

# CHARTIST

**For democratic socialism**

**#294 September/October 2018**

**£2**

## **Labour at Brexit crossroads**

**Alena Ivanova &**

**Catherine West MP**

**Brexit & A People's vote**

**Don Flynn**

**Labour Left**

**Prem Sikka**

**Labour & taxation**

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ISSN - 0968 7866 ISSUE

94 >



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# CHARTIST

For democratic socialism

## Editorial Policy

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

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

CHARTIST is not a party publication. It brings together people who are interested in socialism, some of whom are active 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

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Production: Ferdousur Rehman

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

Contributions and letters deadline for

## CHARTIST #295

### 08 December 2018

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Cover by Martin Rowson

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## OUR HISTORY

## OUR HISTORY - 80

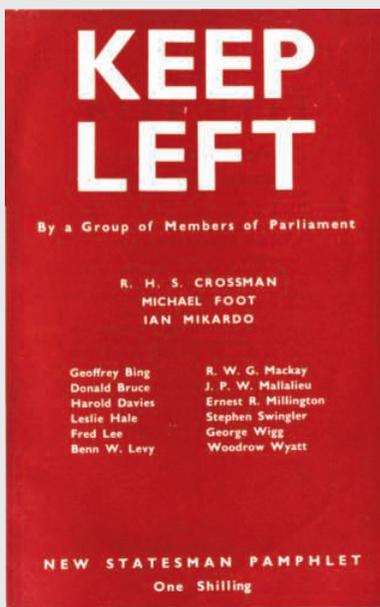
## Keeping Left - 1947

The Keep Left group was formed in January 1947 by a group of left-wing backbench Labour MPs grouped round the New Statesmen journal. Their first pamphlet, *Keep Left*, was published in May 1947, edited by Richard Crossman, Michael Foot and Ian Mikardo, but signed by 12 other MPs. In the preface, it stated that “we are convinced that the Movement is in the mood for plain speaking. Our ‘red paper’ tries to carry on from where the government White Papers left off.” The paper concluded with a 20 point programme covering economic policy, manpower management, industrial democracy and international policy with a focus on Europe, relations with the USSR, the Middle East and African decolonisation. In 1950, a second pamphlet was published – *Keeping Left* – reflecting on five years of Labour government. This was signed by 12 MPs, including Crossman and Mikardo, Richard Acland and Barbara Castle. The action programme now had 30 points – 10 on foreign policy and defence; six on ‘towards the world fair deal’ and 14 on ‘what to do at home’, concluding with the case for a ‘more vital democracy’ taken from the 1943 Common Wealth manifesto, no doubt reflecting Richard Acland’s membership of the *Keeping Left* group.

The fullest study of *Keep Left* and other left pressure groups under the 1956-51 Governments is Jonathan Scheer’s 1988 study *Labour’s Conscience*. The development of the Bevanite left into the 1950’s and the role of *Tribune*, *Victory for Socialism* and the hard-left

*Socialist Fellowship* is covered in Mark Jenkins’ 1979 *Bevanism: Labour’s High Tide*. A study of the *Tribune* Group by N H Twitchell was published in 1988.

“The lesson for the next five years is clear. Socialism cannot be achieved from the top by mere legislation. There will be many more Bills to pass, but, by and large, the Government already possesses on paper most of the powers it requires to create the framework for a socialist community. The next steps are: i) to make the paper powers effective powers for the planning of our mixed economy, and ii) to enlarge the freedom, and with it the responsibility, of the common man, so that he can participate more fully in the decisions which affect his life at work and at home. For socialism is a two-way process. It does not, like communism, mean transferring the economic power of the all-powerful capitalist to an all-powerful Party, and so creating full employment and fair shares by direction and decree. It means distributing economic power between three groups: i) the democratic representatives in Parliament and on the local authorities; ii) enlightened management; and iii) the workers themselves. That is why, as we shall see, Socialism demands great changes in the outlook not only of the managerial class, but of the Trades Unions and the Co-operative Movement. The dirty clothes of capitalism are unsuitable for a socialist community. Not only management, but the labour movement itself, must be transformed to fulfil their new roles.”



## LETTER

## A very British coup &amp; Labour’s Defence commitment

Dear Chartist,

The election of Jeremy Corbyn to the leadership of the Labour party in September 2015 tested the limits of British democracy. Corbyn is a long-standing supporter of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, the Stop the War Coalition and an opponent of Trident. He was described as ‘... the least militaristic person since the 1930s to command a major British party’. Just three days after Corbyn’s election, the Chief of Defence Staff, Sir Nick Houghton, described Trident as ‘non-discretionary’. This was a rebuff to Corbyn by attempting to close down the debate on the replacement of Britain’s nuclear weapons before it had started. On the same day the First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir George Zambellas, had also stated publicly how vital Trident is to Britain’s security, in spite of the constitutional convention that military chiefs avoid political controversy. A week after his election ‘a senior serving general’ told *The Sunday Times* that the armed forces would take ‘direct action’ to stop a Corbyn government downgrading the military: ‘There would be mass resignations at all levels and you would face the very real prospect of an event which would effectively be a mutiny... You would see a major break in convention with senior generals directly and publicly challenging Corbyn over vital important policy decisions such as Trident, pulling out of NATO and any plans to emasculate and shrink the size of the armed forces. The Army just wouldn’t stand for it.’ The MoD described the general’s comments as ‘not helpful’ but ruled out a leak inquiry.

Labour and Conservative Prime Ministers have struggled to contain the power of the military elite, which has been emboldened by its support within the media, civil society and the public. By the 2017 general election even Corbyn’s Labour party endorsed the target of 2% of GDP spent on defence, something it hadn’t been committed to in 2015. Militarisation has contributed to a culture, which supports the use of military force as long as it does not put British lives at great risk. Whether or not current levels of militarism endure or not remains to be seen.

Paul Dixon (see article, page 11)

# Austerity Britain- things can only get worse

**W**ithout a decisive break from 'constructive ambiguity' to a 'ditch Brexit' position Labour is in danger of being dragged into the Brexit swamp. There lurks Trump with his protectionist ultra-nationalist trade war agenda. There swims the nationalist far right of Salvini in Italy, and neo-fascists in Austria, Hungary and Poland with the alt-Right growing in Germany and a wounded Front National in France. There also loiters our own Boris Johnson, Rees Mogg, Liam Fox and the ragbag of 'Little England' fantasists who tell us the benefits of Brexit may not be felt for 50 years.

Labour's fence-sitting worked well for the last snap General Election, attracting most Remain voters (seats like Canterbury would otherwise not have been won) and peeling back a smaller proportion of UKIP voters in Leave areas. The 48% supporting Remain has grown slightly according to recent polls and is likely to grow even larger when the 80 scenarios of a 'no deal' — covering everything from farming and fisheries to finance and food — are fully publicized.

The fudge of the Chequers negotiating position is unlikely to secure a deal opening the way to a trade agreement. The EU will not agree to Britain doing tariff checks while the Northern Ireland border issue remains a huge stumbling block barring the way.

Meanwhile the clock is ticking with barely six months before formal exit from the EU at the end of March. There will be no transition period if agreement on the first stage is not reached. Ten-mile lorry jams at Dover, huge flight delays and cancellations at major airports will be but the tip of the iceberg. Crashing out of the EU with no deal will mean businesses will be hit with high tariffs with a race to the bottom on taxation while being at the mercy of the US and Chinese titans intent on crushing smaller economies and cherry-picking what remains. This will hit jobs, living standards and public services hard.

Fighting austerity will be a daunting task in a protectionist world economy with few allies. Ending spending cuts and lifting incomes is one of the cornerstones of the Corbyn/McDonnell strategy for renewal. Without at least a European context to build investment, end tax havens and corporate tax dodging, as **Prem Sikka** argues, and promote training with new tech, sustainable employment we won't even be at base camp on the Everest of a climb.

As **Alena Ivanova** from Another Europe is Possible argues, we need a left Labour Party which embraces European-wide solutions and rejects the increasingly threadbare Brexit offer coming from the government. She puts the case for a People's Vote to reject any/no deal and remain. A Tory

Brexit will not meet Labour's six tests as **Catherine West MP** argues in echoing calls for a peoples vote. Labour should be campaigning on two tracks: on one hand pressing for a parliamentary vote and rejection of whatever deal or no-deal an enfeebled Theresa May can offer with a minimum of extending Article 50 to stay in the customs union and single market; on the other pushing for a general election with a manifesto pledge to remain and reform and a People's Vote. This could provide Labour with a principled, democratic winning formula.

In this issue we outline central questions Labour needs to address to effectively dump the Tories. **Don Flynn** sets out the challenges for the newly resurgent Labour left if it is to consolidate its position and win an election with a transformative programme. This includes a rejection of

Brexit and a pan-European recovery programme embracing free movement and democratic renewal. **Frances O'Grady** sets out the challenges facing the trade union movement, again with Brexit as the chief threat to jobs, security and living standards in turning back austerity. **Dave Lister** outlines a national education service plan, while **Ann Black** surveys Labour's Democracy Review designed to strengthen the voice of rank and file members. **Paul Dixon** highlights the threats from the military establishment both under Blair and more venomously against Corbyn Labour's radical peace politics in rejecting the Iraq and Afghan wars and NATO warmongering.

In Latin America new progressive forces are surfacing. **Manuel Cortes** reports on the Mexican general election which resulted in a socialist president for the first time in almost 100 years. While **Thomas de Barros** looks at prospects for a return of the Brazilian Workers' Party.

As Labour goes to Liverpool for the most important conference in years it is vital that we take the internationalist, remain and reform European road to renewal. Anything less will mean demoralization for the thousands of radical young and older new members, a weakening of our campaigning resolve and a reduction of our chances of general election success.

Jeremy Corbyn needs to start openly challenging the lies of the Tory Brexiters and stop some of our shadow ministers echoing the nonsense about further votes being undemocratic. A robust critique of Leave arguments, mainly from the right but including a few neo-staliniists who have little concept of the declining influence of national states in a world of globalised capitalism, could yet win over voters in many Remain parliamentary seats. Defeat for a May deal, probably early in the new year, could precipitate her resignation and a general election. Labour must be ready.

**It is vital that we  
take the  
internationalist, remain  
and reform European  
road to renewal**

# Fast line to failure?

**Paul Salveson** says there's still time to reconsider HS2

**T**he traditional left likes big infrastructure projects. They create jobs and provide long-term infrastructure for the nation. So whether it's a new motorway, airport (or new runway), railway (slow speed or high-speed), they are almost by definition 'a good thing'. In addition, it's often asserted that major infrastructure projects can assist economically disadvantaged areas. Environmental campaigners tend to be inherently distrustful – wary of extra pollution through car or air traffic, as well as opposed to the environmental damage which new roads or railways cause. The new high-speed railway from London to Birmingham, Leeds and Manchester – HS2 – exemplifies the divisions. Labour and the unions seem broadly in favour of the scheme, with local authorities in the main cities seeing it as a tool of urban regeneration. Most environmental campaigners are against it.

But what of the influential but fragmented 'rail lobby', comprising the industry and its suppliers but also the large number of campaigning groups who have succeeded in shifting much Government policy towards a much more pro-rail stance, compared with the road-obsessed approach of the 60s and 70s? It's very divided. Unsurprisingly, rail industry suppliers are all in favour, with the prospect of multi-billion pound contracts for rolling stock, signalling equipment and actual construction. Some rail campaigners are in support, seeing any rail investment as automatically positive. Yet a large number of experienced industry professionals, as well as lay campaigners, think the whole thing is ill-conceived. This is an interesting group: knowledgeable and pro-rail and not instinctively against 'high-speed rail' as seen in mainland Europe, China and Japan. I include myself amongst their number.

So what's wrong with HS2? The scheme is for a 400 km/h railway starting at Euston and running via west London then out through the Chilterns to a major interchange south of Birmingham. The route then splits, with a branch

terminating at a new station at Birmingham (Curzon Street). Phase 2a continues to Crewe and will eventually continue joining the existing West Coast Main Line near Wigan with trains continuing north to Scotland. In Phase 2b there will be branches to Manchester and another line heading to Leeds and the East Coast main Line, with a line joining up with the existing East Coast main Line near York. As with Birmingham, both Leeds and Manchester stations will be dead-ends. There is also serious consideration being given to a Northern east-west route – HS3 or 'Northern Powerhouse Rail' linking Merseyside, Manchester, Leeds and the east coast.

There are a number of big issues with HS2 as it's currently conceived which should make Labour MPs and local authorities pause for thought. Above all, it's a hugely London-centric scheme which will benefit the economy of London at the expense of other regions, particularly the North. It will suck wealth further into London, with only some localised regeneration benefits in the areas around the three termini (Birmingham, Leeds and Manchester). At £56 billion (a very conservative estimate and challenged by several commentators, including internal government sources) it's a very high price to pay to bring a few more jobs to cities which are already doing pretty well. The benefits to large towns which are currently struggling are minimal. And it won't link to HS1, allowing through trains to mainland Europe, and neither will it serve Heathrow which would help reduce the number of highly polluting domestic flights.

The maximum speed that the line is engineered for is very high – at 250 mph it is much more than European high-speed operation and has consequences for where it goes and places it serves. It is engineered to get from A to B as quickly as possible and misses out large towns and cities in pursuit of the very high-speed holy grail (which is hugely environmentally damaging, both in terms of route and energy consumption). Ironically, it doesn't do what any sensible high-speed rail



HS2 a white elephant Image:Getty

project should do and serve the country as a whole, including more distant cities which currently tend to use aviation rather than rail. Above all, this means Glasgow and Edinburgh, but Bristol, Cardiff and Swansea should be included in a strategic approach to a British high-speed network, which is fully integrated with the conventional network. HS2 is neither. Interestingly, the new trains for HS2 which are compatible with the conventional network can only go at a maximum speed of 115 mph, unlike the existing Pendolinos and ageing HST fleet which can run at 125 mph (in the case of Pendolinos they have a design speed of 140 mph but existing signalling limits them to 125). So new 'high-speed trains' post 2033 (that's the target) will actually be slower from Preston northwards.

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

The new route south of Birmingham will free up capacity on existing routes, though mainly for longer-distance suburban services into London. It will do nothing to provide extra capacity into the major northern or Midlands cities. It won't help the rail freight industry, whose main spokespersons (including Labour peer Tony Berkeley) are strongly opposed to the current scheme.

I haven't dwelt much on cost. Even the official estimate is very high and likely to be exceeded. A final figure of around £100bn isn't unrealistic. You could get an awful lot of good quality conventional railway for that, with money left over for schools and hospitals. There's still time to reconsider. **C**

# Hothouse earth

**Dave Toke** is not so rosy on Gove's warming to sparkling wine prospects

**A**s the UK sweltered along with much of the rest of the world Michael Gove was talking about how climate change would build the wine market. "One of the opportunities of a changing climate is the chalky soil of parts of England, combined with the weather that we are having, means that English sparkling wine will have a bumper harvest", he said in the Daily Telegraph on August 2nd. I suppose you could also think of other advantages for a British nationalist position. There's no need to go on holiday in Spain to get the sun. People can just stay in the UK and enjoy the heat without having to meet many Spaniards. Although, having said that many Brits go to the Costa del Sol and just meet with fellow Brits anyway!

But of course, the truth is a lot darker. Heatwaves mean more fatalities, even in the UK. Meanwhile, as scientists have warned, by the year 2100 parts of the Persian Gulf and Northern China could become toxic for people forced to be outside air conditioned buildings for long periods. That is if the world continues to miss greenhouse gas reduction targets. Of course rises in sea levels will accelerate, although Gove's constituency of Surrey Heath won't be the first to disappear.

Some even talk about 'tipping points' whereby we are close to the stage where a bit more warming will result in feedback effects that will increase the temperatures still further, plunging us into what is called a hothouse Earth. But of course, the median projections produced by the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change do not assume this.

Of course we don't want to encourage people just to give up hope – like the old advert for a brand of Aussie lager that said the world is frying so you might as well have a drink! But neither should we engage with the Gove-like complacency that says that things will get as rosy as the glass of sparkling wine served up at a Tory summer fete!

Meanwhile Friends of the



**Gove with a reusable cup**

Earth are campaigning for people to forsake mainstream chewing gum that is apparently just a form of plastic. It seems our discarded bits of chew are thus just part of the mountains of plastic that are polluting the oceans. Originally chewing gum came from resin extruded from tree bark, but for a long time now it has come from oil based polymers. 'Just One Ocean', which is campaigning against plastic use, put it this way: 'The Wrigley Company uses butadiene-based synthetic rubbers, polymers synthesised from petroleum by products, similar to those used in car tyres.' Now that does not sound so appealing! But, Iceland, the often ecologically sensitive retail chain, is now selling a biodegradable chewing gum that is not made from plastic. Iceland's boss Malcolm Walker, said: "I absolutely detest the mess that discarded plastic chewing gum creates on our streets, and the fortune that is wasted by councils trying to clear it up."

### **Blaming the EU**

True to the stereotypical position of Brexiteers in blaming things they don't like on the EU, Ian Duncan-Smith is blaming the EU for a policy on carbon taxes that was actually introduced by the Government in which he sat. He wrote in the Daily Telegraph on August 16th that 'Outside the EU....the UK could.... decide how to reform emissions trading and wider climate change policy. Abolition of the damaging climate

price floor mechanism would be a good place to start'. In fact the policy (really called the 'carbon price floor') was a purely British inspired effort to ensure that the carbon levy on fossil fuel energy used by the electricity sector was taxed at a more consistent rate by setting a minimum level of tax. Indeed the policy has impressed others in the EU so that other states, including France, are thinking of introducing it themselves. Perhaps Duncan-Smith's ire is influenced by the fact that this (carbon price floor) policy was an initiative introduced by Chancellor George Osborne in 2011. These days, perhaps, Duncan Smith cannot distinguish between something done by Osborne & that done by the EU.

I have warmed to the idea of a carbon price floor since it was introduced. It seemed at the time to be a measure that just kept old nuclear power stations running a bit longer whilst doing nothing to help new renewable energy schemes. That's because companies need legally enforceable contracts to guarantee the future price for which they are going to be able sell energy. With politicians like Duncan Smith hovering around aiming to cut things associated with the word 'climate' in it, banks won't lend funds to projects on the basis of such policies. But now some wind farms are getting older and could do with a bit of help to keep going, I'm warming to the idea, as is the climate in general. **G**

**Dr David Toke is Reader in Energy Politics at the University of Aberdeen**

## BREXIT

# Crunch time for Corbyn's Labour on Brexit

**Alena Ivanova** reports the Left is gearing up for a fight on Brexit - and not a minute too soon



100,000 march for Peoples vote 23 June

**T**here are those - on the left, as well as the right of the political spectrum - that are adamant to tell anyone who'd listen and plenty who won't that Brexit is a done deal. But having spent this heatwave summer helping put together a programme of dozens of speakers at events across the country, lobbying Labour party members to support an anti-Brexit contemporary motion for conference and stuffing boxes and boxes of leaflets and posters to go out to street activists all over, I am just not buying it. Brexit was never of the left or for the left, so instead of scrambling around to make the best of a catastrophe, we might as well do what we do best - campaign for what is in the best interests of working people and social justice.

Another Europe is Possible has, since it launched to defend the Remain and Reform position in the 2016 EU referendum,

established itself as the natural home for unapologetically progressive and left-wing voices fighting the anti-Brexit corner. And it is only natural that we have continued to do so, even after that referendum was lost.

**[T]he prospect of us flunking out of the EU is ever more present and we desperately need people to stand up and speak out.**

Because fundamentally we all agree democracy does not stop at one vote, one election, one historical point in time. Democracy is a constant process, and one where the left is often on the losing end, yet we keep going because we believe it is ultimately better than any alternative.

So where is the campaign to stop Brexit headed and who's in the driving seat?

Without going into a full-blown analysis of the Brexit vote, it's vital to take a good look around us and establish several home truths. First of all, there is no single group of Leave voters, just as there is no single group of Remainers. There are battles to be won on many fronts - on immigration, on nationalisation, on regulations and workers' rights, and they all have a role to play in the overall Brexit battle. If you campaign for remaining in the EU but against freedom of movement, if you campaign for remaining in the EU but don't have a game plan to change restrictive laws demanding competition in services, if you campaign for remaining in the EU but leave aside the damaging anti-union laws in the UK, then Another Europe is probably not the campaign for you. But if you agree with us that these are all

questions we need to face head-on, then read on because we have a lot of work to do.

Home truth number 2: outside of the small world of the British left, Lexit does not exist. In its conception and its implementation during the referendum campaign, Leave was the right-wing option. I would love to see polling that would show where most voters who chose to wave goodbye to the EU got their main campaign arguments, and I doubt the SWP will rank high on that list. However, left-wing arguments weren't leading the Remain camp either, and this is a mistake we can't afford to make again.

This time around, we have a remarkable opportunity to build a people's vote campaign that speaks to people not just about the economic dangers - made evident even just through the process of the failed negotiations, but about the possibility of having a different European Union, a different relationship with our elected representatives, a different way of doing democracy. We could turn this into our version of the Scottish referendum and end up with a general public more aware, more politically engaged and more determined to fight for the social justice we all deserve and that Labour can deliver for us.

So this summer, ahead of the all-important Labour conference in September, and even more all-important vote in Parliament in October, we decided to take the campaign on the road. The Left Against Brexit speaker tour revolves around a simple concept - we had a campaigning network during the referendum, and understandably since we lost it, there has been some downtime for activists. However, the prospect of us flunking out of the EU is ever more present and we desperately need people to stand up and speak out.

The meetings we have had so far have been incredibly successful - speaker after speaker defended the Corbyn project, defended the fight against the Tories, condemned austerity and the anti-democratic processes that do exist in the EU, but they also brought home the truth. For the left, there is nothing to be gained from leaving the Union and still be subjected to the same restrictive global neoliberal framework.

There is neither ambition, nor merit in attempting to build socialism in one country. There is

also no hope for success. There is no Brexit scenario that helps us against the rise of the far right. There is no appeasement to be offered to the groups of hate whereby we are left to build our socialist vision in peace. So far, we have held meetings in Manchester, London, Bristol, Birmingham, Liverpool and Nottingham, and still plan for Glasgow (30 Aug), Leeds (3 Sept), Oxford (10 Sept), Norwich (11 Sept), Sheffield (12 Sept), York (13 Sept) and Newcastle (20 Sept).

This is an ambitious endeavour not purely because of the scale of the tour, but more importantly because it wasn't set up just to reassure people on the left that others still agree with them Brexit is a bad idea. It is meant to re-build our network of

**We are under no illusions - another vote could be lost just as easily as we lost the first one. But with an economy in crisis and a political culture continuously making pathetic attempts to pander to the rising far right, it is also not a guarantee that the next general election will come soon enough**

activists, to re-energise people to take the next step and start having the uncomfortable conversations in their Labour branches, in their unions, in their Momentum meetings, and of course with friends and neighbours in their communities. We are using the Left Against Brexit meetings as catapults for street activities, for campaigning within and beyond labour movement structures and for linking people to do all that more effectively.

A key element in the strategy undoubtedly is the Labour party conference in Liverpool this year, as the last chance for Labour party members to have a say in our Brexit policy before the dreaded March 2019. As anyone who has ever observed a looming deadline draw close, by now we



**Alena Ivanova is campaign organiser for Another Europe is Possible**

should all realise that procrastination is not an option and we need to deliver a tangible result - in this case a policy that the majority of our members and voters agree with.

While the call for a people's vote may have been picked up by a whole array of unsavoury characters for the Labour left, it is still in and of itself a reasonable way out of the Tory Brexit disaster, and if it manages to rally the party members behind it, it could be the strong left-wing campaign Remain never managed to be.

Labour for a People's Vote is pushing a contemporary motion at this year's party conference which calls for a general election demand with a public vote manifesto pledge for the final deal. Crucially, it also calls for a radical government that will tax the rich accordingly, expand public ownership and abolish anti-union laws. What is needed is for the left at conference to rally around that call and not be sidelined into squabbles with the Labour right who may try and use the issue to drive a wedge between Corbyn supporters. The reality is they no longer run conference, they don't have a hold over the membership and the quickest way to making the likes of Progress completely irrelevant is if we took back the question of our membership of the European Union and gave it the firmly left-wing grounding it needs.

Readers will know the deadline for contemporary motions is the 13 September and what could be more contemporary than the looming exit from the EU? The Labour for a People's Vote model motion will be discussed by over 150 CLPs and hopefully passed by many of those. The text and guidance on submitting can be found on [www.labourpeoplesvote.org](http://www.labourpeoplesvote.org)

We are under no illusions - another vote could be lost just as easily as we lost the first one. But with an economy in crisis and a political culture continuously making pathetic attempts to pander to the rising far right, it is also not a guarantee that the next general election will come soon enough, or indeed that it will be the Labour victory we all desperately need. What the left needs to do therefore is boldly go on the attack against Brexit, deploying the enthusiasm and confidence that the Corbyn movement brings and convince the public another Britain and another Europe is possible, and so is another world. **C**

# Lions led by donkeys?

**Paul Dixon** on the Generals' drive and government complicity in the Iraq and Afghan Wars

**T**he 'ruling class' has betrayed Britain. The generals 'enthused' for the Iraq war 2003 and the escalation of Britain's involvement in Afghanistan, 2006. They were 'panting' to wage wars for which they 'were woefully, shamefully ill-prepared and under-resourced'.

These are not the words of Jeremy Corbyn or John McDonnell, but conservative columnist and military historian Max Hastings in response to the Chilcot Report. Hastings concluded that the Iraq war 'cannot properly be considered Blair's war, of which the Armed Forces became victims...'

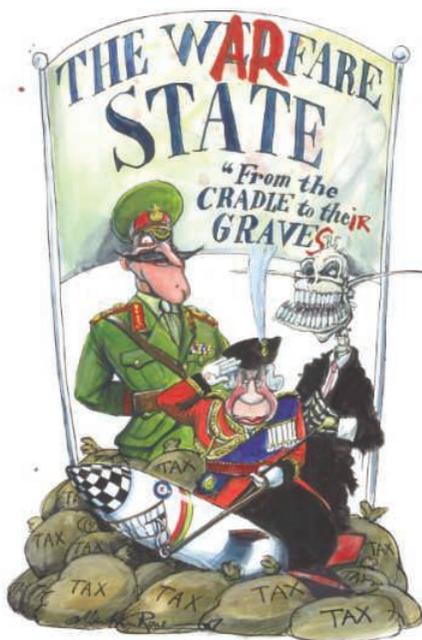
The Chilcot Report was released in July 2016 on the centenary of the Battle of the Somme and again raised the question as to whether the British army are 'lions led by donkeys'?

The Chilcot Report found remarkable evidence that the military had pressured for maximum British involvement in the invasion of Iraq. Chilcot argued that the size and composition of the UK military contribution to the invasion was 'largely discretionary'. The US were most concerned to have Britain's symbolic rather than military participation.

In July 2002, the Prime Minister Tony Blair did assure President Bush that "I will be with you, whatever." But at this point a much more limited British contribution to the invasion force was envisaged. The generals used their relationship with the US military to get the US President to put pressure on the UK for the maximum British military contribution.

At a meeting with President Bush on 7th September 2002, Tony Blair 'had been alarmed by the US expectations that the UK would lead the northern axis [the invasion of Iraq from Turkey] ...'. Blair had to caution President Bush about the extent of the UK's military role in Iraq.

General David Richards, later head of the British Army and then the Armed Forces, lobbied hard for the Army's involvement. This was in spite of the fact that he was 'uneasy about the war' and regards it, with the benefit of



hindsight, 'as a grand strategic error'.

The military chiefs perceived that if they did not use their assets in the Iraq war then they would lose them in defence cuts: it was a question of 'use it or lose it'.

The generals succeeded in persuading the Prime Minister to agree to the deployment of 46,000 British military personnel and the option with the strongest role for the Army.

The unpopularity of the Iraq war, the failure to find weapons of mass destruction and the deteriorating security situation led senior members of the military to reach the view that little more would be achieved in Iraq. They argued that it would make more sense to concentrate military effort on Afghanistan where it might have greater effect.

The military made the 'high risk' assumption that as British troops drew down in Iraq they would be re-deployed to the war in Afghanistan.

The military reassured politicians, however, that fighting two wars simultaneously in Iraq and Afghanistan was sustainable. The Chief of Defence Staff, General Sir Michael Walker told the Chilcot Inquiry: "So we were giving them [the politicians] the advice [on Afghanistan], which they were following. I don't think we had any difficulty with that."

The military's 'high risk' assumption that troops could be redeployed from Iraq to Afghanistan was undermined by talk of British 'strategic failure' in Iraq during 2005. The generals made the deployment to Helmand sound as attractive as possible in order for the politicians to approve the mission. The deployment was presented as a limited, 'peace building' operation, with a three-year time frame and small budget.

The military deployed to Helmand in April 2006 but quickly shifted the mission from 'peace building' to 'war fighting'. This was the most intense war fighting the British Army had been involved in since Korea. They were in danger of being overrun by the Taliban and had to be quickly reinforced.

General Sir Richard Dannatt, the new head of the British Army stated, in September 2006, that the military was "running hot" and could only "just" cope. On 12 October 2006, he launched a stinging, public attack on the Labour government claiming that the 'Military Covenant' had been breached. The politicians should have properly funded the military, respected the sacrifices of the armed forces and put the country on a 'war footing' to rally public support for the war in Afghanistan.

The 'Military Covenant' was invented by the Army in 2000. It was claimed by some to date from the time of Wellington, if not to be as old as soldiering itself.

In 2009, Dannatt argued, 'We would never have knowingly engaged on two major operations to run simultaneously with an army organized to do one'. By 2014, he suggested that the Army should have reconsidered the Afghan mission.

The Chilcot evidence suggests that the generals bear considerable responsibility for overstretching the military by pursuing the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The generals created the crisis that they then successfully blamed on the politicians. They were then able to use this crisis to increase their power over policy and promote the militarisation of British politics and society. **C**

**Professor Paul Dixon is Honorary Research Fellow at Birkbeck College, University of London and the author of a report *Warrior Nation: War, Militarisation and British Democracy* published by Forceswatch available free at [www.Forceswatch.net](http://www.Forceswatch.net)**

# Antisemitism – a global threat

**Rachel Horwitz** explains that the rise in antisemitism is real. Labour needs to be alert to its appearance in its own ranks and have plans to deal with it.



Jewish Leadership Council rally against anti-Semitism

The UK's antisemitism problem cannot be separated from the consequences of the 2008 economic crisis. The resulting political instability and austerity policies have helped legitimize every form of bigotry and hatred in British society. The result of the Brexit vote stoked extreme nationalism and myths and the election of Donald Trump has further normalized racist rhetoric.

Antisemites too are increasingly organised, confident and empowered. The Community Security Trust, which monitors and records antisemitic incidents, recorded its worst ever number in 2017 at 1,382, a likely underestimate as most UK hate crimes are unreported. Most antisemitic incidents involve verbal harassment and abuse, but also include property damage and violence.

Antisemitism has returned as a political force when Jews are more critical of Israel than ever. Even the Board of Deputies of British Jews criticized Netanyahu's recent new law enshrining religious discrimination into the constitution. The Movement for Reform Judaism have protested against Israel's discriminatory laws on marriage.

Antisemitism does exist in all political parties, such as the members of a Conservative Association at Oxford University

who sang Nazi songs, and Lib Dems Jenny Tonge and David Ward. David Icke, Tony Gosling and the Holocaust denier Nick Kollerstrom were all Green party members, and UKIP has openly embraced the alt-right. Yet Labour under Corbyn has seen this issue become a crisis that threatens his leadership.

Any popular left-wing leader in the UK would have attracted the support of antisemites and would have struggled with this problem, let alone one with Corbyn's history. His widespread popularity has meant conspiracy theorists on the 'fringe' of the left have begun to support and join Labour.

Sometimes, leftists find 'fascist' ideas hard to recognize. European antisemitism usually views Jews as powerful, rich, and evil. These beliefs can coexist with traditionally left-wing views of capitalism, the health service and poverty; you can oppose and campaign against injustice while believing 'the Jews did it'. In the 1930s, the NSDAP produced pamphlets encouraging a vote for Hitler so the 'working class' could take control.

Similarly, although conspiracy theories are frequently packaged as entertainment, they are an insidious way of spreading hate, fake history and pseudoscience. Conspiracy theories about Jews are often spread by professionals like David Icke, who continues to

receive sympathetic media interviews despite having promoted the Tsarist forgery Protocols of the Elders of Zion, which purports to show a Jewish conspiracy.

International developments also influence the UK, with the far right having taken power in countries such as Hungary and Poland. Mainstream and far-left groups in Europe have also embraced anti-migrant, islamophobic and antisemitic sentiments. This often comes with pro-Assad and conspiratorial views on Syrian rebels. These ideas have been promoted by RT and Iranian Press-TV, which has also promoted Holocaust denial. However, perhaps the election of Donald Trump has had the biggest impact internationally. When the president of Britain's main ally talks about 'right and wrong on many, many sides' in response to neo-Nazi protests, it is hard to be worried about accusations of bigotry.

Inaction on the left and a willingness to ignore and cover for antisemitic discourse has resulted in its widespread acceptance, at the same time as the resurgence of the far right. Antisemitism kills and hurts vulnerable people. Instead of complaining about 'smears', we can be proactive in driving out bigotry and hate, by listening to people's experiences and examining our own behaviour and assumptions. **C**

**Rachel Horwitz is an anti-fascist activist and MA student**

# All change for Welsh Labour?

**Peter Rowlands** assesses prospects for a left Welsh Labour leader

**T**he decision by Carwyn Jones, the Welsh Government's First Minister, (and since 2011 the most senior elected Labour politician in the UK) to stand down in the autumn, triggering an election for leader, heralds major changes in Welsh politics.

The electoral system to be used will not be determined until a special conference in September. This is because last year, in a controversial decision, the Welsh Executive ruled that the previous electoral college system be retained for the election of leader and deputy, despite the adoption UK wide and by Scotland of an OMOV system. An election for the deputy post, which did not previously exist, was held last autumn, under the old electoral college system. It was won by Carolyn Harris MP, despite her gaining fewer individual votes than her only competitor. Strong campaigning by the left against this result and for the adoption of OMOV ensued. This could well now happen as there have been some union changes of view.

The election of a new leader is significant in that it could mark a change of direction for Labour in Wales if the candidate of the left, Mark Drakeford, is elected. This is more likely to happen if OMOV is adopted, but could well be the case even if the electoral college system is retained. Drakeford, formally an advisor to previous leader Rhodri Morgan, was elected in 2011 and has been seen as the leading figure on the left since then. He has (early August) 13, or almost half, of the current AMs supporting him, probably reflecting his capability and experience as well as his ideological outlook.

Jones's resignation, although he may have been thinking of standing down anyway, was undoubtedly strongly influenced by Carl Sergeant, a Welsh Government minister, taking his own life following his suspension after unspecified allegations against him last autumn.

There were concerns expressed over Jones's failure to follow proper procedures, although he was cleared of this, but there is to be an inquiry into the whole affair, which is yet to take place. In



**Carwyn Jones stands down after 'the darkest of times'**

February Sergeant's son was elected to replace him, openly with the aim of seeking justice for his father which he and his family do not accept has occurred. It was barely surprising therefore that Jones announced that he would be standing down this autumn.

The general view on the left in Wales is that Welsh Labour has drifted to the right since Jones took over from Rhodri Morgan in 2009, with lesser concern about maintaining 'clear red water' between themselves and what were to shortly be Tory governments, and a lack of enthusiasm for the Corbyn leadership. In particular there was a capitulation to central government over education, with an effective return to banding and league tables. The advent of Drakeford as leader could well reverse this trend, which is certainly what the left is looking for.

Having said that Wales, along with Scotland, can be seen as a beacon of hope in those areas it has control over, compared to England. There are no academies, free schools or grammar schools in Wales, where schools are run by local authorities. The NHS in Wales has free prescriptions, free hospital parking and controls and administers the service.

But political upheaval has not been confined to the Labour Party in Wales. In fact except for the

Lib-Dems, all parties represented in the Assembly are undergoing leadership contests. UKIP has elected the nastiest of their bunch of five AMs, although at least they refused to reinstate the egregious Hamilton.

It is the contest in Plaid Cymru that is of most interest to the left, where Leanne Wood, leader for six years, has tried to establish a left wing Welsh nationalist party with support beyond the traditional Welsh speaking areas in the North and West. In this she has been partially successful, as her stunning victory against the Labour AM in Rhondda in 2016 demonstrated, but it has not been enough. Many on the left in Wales admire Wood, but real nationalism (not to be confused with 'Rugby Nationalism') is just not a strong enough force in Wales, and Plaid is in danger of slipping back to being a primarily rural party whose concerns are mainly cultural.

There are huge problems in Wales, particularly in health, which it is now clear is grossly underfunded, Local Government, requiring a smaller number of larger authorities, education, environment, employment and more. But the prospect of a new and more radical political leadership gives hope to finding left wing solutions to these problems, notwithstanding UK-wide change. **C**

**Peter Rowlands**  
(Swansea West CLP)

# LIVERPOOL 2018

**\*Chartist Conference Special 2018\***

## Standing up for European solidarity

**Frances O'Grady** says workers must not be made to pay the price for Brexit

**T**his is a defining moment for the trade union movement, and even more so for the working people we represent. The UK is on the verge of leaving the EU, the government is in a shambolic mess and hard right Tory advocates of capitalist 'creative destruction' would prefer no deal at all. At stake are workers' jobs, rights and living standards for generations to come.

After a decade of crash, recession and stagnant wages, working people are rightly angry at a system that is plainly failing. Worryingly, the globally funded and networked 'Alt Right' is gaining traction by scapegoating migrants and refugees for problems caused by pro austerity politicians and tax dodging corporate titans.

Given succour by Brexit and the election of President Trump, right-wing populists now hold the keys to power in Italy, Hungary and Austria, and are a potent political force elsewhere. Here in the UK, Tommy Robinson's street thugs have been encouraged by leading alt-right figures including former White House adviser Steve Bannon. As the democratic voice of workers from all walks of life, trade unions have a special responsibility to lead the fight back against this growing menace. And we must work with our friends world-wide to out-organise the new far right.

A top priority is to ensure workers do not pay the price for Brexit. That means striking a deal for fair trade, investment and growth on which jobs and wages depend; safeguarding workers' rights trade unionists fought so hard to win; and pro-



**TUC marching for a new deal for working people**

tecting the Good Friday Agreement. The TUC has looked at all the options and believes workers' interests would be best served by staying in the Customs Union and Single Market, which guarantees a level playing field of rights at work on which collective agreements build. We've been clear that if the government has got a better idea then we want to hear it. But so far, the Prime Minister can't convince her own Cabinet, let alone anyone else.

We also need to set out our vision of the future beyond Brexit. That's why, the TUC is calling for a New Deal for working people. We need to address the root causes of people's anger: insecure jobs that don't pay enough to live on; sky high rents and a shortage of council housing; and schools, hospitals and councils starved of cash year after year. Every worker deserves the dignity of a great job, somewhere decent to live and public services they can rely on, from cradle to grave. Instead of blaming migrant workers, we want to stop

wage undercutting with a £10 minimum wage, a ban on zero hours and stronger trade union rights.

We also must get to grips with the profound challenges posed by the automation and digitalisation of work. The Bank of England estimates 15 million jobs may be vulnerable to new technology, with those communities already battered and bruised by industrial change most at risk. Companies such as Uber have made workers slaves to an app, denied even basic employment rights, and the likes of Amazon use surveillance tech to oppress and control workers. Yet technology could be used to liberate us all by creating socially useful goods and services, a greener economy and more satisfying work.

Whether it's the rise of the alt-right or the rise of the robots, we need a strong and growing global trade union movement to create a

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14>>

# Funding a left Labour programme

**Prem Sikka** says getting taxation policy right is critical for Labour

**T**ax revenues are the life-blood of all democracies. Without these, no state can alleviate poverty or provide healthcare, education, security, transport, pensions and public goods that are necessary for all civilised societies. They are of critical relevance to the next Labour government as it will inherit an economy broken by Brexit and the erosion of its manufacturing base. It will need to invest extensively in education, housing, healthcare and public ownership of railways and utilities. Yet tax revenues are under relentless attack from wealthy elites, large and small corporations, accountants, lawyers and financial experts.

The challenges for Labour are all too evident and a detailed analysis would require several books. In the space here I examine some issues relating to corporation tax, capital gains tax and wealth tax.

Companies like Apple, Amazon, Google and Facebook pay little or no corporate tax in the UK despite making huge profits. Most recently, Amazon paid corporation tax of £1.7 (\$2.2 million) on its UK sales of \$11.37 billion. A recent study by Thomas Tørsløv, Ludvig Wier and Gabriel Zucman estimates that around 40% of the profits of giant corporations are shifted to tax havens through intragroup transactions, such as royalty payments, management fees, interest payments and other practices. The trend is increasing.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13>>

more equal and democratic world. History has shown that workers advance furthest and fastest when they join together and bargain collectively. And that's why unions must put organising at the heart of everything we do.

In particular, we must engage young workers on the frontline of insecurity: speaking a language they can understand, harnessing their hopes and dreams and making a difference to their working lives. The TUC marked our 150th anniversary in June by launching a new digital programme, to find



Amazon paid corporation tax of £1.7 million on UK sales of \$11.37 billion

The EU and developing countries are amongst the biggest losers.

Here is how Thames Water shifted its profits to virtually eliminate its UK corporation tax bill. From December 2006 to March 2017, Thames Water was owned by Macquarie Bank. For 11 years Thames operated through a labyrinth of companies, with some registered in the Caymans. Returns for Macquarie and its investors averaged between 15.5% and 19% a year. For the period of its ownership Macquarie received an estimated £1.2 billion in dividends, but this was not the only return. Thames Water was loaded with intragroup debt through entities in the Cayman Islands and elsewhere and the debt did not have to be

used in the UK.

Its debt ballooned from about £2.4 billion to £10 billion and interest payments swelled the charges for customers. Tax relief on interest payments reduced corporate tax liability. For the period 2007 to 2015, the company's accounts show that it paid £3.186 billion in interest to other entities in the group alone. This would have been paid without deduction of any withholding tax. Entities in the Caymans and other low/no tax jurisdictions would have received the amounts tax free. At the same time, Thames Water would have been able to claim a tax deduction for the interest payments. Thames Water paid about £100,000 in corporation tax for the period 2007 to 2016.

new ways to win young workers into union membership. It's still work in progress, but in an age when many people live and work through their smartphones, increasingly unions must go digital too. Throughout our history, our movement has been at its best when we have been boldest.

Times may change, but our values stay true. It's by sticking together and fighting together that working people win together. Over the past year or so, trade unions have scored some incredible successes: workers took their first ever strike action at McDonalds and won a pay rise;



**Frances O'Grady, is TUC general secretary**

UNISON took the government to the Supreme Court and won a famous victory when tribunal fees were ruled unlawful; and despite facing every union-busting tactic in the book, trade unions finally won recognition at Ryanair.

For all the challenges we face, we should be confident about our future. Our movement has never been more relevant, nor more needed, than now. And if trade unions reach out to a new generation of workers to build a more equal economy, we can defeat the alt-right's politics of hate with a new unionism of hope. **C**

The current system of taxing corporations is dysfunctional. It was crafted more than a century ago and before the advent of corporate globalisation and e-commerce. There are now three key problems.

Firstly, under the rules companies are generally taxed at the place of their residence and control rather than where economic activity took place.

Secondly, each entity in a group of companies is treated as a separate taxable entity. Thus, if Amazon has 500 subsidiaries they are treated as 500 taxable entities. This gives companies enormous scope to shift profits and reduce their tax obligations. They play one country off against another and large proportions of corporate profits escape taxes altogether.

Thirdly, the authority of any nation state is confined to its defined geographical boundary, but in search of profits corporations roam the world and their operations are often integrated. Their subsidiaries in far flung places are part of an integrated supply chain. The big question is about the proportion of corporate profits which could be attributed to each country so that it could then tax it to raise revenues. This is done by using arm's length prices of various inputs under a system known as transfer pricing. But the problem is that in the era of global monopolies, independent arm's length prices are hard to obtain. This has enabled companies to play games with tax authorities.

A way forward is offered by the Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base (CCCTB) system advocated by the European Union. It sweeps away the above problems. Under this, a company like Amazon, regardless of the number of subsidiaries, will be treated as a single integrated entity. Its global profits would be apportioned to each country on the basis of a formula which takes account of sales, number of employees and other factors. CCCTB merely allocates profits and each country can set whatever rate of corporation tax that it wishes.

CCCTB can negate profit shifting and early estimates suggest that the biggest losers will be tax havens, including Ireland and Luxembourg because they rarely have a large volume of sales or number of employees. To make the change the EU needs to secure unanimous agreement and

may have to offer sweeteners to the opposing member states.

There is a long way to go, but Labour should support CCCTB. It can also act unilaterally and disallow certain expenses for tax purposes on the basis that they do not represent any independent economic activity. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has examined profit shifting under its Base Erosion Profit /Shifting (BEPS) project. It recommended that tax relief on corporate interest payments be restricted to between 10% and 30% of corporate earnings before interest, taxation, depreciation and amortization (EBITDA). Last year, the government enacted legislation to restrict it to 30% of EBITDA. This won't stop the tax games and the next Labour government should consider abolishing tax relief on interest payments altogether. Ordinary individuals cannot claim tax relief on interest payments whether for the purchase of sole residence or anything else. The rationale is that tax relief on interest payments distorts markets, creates bubbles, unfairness and financial instability. Well, the same logic should apply to businesses too.

Progressive Taxation to Tackle Inequalities

The next Labour government would need to address the inequalities exacerbated by Conservative economic policies. In 2003, households on the lower half of incomes earned £14,900, after inflation and housing costs, but by 2016/17 it declined to £14,800. This is translated into wealth inequalities. The most recent data published by the Office of National Statistics shows that the UK's wealthiest 10% of households owned 44% of aggregate total wealth.

In contrast the least wealthy 50% of the households owned just 9% of total wealth and middle wealth households (51% - 90%) had 44% of wealth. Yet the government has done little to check the inequalities. It reduced the highest marginal rate of tax on income above £150,000 from 50% to 45%. The wealthy make capital gains on their investment and the government policies again favour the well-off.

Currently, income and capital gains are taxed at different rates. For the tax year 2017-18, the UK levies a basic rate of income tax (20%) on taxable income of up to £33,500 (£31,500 for Scotland), 40% on taxable incomes between

£33,501 and £150,000 (between £31,501 and £150,000 for Scotland) and 45% for incomes above £150,000. At the same time the rates for capital gains tax (CGT) are 18% for basic rate taxpayers and 28% for higher rate taxpayers.

The tax rate differentials have created opportunities for accountants and lawyers to use their energies to convert income to capital gains, and even vice-versa if the circumstances are considered to be advantageous. If wealthy individuals succeed they can pay tax at 28% rather than at the marginal rate of 45%. These crazy policies further exacerbate inequalities.

Labour's 2017 manifesto is already committed to raising the highest marginal rate of income tax from 45% to 50%. It should consider curtailing capital gains tax avoidance strategies by abolishing the distinction between capital gains and income. Capital gains are windfall gains and increase the purchasing power and potential consumption of the individual. There is no qualitative difference between the two. Capital gains should be added to the individual's total income for the year and taxed at the appropriate marginal rates to reduce opportunities for avoidance.

Labour should also consider forms of wealth taxation. There are numerous forms of wealth – some arising from trade, innovation and production, which arguably confer some benefit on society at large. Others arise from speculation or windfalls where the recipient has done little or nothing to generate any wealth. There is some attempt to tax inherited wealth, but the rich have been very adept at avoiding inheritance through offshore ownership and trusts. Labour would need to examine the whole issue of tax on various categories of wealth.

All too often some individuals and companies have made fortunes from the effects of public expenditure. The construction of HS2, M25, the Jubilee line and other publicly funded projects has made land and infrastructure around these projects extremely valuable. The owners of land have become richer without spending anything. The next Labour government should demand a share of those gains so that the public purse also benefits from the gains arising from the public. Labour's 2017 manifesto promised to look at land tax. **C**



**Prem Sikka is professor of accounting at the University of Sheffield and emeritus professor of accounting at the University of Essex**

## STATE OF THE LEFT

# Labour left at a turning point

**Don Flynn** sets out the challenges facing Labour's left in seeking to build on successes and secure a Corbyn government



**T**he socialist left inside the Labour Party has been strengthened by the radical political moods gripping a large segment of the population in response to the impact of the austerity measures adopted by the Tory-led governments after 2010.

The half million rise in membership of the Party has sustained the radical leadership of Jeremy Corbyn and supported his call for an active role for government and the public sector in returning to economic growth while challenging the deepening inequality scarring British society.

The launch of Momentum, intended to give this surge a robust, organisational form, held out the hope that the new members would become engaged in important new political projects both at local level and more widely at national and international levels. In this way the left turn would be consolidated across all levels and a united labour movement would emerge with the resources needed to challenge the reign of free market, financialised global capitalism.

### **Inevitable victory?**

How are things working out for this project? The apt title for the grassroots movement,

Momentum, conjured up the idea that a force has been set in motion that would gather strength to the point of becoming unstoppable. This optimistic view has been read into a political strategy which has at various times come close to arguing that a Labour victory at a future election is all but inevitable, if only we all agree to hold back from the discussion of potentially contentious issues, and simply all get behind the slogan of Jeremy for PM.

The optimists in the ranks of the left are not entirely wrong in their enthusiasm for unity over controversy. The weirdness of the British electoral system combined with the deep unpopularity of an incompetent Tory government could well have the effect of precipitating Corbyn into office in Number 10 at almost any time in the next twelve months or so. But the fractiousness of the debate around Brexit has shown that there are issues that deeply divide the left, whose resolution has not been served by the reluctance of the Momentum leadership to offer a distinct perspective on this issue.

This approach to the task of politics and leadership has signalled to opponents of the left turn that there is something

about it which seems fragile. The centrist and right wing majority in the Parliamentary Party, having failed in its efforts to dislodge Corbyn through no-confidence votes in 2016, has learnt that a full frontal assault will not work, and is instead chipping away at specific issues where he is considered vulnerable. The often hard-to-follow shifts in the leadership line on the single market and customs union have been high on this list, as well as the more recent claims that Corbyn is the front man for a stratum of anti-semitic feeling across Labour.

### **Brexit – a working class perspective**

Chartist has argued that at this stage of the Brexit negotiations the Labour Party should have moved on from its position of 'constructive ambiguity' to the Tory-led Brexit negotiations and by now should be offering its working class base in particular a much clearer picture of the risks they will face if the UK crashes out of the single market with either no deal or a very poor agreement on access. This needs to be set out by referring to the issues which, we are told, led to the denizens of towns and cities outside the remain areas of London, Scotland and Northern Ireland to vote leave – namely

**Don Flynn is  
Chartist  
managing editor  
and former  
director of  
Migrant Rights  
Network**

what will happen to job prospects and public services when the arrangements of the last 45 years have been dismantled, and the reactionary fantasy of checking migration has been achieved.

The Momentum leadership has been diffident at best in offering a class-based perspective of life outside the EU. It worked hard during the period of the Brighton annual conference in 2017 to suppress any discussion of the Brexit issue, even in meetings and events during what otherwise was a very lively fringe programme. The line offered up was never anything better than ‘we support Jeremy Corbyn on the issue’.

### **Internationalism and the Left**

Labour’s new supporters have straddled a demographic that combines vulnerability to exploitative, zero-hour style work contracts, subjection to the burden of debt arising from efforts to raise skill levels through participation in higher education, and permanent insecurity in terms of their housing needs. But in addition, they constantly show up in psephological research studies as having broadly cosmopolitan outlooks on life, which means a willingness to frame concerns about their own life circumstances within the wider context of global settings. Awareness of a lousy jobs market runs alongside dismay at the xenophobic and nationalist turn in politics across the countries of advanced capitalism. The intensifying threat of human-induced climate change has made them more likely to be aware of the need for practical measures of international solidarity in order to mitigate harm to all people on the planet.

A robust internationalism ought to be at the heart of the left wing politics that have been gaining ground in the Labour Party. We are having to contend with currents that come dangerously close to the demand to ‘make Britain great again’. Defence of inconvenient migrant workers – never a popular cause for the Labour Party in any event – is further marginalised by uncontested acceptance that free movement for workers will come to an end when we finally quit the EU in March next year. In line with other trends observable in the French and German left, Bertolt Brecht’s admonition – meant for different times and different circumstances – of “grub now, ethics later”, is providing a banner for a

politics that will continue to divide working class communities on ethnic lines.

### **Demand for democracy**

There is considerable irony in the fact that, on the very issue where working class communities have registered most concern, the left in the Labour Party has least to say. That issue is democracy. Whilst the great majority of wage-earning citizens have shown awareness that stagnant wage levels and austerity-starved public services have made them poorer, their response has not, in the main, been a return to industrial militancy or its equivalent in defence of hospitals, schools, etc. Instead they have set up a complaint against the quality of the political leadership of the country which they accuse of leaving them behind whilst monied interests are allowed to crack on and get ever richer.

The populist revolt against the elites has shown awareness of the fact that Britain – and the English part of it in particular – is very badly run by a narrow

## **A robust internationalism ought to be at the heart of the left wing politics that have been gaining ground in Labour**

clique of individuals who all seem to have gone to the same public schools and universities and who have a free hand to plot together with their chums in the media to decide who is going to have a crack at running the country. Much of this agonising about the failure to govern in the interests of the majority has been displaced into an over-inflated antagonism towards the European Union, and hence the Brexit vote.

The left’s favoured slogan – ‘For the Many, Not the Few’ – has channelled some of the frustration and anger over the way things are turning out. But it leaves unanswered questions about what we could expect from a Labour government to reverse the huge increase in inequality. ‘Trust Jeremy Corbyn’s Labour’ seems to be the most complete response, when what we need is a detailed programme explaining how political power is going to be wrestled back from the elites and

rooted in a newly-invigorated democracy. If government is ever to be for the many then it has to mean a great deal more than just having Jeremy Corbyn in No. 10. It will mean a democratic revolution that will transform the entire character of the UK’s ancien regime, decentralising the state and building new organs of regional and local government, all equipped with real power to intervene in the economy and structure public services in ways which benefit the majority.

### **More than a Corbyn fan club?**

Three years on from Corbyn’s stunning victory in the leadership election, a huge surge in active membership of the party, and a dogged defence of his leadership against centrist and right wing would-be wreckers, it has to be said that the left has not yet made progress in formulating the political programme that would guide a Corbyn government and mobilise the social forces needed to bring about change. Leadership supporting events, from the Assemblies Against Austerity through to The World Transformed still have too much of the fan club approach about them, perhaps with a sprinkling of contributions from star bloggers and newspaper columnists to maintain the sense that new ideas are driving the movement.

In fact ‘new ideas’ are the very thing that the Momentum leadership and its kindred cliques seem to be determined to block. Check the debate on Brexit policy; back-track in the face of the bogus claims made by the right wing of a tsunami of antisemitism; and strangle any discussion of the democracy issue before it gets off the ground, are all part of the record to date.

But maybe it is not too late to change that. It could be that we still have time to set out a plan for tackling the damage that Brexit will do to working class Britain. Perhaps the left will consolidate its position amongst young radicals by supporting their internationalist commitments, rather than indulging in divisive ‘let’s take care of our own’ parochiality. It could be that the left will finally recognise that it is up to us, and no one else, to build and invigorate the movement for real democracy that Britain needs. But if it is to do these things it has to acknowledge the need to become something a great deal more than what it currently is. **C**

# For a national education service

David Lister on Reclaiming Education's proposals for a Labour programme

The umbrella group Reclaiming Education, which is made up of eight organisations including the Campaign for State Education (CASE), Comprehensive Future and the Socialist Education Association (SEA), has produced a pamphlet listing 39 points that they are suggesting could form the basis of the Labour Party's plans for a national education service. This is an excellent document which can be accessed via [www.reclaimingeducation.org.uk](http://www.reclaimingeducation.org.uk). This article highlights and expands on a few of these points.

- Their stating point, in line with the 2017 manifesto, is that our education system should be for the benefit of the many, not just the few.

- The academies and free schools programme must be ended and the responsibility for allocating school places returned to Local Authorities (LAs). This is of key importance. I would argue also for measures to be introduced to allow for academies to be returned to LA control with a focus on dealing with schools that have been forcibly academised and those academies that are failing, at least to start with.

- Remove the clauses in the Education Act 2011 which prevent LAs from building schools. Again, absolutely crucial. If there are to be no more academies or free schools LAs must have this power.

- Action to address the crisis in teacher recruitment and retention "by addressing the issues of pay and workload and the excessive pressures of the accountability regime". Easing teachers' workload and dealing with the depredations of Goveism will clearly also benefit our children at all levels of the school system.

- Urgent action to "end the scandal of vulnerable children and young people being out of school". There is mounting evidence of informal exclusions taking place on an ever-growing scale, especially from academies, often due to the pressures of the afore-mentioned accountability regime.

- Governance arrange-

## RECLAIMING EDUCATION

ments with representation for parents, children, staff and the wider community. We need to end the situation whereby trusts can run schools without any democratic representation. Community representation takes a number of forms including LA governors, co-opted governors and foundation governors for religious schools.

- Address the severe cut-backs in school improvement and management support services provided by LAs. Resources for these services which many schools, particularly primary schools, value should be restored.

- During our first year we will begin wide consultations on creating mechanisms for reviewing and revising the curriculum and the system of national testing and examinations. There is a tension here between avoiding making yet further changes, given the stress this places on teachers, and the need to reverse and remove the abusive regime introduced by Gove and worsened by Nick Gibb, which, at the same time, many teachers would want to happen. Over time a broader and less prescriptive national curriculum needs to be developed with professional input. There also needs to be an end to the intolerable pressures associated with testing and a review of the changes to the GCSE and A Level examinations. In the longer term it might make sense to end testing at age 16 altogether. (The insistence on wide consultations also applies to all the following medium-term proposals).

- A focus on collaboration rather than competition between educational institutions.

- We will begin to restore the Sure Start network, basing early years education on the best understanding of child development. Sure Start was one of the greatest achievements of the last

Labour Government and its erosion is one of the crimes against children committed by the Coalition/Tory governments.

- End the situation where a school can be its own admission authority. LAs to have complete control of this process running fair and equitable admission systems.

- Move towards a broad and balanced 14-19 curriculum. The introduction of the EBac has led to a detrimental narrowing of the curriculum for which there is no educational justification. Arts and technical subjects and even RE have been marginalised as a result of backward elitist thinking a la Gove.

Although only 11 of the 39 points have been outlined, the other 28 are all worth supporting. However surprisingly there is no explicit reference to Ofsted and inspection generally in the Education Programme. Whilst some form of inspection is useful, Ofsted certainly needs to be reformed, with a thorough revision of its inspection framework, or possibly replaced. Inspection needs to move away from number crunching and a more supportive approach needs to be adopted.

Labour's plans for education need to be broad-based, covering the curriculum and testing, not just based on structures and pay, important though these issues are. Many parents, young people and teachers in particular are only too aware of how awful the Tory counter-revolution in education has been. Learning should be enjoyable as well as fulfilling. A broader more creative approach will equip our children better for the jobs of the future, but our vision ought to encompass also creating the citizens of the future. Work is important but life is about more than that. **C**

David Lister  
(member of  
Chartist EB &  
Brent Central  
CLP)

# Conference and crystal balls

Ann Black reviews Labour's Democracy Review



As I write, I have no idea how the 120 recommendations in the party democracy review will be presented to conference. Some translate into specific rule changes, others less so. I also do not know if conference will be able to vote separately on individual proposals, or just Yes or No to the whole package. So what follows is mid-August speculation.

Electing the leader is clearly on the agenda, with a recommendation that where there is a vacancy, candidates would require nominations from 10% of MPs/MEPs or 5% of MPs/MEPs plus 10% of CLPs or 5% of MPs/MEPs plus 10% of trade union-affiliated membership from at least three unions. This will be carried. The events of June 2016, following the Brexit vote and the failed leadership challenge, left many members with a deep distrust of the parliamentary party. Last year conference reduced the percentage from 15% to 10%, and this now gives a formal role to other stakeholders.

Registered supporters also look set to stay, and people would have at least two weeks to sign up as members or supporters after the timetable is set. Longstanding members are still unhappy with "the £3 people" getting the same

rights as the £50 a year people, and want a period of commitment before being entitled to vote, but those arguments are lost. It should be noted that registered supporters were actually introduced by Ed Miliband, with opposition from the left and enthusiasm from the right, and the NEC itself waived the qualifying period for leadership elections in 2007 and 2010. But either way it is better to have these in the rule-book rather than haggled out in seven-hour NEC meetings with candidates themselves voting for their own advantage.

I do, however, hope to avoid by-elections for every vacancy on the NEC. In the constituency section OMOV elections would cost six-figure sums, and there have been as many as three vacancies in a single year, mostly benefiting runners-up from the left. It would also ensure that the 62% of members who voted for Jeremy Corbyn in 2016 would currently retain 100% of the places. Tony Blair never quite eliminated all dissent, and it would be ironic if Jeremy Corbyn were now to succeed. As an alternative I would support elections by single transferable vote to give the runner-up greater legitimacy, and I am happy for the unions, who can fill vacancies quickly and cheaply, to make their own arrangements.

And political diversity matters, as much as any other dimension. Here there are many good points about empowering women, ethnic minority, LGBT+, disabled and young members, but the answer is, too often, another committee. The review says, rightly, that members want the party demystified, with simple booklets explaining how it works, and then constructs interlocking cat's-cradles of mind-boggling complexity. I remain to be convinced that these will produce greater external engagement. And while the review recommends dismantling the national policy forum, it does not outline any intermediate structures connecting half a million individual members with an NEC policy committee of maybe 20 people. I assume this is still work in progress.

Conference will also discuss rule changes in two areas where the review is silent. The first seeks to guarantee at least one woman in the leadership team, agreed in principle in 2011 but never carried to a conclusion. The second is selection and reselection of MPs and parliamentary candidates, covering a range of points on which the NEC has not taken a position. Finally, on policy, I believe that this year's conference must have a full debate, with meaningful votes, on Brexit. **G**



Ann Black Oxford CLP and NEC at time of writing

WESTMINSTER VIEW



# A People's Vote can end the paralysis in Westminster

## Catherine West puts the case for a People's Vote

Catherine West is Labour MP for Hornsey & Wood Green

After Parliament broke for the summer recess, the Chequers Plan looks dead in the water and the survival of Theresa May's Government hangs by a thread. Vote Leave, led by Boris Johnson and Michael Gove, has been fined for electoral fraud and the newly installed Brexit Secretary confirms plans to stockpile food, medicines and blood in preparation for crashing out of the EU with no deal. In the run-up to the 2017 General Election, the Prime Minister told the British people that a vote for her would avoid a "Coalition of Chaos": what has she delivered? Complete chaos.

The day after the referendum, I had people coming up to me in tears worried about what Brexit meant for their livelihoods and their families' future. Two years on, these worst fears are coming true. Boris Johnson notoriously said "there is no plan for no deal because we are going to get a great deal", but where is he now as we lurch towards a 'no-deal' exit? It would be catastrophic for people's jobs, businesses and our economy and throw into complete uncertainty the lives of the three million Europeans who have made Britain their home.

I've never trusted this Tory Government to put forward a progressive vision for a post-Brexit future, and now Jacob Rees-Mogg and his band of Brextremists have effectively taken the Prime Minister hostage, driving us towards a future that will not only devastate our economy and enable a race to the bottom on workplace rights but it will fuel further the hard right's discourse of xenophobia, racism and isolationism.

I voted against triggering Article 50



because I couldn't back a process that would see us leaving the EU, and I supported over 30 amendments to the EU Withdrawal Bill that would retain environmental protections, keep us in the Single Market, enshrine human-rights law, uphold our international commitment to UN conventions and protect workers' rights. In recent weeks, I sponsored two amendments to the Trade Bill that would have allowed for a continued Customs Union with the EU – essential as millions of jobs and thousands of businesses depend on it. The second would have allowed Parliament to ratify and consent to future trade deals to ensure scrutiny and oversight. In a world that is growing increasingly unstable and unpredictable, it is more important than ever to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with our European neighbours and promote a progressive international agenda.

As Members of Parliament, our vote is our voice and with the Tory party in complete disarray we came close to inflicting a defeat on crucial customs legislation that could have led to a vote of no confidence in the PM and a General Election. Yet May narrowly scraped through – twice by a majority of just three – which makes it all the more staggering that the Liberal Democrat Leader and ex-Leader didn't even bother to turn up. These are nail biting, crucial decisions for the future of our country so what on earth

could be more important? Perhaps, like the Prime Minister they wanted to start their summer holidays early.

With Parliament in deadlock and with a Government becoming weaker and more chaotic by the day, the case for a People's Vote on the deal grows stronger. Theresa May has no majority for a 'no-deal' scenario in the House of Commons. Her chances of pushing through the Chequers Plan appear to be almost as remote - a proposal which pleases no-one, criticised by both the Tory Remainers and Brexiteers and which Andrea Leadsom, her own cabinet colleague, called an "embarrassing climbdown". Barnier has already torn into the plan, and it is abundantly clear that such a deal would not pass Labour's six tests.

A public vote is quite frankly the most obvious way to end the paralysis in Westminster. A recent YouGov poll not only found that a majority of people would back a people's vote on the deal, it also found that most would prefer to stay in the EU rather than accept a deal along the lines of the Chequers proposal or no deal. How can Parliament in all good faith continue to pursue an exit that everyone knows will damage our economy when there is such uncertainty? A People's Vote would be based on reality - not the propaganda spread across the side of a bus.

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# Do not underestimate the Brazilian left

**Thomas Zicman de Barros** anticipates a resurgence of the Worker's Party in October elections

**T**wo years ago, in the middle of a political and economic turmoil that undermined her popularity, Dilma Rousseff was impeached and removed from presidency. More than a hundred days ago, Rousseff's political tutor, former president Lula da Silva, was imprisoned after a long period of judicial persecution. For some, these two events alone indicate a disaster that the Brazilian left could take generations to overcome. However, analyzing the most recent polls, we see the exact opposite: even in his prison cell, Lula is leading the presidential race, and the Workers' Party stands as the favorite in the dispute.

In a few weeks Brazilians cast their votes. The rejection of the conservative government lead by Michel Temer, together with the evidence that Lula's trial was highly unfair, open a wide road for the left to reconquer Brasilia on the night of October 27th, the day of the second round.

Without doubt there are obstacles on the way. An important difficulty comes from the fact that the Workers' Party continues to claim that Lula is its candidate. It makes a lot of sense: Lula would easily win if his name is on the ballot, and his popularity has increased since his incarceration. However, every political analyst knows that this is an unrealistic scenario. The law bans those who have been convicted from running, which will force the party to switch its candidate.

Anticipating the inevitable, his coalition presented an heterodox three-name ticket. Lula now has two vice-presidents: Fernando Haddad, the former mayor of São Paulo who replaces Lula as the head of the ticket if his name is blocked, and the communist congresswoman Manuela D'Ávila.

Lula's running mates are young, open-minded, inspiring, and have the potential of representing his legacy and capturing an important part of his electorate. If they inherit just a portion of Lula's support, it would be enough to put them into the second round.

This is the ticket that unites the left. Of course, it is not the union that we dreamed of, but the



**Lula's two running mates: Manuela D'Ávila and Fernando Haddad**

one that was possible. Two other left-wing candidates are standing: the developmentalist Ciro Gomes and the social activist Guilherme Boulos, leader of the Homeless Workers' Movement. Yet, despite their merits, these two names do not have the same force and party structure to challenge the 'Lulist' hegemony.

Brazilians are facing the most fragmented elections in thirty years, but in the end voters tend to divide into two blocks and place a left-wing and a right-wing candidate in the second round, as has happened in every presidential election for the last two decades. Even if what interests political theorists the most are the moments of rupture, when causal laws and patterns are broken, in a country with continental dimensions such as Brazil, it is becoming clearer that outsiders and third way candidates face a hard time campaigning against the classical polarization.

The Workers' Party seems to have a good chance of securing the Lula-Haddad-D'Ávila ticket in the second round. The question remains open about who will be the right-wing challenger. As the political scientist Alberto Carlos Almeida predicts in his new book *The Brazilian Presidential Elections (2018)*, the most likely contender seems to be Geraldo Alckmin, the long-standing governor of São Paulo and a prominent member from Brazil's most traditional centre-right party. In this scenario, the left will try to depict

him as someone who supported Temer's illegitimate rise to power and helped to approve highly unpopular austerity measures. As the rule of thumb indicates, when a government is rejected, the opposition tends to win.

If Alckmin does not succeed in convincing conservative voters, the scary alternative to challenge the left in the second round is the far-right former military officer Jair Bolsonaro. This controversial candidate openly praises the military dictatorship that brutally ruled Brazil for twenty years, discriminates against minorities and social movements, and represents a serious threat to democratic institutions. Unfortunately, the frightening possibility of his triumph in the right-wing spectrum cannot be dismissed.

To use a French expression that may be misread in monarchical Britain, against Bolsonaro the Workers' Party strategy should be the creation of a 'Republican Front' against fascism. The question, of course, is whether the traditional right would join the left that it cursed for years or will it abandon any democratic principle remaining among its members and rally with a dangerous candidate that may promise to save its purse.

One way or another, the left that was once proclaimed dead shows renewed strength and resilience – and, whoever the final winner, this is good news for democracy. **C**

**Thomas Zicman de Barros is a PhD Candidate, Sciences Po Paris**

## MEXICO

# Viva Mexico, Viva socialism

**Manuel Cortes** reports on an historic landslide win for the left in Mexico

A new dawn broke in Mexican politics following the biggest elections in the country's history in July. Everything, from local council seats to the post of President of the Republic itself was up for grabs. There was only one clear winner though, the candidates of the National Regeneration Movement (MORENA) led by their leader Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador. Called ALMO in Mexico, and described by our media as their Jeremy Corbyn, this hardline anti-austerity candidate smashed the presidential contest leaving his main rival trailing by over 20 points. The impact of his victory is just beginning to be felt. He will assume office for a six-year term in December by which time MORENA will be ruling most local councils, hold most state governorships and command a majority in both houses of parliament. Because the people of Mexico went to the polls in record numbers and delivered a decisive victory for the Left, his mandate for redistributive change is huge. Not since the Mexican revolution has such a powerful and decisive shift occurred to Mexican body politics.

Sadly, the background to these elections was particularly bloody with almost 150 candidates murdered during the campaign. This meant that there were very well-founded fears that there may be significant attempts to cheat and also to deter voters from going to polling stations. Unfortunately, this is what Mexicans have come to expect at election time. Yet this year that tradition was extinguished. I was privileged to represent TSSA as an International Election Observer and can report that on July 1 the genuine fear of electoral fraud turned out to be a worry rather than a reality.

Out of over 156,000 polling stations only 10 did not open because of violence – a massive reduction from the over 1500 forced to stay shut because of it last time round. People everywhere were out early to cast their ballots and they queued patiently. We witnessed an early turn out of orderly voters purposefully waiting to take their own moment in making collective history.



Hand on heart, I can testify to seeing nothing to cause me any concern about the fairness of these contests. ALMO and MORENA share a seismic victory which is well beyond reproach.

As news of this historic victory spread, thousands upon thousands spontaneously poured onto the streets of Mexico City to celebrate and 200,000 plus crowded into the City's huge Zocalo Square to party through the night. The jubilant crowd danced, cried, sang as they waited for ALMO to address them. His delivery was interrupted constantly by collective chants of "El Presidente". The explosion of a people's political ecstasy was palpable on the dawn of July 2 as the multitude grasped their clamour and hope that change is surely on its way.

Decades of despair evaporated and expectations are now sky high. ALMO has promised to end endemic corruption and obscene levels of poverty. Mexico is the 15th largest economy in the world. It's why ALMO's message that it doesn't need to be this way so resonated. But he has his work cut out. Atrocious violence and the drug cartels will not go away overnight. Last year Mexico saw almost 30,000 murders. And of course, there is also the not so small matter of dealing with the erratic president of Mexico's northern neighbour, Trump.

ALMO's in-tray is already full with extremely difficult challenges but the Mexican people's appetite for change has never been greater. Mexico is not a poor country - its economy is second only to Brazil in Latin America



**Manuel Cortes is General Secretary of the TSSA. He was an official observer of the Mexican elections.**

and it has a well-developed industrial base serving markets which include the most powerful economy in our globe, the US. Yet, like in far too many countries, the ill-distribution of its wealth scars its future. In Mexico City, Carlos Slim, one of the planet's richest men, lives side-by-side with millions trying to make ends meet with literally, next to nothing. Since his election AMLO has been developing his message of building an economy for the many. He has announced he will nationalise electricity and wipe off the debt of two million people.

The repercussions of this victory are immense and its ripples will spread. If you can have a left-wing government in a country which borders the US, then socialism is possible anywhere. This Autumn, the Brazilian Presidential election stands a chance of returning a candidate who will be an ally of wealth redistribution in Latin America. AMLO's landslide victory is making a profound change to the politics of the region as the Left rediscovers its confidence and people rise. MORENA is a movement of hope and desire for a new politics in which social wealth is shared more fairly amongst people. MORENA's collective sense of purpose and the people's desire for an economy for the many are an inspiration to those of us building a movement for national regeneration here in Britain. Listen not to the nay sayers. Mexico is the lesson that a Corbyn-led government is possible here.

**Viva Mexico! Viva Britain!  
Viva Socialism!**

# Revived Anti Nazi League on the agenda

Trevor Fisher on the threat from the far right

When John McDonnell called for a new movement against the growing far right threat in early August, he struck a chord. Reported on Labour List on August 7th, his tweet said:

"With the scale of the Tommy Robinson demonstrations, the storming of Bookmarks bookshop, and now Boris Johnson's Islamophobic comments, we can no longer ignore the rise of far right politics in our society. Maybe its time for an Anti Nazi League type cultural and political campaign to resist". He went on to advocate Rock Against Racism as another important precedent and his call seems perfectly reasonable.

Yet it received a muted or hostile response. Most of the responses on Labour List were predictably people running hobby horses, yet why Stephen Pollard of the Jewish Chronicle criticised the call is very odd. Whatever is the case with the anti-semitism row, those who are advocating a new holocaust have to be opposed, not just in the UK, but across Europe and beyond. The Australian Senator (Fraser Anning of the Katters Australian Party) who used the term "Final Solution" in calling for immigration bans on muslims and other races was defended on the ground that he did not know the implications of the term. It is intolerable that anyone can claim not to know what happened under the Nazis or the clear direction of travel the far right are taking.



The term "Nazi" like that of "Fascist" has been devalued over the years and revisiting the history and what the original Anti Nazi League did is essential. The history has faded, and with the rise of Putin extreme nationalism has become favoured across Europe and America. Immediately two areas have to be made priorities - firstly defining the far right and distinguishing it from the hard right, and secondly making the history of the ANL well known. McDonnell can be criticised for linking Boris Johnson with the far right. Johnson is dabbling in dangerous waters, but it is too simple to tar all opponents with the same brush. The anti democratic and exterminationist elements of Nazism put it in a very different place.

The original ANL understood

this, and it was the rise of the National Front which sparked the movement, particularly comments by its leader John Tyndall that they were building a Nazi machine. The current far right is unlikely to make its intentions that explicit, but there is no doubt that unlike the BNP the new movements are unlikely to confine themselves to democratic moves, as the attack on Bookmarks suggests.

When the NF disintegrated, the ANL rightly closed down, though Rock against Racism mutated into Love Music Hate Racism as racism has never gone away. A revival of the ANL may not be easily achieved in the short term, but immediately an Anti Nazi Forum of interested parties should be set up. The process of gathering forces for a revived anti Nazi front must begin. **C**

## Printer ad

## HISTORY

# Nikolai Bukharin – Forgotten Revolutionary

**Nigel Doggett** finds political lessons from a victim of Stalin's purges

**A**mong notable anniversaries this year fall two for Nikolai Bukharin, the Russian Communist. Born 130 years ago, he was the main defendant in the last major Stalinist show trial, leading to his execution 80 years ago.

Stephen Cohen's 1973 biography *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution*\* covers his life and legacy in a broader account of the revolution than the many histories focussing on Lenin and Trotsky. The Mensheviks and other 'old' Bolsheviks have largely been marginalised, maybe lacking the appeal of ideological purity. The old adage that history is written by the victors was true in Russia under Stalin's rule but Trotsky survived in exile to write eloquently about the revolution, Soviet Union and Stalin and to bolster opposition until his assassination in 1940.

Dominant narratives on Soviet history present the succession to Lenin in 1924 in terms of Trotsky and Stalin. Given such a choice, most on the left might opt for the former, but residual Stalinist attitudes still retain influence, manifested in attitudes to Russia today (see Paterson and Zernova, *Chartist* 293) where post-Soviet traumas have spawned an unholy Russian Orthodox-Nationalist-Communist-kleptocrat alliance.

A decade younger than Trotsky and Stalin, Bukharin was described by Lenin in his final 'testament' as its biggest theoretician and "favourite of the whole party". He was the principal advocate of the New Economic Policy (NEP), leader of the Right wing and finally Right Opposition.

He began on the Bolshevik left, enthusiastically supporting the October revolution. Following the civil war and authoritarian 'War Communism', given the ruinous state of the country he supported a more politically and economically conciliatory approach. From 1921 when Lenin instituted the NEP, Bukharin provided theoretical justification. Private business was tolerated and even encouraged. Whilst favouring the 'smychka' (alliance of peasants and workers) he was open to attracting elements from the middle



**Bukharin with Stalin on the Lenin mausoleum in 1929 a month before he was expelled from the party leadership**

classes (in our terms the 'precarious') but no further.

Russia also became more intellectually and culturally pluralistic, allowing space for a glorious flowering of creativity in the arts. Bukharin was a sponsor of 'proletarian' culture but valued variety and toleration. Throughout his life he engaged in dialogue with alternative viewpoints and opponents. When the foundation of a Communist Third International was mooted he advocated including anti-war social democrats and Mensheviks, an early indication of his ecumenical approach.

When the anticipated revolutions failed to materialise in Germany and elsewhere he sympathised with the pragmatic call to pursue what became known as 'socialism in one country' (anathema to Trotsky and the left). In 1925 the other leaders Kamenev and Zinoviev joined Trotsky to oppose Stalin. Bukharin disastrously opted for joint leadership with Stalin on the basis of Bukharin's liberal economic policy. But his call to the peasants to "enrich yourselves, accumulate, develop your economy", went a step too far towards liberalisation, which he was forced to retract.

Stalin manipulated the party in his quest for absolute power, switching policies to wrong-foot his opponents, while left and right alike underestimated him, seeing him as preferable to the other side. Within three years the left was defeated and Bukharin in turn was ousted by Stalin, who now pursued policies of rapid industrialisation more radical than those advocated by Trotsky. Bukharin belatedly approached Trotsky, writing "the disagree-

ments between us and Stalin are many times more serious than all of the disagreements we had with you," but was spurned with the quip: "With Stalin against Bukharin? - Yes. With Bukharin against Stalin? - Never!"

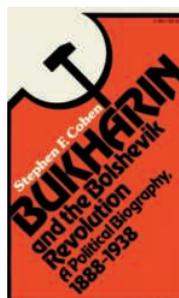
Though sidelined, he continued to write, extolling a 'socialist humanist' alternative to the rising totalitarian fascism, and implicitly to Stalinism too. In 1936, shortly before his final downfall, on a trip West he confided in emigré Mensheviks, describing Stalin as "this small, malicious man, no, not a man, a devil". He nevertheless returned to Russia knowing he was doomed, leading inexorably to a bizarre final act where Bukharin, with fellow rightist leaders Rykov and Tomsky and others were accused of plotting with the Trotskyites to overthrow the revolution. It is widely believed that he capitulated to Stalin in the final show trial.

Right wing and liberal accounts tend to conclude that Stalinism grew inevitably from Leninism. Orwell too believed that a victorious Trotsky would have been as bad as Stalin. Yet many roads not taken might have lessened the dangers of tyranny, which had been foreseen in revolutionary circles. Trotsky warned in 1904 (long before he joined the Bolsheviks) of the dangers of a Leninist centralised party: "The party organization substitutes itself for the party, the central committee substitutes itself for the organization, and, finally, a "dictator" substitutes himself for the central committee". Similar arguments were made by Rosa Luxemburg in 1911.

Cohen sees Bukharin as an inspiration for such developments as the 1968 Prague spring, the Italian and Spanish 'Eurocommunist' parties and Gorbachev's Glasnost and Perestroika, all seeking to liberalize Communism.

Whilst the 57 varieties of Leninism who like the Bourbons have "learned nothing and forgotten nothing" seem passé in this century, Bukharin's acceptance of a mixed economy, advocacy of socialist humanism and engagement with opponents should all resonate within today's open left. **C**

**Nigel Doggett is member of Chartist EB**



**\*Cohen's biography is available to download from <https://rosswolfe.files.wordpress.com/2015/02/stephen-f-cohen-bukharin-and-the-bolshevik-revolution-a-political-biography-1888-1938.pdf>**

## Barking up the right tree

**Patrick Mulcahy**  
on a lesson  
for his son's  
screenwriting  
ambitions

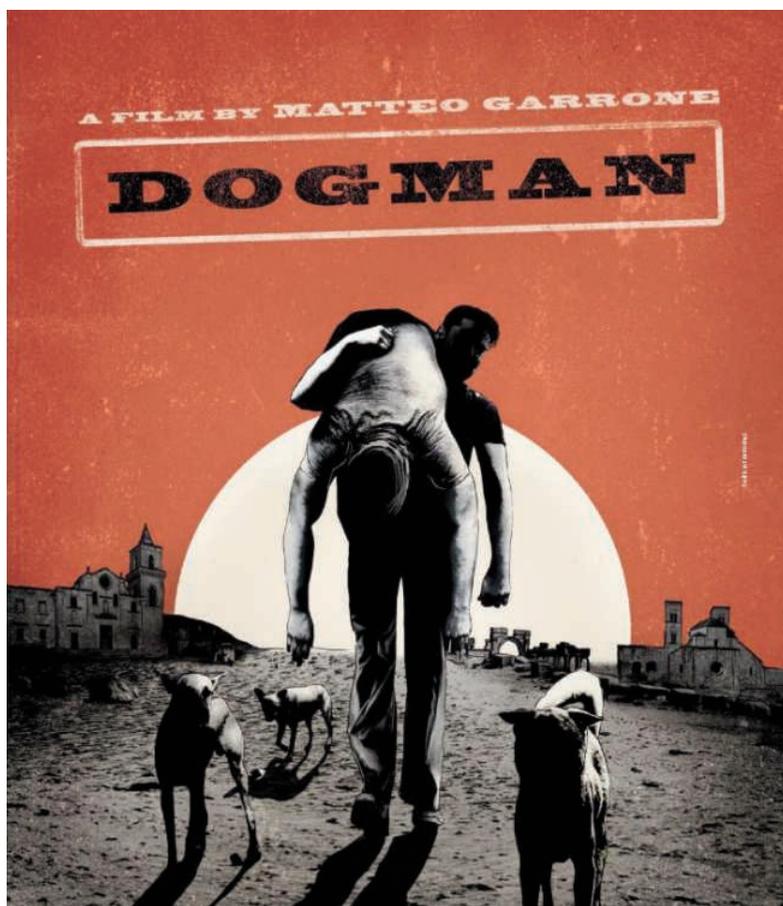
**T**he other day, I was trying to break my filmmaker student son's creative inertia with a screenwriting pep talk. 'Start with a character,' I told him. 'Write about who they are. Then describe a second character. Then imagine a setting. Then start to tell a story.'

'Dogman' the new film from 'Gomorra' director Matteo Garrone, demonstrates with utter simplicity this approach to storytelling. The first image is that of a dog, a white pit bull (I'm not good with breeds), fearsome and snarling. Our interest is in the man talking to him, Marcello (Marcello Fonte), broken-nosed, wiry but infectiously cajoling. He tries to shampoo the beast, then blow dry his hair – tellingly, his mop lies next to the animal, Marcello not wanting to agitate the dog by retrieving it. Marcello cares for dogs. He massages them, washes them and shares his dinner with them. He'll feed a dog some pasta from his fork and then feed himself – he's not worried about germs – until the rhythm of 'one for you, one for me' is broken by the hound going for the bowl.

Marcello attracts a 'stray', Simone (Edoardo Gero), who is strong and tall where Marcello is short and slight. Simone comes for cocaine, and Marcello has a stash just for him. Simone is fearsome, much like the dog we first see. Apparently he beat up some Romanians, and had to be restrained by ten men. Their relationship is abusive; Simone takes advantage. He'll rope Marcello in to a robbery as the getaway driver. Then Marcello will hear how Simone and his brute partner put a barking dog in a freezer to shut him up. Marcello cannot let it go. He returns to the house, shimmying up a drain pipe and takes the dog out of the freezer, thawing him until there is a sign of life.

Simone is the neighbourhood thug. He'll rough up a jackpot machine and demand his 300 euro back – it is only his word against the owner that the money was inserted.

If you want to define your antagonist, you might as Garrone does stage a scene where he is shot in Marcello's company. 'No doctor,' insists Simone. The only place he can take him is to



Simone's mother, but she uses his immobility to whip a bag of cocaine out of his pocket. Simone smothers his mother with an embrace and directs Marcello, who has just removed the bullet, to sweep up his cocaine for future consumption.

The other screenwriting lesson I gave my son is: put your protagonist where they would least want to be. At a certain point, Simone makes a demand which will utterly ruin Marcello's standing in the community. He begs the big man not to insist, pleading with him to go somewhere else. What happens next tests Marcello's character.

Not only does Marcello look after dogs, at a certain point he resembles one, a wounded cur. He is also dogged, placing himself in physical danger.

The story is simple but utterly compelling, going beyond its social realist setting to describe a drama of co-dependency. It has three scenes that will be lodged in your memory, including an extraordinary climax.

Garrone also teaches filmmakers that you don't have to explain everything. Marcello never

speaks to the mother of his daughter, except when she asks him to mind her. You understand that at some point, she felt sorry for him. They had sex; the woman became pregnant, but the relationship was never pursued. We can fill in the blanks by experiencing the silences, as in a scene where one man hammers on Marcello's windows, whilst others restrain him. There is an understanding that Marcello couldn't help his fall from grace.

What 'Dogman' lacks in narrative sophistication, it utterly compensates with a compelling drama. Marcello Fonte is sublimely natural in the central role, with his toothy grin and affectionate response to all creatures. Watching it, I found myself thinking of Federico Fellini's 'La Strada', another Italian film depicting an abusive relationship, this time concerning a strong man (Anthony Quinn) who performs with his wife (Giulietta Masina) in the circus. Like the Fellini film, 'Dogman' has a simple power and stays with you like a barking echo.

**'Dogman' opens in UK cinemas on 19 October 2018**

## BOOK REVIEWS

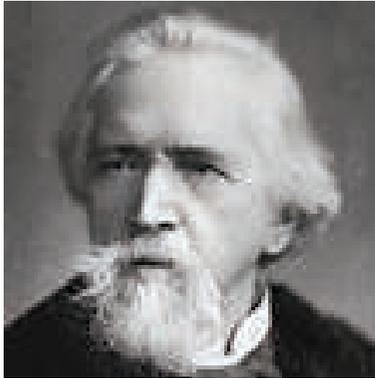
## Secularist travels

**Duncan Bowie**  
on heresy  
and  
tramping

**George Jacob Holyoake's Journey of 1842**  
**Catherine Howe**  
**History into Print £14.95**

**H**olyoake was a co-operator and secularist. This is the story of his speechmaking travels when he was only 25. Holyoake was to survive until 1906, editing a series of radical journals including *The Reasoner* and to write four volumes of autobiography as well as a history of the co-operative movement and a large number of secularist and political pamphlets including an 1868 pamphlet on Working Class Representation discussed in *Chartist's Our History* column in 2006.

In 1842, Holyoake's lecture tour took him from Birmingham to Bristol and back again. Holyoake had met the secularist and Owenite, Charles Southwell



(whose pamphlet *Socialism Made Easy* published two years earlier was discussed in the *Our History* column in 2005). Howe's book is well researched. She has made good use of the Holyoake archives held at London's Bishopsgate Institute and the Cooperative Library at Holyoake House in Manchester as well as Owenite journals and local newspapers.

Howe sets the political context for Holyoake's tour and provides considerable detail on Holyoake's relationship to Owen and other reformers, including a brief reference to the Fourierist, Sophia Chichester (who makes an appearance in my *Radical and Socialist Tradition in British Planning*). The climax of the tour was Holyoake's arrest, trial and imprisonment for heresy in Gloucester. The final chapters of the book trace the later political activities of both Holyoake and of Southwell, the latter having moved to Auckland in New Zealand. There are two existing biographies of Holyoake, but Southwell deserves more attention from historians.

Catherine Howe has also published a pamphlet on the relationship between the Chartist Fergus O'Connor and the actress, Louisa Nisbett.

## Redemption

**Hope Lies in the Proles**  
**John Newsinger**  
**Pluto £16.99**

**D**oes George Orwell still need rescuing? Does anyone still take A L Morton's - the Communist Party of Great Britain's (CPGB) historian - libelous description in his 1952 'The English Utopia' of '1984' as a 'degraded' book that embraces 'the frankest reaction, a determination to resist the "actual" realisation of Utopia' in what is seemingly Stalin's Soviet Union, seriously? Orwell certainly had his flaws. Even for a man of his generation pre-war there was a casual anti-semitism and everyday misogyny that is not easy to come to terms with while his attitude to ordinary men and women left a lot to be desired even if in the end 'hope lies in the proles'. Yet maybe it is the very expectation of difference that was the more surprising in an Old Etonian and Imperial policeman.

Reading 'Animal Farm' or '1984' trumps Morton. What Newsinger does is to widen that redemption. For all that Orwell was a revolutionary socialist not only in theory but also in practice. Orwell voluntarily put his life on the line - and nearly lost it - in

Spain fighting with the unfashionable, principled and persecuted POUM (Workers' Party of Marxist Unification), first against Franco and then against the counter-revolution in Catalonia orchestrated by Stalin, before they were wiped out by terror, torture and treachery.

Orwell and the POUM were painted as Trotskyists in collusion, if not the pay, of Hitler. All a bit rich coming from the lead characters shortly after to star in the Nazi-Soviet Pact. His experience of the Spanish Civil War had him in the run-up to the outbreak of WWII in September 1939 preparing for underground - and possibly armed - resistance to what he saw as an Imperialist War between competing Empires. He had read CLR James 'World Revolution'. It was Hitler and Stalin's August surprise that saw him finally side with England against the totalitarians, for folded with the Imperial War was a second fight for freedom.

The fight was to be as much a fight against the establishment as the Nazis. Only a socialist Britain could defeat Hitler. A revolutionary war to deliver his much neglected manifesto demanding an English Socialism, 'The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and

the English Genius' (1941), in contrast to that of the Soviet model with its 'half gangster, half gramophone' commissars. Orwell enthusiastically endorsed Tom Wintringham's - a dissident International Brigader - demand for an armed civilian militia to fight a guerrilla war against a Nazi invasion of Britain. The Home Guard was to be its pale shadow. Orwell signed up. He was to be thwarted once again. The revolution was betrayed. This time as much in farce as tragedy with his Majesty's loyal opposition wilfully collaborating in the suppression of strikes, unrest and dissent. After Operation Barbarossa in June 1941 saw Hitler stab Stalin in the front the sycophancy of Labour was only outdone by that of the CPGB. By 1947 for Orwell it was neither Moscow or Washington with 'a Socialist United States of Europe the only worthwhile political objective'.

John Newsinger doesn't do much new to rescue Orwell's literary reputation from its detractors and those that have tried to take it hostage to serve their own neo-conservative agendas. He's been well saved previously. What he does do is to give readers a glimpse of Orwell in action.

**Glyn Ford**  
on  
rescuing  
George  
Orwell



Hope Lies in the Proles  
George Orwell and the Left  
John Newsinger

# The People's Movement

**Lazaros  
Karavasilis**  
on new  
populist  
movements

**The Mask and the Flag: Populism,  
Citizenism and Global Protest**  
Paolo Gerbaudo  
Hurst £14.99

The ever-growing academic interest on populism in all its varieties and expressions has explored multiple aspects using diverse theoretical and methodological tools. Most often, the results of the research on an empirical case, or the theoretical expansion of the concept of populism offer insight on the phenomenon. The same can be said about Gerbaudo's book *The Mask and the Flag* which manages to provide a new perspective on the recent social movements that have created new political spaces and have influenced mainstream politics. Movements like, the 'Indignados' in southern Europe, 'Occupy' in the USA and the 'Tahrir Square Protests' in Egypt are the most representative cases and those that are most frequently presented in his analysis.

Starting from introducing the term of 'citizenism' (a populist ideology that combines the 'neo anarchist method of horizontality and the populist demand for sovereignty', making it a form of 'anarcho-populism'), Gerbaudo proceeds into a sociological reading of these protests and movements, examining their organization, their discourse, their causes of emergence as well as the role of the new social media in them. He also provides an interesting comparison between these protests and the Anti-globalization movement which seeks to strengthen his main arguments in the rest of the book.

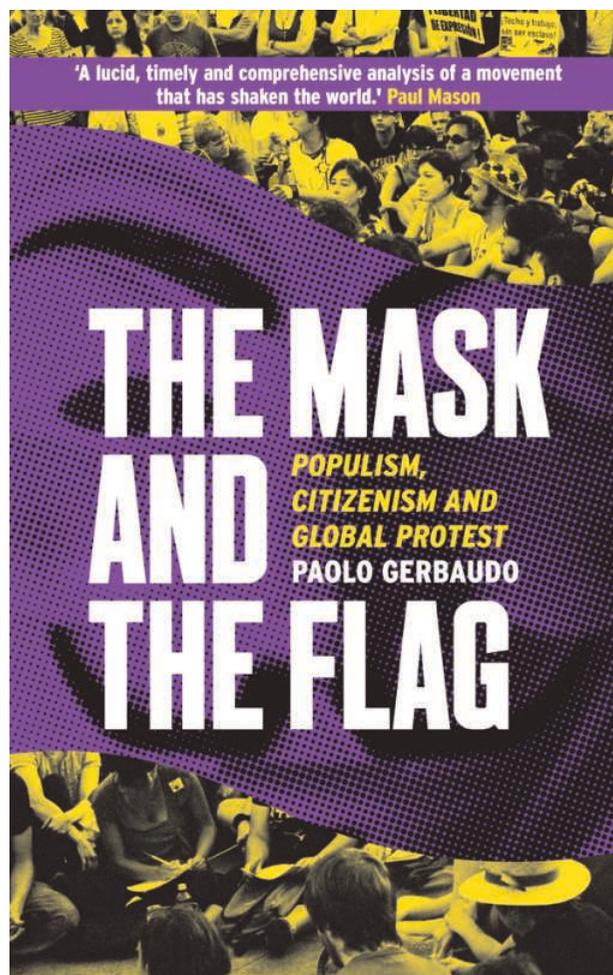
Where the book succeeds is in presenting the people that have participated and organized the protests. Gerbaudo has done extensive research on the sociology of the participants along with the networks that they created, the forms of organization and the actions that they took. Focusing on multiple aspects that examine anarchism and democracy, the '99%' and the elites, the global and the national, the author manages to illustrate the motives that initiated the protests, the common elements that can be found among them as well as the crucial role that social media played. The latter is also one of the highlights of the book as Gerbaudo presents the importance of social media in

organizing these protests and subsequently, their significance for contemporary politics. Adding to that, the thorough examination of the organizational structures and the decision-making that took place provides a complete account of the protests' inner mechanisms and how they operated.

However, Gerbaudo's account of contemporary protests has limitations raising critical questions regarding specific aspects of his research. Starting from his use of populism as citizenism, a main point of criticism is that Gerbaudo does not delve deeper in elaborating his theory. Having presented the promising form of a leaderless populism prevalent in these protests, the author does not develop a more complete theory, focusing on a definition that serves the purposes of his arguments exclusively. Another criticism is the comparison between the Anti-globalization movement and the movements of the squares. To an extent the comparison seems to divert the focus from the contemporary move-

ments into a comparative analysis with a movement that has quite dissimilar features. Hence, the picture and examination of the movements of the squares is sometimes obscure.

However, despite a few negative aspects, the book can be regarded as an important contribution to the research of the protests of the squares. Gerbaudo's methods, including a thorough and refined fieldwork manage to capture the essence of these protests, the motivations of the participants as well as the structures that were formed. Further, the author underlines the essential role of social media in contemporary protests. By combining populist and anarchist elements in his theory of 'citizenism', Gerbaudo succeeds in providing an interesting theoretical framework for the nature and structure of these movements. Overall, *The Mask and the Flag* is a significant contribution to the study of the newest social movements that have emerged the recent years.



## BOOK REVIEWS

# The poor are still with us

**Rory O'Kelly**  
on real poverty

**Destitution in the UK**  
Joseph Rowntree Foundation  
<https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/destitution-uk>

**D**efinitions of poverty tend to focus on social exclusion. There are strictly financial criteria (e.g. income less than 60% of the median) but their validity rests on correlation with inability to live a 'normal life'; e.g. engage in social activities, buy Christmas presents for children, take occasional holidays etc.

Destitution is a more rigorous concept, defined as an income too low to ensure reliable access to food, shelter, heating and lighting, appropriate clothing and basic toiletries. This report suggests some corresponding income levels; £70 per week for a single adult for example or £140 for a couple with two children.

Destitution has some of the same characteristics as poverty. Pensioners are rarely affected and it is geographically concentrated in ex-industrial areas and Inner London. In other respects it is entirely different. Since 2010 poverty has increasingly been associated with having children and thus, indirectly, with being female. Destitution however affects mainly single adults, most commonly men. Another difference is that, as everyone now knows, paid work is not necessarily a route out of poverty but it is still usually a way to escape destitution.

This report has identified destitute people through their contact with crisis services. Based on this it estimates that in 2017 there were 785,000 households with 1,550,000 members, including 365,000 children, who were destitute at some point. Excluding people not in contact with services means that these are probably underestimates. There are also oddities which suggest that the sample may be unrepresentative. For example, these destitute people (excluding the homeless) are usually social housing tenants though experience suggests that younger single men without dependants generally find it hard to access this.

Some causes of destitution are obvious. As the report points out any single person under 25 living on Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) will be destitute by definition and older unemployed people, already



on the margin, will sink below if benefit freezes continue. There are also specific Government policies, notably benefit sanctions, designed to create destitution. The numbers have in fact reduced since the last Joseph Rowntree survey in 2015 because of reduced sanctioning in JSA but as this is being replaced by Universal Credit sanctions are increasing again and destitution is likely to follow.

Another Government strategy is to force even the very poor to pay some proportion of rent and Council Tax, often leading to disproportionate legal and other recovery costs. The resemblance to the former Poll Tax is unlikely to be accidental.

The report tries rather unsuccessfully to look at specific sub-groups of 'migrants' and people with 'complex needs'. The former, covering everyone from EU workers to failed asylum-seekers, is too broad to be meaningful. The latter, defined as two or more of homelessness, substance abuse, offending, domestic violence and begging is even more of a rag-bag, muddling up causes, manifestations and consequences of destitution.

A much more interesting sub-group would have been people suffering chronic ill-health. Again, there would have been some problems since illness, particularly mental illness, is both a cause and an effect of destitution. Nonetheless this group is important since people who are too ill to work have been a specific and consistent Government target since the Freud report in 2007. These attacks accelerated last year and in future people who are

medically incapable of work (frequently a long-term situation) will be restricted to the same incomes as those who are simply unemployed (usually short-term). There is little doubt that without legislative change another survey in a few years will reveal a very clear link between sickness and destitution.

Politically speaking the Government's position is clear. Its obsession with work incentives means that whenever someone, well or ill, is not working the presumption is that this is because they do not want to. From this point of view offering a straight choice between work or destitution makes perfect sense. To challenge this the Labour Party needs to reject radically the entire 'work incentive' discourse--something it has never quite brought itself to do.

The report's conclusions touch on these issues though they are marred by the (very common) failure to distinguish between incapacity and disability. The other recommendations are much as one would expect with regard to benefit levels, sanctions and the responsibility of public bodies to prevent rather than contribute to destitution. An additional important point is that the ability of local authorities to give discretionary help in crises should be restored. At present this function has devolved almost entirely on charities.

The report is largely statistical but contains a lot of illuminating interview material. Even people with no specialist interest will find it interesting and informative.

# Food and famine

**Nigel Watt**  
on Sub-Saharan Africa & why people migrate

**The Famine next Door**  
**Benny Dembitzer**  
**Ethical Events £15.99**

**B**enny Dembitzer knows a great deal about tropical agriculture and food production. He also has long and deep experience of Africa and as an economist. This book is packed with facts, insights and recommendations and the subject is of burning urgency. The main message is well addressed, that Africa is capable of feeding itself but it is failing to do so and that this is a main contributor to the desperation that drives people to try to migrate. The first part of the book suggests in some detail what needs to be done to put agriculture right and would make a good handbook for ministries of agriculture, extension workers and farmers in Africa. In fact the book targets the public in the 'North' interested in development such as NGO workers and donors, large or small, and aims to raise awareness generally about how Africa's predicament affects us all and that we should help Africa do something about it.

Agriculture is the key to creating jobs and feeding the rapidly growing population of Africa. However, apart from in Rwanda and Ethiopia, governments do not give it priority. Most African farmers are smallholders, increasingly women, and in many countries population pressure means that farms are too small to feed a large family. Improvements are vital but must respect traditional (organic) methods. Experience and good practice should be shared. Education must be practical and promoted at a local level rather than through seminars and academic research. It must include planting trees and other measures to combat soil erosion, preserve fertile topsoil, rotate and diversify crops, promote good seeds and manage water supplies.

Agricultural extension workers need to get their hands and boots dirty. Although Africa still has spare land, governments should resist alienating huge areas to the Chinese, Saudis and others. They should also resist the hard sell of

seeds and fertilisers by multinational companies who neither know nor care about local conditions.

The second part of the book looks at everything else that affects development in sub-Saharan Africa, some of which seems less obviously relevant to the title of the book. The model of the 'nation state' does not work well where there are many different languages and ethnic groups which often overlap colonial boundaries. Most African coun-

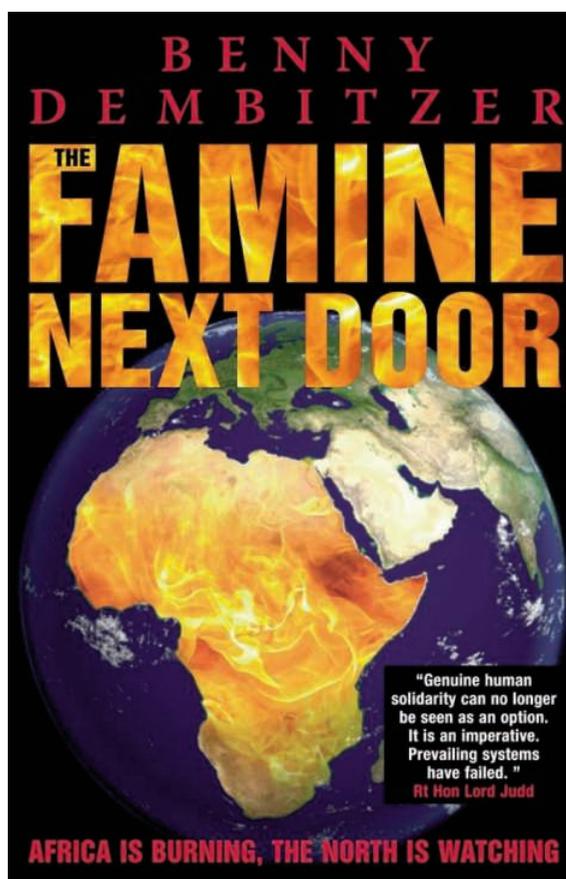
tries often study in the 'north' and stay there, or they work for NGOs, depleting governments' manpower resources.

No country can develop through aid alone. Good aid is properly planned in collaboration with local communities or with governments and can include things like solar energy, microcredit and must target the poorest. Aid is bad when it is uncoordinated and does not take into account local and cultural factors, or when it promotes wrong solutions such as fossil fuels and GM seeds, ruthless privatisation or, worse, when irrelevant conditions are imposed on countries that approve abortion or fail to support moving the US embassy to Jerusalem.

UN agencies can be clumsy and unhelpful. The three agencies most interested in agriculture, FAO, WFP and IFAD (the International Fund for Agricultural Development) do not coordinate their work and WFP has been too closely tied to a policy of distributing US food surpluses. 'Food for work' can be useful but the food should be bought locally. China is now very active in Africa but, like western countries in the past, acts in its own economic interests.

NGOs come in for criticism. They do good work but there are too many of them (600 in Kenya for example). They distort the economy by paying well and creaming off local talent. They often fail to stand up to multinationals and to 'northern' governments. They promote themselves in order to raise funds and do not educate their donors about the realities. They are uncoordinated.

Many things are true all over Africa and Benny naturally refers most to the countries he knows best, Malawi, Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania. It would also have been good if the text could have been broken up with a few cartoons or diagrams. However, the book is important. Its message needs to be heard and the book widely read.



## BOOK REVIEWS

## Fighters for social justice

**Mike Davis**  
on two  
East End  
lives

**Isaac and I: A life in Poetry**  
**Chris Searle Five Leaves £11.99**  
**Harry Constable in his own words**  
**(compiled by Bill Hunter)**  
**Living History Library £10**

Two books, two radical socialists, two ostensibly contrasting characters—a teacher and a docker—a generation apart, but united by London's East End and a common struggle for a better world.

Chris Searle spent most of his life as a teacher seeking to draw out the creativity of all young people who came through his classes. The spirit of the great East London poet Isaac Rosenberg animates his autobiography.

Beginning his working life teaching in Canada and the Caribbean Searle then took up teaching in Stepney, East London (on the same street when Rosenberg had lived). In 1971 Searle was dismissed when he published a book of his students' poems, *Stepney Words*, in defiance of the school governing body. School student strikes, protests, including a march to Trafalgar Square made national headlines and also helped promote children's poetry in the curriculum of many London schools and beyond.

Following a two year battle Searle's dismissal was overturned. During this time he developed a community publishing scheme and an inter-generational poetry project in Cable Street.

His love of cricket, jazz music, poetry and language radiates through the book alongside his passion for social and racial justice, equality and human rights. Whether he is recalling experiences in Grenada or Stepney his writing is peppered with poems and artwork underlined with a sustained political edge.

Many of the children Searle taught were the sons and daughters of London dockers, maybe even those of Harry Constable, a prominent leader of the unofficial docker's union in the 1940s and 1950s. Told through recordings and writings compiled by Bill Hunter he cuts an unexpectedly dapper figure for a docker's leader in smart suit and tie. But the power of his oratory clearly helped thousands of dock workers fight successfully against the injustices of the port employers and in many instances the tame Transport and General Worker's

Union of the time.

The East London world described in this autobiography is a world away from London docklands today. Canary Wharf then was a by-word for strikes and dock militancy contrasting with today's emblematic symbol of corporate capitalism. Constable was born into a poor docker's family in Wapping, one of 16 siblings to an Irish republican mother. His limited schooling was more than made up with self-education and the school of hard-knocks in dock trade unionism, that rapidly propelled him into leadership roles.

A natural and eloquent speaker he helped develop the unofficial 'blue union' at a time when the official unions were lacking in militancy. He describes his expulsion from the TGWU and his defence of rank and file interests through many strikes and demonstrations. Initially a member of the Communist Party, then later, disillusioned with its 'class collaboration' in the 1950s moving to fledgling Trotskyist groups.

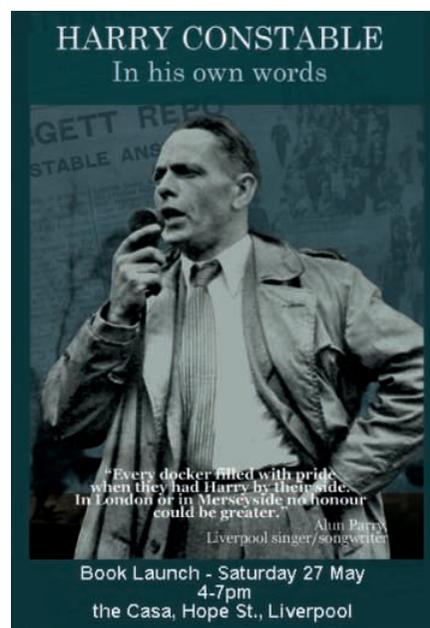
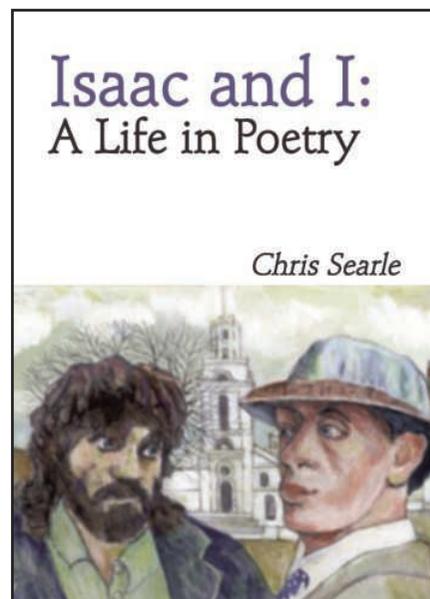
Constable managed to stay in dock work even without a union card thanks to his popularity with rank and file dockers. Famously in the late 1940s he led a successful campaign against victimisation by the dock employers. The solidarity of fellow workers and his own tenacity securing his and others reinstatement.

A dramatic episode was his arrest in 1951, along with six other unofficial leaders of the Blue Union, charged under the wartime regulation 1305, which restricted the right to strike. Dockers in Liverpool, Hull, London and elsewhere stopped work several times during the Old Bailey trial. All were acquitted and the then Labour government withdrew regulation 1305.

Although war time injuries forced his premature retirement in the late 1950s Constable remained active. The book provides detailed descriptions of East End docks and dock labour, working conditions, strikes, anti-fascist action and campaigns including the background to the formation of the Blue Union. The appendices contain original articles written by Constable in the socialist press, and a Mass Observation report of the 1945 Docker's Charter strike.

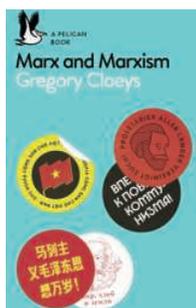
If you want insights into two parallel worlds of militant lives

working for social justice then look no further than these two cracking autobiographies.



# Socialism in one volume

**Duncan  
Bowie**  
on a brave  
attempt at  
synthesis



**Marx and Marxism**  
**Gregory Claeys**  
**Pelican £8.99**

**G**reg Claeys is the leading writer on early English socialism – Owenism and Chartism, and author of a recent study of utopianism. I was therefore interested in how he would tackle Marxism. Claeys writing on socialist theory is normally readable and I assumed that in a Pelican paperback, he would manage to make Marx and his theories intelligible. This was perhaps too much to expect, as the book plunges into Marx's encounter with Hegelianism and philosophy of religion, which, to those disinterested in this period of Germanic philosophy is both obscure and irrelevant.

Claeys then picks up on Marx's theory of alienation in his Paris manuscripts. Given Claeys' interest in utopianism, he treats this in some depth though it is questionable how much this youthful idealism impacting on Marx's later thinking with its dry and often technical economic focus. Marx's vitriolic diatribes against his rival socialist ideologues in his German Ideology also gets more attention than they perhaps deserve. I remember reading this work many years ago and was

depressed to find that Marx was sclerotic to the point of being nasty, which perhaps explains much of the behaviour of the current sectarian left – slander and mock the group who is closest to you politically.

Claeys' treatment of Marx's political engagement in both English and European politics is surprisingly limited. While the book no doubt is intended to focus on Marx's theory, I expected Claeys to focus on how Marx applied his theory to political practice - Marx's role in the First International and response to the Paris commune is covered in 13 pages.

Claeys makes a brave attempt to find socialist idealism within Marx's works on political economy, including Capital, before then examining Marx's limited writings on future socialist systems, with Claeys seeking to assert that Marx, despite his critique of utopian socialists and their prescriptions for future societies, was himself a utopian. Perhaps the most useful section of the book is the chapter on 'Concluding Marx', which seeks to summarise Marx's achievements and to set out what he considers to be the deficiencies of Marx's theories.

The second part of the book seeks to cover the development of

Marxism over the last 130 years. Given the existing extensive literature, this is an ambitious task. There is much on the Second International and Kautsky and Bernstein, but the main section is on Leninism, the October Revolution and the development of Stalinism and post Stalinist Soviet Union. The development of western Marxism, from Gramsci to the Frankfurt school is also covered, with a brief section on 'other marxisms', which is mainly on Maoism, with brief references to Ho Chi Minh and Pol Pot and North Korea.

This is theory well beyond Claeys usual historical period and territorial reach, and for anyone with more specialist knowledge, would appear somewhat simplistic, but no doubt the publisher requested a comprehensive study. Yet for the student reader, struggling through the earlier chapters on Marx's Hegelian and post-Hegelian writings they might not reach the second part of the book. So, overall, I was somewhat disappointed, especially since Claeys is one of my favourite historians and one who has in the past made complex theory intelligible. Perhaps this disappointment says more about Marx than it does about the author.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 32>>

and Omega Schools. Serious questions have been raised over the quality of these chains of schools, their ability to reach the most marginalised children including girls and those with disabilities and accusations that their unaffordable nature drives inequalities and educational segregation. The Kenyan National Union of Teachers released a damning report on the quality of Bridge International Academies and the Ugandan government threatened to close all Bridge schools due to poor conditions in 2017. As aid money is channelled towards private chains of schools, funds as well as staff are also leached from the public sector, weakening state education systems.

The web of players in the promotion of low-fee private schools also highlights which actors are

in pole position to benefit from these ventures. The UK based corporate education giant Pearson has provided large amounts of funding to low-fee private schools, including Omega, through its learning fund; PALF. This conveniently gives the company access to growing educational markets in developing countries. The chairman of PALF, Sir Michael Barber, a strong advocate for the role of the private sector in education was also DFID's Special Representative on Education in Pakistan from 2011 to 2015. This interplay of bodies and individuals raises concerns over the increasing influence that the private sector is potentially having on UK aid allocations and if these decisions are taken with the poorest in mind. In 2015, DFID was given an amber rating – the second worst rating – by the UK Independent Commission for Aid Watchdog for its work with

private sector firms. The watchdog emphasised tensions between poverty reduction, which should be at the heart of DFID's work, and businesses' profit motivations.

As the current UK government makes grand statements and financial commitments regarding education for all, civil society and political opposition must keep challenging the government over where aid is being spent. Labour's new vision for international development, released in March 2018, offers some promising alternatives, including an end to the UK's support for public-private partnerships in health and education and more funding to support grassroots women's organisations. Labour must stay committed to these principles if it is to ensure that the UK can assist in the promotion of human rights, social justice and poverty alleviation for all children and young people. **c**

YOUTH VIEW



# Tory hypocrisy on overseas aid

**Alice Arkwright** explains how the government puts profit before poverty reduction

**Alice Arkwright is an MA student**

**O**n April 20, former Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson launched the Foreign Office's Platform for Girls' Education. A group of 12 figures from across the Commonwealth, co-chaired by Amina Mohammed, Kenyan Cabinet Secretary for Education will act to improve girls access to quality education. As a part of the initiative the UK has committed £212 million in aid to help one million vulnerable girls across the Commonwealth receive 12 years of education by 2030.

At a time when funding for education aid has been stagnating since 2010 and there are still 263 million children and youth out of school, additional funds are welcome. The announcement also fits with the clear aim of the UK government to position itself as global leader of education and

development, especially girls' education. Since around 2013, DFID has emphasised gender equality in education as a cornerstone policy, Penny Mordant has recently insisted efforts must be focused on increasing access to education for persons with disabilities and Theresa May has joined other G7 nations in committing \$2.9 billion to educating girls and women affected by conflict in June of this year.

The hypocrisy of these statements is however not lost on many. Boris Johnson has commented that women attend university in order to find a husband, has made numerous racist comments including referring to Commonwealth populations as "flag-waving piccaninnies" and as the editor of the Spectator magazine published an article stating that black people have a lower IQ. UNISON have shown how budget

cuts and policies of austerity in the UK disproportionately impact women and a UN committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities inquiry demonstrated that the UK domestic policy is failing to protect the dignity and human rights of those with disabilities. The audacity of this government to present itself as a promoter of human rights on the international stage is shocking.

A rising concern in the past five years is DFID's support for privatising education and health. At a time when the pervasiveness of the private sector in the NHS and UK state education is rightly being questioned, we must not forget to apply the same thinking to policies promoted abroad. Examples of this include DFID's funding of corporate chains of low-fee private schools, including Bridge International Academies

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Solidarity Greetings to all Labour Party Conference Delegates

**ANY BREXIT IS A TORY BREXIT**

**BACK A REFERENDUM ON THE BREXIT DEAL**

MANUEL CORTES, TSSA General Secretary

MICK CARNEY, TSSA President

JASON TURVEY, TSSA Treasurer

ANDI FOX, Labour NEC, TSSA

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