

# CHARTIST

**For democratic socialism**

**#297 March/April 2019**

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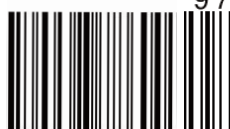
## Time up!

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Labour & Brexit-Day  
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Left nationalism  
Stephanie Clark  
NHS plan  
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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 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

Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of the EB

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## EDITORIAL

# Put it to the people

**T**heresa May's game of Russian roulette with the lives of British people has to end. She is clearly in thrall to the 'no deal' crash and burn fanatical English nationalists of the ERG wing of the Tory Party. The three female defectors are the canaries in the Tory mine. Anti-Brexit ministers could well desert alongside many others over the next few weeks in the lead up to March 29th.

Labour has its own mixed bag of canaries with its defectors. They are no Social Democratic Party of the 1980s but it should be a wake up call to Corbyn and McDonnell to come off the fence, if not to campaign to ditch Brexit, then at least for the party policy of a public vote. It's recognised 'no deal' would be cataclysmic. The last thing May wants is a general election. It means she resigns. So the only option is an extension of Article 50 and a public vote on May's deal, which the EU side has resolutely argued is not up for renegotiation.

We recognise a referendum on the deal is a risk, but whether it's a vote for or against the deal with other permutations, it seems only putting the decision back to the people will resolve the impasse.

To press for a peoples vote, as **Manuel Cortes** and **Julie Ward MEP** argue, would give the EU27 a strong reason for extending Article 50.

As the laughable Brexit dividend crumbles in the form of Nissan, Honda, Airbus and other companies scrapping investment plans and closing plants and hundreds of other companies freeze investment, the cost of Brexit becomes clearer.

The time for sitting on the fence is over. It's time to act. Labour's leadership need to call time on May's brinkmanship. Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell are grassroots campaigners at heart. The campaign should take two forms.

Firstly, Labour should front a street based and community focused campaign, as argued by **Alena Ivanova**, to show that Brexit is bad for jobs, for the economy, for the environment, for workers rights, for public services, for migrants. Second, they should get behind a call for a public vote and mobilise for the 23 March national demonstration.

This also means confronting the left nationalists in the party and trade unions. **Anna Paterson** provides an excoriating polemic against the perils of following a nationalist anti-EU narrative, however dressed up in leftist language. Brexit is a right wing nationalist project. There is a slippery slope for those who try to run a leftist take on it that leads to abandoning a commitment to free movement of people and a socialist internationalism.

Blaming EU migrants, indeed all immigration and Brussels for our socio-economic problems is a dangerous and divisive narrative peddled by the right. We have to stand by the narrative that casino capitalism, corporate tax fraud and austerity are responsible for the woes of working people here and throughout Europe. As **Don Flynn** echoes Anna Paterson, Labour's confusion and belated

opposition to the Tory Immigration Bill illustrates the dangers of failing to champion the positives of immigration.

A 'no deal' Brexit would turbo-charge the English nationalists and xenophobes in the Tory party and beyond. It would give succour to racists and those who blame 'foreigners' for our social and economic ills.

Corbyn should reject these siren calls and listen to the party membership, Momentum and the vast majority of MPs and trade unions who oppose this insular political course. As the leaked TSSA union report reveals, Labour campaigning for a Brexit would mean a loss of 45 seats.

The prize for campaigning for a new deal in the EU could easily reverse this loss. It could consolidate the Remain vote, win most of the newly enfranchised 16-18 year olds who could not vote in 2016, enhance Labour's standing in Scotland and build support in Leave voting areas. If Labour could reverse a 20 point deficit in the

2017 snap election, it could definitely improve its current level-pegging polling by campaigning now for an internationalist, anti-austerity, pro sustainable investment, pro-migration, remain and reform alternative. **Alex Sobel MP** fills out what such a reform agenda might entail. In

a counter argument **Bryn Jones** cites other research highlighting the risks of a further referendum for Labour.

Brexit dominates British politics, the airwaves and public conversations because it is the most seismic issue of the modern post-war era. **Nigel Doggett** reminds us that human-

made climate change is an even greater existential threat to life on earth.

Protesting school students highlight that it's not only Brexit that poses a huge threat to younger generations. **David Toke** cautions that carbon taxes should not be presented as the only solution in outlining a broader array of measures. **Andrew Coates** in analysing the Gilet jaunes (yellow vests) protests in France shows that without action against corporate polluters fuel taxes can backfire leading to politically mixed populist revolts.

**Stephanie Clark** looks at the new Long Term Plan for the NHS finding an insidious threat of further privatisation in amongst some positive proposals for greater investment. On the international front **Fabian Hamilton MP** highlights the need for a multilateral withdrawal plan in Syria and United Nations led peace initiatives in the face of Trump's unilateral decision to withdraw. **Sheila Osmanovic** finds sources for hope for genuine solidarity amongst the peoples of Bosnia-Herzegovina against religious and nativist separatism.

Time is running out to stop a hard no deal Tory Brexit. In the absence of a parliamentary resolution Corbyn-led Labour must now screw up its courage and campaign for a public vote while going out on the stump to argue for a future with our socialist and green allies in the EU.

**Blaming  
EU migrants for  
our socio-economic  
problems is a  
dangerous and  
divisive narrative**

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### Anthony Crosland - The Future of Socialism 1956

Crosland was one of a group of Oxford educated intellectuals, sponsored by Hugh Dalton, which included Roy Jenkins and Denis Healey, who sought to revise and transform socialist theory from its pre-war Marxist basis to a post-Marxist social democratic position. This was predicated on the belief that Britain was entering a period of relative affluence and that the Marxist premise of class struggle over economic value was no longer relevant. At university, Crosland had established a Democratic Socialist club to counter the communist dominated Labour Society. Crosland was elected to parliament in 1950, where together with fellow 'revisionists' he supported Hugh Gaitskell. In 1965 Crosland was appointed Education secretary in Wilson's first government, moving on to President of the Board of Trade and Secretary of State for the Environment, becoming Foreign secretary in 1976. He died in 1977. He wrote a number of books and sets of essays, including *Socialism Now* (1962) and *The Conservative Enemy* (1974).

"Socialists in the 1930's, whatever their disagreements on long term questions, were united on the immediate objectives of a majority Labour government. These were first the abolition of poverty and the creation of a social service state; secondly a greater equalization of wealth; and thirdly, economic planning for full employment and stability."

"Marxism was the dominant intellectual influence, and it made a profound impact on my generation of socialists in their formative years before the war.... Marx has little or nothing to offer the contemporary socialist, either in respect of practical policy, or of the correct analysis of our society, or even of the right conceptual tools or framework. His prophesies have been almost without exception falsified, and his conceptual tools are now quite inappropriate."



"As our traditional objectives are gradually fulfilled, and society becomes more social-democratic with the passing of the old injustices, we shall turn our attention increasingly to freedom, happiness, and cultural endeavour; the cultivation of leisure, beauty, grace, gaiety, excitement, and of all the proper pursuits, whether elevated, vulgar or eccentric, which contribute to the varied fabric of a full private and family life."

"There are, after all, not one, but two good reasons for being a reformer, and on the Left. The first is a belief in the benefits of socialism. But there are many changes in society which an idealistic reformer might wish to make, but which are not set to be assumed under any defensible definition of socialism. And one is also on the Left, and a Labour supporter, because as a matter of experience most of those advocating such changes are to be found on the Left, and those opposing them on the Right.... I would like to see action taken both to widen opportunities for enjoyment and relaxation, and to diminish existing restrictions on personal freedom. ... We do not want to enter the age of abundance, only to find that we have lost the values which might teach us how to enjoy it."

## The Jakereeswocky

Twass Brexit and the slimey goves  
Did fox and farage through the glade  
All soubry were the whittingdales  
And the moom raabs mcveyed.

"Beware the Jakeresswock, proud May!  
The lips that sneer, the snide top hat!  
Beware the E.R.G. and spurn  
The malthouse Boristwat!"

She took her Javid sword in hand  
And grieved it on a leadsome tree  
Until it gavinwilliamsoned  
In shards beneath a D.U.P.

Bladeless, brady graylinged she,  
Past bogs of murdoch, wherein shanks  
Of I.D.S had rothermered  
Along the arron banks

Ti, while in daced gloom she sulked  
The Jakereeswock with tommy mane

Did spit his spats into her eye  
And then did it again

One two! One three! They dysoned on  
Their backstops clarked and hannoned there  
Until no one who'd won or what  
And no one else did care

"And hast thou slain the Jakereeswock?"  
"I think I've made clear", she replied,  
"When daviddavising a rudd  
The backstops corbynyed!"

Twass Brexit and the slimey goves  
Did fox and farage through the glade.  
All Tory was this fucking mess  
And the moom raabs mcveyed.

**Martin Rowson after Lewis Carrol. Written for  
Chartist EB annual bash.**



# Worshipping Walt..200 years on

Paul Salveson on Whitman's local legacy

One of the most fascinating influences on the early British socialist movement was that of the American poet, Walt Whitman. We're coming up to his 200th birthday on May 31st and the main focus of celebrations in the UK will be in Bolton.

Why Bolton? In the late 1880s the expanding textile town developed a lively socialist culture and a key figure in it was a young man called 'Wallace' – J.W. Wallace, though nobody seems to have called him anything other than by his surname. He was the son of working class parents and lived with them in a very modest terrace in one of the town's poorest neighbourhoods. From the mid-1880s he started what was an early kind of book group. It was all men, most having liberal or socialist views. Amongst the latter was a local GP, Dr John Johnston. The group developed a fascination for the writings of Walt Whitman. His message of brotherly love, solidarity, the joys of the countryside laced with a heavy dose of mysticism was a heady and exciting mix for the group which jokingly described itself as 'The Eagle Street College'.

A few weeks before Whitman's birthday in 1887 the group decided to send him a greetings message with the added bonus of a small amount of money. As a penniless poet the gesture was much appreciated. But Whitman was fascinated by what he interpreted as an expression of interest from an 'authentic' group of working class Lancastrians. In fact, the group was more middle class than he thought, notwithstanding Wallace's parentage.

They developed close links not only with Whitman but other admirers of the poet in the UK and in other parts of Europe. A particularly close friend was Edward Carpenter, the Sheffield socialist and pioneer of sexual freedom. Johnston became Carpenter's informal medical advisor and went on holidays with him, and Carpenter's lover George Merrill, to North Africa. The sexuality of the group itself is still a very open question. Some of its members, including the young



mill manager Charles Sixsmith, were probably bi-sexual whilst others would have been horrified at the suggestion that Whitman was anything other than a red-blooded American heterosexual male. Wallace's own sexuality is the subject of a new play written by Manchester writer Stephen Hornby, *The Adhesion of Love*, which is being performed as part of the bi-centennial events.

The Independent Labour Party was founded in 1892 and some of the 'Eagle Street College' quickly joined. Wallace was elected to the ILP's national administrative council and used the position to influence the party, and its leading figures like Hardie, Glasier and Blatchford, to embrace the democratic and spiritual message of Whitman.

The influence of Whitman on British socialism has been recently explored by Kirsten Harris in her book *Walt Whitman and British Socialism*. There is no doubt that Whitman's influence was immense, with his message interpreted and popularised by Edward Carpenter. Within the broad socialist culture promulgated by the ILP, and put into practice by Blatchford's 'Clarion' movement with its choirs, cycling and walking groups and field naturalists, there was a niche for radical sexual politics.

The Bolton group evolved and a number of local feminists such as Alice Collinge became part of its informal membership. The main event in the group's social calendar was the Whitman 'birthday picnic'

usually held at the home of one of the members.

The First World War had a major impact on the group. Wallace, Johnston and some other members of the group were resolutely anti-war, though Johnston worked in Whalley military hospital which cared for soldiers with horrific injuries. He was even pictured wearing military uniform! Another issue which divided the group was the Russian Revolution of 1917, with Wallace firmly on the side of the Bolsheviks and at odds with some of the ILP leadership including Snowden. He supported Katherine Glasier as editor of Labour Leader in championing the revolution, a stand which led to her sacking in 1920. Wallace was also a fervent supporter of Irish nationalism and applauded the 1916 Rising.

The group continued to meet to celebrate 'the poet of democracy and comradeship' until the 1950s.

The annual Whitman Day 'picnic' was revived by a group of local socialists in 1984. Contacts with Whitman scholars in the USA were re-established and the picnics, combined with a walk on the moors, wine tasting (from a 'loving cup') and readings from Whitman, have continued to the present day. This year, a string of events are being planned in Bolton, led by the Socialist Club whose history stretches back to the earliest days of the socialist movement, Bolton Library and the University of Bolton. The annual walk takes place on Saturday June 1st, meeting at Barrow Bridge bus terminus at 2.00pm. **C**

**For full details of events please email Paul at paul.salveson@myphone.coop**

**Paul's book *With Walt Whitman in Bolton – spirituality, sex and socialism in a Northern mill town* is available price £9.90.**

**Chartist readers can take advantage of a special offer of £9.00 including post and packing.**

**Cheques to 'Paul Salveson' sent to 109 Harpers Lane, Bolton BL1 6HU**

# The problem with carbon taxes

**Dave Toke** asks whether carbon taxes or regulations are the answer to combating climate change

**W**ith Gilets jaunes blocking French cities, initially sparked by a carbon tax added to motor fuel taxes, and schoolchildren striking for climate change you would think that politicians were being forced in two contradictory directions. But not necessarily. Certainly big corporations and right wing politicians tend to argue that carbon taxes can solve the world's climate problems much better than regulations. This appeals to some US audiences on an ideological level, but again, misses out the practical measures that need to be taken. Carbon taxes of course can be useful, but miss the point that in order to promote technological innovation you have to have some regulatory measures to encourage 'bottom' up technological innovation. Innovation requires niches supported by relevant incentives/regulations.

Energy conservation programmes are popular insofar as they help reduce the impact of energy price increases, and we have been getting a lot of them as oil becomes more difficult to source and the UK has to access more expensive overseas sources of natural gas as North Sea reserves run down. But we are lacking the regulatory drive to make buildings carbon neutral. Measures to make homes zero carbon have been scrapped and local councils have been stopped from setting their own standards. Indeed local councils usually do not even have the capacity to ensure that current building regulations governing energy efficiency are properly implemented.

On the other hand advances in wind power and solar power, whose costs have dropped tremendously this century, have had nothing whatsoever to do with carbon taxes, or even much (in a direct sense) to do with energy price increases. The cost reductions have been driven because incentives have been given to these nascent technologies.

They have been given markets leading to technical optimisation and economies of scale which have reduced their costs. Indeed,



Wave power-renewable energy

last year a third of UK electricity was supplied by renewable energy. Given the fact that the cost of renewable energy has dropped so much, all they need now is the right regulatory arrangements and they can carry on increasing this proportion very rapidly without increasing costs to the consumer. 80 per cent of our electricity could be supplied from renewable energy by 2030 this way – and there are enough offshore wind farms in the pipeline to assure this even if we only had modest increases in the amount of onshore renewable. We can deploy new technologies like heat pumps linked to district heating systems to convert electricity in heat and store the energy in various forms.

Yes, we can make a lot of progress through various regulatory devices. This is as opposed to solely relying on a one-size-fits-all carbon tax that encourages mainly existing large scale technologies – and which, moreover, will encounter political resistance from large sections of the population. This is because if carbon taxes are applied as the ONLY measure on the level necessary to achieve big carbon reductions they will cause political rebellion

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

on a much greater scale than anything attending the regulatory and incentive measures promoted by the renewable or energy efficiency trade associations and other NGOs. We need lots of different methods; incentives, regulations, carbon taxes, local co-operatives.

I have recently been supporting an innovative wave power technology called 'Resen Waves'. The company involved is now getting its first orders to supply power for communication buoys and also to supply power for oil and gas rigs in the North Sea that are being decommissioned. Once established in this niche it will be able to optimise, get economies of scale and upscale so that in a few years' time it will be able to supply power directly to the electricity grid. That's how new technologies develop, and we can help them by giving specific incentives to help them fill those niche markets. Carbon taxes will not do that.

Existing big business, on its own, won't deliver technological change. We need a bottom up approach that delivers innovation. Then, after some success in this pattern the big companies will decide to change what they are doing. Or go out of business. **C**



## LEFT NATIONALISM

# The danger of left nationalism in the UK and Europe

What's happened to Socialist Internationalism? **Anna Paterson** finds disturbing signs around the Corbyn leadership of an insular political project

**F**rom Germany to France to the UK, some parts of the left see clawing back the sovereignty of the nation state and curbing immigration as key to protecting "our own workers and communities" and rolling back neo-liberalism. These ideas are now more than ever at odds with the reality of global capitalism, and the limits of what nation states can achieve in isolation. In going down this left nationalist path, left leaders in Europe and the UK are losing touch not only with the core values of socialism, but also with progressive grass roots movements as well as their own supporters. Critically, they are also feeding into racist and divisive narratives about immigrant workers which can only benefit the far right.

In the fog of Labour's Brexit policy, events in late January and early February shone a light on the hardening position of Jeremy Corbyn, some of his key advisers and friends. First, in late January, the Labour party vacillated and prevaricated over the Immigration bill, allowing this most feeble of governments to pass a detestable bill with ease. Then news broke in early February that Unite General Secretary Len McCluskey had been conducting direct negotiations with Theresa May on the Brexit deal, offering support for delivering Brexit in return for guarantees for British workers. McCluskey's comments on Brexit have long focused on the dangers of immigration. After the referendum in 2016 he condemned the 'gigantic experiment' of the common labour market, which he said had been conducted 'at the expense of ordinary [British] workers.' In December 2018, McCluskey warned that 'the party has to take concerns about immigration into account, and that if politicians had done so sooner we might have avoided the current situation.'

Corbyn himself has said he is 'not wedded to freedom of move-



**THE LEFT  
AGAINST BREXIT**  
A NATIONWIDE TOUR THIS SUMMER

ment for EU citizens' and has on several occasions called for the curbing of uncontrolled immigration, referring to the deliberate 'undercutting' of the wages of UK workers. It is important to emphasise that these statements are not supported by the evidence on immigration to the UK. Amongst the serious studies available some do show negative impacts for unskilled workers but these are small and short-term in nature and are also likely to be greatest for resident workers who are themselves migrants. Declines in both wages and employment rates of UK-born workers in the short run can be offset by immigration's long term effects in increasing wages and employment (see fullfact.org for more information). There is a problem with declining incomes and working conditions in the UK, but this is not being caused by immigration.

A recent book on Corbynism by Frederick Harry Pitts and Matt Bolton argues that its key components lie in 'seeing the world as constituted essentially of nations' and 'posing the nation against global and international capital.' But, the authors point out, the search for sovereignty is destined to fail, not least because 'we live in a world structured by capital, a social relation which exists as a world market, from which single states cannot abdicate, no matter how hard they try.' Not only is this emerging aspect of Corbynism pitting itself against the tide of history, but it also produces political rhetoric that

shares territory with the nativist Brexiteer right wing. In casting the 'national community' as the primary community for whom the left speaks, and in describing not only global flows of capital but also of people as threat to this primary community, the left has clearly contributed to racist othering of migrant workers. Which is why some of Corbyn's speeches on Europe have drawn praise from the likes of Nigel Farage.

Corbynism's emerging left nationalism is treading the same path as parts of the French and German left. As far back as 2016 Sahra Wagenknecht of Die Linke challenged Chancellor Angela Merkel's decision to accept more than one million refugees, calling for limits on entry. In an environment where the far right is stoking fears about 'violent' immigrants with fake news and conspiracy theories, Wagenknecht has called for the deportation of any refugees who 'abuse' German hospitality: a call in complete contravention of the UN 1951 Refugee Convention, and one that drew praise from the far right Alternative für Deutschland.

In 2018 Wagenknecht and husband Oskar Lafontaine set up the Aufstehen (Rise Up) political movement that promotes left wing economic policies and social protections alongside an explicit criticism of Germany's refugee policy and a 'left wing case for curbing economic migration.' The Aufstehen narrative is very similar to that of Corbyn and McCluskey – letting in migrants makes life harder for German

**Anna Paterson is an International Development adviser and member of Chartist EB**



workers and the left needs to take workers' concerns about migration seriously and claw back 'sovereignty'. This trend is echoed in France where Jean-Luc Mélenchon's La France Insoumise populist left movement combines left economic and social policies with an explicit criticism of migration. 'I have never been in favour of freedom of arrival', Mélenchon has stated. Migrants, he has said, 'are stealing the bread' of French workers.

These leaders appear to be at odds with the very founding heroes of socialism whom they claim to follow. Marx famously said the working class had no nation, and Marx's view of history and progress envisaged that as it progressed, capitalism would break down national boundaries, which socialism would eventually erase completely. In an 1870 letter, Marx wrote that in their prejudice against Irish immigrant workers, English workers became 'a tool of the English aristocrats and capitalists'. Indeed the prejudice of the English worker against these Irish immigrant workers was the 'secret of the impotence of the English working class, despite its organisation.' Lenin, to whom some of Corbyn's advisers are known to look for inspiration, was clear in his internationalist approach to immigration. Responding to various attempts by American socialists to restrict Chinese and Japanese migration, Lenin wrote in 1915 that those in favour of such restrictions could not call themselves internationalists. 'Such socialists are really jingoists' he wrote. Socialism was inherently internationalist, because socialism could never be achieved within the borders of one country.

The history of left-nationalism in action is hardly covered in glory. Of course the biggest and most consequential example of left-nationalism in government was the Soviet Union. The theoretical justifications for 'socialism in one country' in the Soviet context were penned by Stalin, who turned the necessity of surviving as an isolated 'socialist' regime into a virtue. Stalinism increasingly fuelled a messianic Russian nationalism and conspiracy-driven mistrust in foreigners, including the vicious anti-Semitic campaign against 'rootless cosmopolitans' from the 1940s.

Turning to the mainstream British left, anti-immigrant sentiment in the UK Labour movement has produced more shame-



Refugees welcome demo in Berlin- Some on the Left stayed away

ful episodes than can be included here. The Aliens Act of 1905 imposed the first modern immigration controls in the UK, in response to the immigration of Jews fleeing pogroms in Eastern Europe. The Act was passed and implemented by Conservative and Liberal governments, but the Labour movement was critical in pressing for controls, often using grotesque anti-Semitic language. The Trades Union Council formally opposed Jewish immigration, and passed several resolutions for immigration to be curbed.

After the First World War, demobilised white servicemen who returned to the shipping industry experienced more competition from black and brown workers who had been increasingly employed during wartime. They began to mobilise against these workers through the unions and with the support of certain Labour MPs. Sailors' unions operated a 'colour bar' on black and Asian sailors. The TUC passed a resolution condemning 'Asiatic Labour' and demanded preference for white British workers before any others. Racist violence, in which unionised white sailors attacked black and brown workers, ensued in many port towns in 1919 and the crisis culminated in the 1925 'Coloured Alien Seamen's Order', one of the worst examples of state-sanctioned racial discrimination in modern British domestic history.

In the 1960s and 70s, Asian workers were still fighting for union recognition and against colour-bars that prevented Asian workers from getting promotions. Unions such as the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU)

repeatedly refused to support strikes by Asian workers. In Tower Hamlets, where I live, the lack of solidarity shown to Asian workers by the Labour movement has cast a long shadow over Labour politics. Of course both Corbyn and McCluskey would likely condemn these episodes, but they should consider the extent to which their current stance on immigration echoes this lineage.

European left nationalists are clinging to anachronistic views of the extent to which nation states can opt out of the global market, or address global challenges in isolation. They are placing themselves in the dubious tradition of socialism minus its core principle of internationalism. Their final failure is just as important: they are losing touch with, and are unable to engage properly in, grass roots progressive opposition to far right racism, and nativist nationalism.

In October last year an estimated 240,000 people in Berlin demonstrated against the far right and anti-immigrant rhetoric. But Wagenknecht declared she would not join Die Linke's section of the demonstration, inaccurately criticising the organisers for 'calling for open borders for everyone.' It is hard not to make some comparison with the 700,000-strong march for a People's Vote on Brexit in London during the same month, in which Corbyn and the Labour Party leadership were conspicuously absent. There is a deep horror amongst ordinary grass-roots progressives at the juggernaut of right wing national chauvinism and anti-immigrant racism. It is the left that should be galvanising that horror into a movement. **C**

## BREXIT

# Time for direct action

**Alena Ivanova** says Brexit is an existential question for Labour

**T**hat a Tory Government with no majority has squandered the precious little time we had to deliver a serious negotiation process to begin with is indicative of the arrogance of a party completely delusional when it comes to this country's significance on the global stage. Yet, unbelievably and ridiculously, we are nowhere near an outcome where the Labour Party steps in to 'rescue' us from this madness.

Developments since Labour's conference in autumn have demonstrated that a parliamentary strategy alone is simply not enough when it comes to influencing the Brexit process. Despite the truly unified voice with which the whole party voted to reject a Tory deal, we are seeing increasingly bold voices of dissent from all corners of the PLP with MPs openly discussing accepting Tory bribes or compromising on Labour's lines to bring the party and the government closer

to an agreed position and pushing Brexit through Parliament.

This is dangerous because, as Clive Lewis warned recently, the Tories have a lot less to lose from such a strategy. While their MPs are divided, their supporter and voter base is nowhere near as pro-European as Labour's.

Ultimately, they can get rid of a weak leader and wash their hands of responsibility when Brexit inevitably results in job losses and reduced living standards. In contrast, facilitating the Tory Brexit will cost Labour among its own supporters and voters, and crucially, will undermine Jeremy Corbyn's leadership, which is not something we can afford at present.

So what is to be done? Well, parliamentary process is clearly important. We must absolutely keep the pressure on our representatives, and trade union leaders, and Corbyn's office, to follow policy and produce the most effective whipping operation Labour

is capable of delivering, with real consequences for MPs even considering breaking the party line.

But more than this, with mere weeks left to Brexit day, we really ought to be taking to the streets! Those car factory workers should be staging protests and strikes for their jobs, NHS staff should be marching together against the othering of their foreign-born colleagues, Labour party members should be occupying the Home Office in our droves and mass revolt should be the real threat that the government seems to be preparing for half-heartedly already. Our civil disobedience should not be over limited food supplies in the local supermarket, however. We should be ready to rise against a government uniquely inept and criminally cruel to working people in this country, but also to show in no uncertain terms that far from being a fringe middle class concern, Brexit is an existential issue for the soul of the Labour Party. **C**

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

# Steering Labour off the road to nowhere

**Steve Freeman & Phil Vellender** argue for a simple yes/no vote on a Tory deal

**S**ince December 2018, British politics has been deep frozen in a 'ratification crisis'. It climaxed on 15 January 2019, when May's Withdrawal Agreement (WA) was decisively rejected by 230 votes. There are now two ways out of the ratification crisis – via parliament or via the people. May is strongest in parliament, whereas Corbyn demonstrated in 2017 that he fares better talking directly to voters. Crucially, many Labour supporters want Corbyn to take the case against May's WA directly to the people via a referendum campaign.

If May believed her deal had popular support, logically she too would appeal to the people for their backing in a ratification referendum (RatRef). Let's be under no illusions, using all available parliamentary mechanisms, May can still emerge victorious from the current debacle. If her WA is ratified in parliament, she will gamble on a 'I humbled the EU', Falklands-style

general election (GE) soon after. If Corbyn can't find a democratic response to the 'ratification crisis', defeat beckons. He has tried everything in parliament and has so far failed. His best route now is to advance his case for Europe, directly, through a RatRef, Yes/ No referendum. Let Labour's watchword be democracy – the many decide, not the few.

A potential open goal awaits Corbyn. Occam's razor would suggest a ratification referendum, with the single question: Yes or No to May's deal. Corbyn cannot presently force May out by parliamentary means. Demanding both a GE and that May abandons her main 'no deal' weapon while the WA is still on life support, is a non-starter. May will limp on.

Democratic trade union principles and practice can help Corbyn now. Unions in conflict with employers will initially use a 'trigger ballot' to win support for strike action. Unions negotiate with the other side and present any deal to

the rank and file in a Yes/ No ballot.

We should apply this democratic process to EU withdrawal and rule out a 'Remain question' on this May deal ballot paper. Including it would be a mistake and one which the Labour Right fully understands can ensnare Corbyn and further divide Labour supporters. Ratification does not exclude the idea that we might remain, but leaves that for a future ballot, as circumstances dictate.

Strategically, a RatRef shifts the debate on to Labour's terrain of democracy – the people decide. Corbyn can brand the Tories as scared of the people while Labour campaigns for a people's voice. Defeating the WA in a RatRef really is Corbyn's only realistic route to achieving a general election on his terms. Naturally, Article 50 will require extending to allow a RatRef to take place. A RatRef will divide the Tory party, whereas including a Remain option on the ballot paper now will further divide both Labour and the country. **C**



# What Price a People's Vote?

**Bryn Jones** fears another referendum could lead to electoral defeat for Labour

Judging by my email inbox, the case for a second referendum on EU membership seems overwhelming. The left from Lib-Dems to Momentum clamours for the Corbyn leadership to champion a Peoples Vote (PV). However, these campaigners rarely assess the wider implications on political divisions and Labour's prospects of getting into government. Yet the evidence of the electoral impact of a Labour commitment to a PV shows it is more likely to be negative. The most likely electoral outcome of a referendum gained and even won by its 'Remainer' advocates is a Tory rather than a Labour government.

PV campaigners claim a significant shift amongst former Leave voters towards 'remain'. Yet closer scrutiny of opinion polls suggests 'Leave' has a good chance of winning again. The most optimistic polling puts an anti-Brexit vote on only 40%: the same level of support expressed for Leave in polls just before the fateful June vote; in which, of course, Leave won 52%. In Leave strongholds wider issues of identity and populist nationalism have not changed and may have strengthened by the drawn-out Brexit process (Roger Awan-Scully: 'Have Welsh voters changed their view of Brexit?'; Sara B Hobolt, Thomas Leeper and James Tilley: 'Emerging Brexit identities').

What if another referendum was secured? Irrespective of the outcome the electoral consequences for Labour could be dire. The TSSA union, a strong advocate of a PV, reportedly claims Labour could lose 45 seats in a snap election unless it adopts an anti-Brexit position. It also, allegedly, claims 'Brexit energises Labour remain voters' disproportionately, and warns: 'There is no middle way policy which gets support from both sides of the debate' (The Guardian 6th February 2019). As this report's methods remain unpublished we cannot check its evidence. Assume, however, that its 45 lost seats figure is correct but assess the other side of the coin: that Labour-supporting pro-Brexit voters also base election votes on their Brexit preference. What would be the



consequences of their switching away from Labour?

Note that to get the General Election votes needed to form the next government, Labour needs to add to its present total another 64 seats. According to Richard Johnson's Lancaster University analysis, in the 20 Labour-held marginals most vulnerable to the Tories, 16 constituencies voted for Leave. So, other things being equal, that would reduce the positive balance of TSSA's 45 'holds' to 29; raising the overall target of must-win constituencies to 80. Most of these have to come from Tory marginals where Labour came second in 2017. This is because the Conservatives, not Labour, are in second place in every English Lib Dem constituency and the SNP came second in every Scottish Lib Dem seat. Johnson calculates that only three of Labour's targets in Tory-held marginals had Leave votes of less than 40%.

Discounting the more complex Scottish case, I analysed 45 Tory-held Labour targets in England and Wales, of which 37 had Leave majorities. Of these 17 were near or above 60% pro-Leave majorities. Adopting again the TSSA hypothesis, that Brexit preferences will directly influence General Election party choices, there are unlikely to be enough switchers from Leave to Remain to turn most of these seats into Labour gains. Instead, Labour would not win between 17 and 37 of its most promising gains from

Tories. The 64 seat gap would not be closed.

Castigated by pro-Brexit media, mere support for a referendum by Labour, irrespective of the outcome, would doubtless alienate many pro-Brexit voters. Barring a startling number of Liberal Democrat victories in Tory seats, the above electoral arithmetic indicates another neoliberal Tory government. The longer-term consequences of another bitterly fought and divisive referendum campaign would further handicap Labour's project. Continuation of the Brexit saga through a referendum campaign, whatever its outcome, would strengthen and embolden nationalism, crypto-fascism and ethnic supremacism; both within the Tory party and in emerging outfits, such as Farage's infant Brexit Party.

Against these spectres a partial Brexit opens up much more attractive scenarios. If Labour establishes the case for a close economic alignment with, but outside the EU, it could then win a General Election. Labour could begin to implement its emerging social democratic alternative to neoliberal inequality and austerity. Such reforms might then serve as a model for the left in member states and eventually EU bodies. In a less polarised UK, Labour might also, in the fullness of time, propose entry into a sufficiently reformed EU that would contradict the bureaucratic behemoth caricature that has fuelled Brexit hysteria, paranoia and our current dystopia. **C**

**Bryn Jones is the co-editor of *Alternatives to Neoliberalism* and an executive officer of Bath CLP.**



## WALES &amp; BREXIT

# Wales to be hit harder

**Peter Rowlands** on the impact of Brexit on Wales and the challenge for new Labour leader

A recent survey for Wales Online highlighted the various ways in which Wales was likely to suffer from Brexit over and above the effects on the UK generally. These included: exports to the EU from Wales being higher at 61% than those from the UK at 49%; sectors at risk, including aerospace, vehicles and steel with Wales, along with Northern England, the Midlands and Northern Ireland likely to suffer more than the rest of the UK; the closure of Airbus, which employs 6500 workers in Flintshire; the threat to lamb exports to the EU being hit by tariffs; the loss of EU funding referred to above.

In the 2016 referendum Wales voted Leave, (52.5%), unlike Scotland (38.0%) and Northern Ireland (44.2%), which both voted Remain. (All figures are for Leave). The Wales figure is only marginally less than that for England, (53.4%), although a more accurate comparison, in terms of the economy and society, is probably with just the three Northern English regions and the West Midlands, (an average of 57.2%).

The disparity in these votes can be mainly explained by the much greater support for independence in Scotland and Northern Ireland than in Wales, based on the necessity for a small country of remaining in the EU. Plaid Cymru takes essentially the same view, which probably explains the lower Leave vote in Wales than in the four English regions noted and the majority Remain vote in the two strongest counties for Plaid Cymru, out of only five Remain counties in Wales.

However, there was a strong Leave vote in the old coal valleys of South Wales, particularly in localities to the East where there was little Plaid Cymru influence. This area is strongly Labour, but also, along with West Wales and Cornwall, had the highest rate of EU aid in the UK. Professor Scully of Cardiff University has researched this in some detail. He found widespread scepticism about the effects of EU aid, with some seen as expenditure on 'vanity projects' that did little to revive the local economy.



**Welsh Labour leader Mark Drakeford- Big challenges with Brexit**

Opposition to immigration was strong, despite there being little evidence of any in this area, and much of the reverse.

Unlike Scotland and Northern Ireland, the Welsh Government was put in a weak position with regard to safeguards against the effects of Brexit, because of the Leave majority vote. This was partly why it came to an agreement on Brexit with Westminster without Scotland in April last year. Under this all powers previously devolved will remain devolved, except for certain powers held temporarily, whereas the original intention was for Westminster to retain powers over farming and fishing.

Funding for Wales is via the so called 'Barnett Formula' established in 1978, which many have thought is not fair to Wales, certainly in relation to Scotland, and although a needs based formula was agreed in 2016, and there have been assurances that Welsh agriculture will not suffer, Barnett remains an inadequate means of funding which both Labour and Plaid Cymru want to see replaced. It provides no certainty about future funding, while replacing EU funding is even less

certain.

The Welsh Government have issued a White Paper, 'Securing Wales' Future', which advocates a 'Soft Brexit' based on possible EFTA membership and continued free movement of labour, and the necessity of replacement funding for the EU funding that will be lost. They have also issued another paper, 'Preparing Wales for a No Deal Brexit'.

Whatever the final outcome of the Brexit saga, it is fairly evident that for those who accept that its economic effects are likely to be adverse, these are likely to be worse in Wales than in most other parts of the UK. This will be a major challenge for Labour and new left wing leader Mark Drakeford in the run up to the next Welsh Assembly elections in 2021. The greatest opportunity is that offered to Plaid Cymru and new leader Adam Price, although this depends in part on what happens in Scotland over a new independence referendum there. It will probably have some positive effect for Plaid Cymru, but probably not enough to achieve a majority in government or for independence, but in these volatile political times who knows what may happen. **C**

**Pete Rowlands is a member of Swansea Labour Party**

# No ifs, no buts, oppose this Immigration Bill

**Don Flynn** finds Labour's parliamentary confusion flies in the face of support for free movement among party members

**T**he Immigration Bill currently making its way through the various stages of Parliamentary procedures ought to provide Labour with its best chance of defining a set of post-Brexit policies which are consistent with what most of the party's membership believe to be its best values.

The bill (official title: Immigration and Social Security Coordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill) makes provision for EU nationals arriving after the transitional date for departure (or by the end of March if a No-Deal Brexit prevails) to come under the remit of UK-made regulations. It will mean, as the government has made clear in its promotion of the measure, a decisive end to the freedom of movement deriving from the EU Treaty.

When the bill came up for a vote on its second reading in the Commons at the end of February, the Labour leadership team seems to have allowed its stand on the matter to be determined by the blunt wording of its 2017 manifesto commitment to back the ending of free movement. The shadow Home Secretary, Diane Abbott, initially let her view be known on how the Parliamentary Party should vote by stating that Labour "... is clear that when Britain leaves the single market, freedom of movement ends, and we set this out in our 2017 manifesto. I am a slavish devotee of that magnificent document: so on that basis, the front-bench of the Labour party will not be opposing this bill this evening."

Unfortunately, what Abbott should have been more alert than any one else to is the fact that the Windrush scandal had broken since that date. A much better understanding among sections of the public of what it meant to be subject to UK immigration policy has resulted from the media stories which told of elderly Caribbean residents being denied much-needed health care, dismissed from their jobs and evicted



**Diane Abbott - Confused Labour line**

ed from privately rented accommodation. Some had been detained in immigration removal centres and a number, probably in the region of hundreds, actually deported from the country in which they had been legally resident for decades.

The news that Labour MPs had been instructed to abstain on a vote against a bill that threatened to extend the immigration control system to some 3.5 million EU citizens settled in the UK was greeted with alacrity by some backbenchers and others who found out about the proposal. Abbott attempted to calm nerves with a tweet that was supposed to assure people that she was aware of the bill's deficiencies and the Parliamentary party would be seeking substantial amendments at later stages.

This provoked a storm of criticism across social media and, 90 minutes before the vote took place, the party leadership announced a change of plan and called upon its MPs to vote against the bill. Getting effective opposition organised at such a late stage was an almost possible task and, in the end, only 178 of Labour's 256 MPs were present in the chamber for the vote. The

second reading of the bill was then carried by 297 to 234.

Recent weeks have shown a strength of support among Labour party members for immigration policies that replicate the principles of freedom of movement in UK domestic legislation if Brexit does take place. The Labour Campaign for Free Movement advocates going beyond the current limit of beneficiaries of this policy to the European Economic Area countries and Switzerland and extending its scope to citizens of third countries.

The LabourList website, which has 12 million visits each day from people interested in news about the party has surveyed the views of its followers on the question of freedom of movement in the event of withdrawal. Getting a response of over 5,000 people, 83% said they favoured keeping free movement after Brexit.

The bill will come under even closer scrutiny as it moves to its committee stage and further readings. Pressure needs to be kept up on the leadership to make sure there is no further confusion on where Labour stands on the issue as the debate becomes even more intense. **C**

**Don Flynn was Founder/Director of Migrant Rights Network and is a member of Chartist EB**



# Remain & reform

**Alex Sobel** says we're better in and working for change together

**F**ighting to remain a part of the European Union is only the first step of what should be the project of all of our lifetimes – permanent reform of the body and institutions that make it up.

It is not enough simply to argue that – on balance – it is better to stay a member of the European Union and leave it at that. As if those who wish to leave have no valid reasons at all for doing so. Being a member of the EU is better for us a country and we should have no problem with saying so however often we're shouted down as traitors. But we cannot submit to the simplistic thinking of such opponents. Ours must be a message of remain and reform.

In his excellent pamphlet for Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, *Forward with Europe: A democratic and progressive reform agenda after the Lisbon Strategy*, Stefan Collignon sets out an approach to reform that all on the left should get behind.

Firstly, we must not be afraid to take on the mammoth task of reforming the EU's institutions. This is fundamental both to the case of why we should remain as part of them, but also to make sure they function in such a way as to allow the maximum of democratic choice within EU nations.

The Right and Centre Right groupings have been somewhat successful in making a neoliberal agenda common across the EU, while the left have successfully defended and increased environmental and social wins through joint action on pollution and climate change and areas like the social chapter. We should now formulate a new strategy that explicitly ties the original Lisbon agenda with broad redistributive objectives.

For too long, the EU has focused on economic reforms that focus exclusively on producer and capital and not enough on workers. There have been some wins – like the Working Time Directive and Freedom of Movement – but these are overshadowed by the sense that these are a ceiling not a floor. Any role the left could play in building a reformed EU



**Alex Sobel - Campaigning for a reformed EU**

would be about further balancing these interests.

As a joint enterprise the Socialist group should be pushing to bring workers councils, co-determination and board-level representation to workers to the fore as a standard across Europe. Actively sought as part of international trade deals and as minimum requirements for EU-based businesses above a certain level such a move would both change fundamentally the balance of power between labour and capital as well as increasing productivity and enabling investment in the kind of future economy needed to ensure our ongoing prosperity in Europe.

The EU should also be willing to be more economically interventionist on behalf of workers – within a democratic structure. There are three key planks to making this work.

Firstly, a Growth Fund to enable a Europe Wide Green New Deal plan to completely reset our struggling economies and enable the urgent change needed to tackle climate change. This would act as a 'Marshall plan' for the environment. But instead of investing after the destruction – as was the case after WW2, this would be

investment to avoid it.

Secondly, a Cohesion Fund to rebalance those areas of the economy which have suffered chronic underinvestment throughout Europe. By increasing productivity and capital intensity at a regional level, this will be the vital price to pay to ensure that those areas that voted leave benefited properly from any decision to remain. They have to feel listened to and understood. Immediate cash injections into their localities as well as long term structural change will be essential to answering the call they made for change in 2016.

Finally, a Globalisation Fund to help those who are under the most pressure in responding to shifting global trends. This will be particularly necessary to help countries on the Mediterranean as they struggle to deal with the ongoing crisis in the Middle East and increased levels of climate-driven refugees.

It is right for the left to fight to stay in the EU. Brexit is a damaging project of the hard right which is designed to benefit a few at the expense of the many. But wanting to remain in the EU does not mean we should not also dedicate ourselves to reforming it too. **C**

**Alex Sobel is Labour and Cooperative MP for Leeds North West.**



# New NHS Long Term Plan-more than window dressing?

**Stephanie Clark** finds ambitious promises but an ongoing threat of outsourcing

**U**nder assault from 10 years of ruthless 'austerity', fragmentation and creeping privatisation, NHS England's Long Term Plan (LTP) launched on 7 January now promises an NHS 'fit for the future'.

But what is the reality behind the promises of transformation and 'integrated care'?

The Plan presents huge ambition:

- to prioritise for investment mental health, the major killer diseases, maternity, neonatal and child and young person's health care
- to improve public health through addressing the causes of ill-health (though not the impact of 10 years of austerity!)- through a focus on prevention of ill health, including through 'self-care'
- to address health inequalities.

There is wide support for these ambitions, but what in the plan is for real and what is aspiration or, more accurately, window dressing?

To start with three stark and shocking omissions:

there is no workforce plan, no funding plan, and no plan for social care.

To put this in context, deliberate Government underfunding has caused:

- 2/3rds of NHS hospitals trusts to go in the red
- A&E in crisis and bed shortages at unsafe levels
- A massive and rising £8 billion maintenance backlog across the NHS
- Targets routinely missed, including for cancer treatment
- Average waits for GP appointments now two weeks
- Rationing of treatments, for example withdrawal of hip replacements, operations for cataracts and 'non-life threatening' hernias
- A workforce crisis – 100,000 vacancies in health and 150,000 in social care
- A social care system on the brink of collapse

There are 60 uncosted plans in the LTP. And the LTP does not

even identify the number of health care facilities that will need to be built and the capital funding for this. The Chair of NHS England's January Board meeting admitted "we cannot begin to deliver the Long Term Plan without the workforce to do it."

There are some concrete plans that will be implemented. Namely increased funding for mental health, a welcome commitment, but with implied cost-cutting elsewhere.

Digital technology will transform access to health services – from online information for delivery of 'self-care', to access to GP by Skype App. Alarming, this 'right' is not matched by any right to a face to face appointment with your GP. Amidst the promise of Artificial Intelligence and an NHS digital future, there is dystopia in the making, a threat to personal data confidentiality, and a vast profit potential for the tech companies.

The Reorganisation of GPs into centralised 'hubs' means GP practices will be forced to merge, turning 7,500 practices into 1,500 super practices covering populations of between 30-50,000, and reducing patient access and personalised care.

Top down restructuring – and the end game for the NHS?

The threat to the NHS is not just from underfunding, but also from privatisation.

Much has been made in some of the media of the LTP's commitment to find a way around the

2012 Health and Social Care Act's requirement to put out to tender all commissioned services, recognising the chaotic waste involved. No-one will now speak up for this disastrous Act.

However, central to the LTP is the development of Integrated Care Providers (ICPs). An ICP would hold the contract for the integrated delivery of hospital, community and GP services, and social care in each of 44 NHSE-designated health care areas, established since 2016, with a budget fixed per head of the area population. An ICP would commission the services but could



**Hospital beds in corridors - not what the doctor ordered**

also be a provider. An ICP would have no accountability to the community of its area or be subject to local authority scrutiny. It's sole accountability would be upwards to the regional directorates being set up now by NHS England.

There is nothing to prevent a private company winning an ICP contract. Ultimately, the plan to move towards large 10 or more – year regional contracts could threaten the wholesale outsourcing of the English NHS to private – and potentially foreign interests.

The LTP makes clear that establishing ICPs is central to its plan. The direction of travel can be seen in the changes brought in under Simon Stevens, head of NHS England, and championed behind the scenes by the Secretary of State, Jeremy Hunt and now Matt Hancock, and, more generally in the 30-odd year opening up of the NHS to the market.

Let us not sit back and let this happen.

Find out more. Support the health campaign. Support the NHS Bill which will end privatisation and financialisation of the NHS and is now backed by the Labour leadership. **C**

[www.keepournhspublic.com](http://www.keepournhspublic.com)

[www.healthcampaignstogether.com](http://www.healthcampaignstogether.com)

[www.nhsbillnow.org/](http://www.nhsbillnow.org/)

**Stephanie Clark  
Member Keep Our  
NHS Public and  
local health  
campaigns, and  
Bethnal Green &  
Bow CLP**

## LEFT AND BREXIT

# Brexit is a busted flush – Britain needs Labour

**Manuel Cortes** says extend Article 50 and call a special party conference to lead fight against Brexit and austerity

**T**hat the story of the 2016 European Union (EU) referendum continues to unfold with just a month left until the proposed March 29th leaving date says much about the unholy mess we find ourselves in.

Parliament is paralysed and business caught in a tailspin over the actions of a reckless Tory Government which has offered zero leadership since the referendum almost three years ago.

Let's face it, leaving the EU will do nothing to replace the anger felt in deindustrialised communities. That strife continues, propelled now by fear of what happens next; just ask car workers in Sunderland who have been told Nissan has abandoned plans to build a new model of one of its flagship vehicles on Wearside.

Sadly, this will not be the last such announcement brought about by Brexit. Be in no doubt, we are being taken to the cliff edge by a Tory party determined to wreck our economy.

This should come as little surprise, after all we got here thanks to a vainglorious Tory leader attempting to placate an ultra-nationalist faction on the Right of his own Party. David Cameron failed in this fools' errand and his successor, Theresa May, has proven herself totally unequipped, personally and politically to deal with the fallout.

Her gambit in holding a General Election in the spring of 2017 was aimed at securing a larger parliamentary mandate for any kind of Brexit which could be cobbled together. From the moment her Commons majority was wiped out, by Labour under Jeremy Corbyn, Brexit was a busted flush.

The general election result called into question the veracity of a smear-laden referendum campaign which was won, don't forget, by a whisker. The electorate in 2016 were given a binary choice and in effect voted for a concept of Leave which was nebulous at best and which no-one is saying can be delivered.



**Manuel Cortes- Fight to stop Tory Brexit**

Since that time millions more have come onto the electoral roll and are rightly demanding they be given a stake in our shared future. This fact alone should lead us to question whether the referendum result remains valid.

Reasons abound why we in the Labour and Trade Union Movement will long be thankful May failed to get her majority, not least because you can bet the house protecting workers rights would have been bottom of her wish list when it came to negotiations with the EU.

The facts speak for themselves. Not only does May not have a majority with which to deliver Brexit, but her party is hopelessly split. Their divisions have led to the European Research Group (ERG) tail wagging a government on its last legs.

While this saga drags on communities continue to suffer real hardship and trauma as a result of austerity and a hostile environment programme. Tens of thousands of deaths have been linked to austerity, hundreds of thousands are homeless and, according to the United Nations '14 million people, a fifth of the population, live in poverty'.

In Britain, in the 21st Century!

**Manuel Cortes is  
TSSA General  
Secretary**

On top of that lives are being blighted because of the Tories narrow nationalist vision of our country. The Tory ultras dream of a free-trading Brexit Britain, a neo-liberal privatised paradise which would shame even Margaret Thatcher.

Wave goodbye to any such thing as society, it would be every man and woman for themselves in which only the elites – the likes of Rees Mogg and Farage – would have nothing to lose.

This must be resisted with everything we have. We need a general election now and a Labour government so the country can begin to rebuild and renew after a long, barren decade of austerity; a series of hammer blows from the party of the rich against the poorest and most vulnerable in society.

Labour has been united and clear about the importance of our shared future - that of the 52 as well as the 48 per cent in the Brexit vote. How different things would be under Labour, we would have a party governing For The Many and a government determined to speak for, and invest in, all of its citizens.

How badly we need the Labour grownups in the room speaking to

the EU about future arrangements. They would do so as partners rather than adversaries.

As a wider movement we in the trade unions have always been guided by a strong democratic streak and we must lead from the front, both on Brexit and austerity.

We exist only to protect workers, their families and our communities across our country. Brexit in any form will further hurt the millions of people we stand up for every single day. That's why I have called for a special Labour Party conference.

Our party has been strategic and taken the Brexit process step by step. We want a general elec-

tion because we understand the scale of change our country needs to get back on its feet and make sure no one is left behind. That's why we have taken nothing off the table including holding a public vote on Brexit.

It may still be that we leave the EU in March 2019 but it should not be with Labour's blessing. We must build opposition to this alt-right project at every turn. That's why I urge at the very least an extension to Article 50, a pause to reflect on what self-harm we are about to inflict upon ourselves.

Brexit is not a game for clowns like Boris Johnson to conjure up false notions of Old England

besieged by the common enemy of straight bananas and a myriad of other (non-existent) regulations from Brussels bureaucrats.

All of this would be very funny if it were not so serious and economically damaging. Britain after Brexit will be more racist, less tolerant, less equal and more divided. This is what four decades of Tory infighting have brought us. It is a sorry pass.

We must fight to stop Tory Brexit with every sinew and confine the likes of Boris, Farage and Rees-Mogg to the circus so they can perform their clown act without causing harm to the rest of us! **C**

# Not opposing Brexit could cost Labour victory

**L**abour could lose an additional 45 seats in a snap election if it fails to take an anti-Brexit position, says a leaked report from the Labour affiliated transport union, TSSA.

It claims that "Brexit energises Labour remain voters" disproportionately, and warns: "There is no middle way policy which gets support from both sides of the debate."

The unpublished document says: "There can be no disguising the sense of disappointment and disillusionment with Labour if it fails to oppose Brexit and there is every indication that it will be far more damaging to the party's electoral fortunes than the Iraq war."

"Labour would especially lose the support of people below the age of 35, which could make this issue comparable to the impact the tuition fees and involvement in the coalition had on Lib Dem support."

The document starts by pointing out that the TSSA has "supported Jeremy Corbyn's leadership from the very beginning".

Highlighting that party supporters view Brexit as a "Tory project", it adds that four-fifths of them believe the current deal will hurt the British economy and 91.4% of Labour voters do not trust the government to deliver a good Brexit for people such as them.

The report concludes: "If there is an election in 2019, Labour will get a lower share of the vote in every seat in the country if it has a pro-Brexit policy than if it has an anti-Brexit position."

Senior figures linked to Momentum were sent the report as were several members of the shadow cabinet, including the shadow chancellor, John McDonnell, and the Labour party in Scotland. It was not intended for publication.

It claims that three-quarters of Labour voters would back remain in a second referendum. It acknowledges that according to the current polls Labour would lose seats in an election, and shows that Labour faces risks whichever way it turns.

But it says that there would be much heavier electoral losses if Labour entered a snap election promising to implement Brexit.

It finds:

- That if Labour supports the implementation of Brexit it will lose an additional 45 seats in an election, compared with 11 if it opposes Brexit.
- A more vociferous opposition to Brexit would win the party an additional five seats.
- The party could lose five of its seven MPs in Scotland by being pro-Brexit.

The briefing says its findings are based on "in-depth polling and focus group work" carried out to prepare for a snap election.

The TSSA asked 5,125 voters in January what positions would make them see Labour more positively or negatively. The most popular option was for Labour to oppose Brexit, the second preferred choice was for Labour to honour Brexit but renegotiate a better deal, and the third choice was to support May's deal. **C**

## EU no barrier to nationalisation and state aid

**TSSA General Secretary Manuel Cortes has hailed as "fantastic" myth busting research showing EU State Aid rules would not hinder a rail nationalisation programme in the UK.**

**TSSA teamed up with the respected left of centre think tank, the IPPR (Institute for Public Policy Research), to produce a briefing which finds the EU is 'officially neutral on the matter of state ownership and does not prevent nationalisation'. The research also shows Britain spends much less on State Aid than the EU average and could at least triple State Aid spending to industry without breaching rules.**

**Manuel Cortes said: "This briefing is fantastic news because it shows that we can have a transformative Labour government led by Jeremy Corbyn and stay within the European Union.**

**"Our union is pleased to have played a central role bringing these important findings to light. We now know the EU does not stand in the way of hugely important and popular programmes such as bringing our railways back into public hands.**

**"The message is clear and heartening – we do not need Brexit in order to change Britain for the many."**



## FRANCE

# Macron faces populist revolt

**Andrew Coates** finds grounds to be cautious on the rise of the *Gilet jaunes*

In May 2017 Emmanuel Macron was elected President of France with 66.10% of the vote in the second round. Marine le Pen won 33.90%. There was a 25.4% abstention rate - a record high. An admirer wrote of the new head of state's 'optimism'. His ambition was to build a society open to global commerce, innovatory, and entrepreneurial. Yet, Brice Couturier noted, he would find it hard to win over "la France périphérique". There are many (half-hearted or non-Macron voters) who want security rather than change. (Macron, The Philosopher President. 2017)

The Gilets jaunes protests began last October over a rise in fuel taxes. Raising issues of fiscal justice up to the way French democracy is organised, and the legitimacy of the 'political class'. 287,000 people demonstrated in November for 'Acte I' of a national day of protest. People wearing the High-Vis vests have blocked roundabouts and motorways. There has been heavy-handed repression. Following tumultuous protests - without formal stewarding - and vandalism on the 1st December in the Arc de Triomphe, there was a crack down. The use of rubber bullet launchers amongst other arms, has led to hundreds of injuries. Up to 200,000 came out in 'Acte XII' on 2nd February. The issue of police violence was at the forefront.

In response to 'Casseurs', those who smash up shops and fight the police, Macron has proposed a law which enables the state to ban people, without independent control, from protests. Around 50 of his MPs abstained on this legislation.

Another response has been the Grand Débat National. Across the country meetings, before an invited audience, have been held with the President and other government leaders. Discussion is intended to be on 'green transition' (the original fuel tax hike was presented as a way of reducing carbon emissions), taxation, the way the state works, democracy and citizenship. Watching some of them, on BFM TV, there is polite, if heated, discussion, raising problems familiar to a

British audience. These include housing, precarious jobs, poor public services, and inadequate education provision.

A grand absence is the mass of the Gilets jaunes. Instead of the Grand Débat they offered their own Web platform. The importance of social media in the protests is hard to avoid. Some, optimistically, consider that this is tied to popular assemblies and new forms of democracy, (see Understanding the Gilets jaunes, an e-book). Attempts to create a national structure out of a structureless movement have, however, foundered. A widely shared demand is for government referendums called for popular petitions, by-passing Cabinets and Presidents. Conspiracy theorising is omnipresent on social media. One target is the media. Journalists have been singled out, women reporters have been threatened with rape and there have been vicious physical assaults in Rouen and Toulouse, amongst many other acts of intimidation.

An egalitarian impulse, a wish for fairer taxation, the well-founded criticism that Macron's government represents the wealthy (15 Ministers out of 32 are millionaires) may point to the better side of the Gilets jaunes. There is hostility to globalisation and capitalism in the abstract but few criticise companies or call for alternatives to the market. If there is a demand for social justice, it is from the State, not from changes in the workplace, or a challenge to private enterprise. The rights of motorists have been promoted by vandalising a majority of speed cameras on French roads. It is hard to see any green politics at work there. While a minority of Gilets jaunes activists are on the left, the far-right Rassemblement National of Marine le Pen, has a big audience in the movement. Those mobilised in the protests - not just giving passive approval - include many from 'white van' employment, rural and 'peri-urban' areas where backing for the far-right is strongest.

Researcher Luc Rouban suggests that the movement feeds into right-wing populism. The left-wing trade union federation



**Gilets-jaunes protests - Mixed politics**

**Andrew Coates is a member of Chartist EB**

the CGT has tried to challenge this. They called a day of action to 'converge' with the Gilets jaunes in early February. It attracted several hundred thousand supporters in protests across the country, but work stoppages were limited. Some Gilets jaunes participated, following the appeal of leading figure, Éric Drouet. Others attacked any co-operation with the CGT.

Many who have no sympathy with Macron's Presidency are concerned that a possible melt down of French politics will favour a 'populist' clean out of the left. The possibility that something like the Italian political landscape may emerge, with no recognisable left, is underlined by the support the 5 Star movement (in power with the far-right) has given to the Gilets jaunes. A left divided into Socialists, Communists, Greens, Benoît Hamons Générations, Socialists, three main Trotskyist groups, and Jean-Luc Melenchon's La France insoumise, risks electoral marginalisation.

For the moment attempts to form Gilets jaunes lists for May's European elections have shown more divisions than common purpose. President Macron is said to be on the brink of holding a referendum on that date, to decide on some of the key demands that emerge from his Grand Débat. Despite a steep decline in personal popularity, his party La République en Marche still heads opinion polls for the coming electoral contest. **C**

# Climate Change: the beginning of the end?

As school students protest internationally **Nigel Doggett** finds hot air from governments

Attention is increasingly focussed on multiple environmental crises, with climate change posing a lethal danger to us all. It is no longer fanciful to suggest that our civilisation might collapse within the lifetimes of young people living today. The looming threat to their future, in contrast to older generations who benefited from a relatively benign climate, constitutes an intergenerational injustice. Young Swedish activist Greta Thunberg's interventions have inspired widespread protests, reaching Britain last month. Their argument is cogent: neither government or business have acted decisively and this highlights adults' failure and children's seriousness.

Extreme weather events across Australasia, Asia, Europe and America reveal the new 'normal' climate uncertainty and unprecedented extremes. Biodiversity is jeopardized at all levels from oceans, insect life to bird and large mammals, with ominous implications for food production. The melting of glaciers, arctic ice and permafrost causes sea level rises, threatening low lying coastlines and patterns such as the gulf stream current that brings mild winters to the British Isles. The recent Brazilian dam collapse was merely an extreme example of reckless risk taking in the name of profit.

The latest IPCC report identifies severe risks beyond 1.5°C above the pre-industrial benchmark level, but the average temperature has already risen by 1°C and the possibility of staying below 1.5°C depends on political will. It is technically, financially, politically and socially difficult to change pathways, with past investment in infrastructure such as airports, roads and pipelines tending to lock us in to high carbon lifestyles based on consumerism, foreign travel and lavish diets.

The December Warsaw Climate Conference (COP) agreed monitoring rules for emissions reductions, three years after the Paris agreement set a target of well

below a 2°C rise. A classic case of fiddling while the world burns, this prompted accusations of settling for what was politically possible, not what was necessary. Whilst David Attenborough, token advocate at the COP for the world's people, has avoided the political implications, Thunberg put Davos business leaders on the spot: "I want you to panic. I want you to feel the fear I feel every day and then I want you to act". This challenges accepted wisdom that change on environmental issues requires a positive message, not doom-mongering. However, a review of progress since climate change became an internationally acknowledged problem 30 years ago shows much more hot air than solid action. We need to go beyond incremental change to more fundamental social transformation.

Accordingly, the IPPR report *This is a Crisis: Facing up to the age of environmental breakdown*, argues that politics and policy has 'failed to recognise that human impacts on the environment have reached a critical stage'. It identifies three key aspects: the scale and pace of environmental breakdown, the implications for societies, and the subsequent need for transformative change. Whilst promising initiatives at town, city and regional level abound, the far-right populist tide shows how easy it is to disrupt even a cautious climate consensus unless it has active popular support. The gradual nature of climate change means that it is never the most urgent issue, but it's surely now the most important. Of course consumption and carbon emissions have been led by richer countries and people, whilst the worst effects will be felt by poorer ones, hence the growing calls for 'climate justice'.

We should be proud of the last British Labour government's active role in climate negotiations and Ed Miliband's 2008 Climate Change Act, which set a binding reduction target of 80% in carbon emissions by 2050. But Britain's record is distinctly patchy, with progress in reducing emissions by 38% between 1990 and 2015



Swedish activist Greta Thunberg inspired worldwide protests

based on 'low hanging fruit', mostly the switch from coal to gas for electricity generation and heating. It is essential to move on to 'hard to reach' areas such as domestic heating demand. The Tory government has failed to act – allowing the fruitless fracking sideshow, phasing out feed in tariffs for renewable energy, cancelling obligations in new housing standards and failing to confront the growth of road and air transport or promote greener electric cars, buses or local trains.

Despite the glare of Brexit headlines, Labour is taking low carbon transformation seriously across economic, industrial and environmental policy, but faces a challenge in achieving a 'just transition' to a low carbon economy that ensures sustainable jobs and avoids more devastation in industrial communities. Shadow Business Secretary Rebecca Long-Bailey has launched a year-long Green New Deal consultation on a 'green jobs revolution' involving round table events with unions, industry and community groups. We should all make our voices heard.

Labour's plans will be tested in economic crisis, post-Brexit (whether it happens or not) and post-austerity. We must mobilise public support, not just from those directly affected by pollution or seeking employment, but by demonstrating the potential for a better life with clean air, less traffic and warmer, cheaper to run homes. **C**

**Nigel Doggett is a member of Chartist EB**

## BALKANS

# Winds of solidarity in the Balkans

**Sheila Osmanovic** surveys Bosnian politics 28 years after the Dayton Accords

In February 2019, the 14th European Youth Olympic Festival brought its Olympic torch to Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina. For a week, youth from across Europe competed in winter sports throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, the country which hosted the Olympic Games in 1984.

Although the event does not enjoy a high profile in the European sports calendar, for impoverished Bosnians it brought more than thirty thousand people to the opening Ceremony. It attracted prominent public figures and regional politicians. For a week, Sarajevo and surrounding mountains hosted competitions, award parties, and celebrations. The rhetoric of intolerance and hatred was replaced by vibes of unity and harmony, just as in the 'good old' times when the country was part of the Yugoslav federation. Even the notoriously far-right driven president of Republika Srpska, a part of the territory mainly populated by the Serbs in post-war Bosnia, abandoned his divisive and offensive nationalistic language to celebrate sporting spirit and the ethics of fair competition.

The positive atmosphere penetrated corners of Bosnia, which generally fall victim to the nationalistic and separatist backbiting of local politicians. Since signing the controversial Dayton Agreement which ended the war 28 years ago, Bosnia was split into two parts and thus held hostage to the political climate of nationalism, extremism, intolerance and the denial of any accountability for extensive war crimes carried out all over the country during Serb-nationalists 1992-1995 aggression.

Following the end of the war, all three Bosnian peoples: Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks (an ethnic name for Bosnian Muslims) have been conditioned via a plethora of tactically designed political and social factors to embrace 'own' people and protect 'own' religion from the 'belligerent other'. Looking after the security of the group traditions and religion was presented as a more important matter than collective socio-economic well-being. The religious

leaders from all three major denominations in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Orthodox, Catholic and Muslim, were given prominence in various media shows broadcast widely to ensure the public was re-educated about their roots.

The oft-repeated mantra is that the 'other' is ultimately a threat to one's own religiosity. The 'other' ethnic group is presented as unwanted collateral outcome of the Peace Accord imposed by the 'international community' and signed in Dayton in 1995. Local politicians as well as those from neighbouring Serbia and Croatia, who were signatories to the peace Agreement responsible for 'their' people in Bosnia, are playing an endless blame-game about who caused the war and who is guilty of the muddled stalemate after it. Respected academia participates in the theatre submitting various theories partly adopted from their Western counterparts and partly from local sources.

The truth is that neither the religio-political leaders nor the 'international community' representatives really care. These bigoted self-proclaimed pioneers of

## Elites see moments of solidarity amongst ordinary citizens particularly dangerous

democratic freedoms are staging public displays of hatred to ensure a permanent stronghold for their political power. The same elite which led Bosnia into the war are now claiming to march the country to peace and European Integration. There is a joke often heard on the Bosnian streets: by the time Bosnia is ready to join the EU, the EU will be no more! The current political and economic climate in Europe indicates that there might be a pinch of truth in it.

The gloomy economic position is very similar in the neighboring countries of the ex-Yugoslav region, Slovenia may be an exception. In line with the other countries in 'transition' from Eastern



**Bosnia Winter games - evidence of solidarity**

Europe, a rich segment of the population has been formed and shaped. For them the reality is somehow different. The nationalist far-right cloak is worn less prominently. It is reserved for display during pre-election campaigns or special occasions to promote financial self-enrichment.

It is these elites that see moments of solidarity amongst ordinary citizens particularly dangerous. Any attempt to unite in the common struggle against exploiting interests of the oligarchs is swiftly dispersed by the local police, often helped by the European Police Forces that are still engaged in Bosnia as part of the post-war Dayton peace plan. The citizens' protests of February 2016 which flared through all Bosnian cities indicate the potential power of a united people.

The recent mysterious killing of a young university student is another example. It is still unclear how the youngster died after accidentally hacking into secret files of arms deals by the leadership of Republika Srpska. His parents have been persecuted and arrested for enquiring about the true circumstances of their son's killing. This tragic murder sparked a series of nationwide solidarity actions involving people from all ethnic groups.

The collective mood also evident at the European Youth Games testifies to the winds of solidarity that can blow through the Balkans. Time will show if they are rays of hope for the United Europe. **C**

**Sheila Osmanovic is a member of Chartist EB**



# Kinder Trespass legacy

**Keith Savage & Langley Brown** celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Peak National Park and the right to roam

**S**unday, 24th April 1932: the date is the stuff of legend. Whatever happened that day on a moorland hill above the Derbyshire village of Hayfield is less important than the meaning those events came to have.

Between the wars life for many working class people was grim beyond imagining for us today. Thousands of homes were cold, damp and overcrowded. Health care was unaffordable for most, with millions out of paid work. In the pit, mill and foundry cities of northern England the air was often choking and industrial deaths and injuries were common.

Opportunities to escape so poisonous an environment were few - especially for those with little money to spare. Cycling, rambling and camping offered affordable options - especially for younger people without families to support. Groups and clubs sprung up to organise trips out of the cities, especially on Sundays - the one day of the week when most in work had a day off.

Long-established ramblers' federations had worked to secure access to footpaths across the countryside, but did little to challenge implacable opposition from landowners who insisted that grouse moors, for example, would become spoiled and unprofitable if ramblers had free access.

The slow progress of Access to Mountains legislation through parliament persuaded some that only direct action would bring results. The British Workers' Sports Federation was short lived and in 1932 dominated by Communist Party members, among whom was Benny Rothman, born in 1911 in Manchester of a Jewish, Romanian immigrant family. Benny got his first bike when he was 15 and quickly developed an appetite for the nearby hills.

The Peak District, between Manchester and Sheffield, is often described as 'the lungs' of these great cities. For Benny, and many like him, the hills and moors were a release "from the squalor and monotony of the towns"; and, for the politically aware, the landowners' denial of access to



**Militant ramblers on the Kinder trespass (photo- Working Class Movement Library)**

the high moorlands had a class dimension.

Walking the moors of Kinder is not simply about beauty and pleasure; the peat makes it hard work and during mist navigation is tricky. Walking on Kinder in 1932 was about who controlled the land. A handful of wealthy landowners determined that working class people should be kept off land which the BWSF viewed as stolen from ordinary people.

Benny was secretary of the Lancashire district of the BWSF and he and his comrades - most of them under 25 - decided to organise a mass trespass to challenge the denial of access to moorland. As a group they lacked experience and were undoubtedly naive. They had not devised a clear strategy, other than that the Trespass should be well announced to ensure that ramblers—and the police, landowners and gamekeepers—were duly prepared.

Around 500 ramblers gathered in Hayfield village. They had none of the sophisticated equipment seemingly essential for 21st Century hiking. The Trespass was intended to be peaceful but the gamekeepers carried sturdy sticks and were prepared to use them. In the inevitable skirmish one gamekeeper was injured. A group of ramblers succeeded in 'trespassing' and celebrated the fact.

The action might have been a minor historical footnote had it not been that, on their return to

Hayfield, a number of ramblers - including Benny - were arrested. Two months later they were tried in Derby on ridiculous charges; not for trespassing but for riotous assembly. Benny and four others received prison sentences of 2-6 months. This unsought-for martyrdom gave greater significance to the Kinder action, demonstrating all too clearly the class nature of what was at issue.

Change was slow. National Parks were not established until 1949 (the Peak District fittingly being the first). Long-distance paths such as the Pennine Way - starting near Kinder and completed in 1965 - are also part of the legacy. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act was only passed in 2000. The Kinder Trespass had been the pivotal moment.

19th century civic society ensured urban green spaces at the time of migration from rural areas to the industrial towns. Recent research highlights the health benefits of experiencing open country, prompting us to consider the health risks of not exercising those rights for which Benny and his comrades fought. Respite from corrosive environmental factors, arguably no less insidious than those of the 1930s, is not aided by the erosion of affordable public transport. Where people experience severe deprivation, it is only those with more than subsistence resources who are able to roam and breathe freely in the natural world beyond our cities. **C**

**Keith Savage is  
an ex Buxton  
Councillor**

## SYRIA

# Kurds need support on Northern Syria

**Fabian Hamilton** argues for a multilateral approach to the Syrian conflict

**L**ike most people in this country, I have watched in horror in recent years as – far from bringing the horrific Syrian civil war to an end – the dozen or so foreign powers who have intervened in the conflict have simply turned the war into a global free-for-all, with regional rivalries and geopolitical power struggles being played out against an ever-worsening background of death, displacement and humanitarian tragedy for the people of Syria.

So, in theory, for Donald Trump to announce that he will be withdrawing US forces from the country and ending American involvement in the conflict should be a welcome development. However, to have any chance of restoring peace to Syria in the current circumstances, Trump's decision to withdraw US troops must be part of a multilateral plan which encourages all foreign powers to leave the country.

First and most immediately, the reason offered by Trump for his decision – that ISIS has been destroyed in Syria, hence US troops no longer need to be there – is unfortunately premature.

ISIS has lost almost all the territory it once occupied. Therefore, Trump's announcement has given them every incentive to melt into the Syrian population, lay low, wait for the US to withdraw, and switch to a campaign of guerrilla warfare and terror strikes, as indicated by their recent deadly suicide attack in the US/Kurdish-held town of Manbij. Preparing to withdraw with ISIS so low on territory and lacking the masses of personnel they once had, means the use of UN peacekeeping operations to replace existing foreign powers. Establishing and expanding de-escalation zones must also be considered as part of any political settlement.

Second and most important, because this withdrawal is not being carried out alongside other foreign militaries stationed in Syria, it risks leaving the Kurdish territories in Northern Syria completely vulnerable to attack. The Kurdish fighters who sacrificed so much to liberate their own towns



**Kurdish fighters in Syria**

and cities, and most of Northern Syria, from ISIS control, now risk seeing those same towns and cities, the heartland of the Syrian Kurdish community, again become war zones, particularly if ISIS were to mount a resurgence.

Is it any wonder that many Kurdish leaders – taken unaware by Trump's announcement – are now contemplating an unholy alliance with the Assad regime, simply so they can maintain the protection that America is threatening to withdraw?

And third, the unilateral US withdrawal risks wiping out one of the few bright spots of progress in this wretched war, and one which should be serving as a model for what can – in due course – happen in the rest of the country. Only by having a proper multilateral plan in place for withdrawal, while working with the UN to establish peacekeeping forces where necessary, could this progress continue.

In the now largely peaceful, Kurdish-controlled Self-Administration Area of North-East Syria, secure educational facilities have been set up to teach children formerly living in areas controlled by ISIS about the rest of the world and about non-extremist values, and yet these are exactly the communities that would be thrown to the wolves if Donald Trump has his way.

So instead of Trump's impulsive lurches in military policy, what we need to see now in Syria is a strategic approach on three fronts.

First, the continued reclamation of all remaining territory from ISIS, and the total destruction of

all remnants of ISIS forces trapped in those enclaves.

Second, the resumption of genuine talks between all parties in the Syrian conflict, meeting without pre-conditions, to work towards a negotiated political solution; and the establishment of an inclusive government that can deliver the lasting peace, stability and unity the Syrian people deserve, as well as having the strength to stop any re-emergence of ISIS as a serious force there.

And third, as part of that settlement, we need to see all foreign powers who have intervened in Syria withdraw from the country, and focus on providing support with the reconstruction it so desperately needs, not aiding in its continued destruction.

Yet again, Syria stands at a fork in the road.

Down one path lies the final elimination of ISIS, and a concerted effort by all sides to negotiate a political solution, an end to the conflict, and the start of an end to the humanitarian crisis.

Down the other path lies the opening of a whole new theatre of the conflict in North-East Syria, the betrayal of the Kurds, the continuation of the war into a ninth year, and the conditions that will allow ISIS to regroup and plan their resurgence.

Working under the auspices of the UN, combining the Geneva and Astana processes could rid the country of the dozen or so foreign powers that have intervened militarily and restore peace and stability to the people of Syria. **C**

**Fabian Hamilton  
is MP for Leeds  
North East &  
Shadow Minister  
for Peace and  
Disarmament**



# Lift the Ban

While asylum seekers are denied the right to work and face poverty or detention, **Alice Arkwright** finds little urgency in Home Secretary Sajid Javid's planned review.

**A**s it currently stands, asylum seekers are prohibited from working whilst they wait for a decision on their claim. If they have been waiting over twelve months for a decision, they can apply to the Home Office for permission to work, but only for jobs listed on the government's Shortage Occupation List. This is an extremely narrow list of highly-skilled jobs including radioactive waste manager and classical ballet dancer. As a result, most asylum seekers in the UK will never be permitted the right to work.

Many are therefore left to live off asylum support; £37.75 per person per week or just £5.39 per day to cover essential living costs. Despite government commitments that most asylum applications will be reviewed within six months, almost half of all people claiming asylum currently wait longer than this to receive a decision. In 2018, there were over 14,500 people waiting for an asylum decision and many wait years, even decades. Living off only £5.39 a day for years forces people and families into poverty, leaving them dependent on charities, food banks and donations.

The Lift the Ban coalition, a group of 80 organisations including trade unions, non-profit organisations and thinktanks are campaigning for the law to be changed. They are calling for the right to work for asylum seekers after six months of submitting an asylum claim, with no limits on the kinds of work they can apply for. Dianne Abbott has already indicated that Labour would support these changes.

The arguments for this seem so obvious. Lift the Ban have estimated that the UK economy could gain £42.4 million per year. This figure includes £31.6 million the government would receive in tax and national insurance contributions if half of the asylum seekers aged over 18 waiting for a decision were able to work full time on national average wage. Added to this is £10.8 million the government would save in the asylum support it would no longer need to provide. This fig-



**Sajid-Javid Home Secretary stonewalls asylum seekers**

ure doesn't even include the benefits to the economy from increased spending power.

As well as allowing people to contribute their skills and talents, the right to work also helps people to improve their English, make friends and support networks in countries where they may have none, develop their skills and can have huge benefits for physical and mental health. Most importantly the opportunity to work could lift families out of poverty, it respects asylum seekers' dignity and acknowledges the variety of benefits that they can bring to host countries. All these benefits also ease the process of integration into communities once asylum seekers have received their refugee status.

It also decreases the chances that workers will be forced into the informal labour market, which can expose people to serious dangers, such as modern slavery, exploitation and forced labour. Theresa May pledged in 2016 when she became prime minister that she was serious about combatting modern slavery. Allowing asylum seekers the right to work would be a clear policy change that could contribute to this, yet her government is still stalling.

One of the key arguments against the right to work is that it would act as a pull factor and encourage economic migrants to apply for asylum in order to work.

Research has widely discredited that opening up the labour market would draw people to the UK and has demonstrated that there is no correlation between the right to work and numbers of claims. In fact, due to the government's hostile environment people are more likely to be deported whilst applying for asylum to seek work than if they remained undetected and worked illegally.

For employment opportunities to really benefit asylum seekers the right to work must also be met with supporting structures. Spain currently offers asylum seekers career guidance, support in finding work, occupational training and vocational training.

Policies can also go much further. Other countries offer the right to work one day after submitting an asylum claim. Additionally, if we are to really improve the lives of asylum seekers current and future governments must overhaul the entire system, and make vocal arguments for the rights of asylum seekers and refugees. It must be a system based on dignity and humanity, which means the right to work is just one step. Further changes should include greater English language provision, increased access to mental health services, shorter waiting periods for asylum claims, better housing support, active efforts to reduce discrimination and, vitally, safe routes to the UK. **C**



**Alice Arkwright works at the TUC. She writes in a personal capacity**



## FILM REVIEW

# Locked inside the room

**Zoe Mavroudi**  
on Colette's  
literature  
and  
masochism

**D**irector Westmoreland's beautiful, discrete film *Colette*, dramatizes an anecdote from the great writer's first marriage. Her husband Henry Gauthier-Villars locks Colette in his study to force her to write her second Claudine novel. As she pounds the door, he shouts he'll return in four hours. The scene depicts him as a controlling, abusive man. That frequenter of fin de siècle Parisian salons would embellish the works of his 'factory' of writers with witticisms, before selling them under his nickname "Willy." Willy had recognized in Claudine's unexpected success the goldmine he searched throughout his illusionary career. Colette was no longer the 20-year-old village girl he married at 34 but an anonymous, unpaid worker.

In *Secrets of the Flesh: a Life of Colette*, biographer Judith Thurman writes that the anecdote is probably inaccurate. The couple's home had a telephone and servants, who could have let Colette out. Colette herself once said, she asked to be locked in order to concentrate. Whatever the truth, the story conveys an ambiguity, which Westmoreland underlines with eroticism. When Colette sits at the desk out of breath, anger in her eyes as she picks up the pen, it is mixed with satisfaction. The woman here unleashes her creative urge, while succumbing to the coercion of a dominant man. It's implied that Colette's writing was simultaneously an act of liberation and submission.

Westmoreland shows Colette in a school uniform during an awkward love scene but doesn't delve into the costume's symbolism. Thurman on the other hand, traces Colette's masochism in her anointment as 'the unique child' of her mother Sido. 'Her struggle with Willy magnifies the paradoxes of her childhood,' writes Thurman. 'She claims sole authorship of the novels, but in the same breath disavows their esthetic servility. She denies Willy's role in her evolution as a

writer, but complains indignantly of his total domination.' This, she adds, was her predicament with Sido, who had 'claimed co-title to her identity.'

Thurman examines how this mother-daughter fusion influenced Colette's search for a partner, whose freedom to maltreat her reflected the freedom she hadn't attained for herself. *Claudine at School*, a fantasy

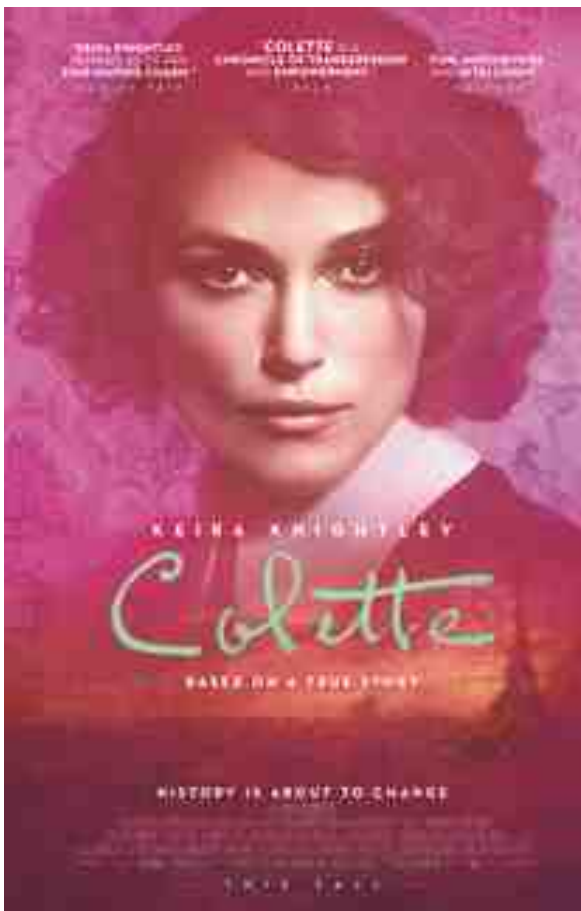
ageing high-society prostitute and her young lover, whose initial rejection of her becomes his biggest regret. Stephen Frears' gorgeous recent film adaptation delivered the tragic conclusion of that novel in a swift denouement. Like Westmoreland, Frears has an Anglo-Saxon's fascination for Colette's sensuality but little interest in the decadence and non-conformity lurking under her

stories' satin sheets. When the apprentice-prostitute heroine of *Gigi*, (adapted into the tepid 1958 Oscar-winning musical) answers her millionaire suitor's proposal with a defiant, "I don't want to," she speaks for women struggling with oppression as well as their own heterosexual desire.

Westmoreland avoids a 'feministization' of Colette (who said suffragettes "deserve the whip and the harem"), steering his film away from politics, and from Colette's later-life complexities. Colette's affair with her 16-year-old step-son when she was 50 certainly would not fit current female empowerment narratives. Her public life had dark spots too, like her contribution to pro-Nazi newspapers. She eventually eluded post-war condemnation, becoming a national treasure admired by the French left, the first woman to receive a State funeral. She had become, at 81,

with her much-younger husband by her deathbed, the large, imperious female of French 20th Century literature. Waifish movie stars like Audrey Hepburn, Leslie Caron and now Keira Knightley (who wears enhancing underwear in *Colette*) have not incarnated that iconic figure. But second and third acts in women's lives -after they've killed the ingénue within- are multifaceted.

A film about the mature Colette might better explore the interaction between her private life and her beautiful, elusive literature. If Colette's life constitutes a 'female' story, then it's one about what women conquer in the public sphere but also, of what overcomes them when writing, locked inside the room.



**Colette is on  
General Release**

# For a Left Populism

**Andrew Coates**  
on  
populism

**For a Left Populism**  
**Chantal Mouffe**  
**Verso. £10.99**

Chantal Mouffe and her partner Ernesto Laclau published *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* in 1985. She begins *For a Left Populism* on the challenge represented by the 'populist moment' by referring to the 'incapacity of left politics' during the 1980s to grapple with post-68 movements, from the women's movement to ecology. Anything that could not be thought of in class terms had been rejected. They offered, she states, an alternative, which became associated with the monthly, *Marxism Today*, against this 'class essentialism'. It focused on bringing these new social forces into a left project, the 'radicalisation of democracy'. There were angry debates on the left about the authors' 'post-Marxism'.

The world has changed. Today Mouffe argues that neoliberalism, austerity, and 'oligarchisation', have brought down living standards and eroded popular sovereignty. The political system is hollowed out. It is post-democracy, a term she takes from Colin Crouch and Jacques Rancière. A paradigm of 'consensus' around the value of the free-market marks Western societies. There is little more detail about what is 'post' democratic in the new millennium's elections, political competition for government and the possibilities for public debate opened up by social media.

How this differs from the previous consensus around the Keynesian welfare state, known in Britain during the 1950s as 'Butskellism', is not explored. The thrust is that the Labour Party, notably during Tony Blair and Gordon Brown's premiership, accepted the legacy of Margaret Thatcher. As part of this 'hegemonic' package they put concern for the taxpayer over public spending. New Labour agreed that privatisation of state functions and industries were 'what works'. They aimed at competing on the global market.

After the 2007-8 financial crisis, people across Europe began to question the belief that these policies brought them any benefit. Those 'left behind' by austerity in the wake of the banking crisis and globalised economies, demanded 'democratic recognition'. Many, Mouffe says, have turned to anti-establishment populist parties of the right, or have expressed their unhappiness through backing the Hard-Right

project of Brexit in the UK European Referendum.

The message of *For a Left Populism* is, 'To stop the rise of right-wing populist parties, it is necessary to design a properly political answer through a left populist movement that will federate all the democratic struggles against post-democracy.' She commends the Spanish Podemos, Jean-Luc Mélenchon's La France insoumise (LFI) and Labour under Jeremy Corbyn's leadership, for 'left populist strategies'.

*For a Left Populism* draws on many abstract ideas that Mouffe has developed since the 1980s. This include her writings on Carl Schmitt, Claude Lefort, Jürgen Habermas (amongst many others) and 'agonistic democracy'. This is a concept which puts conflict and dissensus at the heart of democratic debate. Conflict, she argues, is the keynote of pluralist democracy. This is an idea familiar from less elevated works. Bernard Crick's *In Defence of Politics* made a vibrant democratic socialist case for the importance of open disagreement and debate for the democratic left. Crick also wrote on how Machiavelli saw 'liberty arising from conflicts'.

*For a Left Populism* talks about constructing a 'collective will'. Left populism, she asserts, draws into its orbit by a 'chain of equivalences' a variety of progressive demands, open citizenship. This is the 'construction of the People', a collective political agency, opposing the 'people' against the 'oligarchy'. There has to be 'some form of crystallisation of common affects, and affective bonds with a charismatic leader... One can see the attraction for Jean-Luc Mélenchon who has made sure that there is no 'so-called' democratic opposition in his Web-Platform based movement. It is a 'lieu de Rassemblement' (rallying point) not a political party.

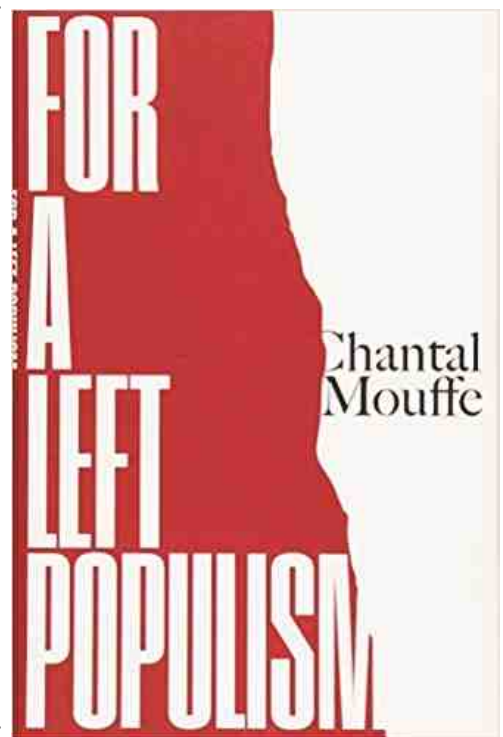
Mouffe's left populism also, centrally, draws on the 'libidinal investment at work in national – or regional – forms of identification'... 'National identities should be left to the right. Instead of leaving the field to national populists there should be another outlet, 'mobilising.... around a patriotic identification with the more egalitarian aspects of the national tradition.'

Much of this approach to nationalism is drawn out from the tangled thickets of

Frédéric Lordon's *La Société des affects*. Lordon has faced charges of nationalism himself. Chantal Mouffe's French critics have not been slow to point to the emotional 'affects' of voters motivated by anti-immigrant feeling. They have neither legitimate concerns nor are likely to drop their views to join a left-wing Collective Will.

Since *For a Left Populism* was published Mélenchon's Movement has stagnated and declined in polls, down below 10% of voting intentions for the coming European Elections. It has faced a series of internal crises, centring on the lack of democratic decision-making. Marine le Pen appears to have had more of an impact in the Gilets jaunes uprising than the leader of La France insoumise. After poor regional election results in Andalusia and declining support Podemos, has suffered a serious split. Leader Pablo Iglesias is said to project a long-term alliance with the Spanish socialists, the PSOE. The radical left 'Anticapitalista' current is in out-right opposition.

The problem with left populism, as Éric Fassin has remarked, is that, "it's neither left nor a winning strategy." Perhaps we should follow his advice and concentrate on creating broad and effective democratic socialist parties and not the "people".



## BOOK REVIEWS

**Dave  
Lister**  
on  
Leninism

# A libertarian socialist perspective on October

**No Less than Mystic**  
**A History of Lenin and the Russian Revolution for a Twenty First Century Left**  
**John Medhurst**  
**Repeater £9.99**

**T**his is an important book written from a libertarian socialist perspective. It makes for uncomfortable reading for those of us who may have broken with Leninism long ago, and

see events like the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly and the suppression of Kronstadt as symptomatic of its failings, but nevertheless believed that there were positive aspects to early Bolshevik rule. Two years ago, a book from Fourth International sources provided evidence of internal democracy in the Bolshevik Party in 1917 and industrial democracy in the period after the second revolution. Medhurst does not dispute this but provides a disturbing picture of mass arrests and shootings of striking and demonstrating workers in the period before 1921. So, it seems that your interpretation of this period depends on which evidence you choose to regard and which you choose to ignore. Medhurst is sympathetic to other left forces, particularly the Left Mensheviks and Martov, but also to the Socialist Revolutionaries (SRs) and indeed the anarchists. A less satisfactory feature of this book however is the way that it shifts from early Twentieth Century Russia to contemporary issues and the parallel is not always obvious.

The major focus of this book is on the role of Lenin, aided and abetted from summer 1917 by Trotsky, as the architect of the one-party police state. At various times other Bolsheviks are shown as unconvinced by the trajectory which he insisted on. It was clearly Lenin who engineered the split in the RSDLP and it is interesting to note how few people were involved in what proved to be a momentous decision. The vote for the October action was 28 to 23. In the years leading up to the First World War many Bolsheviks wanted to work with their fellow Menshevik socialists, against Lenin's will, and indeed did so. And then the Bolsheviks

agreed with the Mensheviks on the nature of the February 1917 revolution until Lenin stormed in from Switzerland with his April theses and insisted that they needed to move on to the proletarian revolution. Some leading Bolsheviks opposed the seizure of power in October but were overruled. Medhurst then shows how Lenin and Trotsky drove the formation of the one-party state through the suppression not only of the Kadet Party but also gradually of the Menshevik and SR parties against the opposi-

argues that the idea of a massive change under Stalin is false. What changed was the scale of the repression, including the killing of party members, not its nature. Trotskyists have to believe that all was good in the period 1918-21, whatever the overall evidence might suggest.

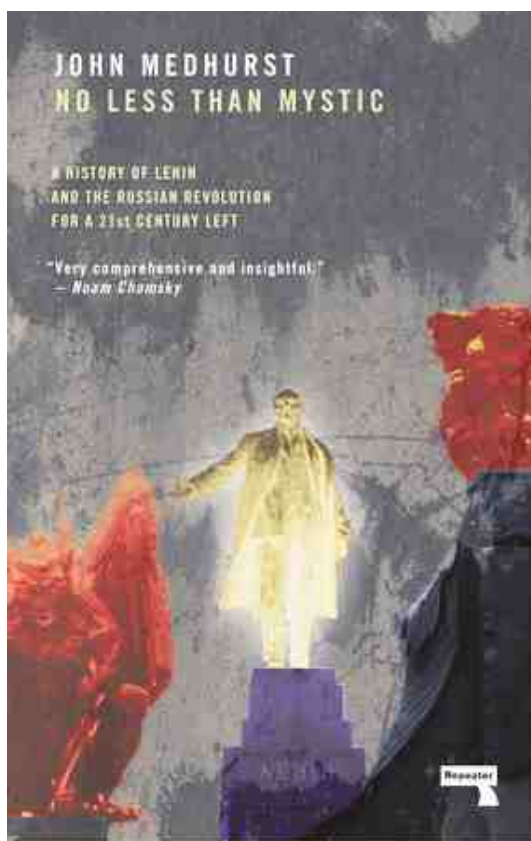
Medhurst explains that it was also Lenin and Trotsky who advocated the militarisation of labour, the absorption of trade unions into the state and the introduction of one-man management and Taylorism in the factories, reflecting developments in American capitalism. Medhurst sees the Mensheviks as supporters of working-class democracy in the Soviets and the factory committees against the dictatorial edicts from the Bolshevik Government. He shows how the Menshevik government in Georgia introduced a mixed economy and encouraged the development of cooperatives. Martov is portrayed throughout his life as advocating democratic socialism and opposing repression in a system which, in Rosa Luxemburg's words, "was worse than the disease it was meant to cure".

Medhurst does however acknowledge that there were some positive developments mainly due to Lunacharsky and Kollontai. Palaces and museums were preserved. Schools were to be run by cooperatives of staff and representatives of the older pupils. The new curriculum emphasised activity-based learning. Exams and homework were abolished and replaced by continuous assessment. Divorce was made easier and homosexuality and abortion decriminalised.

Without Lenin there would almost certainly have been no successful Bolshevik revolution, no Stalin, no Cold War and possibly no one party state in China. Fascism arose in part as a reaction to the perceived Communist threat to the European bourgeoisie.

Unfortunately, none of Lenin's legacy has been positive and countless millions have died as a direct or indirect result of them.

However, the struggle for the democratic socialist future that Medhurst advocates continues.



tion of some leading Bolsheviks who advocated a coalition socialist government. Their newspapers were shut down, their members were arrested and, in some cases, shot or deported. It was Lenin supported by Trotsky who ordered the Cheka to instigate a reign of terror with widespread arrests and shootings. Even women protesting about food shortages were fired on and 2,500 Kronstadt sailors were shot, with many others sent to a concentration camp, whilst about 7,000 fled to Finland. Medhurst points out that there was no legal framework for the Cheka to operate under and no recognition of civil rights. He also



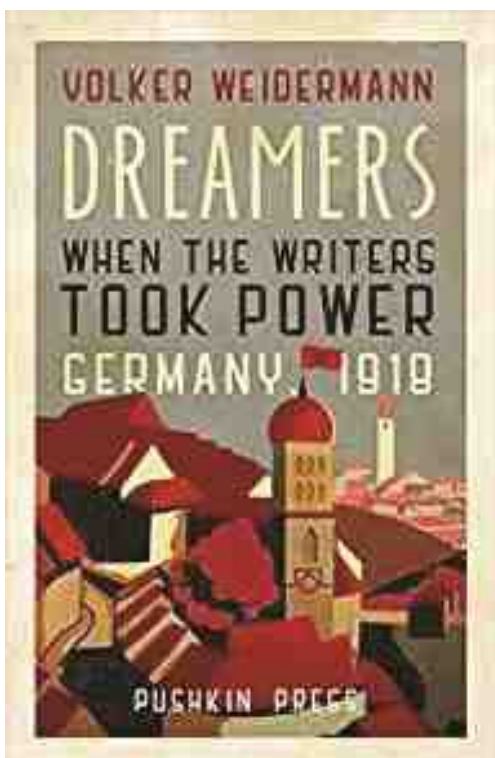
**Duncan  
Bowie**  
on Munich  
and  
beyond

# Revolution, counter-revolution and the origins of Nazism

**Dreamers**  
**Volker Weidemann**  
**Pushkin Press £16.99**  
**Becoming Hitler**  
**Thomas Weber**  
**Oxford University Press £20**

**B**oth these books centre on Munich in the years after the end of WW1. Weidemann is a German literary critic. His book is a novelised study of the Munich revolutions of 1918-19. I say novelised as although purporting to be a history, it is written in an episodic style as if contemporary journalism, and reminded me of Victor Serge's novels. While there is a bibliography, there are no source notes and no index.

The book focuses on the coup led by the theatre critic Kurt Eisner who walked into the Bavarian parliament in November 1918 with a small group of associates and announced himself as Bavarian president, filling an apparent power vacuum as the imperial government in Berlin had collapsed and the Bavarian monarch had also fled. Not surprisingly the group of dreamers could not govern and Eisner's party, the Independent Social Democrats (USPD) managed to get less than 10% of the vote in the first election, and Eisner was assassinated just after belatedly reluctantly resigning from his position.

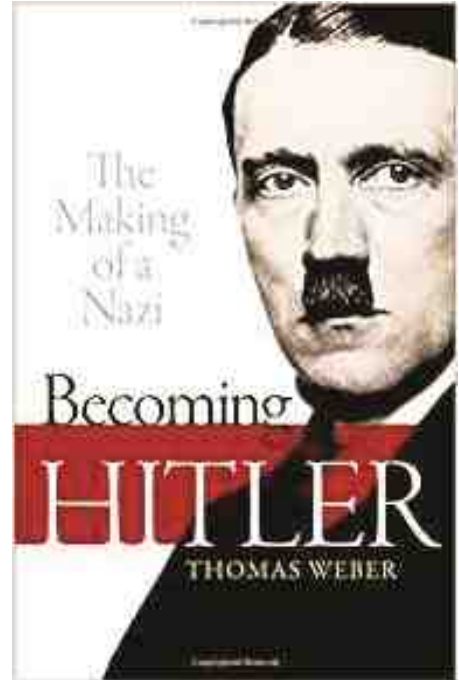


Eisner was succeeded by a series of short term governments, firstly a parliamentary government led by the Social democrat Johannes Hoffman, then a Soviet republic led by the poet Ernst Toller and the anarchists Eric Muhsam and Gustav Landauer, the latter becoming Commissar for Education. They then lost power (so far as they had any) to a group of communists led by Max Levien and Eugen Levine, who established a second Soviet republic, which fell when in March 1919 Munich was 'liberated' by anti-communist freikorps.

The revolutionaries had little support within Munich, not surprisingly as they were not Bavarians. Some were from a non-Bavarian Jewish cultural intelligentsia – Levine was Russian, Levine was a Berlin based communist. The populist Bavarian counter-revolution was therefore both anti-communist and anti-Jewish and in fact was a milieu in which another young Munich based political activist mentioned in Weidemann's narrative, a certain, Adolf Hitler could thrive. Reading this story took me to one of Weidemann's contemporary sources – Ernst Toller's autobiography which was written in German with an English edition published in New York in 1934, to discover that large chunks of Weidemann's book – in fact most of several chapters were taken word for word from Toller's book. Surely the publisher must have been aware of this. I can only recommend readers to return to the original. Richard Grunberger's *Red Rising in Bavaria*, published in 1973, provides a sound historical account, for those who prefer their history to include both chronology and analysis.

Weber's book on Hitler's years in Munich is much more original. Weber is an American academic who wrote an earlier volume on Hitler's service as a soldier in the First World War. Weber's study will come as a surprise to anyone who might have thought that Ian Kershaw's two magisterial volumes were the final word.

Weber has traced Hitler's activities, friendships and influences from his return to Munich at the war's end to the failed Munich putsch of



1923. Weber investigates Hitler's post-war employment as an education officer for the army, his political contacts and development from educator to agitator, his links to a range of political groupings, revolutionary communist, democratic socialist, Bavarian secessionist, counter-revolutionary, anti-capitalist and anti-semitic.

Weber analyses the development of Hitler's anti-semitism, his increasing interest in German eastwards expansionism, and the growth of his self-belief in his potential leadership role and self-identification as fuhrer and messiah. This study is revelatory, showing Hitler as both a complex and highly intelligent political figure, and provides a new understanding of the milieu in which Hitler developed his beliefs and his self-confidence. It is highly recommended.

For further reading on the politics of the early Nazi party between 1923 and 1933 when Hitler became chancellor, I would also recommend Peter Strachura's study of Gregor Strasser and the Rise of Nazism, first published by Allen and Unwin in 1983, and republished by Routledge in 2015, a study which examines the contrasting ideologies and political practice within the Nazi party, which is an important corrective to the view that Hitler was the dominant and unchallenged leader of the party and that the Hitler dictatorship was somehow inevitable.

## BOOK REVIEWS

# Gerrymandering and Voter Suppression

**Glyn Ford**  
on American  
Democracy

**One Person, No Vote: How Voter Suppression is Destroying Our Democracy**  
Carol Anderson  
Bloomsbury \$27

American Democracy's flowering was all too brief. It spanned the short half century from the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965 to the Supreme Court's decisions of 2010 and 2013. The first decision was to collude, on grounds of freedom of speech, in Corporations subverting the electoral and democratic process by inundating right wing Political Action Committees with hundreds of millions in 'dark money'. The second, in a neat pincer movement, gave them something else to spend it on, removing federal oversight from States' Electoral Laws that threatened to disenfranchise black voters. The first tipped the political playing field towards the Republicans and the second 'red carded' Democratic voters before the match started.

The scale of ambition for electoral malfeasance was evidenced by the need for the Department of Justice to block more than 700 racially discriminatory changes in voting and electoral procedure between 1982-2006. The floodgates re-opened after 2013 with 180 Bills introduced in 41 States. By 2016 the Economist Intelligence Unit was listing the US as a 'flawed democracy'. North Carolina's democratic performance was ranked between that of Iran and Venezuela.

Prior to 1965 the black population in the South was prevented from exercising the franchise by poll taxes, literacy tests and gerrymandering policed by lynching and state sponsored violence. After 2010 it returned in new subtler forms. Purging the voter rolls of felons - or rather those that shared a name with a felon - saw Florida disenfranchise 1.7 million citizens including 21% of all African Americans. Across States Voter ID requirements were designed to be an impenetrable tangle of rules and regulations. One

demand was to produce a driver's licence, which requires a birth certificate. In Marion County, Indiana - where 200,000 of the State's black population lives - they invented the perfect Catch 22. To get a new birth certificate required a driver's licence as proof of identity.

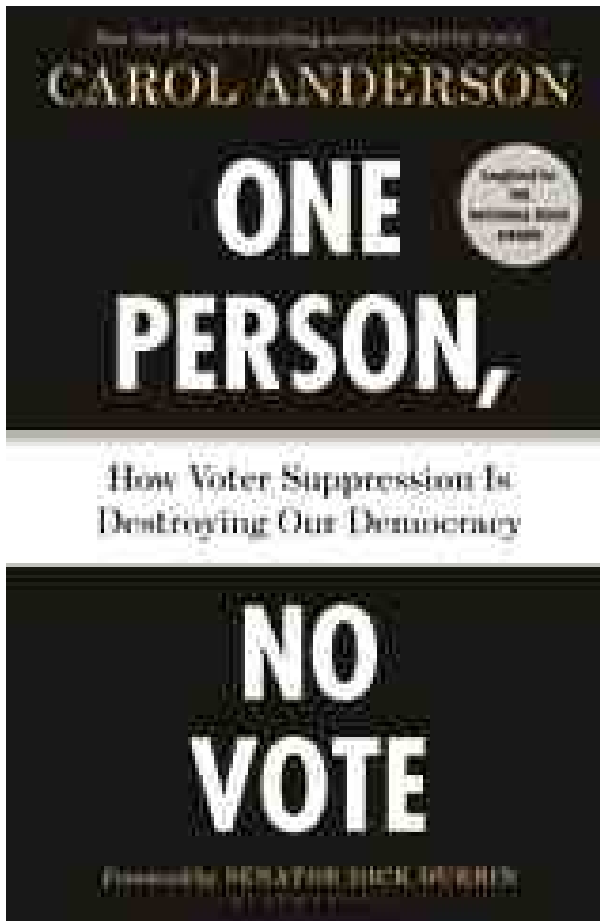
The ostensible driver and excuse behind the US's highly partisan voter suppression campaign was the claim that it addressed widespread voter fraud. The claim was absurd.

Republican bias in the House of Representatives; in 2016 despite Democrats winning 1.4 million more votes than the Republicans they ended up with 33 fewer seats. Second - sometimes in collusion with incumbent Democrats - it sucks the life out of politics; accountability disappears as voting blocks are diced and sliced by sophisticated computer programmes to create a swathe of safe Republican seats punctuated by the occasional impregnable

Democratic bastion. In the 2016 House elections 97% of incumbents won re-election, while in California there had been less turnover than in the Soviet Politburo. Between 2002 and 2010, only one congressional seat out of 265 changed hands.

Why is One Person, No Vote important? It's a warning for Labour: it's happening here. The Tories have seen it works. The pompous Tory Eric Pickles launched the attack raising the spectre of electoral fraud a couple of years ago on behalf of the Tory Party and his Government used his spurious claims as an excuse to run Voter ID trials in 2018. It worked a charm. Three hundred and fifty voters were turned away and never came back. They were the poor, the old and the minorities: neither a surprise nor unintentional. After all, how many 18 year old Muslim girls have a passport, driving licence or household utility

bill in their name? It's back on a wider scale for more voter suppression practice in 2019's local elections. The second front is national gerrymandering. The Tories want to save money by reducing the size of the House of Commons from a bloated 650 to 600 seats. That just happens to be the number that optimises the Tory advantage. Labour needs to learn the lesson the US Democrats learnt all too late. Oppose voter suppression in all forms, slash the number of MPs to 500 making the UK comparable with most EU Member State Parliaments, and finally abolish the House of Lords.



An US academic study put it in context, finding 31 cases of voter impersonation amongst the billion votes cast between 2000 and 2014. That's the equivalent of one fraudulent vote in a British General Election.

Gerrymandering replicates in the US all the political benefits of the House of Lords, an inbuilt Conservative majority and unaccountable members acting as a reactionary buffer to change. This is a principally Republican sport - well organised and financed by the same US billionaires who source 'dark money's' flow. The impact is twofold. First, creating a permanent

# The deadly rise of the black stuff....

**Don Flynn**  
on Fossil  
Fuels

**Burning Up: A Global History of Fossil Fuel Consumption**

**Simon Pirani**  
**Pluto, £18.99**

A history of the use of fossil fuel by humans could start sometime around 3,000 years ago, a time when we know the Chinese at least were burning coal. Pirani eschews this deep history approach. His account deals with the period from 1950 onwards, when use of coal, oil and gas escalated to the point where what was consumed in half a century equalled and surpassed all consumption before that date.

What has been driving this increase? Neo-Malthusian commentators put it down to human population increase. Back in 1950 there were 3.5 billion people on the planet: the current number is double that. Isn't that a sufficient explanation for the huge increase in the use of fossil fuels?

Pirani points out that it is more complicated than that. The use of fossil fuels to generate electricity and drive vehicles has increased most rapidly in the developed countries of the OECD, where population increase has been modest or even flat-lining. Among the nations of the global south wood remains the most widely used fuel to generate heat to warm rooms and cook.

He also asks us to think more critically about the often-quoted examples of industrial development in China, India, and the 'tiger' economies of the Pacific east. Much of the growth of output in these countries has served the needs of consumers in the Global North rather than their own citizens. Researchers into the greenhouse gas effect of fossil fuel consumption now use consumption rather than production-based accounting, meaning that the energy cost of a mobile phone owned by a person in

Britain but manufactured in China figures on the British side of the balance sheet rather than the Chinese.

For Pirani the key point is that fossil fuels are consumed "by and through technological, social and economic systems...". Even if population is to figure as a factor explaining what has been going on since 1950 we still have to understand that this is an impact that is heavily mediated through

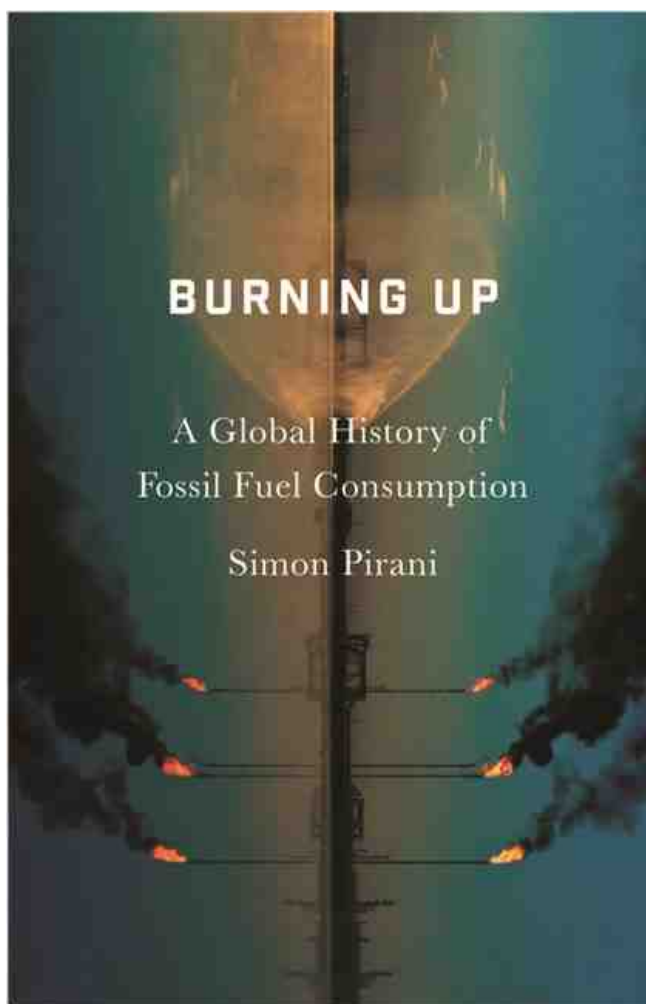
in countries which had undergone industrialisation by electrical power, but even here its generation was through power stations which serviced the towns and region where they were located.

This began to change after 1950 when power was distributed through networks – national grids – which increased the degree of separation of producers from consumers. This shift allowed electricity to take the form of a commodity, traded on the basis of the profits it could make through exchanges in energy markets, rather than its immediate use to the people who needed it to power workplaces, heat and light homes, etc.

The opportunity to make a profit out of supplying energy encouraged private investors to step in to finance increases in capacity, which produced a price structure favourable to businesses that wanted to consume power on a large-scale. The scale of the investment required to generate electricity for these needs required state subsidy which maintained an affordable unit cost for the purchaser and an acceptable rate of return on investment for the capitalist. These relationships, between producers for networks, consumers drawing on power from national grids, and governments pumping in money to keep the

whole system running, all depended on the essential premise that the fuel needed to generate all this power would remain cheap and abundant.

The exploitation of oil for petroleum-based energy needs is essentially the same story of the radical severance of producers from consumers. Pirani takes from this the cue for a radically different energy policy, which requires this rift to be overcome and the power needed for human communities to be generated on locally-available wind, hydro and biomass.



these systems.

This history of fossil fuel consumption really has to be understood as a history of the way energy has come to be produced in societies and economies that function as a part of a globalised capitalist economy. Human beings once produced the energy they needed by drawing on resources available in the immediate locality. Once this had meant wood gathered from local forests, peat from adjacent moorlands, the power of harnessed animals, and the kinetic energy of wind and water. In time this was replaced



## BOOK REVIEWS

## Stuck in doctrinairism

**Mike Davis**  
on an  
invaluable  
survey

**Contemporary Trotskyism - Parties, sects and social movements**

**John Kelly**  
Routledge £30.99

**L**et's begin with an admission and an omission. Hands up, Chartist began its early days in the 1970s as a Trotskyist tendency. The Revolutionary Communist League to be precise. Strictly speaking, the formative period was in 1968 as the Socialist Charter, a left Labour split from the Tribune Group. However, non-Trotskyists were eclipsed by ex-members of Militant and the International Marxist Group and in 1973 by a group of expellees from International Socialism (the Cliff group), including this reviewer.

By the late 1970s the majority had shed their residual Trotskyist/Leninist carapace to strike out on a more reflective independent democratic socialist course. The omission is that John Kelly's otherwise thorough dissection of the British Trotskyist movement fails to give any detail on Chartist manifestation or the minority who formed the Briefing group.

Notwithstanding this gap, readers looking for detail on the major and minor Trotskyist groupings will find a rich compendium in Kelly's book.

He provides some shorthand chapters on Trotsky and the origins of Trotskyism in Russia in the Left Opposition against the rise of Stalin and the bureaucratisation of the Russian revolution. He covers the beginnings of the movement in Britain with the Balham group in the early 1930s. The various groupings coalesce in the post Second World War period in the Revolutionary Communist Party, numbering about 500 members. From splits in that organisation in the late 1940s came the shape of British Trotskyism in the latter half of the 20th century with three main groups: Militant/RSL, IS/Socialist Workers Party and Socialist Labour League/Workers Revolutionary Party, followed by a fourth smaller grouping, the

International Marxist Group.

Kelly covers the multiple fractures which for the uninitiated can seem mind boggling. Early splits were largely about the class nature of the Soviet state and post-war satellites—state capitalist, bureaucratic collectivist, degenerated or deformed workers' states. Later divisions were often tactical, whether to work inside the Labour Party, within broader campaigns (united fronts) or to concentrate on 'party building'.

Most groups subscribed to the core theories, explained by Kelly: permanent revolution, transitional programme and demands, need for a vanguard democratic centralist party, the imperialist nature of modern capitalism, the nature of Stalinism, worker-led revolution.

Feminism, green and sexual politics have been sources of conflict. The sexual double standards and abuse in the SWP and WRP, leading to splits in the former and disintegration of the latter are recounted, while the tensions and usually inability to acknowledge the equal importance of female, black and LGBT+ oppression vis-à-vis class have proved a major flaw. Kelly could have spent more time examining this flaw, building on the work of the seminal *Beyond the Fragments* (Wainwright, Rowbotham and Segal).

Kelly sees the close of the 20th century as the end time of the long period of disintegration of the Trotskyist movement. Membership of the leading groups has never reached the peaks of the 1980s when the main organisations mustered over 20,000 members and outweighed the declining Communist Party of Great Britain between them. Today Kelly identifies 22 groups and 23 Fourth Internationals (and one Fifth!).

If Trotskyism had the answer, surely the capitalist crisis of 2008 would have been the time to take advantage, to lay out a programme and make huge advances against a compromised social democracy (the Labour Party). It didn't happen, nor throughout all previous economic crises. Even at times when the Communist party was wracked by crisis and division: 1956 Hungarian uprising, 1968 Prague Spring, Trotskyist groups failed to recruit significantly defecting CP members.

Election results from groups that have stood independent candidates have been derisory. Only through the Labour party label have Trotskyists secured MPs (Militant) or a handful of councilors through united front organisations, like Respect.

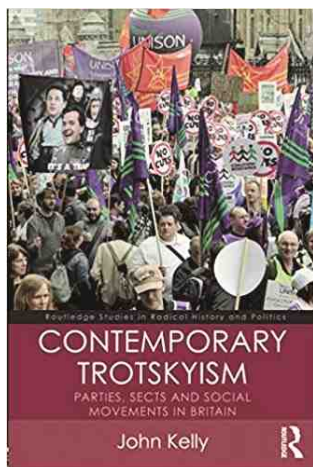
Paradoxically it has been in the field of social movements that Trotskyist groups have made most progress, from the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign (1960s) to the Anti-Nazi League and Anti Poll Tax Federation (1980s+) and Stop the War Coalition (2000s+). Kelly finds that where doctrine and 'party building' becomes secondary to building the broader movement, success has come but this has been at the expense of the 'parent' organisation by diverting resources from the usual routines of recruitment, induction and member education.

Kelly identifies seven broad families of Trotskyism: Third Camp, Orthodox, Mainstream, Latin American, Institutional, Radical and Workerist. While overlaps occur, the categories are useful for understanding the differences and Kelly seeks to explain the nature of each. Most subscribe to a version of a Fourth International, which again can provide a bewildering array of organisations as can the genealogy of various groupings (both listed in appendices).

While Kelly acknowledges the achievements of Trotskyists, his assessment of weaknesses is convincing. Ultimately key is the obsession with the October Revolution, and the quest to transplant the early Bolshevik template to forge revolution in a country, indeed a western world, that has long democratic traditions and entrenched institutions within a globalised capitalist system.

What's the point of building an independent revolutionary party if many Trotskyist policies and demands can be achieved through the medium of a radical left party, particularly today with Labour led by Corbyn and McDonnell?

Kelly concludes by acknowledging that while some rejuvenation is possible, Trotskyist groups are condemned to be weak and divided by their fundamental flaws of doctrinairism, sectarianism and millenarianism. It's hard to dissent from this conclusion.



# Reform and Revolt in the City of Dreaming Spires

**Ann Black**  
on Oxford  
Politics

**Radical, Socialist and Communist Politics in the City of Oxford 1830-1980**  
**Duncan Bowie**  
**University of Westminster Press**  
**£20.25**  
**Free download from**  
**<https://www.uwestminsterpress.co.uk/site/books/10.16997/book28/>**

As a resident of Oxford for 40 years I found this a fascinating read. Duncan Bowie served as a city councillor from 1979 to 1983, and the book runs from a barely recognisable past to the date when I became active in the Labour party. Unlike many histories it focuses on the town and the city council rather than the university. Politicians who started their careers in student politics, such as Denis Healey and Roy Jenkins, barely feature, while Patrick Gordon Walker and Frank Pakenham (later Lord Longford) played prominent roles in the local party as well as on the national stage.

There is a wealth of detail regarding meetings, elections and personalities, following social and political developments within parties, factions and movements through 150 years. The 19th century saw a long struggle for secret ballots, intended to prevent intimidation and bribery, and only finally achieved in 1872. Politics was an expensive business, and in 1880 Alexander Hall lost his seat for only declaring £3,610 of his £5,601 election expenses, around £650,000 in today's money.

Employment patterns also changed. In 1901 the major groups were printers, building trades, tailors, bakers, the food industry and university and council work, with nearly half of waged women in domestic service. When the Morris car plant came to Cowley in the 1930s it altered the face of the unions and the labour movement, and housing for its thousands of workers shifted growth towards the east of the city.

The meanings of the terms radical, conservative, socialist, reformist, independent, liberal, have doubtless altered over time, though perhaps the same applies today when talking about moderates, progressives, lefties and

Blairites. However, some themes still resonate. In 1902 the Municipal Labour Representation Association agreed a programme which included building homes at affordable rent, taking the trams into public ownership, trade union wage rates for council employees and contractors, and holding council meetings in the evening, so that working men could attend without loss of pay. And on the industrial side the building workers went on strike in 1872 for a maximum 54-hour week.

'Progressive alliances' of varying shades have a long history. In 1903 a newspaper editorial called on Labour and the Liberals to co-operate: "progressive must not fight progressive". In the 1930s Labour and the Communist party worked together on community campaigns and in opposing, successfully, the use of the Town Hall for an Oswald Mosley rally. Some members argued for electoral pacts, and the party even voted to allow the Communist party to affiliate, deploring the "reactionary reply" from the national executive committee (NEC) which rejected the move.

Also, in the late 1930s the Oxford party proposed a deal with the Liberals, where they would stand down in the Aylesbury parliamentary constituency while the Liberals would not contest Oxford. In the famous 1938 by-election the majority of local members advocated a single Independent Progressive as an anti-Chamberlain candidate, and A D Lindsay stood against Quintin Hogg but lost.

The Oxford Trades Council, founded in 1888, had fluctuating relationships with Labour. In 1889 they put up their own council candidate. In subsequent elections they surveyed candidates' attitudes to labour issues, but varied in whether they should support only Labour, back other sympathetic candidates, allow members to make up their own minds, or stay out of party politics altogether. The question of whether working people should be represented by councillors and MPs from their own class, rather than members of the liberal elite,

was as current then as it is today.

Despite continuing splits within and between the various 'progressive' forces, Labour gradually gained seats on, and eventually took control of, the city council. Their first act was to stop the sale of council houses. In 1966 Evan Luard was elected as Oxford's first Labour MP, serving until 1970 and from 1974 to 1979. As in later periods Labour lost council seats while in national government, and regained them while in opposition. Nuclear disarmament was hotly debated, and the local party was divided on whether to hold a referendum on EEC membership and which side to take. Those differences persist: though 2016 saw a 70% Remain result in Oxford, three traditional working-class wards voted to Leave.

Tensions with the local party led to Evan Luard departing for the SDP, and Oxford did not regain a Labour MP until Andrew Smith's election in 1987. The Oxford party continued to take positions to the left of the national leadership, particularly during the Tony Blair era, but Andrew Smith and his successor Anneliese Dodds have worked to maintain strong links between local members and their representatives in Westminster.

Duncan Bowie himself sees this as a case study of a particular city at a particular time. Whether more general lessons can be drawn is for others to decide.



## VIEW FROM STRASBOURG



# The door is still open

**Julie Ward** on the madness of isolationism

**Julie Ward is a Labour MEP for North West England**

**W**e've all had enough of experts" was an infamous line trotted out by the Leave campaigners during the 2016 EU referendum debate. Ironically, nearly three years on, the British public now have a far better understanding of how the EU works, what its institutions do, and how we benefit. For many this has led to a change of heart - check out #RemainerNow.

The chronic failure of this Tory government is that at every twist and turn it has shown how out of depth it is regarding negotiations and preparations for Brexit of any kind. That is partly why some form of extension to Article 50 is necessary. Regardless of the end point, there simply isn't enough time for the UK parliament to push through necessary legislation. Even if May's deal manages to pass in the House of Commons, a technical extension would be needed to ensure the passage of five key pieces of legislation and over 600 statutory instruments.

Barnier already warned last autumn that it's not more time that's really needed but decisions, so the EU might be open to an extension if it included a new democratic initiative such as a general election, a People's Vote or Citizens Assemblies. Sabine Weyand, Deputy Chief Negotiator for the EU, said on January 28th, that the EU's heads of state and governments would need information on "the purpose of an extension", adding, "the idea of going into serial extensions really isn't very popular in the EU27".

Right from the start, Theresa May and her team have been cavalier and arrogant in their approach to Brexit.

This began with the triggering of Article 50 without a plan, then came the utterly reckless



**Sabine Weyand, EU negotiator - Door is open**

Mansion House speech with the Prime Minister's red lines, the calling of a snap general election, and the continued use of EU 27 citizens as bargaining chips, whilst all the time suggesting there would be a Brexit dividend.

Then, there is the appalling failure to understand the consequences at the Irish border and the undermining of the Good Friday Agreement. Brexit is in itself a contravention of the Agreement and jeopardises a fragile peace built up over the past twenty years. The EU holds firm to the integrity of its four freedoms which means the backstop is crucial as a response to Theresa May's red lines.

Dominic Raab admitted he had not read the Good Friday Agreement, even whilst as Brexit Secretary. Meanwhile, Karen Bradley, Northern Ireland Secretary, reflected, "I didn't understand some of the deep-seated and deep-rooted issues."

The litany of Tory failures would be laughable if the consequences were not so serious, yet the government is trying to blame everyone but themselves, whether that be the European Commission, Jeremy Corbyn or backbench MPs. We are sleepwalking into a constitutional and economic crisis the like of which we have not seen in generations.

Now is the time for honesty and transparency. That must begin with an acknowledgement that no deal is catastrophic for our country and bad for our neighbours. Colleagues here in the European Parliament cannot believe that any rational government would even contemplate the thought, yet in

Brussels and across the EU preparations for a no-deal Brexit are fairly advanced. In each committee in the European Parliament there is a Brexit Working Group tasked with discussing the implications of various scenarios.

In the Culture and Education Committee, for example, a decision has just been made regarding the UK's participation in Erasmus+ in the eventuality of no-deal. This would honour the participation of British beneficiaries who had already begun Erasmus+ projects but nothing else can be agreed beyond March 29th.

Although initially reticent to comment for fear of being perceived as 'interfering' in our affairs, MEP colleagues have become increasingly outspoken in their support of alternatives to 'hard Brexit'. Austrian Socialist and Democrat MEP Josef Weidenholzer organised a heart-warming open letter to the British people in January which was signed by 129 MEPs from different political groups. The letter suggested that the door is still open, "any British decision to remain in the EU would be warmly welcomed by us and we would work with you to reform and improve the European Union, so that it works better in the interests of all citizens".

Whatever the outcome of Brexit, no matter where it leads, the reputational damage and the loss of soft power will take time to recover. We will still only be 17 miles away from our closest allies and our biggest trading bloc. The madness of isolationism becomes more and more apparent as each day passes. We do not have to follow such a hazardous and dangerous route, we could still yet remain fighting for a Europe for the Many. **G**

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