CHARTIST

For democratic socialism March/April 2014 #267 £2

Labour's opportunity?

Katy Clark MP
Labour's alternative
Don Flynn
Immigration
Dot Lewis
South Africa
Julia Wickham
Syria
Steve Freeman
Left Unity

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CHARTIST
For democratic socialism

Editorial Policy

The editorial policy of CHARTIST is to promote debate amongst people active in radical politics about the contemporary relevance of democratic socialism across the spectrum of politics, economics, science, philosophy, art, interpersonal relations – in short, the whole realm of social life.

Our concern is with both democracy and socialism. The history of the last century has made it abundantly clear that the mass of the population of the advanced capitalist countries will have no interest in any form of socialism which is not thoroughly democratic in its principles, its practices, its morality and its ideals. Yet the consequences of this deep attachment to democracy – one of the greatest advances of our epoch – are seldom reflected in the discussion and debates amongst active socialists.

CHARTIST is not a party publication. It brings together people who are interested in socialism, some of whom are active the Labour Party and the trade union movement. It is concerned to deepen and extend a dialogue with all other socialists and with activists from other movements involved in the struggle to find democratic alternatives to the oppression, exploitation and injustices of capitalism and class society

Editorial Board

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CONTENTS

Labour's ch..ch...choices: pages 8 to 12

South Africa post-Mandela: page 16

Syria: page 22

FEATURES

Cover cartoon by Martin Rowson

CHARTIST
FOR DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM
Number 267 **March/April 2014**

REGULARS

Nationalism – what for?

Dear Chartist,

What is nationalism for? And why does the Left need it? Steve Freeman got me wondering about these questions in his recent article on the coming Scottish independence referendum (*Chartist*, Jan/Feb).

Steve refers to the Scottish Parliament 'and some of its social democratic policies including its rejection of NHS privatisation and its different approach to university student finance. Of course the Scottish Parliament doesn't have policies; it's the party, or parties, that form the Scottish government that have the policies.

Surely, if you want socialism, you can simply vote for it in the UK Parliament by electing socialist candidates? How would Scottish socialism be different?

Some other things baffled me in Steve's report about the Radical Independence Conference in Glasgow. Apparently, 'reactionary forces are more than willing to exploit any division between people of England and Scotland'. Yet, would not a fully independent Scotland simply widen any such divide?

How would a fully independent Scottish parliament help working-class unity?

This returns me to my initial questions about the use of nationalism by the Left. We need a discussion about the whole ideology of nationalism (Scottish, English or Welsh). What does 'nationalism' really mean for working people and why do they need it?

GRAEME KEMP
WELLINGTON, SHROPSHIRE

The Scottish republic and the English working class

Dear Chartist,

In 2014 there will be a major national debate over the future of the union between England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland. This parliamentary union of England and Scotland in 1707 was a key stage in the formation of the United Kingdom as a constitutional monarchist, unionist and imperial state. This was further consolidated by the 1801 union between Great Britain and Ireland.

The democratic response to the unionist state has been the championing of the right of self-determination. The process of breaking up the UK state was started in Ireland in the Easter uprising 1916 and is posed again by the referendum on independence for Scotland.

We have no illusions in the SNP vision of the future of Scotland. Neither do we have any illusions in Crown government which is committed to extending neo-liberal policies as far as possible in Scotland if the Unionist parties can win the referendum.

However the referendum provides an opportunity to make the case for a Scottish Republic which is democratic, secular and social and is internationalist in outlook.

The largest section of the working class in the UK is in England. The most politically active section of the working class, and the section of workers organised in the trade union movement must be won to the case for a Scottish Republic. It is vital the demands for a Scottish Republic are given a wide hearing in England.

We call on all left parties, political groups and active trade unionists in England to give maximum support for these democratic demands during the referendum campaign.

RCN (SCOTLAND), RADICAL INDEPENDENCE CONFERENCE (EDINBURGH), REPUBLICAN SOCIALIST PLATFORM (LEFT UNITY).

A report from Greece

Dear Chartist,

In January the Greek high court declared pay cuts for judges, army and police illegal. This is unlikely to derail the neo-liberal New Democracy government at this stage, but will certainly create difficulties for it; both with the public, but more worrying for them with the Troika.

The government could find ways around the judgement, but it would cost them with those directly affected and it would force them to even more blatant acts of undermining the constitution.

It also seems that further cases (involving other classes of public servants) are to follow. There is of course a certain irony involved in the fact that the fightback will start with the judges of all people - usually the staunchest supporters of the establishment - but then … they were judging whether their own salaries and perks should be cut, or should they be exempted from the austerity regime.

A likely scenario is that the government will be forced to at least partially implement the judgement imposing more cuts elsewhere (in order to satisfy the Troika).

Meanwhile Syriza rides high in opinion polls and the fascist Golden Dawn changes its name to National Dawn to fight the European elections.

The Greece Solidarity Campaign will be discussing the democratic movement against austerity at its AGM on Saturday March 1st at UNITE offices in Holborn, London. Details www.greecesolidarity.org

ISIDOROS DIAKIDES, LONDON.

Labour needs its own tune

As David Cameron's eyes swivel to the UKIP serpent, Labour must be wary

The British electorate goes to the polls for the European Parliamentary and local government elections on 22nd May. Prime Minister David Cameron remains mesmerised by UKIP and its poisonous anti-immigrant rhetoric. This political challenge is also a litmus test for left of centre parties. **Don Flynn** is doubtful Labour's stance is sufficiently enlightened to resist the Tories and the charmed UKIP snake. Only a resolute defence of the economic, moral, social and political rights , benefits of free movement of people in Europe and a humane immigration policy for the rest of the world will do.

Labour realised a smidgen of consolation from the by-election victory in Manchester Wythenshawe and Sale East securing 55% of the popular vote up from 44% at the 2010 General election, while the Tories were forced into third place just behind the poor second UKIP. But there is still no room for complacency. As **Katy Clark MP** argues in this issue, unless Labour abandons its attachment to austerity it will be unable to offer an effective alternative to the British people. With the special conference set to seal a deal with the trade unions to establish associate members, change the proportion of votes in the electoral college for leadership elections while maintaining union voting power at conference it remains to be seen whether this stance will boost or blight the party.

Despite Osborne's talk of growth, economic recovery is not translating into improved living standards. Unemployment remains stubbornly high, most people are at least £1500 worse off than when the Tory led coalition came to power, with those at the bottom end taking the brunt of austerity measures. Even the head of the Catholic church in England and Wales waded into government welfare cuts and the bedroom tax saying they are hitting the poor and sending thousands into penury.

To cap it all we have floods with thousands facing months of homelessness, power failures and water-destroyed homes, farms and small businesses. This crisis is not the result of gay marriages as a UKIP representative would have it, but as Nicholas Stern, President of the Royal Academy warns of man-made climate change, 25% cuts in Environment Agency budget and staff have made matters worse. 'If we do not cut emissions we face even more devastating consequences', warns Stern.

Only a resolute defence of the economic, moral, social and political rights, benefits of free movement of people in Europe and a humane immigration policy for the rest of the world will do

The coalition shows no signs of letting up with its ruthless austerity programme set to last until 2020, unless the British electorate votes in a Labour majority government in May next year. This poses a massive challenge for Labour Ed Miliband. Miliband continues to be battered by the Blairites and their neo-liberal obsessions. In this issue ***Chartist*** offers its own suggestions about how Labour can resume its historic role championing the interests of the great mass of working people whether white or blue collar, young, old or jobless. These form part of *Chartist*'s submission to the Labour Assembly Against Austerity

Ed Miliband is also beginning to talk the talk about devolving power to communities and local bodies in opposition to the sham localism of the Tories that penalises local councils seeking to raise revenue and is crippling local public services. Liverpool council, one of the poorest, recently reported 56% of its funding gone and the prospect of 25% cuts in statutory adult and children social services with closure of libraries, leisure and day centres. This picture is repeated around the country, as the Institute of Fiscal Studies reports, with a planned 40% cut in public sector jobs hitting the poorest parts of Britain hardest.

In his February Hugo Young lecture Miliband said that the next Labour government would seek to 'put more power in the hands of patients, parents and all users of services. We will help people work together with each other and with those professionals who serve them, giving them a voice as well as a choice.'

Two problems here: public services need investment, funded by progressive taxation. Will Labour halt the planned cuts? Second, will the workers who provide the services, have more say? Miliband gave the example of parent power. Dissatisfaction with their local school should mean parents are able to call in teams of local school improvement staff to put things right. A problem here: most School Impovement Teams (SITs) were the first to be cut in the great coalition staff cull. So Labour must commit to invest in all public services (not just health and education) and restore decision making and revenue raising power to accountable local councils, as **Keith Savage** explains, if it is serious about 'people power'.

The May Local Government and European elections will provide the real test of Labour's political alternative. In this issue we have several articles focusing on the politics of Europe: **Lily Murphy** questions the nature of Ireland's economic recovery, while **Sheila Osmanovic** examines the character of the Yugoslav model of socialism and its subsequent fate. Greece, Cyprus and Turkey are also briefly featured as the frontline states in the battle against austerity and corruption while **Tony Simpson** looks at the state of the European peace movement.

The other looming test for Labour will be the Scottish independence referendum in September. Labour member **Cailean Gallagher** puts the case for a 'yes 'vote and we invite readers to join the debate on nationalism, socialism and autonomy.

Finally on the international terrain **Dot Lewis** examines the politics of South Africa post Mandela, **Dan Thea** explains the crisis in Africa's new state of South Sudan while **Julia Wickham** seeks to unravel the tangled conflicts in Syria making the case for humane, political non-military intervention.

CHARTIST have launched its new website. It will include the magazine's blog, access to the magazine and a link to old content in our new archvie site

Patriotism: The last refuge for scoundrels?

Paul Salveson surveys patriotism, Englishness and the left response in **Points and Crossings**

The English left has a very uneasy relationship with the concept of patriotism, for good reason. It smacks of empire, racism, and that delightfully old-fashioned term 'jingoism'. Its ugliest contemporary manifestations are seen in the English Defence League, BNP and the wilder fringes of UKIP. It has had a few recent defenders on the left, notably Billy Bragg but also Jon Cruddas, who revived George Lansbury's notion of 'radical democratic patriotism' in his very powerful and thoughtful lecture in honour of the East End socialist, last November.

I'm talking 'English' patriotism here. It's becoming increasingly difficult to talk of a British politics any longer, with the growing autonomy of Scotland and Wales. A Scottish or Welsh patriotism is, of course, much less problematic. As the debate on independence hots up, large sections of the Scottish left are able to tap into a re-awakened sense of Scottish patriotism which is inclusive and radical. Plaid Cymru has made a similar pitch in Wales, electing a leader – Leanne Wood - who is far to the left of anybody on Labour's front bench.

England is different. It was the core of the British Empire and while it's no longer the norm to conflate 'English' with 'British' it did reveal a certain reality that it was England that was the dominant force. British patriotism was regularly used by governments to whip up support for colonial wars, culminating in the bloodbath whose outbreak we are currently 'celebrating'.

Yet the 19th century did see the left using patriotism as part of its own political toolbox at certain points. Some of the Chartists were adept at integrating democracy and a radical patriotism, attacking their upper class opponents for being self-interested and opposed to the national 'common good'. More problematically, two of the key figures in late 19th century socialism – Robert Blatchford and H M Hyndman - cloaked themselves in the union jack. Blatchford wrote perhaps the most popular socialist tract ever published in Britain, tellingly called *Merrie England*, whilst Hyndman's 'founding text' of British Marxism was England for All. They were not on their own, and William Morris was fond of proclaiming the rights of the 'free-born Englishman' without the jingoist baggage of Hyndman and Blatchford.

The 'radical patriotism' of Blatchford and Hyndman led them to becoming enthusiastic supporters of Empire and re-armament, becoming recruiting sergeants for the British Army in 1914. And they displayed an ugly anti-semitic strain which was not uncommon within the British left. Even socialist opponents of the war, like Philip Snowden, showed a passionate commitment to what he called 'our dear land'. The point was, this dear land of ours had been expropriated by an alien class of landlords and capitalists who did not have the nation's collective interest at heart.

Fast forward to the 21st century, and the British Empire lies in ruins. Is there scope for a new form of patriotism that isn't reactionary? Billy Bragg posited a 'left nationalism' in *The Progressive Patriot,* but his support for an 'English Parliament' won few converts. More recently, he refined his stance and proposed an 'England of the regions' which would involve a radical democratisation of the British state: national devolution for Scotland and Wales, regional devolution to the North, Midlands, South-West and East.

Maybe that is the way to nurture a 'progressive patriotism' which stands for a diverse and decentralised England which can build a new, equal, relationship with Scotland, Wales – and Ireland, both north and south. Jon Cruddas's argument for what Lansbury called a 'national, popular' patriotic socialism needs a lot of careful thought and debate, which should begin to echo the ferment of ideas being discussed north of the border – mostly by the 'yes' campaigners. Patriotism isn't simply reducible to one level of 'nationhood'. Within the UK it's highly contentious what we mean by that anyway: in the past 'British patriotism' has held sway but Britain isn't a 'nation', it's a state based on an increasingly reluctant federation of nations - with England predominant. I remain slightly confused as to what Ed Miliband means by 'One Nation' – which one, Ed?

It's a truism that people's identities operate on many levels: from a very local, neighbourhood identity to a town or city, county, region, nation and – perhaps less common – global. Each is valid and potentially 'a good thing', capable of releasing energy and vitality, providing that local/regional/national patriotism doesn't degenerate into hostility towards 'others'. But subsuming, for example, regional identities within a centralised, super-imposed entity, be it England or 'Great Britain' doesn't seem to me, at any rate, to be the right way to go in the future. Constructing a Federal Britain, based on a new settlement between the nations which make up these British Isles, is however a potentially exciting project. England needs special treatment given its size and historic power. Contrary to what some so-called 'English patriots' say, an England of the regions isn't about weakening our sceptr'd isle, but re-balancing a very unbalanced and centralised nation and encouraging a new vitality in the regions beyond London and the South-East. And that seems to me highly patriotic.

Paul's website is www.paulsalveson.org.uk

The Tory slaughter of local government

The 'post-austerity' landscape will be very tough for Labour-led councils. What can the party focus on asks **Keith Savage**

This year's round of local government elections coincides with those for the European Parliament. This is likely to mean that the media focus will be on the perennial issue of 'in or out' of Europe. This is an important political debate, of course, but if it makes it more difficult to get across what is happening in local government, that will be a pity.

For Labour candidates and for existing councillors there is the matter of trying to arrive at a strategy for local government in 'difficult times' (that is when planned spending is being cut by 43%, £20bn, over the next two years). The instinctive reaction may well be to say, "What's the point? Why be elected if all you can do is carry out Coalition cuts?"

There were local elections in 2013. One of the few Labour gains was the county of Derbyshire. Over the next four years the county has – to comply with Osborne's spending review - to cut £157m from its budget, a cut of around 7% for 2014/2015 alone. Some provision is protected by law but there will be cuts to services for vulnerable adults and children. Hundreds of jobs are to be lost too.

In 1995 the price of a house in the UK was about 3.5 times the average salary; now homes cost more than six times an average salary. For many people a huge proportion of their income is tied up in mortgages and money is sucked out the local economy

None of the recently elected Labour councillors will have happily voted through a new budget that can only cause damage to services, staff morale and the local economy. This story is likely to be retold all over the country; there is no point in pretending that all will change for the better after the 2015 general election – even if Labour forms a majority government. So, what is to be done?

Turn out

Turn out for the May elections will probably be around 40% at best (compared with 65% at the last general election). This percentage has been declining slowly but steadily over the last 30 years. Voters have either reached the conclusion that there is no good reason to vote – spending cuts will happen anyway – or the political compact between parties and the public is being eroded. What might Labour begin to do to address this?

Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett argued in *The Spirit Level* (2009) that large income differentials are socially unhealthy. The UK has some of the widest differentials between the best paid and the worst. According to Wilkinson and Pickett the ratio between the top and bottom of the salary ladder should not be more than about 1:8. What might that mean if applied to local government pay scales? Pay at £9 an hour would be needed to get the lowest earners anywhere near an estimated 'living wage' of £17,000. Multiplied by eight you would have a maximum salary of £136,000.

Is this a reasonable aspiration for a Labour government, working in partnership with local government, over the course of five years – to reduce the numbers of working poor and cap the salaries of chief executives (some of whom are now paid £200,000+)? This is not to propose jumping into bed with the Tax Payers' Alliance – the overall wage bill might go up rather than down – but it would be a statement about what our values are.

A change of government

In some parts of the country a major issue is to do with planning permission for new homes. Whilst most people accept that more housing may be needed – especially smaller, affordable homes for single people of all ages – not everyone wants development close to their own house.

Again, a change of government in 2015 might not change much – Labour wants 200,000 new homes built each year. However, the all-party Local Government Association, which is hardly the most radical voice around, has called for stronger compulsory purchase powers so that empty homes can be restored to use. Labour might also legislate to force the prior development of brownfield sites (rather than allowing the easy and profitable option of greenfield development). This would reverse a Coalition policy.

In 1995 the price of a house in the UK was about 3.5 times the average salary; now homes cost more than six times an average salary. For many people a huge proportion of their income is tied up in mortgages and money is sucked out the local economy. A Labour government – again in partnership with councils – should work to see new homes built in places that are acceptable to existing communities and at prices that are genuinely affordable. Planning rules need to be amended in favour of councils and communities rather than the present presumption in favour of developers.

Those Labour candidates hoping to be elected in May need something from the party leadership to cling on to. The next 12 months will surely be grim and the 'post-austerity' landscape will change slowly. In the meantime Labour councils can be something of a rallying point. Recently, for example, Derbyshire County Council has promised funding for foodbanks and is to create 500 apprenticeships paid at the minimum wage rate rather than the £2.65 an hour rate paid by the previous Tory administration. These are small but hopeful decisions; we need clear signals about how Labour will use the power of central and local government to work with and for local communities.

Austerity – Labour's blind alley

Katy Clark MP acknowledges Ed Miliband's pledge to empower people, but this must include party members and be open to alternatives to austerity

Ed Miliband pledged a fresh start following his election as leader in 2010 and famously promised a blank sheet of paper on policy. This has been followed up with a policy review which has been ongoing since June 2011. In that time, front-benchers in the House of Commons have been cautious not to make any pledges for beyond the next General Election, particularly in relation to spending commitments. The youth jobs guarantee and reversal of the Tories' top-down reorganisation of the NHS being notable exceptions.

This has changed in recent months. At he 2013 party conference it was announced that the next Labour Government would repeal the Tory/LibDem bedroom tax and freeze energy bills until 2017. in January this year shadow chancellor Ed Balls announced that the 50p tax rate would be re-introduced. Each of these policies creates a clear contrast between Labour and the Tories – clear red water - and each of them will benefit working people and contribute to making Britain a fairer society. Unsurprisingly they have proved popular with party members.

The Labour response to austerity needs to be got right

Further spending cuts

Unfortunately when it comes to challenging austerity the picture is less positive. In the same speech in which he announced the return of the 50p tax rate Ed Balls also re-emphasised a previous pledge to use the coalition's 2015/16 spending plans as a starting point and commit a future Labour Government to further spending cuts. Such an approach risks choking growth and stunting the positive impact which the positive measures above will have. As many in the media claim further cuts are inevitable. So campaigns such as the Labour Assembly Against Austerity are vital in ensuring that alternatives to austerity are heard within the party.

As well as igniting an economic debate the recent policy announcements from Ed Balls also raise questions about how policy within the Labour Party is determined. In the 2014 Hugo Young lecture Ed Miliband spoke of empowering individuals and communities so that they are able to help shape the future of their public services. This approach needs to be extended to the Labour Party itself. While the policy review remains ongoing thus far policy commitments, even those with widespread party backing, at present appear to be made by individual front bench spokespeople in conjunction with the leader's office. This is especially the case in relation to economic policy where decisions continue to be taken behind closed doors by the leader and shadow chancellor. On the other hand policies determined by party members at conference such as the re-nationalisation of the railways and of Royal Mail have simply been ignored.

The Labour Party should be proud of our links with the trade unions. Any reform to our party rules and structures should therefore look to strengthen these ties and give working people a greater voice in our party. Time will tell if the Collins Review proposals will achieve this. The move to make affiliated union members who chose to opt in 'associate members' could potentially be a positive move which gives trade union members a much greater role within the Party. Much will depend however on how many members choose to opt in and the benefits which becoming an associate member brings. The right to vote in future leadership elections will not be enough, particularly as this is a right which political levy payers in affiliated unions have enjoyed for many years. A meaningful say in determining our policies when in Government would be a much more attractive offer.

Katy Clark is MP for North Ayrshire and Arran

Bewildered Balls

Labour's 2015 election manifesto

Chartist contributors set out some manifesto must-haves as an antidote to austerity for the Labour Party's last National Policy Forum meeting ahead of the 2015 General Election

Democracy and Politics

Labour recognises a need for a change of political culture. This will reflect the new ways we communicate, the lack of deference, the importance of listening and problem solving, rather than having 'answers'. We need diversity in every decision-making body which reflects today's society, an equality which is not sameness, respect for difference, a new collectivism whereby people join together to take on structures which are insensitive or irresponsive to their needs. Subsidiary is the best arrangement without the hierarchy that often exists with it. Bottom up is better than top down. So linking outcome in people's lives with democratic change will include votes at sixteen, citizenship education, devolution to England, unitary authorities perhaps linked to parish councils, with a strategic layer at regional or subregional level which reflects that already existing in London, Labour will reform the second chamber to help keep the union together, and extend electoral reform to make sense of our voting.

Housing

Labour will implement a programme of new social rented housing with low rents and secure tenancies. Subsidy will be provided to those local authorities who cannot fund from their own resources. The programme will be concentrated in the South-East and other areas where need is greatest and market homes are least affordable. Local authorities will be given the freedom to borrow to fund new homes. Rent increases for existing council and housing association tenants will be no greater than the average increase in earnings and benefits. Labour will improve standards and hold down rents in the private rented sector and where necessary local authorities will be funded to take properties over from under-performing landlords. Councils will be able to acquire land for new homes at pre-existing use value. Where developments are undertaken on privately owned land, part of the profit of landowners and developers will be used to support essential infrastructure and other community benefits.

Stamp duty on home purchase will be replaced by a tax on the increase in the value of private property with the tax receipts to be used to fund the new programme of secure and affordable rented homes.

Contributors: Patricia d'Ardenne (Health), Duncan Bowie (Housing), Peter Kenyon (Economy), Andy Morton (TU/working people), Mary Southcott (Democracy and Politics)

Economy

Labour will present a growth budget as soon as possible after the 2015 General Election. We want local government and other public bodies to know we will quickly lift restrictions on borrowing for capital investment. So they can plan to help rebuild one nation Britain for the benefit of all. We accept that we will be stuck with Tory austerity plans for current spending in 2015/16 for our first year in office. Every effort will be made to encourage increases in disposable income for those on the lowest incomes by promoting a living wage. With regard to payment of taxes, we will work with progressive governments around the world to promote fair taxes and close down tax havens. In the meantime targets will be set for HMRC to collect taxes that are due. Business and entrepreneurship, whether private, public or social, will continue to be encouraged alongside the promotion of tax fairness to re-establish full employment.

TU/working people

Labour acknowledges that today the majority of Thatcher's labour law reforms are still place. During 13 years of Labour rule a national minimum wage was enacted, but enforcement was lacking and young people were not offered adequate protection. Labour now understands that workers rights and economic democracy, have to be actively promoted. We propose to reassert the principle of economic democracy and workers' rights in the next Parliement by legislating for workers on company boards and reconstructing sectoral collective bargaining in the UK labour market. This will include legal reforms targeting new individual and collective labour law rights as well as government intervention to incentivise collective bargaining as part of our commitment to granting people power..

Health

Labour will promote health equality as the central purpose of the NHS. It will address the funding gap between the current NHS spend and the impact of an ageing population, and higher public expectations of healthcare as result of clinical developments. To these ends Labour will repeal the current Health and Social Care Act, reverse privatisation of NHS services, and halt the letting of NHS contracts to commercial providers of healthcare where accountability is to shareholders, not the public. The health needs of those with mental illness currently costing the British economy £70 billion/year will be addressed by identifying and supporting sufferers still in work. Public health initiatives on obesity, substance misuse and sexual health will be introduced to reduce health inequality.

Labour on wrong track with Immigration Bill

Don Flynn explains what Labour needs to do if it is to change minds and challenge the right wing consensus

The coalition government's Immigration Bill is wending its way through the last stages of Parliamentary procedure, the expectation is that it will be in force by the early summer.

Its passage has been a bruising experience for the Prime Minister and his Home Secretary. When it was announced as the centrepiece of its legislative programme back in May 2013, Mr Cameron must have envisaged a timely measure aimed at showing his supporters that he was on top of all the talk about fresh influxes of migrants from Bulgaria and Romania and had everything in place to 'stem the tide'. This would have been a strong card to play against the threat from UKIP in the run-up to local government and European Parliamentary elections in May 2014 and the top man could have hoped for some credit for having engineered this outcome.

The result of Labour's immigration policies of recent times is plain to see

Appeal rights

But the contest over the Bill turned out to be less about its obnoxious details – intended by the Home Secretary to create a 'hostile environment' for migrants – and more on big vision stuff relating to Europe, human rights and welfare abuse. It has turned out that the relentless raising of these issues by Conservative right wingers of the stature of Nigel Mills and Dominic Raab did far more to define opposition to the Bill than anything that came from the Labour benches.

To her credit, the opposition home affairs shadow, Yvette Cooper, cottoned on to the importance of opposing the abolition of appeal rights in matters concerning the correct application of the immigration regulations and Labour did its best to force a division on this issue during its final day in the Commons. This aside, on important issues like the requirement for landlord checks on the immigration status of prospective tenants, and the imposition of health charges on anyone not settled as a long term resident, the Labour position harped on the theme that 'the Government hasn't explained how this will actually work.' It often seemed that if a satisfactory answer could be provided on that score, Labour would have been quite content to vote in favour of the measure, rather than merely abstain, which is what they did in the end (with only 12 Labour MPs voting against).

Because of this the official opposition to Government policy on immigration policy now seems to come from a bunch of a hundred or so rabid right wingers on the malcontent wing of the Tory party. Added to this are a half dozen votes from Labour's has-been tendency, rather incompetently led by the likes of David Blunkett and Jack Straw.

The party leadership probably thinks that this is a perfectly decent exercise of the triangulation tactic, which involves grabbing your opponents' star policies and reconfiguring them as your own. Rumour has it that Cooper talks to those in her circle of not wanting to see space large enough for the insertion of a cigarette paper between her position on immigration and that of the Tories.

Don Flynn is Director of Migrant Rights Network

It seems likely that Ed Miliband wants to push the boundaries of difference a little beyond this glum point. His few speeches on immigration since winning the leadership contest have explored the theme of migrant exploitation and have played with it as the real reason why the wages of newcomers are often so low. This opens up a line of defence against many of his party's working class supporters, who blame immigration for their wage levels being held in check through most of the last decade. There is space for saying that this could be turned around if only the minimum wage inspectorate were beefed up and bad employers made to stump up.

Labour's best allies on these points tend to be the researchers who work away at the data in such bodies with acronyms like NIESR, IFS, CReAM, IPPR and the more helpfully entitled Migration Observatory. The stunningly obvious fact that emerges from much of their commentary is that migrants don't actually like being paid less for their daily labours than other folk. A helping hand to get them the rate for the job tends to earn their gratitude. But is this an explicit enough message to make its mark on the thinking of the 60-70% of public opinion poll respondents who worry that immigration is out of control and its making its detrimental mark on their standard of living?

Bigger picture

Almost certainly it is not. This line of defence leaves intact the powerful sense across that large section of the population which lives week-by-week, or month-by-month, on its pay packet and operates with the profound belief that its way of life is being abolished. Once it was holidays in Spain that were leveraged from credit companies and tallymen: now it is the business of paying the rent and having food on the table during that last week before the wages go in the bank, which needs to be covered.

Where does migration fit into this bigger picture? Notions of globalisation and the footloose nature of modern business begin to swirl around here. Companies don't want to pay the taxes that were once used to finance the education and health services that played the useful role of securing their supply of fit, able and literate workers to help make their profits. In conditions of open markets and the free movement of labour and services the cost of producing the modern proletariat can be pushed further down the line, stripping out the need for welfare and public service budgets. Instead the cost will draw on the scant resources of families abroad and their willingness to make greater sacrifices to give their kids a start in the jobs market, either in their home regions or, increasingly likely, in some far off place abroad.

For the right wing the issue of immigration is situated in the crisis of the national state and its capacity to act with sufficiently severe measures to allow its native working class to be disciplined and dragooned into labour markets. The European Union and the paraphernalia of human rights appear to be major obstacles to achieving this end, giving more mobile and enterprising workers the ability to up the value of their labour power by moving far and wide to other places where the wages are higher. For employers who have to deal with the perceived rubbish that is left behind, EU regulation and human rights pops up to restrain the use of the whip and lash which is really needed to get them back in line and clocking on.

Labour to date has failed to challenge the essential features of this vision. Its ideologues have their own explanations as to why the welfare state is in crisis, often rooted in claims about the erosion of common values which once sustained the communal sense of fairness, which is itself a victim of the increased social diversity that immigration has brought. They hold out the hope that it might still be possible to produce a 'modernised' version of the class settlement that was put in place after World War II, with social fairness being handed out to those whose ration cards show that they have made the necessary contributions.

If Labour is to play a useful role in supporting the efforts of working class people to realise their potential for power and self-determination then it will have to undergo a profound change in its attitude to immigration

Yet there is an alternative to the political stances which form the poles of the harshness of free market realism and the nostalgic hankering for common values that guides the social democratic centrists. Its starting point has to be a better understanding of the conditions in which the contemporary working class is produced by global capitalism and the nodes of resistance which emerge to the dispossession and exploitation that this inevitably involves. The formation of communities and the forging of values of mutual aid and solidarity takes place within these processes as much as they did in the European 18th and 19th centuries, when a militant working class emerged in the poisoned and overcrowded cities of early industrial capitalism.

Issues of welfare

Issues of welfare and social insurance, nowadays scorned as nothing more than the feather-bedding of the bone-idle, will come back onto the agenda as the new working class finds ways to protect themselves from the worst of the risks they are newly exposed to in the context of mobility and migration. The portion of welfare that globalisation has clawed out of the hands of wage earners and placed at the disposal of the holders of assets who seek increased rents and dividends will be eyed once again by leaders of the new working class, and strategies will be found to summon up and consolidate the potential power of wage earners in ways which mirror capitalism's own ability to mobilise resources across national frontiers.

A useful role

If Labour is to play a useful role in supporting the efforts of working class people to realise their potential for power and self-determination then it will have to undergo a profound change in its attitude to immigration. Its policies should cease to be guided by the project it shares with the right wing, to control and discipline the movement of people as they cross frontiers, and instead work with the fact that mobility has the potential to empower wage earners in resisting the dominance of capitalism. The current interest in countering the exploitation which migrants are exposed to is a sign of at least early steps in the right direction. It needs to be followed up with much more strategic thinking on how we move from migration regimes which express the dominance of capital to ones which are based on the rights of migrants and work to strengthen the capacity of the whole of working class and act in defence of its own interests.

Labour supporters hold key to Scottish vote

Opportunties for the left would open up in an independent Scotland, argues **Cailean Gallagher**, but Labour's ears are firmly blocked to the prospect

Towards the end of January, at a packed pro-independence meeting in Airdrie football club amongst the housing blocks and sprawling estates of Scotland's central belt, an elderly women rose from her chair to say that she never left the Labour party, the Labour party left her, and she looked forward to when a revived Labour party would become the government of an independent Scotland.

The week before over 200 people had gathered at a meeting of a campaign group called Labour for Independence, at the Scottish Trade Union Congress in Glasgow, to hear Dennis Canavan and other ex-Labour figures speak on the potential for Labour's renewal after a Yes vote. The visions were radical, the analysis was class-based, and the language was socialist.

Pro-Union Labour

Meanwhile, Constituency Labour Party meetings across the country have a more sombre mood, as pro-Union Labour activists anxiously recount their doorstep experience during the recent by-election in the Labour heartland of Cowdenbeath, where long-term Labour voters said that yes they would be voting for the Labour candidate, but would also be voting Yes on September 18th. The reason was a loss of faith in the potential for deep and genuine change through Westminster, even with a Labour government elected in 2015.

If my partisan update sounds rather fragmentary, let me offer some more traditional evidence for this groundswell of left-inclined, residual Labour support for an independent Scotland. Research shows that many traditional Labour supporters are undecided and are numerous enough to determine the result. Research also suggests that of all the 'social groupings' – gender, age, location – it is class that is the firmest indicator of voting intentions: the lower your class, the higher the likelihood that you will vote Yes in September. Meanwhile the pollster Ipsos Mori said last year that deprived parts of the population would be encouraged to vote Yes by a 'radical' plan to use the powers and strength of a sovereign Scottish state for social and economic gain.

In this context, a raft of polls since the New Year has shown a firm, significant and consistent shift towards Yes, with potential shifts still to come.

All these facts point towards to the potential revival of Labour in Scotland as a party rooted in the interests and support of working people. It leads many to believe that the powers of an independent Scotland can be claimed by a radical Labour party, which can move away from its appeal to more privileged classes concentrated in southern parts of the island, and draw on the support of the many former members and trade unionists who say they never really left Labour.

There is one huge problem. The Labour party itself remains so firmly and staunchly opposed to a Yes vote that they will not even discuss Labour's post-independence prospects. Not only the leadership but careerists and loyalists remain silent on the possibilities, dismissing the referendum exercise as constitutional politics, a great distraction from real issues facing ordinary working people.

Labour Unionists combine this accusation with other frustrating tactics. They insist that Scottish independence and the referendum are all about Alex Salmond and the SNP. They will not discuss a Yes vote in terms of radical transfer of powers from London to Edinburgh, and will not debate whether 'independence-lite' with a continuing currency union might resemble the old Labour demand for Home Rule. They will not acknowledge the prospect for a Labour government in an empowered Scottish Parliament to use the new and extensive powers – over corporate regulation, wages, taxation, finance and security – to distribute not just wealth but power to the people of Scotland who for so many generations have lacked the party organisation or political programme to claim it.

Letting go: how close are Scotland to going it alone?

This lack of strategy

There have been some attempts at crafting a democratic socialist programme for after a Yes vote, most notably in a new book by the one-time MP and founder of the Scottish Labour Party, Jim Sillars. Some members of the socialist Red Paper Collective have made hints about how full powers might be used, but the group remains attached to a No vote. So voters are waiting to see a strategy and vision that is credible, radical and recognizable.

This lack of strategy raises concerns for those of us in Labour who favour a Yes vote. Supposing the people do vote for independence? We share the fear of our fellow members and socialists, that after a Yes vote the SNP will consolidate its hold on power, and elements of the organised right and centre-right (especially the hundreds of small business owners grouping in the sinister 'Business for Scotland' group, and those writing the new libertarian website Wealthy Nation) will lay claim to the SNP. Salmond's party will continue its strategy of wide-net consensualism with efficient social administration, concealing their neo-liberal economic programme for Scotland. The risks are manifold, but the most significant is that a strong SNP administration could easily use the new economic powers to ease open those elements of regulation that remain on our labour market, and lower corporation tax to allow quick global capital to flow into the country. This would plunge more working people into lower wages and harsher contracts, while leaving high-level monetary and regulatory powers to Westminster, the City of London, and the Bank of England.

Resisting this agenda requires a strategy that uses the economic powers and levers that would come to Scotland with a Yes vote. It emphasises that the most important powers relate to wages and the labour market, as well as powers of job creation, public investment, nationalization and regulation of the economy in the social interest.

In the interest of workers

Thus, from resistance to centre-right consolidation, the party can develop a programme for proactive economic governance in the interest of workers. This includes the pursuit of full employment, facility for non-capitalist investment in untapped resources like tourism, invention and renewable energy, and provision of the kind of world-class universal education that has inspired the labour movement and our radical predecessors for countless generations.

Of course, these are not the policies of a Labour party that has malfunctioned into parliamentary opportunism, such as Westminster Labour has become and such as Scottish Labour could risk becoming. They are the policies of a revitalized Labour party, which might emerge from people's desire to use the full powers of economic independence.

So Labour voters' decisive power this September is only the first chapter of the story that begins with a Yes vote. If working class votes will determine the referendum, they can also influence Labour's leftwards direction after a Yes vote, in order to outflank the capitalist SNP, win the first elections in an independent Scotland, and use the powers of a new nation-state for a more socialist purpose.

Cailean Gallagher is a member of Glasgow Kelvin CLP and a researcher for Yes Scotland

OUR HISTORY 53

Zelda Kahan - Principles of Socialism (1908)

Zelda Kahan was one of the leaders of the internationalist faction within the Social Democratic Federation. Working with colleagues such as her fellow Russian exile, Theodore Rothstein, Joe Fineberg and E C Fairchild, she opposed Hyndman's imperialist and pro-war position. Together with her husband, W P Coates, she published a series of books on Russia and the Anglo-Russian relationship, including Armed Intervention in Russia 1918-22 (1935), From Tsardom to the Soviet Constitution (1938) and A History of Anglo-Soviet Relations (1944) for which Lloyd George contributed a forward, as well as studies of the First and Second Five Year Plans, two books on Soviet relationships with Finland and the Baltic and a volume on Soviets in Central Asia.

Zelda Kahan, who was Jewish, was born in Lithuania, coming to England at the age of ten. Her brother, Boris was secretary of the Hackney SDF. Zelda represented the Hackney branch on the executive of the British Socialist Party (as the SDF had become) in 1912 and married William Coates in 1912. Coates was the BSP national organiser, who became secretary of the Hands Off Russia committee. Zelda and her husband later joined the Communist Party. Theodore Rothstein, the leading London based Bolshevik, and anti-colonialist historian, was brother in law to the Kahans. In 1909, at the time of the scare over increasing German naval power, Kahan attacked Hyndman for allying himself with the 'jingo naval scaremongers'.

In 1911, Kahan proposed a resolution at the SDF annual conference opposing armaments. The resolution was defeated but split the SDF into two, with the old guard of Hyndman and Harry Quelch retaining control. Lenin commented that ' Zelda Kahan was right when she said that never had English social democracy so disgraced itself as now – even men like Quelch desert to the side of the chauvinists.' In 1912, the internationalists led by Kahan, won a narrow majority on the BSP executive to declare that 'so far as workers are concerned there is nothing to choose between German and British Imperialism and aggression.' This was then rescinded in February 1913, which led to Kahan's resignation.

"We have seen what private enterprise and competition have led to. Quite against the will of its supporters, competition is well-nigh a thing of the past. We are fast approaching a state of pure collectivism so far as production is concerned, but unfortunately the manner of distribution of the wealth is anything but collectivist. Here private ownership steps in, and a small minority appropriates what the majority produce. You see the question is no longer for or against competition. It is firstly shall we perfect the collective method of production already largely established? Secondly, shall we collectively own what we collectively produce? Common sense and common justice can give but one reply. But here comes the all important question, how are we to do it. Well, if you have made up your mind to do it, there will not be much difficulty… What is to prevent a Parliament composed of representatives of your own class from passing a law by which the profits from the concerns should go into the national coffers instead of into private hands ?... The workpeople would now be the employees of the State, and if only you and they used their votes aright, the profits would now be used for raising the quality of the things produced, raising the wages of the people employed, and for initiating some very pressing social reforms. "

Detroit – From Mo-town to Ghost-town

The trumpeting of a US 'recovery' obscures what is really happening in the USA, particularly at state and city level, writes **Frank Lee**

'What's Goin' On?' – Marvin Gaye

Those of us old enough to remember the great Tamla Mo-town sound can only wonder at what's happened to Motor City, as it was fondly and appropriately named. For Detroit, Michigan, one time hub of the US automobile industry, home of General Motors (GM), Ford and Chrysler, with one time population of 2 million has become a wasteland. A population now reduced to 700,000, where an estimated 50,000 feral dogs roam the streets since there are no dog-catchers any more. Crime is rampant of course since police numbers and budgets have been pared back, and street lighting is of a third world order. Moreover, other types of social services involving health and education have also come under the swingeing austerity programmes taking place in Detroit and at City and state levels across the Union.

The city has debts of $18bn and has been officially declared bankrupt. There has been no help for the city from the Federal Government; hardly surprising since Washington is on the hook for $17.4tn itself and that's just public debt. Add in private debt and other unfunded liabilities – Medicaid, Medicare and Social Security - and America's cities and state debts. The total is now thought to be estimated at a cool $75 trillion. Interesting to note that during Detroit's travails the US government apparently found $50bn to bail-out the bankrupt General Motors. This perhaps speaks volumes about the Obama government's priorities.

Bankruptcy will mean the city will now have to make even more draconian cuts in public expenditure in order to balance the books. Public sector health provision and pensions have become the number 1 target for cuts. Detroit's liabilities include $5.7bn for municipal workers health care costs, and $4.5 billion for their pensions.

On 3 December 2013 a Federal judge ruled that bankrupt Detroit may cut retirement benefits for its workforce. This of course sets a very dangerous precedent and can only make matters worse. As has been the case in Europe and the UK, austerity is akin to applying leeches to an anaemic patient.

In addition, other cash-strapped cities and states across the Union may now be emboldened to take the same action. The practice has now spread to the state of Illinois where the legislature has voted for a $160bn restructuring programme (read cuts).

Curbing worker power

These decisions, coming after efforts to curb public employee power in states such Wisconsin, Indiana and Michigan (where workers have lost even their bargaining rights), will undoubtedly encourage other municipalities to act likewise and leave workers more vulnerable. Retirees are already seeing reduced benefits in cities such as Central Falls, Rhode Island, where a judge last year approved cutting pensions to help it emerge from insolvency. In California – where Stockton, a city of nearly 300,000 people recently became bankrupt – San Jose Mayor, Chuck Reed, is leading the push for an initiative that would let cities cut benefits already promised to employees. Thus the policy and its ramifications stretch much further across the US.

The policy of downgrading pay and conditions of the working people presupposed the elimination of the US labour movement. This has been pretty well accomplished. The percentage of unionised workers, private and public stood at 11% in 2012, down from 20% in 1983. Of this 11% most are in the public sector that, however heroic, seem to be performing a re-enactment of Custer's last stand. Political and industrial cleansing has effectively taken place in the private sector and now is being repeated in the public sector.

This is all taking place against a back-drop of increasing levels of municipal debt across the US. The municipal debt level among cities and states has now reached $3 trillion dollars.

Death warrant

Detroit has been part of this trend, but has had additional problems to contend with: namely the decline and hollowing out of the US automobile industry. In 1950 US automobile production was more than 50% of the world figure; today that figure has shrunken to less than 10%. This has been due in the main to the development of manufacturers in, Japan, China and South Korea and Germany (which collectively now account for 45% of world automobile output). These latecomers have successfully increased their share of the world as well as the domestic US market. These developments in the global automobile industry were really the death warrant for Detroit. Thanks to the bail-out GM motors survived, but now most of its production operations are based abroad in lower cost venues - a process generally referred to as globalization.

Naturally the centre-left seems to have missed out on what is going on at grass roots level in the United States, and seems infatuated with the 'recovery' narrative coming from US official sources and the media.

The only 'recovery' taking place in the US, however, is in stock prices, corporate profits, and recapitalised banks' trading figures. Figures on unemployment, inflation and growth are systematically manipulated. That issue is for another article.

Painful birth of a nation

South Sudan has endured further conflict. **Dan Thea** explains the background to Africa's youngest state's internecine war

Africa's youngest country, the landlocked Republic of South Sudan, unexpectedly found itself in the grip of a civil war on Sunday 15 December, 2013, with President Salva Kiir declaring a state of emergency. His sacked Vice President, Riek Machar, was at the head of an attempted coup by a splinter group of the ruling party, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement, (SPLM). The country's proud motto of: 'Peace, Liberty, Prosperity' lay in ruins.

South Sudan gained independence on 9th July 2011, after a half century of on-and-off armed struggle under the leadership of the legendary Dr. John Garang to separate from Sudan, and became the 54th member Sate of the continent-wide African Union. This long struggle saw an estimated 1.5 million people dead and four million displaced, overwhelmingly in the South.

Historically, Sudan had been plagued by racial/ethnic/religious antagonisms. The South being black African, including a wide range of religious beliefs. The North was Arab/African in ethnicity and Muslim.

Liberation struggle

Both protagonists in the current fighting command sizeable military forces. Machar claimed his forces had taken control of three states, Unity, Upper Nile and Jonglei. The government tightened its grip on the capital, Juba, quickly received Ugandan military assistance and before long largely took back the lost states.

It would appear that with the liberation struggle over, factional struggle developed within SPLM, based on rivalry for jobs in government and associated entities, which gave access to the means for rapidly accumulating personal wealth through high salaries, privileges, and corruption. Tragically, the ethnic card duly emerged as a factor in this struggle for self-enrichment among the ruling petit bourgeoisie.

The regional Eastern African countries, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda, through their organisation the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) promptly responded to the crisis by sending the Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta and the Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn to Juba to seek cessation of hostilities and negotiations. The UN followed by announcing the strengthening of its forces, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, (UNMISS).

Bitter disputes between the two Sudans continued after their divorce, particularly over territory and transportation. South Sudan sees its future transportation to the outside world through Kenya, via the planned massive Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia Project (LAPSSEP) transport corridor consisting of oil pipelines and a road system to a deep-water port at Lamu in Kenyan northern coast.

According to some estimates South Sudan has the third highest proven oil potential in Africa, after Angola and Nigeria, giving it huge development potential. However, currently it is one of the least developed countries in the least developed continent, Africa. The relevant key indices include 50% of the 11 million people living below the poverty line; 47% suffering malnutrition; a 75% illiteracy rate, which is even higher among women; 75% without access to toilet; extremely high maternal mortality; and very poor infrastructure. For the average family, agriculture, including livestock, remains the mainstay, while the country is highly dependent on food imports, among other necessities.

South Sudan's development level is much lower than that of its immediate neighbours Sudan, Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia, although two other immediate neighbours, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of Congo, with similar troubled histories, share low developmental indices.

Nevertheless, South Sudan has good development potential, based on oil, which accounts for 60% of the GDP and 98% of the government's revenue; agriculture and hydropower based on a largely tropical climate, the River Nile and its tributaries; and many minerals. However, the reliance on government spending and the woeful shortage of skills are huge constraints.

In pursuit of development the country has turned to the East African Community, composed of Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi, which has a market of 150 million people. The LAPSSEP scheme also offers further prospects.

It was in these circumstances that the war broke out, followed by a ceasefire five weeks later, on 23 January 2014. Under pressure from the African Union, the Government handed to Kenyan custody seven of the eleven alleged rebel leaders. The African Union further called for a negotiated settlement.

Urgent tasks

Following this proposed negotiated settlement, with about 10,000 people killed and about one million displaced, together with huge physical destruction, the country's likely priorities will be as follows:

1. Feeding the 3.7 million people, i.e. a third of the population, the UN estimates as in acute need of food.
2. Resettlement of the, 645,000 internally and 125,000 externally, displaced people
3. Reconciliation and strengthening national unity
4. The establishment of a competent public administration and a re-unified national army
5. Addressing the issues of a 50% poverty rate, food security, education and health
6. The provision of an infrastructure supportive of the development of a diversified economy, less dependent on oil.

Can elections change anything?

In the wake of Mandela's death and with South Africa facing elections in May, **Dot Lewis** surveys the conflicts and declining support for the African National Congress

ANC returned but with a reduced majority' seems a pretty safe prediction of the results of South Africa's national and nine provincial elections (proportional representation, on a single ballot paper) on 7th May. The president is elected by the National Assembly, which in practice means the president of the ANC, Jacob Zuma this time. Increased unrest, whatever the election results, seems a pretty safe prediction too. High levels of unemployment; continued poverty and increased inequality, strikes and protests at the lack of service deliveries (water, electricity, housing, jobs); violence, including killings by police and sometimes protesters; crime, including endemic corruption by political leaders.

Most of the list 'reads' rather like the SA of the 1980s, when fears of civil war made local and international capital look for ways of achieving stability and the ruling National Party was forced to accept that apartheid must at least be modified. The result was the settlement reached in 1994 after five years of negotiations: universal suffrage, a massive ANC majority and famously Nelson Mandela as President.

Fear of civil is war is not on the agenda today, but fears of worsening conditions, increasingly violent confrontations and political instability are, and it seems unlikely that the elections, whatever the result, will lay these fears to rest. Here we focus on the growing political instability.

Stable government?

Since 1994 SA has been ruled by a tripartite alliance of ANC, the SACP (Communist Party,) and COSATU (Congress of SA Trade Unions). Formed in 1985 by 32 unions, supported the United Democratic Front (UDF) which led the anti-apartheid struggle in the 1980s, and the ANC when it became legal in 1990 (along with the SACP, PAC – Pan-Africanist Congress - and BCM - Black Consciousness Movement). Dual membership of the ANC and SACP is allowed, and not uncommon. Leaders of COSATU sit on the national executive of the ANC. This alliance seemed to guarantee stable government, with the ANC in command. However, twenty years later the cracks are showing and some observers are suggesting that the alliance is crumbling, with profound results.

Last December the secretariat of COSATU's largest affiliate, NUMSA (the National Union of Metalworkers), formed in 1989 and with 333,000 members today, told a special congress that the alliance has become only "a voting machine for the ANC". They will continue to support the ANC as a mass movement, but the leadership is riven by factionalism and it is not democratic. For example after an ANC Conference in 2012 voted overwhelmingly in favour of nationalisation of the 'commanding heights', the leadership produced instead the National Development Plan (NDP): more of the neo-liberal policies which have turned SA into 'colonialism of a special type' ... 'the most unequal place on Earth today'. Similarly, they accuse the SACP of immediately and uncritically supporting the NDP. The SACP has lost its role as a 'vanguard party' as so many of its leaders now occupy key government posts; and it fails to carry out political education amongst the people. NUMSA urges its members to join the SACP, to transform it.. The SACP accuses the NUMSA leaders of being a clique of 'workerists'.

Zuma - for how much longer

As for COSATU, it is the workers' 'beacon of hope' which, says NUMSA, the ANC and SACP are trying to 'turn into a labour desk and toy telephone', while some COSATU leaders have joined the neo-liberal camp. The federation is 'in crisis', 'walking away from its campaigning and revolutionary character'. As we go to press, NUMSA is holding a week-long school to decide on implementing decisions made in December: that the union leaves Cosatu and forms a 'united front' modelled on the UDF; and that it does not provide funds to the ANC for the elections, or campaign for it. This could be a re-run – in 1993 NUMSA decided not to support the ANC - but did in the 1994 election. Whatever they decide, the issues and the divisions are unlikely to diminish.

Fear of civil is war is not on the agenda today, but fears of worsening conditions, increasingly violent confrontations and political instability are, and it seems unlikely that the elections, whatever the result, will lay these fears to rest

Meanwhile, NUMSA has led nine unions affiliated to Cosatu in giving the federation to the end of March to convene a special conference, challenging Cosatu's 's support of the NDP. In addition, 'extraordinary measures' are threatened, including court action, if COSATU's suspension of a popular general secretary is not withdrawn. With the election looming, it's quite possible that the conference will not take place, and that all three in the alliance, and NUMSA, will 'pull together' for the ANC. But the truce will not last long.

And the next-biggest COSATU union is up for grabs....

Up till late 2012 the National Union of Miners (NUM) was SA's largest union, dominant in mining, affiliated to Cosatu and supplying all three secretary-generals of the ANC since 1994 (including today's Cyril Ramaphosa, a multi-millionaire who achieved dubious fame as a member of the board of Lonmin). Today the NUM competes with AMCU (Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union) which has replaced the NUM in the Lonmin mine in Marikana (the third largest platinum producer in the world) where police shot dead 34 striking miners in August 2012. AMCU is trying to replace the NUM not only in the two other platinum companies but also in gold and coal mining. It has not joined COSATU. Turf wars between the unions have been going on for at least three years, and have included violence – including killing. In the battle of words, both sides have accused the other of corruption: AMCU says the NUM lost the support of workers because it was remote, not pursuing members' needs. The NUM says AMCU was set up in order to destroy the NUM and so weaken the ANC. Some commentators blame weaknesses in the law on trade union recognition for the turf wars, but the fundamental problem is the persistence of the conditions of apartheid. Still recruited from desperately poor rural areas and living and working in appalling conditions, miners have seen their wages and safety provisions improve, but surely they hoped for more than has been delivered? Mass redundancies are threatened.

The ANC and SACP are not homogenous blocks, and people disagreeing with the dominant line are not always kicked out. In September, 2012, Z Pallo Jordan, a Minister in Mandela's government, told a meeting of the Eastern Cape Provincial Council that 1994: "opened the path to property acquisition and capital accumulation to a small minority of Africans who have since become engaged in mining, agriculture, secondary industry, finance management and banking. But it has left unchanged the large pockets of poverty that compel thousands of other Africans to descend to the bowels of the earth to extract the minerals that go to enrich the few". He is still on the executive of the ANC.

Secrecy and authoritarianism

Ronnie Kasrils, formerly a member of MK (Umkhonto we Sizwe) the armed wing of the ANC, member of the SACP and Minister for Intelligence in the 2004-8 government adds his voice. Noting the gains since 1994 – houses, schools, roads, water and electricity, education and health, social grants - he also notes that the bottom 50% receive only 7.8% of total income. ."Little wonder that the country has seen such an enormous rise in civil protest." He adds police violence (the Marikana massacre was 'just' an example), threats to press freedom, "a tendency to secrecy and authoritarianism in government", corruption to the list. Like a growing number of commentators Kasrils traces today's problems back to the tripartite alliance falling into the arms of wooing capitalists.

The tripartite alliance, focused on defeating apartheid, papered over, ignored economic questions and class issues. It is not surprising that an alliance formed with a single aim runs into difficulties when faced with new (to them) issues and conflicting interests.

Outside the tripartite alliance, the party need to keep an eye on the Economic Freedom Fighters, formed by Julius Malema in 2013 after he was kicked out of the ANC's Youth League for singing "Kill the Boer". Anti-imperialist rhetoric by Commander-in-Chief (sic) Malema sits with racist stereotyping. He is a director of several companies and his family have been found to have 'benefitted improperly from the unlawful, fraudulent and corrupt conduct of On-Point...', (an engineering company 50% owned by the family). This is unlikely to deem him unfit (millions will still vote for the ANC, while knowing about corruption in very high places). The threat of the EFF is not through the ballot box though. Its support seems to come mainly from black youth in rural and semi-rural areas: unemployed and maybe lumpen. The strikers in Marikana sported the yellow jerseys and red berets of the EFF... Malema is meeting with Chief Buthelezi's Inkhata Freedom Party. Inkatha colluded with the SA police force in murderous attacks on UDF campaigners in the run up to the 1994 elections. Maybe the EFF will just fizzle away, but the ground is ripe for a populist movement on the right.

So no predictions of the direction South Africa will take. The need for re-thinking, for developing grass-roots organisations, to change direction are becoming frequent in commentaries on South Africa. That makes the country just like us.

Dot Lewis is a member of Hackney North Labour Party and Refugee and Migrant Support Group

European bridge building

Tony Simpson explains why the European peace movement still has a vital role

'It is fair to say that the peace movement in the 1980s contributed more to building the idea of Europe as a community than all the European institutions with their Treaties in over half a century.'

That's the assessment of Luciana Castellina, the inspirational Italian politician. She was a Member of the European Parliament when European Nuclear Disarmament was taking off in the early 1980s, and readily arranged access to the Parliament's interpretation equipment in Brussels, with volunteer interpreters, so that the END Liaison Committee could prepare the first END Convention, which met in the city's Palais des Congrès in July 1982.

Socialists, Communists and Greens attended the Convention in numbers, alongside trade unionists, church representatives, and women from the camp at Greenham Common, where Michael Heseltine insisted US nuclear armed cruise missiles were to be installed. Judith Hart came on behalf of the Labour Party national executive, while Tony Benn debated with Rudolf Bahro, recently exiled from East Germany.

We got the political architecture of those early END Conventions about right, was the assessment of Ken Coates, who had drafted the END Appeal for a nuclear-weapons-free Europe ' from Poland to Portugal', together with E P Thompson and Ralph Miliband. 'We must commence to act as if a united, neutral and pacific Europe already exists. We must learn to be loyal, not to 'East' and 'West', but to each other ... ' read the Appeal, which attracted signatories throughout Europe. Subsequently, after enormous and continuing protests in many countries, 'theatre' nuclear weapons were removed under the intermediate nuclear forces treaty. Mikhail Gorbachev, President of the Soviet Union, was the catalyst for this important change. Some years earlier, in 1983, the Soviet Peace Committee, had tried unsuccessfully to block the second END Convention in Berlin, where reunification of divided Germany was under discussion.

More than thirty years later, NATO's nuclear arsenal remains in place in several western European countries, controlled by the United States, whilst the UK squanders billions of pounds subsidising a planned upgrade of the US sea-borne Trident missile designed to destroy Russian cities and other targets. The US, notwithstanding its 'pivot' to Asia, installs so-called 'missile defence' systems in Poland, Romania and Bulgaria, equipped with missiles which, Russia fears, might facilitate a first strike against its territory. In response, Russia pumps up spending on its own military. NATO expansion continues, now hoovering up

Flower power

Europe still has need of its peace movement

Cyprus into its nursery, which has the Orwellian title of 'Partnership for Peace'. Neutral Ireland is already in PfP. But the frontline for further NATO expansion runs through Ukraine and Georgia, hard up against Russia's borders. Kiev is currently gripped by a public revolt which looks more deep-rooted than the US subsidised 'Orange Revolution' of 2004.

In 1989, Ken Coates was elected to the European Parliament together with a generation of END colleagues from many countries. He quickly proposed that the Parliament should meet with the Supreme Soviet. As he put it, ' ... the two largest emerging democracies of East and West should arrange a suitable meeting. Separately, they were doing similar things. The European Parliament was seeking to prepare a democratic foundation for political union, at the same time that the Supreme Soviet considered how to lay out the groundwork for political pluralism and the rule of law.'

This audacious proposal found some support in the European Parliament, and President Gorbachev responded positively to an initiative to build 'our common European home'. Preparatory visits were made, but the initiative bit the dust with Gorbachev's fall and the rise of Yeltsin, in December 1991. Ken had seen the proposal for a joint meeting as a development of END. It never happened, but a constructive and mutually supportive relationship between the European Union and the Russian Federation remains desirable if not readily achievable.

In June, the 'Sarajevo Peace Event 2014' takes place, a hundred years after Gavrilo Princip assassinated Franz Ferdinand, triggering in a matter of weeks, and to widespread surprise, the start of the First World War on Sunday 2 August 1914. Bertrand Russell was astonished to learn of the outbreak of war from JM Keynes, who was busily searching for a motorbike in order to get to London to advise the British Government on the financial implications. Later, in the 1930s, Russell was to go back to 1814 and the Congress of Vienna to trace the origins of the War. Russia's defeat of Napolean in 1812 echoed down the century.

Sarajevo's Peace Event promises much excitement from 6th to 9th June in the mountains of Bosnia-Herzegovina. There will be a youth camp and rich cultural programme, as befits the city as it recovers. An international co-ordinating committee is preparing the programme, including some old END hands. Europe still has need of its peace movement.

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www.spokesmanbooks.com

www.p2014.eu

The end of Ireland's recessionary blues?

Lily Murphy on the price of Ireland's fragile recovery

The year was 2010 and on a dark Sunday night in November people in Ireland gathered around TV sets to watch the then Irish Prime Minister Brian Cowen make a special announcement regarding the country's dire financial situation.

We were informed rather ashamedly that the country was entering into a bailout programme with the International Monetary Fund.

Three years later and again it was on a Sunday night in November when the now Irish Prime Minister Enda Kenny had an announcement to make regarding the economy.

This time the Prime Minister announced that Ireland was successfully exiting the IMF bailout.

It wasn't a dark night but some shame still lingered. During the three years when the IMF along with the EU took control of Ireland's economic affairs the country has seen a change in government, a surge in emigration, a spike in suicide rates and savage cuts to public services. The tune was recessionary blues and it was being played heavy over the country while austerity measures imposed by the IMF bailout drove recession at a furious speed.

During the Celtic Tiger boom years Ireland had jumped head first into the modern age but underneath all that prosperity and progress there was a recession bubbling up. The optimism displayed by the Celtic Tiger cubs soon turned to pessimism when the world's economy started to crumble during 2008 and Ireland was beginning to feel its bleak economic past creep back again.

Emigration was part and parcel of Irish life for centuries but when financial success came that trend was stalled as people found a better life by staying at home and getting jobs in the many multinational companies that flooded into Ireland. In the three years of IMF austerity measures emigration is again a social trend with destinations such as Australia and Canada receiving in their droves the bright young things of the Celtic Tiger age.

'Work abroad' expo's attracted thousands of Irish people of all ages eager to find a route out of the recession riddled country.

One such work expo in Dublin which advertised jobs across Australia attracted over 10,000 jobseekers were quite literally queuing up to leave Ireland.

While this organised evacuation of Ireland was happening society crumbled under austerity. Without doubt the Ireland of the boom years is dead and gone. Now we have a country shaped by extreme austerity, a country that has had to accept a type of poverty that it thought it would never see again.

In just three years Ireland has been reshaped by harsh measures dished out by the EU and IMF. State assists have had to be auctioned off to the highest bidder while NAMA, the National Asset Management Agency, was set up to take control of large scale loans that banks were unable to control.

Closures

Irish banks have been downsized and reorganised so reckless lending will not happen again and toxic institutions such as Anglo Irish Bank were completely shut down. During the last three years businesses big and small closing their doors became almost an everyday occurrence. A common trend was the speed of business closures with staff dismissed without warning and sometimes without pay. Some workers staged sit ins which became the popular form of protest during the bailout years. Workers at the Vita Cortex factory in Cork staged a sit-in which lasted through the winter of 2011 and ended successfully in May 2012, 161 days later.

When the video game company Game closed 277 stores across Ireland in 2012 it resulted in 104 full time jobs being lost. Disaffected staff who were left with no redundancy pay staged successful store sit ins. Many other workers including those at Target Express and at clothing store La Senza also staged sit-ins.

Ordinary workers bore the brunt of the sudden and drastic action taken by employers during the years of IMF imposed austerity. While many workers eventually gained their rights to severance pay and pensions, countless others in various other sectors did not.

Whilst emigration and unemployment rose over the last three years so too did suicides. Suicide in Ireland straddles the class divide, it reaches into all sectors of society and takes grip on unstable minds rocked by recession. The highest number of deaths from suicide come from those under the age of 30, also the highest number to emigrate.

Emigration over the last three years has played a key role in keeping unemployment figures below the 20% mark, a fact not lost on the Irish government. While the government like to hark on about numbers on the welfare line declining this is not due to the creation of jobs, but the fact that thousands of people are emigrating.

Offloading many youth to Australia is helping the government create an image of dwindling unemployment figures but this brain drain will hinder not encourage future economic growth. Ireland's exit from the bailout programme does not mean we have achieved an economic clean bill of health and the country is still reeling from the economic crash.

On 15th December when Ireland left the bailout programme the Irish finance minister bluntly stated that we will never go back to those mad days of economic recklessness seen during the Celtic Tiger age.

History has a knack of repeating itself and although the nation didn't break out in celebration when we exited the bailout programme, any whiff of wild prosperity in the near future could bring us all back to 2010 and singing those recessionary blues again.

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Yugoslavia – the rise and fall

Almost 25 years after the break up and violent conflicts **Sheila Osmanovic** looks back at the model of Yugoslav socialism that many saw as a democratic alternative to the Soviets

'Once upon time somewhere in the hilly Balkans there was a stoic country that endured the worst of the worse blows'

These are the opening lines of the school text book World War II epic poem that all secondary school pupils wanted to learn by heart in celebration of Tito's birthday in the 1980s. Tito died in 1980, but a majority of Yugoslavs mourned the beloved leader, who left the legacy of Yugoslavia . Yugoslavia was a country created by people for people, with a strong sense of empathy, conviviality and solidarity. Today Bosnia, a key part of Yugoslavia, is again at the epicentre of crisis - with workers of all faiths and cultures united in massive protests against corruption, job losses, cuts and unbearable living conditions. How did the dreams of a better future come to this end?

The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was a multicultural federation comprising six republics and two autonomous provinces. In the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the province of Kosovo, Muslims made up the majority of the population, accounting for about four million of the approximately 23.5 million Yugoslavs. To manage the different nations and nationalities, as well as to compete in the global post-war economy the Yugoslav state apparatus relied on three main policy pillars: economic self-management embedded in a specific type of socialist market economy, political non-alignment and societal norms of 'brotherhood and unity.' What was the impact of each of these paradigms?

On the last Bosnia and Herzegovina held a specific symbolic position, and Bosnian Muslims a special role, in the promotion of a policy of 'brotherhood and unity'. The reason is twofold. First, in the early years of Yugoslav formation following the end of the WWII, the country was still repelled by the consequences of the onslaught, when many different warring factions had turned to exterminating each other. The WWII in Yugoslavia was not only a war against the Nazis, but also a civil war and a socialist revolution. During the war, quislings – mainly Serb and Croat nationalists - supported the Nazis, whilst others fought with the partisans against them. Partisans promoted a united Yugoslav ideal based on Communist ideology. There were situations in which close family members were on opposing sides. Thus, the war left scars so deep that at times they threatened to undermine the legitimacy of the unified post-WWII Yugoslav state. To address this problem, the state apparatus constructed a common history of a national liberation struggle by means of ideologically inspired tales of partisan hardship and communist triumph. WWII novels were mandatory reading in schools and ideologically inspired movies featuring the joint struggle for Yugoslav liberation and communist victory were frequently broadcast. As almost all of the major battles during the national liberation struggle took place in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the republic's place in generating this sentiment of 'brotherhood and unity' was most significant.

Balkan youth are growing impatient

The exception

Yugoslavia's federal principles organised the republics around the most dominant nation, awarding the largest ethnic group a considerable measure of self-governance within its own republic. Bosnia and Herzegovina, however, was the exception to this rule. Even though Bosnians formed the largest ethnic group in Bosnia and Herzegovina, there was no absolute majority as in other Republics such as Serbia or Croatia. This was mainly due to the emigration of Bosnians from the Balkans in the nineteenth century following the Ottoman withdrawal from Europe, as well as anti-Muslim campaigns across the region. More importantly, Bosnians were unable to exercise 'ownership' over the Bosnian republic because they were not recognised as one of its 'constituent nations'. The persistent line of argument was that Bosnians were Islamised Serbs and/or Croats who had reneged on the Christian faith of their ancestors, and needed a nationalist structural environment if they were to comprehend their historic mistake and return to their perceived primordial origins. In the event, they refused. They continued to describe themselves as adherents to Islam, a religion considered not only nationally unacceptable to both Serbs and Croats, but also portrayed as a 'late-comer' to the region, rendering its adherents vulnerable to being 'exported back' when the time was ripe. Material evidence, however, does not support such claims, confirming instead that the arrival of Islam in the Balkans occurred no later than that of Christianity. Muslims were not seen as a part of the project for national enlightenment.

Until 1968, the prerogative of 'constituent nationhood' within Bosnia and Herzegovina belonged exclusively to Serbs and Croats, while Bosnians were left to either classify themselves as nationally undeclared Muslims, then undeclared Yugoslavs, or to express allegiance to the Serb or Croat nations by declaring that they were one or other nationality. Although this view ran counter to the Yugoslav Communist Party platform, which since 1937 had considered 'Bosnian' a separate ethnic entity it was not until the 1971 census that Bosnian Muslims gained national recognition. However, the communist cadres did not allow them to resume their historic name of 'Bosnian'; instead, they bestowed on them a new term, 'Muslim', which was supposed to symbolise ethnic and cultural belonging but without religious connotations. It was written with a capital M for ethnic Muslims as opposed to 'muslims', a term that denounced an adherent of Islam. This produced confusion and a disturbing term such as a Muslim muslim. Moreover, it did not solve the problem. By classifying Bosnians as Muslims rather than allowing them to re-embrace their historic name of Bošnjaci (Bosniaks), the communist leadership left room for disputes to arise over the legitimacy of the Bosnians' nationhood and claims of ownership over the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. All of these are causes for the carnage produced during the Yugoslav break-up that continues to this day.

The adoption of Yugoslav 'brotherhood and unity' policies continued until the end of the Cold War and the declaration of a New World Order in 1991, when the process of Yugoslav disintegration and the formation of new states began. At the time, Yugoslavia was one of the last remaining multicultural federations in the region. More importantly, it was the only regional economy run by self-managed guilds of workers, which owned their companies' assets, rather than privately operated multinational conglomerates. The workers chose their leaders and had elected representatives on the management board. The workers' rights were protected and there were separate courts that dealt with allegations brought by the workers against management officials. The law was on the side of the worker. The enterprises were competitive, self-sufficient, efficiently managed and great exporters.

The companies owned assets, properties, and apartments. Flats were bought on behalf of the workers and distributed free on the basis of the priority rating on the waiting list. The monitoring system was tight and quality assurance in place so that the lists were hard to manipulate. Moreover, it would have been a great public embarrassment if workers had been suspected of any wrong-doing or corruption by their comrades. Empathy was also encouraged and consideration for needs of others, especially those less fortunate, was a common way of thinking. For example, if an underprivileged student was unable to join the school excursion, the teachers would make an appeal for solidarity and would urge parents of each student to make a contribution for the less fortunate one. The self-managed guilds owned holiday hotels and homes at attractive winter and summer destinations. The company holidays were booked on a rota basis ensuring carefully that each worker was given their due share of a minimum ten days. These were paid for by the workers at discounted prices as the enterprises heavily subsidised workers' holiday visits. Health and schooling was top quality and free to all.

The Non-Aligned Movement

Tito attempted to promote this model of a socialist self-managed economy world-wide through the Non-Aligned Movement, which was established on his initiative at a conference convened in Belgrade in September 1961. The movement wanted to remain independent of the Soviet bloc and its state-run society, but it did not want to unite with the imperialist West, as it was very critical of Western colonialism. The movement's administration was, and still remains, non-hierarchical, rotational and inclusive, providing all member states, regardless of size and importance, with an opportunity to participate in global decision-making and world politics. The movement was especially popular during the 1970s and 1980s, but with the end of the Cold War and with the prevailing capitalist hegemony, it lost its voice, and its member states were taken over by neoliberal structural adjustment programmes.

Following the collapse of the Soviet state-run economy in 1990s, the New World Order was founded according to capitalist parameters that later metamorphosed into neo-liberal austerity programmes. As such, it did not tolerate economic deviations in any shape or form. Yugoslavia was no exception. The principles of equality, solidarity and empathy became distant and quaint in Yugoslavia. It was not until the war began in the former Yugoslav republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1992, that the international community paid special attention to the conflict. It issued explicit instructions to its countries' respective intelligence operatives to follow the rapidly developing events closely, and to physically move from their various stations clustered around Eastern Europe to the Bosnian capital, Sarajevo. The Yugoslav war was internationalised from the outset, and international involvement proved a decisive element in its outcome. Rather than having assisted in overcoming the disputes, Western response to the emerging conflict in Yugoslavia accelerated the Yugoslav break-up into mutually hostile and economically unviable statelets. The reason? Western capitalistic elites appeared weary of the self-managed socialistic economy of the former Yugoslavia and the efforts towards just income distribution of the Non-Aligned states. As the conflict was taking its toll and the war appeared imminent, the corporate cadre was making its appearance, by which time a great part of local policy makers had already secured their shares in financial portfolios. Encouraged by the Western capitalistic trends, the Yugoslav leaders abandoned self-managed economic principles and embarked on the road to a transition economy at the end of the war.

Unprecedented economic debt

Following the end of the war, the Yugoslav republics plunged into unprecedented economic debt. Each of the six former Yugoslav republics are tied hand and foot into debt and structural adjustment programmes to repay disadvantageous loans. These include job cuts, fierce privatisation, large reductions in public spending, selling natural resources and public enterprises (usually to foreign investors), huge income and social inequalities. Spiralling indebtedness at individual, commercial, governmental levels, elitism and institutionalised religiosity are the main current features of all six former Yugoslav republics. The new post-Yugoslav 'democratic' governments are carrying out this dowry following the independence bonanza without challenge, in tune with the global Neo-Liberal agenda .

Sheila Osmanovic is a consultant and founder of a disability charity. She is also on Chartist EB

What happened to the Syrian revolution?

Julia Wickham makes a case for political and humanitarian intervention

If the barbarous mess that is Syria were easy to solve, it would have been solved by now. The struggle to implement even a short-term truce to enable humanitarian access in the Old City of Homs, the only result of the UN-brokered peace talks in Geneva at the end of January, and now further deadlock in the February talks, illustrates how hard it is. The deadlock lies not just in the enmity between the regime and its opponents, but among the fighters on the ground and in the disconnect between the fractured internal opposition groups and the splintered political opposition trying to represent them externally.

Arming the 'rebels' amidst such chaos is too little too late, and risks entrenching the fighting further. To do nothing is not an alternative. It is essential, but not enough, to initiate and sustain a process to map a way out of a situation that has cost more than 130,000 lives, maimed many more and displaced around 40% of the 22 million population inside and outside Syria. Providing humanitarian aid, accepting refugees and helping Syria's neighbours (Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Iraq) to deal with the influx of people fleeing the violence is a moral obligation. However, what is most urgent is an end to the bloodshed.

Chemical weapons

One thing the chemical weapons attack in the opposition-held suburbs of Damascus on 21th August 2013 proved was that political will can be generated among the international community to act with real intent. It seemed the West would finally resolve to support military action in the form of US air strikes against the Syrian regime believed to have carried out the attacks. Amidst the diplomatic disarray following the UK Parliament's rejection on 29 August of a government motion to support intervention, and days before the US Congress was to hold a similar vote, Vladimir Putin executed his champion chess move. He averted retaliation against the Assad government by persuading it to relinquish its chemical weapons arsenal, thus letting Barack Obama off the hook of defending his 'red line'.

Despite the efforts of journalists, human rights organisations and others to publicise the carnage, many images of mutilated corpses had been withheld in the two years before the chemical attack: detainees tortured to death, families slaughtered in their homes, attacks on hospitals and medical workers who dared to treat anyone involved (even peacefully) in supporting the uprising, summary executions and gang rapes. In the new era of citizen journalism there was no shortage of footage. So why now the 'no holds barred' about the chemical weapons?

Apparently it is so much less acceptable to be murdered by a chemical weapon than by a conventional one, no matter what the degree of barbarity involved. The conventional means listed above had not been sufficient to galvanise the international community into action early on. The first red lines were crossed in Dera'a in March 2011 with the brutal treatment of schoolchildren by security forces for spraying 'Arab Spring' slogans on walls; with the first sniper bullets fired from rooftops at peaceful protesters; and the detention and torture of innocent men, women and children. Even now, despite the rhetoric, the proposed limited strikes were detached from any wider political strategy to topple the regime.

Air strikes

Before Putin's manoeuvre, I sat in the tension of Beirut on the last day of August, communicating with friends in Syria. Most were against air strikes, on the basis they would only harm them and not the regime. Arguments raged on social media sites between those who wanted the same outcome – to see the end of the regime and the killing – but taking a different route. My own anger was a response to the hypocrisy of trying to hide the geopolitical muscle-flexing, the protection of a weapons norm and saving an American president's face behind a sudden concern to protect Syrian civilians. A young Syrian neighbour in Damascus who supports the revolution, a smart entrepreneur sick of the corruption, had written to me in 2012 when opposition forces were gaining ground but the 'Assad must go' rhetoric from outside was still not translating into tangible support. 'God damn politics and politicians' expressed his sense of abandonment shared by ordinary Syrians who had risked their lives to call for the same freedoms people were demanding in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Libya and Bahrain. How were they to know that Homs would not equal Benghazi in the eyes of the 'international community' and its purported resolve to protect citizens from being savaged by the state?

The next right thing

I might appear to be making the case for military intervention in Syria. I am not; at least not of the 'arming the rebels' kind. In 2012, while I was still living in Damascus, I wanted intervention. The newly formed Free Syrian Army needed support. The terror unleashed on a defenceless civilian population warranted the same collective action that had been taken in Libya in 2011 and Bosnia in 1995. But unless there is a cogent political strategy and peace plan, sending a few tanks and missiles into a chaotic and unpredictable situation is naïve. Ordinary Syrians have had enough. I asked a former student of mine, a brilliant young woman, now a refugee in Lebanon trying desperately to get her family out of Syria, what she would like to say to people in the UK. "Primarily they should realise that it is the long, long, long time of conflict that has brought all of the armed and extremist groups into Syria, which most Syrians who support the opposition do not support. Please point out that the best help Syrians now aspire to is help in putting an end to the massive bloodshed."

The tragedy in Syria is being misrepresented. The average person could be forgiven for believing it is 'six of one …', another case of 'they just can't live together'; or another showdown between Al Qaeda and its enemies. So Assad moves down the list of 'baddies', vindicating him – so it would seem – in the conspiracy theories he propagated at the start of the uprising. The winners of this are those fuelling the conflict; the losers are ordinary people in Syria and the surrounding region. Obama is no Bush, but the spurious 'war on terror' has rooted itself insidiously over a decade into our transatlantic language and belief systems. By extension, the word 'terrorist' is a blanket term for enemies whose grievances you are not willing to countenance. It is especially convenient for dictators and despots.

It is striking that politicians and even seasoned journalists commonly refer to a 'war' that has been raging for almost three years. It did not start as a war. The situation evolved into conflict, crisis and civil war owing to failure on the part of the international community to act. Political self-interest and enduring Cold War reflexes ensured the violence was stoked. Syrians soon realised there were no honest brokers. Labels such as 'rebels', 'moderates', 'extremists' and 'militants' obscure the origins of the bloodshed.

What happened to the words 'revolution', which means the overthrow of a social order in favour of another one as much as of a particular regime? And to 'uprising', which in the case of the 'Arab Spring' countries, including Syria, meant ordinary people having the courage to demand economic justice, political freedom and the right to live in dignity?

These aspirations have not gone away. Ordinary Syrians have become eclipsed behind the stories that make headlines. They are still there, striving with unbelievable determination to hold together their families and communities. Many have left the country only to find themselves unwanted and destitute, to the extent that increasing numbers have returned to the hell of home.

There are no easy solutions. But what we can do incrementally is 'the next right thing' and for the right reason. The benchmarks for concerted action should be based on international law and common humanity. It is a no-brainer we should accept Syrian refugees, and more than the paltry 500 or so currently proposed. Public opinion supports this. It is not an alternative to providing humanitarian aid.

The deadlock lies not just in the enmity between the regime and its opponents, but among the fighters on the ground and in the disconnect between the fractured internal opposition groups and the splintered political opposition

Stopping the killing

All energy should be focused on stopping the killing. The UK should take a leading role in advocating for the full array of political, economic and diplomatic tools to press allies and foes alike to cease the shameful exploitation of the conflict to further their own self-interests. The political space created by cooperation between the US and Russia should be built on, as should the rapprochement with Iran. A process of internationally mediated talks is crucial in persuading parties to the fighting to renounce their maximalist positions.

An ugly betrayal

Once again I wish to bring it back to ordinary Syrian people. Those involved in the original peaceful protests never held 'maximalist' positions. They were not even calling for the overthrow of the regime, but economic and political reforms. Many Syrians trusted Assad would lead them down a different path from his fellow miscreants in the region. The path he chose was an ugly betrayal of his people. The atrocities beamed into our homes last August have not gone away with the spotlight. The same towns and villages targeted then, and many more around the country, are still under siege and people are starving to death. Another young Syrian friend and former colleague trapped in one of these towns joked with me on Facebook: 'We have internet but no food.'

A political solution and peace plan are needed to solve this conflict. But the people of Syria – those still alive and striving for justice and those who died for daring to do the right thing – should not have to wait a moment longer for the bloodshed to be stopped. This, too, is the right thing, for the right reason.

Julia Wickham is a Middle East affairs specialist, teacher, writer and peace-builder. She was formerly Director of Labour Middle East Council and recently lived in Syria and Lebanon.

Turkish pains

Amina Patak on shoe boxes and corruption

Since 17th December 2013, political corruption scandals have been on Turkey's news agenda. At the epicentre was the Justice and Development Party (AKP), the leading Islamist party, led by Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Resulting instability has led to devaluation of the Turkish Lira and speculation about 2014 election results.

Turkey has seen some democratic improvement in recent years in the resolution of the 'Kurdish problem', more rights to veiled women and, most importantly, avoiding military coups by changing the constitution. Since the social unrest last year, the Turkish government has stopped democratic reforms. Attention has shifted to finding scapegoats for civil protests, which Mr Erdoğan called a 'coup against his government and democracy'. Gezi Park demonstrators have been detained facing terrorism charges. News of corruption charges forced events to take a wholly different course.

In the early morning of 17 December, Turkish police arrested government officials, simultaneously in Istanbul and the Turkish capital, Ankara. The 24 arrests included the sons of three Ministers, Interior, Economics and Environment and City Planning. Other arrests included the mayor of the Fatih municipality of Istanbul, a murky Iranian businessman, Rezza Zarrab, the construction tycoon Ali Ağaoğlu and the director general of the prominent Turkish bank, Halkbank, Süleyman Aslan. The alleged connection is the Iranian businessmen's ghost companies, illicit money laundering and bribes directed at the bank director general and the Ministers' sons, irregularities in various construction projects and money exchanged for planning permits.

During the operations, $US 4.5 million were found in shoe boxes at the home of the Halkbank director general. Shoe boxes have become the symbol for corruption in Turkey. Mr Erdoğan said this was 'a dirty game directed at his government'. But he supported the investigations. What actually happened was to reverse the course of investigations. The chiefs of police were replaced. A total of 4000 police and investigators were reshuffled. It took eight days for the ministers to resign. The son of Prime Minister, Bilal Erdoğan, was due to meet investigators but allegations against him went quiet. A few days later he appeared in public with his father.

Prime Minister Erdoğan blames his one-time fellow-comrade, Fetullah Gülen, well known for establishing missionary schools around the world. Gulen is the leader of the Hizmet (Service) movements which have great influence among Muslims and non-Muslims across the United States, Europe and the Middle East. The relationship between the AKP and Gülen was public knowledge. Political experts claim that the corruption charges resulted from a breakdown in this relationship. But why has this marriage come to a bitter end?

After the police reshuffle a draft Law was introduced by AKP MPs to limit the Supreme Council of Judges and Public Prosecutors and give more power to the Minister of Justice. It was also proposed that safeguards on internet privacy were removed and the need to have a 24 hour court order abolished. The government would have the right to see all the content browsed on the internet by any user. This caused chaos in the Grand National Assembly including physical coercion from the Ministers. Both measures await President Abdullah Gül's approval.

The Turkish saga shows no signs of abating. Quite the contrary, it gains more prominence as the war in neighbouring Syria continues. Whether local and presidential elections this year will change the situation is an unanswered question.

Turkey's loss, Cypriot gain

Mary Southcott on a possible settlement

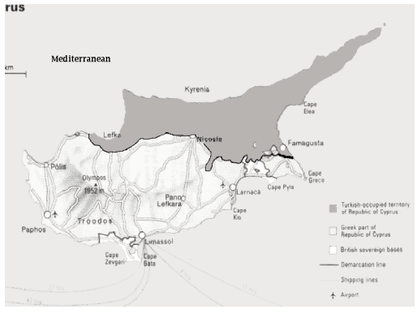
The Communique agreed by the two Cypriot leaders, Nicos Anastasiades and Dervish Eroglu, on 11th February will allow intensive negotiations for a Cyprus settlement, including triangular visits by the two Negotiators, Andreas Mavroyiannis to Ankara, and Kudret Ozersay, with Turkey's backing, to Athens.

Turkey's Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu has been active in achieving sign-off, five hours with Eroglu in December, and contacts with US Secretary of State John Kerry and William Hague. The USA has decided there will be a Cyprus settlement in a turbulent region, where the Turkish model and its own democracy have been seen to be flawed. Exploiting hydrocarbons will prove difficult with Turkey's counter claims to Exclusive Economic Zones.

This is the chance for Cyprus civil society to help their leaders succeed where successive attempts have failed. Perhaps a Cypriot civic forum could build on the intercommunal cooperation in the Nicosia Master Plan, Famagusta Ecocity Project, Bicommunal Famagusta Initiative, Kondea village, Cyprus Friendship Programme, Malta Business Group collaborating with Chambers of Commerce (and Industry), Trade Unions, faith groups, football associations, Cyprus Friendship Programme, Cultural Heritage and Missing Persons Committees, Home 4 Cooperation and Cyprus Community Media Centre.

50 years of the UN Peacekeeping Force Cyrpus (UNFICYP), 40 years since the 1974 coup and invasion, 11 years since the Green Line opened, with cooperation between the non nationalist left and right, surely it is time for optimism of the will.

The 2014 New Year Report of the Friends of Cyprus giving the background is available from marysouthcott@hotmail.com.



Republican socialism and Left Unity

Steve Freeman, in rebutting Pete Rowlands in *Chartist* 266, travels from Chartism to the founding Left Unity Party conference

Republican socialism is an idea and a programme which needs a party. Like the Chartists in the 19th century, republican socialists place a high priority on the struggle for democracy. We need new democratic institutions and new constitutional laws and an extension of democracy into many of the dark corners of politics and the economy.

A new democracy will make possible and practical the policy of extending and democratising the public sector and social rights. But without a party this will be pie in the sky. Such a party would mobilise the politically active workers to fight for democracy. This would make possible the support of the broader mass of working class people. How can we build a republican socialist party?

One answer is to take over the Labour Party and transform it into a republican and socialist party. This has not been tried. The Labour left has restricted itself to trying to shift the Party to the left. It has not fought to change the political system which concentrates so much power in the hands of the Crown, its Ministers and security apparatus which so ably serves the City of London

The alternative is to set up a republican socialist party from scratch. This hasn't been tried either. Instead there has been what Pete Rowlands calls failed attempts to set up a new party of the left (NLP) beginning with the Socialist Labour Party through Respect to the Trade Union and Socialist Coalition. All attempts to build a socialist Labour Party inside or outside the Labour Party have failed.

Rowlands identifies one major factor in this. The Labour left must break with the liberal reformist monarchist and pro-capitalist right wing of the party. Such a break would require Proportional Representation. Pete Rowlands says PR 'would have a major effect, and would allow for the emergence of a proper left wing party with substantial electoral support and representation'.

Here is the problem. To get a 'proper left wing party' we need radical democratic change. But to get radical democratic change we need a party to fight for it. How can we square this circle? We have to go back to the Chartist party in the 1840s. This was not a 'normal' party but a 'peculiar' kind of party because it mobilised the working class for constitutional change mainly by extra parliamentary means.

Although Chartism was defeated it changed the political direction and within twenty years suffrage was extended. This made possible a Labour Party in parliament. The struggle of the Chartists broke down the constitutional barriers to working class social progress. We need this kind of party today which makes the struggle for democracy a priority and thus makes possible in the future a 'proper left wing party'.

The struggle of the Chartists broke down the constitutional barriers to working class social progress. We need this kind of party today which makes the struggle for democracy a priority

In 1997 constitutional change with the Scottish parliament made possible a 'proper left wing party' called the Scottish Socialist Party. Otherwise socialists are locked in the cycle of failure whether inside or outside the Labour Party.

Too dismissive

However Pete Rowlands is too dismissive of the new Left Unity party. He says that 'those attracted to Left Unity would be best advised to rejoin Labour'. He asks himself whether it is the 'proper left wing party' which aided by proportional representation can win significant seats in 2015. The answer is obviously no.

Is it a party like the Chartists which can wage an extra parliamentary struggle for democratic constitutional change? The answer again is no. Yet the jury is to still out and has not returned a final verdict. The game plan is set up a more left wing Labour type party with references back to 1945. This plan, under the name of the Left Party Platform, won the conference with about three quarters of the votes. Left Unity now identifies itself as a 'radical socialist party' not a republican socialist party. The majority want a 'proper left wing party' but have not recognised the preconditions for success.

However, this is not the end of the story. The founding conference was a representative sample of the politics of the socialist left in England – both its past and its future. There were four strategic platforms as the Left Party (1945), Republican Socialist (1649), Socialist (1918) and Communist (1920). Behind these were three trends - reformist, republican and ultra-left. The latter were rejected. Consequently the next stage of Left Unity will become a struggle between the reformists and republicans or if you prefer between those who want another Labour Party and those who see the necessity for a new Chartist party.

Steve Freeman supports the Republican Socialist Alliance

Facing both ways

Andrew Coates on a mixed legacy

MITTERRAND: A STUDY IN AMBIGUITY
Philip Short (The Bodley Head, £30)

François Hollande's electoral campaign in 2012 presented him as 'Mitterrand's heir.' Perhaps British readers will come to Philip Short's biography more interested in the parallels between the former French Head of State's 'second family' with Anne Pingeot, and Hollande's affair with Julie Gayet. But Mitterrand invites more significant comparisons with the legacy of France's first, and longest serving, French Socialist President.

Mitterrand, marked by 'ambiguities' was known as 'the Sphinx'. His life is littered with riddles. Catherine Nay counted seven 'Mitterrands', from a left-wing Léon Blum to the Father of the Nation, in his first term of office alone (*Les Sept Mitterrand*. 1988). Philip Short has the more daunting task of covering a life and career from 1916 to 1996.

As a student in the 1930s Mitterrand was involved with the far-right Croix de feu. As an escaped prisoner of war he served the Vichy regime and was awarded the francisque emblem for his work. Engaged in the Resistance from 1943, he ended the war in Parliament and served, as a centre-left republican, in a variety of posts under the Fourth Republic. Short, more generously than many, finds excuses for these early years. He was no anti-Semite. As a Minister of the one of numerous Coalitions during the Algerian War of Liberation he opposed independence.

Mitterrand furiously opposed De Gaulle's 1958 'coup d'état' and the 1962 referendum on the direct election of the President. But his failure to speak out against torture and his ambiguity over decolonisation isolated him from the burgeoning New Left that regrouped during those years in the Parti Socialiste Unifié (PSU). Yet, Short argues, his distance from the 'squabbling over political theory' of these factions allowed Mitterrand to rise to lead France's left. A stunning 37.78% of the vote for his Presidential candidacy (backed by the entire left, including the Communist Party) in 1965 brought him back centre-stage.

A Study in Ambiguity recounts how Mitterrand, from creation of the Parti Socialiste in Épinay (1971) to his electoral triumph in 1981 made himself the undisputed chief of the French left. Mitterrand, Short argues, was able 'to forge unity not around a programme but around his own person.'

The Socialist General Secretary rapidly came into conflict with the one French party with a collective leadership, the Communists (PCF). Right up until his 1981 election Mitterrand clashed with the PCF. From unity, over the *Programme Commun* in 1972, to the break up in 1977, relations were stormy. Short repeats the allegation that the Communists (still hovering around 20% of the vote during the decade) were prepared to secretly support conservative politicians in an attempt to stop him coming to power.

Force tranquille

The victory of the '*force tranquille*' (a phrase of Victor Hugo) in 1981 put Mitterrand on the stage of history. The new President's supporters swept through Paris. The Right was 'panic stricken'. Elected on a programme promising a 'rupture' with capitalism, the new government included four members of the declining Communist Party. There were nationalisations (36 banks, five large industrial groups, and many more), a 10% rise in the minimum wage, the lowering of the retirement age to 60, an increase in holidays to five weeks a year, and new rights for employees at work. The death penalty was abolished. The first moves towards decentralisation were taken.

For a while it looked as if something resembling the British *Alternative Economic Strategy* was being put into practice. Nevertheless the core policy, raising incomes to spark a consumer boom, failed. There was immense pressure on the Franc. The French economy did not prosper. Unemployment and inflation rose.

Short asserts that confronted with these economic realities retreat was inevitable. By summer 1982 there was devaluation, and a 'four month price and wage freeze'. Over the next years, 'socialist France had joined the rest of the industrialised world in a forced deflationary spiral to get its economy back into balance.' For some on the French left, such as Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the left government ran up against the 'bankers ramp'. Was this realism? To Short, Mitterrand and his supporters became zealots for 'modernisation' and talked up entrepreneurial 'winners' and market flexibility.

This was not just a 'disavowal of everything Mitterrand had stood for'. It was, for many on the left at the time, the replacement of the radical, and ill-defined, socialism of the 1970s by the exploitative 'free market norms' of France's partners. Instead of changing, for example, to a new pan-European left strategy, the Government had taken over the European right's policies.

Mitterrand won a second seven-year term, in 1988, with the slogan, 'neither nationalisations nor privatisations'. While he promised to restore the wealth tax – abolished during his 'cohabitation' with right-wing PM Jacques Chirac (1986-88) this focused 'almost entirely on winning over the political centre.' It was a success.

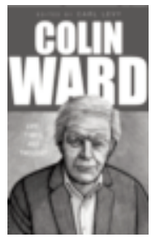
Was Mitterrand ever interested in more than winning and keeping power? Short argues he was. Mitterrand 'began a slow and painful accommodation to the economic and political realities of the world outside.' His values endured, 'the construction of Europe and the quest for social justice, the two great causes which had sprung from Mitterrand's experience as a prisoner of war, and modernisation, which had imposed itself as a necessity during his time of office, are legacy enough.'

Yet Short also describes another legacy. Mitterrand, from the mid-1980s onwards brought the far-right Front National into the electoral arena. In contrast to those who consider this a manoeuvre to split the Right, he states it was designed to 'neutralise its venom'.

Recently the Front National has occupied a leading place in the opinion polls, while the streets of Paris have been full of tens of thousands of far-right demonstrators. The sight of religious hysteria against gays and the sound of anti-Semitic chants, is perhaps not the kind of achievements the, excellent, *Mitterrand: A Study in Ambiguity* would wish to celebrate.

Colin Ward: a thinker for our times

Paul Salveson surveys different takes on the life a great libertarian socialist



COLIN WARD: LIFE, TIMES AND THOUGHT
Ed Levy (Lawrence and Wishart, £12.99)

He was one of the most important radical thinkers of the 20th century, writing on architecture, town planning, education, housing, transport, community development and lots more. Colin Ward was part of the British anarchist tradition, living proof of the continuing relevance of libertarian ideas within and beyond the left. He was a very gentle, peaceful man who died three years ago. It's ironic that since his death his ideas are becoming more widely known. An excellent collection of essays has just been published (Colin Ward – *Life, Times and Thought*) which offer a contemporary view on Ward's contribution across so many fields and disciplines.

Carl Levy provides a helpful introduction to Ward's life and some of his publications. His politics challenged the post-war social-democratic consensus that the state will provide for everything. As Levy points out, Ward argued that 'it ingrained inequalities and undermined the self-organised institutions of the working class welfare.'

A central concept in Ward's thinking is mutuality, inspired by (Prince) Peter Kropotkin's transformative work of 19th century radicalism, *Mutual Aid*. Kropotkin was part of that decentralist, anti-authoritarian strand within anarchism which was peaceful, gradualist and practical. He found living examples of 'mutual aid' everywhere: allotments; volunteer life boats, friendly societies, co-operatives. In many ways, Ward was a 20th century Kropotkin, without the aristocratic background which probably saved the Russian prince from prison, exile or worse.

This principle of 'mutual aid' – supporting each other to improve your community, rather than waiting for 'the state' to come along and do it for you, is fundamental to this approach. Railway preservation societies rescuing disused branch lines from destruction, community transport services for rural and inner city communities are perfect illustrations of 'mutual aid' in a 21st century setting. Ward was ahead of his time in so many fields, not least his environmental politics. As Peter Marshall in his contribution to the book says 'He was interested in the nuts and bolts of environmentalism, not just in the poetry of trees, in the city as well as the country.' And that is one of the key things about Ward that makes him so attractive as a political thinker. His anarchism wasn't just an ideal for some far off epoch ('tarmac on the road map of history' as one contributor calls it!), but a very practical form of radical politics that could be put into action here and now. Housing projects, allotments, community transport, squatting and free schools are just part of his 'real living anarchism' which have made a great contribution to the vitality of local communities.

Carissa Honeywell goes into Ward's critique of the welfare state in some depth and shows that Ward's alternative may have served us better. For housing, Honeywell quotes Ward saying that 'there was nothing necessarily socialist about state-owned social or council housing, nor anything necessarily capitalist about owner occupation'.

Alongside mutuality, Ward, like Kropotkin, stresses the importance of decentralisation. This isn't an absolute and both would recognise that some services for the community as a whole should be delivered collectively, with some centralised control. Railways are a good example where you need that, and yet there is still room for some degree of decentralisation. In his book *Freedom to Go*: after the motor car age (published in 1991) he uses the example of Swiss railways – one of the world's most efficient, integrated and reliable systems. And yet that network is a patchwork of over 50 separate railway companies, many of which are community-owned, by the cantons.

I would have liked to have seen more contributions in the book about his practical radicalism, in areas such as transport, town planning and housing with a bit less on internal debates within anarchism. For all that, I hope the book helps to build a momentum of interest in Ward's work, with re-publication of more of his writings (see below).

Reading Colin Ward is always an inspiration, whether it's his advocacy of allotments, sustainable transport, town planning, housing or education. He doesn't offer a detailed blueprint for any of these, but would stress their inter-connectedness and the importance of grassroots control. Don't be put off by labels, Colin Ward's ideas cross political boundaries and challenge all of our prejudices. While the centralist and authoritarian tenets of classic Marxism are less and less relevant to modern-day radical politics, the sort of political practice that Colin Ward espoused – call it anarchism, libertarian socialism or whatever you like – is more and more in tune with our times.

Colin Ward: Life, Times and Thought, edited Carl Levy; published by Lawrence and Wishart, 2013.
Autonomy, Solidarity, Possibility: The Colin Ward Reader was edited by DF White and C Wilbert and was published in 2011. Five Leaves Publishing in Nottingham brought out a good selection of his essays on environmental politics last year: Talking Green

The roots of capitalism's collapse

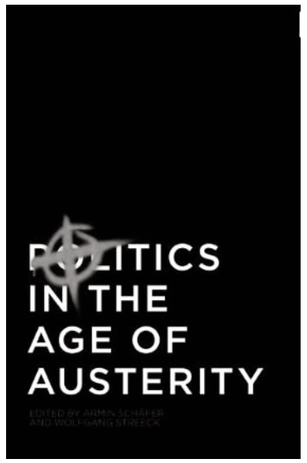
Andy Morton on a book that targets the real roots of the crisis

POLITICS IN THE AGE OF AUSTERITY
Armin Schäfer and Wolfgang Streeck (Eds) (Polity Press, £16)

This review starts with a health warning: although this book's core argument is important for current austerity discourse it is a firmly and academically-set book. This applies more to some of its edited chapters than others, with those authored or co-authored by the books' co-editor Wolfgang Streeck, Fritz Scharpf and Colin Crouch being the best picks. Although some if its language and theoretical references might limit the books' potential audience, the concern for evidence-based argument that runs through most of the book should not turn off the non-academic reader.

The books' central purpose is to examine the long-run relationship between democracy and capitalism, contending there exists an inherent conflict between the two that has led OECD countries to the public finance disaster they have encountered since 2008. More pointedly, Streeck, in the three chapters he co-authors, makes the central claim that recent finance problems faced by all OECD countries are the result of a number of deep set and long-run dynamics, rather than merely to poor policy choices and states 'living beyond their means' as claimed by most right of centre commentators and politicians.

Streeck and Co do concede that welfare states in this period have become more expensive as they've matured but reject this as the primary cause of public debt. They importantly cite a steady but clear decline in post-1960s economic production, thus reducing the fruits of production sourced to fund state services. They argue that this development has been exacerbated, despite this dwindling size of our economic product, by the interests of capital pulling off an impressive double heist: The first has been to ensure the profit of their operations have been taxed less, either through shifting production and/or its proceeds overseas and/or bending policy of successive governments



to its will. The second is the successful de-linking of wages and remaining productivity, seeing not only a compression of median wage levels but increasing wage inequality.

A candle being burnt at both ends

The implications of this for long-run patterns of rising public debt present a picture of a candle being burnt at both ends. As profits have become harder to tax the taxation burden has shifted disproportionately and unsustainably onto the incomes of working populations, despite these themselves dwindling. Streeck and Co not only neatly illustrate the pincer movement state-sanctioned expenditure has been subjected to, but also importantly map the democracy concerns of legitimacy presented by rising income inequality also created in the process. In particular the decline of electoral participation appears to mirror the decline in median wage levels.

The thesis of the book does implicitly accept the core premise that public debt is in fact a problem, something that many on the political left currently firmly reject. There is one crucial aspect of the argument that should be reached for. The shifting of culpability for the crisis on the cost of welfare states and public service provision onto the interests of capital that has systematically destroyed the state's ability to sustain fair societies over time.

This OECD-wide picture obviously has its variations across different countries. Colin Crouch's chapter offers a characteristically interesting take on Britain's problems in neatly bringing together developments from the phone hacking scandal with concerns of dominant 'new public management' practices that have been so corrosive to public sector structures and ethos in Britain. This chapter joins those of Streeck (with associates) and Fritz Scharpf in providing most interest to the lay reader, without sacrificing the strengths of their clearly academically-inclined contributions.

For about three decades Mssrs. Streeck, Scharpf and Crouch have been of real intellectual importance to the political left. They are now joined by some new researchers like Armin Schäfer to continue this sort of work. It is unfortunate perhaps that volumes like this confirm that austerity is here to stay. But at least they provide a good evidence-based attempt to understand it.

The core argument provided in focused terms in the first two chapters can be viewed in a publicly available academic paper (link below), although the same proviso regarding the academic nature of its writing is again attached.

http://goo.gl/tmXOjN

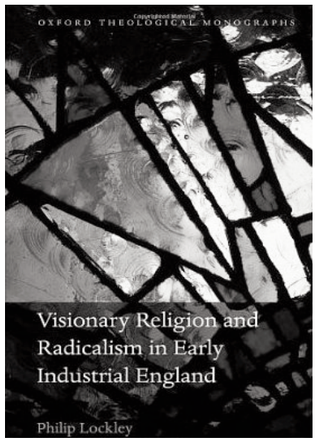
From Southcott to Socialism

Duncan Bowie on millenarian socialists

VISIONARY RELIGION AND RADICALISM IN EARLY INDUSTRIAL ENGLAND
Philip Lockley (Oxford University Press, £65)

A book published in a series of Oxford Theological Monographs would not normally be my bedtime reading. This study is of interest in that it examines the relationship between religious and political radicalism in the early 19th century. Lockley picks up the study of the followers of Joanna Southcott, the 'woman clothed with the sun' from J F C Harrison's classic 1979 study of popular millenarianism – The Second Coming. Lockley starts with a detailed study of the Southcottians in Ashton under Lyme under the leadership of John Wroe and their attempt to create a New Jerusalem in the Pennines. He then follows the splintering of the Southcottians, with the movement of John 'Zion' Ward to London, his preaching at the Rotunda in Blackfriars Road and involvement in London radicalism with atheistic radicals such as Richard Carlile and Anna Wheeler. The study then focuses on the political and religious career of James 'Shepherd' Smith who moved from Southcottianism to the Owenite movement to become editor of Robert Owen's trade union journal The Crisis, only later to separate from Owen to establish his own journal –The Shepherd.

The study is based on research into Southcottian and Owenite records which is best described as heroic. What is surprising is how much of the records, from church records and correspondence to Southcottian writings have survived. Smith has been subject to study before - by John Saville in a 1971 essay in Pollard and Salt's collected essays on Owen, and also by James Gregory of Plymouth University who has focused on Smith's post Owenite career.



The book is a reminder of the millenarian features of Owenism and of much of Owen's own later writings – for example in the New Moral World. Owen's millenarianism attracted religious millenarians, despite Owen's professed atheism. Individuals moved between political and religious movements – Smith was at one time a proponent of Saint Simon and Fourierism, both translating Saint Simon's Nouveau Christianisme into English but also editing the London Fourierist London Phalanx. To Smith and many of his colleagues, building a New Jerusalem was both political and religious – the millennium could not however be achieved by biblical exegesis alone and political action was necessary, a view which was shared by later Christian communists such as Goodwyn and Catherine Barmby and by the sacred socialist James Pierrepoint Greaves.

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The spectre of Marx

Mike Davis on a towering life

KARL MARX: A NINETEENTH CENTURY LIFE
Jonathan Sperber
(Liveright/WW Norton, £25 (hardback))

While the Brits voted for Churchill as Britain's most famous person on a BBC Today programme poll a few years ago Germans voted Karl Marx on to their No1 plinth. Marx stands alone as the most influential theoretician of social change of the last two centuries.

Although he may not have moved masses during his own 19th Century lifetime, his ideas and theories could certainly be said to have changed the course of the 20th Century.

Alongside Engels his name is invoked as the father of the 1917 Russian Revolution, that brought the Bolsheviks to power, and the Chinese revolution of 1948. Castro and Guevara drew inspiration from his work in the Cuban Revolution of 1959. Virtually every 20th Century revolution from the Latin Americas, Africa through to India and south east Asia has been influenced by his ideas.

Even social democratic parties, particularly German and French, and the British Labour Party, until the latter part of the 20th Century owed a debt to Marx. In 1948, the 100th Anniversary of its publication, the Labour Party published Communist Manifesto Socialist Landmark a new appreciation by Harold Laski with a Foreword by the Labour Party. This was the middle year of the post-war Attlee government. Moreover, there has been a veritable library of biographies and studies of his work written since Marx's death in 1883 at the age of 65. So why another study? What new insights can Sperber, an American of professor European history , bring to our understanding of Marx and Marxism?

Primarily in this readable account, Sperber relocates Marx firmly in his 19th Century context. The bearded Olympian critic of capitalism is humanised and placed in a world of journalism—between 1848 and 1860 he wrote over 500 articles, amounting to a greater word count than *Das Capital,* his masterwork, political activism, family relationships and scholarly research.

Drawing on the recently published MEGA (the Marx-Engels *Gesamtausgabe*, the total edition of Marx's and Engels's writing) Sperber paints a rich portrait of the man, his central ideas and how they evolved.

The biography is divided into three substantial sections: *Shaping, Struggle* and *Legacy*. Each weaves Marx's writings into the fabric of his life at the time, so we can easily trace the gestation of his ideas.

Born and growing up in the Rheinland city of Trier we see the young Marx influenced by his father, Heinrich, for whom the 'French revolution and its aftermath offered an opportunity to escape the narrowly circumscribed social and political position of Jews in society.' For Heinrich, many contemporaries, and certainly Karl, this meant renouncing Judaism. For the young Marx it meant embracing the ideas of the Enlightenment and an unshakeable belief in human equality and emancipation.

Following several years in Prussian Young Hegelian circles Marx moved from philosophising the world to 'standing Hegel on his head', developing a materialist conception of history—social relations in the material world being the context for the development of ideas— & a critical analysis of the dominant mode of production, namely capitalism. In tandem he was also working on a theory of agency, which under capitalism was to be the working class. *The Communist Manifesto*, written with Engels and other works of political activism like *The German Ideology* were written well before *Das Capital* and *Theories of Surplus Value* were begun.

Throughout the period from the early political journalism in Berlin, Brussels and Paris through to his longer London years of devoted marriage to Jenny von Westphalen (despite an illegitimate child, Freddy Demuth, with the maid), family life, constant money problems, only surmounted with constant financial subsidy from Engels, and writing *Das Capital* in the British Museum Reading Room, Marx was also politically active. The League of the Just, the Communist League, the International Working Men's Association (IWMA) First International) were the major organisations he and Engels led. He was also engaged with the social upheavals of the times particularly the 1848 revolutions in central Europe which got him finally exiled from Prussia.

Sperber rejects the sometimes rigid distinction made between the young and older Marx, the *Marx of The Holy Family*, *The Poverty of Philosophy* and especially the later published *Paris Manuscripts* and *Das Capital*. He argues convincingly that the 'humanist' Marx of alienation of the worker from the product of his/her labour, and from our species essence was also concerned with economics and communist transformation.

Marx's basic concepts of economics, such as use value, exchange value, and modes of production are all to be found in the early writings.

However, Sperber also reminds us that many of the interventionist works failed to be published at the time of writing and reach intended audiences. Besides this practical problem Sperber identifies a recurring fault-line in Marx's political activism, namely Marx's difficulty in 'formulating consistent accounts of his ideas and a 'penchant for launching vehement polemics, witty and cutting, but also lengthy and obsessed, that would become an end in itself.' This was to appear and reappear in many personal and political conflicts.

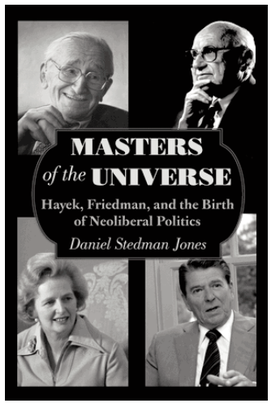
Beginning with his rejection of early associates like Arnold Ruge, Moses Hess, Wilhelm Weitling and Karl Grun in the Communist Committee of Correspondence this presages later fall-outs with anarchist Michael Bakunin and others in the IWMA. Along the way there were personal spats with Engels, always reconciled. Sperber takes a sympathetic view of these breaks seeing them less as Marx's dictatorial tendencies but more as attempts towards greater theoretical clarity and unity of action, plus a desire to carve out a position for himself amongst the competitive and largely impoverished émigré German radical population.

Marx did not live to see his ideas realised. This book enables us to understand more completely how his spectre came to dominate the 20th century. Of the 21st that remains to be seen.

The road from Mont Pelerin

Duncan Bowie on a history of neo-liberalism

MASTERS OF THE UNIVERSE
Daniel Stedman Jones
(Princeton University Press, £24.95)



This is a very important book. The term 'neo-liberalism' has become part of our political discourse – often used as a catch all term for all we hate about the contemporary economical and political paradigm. Stedman Jones, (incidentally son of those two great socialist historians Gareth SJ and Sally Alexander) is a political historian whose PhD now published in book form presents a detailed study of the development of neo-liberalist thought and its impact on British and American politics. A former researcher at Demos and the New Opportunities Fund now turned barrister, he has undertaken an analytical and thoroughly researched study of the work of Hayek, Friedman and colleagues, the interaction between them and their fellow thinkers, and the organisation of the Mont Pelerin Society and related neo-liberal networks which disseminated their views and had such influence on the politics of both countries. Those familiar with Harvey's Short History of Neoliberalism, which presents a standard Marxist critique, and what is best described as the conspiracy theory of neo-liberalism found on various websites which sees the Mont Pelerin Society as a secret cult plotting to take over the world, will welcome Stedman Jones as presenting a much more nuanced and intelligent study. A study which demonstrates that 'neo-liberalist' thinkers varied in their approach, with different thinkers focusing on different aspects – deregulation, monetarism and privatisation. Stedman Jones points to the origins of neo-liberalism in opposing both communist and Nazi totalitarianism - the Austrian 'ortho-liberals; – Hayek, Popper and von Mises, were after all refugees from Nazism.

Stedman Jones draws attention to the fact that it was the Callaghan and Carter administrations which first adopted neo-liberal concepts – with Carter introducing deregulation and Callaghan abandoning Keynesian economics in favour of monetary control. He draws attention to the role of *Financial Times* economist, Peter Jay, son of Douglas Jay (who had been Attlee's Keynesian economic secretary to the treasury and Wilson's first trade Minister) and son in law of Callaghan, in promoting the neo-liberalist creed in Labour circles. He also traces the promotion of neo-liberalism within the Conservative party, focusing on the roles of Enoch Powell, Geoffrey Howe and Keith Joseph, as well as the think tankers such as Ralph Harris of the Institute of Economic Affairs, Alfred Sherman of the Centre for Policy Studies, Madsen Pirie of the Adam Smith Institute and John Hoskyns who became Thatcher's policy chief.

Stedman Jones also undertakes two studies of neo-liberalism in practice in the USA and Britain . He first focuses on the impact on economic policy following the IMF crisis in Britain and the role of Paul Volker's Federal Reserve under Carter in the US. His second case study is of urban and housing policy. In the UK context he focuses on housing privatization, which he sees as predating Thatcher's 1980 Housing Act seeing Labour as favouring Right to Buy prior to this legislation. He also sees the introduction under Callaghan's government of the Housing Investment Programme system as a monetarist way of controlling local authority housing expenditure - as someone who wrote about both these subjects in the mid and late 1970s, I think he is wrong on the former but has a point on the latter. While interesting, his housing chapter lacks the depth of much of the rest of the study. Overall the book is essential reading, both to know the history of neo-liberalism and to understand how it impacted on both Labour and Democrat administrations as well as those of the Reaganite and Thatcherite right.

I would also recommend readers to watch Stedman Jones' LSE lecture on the book, which includes responses from Mark Pennington and Robert Skidelsky: *http://goo.gl/XZoBGF* and to read the review of the book in the *Wall Street Journal* by Kenneth Minogue of the Mont Pelerin Society: *http://goo.gl/nVJKiR*

The Mont Pelerin Society's own website is also worth a visit: *http://goo.gl/ifjsov*
Know thine enemy.

Universalism must rule

Dermot Neligan on challenges to welfare collectivism

Don't renege on my entitlements please. Tax is not a transaction, but a commitment from both sides. For far too long the narrative on welfare has been negative – fundamental Attlee era entitlements vilified, with the most prominent scrutinisers inevitably the affluent. Benefits claimants have become both the source of popular judgement and ridicule – the infamous Benefits Street surely the nadir of a media tide decrying an alleged 'Benefits Culture'. But with institutions such as Channel Four appearing to side with crude, condescending portrayal, there lies scant hope for an informed debate on welfare with a General Election looming

Bigoted extremists such as Katie Hopkins, or rather the growing airtime she accumulates across the daytime TV schedule, surely heralds in a new era of aggressive scepticism. Whilst her overt snobbery may even inflict the ire of the portion of aloof society she claims to represent, her outbursts on welfare claimants are not alone, and the response from the Left is often woefully poor. Clichéd responses are not enough to tackle popular disillusionment with what welfare really is -a lifeline for many. Perhaps a less patronising prime time chronicling of what life on benefits really is like, could help educate the employed as to the realities of life on the 'dole'.

Yet a curious divergence from mere scorn for the welfare entitlements of the less well-off is occurring. A growing lobby, from the top of the socio-economic food chain has begun to bring into question their own entitlements, as highlighted last year with the campaign to strip well off pensioners of perks including the free bus pass. Iain Duncan Smith's recent avowal that no pensioner benefits are ringfenced could on one level, highlight how under David Cameron, we really are 'all in this together'...

More likely it could constitute an alarming shift toward a no frills society.

Why is a subtle shift toward a Ryanair-esque culture of hidden surcharges permeating beyond mere Tory ranks? How can a squeezed middle be expected to top up their taxes by now having to pay add-ons for entitlements enshrined within our proud welfare state?

A recent Social Market Foundation report, headed by the Master of £32,000 a year Wellington College, claimed that parents earning over £80,000 a year should be forced to pay school fees for any children attending the best state schools. His logic? Unconvincing – yet it does hinge upon the not entirely false notion that the best schools are monopolised by the sons and daughters of the affluent. The fees, he believes, would force such parents to consider either sending their children into the independent sector (freeing up places in good state schools), or 'paying nothing at middle- and lesser-ranking state schools' (implicitly arguing that this might drive up overall standards).

Aside from a litany of flaws – one being his thinly veiled assumption that parachuting in middle class kids to inner city comprehensive schools might benefit the intellectual development of their hard up classmates, the precedent is thoroughly un-British. The idea of the economic elite subsidising the education of the comparatively poor is surely populist, and to an extent, justifiable. In isolation, such a move toward school fees for the wealthy might well appeal to certain groupings on the Left.

Yet why stop at school fees? Why not push for the wealthiest patients to be made to pay for their use of currently free NHS core services? Shouldn't those requiring expensive, yet vital, operations be made to pay toward the cost of their treatment?

No. In Britain, we're blessed with one of the most comprehensive provisions of healthcare and education in the world. That the quality of care or of teaching is not uniform is starkly apparent, yet it remains a noble goal to aspire too. Nonetheless, such world leading services are not God given, or as the Tories would have you believe – 'something for nothing'. Rather, it forms the centrepiece of a British social contract where taxpayer contribution is reciprocated by the state; a consensus for collectivism unparalleled.

The precedent of introducing a tier based system for vital services provision, or with expensive add-ons for certain members of society, is toxic. Our welfare system, founded upon values of universal access to health and education, is as important as the sliding scale of tax contribution, depending upon income bracket, which finances it. When Lloyd George first envisaged the framework for his then radical Liberal reform package over a century ago, he included universal Free School Meals. Sentiments of universality within education and health provision should remain sacrosanct – it's our challenge to keep it so.

The memory of Attlee is going up in smoke