

# CHARTIST

For democratic socialism

November/December 2015

#277

£2

## Tory demons

**Jude Girton-Darling MEP**

*EU workers' rights*

**Don Flynn**

*Migrants*

**Marina Prentoulis**

*Greek elections*

**Mike Davis**

*Corbyn*

**Wendy Pettifer**

*Legal Aid*



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## 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

## Contributions and letters deadline for CHARTIST #278 11th December 2015

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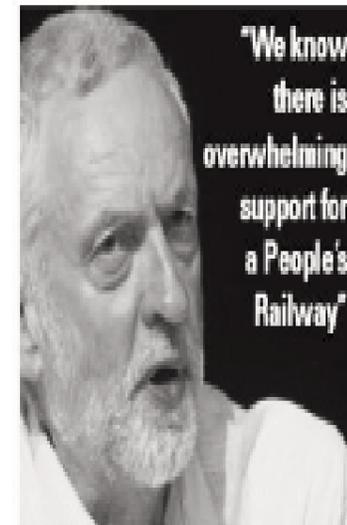
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Not British Rail Mark II - page 6



Debunking migration myths - page 10



Unusual suspects on the barricades - page 20

## FEATURES

8

### CORBYN EFFECT

Mike Davis weighs the Momentum movement

9

### OBITUARY - MICHAEL MEACHER MP

Mike Davis pays tribute to a stalwart of the Labour movement

10

### IMMIGRATION

Don Flynn calls for boldness from Labour's new leadership

12

### BBC

Paul Reynolds provide a critical defence

13

### BUSINESS ETHICS

Frank Lee shows yet again money talks and China is no exception

14

### SYRIZA WON, BUT...

Marina Prentoulis offers hope

15

### PIRAEUS PRIVATISATION

Wendy Pettifer and Mike Davis talked to the workers

16

### EU REFERENDUM

Jude Girton-Darling MEP sounds a wake up call

18

### CRIMINAL JUSTICE - FOR SALE

John Lea and Wendy Fitzgibbon explain gross injustices

20

### LEGAL AID - NOT!

Wendy Pettifer exposes the Tory crusade to deny access to justice to the many

21

### OPEN LETTER TO LUCY POWELL MP

Dave Lister offers his expertise to Labour's Education shadow

22

### FAMILY LIFE

Mike Davis reviews domestic life in the first half of the 20th century

24

### TAKING ON THE TORIES

Trevor Fisher sees 1983 parallels in Labour's struggle to organise to win



Cover by Martin Rowson

# CHARTIST

FOR DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM  
Number 277 November/December 2015

## REGULARS

4

### OUR HISTORY 63

Emily Townshend - Creative Socialism (1924)

5

### EDITORIAL

Casting out Tory Demons

6

### POINTS AND CROSSINGS

Paul Salveson on a People's railway

7

### GREENWATCH

Nigel Doggett on protecting the planet

25

### FILM REVIEW

Patrick Mulcahy on women in Hollywood

26

### BOOK REVIEWS

Don Flynn on migrants, Frank Lee on Ukraine, Glyn Ford on Catalonia, Tehmina Kazi on fundamentalism, Patricia d'Ardenne on gender inequality, Duncan Bowie on James Klugman, Bertrand Russell and the Paris Commune, Nigel Doggett on capitalism

32

### VIEW FROM BOSNIA

Sheila Osmanovic on the legacy of genocide

# OUR HISTORY - 63

## Emily Townshend - Creative Socialism (1924)

**E**ducated as one of the first cohort of students at Girton College, Cambridge, Emily Townshend was a member of the Fabian Society who lived in Earls Court, London. She had been married to an architect, a relative of George Bernard Shaw's wife; he died in 1897. Emily Townshend was active in education reform, running a journal, *The School Child* in 1911. She later qualified as a sanitary inspector. Together with her daughters she was active in the suffrage movement and was once imprisoned for a fortnight. One of her daughters, Mrs Keeling, became a Labour member of the London County Council. Emily Townshend wrote one Fabian pamphlet – on William Morris and communism, but resigned from the Society in 1915 on the basis that it 'had fallen out of the real line of advance'. She then helped to found the National Guilds League. She was a friend of G D H Cole, as well as of C P Scott, editor of the Manchester Guardian. After the First World War, she developed an interest in Italian fascism, which she considered to be a form of militant socialism and translated the work of the Italian syndicalist and fascist Odon Por. In 1923, she published Por's two major works: *Guilds and Co-operatives in Italy* and *Fascism*, with Cole contributing an appendix to the first volume, both volumes published by the Labour Publishing Company. Townshend was also a friend of the French Cubist painters and a collector of modern art. She was 73 when she wrote *Creative Socialism*, which had originated as an essay on Por, but also served as a reflection on the Labour Party in government. In a memoir, published privately by her friends in 1936, she was described as 'plump, rosy-faced, talkative, argumentative'. In 1934 at the age of 85, she

was 'still enjoying, investigating, exploring, still making friends, still young'. Apparently she was converted from fascism to communism in her final years, convinced that only 'bloody revolution' could save civilisation.

"The Labour Party, fine as it is, is not doing, and cannot do, the work of Socialism. It is doing the work that would be done by an equally able and enlightened Liberal Party. It may be, and indeed is, work of vital importance, yet every such act of compromise not only tends to strengthen and consolidate the old system which we want to undermine, but tends also to destroy the creative impulse for the new.

It used to be believed that social democracy would lead to social revolution. Many socialists believe it still, but for those who look below the surface, it has been disproved all along the line, first in one European country, then in another. Social democracy, with its millions of voting adherents, dare not insist unconditionally on its ideal. It has not the power, and never will have power, to insist. Notwithstanding its legislative reforms and its able administration, nay, even in virtue of them, it is a menace to real progress if it deludes its followers with the idea that the work of revolution can be done for them, instead of by them....It is up to us to erect another ideal, an ideal of communal service and of the responsibilities, the privileges and the rights of service, an ideal of freedom – not merely political freedom, but economic freedom, the right to do the work of the world in our own way..... The creative passions of man must be enlisted for the coming battle. These alone have the power both to construct and to destroy, but the constructive impulse is the stronger: destruction is but an incident of creation."

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# Building a social movement

**J**eremy Corbyn had a good conference. His leader's speech made fun of the wild "Corbyn causes asteroid strike" media comments and went on to outline policies from sustainable investment backed by a new bank, a green new deal, 100,000 new council homes, a more robust defence of human rights and non-renewal of Trident in a clear break with orthodox Labour. His mandate for change was a kinder, more inclusive, tolerant and 'Straight Talking, Honest Politics'.

A core theme was that Labour stands for the people, not vested interests, opposing the Tories' extreme agenda to shred the welfare state, shrink the public sector and tear up workplace protections: taking us back to the 1930s. He reminded us we are experiencing the longest fall in living standards since records began; engineered by a Tory party funded by the few. He countered the scaremongering that Labour was a threat to economic and family security by questioning the meaning of security for the self employed, those on zero hours contracts, the millions of people getting deeper into personal debt and facing eviction for failure to pay ever rising rents. He mocked the idea of meagre minimum wage rise as any compensation for the cuts in working tax credits.

A plea for Cameron to defend human rights in Saudi Arabia was combined with a principled stance on humanitarian aid for refugees and cooperation with partners in Europe and the UN. Shadow chancellor John McDonnell's speech was anything but boring, with its core messages of ending austerity, using people's quantitative easing, ending tax loopholes and tax havens, and ending the outsourcing bonanza. This message has been repeated time and again at fringe events. Under the shadow of thousands of steel job losses at Redcar and Scunthorpe, he spoke of a reindustrialisation programme, boosting manufacturing and rebooting an economy with the slowest, lowest and meanest recovery from any recession in the last 100 years.

Building a social movement for change is seen as the means to achieve these ambitions. Policy reviews will engage party members more actively, with conference having a deciding role. With this rallying call, members left with a renewed commitment to the new way of doing politics; ready to take on the Tory government's dismantling of social security and the institutions of the liberal welfare state and with renewed determination to put Labour values at the heart of British society.

Human values of solidarity, tolerance and kindness are currently being trampled on by Cameron's 12-seat majority government. The Immigration Bill shows us the really nasty face of the Tory party. As **Don Flynn** explains, these plans would establish a vigilante state where landlords, employers, banks, university heads (and even driving instructors) will

be co-opted to check and recheck on immigration status if they want to avoid criminal charges. Unprecedented powers will be handed to immigration officials to detain individuals seize property and close businesses. A culture of suspicion and fear will inevitably increase discrimination against minorities whatever their status, driving people into the arms of the criminal gangs. We have the spectacle of the fifth richest country in the world refusing to take part in offering safety to refugees fleeing war and persecution on the borders of Europe and North Africa, even those ravaged by British bombs. Meanwhile Osborne ushers in a 'golden era' of relations with the Chinese one party dictatorship in order to sidestep the issue of who will fund wildly expensive nuclear plants when he is cutting state support and strangling the growth of the renewable energy sector. Even as cheap steel dumped on European markets is putting paid to the last vestiges of heavy industry, the government's blind faith in "market forces" prevails. **Frank Lee** explores the economic challenges facing China.

Human values of solidarity, tolerance and kindness are currently being trampled on by Cameron's 12-seat majority government

Corbyn highlighted how great British public institutions are now in the Tory cross-hairs: the BBC as well as the NHS. **Paul Reynolds** defends the BBC while **John Lea** and **Wendy Fitzgibbon** explain how our criminal justice system is increasingly being outsourced to private companies, with the probation service following in the footsteps of private prisons. **Wendy Pettifer** highlights the assault on the legal aid system which will end access to justice to those who cannot pay, at a time when the poor need it most.

Europe could be the one arena where Cameron comes a cropper. Labour could steal a march on the Tories if, under fire from UKIP, the truce ends between Cameron and his largely Euro-sceptic party. **Jude Girton-Darling MEP** provides a trenchant case for the benefits of the EU and a critique of the fictional nationalist alternative. Meanwhile **Marina Prentoulis** explains why Syriza won a majority in a second Greek election this year, in the face of a third austerity bail-out and the prospect of a fire sale of government assets. Without any amnesty on sovereign debt, they have little scope for recovery in or out of the EU.

Cameron believes that unfettered by coalition, and with a diminished Labour opposition and unions disabled, the government can steamroller public spending cuts and watch the steel industry collapse without risk of a backlash. Victimising welfare dependency, illegal immigrants and work-shy employees will play well, according to the rule book. It is Labour's job to exorcise the Tory demons. It will need to build a social movement capable of exposing the injustice and lack of humanity that the Tories represent and tap into the British values of fairness and solidarity that Corbyn champions.

## A people's railway

Paul Salveson on learning from the past

A few years ago I went along to a community theatre performance, given by a local company. I sat through what I thought was a pretty turgid performance – not that well acted and the script was poor. Yet at the end the audience, or at least all of it apart from me, went ecstatic. What was wrong with me? Was I missing something? I have to say I feel a bit like that with Jeremy Corbyn at the moment. I'm all for accentuating the positive but I think there's a risk we get carried away with our own enthusiasm and fail to heed those wise words of Gramsci 'optimism of the will – pessimism of the intellect'. Whilst I can, as a sympathetic outsider, welcome the new energy that is clearly going into the Labour Party (my local constituency party has seen its membership double in the last two months) I have major reservations in at least one area that I have particular interest in – railways.

Corbyn, and the rail unions – I'm a card-carrying TSSA member, that most Corbynist of trades unions – are fond of saying that 'railway nationalisation' is popular with the general public. We're being offered a 'people's railway' yet the detail remains thin. A return to a monolithic BR, with an HQ in London which

lays down 'the right way to do things', would be a classic case of throwing the baby out with the bath water and is unlikely to go down well in Scotland, where most rail services are the responsibility of the Scottish Government. Wales is likely to go the same way, closely followed by the North of England and West Midlands. A return to the old style of centralised state ownership would land us with a discredited business model which would ignore some of the positive gains that have been made – dare I say it – under privatisation. We've got a rapidly growing railway which is safer than it has ever been. It is certainly costing more to run than it did in BR days, but a lot of those costs are coming not from the private train operators ('private' in the sense of not being owned by the British state, as opposed to the French, German and Dutch) but from UK state-owned Network Rail. The most dynamic and successful train operators tend to be the smaller ones, like Chiltern, Merseyrail and Grand Central, suggesting that 'one big railway' isn't that good an idea.

Centralised state ownership would lead to an ossified railway in which new ideas are discouraged and the interests of passengers and workers are of little concern. But this is perhaps taking 'pessimism of the intellect' a bit far, and it's good to see that

Lillian Greenwood has taken on the top transport job in Corbyn's shadow cabinet. She's a highly intelligent politician, with all the right instincts combined with a good understanding of transport having been in the shadow railways role for several years. She will head a commission to hear evidence about what a 'people's railway' should look like.

The commission will face a key problem for the left: how can it come up with a model of social/socialist enterprise that is dynamic and innovative, meets wider social, economic and environmental concerns, is democratically accountable and costs less than the current system? Rather than start off with a preconceived model of state ownership it's vital that Lillian Greenwood's team decides exactly what it is it wants from the railways, then looks at the best method of delivering it.

As things stand, franchising delivers quite a lot of the 'goods' that a Labour Government would want to see. The specification for the Northern franchise,

with the winner due to be announced in December, hard-wires a whole string of benefits that go way beyond the financial bottom line. Bidders were instructed to incorporate quantifiable passenger and wider community benefits in their proposals, that would be

'weighted' in the evaluation. So if your bid ignores wider social and economic benefits of rail, you'll be marked down and potentially lose.

Franchising is far from perfect and can be a costly solution which builds in short-termism, making the case for companies to invest in the business less than attractive. The big profits are not being made by the train operating companies but by the rolling stock leasing companies and the plethora of suppliers. These are some of the issues which Labour needs to get a handle on, but perhaps above all link the devolution agenda to how a modern railway should look. Already, London, Scotland and Merseyside have control over local rail services and Wales, West Midlands and the North will go the same way. The results have been extremely positive and the remaining English regions should go down the same route. A big question is what to do with the InterCity network which must be UK-wide. Bringing that into a more co-ordinated brand, possibly with more than one provider (e.g. West and East Coast, Cross Country, Great Western), is something that should be considered. Let's resist the temptation to go back to the solutions of the 1940s and learn from the successes as well as the failures of the last 20 years.



Paul Salveson is a member of Yorkshire First

Paul Salveson's blog 'The Weekly Salvo' is at [www.paulsalveson.org.uk](http://www.paulsalveson.org.uk)

## Labour's 'Protecting the Planet'

Nigel Doggett responds to Corbyn's greening of Labour policy

Labour Leader Jeremy Corbyn's Protecting the Planet campaign document was remarkable in linking climate change to the economic system, reflecting his challenge to the status quo.

Much has been made of an alleged wish to re-nationalise the big energy companies. In fact, as shadow Energy and Climate Change Secretary Lisa Nandy confirmed at conference, Corbyn stressed only the need to control the national grid. His emphasis is on socialising energy and expanding community schemes. And a revival of coal? This would depend on implementing Carbon Capture and Storage, which is as yet unproven, and is likely to be overtaken by events.

Labour now needs to fill in the policy details on the environment. The Party should set up policy groups based on UK government departments - the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) for biodiversity and agriculture, the Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC) for energy and climate change and finally Transport - bringing together knowledgeable members, specialists and campaigners with elected representatives.

Three key R words are Radical, Robust and Relevant. Radical is a given, but policies must be consistent, achievable and demonstrably relevant to people's lives and futures.

### 'Apollo Programme'

Recently David Attenborough and others called for the funding of a new global 'Apollo Programme' to develop clean energy and head off climate change. The actual parallels with the original Apollo programme are limited as it 'only' posed biological and engineering challenges, in a time of economic prosperity. However, even the priorities for renewable energy are still heavily contested and finding solutions to the climate crisis is much more complex, linking science, technology, economics, ecology and international diplomacy.

The two degree target for future global temperature rise set for the forthcoming Paris Conference (COP) is politically challenging but it has solid science behind it. The latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report highlights numerous risks if the earth rises two degrees on average: accelerating biodiversity loss, extreme weather, sea level rise and the danger of runaway climate change. Temperatures have risen by 0.7 degrees since pre-industrial times. Another 1 degree is probably in the pipeline, so we have little room for delay. Groups such as 350.org call for a smarter focus on the causes, principally carbon dioxide, which has risen from a 278 parts per million to 400 and will need to be reduced again. Trace gases such as methane and fluorocarbons also have proportionally larger effects.

Nigel Doggett is reading for a Masters degree in Climate Change and Policy at the University of Sussex. He is a member of Wealden Labour Party

Commitments so far from governments will not be enough to meet the target. From past experience, once the TV cameras have gone, promises melt away like an iceberg in the tropics. There are also many difficult stages from an agreed policy to actual success involving public bodies, companies and myriad decisions by people. It will be hard to get all countries on track and secure financial and technological support for carbon reduction worldwide. We must ensure the Labour team led by Lisa Nandy provide the leadership so lacking from the Tories.

Poor countries and people will be hit hardest by climate change. The new UN Sustainable Development Goals stress poverty reduction alongside combating climate change. Fortunately these can work together: building resilience in poorer countries should also reduce carbon emissions, as solar power generation reduces the need for firewood and the destruction of forest cover.

### Oil Justice Campaign

War on Want is backing the Oil Justice Campaign to expose links between major oil companies and human rights abuse. A civil action is being brought in the British High Court against BP in connection with the 1992 kidnapping of Columbian Trade Unionist Gilberto Torres. BP was a large minority stakeholder in the oil refinery, and four paramilitary kidnapers claimed they were paid by the owners to murder Torres, who was only released after an international campaign. Many multinationals are deeply implicated in attempts to suppress community, environmental and trade union groups who defend the earth, human rights and justice. War on Want's Tom Lebert believes that neoliberalism is inextricably linked to 'extractivism' and Big Oil. He calls for measures to democratize energy supply and benefit local people.

### Plan to explore

In harmony with the new politics, Greenwatch is inviting feedback on future coverage. Here are areas we plan to explore:

**Is increased nuclear power necessary to decarbonize energy supply?** Even some prominent greens think so. Greenpeace recently published a fully renewable plan that would phase out nuclear but this is at odds with academics who believe that completely fossil and nuclear-free energy is not a realistic option.

**Is there such a thing as inherently safe nuclear power?** Can human error and technical failure resulting in dangerous accidents be designed out? Can spent fuel contamination and terrorist threats be eliminated?

**What would fracking for shale gas or oil mean for the local environment, safety, energy supply and greenhouse gas emissions?**

Have your say: [www.chartist.org.uk/greenwatch](http://www.chartist.org.uk/greenwatch)

# The Corbyn Effect

Converting supporters and new members into active campaigners is the challenge for Labour today, but will Momentum help asks **Mike Davis**?

**D**emocratic socialism is back on the agenda. For the first time in thirty years, Labour Party members and supporters are talking about what socialism means in the 21st century. If the Corbyn leadership can be sustained then we are likely to be campaigning on a range of policies which put both clear red water between us and the Tories and give members something positive to campaign for. Labour Party membership continues to grow upwards of half a million. There is a new enthusiasm abroad and team Corbyn is beginning to score a few hits on Cameron over tax credit cuts, gerrymandering of electoral boundaries and health cuts.

Back on the agenda is a fresh way of conceiving politics, as something participatory, pluralist and active, and not simply the preserve of parliamentarians or councillors, or something that happens at elections. Partly inspired by the Scottish referendum campaign and by social movements in Greece and Spain, what Corbyn and McDonnell remind us is that extra-parliamentary work is vital. Without a confident, strong and vibrant movement outside parliament and town halls, fundamental change won't happen. At Party conference Shadow Chancellor McDonnell pledged to support every strike for jobs and living standards and show solidarity with anti-austerity protests; a refreshing change from the timidity of Labour for the past 30 years or more. Self activity allied to parliamentary activity is the well-spring of change rather than the patronising old school fabianism of 'we know best'. Change that people participate in is likely to produce sustainable results. A parliamentary Labour Party and councillors who seek to cooperate with social movements, be they trade unionists in action against steel plant closures, junior doctors against longer hours and further diminished working conditions, or homeless people squatting for homes, will mark a real transformation.



When we talk about the democratic part of the democratic socialism phrase this is what it means. Whilst the couplet is also designed to distinguish socialists from the undemocratic Stalinist models of bureaucratic, authoritarian socialism experienced in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and yes China and Cuba today, it also seeks to emphasise that socialism is nothing if it is not in the vanguard of democratic revolution. Britain's antiquated semi-feudal state needs that transformation to republican, pluralist, transparent governance more than most in modern Europe. We may have a relatively free press and media, independent trade unions, a right to demonstrate, free speech and wider human rights but this government is launching offensives against all these historical achievements.

Make no mistake this is an extremist government seeking to turn the clock back to the 1930s. We are witnessing a fundamental shift of wealth and power to the rich, with hideous levels of inequality, at the same time as experiencing a social state shrinking to pre-war levels.

So without the emergence of broad and combative social movements allied to Labour we will not secure the redistribution of wealth and power to the vast majority that should be at the heart of the socialist project. However, Labour must be more than against what the Tories are doing. We must project a vision and a narrative which both

explains the situation while outlining a convincing road forward. To achieve that change of direction and positive alternative also requires the 'building of economic, social and political alliances way beyond our comfort zone', to quote Ken Spours author of a new Compass pamphlet, *The Osborne Supremacy*. It also means engaging with how people see the world now, not just how we would like them to see it.

So is Momentum, a new extra-parliamentary grouping supporting Labour, part of the solution? It could be if it grasps these challenges and is able to convert the claimed 60,000 supporters into Labour Party members, or at least maintain a non-sectarian symbiosis with local Labour Parties, providing a vehicle for discussion and political education. However, there is the danger it could become a distraction from building up an active Labour membership, a diversion from the battle to democratise Labour and prevent the Labour right from regaining the initiative. There are many unreconstructed Leninists with whom we can work in broad front organisations but whose politics are antithetical to building a democratic socialist Labour Party. The danger is that Momentum becomes a harbour for sectarians and authoritarians who have little conception of democratic socialist politics and don't want to join a 'reformist' party for fear it will sully their revolutionary purity.

Our energies should be directed to building strong local move-

ments against austerity, and identifying popular local issues. They can range from library or health facility closures to exposing low wage employers. Championing the needs of refugees, the disadvantaged and poor is also a way of mobilising. An urgent task over the next few months is to ensure that hundreds of thousands of people, especially youth, are not disenfranchised by Tory plans for individual voter registration and by the impending boundary changes which could be framed by these voter enrolments. Transforming local CLPs into campaigning bodies involved in our communities will be key to transforming the 100,000 plus supporters into members. Local councillors should not be content to pass on Tory spending cuts but actively

seek to support trade unions and citizen campaigns for social housing, maintained schools, lower rents, safer streets, parks, leisure and learning facilities.

## Perspectives

Yes, we need to have perspectives for the non-metropolitan areas. But people in 'middle England' are also affected by diminished health services, by rising housing costs, by insecure and low wage employment. These are issues around which a popular, even populist, democratic socialist narrative can be built.

The Tories are not sure how to respond to team Corbyn. They have not faced a socialist Labour alternative for many years. This raises the stakes. But a Corbyn led Labour Party can win, provid-

ing there is no big split from Labour as in the early 1980s with the 'gang of four' SDP wreckers. We have over four years to build the alliances and garner support around a democratic socialist platform. Capitalism does not work for the majority of people: neither here nor internationally. Private profit is not a basis to build a cooperative, egalitarian society. Of course there is a role for markets and private enterprise, but the free for all we have with neo liberalism is leading us to hell in a handcart. Now we have a Labour leadership that will be working for social solutions that put people before profit, with a wave of enthusiasm behind it. We need to make that wave a tsunami to sweep out the Tories and their elitist establishment.

## OBITUARY

### Michael Meacher

4th November 1939 - 21st October 2015

**I** got the call rowing with a couple of my grandchildren in the middle of Thorpness mere, Suffolk. It was early June. I shipped oars. Michael Meacher had phoned me to confirm he would be the keynote speaker at the 2015 Chartist AGM. I breathed a sigh of relief knowing he was recovering from a fall and damaged foot. He agreed to outline some of the key messages of his recently published *The State we Need*, a critique of Tory austerity policies and the need to move to a policy of sustainable growth and infrastructural investment. He subsequently detailed the policy in his usual forensic style at the meeting. It was a thorough demolition job on government economic policies and a clear alternative. It sparked a lively discussion. This was Meacher's style. But as Jon Lansman, who worked for him for the last seven years, and with him from the early 80s remarked, Michael was always clear and well versed with evidence to back his case.

He held a wide variety of posts from his long parliamentary career, spanning 45 years, including front bench positions at Industry and Energy as minister under Wilson/Callaghan and later Environment under Blair. Always thoroughly researched and meticulous in preparations, he spoke with great authority. He knew his



**Michael Meacher: a tireless campaigning socialist**

subjects inside out.

But he was always on the left. He was a close ally of Tony Benn, strongly supporting his deputy leadership bid in 1981 and himself unsuccessfully stood for deputy leader against Roy Hattersley in 1983.

Although a member of the Campaign Group of MPs he recognised the need for a new left politics that could reach both down to the grassroots of Labour and outside the Party. In 1980, along with other left MPs, he helped form the Labour Coordinating Committee to do just that and provide a forum for discussing ideas and analysis of how to rebuild Labour after the Thatcher

victory in 1979. He was its first chair.

Oxford educated, he had been elected in Oldham West in 1970 (making him alongside Gerald Kaufman, one of only two MPs of that generation still in the Commons) and held his seat in every election in the renamed Oldham West and Royton, increasing his majority until the last election when it stood at over 14,000.

He was a tireless campaigner, willing to speak on platforms up and down the country. Poverty was a primary focus, but he recognised the importance of trade unions in the battle against inequality. He was also a prolific writer, his *Socialism with a Human Face* provides insights into his early green and humanistic socialist outlook. He wrote almost daily postings on the *Left Futures* website which he set up with Lansman.

He was one of the first to nominate Jeremy Corbyn for leader. His death followed a short illness. He will be sorely missed by the new team, both for his experience and knowledge but also because of the respect he commanded across the Labour Party for his authoritative, but never aggressive articulation of a radical democratic socialism.

MIKE DAVIS

# Standing up for migrants

Challenging the 'hostile environment' fallacy is the central key task for Corbyn's stand on immigration says **Don Flynn**

Jeremy Corbyn is not short of advisors when it comes to ideas on how Labour can get itself through the next five years with a reinvigorated reputation as a party capable of mounting an effective challenge to the plans of the Conservative government.

It is not likely that many of them will suggest a defence of immigration and support for the rights of migrants is one of the ways he might hope to get a hit in below the waterline of a government which is increasingly certain that it speaks for the entirety of the British people on this issue.

Yet the tone of Home Secretary Theresa May's speech to the Tory party conference at the beginning of October, and the content of yet another immigration bill (now proceeding through Parliament) suggests that there may be a surprisingly high number of pitfalls in store for the government on this, the unlikeliest issue for the Labour cause. May's offering of a raw, anti-migrant message to the hardcore right-wingers who make up the activist strand of her party was calculated to tick all the boxes needed to keep her name on the list of credible challengers for the Tory leadership once the Prime Minister steps down, as promised, before 2020.

## Social cohesion impossible

Immigration, she claimed, makes social cohesion impossible within the confines of a nation state. The "pace of change is too fast" she opined, making it "difficult for schools and hospitals and core infrastructure like housing and transport to cope"; neglecting to mention that the arrival of newcomers to localities across the UK was a rather minor source of problems in comparison to the £200 billion that the Chancellor George Osborne is working hard to cut out of public services, capital investment and welfare spending before the next election.

She then went on to say that "for people in low-paid jobs, wages are forced down even further

while some people are forced out of work altogether." Yet a report published jointly by her own Home Office and the department for Business, Innovation and Skills in March 2014 found "little evidence that migration has caused statistically significant displacement of UK natives from the labour market in periods when the economy has been strong."

The assertion that the economy is now strong is one of the central claims made by the Tories about their achievements in government, at least since 2012, when employment levels began to grow again, and even more so in recent times when average wages have been rising after years of stagnation.

## Net migration

The country's recent record on net migration, the benchmark against which Cameron and co. asked voters to judge him on a 'no ifs, no buts' basis in the early days of his first premiership, reflects the way in which immigration fits into a famously open economy like that of the UK. This is during a time when businesses are hiring and doing their best to sell their goods and services in the world marketplace.

Of the 'unsustainable' net inflow of 330,000 people who came to the UK in the 12 months prior to March 2015, one-third comprised international students mainly enrolled in higher education establishments. According to Universities UK, the sector organisation representing higher education, this group is responsible for nearly £11 billion annual export earnings for the UK economy and funds 25,000 jobs – around 18% of the 137,000 people in universities and colleges.

The numbers of workers coming into the country also increased, with non-EU nationals being recruited directly into skilled level jobs under the provisions of the Home Office's points-based scheme. Over 60% of EU nationals who arrived during this period also went straight into



Corbyn: addressing Refugees Welcome rally in London immediately after being declared victor on first count of Labour's leadership elections

jobs, and the vast majority of the remainder placing themselves in employment a short time after their arrival.

None of this is suggestive of a broken system that is undermining social cohesion and driving more into poverty. As a recent report published jointly by Migrants' Rights Network and the CLASS think tank has shown,\* the basic facts about migration to the UK today are there to be marshalled and fed into public conversation by any progressive political movement that is up to the task of challenging the xenophobic myths that are still largely prevalent.

## Flimsy evidence

Despite having such a flimsy evidence base to sustain their negative viewpoints on immigration, the Tory government has chosen to embark on yet another round of legislation which derives all its impetus from Mrs May's insistence on a perspective focused on the supposedly toxic effects it is having on British society.

Labour, somewhat splutteringly, is beginning to recognise that it would make sense to contest an immigration bill that aims to promote a 'hostile environment'. The stated intention of the government strategy - to send out the message that unwanted migrants

should 'go home' - points like a dagger at the heart of those diverse urban parts of the country which still vote Labour.

Until now leadership strategists have pondered the anti-immigrant messages they have been picking up on doorsteps as evidence that the centre-left needs to enter into competition with the Conservatives on the issues of who can come up with the toughest rhetoric on how the numbers of newcomers can be driven downwards. The Shadow Home Secretary, Andy Burnham has represented this approach. His speech at the party conference in Brighton contained a section which set out the claim that migration is 'widening inequality' and 'making life harder in our poorest communities.'

## Sucked into a vortex

It is doing neither of these things. The argument that immigration is a zero sum game run at the expense of native workers has been played so often that it seems contrary to common sense to assert otherwise. Yet that is exactly what Labour must do if it is to avoid being sucked into a vortex in which positions on immigration have to be stated with ever-increased negativity in order to keep up with the competition from the Tories and forces even further to their right.

If that is the direction Labour is to go, it will have to compete in a race to the xenophobic bottom which they just cannot win. This will become increasingly evident as the cost of the hostile environment for migrants, requiring landlords to discriminate in letting tenancies, immigration checks on high streets and public transport systems, and increased risk for employers who offer jobs to anyone tainted with the possibility that they might just be 'foreign'.

The danger that the mania for 'getting tough' on migrants now poses for the UK's ethnically and culturally diverse communities ought to be the clue as to the direction in which Labour now needs to take if it is to mark out a path for itself as a true opposition to Theresa May and her particularly right wing current in the Conservative party. To continue tracking in that direction would mean closing down the option of building a relationship with that significant section of public opinion which has revealed itself over

the summer months as wanting to see more done in the field of refugee and migration policy to buttress the rights of mobile people, rather than bring about their further erosion and exposure to the risk of marginalisation and exploitation.

There are good grounds for thinking there are large number of people who are capable, independent thinkers and potentially effective as a new wave of political organisers. With much in common with the grassroots activists who took the discussion about Scottish independence so deep into local communities during the referendum campaign, they are looking for new ways of doing politics and new inspiration as to the future we should be striving for.

Labour should offer a way in which we can live together in diverse, mutually respectful communities as a central part of this future vision. It should proclaim an end to the mean-spirited

blame game, which says that immigrants are causing hardship to those already settled in the UK, and its thorough-going opposition to the idea that we need should be aiming for a hostile environment to manage the movement of people.

## 'No!'

As the immigration bill breaks down into its segments in the coming months, and is rolled out into programmes for action in local communities the clearest message that the party's home affairs team need to get out is 'No!' to measures which threaten to more deeply divide areas where working class voters are continuing to pledge their support for Labour. That is the mandate that needs to be given to Andy Burnham as long as he has the Home Affairs post: he should be told in no uncertain terms to get on with it.

\* Changing the debate on immigration, CLASS and MRN, September 2015  
<http://classonline.org.uk/pubs/item/changing-the-debate-on-migration>

## The Immigration Bill 2015-16

**I**n their pursuit of reducing the net migration statistics and looking tough on immigration, the Conservative government has produced a legislative sledgehammer which removes safeguards, invents new criminal offences and extends the requirement to check papers into everyday activities.

**The Immigration Bill 2015-16 creates a new criminal offence of illegal working which carries a twelve month prison sentence and an unlimited fine. It allows immigration officials wide ranging powers to search, seize earnings and property and close down businesses.**

**It creates a new criminal sanction for landlords who could be imprisoned for up to five years if they let out a property to anyone without the 'right to rent' – and not just the official tenant. Immigration checks on everyone staying in rented accommodation will be subject to checks by the landlord.**

**The Bill introduces a new criminal offence of driving in the UK whilst being a migrant without status – with implications for anyone stopped on the road or having driving lessons. The Bill places additional duties on banks to close accounts held by undocumented migrants – raising the prospect of every current account holder having to periodically produce proof of their status.**

**For failed applicants, the Bill extends the principle of "deport first, appeal later" which was first introduced in the 2014 Immigration Act. The Bill proposes to extend the same principle to all cases - including human rights based appeals. Implementation will be contentious for this reason - but in the meantime, the Bill withdraws asylum support for those rejected. Those who do not leave the UK will therefore become de facto criminals: unable to work, unable to rent, with no means to survive and forever in limbo, outside the law and beyond any protection from criminal gangs who no doubt will be the real beneficiaries if this Bill is passed.**

Don Flynn is director of the Migrant Rights Network and a member of the Chartist EB

# Backing the Beeb

**Paul Reynolds** on critical defence of the BBC

Perhaps inevitably, one of the first political issues after the Conservative's 12 seat election victory is a proposal to transform the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). Cameron's leadership felt the BBC was bias against them in its coverage, and Miliband advisors have long claimed Conservative officials made repeated threats of reforming the BBC to influence coverage of the 2015 election.

Culture Secretary John Whittingdale's Green paper proposes a review of the BBC Charter and the BBC's nine TV channels, five national radio stations, 40 local radio stations and online services. It is estimated that the BBC is used for an average of 18 hours a week by 97% of the population. With a £145.50 licence fee that yields £3.7 billion in funding the BBC's commercial activities earned £227 million last year. For the Conservatives, reform offers both a significant opportunity for private enterprise and political advantage, but a substantial cost if political opposition mounts.

Behind the review threat is a commitment to effectively render the BBC vulnerable to market forces - thereby imposing a privatising logic without the political cost of privatisation of a popular institution. This is much the same as policy on the NHS - privatisation by the back door. This involves some familiar arguments - unfair competition in popular broadcasting and the possible sale of commercial activities, the scale and scope of 'minority programming' and the burden on public finance in a time of austerity. The impact of these changes would be to diminish voices of political criticism as commercial pressures neuter criticism and to diminish the BBC in scope and size, making it more vulnerable to political influence.

The BBC has developed defensive postures designed to mobilise public resistance, from claims that the reforms will result in the scrapping of popular programmes like *Eastenders*, *Strictly Come Dancing* and *The Great British Bake Off* and popular services

like Radio 1 and 2. The BBC has emphasised a rhetoric of being 'an asset for Britain' that combines popular and quality programming with a peerless international reputation for current affairs broadcasting. It has drawn support from popular BBC performers such as Peter Capaldi (*Dr Who*), and broadcast icons such as Melvyn Bragg to lament the threat to the BBC. This mobilisation has provided Labour with an opportunity for a popular campaign, and former Shadow Culture Secretary Chris Bryant has been vociferous in his attacks on the review. Whilst these voices will certainly be influential in the public consultation that Whittingdale has launched, the final decisions are far more likely to reflect the political judgement of Cameron's leadership as to the costs of pressing forward against the benefits of pleasing private media interests such as Murdoch's News International. The review itself, regardless of any changes in the Charter, is a potent weapon to intimidate the BBC. The proposed decriminalisation of non-licence fee payment at an estimated cost of £200 million, and the shift of the burden of free licence fee provision to BBC budgets, are indicative of a policy of political pressure on BBC Governors and Trustees.

In this context, it is clear that the Left should defend the BBC. It is a popular public institution at a time when there needs to be a reclaiming of the public territory from privatised interests, especially public utilities and rail services. Quality programming such as *Panorama* and *Newsnight* enrich public debate and support public scrutiny on the political world. For Labour there is an equal political gain from defending the BBC and showing political leadership of a recently mobilised movement that was previously demoralised or felt excluded from political struggles. But this support, necessarily full-throated, should not be a blank cheque.

The BBC has been cowed by Conservative threats in a way that has muted its critical faculties being exercised on Coalition and Conservative Governments.



**BBC: worth fighting for**

**Paul Reynolds is a lecturer at Edge Hill University**

It continues to sensationalise strike action and trade union politics negatively, taking as its 'neutral' position the 'obvious' necessity of Conservative austerity agendas, low pay and the 'plight' of private enterprise that struggles with profitability through the resistance of organised labour. The coverage of immigration has been largely jingoistic and whilst there has been criticism of the war in Iraq, it is rarely elaborated, explained or joined to broader foreign policy issues. Political satire is always to be encouraged, but not in news reporting. Some of the BBC's coverage of Jeremy Corbyn's leadership campaign and leadership has uncritically adopted establishment 'patriotic' positions against his republican expressions, anti-Trident positions and his personal and 'unconventional' style of leadership. There is a rich vein of research from such as the Glasgow Media Group that charts the failures of the BBC in this respect.

The BBC should be defended, and we should press our advantage in an area where the Tories political calculus might backfire. That should be accompanied, however, with a real debate over how the BBC should be more self-critical of its bourgeois bias and more willing to be critical of all political positions. One way forward is the Co-operative Party's campaign for a people's BBC, where licence fee payers are shareholders and which seeks to ensure independence from Government and greater accountability. That would be a start to ensuring a better standard of public informed debate.

# Business trumps human rights

Concerns over human rights and geopolitical issues take a back seat, writes **Frank Lee**

China's meteoric economic rise in the last three decades has been astounding. It now has an absolute GDP of US\$8 trillion, second behind the US which has a GDP of US\$17 trillion. Yet measured in terms of purchasing power parity China is now the biggest economy in the world. What should also be taken account of is the size of the US's public debt (US\$18 trillion); US debt-to-GDP ratio is over 100% (debt is greater than national income, and getting larger all the time). China on the other hand has a smaller debt to GDP ratio of 41%. Moreover, China has clocked up huge export trade surpluses and has foreign currency reserves of US\$3.6 trillion, compared to the US US\$1.2 trillion. Of this US\$3.6 trn China holds US dollar denominated assets (usually US Treasury bills) of US\$1.5 trn.

This should give some indication of whose star is on the wax and whose is on the wane.

Recent events have seen a slowdown of China's growth - to a 'mere' 6.9% - a disaster according to the western financial media commentariat. (British growth rate including the asset price inflation in stock and property markets, which isn't growth at all, comes in at 2.4%, a triumph of Osbornomics according to the same commentariat).

There has also been some recent volatility in Chinese stock and property markets. This was inevitable given the emergence of a huge property bubble which has accompanied Chinese growth, but which now seems to have stabilised. In another sense, when a nation makes the transition from a rural pre-industrial economy to a modern industrial economy, growth is initially very high due to massive infrastructure investments. These will, eventually, slow down since the opportunities for such investment will have been exhausted. In short, you can only build an industrial, urban infrastructure once. After the initial burst of investment, further outlays will be to replace obsolete or depreciating infrastructure capital, and growth rates will

decline. Thus mature economies have a tendency toward stagnation.

Chinese success so far has been primarily based on infrastructure investment, funded by export led growth and the earnings from these exports. This was the position which the Soviet Union faced in the 1950s. But the transition from such an economic model requires the creation of a mass internal consumer market, and a movement up the value added chain thus moving away from export led growth - a policy which, as the old Soviet Union found out, can be a difficult transition to make, hence Chinese volatility.

Of course it goes without saying that the United States and its European and Asian vassal states are fundamentally hostile to the development of China into a superpower. The US policy of containment of both Russia and China requires a military and economic presence at both ends of Eurasia which either excludes or absorbs both the big Eurasian players. Obama's 'pivot to Asia' moves the bulk of the US military assets to the Pacific region since Europe is now an occupied US zone of influence cemented by NATO membership. This military encirclement - with hotspots in Ukraine and the South and East China Seas - is complemented by the economic encirclement with the proposed Trans Pacific Partnership, and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership.

The Eurasian response to this has been the rolling policy of circumventing the dollar as the global currency and building political and economic structures outside of US control. This has involved setting up of institutions such as the Shanghai Co-operation Organization (SCO) consisting of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, with India and Pakistan to be admitted next year. The initial object of the SCO was to set up a free trade area but given the global geopolitical realities there appears to be a closer and continuing integration into joint security and military



**Human rights in China: Not on the business agenda**

cooperation.

Given this huge free trade area, otherwise redundant western capital casts it envious eyes in this direction. Ongoing Chinese infrastructure projects - e.g., the new Silk Road project, present extremely viable investment outlets for western capital. This 'New Silk Road' will begin in Xi'an in central China before stretching west through Chinese provinces to adjoining Kazakhstan. Then through Central Asia to northern Iran and west through Iraq, Syria, and Turkey. It then crosses most of Europe to Rotterdam. The path then runs south to Venice, Italy - where it meets up with the equally ambitious Maritime Silk Road.

Some juicy civil engineering contracts will be put out to tender here. This explains both Cameron's and Osborne's obsequiousness towards the Chinese premier during his recent visit to London. UK capital wants a slice of the investment action opening up in Eurasia, and damn the geopolitics. Moreover China's setting up of the AIIB (Asian Industrial Investment Bank) NDB (National Development Bank) and BRICS development bank clearly demonstrate China's resolve to break with the Anglo-American strangle-hold on multi-lateral financial institutions and to set up its own parallel organizations. Much to the chagrin of the US, this development has occasioned a stampede of 42 states wishing to sign-up including a number of its client states, even uber-Atlanticist vassals like the UK. What about human rights in China? Forget it: money talks.

**Frank Lee is a former FE economics lecturer and member of the Chartist EB**

# Syriza wins but at what price?

In the wake of a third bailout worth €86 billion **Marina Prentoulis** provides context

2015 has been a difficult year for Greece, still the country is far from coming out of the woods. Two general elections, a referendum plus a long and painful negotiation between the Syriza coalition government, the European institutions and the IMF, have ended with yet another austerity programme and without a clear solution for the unsustainable Greek debt problem. After the first election on January 25th, Syriza (Coalition of the Radical Left) had high hopes that after five years of unbearable austerity and a huge increase of the Greek debt, convincing the Eurozone leaders that a different path was rational and desirable, would be possible. On July 13th after seven long months of negotiations, it became clear to the whole of Europe that the neoliberal logic had become the modus operandi for both the EU and the Eurozone. The European leaders were determined to crush every voice of resistance, even if that meant the destruction of the European project as such.

The defeat of the Syriza coalition government at the negotiating table was interpreted by domestic and foreign commentators as the beginning of the end for Syriza. The opinion polls before September 20th, predicted a very close result between Syriza and New Democracy (conservatives). Some polls even showed a government led by New Democracy. The outcome of the election was very different and once again the weakness of 'scientific' polling to predict the results in a new political environment, shaped by the financial crisis of 2008 and the catastrophic effects of austerity policies, became evident. Some similarities can be drawn here between the Greek electoral results and the unprecedented support for Jeremy Corbyn's leadership of the Labour party.

In both cases the domestic and international media cannot come to terms with the shift to what for them is a resurgence of 'left', 'socialist' politics. In the case of Corbyn, the old mantra of trying to win the 'centre' ground with neoliberal-friendly policies

seemed obsolete in the face of his overwhelming leadership vote. In the case of Syriza it seems that despite the government not being able to implement its original anti-austerity programme, Syriza still commands important political capital. Neither the social-democratic PASOK nor the right-wing New Democracy, both of which had never argued against austerity, could for the time being at least, regain their electoral power. PASOK, despite a small increase of 1.1%, has virtually collapsed while New Democracy, despite an attempt to consolidate its power and present itself as a 'centrist' party, still did not manage to close the significant gap of 7.5% separating it from Syriza.

Of course it would be wrong to over exaggerate the electoral victory of September 20th. Taking into account that electoral registration is automatic and voting is mandatory in Greece, the turnout has been quite low. This can be attributed partly to the understandable fatigue generated by the repeated call to the polls and partly to the disappointment of the Greek public with electoral politics. According to sources, 800,000 additional voters abstained (compared to the January election). After the 62% referendum 'no' vote to the Institutions' (ECB, EC and IMF) tough austerity terms, it became evident that the ruling establishment would over-ride the wishes



Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras enjoying victory, but for how long?

of the Greek people for a more humane socio-economic agreement. The blunt refusal to recognise the anti-austerity mandate of the Greek government highlighted the democratic deficit in the Eurozone. The broken relationship between electoral politics and citizens will not be mended easily and will haunt the future of Greek politics.

The victory of Syriza for a second term, begs some further examination. The snap election of September took place amidst a significant demobilization of the Syriza activists. The left tendency of Syriza formed a new party, Popular Unity (LAE). Some of the most prominent figures of Popular Unity, had associated themselves with Grexit as the only viable alternative to the neoliberal dictatorship of the Eurozone with a return to the national currency. Currently this clearly does not reflect the mandate of the Greek voters. Other activists and officials of the party, disappointed with what has been perceived as a shift of Syriza to the centre-left and the lack of democratic procedures within the party, decided to stay outside party politics. The internal turmoil and the bailout agreement led many commentators to predict victory for Syriza as unlikely, as well as a weakening of their right-wing government partners, Independent Greeks (ANEL). Yet none of these predictions came



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true. Syriza won with 35.5% of the vote, ANEL although it suffered a decline of 1.1% compared to January, still gained 10 seats in parliament and once again formed a coalition with Syriza. As for the newly formed Popular Unity, it failed to pass the 3% threshold in order to enter parliament.

The discordance between left activists and a large part of the electorate is not an uncommon phenomenon. Three factors are at play here with the Greek electorate. Firstly, the implementation by the government of policies targeting the humanitarian crisis in Greece, like food vouchers, restoration of electricity connections in primary residences and rent allowances for the most vulnerable in society. Secondly, the

negotiations themselves (despite their outcome) changed the subservient position of the previous Greek governments vis-a-vis the EU and gave back to the Greek people some dignity and national pride. Finally, the media and right wing underestimated the hostility of a significant part of the electorate to the old political establishment.

The last point played a key role in the Syriza rhetoric during the second electoral campaign. Although there are good reasons for a leftish anxiety and disappointment as the January anti-austerity discourse has been replaced with an emphasis on changing of the 'old' political establishment there is still hope on the horizon. Old evils, from clientelism to corruption still domi-

nate the Greek state. Despite scepticism on how feasible it is for SYRIZA to change these structures, any development in these areas will be an unquestionable victory and will have a great impact on Greek society. Furthermore, there is still the issue of the Greek debt and it is common knowledge that if the EU partners do not offer some form of relief, it will increase from the current 180% to 200% of GDP in the next few years. Finally, when it comes to the imposed austerity measures, the possibility of replacing measures targeting the most vulnerable strata of society with others that do not contribute to the humanitarian crisis, is still open. All is not lost and without being over-optimistic, we can still hope.

Follow Greece Solidarity Campaign at [www.greecesolidarity.org](http://www.greecesolidarity.org) or on Facebook

## Privatisation of Piraeus port

Wendy Pettifer and Mike Davis talked to the workers

The port of Piraeus faces wholesale privatization as a condition of the third Memorandum bail-out. As a part of the recent Greece Solidarity Campaign delegation to Athens some members went to meet Giorgos Gogos, general secretary of the Union of Dock Workers at the Port. He explained that the Hellenic Development Asset Fund was created to privatize the Port. The majority shareholder is the Greek State, it is the equivalent of an Arms Length Management Organisation. The state owns 74% of the Port of Piraeus while 26% is the privately owned containerization part of the dock. This share is owned by CosCo, a Chinese Company. The port currently consists of integrated pieces of land including cargo handling, passenger terminals, cruise and ferry terminals and the car terminal.

The requirement of the third memorandum is that 51% of the 74% of the Port of Piraeus currently owned by the Greek State be transferred to a private bidder, giving that bidder a majority shareholding of the 37 square kilometres of land, including the profit making domestic ferry service included within the definition of the Port of Piraeus. This is a pre-requisite of receipt of the bailout funds. It is a national asset, contributing to state funds, and

contains the domestic ferry terminals, which provide a life line for Greek society, with affordable fares between the mainland and the islands as well as recently a lifeline for mainly Syrian refugees for whom the Piraeus Port Authority provides free bus passes from passenger terminals to the metro station. It also includes wasteland which the local community planned to turn into a recreational area close to the coast and an area of important archaeological significance where ancient Athenians moored their boats. 1,100 people across four unions are employed by the Port: dockworkers, ferry operators, foremen, and white collar workers.

The inclusion of the requirement that a long lease of land on which the social infrastructure exists be included in the privatization bid came as a complete surprise to the Greek State, and as we spoke the Supreme Court of seven judges was considering an application from four of the local authorities included in the Port of Piraeus for an injunction to prevent the inclusion of their social infrastructure, including domestic roads, in the privatization process.

The land includes schools, clinics, houses, roads and services and if sold, will be used to create a high speed rail/road link to the hinterland. Judgment is expected

within one to eight months.

Although there are three potential bidders: CosCo, APM and ICTS (a Filipino company), the proposal is tailored to CosCo, a company backed by the Chinese State. In the container port they have already casualised work practices: there is no register of workers and no full time employment. In July 2014 CosCo workers, who are non-unionized staged, a 24 hour strike in a bid to obtain union recognition.

There have been strikes and rallies in the city to establish a common front against the privatization process. Many are disappointed that Syriza, on re-election has currently failed to stop it. Costas Douzinas, newly elected MP for Piraeus also spoke to the GSC delegation. He stressed that Syriza opposed the privatisation introduced in the first two Memoranda and was working hard to change the nature of the contract. He highlighted Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras's promise to exclude land, some public buildings and coast from the sale process. He was also mindful that this issue was the first measure of evaluation (in November) for the first instalment of €3bn loan to enable recapitalization of the banks. The message from the dockworkers was an open dialogue with all stakeholders is needed, but that privatization must be stopped.

# Wake up call for UK employees

**Jude Girton-Darling MEP** argues that staying in the EU provides the best basis for securing jobs, rights and a social Europe

In the next two years the UK electorate will face its biggest political decision in 40 years, as it votes either for Britain to remain in the European Union (EU) or to leave forever and go it alone. With Eurosceptic forces growing in number and confidence, bolstered by a right-wing tabloid press, the Labour Party and the pro-EU campaign must waste no time in making the case to stay in Europe, to the benefit of us all.

As the UK's single biggest trading partner, the EU is crucial to British business, jobs and investment opportunities. The EU single market, implemented over the last 20 years, by removing restrictions on trade, competition, services provision and the movement of workers, has had immeasurable benefits to Britain: 3.5 million British jobs are dependent on UK trade with the rest of the EU, with every British household £3,000 better off. In my North East constituency, which is due to receive £660 million worth of EU funding over the next five years, people are net beneficiaries of our EU membership.

For every pound contributed we get more back out of the common pot. This is keeping people in good jobs with up to 160,000 local jobs relying on trade with our European neighbours. In a region where unemployment rates and child poverty are among the highest in the UK, we simply cannot afford to sever such ties and jeopardise our role as host to such job-boosting companies as Nissan and Hitachi.

## No evidence

Much to the despair of Eurosceptic Tory MPs, evidence collated under their own government's watch is unequivocal in its findings on the benefits of EU membership to the UK. A review of the Balance of Competences between the UK and the EU, commissioned by the government in 2012 and hailed by William Hague as the "most extensive analysis of the impact of UK membership of the EU ever taken", found no evidence under any of the criteria studied to suggest that the EU was interfering excessively in British life. Rather, written statements from several major businesses operating in the UK, including easyJet, Vodafone, BT and Tata Steel, highlighted the absolute necessity for their business of staying within the EU.

The Japanese government stated that UK access to the single market was to thank for the investment of 1,300 Japanese companies in the UK, resulting in the creation of 130,000 jobs. A report on the "free movement of people" - one of the fundamental principles of the EU that key figures in the Conservative party are desperate to get rid of - found that it was on balance beneficial to the UK.

Such findings fly in the face of claims by David Cameron that the EU is taking on too much power and becoming like 'a state', and it is to his great shame that he has allowed concerns over rising Euro-scepticism in his party's ranks to take prece-



European Union: rally round the flag for the few or the many?

dence over his duty to provide the British public with the facts. Repeated delays of the Balance of Competences review and an attempted fudging of the document to impose a Eurosceptic spin mean that it has thus far received minimal press attention and is little known to the citizens whose lives and livelihoods our withdrawal from the EU will affect.

Conservative infighting and Cameron's continued failure to present any real progress from his lengthy renegotiation of the terms of our membership mean that it is up to the "Yes to Remain IN" campaign to ensure that the electorate are equipped with the facts that enable them to make an informed decision on the EU when the time comes.

It is up to Labour MPs and MEPs, trade unions, businesses and civil society to make the case for Europe and to shout from the rooftops about the key gains achieved in the EU in the last half century - for example on ensuring paid holiday, parental leave and protection from unfair dismissal for workers; on efforts to tackle human trafficking and protect women's rights and on banning excessive credit and debit card surcharges and expensive customer phone lines.

Pulling out of the EU would in one fell swoop strip the UK of these social protections and engender a period of protracted uncertainty as Britain attempts to renegotiate trade agreements and diplomatic ties with Europe and the wider world. Based on the models of non-membership presented so far, the future for a UK that votes 'No' looks decidedly more gloomy and less prosperous than one that stays in.

Reneging on our membership of the EU would deny universities access to £727 million worth of research and development funding, reducing the

UK's science and research budget by 15.5%. It would jeopardise key investment opportunities for small and medium sized enterprises, youth support schemes and projects developing business connections with developing economies.

Moreover, as we face some of the biggest humanitarian crises and threats to our global security since the second world war, it is only by working with our European partners and not against them that we will have any chance of making a difference. International challenges require an international response, and if the UK is to be taken seriously as a key player on the world stage we must show our willingness to cooperate with efforts to tackle tax evasion and avoidance, rising extremism and to support the plight of the hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing to Europe from violence, death and persecution.

Many on the left fear that following renegotiation, David Cameron's 'reformed' EU will present them with no option other than to vote to leave; that an EU stripped of social protections and worker rights will not be worth the paper it is written on. It is already rumoured that David Cameron is seeking to withdraw permanently from European rules which ensure four weeks' guaranteed paid holiday per year for British workers, equal pay and conditions for temporary and permanent workers and guaranteed equal treatment of men and women in the workplace.

However a much starker prospect awaits us if we opt out of Europe altogether: make no mistake about it, the real bonfire of our rights will come after our withdrawal from the EU. Unfettered by EU influence and regulation, a majority Conservative government will have free reign to accelerate and

expand its programme of unilateral deregulation and austerity. People have raised concerns to me about things they are not happy about currently in the EU, including the treatment of Greece or the contents of the TTIP negotiations. We should have no misconceptions; outside the EU we would have no role in mitigating these challenges to progressive values.

A Tory/UKIP government would have signed us up to a bilateral trade deal with the US months ago without any attention to the exclusion of our cherished public services or opposition to investor-state dispute settlement. It is thanks to Labour MEPs working in cooperation with progressives across the EU that these issues have been raised. It is progressives working in solidarity with the Greek people in action at the EU negotiating table that will ensure a fairer deal for all across Europe. We betray our long term self-interest and that of our counterparts in other countries by conflating the EU referendum with a referendum on current EU policies.

## Too terrifying to contemplate

For a government whose first five years have been defined by the targeting of the young, ill, poor and disabled, by escalating food bank use and homelessness and by the rise of zero-hours contracts, the prospect of a Conservative government left entirely to its own devices is too terrifying to contemplate.

Now is not the time to retreat into premature defeatism. Fresh out of this year's inspiring Brighton conference, revived by a recent leadership election in which more Labour members and affiliated supporters voted than ever before and with party membership swelling by a huge 150,000 since our defeat this May, the Labour Party must use the momentum of Jeremy Corbyn's election to fight for a better, more social Europe: a Europe that protects our rights, prioritises the young and places the principles of equality and social justice at the heart of all policymaking.

This is what Labour MEPs have always fought to achieve within the European Parliament, and we will not let a poorly negotiated membership deal hinder our efforts. Jeremy Corbyn and his team have stated unequivocally that a future Labour government will reverse the worst of the prime minister's renegotiation: we must ensure now that the results of the EU referendum do not strip us of this option.

With the vote suspected to come as soon as next year, and with the 'No' campaign gaining in confidence and momentum, there is no time left to lose and certainly no room for complacency. We will have to fight tooth and nail to ensure that the British public vote 'Yes' on referendum day and that Britain is not left isolated from Europe and the world. We should put our values into action by ensuring that we achieve more through our common endeavour than alone.

I hope you will join us and get involved.



**Jude Girton-Darling is a Labour MEP for the North East**

# Privatising criminal justice

John Lea and Wendy Fitzgibbon explain gross injustices

The speech by Michael Gove, the Justice Secretary, to the 2015 Tory Conference was remarkable for its enthusiastic celebration of classic welfare-state penal rehabilitation. 'We should not,' he effused 'treat prisoners as society's liabilities who we keep warehoused - out of sight and out of mind - while they do their time. We should see them as potential assets - people who can contribute to society and put something back.' A pity then that he is, like his predecessor Chris Grayling, committed to effectively destroying some of the key institutions which have traditionally devoted themselves to this goal, in particular the probation service.

As in other areas of social welfare the long history of penal reform in the UK was essentially one of de-privatisation, the bringing of a dispersed network of locally run prisons and voluntary social work charities (forerunners of modern probation) under central government control and the imposition of consistent standards of training, provision and working practices.

## Harsh

The punishment of criminal offenders was harsh, at times brutal, the aim was to get the vast majority of offenders back into 'society' (i.e. the capitalist labour process) as effectively as possible. The probation officer played a particular role as the last port of call in the offender's journey through the system - basically the social worker who will help prisoners released on licence and those on non-custodial sentences to find a route back into work and the community. The working slogan of the old probation service was 'advise, assist and befriend', a process which often involved contacting local employers, education and public housing and attempting to help clients back into a non-criminal lifestyle.

Neoliberalism has destroyed this orientation in the same way that it has destroyed the general idea of the welfare state as a form of social citizenship - by making



Tory dogma banged to rights: if it's privatised what incentive is there to rehabilitate ex-prisoners?

individuals, families and communities responsible for their own welfare, by making welfare itself into a commodity, a source of profit for private sector investment and, finally by a frontal assault on the professional autonomy of practitioners. These themes have a complex relationship but they have certainly combined to devastating effect at the probation end of criminal justice.

Firstly, the responsibility for rehabilitation has shifted to the individual offender. The term is still used but its meaning is increasingly about encouraging individual offenders to make 'correct choices', that is, to desist from further offending. It is continually less about providing the support services and opportunities that make a non-criminal lifestyle a viable choice, particularly for young offenders. To the extent that the latter still exist they are subcontracted out to voluntary charities. The main task of probation is increasingly surveillance and risk management, ensuring offenders are not a risk to the public while they 'self-rehabilitate'. While the majority of probation officers - probation has particularly strong traditions of professional autonomy - tenaciously cling to the older concepts of helping offenders, they have

**John Lea is a professor of criminology and author. Wendy Fitzgibbon is a former probation officer and professor of criminology at London Metropolitan university**

been continually undermined by increasing workloads and deskilling. Probation training was disconnected from social work in 1997 while at the same time increasing numbers of semi-skilled 'probation service officers' are employed to perform simplified 'tick-box' risk assessments of offenders.

## Own fate

Behind this lies a sea-change in attitudes to the working class. From the idea of 'citizenship' characteristic of the welfare state and a strong organised labour movement, the shift has been to 'security' (of the middle class) through the policing and management of an increasingly disorganised, low paid 'precarariat' which must be forced to take responsibility for its own fate in the labour market.

Since the mid 1980s, under both Tory and New Labour governments, changes were imposed on probation through tighter central control as with the amalgamation with the prison service to form a single National Offender Management Service in 2004. In 2013 Chris Grayling, Justice Secretary in the Coalition government, initiated a radical overhaul involving massive privatisation.

Ironically titled Transforming Rehabilitation, his White Paper announced the splitting up of probation into a small rump National Probation Service (NPS) to supervise the most serious and high risk offenders while 21 regionally based Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) handle the vast majority currently supervised by probation, together with those on short sentences (hitherto beyond the remit of probation). The CRCs have been outsourced to the private security industry (and in theory some voluntary sector charities). The tendering process has resulted in two large multinational private security companies, Sodexo and Interserv, now running more than half the probation services in England and Wales.

## Allegations of fraud

Group Four (G4S) and Serco, the most high profile UK private security companies, were barred from the bidding process less by virtue of both the high-profile chaos of the management of the 2012 Olympics (by G4S) than by allegations of fraud - overcharging for existing criminal justice work. Serco and G4S have been heavily involved in areas subcontracted by probation, such as monitoring electronically tagged offenders, for several years. There have also been the events at Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre and the death of Angolan deportee Jimmy Mubenga at the hands of G4S operatives that cast a shadow over the working methods of both these corporations. Nevertheless, it is widely assumed that they will eventually make a comeback in tendering for the management of CRCs.

To those who argued that the likes of Sodexo and other private security companies have little experience of traditional rehabilitation work with offenders Grayling's response was that voluntary charities - to whom probation has outsourced much of this work for a long time - would be a crucial part of the 'transformation'. While some of the larger charities have a foot in the door many smaller organisations suffer from funding cuts and have only been able to maintain their role in the probation sector by putting themselves under the umbrella of the private security sector.

Was this policy simply a fit of ideological madness on Grayling's

part? It has been followed by no other criminal justice system in the EU nor in Scotland. However it strongly follows developments in the US where not only has there been massive private prison construction but probation is heavily privatised - even charging 'user fees' for supervision - and overwhelmingly oriented to surveillance and control rather than rehabilitation.

The changes over the last two decades in probation - the shift from rehabilitation and reintegration to surveillance and risk monitoring by an increasingly deskilled and overworked workforce have made way for privatisation as the last step in the chain. The role of privatisation is to consolidate these tendencies and make them completely irreversible.

The transformation of probation into a profitable commodity and the destruction of the professional autonomy of practitioners

## The transformation of probation into a profitable commodity and the destruction of the professional autonomy of practitioners are proceeding hand in hand

are proceeding hand in hand. No sooner had Sodexo assumed control of 6 of the 21 new CRCs than it began (in March 2015) announcing a freeze on recruitment and massive redundancies (around 30 percent) of the staff it had inherited from the probation service. Probation practitioners will be replaced by 'biometric reporting' in which offenders under supervision who 'behave themselves' will 'report' to electronic kiosks equipped with fingerprint recognition software, tick a few boxes and be on their way. It is important to note that the initial pilot studies for biometric reporting were conducted by the London Probation Service in 2012, prior to privatisation.

This 'advise, assist and befriend', neoliberal style, will achieve several goals. It will help cut costs and it will destroy what is left of probation as an autonomous profession (apart from the small numbers employed by the NPS who will become civil servants). Skilled, labour-intensive, patient rehabilitation work with people whose chaotic and troubled lives drove them to crime will finally be history. Surveillance and monitoring

will involve a few IT maintenance experts and a small army of deskilled operatives of the type that the private security companies already classically employ.

## Impossible to turn

Ten years down the road it will be impossible to turn the clock back. It is significant that, before the last general election there was loud Labour opposition to probation privatisation and a promise to reverse it. But Charlie Falconer, Shadow Justice Secretary, in his speech to the last Labour Conference made no mention of it. He was wise not to do so because the chances of reversal are slim. Grayling saw to that by allegedly bringing probation privatisation contracts under the same rubric as that embodied in the notorious Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership currently being negotiated between the EU and the US. Under TTIP private corporations will be able to sue governments for loss of profits if the latter should change policy (e.g. nationalise private sector assets). Grayling allegedly included TTIP-type clauses in the contracts (which last 10 years) for the CRCs, any reversal of which by a future Labour government could incur in the region of a £400 million compensation bill for the taxpayer.

Future articles will consider the record of private prisons, the development of privatisation within the police and the increasing role of the private security sector in the control of public space



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# Death knell for Legal Aid

Wendy Pettifer on the Tory crusade to reduce access to justice

Legal Aid has been available in the United Kingdom in some form since the beginning of the twentieth century. During the early 1950s, approximately 80% of the population was eligible for legal aid over the past few decades, successive governments have reduced the eligibility criteria so that in 2010 only approximately one-third of the population was eligible for civil legal aid. Overall legal aid spending dropped to its lowest level for over 10 years in 2014-15 to under £1.7bn.

Such cuts must be seen in the context of the neo-liberal attack on post war rights to free education, free health care and social housing. Without legal aid to facilitate access to justice when rights are threatened or denied, they become meaningless.

In June 2011 a Commission of Inquiry into Legal Aid chaired by Lord Low concluded that:

- legal aid is vital to protecting the rights of vulnerable people;
- legal aid is vital to upholding the rule of law;
- legal aid is essential to holding the state to account;
- cutting legal aid is a false economy;
- an holistic approach is needed in providing legal aid;
- cuts to legal aid will drive out committed lawyers; and
- cutting legal aid is not a fair or effective way to reduce unnecessary litigation.

## High-profile campaign

Despite a very high-profile campaign against the government's proposals, the cuts to social welfare law were implemented in the Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (LASPO), which came into force on 1 April 2013. The following areas have been taken out of the scope of legal aid:

- Welfare benefits – there is no legal aid at all for advice or representation in tribunals.
- Family – there is no legal aid for private family cases, only for parents (not other family relatives) of a child being taken into the care of a local authority and domestic violence, where a high

threshold of proof is required.

- Immigration – except for asylum, detention, trafficking and domestic violence.

- Housing - legal aid only remains to defend possession cases brought in the county court and homelessness. This means lawyers cannot carry out early intervention work to avoid homelessness. Due to cuts many lawyers refuse to take on complex homelessness appeals to challenge such decisions.

Additionally, stricter means tests were brought in. Clients now have to provide Bank statements for between one and three months for Legal Help/Legal Aid. Many applicants cannot comply with these requirements because they don't have a bank account,

## Until the austerity agenda is beaten back, access to justice continues to diminish at an alarming rate

cannot access a computer or cannot speak English.

On 10 April 2013, the Government announced its intention to make yet more cuts, to both civil and criminal legal aid. The Ministry of Justice wants to slash a further £220 million from its legal aid budget including:

- Removing client choice from criminal legal aid;
- A reduction in fees by 30% in very high cost cases;
- A residence test for civil legal aid restricting eligibility to those with at least 12 months' lawful residence;
- Legal aid only being paid for judicial review work if a permission application is successful;
- The removal of civil legal aid where cases are assessed as only having borderline prospects of success, and
- Most of prison law is also to be ineligible

## Ideological attack

The proposals cut Police Station fees by 8.75%. There was a huge public outcry about the proposals and the risks that they presented to access to justice and the right to a fair trial. These new plans are an ideological attack on

the poorest and most vulnerable in society and an economic attack on those who fight for their rights.

## The campaign

A number of organisations, including the Haldane Society, came together to form the Justice Alliance, which has spearheaded the campaign against the proposed cuts. Barristers went on strike for the first time ever on 6th January and 7th March 2014. Solicitors walked out with probation officers (the Government is also in the process of privatising the probation service) twice last Spring. The strike action resulted in a delay to the implementation of criminal cuts until after the May 2015 election.

Sadly the Government has now forged ahead with competitive tendering for criminal legal aid contracts across the UK reducing the number of contracts available from just over 1000 to 527. In three bid zones no bids have been received which effectively means that anyone arrested is unlikely to be able to access Duty Advice whilst in police custody.

## Conclusions

The campaign to prevent further cuts to civil legal aid has largely been overshadowed by the campaign for criminal legal aid.

There have been several successful judicial review applications against proposals to:

- prevent limits on legal aid for public law work in the Administrative Court;
- to halve the number of criminal police station contracts;
- to restrict legal aid to people who have been lawfully present in the UK for 12 months.

The Government response to these decisions has been to attempt to amend Legal Aid Regulations with regard to judicial review work and to increase the available number of police station contracts by three.

They propose the closure of over 40 Magistrates and County Courts. Until the austerity agenda is beaten back, access to justice will continue to be cut at an alarming rate.

Wendy Pettifer is a human rights lawyer

# An open letter to Lucy Powell, Shadow Secretary of State for Education

## Dear Lucy,

I was able to attend the recent Labour Party Conference for the first time after 38 years' membership. I very much enjoyed listening to your speech on the final morning of Conference. As a career educational administrator, I agreed with everything that you committed a future Labour Government to enact. In the light of my experience, may I add a few points that you might like to think about.

You said that education will be at the heart of Labour's offer to the country in 2020, which is encouraging,

You said that there is no evidence that academisation leads to improvement, which is true. Also that a future Labour Government will create no new free schools and make academy chains more accountable. Most important of all, you said that you will grant Local Authorities (LAs) the power to intervene in all schools and to build and expand community schools.

This is an excellent change in direction which many of us have been urging for some time. There has been much talk about the creation of a middle tier between Government and schools. Why invent a new layer of oversight though when LAs are still in existence? Currently unelected regional commissioners have been given huge powers over schools. They need to be redeployed. Clearly also the issue of LA funding needs to be addressed by the party leadership as the draconian cuts implemented by the Coalition and Tory Governments are devastating local government. In areas like London some school improvement teams are operating effectively; but in many parts of the country they have been cut to the bone.

On school building the current situation, as you will know, is that new schools have to be academies or free schools. Reversing this regressive legislation would be a tremendously positive step and a victory for local democracy. Of course there are those on the Left who will urge you to abolish all existing

academies and free schools. I think this would be a mistake because it would alienate many people. We need to recognise that some but by no means all of these schools have been successful but they need to be made accountable to elected local councils, as you have pledged to do.

You referred to other areas which presumably you would want to address – the chronic shortage of teachers, the attainment gap, the pressure on school places, the expansion of grammar schools and the cuts to post-16 education. No disagreement here.

You said that Labour will be relentless on standards. Whilst nobody would disagree with this, there are some related issues that you might want to consider. The Socialist Education Association has some sound policies on these.

Successive governments have put increasing pressure on schools and teachers to raise standards in ways which have not always been in the best interests of our children. Relentless emphasis on results and league table positions has driven some to 'teach to the test', as has been amply demonstrated by Warwick Mansell amongst others. Children being drilled. Little creative teaching. Clearly some very able and confident heads and teachers have been able to combine inspirational teaching with outstanding results, but many find this difficult. It is perhaps worth noting that Finland, which has no school inspection, no standard curriculum and no test-based accountability, is recognised as achieving amongst the highest educational standards internationally.

The EBaccalaureate is a throw-back to the 1950s and devalues creative and vocational subjects and even RE. Whilst many teachers are fed up with constant changes, I think they would welcome a reversal of some of the edicts of Kim Il Gove. Let's push for higher standards but in a more creative and less pressured way.

Similarly the role of Ofsted needs to be reviewed. We have a Chief Inspector who wants heads to be like Clint Eastwood (female heads please note!) Presumably this involves shooting from the hip, which may not be the ideal way to deal with unruly children! Successive Ofsted inspection schedules have been increasingly punitive. Satisfactory has become requires improvement, which has become failing. Schools previously judged to be good are put into special measures based on one aspect of their performance when many other areas are fine. Schools and teachers need to be accountable but we need an inspection regime that is supportive, not one that is working hand in glove with Government to create more academies.

Hopefully Lucy you will become Secretary of State for Education in 2020. You have already shown an admirable willingness to break with some of the less inspired beliefs of your predecessors as shadow minister and you are showing every sign of appreciating many of the issues that will need to be addressed.

With my very best wishes for the future.

**Dave Lister**  
Brent Central CLP



# Family fortunes

Mike Davis on families in turbulent times

Five countries underwent turbulent revolutions in the first half of the 20th century. Much has been written of the political and economic changes wrought by revolution in Russia and Turkey and fascist counter-revolutions in Italy, Germany and Spain, but much less on the impact on the family. Paul Ginsborg focuses his lens on the impact of political upheaval and radical social policies on family life and in turn on the impact of families on revolutionary change itself, with the subjects brought to life as actors in the historical process.

It is a monumental study. Russia, or the Soviet Union, as it became after the October 1917 revolution, gets two chapters, and is a particularly illuminating part of the book coming at a time when unashamed homophobia and violence against women in contemporary Russia stands in stark contrast to the progressive changes of almost 100 years ago. The first chapter covering 1917-1927 looks at the life and ideas of Aleksandra Kollontai, the only female commissar in Lenin's revolutionary government. The other chapter covers Stalinism and the Soviet family from 1927-45. The former was a time of high hopes when the early edicts of the Bolsheviks began a progressive transformation of family life which included huge advances for women, homosexual rights and ideas for communal living.

The family code of 1918 sanctioned divorce, enfranchised women, removed religion from marriage and provided equal rights. Kollontai was at the heart of the change, being a confidante of Lenin: her writings on emancipation of women, free love, abortion and contraception were hugely influential.

By 1921 she had fallen out with the Bolsheviks over the trend toward bureaucratic authoritarianism. In the Workers Opposition she called for a more libertarian approach to Soviet social policies, but as Ginsborg remarks, her ideas on family and private life are now forgotten. It was as if the political and domestic spheres, the world of democracy and of everyday life were hermetically

sealed from each other. The all-embracing welfare state that would care for children while mothers worked was to become a bureaucratic juggernaut. Kollontai was silent.

The reality for rural families was still one of crushing poverty and hardship in contrast to urban families. However the trend was to smaller families, more akin to nuclear family units, than the communal living of Bolshevik dreams. There were a handful of 'worker communes' in Moscow, covering one or more apartment buildings managed by elected committees and offering communal services such as bakeries, food stores and laundries. But the experiments were 'never espoused by the leadership or became a subject of the soviet propaganda machine'. There were communal dining halls between 1918-20, but these soon declined when food was easier to obtain. A revival in 1923, with the formation of company called Public Catering, soon died. When diners finished eating they saw a message at the bottom of the glazed bowl: 'Public catering is the path to the new way of life'. There was scant sign of this in reality, comments Ginsborg. It marks an ironic comment on the corruption of early ideals.

Urban women were more emancipated enjoying equal rights with men, but they were not free. The harsh realities of a backward country told against them as it did against the prospects for socialism. Ginsborg explains in detail why beginning with the world of work, then society, then home, women increasingly fell back. Bans on night work and paid maternity leave made it more costly to employ women than men. Prostitution and homeless abandoned children (4 to 7 million) plus the ravages of war, disease and famine undermined the progressive project. Children's homes catered for 540,000 by 1921. Trade unions supported some, but the state failed them. Neither Kollontai's plans nor a bureaucratic monolith were the reality, instead an under-resourced and chaotic administration failed children and family life. The insights of Trotsky, seeing family relations



Aleksandra Kollontai: the only female commissar in Lenin's revolutionary government

as more than a product of socio-economic conditions and as a potential foundation for further structural reform, were never followed up.

For Ginsborg the New Economic Policy was the interlude between two great rural catastrophes—war, famine and civil war, then Stalinism, repression and one-party dictatorship.

He ascribes to Kollontai some responsibility for the failure of Russian experimentation, her vision of communism and the family took too little account of individual parenthood or love, arousing more fear than support. She never translated her pluralist democratic views for the workplace into civil society. The collapsing of private into public life, rather than respecting their autonomy, became a feature of tyrannical societies.

Ginsborg's examination of fascism and the family in Italy puts the founder of Italian futurism, Tommaso Marinetti centre stage. A misogynist and enemy of the

bourgeois family, but he shared the views of Kollontai on the collective care of children, he diverged radically on gender in wanting fatherland not family, a national community where men and women were free to choose but a rigid separation of sexes in collective education and a de-Vaticanised Italy. Mussolini made his peace with the Catholic church – so no divorce. Fascism sought to collapse Hegel's three spheres of civil society, family and state into the latter, with the triumph of the universal over the particular. The Italian communist Gramsci saw the family as an 'organ of moral life' and, while supporting abolition of private property, denied that family functions be gradually transferred to the socialist state. Gramsci saw the limits to collective life and collective power along with other insights.

The Catholic family is at the heart of Christian activity. Its two key elements: marriage and 'anteriority theory', family as natural social formation preceding civil society and state. Within the family hierarchy patriarchy rules, women's economic independence, equality and emancipation is seen as perdition.

For Ginsborg this is the most formidable family model of all, playing a central role in the history of Spanish and Italian dictatorships with the church utterly opposing abortion, homosexuality and feminism, with the French Revolution seen as the founding evil of the modern world.

Italian and German fascism modified the rigid hierarchy of the Roman family with the draconian power accorded to the male head of household and its cult of ancestor. Equally Mussolini and Hitler opposed the bourgeois family founded on individualism and privacy, the archetype of urban, prosperous, hedonistic, egotistic life and limited fertility and seen as breeding grounds of homoeroticism, pacifism and absence of national spirit.

Italian fascists failed in the area of law. Unlike the Bolshevik family code or Swiss family code adopted by Kemal Ataturk in reconstructed Turkey, Mussolini failed to reform the Catholic Civil Code.

Franco was all for family and church. Of all the dictators only Franco was a 'good' family man, married for 52 years. He saw his war against the republic as a religious war against atheism and materialism. Franco cleverly dis-

tanced himself from the Falange and Nazism, firmly embracing the church. The old articles of the Spanish Civil Code, abolished by the republic, were reinstated with radical reforms on divorce and matrimony. However, for Ginsborg, the republicans and fascism under Franco 'turned out not to be so far apart as the advent of civil war had suggested'. There was little debate on the family in the republic. While women fought and worked in factories there was little reflection of this in the political sphere.

The chapter on Spain also covers the anarchists and uses the life and views of revolutionary socialist feminist Margarita Nelkin as the prism for viewing the interlude of Republican Spain, while the chapter on Turkey in transition from Ottoman empire to modern republic focuses on the nationalist writer Halide Edib.

The chapter on Nazi Germany spans the failure of the Weimar republic to the National Socialist state. Hitler's closest associate, Joseph Goebbels, and his own family raised on the ideal Nazi model provides the subject focus. Uniquely the Frankfurt school of the German left (Marcuse, Horkheimer, Fromm) and psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich sought to explain the triumph of Hitler with explicit reference to the family. The German family archetype with the father an all powerful authority played a fundamental role in the rise of Nazism. Whilst detailing the feminist critique of the limits of these views (sidelining mother and child) Ginsborg acknowledges making the connection with the authoritarian personality and Nazism was important and innovative as explanation.

All the regimes—loosely described as totalitarian—of the first half of the 20th century, demonstrated no such all embracing destructive powers regarding family life as in the dystopia of Orwell's 1984. Ruthless, often barbaric, but not against families per se, they were characterised by a binary approach, repressing certain kinds of family, bolstering others.

Ginsborg's study underlines that family theory was weak in anarchist and Marxist traditions. The First International had never debated the family, the Second and Third were little better. Bakunin and Kropotkin had different views from Marx and Engels on communist society, the

family would not disappear with revolution, but as human beings change so would the structures and content of cohabitation. Free unions and 'free love', not promiscuity, but love free from rigid rules imposed from above – whether from a Catholic or Marxist state. Free love was premised on education and equality of rights and liberty from possessiveness and control. Mainstream anarchism supported monogamy and family child rearing.

Austerity policies directed by neo-liberal governments are putting huge strains on traditional family life across Europe. Migration put further strains and demands on extended kinship bonds. While savage welfare cuts from the Cameron government exacerbate already fractured family life expect 'family values' to be a rallying cry somewhere down the line from this government. Families and their composition have changed enormously in the post war western world: a third of children in single parent households; legal gay and lesbian marriage and parenting; greater freedoms for divorce and sexual equality in the home and workplace with childcare. But domestic violence, child abuse and rape persist in families. The personal is political as the new feminist left taught. It is now time to revisit these messages in the 21st century. This is a wonderfully rich, penetrating and rewarding study of a much neglected, but highly significant area of life every radical should read. Its ideas are as relevant today as those of the period it analyses.

**FAMILY POLITICS - DOMESTIC LIFE, DEVASTATION AND SURVIVAL 1900-1950**

Paul Ginsborg (Yale University Press, £25)



Mike Davis is Editor of Chartist

# Corbyn now needs to win political dominance

Trevor Fisher on organising to take the fight to the Tories

After one of the most extraordinary six months in British political history, the dust is settling in Scotland and Westminster and showing Labour's problems in a lurid light. No obvious conclusions can be drawn about the Corbyn surge, but the most popular conclusion is clearly wrong. The leadership win did not indicate an upsurge for the Labour Left. The root cause was the Blair establishment being rejected by party activists – but Blairites remain strong for a potential coup.

The evidence against a Left upsurge was clear before Labour Conference, and my post on the Chartist website states it. Conference reinforced the strange message that it was right wingers voting for Corbyn that did it by winning most of the votes, especially on Conference Arrangements Committee (CAC). When Corbyn failed to get the Trident issue debated, the lesson was clear. He does not have the strength to push his own position.

Yet Corbyn's victory is profoundly significant and opens up possibilities, especially in the work of John McDonnell. Short term, the key lesson is that the Old Right voted for Corbyn precisely because they were sick of New Labour manipulation, but they will not accept a Hard Left attempt to build strength for a conference offensive. The Old Right around Labour First is rebuilding. Luke Akehurst reported 200 people turning up to the Labour First fringe meeting which was not expected, but is logical as the consequence of Corbyn opening up conference. Votes now matter again.

A return to 1981 and factional fighting is not welcome, as it would divert focus from the key issue for Labour, the dangerous political dominance of the Tories. The failure of triangulation and the appeasement of the Tory agenda has left the Tories in control of the political agenda as it has been for over five years.

What Paul Reynolds said in the last edition is crucial. Ed Miliband knew that the myth that Labour created the deficit was false, but could never find an antidote. When he said the truth on BBC Question Time he was regarded as a liar, and accused of not understanding home truths. It was the moment he lost the election.

The key fact which defines politics now is that the Tories, though a deeply machiavellian party, have credibility, and use it to ruthlessly dominate Westminster. In the era of 'hugging a hoodie' to get the Lib Dems into bed, the Lib Dems could exercise some restraint. But Lib Dem MPs were eliminated on May 7th, and the Tories can go full speed ahead for the extremism of the Hard Right.

Yet this reality is obliterated by their propaganda ability to claim

**The key fact which defines politics now is that the Tories, though a deeply machiavellian party, have credibility, and use it to ruthlessly dominate Westminster**

to be Centrists. Osborne 'Love Bombed' Labour voters at Tory conference, claiming to be their defender as Cameron is making the Tories the party of the working people, the blue collar Conservatives. Any sensible person should see through this with the Trade Union Bill, the anti democratic politics of reducing MP numbers and at council level a reduction in the number of councillors and council meetings. These show a direction of travel to make politics only available to a limited number of mainly rich people.

However, the commentariat are blind. The Independent journalist Jane Merrick was quoted by Phil Burton-Cartledge on Left Futures as writing "why did I, from a Liverpool comp, who voted for Blair and never voted Tory, agree with nearly every word of the PM's speech". Phil sees this as part of a phenomenon that "some



**Tory leadership David Cameron and George Osborne: Labour strategy must focus on wiping the smiles from their faces**

journalists are incredibly gullible". It is not a few - the commentariat accept the Tory line across the whole field, even when it is not in their interests to do so. The BBC is abject, though the Tories are out to destroy it and do so through long standing right wing prejudices. The killing fields of Work and Pension Secretary, Ian Duncan-Smith's welfare reforms would be seen as state terrorism in a foreign land, but are presented as balancing the budget in the UK. And we are back to the deficit, the biggest lie of all, established with LibDem collusion and Labour appeasement, and never yet countered. For the Tories, every day is Christmas. As Owen Jones has pointed out, the Tories behave as though they have a majority of 200 not 12.

Thus any strategy must focus on two factors - the weakness of the left – Corbyn did not win dominance, only the leadership election – and the strength of a massively deceitful Tory Party, backed by a vicious media.

The two fault lines of a weak Labour Party and a strong (Thatcherite) Conservative Party need a grouping like the old Soft Left of the 1980s which addressed a similar situation. A revival is the best chance of Labour renewal. The first rallying point would be to back Corbyn as legitimate Labour leader and resist a coup in the spring. Secondly, confronting Tory strength with measures to sap it. It is not 1983, but close enough. Anyone for the third way?

**Trevor Fisher recently rejoined the Labour Party.**

**He was formerly active in the Labour Co-ordinating Committee, Labour Reform and Save the Labour Party**

Patrick Mulcahy on getting it right on gender

# Women in Hollywood

Women have fronted some of the most lucrative franchises in recent Hollywood history. *The Twilight* saga, the *Hunger Games* quadrilogy, *Divergent* and its sequels – all of these movies feature young female stars delivering at the box office more than their male counterparts. It helps that the source of these movies are all novels by women, but *Hunger Games* star Jennifer Lawrence has also had two hits with director David O Russell – *Silver Linings Playbook* and *American Hustle*. *Divergent* star Shailene Woodley also scored big with teen weepie, *The Fault in Our Stars*.

In spite of this, women are still paid less than their male counterparts. The most successful woman in recent cinema history, J K Rowling, author of the Harry Potter books, is only now returning to movies with a Potter spin off, *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*, starring Eddie Redmayne. She is very much a one-off.

Meanwhile, one of the few women studio heads, Amy Pascal of Sony, had to weather leaks of its movies and email correspondence in the run-up to the limited cinema release of the comedy, *The Interview*. Do women have a case for better treatment? Yes. They have undoubtedly proven themselves in a changing marketplace. Women are not carving out new niches. Their lot contrasts with two big new players, producers Will 'Power' Packer and Jason Blum, who have succeeded through the low-cost, high profit genre films, comedy and horror respectively.

The years of the Julia Roberts and Meg Ryan romantic comedy are truly behind us. Women are the dominant force in young adult adaptations, redefining themselves as drivers in the story rather than giddy love interests. In shifting priorities, men have moved from action heroes to eroticised love interests, exhibited by the success of Channing Tatum in the first *Step Up* movie and two *Magic Mike* movies. It would be wrong to see Tatum's success as a fundamental shift in taste. *Mission: Impossible – Rogue Nation* demonstrated the enduring appeal of the male-fronted action movie, though Rebecca Ferguson gave star Tom Cruise a run for his money. Comic book films are dominated by male

heroes, though the genre is looking a little tired – find a person who loved *Avengers – Age of Ultron*. The new *Star Wars* film promises to have strong female roles, coming from the pen of J J Abrams, who created the TV series *Alias* starring Jennifer Garner.

New women directors are coming to the fore, notably Ava DeVernay, whose Martin Luther King drama *Selma* was a critical and commercial success. So far, she has resisted the lure of franchise cinema. This seems right. Women directors should be challenging genre definitions to present women on screen in a more complex way – Nancy Meyers' recent comedy, *The Intern*, looked at the sacrifices necessary to blend motherhood with business, a recurring Meyers theme (she wrote *Baby Boom* for Diane Keaton in the 1980s).

Jennifer Lawrence blames herself for not negotiating a higher fee now she has become 'bankable', but the fact is there are more powerful women in American TV. The successful shows *Homeland*, *Orange Is The New Black*, *Two Broke Girls*, *Scandal*, *Empire*, *Bones* and *Modern Family* all feature female stars who could easily bring

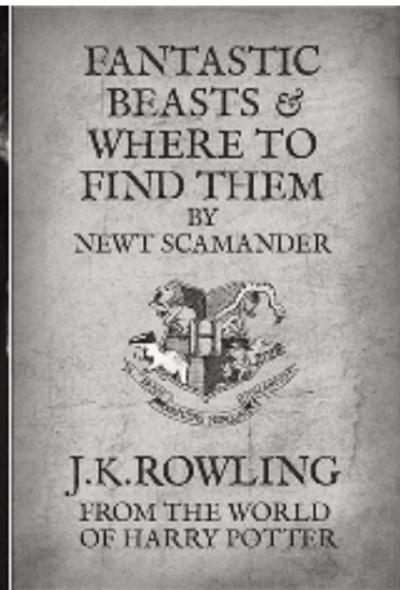
an audience with them to the big screen with the right vehicle – but not *Hot Pursuit*.

It is important to note that the way we consume films and TV is changing, not just through on demand services like Netflix. Series are watched on mobile devices, consumed in spite of the surroundings. I can foresee a cinema where to avoid the distraction caused by other viewers, audience members are given headsets akin to 3D glasses – and late entry is not permitted. Well, perhaps maybe in my fantasy.

It is important as viewing platforms change that the stars of new programmes and films are adequately rewarded for their efforts. I don't know if we'll move from the \$25 million up front star salary to a pay by download or web impression salary structure. Content remains important, films and TV should reflect the world around us and empower or challenge us. Remuneration should not be based on gender.



**J K Rowling: The most successful woman in recent cinema history**



# The hard way up

**Don Flynn**  
on a view  
from the  
right

**THE PROBLEM WITH IMMIGRANTS**  
Derek Laud (Biteback £14.99)

The most interesting thing about this book is that it serves as a reminder that it is possible for a relatively decent, open-minded person of a decidedly conservative disposition to take a positive view of immigration.

In Laud's case conservative can be written with a capital 'C' since he is a well-known journalist active in the right wing cause since the days of Margaret Thatcher. He is also the son of West Indian immigrants to the UK and as such, quite properly sensitive to the charge that the presence of people of colour in the UK is a fact to be deeply regretted. He aims to do some justice to all those people who have come from other quarters of the world and tell a bit more of their story.

He succeeds well enough in doing this. The book becomes a sequence of chapters with headings like 'The West Indian community', 'The South Asian community', 'The eastern European and Polish communities', etc. He dips into personal accounts of migratory experiences in order to provide these assemblages with voices and accounts of real lives, and does all of this very well.

My problem with his way of looking at the world is that it leaves the complaint that he sets out at the very start of the book that "We must be mad" to be allowing these 'coloured immigrants' into the country essentially unchallenged.

Powell believed that black and Asian people were congenitally ill-suited to life in a country like Britain and would always remain chilly and marginalised outsiders raking up trouble for everyone. Laud says that his error was that he failed to understand that integration

could work.'

Is that all he failed to understand? Laud is correct in his essential point that the historical record shows that the vast majority of the people who came in the 1950s and the decades thereafter made what in Britain passes for decent and successful lives for themselves. In doing this they were able to work with the contours of a liberal, laissez-faire society which, if you got your head down and battled against the racist and discriminatory brickbats that came your way, eventually allowed you to haul your aching frame up the hilltop.

It was a hard job and inflicted a degree of suffering on people that just wasn't necessary. Moreover, not everyone made it to the giddy heights of a middle class lifestyle, they and their descendants remained in the lower levels of the social system.

His account of successful immigration leaves the full story of British racism essentially unexplored, viewing it as a sort of challenge out there in the background which the plucky newcomer would meet and overcome.

What this means is a narrative that is fully consistent with the modern form of racism that runs through our current attitudes to immigration, which calls upon people to 'welcome' the hardworking and industrious who would surmount the challenges, whilst barring the road for anyone who, in advance of their arrival, is con-

sidered not up to the task.

The hard and often brutal road to 'integration' for Laud's parents was marked every inch of the way by the cold-shouldering discrimination and vicious racism that so often came from the people in the communities in which they settled. Nowadays the task of cold-shouldering and discriminating is taken on first and foremost by the state agencies - the Home Office Border Enforcement teams and the squadrons they enlist for immigration checks in workplaces and at the point of accessing public services. It is all presented as a way of winnowing out the 'good immigrants' from the 'bad', with the difference that whilst Powell could only dream of repatriation, nowadays the state routinely achieves it through its detention procedures and deportations.

None of this deflects from Laud's efforts to swim against the conservative stream he is otherwise happy to be immersed in. His stories of 'successful' immigration are a welcome enough counterweight to the miserable reversal of the truths about immigration we get from more mainstream politicians and journalists. But it will always be a partial story as long as we hold back from a more thorough-going critique of a British society that sets up the wretched social and economic obstacle course which it requires that those living at the lower levels of existence are required to run on a daily basis.

**Frank Lee**  
reviews  
the results



**FRONTLINE UKRAINE: CRISIS IN THE BORDERLANDS**  
Richard Sakwa (I.B.Tauris, £18.99)

This is a very scholarly, timely and heterodox description and analysis of events which have taken place within Ukraine since late 2013, and which are still ongoing. Also examined are the broader geopolitical implications of this process. The book is meticulously researched and sourced, and challenges the official western account. The crisis itself has two dimensions Sakwa explains: "Two fundamental processes have intersected to devastating effect: the Ukrainian crisis has emerged out of the contradiction of the country's nation and state building since independence in 1991, whilst the Ukraine crisis is the sharpest manifestation of the instability of the post Cold-war international system."

Taking those two concurrent episodes in reverse order, Sakwa outlines the geopolitical aetiologies which gave rise to the current situation. The collapse of communism and the break-up of the USSR in 1991 were seen from very different perspectives by the East and West. From the Russian angle this was seen as the end of an inefficient, corrupt and oppressive regime, the end of the Cold War and the MAD (Mutually Assured Destruction) doctrine. Europe would become whole again, from Vladivostok to Lisbon. The west - under US command - didn't see it that way and thought of it as a victory over the mortal threat of communism/Russia. An updated version of the Treaty of Versailles was to be imposed on a defeated enemy. Thus from the outset both sides read from different scripts. Underscoring the point was the relentless push of NATO eastwards initiated by Clinton, with the EU serving as a stalking horse for NATO membership, 'a policy later made explicit by the Lisbon Treaty'. This occurred whilst the Warsaw Pact had been disbanded. Russian concerns were understandable as country after country on Russia's hinterland was swallowed up by EU/NATO.

Trouble did come. In the NATO summit meeting in Bucharest in 2008, Article 23 read: "NATO welcomes Ukraine's and Georgia's

Euro-Atlantic aspirations for membership in NATO. We agreed today that these countries will become members of NATO." The NATO juggernaut which had transmuted from a defence of the west against a possible Soviet invasion, had become an aggressive out-of-theatre, strike force serving US foreign policy interests, looking for trouble anywhere but the North Atlantic: Yugoslavia, Libya, Afghanistan, and which was about to park its military assets on Russia's doorstep.

Internally the Ukraine had been the object of regime change since 2004 and the rise and fall of the Orange movement of Yushenko and Tymoshenko. The US - through its NGOs - principally the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) a state funded body, was quite open about interfering in the affairs of sovereign states with a mission to bring about regime change. Indeed Carl Gershman, boss of NED opined that "Ukraine is the biggest prize," after which Russia would be the next target.

In a similar vein Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs at the United States Department of State, Victoria Nuland, at a press conference in Washington sponsored by Chevron, openly stated that some \$5bn of US taxpayers' money had gone to fund anti-Yanukovic forces with a view to regime change by all means possible.

The upshot of all this was the Maidan insurrection, the February 22 coup, followed by the rebellion in the eastern oblasts and the referendum and secession of the Crimea (or annexation, depending on the narrative) and an ongoing civil war.

The forces which took power were a motley collection of oligarchs; Poroshenko, Yatsenyuk, Kolomoisky (currently out of favour), Pinchuk, and the neo-nazis, Yarosh, Tyhanybok, Lyashko,

Pariuby et. al. They represented the western and some central parts of the Ukraine. This regional rather than national representation was the problem.

The other concept of state development was pluralist. This should denote the Ukrainian state as a home to many disparate peoples - which in fact it is - which reflect its long history and fragmented statehood and the way its contemporary borders include territories with very different histories. In other words an ethnically heterogeneous, multi-lingual state based on a federal structure.

Needless to say the monist version has won out, and the attempt to ethnically cleanse the Russian speakers in the eastern oblasts has been the tragic upshot of this choice.

So the deadly game of upping the ante goes on. Minsk 1 and 2 have not been adhered to principally because the war party in the US State Department wants it that way, which in turn encourages the Kiev regime, although bankrupt, to continue with the war.

Given the comic-book, Hollywood version of events as presented in the mainstream western media, this publication provides a useful counterweight and deserves to be widely read.



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## Catalonia: a tragedy

**Glyn Ford**  
on two  
counter  
revolutions

**WAR AND REVOLUTION IN CATALONIA 1936-1939**  
**Pelai Pagès i Blanch (Haymarket Books, £20pb)**

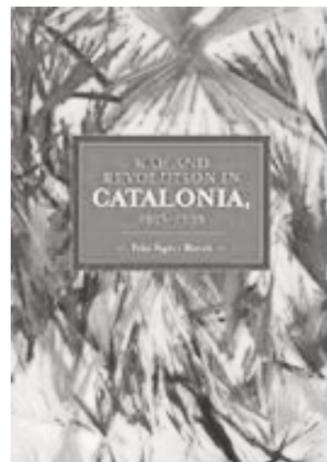
Ernest Mandel in his 'The Meaning of the Second World War' makes the point that in fact there was not one war, but many. There were inter-Imperialist Wars with Japan and Germany fighting the UK and US, the USSR's war against fascism and a clutch of wars of colonial liberation and/or revolution plus associated civil wars against both the Axis and Allies. 'War and Revolution in Catalonia' makes the same point on a smaller canvass.

There was the war against Franco fought by some to defend and restore the *status quo ante* and by others for revolution, and there were the wars of liberation for Catalonian - and Basque - autonomy and independence. This jigsaw of wars made for uneasy alliances on the Republican side in particular and led at best to tensions amongst the groups and factions that threatened the efficient conduct of the war and at worst triggered the civil war within the civil war with the 'May Days' fighting in Barcelona in 1937 that sounded the death knell of revolutionary idealism in Spain.

### Different world

Prior to Franco's attempted *coup d'état* on July 17th 1936 Catalonia was a different world from the rest of Spain. Here was a developed industrial base sharply different from the rural agrarian economy that prevailed across the rest of Spain save in the larger cities. In Catalonia the Anarchist (Confederación Nacional del Trabajo - CNT) out-ranked the Socialist (Union General de Trabajadores - UGT) Trade Union but both were strong. Alongside were a cocktail of parties that leaned to both the left and autonomy - if not outright independence. The largest and most influential of the Marxist parties was the Workers' Party of Marxist Unity (POUM) led by Andreu Nin and Joaquín Maurín. It was a Leninist and anti-Stalinist Party that whilst formally Spanish had the bulk of its strength in Catalonia.

The immediate response to the



attempted coup across Spain was resistance from organised workers and peasants. In Barcelona - the key to Catalonia as a whole - the Assault and Civil Guards remained loyal to the leftist Provincial Government, they had been joined by thousands of armed anarchists and POUM militants by the 20th when the last of the rebel soldiers surrendered. Paradoxically the military officers leading the uprising claimed it was necessary to prevent social revolution yet their actions created the very environment for it. Within 48 hours the CNT were the region's new dominant political force and by July 21st the Catalan Governor had agreed to establish a Comitè Central de Milícies Antifeixistes de Catalunya (Central Committee of Anti-fascist Militias of Catalonia) dominated by the two Trade Unions with representatives from the spectrum of Parties opposing Franco.

They immediately went on the offensive with anarchist and POUM columns sent out to Zaragoza and Huesca. By early August an expedition to re-capture Mallorca and Ibiza had set sail. All had mixed results, failing to achieve their ultimate objectives, but nevertheless consolidated the Catalonian base. At home the revolution was almost a spontaneous act. Workers collectivised factories as the owners fled, the education and health services were transformed, war industries were established and finally property was municipalised. All of which fed into George Orwell's wonder in 'Homage to Catalonia' when he arrived in Barcelona in

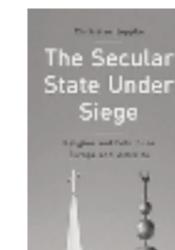
December 1936 to see the 'revolution was still in full swing' and reporting it was the 'first time that I had ever been in a town where the working class was in the saddle' and consequently opted to join the POUM's Lenin Division near Zaragoza on the Aragon Front.

'War and Revolution' describes the two counter-revolutions in Catalonia, the first the 'May Days' as the Stalinists of Spain's burgeoning Communist Party bloated by Soviet advisers, gold and greed fought the POUM and the anarchists on the streets of Barcelona in the interests of Moscow's foreign policy. There was a truce. The anarchists were too powerful to fight head on. Instead they sacrificed the POUM. It was banned, its leaders jailed, tortured and killed with subsequent farcical show-trials accusing the Party of being in league with Franco. The second counter-revolution was the destruction of Catalan autonomy. As the war turned against the Republic the Spanish Prime Minister Juan Negrín moved the Government to Barcelona in October 1937. The move was designed to strip Catalonia of its power. After the war Catalan nationalists have a point when they claim Catalonia was first occupied not by Franco's Army, but Negrín's government.

### No chance

As Pelai Pagès i Blanch shows these events signalled the beginning of the end for the war in Catalonia and Spain. Poorly armed workers and peasants had no chance taking on Spain's professional soldiers backed by troops, equipment and an airforce supplied by Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany and win. Nor in the end did they, but it was the hope born at the beginning of dreams of revolution and autonomy that spurred them on to achieve the impossible. It was the powerful anarcho-sindicalist movement and a heterodox, non-Stalinist, communist party with real social influence that was the source. Diversity was strength not weakness. Moscow - and its fellow-travellers - in annihilating these aspirations killed the prospect of victory. It just took another 18 months for Franco to realise it.

**Tehmina Kazi** on  
progressive  
Islam



**THE SECULAR STATE UNDER SIEGE**  
**Christian Joppke (Polity Press, £17.99)**

This was an intense and time-consuming read, which broaches the subject from an historical-institutional perspective. It covers both Western Europe and North America and attempts to analyse the majority-minority dynamics of Christianity and Islam e.g. Christian crosses are seen as a 'cultural' symbol of the majority religion in Europe, and are therefore ripe for banning. Joppke writes that this is an example of privilege being accorded to the majority religion only by 'denying its religious quality,' relegating it to the status of 'mere culture.' However, this begs the question as to why hard-line interpretations of Islam are given a privileged status in some Western contexts, when their religious nature is brought repeatedly to the fore.

The analyses of Christianity and secularism are similar to

those found in other historical books. However, What is unique is the author's faithful referencing of Patricia Crone, Tariq Ramadan and Bassam Tibi in the 'Islam in Europe' section. He attempts an analysis of the dire human rights situations in majority-Muslim countries, and correctly points out that rights are nullified if couched as obligations. He cites Allawi as saying that the Arabic word for 'individual' mirrors the idea of freedom as 'licentiousness.' Further, it is disappointing to see Yusuf Al-Qaradawi treated as a scholar who 'largely defines the mainstream Muslim position' and is 'not given to extremes.' The truth is that his positions on FGM, and other issues within the equalities rubric, fall way short of a universal human rights standard.

There are small elements of critique; the inclusion of Caroline Fourest's take on some of Tariq Ramadan's positions is welcome. She describes citizenship as only mattering to Ramadan as 'an

instrumental vessel.' While his books on European Muslims are very readable, his viewpoints on secularism differ significantly from the likes of British Muslims for Secular Democracy, for example.

As a whole this book does little to promote the legitimacy of a liberal Islam (even going as far as to describe it as a 'chimera'). The scholarship of Muslim academics like Abdullahi An-Naim - who DOES propound a secular state - barely receives a hearing, and is dismissed out of hand because his conception of faith (as a 'subjective belief and choice') differs too strongly from the so-called mainstream Islamic dogma of 'communal submission.' Progressive Muslim scholarship should not be discounted just because it is harder to come by, because it has 'too few' adherents, or because it is seen by some non-Muslim commentators as 'less authentic.' This is why, although the book had several redeeming features, it was a disappointing read.

## Still unequal

**Patricia d'Ardenne**  
revisits a  
classic text  
updated



**WOMEN WORKERS AND THE TRADE UNIONS**  
**Sarah Boston (Lawrence and Wishart, £20)**

This scholarly, classic that informed so many when it was first published in the 1980s has been thoroughly updated for the 21st century. It covers the whole history of women workers and British Trade Unions from the 19th century to today, and one of the few of its kind that covers such an important topic as the current status of women in employment today.

The preface by Frances O'Grady, TUC General Secretary, is an eloquent testimony to how the original text shaped her thinking, and her future. There are now more UK women trade unionists than men. Their pay and conditions are still unequal.

The importance of this book, with its two new chapters from the 1980s to now, is to remind us of how hard won was any representation or equality, not just from employers, but also the public, and from male workers and trades unionists! Women were routinely paid half of men's wages

in many industries until recent times, and thus undercut men's pay and conditions too. Some trades unions were therefore hostile. But when men and women worked collaboratively, change was possible.

The book's chapters are arranged chronologically, all with pithy titles to remind us of what the struggle was actually about. One called 'Become feminine or we will become fringe' 1987-1997, a phrase written by Margaret Prosser, addressed the survival of the Trade Union Movement. It meant that recruitment to unions had to address women's priorities, responsibilities and work patterns, and not stay with the male culture of work. The business of Trades Unions was in the cryptic language of politics. Working hours rarely addressed the needs for parenthood leave, child care, family life and care for elders, a responsibility that had traditionally fallen on women and ensured their work was seen as secondary and of lower status. But also health issues, sexual harassment, attitudes, language and behaviour towards women, including minority ethnic were

now on the agenda. The 'girls', the 'ladies' (as male unionists had referred to them) had come of age and were about to save the unions from extinction.

The last chapter addresses legacy. 2010 was the fortieth anniversary of the Equal Pay Act but despite the legislation and numerous reports and the TU movement itself, women still receive 86 % of men's pay, though up from 80% at the start of New Labour. Part of this was New Labour's acceptance of the anti Trade Union policies of its Tory predecessors, and its own policies of privatisation of public services, where market rules boasted 'business, not barriers', usually at women's expense.

Progress has been slow and hampered by many factors that our grandmothers' struggles a century ago could not have envisaged. But this book sympathetically and systematically charts the path that women have taken and continue to tread. Corbyn's new Shadow Cabinet with a majority of women should all have a copy of this text and take it to heart in all their deliberations.

## Loyal but sceptical communist

**Duncan Bowie** on James Klugmann

**THE SHADOW MAN**  
Geoff Andrews (I B Tauris, £20)

This book is a biography of James Klugmann; the first editor of *Marxism Today*, education secretary of the Communist Party and the 'official' Communist Party historian. Klugmann was a member of the pre-war Cambridge group of communists and knew Donald Maclean and Guy Burgess as well as having a fairly marginal role in the links between the Cambridge 'spy circle' and soviet intelligence, which is why the book is subtitled *'At the Heart of the Cambridge Spy Circle'*. Focusing on Klugmann's brief espionage activity helps to market the book but detracts from the more substantive role Klugmann had in both the British CP and the Comintern over a forty year career.

Andrews has a solid track record on writing on Communist Party history, as the author of the final volume of the five volume history started by Klugmann and this is a comprehensive biography of an important communist intellectual, activist and party functionary. Andrews sets out the

narrative of Klugmann's life – public schoolboy and co-leader of the pre-war Cambridge communist students (with John Cornford who died in Spain), Comintern supported organiser of the international student movement, SOE operative in Yugoslavia during the war and a critical link with Tito's partisans, and then King Street official: educator, journalist, propagandist and historian.

Andrews provides an excellent study of the Communist milieu in both pre- and post-war periods and provides a detailed analysis of Klugmann's role in a number of controversies – including the Cambridge espionage case; his role in Yugoslavia (where he was accused of manipulating evidence to switch Allied Support from the monarchist chetniks to the communist partisans, though this perspective was shared by a number of SOE colleagues such as Basil Davidson, Bill Deakin, Michael Barratt Brown and Fitroy Maclean), his role in promoting the Soviet position in the Soviet-Tito split against his own better judgement, and his growing private disillusionment with the British Communist Party's

reluctance to shift from its Stalinist position, both in terms of its external relationships and its internal organisation. Andrews, in demonstrating Klugmann's loyalty, provides a fascinating commentary on the dilemmas faced by a communist intellectual in publicly supporting a policy line of which he is sceptical. Andrews demonstrates that though defending the party line against the new left critics of 1956 such as John Saville and Edward Thompson, fellow members of the Communist Party History Group, Klugmann on resigning as a King Street functionary, sought to re-establish relationships with his former comrades, even participating in meetings to discuss the dissidents' 1967 May Day Manifesto. He sought to establish a Marxist-Christian dialogue. In his final years, as well as writing his two history volumes, Klugmann promoted a communist humanism, with the Party publishing in 1970 his pamphlet *The Future of Man*.

Andrews' volume is fascinating, both as a biography of an important communist intellectual, but as a study of the communist left between the 1930s and 1970s.

## Bad things can get worse

**Nigel Doggett** on modern capitalism

**CAPITALISM AND ITS ALTERNATIVES**  
Chris Rogers (Zed Books, £14.99)  
**CAN FINANCIAL MARKETS BE CONTROLLED?**  
Howard Davies (Polity Press, £9.99)

These two brief books cover the complexities of modern capitalism and the challenges of changing it. Chris Rogers starts with three strands of capitalism exemplified by Adam Smith (classical liberalism), Keynes (interventionism) and Hayek (neo-liberalism). He discusses Marx's critique, focussing on the persistence of crises, including the role of credit (most apt in the light of recent experience). He considers various alternatives including the co-operative model, vanguard parties and parliamentary socialism, the dangers of degeneration into rule by elites and perpetuation of gender inequality, but curiously not by race.

He omits such factors as international trade, transnational corporations or the limitations of resource planning, as in the

USSR or by our own governments. Also he ignores the many voluntary, charitable and state public services, which espouse social values that the Tories are so keen to destroy. There is only a passing reference to environmental destruction, a feature of capitalism but also of Soviet and Chinese models of Communism.

He concludes that alternatives to capitalism must be ongoing pluralistic processes, not a destination. But this account is marred by excessive repetition.

Howard Davies by contrast seeks to make capitalism work. He has led some key organisations: the Audit Commission, Financial Services Authority, the LSE (London School of Economics) and latterly the London Airport inquiry. He can'ters through the ongoing financial crisis and the responses, fills in much detail and demolishes both the Conservative account and popular misconceptions largely unchallenged by Labour.

Covering issues such as the balance of payments, house price

bubble in the South East (we need an interest rate that only applies to housing) and manufacturing, he provides examples of the law of unforeseen consequences fuelled by greed and group-think.

Davies considers whether financial institutions are over-regulated. If an institution is 'too big to fail' we must be ready to rescue it. Pure free-marketeters have opposed this, most notably when Lehman Brothers failed. Davies shows how much regulation, with inevitable overheads, now exists. The problem he avoids is that any profit-driven company, or an employee offered a bonus, has a great incentive to 'game' any system. The regulator always lags behind, while innovators seek new ways of boosting profits and bonuses. In my experience auditors always focus on easily measured, known dangers, "fighting the last war".

The crisis is still unresolved. As Humphrey Bogart says in *The African Queen*: "Things are never so bad they can't be made worse".

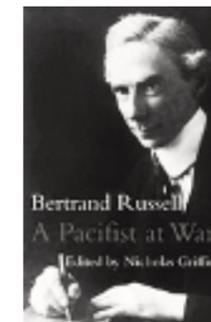
## Unsavoury correspondence

**Duncan Bowie** on separating the personal from the political

**A Pacifist at War : Letters and Writings 1914-1918** by Bertrand Russell  
Edited by Nicholas Griffin (Spokesman £9.99)

This is a collection of Russell's letters between 1914-1918 taken from two volumes of the Collected Papers of Russell published by McMaster University in Canada in 1995, reissued to coincide with the centenary of the start of the war. Russell, known at that time more for his philosophy than his politics, opposed the war and was actively involved in the No Conscription Fellowship, as editor of their newsletter, *The Tribunal*, and as chairman. In 1918 he was sentenced to six months in Brixton prison for an article in *The Tribunal* on the German Peace Offer, though as an intellectual he received preferential treatment, rather than having to sew mailbags he could use his time to write a book on mathematical philosophy.

The collection is expertly edited by Nicholas Griffin and the commentary seeks to explain the context of each letter. The volume also includes some of Russell's writings during the period, including a 1914 article War, the Cause and the Cure, his 1916 letter to American President Woodrow Wilson and a pamphlet in the same year for the NCF – For Conscience's Sake, a 1917 article on Freedom or Victory? and the German Peace Offer article that resulted in his imprisonment.



The letters are themselves disappointing in that they relate more to Russell's complicated personal life than to his political activity and his pacifism. The majority of the letters were written to Ottoline Morrell, wife of the radical Liberal MP, Philip Morrell. Russell was having an affair with Morrell for most of the period, though in the last years of the war, Russell was having a relationship with Lady Constance Malleon, otherwise known as the actress Colette O'Neil, and wife of another of Russell's 'friends', the dramatist Miles Malleon. Some of the earlier letters relate to Russell's attempts to offload one of his former mistresses, the American Helen Dudley, who refused to let go, mistakenly thinking that Russell had made a commitment to her.

During the wartime period, Russell undertook several lecture tours, which also generated two classic books – *Principles of Social Reconstruction* and *Political Ideals*. He also wrote a defence of conscientious objection published under the name of

Margaret Hobhouse – *I Appeal unto Caesar*. I had hoped that Russell's correspondence would have given some of the background to his thinking – including his move from radical liberalism to a form of libertarian socialism, which was to be most evident in his 1919 work, *Proposed Roads to Freedom*. This was my mistake. Reading this correspondence was an unsavoury experience and I remembered the same experience when I read Ronald Clark's 1975 biography of Russell, and Russell's own autobiography over 25 years ago. It is depressing that such a brilliant man could be so appalling when it came to his personal relationships. This is a book I regret reading and I wish Spokesman had not republished this selection. The correspondence does have some passing references to Russell's lectures and his NCF work, but if you want to understand Russell's beliefs and political activity during this period, read Jo Vellacott's 1980 book on Bertrand Russell and the Pacifists, Kennedy's 1981 history of the NCF – The Hound of Conscience, or even Russell's own essays. There is also a recent lecture on Russell in the First World War from the recent Conway Hall lecture series on Opposition to the First World War on their website: <http://ethicalrecord.org.uk/ethicalrecord/bertrand-russell-and-world-war-i/>

Russell's personal correspondence demeans the man but should not demean his work.

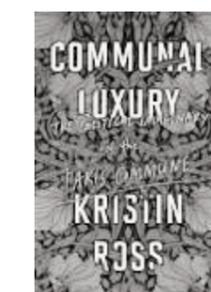
## Laboratory of political invention

**Duncan Bowie** on the legacy of the Paris Commune

**COMMUNAL LUXURY**  
Kristin Ross (Verso, £8.50)

Kristin Ross is an American academic who has previously written on the legacy of the May 68 Paris revolution. She has now turned her attention to the legacy of the Paris Commune of 1871. The new book, short and engaging, focuses on the ideology and culture of the communards. She neither repeats the well known narrative nor enters into the debate as to whether the Commune was dominated by Marxist internationalists or neo-Jacobins.

Instead she focuses on the



internationalism of the communards and the impact of the Commune on the new revolutionary generation, with the focus on anarchists such as Petr Kropotkin and Elisee Reclus. The book traces communard exiles to

London where they influenced the thinking of William Morris, and to Switzerland where the exiled communards developed the principles of communist anarchism – Reclus developing the concept of 'solidarity', with Kropotkin developing the concept of 'mutual aid'.

Ross also points to the relevance of Kropotkin's and Reclus' thought to current ecological political theory. The communard ideology of regional self-sufficiency is certainly relevant to contemporary political debates. This is an excellent book and recommended reading for all libertarian socialist and anarcho-communists.



# Unfinished business

**O**n 26 February 2007 the International Court of Justice concluded that an act of genocide occurred during the 1992-95 Bosnian war. The judgement stipulated that whilst the massacres were committed throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Srebrenica enclave suffered a brutal genocide in which more than 8000 men and boys were systematically killed. This year marks its 20th anniversary, but it is still being denied by the Serbs and some of the international intelligentsia.

What happened in Srebrenica is that the Dutch peacekeeping troops under UN auspices organised a 'safe haven' for the local population to protect them from the Serb forces. Following the establishment of the enclave, the Bosniak men were ordered to disarm and asked to sign the ceasefire agreement. After the truce was signed the Dutch peacekeepers withdrew for a number of still-debated reasons, and the Serb death squads entered the town. During the rampage women and children were separated from men. Women and girls, in some cases as young as nine, were raped whilst some were allowed to embark on buses and leave. The imprisoned men and boys were killed and buried in mass graves, which the perpetrators later excavated and moved into different places to hide the crime. This is the reason why even after 20 years some of the bodies have still not been found. This means that for some families the wounds of war are still fresh and the process of healing cannot commence.

Reconciliation efforts are further hampered by the slow and corrupt justice system that refuses to indict war criminals who still occupy prominent places and are protected by the police uniforms they still wear

as part of their jobs. As for the Dutch soldiers – they were awarded medals by the Dutch Ministry of Defence for the bravery demonstrated in Bosnia.

The Dutch behaviour is representative of the 'international community', which has always held an ambivalent stance towards conflict resolution in the Bosnian war. Generally, they successfully defended their policy of calculated neutrality towards the so-called 'warring factions'. In fact, the more they insisted on promoting a 'level playing field amongst warring factions', in the words of Lord Owen, the more ethnically inflamed the war became. Insisting on neutrality in the face of criminal actions, the



international community encouraged policies of appeasement that gave the green light to the commencement and continuation of the carnage perpetrated against Bosnian civilians. Bosnian Serbs, who were militarily much more advanced and equipped, thanks to support from Serbia, rapidly succeeded in occupying two-thirds of Bosnia and Herzegovina, ethnically cleansing most of the non-Serb population from the occupied territories.

The Bosnian war developed into a human catastrophe on a horrendous scale. Thousands of people were killed, maimed or massacred. It is often cited as the worst carnage in Europe since the Second World War. The war is also significant in that it influenced the International Criminal Court to change its stance on the definition of rape during conflict. Some of those subjected to systematic mass rape – mainly Bosniak women and children – described how, during their ordeal, they were kept imprisoned until impregnated and then released when it was too late to

abort. These poignant testimonies compelled international jurisprudence to define rape as a tool of war and crime against humanity. The statute was ratified in 1998, and since 2003 it has been applied to all international conflicts where systematic rape has occurred.

Numerous 'peace resolutions' and the policies of indifference of the 'international community' allowed the pogroms against Bosniaks to continue unremittingly, in the belief that they comprised 'a perpetratorless crime' in which all were victims and all more or less equally guilty. Innumerable, fruitless 'peace' conferences were convened and reconvened at various summer and winter holiday destinations. In the absolute belief of the moral equivalence of all the 'combatants', the world's leading diplomats claimed they were indeed dealing with 'ancient ethnic hatreds', fought out along the traditional fault line of Islam versus the West. Without any ethical quandary, 'peace' negotiations were initiated and conducted with local warlords, who were simultaneously engaged in issuing orders to kill. Meanwhile, the international mediators pretended not to see their crimes and convened a Dayton peace agreement in 1995, which rather than bringing the peace about, hauled the war into a standstill.

The Dayton Peace Agreement endorsed ethnic divisions created by killings, rape and genocide. It cemented animosity by shattering the convictions of all Bosnians who believed in a multiethnic, pluralistic-religious and unified state of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The multicultural Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina – which represented a smaller version of Yugoslavia unity – was destroyed by the 'peace' efforts in concerted manoeuvres of the 'international community' and local nationalist warlords. The genocide deniers impede finding a final peace for the genocide victims, burying the remains of loved ones and extending the hand of reconciliation.

The peace in Bosnia is unfinished business. The secessionist efforts of the 'international community' have created yet another 'frozen conflict' in the new states in transition to democracy.