

# CHARTIST

For democratic socialism

#289 November/December 2017

£2

## Strictly not dancing

**Prem Sikka**

**Budget blues**

**Martina Anderson MEP**

**Julie Ward MEP**

**Don Flynn**

**Brexit blues**

**Bryn Jones**

**Taking Control**

**Naomi Winborne-**

**Idrissi**

**Jewish Labour**

**Duncan Bowie**

**Councils under cosh**

**plus**

**Book & Film reviews**



ISSN - 0968 7866 ISSUE

89 >



[www.chartist.org.uk](http://www.chartist.org.uk)

# 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 in 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

CHARTIST is published six times a year by the Chartist Collective. This issue was produced by an Editorial Board consisting of Duncan Bowie (Reviews), Andrew Coates, Peter Chalk, Patricia d'Ardenne, Mike Davis (Editor), Nigel Doggett, Don Flynn, Roger Gillham, James Grayson, Hassan Hoque, Peter Kenyon, Dave Lister, Puru Miah, Patrick Mulcahy, Sheila Osmanovic, Marina Prentoulis, Robbie Scott (Website Editor), Mary Southcott, John Sunderland.

Production: Ferdousur Rehman

Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of the EB

## Contacts

Published by Chartist Publications  
PO Box 52751 London EC2P 2XF  
tel: 0845 456 4977

Printed by People For Print Ltd, Unit 10, Riverside Park, Sheaf Gardens, Sheffield S2 4BB – Tel 0114 272 0915.  
Email: info@peopleforprint.co.uk

Website: [www.chartist.org.uk](http://www.chartist.org.uk)  
Email: [editor@chartist.org.uk](mailto:editor@chartist.org.uk)  
Twitter: @Chartist48

Newsletter online: to join, email [webeditor@chartist.org.uk](mailto:webeditor@chartist.org.uk)

## Contributions and letters deadline for **CHARTIST #290** **08 December 2017**

Chartist welcomes articles of 800 or 1500 words, and letters in electronic format only to: [editor@chartist.org.uk](mailto:editor@chartist.org.uk)

Receive Chartist's online newsletter: send your email address to [news@chartistmagazine.org.uk](mailto:news@chartistmagazine.org.uk)

### Chartist Advert Rates:

Inside Full page £200; 1/2 page £125; 1/4 page £75; 1/8 page £40; 1/16 page £25; small box 5x2cm £15 single sheet insert £50

We are also interested in advert swaps with other publications. To place an advert, please email: [editor@chartist.org.uk](mailto:editor@chartist.org.uk)



**Speakers at the Chartist-TWT Labour fringe meeting on Brexit. (From left) Sarandra Bogujevci, Josef Weidenholzer, Paul Maskey, Julie Ward, Mike Davis, Marina Prentoulis & Marianne Kasperska-Zegar (see report p. 13)**

# CHARTIST

FOR DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM



Join the growing body of supporter subscribers for which you will receive occasional discussion bulletins and an invitation to readers' meetings and the AGM. Alternatively, just take out an ordinary subscription.

£15 ordinary subscription  
\$30 supporter subscription  
(6 issues)

Visit [www.chartist.org.uk/subscribe](http://www.chartist.org.uk/subscribe) for details



No people's budget says Prem Sikka – page 8



Rohingya-Britain & EU must act now – page 22



A new model of nationalisation – pages 16-17

## FEATURES

- 8 THE BUDGET WE NEED**  
Prem Sikka predicts sops and austerity from Hammond
- 10 TOWN HALLS-ROCK & HARD PLACE**  
Duncan Bowie on tough choices in local government
- 12 VIEW FROM EUROPE**  
Jack Simmons on Juncker's State of the Union
- 13 EURO-LEFT V AUSTERITY**  
Left politics in Europe is route says Julie Ward & Chartist
- 14 NO TO IRELAND HARD BORDER**  
Martina Anderson MEP on Brexit threat to peace
- 15 TORY SPLITS**  
Trevor Fisher warns against triumphalism
- 16 TAKING REAL CONTROL**  
Bryn Jones draws out Corbyn on empowering workers
- 18 JEWISH LABOUR VOICE**  
Naomi Wimborne-Idrissi celebrates and cautions
- 20 WHY LEXITERS ARE WRONG**  
Don Flynn shakes down the nationalist left
- 22 WESTERN SHAME ON ROHINGYA**  
Muddasser Ahmed argues EU must act on genocide
- 23 RUSSIAN REVOLUTION 100 YEARS ON**  
Duncan Bowie on a mixed bag of books
- 24 BLACK DWARF 200 YEARS ON**  
Phil Vellender looks back on Regency Republicanism



Cover by Lorna Watson

## CHARTIST

FOR DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM  
Number 289 November/December 2017

## REGULARS

- 4 POINTS & CROSSINGS**  
Paul Salveson on UK impact of Russian Revolution
- 5 EDITORIAL**  
Tories in a spin
- 6 GREENWATCH 1**  
Nigel Doggett on two cheers from Labour fringe
- 7 GREENWATCH 2**  
Dave Toke no cheers for green Labour
- 19 OUR HISTORY 75**  
Douglas Jay –The Socialist Case
- 25 FILM REVIEW**  
Patrick Mulcahy on Death of Stalin
- 26 BOOK REVIEWS**  
Duncan Bowies on land reform, spies and Boris Johnson, Nigel Watt on Israel, Don Flynn on migrants, Nim Njuguma on Mackham Singh, Dave Lister on Brexit folly, Glyn Ford on Hilary Clinton
- 32 WESTMINSTER VIEW**  
Fabian Hamilton MP on banning the bomb

# Siding with the future

**Paul Salveson**  
on the mixed but damaging legacy of October

There's been lots of good stuff around about the centenary of the Russian 'October' Revolution of 1917. Some informed debates, stimulating exhibitions and fascinating programmes on the music inspired by 1917. Most of us brought up in the 70s still have a reverence for '1917' which is perhaps being rekindled with everything happening this year. But is it mis-placed?

I think the Russian Revolution and the emergence of a highly centralised, autocratic Soviet state under Stalin was a disaster for socialism – in the UK and in many other countries too. The Soviet legacy is complex and contradictory. But the actual revolution and the creation of the Communist International ('Comintern') in particular had dire results for British socialism.

Here's why. Up to 1917 there was a healthy socialist tradition in Britain, mainly represented by

the Independent Labour Party (ILP), strongly influenced by radical interpretations of Christianity and the democratic ideals of William Morris and Edward Carpenter. Alongside the ILP, and often sharing joint candidates, the British Socialist Party had a more orthodox Marxist under-

pinning but retained some of the ILP's democratic socialist politics. Uniting the two and going beyond party boundaries was the Clarion movement, socialist clubs, choirs and a very rich socialist culture which was genuinely working class, very much rooted in the North, South Wales and central Scotland.

The Russian Revolution and the creation of the Comintern as a means of imposing a rigid Soviet model on the left, world-wide, did its best to destroy that distinctly British socialist culture. The Comintern's acolytes badgered and bullied the BSP and parts of the ILP, and some of the smaller socialist groups, to form the CPGB in 1920 but with a very different organisational structure from anything the ILP or even BSP had been used to. There had been much discussion in the British left about a united socialist party, but I don't think this was what those pre-1914 radicals had in mind.

The 'Bolshevization' of the British left resulted in a sterile, undemocratic organisation which was entirely subject to the sways of Soviet policy. How did the Comintern get away with it? It's easy to see. The Russian Revolution was an inspirational event which captured the imagination of most activists on the left. The 'Leeds convention' of 1917 brought together thousands of activists from across the left in support of the revolution. The only people not convinced were the small anarchist groupings on the far left and the right-wing Labour leaders to the

right, including Philip Snowden. In many ways, Snowden was right.

The radical democratic politics that had infused pre-WW1 British socialism was squeezed between the ideologues of the CPGB and the right-wing 'realism' of the Labour Party, eager to take power. Whilst the two political organisations hated each other, they also had much in common: a disdain for democratic engagement, a highly centralist approach and a touching faith in the power of the state and the ability of Labour or the CP to 'mould' it to deliver socialism.

The CPGB's impact wasn't totally negative. It attracted some highly talented leaders, not least Harry Pollitt, a young boilermaker from Manchester. The CP played a mostly honourable role in many industrial struggles, in combating fascism in the 30s and in supporting the republican side in the Spanish Civil War. The



CPGB leaders Palme Dutt and Harry Pollitt overlooked by Lenin and Stalin

hundreds of CP activists who volunteered did so from the best of motives. The role of the CP during the Second World War, after the USSR had entered the war at least, was a positive one. The role of the Soviet Union in defeating Hitler inspired a new generation of socialists, in Britain and across the world. But it reinforced the dangers of hero worship and pushing uncomfortable 'facts' aside, and seeing socialism as synonymous with total state control. Most people in the CP by then knew that Stalin was a ruthless dictator and the 'gulags' were a reality. But they were prisoners of a religious-like faith in the 'leading role of the Soviet Union' in which mass killings, torture and repression were merely 'administrative errors'.

Today, there is a real danger that the activists, once again, will be intoxicated by their own internal successes and forget that political power is won by winning over some of the middle ground. That isn't an argument for diluting a radical programme. It's an argument for thinking through what a radical programme should really look like, that can be popular. Going back to the arguments within the CP in the 70s and 80s, a key area of debate was around 'democracy'. Some of the Eurocommunists (especially the journal *Marxism Today*) were arguing that democracy should go beyond the very limited scope of the British parliamentary model and encompass voting reform, regional and national devolution, a lower voting age and new forms of democratic engagement. Despite its unfortunate name, I think some of the ideas being developed by Maurice Glasman's 'Blue Labour' are the closest to this. Should we have a 'Blue Communism'? **C**

Paul's website is [www.paulsalveson.org.uk](http://www.paulsalveson.org.uk)

# Tories in a spin but no room for triumphalism

Whether it's Universal Credit or Brexit the Tories can't seem to agree. Parliament votes nem con to pause Universal Credit and Theresa May dithers. May promises Parliament a vote on any deal with the EU before March 2019, David Davis contradicts. The Tories are a deeply divided party. May staggers on only because the Tories don't have a clear alternative leader and a contest would almost inevitably usher in a general election and the spectre of a Labour win.

Labour is now running ahead of the Tories in the polls. Labour had a good party conference. Corbyn's leader's speech was confident and peppered with radical ideas. The shadow cabinet seems more united. Conversely May coughed her way through her leader's speech with comic interruptions and little of substance to say. No plans to re-vote on fox hunting, reintroduce grammar schools or a dementia tax. Pilfering Labour ideas like energy price caps seems the new normal.

The challenge remains Brexit, the defining issue shaping the political agenda. Increasingly Labour needs to clarify its stance. The ambiguity at the last election won't suffice next time round. Keeping the Tories' feet to the fire—after all they created this mess—and asking the tough questions on EU citizens rights, the Irish border, the divorce settlement, parliamentary scrutiny alongside the right of parliament and people to decide on any deal before March 2019 are vital. Currently the Tories are kicking the can down the road and are no nearer a breakthrough in negotiations than a year ago.

We make no apologies for covering different aspects of the EU relationship. Chartist campaigned for reform and remain. The evidence against Brexit is stacking up: from the slide in the value of the pound, economic uncertainty with more companies relocating or not investing and the rise of nationalist and racist sentiment to name just a few factors. But some on the left keep their heads firmly in the sand. There has always been a Lexit (left exit) tendency. **Don Flynn** takes on the arguments, finding them stuck in a 1970s time warp before globalisation and mass migration.

Another neglected aspect of the Brexit process is the European view. **Jack Simmons** examines Commission President Juncker's State of Union speech and that from President Macron. Both lay less significance on Brexit than on future EU plans without the UK. **Julie Ward** highlights the Left Caucus in the European Parliament which has championed anti-austerity and pan European action.

Chartist staged a successful Labour conference fringe meeting to hear from socialists across Europe. One perspective came from Sinn Fein. Here **Martina Anderson** MEP outlines the case for special status for the north of Ireland in the EU—remaining in the single market and Customs Union whilst also flashing a red light on any re-imposition of a hard border in Ireland, which combined with the likelihood of renewed direct rule would signal a dangerous unravelling of the Good Friday Agreement.

Elsewhere **Muddasser Ahmed** reports on the genocide against the Rohingya people of Myanmar and the failure of the EU and Britain to act against state terror.

Labour's Brighton conference was the biggest, most delegate-friendly gathering in over a generation, marking the beginnings of a return to the sovereignty of conference. The NEC is to be expanded while a Democracy Review is to be established to look into every aspect of democracy in the party and more widely in society. One contentious issue for the party is the approach to challenging sexism, racism, Islamophobia, anti-semitism and other forms of abuse. **Naomi Wimborne-Idrissi** reports on the historic launch of Jewish Voice for Labour but cautions against over-optimism, with prominent Jewish critics of Israel (Moshe Machover, for example) continuing to be disciplined.

Democracy in the workplace was a theme little reported but referenced in the Leader's speech. **Bryn Jones** picks up the question, arguing that commitments to renationalise sections of the economy—rail, water, energy, Post Office, are positive but need a bottom up approach providing the oxygen of worker democracy. Without real decision making allied to creative local and regional forms of democratic control the danger remains of recreating the alienating and inefficient bureaucratic structures of the past.

The economy will prove the undoing of this government. Inflation is rising, living standards have been squeezed by the pay cap, and interest rates are likely to rise with millions on the edge of poverty and deep in personal debt. Beleagured Chancellor Hammond will seek to make paltry concessions in the November budget. **Prem Sikka** demonstrates it won't be the budget Britain needs: one to boost investment in housing and infrastructure, tackle tax evasion, boost wages, protect welfare and public services.

Labour is in a strong position not having to directly manage the EU negotiations and is building on the June general election advances. But there is no room for the triumphalism that so damaged Neil Kinnock in 1987. As **Trevor Fisher** warns, the Tories may be divided but there is still a huge battle for hearts and minds to be won. It will require much greater clarity in opposing Tory Brexit. Labour's 2016 conference called for any deal to be put to another referendum or a general election. The latter option is clearer and enables Labour to go into an election seeking a new mandate and a new deal in Europe.

Corbyn spoke at conference of the shift in the centre of gravity to the left, of Labour a party in waiting for government. To realise this goal Labour must hone its policies on taxation, democracy, and regeneration and popularise them. The Democracy Review will be important alongside greater member involvement in policy. Labour's advance with youth, the role of Momentum, its digital success and our campaigning vigour have not gone unnoticed. We need to be more than one step ahead of the Tories to win next time. **G**

# Repowering Britain

**Nigel Doggett** is fired up by a renewal of Labour energy policies



**T**his year's Labour Party conference fringe featured a wide range of meetings on energy and environmental topics. A series of events titled Repowering Britain was organised by two groups concerned with a low carbon energy transition: the Labour Energy Forum ([labourenergy.org](http://labourenergy.org)) and Platform ([platformlondon.org](http://platformlondon.org)).

Recurring themes included working with social movements and local government, moving beyond top down, centralist statist approaches.

At a session on winning working class votes with a leftwing clean industrial strategy a contribution from Paul Mason pressed the case for longer term infrastructure investment and closing the skills gap. Both ubiquitous MP Clive Lewis and Shadow Minister for Industrial Strategy Chi Onwurah stressed connections between our response to the climate crisis, energy policy and industrial strategy. There was universal acknowledgement of the challenge of decarbonisation whilst safeguarding employment in communities dependent on old high-emissions industries. Much of our renewable energy supply is owned by foreign (often state-owned) companies, providing few local jobs. Richard Leonard MSP, fresh from campaigning for the

Scottish Labour leadership, reported a similar pattern for renewable energy in Scotland: we need a variety of forms of common, not just public, ownership.

The international socialist and trade union movement is increasingly demanding a 'Just Transition' to a low carbon economy, providing well paid and skilled jobs: social as well as environmental sustainability. Organisations such as Trade Unions for Energy Democracy (TUED) and the Campaign against Climate Change Trade Union Group are gaining support here, with many British unions incorporating this principle in their energy and climate change policies.

Sam Mason, policy officer for the environment and energy at PCS highlighted this union's recent pamphlet, *Just Transition and Energy Democracy: a civil service trade union perspective* (available from the PCS website). This provides a good survey of the issues from a green socialist trade union perspective, expressing scepticism about carbon capture and storage and makes powerful cases against fracking, nuclear power and airport expansion. It develops a radical critique of national climate and energy policy, branding the UK energy system 'a social failure not a market failure'. For a socialist alterna-

tive to privatised markets it takes a mixed ownership model advocated by the we own it campaign (see [weownit.org](http://weownit.org)), with public ownership of the strategic National Grid transmission and local distribution systems, and public stakes in generation and supply, as formulated in detail by Richard Hall of the University of Greenwich. The 2017 Labour Manifesto, wrongly described in the mainstream media as a return to 1970s nationalisation, in fact reflected this line of thinking.

At the SERA environmental rally, TUC Deputy General Secretary Paul Nowak described the Just Transition as a key principle, to create sustainable jobs in three dimensions – economically, socially and environmentally; this can only be achieved by an industrial strategy covering construction, industry and energy.

So, while the principles of Just Transition and Energy Democracy are increasingly integrated into Labour's industrial policy agenda, the Tories have failed to craft a coherent industrial strategy: not so surprising as this would entail a reversal of nearly 40 years of neo-liberal market-oriented policies. In the context of Brexit negotiations and (un)civil war in the cabinet, prospects under the Tories are bleak. **C**

**Nigel Doggett (Chartist EB) has been researching energy policy in the Trade Union movement**

# Trust the Greens, not Labour, with renewable energy

**Dave Toke** was hoping for something better from Labour



**John McDonnell**—what about wind power?

**J**ohn McDonnell's speech to the Labour Conference came out with a lot of green sounding rhetoric on renewable energy. However the commitments are vague and potentially fatally undermined by what could well end up as a commitment to centralised re-nationalisation of parts of the energy system to build disastrous nuclear power stations.

I'm all in favour of the community owning our energy system provided it is by local people – local and city councils, cooperatives, local not for profit companies, but not centralised monopoly nationalised industries. These aren't things controlled by the public or the Government. On the contrary centralised nationalised monopolies will control the Government. They compete with nobody and are accountable, in effect, to nobody but themselves. They will keep technologies much the same - a dreadful outcome in industries that are undergoing revolutionary technological pressures to decentralise.

The bad side of centralised nationalised monopolies can be seen most graphically in the case of EDF, which has engineered the bizarre outcome of inducing the French Government to give over 3 billion euros to EDF to build a nuclear power station (Hinkley C) in the UK.

One should not trust Labour's commitments, vague as they are, as far as you can understand them - which isn't very far. The only renewable energy source mentioned in John McDonnell's speech was a tidal lagoon plant in Swansea. What about wind power or solar power? Whilst Jeremy Corbyn was busy saying he would cancel Hinkley C (really?), his energy spokesperson was busy telling people Labour would support a different nuclear project at Moorside. Salford and Eccles MP Rebecca Long-Bailey interpreted the manifesto commitments on energy as consisting of ensuring 'that 60% of our energy comes from low carbon or renewable sources

by 2030. To support projects like Swansea tidal lagoon and Moorside nuclear plant.' (See <http://press.labour.org.uk/>)

Would Moorside be a better project than Hinkley C? No, it would not. All proposals for new nuclear power face the same crippling costs to reach modern safety standards. A terrible problem with a Labour Government is that a commitment to centralised public ownership could mean, in practice, a blank cheque to be given to nuclear developers who would gobble up lots of money that could otherwise be spent on solar and wind power. We would be left with never-ending nuclear building sites and little renewable energy.

This has to be contrasted with renewable energy technologies such as offshore wind and solar photovoltaic (pv) which used to be very expensive but are now becoming increasingly cheaper. The only reason that we do not have more onshore solar farms and windfarms is that the Government has shifted the regulations so that it is now only big power plants that receive subsidy. Despite that, a 'subsidy-free' solar farm was recently established at Clayhill on a site where a large solar farm was twinned with a set of batteries. Actually co-locating with batteries make renewable energy more, not less, economic. That's because the batteries can help solar pv get access to the subsidies that have now been reserved for large power stations to provide capacity! It is quite remarkable that John McDonnell didn't even mention solar pv, which is now less than half the price of Hinkley C. The problem with Corbyn's Labour is that it can never stray far from its dinosaur pretensions kept alive (in its mind) by the GMB and others. That's what you'll get with their centralised visions of state ownership. By contrast the green movement stands for decentralised, people's control of energy which will be thoroughly renewable and not nuclear. You can trust the greens to support that consistently, but not Labour. **C**

**Dave Toke is Reader in Energy Politics at the University of Aberdeen. His next book, to be published by Routledge will be entitled *Low Carbon Politics***

## AUTUMN BUDGET

# The budget we need

A deadbeat Government is likely to steal Labour policies for the Autumn Budget says **Prem Sikka**

**F**ollowing last year's announcement that there will only be one fiscal event each year, the government is set to publish its Autumn Budget on 22 November. From 2018 there will be a Spring Statement, responding to the forecast from the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR), but no major fiscal event. So the Chancellor will soon be dusting down his red box to announce plans for the economy.

What should the Chancellor be doing? With rising inflation, low productivity and faltering economic growth rate, two things need urgent attention. He needs to invest in the economy to increase its productive capacities and raise disposable income of the ordinary person.

## Investment

With Brexit uncertainties, companies are holding back on their investment and the economy will not move forward significantly without direct investment from government. The Chancellor has created a bit of a wriggle room for himself by being a little less obsessed with the elimination of the public debt. Previous Chancellor George Osborne wanted to eliminate net borrowing by 2015, and failed miserably. In its 2017 manifesto, the Conservatives promised to eliminate the deficit by the middle of the next decade. That gives the government some room to manoeuvre.

Billions have been given to banks and the government could adopt the same zeal and invest in manufacturing, green and new technologies. The creaking infrastructure could be upgraded; potholed roads, slow railways, congested hospitals, unaffordable housing, crowded schools and people needing new skills to manage new technologies are all awaiting government response.

The reversal of recent corporation tax cuts could raise money for investment in the NHS, social care, childcare, housing and energy efficiency. However, all this militates against Conservative ideologies and will certainly require admission that the gov-



Philip Hammond and Sports direct boss Mick Ashley

ernment's tax cutting policies were wrong.

Government could fund all this by issuing People's Bonds, which could give savers a decent return and at the same time make a real

## Money in the pockets of the people is a key ingredient to building a sustainable economy

difference to the economy. This could also help people to save for their pensions and also cool the overheated stock market. Of course, government could borrow Labour's idea of a National Investment Bank and build an investment fund of £500 billion, but that is unlikely to be on the table. Alas, we are more likely to see some isolated projects, such as transport projects for Northern England, rather than a much-needed rebuilding of the economy.

## Money in People's Pockets

Money in the pockets of the people is a key ingredient to building a sustainable economy. Companies will not invest if people can't afford to buy their products and services. People have fuelled economic growth by personal borrowing and such a policy is now unsustainable. Household debt stands at £1.554 trillion and is expected to rise to £2.3 trillion by 2020, which would be much higher than the pre banking crash levels. This is a dangerous policy and may well be establish-

ing the foundations of the next big crisis.

Raising people's purchasing power should be a priority and the trends are worrying. Employee share of GDP is now 49.3% compared to 65.1% in 1976. For the last ten years, there has been no growth in wages. At the end of August 2017 the average pre-tax regular pay (excluding bonuses) for employees was £459 per week, compared to £473 per week in March 2008. Unsurprisingly, the average person now cannot entertain the possibility of owning his/her own home.

After ruthlessly implementing austerity and wage freezes, the

## The Chancellor has to contend with the Corbyn effect which has made leftist policies an electoral asset

government has little room to address the causes of the present low wage economy. Even if it were to commit to making the UK a high-tech economy, the outcomes probably won't be evident until after the next general election. Trade unions have generally been in the vanguard of defending workers' rights and securing higher pay and could be empowered, but the Chancellor will not be repealing any of the anti trade union laws.

There may be marginal reform of the 'gig economy' to give workers better rights, but that won't significantly reduce inequalities or increase the spending power of the masses. The Chancellor might relax, not abolish as advocated by Labour, the pay cap for selected public sector workers but this will be miserly at best and certainly won't help to make up the ground lost in recent years. He could increase social security benefits to help the low-paid, but

**There may be marginal reform of the 'gig economy' to give workers better rights, but that won't significantly reduce inequalities or increase the spending power of the masses**

that does not fit the current thrust of government policies.

People's purchasing power can be improved by the introduction of rent controls and checks on speculation on the price of land, but government is unlikely to move in that direction. The Chancellor could check corporate profiteering by 'capping' the price of essential services, but other than a temporary freeze on the price of energy, there is little on the table. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has said

that higher taxes on the rich can reduce inequalities without hitting economic growth, but the Chancellor is unlikely to accept that advice even though this would provide a tidy sum for redistribution.

There will be the usual tweaking of personal allowances though the thresholds for the 40% and 45% income tax brackets may not rise in line with inflation. Stamp duty for expensive houses may be raised. The government would be looking for additional revenues and not much of that will come from tweaking taxes on tobacco and alcohol. The Spring Budget's proposed increase in the National Insurance Contribution rates for the self-employed was rapidly abandoned after a public outcry and opposition from Labour. The Chancellor will be tempted to resurrect the proposals as part of reforms of the 'gig economy' proposed in Matthew Taylor's report.

**Steal Labour's Policies**

The Chancellor has to contend with the Corbyn effect which has made leftist policies an electoral asset. He will surely be tempted to steal and revarnish some of Labour's policies. The government may woo younger voters by promising to cap, rather than completely abolish, university tuition fees. Following Labour's electoral success, the government will surely abandon its manifesto pledge to abolish the triple lock on state pensions. It would be ironic that a party which sold vast swathes of council housing is likely to do a major U-turn and commit to a major council-house building programme.

The Chancellor again is likely to steal more Labour policies. Labour's 2017 election manifesto promised to levy additional stamp duty on the purchase of UK residential property by companies located in offshore tax havens. In principle this could be extended to cover purchase by any foreign individual or entity. I suspect Tories would be keen on this policy as taxes would not be directly borne by UK citizens.

The government has been salami slicing tax relief on pension contributions for some years and that may well continue. Currently, the annual allowance is £40,000 and the Life Time Allowance is £1 million. The Treasury will be eyeing the tax relief on pension contributions, currently running at £50 billion a year. A 2016 report by the Pension Policy Institute estimated that by 2018, around 65% of the tax relief will be taken by additional and higher rate taxpayers i.e. those paying income tax at marginal rates of 40% and 45%; that is some 4.6 million workers out of a workforce of 30.4 million. The government may seek to cement its claims of being egalitarian by restricting tax relief on pension contributions to a flat rate of 20% i.e. equivalent to the basic rate of income tax. This change is likely to save around £13 billion and can provide a war chest for the Chancellor.

Overall, the government is hemmed-in by poor economic management, lack of vision and in-fighting and is unlikely to present a budget that the country needs. **C**

**Prem Sikka is Emeritus Professor of Accounting, University of Essex**

**Printer ad**

# Is this the end of the road for local government?

Local councils have lost over 40% of their funding since 2010.

**Duncan Bowie** assesses the huge challenges facing local town halls and the difficult choices for Labour councillors.

**I**s this the end of the road for local government? Local councils have lost over 40% of their funding since 2010. Duncan Bowie assesses the huge challenges facing local town halls and the difficult choices for Labour councillors. Local authorities in the UK are largely dependent on central government grant. Last year, the Government announced its intention to abolish the main revenue support to local authorities (known as the formula grant – previously the rate support grant) from 2020. The Government has stated that local authorities will be able to retain some of their business rates (which were centralised by the first Thatcher government) though it is unclear how any inter-authority equalisation system will work. Such a system is vital if authorities with little business rate income are to be protected. While many authorities and political parties across the political spectrum have generally welcomed the localism agenda and the devolution agreements, city deals and regional Mayors, which have followed, there has been little discussion as to how the increased responsibilities assigned to local authorities and groups of authorities are to be paid for. Tax raising powers have not been devolved and most investment grant is still centrally allocated. The Mayor of London distributes the London share of the national housing investment programme but the London share is still determined by Ministers centrally. Other Mayors have not yet been devolved housing investment budgets, although it was implied this would happen once city and regional Mayors were elected. Critically, councils ability to raise revenue locally is limited. Rate (Council Tax) increases are capped, though the cap was raised temporarily from 2% to 5% in the light of the crisis in funding adult care.

Council rates are rarely more

than £2,000 per year – even for the highest value properties and have increased only marginally in the last decade. With property prices climbing, rates as a proportion of real property value have continued to fall, while stamp duty receipts, payable to central government have continued to climb, as shown in the chart below relating to London.

In the City of Westminster, with an average rate of £1376, the Conservative council leader has suggested that residents of properties worth over £10m should perhaps pay a little more – an additional £1376 - on a voluntary basis of course as the council has no power to require it.

It is understandable that there is increasing concern as to how local authorities are to fund core

## Councils have been drawn into the financialisation of housing as much as the private developers

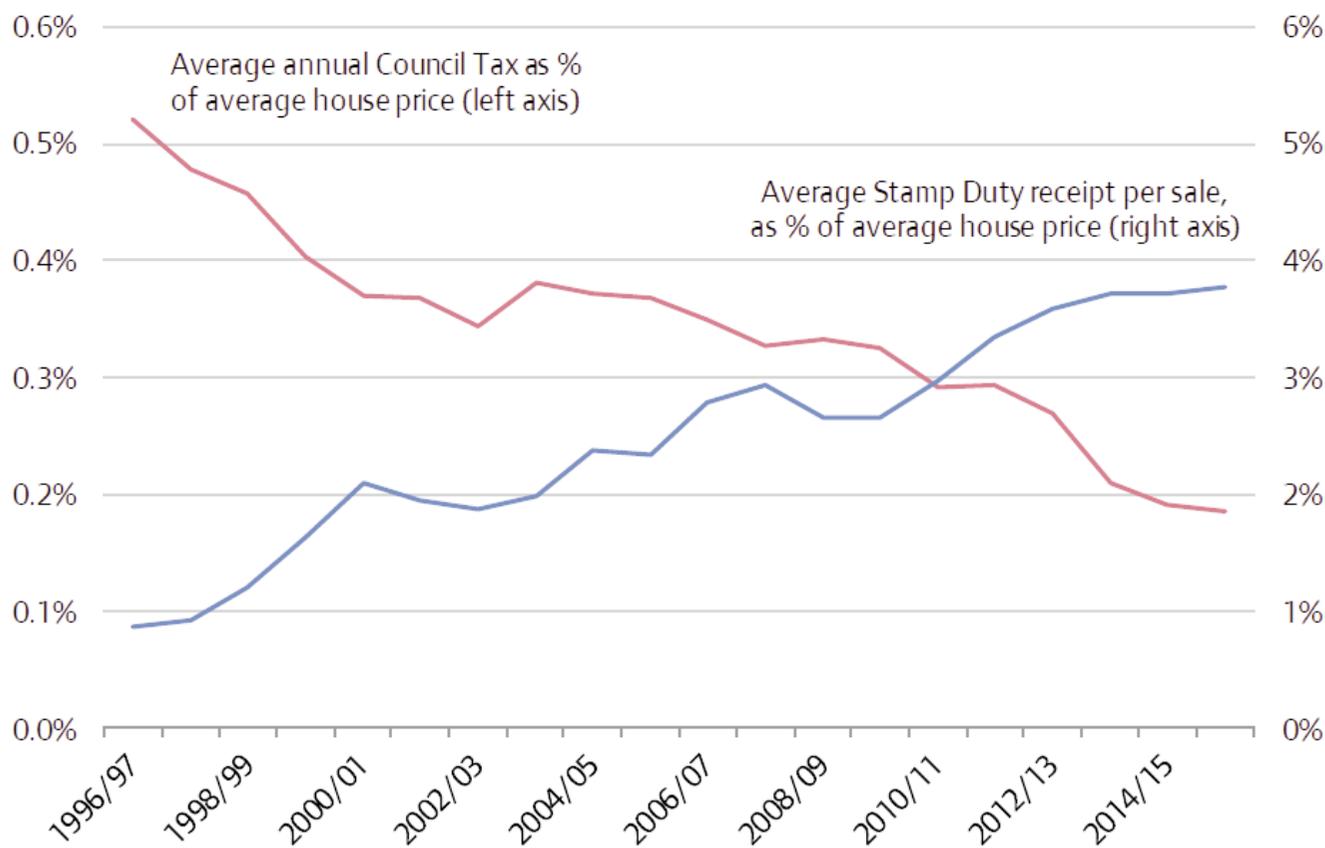
services such as adult care and child care. Following the horrific Grenfell Tower fire local authorities are assessing the cost of retrofitting tower blocks with sprinklers. It has been reported that the London borough of Southwark has estimated a cost of £100m for this. Birmingham, which has more high rise blocks will have a higher cost. It has been reported that the Government has refused councils any financial support – saying that making properties fit for habitation is the landlord's responsibility, and that a decision as to whether sprinklers are necessary is a matter for local decision. This is despite the fact that all new high rise dwellings require sprinklers and that the



London Fire Commissioner states that sprinklers should be mandatory for existing towers. So what is a Council to do? This is a rather important question not just for existing councillors but for anyone considering standing in the forthcoming local elections. What we have seen in the last few years is councils cutting non statutory services, such as libraries, youth services and park and leisure staff and sweating their assets. What sweating assets means is not just putting up service charges (whether it be meals on wheels or in the case of the NHS - hospital parking charges) but actually selling land and property assets.

Where a council (or other public body – say the Ministry of Defence) has a piece of land which is seen as valuable for market housing, it will be put on the market, and in some cases to maximise the receipts, any of the council's own planning policies which might reduce its value, for example any requirement to provide social rented housing, will be waived. Many of the estate regeneration schemes in inner London have little to do with the needs of the existing residents – the focus

**Average Council Tax and Stamp Duty as % of average house price, London 1996/97 to 2015/16**



is on the receipts which can be generated by making the site available for market housing and by moving the existing residents somewhere else. If a council estate is on the edge of a city centre, or has a nice view, it goes to the top of the regeneration list.

Councils have been drawn into the financialisation of housing as much as the private developers – it is not about housing need any more but about maximising returns – and in many cases local authorities are looking for a quicker return than their private sector partners who may be focusing on returns on their investment in the medium term. This is why so many councils are going for growth – they need more residents to pay council tax and the receipts from land sales and planning gain deals with developers, and the New Homes Bonus from central government which follows development, with the hope of business rate income in the future. This is going for growth – whether any of the new homes are affordable by local residents is often a secondary issue. So what should Labour do if we are to avoid the bankruptcy of local

government – and the bankruptcy of local politics as a whole – officers and councillors. Firstly, we need to restore a system of central grant to local authorities which relates to the assessed need for services in different areas and the relative ability of authorities to self fund. Secondly, we need to have a nationally funded system for welfare state infrastructure – social housing, transport systems, schools and hospitals, that relates both to existing infrastructure deficits and to the demands arising from population growth and demographic change. Thirdly, we need more freedom for councils to raise money locally – increased borrowing powers but also the removal of caps on rate increases.

Local councils should be able to set local rates according to their needs for funding – as used to be the case, with alternative parties putting service and rate proposals to their electorate. This is what democracy is about – and Labour should be the first to argue that households on higher incomes and/or with more valuable properties should pay more to help fund essential local ser-

vices. When the Conservative councillors of Surrey County Council proposed a 15% Council tax increase in one of the wealthiest parts of the country, this should have been welcomed by Labour, not opposed.

We also need to consider reducing local government’s financial dependence on central government – for example councils could retain part of stamp duty receipts. There may be a case for a local income tax – Scotland now has tax powers. Areas with high levels of tourism such as London could have a tourist tax as operates in many cities in Europe and elsewhere – tourists put lots of money into the private sector, but make no direct contribution to funding the services they use.

Labour desperately needs a proper discussion not just on devolving powers to local government, but how to fund the maintenance of the local state in the long term. The big challenge is: how do we enable councillors to move beyond crisis management based asset stripping which damages the credibility of local government but also the interests of future generations. **C**

**Duncan Bowie is the author of Politics, Planning and Homes in a World City**

# The view from Europe

What future do European leaders plan? **Jack Simmons** unpicks Commission President Juncker's State of the Union speech



**T**he twists and turns of British politics since the Brexit referendum have been endlessly and minutely dissected. But few in the UK are aware of the equally dramatic and complex developments at European level during this period. It was ever thus but it has become more acute since for most British journalists, Europe is now only of interest framed through the lens of the Brexit negotiations and the associated government splits. The mid October Heads of State meeting, for example, trailed for weeks in the UK as a showdown over Brexit, was in fact focused on how to respond to Trump's Iran policy, and develop Europe's immigration policy and its digital economy. On Brexit, it had been clear for weeks that the only decision that could be taken was to kick the can down the road to the December summit.

But Brexit has coloured European developments in important and unnoticed ways. Commission President Juncker's State of the Union speech on 19 September was mainly reported because it addressed so little attention to Brexit, a sign that the issue was not a matter of great concern to the EU. But a closer reading of what Juncker said showed that in many ways the speech reflected a European response to the prospect of an EU without the UK, as well as to a US led by President Trump.

Juncker set out the normal annual programme of activities. But most of his speech was dedicated to outlining a vision to put "wind in the sails" of Europe's future that would have been inconceivable if the UK was not leaving the Union. Among his proposals were creating the conditions for all Member States to be members of the Euro; the development of legally enforceable pan-European social standards and an end to social dumping; strengthening the single market through the beginnings of tax harmonisation across the Union; a stronger European foreign policy through moving to qualified majority voting for decision-making. These, and others, are all proposals that would have faced a British veto if the UK was not leaving the EU.

That sense of opportunity is also rooted in the potential of a new Franco-German motor in European politics. Angela Merkel will be more open to leaving a European legacy during her last term as Chancellor, following in the footsteps of her mentor Helmut Kohl. She is likely to be less concerned with the day to day political managerialism and caution that has limited her ambitions on the European

stage. In Paris, President Macron is not even trying to be managerialist or technocratic. A week after Juncker's speech, he laid out his own ambitious vision for the future of Europe at the Sorbonne. Among his asks were a European defence policy, a common strategic culture, a stronger European budget, and a fund to support putting an end to wage inequalities in Europe. For him, an ambitious platform for Europe is the only way to defeat the nationalists in Europe, to defeat "those who hate Europe". It is of course a much broader reference than to Brexit but it implies that Brexit has given Europe the opportunity to fight nationalism in a way that has not been possible with the UK inside the EU. He does offer the UK a way back into this reformed Europe but it is clear that for Macron, the shape of this reformed Europe will be developed, in a repetition of history, without the UK at the table.

Juncker's and Macron's speeches are also focused on strengthening European democracy. Macron proposes using the vacated UK seats in the European Parliament for new European members elected through transnational lists. Juncker insists on maintaining the system used to choose him as Commission President, as the centre-right EPP's candidate in the European Elections, a system David Cameron bitterly opposed. And, most radically of all, Juncker proposes that the posts of President of the Commission and the President of the European Council should be merged so that the European elections would become, at a stroke, elections that would also choose the President of Europe. Brussels beltway speculation has centred on the idea that behind this proposal lies a plan for Angela Merkel to stand for this new super-executive role.

So the European left needs to start to think seriously and collectively about its own programme for the future of Europe and its own candidate for Commission President since it is rather clear that Juncker's vision has fired the pistol for the 2019 campaign. The Socialists' big public event in the margins of the summit had two keynote speakers: Federica Mogherini, the EU's High Representative, and Jeremy Corbyn. Sadly for us, the UK will probably not be a member by June 2019, so no Labour candidate. But the prospect of two very different but very powerful women seeking an electoral mandate to take Europe forward is an intriguing one. Like the grain of sand in the oyster, Brexit may just have triggered a great leap forward for Europe that would have been impossible without it. **C**

## New Left Caucus – a progressive vision of Europe

As Austria and Germany lurch rightwards **Julie Ward** outlines an initiative from the left



**Julie Ward is a Labour MEP for NW England**

**W**ith the exception of a few EU Member States such as Portugal, Sweden and Malta, and a resurgent Labour Party in the UK, the Left is in trouble across Europe and beyond, although recent elections, in the Balkans, for example, have seen successes for Left parties such as Vetëvendosje in Kosovo and Partia Socialiste e Shqipërisë in Albania. Elsewhere, the poor results for Socialists in France and the Netherlands earlier in the year, SPD's dismal campaign in the German federal elections, and the recent wipeout of the Greens in Austria's scary lurch to the Right (despite choosing a Green President a few months ago), reveal an ongoing disaffection amongst voters. When the Left cannot come up with radical people-focussed solutions the

policy vacuum is all too easily filled by anti-European populist parties, peddling simplistic retrograde solutions that scapegoat migrants and refugees rather than addressing the root cause of public disquiet, namely globalisation and neo-liberal austerity.

What is the European Left's answer to the public's rejection of progressive politics? In the European Parliament I work closely with the Progressive Left Caucus, an informal grouping of three large political blocs: the Socialists and Democrats, the Greens and GUE/NGL (the radical left). Together we are standing up against aggressive trade deals such as TTIP and CETA, sometimes against our own group-line. We are also critiquing the neo-liberal agenda of Juncker's commission, and can take some credit for the end of the so-called 'Grand Coalition' between the EPP (centre right Christian Democrats) and S&D (centre-left Socialists & Democrats) which prevailed until the mid-term review.

When Juncker published five possible scenarios for the future of Europe (see Jack Simmons article) on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, we critiqued his colourless limited vision and wrote the Missing Scenario. This

outlined specific measures to build a social Europe, able to reclaim common goods and deliver social benefits, rather than pandering to economic and private interests which continue to impoverish the poorest people on the planet, accelerate climate change and fuel conflict.

We believe that there must be a debate about the institutional future of the EU, with democracy, social justice, social convergence, solidarity and gender equality at the core of deep change. The Progressive Caucus is therefore a space of dialogue, based on confidence-building and open debate. We are unashamedly the pro-European Left and aim to build bridges between like-minds in the European Parliament and across Europe. We want to return to the founding values of the European Union, as they had been imagined in the Ventotene Manifesto by Altiero Spinelli and Ernesto Rossi, but through a Green New Deal, unlike Juncker's more or less of the same kind of Europe. We want a genuine 'community method' that goes beyond the current intergovernmental system, with investments centred on jobs, humane policies for welcoming refugees, a common European framework for fighting tax evasion and money laundering, a shift from austerity policies to a green transition, democratisation of the institutions, and a grand pact amongst the people which puts the emphasis on social rights, education, common goods and a shared vision of sustainable development.

Today Europe does not need walls or bureaucratic fences but a network of values in the service of the collective interest. We need to construct a new European project based on solidarity, co-operation and ecology. We invite others to join us from trade unions and environmental organisations, NGOs and civil society, academic and student bodies, active citizens and human rights defenders, artists and anti-racist campaigners. We are beginning our work in Marseille on November 10 and 11 - please join the ongoing conversation and help promote socialist solidarity at a European level. **C**

### Challenging Brexit at Chartist/TWT fringe

**Meeting Brexit head-on** saw a 100+ capacity audience during the Labour conference Chartist/The World Transformed fringe event. Chaired by **Mike Davis** (editor, Chartist) the meeting heard speakers from Europe and the UK.

**Josef Weidenholzer** (Austrian MEP & vice President Socialist and Democrat group in the European Parliament), spoke in sadness about a UK withdrawal. In answering critics of the austerity policies of the EU he highlighted that it was New Labour that had helped shape the neoliberal EU. He said the nation state was disappearing, and that migration was a normal feature of globalisation.

**Julie Ward** (NW England MEP) reminded us that peace provides a stable basis for negotiating trading arrangements. In emphasising the progressive potential of the European Parliament she reported the recent EP vote to support the nuclear disarmament process at the UN and work of the left group against austerity.

**Marina Prentoulis** (Syriza and Chartist EB) also highlighted the struggles of the Greek people against austerity but reminded us that despite the harsh debt repayment deals there was a strong commitment to the European Union.

**Paul Maskey** (West Belfast Sinn Fein MP) outlined the dangers of any renewed border in Ireland and its dangerous implications for the peace process.

**Sarandra Bogujevci** (a war refugee and a newly elected Kosovan MP) sent out strong messages against Brexit and echoed the pro-European sentiments.

**Marianne Kasperska-Zegar** spoke from the Movement for Justice by any means Necessary against the post Brexit racism. There was strong support from the floor and panel for defending free movement of people and working to reverse a Tory Brexit.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

# Brexit and protecting the Good Friday Agreement

**Martina Anderson** MEP on the case for special status for the north of Ireland

**T**here is no doubt that Brexit poses the biggest threat to Ireland since the partition of the island almost one hundred years ago.

The imposition of an EU frontier on the island of Ireland would reinforce the partition which divided communities, economies, land and people.

That is one of the reasons why, in the EU referendum last year, 56 per cent of people in the north voted to remain in the EU. That majority was made up of people from all community backgrounds and political outlooks.

Despite the fact that the majority expressed their democratic will to remain in the EU, the British government has repeatedly ignored the vote of the north.

There are many differing views on Brexit in Britain. However the context, history and circumstances for the north of Ireland is very different.

After a decades-long conflict peace was finally brought about when the Good Friday Agreement was signed in May 1998. Since then, despite problems, the peace and political process has progressed and sustained. However, Brexit has the potential to totally undermine the Good Friday Agreement, which in turn could put at risk the hard-won peace process itself. This must be avoided at all costs.

The seriousness of this has now been recognised across the member states of the EU and Michel Barnier as EU Chief Negotiator is mandated by the EU Commission and EU Parliament 'to protect the Good Friday Agreement in all of its parts.' This is also why the EU have put the issue of the border in Ireland as one of its three top priorities for the first phase of the Brexit negotiations.

Since the Agreement was signed almost twenty years ago, the border in Ireland has been transformed from a militarised frontier to an invisible one, where tens of thousands of people and businesses cross daily for work, trade and leisure.

The border is not just a line on a map. There are homes in



**Northern Ireland: Good Friday Agreement or troops**

Ireland where the front door is in the north and the back door is in the south, churches where the church is in the north and the grave yard is in the south and many hundreds of farms straddle the border.

All of this was based on the foundation of both Britain and Ireland being in the European Union. The legal arrangements around the political institutions

## The imposition of an EU frontier on the island of Ireland would reinforce the partition which divided communities, economies, land and people

in the north are founded on being compliant with EU law.

The political decisions of the Tory government on Brexit that they also intend to leave the Customs Union and the Single Market mean that a hard customs border in Ireland is inevitable.

The only way to avoid such a damaging scenario is to secure a special or unique arrangement from the north.

Sinn Féin has put forward proposals for this through our case for special status and we have been actively engaged on a diplomatic offensive across the EU building support for it.

More and more people across Ireland and across the EU now see the importance of securing special status for the north within the EU.

This would mean that the north of Ireland would remain in the Customs Union and Single Market and its citizens would have full EU rights including having access to the European Court of Justice. East west trade from the north to Britain would be catered for through a free trade arrangement between the Executive and the British Government.

To date, all of the proposals put forward by the British government have failed to address the challenges of Brexit in an adequate way and have been rejected by both the EU and the Irish government.

So the way to avoid the disastrous impact of Brexit on Ireland is through securing special status for the north within the EU.

It is vital that the Good Friday Agreement is protected in this Brexit process and this should be supported by all parties in Britain, regardless of their views on Brexit, for Britain itself. **C**



**Martina Anderson is Sinn Féin MEP for the Six Counties**

# The Winding Road

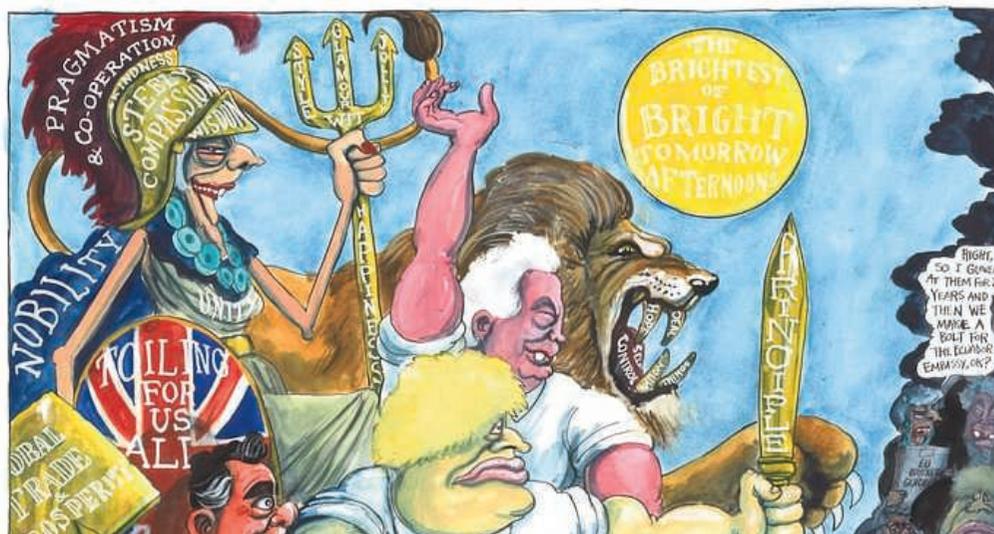
Trevor Fisher looks at Tory tangles making an early general election unlikely and the implications for Labour

The state of British politics this autumn demands we think outside the box. Hopeful noises from the Labour Party are misleading: the key factors are two. Firstly, Labour is unlikely to secure a General Election before the Brexit deadline in March 2019. Secondly the Tory lunatic fringe are firmly in control of their crisis ridden party, and the Fixed Term Parliament Act (FTPA) is acting to give them time to move forward.

The FTPA has always been folly, but it could be broken if there is a parliamentary majority for an election. But even if the DUP withdraw support, the Tories don't want an election before Brexit and the Tories won't split unless Brexit goes critical. If the Tory support collapses along with their membership, the Tories would be committing political suicide to have an election. If their support holds up, the Tory leadership can plough on regardless towards Brexit. The FTPA means the Tory rebels have to vote for an election and defy their own leadership. Only a Brexit reversal can trigger this. If Brexit happens, the Tories are then in a strong position as deliverers.

Labour can do nothing even if the Tories lose DUP support, and the one thing the DUP do NOT want is a Corbyn government. So on the current parliamentary arithmetic, the Tories can survive with DUP support avoiding defeats in the Commons. The next eighteen months are going to be the Brexit months. All the other crises, from the NHS to prisons and the armed forces, Tory disaster areas, are going to be on hold.

The control by what Cameron called the 'Swivel Eyed Loons' have over the Tories makes a leadership contest unlikely, as this would focus on their collapsing membership and put Boris Johnson on the front line. The Tory MPs who have a decisive role in the process do not favour Blonde Ambition despite support from the Mail and the Torygraph. David Davis is a stronger candidate, but Tory MPs must believe



All together? Credit: Martin Rowson

a leadership contest would damage the Party and divert energy from the Brexit project.

It is unlikely Labour can benefit from any of this, and as Prog Pol have pointed out in their Surge Pamphlet, and Matthew Sowemimo in his Compass Thinkpiece\*, the Tories gained support (but lost MPs) as UKIP voters switched to them in June. A UKIP revival would intensify pressure on May . Hammond wants a two year transitional period after March 2019, but the dominant Swivel Eyed Loon faction want out even without a deal. Deal or No Deal is going to be the key issue for them.

Sowemimo notes that seven in ten Tory voters wanted Brexit to happen as soon as possible, 48% saw Brexit as the most important issue in the election, and the Brexit voter is impervious to economic considerations (culture being more important) so Labour's Brexit for Jobs line, itself inconsistent and unworkable, does not play to Brexit voters. As the Tories have more voters than Labour, winning by gaining Brexit voters is not an option. Moreover the fudge which allowed Leave and Remain to vote Labour in 2017 is a hard act to maintain. Brexit offers the Tories the chance to pressurise Labour.

Youth is clearly the key to Labour success. The biggest gains on June 8th were in the 30-44 age bracket, but 56% of under 34s

also voted Labour. As the turn out is higher among older groups this is not so good for Labour as it may seem, but points to the key break point for the immediate future - the Third Brexit Referendum. If this is achieved and then won the political culture breaks to the left.

The Referendum is critical, with a campaign needed on a simple veto Brexit position. The idea - stated this autumn by such as Mario Cortes (Chartist 288), Kezia Dugdale MSP and Jon Bloomfield - that we should campaign for a second referendum is a non starter. It has already taken place. We do not want a re-run of 2016. A third referendum (1975 being the first) is the key demand, with arguments to move beyond the 2016 disaster. Key to success will be a campaign to trigger a pro vote 3 movement in Parliament capable of splitting the Tory MPS. This has to take on board the lessons of the past, notably those posed by Cambridge Analytics and the tabloid press. It would encounter a viciously hysterical reaction, . Once the key demand to abandon Brexit is made, all hell will break loose. But that is the challenge. The road ahead is winding and difficult but it ends at a cliff edge in March 2019.

Reversing the direction of travel is now the only show in town. Breaking Brexit opens the road to progress on all fronts. **C**

\*The Surge Politics pamphlet is available from [www.progp.org.uk](http://www.progp.org.uk) Sowemimo on the Compass website

# Taking Back Control? |

Bryn Jones finds an alternative Labour narrative

**M**uch publicity was given to the emphasis Jeremy Corbyn's Conference speech gave to restoring government intervention and public ownership to break with neoliberal capitalism. Less remarked on was his call for the expansion of democratic decision making. Yet this marks a potentially more significant approach to nationalisation and public ownership. Democratisation was also stressed in some fringe talks, particularly by journalist, commentator and Labour adviser Paul Mason and Shadow Chancellor, John McDonnell at an event in The World Transformed festival. Why might this aim be important? Because it suggests that Labour could develop an approach different to a straightforward re-introduction of bureaucratically controlled public services and the old nationalised industry model. Such innovation could counter media criticisms and those made by Corbyn's political enemies.

Nationalised industries certainly delivered more collective benefits for consumers and employees than have the rent-raking, price-hiking approach of their privatised successors. However, the nationalisation model also had severe defects. Democratic accountability via government ministers was partial and weak. It facilitated cabinet interference for wider political and economic objectives such as income and public spending controls. Thatcherite governments used such powers to prepare corporations such as National Rail for privatisation. Decision-making was highly centralised, lacking in transparency and, in effect, shared between top management and civil servants. Beyond token consultative mechanisms, workers and consumers had no say in the industries' strategic management and thus only limited loyalty to the businesses of which, as tax payers, they were the theoretical owners.

The nationalisation-to-privatisation saga suggests that the



Corbyn at LP conference calls for democratic decision making and public ownership to break with neoliberal capitalism

average worker or consumer might rate more effective control of industries higher than nationalised state ownership of them. Labour has, recently, been considering different types of ownership to both the nationalised industry and the equally problematic, share-owned, 'joint-stock' corporation (see the Party's Alternative



**Many commentators favour German-style companies' supervisory boards**

Models of Ownership report). These alternatives range from mutuals, like the still successful Mondragon federation of worker-owned coops, to municipally-owned businesses and on to less centralised forms of nationalised utilities – with more representation for different 'stakeholders': workers, consumers and communities, as well as government.

Several of these models highlight the importance of participation that extends beyond a mechanistic role for 'worker directors.'

## Transform Britain by putting power in the hands of the people

Worker directors proved to be too hot a potato for Theresa May to pursue. Many commentators favour German-style companies' supervisory boards with guaranteed seats for worker or union representatives as a model worth imitating in the UK. But this system is no panacea; as financial frauds and scandals such as the VW diesel emissions policy illustrate. Moreover, workers are not the only social interest that deserves and needs representation in the overall management of a business. There is a strong case for institutions in which share-owning unions, green and community groups could cooperate with responsible investors, such as pension funds, in new controlling bodies. These could be mod-

# Download Democracy!

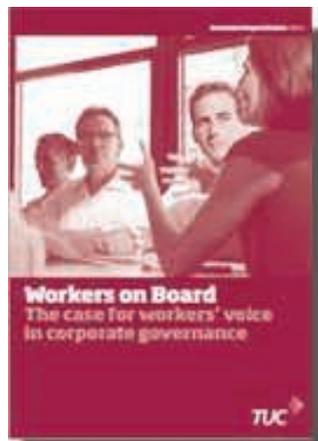
Alternative to the bogus democracy of the Brexiteers

elled on Sweden's executive appointment committees (see the Conclusion to my *Corporate Power and Responsible Capitalism* book).

Indeed, Corbyn's conference speech signalled a much wider vision of democratic participation than workers on boards. A Britain in which 'people have a continuing say in how society is run, how their workplace is run, how their local schools or hospitals are run. . . increasing the public accountability and democratization of local services [and] democratically accountable public ownership for the natural monopolies, with new participatory forms of management.' Properly planned and with public participation in its implementation this vision could inaugurate a step change to the post-1945 welfare state and public ownership models. It could be what many democratic and libertarian socialists and social movement campaigners have increasingly advocated: a participatory or democratic social democracy. In Corbyn's words: 'Power devolved to the community, not monopolised in Westminster and Whitehall'. If Labour is serious about calling time on neoliberalism then such a shift is essential. Why?

Well, corporate neoliberalism can live with, and indeed often profits from, cooperation with state and top-down control and direction. Think PFI, railway franchises and favourably regulated energy and water utilities and so on. What it cannot accommodate is participation from and accountability to genuinely representative community and citizens' decisions. As Corbyn put it: 'Our rights as citizens are as important as our rights as consumers'. That his team envisage radical improvements to Old Labour-style social democracy is substantiated by another statement he made: 'Now let's take it a stage further – make public services accountable to communities. Business accountable to the public, and politicians truly accountable to those we serve . . . transform Britain by genuinely putting power in the

hands of the people'. Speaking at the packed-out, TWT, meeting on *Governing from the Left*, John McDonnell, backed up the comments of his collaborator, writer and journalist Paul Mason, on the importance of a supportive, mass base for economic reforms.



**TUC backing a worker's voice**

McDonnell argued that there must be popular participation in the implementation and institutions of new policies; to 'open up' the practice of government. The critical challenge, of course, will be to model and introduce forms of decision making that are practicable but don't impede the state's provision of resources needed in social and health services, education; or markets such as housing and the supply and use of sustainable energy. But if Labour is to launch, as well as sustain, path-breaking socio-economic reforms, it must go beyond the box-ticking pseudo-consultation procedures that have masqueraded as citizen participation under recent neoliberal governments. There must be bottom-up support and activism to complement 'top down' initiation.

McDonnell alluded to the participatory approach of the GLC, before Thatcher abolished that radical experiment. Since then, however,

significant other models have been proposed and tested as alternatives to neoliberal markets and managerial governance. These include civil society (as well as union) representation in the governance of share-owned corporations, participatory budgeting for public bodies; as well as local authority licensing of service businesses in retailing, adult care, and infrastructure providers. Such licensing would enable councils to set environmental, training and other employment standards. To set quality thresholds in, for example, supermarket and other retailing operations - think Amazon, Ebay or Sports Direct - or the running of care homes or bus services. These and other ways of democratising the public and economic realm, from student participation in schools and colleges, to stakeholder representation on the Bank of England's ruling body (why should this be the preserve of financial interests and establishment economists?), are set out in a collection I have co-edited: *Alternatives to Neoliberalism*.

Community democracy should surely include empowerment of the tenants of social housing estates. As others argue, more tenant participation could have prevented the mismanaged horror of the Grenfell catastrophe. It could also counter the social cleansing involved in profit-focussed regeneration schemes. Of course, the constitutional system - the House of Lords, the monarchy, and the electoral process - are all in need of a democratic overhaul. But democracy must have a broader scope if Labour is truly to aim for social and economic transformation. What Corbyn and McDonnell are recognising is that Labour's shift from ultra-market economics also needs a reversal of neoliberalism's suppression and discrediting of democratic controls. Or, as Nye Bevan put it 65 years ago: 'ballot box democracy at municipal and national elections is limited and only partially satisfactory . . . Democracy is protected by extending its boundaries'. **C**

**Bryn Jones is co-editor, with Mike O'Donnell, of *Alternatives to Neo-Liberalism Towards Equality and Democracy* (Policy Press), reviewed in last *Chartist* and a member of Bath CLP**

# Jewish voice to speak for non-Zionist Jews

One of the highlights of September's uplifting conference was the emergence of a new organisation for Jewish members of the Labour Party, Jewish Voice for Labour. **Naomi Wimborne-Idrissi** reports

**J**ewish Voice for Labour (JVL) was founded in July to answer a crying need – to give a voice to progressive Jews in the party whose views were being comprehensively misrepresented as part of a factional battle to undermine the Corbyn leadership.

“Our mission is to contribute to making the Labour Party an open, democratic and inclusive party, encouraging all ethnic groups and cultures to join and participate freely,” the new group said in its founding statement. “We stand for rights and justice for Jewish people everywhere, and against wrongs and injustice to Palestinians and other oppressed people anywhere.”

Unlike the Progress-aligned Jewish Labour Movement, JVL does not make promoting the centrality of Israel to Jewish life a condition of membership. Also unlike the JLM, full members of the JVL must be Labour Party members who identify themselves as Jewish.

JVL rejects attempts to extend the scope of the term ‘antisemitism’ beyond its meaning of bigotry towards Jews, particularly when such accusations are directed at activities in solidarity with Palestinians, such as Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against Israel.

The new organisation burst onto the scene at conference as two members earned standing ovations with speeches about Palestine and changes to the party rule book, while its public launch on September 25 packed the Mercure Hotel Ballroom and attracted high-profile support from filmmaker Ken Loach, UNITE general secretary Len McCluskey and ASLEF president Tosh McDonald.

The audience heard speeches from David Rosenberg, writer and activist from the Jewish Socialists’ Group, Oxford Professor Avi Shlaim, one of

Israel’s “new historians”, and Sir Stephen Sedley, retired appeal court judge. The title was Jewish Socialism Past and Present: Antisemitism, Israel, and the Labour Party. Its goal was understanding and combating the manufactured moral panic about antisemitism in the Labour Party.

McCluskey said afterwards, “The existence of JVL means Jewish members on the left of the party now have an organisation that represents their views – and that transforms the discussion into one of left vs right as it should be.”

For those determined to continue whipping up the soufflé of moral panic, this was a disturbing development to be either ignored or denigrated. LabourList and Jonathan Freedland in the Guardian went for the former option, making no mention at all of JVL’s existence while employing yet again the tired mantra of “Labour’s problem with Jews” and, in Freedland’s case, accusing Ken Loach of endorsing Holocaust denial. The Guardian refused to carry a response from Loach but partially bowed to pressure and published a heavily edited letter from him, including a live link to his reply on the JVL website. It crashed twice under the weight of the resulting access demands.

Others went for an all-out attack, with a rash of sensational stories, mainly targeting Jewish critics, portraying conference as awash with anti-Jewish sentiment. Luke Akehurst’s “We Believe in Israel” pressure group went to the lengths of launching a petition demanding that McCluskey withdraw support from JVL.

The petition alleged that JVL’s launch meeting “saw a call for expelling the Jewish Labour Movement and Labour Friends of Israel.” No such sentiment was uttered either from the platform or the floor. The charge was based on a contribution by a Jewish audience member at a dif-

ferent fringe meeting, attacking JLM and LFI for their unstinting support for Israel. For the record, JVL accepts other organisations’ right to organise within the party, but rejects JLM’s claim to represent all Jews.

In the face of the facts, the party conference was portrayed as indistinguishable from a Hitlerite Nuremberg, a portrayal calculated to alienate Jewish voters around the country. One would have to be quite naïve not to identify a factional agenda in play here, aimed at undermining Corbyn’s supporters and thus his leadership.

If proof were needed, consider the controversy surrounding rules governing party membership.

JVL speakers during the rule change debate at Conference welcomed the inclusion of provisions against antisemitism, racism and all forms of discrimination in the party’s conditions of membership. At the same time they expressed concern about elements of the new rule Clause 2.1.8. making it easier to discipline members for “the holding or expression of opinions or beliefs” which clash with codes of conduct yet to be written. This had been the stated intention of the Jewish Labour Movement for the past year. Leah Levane, JVL vice-chair and a delegate for Hastings & Rye CLP, moved a motion calling for a clear distinction to be made between antisemitism and criticism of Israel or Zionism and for transparent disciplinary processes consistent with natural justice. She agreed to an NEC request to remit the motion on the understanding that these principles would be incorporated into codes of conduct and guidance for future implementation.

Her warnings were proved prescient barely a week later, when an automatic expulsion notice was sent to Moshe Machover, an outstanding political thinker and a Jewish veteran activist for social justice in his native Israel/Palestine. It cites his “asso-

**Naomi Wimborne-Idrissi is JVL media officer**

ciation” with the Communist Party of Great Britain (he is not a member but has spoken at meetings) and puts him on notice that, should he ever wish to reapply for membership, he would first be investigated for alleged “creation and publication of antisemitic material.”

The evidence offered is nothing more than a number of Machover’s in depth articles, challenging the idea that anti-Zionism is equal to antisemitism, one of which was handed out in the form of a leaflet during conference. By no strength of the imagination does it or any other of Machover’s writings exhibit any hint of antisemitism. On the contrary, as both the Jewish Socialists’ Group and JVL said in

supportive statements, it is a scholarly critique of the political ideology of Zionism, which, far from espousing antisemitic ideas, exposes them.

At the time of writing, motions in his support are flowing in from party branches and an open letter was circulating calling for his reinstatement and for an investigation into how such an expulsion can have occurred.

As JVL chair Jenny Manson said in a post conference write-up, after sending delegates back to their constituencies fired up and determined to build a movement capable of sweeping a Labour Government into power, we can do without alarmist rhetoric that risks undermining that movement. **C**



## OUR HISTORY - 75

### Douglas Jay The Socialist Case (1937)

**D**ouglas Jay was an economist and Labour minister. Educated at Winchester and Oxford, he was first a financial journalist at The Times and a fellow of All Souls, Oxford, before joining the Economist in 1933, and in 1937 joining the Daily Herald as city editor, becoming an economic adviser to the Labour Party. Having studied the great depression and Keynesian economics, he published his most important work *The Socialist Case* in 1937. He worked in the Ministry of Supply during the war years. He was personal assistant to Hugh Dalton and then to Clem Attlee at Downing Street before being elected as MP for Battersea North in 1946, holding the seat until 1983. He became a junior Treasury Minister and then Economic Secretary under Stafford Cripps. He was President of the Board of Trade between 1964 and 1967 and argued for the dispersal of economic activity away from London – he was known as ‘Mr Regional Development’. Jay was a follower of Hugh Gaitskell. He was sacked by Wilson – their relationship was awful. Tam Dalyell, in his obituary of Jay in *The Independent* said that Jay regarded Wilson as ‘a little crook’. Jay was a vigorous opponent of British entry into the European Economic Community and campaigned for a No vote in the 1975 referendum. He joined the House of Lords in 1987. In 1962 he published *Socialism in the New Society* and *After the Common Market* in 1968. In 1980, he published his autobiography, *Change and Fortune*, which is a detailed study of the economic policy of successive Labour governments. His first wife, Peggy Jay, was a leading member of the London County Council and the Inner London Education Authority. Their son Peter Jay, also a financial journalist, married James Callaghan’s daughter before, somewhat controversially, becoming British Ambassador to the US. Douglas Jay died in 1986.

“The case for socialism is mainly economic, and it

rests on fact... And in fact the greatest economists have always recognised the three fundamentals of the socialist case: the arbitrary effects of free exchange, the peculiar character of unearned incomes, and the profoundly anti-social consequences of the institution of inheritance...“For the drastic application of a socialist policy does not necessarily involve, for economic reasons, a revolutionary break with the methods of social reform that have been followed in the last century in democratic countries. The progressive expansion of the social services, the steady extension of social ownership and control, and the even more drastic modification of property and inheritance rights – all these policies need not cause any violent upheaval in the machinery of the economic system...It may be that peaceful reform is impossible, not for economic, but for political reasons. It may be that the propertied classes will defend their unjust privileges not merely by force but by political force... First there is no economic reason why a clash of this kind is inevitable.

“There is no economic reason why a modern industrial State... should not simultaneously overcome the forces of the trade cycle and redistribute the incomes of the rich. Those who proclaim the inevitability of violent revolution are always anxious to base their arguments on economic grounds. But a disinterested examination of the economic facts reveals no such inevitability; and those who proclaim it often seem really inspired, not by any economic analysis at all, but by an irrational eagerness to believe in the imminence of calamity.

“Experience may show that even in the democratically inclined countries the attempt to introduce socialism peacefully will meet with forcible resistance. In that case violence would become a necessity and an obligation. But those who recognize that the realities of personal and intellectual freedom are as precious as those of economic justice will probably be of the opinion that the attempt is at least worth making.”

## LEXIT

# In or out – the battle rages on

**Don Flynn** on the phoney hopes of Lexiters and why the fight for democratic socialist policies in Europe remains central



**I**t will not have escaped anyone's attention that the arguments of the proponents of Lexit (Left exit from the EU) played little or no part in the outcome of last year's referendum.

Based on the fact that the European Union is, as they put it, a neoliberal, anti-democratic project, the Lexiteers held out the hope that a leave vote would be the catalyst for a new popular movement calling for the return of powers to the British government to plan the UK economy. Whilst some of this sentiment echoed in messages about 'Brussels bureaucrats' and the ways in which they called all the shots in Europe, the most commonly cited motivation for the majority leave vote was, as we now know, 'too many immigrants'.

In an article published earlier this summer in *New Statesman*, prominent Lexit supporters, Joe Guinan and Thomas M. Hanna argued that this happened because the Labour Party failed to articulate a strategy for advancing the interests of working class voters outside the EU, which would have involved new prospects for public ownership, an industrial strategy and procurement. But all is not lost: the Brexit vote has freed Corbyn and McDonnell from the grip of pro-

EU right wingers and allowed them to set out new agendas which centre on the protection of jobs and public services on which a more rigorous leftism will have a solid grip.

The authors don't say it as such, but their approach to these issues is heavily dependent on reviving hopes for democratic socialism that are based on the revitalisation of the nation state as the place where the working class can exercise its power and realise its potential. The left has to rid itself of the delusion, propa-

**the Brexit vote has freed Corbyn and McDonnell from the grip of pro-EU right wingers and allowed them to set out new agendas**

gated by pro-European socialists, that it would be possible to "acquire new supranational options for the regulation of capital". The price paid for buying into this dream was the surrender of the tools they already possessed at home. As they put it, "The national road to socialism, or even to social democracy, was closed."

**Don Flynn is founder and associate of the Migrants Rights Network**

The idea of the voluntary surrender of powers securely held by democratic states which allowed the democratic planning of national economies is only one of the flaws in this argument. The apparatus for the orderly regulation of the movement of capital had already entered its crisis phase in the 1970s. The collapse of Bretton Woods and the almost accidental rise of the US dollar as the most dependable world currency had reduced the role of multilateral agreements as the principal force shaping the international economy, simultaneously defining the space in which national states could be considered sovereign. Henceforth it was the relentless advance of markets which determined the direction of travel.

The EU – or European Economic Community as it was in those days – came into its original existence as a project that would build on the foundations of a free trade agreement and extend upwards towards the sort of regulation of the Common Market that had hitherto been the province of national states. There was no simple blueprint as to how this might be achieved. Parties of the centre right saw this as a matter of partnership between government and business, working on a purely pragmatic basis. Social democrats

had less confidence in this model of amicable cooperation and looked for ways to build a more formal tripartite arrangement into the governance of the Community, requiring the addition of 'social partners' – trade unions, civil society organisations, etc – into the system.

Lexiteers claim that the domination of unfettered free markets was hardwired into the European set-up, with all its features being programmed by the provisions of the various European treaties. This ignores that fact that the treaties were themselves the outcome of the struggles at inter-governmental level of different sets of interests pushing against each other for priority. Always shifting and changing, the array of outcomes was complex enough to allow the UK to appear as the champion of the Single Europe Act and then, a few years later, to register dissent over its most obvious implications when these were set out in the Maastricht Treaty. Similarly, Germany's long resistance to a single European currency gave way in the face of this being the price it had to pay for French agreement to reunification with the country's eastern half after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Hindsight makes it possible to see the efforts of Jacques Delors to entrench a social dimension to the single market in order to promote the cohesion he felt would be jeopardised by the free movement of capital as inevitably doomed to failure. But the reasons for this have less to do with anything emanating from the EU's status as a club for rich capitalist nations than the fact that belief in the efficacy of social democratic intervention was on the wane even among social democratic parties. The 1980s and 90s were the years in which reaction against even the palest pink versions of socialism were in full swing and it was this which settled the fate of hopes that the EU would be a bulwark against the worst of whatever triumphant neoliberalism was going to send its way.

The Lexit argument might not absolutely require the misrepresentation of the EU as an entity which is irrevocably determined by its essential character to be the harbinger of ultra-free market capitalism. It could be sufficient to say that, whatever its potential given the right balance of political forces might have been, it is now a region where the

single market is cemented into an increasingly federal political structure which will finally put paid to all hopes for a left future for the continent. But this makes sense only if we think that a comprehensive alternative is within relatively easy reach of anyone who wants to reach out for it. What needs to be done at its simplest and most straightforward level, is that we rebuild the capacity for national states to implement socialist policies.

On this point Lexiteers resort to generating more myths and erroneous perspectives. Alongside the view that the EU could never be anything other a capitalist union we are expected to believe that the UK, before its accession to the Treaty of Rome, had the power to build socialism within its own borders. However, another scenario seems much more realistic.

By the mid-1970s the UK version of social democracy had exhausted its options for further advance with regard to the social-



'Lexiteers calling for withdrawal from a neoliberal EU'

isation and democratisation of the productive forces of its econo-

## Lexiteers claim that the domination of unfettered free markets was hardwired into the European set-up

my because the political mechanisms for getting capital to bend to the will of government had ceased to be effective. The social compact under which the private sector submitted to the duty to pay taxes in return for being provided with a supply of adequately educated and productively disciplined workers at the expense of the state, was in the process of irreversible breakdown. Capital had become more mobile and was

steadily gaining access to new sources of wage labour located overseas in countries with very low levels of social insurance.

A socialist response to this development was possible but would have required, from the onset, action to protect the standards of life of the mass of British citizens whilst simultaneously promoting the rapid development and the expansion of social protection for the new working classes which were being formed abroad. Without this internationalist perspective British govern-

## Lexiteers resort to generating more myths and erroneous perspectives

ment policy could have at best aimed for a reorganisation of its national working class in order to maintain or increase its competitiveness against the workforces of the developing regions of Asia and elsewhere.

The vote for Brexit has revived this as a possibility and it has emerged in plans to set British workers up in competition with their counterparts in China, India and Singapore. It is difficult to see how any government would be able to negotiate agreements on trade and commerce after leaving the EU that gave any consideration to protecting the rights of wage earners either here or in the countries we are hoping to do deals with.

The EU has failed to achieve that which was unachievable on the basis of socialism in one country; this does not provide a reason to walk out of a structure that at least requires the left to think of the imperative of framing its programmes for radical change at both national and supra-national levels. The tortuous, agonised contentions that continue to wrack relations between states within the EU are the best indication of the fact that history has not come to an end in Europe, and the end stage of an ineluctably neoliberal capitalist super-state has been reached. The reason for objecting to Brexit is that, for a road to socialism to be opened up once again, social and political struggle against this fate for Europe has to remain central to all our strategic campaign work. It will have far greater chance of success within a European structure. **C**

## ROHINGYA

# Britain & EU – blood on their hands

As over 700,000 Rohingya Muslims have fled genocide to Bangladesh  
**Muddassar Ahmed** says it is time to end preferential trade

**C**an you find a better word to describe it?" That was UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres' response when he was asked whether the Burmese Government's murder, rape and displacement of almost half a million of its own citizens was "ethnic cleansing".

The UN seems much more comfortable with the truth than the EU, which has Rohingya blood on its hands.

Burma is effectively in the EU single market, thanks to Brussel's Generalised System of Preferences (GSP). Burma benefits from a preferential trade regime that means it has "duty-free and quota-free access to the EU for all products except arms".

Burma has, in short, our ideal Brexit deal – full single market access, while not having to give anyone freedom of movement. Not even its own citizens, if they happen to be Rohingya Muslims.

The EU's position is difficult to believe: their last statement "condemned the attacks on Myanmar security forces" but made no mention of the Burmese army's campaign against the Rohingya. EU Vice President Federica Mogherini could hardly have been more understanding of the Burmese army's post-truth posturing, and more in denial of the truth of the Rohingya's conditions.

Compare this to Trump's ambassador to the UN, Nikki Haley, who has at least called for "an end to violence against innocent civilians in Rakhine State". We are in the surreal situation of the current US Government being more concerned about humanitarian causes and global social justice than the 'progressive' European Union.

But what's in it for the EU? The Brussels elite are understandably keen to do business with "one of the world's top five nations in terms of its proven oil reserves". European oil companies have been awarded the lion's share of contracts by the Burmese military. Many of these contracts are production-sharing initiatives in Rakhine State – the Rohingya



Thousands of Rohingya are stranded on the Bangladesh-Myanmar border

homeland.

The EU's success in drawing Burma out of China's sphere of influence is such a coup that they feel reluctant to undermine their success by raising the awkward issue of human rights. But doing dodgy deals with despots is a crowded market place. Do the Brussels bureaucrats really think they can compete with Beijing?

These are not the rumblings of a Brexiteer who is delighting in finding a stick with which to beat the EU: I actively campaigned to Remain, and many would call me a Remoaner. It is precisely because of my admiration for the EU's values that I expect – and demand – better from it. I am inspired by how the union of previously divided and warring European states has, in a generation, created the world's largest trading bloc. But that unity and peace can only be maintained at home if it is exported abroad.

Instead, one of the main exports Britain is sending to Burma is free training for its authoritarian army. The only training we should be providing Burma's Generals is diversity training.

The genocide of the Rohingya and the free world's (and particularly the EU's) silence is already being used as a rallying cry by Jihadists. Grainy videos from Pakistan, Bangladesh and even Syria are now circulating calling for a global all-out Jihad against Burma and Buddhism.

The world must deprive the terrorists of this recruitment tool, and Brussels must take the lead. The EU has, in recent years, threatened both Sri Lanka and

Bangladesh with the loss of EU single market access because of their lack of progress on labour laws. There have been no similar threats made to Burma because of its lack of progress on not murdering its own citizens en masse.

The EU's Rapporteur in charge of the EU-Burma Investment Protection Agreement, David Martin MEP, has been conspicuously silent in the face of Burma's ethnic cleansing. They must immediately suspend Burma from the GSP duty-free and quota-free trade regime with the EU. And they must not reinstate it until Rohingya are recognised as full Burmese citizens with equal rights, and those guilty of crimes brought to justice.

I'm sure that Burma's Generals will retaliate by cutting off European oil companies who are doing a roaring trade in extracting Rakhine state's oil from the soil under burnt-out Rohingya homes. I'm sure that Burma will then pivot back to China, jeopardising what some Western diplomats are still dreamily calling Burma's "democratic transition". I'm sure that EU trade will suffer as the money dries up.

But to do anything else is simply not an option. To ignore the genocide and displacement of half a million people live on our TV screens, to witness psychopathic Burmese spin doctors accuse "Bengalis" of setting fire to their own homes, to simply look the other way while they continue to send us their cheap oil and their cheaper garments, is unbridled hypocrisy.

It is worse than that – it is repugnant, spineless, cowardice. **C**

**Muddassar Ahmed is chair of Forum for Change, a British think tank working on issues of inclusion and diversity, and a former British government adviser**

# Romantics & realists on the Russian Revolution

The centenary of the February and October revolutions has produced a plethora of new books. Chartist has published a number of reviews this year. **Duncan Bowie** rounds off the centenary with a feature review

**A** Russian civil wars specialist and Glasgow based academic, Geoffrey Swain, has published a *Short History of the Russian Revolution* (I B Tauris £10.99). Swain has always taken the long view of the Russian revolution, avoiding the traditional focus on the ten days of October. This is repeated in his new book which has an introductory chapter on the Russian revolutionary tradition – his time line starts at 1905. He then focuses on the February revolution and the role of the provisional government, before discussing what he refers to as the Bolshevik insurrection. Swain's view is that 'Bolshevik concepts of discipline and ideology meant that the party which had guided the masses to 'October' directed them in the months that followed along an unnecessary path which led to dictatorship and terror.' This enforced 'an ideological view of history which insisted that only the working class could lead a socialist revolution leading inexorably to one party rule.'

A novel approach within the book (no doubt written at the end of the UK coalition government) is to treat the narrative of the revolution as a series of coalitions – first between aristocrats and liberals, then between liberals and social democrats (Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries), and then the brief post October coalition between Bolsheviks and left Socialist Revolutionaries. It was the Bolshevik rejection of coalitions and socialist purism that created the one party state and to Stalinist oppression and dictatorship over the proletariat. Swain's conclusion muses on whether a Bolshevik/Socialist



Lenin and Russian Revolution

Revolutionary coalition could have avoided this outcome. Neil Faulkner's *People's History of the Russian Revolution* (Pluto Press £11.50) presents a contrasting narrative. Faulkner, a Bristol based historian and archaeologist, whose main previous populist work was *A Marxist History of World* (but also author of an academic study of Lawrence of Arabia), does not disguise his partisanship. He presents an heroic narrative –

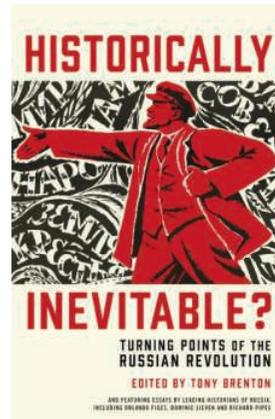
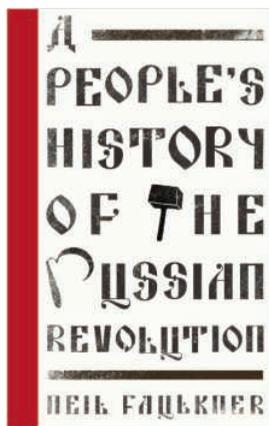
Lenin and the Bolsheviks lead 'a mass movement of millions mobilised for militant action and destroyed a regime of landlords, profiteers and warmongers'. This is history at its most simplistic. Faulkner selectively used eyewitness accounts, but only those which support his argument. His main secondary

source appears to be Tony Cliff's four volume life of Lenin.

The book is readable but is basically one long polemic. This revolutionary romanticism is enhanced by headings such as 'The Carnival of the Oppressed' for the post October second conference of Soviets, an image of Eisenstein's 'October Days' and a

Red Army recruitment poster. As a good Trotskyist (formerly in the Socialist Workers Party, then in Counterfire, now in the Labour Party), Faulkner ends the book with a critique of Stalinism – Stalin is seen as emerging 'from the backrooms of the Bolshevik party as the political expression of a new bureaucratic class.' – nothing to do with Leninism of course. Perhaps Faulkner should stick to archaeology. Interestingly, Faulkner has been attacked in the SWP's *Socialist Review* for not being sufficiently Leninist. A series of essays entitled *Historically Inevitable: Turning Points of the Russian Revolution* (Profile £25), is edited by Tony Brenton, formerly UK ambassador in Moscow. The book has 14 short essays by leading historians such as Dominic Lieven, Richard Pipes, Orlando Figes, Evan Mawdsley, Catriona Kelly and Richard Sakwa, the former BBC journalist Martin Sixsmith and the Russian playwright Edward Radzinsky. The chronological range is wide – Lieven takes the long view on foreign intervention – 1900-1920. Other essays range from the assassination of prime minister Stolypin in 1911 to the death of pluralism in the Bolshevik party between 1917 and 1922. Brenton's afterword focuses on the 'inescapable Russianness that flavoured, and occasionally drove much of what happened around 1917.' Referencing Dostoyevsky and Chekhov, he comments that 'Russia was always an extraordinarily riven society. On one side stood the sparse, westernised, ruling class. On the other was the great mass of 'dark people, serfs until 1861, focused on their own communities, suspicious and resentful of any interference from outside'. Brenton refers to Pushkin writing of the 'Russian revolt, mindless and merciless' before concluding that '

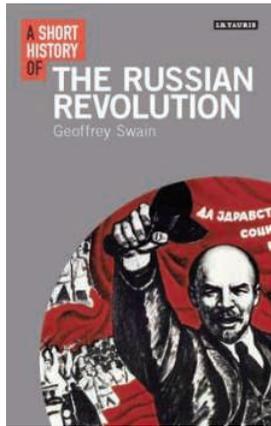
CONTINUED ON PAGE 24>>



# BLACK DWARF

>>CONTINUED FROM PAGE 23

One picture of 1917 is that it was just such an uprising that consumed the whole country, and then whose shadow hung over world history for the next seventy years ‘... so nothing to do with Lenin and the Bolsheviks then! While there are no doubt other centenary books I could review, I will briefly mention two earlier works – firstly Semion Lyandres’ 2013 *The Fall of Tsarism* which has interviews of ten of the leaders of the February revolution undertaken between May and June 2017 by historians of a semi-official interview commission of the Society for the Study of the Russian Revolution’, translated from the



and Duma president Rodzianko, and Tereshchenko, the Progressive (Liberal) first finance and then foreign Minister, the Kadet (Constitutional Democrat) Nekrasov, Mensheviks Chkheidze and Skobolev, and

original manuscripts which had ended up at Notre Dame University in Indiana. The interviewees include leading members of the Duma and the pre Bolshevik soviet, including Octobrist

Kerensky, prime minister of the second provisional government.

These are fascinating eyewitness accounts by the leaders of the February revolution which brought down the Romanov dynasty only to be cast into the dustbin of history by the October revolution of Lenin and Trotsky.

The second is a book of 200 photographs by an American photo journalist Donald Thompson. Published in 1918, as *Blood Stained Russia*, but recently reprinted by a facsimile publisher in India, this book shows the ugliness, misery and violence of war and revolution, a corrective to those narratives produced by contemporary armchair revolutionary romantics. **C**

## Voice of radical republicans

‘Nothing puzzles an Englishman so much as the constitution of his country’  
Thomas Wooler, *Black Dwarf*, 1817

In the May days of 1968, a new, radical left broadsheet emerged, edited by one, Tariq Ali. Named *Black Dwarf*, the paper ran from June ‘68 to March 1972, although some contributors quit in 1970 to found ‘Red Mole’. The paper Ali edited and wrote for, along with various other ‘60s luminaries, took its name from a highly seditious 19thC newspaper published by that great Regency radical, Thomas Wooler. So awed were the 1968 collective by the original newspaper’s reputation that Ali even continued the numbering from where Wooler had left off in 1824 (Vol 13, No 1, June 1968). So why did Ali et al so identify with the political legacy of the Regency period?

One obvious reason was the extraordinary surge in political writing and publishing, driven by the mounting level of political unrest and the rapidly deepening economic crisis in England from 1815 onwards. Before 1815, Britain had dominated world trade, blockading French commerce for almost the entire Napoleonic War period. With France unable to trade, British industry and agriculture had flourished, but this happy situation ended abruptly in 1815. Cheap foreign imports flooded into the country and competition increased as Britain fought with France to hold onto her all important American markets.

With a war costing £1,039 million and with the national debt spiralling, taxes rose steeply with the poor bearing the brunt. Swelling the numbers of the existing unemployed resulting from the end of the blockade, were vast numbers of demobbed soldiers and sailors, mostly unable to find food or work. Crucially for the Regency radicals, this economic

chaos was occurring within a political and constitutional system entirely unsuitable for a bankrupt, yet still rapidly industrialising, society, one both replete with disenfranchised new towns and burdened with a political class which bought and sold parliamentary seats like so much coffee or corn.

However, it was probably the vehemence and volume of the extra-parliamentary radical polemic in response to the post-war Regency crisis that led the 1960s generation of radicals to rediscover Regency writers such as Wooler himself, Richard Carlyle, William Cobbett, William Hone and Leigh Hunt. More than simple agitators, many of them faced the full force of the law for what they wrote as the state suspended Habeas Corpus, gaoled several of them for sedition and, as in Cobbett’s case, induced some to flee abroad.

One can see when re-reading those early 19thC radical newspapers, why Wooler and his associates must have appealed to radicals in the 1960s. In many ways Britain was still a claustrophobic environment and the youth were seeking alternatives to the ‘parliamentary road to socialism’. As important was the nightly televised violence of the Vietnam War and the waves of militant strikes that challenged a world order supporting American intervention in South East Asia and elsewhere.

Crucially, the original *Black Dwarf* represented a startling cultural and stylistic intervention, something all too readily forgotten today, and these characteristics were also clearly reflected in the brilliant ‘counter cultural’ publications of the late 1960s. Wooler et al were above all radical republicans, attacking the fundamental constitutional structures of the Regency state. Their constitutional demands were so radical that 200 years later, even with Corbyn as leader, Labour still has not accommodated them! **C**

Phil Vellender celebrates the 200th Anniversary of the original *Black Dwarf*



# Don't Tell Mother Russia, the Dictator is Dead

**Patrick Mulcahy**

on a comedy that fails to meet its billing

**THE DEATH OF STALIN**  
Armando Iannucci  
On release

Comedy relies on variation, on the surprise of not sounding like everyone else. The problem with the black comedy satire *The Death of Stalin* – and it is not its only shortcoming – is that there's only one mood, one joke: that there are soulless terrorisers and the terrorised, but the terrorisers are incompetent and vain, lacking in values and strategy. Sometimes the terrorisers are terrorised themselves, clinging to dogma. They can't agree with a plan because they need the assurance of collective responsibility.

Director Armando Iannucci (*The Thick of It*, *Veep*) has assembled a talented, mostly male cast who achieve the near impossible by not making us laugh. The opening night screening I attended was surprisingly silent; partly because we identify a little too much with the terrorised, who are in no position to resist, and partly because the joke seemed too thin, too easy. Iannucci has cast actors who are jokes at the expense of the departed members of the Soviet Central Committee circa 1953. Steve Buscemi, whose screen persona is gawk-eyed weasel whining, looks nothing like Nikita Khrushchev, the eventual successor to Joseph Stalin, but it is briefly amusing to note the contrast. Similarly Jeffrey Tambor (TV's *Transparent*) is unlikely casting for Georgy Malenkov, Stalin's former private secretary and interrogator, playing him like a lost child wandering around in his pyjamas seeking to be reunited with his teddy bear.

The film begins with the recreation of a real-life incident, in which Stalin orders the recording of a concert after it has taken place and the general manager (Paddy Considine) is forced to re-stage it, swelling the audience with people off the street, finding a new conductor after the old one has a cardiac arrest and bribing the pianist (Olga Kurylenko) to perform again. The comedy – I use the word loosely – arises from the manager having to phone back Stalin's office in seventeen



minutes ('seventeen minutes from when?') and struggles to record the number correctly. The joke stumbles because there is no challenge to Considine's mania.

Iannucci and his co-writers, David Schneider and Ian Martin, adapting a French comic book by Fabien Nury and Thierry Robin, create set-ups but leave out the jokes. No one in Iannucci's fictive universe is capable of a comedy riposte, because in the Soviet Union of Stalin's purges, there is

**Director Armando Iannucci has assembled a talented, mostly male cast who achieve the near impossible by not making us laugh**

no comedy riposte. Instead, characters fret as they carry out actions in the knowledge that failure or saying the wrong thing may lead to death. Truth gets in the way of laughter, instead of – as in a conventional comedy – laughter being a relief from truth.

The plot revolves around the Central Committee's response to Stalin's sudden heart attack after laughing too hard – something with which we cannot identify in this context. There aren't any good doctors to treat him as they have all been jailed for conspiring to kill him. Instead young or ex-doctors are rounded up. This of itself is the beginning of a joke, but then the diagnosis – a form of paralysis – is delivered straight.

The drama then shifts to a series of party pieces, as Stalin's son (Rupert Friend) and daughter (a terrific Andrea Riseborough) are summoned to his dacha. Stalin's son is a drunk, seen training a replacement hockey team as the original 'Red Army' died in a plane crash. His daughter is more thoughtful but Svetlana Stalina is sidelined by the Central Committee. The dominant turn is by Simon Russell Beale, a stage actor who rarely appears in films, as Lavrentiy Beria, Head of the Secret Police. The real Beria looked more like current Russian President Vladimir Putin than the burly Beale, but the actor exudes menace and entitlement as a brute holding everyone's secrets. His relish makes him less likeable than the rest, but when Beria faces his opponents at the climax, Beale plays him like one of Shakespeare's tragic heroes, cursed by their own ambition.

Iannucci eschews faux Russian accents for a broad range of English regional voices. Jason Isaacs turns up as a Mancunian Head of the Red Army. But Iannucci doesn't just drain the comedy of laughter – he doesn't follow up on the more dramatic moments. Molotov (Michael Palin) denounces his wife as a traitor thinking she is dead, but then is reunited with her. She hears his every word but says nothing. In a drama this would be developed and perhaps result in a change within Molotov. However, this is just shrugged off. In Iannucci's comedy, there is no proportion, no delineation with personal feelings and political beliefs. His comedy is as inhuman as the regime that he satirises.

## BOOK REVIEWS

## Theory and practice

**Duncan Bowie** on revisiting the land issue

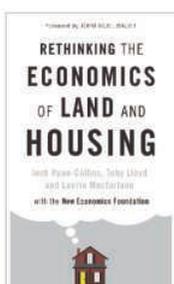
**Rethinking the Economics of Land and Housing**  
**Josh Ryan-Collins, Toby Lloyd and Laurie Macfarlane**  
 (Zed £14.99)

The book has been written by researchers at the New Economics Foundation and SHELTER. The object of the book was to try to get economists and policy makers to understand the importance of land in housing policy and the wider economy. I will declare an interest as I know the authors and peer reviewed the book before publication. Much of the analysis is similar to that undertaken by the Highbury Group on Housing Delivery over the last few years and summarised in my recent book on Radical Solutions to the Housing

Crisis (Policy Press). Mine was written more as a critique, and a manifesto. This book provides a more detailed and systematic analysis of the property market in the UK and the role of land within it.

The book is aimed at economists and students of economics to serve as a corrective to mainstream economics which has largely disregarded the role of land in economic theory and social policy, a mistake also made by Marx and generations of Marxists who have tended to see land nationalisation as a side issue to the ownership of productive enterprises, despite land being one of the factors of production - Ricardo and Mill had a better understanding. The authors

presents a primer on land and rent theory before analysing their role in the contemporary UK economy. The final chapters consider policies on compulsory purchase of land, reform of land and property taxes including land value tax, regulation of financial institutions and credit, the case for a state housing investment bank, reforms to legislation on housing tenure and planning and accounting practices in relation to public debt - all sound policy recommendations. This is a book well worth reading - not just by professional economists but by others who want to understand why housing policy has gone so badly wrong and what we can do about it.



## The threat from within

**Nigel Watt** on Israel's internal contradictions

**HOW LONG WILL ISRAEL SURVIVE?**  
**Gregg Carlstrom**  
 (Hurst £20)

Until I got to the final few pages I was thinking that Carlstrom had given this book the wrong title. Even then the question of "how long" is not addressed. However, the book gives a very readable account of the history of this extraordinary little country, including the Gaza war and the careers of Shimon Peres and of Benjamin Netanyahu (whom the author seems to heartily dislike).

It exposes Israel's many contradictions - and it is these contradictions and divisions that raise questions about the country's long-term survival.

The secular Zionists, Ashkenazi from Europe and America, who founded the state in the shadow of the holocaust, provided it with an extremely proportional electoral system. This was fine in the early days when the Labour Party of David Ben Gurion dominated the scene. This was the time when Israel had a positive image among progressive people, seduced by the example of the kibbutzim. Then

with much support from the "Mizrahim", the Sephardic Jews who had immigrated from North Africa and the Middle East, Likud first took power in 1977 and has remained in government for most of the time since, but has been dependent on support from other right wing and religious groups.

Netanyahu has been prime minister for a long time but he has been pushed further to the right. The other error Israel made from the start was to give privileges to the Haredi, the ultra-orthodox, especially giving them exemption from military service so they could spend their lives studying the Talmud (some of whom are not in fact Zionists because they believe that the promised land will only be delivered by the Messiah.)

By the 1980s the country was already badly divided: Ashkenazi versus Mizrahim plus the Druze, loyal but also not equal, also plus the 'Arabs' who were Israeli citizens but who, like the religious, were not accepted into the army which was supposedly the national melting pot. Added to the pot are a million Russian Jews and 100,000 from Ethiopia. The

author divides the population to four 'tribes': the secular Zionists and the 'national religious', both sub-divided politically, the Haredi and the Arabs. Then there are the settlers in the theoretically Palestinian lands who form a different and not universally popular separate group.

The differences are illustrated in the vastly different cultures of Tel Aviv, a modern 'western' city, and ultra-orthodox parts of Jerusalem.

This tiny, fractured citadel is also shaken by corruption scandals, protests against rocketing prices and, more seriously, surrounded by potentially hostile countries. At present Egypt and Jordan are tolerant and Syria is in a mess so Israel just obsesses about Iran. Many Arabs see Israel as a re-run of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem and hope it will be just as ephemeral. The modern Jews with their technology and their atomic weapons are much stronger than the Crusaders ever were but, as Simon Schama says, "The Jews are a suitcase people". Will their internal contradictions result in their having to be wanderers again?



# Novelising history

**Duncan Bowie** on spies

**M: MAXWELL KNIGHT  
Henry Hemming (Preface £20)**

Writing about spies has always been a popular literary form. There is however an increasing tendency to confuse fact and fiction, not least because so many novelists have themselves a background in the intelligence service, of which Le Carre (aka David Cornwell), Ian Fleming and Len Deighton are perhaps the most notable.

There is however a difficulty when historians start novelising their historical studies and we have seen a whole series of works by authors such as Ben McIntyre which claim to be based on facts but where the embellishment is so extreme, no doubt in an attempt to mimic John Le Carre, as to raise questions as to the factual basis of the story. Hemming's book falls into this category, reflected by the blurb on the cover 'Everything you'd want from a great espionage story' according to screenwriter for 'Bridges of Spies'.

Not surprisingly this screenwriter is also scripting the Maxwell Knight book for a film, though the book is itself written as if it is a film script, so he won't have to do much further work. The subject of the book, Maxwell Knight (one of a number of intelligence operatives to be known as 'M', so one of the possible sources for the use of 'M' in the James Bond books and movies) worked in counter-intelligence in MI5 and previously in a private intelligence organisation in the 1930's (the McGill organisation providing industrial intelligence) before, during and after the war. He ran a number of undercover agents, including agents infiltrating both communist and fascist organisations.

Much of the story has been told before – there are several works on communist infiltration/subversion and a series of three books on right wing organisations in Britain both before and during the war by the academic, Richard Griffiths, including his most recent study *What Did you do during the war?* reviewed in a recent edition of *Chartist*, which focuses on the Right Club run by the MP, Captain Ramsay.

We also have a recent popular novelisation covering the same territory including a focus on Knight in the attractively titled *Rendezvous at the Russian Tea Rooms* by Paul Willets. There is considerable overlap between all these books.

The Hemming book, once you discount all the embellishment of the novelisation, does focus on Maxwell

than fact. Knight was an eccentric character.

Obsessed with animals, he kept numerous exotic species in his various flats, including the flat in Vincent Square in Pimlico from which he ran his counter-intelligence operation. His personal life was bizarre – he married three times but apparently never consummated any of his marriages (I'm not sure that I needed to know that). While still an MI5 operative, he had a second career as a TV presenter of popular nature programmes and wrote numerous books on how to keep pets. Hemming argues that taming wild animals and running espionage agents requires similar skills. I'm not sure I would recommend reading Hemming's book. As an alternative, I would suggest not just Griffith's trilogy but the 2007 study of Desmond Morton, Churchill's intelligence chief, Churchill's *Man of Mystery*, by Gill Bennett, who was chief historian for the Foreign Office until 2005 and who writes more substantive, if less 'populist' studies of the intelligence service and its political role.



Knight's own fascist youth, including membership of not just Mosley's British Union of Fascists, but also of a direct action group, the 'K organisation' which specialised in breaking into and trashing communist offices. His closest colleague was none other than William Joyce, leader of the National Socialist League and later the pro-Nazi broadcaster, known as 'Lord Haw-Haw'. Knight maintained contact with Joyce even after he had joined MI5 and there is some implication that Joyce himself was an MI5 Informer, but it also appears that Knight was actually passing information to Joyce, and actually warned Joyce that he was about to be arrested, allowing him to escape to Germany.

Rather curiously, the new biography of Joyce by the historian Colin Holmes does not even mention Knight, so it becomes rather difficult to conclude how much of Hemming's story is more fiction

**LABOUR Briefing**

Sometimes you find that only the original will do...

**Labour Briefing : You can't put it down.**

Welcome back to Labour Briefing. (beware of dodgy imitations)

FOR AN ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION (10 ISSUES) SEND YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS AND A CHEQUE FOR £20 (PAYABLE TO LABOUR BRIEFING CO-OPERATIVE LTD) TO:

LABOUR BRIEFING, 7 MALAM GARDENS, LONDON E14 OTR. SEE OUR LATEST SUBSCRIPTION OFFERS ON :

[WWW.LABOURBRIEFING.CO.UK](http://WWW.LABOURBRIEFING.CO.UK)

# Migrant smuggling and its business models

**Don Flynn**

on the  
Libyan  
nexus

**Migrant, Refugee, Smuggler, Saviour**  
**Peter Tinti and Tuesday Reitano**  
(Hurst £20)

The EU claimed conspicuous success over the summer in pursuing a deal with Libyan warlords that brought about a halving of the numbers of people trying to escape the North African country for the safer shores of Europe.

The jostling of Libya's three rival governments for recognition by European governments and EU authorities doling out large sums of money to anyone who can help 'solve' the refugee problem inevitably involves payments, not only to agencies like the national coastguard, but also to the large numbers of powerful militias involved in crime of all sorts, including trafficking and human smuggling. According to the African Arguments website ([www.africanarguments.com](http://www.africanarguments.com)) these groups are represented in the contesting authorities claiming to be Libya's legitimate government.

What do human smugglers do when Europe decides to get them onside with bribes of huge amounts cash? Do they release the victims of their trade and let them resume their normal lives? In the African context the answer is no, because there is no normal life in easy reach of people caught up in the tumult of civil upheaval and desperate poverty. All the evidence suggests that the wretched flows of people caught up in this tragedy are diverted into new revenue streams for the militias who control them, including raising ransoms from their families and being subjected to the vilest forms of slavery.

Peter Tinti and Tuesday Reitano have written a book that searches out the place that the movement of vulnerable people has come to play in the politics of our time. Their work looks at the routes that head towards the Mediterranean in two major flows that converge on either to Libyan coast or the shores of the Aegean Sea. In understanding what is going on with all this movement

of people they are not content with simplistic sketches which fill the narrative with the sort of monsters reduced to their elemental evilness. In the course of fieldwork that takes the authors across West Africa and the desert regions of Mali and Chad, a picture emerges of societies which have eked out livelihoods and for centuries have involved the movement of people and goods across dangerous terrain.

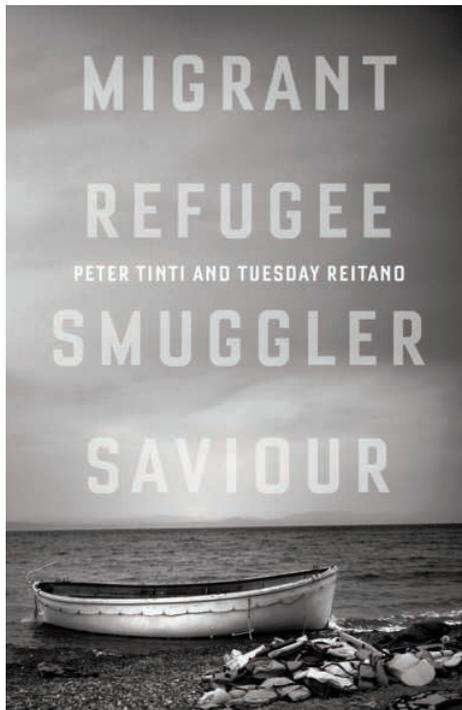
They describe a 'hierarchy of trafficked commodities' which

when detention centres holding large numbers of people fell into the hands of militia who set about utilising the imprisoned as unpaid work gangs who were rented out to whoever needed their labour. With profits rolling in from this activity the militias then contracted nomadic Tuareg and Toubou groups to supply fresh cohorts of forced workers from amongst the migrants who were being transported across the country's border.

Business models that had been in existence for generations were in this way adapted to sustain the livelihoods of the interests and ethnic communities that had once sustained the Gaddafi regime. Migration was by no means suppressed, but rather re-channelled away from the routes that brought sub-Saharan Africans to work in the oil and gas fields and on the giant infrastructure projects that were transforming the desert, and instead moved people towards destinations where they could be shaken down for cash or set to work as labourers or sex slaves.

The EU agreement with the Libyan militias that form the power bases of the rival governments is another version of the earlier deal struck with the Turkish government of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. In this instance the political strength of the president has enabled a clampdown on the activities of the smuggling gangs and this is reflected in the lower numbers attempting to enter Europe by that route. But the 3.2 million refugees accommodated in Turkey find themselves in a powder-keg society which might explode at anytime.

The idea that the refugee crisis across the Middle East North Africa region will be solved by the simple exercise of some determined authority is, as this book shows, a misleading reading of the situation which ignores the deeper realities to be found on the ground. History has shown that the tough approach, whilst enjoying some immediate success, tends to evaporate as events spiral upwards to the next level of crisis.



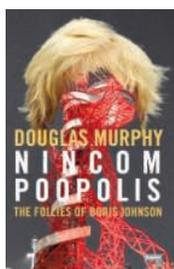
ranks human beings alongside pharmaceuticals and weapons in a trade in which one cross-subsidises the other to make the overall business model viable. As they put it, "... moving migrants was a way of supplementing income on the return leg of journey: a truck carrying subsidised fuel from Algeria to Mali might come back with a couple of West Africans keen to work in the hydrocarbon economies of North Africa."

In earlier times this activity barely registered as a crime. It became an issue for Europe only after the intervention in the Libyan revolution that toppled Gaddafi in 2011. A system of migration that the Libyan dictator had kept in check fell apart

# The follies of Boris Johnson

**Duncan Bowie**  
on a  
celebrity  
Mayor

**Nincompoopolis**  
Douglas Murphy (Repeater £8.99)



Murphy is an architectural critic and journalist who has written two previous short books on the political culture of architecture. This book is in two parts – the first a commentary on Johnson’s grand projects, the second a more wide ranging study of London under Boris’s regime as Mayor. Chapters in the first half cover the Siemens Crystal in the Royal Docks, the Olympic ‘hubble bubble’ structure, the Dockland cable car, the Heatherwick designed Boris bus, the Crystal Palace development proposal and of the course, the Garden Bridge. The book is basically a compendium of material taken from the investigative journalism of others and websites relating to individual

projects, both official documents and commentary from campaigners and other critics. Murphy does acknowledge his sources but for anyone who has been following the various sagas of London development over the last eight years, much of the story will be familiar. The second half of the book takes a number of policy areas: Transport, Housing, Wealth, and finally Disorder and Crime. What the book lacks is any use of either reports published by the Mayor or by independent researchers. There is no analysis of the vast amount of information of Mayoral policies and actual outputs – the commentary on the impact of Boris as Mayor relies on anecdote and journalistic commentary. Perhaps it is inevitable that an architectural critic will focus on style rather than on substance. There is no real discussion as to how Boris’s policies differed from

those of his predecessor, Ken Livingstone – there is no discussion of Johnson’s revision to the London Plan, or the Housing Strategy or the Transport strategy or the strategy for employment growth post 2008. The story, though entertaining, is a partial one. It also lacks an overall conclusion as to what Johnson did or did not achieve in his Mayoralty. The book is partisan and selective as its focus is on Johnson the blusterer, and as the title implies – a Nincompoop. The conclusion turns to Johnson’s so far unsuccessful attempt to become Prime Minister – his London Mayoralty being seen as a stepping stone to his higher ambition. This is perhaps a perspective shared by Johnson himself. However the conclusion that Johnson’s main achievement was to ‘create terrible architecture’ is a rather limited interpretation of the impact of eight years of governing London.

# Trade unionism and nationalism

**THE REVOLUTIONARY LEGACY OF MAKHAN SINGH IN KENYA**  
Ed. Shiraz Durrani (Policy Press £60)

**Nim Njuguma**  
on a  
Kenyan  
trade  
union  
pioneer

This book explores and highlights the life and work of a remarkable trade unionist who can rightly be called the father of Kenya’s trade union movement and who became a leading anti-colonial freedom fighter. Refusing to accept that the trade union movement in Kenya should be segregated by race, he successfully fought for a multi ethnic and non-racial trade union movement in Kenya and articulated the message that the fight against colonial rule could not be differentiated from the fight for workers’ rights.

Since the 1920s, Kenyans, especially the Kikuyu tribe had objected to the reservation of the Highlands for Europeans. Bitterness and animosity grew between the two sides and in 1921 Harry Thuku, a telephone clerk in Nairobi formed the Young Kikuyu Association which drew up a petition containing grievances on labour, land and ‘Kipande’, (pass book) which Africans had to carry.

In 1931 Harry Thuku formed a more militant organisation - East African Association, which reject-

ed the "fundamental premises of white rule". Thuku protested the proposed reduction in African wages, land alienation, compulsory labour recruitment, increases in hut and poll taxes. These laws were introduced for “controlling movements of African labourers and for locating and identifying them” (M a k h a n Singh, 1969).

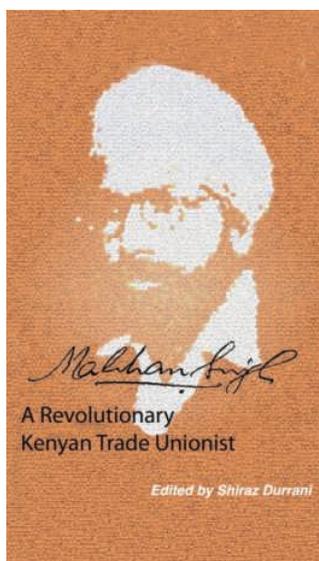
In 1935, M a r k h a m Singh was elected secretary-general of the Indian Trade Union (founded in 1934). He soon transformed it into the Labour Trade Union of Kenya to attract all races. By 1937, he had succeeded in transforming it into the Labour Trade Union of East Africa, which championed the interest of workers in the entire region. As a trade union organiser, Singh tried to break down the divisions

between the Indians, who made up the majority of the organised workers, and the African workers. It was a hard struggle when the colonial authorities’ divide and rule strategy aimed to set the two groups against each other.

Markham Singh was in detention for eleven and half years from June 1950 to 22nd October 1961. Yet, After Kenya’s independence, he was shunned, most likely because he was a declared communist, without any meaningful recognition for his contribution to Kenya’s independence.

English writer Dana Seidenberg has summed up Makhan Singh in her book *Mercantile Adventurers*: "His personal sacrifice in support of Kenya's freedom struggle, and

his leadership in bettering conditions for Kenya's lowest-paid workers, have made him the most important Asian to have lived in East Africa in the twentieth century."



# A small and petty offshore island

**Dave Lister** **BREXIT AND EXIT**  
**Denis MacShane (I.B. Tauris £8.99)**

on the  
folly of  
Brexit

**D**enis MacShane has a great deal of knowledge of Europe. He was the policy director of the International Metal Workers Federation 1980-92 and, elected as MP for Rotherham in 1994, he became Minister for Europe 2002-05. This book contains some very useful nuggets of information and important arguments, although at times it is rambling and repetitive.

MacShane demonstrates how the groundwork for Brexit was laid by the Tory right-wing and the right-wing press over a whole period of time. William Hague as Tory leader used Europe as a stick with which to beat the Blair government. Other Tories like Nigel Lawson and Norman Lamont had plugged a similar line. MacShane also blames David Cameron for his complacency during the referendum campaign. The Remain camp rarely referred to the positive benefits of EU membership, instead issuing dire warnings which their opponents labelled Project Fear. MacShane further blames Jeremy Corbyn for what he considers to be his ineffective contribution.

A comprehensive account is given of the pitfalls facing us in a post-Brexit Britain. Foreign companies have invested here to avoid paying duties in Europe. Are they likely to stay when this advantage no longer pertains? British farmers currently export 80% of their produce to Europe. They could face tariffs of perhaps 10%. Service industries account for 80% of the UK economy and their exports to the EU are hugely profitable. The City of London generates huge amounts of income from trading in euros, which is unlikely to continue once Britain leaves the EU, possibly resulting in the loss of 100-200,000 jobs. MacShane quotes estimates that something like 20,000 laws and regulations would need to be re-written and new agreements made with 162 countries in the World Trade Organisation. Leaving the Customs Union would require every good or component to be

cleared. The UK road haulage industry reckons that firms would have to complete 60 million forms annually. A new bureaucracy will need to be recruited for Brexit at an estimated cost of at least £5 billion. Much hope has been placed on trade with the USA but Trump has promised tariffs on imports, the possible impact of which we have seen in the recent Bombardier case.

MacShane points out that there is a correlation between the areas that voted for Brexit and those most affected by the deindustrialisation of the 1980s and 90s. Unfortunately it may be those

the referendum campaign and can therefore have little trust in them. Theresa May's Florence speech may have mollified them to some extent but, as suggested, there will be no special deal for Britain.

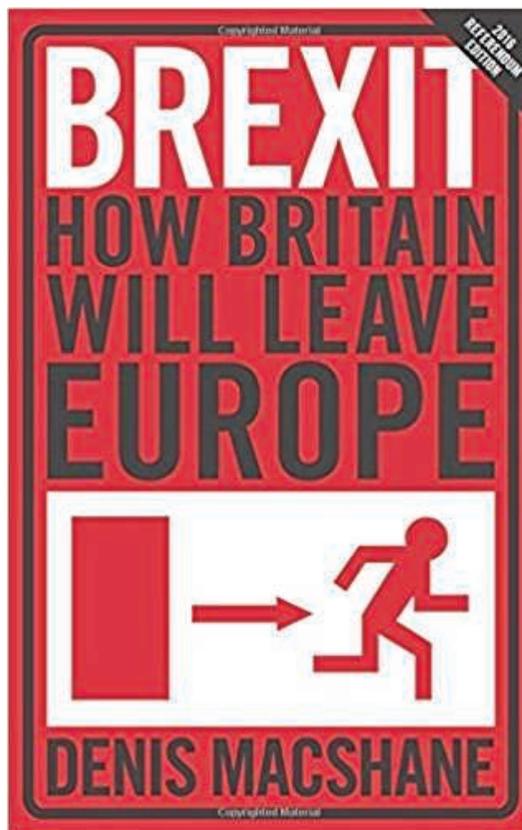
Meanwhile all this must be a nightmare for mechanical Marxists as Brexit can hardly be seen to be in the interests of British capital as a whole, except maybe for some small businesses and hedge funds. Delaying its implementation for as long as possible is in their interests and MacShane thinks that this is likely. He thinks that current calls

for a second referendum are premature but that Britain will not ultimately leave the EU because the good sense of the British people will prevail once they appreciate the likely consequences of Brexit. MacShane may have predicted the outcome of the referendum correctly in January 2015 but I think that the final outcome is too hard to call at present.

In his final section MacShane considers the possible effects of Brexit on Europe and the shortcomings of the EU. He points out that the removal of Britain's net contribution will mean a "recalibration" of the money that the EU can spend especially on poorer EU countries. He also recognises that its more recent failure to promote pro-growth policies gave ammunition to the pro-Brexit camp. More controversially he calls for a new compromise between

European capital and labour and the creation of a strike free zone across the EU on the proviso that "unions realise that keeping the wheels turning makes sense for all".

Finally, whither Labour? The party has been successful so far in getting many both Remain and Leave voters behind it. Whether this can continue is uncertain as we will surely have to sharpen up our policies. But, as MacShane concludes, "If we cut ourselves out of Europe, we will become small, petty, no longer a leader and shaper of our part of the world".



still at work in areas like the North East who suffer most from the effects of Brexit. The perils outlined by MacShane are still not widely known or understood. Instead all sorts of illusions have been peddled around the idea of 'making Britain great again'.

The EU negotiators and leaders appear to have complete contempt for the Tories' poor understanding of what is at stake. Thus Merkel, Hollande and Juncker all said on the record that Britain would not be given any favours. The EU is negotiating with people who they consider to have lied throughout

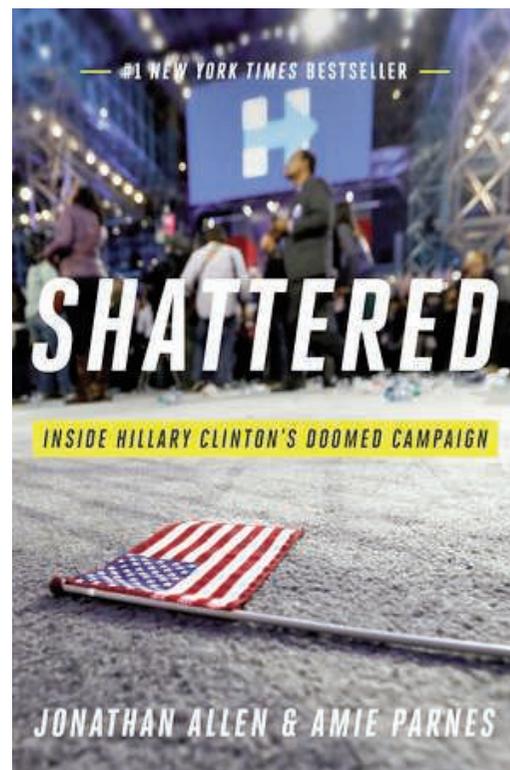
# Collusion and Failure

**Glyn Ford**  
on Why  
Trump  
won

**Shattered: Inside Hillary Clinton's Doomed Campaign**  
Jonathan Allen and Amie Parnes  
(Crown £28)

**S**hattered' has the spoiler in the title. For Allen and Parnes Hillary's campaign was always destined to tread a predetermined road to ruin. She was the antithesis of the ideal candidate. An archtypical establishment figure waiting her turn to be President despite the electorate. She had learnt the lessons from her 2008 run against Obama, but had learnt them badly. After Bernie Sanders appeared on the primary scene and outperformed her amongst the young, gifted and white she retreated into arithmetic not politics. The nomination was to be won by racking up delegate numbers for the Convention rather than getting down and dirty addressing the concerns that resonated with Sanders' supporters. First Hillary colluded - or had them collude for her - with the Democratic Party establishment, and scooping them up as 'super-delegates' detached from the electoral process in their own States representing no interests but their own search for office and preferment. Second they were to read the rules to Hillary's advantage by suppressing voter turnout in the primaries, demanding - where it could be done - that party affiliation had to date back to before Bernie Saunders had even announced he was going to run. Then the campaign shaped the offer to ignore class and appeal to the black and rainbow coalition designed to deliver votes required in the South topped up by focussing money on the delegate rich counties in the North. It was a cheap campaign, financially and politically. After nomination the campaign doesn't change gear or direction. Having distorted the platform for the primaries it was never straightened out for the General Election. The ground war barely got started. The organisers were sparse, for those with feet on the ground there was little or no literature to deliver and in States like Michigan - wrongly taken for granted - if you wanted a yard sign you had to pay for it. Instead it was purely an air war of analytics rather than polling, negative ads focussed on character rather than

cause. Despite the Russians, the Libya hearings and the emails the campaign had it won. Yet defeat was snatched from the jaws of victory. They neglected their base and never saw the rage of the left behind. Hillary lost Wisconsin by less than 11,000, Michigan by 23,000 and Pennsylvania by 45,000 votes, all Democrat banker States. Winning Countrywide by almost 3 million votes and losing the Presidency by less than 90,000 was an accomplishment in itself. You don't have to be a weatherman to know which way the wind blows. In many counties Hillary's vote was up, yet Trump surged ahead as those that had lost their way to the ballot box decades before or never found it turned out to vote Trump, as Black and Latino voters sat out the election. Hillary, who lost both Wisconsin and Michigan to Sanders in the Primaries, failed to visit Wisconsin once in the General Election campaign and only made Michigan for an eve of poll rally when it was all too late. 'Shattered' is wrong, Hillary lose was an accident. If only one of the political plagues sent to try her had failed to appear she would be President now by default. Trump, a national revolutionary of the populist right, was ultimately elected because of what he wasn't, not because of what he was. Britain voted Brexit on the same basis, as Macron won for the populist centre and Corbyn for the left. The common theme was a rejection of the whole of the political class for their cowardly collusion in choosing to visit the sins of greed and avarice by the hedge fund managers and bankers on the poor and not the rich. Holland and Brown were responsible for their own political immolations. Hillary's wasn't her own worst enemy. Rather it was Obama's failure to drive a stake into the cancer of finance capital which - sadly - provided the judas goat enticing xenophobia and protectionism back to power in the US.



## WESTMINSTER VIEW



# Give peace a chance

### As Trump threatens Armageddon against North Korea and reneges on the Iran treaty Fabian Hamilton MP reports on wider efforts to ban the bomb

**Fabian Hamilton is the Labour MP for Leeds North East and has been Shadow Minister for Peace and Disarmament since October 2016**

**O**n 25 March 2017, I went to the United Nations in New York on behalf of the Labour Party to attend the start of the negotiations on the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (the Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty).

My delight at being there on a miserable March morning was tempered a little when I heard that the US Ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, was standing outside the building on East 42nd Street with the British and French Ambassadors to denounce the discussions and any treaty which might follow. She told the waiting media that the United States would certainly take no notice of such a treaty and that the allies of the USA, including the other nuclear weapons states would disregard, with contempt, a treaty which threatened their security and right to self-defence.

ICAN, the International Campaign for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in October 2017 for its work on getting the Ban Treaty debated and agreed. It's a justified reward for a truly dedicated international organisation which is trying hard to create a safer, more peaceful world, and I hope to be able to attend the award ceremony in Oslo with Labour Leader Jeremy Corbyn at the end of 2017.

The UN has a very good record of concluding treaties on different types of weapons which the world has come to regard as wholly unacceptable in war, such as the Chemical Weapons Convention which came into force in 1998; the



Landmines Treaty; and the Cluster Munitions Treaty. Of course, the system is by no means perfect and some of the worst offenders are under no obligation to sign and ratify any of these treaties – but they have had the effect of changing international norms on the use of such weapons.

We have, of course, not managed to abolish war or stop evil dictators from murdering their populations, but the nations of the world do regard such actions with contempt and anger and are able to use the body of international law to sanction leaders and governments who use weapons which have been banned by treaty.

I doubt that the Ban Treaty, even if – as is likely – it comes into force next year, will see the eradication of nuclear weapons in my lifetime, or even in my children's lifetimes, but it will change the way in which we regard the development, possession and – heaven forbid – the use of nuclear weapons in the future. And, perhaps one day, it may even succeed in their eradication altogether.

President Trump has been making extremely bellicose noises against Kim Jong Un, the North Korean dictator who has spent a vast percentage of his impoverished country's GDP on developing a nuclear warhead and missile with which to deliver it. But from Kim's perspective, it's entirely logical to own such monstrous weapons: look at what hap-

pened to Muammar Ghaddafi in Libya when he agreed to stop the development of a nuclear warhead in return for re-integration into the international community. Kim is determined not to share the same fate and his possession of a nuclear weapon ensures that.

Clearly, it's not going to be easy to negotiate with the North Koreans now that they have acquired nuclear weapons, but it is essential that we do have a dialogue.

There is no doubt it's going to take considerable effort to persuade the Labour Party – and the British public – that the UN Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty should be signed and ratified by a future UK government, but I am convinced this is the only way in which we may begin to see the end of the nuclear arms race. After all, the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) had a profound effect upon nuclear weapons proliferation in the last third of the twentieth century and this Ban Treaty – far from damaging the NPT – is complementary to it, aiming to complete its work in the twenty first century.

We have always been told that the British public would never agree to unilateral nuclear disarmament, but would be happy with multilateral disarmament, so here's our chance to test that contention with real hope that the ever-present threat of nuclear annihilation can one day be consigned to history. **C**

Subscribe to CHARTIST at [www.chartist.org.uk](http://www.chartist.org.uk)

