

A paper of Marxist polemic and Marxist unity

weekly **worker**



**Hillel Ticktin lambasts
the confused reformism
of McDonnell and Corbyn**

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New era taking shape

LETTERS



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

Distinction

Adam Buick says I have “confused” two transitions (Letters, November 17). The “transition from capitalism to the first phase of communist society and the transition from the first phase of communist society to the higher phase.”

However, apart from the fact that I call the first phase of communist society ‘socialism’, and the higher phase ‘communism’, I cannot really see where we differ here. Note, with the Socialist Party of Great Britain the first and the second phases of communism are named ‘socialism’.

The first phase, of what we could agree to call the society of the future, emerges from capitalism as it is, from where the working class finds it when it takes political power. In other words, the “transition from capitalism” begins with a decisive moment. That is at the point when, through winning the battle for democracy, the working class establishes its own rule - ie, the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Only when the state finally withers away, where the antithesis between mental and manual labour has vanished, where there is fully rounded individual development, etc, can society “inscribe on its banners, ‘From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!’” Comrade Buick says that “Jack Conrad asserts that the distinction between ‘socialism’ and ‘communism’ was “an orthodox Second International formulation”. Well, not quite. What I actually did was quote Lenin’s *State and revolution* (1917), saying it was “usual” to call the first phase “socialism”. I then stated that it was Second International orthodoxy to make the *distinction* between a lower and a higher stage - whatever name one gives it.

And there have been any number of names. Eg, Karl Kautsky, in *The class struggle* (1892) - his extended commentary on the Erfurt programme - writes of the “cooperative commonwealth”.

All Lenin seems to have done is return to Karl Marx and Frederick Engels and their preference for the word “communism” - at least when it comes to the higher stage. Hence also the name change of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (Bolsheviks) to Communist Party.

Jack Conrad

London

Price tag

I find little to disagree with Maren Clarke’s reply (Letters, November 17). Socialism will be a system of planned allocation of resources, accomplished through democratic decision-making. Socialists have always acknowledged capitalism’s past achievements, but capitalism (and what has passed for ‘socialism’) has failed to satisfy people’s needs and has excluded them from the determination of those needs. As Marx said, “The process of production dominates individuals; individuals do not dominate the process of production”.

Maren says I “miss another factor to be taken into account: namely, time.” Guilty. Society will not assign values to products. It will not express the simple fact that the hundred square yards of cloth have required for their production, say, a thousand hours of labour in the oblique and meaningless way, stating that they have the value of a thousand hours of labour. It is true that even then it will still be necessary for society to know how much labour each article of consumption requires for its production. It will have to arrange its plan of production in accordance with its means of production, which include, in particular, its labour-powers. The useful effects of the various articles of consumption, compared with

one another and with the quantities of labour required for their production, will, in the end, determine the plan. People will be able to manage everything very simply, without the intervention of much-vaunted “value”.

Maren makes good points. In socialism, the answer could be, ‘No, we will not be producing this, even though there is a need for it.’ And people will have to develop a culture where need is considered and argued over, rather than being simply a reaction to the immense collection of commodities before our eyes, from which we pick what we feel we need. And also consumption itself will be a debated and discussed action, and will not simply be a signal for stores to produce more widgets; and if you have stores where the technology determines what is demanded this week or the next and responds to this change in demand, then all you really have is a system of sale and exchange in another guise.

These last comments allude to my analogy that we will use existing logistics systems to keep the shelves stacked, but I am not suggesting that it will be isolated consumers who direct production. I am assuming that, after the initial assessments of the expected needs of a local community, these may well be later adjusted by changes in individual desires that will add up to an aggregate demand.

Socialism does not imply the non-communication of costs in terms of hours of work, input resources and environmental impact. Nor does it imply no processes for comparing this information which will all go hand in hand. We already have statistical and information departments. Socialism will not lead to the creation of new layers of administration, but simply the transformation of them. Socialism will not disregard opportunity costs calculated by such methods as cost-benefit analysis. We will economise most on what is the scarcest. Socialism does not reject Maslow’s “hierarchy of needs”. High-priority goals would take precedence over low-priority goals, where the same resources are required by both. Some may wish luxury goods, but by collectively deciding to prioritise resource allocation to the production of other goods higher up in production hierarchy, people are indicating their preference for the latter as a priority. Jane’s kidney machine comes before John’s karaoke machine - “to each according to needs”.

Maren’s car factory does not require recourse to monetary prices to make a decision about its production. A monetary economy gives rise to the illusion that the cost of producing something is merely financial. The point I wanted to make is explained by Paresh Chattopadhyay: “The problem of rationally allocating productive resources in an economy is common to all human societies, at least as long as these resources remain relatively limited compared to needs. However, there is no need to assume that this allocation could be effected rationally (if at all) only through the exchange of resources taking the value (price) form.”

Alan Johnstone
SPGB

Pure Marxism

Concerning the comments made by Robin Cox (Letters, November 17), my major concern is not to provide the latest version of ‘what Marx said’ about socialist economy, but instead to support the alternative conception of market socialism. However, I would still claim to be a Marxist, because only the strategy of class struggle will bring about the realisation of an alternative to capitalism. In other words, adherence to a revolutionary approach is crucial when defining a person as a Marxist. But it is also obvious that Marxism is not a doctrine that is based on rigid dogmas. Marxism can only thrive when it is subject to constant revision and improvement in its ability to explain reality.

In relation to war communism, my primary aim was to try and indicate that it could not succeed because it was based on the methods of extra-economic coercion of the peasants. Indeed, it was generally known as the surplus grain appropriation system. War communism could only be a transitory emergency measure for the period of the civil war, and it was sensible for the Bolsheviks to replace it with the New Economic Policy, which allowed for freedom to trade.

Lenin’s justification of an end to war communism was based on the following understanding: “We know that, so long as there is no revolution in other countries, only agreement with the peasantry can save the socialist revolution in Russia” (*CW* Vol 32, p215). The aim was to create a system of exchange of goods between industry and agriculture based upon the market. This system was superior to the confiscation of goods from the peasantry: “The exchange is an incentive, a spur to the peasants. The proprietor can and will surely make an effort in his own interest when he knows that his surplus produce will not be taken away from him and that he will only have to pay a tax, which should whenever possible be fixed in advance” (*CW* Vol 32, p226). The historical importance of this policy is that it indicates the importance of compromise, and retreat, plus the dilution of goals, if the overall objectives of socialism are to be promoted.

Hence the contemporary relevance of the New Economic Policy is that it represents a recognition that socialism can only be realised if any tendency towards compulsion in economic and political relations is rejected. Instead it is vital that the importance of developing the maximum support for socialism is generated via acceptance of market incentives. It is significant that the advocates of pure Marxism can only justify their standpoint in terms of the supposed smooth functioning of economic processes, and so are silent about the crucial issue of how to develop maximum support for the objectives of socialism.

Alan Johnstone is right to consider that socialism was not created within the Soviet Union. But what he is silent about is that the SPGB never supported what was a genuine proletarian revolution, which was based on the role of the popular organisations of the soviets. The choice in 1918 was between support for world revolution to facilitate the possibility of socialism in Russia, or passive acceptance of capitalism. The Bolsheviks failed, but their strategy was based on the internationalist understanding that World War I created the conditions for the success of a revolutionary approach. Hence this failure was not futile, or an expression of illusory politics. What happened was that an isolated proletarian regime turned into its opposite in terms of Stalinist degeneration.

Between 1918 and 1928 the Soviet regime presided over a system of state-capitalist regulation because workers’ self-management was not successful in 1918. This contradictory situation was resolved by the ruthless industrialising policies of Stalin in 1929. But this adverse situation does not reduce the October revolution to an expression of a modernising project of industrialisation, contrary to the claims made in John H Kautsky’s *Communism and the politics of development* (New York 1968, pp69-82). Kautsky’s view, like that of his distinguished relative, is dogmatic, because it is absurd to define the revolutionary activity of the working class in 1917 as an expression of an implicit bourgeois revolution.

Lastly, Adam Buick considers that my interpretation of market socialism is an accommodation to the understanding that people are inherently greedy. This is a caricatured view. Instead we have to reconcile individual interests with the needs of the community. This relationship can be ensured by the role of the market

and the price system. In contrast, Adam advocates a society where people accept “mutual obligations and generalised reciprocity” (Letters, November 17). The problem is that this standpoint is based on the substitution of moral premises in place of the role of economic mechanisms.

Phil Sharpe
email

Lesser evils

Who can deny that communists are better positioned under Trump than they would have been under Clinton? The election has already produced the beginning of a youth radicalisation, and Trump supporters themselves will follow when the next president fails to deliver.

Yet, writers for the *Weekly Worker* call the Trump victory over Clinton a defeat (a win for nationalism) and Paul Demarty even hopes the Trump era will soon be replaced by normalcy (“Trump need only be a one-term president, or less than that ...”) The Spartacists *Workers Vanguard* states flatly: “Trump’s victory is bad news.” Comrades who reject ‘lesser-evilism’ apparently harbour the belief that Clinton really was the lesser evil. Lesser-evilism hasn’t been well refuted. Most of the contemporary left that rejects lesser-evilism doesn’t understand why it’s misguided. There’s a theoretical lacuna.

Let’s review the stock of arguments. They are wanting. The most popular argument was stated by Julian Assange, when he compared the choice between ruling class parties to being forced to choose between contracting cholera and gonorrhoea. But revolutionary strategy cannot always avoid choices between unfavourable alternatives. We make choices between evils. Why not? Another argument - one I’ve made - is that we really don’t know which capitalist candidate will turn out to be the lesser evil. But why should we rule out the possibility that sometimes we do know? The best argument is due to Engels, who maintained that the gains from running independent working class candidates are more important than securing the election of the more reformist bourgeois candidate. While a correct observation, it doesn’t explain why this should always be the case, nor is the generalisation useful when there are no mass working class parties.

Lesser-evilism hasn’t been defeated even on a theoretical plane, and to rebut it some fundamentals of Marxist strategy must be recovered. For a Marxist to support a demand on the ruling class, including a candidate for office, two criteria must be met, objective and subjective. The objective criterion is that the realisation of the demand benefits the working class. The subjective criterion is that the *effort* to realise the demand benefits the class. Ignoring the subjective criterion is the error of objectivism. Ignoring the objective criterion is the error of demagoguism.

Lesser-evilism as we know it - the support for liberals against hard reactionaries - is a demagoguist error. Objectively, the victory of the more reactionary candidate is the lesser evil: the victory of the reformist is the greater! The more reactionary candidate fails the subjective test, but the reformist candidate fails the objective test.

Howls of protest will be heard: third periodism! Communists during the declared third period responded to the National Socialists by proclaiming ‘the worse, the better’, but in Germany the error was objectivist because the subjective criterion was ignored. ‘Worse is better’ in electoral conflicts is not an excuse for strategic failure to mobilise to improve the relations of forces.

When all else is equal, the reactionary side is objectively the lesser evil electorally. All else was equal in the last US election - essentially a toss-up. The victory of one side or the other connotes nothing about a change in the relations of forces, causally isolating

the electoral result. The difference causally between a Clinton and Trump win is the difference between the ratio of concession and repression that will characterise ruling class tactics. Except under fascism the bourgeoisie divides between a more far-seeing reformist wing and a hidebound rigid wing that’s unwilling to compromise. The ruling class deployment of hard reaction improves the objective position of the working class in dialectical fashion, because the ruling class discards its most potent weapon, reformism. Although the subjective criterion requires communists to oppose both Clinton and Trump, the Trump victory places the proletariat in an objectively better position. (The Social Democratic second-ballot support for the reformist Cadets in Russia is objectively justified for the sake of Social Democratic gains due to the electoral pacts, which presumably was greater than the harm caused by electing Cadets.)

The widespread preference for a Clinton win on the left, even among those who opposed her absolutely (such as comrade Demarty), is a concentrated expression of centrism. When contemplating a Clinton regime featuring a few possibilities for reform versus a Trump regime featuring none, centrists show their inclinations in their preference for reform. They never see contradiction between what serves reform and what serves revolution. (Sometimes this is expressed with the pseudo-revolutionary rhetoric that the struggle for revolution is always the effective way to obtain reforms.) Centrist thinking bars the true rebuttal of lesser-evilism: reformism is the greater objective evil.

Stephen Diamond
USA

Little England

The iconic picture of Trump with Farage reveals a certain truth about Brexit. Here we have a glimpse of reality, entirely absent from the Tory referendum. We can invent our own dialogue. Farage says: ‘Donald, I am handing you the UK on a plate.’ Trump, thumbs up, replies: ‘Thanks. I’ll take Scotland as my golf course, the NHS and more tax breaks for American multinationals. I want free trade deals to benefit America and no more wind farms.’

The decision to leave the European Union did not take place in isolation from real economic forces. In 2015 China became the world’s largest economy with a gross domestic product measured at \$19.5 trillion. The EU was not far behind with \$19.1 trillion, followed by the United States with \$17.9 trillion. The UK is integrated with and dependent on both the US and EU economies, not least through the close relations between Wall Street and the City.

Exit from the EU therefore leaves the UK more dependent on the US. There is no future for the UK as an independent imperialist power. Only fantasists like the UK Independence Party and Tory free marketers seem to think so. The UK is not about to conquer the world by imposing ‘free trade’ deals on Europe, China and America with our 19 frigates. So Farage has arrived where Brexit was always taking us.

After meeting Trump, the Ukip leader said we should “be in no doubt” that Trump was a supporter of the UK and willing to be “very close partners”. There was a “real opportunity” for “Brexit Britain” to have improved UK trade with the US. He claimed that Trump would be a much more accommodating partner than Obama, who he suggested had “damaged” the relationship between both countries.

So in reality England and Wales voted to leave the EU for a new Atlantic partnership with the USA. The picture portrays the reality of ‘partnership’. It provides a cold shower of realism and a metaphor for America and England. On one side is one of the richest and most powerful men in the world and on

the other a powerless Little Englander pumped up by his own hubris.

This was not the story presented in the referendum. Brexit was an ideological campaign around the values of British nationalism. Britain would become a free and independent nation once again. There would be "British jobs for British workers", as Gordon Brown promised. Great Britannia would again rule the waves, striking deals hither and thither, as the vanguard of renewed free market globalisation, innovation and trade.

Of course, Obama wanted the UK to remain in the EU to protect US interests by advancing the neoliberal, 'Anglo-Saxon' model of capitalism. Voting to leave was a rejection of advice from Washington in a way which would leave British business more dependent on the US than ever.

It is an opportunity that a businessman like Trump is ready to exploit to the full. Farage explained: "Not only president-elect Trump, but his whole team, is Anglophile. They like our country, they recognise what we've done together in the past, and they're coming into this with an incredibly positive view. We need to seize the day."

So little England has taken to hanging around the new king of America's golden palace, hoping for a few favours. Trump duly obliged. He told the world that Farage was his preferred British ambassador. The Tories were embarrassed. Her Majesty was not amused. It is her job to appoint ambassadors and she does not take kindly to somebody interfering with her prerogative powers. Yet in the new post-Brexit world all the Tories can do is grin and bear it.

The divisions of class and nation are at the heart of the problems socialists have to overcome. Scratch British nationalism and behind it is the monster of Great English chauvinism. The referendum showed deep divisions in the country. Ireland, north and south, wants to remain in the EU. Scotland voted to stay, not least because Scottish nationalism looks across the North Sea to a more European social democratic future like Norway or Denmark.

The Tory referendum highlighted divisions within the working class. Many working class people in England and Wales voted out, rejecting the urging of the ruling class and the Westminster establishment. Combine anger, frustration, poverty and an absence of class organisation with patriotic appeals, love of country, resentment of foreigners and we have a dangerous brew.

Most organised workers and Labour Party members did not fall for this British independence bullshit. Yet what is really revealed is confusion about what to do next. The socialist movement has not recognised the danger of Great English chauvinism and has no progressive policy for confronting it other than moral condemnation.

Leaving the EU frying pan means jumping more firmly into the US fire. So now we have to deal urgently with England's relationship with itself, and with Europe, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The future of Corbyn's Labour Party and Left Unity depends on this. Let us begin by finding and taking the democratic exit from this nightmare.

Steve Freeman
Left Unity and Rise

Huff off

With Momentum boss Jon Lansman walking out in a huff, amid a hail of accusations of undemocratic behaviour, from the London regional committee meeting on November 19, it is clear that the deep dissatisfaction felt by delegates with the democratic deficit in Momentum has not been, and should not be, covered over with false claims of unanimity. Differences must be brought into the light for clarification, not concealed behind fudged formulations.

The issue in contention is whether Momentum's constitution and politics will be decided by delegates voting after debate at its February launch conference - the best way to encourage the organisation of members into local branches - or through

online voting by atomised members, bypassing face-to-face meetings and discussion, bypassing local and regional organisation. The first opens the way to democratic unity of the left and building a robust socialist organisation capable of transforming the Labour Party and the trade unions. The second, treating Momentum as a stage army to be activated from above when required, inevitably undermines the development of effective and enduring organisation.

Lansman's October 28 attempted coup announced a *fait accompli* - that conference decisions would be made after conference by online voting of all members - and cancelled the November 5 national committee meeting, which would likely have rejected that decision. This led to an immediate rebellion led by Matt Wrack and the London committee, quickly followed by several other regions. Within days, John McDonnell had met with Matt Wrack and Jon Lansman, and peace was prematurely announced in a fudged 'unanimous' steering committee statement. Under pressure to forget their principles for appearances' sake, those who opposed online decision-making by an atomised membership nevertheless put their names to it, albeit now as a recommendation to the NC. No wonder Jill Mountford recanted the very next morning.

The November 19 London meeting was outraged to learn that the December 3 NC meeting was being "packed" by new delegates elected with indecent haste through online voting by atomised members - some to represent so called "liberation groups", which may or may not exist, others to represent lone members not (yet) organised in local branches. Unfortunately reminiscent of the Labour right's shenanigans during the two recent leader campaigns. Strange that Nick Wrack, newly elected London delegate to Momentum's NC, has declared that he favours keeping Lansman on, when the NC elects a new steering committee.

Stan Keable
London

Driving force

I'm going to Nick Wrack's Labour Party Socialist Network meeting this Saturday. It's at ULU, Malet Street, from 12 to 5pm and looks like it's the driving force against Lansman and may well defeat him at the February conference.

Nick's brother, Matt, general secretary of the Fire Brigades Union, launched the crucial attack on Lansman and is now chair of the Labour Representation Committee. They are mainly ex-Militant Tendency supporters and it's rumoured to be the vehicle for welcoming in up to half the membership of the Socialist Party, who are now entering Labour.

We could defeat Lansman and then be faced with a new battle there. But in a better, more leftist place to fight, given the democratising of the structures of Momentum necessary to defeat Lansman.

I've joined the LPSN for £1 a month retired fee and expect to be warmly welcomed.

Gerry Downing
Socialist Fight

Knock-out

Your correspondent, John Holliday (Letters, November 3), thought it justified to criticise Yasmine Mather's article, 'A tale of two cities' (October 27), for lacking any proper Marxist perspective, and thereby for not having any revolutionary 'bite' (that being my interpretation of the author's words, at least).

Well, you can imagine how thrilled some of us bystanders to this skirmish were, when the very next week comrade Yasmine came up with what can only be described as the golden booty welded to the killer blow ('No democratic advert', November 10).

There's an underlying recognition and inherent understanding of the fact that, when capitalism places on offer its baubles, bangles and trinkets, it does so on the basis that a recipient population will continue to tolerate any associated dehumanisations and outrages

(or even maintain a downright apathetic acquiescence in all such toxicity, tawdriness and decadence).

Put another way, each side of the equation drawn up between the participants permits the whole thing to continue and at least notionally succeed.

This is a highly unfortunate but pretty much central aspect of modern-day capitalism, that many so-called 'freethinking' revolutionists are not prepared to acknowledge - not openly anyway. And, consequently, it's something that doesn't get the productive or constructive placement it deserves in everyone's minds. Comrade Mather corrects that fact with her article. Indeed, she corrects those failings of almost all others rather beautifully, but with knock-out punches.

Bruno Kretschmar
email

Wealthy few

Despite the lack of headlines, chancellor Philip Hammond's first mini-budget was like those of his recent Tory predecessors: a range of policies which will continue austerity and the attacks on the poor and most vulnerable in society.

The chancellor confirmed welfare cuts already planned. People on the minimum or living wage depend on benefits, and there was already a freeze on major benefits until 2020, and this will bite harder, as inflation is set to increase. The government plans to cut a total of almost £5 billion from both the work allowance element of universal credit and employment support allowance, but this, wasn't mentioned by Hammond. Both cuts could, and should, have been withdrawn.

Nearly two million remain unemployed, and permanent jobs are scarce. Outside Rugby job centre, claimants regularly tell us about the poverty they have been forced into, often because of sanctions when their benefits are suspended or cut off altogether. Poverty is clearly getting worse - hence the ever increasing use of food banks - and this autumn statement does nothing to address that.

Even the 30p hourly increase in the national living wage to £7.50 will only marginally help those forced to live on it, and it remains well below what people need to survive. Young workers under 25 are on a much lower minimum wage ranging from £4 to £6.95 per hour, and those on zero-hours contracts will be lucky to receive any benefit at all from the tiny national living wage increase.

Whilst the poor suffer, wealthier households are in line for a tax boost. The autumn statement confirmed that the Tories will raise the threshold at which people start paying the higher rate of tax from the present £43,000 to £45,000 next April and £50,000 by 2020-21. Philip Hammond reconfirmed the Tory commitment to cut income tax for Britain's 15% richest earners.

The autumn statement also confirms that the Tories are preparing for more austerity, with massive cuts to local government finances, the continuation of the 1% public-sector pay rise caps and the admittance that future cuts will be needed to pay for an 'ageing society'. But austerity is a political choice. Instead of cutting public services and attacking those on benefits, the government could save the same amount by:

- A 5% wealth tax on the richest 10%, which alone would resolve the country's debt.
- Reclaiming the £120 billion per year of unpaid tax that rich individuals and companies avoid or evade.
- Nationalisation of the banks and building societies: their massive profits could be used to maintain and improve public services.

However they may try and dress it up, the autumn statement promises more pain and suffering for most of us. Philip Hammond started his speech by stating that the International Monetary Fund predicts the UK will be the fastest growing economy in the world. What a shame this apparent prosperity will only be available to the wealthy few.

Pete McLaren
Rugby Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition

ACTION

London Communist Forum

Sunday November 27, 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 8 ('The challenge of appeasement'), section 4: 'War'. Organised by CPGB: www.cpgb.org.uk; and Labour Party Marxists: www.labourpartymarxists.org.uk.

Radical Anthropology Group

Tuesday November 29, 6.45pm: Daryll Forde seminar room, Anthropology Building, 14 Taviton Street, off Gordon Square, London WC1. 'Learn to sing in polyphonic chorus: a dark moon workshop'. Speaker: Ingrid Lewis. Organised by Radical Anthropology Group: <http://radicalanthropologygroup.org>.

From Grunwick to Deliveroo

Saturday November 26, 10.30am to 4.30pm: Conference on migrant workers and trade unions, Willesden Green Library Centre, 95 High Road, London NW10. 'Getting organised and getting unionised'. Organised by Grunwick 40: www.facebook.com/Grunwick40.

Labour Party Socialist Network

Saturday November 26, 1pm to 6pm: Members meeting, Birkbeck, University of London, Malet Street, London WC1. Join on the day - pre-registration essential. Organised by LPSN: <http://socialistnetwork.org.uk>.

Celebrate the Lucas Plan

Saturday November 26, 9am to 5pm: Conference on the 40th anniversary of the Lucas Plan, BVSC, 138 Digbeth, Birmingham B5. Climate jobs, not bombs! Organised by Birmingham TUC: www.facebook.com/BhamTUC.

Lessons from Chilcot

Monday November 28, 7pm: Meeting, Saint Parish Centre, St Mary's Gate, Chesterfield S41. Speaker: Lindsey German. Organised by Chesterfield Stop the War: www.stopwar.org.uk.

Reclaiming the NHS

Wednesday November 30, 7pm: Public meeting, council chambers, Camden town hall, Judd Street, London WC1. Organised by Camden Momentum: <https://en-gb.facebook.com/MomentumCamden>.

After Trump's election

Wednesday, November 30, 6.30pm: Public meeting, Old Fire Station, 84 Mayton Street, London N7. The impact of Trump's election in the Middle East. Organised by North London Stop the War Coalition: www.facebook.com/nlondon.stwc.7.

More bombing won't help Syria

Thursday December 1, 7pm: Public meeting, room 1031, Owen Building, Sheffield Hallam University, Howard Street, Sheffield S1. Speakers: Paul Rogers, Piers Robinson, Andrew Murray, Maz Saleem. Organised by Stop the War Coalition: www.stopwar.org.uk.

US elections and the anti-war movement

Thursday December 1, 7.30pm: Meeting, Council House, Victoria Square, Birmingham B1, committee rooms 3 and 4. Organised by Birmingham TUC: www.facebook.com/BhamTUC.

Momentum North East

Saturday December 3, 9.30am to 8pm: Regional conference, CastleGate, Melbourne Street, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1. Featuring policy-making debates and workshops. Organised by Momentum northern regional network: www.momentum-nrc.com.

The politics of Antonio Gramsci

Saturday December 3, 1pm: Public meeting, Red Shed, Vicarage Street, Wakefield WF1. Speakers: Colin Waugh (Independent Working Class Education Network), Howard Moss (Socialist Party of Great Britain). Music from Barnsdale Hood. Organised by Wakefield Socialist History Group: www.theredshed.org.uk/SocialHist.html.

Festive Marxist bargains

Saturday December 3, 11am to 3pm: Second-hand book sale, Marx Memorial Library, 37A Clerkenwell Green, London EC1. Organised by Marx Memorial Library: www.marxlibrary.org.uk.

Slaughter no remedy

Monday December 5, 8pm: Anti-war film night, The Cube cinema, Dove Street South, Kingsdown, Bristol BS2. Tickets £4/£5 from www.cubecinema.com/programme/event/slaughter-no-remedy.9053. Organised by Bristol Radical History Group: www.brh.org.uk/site.

Stop the War Christmas dinner

Wednesday December 7, 8pm till late: Annual festive meal fundraiser, Pasha, 301 Upper Street, London N1. Tickets: £35 (members), £40 (standard), £50 (solidarity). Book by phone: 020 7561 4830. Organised by Stop the War Coalition: www.stopwar.org.uk.

Media Reform UK

Saturday December 10, 10am to 6pm: Meeting, Clore Management Centre, Birkbeck, University of London, London WC1. Keynote speaker: John Pilger. Organised by Media Reform UK: www.facebook.com/MediaReformUK.

Christmas benefit night

Thursday December 15, 8pm to 2am: Live music benefit, Junction Room, 578 Kingsland Road, Dalston, London E8. £5 on the door. Organised by Stop the War Coalition: www.stopwar.org.uk.

CPGB wills

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

USA

New era taking shape

Donald Trump's early cabinet nominations are in line with his conspiratorial rightism. Paul Demarty assesses the reaction

Among the great and the good of Twitter, we observe a great divide: between those whose 140-character witticisms are the product of their own minds and hands, and those whose social media profiles are plainly the domain of 'their people' - PRs, assistants, interns, apparatchiks, automated chatbots.

There can be little doubt, of course, that '@realDonaldTrump' is in the first category: the mixture of brutal putdowns, conspiracy theories, ruminations on the emasculation of American football and so on can surely only be the product of the Donald slapping a tanned hand angrily against a touchscreen of his very own. This unfiltered digital id-stream is, of course, only the more hilarious now that he is president-elect and there are no more excuses not to follow the man's circuitous trains of thought; thus the latest of many scrambled responses to his plans, whereby he appeared to formally invite Nigel Farage to serve as British ambassador in Washington.

Cue a desperate response from Her Majesty's government, thanking Trump, but declaring that there is no vacancy, wrapping the whole package up in yet more threadbare guff about strengthening our historic relationship, etc. In reality, in a world with more than enough delicate situations to begin with, a great deal of chaos and uncertainty is breaking out at the global order's very summit.

Changing of the guard

Uncertainty, of course, is the watchword - a president-elect is not a president, and Trump will not get his chance at playing commander-in-chief for another couple of months.

In the interim, there is the prefatory drama of his nominations for cabinet positions, which are picking up steam, and attracting a great deal of concerned attention. There is, first of all, Alabama senator Jeff Sessions, who is supposed to be attorney general (in American politics, the position is more important than it might sound, and essentially equivalent to home secretary in British terms).

Sessions' full name is Jefferson Beauregard Sessions III, presumably

after Jefferson Davis and Civil War general Pierre GT Beauregard - to have one Confederate name can be put down to misfortune, but two - for three successive generations of firstborn men - begins to look like nostalgia for the glory days of King Cotton and the bull-whip ... And Sessions has altogether too often looked the part, interfering with black voter registration drives, allegedly describing the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People as un-American and "communist-inspired". Let us merely say that we do not expect a department of justice (DOJ) under his command to reduce police militarisation or confront neo-Jim Crow gerrymandering in deep red states.

Trump is also proposing congressman Michael Flynn as national security advisor (NSA), and Mike Pompeo to head up the CIA. Flynn is a retired three-star general with a paranoid cast of mind - a fanatical counter-jihadist, who believes a vast global conspiracy encompassing Islamic State, Iran and the Chávista regimes of Latin America is sponsoring terrorism against United States interests. He is often reported as having sympathy for the Russian government, which can presumably be put down to the fact that Russia is throwing a lot of ordinance at his hated enemies. Pompeo is a Tea Party die-hard and Kansas representative, who enthusiastically supports mass surveillance and wants Edward Snowden to be executed for treason. Between the two of them, expect ever more intrusive spookery than already exists - which is saying

something.

World stage

The main event, however, is yet to come - and that is the state department appointment. Numerous names have been floated: obnoxious neocon John Bolton was in the running for a time, and Rudy Giuliani looked set for coronation until his recent lobbying efforts on behalf of the Saudis and others were deemed an embarrassment, in the light of the use made by Trump's campaign of the Clinton Foundation scandals.

The latest twist is that Mitt Romney, of all people, is in the frame: the socially liberal, private equity vulture soundly beaten by Obama in 2012, and nobody's idea of a Trumpite (he refused to endorse a vote for either candidate this time around). A great deal of coquetry between Romney and Trump has taken place - on a golf course in New Jersey, of all places - but the thing is not confirmed. To say the least, this would be a great relief to the international capitalist establishment; it is one thing for the DOJ to be taken over by a dog-whistle racist with a Lost Cause of a given name, or even for the NSA and CIA to be handed to rightist ideologues.

The state department, however, is the crucial thing - the core of American global policy. There are plenty of signs that Trump is being urged very heavily to retreat from those parts of his programme - such as it is - that impinge on the nature and form of *Pax Americana*. A 'moderate' - which is to say, someone committed to *continuity* with the essence of post-cold war American geopolitical strategy - would provide welcome reassurance.

At the moment, the uncertainty hovering over the state department is provoking a great deal of worry. The renewed tough

talk from the European Union on Brexit - whereby the 27 member-states apart from Britain have made starkly clear their consensus that there will be *no compromise whatever* on free movement: with an incoming Trump administration, the EU must rely on its own resources to put a scare into anyone thinking of following Britain (and now America) into populist-nationalist revolt. With Marine le Pen banging on the door of the Élysée palace, and Farage's grin wide enough to swallow galaxies at this point, you can hardly blame them.

His lies and theirs

We must now say a few words about *exactly what it is* that makes Trump such a stick-in-the-craw president-elect, and to do so we must disentangle two types of objections that, in reality, are thoroughly tangled up. Objection category one: Donald Trump is a (particular kind of) Republican hard-rightist; there is likely to be a great deal of policy made in the next four years which is very unpleasant for liberals and lefts. It is not irrational for the latter constituency to be less than chuffed with the president-elect. But this would be equally true had Ted Cruz won out - a man who basically wants to prosecute every Planned Parenthood employee for infanticide; and, for that matter, most of the rest of the Tea Party-infused Republican candidates, who got so thoroughly, deservedly and hilariously Trumped this year.

The other class of objection is best exemplified by the line of argument from Team Hillary, spectacularly unsuccessful, that basically attempted to portray Trump as Putin's catspaw and a security risk from the point of view of American national chauvinism. The Trump objected to here is the one whose otherwise run-of-the-mill calumnies against the Obama administration contain the elements of a drastic shift in foreign policy doctrine - towards rapprochement with Russia, reversing the expansion of Nato, welcoming the break-up of the EU ... It is this Trump who met Farage before any other British politician, and wants him as an attaché in Washington. These are the sorts of things that make Donald Trump the second-to-last choice of US imperialism in the recent electoral cycle (after Bernie Sanders).

A good illustration of this is Trump's friends and followers on the 'alt-right'. The latter is an ill-defined phenomenon of modish reaction, characterised by infantile lashing-out at political correctness, overt authoritarianism, openness to conspiracy theories, and absurd male chauvinism. Liberals and lefts find such characters distasteful, and the prospect of Steve Bannon, their philosopher-king, serving as a senior advisor to the president of the United States is hardly welcome.

Yet there are all manner of diseased, hateful

degenerates on the American right, of which the alt-rightists are only one of the younger subspecies. To understand the exceptional opprobrium they face, we must introduce the minor detail that a good many of them are ... sympathetic to Vladimir Putin, an honorary alt-rightist, with his bare-chested, macho peacock displays and nationalist-populist resolve. It is not the misogyny the alt-rightists share with every televangelist in America that makes them uniquely unacceptable, but their celebration of nationalist populism *as such*, even when it is opposed to perceived US interests.

Post-truth

Thus it is with increasing exasperation we observe the course of the post-election recriminations, which have become fixated (as with the Brexit aftermath) on the circulation of false clickbait 'news' stories on social media. There is no phenomenon of sufficiently minor significance that some cut-price pundit will not spin a historical periodisation out of it eventually; thus are we told we live in a 'post-truth' age.

There is, naturally, no doubt that a great many of the stories Trump and his *confrères* put about regarding his various vanquished opponents were utter balderdash. (One porky in particular will always stand out for us: Giuliani claiming that terrorist attacks had only recently come during Democratic presidencies - despite his having been mayor of New York in 2001.)

Yet the idea that the media organisations so piously huffing about made-up stories can talk about the subject with any moral authority is laughable. The mainstream media lies, day in and day out; it constructs utterly cynical paranoid narratives out of whole cloth. How many British media outlets - currently full of worry about 'post-truth politics' and fabricated clickbait garbage - reported, as if true, defeated London mayoral hopeful Zac Goldsmith's impeccably Trumpian insinuations that the ultimately victorious Sadiq Khan was a terrorist sympathiser? How many American outlets have spent the last year burnishing baseless accusations that Trump is an agent of the Kremlin? How many media outlets, worldwide, did *not* talk about Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction as if they really existed?

The truth is that - as we have argued repeatedly - the most unpleasant aspects of Trump's *modus operandi* are all phenomena that have either been openly tolerated by the acceptable representatives of official American politics or otherwise have been covertly gestating on their watch. The demagoguery of Bill Clinton, his war on black males in poor urban neighbourhoods, authorised the right to go further; the right's increasingly ridiculous authoritarianism invited a Donald Trump to try his best. Making abortion illegal once again, as a wide spectrum of supposedly 'acceptable' rightists wish to do, precisely by manipulating facts, is a surer hold on a woman's vagina than the president-elect ever boasted of in the back of a limo. And no piece of Trumpite clickbait will exceed qualitatively the contempt for truth displayed by American politicians for centuries (advanced in the extension of the suffrage, the United States is by the same token advanced in dishonesty before the sufferers).

The capitalist establishment lies systematically: is it any wonder that Trump's lies were also believed? ●

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Steve Bannon:
philosopher-king of the
alt-right - and friend of
the president-elect

MIDDLE EAST

Iran deal dead and buried

How will the Trump presidency impact on the Middle East? Yassamine Mather looks at the possibilities

There are many predictions about US foreign policy under Donald Trump's presidency and in some ways, until a nomination for secretary of state is made, it is too early to assess the impact of US policy internationally or even in the Middle East. However, we can say with a level of certainty that the Iran nuclear deal is dead and buried, irrespective of the new administration's policies in the rest of the region.

The two themes consistently repeated by Trump during the presidential campaign were, firstly, his opposition to the Iran nuclear deal - he called it the "worst deal" ever negotiated; and, secondly, his opposition to the current policy on Syria - he claimed that Russia and the regime of Bashar al-Assad were the only forces fighting Islamic State, as opposed to US allies Saudi Arabia and Qatar. On the face of it contradictory statements: on the one hand, supporting the Syrian allies of Iran's regional policies; on the other hand, promising to "tear down the Iran nuclear deal".

Anyone who knows anything about the region will tell you that the Syrian civil war and the question of Iran's nuclear deal are interconnected. The US position on Assad has little to do with the 'Arab spring' or the Ba'athist government's suppression of its own opposition, and everything to do with weakening Iran's regional ambitions; and the conflict with Iran had nothing to do with the country's nuclear capabilities (all independent nuclear scientists confirm this), and everything to do with the country's regional ambitions, including its expansionist policies in Syria in alliance with the Assad regime (now supported by Russia). Hence the obvious contradiction in the two pillars of Trump's Middle East policy. However, let us not allow rational thought to infringe upon the president-elect's foreign policy.

Secretary of state

Irrespective of his final choice for secretary of state, the men - and one woman - he has been considering speak volumes about this lack of clarity when it comes to the Iran deal. All are united in their opposition to the nuclear deal, and all are keen to facilitate regime change from above in Tehran.

● John Bolton is a leading figure from the neoconservative Project for the New American Century and has consistently called for regime change in Iran. George W Bush gave him the post of ambassador to the United Nations, which he held for two years until the Senate blocked his long-term appointment. He was a strong supporter of the Iraq war and had called for an invasion as early as 1998. Despite the disastrous consequences of that policy when it was implemented in 2003, Bolton has no regrets: "I still think the decision to overthrow Saddam was correct ..., although I think the worst decision made after that was the 2011 decision to withdraw US and coalition forces."

In a recent interview published by the *Huffington Post*, Bolton said: "The only long-term solution is to change the regime in Tehran ... I am not saying that the overthrow of the Iranian regime will solve all the problems of the region, but it will annihilate the threat." In the past Bolton has openly criticised the current administration's attitude towards Tehran - like many other neoconservatives he is a supporter of Saudi Arabia. Earlier this year he was enraged that US victims of 9/11 were allowed to sue the Saudi regime for alleged complicity in the 9/11 attacks.



Jews in the US have no liking for Trump. But in Israel ...

● Rudy Giuliani has, according to the *Wall Street Journal*, "suggested several times that he would be interested in the post" of secretary of state. His position seems to reflect the contradictions in the Trump camp. He had stated that Trump would cancel the nuclear deal on his first day as president, but, when asked how he would deal with the diplomatic aftermath of such a move, he replied: "You have to set priorities. So if the priority is, let's eliminate Isis, maybe you put that off a little bit and you get rid of Isis first. And then you get back to that."¹

However, by the end of last week, Giuliani seemed to be losing ground as a candidate, mainly because for many years he had been paid as a lobbyist by Saudi Arabia and Qatar - the very countries named by Trump as financial contributors to the Clinton Foundation and Hillary's election campaign, for which "she certainly should have been indicted", according to Giuliani. It now turns out that he himself was accepting huge fees and lobbying on behalf of overseas interests. Giuliani's nomination would cause problems within Congress because of Saudi connections to the funding of jihadist groups, including al Qa'eda and, according to some, even IS.

● By the end of last week another name emerged: Mitt Romney. If anyone believes the nomination of a mainstream Republican as secretary of state would mark a more moderate foreign policy, they should think again. At least as far as the Middle East is concerned, he is no different from Bolton or Giuliani.

In the summer of 2015, as the nuclear deal was being signed in Vienna, he wrote:

The generational calamity that will result from president Obama's nuclear deal with Iran will last a very long time indeed. This can be said with perfect confidence because of two undeniable facts. First, Iran is led by suicidal, apocalypse-seeking, America-hating, Israel-denying theocratic fanatics. If these ayatollahs have nuclear weapons, they will use them, someday, somewhere. Iran is a major, long-time state sponsor of terrorism; its leaders are entirely bereft of restraint, decency and respect for human life. Second, the Obama deal prescribes a pathway for Iran to develop nuclear weapons. The agreement's defenders contend that it will delay Iran's nuclear program by 10 to 15 years (about one half of a generation). Perhaps. But no-one can say that the deal will prevent Iran from getting the bomb.²

In fact throughout his presidential election campaign in 2012 he promised "regime change in Iran".

● The one woman in the frame, Nikki Haley, has now been nominated by Trump as US ambassador to the UN. She is no supporter of the Iran deal either. In 2014, as governor of South Carolina, she signed a law prohibiting that state from investing funds (or negotiating contracts) with companies that had invested in the Islamic Republic's energy sector. In 2015, she signed a statement with 14 other Republican governors opposing the Iran nuclear agreement and promising to keep state-level sanctions against the country intact.

Reaction

As we await clarification of Trump's foreign policy beyond the slogans and election promises, it is worthwhile looking at the reaction to his election in the Middle East. As predicted, IS celebrated the result. The group would like nothing better than to see religious conflict between Muslims and Christians in the US itself, and Trump's proposed register of Muslims might be a step in that direction - it might even "lead to civil war".³

The IS-affiliated al-Minbar media network was delighted:

Rejoice with support from Allah, and find glad tidings in the imminent demise of America at the hands of Trump ... Trump's win of the American presidency will bring hostility of Muslims against America as a result of his reckless actions, which show the overt and hidden hatred against them.

But Iran was not quite so enthusiastic. Supreme leader Ali Khamenei said:

The Trump presidency has little impact on the Islamic Republic ... We have no judgement on this election, because America is the same America. We neither mourn nor celebrate, because it makes no difference to us.

Of course, he might change his mind if 'regime change' becomes official policy.

The reality is that the Iran deal is in real trouble. According to professor Pejman Abdolmohammadi of the London School of Economics,

Trump's presidency will dismantle the western political and diplomatic network, guided by the USA, UK and EU states, which worked for years on the historic nuclear deal between Iran and the west, successfully implementing it in 2015. This deal is

allowing Iran to slowly re-enter the global arena. With president Obama, John Kerry, Jack Straw, Federica Mogherini and others in the network declining in influence, Rowhani will lose key international support. Geopolitically, if Trump opens up more diplomatic ties with Russia, Rowhani's government would be further weakened. Russia is one of the main allies of the Islamic Republic and is particularly supportive of the conservative front. A Russian deal with Trump would undermine Iranian pragmatists and impede progress towards a more stable position in the region. It will strengthen both the Revolutionary Guards and the office of the supreme leader.⁴

Although European companies have started negotiations with Tehran, continued US banking sanctions hinder any serious progress with the reintegration of Iran into the world economy. And the US Senate has continued to vote for legislation in support of sanctions, including, last week, the sale of civilian planes to Iran - legislation which Obama is threatening to veto.

But this demonstrates that the Republican-dominated Congress and Senate are unlikely to block the ending of the deal. As for Bolton, Giuliani and Romney, they will hope the obstacles will be severe enough to force Iran to return to nuclear enrichment, which might be used to justify US military intervention. What can be said with a level of certainty is that Trump's election will damage Hassan Rowhani's attempts at winning a second term as Iran's president. For Tehran the only consolation is that, with a misogynist in the White House, the United States will not be in a position to criticise Iran on women's rights.

Israel

Although the Israeli state had invested quite a bit in the Clinton election campaign, rightwing Israeli ministers seem happy enough with Trump's victory. According to minister of education Naftali Bennett,

The era of a Palestinian state is over. Trump's victory is an opportunity for Israel to immediately retract the notion of a Palestinian state ... which would hurt our security and just cause. This is the position of the president-elect, as written in his platform, and it should be our policy, plain and simple.⁵

Likud party members were celebrating the likelihood that Trump will legitimise Israeli sovereignty over occupied east Jerusalem and support moving the US

embassy there. The vice-president-elect, Mike Pence, is a long-term ally of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (Aipac). In 2009 he told an Aipac convention: "Israel's enemies are our enemies; Israel's cause is our cause. If this world knows nothing else, let it know this: America stands with Israel."

However, the Zionist state's enthusiasm is not shared by many in the Jewish community in the United States. Exit polls suggest that only around 25% of American Jews voted for Trump. The day after his election, according to *The Atlantic*,

A man discovered that someone had painted swastikas on an abandoned storefront in South Philly, placing the symbols next to Trump's name and the words "Sieg Heil" ... Maybe it was an anti-Trump protestor. Maybe it was an anti-Semite. Either way, it underscored the ways in which Trump's election has evoked the persistent Jewish nightmare: that America will become like Germany in 1938. Jews, who have a keen eye for the repetition of history, might be forgiven for worrying about the fragility of American democracy.⁶

The Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz* went further:

The election of Donald Trump has shattered the Jewish idyll, all across the board. Although one must give the president-elect the benefit of the doubt that he is not an anti-Semite himself, he has frequently promoted disparaging Jewish stereotypes in his personal statements.⁷

For example, this was Trump's response to media claims that the Jewish lobby was making large contributions to the Clinton campaign:

The Jews don't give me money because they know I can't be bought. So they're doing everything they can to destroy me. We'll see how to deal with this thing once I'm in office, but I promise you, it won't be pleasant.⁸

Of course, Trump and his team will moderate their comments now that they are in power and we can expect that the administration's continued support for the Israeli state and his positions on Iran will win him allies in the Jewish community in the United States.

However, it is right to say that in the immediate aftermath of the Trump victory there were stark differences between the reactions of the Jewish community in the US and those of Israeli officials in the Zionist state. Not surprisingly soft Zionists, apologists for the Israeli state within the British 'left', as well as supporters of bourgeois liberalism in the US left, have been relatively quiet on the potential threats of a Trump presidency ●

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ZIONISM

A welcome for Trump and Bannon

Anti-Semitism has never been a problem for Zionism, observes **Tony Greenstein**

It must have come as a shock to many young members of the Jewish Labour Movement when the president of the Board of Deputies, Jonathan Arkush, “publicly congratulated Donald Trump on his election win”.¹ After all, these young things have grown up to believe that anti-Semitism is a leftwing phenomenon that exists in organisations like Jeremy Corbyn’s Labour Party, and 21 of them were among the 175 British Jewish signatories to a letter expressing their ‘deep concern’ at Arkush’s statement.²

One wonders whether the 21 – such as Rhea Wolfson, who is on Labour’s national executive committee – are also going to condemn Isaac Herzog, the leader of the Israeli Labor Party. Herzog also sent his congratulations to Trump, praising him³ as “an American leader who showed the commentators and the sceptics that we are in a new era of change”.

In America there has been a massive backlash among Jews at the election of Trump and outrage at the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA), which has supported Trump’s appointment of Steve Bannon, the former head of the rightwing *Breitbart News* website, as strategic advisor. Over the last year *Breitbart News* has given space to racists and anti-Semites who supported Trump, and, although Bannon said he did not agree with such views himself, admitted: “We’re the platform for the alt-right.”⁴ But none of that seems to have bothered the ZOA. Indeed it announced that Bannon would be a featured speaker at its annual dinner this year.

Libby Lenkinski of the liberal Zionist New Israel Fund declared: “We did not survive the holocaust, we did not found the state of Israel, just so that less than two generations later we could cosy up to neo-Nazis.”⁵ Some may ask where Ms Lenkinski has been all these years. Has she not seen the growth of a Jewish neo-Nazi movement in Israel and the mobs that cry “Death to the Arabs”? Or those who put signs in shops boasting that they do not employ Arabs?⁶

Was she unaware of the military support that the Israeli government gave to the neo-Nazi junta in Argentina between 1976 and 1983 when they tortured and murdered up to 3,000 young Jewish leftwingers – a good proportion of “the disappeared”? Surely she recalls the statement in the *knesset* of Yossi Sarid of Meretz, that “the government of Israel never once lifted a finger, and cooperated with the Argentine murderers because of their interest in arms deals ... In Argentina, Israel sold even the Jews for the price of its immediate interests.”⁷

Hadashot, a now defunct Israeli newspaper, described how Marcel Zohar, an Israeli correspondent in Argentina between 1978 and 1982, told in his book, *Let my people go to hell*, how the Israeli government, the Jewish Agency and other official bodies refrained from processing immigration applications from Jews with leftwing backgrounds, in order to preserve Israel’s business and political links with the ruling junta. In the same period, arms sales worth about \$1 billion were concluded between Israel and Argentina. Both Likud and Labor leaders shared in the conspiracy of silence.⁸

Zionism v diaspora

What we are seeing with the election of Trump, and the enthusiastic support for him in Israel, is a cleavage between the interests of the Israeli state and the Zionist movement, on the one hand, and those of the Jewish diaspora, on the other. Although this contradiction has rarely surfaced previously, it has always been there. Zionism was founded on a rejection of the Jewish diaspora, which represented everything that it was fighting against.



Jonathan Arkush: congratulated Trump on his win

Zionists spoke of diaspora Jews in much the same way as anti-Semites did. For example, Pinhas Rosenbluth, Israel’s first justice minister, wrote that Palestine was “an institute for the fumigation of Jewish vermin”.⁹ Jacob Klatzkin, editor of the Zionist paper *Die Welt* from 1909 to 1911, wrote that diaspora Jewry were “a people disfigured in both body and soul – in a word, of a horror ... some sort of outlandish creature ... in any case, not a pure national type ... some sort of oddity among the peoples going by the name of Jew”.¹⁰

Israeli novelist AB Yehoshua, in a talk to the Zionist Youth Council, spoke of the diaspora as the “cancer connected to the main tissue of the Jewish people”. Yehoshua described diaspora Jews as “using other people’s countries like hotels”.¹¹ In other words, Jews outside Israel are guests who do not belong in the countries where they live. Which chimes exactly with the views of anti-Semites.

Theodor Herzl, the founder of Zionism, was actually a pioneer of Zionist anti-Semitism. He saw anti-Semitism as a positive asset in helping to encourage Jews to move to Palestine. As he put it, “anti-Semitism has grown and continues to grow – and so do I”.¹² He drew the conclusion that “the anti-Semites will become our most dependable friends; the anti-Semitic countries our allies”.

The Zionist attitude during the holocaust was no different from previously. Building a Jewish state was of greater importance than rescuing Jewish refugees. Indeed the Zionist movement endeavoured to ensure that rescue would only be to Palestine and in some cases actively acted against other destinations.

Shabtai Teveth – the official biographer of David Ben Gurion, Israel’s first prime minister – wrote:

In spite of the certainty that genocide was being carried out, the Jewish Agency executive did not deviate appreciably from its routine ... Two facts can be definitely stated: Ben-Gurion did not put the rescue effort above Zionist politics ... he never saw fit to explain why, then or later. Instead he devoted his effort to rallying the Yishuv [Jewish community in Palestine] and Zionism around the Biltmore programme and to the preparations for its implementation.¹³

Teveth concluded: “If there was a line in Ben-Gurion’s mind between the beneficial disaster and an all-destroying catastrophe, it must have been a very fine one.”¹⁴

It is therefore entirely consistent

that Zionist leaders, in Israel and the United States, have been supportive not only of Trump, but Bannon too. The Israeli ambassador to the United States made Tel Aviv’s position clear when he praised Trump as a “true friend of Israel”, extending “a specific mention to incoming top White House advisor Steve Bannon”.¹⁵

Alan Dershowitz, who has attacked Black Lives Matter as anti-Semitic, because of their support for boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) against Israel, displayed unusual reticence when it came to Bannon:

I think we have to be very careful before we accuse any particular individual of being an anti-Semite. The evidence certainly suggests that Mr Bannon has very good relationships with individual Jews.¹⁶

Of course, it is quite possible to be friendly to Jews on a personal level and yet anti-Semitic politically. Consistently publishing anti-Semitic and white supremacist articles is racist and anti-Semitic behaviour. Enoch Powell, the English Tory MP who argued for repatriation of black people, was never accused of being a racist on a personal level.

Under Andrew Breitbart, who died in 2012, *Breitbart* was focused on “calling out the left, but especially American Jews who were insufficiently loyal to Israel”.¹⁷ In other words there was nothing these bigots loved more than attacking anti-racist Jews. Robert Mackey notes that “*Breitbart’s* rightwing Jewish writers were willing to use anti-Semitic tropes to attack their leftwing Jewish enemies as ‘self-hating’ enemies of Israel.”¹⁸ ‘Self-hatred’ was the term the Nazis applied to anti-fascist Germans.

Confusion

All of this has caused anguish amongst liberal Zionists. *Forward’s* Jane Eisner wrote:

For many years now, American Jews have been told to worry about anti-Semitism from the left ... So obsessed are we with looking for threats from one direction that we have missed the growing danger from another.¹⁹

She demonstrates the muddle and confusion at the heart of liberal Zionism. A muddle represented by the signatories to the letter to the Board of Deputies. They wonder why there is no “coherent response” to the anti-Semitism of the right, as there is to “left anti-Semitism”. The answer is, of course, obvious. Zionism and Israel have never been interested in fighting the

anti-Semitism of the right. Their only interest is in branding anti-Zionism as anti-Semitism, because the former is a direct challenge to Israel as a Jewish supremacist state. These liberals have turned a blind eye to Israel’s anti-Arab racism for so long that they cannot see that the Israeli state also has no principled objection to anti-Jewish racism.

Chami Shalev quotes Deborah Lipstadt, the Zionist holocaust historian: “We need to do a serious reckoning. It’s been so convenient for people to beat up on the left, but you can’t ignore what’s coming from the right.”²⁰ These hypocrites, who turned a blind eye to Israel’s murderous carnage in Gaza and its systematic denial of rights to Palestinians, are now dumbstruck at how Israel and the Zionist movement has no objection to the anti-Semites in the new Trump administration. Shalev describes how Bannon is “the poster child” for rightwing Zionists such as Mort Klein, “the very hawkish head of the Zionist Organization of America”.

It is amusing to read liberal Zionists like Jane Eisner discovering that “it’s possible to be Zionist and anti-Semitic at the same time.”²¹ Zionist ideologues have long argued that if you are pro-Zionist then you cannot be anti-Semitic. No-one pursued this more avidly than the editor of the *Jewish Chronicle*, Stephen Pollard. Pollard defended the anti-Semitic Polish MEP, Michał Kamiński, who opposed any Polish apology for the burning alive of up to 900 Jews in Jedwabne in 1941 by fellow Poles. Pollard wrote:

I worked in Brussels. It is not a place associated with friendliness towards Israel ... One of that rare group is Michał Kamiński ... It would be harder to find a greater friend in Brussels. That is why the accusation of anti-Semitism is so vile.²²

Unsurprisingly Pollard has been one of the main leaders of the campaign to smear Jeremy Corbyn and the left in the Labour Party as ‘anti-Semitic’. Eisner notes that “according to this logic, as long as you support certain policies of the current Israeli government, it’s okay to pal around with people who hate Jews”.²³ Liberal Zionists are having to go through a steep learning curve! Similarly Naomi Zeveloff writes that, although “it would seem impossible to hate Jews but love the Jewish state, these two viewpoints are not as contradictory as they appear”.²⁴

As Eisner states in the same article,

Some, like Bannon, see in Israel a (white) nationalist, anti-Arab country

worth supporting – over there. Here, in America, they may accept, even respect, individual Jews, but their ideological aim is to cleanse the country of its multiculturalism and restore privilege to white Christian males.

What Eisner does not do is explain why the American and European far right see Israel as a “country worth supporting”.

Like many others, she seems to be in a state of shock, having discovered that supporting Israel and supporting anti-Semitism are entirely compatible, whereas opposing racism – be it in America or Israel – is going to get you labelled an ‘anti-Semite’ by the anti-Semites!

What we are seeing is a great awakening among some Zionists. How long it lasts is another matter. Zeveloff even quotes Steven M Cohen, a sociologist at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion:

There is actually “little correlation” between anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism ... To be sure, anti-Semitism is found among the anti-Zionist left. But it is also found among the Zionist right.²⁵

Groping towards an understanding of the present confusing situation, Zeveloff cites Cohen as saying that “Many people who dislike Jews like Israel, and many people who are critical toward Israel are affectionate toward Jews.”

As Trump’s administration in waiting embraces the politics of the alt-right and Israel’s supporters embrace them too, liberal Zionists are going to find it difficult coming to terms with the fact that all their comfortable nostrums about a ‘different’ Zionism have gone out of the window. We live in interesting times! ●

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LABOUR

Confused reformism

Hillel Ticktin lambasts the shadow chancellor's economic timidity

Clearly, with the election of Donald Trump, the bourgeoisie is entering a period of difficulty - as is to be expected at this stage of the decline and decay of capitalism.

However, the Corbyn wing of the Labour Party is putting forward a very weak economic programme. It is, of course, difficult for shadow chancellor John McDonnell to openly propose what he has held in the past (and may continue to hold till the grave), because he believes it to be unacceptable - the Labour right is in fact attacking him as a fantasist.

McDonnell's programme begins, as does Trump's, with investment in infrastructure - something like £500 billion. £250 billion would be invested directly, and £150 billion would be spent through a nationalised bank, plus £100 billion to be raised from taxing the capitalist class. To give you some idea of what £500 billion means, it is close to the total spent in the government budget every year. Trump, of course, is putting forward a figure of \$600 billion, but in the context of the United States this figure is trivial. The GDP is \$16-18 trillion a year; while the official arms budget alone is \$700 billion.

At the present time the bourgeoisie has realised that the policy of austerity cannot continue as it is. It has been the policy since the downturn and has been enforced worldwide, whether the government imposing it is conservative or 'socialist'. That is obviously true in France, Britain and Germany, and effectively it has been the same thing in the third world, with certain exceptions.

So a switch to infrastructure represents a change - and, of course, Trump presents it as a very big change. It is not new, however: it was in a sense Barack Obama's policy, but he could not get it through congress, and it has been the policy of the International Monetary Fund for the last few years. Since the IMF is an institution largely controlled by the US, this is not so surprising. The IMF has been insisting on the importance of infrastructure, which should be built up in all countries. You do not need to be familiar with Keynesian economics to know that if you expand your budget and invest in the economy then you will have growth and increase the number of people employed. The result being that the tax take will grow - and it can grow very considerably. That is elementary logic - you do not need to know anything about economics to understand it.

But economics has become a huge industry in itself. Lawrence Summers, who was Bill Clinton's treasury minister in the 1990s and is now professor of economics at Harvard, keeps writing in the *Financial Times* along the lines of what I have just said: there is no reason not to spend on infrastructure, since it would not cost the bourgeoisie a single penny. Employment and the tax take would rise, and consequently there would be no increase in the budget deficit, so technically it could have been done a long time ago.

But, of course, it was not really about a budget deficit at all. The reason they did not adopt such a policy was because they preferred austerity - they actually wanted large-scale unemployment. They wanted a reserve army of labour, which would hit the working class hard, in order to control it. They wanted to re-establish commodity fetishism - the eternal, permanent nature of the market. They wanted to re-establish the ideology. That was the intention. But could such a policy succeed? One could argue - and this obviously is what a section of the capitalist class, and whoever advises May, must think - that it just does not work. The working class voted for Brexit because it was antagonistic to



John McDonnell and Jeremy Corbyn: 'socialism' - but not as we know it

the establishment, in the words of Nigel Farage. If that is so, clearly austerity is not actually working, or working sufficiently. That is what this government believes and what the far right has been arguing in its own, anti-establishment language - it is what Trump is arguing.

Capitalist 'socialism'

In fact McDonnell is actually far less radical than Trump in terms of what he is proposing. And in the context of the new May government he is not that radical either. The fact that rightwing Labour says it is a fantasy shows the nature of rightwing Labour - it does not understand the system it is supporting. So there is no reason for McDonnell to back down - indeed he could go very much further. But he has not put it in this overall context. So, while Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell both talk about socialism, they are not even very radical, let alone socialist.

Indeed they both talked of socialism at the Labour Party conference in October. But it was simply amazing - deputy leader Tom Watson came out with a speech about the wonders of capitalism and afterwards was congratulated by Corbyn! This must be a new type of socialism. In a recent TV interview Corbyn was asked if he was in favour of a socialist, planned society. And he said no: that went out with the Soviet Union, and Labour was in favour of the market. So what on earth is he talking about? On the one hand he talks about socialism, and on the other hand the market. Obviously McDonnell is anxious to distance himself from Stalin's regime, but he is not prepared to explain the difference between that and what a socialist society would be like.

The case for a socialist society starts with the abolition of abstract labour. Obviously Corbyn and McDonnell are not going to use those words, but what it amounts to is abolishing the measurement of, and control over, labour. A society where such control exists is a society marked by an economic force which socialism aims to abolish. You might put forward a demand like, 'There

should be control from below, and managers should receive the same wages as ordinary workers.' If McDonnell did that he would be laughed at, of course. But it would be a necessary feature of socialism, which entails self-management throughout society, from top to bottom, and movement between positions, whereby people are trained to take part in the planning and management apparatus, as monotonous, soul-destroying jobs are abolished. This is not just an ultimate aim: it is one which needs to be brought into being.

Quite obviously McDonnell does not go near it. Yes, he says he will tax wealth, but it is not very clear to me why he does not propose a very heavy tax on incomes. Why should anybody get £5.5 million, the average salary of a CEO today? I looked at the income tax statistics for 2010, and what they show is that there were around 11,500 people who 'earned' more than £1 million a year, the average among them being £2.5 million. Since then, the average has gone up to £5.5 million - their salaries have more than doubled. If you multiply 11,500 by £5 million, you get close to £60 billion and the budget deficit is £70 billion!

So McDonnell could produce these statistics to really back up his claims for 'higher levels of equality'. Of course, the reply would be: 'There'd be no incentive for the wealth-creators, the entrepreneurs, those who come up with the ideas.' One could argue in reply that such capitalists are actually a hindrance, but if he did that he would be viciously attacked and derided as an idiot.

So instead he proposes a fairly anodyne wealth tax, which is opposed using the argument that old people - usually women - who have big houses should not be penalised in that way. Along with this he has put forward a £10-an-hour minimum wage. I do not understand why he is being so miserly - the government itself is proposing £9 and there is still inflation. McDonnell clearly wants to be seen as a 'moderate' leftwing shadow chancellor, whom the newspapers will take seriously. But the result is just incoherent and stupid.

Even on the obvious question of the full nature of austerity, why he does not commit to restoring all benefits I do not know. The argument in 2010 was that Britain had to go for austerity because it would go bankrupt otherwise, and there were comparisons with Spain and Greece. But Britain is not actually in the same position, even though it has a huge budget deficit. In the case of Greece and Spain, the largest percentage of the deficit is owed to external lenders; in Britain two-thirds is owed internally, to various pension funds and so on. The fear was that investment in Britain would cease, but that has not happened, and was not likely to happen. There was no reason to assume that pension funds or asset management funds would go under and that is even more true today.

It is hard to see how McDonnell's programme gets anywhere near appealing to the majority of the population. He does say that Labour would repeal the anti-trade union laws passed by Tories, but he does not go beyond that. The laws were not exactly pro-union before that. It really is a case of 'extreme moderation'.

There is the usual statement about corporate greed and the need to deal with tax avoidance and evasion. Personally, I do not think socialists should bother with that. It is absurd. What you need to do is raise taxes, full stop. If a corporation refuses to pay tax, then you deal with it. Tax avoidance is deliberately built into the budget statement: it is 100% legal. You cannot argue against it except by arguing against the whole budget and the philosophy behind it - which is what McDonnell should do. But to talk about cracking down on tax avoidance... well you can't: a considerable percentage of the population takes part in it. ISAs (individual savings accounts) are legal tax avoidance, built into every budget, so talk of cracking down on it is extreme reformism, of an absurd kind. If you are going to propose a budget at all, then you need very high levels of taxation on the rich. If someone has a £5.5 million salary, charge them £5.4 million in tax: if they refuse to pay it, put them in jail!

It is the same with tax havens, even

though Britain itself is one of the top tax havens in the world anyway. And it is not that the Channel Islands, Bahamas, etc simply act on their own: tax havens are part of the capitalist system as a whole. The idea that an isolated Labour government can do anything about it on its own is a fantasy, but there is no attempt to look for an international response: it is just Britain and its 'tax problems'.

However, McDonnell has never held a revolutionary position, although it is understandable that the bourgeoisie attacks him so viciously (and, in its own stupidity, the Labour right has turned Corbyn into a hero). But what they are proposing has very little to do with socialism - except in one important sense. We are living in a period of crisis for capitalism, which is why the bourgeoisie has reacted to Corbyn in the way it has. It really does not have a way out. So, even though McDonnell is a confused reformist who is not going very far, people may force him, in spite of himself, to go further. He has obviously decided to try and conciliate the people attacking him, but in time he will discover that will not work, unless he capitulates completely.

His first demand should have been for full employment; after all, the recent results of votes in the US and Britain precisely reflect current high levels of unemployment. He ought also to have made a statement on pensions, which for most people are appalling at around £8,000 a year. But some in the Labour Party seem to go along with the idea that the cost of pensions is getting too much. The Labour MP, Frank Field, has expressed this view and was not repudiated. Nor has McDonnell proposed anything near enough regarding the national health service, which is clearly cracking today.

Efficiency

And in terms of the overall system, he should have stood up and said, 'We don't believe in competition. Competition is not part of socialism. On the contrary, we stand for equality, including equality of power. We stand for people working because they want to work, because work has become humanity's prime want.' But he did not do so; he is clearly prepared to accept the overall capitalist philosophy.

Although Corbyn and McDonnell at various times have talked about control from below, now there is no mention of what some people call economic democracy. Nor, what is crucial, did he attempt to take on Tom Watson's line, which is basically that capitalism is highly efficient, more so than any other system. He ought to have explained that only socialism is efficient, and then given examples of how inefficient capitalism is. The meaning of the socialisation of production - that he does not touch upon. Socialism is a very different system which is bound to come about, which is in the process of coming about.

Both *The Economist* and the *Financial Times* have recently made the point that today we have a level of monopoly higher than it has ever been, even though bourgeois economics disputes this. Today, according to *The Economist*, there are three finance-capital firms, which control 40% of the stock exchange - and that 40% accounts for 80% of output. So there are three firms effectively in control - I do not think such a situation has ever existed before. One would not expect the Labour leaders to really understand what that means, but one would expect, perhaps, that their economists will eventually catch up with reality.

Capitalism is going the way Hilferding and Lenin predicted, even if some on the left say they were wrong. That is the way it is, and yet McDonnell seems to be in some other space ●

NHS

Defend founding principles

Ensure the enthusiasm for Corbyn is not wasted, urges medical archaeologist **Robert Arnott**



Celebrating the NHS: opening ceremony, 2012 London Olympics

The national health service, created in 1948 out of the optimism following the defeat of fascism in Europe, is facing a major crisis - a crisis that is not related entirely to financial, social or clinical pressures. It is a crisis prompted by the actions of those who want it to fail, so that the Tories and their friends can dismantle it in the interests of those who favour new funding based on insurance companies or delivery based on private suppliers - both making huge profits.

One of the major influences on Clement Attlee's Labour government, which introduced the NHS, was the Socialist Medical Association (SMA). When the question of how the NHS was to be managed was first discussed, the question of what model to use arose. The idea of a US-type system of private insurance and medical inequality was not even considered, so it was an argument between the Bismarckian and Soviet systems. The first, which originated in Germany in the 19th century, was a mixture of social insurance and free treatment, but with differing providers - some public and some private. The alternative was a state-funded and state-provided service, like the one that existed in the Soviet Union.

It was communists within the SMA that pressed for the Soviet model. Several SMA doctors, who were members of the Communist Party of Great Britain, visited the Soviet Union pre-war and some worked as volunteers alongside Soviet doctors in the Spanish civil war. Even within the Labour Party, leading figures such as Harold Laski and Sidney Webb had visited the Soviet Union in the 1930s and were impressed by Soviet healthcare.

There was also the British Sigerist Society, named in honour of Dr Henry E Sigerist, the leading Swiss medical historian who worked at Johns Hopkins University and was a member of the Communist Party of the USA. The society was established by Marxist (mostly CPGB) doctors in 1947 and met several times a year until 1955 to discuss the theoretical and social aspects of medicine from a Marxist point of view. Most of them were also members of the SMA and influential within it. They discussed the relationship between science and social responsibility and the significance of social class. They advocated salaried and group practice

for primary care.

Sigerist was a great advocate of socialised medicine in the 1930s and influenced its introduction in Canada. He also wrote for the Left Book Club *Socialized medicine in the Soviet Union*, which was widely read in the UK and would have had a major influence on the CPGB, the Sigerist Society and the SMA.

The NHS has never experienced stability. No other organisation that is publicly funded has ever gone through so many organisational changes in the years of its existence and been the subject of so much debate on how it is funded. The most significant in recent years resulted from the Health and Social Care Act 2012, which established the statutory basis for the imposition of privatisation and created clinical commissioning groups (CCGs), many of which are now run by global firms of accountants and management consultants - whose interests, to put it mildly, do not lie in patient care.

A further £10 billion has been promised for the NHS before the 2020 election. But that is an illusion - the government is also looking in the same period to make so-called "efficiency savings" of £22 billion: in other words, a net cut of £12 billion. Most have said these savings are unachievable. Nearing its 70th birthday, the NHS is witnessing its lowest ever funding increase and worse is to come.

The latest attempt by the government to undermine the NHS is through what are called 'sustainability and transformation plans' (STPs). Any suggestion that they are there to rationalise the service is an illusion. Without legislation or publicity, the government has divided all English NHS trusts, CCGs and local authorities into 44 'footprints', each of which has been ordered to develop an STP. These plans are mostly being kept secret from the public, despite a department of health proposal to consult patients.

These new, unaccountable bodies are supposed to plan future NHS and social care funding across England along with local authorities, but with massively reduced budgets. The core component of STPs is a financial one, where local authorities and NHS trusts are being compelled to tailor provision to meet the demand for cuts and for budget deficits to be reduced to zero. The STPs aim to shift core elements of health provision from

hospitals to 'the community'.

With local authority cuts, this will result in lower healthcare standards, for many core NHS functions are to be handed over to 'accountable care partnerships', which may lead to further privatisation in the NHS and over which local authorities will have no control. The role of community hospitals is being questioned and the number of mental health inpatient sites could be reduced. NHS England prefers to call it "transformation" and claims it will provide for consultation with local communities. But when? The truth is, it is all about finding the treasury £22 billion, not about healthcare improvement or 'rationalisation'.

Social care

Singling out cuts in domiciliary care is a good example of a deteriorating service and how it has a knock-on effect on the NHS. Just over £3.5 billion has been cut from local council care budgets. A quarter of a million fewer older and disabled people are not now getting vital services like home care visits, which help them get up, washed, dressed and fed. Over 5,000 fewer people are benefitting from home adaptations like handrails, ramps and stair lifts - a lifeline for older and disabled people, helping them to live independently at home. Fewer home adaptations, alongside the lack of other services in the community, means increasing numbers of frail, elderly people are ending up in accident and emergency departments - and having to be kept in hospital when they do not need to be there. This causes huge distress for them and their families, but it is also a false economy, because taxpayers end up paying more in the shape of expensive hospital care. The answer lies in the integration of properly funded health and social care.

At a time when any number of areas in the public sector could argue that they deserve more funds, there is compelling evidence that this is particularly the case for social care. While the NHS has seen its budget rise in real terms, once inflation is considered, the opposite has happened for local authority-run social care. What makes this particularly frustrating is that the two sectors are often referred to as two sides of the same coin. Cuts to social care have a knock-on effect on NHS funding - as the rising number of

hospital admissions and increasing delays in discharging patients show.

The government had claimed that some of these issues would be resolved through the Better Care Fund, launched to 'encourage more efficient working' between the two sectors. A total of £3.8 billion for 2015-16 has been set aside; but it is not new money, having been taken out of current NHS budgets. This is being topped up to a total of £5.3 billion from local authority budgets, already under huge strain. There is, however, real doubt in the social care sector about how effective this spending will be. It is not the answer. Where the answer lies is in the merging of social and health care, and funding it properly.

Challenges

We have no illusions that the NHS faces some very real challenges. They include the increased cost of drugs and new technology; a continued growth in the ageing population; larger real incomes and a much better educated population, which have rightly created greater expectations. To this can be added a huge increase in dementia and lifestyle issues, such as sedentary activity and obesity - creating, for example, a big rise in type-2 diabetes, even in adolescents. There is no indication from the government that resources will be made available to address these challenges.

Today some major cities lack sufficient general practitioners, hospital beds and community care services, and face a huge shortfall in their finances. Regardless of the government's alleged ring-fencing of NHS expenditure, the amount of cash available has not grown and many departments are being forced to make what are euphemistically called "efficiency savings". The resolution to the financial crises lies in the abandonment of the totally counterproductive austerity measures involving the NHS. In fact, expenditure must rise - there is no alternative.

Everyone involved in the NHS - patient or staff - knows what needs to be done, and it is not cutting services. Some measures are very urgent, including the need to significantly reform general practice; the need to end the increasing pressures on Accident and Emergency services; the need to expand work in the field of promoting healthy living

and accident prevention; the need to re-examine hospital 'rationalisation' and centralisation; and the need to counteract deprofessionalisation in healthcare before it seriously undermines staff morale and patient care.

Of course, we must also understand that the challenges of the 21st century are largely different to those of 1948 and recognise that changes must be made to reflect this. But such changes must not compromise the founding principles of the NHS, which are:

1. Services are provided free at the point of delivery.
2. Services are paid for out of central taxation, not national insurance.
3. Everyone is eligible for treatment.

For the NHS to survive in its present form and not to be privatised piecemeal, it requires the application of some specific policies, many which are a response to the dangers inherent in the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

The NHS was established as the climax of a plan to set up the welfare state after World War II, tackling what was called at the time the 'five giants': disease, ignorance, squalor, idleness and want. Whilst 68 years later these five factors have changed, the need for the NHS and its basic principles has not. We must always be reminded of what Nye Bevan said in 1948: Britain could "take pride in the fact that, despite our financial and economic anxieties, we are still able to do the most civilised thing in the world - put the welfare of the sick in front of every other consideration". Again, that has not changed.

Since 1948, the NHS has grown into the world's most respected free healthcare system and one of the world's largest employers, along with the Chinese People's Liberation Army, Indian Railways and the Wal-Mart supermarket chain. We are also reminded that NHS staff are in daily contact with more than 1.5 million patients and their families. Men and women now live an average of 10 years longer than they did before the NHS was established.

Health and welfare must come first, not profit. Without a healthy population, nothing else matters. The NHS is a part of all our lives from the very moment that we are born to the time we die, and often many times in between. But the NHS is even more than this. It is an important expression of our basic values; a belief in the power of collective action to change people's lives for the better, by ensuring proper care is available to each of us according to our needs, not our ability to pay. Nothing will be allowed to take it away from us.

It would be a disaster for the NHS if we simply waited for the Labour Party to form a government to implement change. The NHS is at breaking point today and by 2020 it will be too late. We need to act today to reverse the damage done by the closure of A and E departments, outsourced or pared-down services, ward and hospital closures, reduced access for patients and further privatisation.

It is only through the creation of real grassroots movements, present in towns and cities everywhere, that we can protect our NHS. We are reminded that a campaign to save a local A and E department win more hearts and minds than anything else. The fight to save our NHS must become a visible reality on every high street. Only such a fight might give our health service a chance of survival.

Campaigning to save the NHS must be a first priority. We must ensure that the enthusiasm, within trade unions and the left as a whole, which the election and re-election of Jeremy Corbyn as leader of the Labour Party has generated, is directed to practical ends ●

REVIEW

It ain't dark yet

Philip K Dick Do androids dream of electric sheep? Free download: <http://pdf-more.com/0354504475>

Given the present conjuncture, a period of rising instability and uncertainty about the future, when everything appears to be turned upside down, a return to this classic, written in 1968, is not out of place. Philip Dick may not have a great prose style, but what he lacks stylistically he more than makes up for when it comes to ideas. Dick imagines what the earth might be like 30 years later and, as we all know, he has a dystopian view of the future (as many sci-fi writers do). To this end, *Do androids dream of electric sheep?* rests on two main themes.

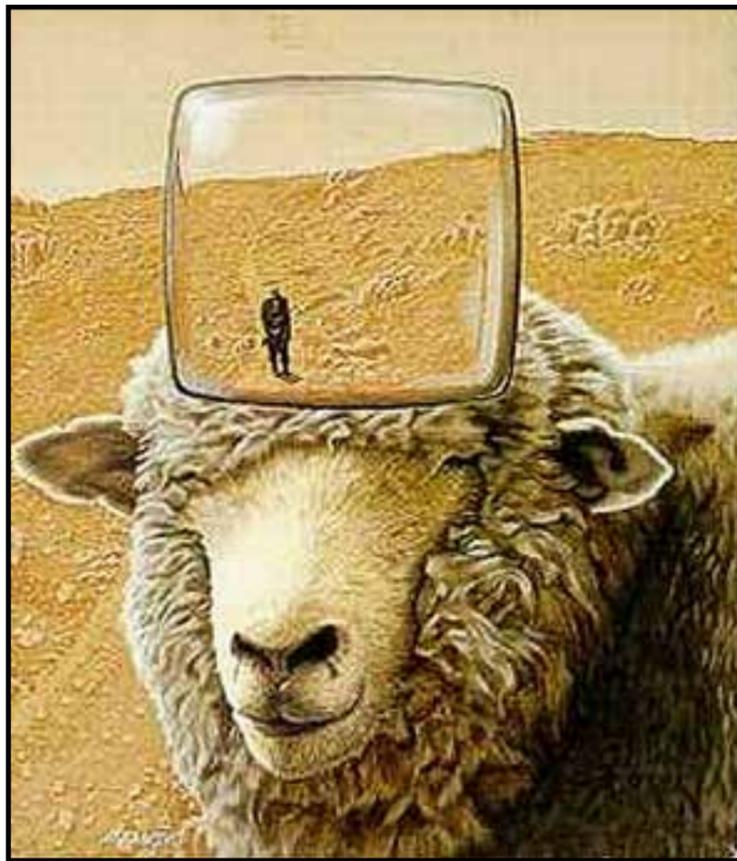
The first introduces the idea that humanity is in danger of destroying the earth's environment - that is, from the standpoint of most living things. This is remarkably prescient for someone writing in the 1960s, when we consider the present state of the planet. Not only is global warming proceeding at an alarming pace, but humanity is certainly endangering many forms of life, as well as our own, via habitat destruction, or piling up mountains of plastic waste, which are not bio-degradable. The earth is our domain; but, as *homo sapiens*, the most intelligent of all the primates, we humans are supposed to behave rationally: ie, understand the necessity of living in harmony with the rest of nature. If we look after it, the earth will look after us. But if we continue to abuse it, we do so at our peril. It is clear from reading *Androids* that Dick cares about the environment and other species almost as much as he does humans - from our primate 'cousins' right down to spiders and insects.

The second theme raises the question of whether post-war capitalism, the new technologies of mass production, mass consumerism, combined with the mass media and mass entertainment, has a dehumanising effect, characterised by a loss of individuality and loss of empathy, which leads to a decline in moral responsibility: ie, the belief that there are no limits to the concept of the human. For any student of Marxist theory, such a dystopian outcome would mean that the world revolution - which began with the events of October 1917 - has been defeated. It would mean that the revolutionary class - all those who are forced to sell their labour-power in order to live - are no longer capable of understanding that a fundamental revolution is necessary. But, to succeed, the revolution must also be able to overthrow the barriers of sex, race, ethnicity and nationalism, as well as the state. As Marx pointed out in the *Communist manifesto* (1848), the revolution is international or it is nothing.

Arguably Dick refers to the class struggle indirectly, by placing an incipient revolt by robots at the centre of his story. Perhaps by so doing he is implying that the class struggle against the system needs to be revived? Of course, he is not a theoretician of any sort, let alone a Marxist one; nor is he obliged to be. Rather he chooses to be a creative writer, specialising in sci-fi literature. He found this more satisfying - besides it allowed him to appeal to a much wider audience. It also meant that he is not obliged to explain anything: in particular, why the world is in such a sorry state (although he does to some extent).

Dick and Lukács

Nevertheless, there is an uncanny parallel between Dick's ideas about human consciousness and those of the Marxist theoretician, György



Sheep: real or replicant?

Lukács. Both are aware of the fact that we do not always see our fellow human beings as such. We live in an instrumental world, in which the end justifies the means. Does it matter, as long as you can get what you want? Dick might attribute this to a fatal flaw in human nature, whereas Lukács is a historical materialist. He understood Marx's dictum: "Men make their own history, but not under conditions of their own choosing."¹ (Hence, contrary to popular opinion, Marx never argued that the social revolution is inevitable.) In 1921, for example, the world revolution had entered a period of downturn. Following the shockwaves of imperialist war and the October revolution, capitalism was able to stabilise itself (at least for a while).

But why did the revolution not spread to the more advanced countries, where it had a better chance of success: ie, Germany, Britain or the United States? In *History and class-consciousness*, Lukács tries to answer the question. By so doing, he abandons the Leninist theory of revolution - the notion that in a period of acute capitalist crisis the proletariat is able to organise itself into a revolutionary movement with the help of the vanguard party, which leads to the overthrow of capitalism and the transition to socialism. By so doing, Lukács replaced the subjective/objective dialectic with objectivism, which is undialectical: ie, he brings to the fore the role of the commodity form (the basic cell of the capitalist system) as a major impediment to true consciousness. In other words, Marx's theory of alienation is a 'one way street'.²

Thus Lukács arrives at his theory of 'reification', wherein the commodity form structures the human subject, so that the social relation between people takes on the character of a thing and thus acquires a "phantom objectivity", an "autonomy", which is "all-embracing as to conceal every trace of its fundamental [human]

nature".³ Ultimately, however, if the impediment is not removed by a successful social revolution, then Lukács's theory is in danger of becoming a 'self-fulfilling prophecy'. Be that as it may, it is not technology which is the problem; it is alienated humanity and what it does with the technology it creates: ie, it turns it against itself. To argue otherwise would be a good example of Lukács's theory of reification in practice!

But in the 1930s Lukács made a volte-face, when he reconciled himself with the Stalinist regime. Therefore he embraced the nostrum that it is possible to build 'socialism in one country'. Meanwhile the world revolution had to be put on hold. The Third International, to all intents and purposes, was made redundant. In this case, we have the subjective/objective dialectic in reverse, with subjectivism uppermost. History has proved that Marx was right: socialism in one country is impossible. But the cost, in human terms, was incalculable, and it has left a semi-permanent stain on human consciousness. At the same time, the door was pushed open for the rise of the United States as a capitalist superpower, characterised by mass consumerism, advertising and news management, combined with mass entertainment or the culture industry; the manufacture of false needs - ie, distracted consumption - which it proceeded to export to the rest of the world.

Bear this in mind. When *Androids* opens, the capitalist world has survived a nuclear world war. The planet might be devastated, but we still have the market and the technology to produce things on a mass scale. There are machines which are designed to massage the consciousness of the individual, as well as create an 'unreal' real world, which makes one feel safe. Other machines are able to alter mood, so that people can get up in the morning and carry on, etc. *À la* Lukács, these machines have acquired a "phantom

objectivity", an "autonomy", which is "all-embracing", whilst in the real world people treat each other more and more like things.

Rogue androids

In Dick's 'tomb world', here represented by California, there is a permanent cloud of nuclear dust which cuts out sunlight and pollutes the atmosphere. A great deal of planetary life has been obliterated - not just two thirds of the human race, but even lower forms of life as well. Real toads or spiders, for example, are so rare, they are worth thousands of dollars. As for a sheep or an owl, they are worth a great deal more. The environment is so devastated that humans have had to colonise other planets, starting with Mars. But now most work 'offshore' is done by slave robots or androids, supervised by human slave masters. Some of them, however, manage to escape back to earth. If more are able to escape, they could easily start a slave revolt. (cf the Spartacist revolt against ancient Rome). Therefore these rogue androids have to be hunted down and destroyed before things get out of hand. Agent Rick Deckard is assigned to do the job.

The most advanced android is called the Nexus-6. But they can only 'live' for about two years, since they cannot replace their body cells; so they age very quickly and die. They are made of synthetic tissue that resembles human tissue, and can be easily destroyed with a conventional gun or a laser - whereupon they simply disintegrate into a heap of waste material. Otherwise they are highly intelligent and stronger than humans. This gives rise to a paradox, which could not be more profound: the more advanced technology becomes, the more sophisticated androids become; they become humanoids or human 'replicants'. The one real human quality which they lack is empathy for others. But they are already conscious of their own mortality. They suffer when one of their own dies. Maybe they will acquire an empathy for other living things as well?

Deckard's humanity is also called into question. He has become the modern version of a bounty hunter from the old wild west. For every android he 'retires', he can claim \$1,000. At least he is obliged to administer an 'empathy test'. The suspect is required to show appropriate emotion to a set of questions, designed to show how much it cares about living things. Somehow a quality can be turned into a quantity (cf human social labour!). If the suspect fails the test, Deckard knows that he has a 'replicant' on his hands, which must be disposed of. The problem is that the test may not work, because the more advanced androids can simulate the quality of empathy. In other words, they are beginning to acquire human characteristics - whilst human beings are losing theirs!

Rachael Rosen is the 'daughter' of the head of the Rosen corporation, which makes Nexus-6, as well as replicants of many different kinds of animals. Deckard pays a visit to Rosen in the hopes that he might learn more about his prey. At their first meeting, Rachael shows him an owl. (Note the symbolism here: the proverbial 'owl of Minerva' emerges at close of day; it is a metaphor for the idea that knowledge is based on reflection, as well as observation. Is the owl there to comment on what is happening?) At first he believes it is real, before being informed that it is a new Rosen product. He begins to toy with idea that, if the simulation is good

enough, it is almost as good as the real thing; so why not be satisfied with that?

To make matters more complicated, it soon transpires that the Nexus-6 androids are more widespread, popping up everywhere, even as opera stars. For a brief moment Deckard wonders why it is necessary to 'retire' a creature with such a beautiful voice. But he carries on with the job anyway. The escapees are also clever enough to masquerade as police officers, brought in from as far away as the Soviet Union to help in the hunt! (Somehow the USSR has survived a nuclear war too, but now the cold war is over.)

If Nexus-6 androids show little or no emotional awareness, what about the next generation? Deckard soon realises that the beautiful Rachael is not really Rosen's daughter. She herself is a Nexus-7, a very sophisticated humanoid robot. After being introduced to him, she offers to take the empathy test. Even though she fails, she is the exception to the rule: ie, she is owned by the Rosen Foundation and so cannot be 'retired'! Deckard refuses Rachael's offer of help to track down the escaped androids, because he needs 100% of the bounty money, so that he can buy a real sheep for his wife, Iran, as opposed to the electric one they currently own. Both husband and wife desire to own a real animal of some description; partly to 'keep up' with their richer neighbours; partly to make them feel more human. Nevertheless Deckard feels a sexual attraction for Rachael. A colleague tells him that it is OK to have sex with a female android before killing it. "Make love with an andy, then kill it!" he says. Eventually Deckard gives in to Rachael's offer of help. Sure enough, before their final operation, they go to a hotel, where they have sex.

After the operation is over, Rachael kills the black goat which Deckard has been given as a bonus for his work. Here we have another metaphor - a fairly obvious one this time - for a scapegoat. By so doing, is she merely exercising her desire for revenge against the 'murder' of her own 'kith and kin'? If so, at least she is able to empathise with her own kind. Or does she kill the sacrificial goat because she feels guilty about her complicity? She certainly shows that she has human qualities. And, without her help, Deckard would not have been able to 'retire' the last of the android escapees.

Deckard becomes a paradigm for the state of the human, but to what extent is a bounty hunter human anyway? He might be 'retiring' androids, but how should he deal with human androids or replicants? What is happening to his own human capacity for empathy? Human androids are able to do his job just as well - indeed they have already done so. Where is the dividing line? Is Deckard himself an android?

With hindsight, of course, the 90s were not as bad as Dick predicted. But, as the (reluctant) 2016 Nobel prize winner for literature, Bob Dylan, says in a famous song, "It ain't dark yet; but it's gettin' there!" Maybe we will make the planet uninhabitable for civilised life before we reach the android state and so become indistinguishable from humanoid robots. But, to borrow the title of another famous book, this is a *Catch 22* question, isn't it? ●

Rex Dunn

Notes

1. K Marx *The eighteenth Brumaire of Napoleon Bonaparte* (1852), Moscow 1977.
2. K Marx *Capital* Vol 1, chapter 7, London 1992.
3. G Lukács *History and class-consciousness* (1923), London 1990.

REVIEW

Strengths and weaknesses

Ian Birchall looks at the valuable work of Alfred Rosmer - in particular his book *Lenin's Moscow*. This is an edited version of the talk given at Communist University in August 2016

Lenin's *Moscow* first appeared in English in 1971. The original French text was published in 1953, a few months after the death of Stalin (but before anybody knew what its implications might be).

It is important to remember that the understanding of the Communist International was very different in those days. Basically the cold war was still at its height and therefore you had two schools of history of the Comintern: an anti-communist history and a Stalinist history. Both of these agreed on one fundamental point, however: the basic continuity between Leninism and Stalinism. Both held that Lenin had opened the way for Stalin. There was very little independent history and, such as there was, it came largely from the Trotskyist tradition and tended to be very defensive.

According to these histories, while Lenin and Trotsky were running things, everything was wonderful and then suddenly everything was terrible when Stalin came to power. But obviously things were somewhat more complicated than that, although this view was widespread up until at least the 1970s. I remember in the International Socialists in 1969 we had a faction led by Sean Matgamna, and the platform of this faction was the first four congresses of the Communist International. (Tony Cliff used to take great pleasure in asking Matgamna's followers if they knew the dates of the first four congresses, which most of them did not.)

Things have changed enormously over the last 30 years or so. We now have, for example, Pierre Broué's *Histoire de l'Internationale communiste 1919-1943* - I understand the English translation of this is almost complete and should appear within the next couple of years. We have the work of John Riddell, who has made available to us the complete minutes of the first four congresses, so that we now know what went on in considerable detail. We are beginning to get biographies of figures from the Comintern other than Lenin, Stalin and Trotsky, of whom there are probably more biographies than anybody needs. There are very few biographies of people like Radek, and we are still waiting for the first proper biography of Zinoviev, who played an absolutely central role in the Communist International.

Alfred Rosmer's book is so important because Rosmer was actually a participant, attending the second, third and fourth congresses and being a member of various leading bodies. He was on very friendly terms with Lenin and Trotsky. He produced an account which is certainly not defensive - he did not in any way abandon his original beliefs. He stood by his commitment to the basic aims and principles of the Communist International, but had no illusions that it was infallible. On the contrary, he reported all sorts of problems and difficulties from the period. Therefore he has given us a text which is an important introduction to the subject of the early Comintern.

Rosmer was born in 1877. His family had left France and gone to live in the United States during the period of repression that followed the Paris Commune. He spent the first seven years of his life there and so was fluent in English, as well as in French and one or two other languages. Lenin is reputed to have said of him that he was a man who 'knew how to keep quiet in several languages'.



Mexico 1939: Marguerite Rosmer, Natalia Sedova, Leon Trotsky and Alfred Rosmer

He first became politically engaged in the period of the Dreyfus case, and then became involved with a journal called *La Vie Ouvrière* (*Workers' Life*), which was launched in 1909 by Pierre Monatte. Although it did not have a massive circulation, it was very influential internationally. It was a fortnightly journal that attempted to produce both commentary and analysis, essentially aimed at the syndicalist milieu. Indeed the tradition that Rosmer comes out of is that of syndicalism.

Syndicalism

It is important to be clear on the meaning of the word 'syndicalism', because it is very often misused on the left. People can be denounced as syndicalist when they are not syndicalist at all and this is a bad habit that goes back to Lenin. I have just been reading the biography of Alexander Shliapnikov, and Lenin made great play of denouncing him as

a syndicalist when it is quite clear that, whatever his deviations were, he was no such thing. The syndicalists argued that there was no need for a party at all and that the trade unions would play the role of both defending the day-to-day interests of the working class and of a political organisation. There is a book by two syndicalists, Émile Pouget and Émile Pataud, that described in some detail what a revolution would look like and the way in which trade unions would simply take over the organisation of social life.

There are great problems with the syndicalist position. One is that, if an organisation is simultaneously a trade union and a political party, it will have a much more limited membership than a trade union. In France the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT) in the period just before 1914 had only half a million members, whereas in Britain and Germany there were three or four million trade

unionists. There were serious problems, but at the same time the syndicalists did do very serious work, notably around the question of anti-militarism.

The important thing as far as Rosmer is concerned is that in 1914 he and Pierre Monatte, along with the very few supporters of *La Vie Ouvrière*, were amongst the only people who opposed the war from the very first day and very rapidly began distributing anti-war literature. They very soon came into contact with a Russian exile in Paris: Leon Trotsky. It is important to remember that, whilst Lenin was sitting in Switzerland reading Hegel, Trotsky was in Paris producing a daily anti-war paper. This was the time that Rosmer and Trotsky got to know each other. In 1920, on Trotsky's recommendation, Rosmer was invited to Moscow to participate in the second congress of the Communist International. This was before the founding of the French

Communist Party (PCF).

It is important to remember the importance of the syndicalists in the founding of the PCF. There is a common myth, propagated particularly by those who advocate entryism into social democratic parties, which says mass parties of the Comintern were formed from splits in the social democratic parties. It is only true of certain countries. In France the revolutionary syndicalists, people like Rosmer and his wife, Marguerite Thevenet (a woman who has been almost completely written out of history), played an important role in the early years of the PCF. As the syndicalists departed - either being expelled like Rosmer in 1924 or doing so voluntarily - the history was rewritten, so that their role largely disappeared. It is only very recently that people started doing work showing how significant that role was at this time.

All this is relevant to the picture Rosmer gives us of the Communist International.

Lenin and revolution

I will now touch on one or two themes in the book and quote a few passages, beginning with Rosmer's account of his first meeting with Lenin. In many ways this sets the tone of the book, and explains how Rosmer perceived Lenin and Leninism, which is very different from the stereotypes that you get from many of Lenin's friends or enemies. When Rosmer got to Moscow he was invited to go and meet Lenin, who made a point of getting to know as many as possible of the delegates to the conference. Rosmer writes:

As we were talking about the Zimmerwaldian minority in the French Socialist Party, he said to me: "It's time for them to leave the party now to form the French Communist Party; they've waited too long already." I replied that this was not the view of the leaders of the minority. Previously they had sometimes been impatient to leave the party *en bloc*, but the recent Strasbourg conference had been so favourable, that they were now opposed to the idea of leaving. They had hopes of becoming the majority quite soon. "If that's the case," he said, "I must have written something stupid in my theses. Ask for a copy of them at the secretariat of the Communist International and send me the corrections you are proposing."

This is not quite the picture that one gets from many accounts. This Lenin is not simply concerned with laying down the line, but was also constantly willing to learn. Rosmer said of him: "Just because he knew a lot he was able to fill out his knowledge when the opportunity arose and also - an unusual thing in a leader - to recognise when he had quite simply been wrong." This is the picture he gives us of Lenin.

In the perspective of Lenin during these congresses of the Comintern the important thing was to spread the revolution as quickly as possible. Therefore it was possible to build mass organisations - initially in Europe, but then elsewhere in the world. To do this meant bringing people together. It is true that Lenin spent much of his political life demarcating himself from other people and denouncing them for their errors. But in this period he

What we fight for

was concerned with something quite different: trying to pull people together and bring into being an organisation of broad unity, so that it could effectively intervene in the situation.

There are a number of aspects to this - the situation was quite complicated. The Communist International concerned itself with organising splits with reformism and with the chauvinism of the social democratic Second International. At the same time the early CI had a problem that we do not face very much at all today. The problem was not around the question of recruiting people, but of keeping people *out* of the organisation. It arose because for a brief period the Communist International was very popular, and all sorts of people who had been in the social democratic parties were quite willing to claim that they were communists.

The two people that Rosmer talks about in particular in the PCF were Marcel Cachin and Ludovic-Oscar Frossard. Cachin had been an ardent supporter of the war in 1914. In 1915 he had gone to Italy to try and negotiate with Mussolini's faction of the Italian Socialist Party to get them to support Italy's entry into the war on the French side. His record was beyond dubious, but in 1920, having seen the way things were going, Cachin supported the affiliation of the Socialist Party to the Third International. Subsequently he remained a loyal Stalinist, right up to his death in 1958. Frossard, on the other hand, walked out after a couple of years, went back to the Socialist Party and ended up as a minister in Philippe Pétain's pro-Nazi government in 1940.

The strategy adopted by the Comintern was to set up the so-called '21 conditions' as the basis for affiliation, in order to keep out opportunists and those who were not prepared to build a revolutionary organisation. Rosmer was very sceptical about this. He said:

The Russian communists had drawn up these conditions meticulously, intending thereby to anticipate criticism of the method they followed in establishing the Communist International. These draconian conditions would form such a formidable barrier that the opportunists would never be able to pass through it. They were soon to see that this was an illusion. Certainly they had a good knowledge of the labour movements in the European countries and they knew the leaders, having encountered them at the congresses of the Second International. What they didn't and couldn't know was the lengths to which these men would go with their skilful manoeuvres, for they had received their training in the practices of parliamentary democracy. They could pull more tricks out of the bag than the suspicious Russians could ever imagine. The secretary of the French Communist Party, Frossard, for example, was going

to spend two years giving them a lesson in the art of evasion.

United front

Very closely linked to this was the question of the united front, which became more and more important in the strategy of the Comintern from 1921 onwards. This, as Rosmer analyses, produces certain problems because many members of the newly established communist parties had just gone through an often very vigorous process of splitting with their former allies. Having done this, they were now being told to propose unity to the people they had just split from. Rosmer notes, when the German Communist Party proposed the so-called 'open letter' at the end of 1920, that:

most of the members of the Communist Party found these tactics excellent, but some party militants, and even militants of the Communist International, were shocked: 'What? After splitting? After calling these men traitors to the proletariat, we should propose common action to them?' They were no less shocked by the demands formulated in the open letter. There was not a word about the dictatorship of the proletariat. It was written in a moderate, a reasonable tone, avoiding any kind of propagandist exaggeration. In the face of the employers' offensive, the masses considered any new split as a crime. The communists had to come close to them, but how? By affirming the necessity of the dictatorship of the proletariat? But was it not that many workers remained in the social democratic parties just because they put their trust in the old methods? The only way to approach the non-communist masses was to start from their present sufferings and to support them in their short-term demands.

This was Rosmer's analysis of how the united front should work. As he also describes with reference to the French party, a lot of comrades did not quite understand. He describes a meeting of the PCF in February 1922, when the question of the united front was being discussed:

There was in the party a leftwing tendency composed mainly of new recruits, which was sincerely attached and devoted to the ideas of the Russian Revolution. It was this tendency which had enforced affiliation to the Communist International; and it was always ready to approve its decisions, but this time it did so without enthusiasm. Nonetheless, one of its members came to the rostrum to defend the tactic, which one after another the federal secretaries were condemning or approving feebly, but he did it in such a way that his intervention was a catastrophe pure and simple. He was the one that on this occasion launched an expression

destined to become famous, 'plucking the chickens'. He could not understand why the united front was arousing such feelings and he went on to say that it was no more than a subtle manoeuvre, which made it possible to strip the socialist parties and reformist unions of their members, who would be taken one by one like the feathers from a chicken. As may be imagined, the chickens, thus warned, became excited, and jeered and shouted, to the great joy of the gallery and the consternation of the frank plucker.

The other thing that I think is important and that Rosmer pays particular attention to is that the united front was to extend not only to reformists, but also to people who saw themselves as being to the left of the Communist International. This would include anarchists, syndicalists and various ultra-left currents. Lenin in particular was very concerned that such currents should be drawn into the Communist International. The Comintern needed as many friends as it could get and it needed to draw them in both from its right and from its left. Rosmer records how this position was being argued increasingly within the Communist International in 1920.

To a young Spanish comrade who had wanted to prove his communist orthodoxy and proclaimed, "We are waging a pitiless struggle against the anarchists!" Bukharin replied sharply: "What do you mean by fighting against the anarchists? Since October there have been some anarchists who have come over to the dictatorship of the proletariat; others have come closer to us and are working in the soviets and in the economic institutions. It is not a question of fighting them, but of discussing frankly and cordially, seeing if we can work together and only abandoning the attempt if there is an irremovable obstacle."

Rosmer shows how this developed during the course of the second congress in particular. A number of revolutionary syndicalists had been invited to the congress, some of whom were opposed to the very idea of the revolutionary party. Rosmer describes how Lenin responded to this. He was replying to Jack Tanner, a British trade unionist and a leading member of the shop stewards' movement. Lenin said:

Your conscious minority of the working class, this active minority that has to guide its action, that is what we call the party. The working class is not homogenous between the upper layer, which has come to full consciousness, and the lowest category, which has no political notions at all. Between these is the great mass of workers, which we must be able to bring along with us and convince if we want to win, but to do that we must organise. The minority must organise, it must create a firm organisation and impose discipline based on the principles of democratic centralism. Now there you have the party.

What Lenin was trying to do there was to play down the distinction between the syndicalists and the Bolsheviks, to claim that the idea of the active minority was not really very different from the Bolshevik idea of the revolutionary party. All this became particularly relevant in the work that Rosmer was given to do, for which he stayed in Moscow between the second and third congresses, which was the forming of the Red International of Labour Unions (RILU). This was meant to be a counter to the dominant organisation within trade unionism, the Amsterdam international.

Rosmer was given the job of organising a congress to set up the RILU, which was not intended (as is often claimed) to split the trade unions, but rather to provide a focus for revolutionary currents within the

union movement and to try and draw in the syndicalist unions that had split from the dominant international. Rosmer was particularly well placed to do this because of his own roots in the syndicalist tradition. What became fairly clear is that not all the Bolsheviks were as sympathetic or as sensitive as Lenin to this task, and he had particular friction with Zinoviev, with whom Rosmer was supposed to work:

Zinoviev and I have been tasked with preparing, each separately, drafts of the definitive text of the appeal to the Amsterdam international. Our two drafts are so unlike each other in form and content that there was no solution but to adopt one or the other as a whole.

I have tried to set out the grievances of workers into an overall scheme with which we could impress and convince, recalling the activities of the Amsterdam leaders and stressing that this federation was in no way international. Chauvinism flourished in it to such an extent that the affiliated nations were still classified as allies or enemies, as they had been in wartime.

Zinoviev merely let fly a broadside of insults, often in pretty bad taste, against "Messrs scab leaders", etc. Only someone quite ignorant of the labour movement and of British workers could imagine for a single moment that an appeal of this sort could win us support or even sympathy, and make easier the job of the revolutionary minorities.

Zinoviev proposed that we tried to combine the two texts, but it was impossible. The appeal reproduced his draft in every detail. I was very annoyed at having to put my signature to it.

Again one can see the problems and the friction. Zinoviev was identified quite early on as being a particular problem.

'Scripture'

I think this book gives us some sort of basis for assessing the Red International of Labour Unions, which most historians of the period have tended to dismiss in a fairly negative way. There is a very good history of the organisation by Reiner Tosstorff, which is waiting to be translated into English and will be a matter of some interest when it appears. More generally the value of Rosmer's book is that it helps to put the debates into context. It is very easy to quote Lenin or the documents of the Comintern as if they were timeless works of scripture. What Rosmer does is to help us understand the context.

I want to conclude with a passage about Lenin's *State and revolution*. What Rosmer draws out is what this actually meant when it first arrived in France in 1919:

It was an extraordinary book, and it had a strange destiny. Lenin, a Marxist and a social democrat, was treated as an outcast by the theoreticians in the Socialist Party who claimed to be Marxist. 'It isn't Marxist!' they shrieked. 'It is a mixture of anarchism and Blanquism' ... On the other hand, for revolutionaries situated outside the mainstream of orthodox Marxism, for the syndicalists and anarchists, this Blanquism was a pleasant revelation. They had never heard such language from the Marxists they knew. They read and reread this interpretation of Marx, which was quite unfamiliar to them.

I have tried to illustrate a few points from this book, which I would strongly recommend. I think it is very useful in helping to understand what was going on in the Communist International in its early years - the enormous strengths of the movement, but also some of the weaknesses, problems and internal friction and conflict ●

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Fighting fund

£557 still needed

This week has been a much better one for our fighting fund, with an extra £495 coming in - more than twice as much as last week. That takes our running total well over the £1,000 mark to £1,193. But now we have to do even better, with even more needed by this time next week if we're going to reach our £1,750 target for November.

But if this week is anything to go by, I'm sure we can do it. There was a nice batch of standing orders, which came to £355 all told - thanks in particular to SK, MM and TB for their usual generosity - plus a couple of handy PayPal donations from KP (£40) and TR (£5). Those

two were among our 2,952 online readers over the last seven days.

KP writes: "Thanks for your coverage of Momentum and the purge" - as a Labour member he was only too pleased to click on our PayPal button.

Finally, there were two cheques - from DC (£50) and DF (£20 added to her subscription). But that still leaves us needing £557 by November 30 - please make sure we get there ●

Robbie Rix

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

weekly worker

**Platonic
republicanism
is not
republicanism**

Not a private matter

Instead of ducking the question, writes **Eddie Ford**, Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell should be fighting for republican democracy

Most of our readers were no doubt delighted to hear that Buckingham Palace is getting a £369 million refit courtesy of the taxpayer. Due to begin next April, it will take 10 years to replace the 100 miles of electrical cabling, some of it 60 years old - not to mention the 20 miles of lead and cast-iron pipework, lifting the 30,000 square metres of floorboards, and so on. Alas, though she will remain in residence during the work, it is unlikely that Elizabeth Windsor will live long enough to enjoy her palace in its final glory, complete with solar panels.

Not that the building is the biggest palace in the world, of course. But it is still a huge building with no fewer than 775 rooms, including its own post office, cinema, swimming pool, doctor's surgery and jeweller's workshop. Interestingly, directly underneath the state apartments is a suite of slightly less grand rooms known as the semi-state apartments, some of which are named after particular visitors - so you have the 1844 Room, decorated in that year for the state visit of tsar Nicholas I and the 1855 Room in honour of Napoleon III.

Buckingham Palace has served as the official London residence of the British sovereign since 1837, with Windsor spending a third of the year there hosting various events - welcoming more than 50,000 people as guests to state banquets, dinners, receptions, investitures and garden parties.

The royal trustees, who include the prime minister and chancellor, have recommended that the works be funded by a temporary increase in the sovereign grant - which was introduced in 2012, being the biggest reform to the finances of the British royal family since the inception of the civil list in 1760.¹ In a nutshell, profits from the 'independent' property business, Crown Estates,² go to the treasury - which in turn gives 15% of the sum to the monarch in the form of the sovereign grant, this year totalling nearly £43 million. The trustees think the grant should rise to 25% for the years the work is taking place in order to cover the repairs. All this, naturally enough, would require MPs' approval, but this is expected to be rubber-stamped by parliament.

Disappointed

Maybe rubbing salt into the wound, the Buckingham announcement comes at a time when MPs are considering a £4 billion plan for renovations at the Palace of Westminster. So much for austerity then. Meanwhile, government funding for social housing is being further cut and the country suffers in general from a chronic housing crisis. But, according to palace officials, the refit will appeal to people's "sense of nationhood", provide a unifying spirit, and is therefore worth every penny.

The loudest grumblings come from the bourgeois liberal pressure group, Republic, declaring that the refurbishment plan was an "indictment" of Elizabeth Windsor's "scandalous mismanagement"



Elizabeth Windsor: abolish the monarchy - now

of royal finances over six decades. The group's campaign manager, Graham Smith, further complained: "The obvious question is why have the royals let it get into this state? Why haven't they raised revenue through opening up all year round? If the royals can't look after the buildings and raise their own revenue to fund maintenance, it's time to give them up." Republic, of course, calls for a referendum - god help us - on the monarchy after the present queen has died on the pusillanimous basis that the period of time between Elizabeth Windsor's funeral and the coronation of Charles, or whoever, will provide an "opportune moment" (*The Independent* April 21 2016) - which seems quite delusional. There will be non-stop, mind-numbing, North Korean-style, pro-monarchist propaganda by every section of the media during this period - not that the establishment would allow a referendum on this matter, it needs hardly be said, unless it was *guaranteed* to win it. Some things are just too important.

We, however, were disappointed - though we cannot pretend to be entirely surprised - by the response to the refit from Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell, supposedly lifelong republicans. After all, back in 1995 Corbyn seconded the Commonwealth of Britain Bill brought forward by Tony Benn, which called for the transformation of the UK into a "democratic, federal and secular Commonwealth of Britain", with an elected president, devolution, abolition of the House of Lords and an equal representation of men and women in parliament.³

But in an interview with Matt Frei for LBC Radio on November 19, McDonnell backed the refurbishment of Buckingham Palace on the grounds that it is a "national monument", which is part of our "national heritage" - therefore it should be treated in the "same way" as the House of Commons - after all, old buildings "have to be looked after".⁴ When asked if the monarch should pay for the work herself, he replied that "she may well consider that" - he then proceeded to completely duck the question by going on to say: "I am a republican, but, when it comes to decisions like that, I think they are left to her." Obviously for McDonnell republicanism is a private matter, not an immediate democratic demand to be fought for. McDonnell was also questioned about whether he went down on bended knee before the queen at the privy council. He replied that he was "not sure what the rules are", but "you can say I did the usual protocol" that was "not far distant from the one you're suggesting" - a shifty, cowardly answer if ever there was one.

The subsequent newspaper headlines just about say it all, 'Republican John McDonnell put on spot by Matt Frei', 'Republican John McDonnell backs £370 million restoration of Buckingham Palace', etc. Not really helping, the next day on the BBC's *Andrew Marr show* he repeated his wish that Elizabeth Windsor should "consider" contributing to the renovation costs - meaning he "wouldn't send a cheque back" if she decided to chip in (leading to almost inevitable *Sun* headline: 'Get your

purse out, ma'am', November 20). But, at the end of the day, he shrugged again, "that's for them to consider", even if "we would welcome it" - although it would be a "nice touch" if the palace was frequently open to the taxpayer free of charge. A truly wretched position for someone who claims to be a republican. Can we have the real John McDonnell back, please?

Propaganda

If the CPGB had a bloc of MPs we certainly would not back or vote for the refurbishment plan - why does anyone need 240 bedrooms? Yes, obviously, Buckingham Palace is not the living space of one person or family. Nevertheless it is designed for the monarchy and the £369 million will be there to improve the living conditions of the monarchy and all its hangers-on and servants (sorry, staff). Hence the talk of more visitors, bigger garden parties, grander spectacles, and so on. Do we approve of refurbishing Buckingham Palace for *that* purpose? - as democrats, certainly not.

However, communists do not want to see Buckingham Palace - or any other major historic building, for that matter - go to wrack and ruin, any more than we agree with William Morris's obviously tongue-in-cheek proposal in *News from Nowhere* that parliament should be turned into a store for "dung".⁵ After all, the Palace of Westminster - in its own idiosyncratic and frustrating way - is a beautiful building. The same generally applies to Buckingham Palace, even if it may be a bit too gaudy for some. Communists therefore object to the £369 million funding, but think the accompanying controversy or scandal, insofar as there is one, should be used as an opportunity to make republican propaganda. Yes, preserve the building at this or that cost, but *preserve it for the people* - whether that means turning it into a museum or converting it into living spaces for ordinary people, given the chronic housing shortage (especially in London and the south-east, where increasing numbers are being priced out). In that sense, turn Buckingham Palace into a people's palace.

McDonnell's LBC comments are important because of the symbolism they represent, just like Corbyn's embarrassing mumbling of the national anthem or recent speech to the Confederation of British Industry. It shows that they have been *tamed* by the establishment - afraid to be bold or

too radical in case it earns the ridicule of the press and Parliamentary Labour Party. Which it always will, of course, making it a totally self-defeating approach. Such moments, which are becoming distressingly common, are also indicative of what to expect from a Corbyn government (if by some miracle we ever had one) - vacillation, backsliding and endless compromises.

Corbyn has stated that his "priority" is "social justice", but the struggle for a republic is "not a battle that I am fighting" - an utterly contradictory and unprincipled statement.⁶ It remains a mystery as to how you can have "social justice", let alone anything approaching socialism, when a particular family descended from the House of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha can inherit political power and obscene privilege. Or does comrade Corbyn think that we can somehow have socialism shorn of democracy?

All this underlines once more the task of the left inside the Labour Party - not to blindly support the leadership whatever they do or say, but to critically defend them against the right in *pursuance of our own programme*. Five years ago you could not imagine John McDonnell shrugging his shoulders about Buckingham Palace - he would have made some sort of republican case. Now we are in the pathetic situation where an insipid bourgeois group like Republic, not the Labour Party, is left to make the case for republicanism.

Our task is to win the Labour Party to fight for radical, republican democracy - as opposed to bourgeois republicanism. We do not need a president (or elected monarch), and elected leaders can always live in a nice flat rather than a palace or mansion. The working class must become the most consistent fighter for extreme democracy in every sphere of society.

Now tell that to LBC Radio ●

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Notes

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sovereign_Grant_Act_2011.
- Holdings include Windsor Great Park and Ascot racecourse, but most of the portfolio is made up of residential property, commercial offices, shops, businesses and retail parks.
- www.parliament.uk/edm/1995-96/1075.
- www.lbc.co.uk/radio/presenters/matt-frei/republican-john-mcdonnell-put-on-spot-by-matt-frei.
- www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1890/nowhere/nowhere.htm.
- www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-33624145.

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