light of the growing possibility that Donald Trump will get the Republican nomination, it is urgent for 'progressives' to rally behind a Democrat who is electable and knows how to 'get things done' in Washington, instead of wasting one's vote on an impossible dream.

So reads the Democratic establishment script. It is being dutifully recited by the party's elected officials. Not a single mayor or governor has thus far endorsed Sanders. Of the 535 combined members of both houses of Congress, including its black and progressive caucuses, only two members of the House of Representatives - Keith Ellison of Minnesota and Raul Gijalva of Arizona (respectively black and Chicano) - have offered their support to the senator from Vermont.

In response to arguments based on pragmatism, Sanders acknowledges that he would be unable to achieve his programme merely by occupying the White House. He says it will require a "political revolution", with millions in the streets, to generate pressure for sweeping reforms and the election of a

new Congress. Sanders, in other words, presents his campaign not simply as a chance for a new face at the top, but as a vehicle for deeper political change.

It is thus highly significant that just about half the Democratic electors in Iowa, and 60% in New Hampshire, voted for the "socialist". The lesser-evilist *Realpolitik*, on which the party hierarchy has leaned for so long to contain left impulses from below, is obviously losing its grip on a growing portion of the Democratic base. A breakdown of the Iowa and New Hampshire results by age and income tell us who is defying the precedents. In Iowa, 75% of caucus-goers between ages 17 and 39 went for Sanders; of those earning \$30,000 to \$49,000 per year, 53.5% voted the same way. The percentages shift dramatically in Clinton's favour, as we ascend the age and income scale.

The New Hampshire primaries paint an even clearer picture. There, Clinton could only break even among voters from 45 to 64, and won only among those over 65. When it came to income, only those earning \$200,000 a year or more gave Clinton a majority. Sanders won in every other demographic, including women. One important thing these numbers tell us is that Sanders' appeal is hardly limited to university-educated young people and comfortable middle class liberals. He is obviously drawing in working class voters as well - although, due to the racial composition of Iowa and New Hampshire, primarily white ones up to now.

Identity politics incapacitated

Another time-worn Democratic stratagem also wilted in the snows of New Hampshire: the use of identity politics as a counter to any signs of class-based voting. The Democrats habitually invoke their professed support of racial-minority, women's and LGBT rights - issues on which the ruling class is as divided as other social groups - to hide their corporate loyalties and burnish their 'progressive' credentials. Thus Hillary and her supporters have lately accused Sanders of conducting a one-note campaign that emphasises income inequality and the influence of big money in politics, to the neglect of what they say are the co-equal evils of racism and sexism. (And it is true that the Sanders campaign, while not eschewing these themes, was a little slow off the mark in taking up the now volatile issues of immigration and police brutality.)

Campaigning on Clinton's behalf, her husband's former secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, declared on the hustings that there is "a special place in hell" for women who do not support female candidates out of gender solidarity. But the prize for bourgeois feminist

fatuity must go to Gloria Steinem, the 81-year-old founder of *Ms Magazine* (and unapologetic 1950s CIA operative), who has also been hitting the boards for Hillary. On a television talk show, Steinem explained the surge in young women's support for Sanders by saying that they were flocking to his campaign because that's where the boys are. The programme's host, Bill Maher, replied that Steinem would have immediately branded any such remark coming from him as crudely sexist.

Steinem's subsequent apology was insufficient to stem the tide of female indignation that greeted her remarks, and, secondarily, those of Albright. Sanders supporters of what the media have called the "post-feminist generation" were highly insulted at the suggestion that their political choices should be governed by their gender instead of their overall views. Never has an attempt to invoke identity politics in opposition to nascent class-consciousness been more crass, and never before has it backfired so badly.

Post-pragmatism

Whatever the final outcome of the primary process, a new constituency - one that first announced its arrival with the Occupy movement of 2011- has now demonstrated that it has grown and is here to stay. Class disparities have become so palpable that standard Democratic Party tropes are failing to work their diversionary magic on a growing portion of the electorate. A division has opened up between an older, more comfortable layer of the party base, which continues to think pragmatically, cautiously and incrementally, and a younger cohort -

students under mountains of debt, workers with ever slimmer prospects of upward mobility - whose conditions are bleak enough to warrant the casting off of old taboos and the taking of political risks. The feeling of having less and less to lose can be the germ of revolutionary consciousness. Will these malcontents remain within the Democratic fold?

Bernie Sanders has evinced a willingness to keep them there with his endorsement in advance of the Democratic primary winner (read: Clinton). But whether he will succeed in bringing them out in great numbers to vote for Hillary in the general election remains an open question - one that is causing the Democratic establishment more than a little anxiety. The grievances that moved them to throw the common sense of party elders to the winds in January and February will still be there in November. Sanders might have a harder time liquidating his campaign back into the mainstream party than did Jesse Jackson after his failed presidential bids at the head of his Rainbow Coalition in 1984 and 1988. These are leaner - and angrier - times.

Besides which, the party brass are not quite as certain of Sander's loyalty as they were of that of Jackson, a committed Democratic politician. Up until the primaries, Sanders always stood for election as an independent. Although he is part of the Congressional Democratic caucus, he also ran unsuccessfully against a Democrat for governor of Vermont in 1986. There is still some doubt as to whether his decision to run this time was an earnest indicator of his loyalty or a tactical move to gain access to voting lists, increase his exposure by participation in the candidates' debates, and avoid the political *oubliette* into which Ralph Nader was cast after running for the Greens in 2000.

At 74, Sanders is not likely to begin a new phase in his political career. But there is uncertainty as to whether he will stump enthusiastically for Clinton come autumn, or make a merely *pro forma* endorsement.

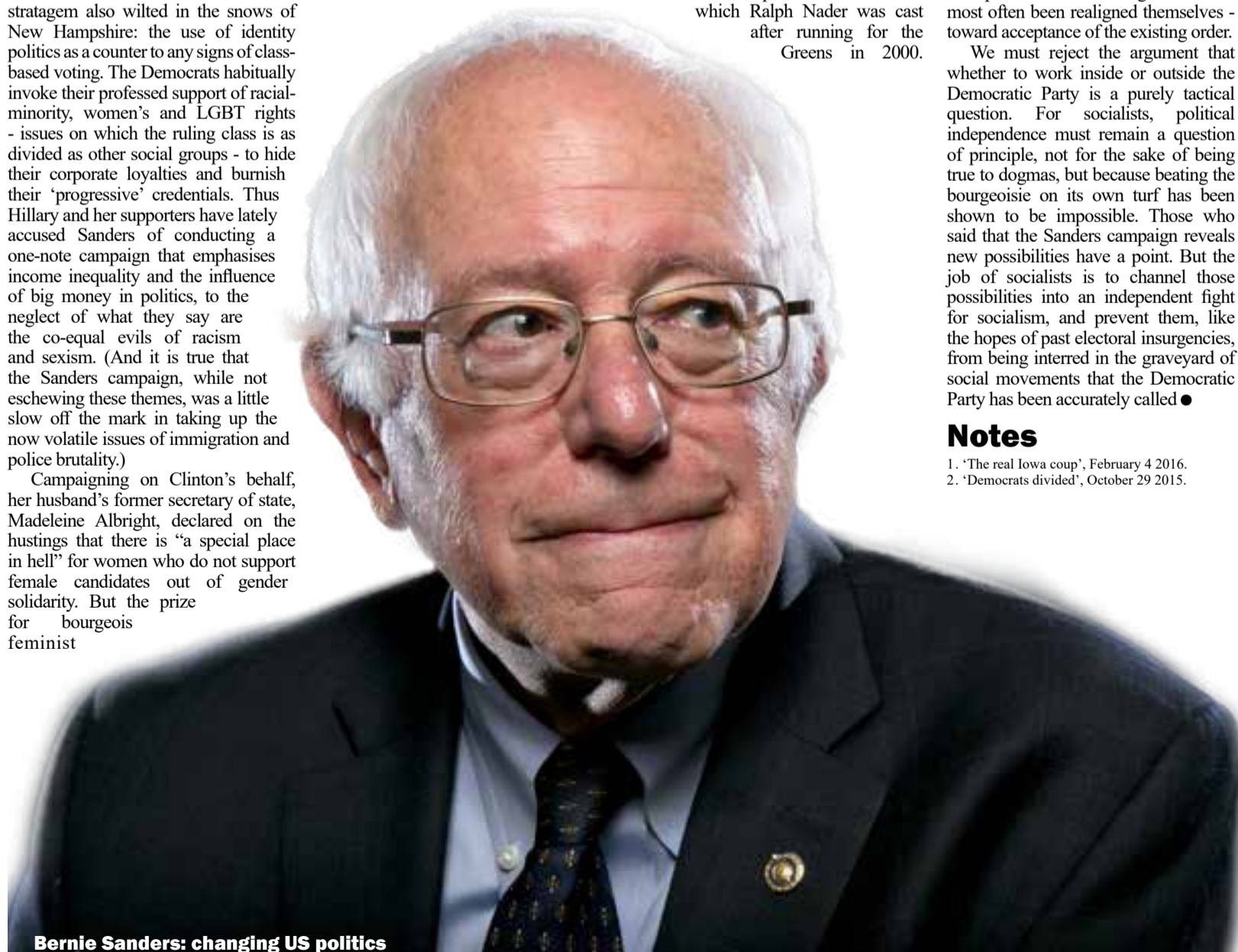
But the bourgeoisie's uncertainty is the revolutionary's opportunity. The American two-party system is now in greater crisis than it has been at any time since the 1960s, and perhaps even the 1930s. Both parties are in disarray. For the first time since Jimmy Carter moved the Democrats decidedly to the right in 1976 - ie, in the adult memory of most people now alive - the party's leading contender is being forced to posture, however disingenuously, to the left. The Sanders bid has shaped the politics of the entire campaign. Many on the Democratic side see through Hillary's hypocrisy, and have suggested through their primary ballots that the lesser evil may no longer be good enough, and that they are not put off by the socialist label (though we know it is misappropriated by Sanders). They could form a constituency for an independent party of the left, in which Marxists would be able to fight for their politics.

But there is also another - more likely - possibility: that dissatisfied Democrats will strive to maintain a coherent presence of some kind within the party, and, following in the footsteps of Max Shachtman and Michael Harrington in decades past, attempt to channel the rebellious energies of 2016 into another vain effort to 'realign' the party to the left. Socialists must answer that those who control the party are far too tightly tethered to the country's ruling class and its empire ever to be transformed, and too well financed ever to be removed. Past practitioners of realignment have most often been realigned themselves - toward acceptance of the existing order.

We must reject the argument that whether to work inside or outside the Democratic Party is a purely tactical question. For socialists, political independence must remain a question of principle, not for the sake of being true to dogmas, but because beating the bourgeoisie on its own turf has been shown to be impossible. Those who said that the Sanders campaign reveals new possibilities have a point. But the job of socialists is to channel those possibilities into an independent fight for socialism, and prevent them, like the hopes of past electoral insurgencies, from being interred in the graveyard of social movements that the Democratic Party has been accurately called ●

Notes

1. 'The real Iowa coup', February 4 2016.
2. 'Democrats divided', October 29 2015.



Bernie Sanders: changing US politics

STRATEGY

A working class military programme

James Marshall of Labour Party Marxists argues that a Jeremy Corbyn government would best be defended by abolishing the standing army and the formation of a popular militia

Two years ago, official Britain solemnly marked the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of World War I. The “war to end war” - that is how HG Wells, the Fabian social-imperialist, justified the carnage at the time.¹ Yet, as we all know, 20 years after the Armistice of Compiègne, what passed for peace once again gave way to generalised armed conflict. World War II outstripped World War I in terms of death, destruction and sheer depravity.

And, of course, at its close, the big three - the United States, Great Britain and the Soviet Union - promised a “world of peace”, secured through the United Nations.² Despite that, since 1945 there have been “some 250 major wars in which over 50 million people have been killed, tens of millions made homeless, and countless millions injured and bereaved.”³

The nature of warfare has changed. From World War I’s mud, blood and trenches and the fast-moving mechanised battlefields of World War II, we now have cyber attacks, drones and satellite-guided action.

As a matter of routine, the servile media portrays the wars conducted by the US, Britain and their allies as well-ordered, almost surgical operations. Yet during the 20th century the proportion of civilian casualties steadily climbed. In World War II, some 66% of those killed were civilians; by the beginning of the 1990s, civilian deaths approached 90%. This is not only the result of technological innovations. Present-day conflicts are often proxy wars fought out within, not between, states. The distinction separating combatant and non-combatant thereby easily evaporates.

Brushing aside mass street protests, one imperialist adventure has inexorably followed another: Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Liberia, Iraq, Mali, Libya and Syria. Equally, despite the 1980s peace movement, the United States pressed ahead with the deployment of first-strike Pershing IIs, cruise missiles and B2 stealth bombers. Ronald Reagan wanted to force a Soviet leadership that had already lost faith in itself to capitulate. Now a US determination to stay ahead in the arms race threatens to see the introduction of weapons once considered pure science fiction: electromagnetic rail guns, hypersonic anti-missile missiles, quantum stealth aircraft, unmanned warships, drone swarms and satellite killers.⁴ Such programmes both terrify and spur on the authorities in Moscow and Beijing.

Only a hopeless sectarian would stand aloof from the peace movement. Organisations such as the Stop the War Coalition and Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament have mobilised huge numbers over Afghanistan, Iraq, Gaza and now the renewal of Trident. That must be welcomed. But - and it is a big but - despite the leadership of socialists such as John Rees, Lindsey German, Andrew Murray, Chris Nineham, Kate Hudson and Andrew Burgin, what the peace movement champions is pacifism. Listen to their platform speeches. Their appearances on radio and TV. The horrors of war are indignantly condemned. But, in the name of keeping the peace movement broad, calls for class politics and socialist revolution are dismissed as sectarian and divisive. Hence, objectively, the STWC and CND serve to spread illusions in a peaceful capitalism.

It would therefore be outright treachery to follow the example of the Socialist Workers Party, Left Unity, Counterfire and the *Morning Star*’s Communist Party of Britain and become uncritical cheerleaders for the STWC and CND. This is not a matter of abstract dogma or a test of political virility, as

some of our critics maintain. No, it is either socialism or we shall see the further descent into barbarism.

What is war?

Let me ask a fundamental question: what is war, and where does the drive for war come from?

The classic definition is provided by Carl von Clausewitz, the Prussian soldier-philosopher and director of the Berlin military academy from 1818 to 1830. His principal work *Vom Kriege* (1832) theoretically distilled the military practice of Napoleon Bonaparte. Hence, along with *Principia mathematica*, *The science of logic*, *Origin of the species* and *Das Kapital*, it is rightly considered a seminal achievement.

Clausewitz tells us that war “is an act of violence intended to compel our opponent to fulfil our will”. War, he says, is “a duel on an extensive scale”. Centrally, for Clausewitz war is a “continuation of policy by other means”.⁵ A definition fully accepted by the founders of scientific socialism, who deepened Clausewitz’s ideas by linking wars to the existence and struggles of classes. Thus we find Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov (Lenin) not only declaring, “War is a continuation of policy by other means”, but adding:

All wars are inseparable from the political systems that engender them. The policy which a given state, a given class within a state, pursued for a long time before the war is inevitably continued by that same class during the war, the form of action alone being changed.⁶

Because Marxists understand the relationship between war and politics, because Marxists link war to the existence and struggle of classes, we are not amongst those who absolutely oppose all wars.

Original, or primitive, communist society did not experience anything remotely like war - at least as we would define it. Amazingly, this 200,000-year period of human *natural* history is breezily skipped over in Steven Pinker’s Whiggish account of *declining* human violence.⁷ Fights between individual male protagonists must have occurred, maybe even the group killing of a social transgressor, but no organised, prolonged, extensive conflicts. Under conditions of material abundance, female equality and counter-hierarchy, it almost certainly never happened. Yet with the gradual breakdown of communist social relations, beginning with the mesolithic, warfare did appear. That is what the archaeological record shows. Collective burial sites dating from the mesolithic, which provide unmistakable forensic evidence of deaths being due to stone implements - arrows, spears, etc - have been excavated.⁸ However, such examples are very rare. When class society, the patriarchal family and private property finally solidified with the neolithic counterrevolution, only then did war become commonplace.⁹

The ruling class not only suppressed their own populations using armed bodies of men (the state). By employing murderous violence, it sought to enslave and extend its domination over other peoples too. Great empires appeared in the Bronze Age, along with an almost perpetual state of warfare. For the ancient Assyrians, Hittites, Persians, Athenians, Spartans, Carthaginians and Romans; for the medieval Anglo-Saxons, Carolingians and Normans, the “profession of arms was esteemed the sole employment that deserved the name of ‘manly’ or ‘honourable’”.¹⁰ Killing, looting and raping were socially sanctioned male



From von Clausewitz to cyber-warfare

aspirations.

However, with the rise of capitalism, wars assumed an even bigger scale. Battles were fought on many seas and on many continents. World markets equalled world wars - eg, the 1652-74 and 1781-1810 Anglo-Dutch wars, the 1755-64, 1778-83 and 1793-1815 Anglo-French wars. In that sense, what we call World War I and World War II are only the latest in a string of world wars.

While Marxists aim for the abolition of war and a modern higher, version of communism, we recognise that this can only come about by first abolishing classes and class exploitation. Self-evidently, this requires the expropriation of a capitalist class which on past experience is quite prepared to go to extraordinary lengths to hold onto its riches, privileges and god-given right to rule. Indeed there are good reasons to believe that the great European powers turned to war in August 1914 in an attempt to roll back growing popular support for socialism.¹¹ Hence, while it is vital to oppose capitalist warmongering, the working class must be won to the idea of making revolution - “peacefully if we can, violently if we must”. It is clear then that Marxists recognise the existence of just and unjust wars - a concept derived not from Hegel, nor from Fourier or Babeuf, but the saintly Augustine of Hippo.¹²

So, almost needless to say, our attitude to war is not determined by gross national product, territorial size or military capacity, whether it is a David-versus-Goliath affair, or even if a country is fighting an offensive or defensive war. In general, we feel obliged to support wars of national liberation - after all, “any people that oppresses another people forges its own chains”.¹³ Nevertheless, sometimes it is right to back the “aggression” of a big country against a small one. Eg, if Soviet Russia had been in a position to save the 1918 Finnish revolution from the Mannerheim counterrevolution, that would undoubtedly have been a just war. What determines our attitude is which class rules and what policies that class pursues. This is the unfailing method we employ to determine whether a war is just or unjust.

Hence, looking back over the centuries, we find just wars. Obviously, when Spartacus fought for the freedom of Rome’s slave population in 73-71 BCE, that was a just war. When John Ball and Wat Tyler led the peasant’s revolt in 1381, that was a just war. When the French masses rose up against Louis XVI in 1789, that was a just war. The same goes for France in 1792-94. The massed columns of the conscript Armée Révolutionnaire Française soundly defeated the joint Austrian-Prussian attempt to impose a Bourbon restoration.

Marxists have also *actively* supported wars judged to somehow bring forward the struggle for socialism. The Marx-Engels team sided with the Union against the Confederacy in the American civil war of 1861-65 (the second American revolution). Both sides were capitalist. However, while the south was based on slavery and subordination to Britain’s commercial dictatorship, the north was based on free labour and sought independent economic development. Victory for the north, Marx and Engels calculated, would strike a powerful blow against the British empire, do away with slavery and unleash the class struggle in America. Their co-thinker and loyal friend, Joseph Weydemeyer, took the lead amongst the German-speaking population of New York (after Berlin and Vienna, the third largest German city in the world at the time). The Marx party worked tirelessly to secure the nomination and election of Abraham Lincoln. And, note, the most militant, most effective, most politically conscious units in the Union army were German. Many, including 10 generals, were refugees from the 1848-49 German revolution - the ‘48ers’ or ‘Red 48ers’.¹⁴

As a central component of their global strategy, Marx and Engels were also determined to bury what they called the “tsarist menace”. Since the 1815 Congress of Vienna Europe languished under an “Anglo-Russian slavery”.¹⁵ Marx and Engels urged Europe’s peoples to bring the conservative order, so meticulously constructed by Alexander I, Metternich, Castlereagh, Talleyrand and Hardenberg - and so admired by Richard Nixon’s prince of darkness - crashing down.¹⁶ By definition that necessitated launching a war of liberation against Russian absolutism.

However, in the late 19th century things began to change. The most fearsome guarantor of counterrevolution showed all the signs of exhaustion ... and being ripe for a popular revolution. Because of this, especially after Marx’s death in 1883, Engels shifted his position ... and not only on Russia. Having eagerly looked forward to a European war, he began to issue urgent warnings. A general conflagration would “inflammate chauvinism” in every country and thus temporarily derail the working class movement.¹⁷

In February 1917 the “tsarist menace” ignominiously collapsed and with October 1917 political power passed into the hands of the working class, as organised in the Bolshevik party. Workers throughout the world had a moral duty and every interest in siding with Soviet Russia. That included supporting its revolutionary wars. Such wars can be defensive: eg, against the white armies

of Wrangel and Denikin and the 14 interventionist powers.

But what starts as a defensive war can easily be transformed into an offensive war. In 1920 the Red Army pursued the invading Polish forces across the Soviet border and deep into Poland itself. Lenin and other Bolshevik leaders envisaged reaching Warsaw. That would not only mean defeating the peasant-aristocratic army, headed by the notorious social-nationalist, Józef Piłsudski. The expectation was that the city’s proletariat would mount an uprising and thus provide the Red Army with a vital staging post on its way to help reignite the German revolution. Of course, it never happened. Logistically the Red Army overextended itself and the Warsaw proletariat proved rather more nationalist than socialist.

Imperialism and war

Needless to say, most wars are neither just nor revolutionary. This is most certainly the case with capitalism in decline: what Lenin called monopoly, finance or imperialist capitalism. Without doubt, there were monopolies, financiers and overseas expansionism at an early stage. Tudor England had its Sir Thomas Grisham, a bourse, privileged manufacturers and a colonial empire. Following Ireland, the first outposts in India and the Americas were established during the reign of Elizabeth I. But what we take from Lenin’s *Imperialism* (1916) is its fundamental insight: since the late 19th century capitalism has been a negative anticipation of socialism and simultaneously in decay.

State pensions, health services based on need, unemployment benefit, compulsory education, universal suffrage - all go hand in hand with the promotion of national chauvinism, perverting human ingenuity and the warfare state. Clearly essential laws are in retreat: market competition, the reserve army of labour, value, etc, continue, but are increasingly influenced, altered and overridden by state organisation. Massive arms spending allows the leading capitalist powers to ameliorate, offload or even bring to an end one of the system’s periodic crises. Imperialist exploitation also provides the additional surplus needed to incorporate social democracy and the trade union bureaucracy into the state apparatus. The working class is thereby divided into rival national detachments.

Albeit at the cost of substantial concessions, the principle of nationalism trumped the principle of class. Demands for import controls, barriers to immigration, appeals to the national interest, etc, became the common currency of a labour movement that has thoroughly internalised its subordination. Not surprisingly then, the working class has failed to realise its historic mission. As a consequence - with capitalism’s economic anarchy, wars, failed states, pandemics and ecological crises going unresolved - there is the ever-present danger that humanity will “crash down together in a common doom” (Rosa Luxemburg).¹⁸

An exhausted Britain was able to ride the precipitous 1929 crash and the economic dislocation of the early 1930s without plunging into social turmoil. It still possessed an enormous empire and a web of semi-colonies and dependants. By contrast, German imperialism, having been reduced almost to the level of an oppressed country by the terms of Versailles, spiralled off into chaos. In desperation, the capitalist class embraced the Nazi gangsters as their saviours.

World War II was considerably more complex than World War I. Its opening phase saw the Italian invasion of Abyssinia, Japanese expansionism in China, the German retaking of Saarland,

Anschluss with Austria, Franco's uprising, etc. Wars of colonial oppression, revanchism and counterrevolution interwove with wars of resistance. However, the looming clash between the German-Italian axis and the Anglo-French alliance had every appearance of being a classic inter-imperialist conflict. The correct slogan under these circumstances would therefore be 'defeat for both sides'. Britain and France were going to fight not for democracy, not for national freedom, not for the anti-fascist cause. No, they wanted to preserve their position at the top of the imperialist feeding chain.

However, instead of the hostilities grinding to a bloody stalemate, as in World War I, the Wehrmacht cut straight through Holland and Belgium and deep into France. Half of the country, including Paris, was occupied. Vichy, though formally independent, became little more than a satrap. Hence, the war for the working class in France turned into a struggle for national liberation. The same possibility existed for Britain. Hence, especially after June 1940 and the fall of France, the necessity of the working class formulating its own demands for national defence: eg, arming the population, election of officers, specialist military training under trade union control, removal of appeaser ministers, abolition of the Hitler sympathising monarchy and elections to a constituent assembly. Standing up against the threat of Nazi invasion had to be combined with the class war for socialism. Operation Barbarossa, the German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, reinforced the complex nature of World War II. The Soviet people fought against being enslaved as agricultural helots in a German India. Stalin, on the other hand, had his own great-power ambitions.

In 1945 Germany, Japan and their allies were forced into an unconditional surrender. Needless to say, the aftermath of World War II was very different from World War I. Despite being on the winning side, Britain and France failed to save their empires. This was in part due to the greatly enhanced power of the Soviet Union and colonial peoples winning national independence. However, as long as it did not see 'official communists' or pro-Moscow left nationalists coming to power, the US too wanted decolonisation. Something it pursued, of course, in its own economic, military and strategic interests. The US had no concern whatsoever for the colonial peoples themselves, except as objects of exploitation.

The US became a sort of super-imperialist power, its capital penetrating every corner of the capitalist world, all imperialist rivals bending to its will. The American century closed the 20-years crises of 1919-39. The rate of profit soared and the global economy expanded at an unprecedented rate for an unprecedented period. Inevitably, however, not least due to rising trade union power, the boom came to an end. From the mid-1970s onwards the US and Britain opted for finance capital, offshoring industrial production and reversing the social democratic settlement. And, with the additional plank of draconian legislation, trade union power was to all intents and purposes neutered.

Despite the growing economic weight of China, a faltering European Union and US parasitism and relative decline, there is no immediate prospect of an all-out World War III. With the likelihood of mutually assured destruction (MAD), who would fight and why? Nevertheless, there is the increasing danger of a regional hot spot accidentally boiling over: Syria, Palestine, Korea, Ukraine, Kashmir and the South China Sea immediately spring to mind. With good reason, Liz Sly, writing in the *Washington Post*, describes Syria as a "mini world war".¹⁹ Militarily, a direct clash between the US and Russia or China could quite conceivably rapidly escalate. Even a limited nuclear exchange would exact an almost unimaginable human toll.

What distinguishes Marxists from others on the left who oppose the war

danger is that we see the need to retaliate not with Left Unity's ambiguous demand for a "drastic reduction" in military expenditure.²⁰ Nor with the Alliance for Workers' Liberty's no less vague "Cut arms spending".²¹ The same goes for the number-crunching plea of *Morning Star's* Communist Party of Britain to "cut military spending to average European levels".²² Ditto the Scottish Socialist Party's recipe of reducing "defence spending" to no more than the *per capita* level of the Republic of Ireland.²³ Banal, timid and self-defeating.

Our military policy does not legitimise a reduced version of the existing armed forces. Despite the verbal, statistical and factional variations, what that theme amounts to is the attempt to win the working class - as individuals and as an organised force - to the hopeless attempt of securing peace, while the capitalist system remains intact.

Inevitably there is a corresponding refusal to take up the elementary demand of arming the working class. That is certainly the case with the Socialist Party in England and Wales and the CPB.²⁴ But, if untreated, what begins as a scratch ends with gangrene. Confronted by the miners' Great Strike of 1984-85 and the formation of hit squads, the *Marxism Today* Eurocommunists condemned "macho" violence. They offered instead the mystical, women-only pacifism of Greenham Common. But come the 'war on terrorism', not a few of these former peaceniks were to be found in the ranks of the Bush-Blair interventionists: eg, the newspaper columnist, David Aaronovitch.

Marxists are convinced that the bourgeois state machine must be broken apart, demolished, smashed up, if we are to realise socialism and put an end to war. So, concretely, in today's conditions, that not only means demanding the scrapping of all nuclear, biological and chemical weapons of mass destruction - they are inherently inhuman. We should be arguing for scrapping the standing army.

None of this will be realised by patiently winning over members of the ruling class. It has to be fought for. The working class must develop its own militia. Such a body grows out of the class struggle itself: in the fight to protect picket lines, in defence of Muslims from fascist attacks, in guarding our print shops, meeting places and demonstrations. With a workers' militia it becomes realistic to split the state's armed forces. Fear of officers, sergeants and court martials must be replaced by rank and file mutiny. Certainly, army regiments, airforce squadrons and naval crews declaring for our side provides us with the military wherewithal needed to safeguard either an expected or a recently established Marxist majority in parliament.

Programmatically we therefore demand:

- Rank-and-file personnel in the state's armed bodies must be protected from bullying, humiliating treatment and being used against the working class.
- There must be full trade union and democratic rights, including the right to form bodies such as soldiers' councils.
- The privileges of the officer caste must be abolished. Officers must be elected. Workers in uniform must become the allies of the masses in struggle.
- The people must have the right to bear arms and defend themselves.
- The dissolution of the standing army and the formation of a popular militia under democratic control.

Background

Strange though it may appear to the historically ill-informed, here contemporary Marxists draw direct inspiration from the second amendment to the US constitution. Ratified to popular acclaim in 1791, it states: "A well regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed."²⁵ Those who made the American revolution - above all the urban and rural masses - saw a standing army as an existential threat to democracy. Eg, in

her *Observations on the new constitution* (1788) Mercy Otis Warren - the mother of the American revolution - branded the standing army as "the nursery of vice and the bane of liberty".²⁶ At great sacrifice the common people had overthrown the tyranny of George III and were determined to do the same again, if faced with another unacceptable government.

Naturally Marx and Engels considered the second amendment part of their heritage. Clause four of the *Marx-Engels Demands of the Communist Party in Germany* (1848) is emphatic:

Universal arming of the people. In future armies shall at the same time be workers' armies, so that the armed forces will not only consume, as in the past, but produce even more than it costs to maintain them.²⁷

The Marx-Engels team never wavered on this. Read *Can Europe disarm?* Here, in this pamphlet written by Engels in 1893, 10 years after the death of his friend and collaborator, we find a concrete application of Marxism to the dawning epoch of universal suffrage and universal conscription. Engels concluded that the key to revolution was mutiny in the armed forces. His pamphlet outlined a model bill for military reform in Germany. Engels was determined to show that the proposal to gradually transform standing armies into a "militia based on the universal principle of arming the people" could exploit the mounting fears of a pending European war and widespread resentment at the ruinous military budget.²⁸

For propaganda effect, Engels proposed an international agreement to limit military service to a short period and a state system in which no country would fear aggression because no country would be capable of aggression. Surely World War I would have been impossible if the European great powers had nothing more than lightly armed civilian militias available to them.

Not that Engels was a lily-livered pacifist. He supported universal male (!) conscription and if necessary was, of course, quite prepared to advocate revolutionary war. However, his *Can Europe disarm?* was not intended to prove the military superiority of a militia over a standing army. No, he wanted a citizen army within which discipline would be self-imposed. An army where rank-and-file troops would confidently turn their guns against officers who dared issue orders that were against the vital interests of the people. Through mutiny such an army could be made ours.

As might be expected, the Marxist parties of the late 19th and early 20th century unproblematically included the demand for disbanding the standing army and establishing a popular militia in their programmes. Eg, the 1880 programme of the French Workers' Party, the 1891 *Erfurt programme*, the 1889 *Hainfeld programme* of the Austrian Social Democratic Party, the 1903 programme of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, etc.

In the 'political section' of the programme of the French Workers' Party (Parti Ouvrier), authored jointly by Karl Marx and Jules Guesde, we therefore find the demand for the "abolition of standing armies and the general arming of the people" (clause four).²⁹ A proposition faithfully translated by the Germans: "Education of all to bear arms. Militia in the place of the standing army" (clause 3).³⁰ The Austrians are adamant: "The cause of the constant danger of war is the standing army, whose growing burden alienates the people from its cultural tasks. It is therefore necessary to fight for the replacement of the standing army by arming the people" (clause 6).³¹ Then we have the Russians: "general arming of the people instead of maintaining a standing army" (clause c9).³²

Theory and practice must be united.

Amongst the first decrees of the 1871 Paris Commune was the abolition of the standing army and the constitution of the national guard as the sole armed force in France. Memorably, Auguste

Blanqui proclaimed: "He who has iron has bread!" By actually constituting a new state, based not on a repressive force that sat outside the general population, the Commune opened a new chapter in working class politics. And Russia took what happened in Paris to as yet unsurpassed heights. Formed in April-March 1917, the Red Guards proved crucial. Red Guards, and increasing numbers of army units, put themselves under the discipline of the Military Revolutionary Committee - a subdivision of the Bolshevik-led Petrograd soviet, formally established on Leon Trotsky's initiative. On October 25 (November 7) 1917 the MRC issued its momentous declaration that the provisional government of Alexander Kerensky "no longer existed". State power has passed into the hands of the soviets of workers, peasants and soldiers.

Workers formed defence corps during the 1926 General Strike in Britain. American workers did the same in 1934. There were massive stoppages in San Francisco, Toledo and Minneapolis. In the 1920s the two main workers' parties in Germany established their own militias. The SDP dominated the soft-left Reichsbanner, while the Communist Party formed the much more militant Rotfrontkämpferbund (at its height it boasted 130,000 members). Despite its 1923 founding statutes emphasising ceremonial paraphernalia, marches and band music, the Schutzbund in Austria served as a kind of "proletarian police force".³³ When it came to strikes, demonstrations and meetings, this workers' militia maintained discipline and fended off Nazi gangs. Though hampered by a dithering social democratic leadership, the Schutzbund heroically resisted the February 12 1934 fascist coup. In Spain anarchists, official 'communists', Proudhon, etc, likewise formed their own militias against the Franco uprising.

Then, more recently, in 1966, there was the Black Panther Party. It organised "armed citizen's patrols" to monitor and counter the brutal US police force.³⁴ Even the "non-violent" civil rights movement, led by Martin Luther King, included within its ranks those committed to "armed self-defence" against Ku Klux Klan and other such terrorism.³⁵ Countless other such examples could be cited.

Corbyn

Speaking to a Hiroshima remembrance event in August 2012, Jeremy Corbyn spoke of his desire to emulate "the people of Costa Rica", who "abolished the army". Leaving aside the actual situation in Costa Rica and the synthetic outrage generated by *The Sun*³⁶ and the *Daily Mail*³⁷, demanding the disbanding of the standing army has assumed a particular importance since Corbyn was elected Labour leader.

Put aside passing opinion polls and imagine that Corbyn wins a majority in 2020. Are the courts, MI5, the armed forces and the police going to be steadfastly loyal to the new government, or powerless to act behind ministerial backs, because of the results of a general election? Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, etc, rightly dismissed such naive politics as "parliamentary cretinism".

The Corbyn government would doubtless be committed to swiftly reversing austerity, renationalising the rails, ending British involvement in the Syrian quagmire, decommissioning Trident and maybe negotiating a withdrawal from Nato. However, say in the name of keeping the Labour right, the *Daily Mirror* and the liberal intelligentsia aside, the Corbyn government decides to leave in place MI5, the police and the standing army. Frankly, that would be an open invitation for a British version of general Augusto Pinochet to launch a bloody counterrevolution. In Chile thousands of leftwingers were butchered after the September 11 1973 army coup, which overthrew the Socialist Party-Communist Party Popular Unity reformist government under president Salvador Allende.

There are already rumours swirling around of unnamed members of the army high command "not standing for" a Corbyn government and being prepared to take "direct action".³⁸ Meanwhile, the *Financial Times* darkly warns that Corbyn's leadership damages "British public life".³⁹

Why trust the thoroughly authoritarian British army? An institution which relies on inculcating "unthinking obedience" amongst the ranks.⁴⁰ An institution run by an officer caste, which is trained to command from public school to Sandhurst as if it is their birthright. And, of course, the British army swears to loyally serve the crown - believe it, more than a harmless feudalistic throwback. The monarch and the monarchy function as a potent symbol, and an ever-present excuse for a legal coup.

Why trust the British army, which has fought countless imperial and colonial wars, up to and including the horrors of Iraq and Afghanistan? A British army that has been used when necessary to intimidate, threaten and crush the 'enemy within'?

No; instead, let us put our trust in a "well regulated militia" and the "right of the people to keep and bear arms" ●

Notes

1. HG Wells *The war that will end war* London 1914. See en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:The_War_That_Will_End_War_-_Wells.djvu&page=8.
2. T Hoops and D Brinkley *FDR and the creation of the UN* New Haven 1997, p219.
3. www.ppu.org.uk/learn/infodocs/st_war_peace.html.
4. http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/five-futuristic-weapons-could-change-warfare-9866.
5. A Rapoport (ed) *Clausewitz on war* Harmondsworth 1976, pp101, 119.
6. VI Lenin *CW* Vol 24, Moscow 1977, p400.
7. See S Pinker *The better angels of our nature* London 2011.
8. J Guilaïne and J Zammit *The origins of war* Oxford 2015, p75.
9. Noted but inadequately discussed by Steven Pinker in his opening chapter of *The better angels of our nature* (2011).
10. AFT Woodhouselee *Elements of general history ancient and modern* London 1818, p287.
11. A view accepted by many mainstream historians. See P Kennedy *The rise of the Anglo-German antagonism 1860-1914* London 1980; J Joll and G Martel *The origins of the first world war* Abingdon 2007; C Clark *The sleepwalkers: how Europe went to war in 1914* London 2012.
12. See 'Augustine to Boniface' in EM Atkins and RJ Dorado (eds) *Augustine: political writings* Cambridge 2001, p217; JM Mattox *Saint Augustine and the theory of just war* New York 2006; GM Reichberg, H Syse and E Begby (eds) *Ethics of war* Malden 2006, pp-70-90.
13. K Marx, 'Confidential communication' *CW* Vol 21, Moscow 1985, p120.
14. AH Nimtz *Marx, Tocqueville and race in America* New York 2003, p170.
15. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 9, Moscow 1977, p197.
16. See H Kissinger *A world restored* Boston MA 1954.
17. H Draper and E Haberkern *Karl Marx's theory of revolution* Vol 4, New York 2005, p166.
18. P Hurdiss and KB Anderson (eds) *The Rosa Luxemburg reader* New York 2004, p364.
19. *Washington Post* February 14 2016.
20. http://leftunity.org/manifesto-2015-international.
21. 'AWL election campaign: why we are standing and our policies': www.politicsresources.net/area/uk/ge10/man/parties/Workers_Liberty.pdf.
22. www.comunist-party.org.uk/about-us.html.
23. www.scottishsocialistparty.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/SSP_Manifesto_2007.pdf.
24. See *Weekly Worker* May 21 2009.
25. www.usconstitution.net/const.html#Am2.
26. http://constitution.org/cmt/mowarren/observations_new_constitution_1788.html.
27. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 7, Moscow 1977, p3.
28. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 27, London 1990, p371.
29. www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1880/05/parti-ouvrier.htm.
30. www.marxists.org/history/international/social-democracy/1891/erfurt-program.htm.
31. I am grateful to Ben Lewis for his translation of the Hainfeld programme.
32. www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1902/draft02feb07.htm.
33. M Kitchen *The coming of Austrian fascism* London 1980, p116.
34. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Panther_Party.
35. See CE Cobb *This nonviolent stuff'll get you killed* New York 2014.
36. www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/politics/6637495/Corbyn-Britain-should-abolish-Army.html.
37. www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3233244/How-wonderful-d-scrapped-Army-ranted-Jeremy-Corbyn-s-call-dismissed-madness-Tory-MP.html.
38. *Daily Mail* September 20 2015.
39. *Financial Times* August 14 2015.
40. NF Dixon *On the psychology of military incompetence* London 1976, p244.

DISARMAMENT



Whole of humanity at risk

Weapons of genocidal destruction

Nuclear weapons pose the threat of a devastating accident waiting to happen, warns Yasmine Mather

The issue of a 'nuclear deterrent' is often debated in parliament or the media in a rather abstract manner. Some of the arguments put forward for and against Trident do not get beyond vague and at times irrelevant questions: what about the jobs in and associated with nuclear armaments? Can we afford the cost of such weapons at a time of economic crisis and when governments insist on austerity? Is Trident an insurance policy in a turbulent world, where many conflicts are raging?

For those involved in this weekend's anti-Trident national demonstration in London, it is important not only to look at the current state of international nuclear arsenals, but to revisit arguments put forward by scientists and engineers who have consistently warned of the serious dangers posed by these weapons of mass destruction.

Although it is difficult to give a precise figure for the number of nuclear weapons deployed worldwide, the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* puts the worldwide total number of nuclear weapons at 16,300, while the Federation of American Scientists gives a figure of 15,650.

The main two countries with weapons-grade nuclear capability are, of course, the United States and Russia, who between them possess 93% of the world's nuclear arsenal. It is estimated that the US has a total of 7,100 warheads - around a third of this arsenal is currently deployed, a third is kept in storage and some 2,340 are now redundant and are due to be dismantled. For its part, Russia has around 8,000 warheads in total.

France has 300 warheads carried by military aircraft and a single nuclear-armed submarine. With 250 warheads, China, like France, is not a major nuclear power, although it is believed to be in the process of

increasing its arsenal. As for Israel, it neither confirms nor denies its nuclear arms capability, but it is common knowledge that the Zionist regime has 80 nuclear warheads. India, Pakistan and North Korea have between them around 200 warheads.

According to the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, another 40 countries have invested in nuclear power and research reactors; they are aiming to achieve or have achieved military capability: ie, the ability to use nuclear production for armaments.

Last year the think-tank Basic Security Information Council (British-American Security Information Council) was tasked with a review of Britain's nuclear capability and not surprisingly, given the nature of this body, came to the conclusion that the UK needed Trident. However, its estimated budget for renewal was twice as much as the ministry of defence's figure: £50.6 billion, to be spent between 2012 and 2062.

The UK has four nuclear-powered Vanguard-class submarines armed with Trident II D-5 ballistic missiles, able to deliver thermonuclear warheads. This arsenal, relying heavily on US expertise for maintenance and entirely dependent on the US for deployment, is unlikely to make any difference to 'international security' one way or another.

Why are so many scientists against such weapons? The answer is quite simple: they are more aware of the devastating consequences of testing and keeping nuclear armaments, never mind using them. Their fears relate not just to the intended targets, but to the world in general and indeed to the country hosting or deploying such weapons.

Scientists for Global Responsibility is one of many such organisations. This is what it said in

2015:

If used, the nuclear weapons carried by just one Trident submarine could cause such huge climatic disruption that global food supplies would be at risk and the survival of human civilisation itself would be threatened. If used, the nuclear weapons carried by just one Trident submarine could directly cause more than 10 million civilian casualties. Intentional use of the UK's nuclear weapons would therefore be both genocidal and suicidal.¹

Of course, whilst there is widespread consensus regarding other weapons of mass destruction, such as chemical and biological weapons, and numerous treaties ban their storage and use, the 'nuclear club', with their permanent seats on the United Nations security council, defend their own right to possess such weapons - while opposing their acquisition by any other country.

Unlike the report produced by Basic, the SGR conclusion is very clear: "Trident replacement should be cancelled, enabling active support of current international discussions to ban nuclear weapons in a similar process to other weapons of mass destruction."² The report also argues that, "to reduce the nuclear risk, the UK should take Trident off continuous patrol at sea and place our nuclear warheads in storage".

Destructive effects

How do scientists assess the destructive effects of nuclear weapons?

Most of these studies are based on facts gathered after the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs. Data gathered after the deployment of nuclear bombs in 1945 is used to estimate

devastation caused by use of a single nuclear warhead.

Each UK Trident submarine carries 40 nuclear warheads. This is equivalent to four million tonnes of explosive power, with an effect 320 times greater than that of the Hiroshima bomb, with colossal destructive consequences. The firepower of one Trident submarine is greater than the power of all the bombs dropped in World War II, including the two atomic bombs used in Japan.

A conservative estimate is that a single Trident-sized warhead would kill at least 80,000 people if detonated over a modern city and would injure at least 200,000 more. This in addition to the complete destruction of buildings, transport, communication and power networks, not to mention health and welfare facilities.

According to a document published by Scottish CND, entitled 'If Britain fired Trident',

One Trident submarine with 40 100kT warheads could cause at least 10 million casualties and as many as 20 million in 10-20 large cities, and hit a further 20 military targets, such as bases and command bunkers. Trident missiles have a range of 7,000 miles. This, combined with the submarine's ability to sail into any ocean area, enables it to strike targets anywhere across the globe within around 30 minutes of launch.³

Then comes the issue of a nuclear winter. Politicians of all parties, including Conservatives (bar a few loony climate change deniers), are keen to portray themselves as 'environmentalists'. Yet none of the supporters of Trident refer to the environmental devastation that the

use of Trident could bring. Nuclear scientists have warned us time and again how the global climate is vulnerable to even a limited, regional use of nuclear weapons:

A climatic impact - commonly known as a 'nuclear winter' - arises because of the intense fireballs that nuclear weapons create. Unlike a fire from conventional weapons - even intense fire-bombing, such as in Dresden in World War II - the nuclear fireball would carry huge volumes of small, sooty particles far into the stratosphere, high above normal weather patterns. These high-altitude particles would reflect much of the incoming solar radiation, causing shorter growing seasons, major changes in rainfall and global disruption of weather patterns. It would take years for these particles to disperse. Such effects have been observed on a smaller scale following huge volcanic eruptions, and have been used to help calibrate current climate models. Other impacts such as long-term damage to the ozone layer are predicted.

The studies predict that as few as 100 Hiroshima-sized weapons - about one-third of the nuclear firepower of one Trident submarine and less than 0.1% of worldwide nuclear stockpiles - detonating over highly flammable cities, would likely cause severe weather disruption across the globe for 7-10 years, leading to severe food shortages. Critical food growing areas would be badly hit and monsoon rainfall disrupted, leading to dramatic shortages of wheat and rice - key staple foods. As current global food stocks would last less than 100 days, very severe consequences would follow. Recent estimates put the

What we fight for

number threatened with starvation well outside the target zones at about two billion of the most vulnerable people - for example, those living in Africa and other poverty-stricken parts of the world.⁴

Nuclear accidents

The threat from nuclear weapons does not just arise from their intentional use - we also have to consider unintentional use of nuclear arsenal, as well as accidents both in storage and transportation of warheads.

The probability of unintentional use of nuclear weapons - whether through accident or miscalculation during a crisis - is not negligible. There have been numerous known cases across the world of 'near nuclear use' over the past 60 years, despite the fact that much nuclear history is clouded in secrecy. Many scientists believe it is only a matter of time before such an accident occurs.

The nuclear industry - both civilian and military - is extremely good at hiding and covering up unfortunate incidents. However, there are a number of known cases of what is described as 'near nuclear use' over the last 50-60 years. This how Dr Patricia Lewis, research director for international security at Chatham House, assesses things:

Historical cases of near nuclear use resulting from misunderstanding demonstrate the importance of the 'human judgement factor' in nuclear decision-making. In addition to cases from the cold war, recent incidents, such as the 2009 collision of French and UK submarines, along with cases of misconduct in the US air force, revealed in 2013, suggest cause for concern regarding current laxity in safety and security measures and in command and control. Incidents similar to those that have happened in the past are likely to happen in the future.⁵

According to Dr Benoit Pelopidas of Bristol University,

In several cases the large-scale launch of nuclear weapons was nearly triggered by technical malfunctions or breakdowns in communication, causing false alarms, in the US, Russia, but also in most other nuclear-armed states. Disaster was averted only by cool-headed individuals gambling that the alert was caused by a glitch and not an actual attack or not willing to take the responsibility to use those weapons ...

Given that it took us several decades to learn about those cases and that most nuclear-weapon states have not reported cases of mismanagement of their own weapons, it is most likely that we can only see an incomplete picture.⁶

We are already aware of US attempts to hack into Iran's nuclear industry, and we know that some governments, as well as a number of political organisations, have developed sophisticated hacking techniques. One of the worst-case scenarios considered by scientists opposed to nuclear weapons is the risk of a missile being deployed by mistake, as a result of hacking. This could involve a situation where communication with a submarine is compromised, a military command misinterpreted or a serious system failure occurs at a time when military exercises are in progress.

There is also a risk of contamination by highly radioactive material and explosions during transportation - in the case of the UK this material is transported from the Atomic Weapons Establishment in Berkshire to the Faslane submarine base in

Scotland, with an inevitable risk of fire or explosion - not to mention the possibility of radioactive materials spreading in a number of regions en route. The movement of nuclear materials is also required in order to refuel submarines' nuclear reactors.

Then there is the issue of nuclear waste, the decommissioning of submarines and the disposal of highly radioactive reactor cores. Both in terms of nuclear weapons and nuclear energy, there is currently no safe, permanent storage. In the case of the United Kingdom, such waste is transported and held in containers docked at a base in Plymouth, posing major environmental and health risks. We all know of the terrible incident in the Sellafield nuclear reprocessing plant that led to release of radioactive material and a major fire in 1957.

It is often said that third-world countries suspected of trying to achieve nuclear weapons capability would be incapable of storing and maintaining such 'sophisticated' weapons - the five permanent members of the security council, along with International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors, remind us of the stringent security and safety measures required for keeping the world safe in a nuclear age.

Yet recent disclosures by a seaman who served on a Trident submarine has brought issues of safety and security in the UK's military nuclear establishment into the public domain. In May 2015, *The Sunday Herald* published parts of a report compiled by William McNeilly, who claims:

Trident submarines are plagued by serious security lapses, beset by multiple safety blunders and are a disaster waiting to happen.

The Trident D5 missile, used by both the UK and US, is designed with nuclear warheads closely wrapped around the third-stage rocket motor. This has been highlighted as a design flaw by US experts in the past, but has not previously been acknowledged by the ministry of defence. The results of a rocket fuel fire at sea or on land could be catastrophic for submariners and the public, critics have warned. The MoD, however, said it had to train for every scenario, no matter how extreme and unlikely.

McNeilly alleges 30 Trident security and safety concerns in an 18-page dossier. He has also filmed the weapons safety manual on his smartphone. Code-named CB8890, it is a book kept in a safe in the submarine missile control centre. Extracts quoted by McNeilly disclose that the warheads clustered around the third-stage rocket motor are at risk from a rocket motor propellant fire. Exposed to heat, the warheads' conventional high explosives could cook to (non-nuclear) detonation, releasing radioactive materials and aerosols over a wide area, according to the manual.

If warhead containment is breached, "several radioactive and/or toxic materials may be exposed to the atmosphere," it says. "These include plutonium, uranium, lithium compounds, tritium gas and beryllium. If mixed with water, fumes or toxic gases will be generated. "The navy manual paints a dramatic picture of what could happen. "The chief potential hazard associated with a live missile is the accidental ignition of the first, second or third-stage rocket motor propellant."⁷

In fact the MoD's own nuclear regulator agrees that "submarine nuclear reactors are inherently less safe than their land-based counterparts".⁸

In addition Trident missiles manufactured in the United States are regularly moved across the Atlantic

for maintenance and replacement. A Trident submarine has been involved in at least one underwater collision with another nuclear-armed submarine.

Ready to fire

During the cold war, US military policy for the rapid deployment of nuclear weapons was called 'hair-trigger alert'. Accordingly all missiles are kept in what is called a 'ready-for-launch status', staffed by crews who work around the clock ready to launch these weapons if necessary - and we are talking of *minutes* before planes are airborne, or submarines are deployed. The UK's Trident missiles are part of this policy.

Military experts claimed it was a necessary response to a 'bolt from the blue' Soviet 'first strike':

The Soviet Union would launch an attack with hundreds or thousands of nuclear weapons, making it impossible or at least difficult to respond and retaliate in time. By keeping land-based missiles on hair-trigger alert - and nuclear-armed bombers ready to take off - the United States could launch vulnerable weapons before they were hit by incoming Soviet warheads. This policy was to ensure retaliation, and was seen as a deterrent to a Soviet first strike - a concept known as 'mutually assured destruction'.⁹

This is one of the ironies of a nuclear war. No-one envisages victory - all you can hope for is a kind of equilibrium. In the pre-nuclear era, each state would aim to defeat its enemy. However, in a nuclear war the weapons used can kill millions of people, including in countries that are your allies. The flight time of each missile is measured in minutes and the nuclear winter it creates will threaten the entire planet. There can be no winner.

The 21st century version of 'hair trigger alert' is 'launch on warning', whereby missiles are despatched when the US receives warning of an impending nuclear attack and retaliates immediately.

In addition the UK and three other nuclear powers - the US, Russia and France - have a policy of maintaining their weapons in a 'ready to fire' state. Given the fact that a small fraction of weapons held by these countries could wipe out humanity, such a

deployment poses an enormous risk to all life on the planet. A number of former US commanders have argued that weapons should be taken off ready-to-fire status to remove the possibility of catastrophic accidental nuclear war - this is a particular risk during times of heightened international tensions, such as what we are currently witnessing in the Middle East.

But in the meantime nuclear missiles remain on a 15-minute alert, ready to be fired if radar shows (or is believed to show) that enemy missiles are heading our way. But there have been false alarms, even after the end of the cold war. In 1995 Norway reported it had informed Russia and the world that it was launching a space research rocket in the direction of Moscow. However, the notice failed to reach the relevant officials and the Russian government was unaware of the exercise. It concluded that the single 'missile' was part of a much more serious attack aimed at paralysing Russia's nuclear capability. The alert was sent from Moscow and a countdown began. The process was only aborted after Russian military officials realised it was a false alarm.

Some scientists believe the fact that Russia's alert systems are older and less reliable than their western counterparts, and the fact that Russia has fewer satellites with sensors and fewer radar stations, means that the world is in more danger from an accidental nuclear confrontation. They argue that an international ban on storing and developing these weapons of genocidal destruction, in line with the bans on biological and chemical weapons, is well overdue ●

Notes

1. www.sgr.org.uk/resources/uk-nuclear-weapons-catastrophe-making.
2. www.sgr.org.uk/resources/uk-nuclear-weapons-catastrophe-making.
3. www.icanw.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/ifbritainfiredtrident.pdf.
4. http://documents.mx/documents/asats.html.
5. www.chathamhouse.org/publications/papers/view/199200.
6. www.bristol.ac.uk/news/2014/may/nuclear-report.html.
7. www.heraldscotland.com/news/13215092.Trident_missile_flaw_could_cause_explosions_and_radioactive_contamination_reveals_whistleblower.
8. MoD *The future of the United Kingdom's nuclear deterrent* 2006. See also MoD *Initial Gate parliamentary report* 2011, p8; and subsequent updates to parliament.
9. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bulletin_of_the_Atomic_Scientists.

Fighting fund

Come to our aid

Our February fund got a big boost this week, thanks to comrade PM, who transferred a brilliant £250 to the Weekly Worker account. He writes: "I want to make sure you hit that target."

He's referring, of course, to the £1,750 we need to raise every month and his generous donation takes our running total to £1,434. But there are only four days left to raise the remaining £341, so we need a few more comrades like him to come to our aid.

Also last week we received £270 in standing orders - thank you, SK, DT, GD, ML and TH. Then there was the £10 that PB added to her resubscription and a single £5 PayPal donation from comrade PM - the only one of 3,193 online readers who clicked on that button over the last seven days.

Talking of online readers, they were able to read every article in its entirety last week. But, due to

an error on the part of our printers, there were several small white patches throughout the paper version, each of them making three or four lines unreadable. Unfortunately we only noticed this after the paper had been sent for distribution. Apologies to all our print readers.

Anyway, as I say, now we need some more comrades to help us out - in particular, those with an online bank account can transfer cash in seconds and without cost to either party (our account number is 00744310 and the sort code is 30-99-64). We need to reach our target by 5pm on Monday February 29, so can you do your bit for the only paper that fights for a single, united Marxist party? ●

Robbie Rix

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The *Weekly Worker* is licensed by November Publications under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International Licence: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/legalcode>. ISSN 1351-0150.

weekly worker

**No to
Bonapartist
presidents**

Turning of the tide

Bolivia's 'road to socialism' turned out to be another dead end, writes **Eddie Ford**

Everything now indicates that president Evo Morales has failed in his bid to amend the constitution so as to allow him to run for a fourth term in 2019. With over 99% of votes counted at the time of writing, 'no' has beaten 'yes' by 51.3% to 48.7% - representing the first time in 10 years that Morales has lost any sort of national vote or poll. The outcome also prevents vice-president Álvaro García Linera - former Túpac guerrilla - from running again. Just like in Venezuela, the 'revolution' is running out of steam.

Morales defiantly declared on February 22 that, whatever the result, he would not abandon his struggle - "We're anti-neoliberal, anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist - we've been formed that way" - and promised that the "struggle will continue". He attributed his defeat to a "dirty war" waged by "rightwing sectors" on social media and elsewhere - an accusation which doubtlessly contains some truth. Referring to himself and his Movement For Socialism (MAS), he said that they "don't like us much in the city" - he was still hoping for a late surge of support from the more remote rural areas and overseas votes.

Though he may have lost the vote, the Bolivian president clearly retains a popular base in the countryside and shanty towns. His fervent supporters ('masistas') argue that he has ended five centuries of oppression against indigenous people - he won his first term in 2005 with 54% of the vote, increasing that support four years later to 63% and almost matching it again in 2014 with 61%. Bolivia's GDP has more than tripled from \$9 billion in 2005 to over \$34 billion under his "indigenous socialist programme". In the words of the *Financial Times*, Morales has "matched anti-capitalist rhetoric and a programme of nationalisation with prudent macroeconomic management" (February 22).

However, the economic boom presided over by Morales has started to wane. Bolivia's revenues from natural gas and minerals, making up three-quarters of its exports, were down 32% last year. More importantly, the reputation of Morales and the MAS government has been steadily tarnished by constant stories of corruption and cronyism - some of which are bound to be true, given that he is he trying to run capitalism. For example, his personal popularity took a fairly big hammering following a 2013 scandal involving a former lover, Gabriela Zapata, with whom he admitted fathering a child - the main problem not being sexual indiscretion, but the fact that Zapata holds an important position in the Chinese engineering company, CAMC, which has secured more than \$500 million in contracts with the Bolivian government.

Whilst communists obviously have no truck with Morales's rightwing opponents, his attempts to cling onto power have become increasingly desperate and unedifying. And it goes without saying that the burgeoning



Evo Morales: presidential finery

state bureaucracy and semi-cult of personality around him is antithetical to genuine socialism.

Inspiration

Thinking back to only a few years ago, Evo Morales (alongside Hugo Chávez) was a great hero for those sections of the British left that looked towards Latin America for political inspiration. In fact, Venezuela's 'Bolivarian revolution' was regarded

by many as a model. Similarly Morales's coming to power was excitedly viewed as a *pachakuti*: the beginning of a new history, free from colonialism and capitalism.

Acting as a barometer of leftwing thought on this matter was *Red Pepper* - the "independent radical red and green magazine". *RP* featured numerous articles assuring us that Bolivia under Morales was laying the foundations for socialism. In a

September 2010 feature tellingly entitled 'The Bolivian road to socialism', Mark Geddes was typically confident that in the period since 2000 the country had "successfully overthrown a neoliberal regime and begun to build new institutions and policies".¹ He approvingly quoted Linera (described as a "Marxist intellectual"), who claimed that the MAS had been "utilising the mass support of the trade unions and a

wide range of social movements" and, "when necessary", the "coercive mechanisms of the state".

The main lesson, in the opinion of Geddes, is that a "radical refounding of the state must embody an active dialectic between state and social movements" - it also required the ability of the MAS to "hold together the broad alliance necessary to win power and begin to map out and implement a movement towards socialism". As we can see, this was an extremely optimistic (or naive) assessment of Morales and the MAS.

Some other left groups, though a little critical of Morales, were also swept away by the excitement. For instance, the International Marxist Tendency of Ted Grant and Alan Woods said the 2008 referendum was a "new turning point for the revolution, in which opposite class interests are clashing."² We were also told that the results of the presidential election the following year were a massive "vote for socialism".³ Similarly, the "ecosocialist and feminist" Socialist Resistance (formerly International Socialist Group), entertained fantasies about the "revolutions" in Venezuela and Bolivia.⁴ Yet the fact of the matter is that the state machines in both countries remain intact. No matter, for the likes of *Red Pepper*, IMT, Socialist Resistance, etc - Evo Morales and Hugo Chávez represented some kind of way forward.

But look how things are today. The tide of opinion is turning against Morales, and the MAS bureaucracy is bogged down in corruption and scandal, with the economy going into contraction. As for Venezuela, the collapse in oil prices has had a calamitous effect on the economy - president Nicolás Maduro declaring an "economic emergency", on top of a sharp devaluation of the currency (the mainly centre-right opposition now controls the assembly for the first time in 17 years).

The so-called Bolivian and Venezuelan roads to socialism have turned out to be dead ends ●

eddie.ford@weeklyworker.co.uk

Notes

1. www.redpepper.org.uk/the-bolivian-road-to-socialism.
2. www.marxist.com/statement-imt-recall-referendum-bolivia.htm.
3. www.marxist.com/bolivia-victory-evo-a-vote-for-socialism.htm.
4. http://socialistresistance.org/169/counter-revolutionary-offensive-in-latin-america.

Subscribe			
	6m	1yr	Inst.
UK	£30/€35	£60/€70	£200/€220
Europe	£43/€50	£86/€100	£240/€264
Rest of world	£65/€75	£130/€150	£480/€528

New UK subscribers offer: 3 months for £10

UK subscribers: Pay by standing order and save £12 a year. Minimum £12 every 3 months... but please pay more if you can.

Send a cheque or postal order payable to 'Weekly Worker' at:
Weekly Worker, BCM Box 928,
London WC1N 3XX

Name: _____

Address: _____

Tel: _____

Email: _____

Sub: £/€ _____

Donation: £/€ _____

Standing order

To _____ Bank plc _____

Branch address _____

Post code _____ Account name _____

Sort code _____ Account No _____

Please pay to Weekly Worker, Lloyds A/C No 00744310 sort code 30-99-64, the sum of _____ every month*/3 months* until further notice, commencing on _____ This replaces any previous order from this account. (*delete)

Date _____

Signed _____ Name (PRINT) _____

Address _____