

# CHARTIST

**For democratic socialism**

**#299 July/August 2019**

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## Put it to people to Remain

**Julie Ward MEP**

**Peter Kenyon**

**Elly Schlein MEP**

**Brexit after Euro election**

**Nigel Doggett**

**Greta Thunberg**

**Climate emergency**

**Sarah Jones MP**

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**UK democracy in crisis**

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ISSN - 0968 7866 ISSUE

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## Editorial Policy

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

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

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

Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of the EB

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**08 August 2019**

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

Production: Ferdousur Rehman

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

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

Website: [www.chartist.org.uk](http://www.chartist.org.uk)  
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## CHARTIST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Saturday 6th July 2019

**Brexit , internationalism and winning with Labour**

10.30 – 5.00pm

Marx Memorial Library

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### Labour & Europe–Brexit, Deal or No-Deal and the implications of the European elections

John Palmer (Ex-Guardian Europe editor)

Julie Ward MEP (North West England)

Laura Parker (Momentum National Coordinator) TBC

Alena Ivanova (Another Europe is Possible)

### Combatting racism & the populist right

Rupa Huq MP, Ealing Central & Acton

Andy Gregg (Director, Race on the Agenda)

### How can Labour win?

Duncan Bowie (Chartist EB)

Bryn Jones (Author, Alternatives to Neoliberalism)

Simon Hannah (Author, Labour a party with socialists in it)

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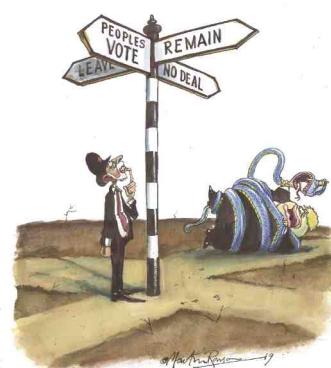
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## OUR HISTORY

## OUR HISTORY - 85

## APRIL CARTER DIRECT ACTION 1961

**A**pril Carter was secretary of the Direct Action Committee Against Nuclear War from 1958 to 1961, having previously studied politics at the LSE and working in the Foreign Office.

Organiser of many of the early CND protests, Carter was arrested at the Swatham nuclear base in 1959, before becoming one of the co-founders in 1960 of the Committee of 100 for civil disobedience. She then became European organiser for the March from San Francisco to Moscow before joining the editorial staff of Peace News. In 1968, she protested against the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia. Moving into academia, she lectured at a number of universities, before joining the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute from 1985 to 1987. In the 1980's she was a member of the Alternative Defence Commission.

Carter has published a number of books: *The Political Theory of Anarchism* (1971), *Direct Action and Liberal Democracy* (1973), *Authority and Democracy* (1979), *Politics of Women's Rights* (1988), *Success and Failure in Arms Control Negotiations* (1989), *Peace Movements* (1992), *the Political Theory of Global Citizenship* (2001) *Direct Action and Democracy Today* (2004) and *People Power and Political Change* (2012).

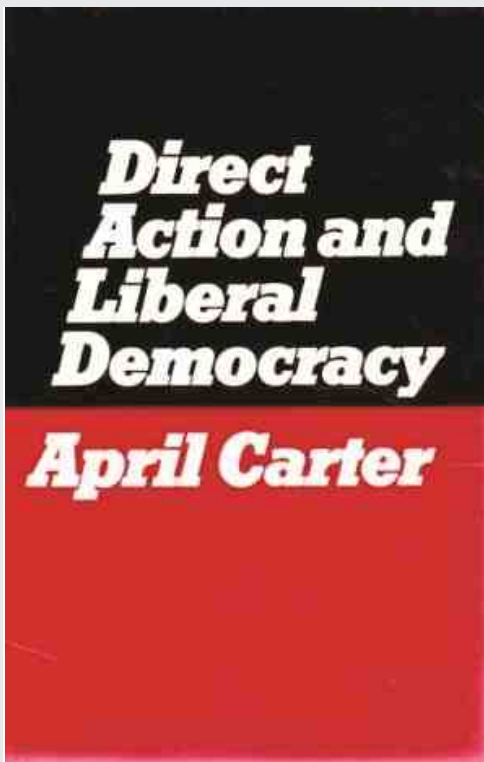
"A democratic society has two main elements. One is a constitutional and legal framework that safeguards individual and minority rights and allows for some

measure of popular control. The other is the practice of their democratic rights by the people. Of these two elements the latter is the more important, since even an ideal constitution cannot operate effectively unless the people take their political duties seriously; merely to keep it functioning mechanically a system dependent on elections has to rely on its citizens bothering to vote.

Moreover, the forms of democracy may be used to disguise the realities of political power; the ballot box may be a popular symbol of democracy, but is no guarantee of it. The methods of non-violent action are not concerned with the forms of democracy; they are the means of creating or defending the spirit of it, and of putting it into practice where the 'normal constitutional channels' either do not exist or are inadequate.

Non violent action is a method of maintaining the values inherent in the idea of democracy – values which are more crucial to its reality than such forms as a general election every five years. It is therefore a complement to the forms of democracy as devised by liberal theory, not a negation of them. Genuinely democratic society may perhaps emerge from the inter-action of law and the constitution on the one hand, and

protest and non-violent action on the other. The principles basic to non-violence are closely related to the principles of democracy: direct action methods are realising both."



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# New Tory PM and Euro elections signal a Labour change

Any day now Jeremy Corbyn should come out with an explicit commitment from Labour to remain in the EU and campaign for that view in a general election or referendum. That's what the majority of Labour Party members want, and listening to members was the hallmark of Corbyn's early success as leader. This is also what the majority of the shadow cabinet want: John McDonnell, Diane Abbott, Emily Thornberry, not to mention Brexit shadow Keir Starmer and the serial false-starter Tom Watson.

The Peterborough byelection was a great result. Labour put on a brilliant campaign with hundreds of party workers and targeted voter id. We came through the middle of two openly pro-Brexit parties with 31%, the lowest winning percentage in a byelection since 1918.

Labour equivocated in the byelection staying on the fence on Brexit. But it won't work in a general election, let alone in another referendum. There are no summer swallows in the result. We won't have the numbers to spread around, but more significantly voters have run out patience with conspicuous ambiguity.

The political reality revealed by the European parliament elections and the ascendancy of a hard Brexiter to leadership of the Tories and Prime Minister is that Labour has run out of road. Labour came a pathetic third place on 14% in the Euros, losing half its MEPs, when it should have won. The LibDems and Greens were re-energised by the Remain vote and the Brexit party mopped up the Leavers. Labour avoided the key question: where do you stand on Europe? There is no more room for equivocation.

Johnson will seek to out-Brexit Farage. He has taken the high road of talking up a hard Brexit (whether he can deliver the numbers in parliament is a moot point). Labour pushed hard for a soft Brexit with a Customs Union and close alignment to the single market and defence of the Good Friday agreement in NI. That failed. Corbyn put jobs, rights and environment first. To protect working people, the economy and social cohesion we now need to ditch talk of respecting the referendum result and get on with the job of campaigning for our programme in a European context.

The collapse of British Steel, with a loss of 3500 jobs, the closures of Toyota, Honda and Ford plants with thousands of job losses in the support and supply sectors shows the writing on the wall. Labour failed to put its programme for a green based investment programme to end austerity in a European framework during the Euros as **Peter Kenyon** argues. We failed to nail our Remain colours to the mast and thus consolidate Remain voters and win over disenchanted Leave voters as **Julie Ward MEP** explains.

Labour needs to cast its economic and social programme in European stone. If we are to harvest money from tax dodgers we need concerted European action as argued by **Alexander Antonyuk** in exposing the UK-Ukraine tax rip off. If we are to tackle the climate emergency we need coordinated European action in the face of Trump's climate

change denial. If we are to champion well-paid secure jobs we need to fight for a European recovery programme with our allies in the Iberian peninsula and other EU member states moving against neoliberalism. If we are to challenge fortress Europe we need to do so with allies in Europe.

In this issue **Nigel Doggett** reports on the latest international report on climate change and the imperative for nations to work together for zero carbon emission targets to be achieved within the next decade. This is the message from young people personified by Swedish school student **Greta Thunberg**.

Several writers underline the danger of rising national populism across Europe and around the world. **Elly Schlein** an Italian independent MEP, in reporting on the Euro elections, highlights the irony of the far right organising internationally for European nationalism, when it should be the left that is championing cross border cooperation and anti-capitalist action. **Sheila Osmanovic** dissects the nature of Recep Erdogan's bid to

Ottomanise Turkey with a mix of populist politics, projects and ruthless repression. The re-running of elections backfired. **Kabul**

**Sandhu** reports on the landslide re-election of Hindu nationalist populist Modi in India.

Now Britain has its own home-grown populist in the shape of Boris Johnson about to become Prime Minister. **Don Flynn** examines the UK's unfolding democratic crisis, turbo-charged by Brexit. The unreformed Westminster two-party parliamentary system is tearing apart. Scotland will press hard for independence in the EU if the Tories seek a no-deal exit. The two-year collapse of power-sharing in (Remain-voting) Northern Ireland raises the spectre of a united Ireland or renewed border conflicts and crisis reports

**Paul Dixon**. In the English regions local independent parties are scoring victories pressing for greater political and financial devolution says **Paul Salveson**.

What is clear is that to quote WB Yeats, the centre cannot hold. Something has to give. For Labour it has to be fence sitting on Brexit. Labour under Corbyn has built close links with our socialist allies in Europe, particularly in Spain, Portugal and Greece. We now need to extend those links in a practical remain and transform the EU campaign. This will enable the party to re-connect with our pro-European base and reach out to wavering Leave voters who are not so much anti-European as anti-establishment.

Jeremy Corbyn's strength is as a campaigner. Without Labour's success in destroying the Tories majority in 2017, we would likely have seen Brexit happen. We now need to find the courage and conviction to start the campaign for the democratic socialist transformation of the UK in Europe, the first step being for a public vote, or if the Tories want to take it to the wire – Revoke Article 50. It was a referendum that should never have happened in the first place.

**Labour avoided the question: where do you stand on Europe? There is no more room for equivocation**

# Cold wind from the North

**Paul Salveson** on a different, more complex reality of northern working class

**T**he May local elections, followed by the European vote, produced results which can be claimed as justification for parties ranging from Brexit to the Lib Dems and Greens. What is very obvious is that the UK as a whole is more divided than ever, with Brexit acting as a deeply corrosive force in our politics. Commentators continue to focus on a simplistic north/south divide, with the stereotyping of 'Northern Labour Voters' as pro-Brexit and increasingly right wing. Yet reality is quite different and far more complex.

Probably the most noticeable differences opening up in British politics are north of the border where the SNP's hegemony seems unassailable. But let's look at England. The Brexit mess is a problem made in England, by English Tory politicians, aided and abetted by UKIP, nurtured by an English media. Support for Brexit played on the fears and disappointments of 'the left behind' in the old industrial English towns, as well as the prejudices of Tory 'middle England'. In my home town, Bolton, there was a large majority for 'leave' and I suspect if there was another referendum that wouldn't change much. Whether most of these 'leavers' are disillusioned Labour supporters is less clear. I suspect that many who voted leave in towns like Bolton might once have been strong Labour voters but had stopped voting for anyone in recent years. Labour's membership is much more strongly 'remain' reflecting the shift in Labour's make-up in the North to more of an alliance between the professional white middle class and the established Asian communities. But the picture is immensely varied.

Looking at the local election results across the North, there isn't much satisfaction for Labour. There were some successes, not least in West Yorkshire where Labour won Calderdale and strengthened its position in Kirklees. In Bolton, the picture was very different with Labour losing control to a minority Tory administration supported by several smaller parties. The reasons



**Farnworth and Kearsley First party**

behind that are interesting and relevant to British politics generally.

In the past I've commented on the neglect of small former industrial towns like Farnworth, a for-

**[l]ocal, and in some cases regional, identity is something that Labour no longer feels comfortable with**

mer mill town which was incorporated into 'Bolton Metropolitan Borough' in the 1970s. Once-proud Farnworthians saw their town's industries collapse and their own local authority (which had a magnificent record in housing, as well as in other areas) disappear. Nearly two years ago I wrote in *Chartist* that places like Farnworth, sooner or later, will rise in revolt. That's exactly what has happened, with Farnworth and Kearsley First (F&KF) now having five council seats and effectively acting as power-brokers with new sister party Horwich and Blackrod First which won two. Labour has tried to dismiss these groups as 'small town Tories', demonstrated by their support for the new Tory administration. Yet they have won huge support in towns that once voted solidly Labour.

The success of F&KF, and an increasing number of 'hyper-local' parties across England, is telling us something that's really quite

important. David Goodhart, in *People from Somewhere* (2017) argued that a growing divide in British politics was between 'people from nowhere' and 'people from somewhere'. The latter, perhaps simplistically, he identified as largely 'leave' voters whilst the 'people from nowhere' were relaxed at being 'European' or 'citizens of the world' who obviously voted 'remain'.

This sense of local, and in some cases regional, identity is something that Labour no longer feels comfortable with. It wasn't always thus. The old ILP was very proud of its multiple local and regional identities, which could mix well in a party that had bases across Britain. I realise I'm on very subjective ground here, but from my experience, the working class (not only its white ethnicities) has kept a strong sense of local identity whilst the middle class has largely lost it. It is more geographically mobile and simply doesn't 'get' why people would go out and vote for the likes of Farnworth and Kearsley First, or for that matter The Yorkshire Party.

Can Labour win back its position as the champion of English working class communities? I think it will struggle, but it is lucky in not having much opposition. Over the Pennines in Yorkshire, the Yorkshire Party is making modest inroads in Labour strongholds (though it fell short of its hopes of getting an MEP elected). It was great to see the Greens doing so well but they really don't get local identity politics, though they should be better ideologically equipped to do so than Labour. The Lib Dems have been slow at really embracing localism despite their historic commitment to decentralism. Mr Goodhart would say that most Greens and Liberals are classic 'people from nowhere' - but some of my friends would differ.

So we'll see more 'hyper-local' politics which may cripple Labour's hold on some councils. England has yet to really see the emergence of dynamic, forward-looking regionalist parties which could complement their localist sisters, but potentially it could become a powerful force that could complement developments in Wales and Scotland. **C**

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

# Labour and energy nationalisation

**Dave Toke** explains why power should be given to local councils, not the pro-nuclear GMB

**L**abour's proposals to take the national and regional energy grid back into public ownership may give a boost to workers' interests over shareholder profits, but the way the proposals are set out produces an increased risk of nuclear power being given priority over renewable energy. Put simply that is because the way the proposals are structured means more power to the GMB in particular, a union which is very pro-nuclear and which is relatively hostile to renewable energy and a smart energy network.

Labour announced the plan, in May, to take the transmission and distribution energy structure into public ownership, as well as plans to set up a 'National Energy Agency' (to run the National Grid), Regional Energy Agencies (to run regional distribution), and give opportunities for municipal ownership of distribution on a local basis.

This plan can achieve traditional Labour Movement objectives, but its impact on pushing forward a green agenda is doubtful. Put bluntly, the more that power is given to bodies that will be influenced by organisations like the GMB (who favour centralised power station solutions), the less useful will be the outcome. The proposals make a gesture in favour of municipalisation, but for most places the reality will be central control.

A good case can be made out that the privatisation of the energy infrastructure monopolies (the electricity and gas grids) did not lower consumer bills; it merely transferred money from the labour force (by reducing its numbers and pay) to the private owners/shareholders. Thomas Piketty has written much about how income has been transferred from labour to capital, and monopoly energy infrastructure might make a good example of this trend. Public ownership could reverse this in this sector, albeit in the context of an argument about how much compensation the private shareholders should be paid.

However, if the (currently) putative national and regional energy agencies are set up, and



**The GMB has historically been hostile to renewable energy**

as the Labour plan says, they oversee decarbonising targets, there is little doubt in which direction policy on this topic will shift – towards nuclear power and away from a decentralised renewable energy system. Currently the National Grid Company has been making noises in the direction of a more flexible, renewable energy, based system.

Yet under a centrally controlled energy network, under Labour plans, policy power would pass to a quango which could be much more easily influenced by trade unions. That, of course, as a matter of principle, is not bad. The problem is that the most important union in this sector (the GMB) has shown explicit hostility towards renewable energy and the 'smart' energy systems needed to integrate it.

For example, in 2016 Justin Bowden, the National Secretary of the GMB, described National Grid's promotion of a 'smart energy revolution' as 'fanciful nonsense'. Instead he promoted new nuclear power plants. Earlier this year Justin Bowden was again attacking National Grid plans for more electricity interconnectors, and in the same press release the GMB attacked the performance of solar power and wind power.

The GMB has consistently urged the Government to shore up plans for nuclear power stations with state money. This is despite the fact that the nuclear power plant are taking decades to

deliver at very high costs for the energy consumer and almost certainly also the public finances.

Of course the GMB is guided by its members, and many of them work in nuclear power stations. Fair enough. But why should this fact dominate UK energy policy? Yet Labour's centralist dominated proposals seem destined to achieve just this. Of course there is mention about how local authorities will have an option to take over their local grids, but the usual practice will be centralised ownership. Clearly the Labour plans are wrong.

Control over the grid should be given to local authorities as a matter of course, perhaps in consortia (certainly at a national, transmission, level). Local authorities are influenced by the local electorate and local citizen groups. They will be sympathetic to green energy priorities. On the other hand centrally owned quangos will be insulated from such democratic input and will be under the thumb of the existing industrial establishment. Innovation will go out of the window.

People forget that in 1948 the electricity industry was not taken into public ownership. It was already largely owned by local authorities. It was nationalised, yes, but this was primarily an act of centralisation, not public ownership. What we need today is more decentralisation, not control by the dead hand of the fading industrial establishment. **C**

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



## EURO ELECTIONS

# Leading not leaving

Why did it all go wrong? **Julie Ward MEP** on how Labour sent the wrong message to the voters in the European Elections

There is the old adage that what worked at the last election will most certainly not work at the next. This sadly came true for Labour in the recent and rather strange European elections. Two years after a positive and progressive 2017 general election campaign, focussing on a myriad of national issues from housing to proper funding for the NHS and social care, the electorate and the mood had changed. Brexit became a defining issue and specifically where the parties stood on the question of another plebiscite.

There is no doubt Labour was squeezed by the simplistic message of “democratic betrayal” peddled by the Brexit Party (or rather Company) and by the Liberal Democrats’ and Green’s promise of a Public Vote on the Brexit deal, particularly in metropolitan areas and in Scotland. The Labour narrative was unclear, burdened by a worthy but uninspiring message about unity and focusing on ‘domestic issues’ rather than the clarity of another democratic vote or the fighting spirit of remain, reform and rebel (which some of us have taken up with unbridled enthusiasm).

Trying to be all things to all people caused confusion not only to our base but also amongst the floating voters who had supported us less than two years ago, almost helping us to beat the Tories then, but abandoning us now for unequivocal pro-Remain parties. Whilst I was pleased to see Labour listed on the People’s Vote website, I felt we were bottom of the class in terms of marks for enthusiasm.

The statistics clearly show that those who had supported Jeremy Corbyn’s vision and message in 2016 have now moved on, with Brexit becoming quite clearly the defining political issue of our time. A staggering 22 per cent of Labour voters switched to the Liberal Democrats as well as a further 17 per cent opting for the Greens on May 23rd.

80% of Labour members back a People’s Vote, while 60 per cent of Labour voters said they’d be more



**Brexiteers celebrating European election result**

likely to vote Labour if the party was committed to opposing Brexit. In 2015, when running for the leadership, Jeremy promised a grassroots bottom-up approach to deciding the party’s direction when it came to policy. He said,

“I don’t think we can go on having policy made by the leader, shadow cabinet, or parliamentary Labour Party. It’s got to go much wider. Party members need to be more enfranchised. Whoever is elected will have a mandate from a large membership.”

We must now hold our nerve and honour that commitment, or Labour will face an even more catastrophic fate at the ballot box when it comes to a general election with a new Tory leader. Unless we make it clear that our Party is fundamentally internationalist in its values, how can we expect others of the same mindset to vote for us by denying that our future should be at the heart of Europe? We must be leading and not leaving Europe.

Initially it looked like Labour would return the highest number of Socialist and Democrat MEPs, which would have given us huge credibility and influence at a time when Britain needs it most, as well as bolstering our political allies and helping to install Frans Timmermans as President of the Commission. At the beginning of May, when the Government final-

ly conceded that the UK would participate alongside the other 27 EU Member States in electing MEPs, Labour were as high as 35% in the opinion polls. By the final week we were at 13%.

The saddest thing is that it was all so clear and could have been avoided. We could and should have won the European elections. It would have been our first national election victory since 2005. The writing was on the wall as we had a “proxy” election across 248 English local councils and after nearly a decade of Tory-led austerity we sustained a net loss of 82 seats.

If Labour fails to learn from these two historically bad nights at the polls the party will begin to lose even its tribal voters. Breaking the voting habit of a lifetime is not an easy step but many did and will do so again. We need to win them back, especially the young for whom the Greens represent something vital and urgent - a connection between the local and the global via our European identity.

Both the major two parties are at critical moment in their histories and the first to adapt to where their traditional support base has drifted in the divisive political waters we now swim, will survive. Labour must set a course for remain or face turbulent times ahead. **C**

**Julie Ward was successfully re-elected as a Labour MEP for the North West**



# The world doesn't revolve around Wigan, Wansbeck or wherever

**Peter Kenyon** marvels at the policy-thinking that our sisters and brothers in Europe are engaged in

**N**o man is an Island, entire of itself every man is a piece of the Continent, a part of the main if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less – John Donne (1572-1631)

We, Britons are slow learners. While our politicians, campaigners and experts have been obsessing about a referendum in June 2016 that should never have happened, politicians, campaigners and experts elsewhere in Europe have been thinking about the future.

Reading, listening to and watching British Labour politicians in recent weeks has been bizarre. The idea that Britain can stand up to global corporate forces to legislate for the climate emergency, rein-in tax evasion, reshape business conduct on its own – for the many, not the few – is ludicrous. I'm fed up of hearing keynote speeches from the so-called leadership of the British Labour Party about how austerity is going to be overcome, without a mention of whether the UK is either inside or outside the European Union. It's not credible and voters in increasing numbers don't think so either.

The very means of tackling the underlying issues in Wigan (represented in the Westminster parliament by Lisa Nandy MP), or Wansbeck (represented by Labour Party chair Ian Lavery MP) or wherever hang on Labour's anti-austerity measures especially the regional investment bank structures. No one has come up with any credible plan to replace EU structural funds or access to European Investment Bank capital. Those Labour MPs who wrote to Labour Leader Jeremy Corbyn MP last week with dire warnings of the adverse electoral consequences for Labour of backing another referendum have to be challenged. "Will your constituents be better served by a Labour government with anti-austerity policies aimed at increasing job and investment prospects in your area, inside the EU or outside?"

Over the past six months, I have been liaising with 'friends' of



Anti-Brexit protest in London

Jeremy Corbyn in academia, the media, elected positions and pro-Remain campaigning groups – people who want him to become prime minister. So far it's been a thankless task. The nascent Socialist Europe Policy Group's mission for Socialist members of the European Parliament – Remain, Reform and Rebel – was published in the last issue of Chartist. As reported elsewhere in this issue and on the Chartist website, Labour's European election campaign strategist(s) had their eyes firmly fixed on their own feet and not the future. Fortunately, other socialists have got a sense of the future and it's shared.

The diminished band of British Labour Party members of the European Parliament are members of the Socialist and Democrats (S&D) group across the sea in Brussels/Strasbourg. During the campaign leading up to the Euro-elections a modest event was held at the London School of Economics to launch the S&D group's report on Sustainable Equality 2019 to 2024. <https://www.progressivesociety.eu>. The report prepared by an Independent Commission runs to 192 pages and includes 110 policy actions aimed at enabling 'Well-being for Everyone in a Sustainable Europe'. Its main headings cover Enabling Change, Power to the People, Social Ecological Progress, Reshaping Capitalism and Social Justice for All. It represents a baseline from which socialists can work over the

coming period. Whether the UK is on or out, the sisters and brothers across the Channel will be getting on with making the EU a better place to live and work for people, rather than the profiteers.

Negotiations have already started following the Euro-elections between the Parliament and the European Council about who will be the next President of the European Commission to replace the centre-right's Jean-Claude Juncker on 1 November of this year. One ambition on the left in Europe is that the S&D's Spitzenkandidat Dutch socialist Frans Timmermans will be the person to takeover opening up an opportunity to continue to build up Social Europe. It is a long-shot as the S&D group with 153 seats, still has fewer than the centre-right EPP with 182. Both lost ground compared with 2015. But what counts are the alliances that can be built within the hemisphere. While the top job haggling goes on, there is work going on in Brussels tackling climate change, tax avoidance, drafting legislation to shape responsible business and reshaping the global textile industry – now dominated by click, collect, covet and cast-off – completely unsustainable.

At the time of writing the idea of a left leaning Commission cannot be ruled out. A better performance by the British Labour Party might have made those negotiations a sight easier. But as reported above our strategist(s) were looking at the floor. **C**

**Peter Kenyon is a member of Chartist EB**



## CLIMATE EMERGENCY

# Climate Emergency

**Nigel Doggett** on the stark findings stirring limited government action

**R**esponses to the climate crisis are unfolding at an unprecedented rate. The school strikes and protests by Extinction Rebellion were followed by the UK Parliament's declaration of a climate emergency and Theresa May's decision to upgrade the UK greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions target to 'net-zero' by 2050.

Both resurgent climate actions and government reactions result from authoritative research and policy reports at various levels. The 2018 UN Environment Emissions Gap Report considered global carbon emissions in the light of the ceiling of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. It concluded that total current national commitments would lead to temperature rises of 3°C by 2100 and that to get back on track requires the emissions gap between commitments and requirements to be closed before 2030.

As temperatures rise with accumulated GHGs in the atmosphere, the earlier action is taken, the far greater the impact. This year, reports have appeared presenting alarming evidence for loss of biological species and Arctic/Antarctic ice as well as linking the increasing instability of our climate to GHGs.

Two key questions arise on the net-zero commitment: is this sufficient, and how do they propose to get there? This government has retreated on many fronts from previous ambitions under Labour and even the coalition, so Britain is falling behind milestones under the Climate Change Act. The government is following the lead of its advisory Committee on Climate Change (CCC), whose most hard-hitting report to date called for far greater urgency and the 'net-zero' target, well beyond the previous legal reduction requirement of 80%.

In view of the UN emissions gap report and backsliding from obstructionist governments, further tightening will be required worldwide, and green campaigners have called for an earlier deadline, but the CCC considers that 2050 is the earliest achievable date.

The CCC report itemises the most challenging sectors for decarbonisation, which nevertheless must be tackled to reach close to



Extinction Rebellion protest in London

zero: industry, buildings, heavy goods vehicles, aviation, shipping and agriculture. Aviation has rightly been targeted as the only sector whose emissions are projected to rise – to become the highest emitting sector! But emissions per passenger mile are comparable with petrol cars – it's the number of miles traveled that magnify its impact. Alongside shipping, its international nature has hitherto allowed it to evade full accountability. The transport nettle must be grasped, not just to decarbonize by switching to electric or ultimately hydrogen power but to prioritize public transport throughout the country by planning policies to ensure new developments include both public transport services as well as local amenities and zero-carbon buildings. Amazingly, the CCC totally omits public transport or town planning policy.

Though it rejects relying on carbon offsetting (paying for often controversial projects abroad) it treats this as a contingency. Its optimistic statement that 'only those genuinely offering additional emissions reduction or removal should be allowed, and these must be part of schemes that also sup-

port sustainable development', is risky when global commitments lag far behind requirements, and all countries need to exert maximum efforts.

Any residual emissions will have to be counteracted by removal or 'carbon capture'. The least controversial option, reforestation, is relatively slow and requires land to be planted and managed into the future. Other forms of 'carbon capture and storage' (CCS) have featured in both UN and UK policies to balance the calculations, but with only pilot projects, and none in the UK since the government stopped funding, concrete (no pun intended) results are lacking. These are far from a panacea, as they would incur costs in efficiency terms and require comprehensive infrastructure, only suitable for power stations and heavy industry, as well as a safe form of, and locations for, storage. The bio-energy plus carbon capture (BECCS) concept, generating power from agricultural products, would be practical only if waste were used, to safeguard food supplies. Agriculture already faces growing demand, soil degradation and climate impacts alongside calls

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

for reversion to forestry or wilderness and less intensive, more ecological practices.

This brings us back to achieving maximum emissions reductions. A key reason why the oil industry has dominated the world economy and is so resistant to alternatives is its convenience as a fuel and the density of its energy content. It is proposed that the particular weight challenges of air travel, heavy haulage and shipping be met using electric or hydrogen power, but it is hard to believe that this will be practical by 2030 as the CCC envisages.

The CCC report accepts the need for a 'just transition' that is fair to both workers and consumers, and the role of civil society, but lacks detail on these areas, falling back on actions individuals can take. Fine words are insufficient if they expect behaviour change to occur without national and local leadership.

In terms of practical politics, the Green New Deal increasingly looks like an idea whose time has come, both in the US and here. Economically it amounts to a Keynesian stimulus focussed on

climate jobs - those which directly contribute to carbon reduction - such as home insulation, renewable power generation and cleaner transport. Connecting the environmental, employment and economic issues is politically attractive and fits well with the democratic socialist narrative, but therefore faces suspicion on the free market right. We must remember that any economic growth must be contained within a package of absolute reductions in emissions, a possibility that is increasingly being challenged. However much technological change alleviates its impact by 'reducing carbon intensity' (achieving more for less emissions), exponential economic growth (that is, by cumulative annual percentages) must eventually collide with inherent planetary limits, of which the climate crisis is only one facet: other looming threats include pollution, loss of biodiversity, and dwindling resources.

The elephant in the room is 'consumption emissions' associated with imported goods, notably from China, that are excluded from UK totals. The CCC mentions 'measures like resource efficiency that

cut emissions from production overseas' but fails to admit our liability. We must challenge any politician spouting green rhetoric to confront the fundamental challenges this presents to our lifestyle and society. Varieties of denial don't stop with Trump and Farage: we are all inclined to look the other way rather than act on inconvenient truths.

Though the net-zero target looks increasingly technically viable given recent leaps in renewable energy and storage, the political and social conditions still lag behind. Evidence for the necessary strategic planning in government, with honourable exceptions in Scotland and a few local councils, is meagre. Accordingly, opposition parties and activists must challenge the government to demonstrate it will really act to reduce emissions in the sectors outlined above without recourse to neoliberal magical thinking such as reliance on 'the market'.

"Reality must take precedence over public relations, for nature cannot be fooled", these words from the late US physicist Richard Feynman ring true as ever. **C**

# 'Our house is on fire'

**Greta Thunberg** says I want you to panic

**I** am here to say, our house is on fire. According to the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change), we are less than 12 years away from not being able to undo our mistakes. In that time, unprecedented changes in all aspects of society need to have taken place, including a reduction of our CO2 emissions by at least 50%.

And please note that those numbers do not include the aspect of equity, which is absolutely necessary to make the Paris agreement work on a global scale. Nor does it include tipping points or feedback loops like the extremely powerful methane gas released from the thawing Arctic permafrost.

At places like Davos, people like to tell success stories. But their financial success has come with an unthinkable price tag. And on climate change, we have to acknowledge we have failed. All political movements in their present form have done so, and the media has failed to create

broad public awareness.

But Homo sapiens have not yet failed.

Yes, we are failing, but there is still time to turn everything around. We can still fix this. We still have everything in our own hands. But unless we recognise the overall failures of our current systems, we most probably don't stand a chance.

We are facing a disaster of unspoken sufferings for enormous amounts of people.

Solving the climate crisis is the greatest and most complex challenge that Homo sapiens have ever faced. The main solution, however, is so simple that even a small child can understand it. We have to stop our emissions of greenhouse gases.

Some say we should not engage in activism. Instead we should leave everything to our politicians and just vote for a change instead. But what do we do when there is no political will? What do we do when the politics needed are nowhere in sight?

Here in Davos - just like every-



**Greta Thunberg initiated the school strike for climate movement that formed in November 2018 and surged globally after the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP24) in December the same year.**

where else - everyone is talking about money. It seems money and growth are our only main concerns.

And since the climate crisis has never once been treated as a crisis, people are simply not aware of the full consequences on our everyday life. People are not aware that there is such a thing as a carbon budget, and just how incredibly small that remaining carbon budget is. That needs to change today.

Adults keep saying: "We owe it to the young people to give them hope." But I don't want your hope. I don't want you to be hopeful. I want you to panic. I want you to feel the fear I feel every day. And then I want you to act.

I want you to act as you would in a crisis. I want you to act as if our house is on fire. Because it is.

*This is an edited extract from Greta Thunberg's speech at the Davos conference January 2019.* **C**



## SPAIN

# Turning the tables on the right

**Patrick Costello** looks behind the resurgence of the Spanish Socialist party under Sanchez

**F**or European socialists, the bright spot of the May European elections was the Iberian Peninsula. While in Portugal, this was a reflection of over three years of successful anti-austerity government, in neighbouring Spain, it was a more immediate follow-up to victory in unplanned national elections one month earlier. Pedro Sánchez, the young leader of the Spanish party PSOE, vindicated at the polls, won 20 MEPs to become the largest national delegation in the Socialist group. He is now striding the European stage as the lead negotiator for the Socialists in the talks between parties to agree on the EU leaders of Commission, Council and Parliament for the next mandate and is in a strong position to push Josep Borrell, his foreign minister, for the post of EU foreign policy supremo.

This is, by any standards, a remarkable turnaround of fortunes. Three years ago, Sanchez led the socialists to their worst result in post-Franco elections and was forced to resign as party leader. As late as December last year, the socialists were pushed out of power in Andalucía after 36 continuous years of regional government by a coalition of conservatives, liberals and the new far right party Vox. To understand what has happened in Spain can potentially offer the European left lessons on how, in this volatile political era, the rejection of centrist third way politics and a willingness to return to the basics of socialist policies can reconnect with a disillusioned electorate.

Sánchez has required a measure of luck. He returned as leader within a year of losing the 2016 elections with the support of the grassroots members of the party to whom his shift leftwards on economic policy and strident pro-Europeanism, appealed more than a return to the centre offered by his rivals. The conservative government of the lacklustre Mariano Rajoy quickly ran into trouble over a series of corruption scandals and the PSOE, with only 85 out of 350 seats in the Congress, was able to win a no-confidence vote in June 2018 that enabled him, just like his neighbour in Portugal, to become prime minis-

ter with the support of MPs from Podemos on the left as well as of Catalan and other regional nationalists who hated Rajoy's confrontational and violent approach to the Catalan independence movement.

This minority government was extremely fragile. At any moment the plug could have been pulled by either Podemos or the Catalans. Podemos, seeking support in the same vote pool as Sánchez, had an interest in timing a withdrawal of support to maximise their potential electoral advantage over the PSOE. With the Catalans it was even more difficult since while Sánchez supported a negotiated solution, independence was a red line: the talks set up by the new government quickly reached deadlock. However, despite the fragility, a clear new policy direction was set and a government formed with several ministers drawn from the pool of Spain's senior EU officials. They set about introducing a raft of popular policy measures [see O'Leary below].

A new election was always on the cards, however, and after less than a year, the Catalans pulled the plug, refusing to vote for the budget in protest at the government's clear refusal to contemplate another painful independence referendum in Catalonia. At the polls, on 28 April, in almost a mirror image of 2016, the tables were turned with the conservatives (PP) suffering their worst result post-Franco. The socialists nearly doubled their numbers of seats in Congress to 123, not enough for a majority alone, but facing an opposition unable to form an alternative coalition. Sánchez was asked by the King in early June to form a new government.

Most of the gains were at the expense of Podemos, who had suffered in most of Spain from their support for Catalan self-determination. However these gains were compounded by the fracturing of the conservative Popular Party, who faced a classic squeeze, losing seats both to the liberal "Macronite" Citizen's Party on their left and the ultra-nationalist Vox on their right. The eruption of the hardline anti-immigration far-right Vox onto the political scene split the PP's voters.

Advised by Steve Bannon, Vox's slick communications and social media messages were effective and they won over 10% of the national vote in April, the first breakthrough of the far right into national post-Franco politics. The Citizen's Party, by going into coalition in Andalusia in December with the PP and Vox, had tainted their centrist brand with PSOE voters but it also enabled them to eat into the more moderate parts of the PP vote bank.

It is too early to predict the direction that the new government will take, though its pro-European credentials are clear. Formally they have the choice of building majority support either with Citizens or with Podemos and some of the nationalists. The latter seems more likely however. Even if Citizens were willing to go into coalition, Sánchez's success has been based on taking the PSOE leftwards. This is more than pragmatic politics, his political history shows an aversion to building coalitions with the centre right: in 2014, he instructed his MEPs to vote against electing Commission President Juncker when there was a cross-Parliament socialist/EPP deal to do so. More likely, strengthened by the two polls, he will continue to pursue the anti-austerity programme launched during his brief tenure last year. This will mean relying on support from Podemos and some of the nationalists. Crucially, the numbers mean that he does not need the support of the most hard-line 'independentistas' in Catalonia which will give him greater flexibility and, hopefully, more stability. The timing of his victory is also a fortuitous one, coinciding with the European centre-right losing its hegemony over European politics for the first time for two decades.

If this is the direction chosen, Spain's socialists, like in neighbouring Portugal, will have decisively rejected the politics of the third way. They can become a powerful voice in the EU for the anti-austerity economics of people-centred economic growth and, with his political family, for a greater willingness to reject grand coalitions and seek instead coalitions and alliances of the left. **C**

**Patrick Costello has worked for European institutions for over two decades.**

# Left secure victory in Spain

**Brian O'Leary** reports on the success of the Spanish Socialist Party and coalition dilemmas

**A**fter highly charged election campaigns and big turnouts the Socialist Party (PSOE) made significant gains in both the general election in April and the EU election in May, helped by the parties on the right being split three ways. However the PSOE's national vote still left it short of the necessary majority to form a new government. Before the results, but expecting this outcome, there was militant grassroots pressure in the PSOE for a coalition with the radical left populist grouping Unidas Podemos (UP), which in turn was keen to gain ministerial posts. However UP support fell sharply in both polls, while in regional and municipal elections that coincided with the EU vote, many of their candidates and close allies suffered the same fate.

The PSOE had formed a minority government last summer following a successful vote of no confidence against the conservative Partido Popular (PP), which was mired in massive corruption scandals.

Despite its minority position the PSOE, encouraged and supported by UP, was able to implement some progressive measures such as increasing the minimum wage, reversing rising job precarity and extending parental leave. Meanwhile, although the PP changed leaders and moved further right, it began to be challenged by the newly emergent extremist Vox, even more socially



**Sanchez: a safer pair of hands**

conservative and nationalist.

The April election was triggered when Catalan nationalists refused to support the budget of Sanchez, the leader of the PSOE, because of his continuing refusal to speak up against the Constitutional Court's ongoing prosecution for treason and imprisonment of Catalan unofficial independence referendum leaders.

Nevertheless, left voters in general saw Sanchez as a safer pair of hands to stop a comeback of an even more reactionary right as well as to reverse severe austerity. As a matter of urgency the

PSOE has promised to confront gross social and income inequality, which has escalated due to years of Euro-area imposed contraction and unemployment in excess of 20%, by job creation and the rebuilding of the core welfare state.

Despite the EU Commission's recent removal of Spain from its Growth and Stability deficit reduction special measures, there is a potential for a future conflict with the PSOE's spending aims. In maintaining an uncritical support for current EU institutions and treaties, which are pro-austerity, it pledges to further reduce the deficit and debt as percentages of GDP even though there are strong signs that the whole EU is on the verge of a recession.

At the time of writing, parliamentary arithmetic would make forming a government instead with the liberal centre right, Ciudadanos (Citizens), more straightforward and as well as attractive to the PSOE's own moderates who want no drift to the left. The PSOE could of course attempt once more to form a minority government and pursue a piecemeal agenda. This could satisfy no one and possibly provide a political space for the right to regroup.

It is still feasible for the PSOE and the UP to form a left unity government supported by some smaller parties, and almost uniquely in Europe offer a progressive alternative to neoliberalism and nationalism. **C**

**Brian O'Leary is a member of Chingford CLP**



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# Don't leave internationalism to the nationalists

**Elly Schlein MEP** says a European green and progressive front is the real alternative to nationalism and neoliberalism.

**T**he European Elections that took place in May 2019 were expected to be of crucial importance for the future of the European Union. The results constitute pictures with different shades depending on the different European countries, containing important lessons for European progressive forces.

First of all, with regard to the balance of power inside the European Parliament, no major surprises arose, considering what was expected during the months preceding the vote. The main European political families faced a downsizing in numbers: the European People's Party (EPP) went from 216 seats won in 2014 to 179 to date, while the Social Democrats (S&D) have witnessed a smaller decrease than forecast, going from 191 seats to 153 to date.

Secondly, an important point to emphasize is how the eurosceptics, nationalists and far-right forces remain a minority within the European parliament. At the same time, however, the rhetoric of some political actors and observers in Brussels, according to which the eurosceptic wave would have been stopped, is far from realistic. That is clear if we look at the eurosceptic and extreme right parties' results at the national level: eurosceptics and far-right parties are unfortunately the first force in the United Kingdom (Nigel Farage's Brexit Party), in Italy (Salvini's Northern League), in France (the Rassemblement National of Marine Le Pen), in Poland (where PiS scored 45.38%) and in Hungary (where Orban's party, Fidesz, got over 50% of the votes).

Negotiations are underway in Brussels to try to form a political majority within the Parliament, which will drive the internal agenda for the next five years. In this regard, it is important to underline how for the first time since the first European legislature (1979) the votes of the EPP and or S&D alone will no longer be enough to form a majority.

This implies that the Liberals (who significantly increased seats from 69 to 106 MEPs) will be pivotal to gaining a solid majority of 438 deputies (where 376 are needed).

A third and very significant element emerging from the European vote is the result obtained by the European Greens, who increased from 52 to 76 MEPs and unexpectedly turned out to be the second party in Germany. Furthermore, the Greens came second in Finland and third in France and Ireland. In all these countries the Greens have been able to benefit from the extraordinary mobilization undertaken by many students all over Europe for the global strike for climate led by Greta Thunberg. This very positive result could bring the European Greens to join the majority and a consequent strengthening of the already solid political line of the European Parliament on environmental issues.

As we know, however, within the European Parliament different majorities can also be built on different issues. In this sense, a fourth significant point is that the progressive and liberal forces together get very close to the absolute majority even without the votes of the EPP. This could lead to the creation of even more progressive alliances inside the EP and to major achievements on certain issues.

The most important point, however, is that it seems that the progressive camp is paradoxically leaving 'internationalism' to the nationalists. Salvini closed the electoral campaign in Milan alongside Marine Le Pen and some of the main leaders of the extreme right-wing nationalist forces from all over Europe. The 'International of nationalists' is full of contradictions, and yet all its members manage to reinforce each other with a rhetoric made of hatred, walls and intolerance, practiced at the same time in different countries of the Union.

Why does Orban's wall reinforce Trump's one as well as

Salvini's 'closed ports', while the fight against inequalities successfully carried out by the Portuguese left-wing government does not strengthen in the same way other progressive forces in Europe? We must react to that 'International of hatred' with a European ecological and progressive front. A front capable of working more tightly across the borders, putting at the centre of its agenda a concrete and valid alternative that responds to the main challenges that will define our common future, such as the fight against inequalities, the dignity of work, climate change (in this regard Corbyn made a significant move by declaring a climate emergency, and I hope that many will follow his example in other countries), as well as migration, European solidarity, social and tax justice against tax evasion and avoidance by big companies.

The 'International of nationalists' wins where it manages to take advantage of the real and concrete worries and struggles of ever-wider spheres of European society. It does so by indicating easy scapegoats for complex and profound problems: the 'others', the migrants, the LGBTI community, emancipated women.

The European Union and the new European Parliament are at a critical crossroads. The truth is the blindness and inability of the European establishment to address globalization and avoid rising inequalities, social and environmental injustice is producing fertile ground for an authoritarian and nationalist alternative that claims to 'take back control' by closure. We need to fill that third space, to build an alternative both to the disastrous economic and social policies of austerity that have worsened the living conditions of the many, and defeat the unrealistic idea that in our interconnected world we would be better off within national borders rather than working internationally on the transformations of our societies. **C**

**Elly Schlein is an independent Italian MEP. The full article is on the Chartist website**



# The cuts that kill

**Sarah Jones** says ending austerity with a joined up plan can tackle the scourge of knife crime

**R**ecently it's felt like wherever you turn, more headlines appear about young lives lost to violence. The number of knife crime deaths in 2019 hit 100 in May. Appallingly, those involved continue to get younger and younger.

Each death is a tragedy, leaving families, communities and politicians asking where is this violence coming from? There are many questions still to be answered, but we know enough to have seen this coming. We know that poverty, inequality, social exclusion, and lack of opportunity create an ideal environment for crime to thrive. We know that government policy since 2010 has done its upmost to exacerbate these complex societal factors.

Violence is not inevitable. To tackle it, we must treat it like any contagious disease – with a public health approach. This means collecting data and researching to create a clear understanding of the scale and nature of the problem and its root causes. It means analysing which interventions and services work and investing in them, or designing new ones if current provision is lacking.

The public health approach means educating and supporting the whole population, while recognising that certain people are at greater risk because of their environment, targeting early intervention to change these environments and social norms. The voices of young people and communities should be at the heart of the approach, tailoring solutions to local needs. But the overall strategy must be driven by the centre of a government committed to change, involving leaders across policing, justice, health, education, social care and more.

We know that children are far more likely to be involved in violence if they grow up experiencing abuse, neglect, or bereavement, around adults abusing alcohol and drugs, struggling with mental illness or incarceration. The more Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) a child has, the more at risk they are. Yet funding for support services that would help identify and protect these children continues to fall.

To use one ACE as an example, the proportion of children involved in knife crime who have previously seen or experienced domestic abuse is very high – much higher than average. If you grow up around violence, it seems normal. But in recent years the services available to prevent or identify this abuse has been stripped away. As demand for women's services has risen significantly, funding has fallen by half. Unsurprisingly, referrals for support are regularly declined.

Vulnerable parents need help to look after their children, support their development, and remain involved throughout their life. A recent Institute for Fiscal Studies report identified Sure Start children's centres as vital parts of this puzzle. But Sure Start funding has been cut by two thirds and an estimated 1,000 centres have closed. The number of children being taken into care, where they are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and disproportionately involved in crime, has increased by almost a third.

Schools are another potential lifeline. But funding cuts have left class sizes increasing and staff numbers, pastoral support and special educational needs provision slashed. Schools need resources to provide education on healthy relationships, identity, life skills and social development. They need to be supported to keep troubled children in school, to help them learn and pursue higher education or vocational training, so they can access opportunities.

The school exclusion rate has increased dramatically - by 56% in three years. The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Knife Crime, which I launched in 2017, found a third of local authorities had no places left in Pupil Referral Units. Children are left alienated and isolated, vulnerable to being exploited and becoming involved in crime.

Our APPG recently heard from young people and youth workers about the importance of youth clubs, ensuring young people have positive activities to engage in and role models where they may have none at home. We conducted research and found the average council has cut spending



**Sure Start centres - a vital part of the solution**

on youth services by 40% in just three years. Areas with the highest cuts also experienced the highest increases in knife crime.

To tackle violence, our response must be grounded in this understanding of the child's experiences. Policing and the criminal justice response is crucial, and cuts here have had an impact too. In March last year there were 21,300 fewer police officers than in 2010. Community policing, an important link for building relationships and gathering intelligence, has taken a huge hit. But we can't just enforce our way out of this.

We need to move beyond asking young people "What's wrong with you?" and start asking "What happened to you?"

As damning evidence continues to build about the devastating impact of austerity, and their hold on power dwindles, Tories have begun making piecemeal attempts to back-pedal on cuts they made.

There is fantastic work being done with children and young people. But often it's in isolation, under-resourced and overstretched, with crisis intervention. We have seen from the success of the Violence Reduction Unit in Scotland that a joined-up approach works. If we tackle the social injustices at the root of the problem, we can immunise the next generation from violence. **C**



**Sarah Jones is MP for Croydon Central, Chair, APPG on knife crime and a Shadow Housing minister**

## UK DEMOCRACY

# When the centre cannot hold

The centrist consensus is breaking up, accelerated by Brexit. **Don Flynn** says Labour too needs to be ready to 'move quickly and smash things'



**T**he old Chinese proverb about the fish rotting from the head seems especially appropriate in any consideration of the mess politics in general is in today and which seems to have particularly hit the Left hardest of all.

The head of the fish in this instance is the UK Parliament. Over the course of centuries this institution has evolved with the purpose of anchoring the politics of the country's ruling elites firmly to the centre ground. The system has been generous enough to allow some space for viewpoints outside this centrist consensus, on the understanding that its strength would be so overwhelmingly as to ensure that all forces other than the safe middle remained marginal in terms of influence.

The grounds for believing that this cosy relationship is breaking down have been around for some time. Social discontent can be checked for long periods of time, but the constant pressure that comes from a population of frustrated citizens will make itself felt in some form sooner or later. A public sector destabilised by right wing ideology and austerity

with dramatic changes to the labour market seeing the loss of the 'decent' jobs once associated with Fordist manufacturing, plus housing policy that doesn't deliver housing, is going to take its toll at moments when despair about what the future might hold become overwhelming.

The sense that government wasn't listening to ordinary people – surely a common enough complaint throughout history – could in principle be ameliorated by the role civil society or a more responsive local democracy might play in representing the people's interests. But the record here seems just as dismal as that of Parliament and central government itself. Over the same time span when discontent with central authority has grown the trade union movement has been reduced by more than half its size and local government has been deprived of its once substantial role in the provision of health, housing and education outcomes. It has become all about the expanding role of the market.

In the schematic terms of (dogmatic?) Marxism, the erosion of the material underpinnings which sustained the old centrism (stable jobs market, broad con-

sensus in the key areas of social policy) has now bled into a radical destabilisation of the political superstructure. But these have been long-term developments: across the last forty years the sense that politics has been losing its grip has come at an almost serenely gradual pace.

The steady accumulation of dissatisfaction has resulted in our present times when everything about the relationship between government and the people has become extremely fragile. The Brexit crisis has shown just how brittle a thing the structures of UK Parliamentary democracy have become over the years when it has been stripped of responsibility for administering the welfare state which propped up capitalism in the years after WW2. By insisting that they should not be judged on the quality of jobs being created in the UK economy or the state of a large segment of public services on the grounds that this was now all the responsibility of market forces, a generation of politicians has put itself in a position where they are easy targets of denunciation for being nothing more than an elite talking shop utterly remote from the real concerns of the people. Is it any sur-

**Don Flynn is a member of Chartist EB**



prise that this has resulted in the doors being flung open wide for a series of new, radical populisms to sweep onto the scene?

#### No way out

The fact that this has not happened earlier can be attributed to that part of the British constitution that was there to maintain rule from the 'reasonable' centre. First-past-the-post voting facilitated a party system which, in its ideal form, was intended to produce a government of the day and an opposition aspiring to have nothing more than its turn to be the government of the day. Radicalisms of both leftist and far right hues were allocated their places within this set-up – safely on the outer fringes where they were allowed to grumble on with their respective critiques on the understanding that this would be all they were ever going to do.

All is now changed. The vote for Brexit in the 2016 referendum has thrown Parliament into disarray precisely because there are no safe centre-ground ways of resolving the dilemmas the ruling elites have now found themselves in. People on the left can shout out their favoured solutions to the crisis (from a new referendum to reverse Brexit through to the vagaries of the possibility of a 'Lexit'), but plumping for one or the other is less of a means to bring about resolution and more moving on to a new, almost certainly higher level of crisis.

Getting out of this predicament will require more than insistence on a socialist comfort zone where people are diverted away from the insurmountable problems being thrown up by the UK's exit and encouraged instead to talk more about the things that affect their material conditions of life. Voters seem to be well aware of the significance of all the things that have been taken away from them, but the problem is they still want to talk about leaving the EU. Their sense is that this entity is involved in taking away from them the opportunity they feel they once had to take government by the scruff of the neck and take their needs into account. Until we can do better in persuading them what is really driving the crisis of democracy, and that it principally involves home-grown factors rather than malign foreign power, the left is unlikely to mobilise the energy needed for radical change.

#### Crisis of democracy

Democracy, which, let's face it, has never been the strongest



**Farage and Johnson: symptoms of democratic malaise** from day one in office.

part of the British way of governing is today in a state of crisis and it is time we delved into those moments in time when socialists have captured the mood of the masses and have spoken to this issue of how and by whom we are governed. It is worth recalling how the original Chartist movement laid the foundations of the first labour movement by demanding the reform of the parliamentary system of its day.

We ought to be well beyond appealing to the certainties that come from using generations-old governance procedures to get out of this mess. A change to a government led by Jeremy Corbyn

**We should also grasp the nettle of reform of the electoral system, favouring a version that allows for the representation of class interests in the Commons, and not just geography**

would almost certainly prove short-lived if it only had the effect of welding capitalist interests to far right populist politicians (whether they be Farage or Johnson) in order to crush a challenge from the left. In its quest for a popular mandate Labour should make it clear that the way it governs will be transformative not only in terms of its rhetoric ('for the many, not the few', etc) but also in throwing up obstacles to the dictatorship of capital,

from day one in office.

In its most radical version this would involve further devolution of power to Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales (including the right to enter into treaty arrangements with other blocs as well as the acceding to the claim to full sovereignty or, in the case of Northern Ireland, reunification with the Republic of Ireland). A Labour government would immediately begin the devolution of power to the English regions and also lay the grounds for a Parliament for England. It would abolish the House of Lords and create a second House of the Regions, with elected members charged with responsibility for protecting the interests of whatever a united Britain might look like in the future.

We should also grasp the nettle of reform of the electoral system, favouring a version that allows for the representation of class interests in the Commons, and not just geography. This could be achieved by having larger multi-member constituencies on the Irish model which ensure that most citizens will have an MP representing their area from one of the parties they voted for.

It is ironic that one of the slogans which adherents of the global neoliberal right constantly intone to each other when government power is within their reach is 'move quickly and smash things'. We should be ready to acknowledge the spirit which animates this drive to radical change and come up with our own version. 'Clear the wreckage of a smashed version of Parliament out the way. Replace it with an authentic people's democracy which reaches out into every part of the country.' **C**



## INDIA

# India- From Secularism to Sectarianism

**Kabul Sandhu** on the implications of Modi's re-election for Indians

**T**he 2019 Indian election witnessed a stunning electoral success for Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Bharatya Janata Party (BJP). Of the 543 seats in the Lok Sabha (the lower house of the Indian parliament) the BJP and its allies took 349. The once formidable Congress Party leviathan racked up a paltry 93 seats. The remaining 100 went to assorted others.

In a free and fair election 600 million people voted. So three cheers for democracy. Well not quite, perhaps. India seems to be opening up a dark political chapter.

BJP's Modi is an accomplished orator. He is a colossus who now bestrides the Indian political stage as former prime ministers Mrs Gandhi and her father Nehru once did. The latter two stood for an inclusive, secular India. Modi and the BJP are populists. Their brand of populism appeals to Hindus, the majority religious group of India. The BJP's aim is to bring about Hindutva - this means through social and political supremacy establishing the Hindu way of life throughout India. It is a siren call that has now had an electoral response beyond the 'cowbelt' (Hindu dominated) Hindi speaking states of northern India. Even Bengali speaking, usually left leaning West Bengal has fallen for BJP's charms.

In this majoritarian political landscape minorities are 'othered' and vulnerable. This is particularly so in the case of Muslims who at 200 million form 14% of India's population. During the last five years of BJP rule attacks against Muslims by mobs have increased, Muslims have been projected as potential terrorists, agents of the national enemy Pakistan. Although Islam has been in India for centuries to Hindu extremists it's seen as foreign to Indian soil. When outrages occur little or nothing is heard from Modi and the BJP. In fact one of its successful candidates, a Hindu nun, Pragma Thakur, is accused of a bombing outrage which killed six Muslims and injured many oth-



**Modi's reach now extends beyond the 'Hindu belt'**

ers.

This election and political trend in India can perhaps be seen as being a part of the current global zeitgeist where we see the rise of populist parties and 'strongmen' leaders: Erdogan in Turkey, Putin in Russia, Orban in Hungary Trump in USA and Farage in UK, err..... sorry I write too soon.

The particular populist horse they use to ride to victory varies from country to country - threats from Kurdish separatists, threats to white supremacy, threats to Christianity, threat from migrants etc. Every populist leader finds the sweet spot which rouses his people. In India it's the 'need' to firmly establish India as a Hindu state.

Are there any glimmers of hope in this bleak outlook as India moves away from secularism? The Congress Party does not give us much hope. It is only going to revive when it throws off the shackles of the Nehru/Gandhi family leadership. They and others of their ilk - westernised, anglicised are dismissed by Modi and other Hindu nationalists as entitled elitists out of touch with the people. Perhaps secularism has always been an alien imposition on the prejudices, hostilities and bigotries of the populace, if

the nationalist interpretation of what the people think is accepted.

However the sheer diversity of India offers hope. It might save India from being homogenised. The BJP tsunami was stopped where there was no Hindu majority as in Punjab and Kashmir. The deep south states of India such as Kerala also resisted the BJP. Here the languages are not Hindi and the ethnic makeup of the people is different from that of the north.

There is also a burgeoning women's movement for equality and dignity which challenges the BJP's traditional family and males first values. The media is still vibrant despite pressures. There is a huge constituency of poor, dispossessed marginalised people that a fleet footed opposition could give voice to. It needs a progressive, left leaning silver-tongued leader of the people to unite them. Hinduism is broad with many schools of thought, perhaps someone from within the religion will challenge the BJP's interpretation and brand of Hinduism. These are glimmers of light and hope and as long as they do not get snuffed out, India will not succumb totally to the tide of sectarianism and will later emerge stronger and more confident in its diversity. **C**

**Kabul Sandhu is a member of South Basildon CLP**

# Setback for populism in Turkey

**Sheila Osmanovic** on Erdogan's Ottomanisation programme, repression of dissent and an opposition victory

**W**e are driving early at 4.30 am on a warm, damp April dawn on the empty Istanbul motorway route that takes us to the new state-of-the-art airport. We are welcomed by a grandiose, four-minaret mosque glamorously pitched right at the fore front approach to the glittering lights spreading miles behind it. Spaced at massive 15.5 million square feet laid the world's largest New Istanbul Airport, a truly amazing superstructure. As we approached, large posters appeared everywhere: side by side portraits of Ataturk, (founder of modern Turkey) were those of Erdogan, a great novelty to whoever is acquainted with Turkish political iconoclasm.

The aim is clear: Erdogan is not content just to be the man worthy of praise for the new airport - he aspires to become the only other Turkish president that may have his framed photo on Turkish official walls. Erdogan is reported to have revived the Turkish tulip Festival held in the refurbished Ottoman parks and Palaces all over Istanbul, as well as commercially breeding the native Turkish tulip again after 125 years. He takes further credit for rebuilding long forgotten museums, archives, hammams, mosques, gardens, palaces, beaches, promenades as well as fabulous road infrastructures and a very efficient public transport system all around the country.

The Justice and Development Party (AK Party) has been overwhelmingly sponsoring the Ottoman revival not only in Turkey but also in the Balkans and Central Asia, even in Cuba by building the ever first mosque there. Erdogan's favourite Ottoman sultan is Abdulhamid II - the Sultan most hated in Western realms for his Pan-Islamistic Renaissance, restoration of the Halifat and the famous motivational comments that led the Ottomans to the 1915 Gallipoli victory, which every Turk considers an ultimate patriotic milestone that saved the land from the Western Imperialists.



**Erdogan's neo-Ottoman populism challenged by recent election results**

Hence, AK Party promotes the general populist thesis that external forces are working to tear Turkey apart now as they tried to a century ago. This belief, which is not undocumented in the history records, runs deep to the point that the undemocratic cancellations of regional elections were not met with widespread street opposition. The aversion to Western Imperialism runs deep so when the Government brutally attacks the Kurds in Idlib, violently crushes free speech and stifles democracy through persecutions of journalists, writers and academics the public is complacent and some members of the Opposition complicit.

But hot on the heels of the recent jailing of 240 people as alleged traitors in the failed coup Erdogan suffered a heavy blow. His AK Party incumbent lost the rerun mayoral election in Istanbul. Erdogan had urged the re-election confident of victory. The decisive win by Ekrem İmamoğlu, the Republican People's Party (CHP)'s Kurd Alevi mayoral candidate defied accusations he was a tool of traitors to win through with 54% of the vote. This is the first major setback for the populist leader in almost two decades. How it will play out for the regime over the next period is uncertain.

AK Party supporters maintain the narrative that Turkish stability is under attack from inside and outside the country. Most of the Turkish population acquiesces in the allegations of the Western

support to 'terrorist' organisations such as the traditional Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), and the newer Gullen Movement, or in Turkish transcription 'Fetullah Terrorist Organization' (FETÖ), in seeking to undermine Turkish independence. Likewise, the recent failed coups are seen as Western efforts to destabilise Turkey, establish a Kurdish state in Anatolia, divide Syria and Iraq and open the Turkey front to wage another regional war to rob the people of their resources.

The AK Party government faces ongoing controversy over the economy and the defense industry. Erdogan is drawing on internal borrowing, a low savings rate, a reduction in government expenditure with a focus on value-added areas to increase the country's export volume and long-term production capacity to create two million new jobs by 2021. In the defense strategy, Turkey cut a deal with Russia to purchase advanced S-400 missiles cancelling the USA F-35 warplane programme. The United States administration criticized Turkey and demanded it sides with NATO and cancels its deal with Russia. This strategy is also facilitating the opposition to side with the Government so that Devlet Bahçeli, head of the opposition Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), praised the Government over the "done deal" for Turkey. The rising tide of global populism seems to have seeped into daily Turkish politics deeply dividing the country. **C**

## NORTHERN IRELAND

# Peace, Brexit and Irish unity

After two years of direct rule **Paul Dixon** looks at prospects for a resumption of power sharing in Northern Ireland

**T**he European Elections 2019 returned three female MEPs for Northern Ireland. The success of Naomi Long, leader of the Alliance Party, was the most eye-catching result.

The Alliance Party represents the centre ground of Northern Irish politics. The party was formed out of a breakaway from the old, hegemonic Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) and other moderates.

This is the party of David Trimble, which went into decline after he supported the Good Friday Agreement in April 1998. The UUP was taken over by Ian Paisley's more hardline and, then anti-peace process, Democratic Unionist party.

In 2007 the DUP signed up for powersharing with Sinn Féin and these two parties have dominated Northern Irish politics ever since.

Peter Hain, Labour's former Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (2005-07), claimed that the triumph of the hardline parties made powersharing more stable. Others criticised the carve up of Northern Irish politics for further reinforcing sectarianism and storing up trouble for the future.

There has been stable but ineffective government in Northern Ireland from 2007 until Martin McGuinness brought down powersharing in January 2017 over a scandal surrounding the 'Renewable Heating Initiative'. The constitution means that neither side can impose its rule on the other, but this often leads to policy deadlock.

The devolution of justice to Northern Ireland in 2010 was highly sensitive and contentious. The DUP and Sinn Féin, therefore, agreed to the appointment of David Ford, then leader of the Alliance party, as Justice Minister. He was the first local minister to take responsibility for justice since the end of Stormont in 1972.

There are, of course, other issues that divide the DUP and Sinn Féin. These include the Irish language, gay marriage and dealing with the past.

The unexpected vote to leave the European Union in 2016 has



Sinn Féin and DUP leaders - finding it hard to agree

further destabilised Northern Irish politics. Northern Ireland voted to Remain (56% to 44%) but the vote went largely but not entirely along sectarian lines as the moderate UUP favoured remain. Nationalists favoured Remain and unionists Brexit.

Some hardline Brexiteers have now claimed that the peace process has run its course and suggested that there should be a return to direct rule from London.

The DUP, however, does not want to end powersharing. But its strong support for Brexit has alienated moderate 'Catholics' who with the Good Friday Agreement compromise became more reconciled to the Union.

This is a dangerous development for unionism because there may come a point, given demographic changes, where they rely on the support of moderate 'Catholics' to achieve a majority to stay in the Union.

Nationalists and Republicans have used the Brexit vote to put Irish unity back on the table by demanding a 'Border Poll'. They claim that Irish unity is 'inevitable' because there will be a Catholic majority.

There have been arguments since partition that economic links meant that Irish unity was inevitable. Churchill believed that this would bring the South back into the Union, while nationalists believed that unionists would see that their interests lay in unity.

The liberalisation of the South

is another reason why unionists are less likely to oppose Irish unity in the future. The grip of the Catholic church on the Republic has been damaged by scandal. The Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar, is openly gay and has an Indian father.

The outstanding performance of the Irish women's hockey team in getting to the World Cup Final in 2018 is also claimed to be evidence of impending unity. Rugby and hockey have always been organised on an all-Ireland basis.

There is, however, little evidence that unionists are becoming more sympathetic to Irish unity. The apparent success of the Celtic Tiger (1993-2001) coincided with unionists voting increasingly for the hardline parties.

The success of the Alliance Party should not be mistaken for a weakening of unionist opposition to Irish unity. This assumption has undermined the moderate parties in the past.

A minority of unionists who voted for Remain and are liberal on social issues voted for the Alliance party. The party has had some success in recent years under the formidable leadership of Naomi Long.

The Good Friday Agreement was an honourable compromise between nationalism and unionism that has probably saved hundreds of lives. But since 2016, Brexit and the collapse of powersharing has, once again, encouraged those who prefer victory over compromise, moral purity over political accommodation. **C**

**Paul Dixon is author of *Performing the Northern Ireland Peace Process* (Palgrave 2019)**



# Tax dodging UK and Ukraine style

**Alexander Antonyuk** exposes the UK-Ukraine tax rip-off and calls for coordinated action

**R**obust studies conducted by Ukrainian left wing activists find that profit shifting out of Ukraine through agricultural trade and iron ore exports supports the lavish lifestyles of Ukrainian oligarchs in London, and contributes to poverty and inequality in Ukraine and the UK.

The UK and Ukraine are located at the opposite ends of Europe and have different modern histories, but the social issues faced by the majority of their populations are quite similar. UK has the highest inequality in Western and Central Europe, Ukraine has arguably the highest in Europe. Both countries have suffered from the social and economic aftermath of deindustrialisation. Both states have embraced neoliberal economics, from the 1970s in the UK, and 1990s in Ukraine. One of the differences though is that the poor from Ukraine often flee to the UK to be a bit less poor, the British poor have nowhere to flee to.

Both countries have very wealthy elites with a disproportionate, undemocratic influence on their economies and politics. The rich of both countries like to educate their children in UK's top public schools and universities, as well as to buy luxury property there. British readers may know about their own British super-rich, but less about the Ukrainian 'fat-cats' who move in the same circles and own some of the most lavish real-estate in London. The most expensive apartment in the world, located in Hyde Park Corner, for example, was bought by a Ukrainian oligarch.

These elites seem to have a strong geographical preference for living in the UK, drawn by its luxury properties and prestigious schools, whilst keeping financial assets in the Channel islands. These luxurious lifestyles are underpinned by offshoring and tax avoidance. To illustrate the point, Ukraine is a large producer of vegetable oils, and more than £1 billion worth of oil was exported between 2015 and 2017 through companies registered in the UK, mainly in the Channel Islands. These companies are not real importers of the commodity,

they are intermediaries or affiliates of the exporters, taking advantage of the favourable tax regimes. Only 2% of this oil was actually delivered to the UK. These tax dodging export operations are conducted by companies owned by very wealthy individuals. Agricultural business is the fastest growing source of oligarchic wealth in Ukraine.

We have conducted two detailed studies of profit shifting out of Ukraine through agricultural trade and iron ore exports, these two commodities are two of the top three Ukrainian exports (the third is steel).

Iron ore might seem like a defunct and unfashionable sector – but not so for Ukrainian oligarchs. Those who manage to grab a Soviet built iron ore mine in Ukraine can make much more and much easier money than in other more cutting edge indus-

## Tax avoidance and offshores are among the most pressing socio-economic issues for both UK and Ukraine

tries. Out of seven Ukrainian US dollar billionaires, six own iron ore mines. These assets, exploiting cheap labour and using the country's natural resources, generate for the owners all these prime properties in central London, luxury yachts, major media channels, and control of Ukrainian politics.

The 'business model' is simple. The capital expenditure was made in Soviet times so there are no investment debts to repay, the asset is ready to generate profits. All that is needed is to pay the miners, who risk their lives in tough conditions, the bare minimum in wages, on average £400 per month. In order to minimise and suppress public outrage at this clearly exploitative situation, it is helpful that Ukraine is totally dominated by right wing ideology propagated by the major TV channels owned by oligarchs, as well as numerous right wing think tanks.

Our iron ore study was initiated

ed by trade unions in the industrial city of Kryvy Rih where the majority of mines are located. When 400 miners stayed underground in May 2017 demanding a pay rise the owners replied that profits were not sufficient to increase wages. The miners knew that the product is mainly exported and that the owners are billionaires. So the profits must be hidden in offshore financial centres. The trade unionists turned to us, and with the help of the progressive left in the European Parliament and international tax experts we managed to find where the profits were hiding.

Using the most detailed analysis of commodity exports ever conducted, as well as previous studies of other authors, we found that Ukraine is losing around \$3 billion of profits every year. To put the number in context, fiscal losses from these shifted profits are similar in size to the whole of EU's macro-financial help Ukraine received since signing its EU association agreement in 2014. We presented the results in the European and Ukrainian parliaments.

Tax avoidance and offshores are among the most pressing socio-economic issues for both UK and Ukraine. Just taxation is the first item in Labour's 2017 Manifesto. Murky profits pouring into the British economy are exacerbating the troubling levels of inequality in the UK and are further inflating already unaffordable property prices. In Ukraine, we demonstrated that the scale of avoidance is enormous and both the outgoing president Poroshenko and the new president Zelenskyy have been caught up in offshore scandals.

The UK and Ukraine, and many other countries are bound together by the negative effects of offshoring on tax revenue, inequality and politics. Progressive forces should fight this tax dodging from both ends: at the source of illegitimate profits, in Ukraine (and elsewhere), and where these profits are kept and spent, in the UK. Tax-dodging elites have long been international in their approach – it is time for us to take a coordinated approach to fighting tax avoidance. **C**

**Dr Alexander Antonyuk is a member of the Ukrainian NGO Social Movement and an expert on international commodity markets. The studies he refers to are by Ukrainian activists from NGO Social Movement, Platform Start, Political party Respublika (Republic).**

## CITIZENSHIP

# Javid breaks international law

**Talha Ahmad** says revoking Shamima Begum's citizenship undermines the rule of law

**S**hamima Begum – along with her two friends became infamously known as the Bethnal Green Girls who legged Britain to join Daesh. Their tender age and previously unremarkable behaviour meant the country, and most importantly, the Muslim community in Bethnal Green and across the country was shocked.

We all want to see those committing acts of terrorism punished. We need to have robust means to do so. However, the Home Secretary's decision to revoke British citizenship of Ms Begum caused serious concern and is problematic on a number of grounds.

First, she was born in Britain, to British parents, never lived anywhere else, and had no connection to any country but Britain. Yet, her citizenship was revoked, as is evident from the narrative that followed afterwards, on the erroneous belief that she may be entitled to claim citizenship of Bangladesh. Had the Home Secretary sought proper legal advice, he would have known that such an

assumption was without basis. It leaves only one conclusion: it was her colour and 'foreign' heritage which triggered this decision.

Second, this decision is unfair on Iraqis and Syrians whose lives and homes have been ravaged by Daesh. We, the Europeans, are unable or unwilling to take a few hundred, at best several thousands, to our countries – richer in resources, infrastructure and know-how. We expect the Iraqis, Kurds and Syrians deprived of normalcy in their affairs to deal with the remnants of Daesh who we have raised, fed and educated.

Third, this decision flies in the face of our commitment to the rule of law and human rights. Sajid Javid's decision contravenes our obligation under international law as it left Begum stateless.

Begum's treatment is the latest in a series of decisions which collectively demonstrates an alarming trend. Between 1972 and 2002, there has not been a single revocation of citizenship. In the quarter century before that – which included the immediate after-

math of the 2WW, only 10 people were deprived of their citizenship. However, since 2013, there has been a serious rise in the number of people deprived of their British citizenship.

In cases where the Secretary of State certifies that a decision is made in reliance on documents which should not be made public for reasons of national security – which would be the case in most decisions of Begum's type – appeal is before a special tribunal. Neither Begum nor her lawyers will have sight of the evidence and will instead be represented by specially vetted and appointed lawyers. Such an arrangement undermines our values of open justice and reduces confidence on the decision making process.

It was heartening however to see Begum's case create national outrage with many prominent critics of the government's decision including the shadow home secretary. But the matter calls for far wider discussion. This is a matter of the integrity of our belief that in Britain all people are equal before the law regardless of their race, colour, belief or gender orientation. **C**

**Talha Ahmad is a solicitor**

# Volume builders profiting from need

**Dermot Mckibbin** on a tale of toxic leases and Tory inaction

**T**he leasehold tenure system in England and Wales is positively feudal in nature so much so that virtually all other English-speaking countries have done away with the concept. A lease is a wasted asset, when it expires a leaseholder will become a mere tenant. Freeholders can sell the ground rent without the knowledge or consent of the leaseholder. The amount of service charges is a problem area. Leaseholders have the legal right to apply to the tribunal for a determination on the lawfulness of such charges. However, case law has decided that even if the leaseholder wins in court, the freeholder can recover their legal costs from the leaseholder.

In 2002 Labour introduced a new form of tenure -Commonhold-which was intended to replace the leasehold tenure. Leaseholders would collectively own the freehold and could decide how they managed their property themselves. This reform was only optional for new properties and required the consent of all leasehold-

ers in existing blocks. As a result, the commonhold tenure never got off the ground.

The House of Commons Select Committee on Housing, Communities and Local Government has recently issued a bi-partisan inquiry report into leasehold reform. The committee concluded:

"Too often leaseholders, particularly in new-build properties, have been treated by developers, freeholders and managing agents, not as homeowners or customers but as a source of steady profit. The balance of power is too heavily weighted against leaseholders and must change".

The Committee recommended that commonhold should be the primary model for flat ownership. Mis-selling in the leasehold sector should be investigated by the Competition and Market Authority. Retrospective legislation is required to remove onerous ground rents and permission fees from existing leases. Other reforms were proposed.

Leading house builders have been criticised in the press for building

leasehold houses and then selling the freehold to third parties with onerous ground rent clauses that double every 10 or 15 years without the knowledge of the home-owner. Some of these properties have been bought via the 'Help to buy scheme'. The influential Leasehold Knowledge Partnership estimate that there are 100,000 new build leasehold properties that are unsellable due to high ground rents.

In March 2019 the Government announced that 40 leading developers had signed a non-statutory 'pledge' to crack down on toxic leaseholder deals. This pledge has been strongly criticised and will not be retrospective.

Labour politicians cannot afford to ignore this issue. The government believe that there were 4.2 million leasehold properties in England and Wales in 2015/2016. Some campaigners believe that this figure could in fact be 6.7 million.

The Labour leadership should raise this issue at Prime Ministers question time and organise demonstration outside the offices of developers such as Persimmons and Taylor Wimpey. **C**

**Dermot Mckibbin is a member of Beckenham CLP**

# Remain-Democrat: Labour's Brexit option

**Steve Freeman and Phil Vellender** offer critical support for Labour's Remain-Democrat position on Brexit, but argue Corbyn needs to lead by making the democratic case more powerfully

**G**eneral Secretary of the Communication Workers Union (CWU) Dave Ward (*New Statesman*, 7/6/2019), says "Labour won in Peterborough because it was able to cut through the Brexit issue" by avoiding the pitfall of a second referendum and refocusing people's minds "on the other profound issues facing our country and their local communities". He continues "I can tell you now that Labour would not have won in Peterborough" with the demand for a second referendum. "Coming out, all guns blazing, for a referendum to keep us in the EU would have been a gift to the Brexit Party and deflated Labour's turnout operation".

"Across England and Wales there are hundreds of seats - just like Peterborough - that Labour must win to secure a majority in parliament at the next election. It certainly will not do that if it ends up nailing its colours to the idea of overturning the result of a democratic referendum which the political class promised it would respect". This is fine as far as it goes. Labour has avoided, for now, the poison chalice of a second referendum. Ward's argument against it is based on the balance of votes to be won or lost. In 2017 Labour had eight million remain voters and four million leave voters. Defeating Labour at the next election requires driving a wedge between these two sections of its social base.

In 1975, Tony Benn told his constituents, before the referendum on the Common Market, that "the whole nation, and all political parties, is divided on the Common Market question. We must respect the sincerity of those who take a different view from our own. We should all accept the verdict of the British people whatever it is, and I shall certainly do so". (*The Spectator*, 18/1/1975). This is a good starting point. 'Remain-Democrats' support remaining in the EU, but



**Lisa Forbes: Labour victor for Peterborough**

have accepted the democratic mandate given by the voters in 2016. They recognise remain was in the minority, but continue both to exercise their right to campaign about the rampant corruption in the democratic process and to explain the case for Remain, while respecting the majority mandate to leave. Labour's Brexit is a policy which seeks to address the contradiction of a post-Referendum, divided working class.

The Corbyn Labour Party has somewhat hesitantly, but rightly, pitched its tent on 'Remain-Democrat' terrain as the party of Remain, yet one that accepts the 2016 result. Labour campaigned for Remain in 2016 and told voters in 2017 that it would respect the result and carry it out. On the basis of that election result it has successfully blocked Tory Brexit. However, Labour's parliamentary manoeuvres will eventually reach the end of the road.

There are three democratic omissions in Labour's Brexit. First, Labour must adopt the democratic demand for a ratification referendum on any deal while rejecting a second, or repeat referendum, with any remain question on the ballot paper. Second, Labour should clarify their support for England

and Wales leaving the EU, but remaining in the single market and customs union. Third, Labour should support the democratic right of Northern Ireland and Scotland to remain in the EU. The weakness of Corbyn's position is not, as Paul Mason (*Guardian*, 27/5/2019) and the liberals argue, that he doesn't back a second-remain referendum. Corbyn is under massive pressure from the national media for being unclear about this. However, were he to support it, then the media would immediately pivot to attack Labour for betraying its Leave voters. Corbyn is damned if he does and damned if he doesn't.

Labour must make it absolutely clear it agrees with the CWU general secretary's opposition to a 'second-remain' referendum: the time for a such a referendum is when the working class has shifted decisively in favour of remain. This has not yet happened. Opting for a second-remain referendum now would be highly controversial, highly divisive and a dangerous gamble. And it will not get through the present parliament.

Therefore, the only practical outcome of present Left demands for a second-remain referendum will be to help Tom Watson and the liberal wing of the Labour Party to overthrow Corbyn. This liberal-remain demand, by undermining Corbyn, exactly as Paul Mason has done, will enable the Tories' Brexit to win. The call for a second referendum and the allegations that Labour under Corbyn is an institutionally anti-Semitic party are the two prongs of the liberal attack on social democracy.

A ratification referendum is Labour's democratic answer to those reactionaries in the Tory and Brexit parties flaunting their fake democratic credentials. It is Labour's democratic answer to the liberals who have no respect for the working class, no policy for austerity and simply support British capital remaining in. **C**



## YOUTH VIEW

# Way to go on women's liberation

**Alice Arkwright** sees woeful progress on gender equality worldwide

**N**o country in the world is set to achieve gender equality by 2030 according to a new report by Equal Measure 2030. The report states that 2.8 billion women and girls live in countries that are not doing enough to improve women's rights.

The report summarises the findings of the first index to try and track progress with gender equality. The index tracks 51 targets across 14 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. 193 countries signed up to the goals in 2015, which focus on ending global poverty and inequality and halting the climate crisis by 2030.

The 51 targets either specifically reference women's rights or are related to issues that disproportionately affect women and girls, including the extent of freedom of association and collective bargaining rights, the proportion of Parliamentary seats held by women and female victims of intentional homicide.

The average score for the 129 countries in the index – home to 95% of women and girls worldwide – was 65.7, considered a poor result in the scoring system. No country received an excellent score and depressingly half of countries scored badly on the sustainable development goal specifically focused on gender equality, which includes targets on eliminating violence against women, ending FGM and upholding women's reproductive rights.

The report clearly exposes the amount of work there is to do and the urgency with which countries need to act. Here's three other factors that we must consider if we are to promote women's rights globally.

Firstly, this is not just an issue for developing countries.

Whilst the report showed some correlation between scores and national wealth, countries with lower GDP are making better progress in some areas, for example Rwanda has the highest share of female members of Parliament globally. Given the rolling back of abortion rights in the US in recent months, there is also a clear danger that progress in some countries is being reversed.



Pro-choice protestors in Georgia

Western countries must also acknowledge and address the negative impact they have had on developing countries' ability to make progress. The US now has clear red lines about the mention of sexual and reproductive health and gender in UN agreements, seeing them as code for abortion and LGBT+ rights. The US group C-Fam has also emerged as a powerful anti-abortion lobbying group influencing governments at the UN level.

The growth of far-right actors in the US and Europe is worrying considering the power Western countries and companies have in international policy spaces.

Those at the bottom of the index also experience multiple political and economic challenges that relate to the legacies of colonialism, the impact of conflicts which Western countries have been involved in and the draining of resources. According to research more wealth leaves Africa every year than enters it, by more than \$40 billion.

Secondly, we need to know more about women's experiences.

Whilst the index gives us a

global overview, what it doesn't tell us is about inequality within countries or the relationships between women's rights and other factors, such as age, income, ethnicity, religion, immigration status and sexual orientation.

By relying too heavily on data, we risk ignoring the factors that are not easily measurable. Examples of this are the amount that women contribute socially, emotionally and economically in unpaid care work, domestic work and childrearing and the allocation of resources inside households.

Nationally collected data also misses people's attitudes and the content of their experiences. What stereotypes and cultural attitudes people hold about gender hugely impact issues like violence against women and access to the labour market.

Certain groups are also often missed out of data collection. For example migrant workers, those with disabilities and older women are frequently neglected in statistics collected on violence against women.

Thirdly, we need to promote public expenditure and free public services.

The report does acknowledge that women have had to take on greater unpaid work as a result of cuts to education, health and other public services. But it does not unequivocally call for access to free and affordable services and the promotion of the welfare state. The targets in the index include measures on access to education, drinking water and family planning facilities, but it does not state the quality of these services, the maintenance of them and if they are free at the point of access.

Research has shown that austerity measures create additional burdens for women, so a key policy demand should be investment in the welfare state and the removal of any barriers that prevent economic, social and political participation.

We know urgent progress needs to be made. Now governments, organisations and international bodies must put women and importantly, the most marginalized women, at the heart of any initiative for improvement. **C**



**Alice Arkwright**  
works for the  
TUC

# China's belt and road: Confucius versus Machiavelli

**Don Flynn**  
on China's  
project to  
become  
number one

**Belt and Road: A Chinese World Order**  
**Bruno Maçães**  
**Hurst Publishers £20**

China's entry into the WTO set-up back in 2001 was seen by the strategists of neoliberalism as a great way to tame the communist beast and shackle the country to the free market. The stirring up of a new round of global super-power tension seems to be a marked departure from a line of development and progress that was intended to take the world in other directions.

Deng Xiaoping's reforms back in the 1970s led to China becoming a supplier of cheap goods to the developed world which was beginning to revel in the joys of outsourcing. Production took root in the newly established Special Economic Zones which were making use of the country's abundance of hard-pressed peasant and working classes. It was a win-win for politicians who saw globalisation as a way for a Global North breakout of its own logjam of low rates of profit and stagnant productivity and at the same time to equip the countries of the developing world with new tools to overcome poverty.

China has been outstandingly successful in accomplishing the second of these tasks, with something like 600 million of its citizens being taken out of dire need and want over a period of time when economic growth has attained rates of 10 percent a year plus. But this very development has presented the country's autocratic rulers with a set of new challenges which have sown the seeds of new, profound tensions being introduced into global capitalism.

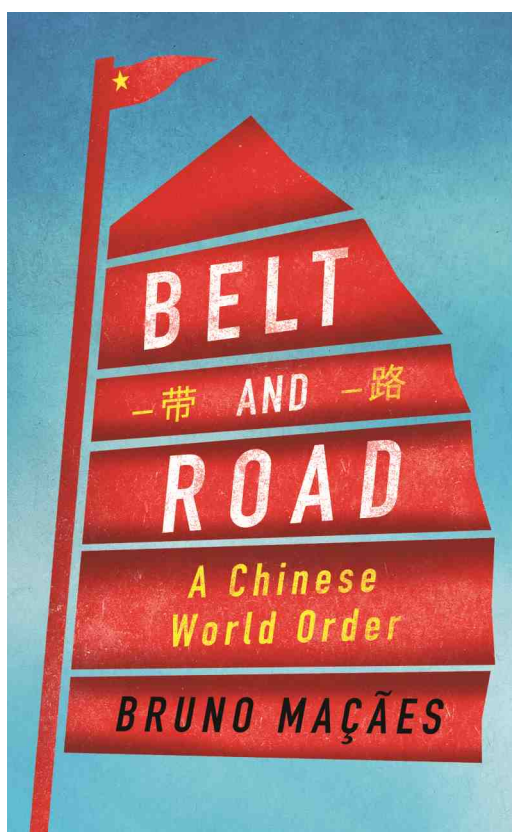
Bruno Maçães book setting out the nature of this challenge to the world order is essential reading for anyone wanting to understand the vitriol behind US hostility towards Huawei's role in building 5G mobile communication systems and the raft of Beijing policies that have been designated 'belt and road'. His starting point is the fact that China has reached the end of economic growth based on a cheap labour force manufacturing cheap goods. It now has a population in which modestly prosperous households make up

the largest segment, and who are devoting a large share of their new wealth to the education of their offspring. Chinese workers are expecting something better out of life than the sweated labour on offer in companies linked to foreign transnationals. Maçães explains that China needs a leg-up to become an economy producing the high-tech goods in innovations in robotics and AI for which the world is becoming ever more hungry. But production for this world means working with the global value

but Maçães insists it is far more ambitious than that. The idea of the 'belt' needs to be understood as a region in which transport, communication, goods manufacture and service provision is integrated in accordance with the standards required to produce value in a chain which will ultimately be captured by the China to which all parts of its unique GVC are directed. The 'road' refers to maritime connections which link Chinese ports to the rest of the world.

Maçães gives us a clear picture of the moral world view which justifies these plans to the Chinese Communist Party. In contrasting this with more the forms of imperialism which stemmed from the European powers he suggests that this can be seen as 'Confucius versus Machiavelli'. Machiavellism is essentially amoral being concerned with the preservation of the power of the prince. Later modifications of the idea tell us that, if good emerges from this it is an unintended consequence of the pursuit of selfish interests, guided by the 'invisible hand' of the market.

Confucianism, on the other hand, is saturated with morality. The Confucian ruler is enjoined to treat the welfare of the people as the highest value, but also that the people who benefit from this state of affairs must yield respect and obedience to the helmsman of their fate. By this standard the countries corralled into the belts and road of the Chinese world order will be expected to show the proper deference to the new emperors in



chains (GVC) that have splayed manufacturing and services out into a thousand pieces spread across a hundred countries, all coordinated by a powerful centre which can command the various parts to deliver according to its own strict standards.

The leadership in Beijing looks outwards and sees the prospects for building the cross-border networks it needs to assemble for the sake of its own GVCs as lying in the barely realised potential of central Asia, which in turn opens up routes to the south and south-east (Pakistan, India, Indochina) and westwards along a new Silk Roads to West Asia and Europe. It becomes too easy to envision the belt and road strategy as a simple opening up of trade routes,

Beijing.

Despite all the nuance, the Chinese world order is likely to be experienced in much the same way as the other world orders which have beset the planet since the Europeans set sail from their own peninsular back in the 15th century. Countries which now seem to be benefiting from substantial investment from Chinese sources that are tied to the modernisation of industry and infrastructure will find themselves burdened with impossible levels of debt should their growth rates fail to reach the clip required to ensure repayment. Expect the belt and road to stir up more discontent and friction in the future, and not all of it coming from the direction of Washington.



## BOOK REVIEWS

# A socialist in rapids of revolution

**Glyn Ford**  
ON  
Scotland's  
Bolshevik

**John Maclean - Hero of Red Clydeside**  
**Henry Bell**  
**Pluto Press £14.99**

John Maclean was complicated and complex, a revolutionary socialist, a Scottish nationalist, an educationalist, an agitator, an enthusiastic supporter of Lenin and the Bolsheviks while a fierce critic of the CPGB. Lenin appointed him as Soviet Consul in Glasgow, he was - in absentia - one of the three honorary chairmen, along with Karl Liebknecht and Victor Adler, of the Third All Russian Congress of Soviets. He was lauded by Trotsky, Stalin and Gramsci and libelled by the Daily Record and Glasgow Herald. At his Majesty's pleasure he served serial brutal jail terms where forced-feeding, hard labour and appalling conditions destroyed his health and, some claimed, his sanity. He was worse served by his 'friends' who in their sectarianism dismembered and butchered his political legacy to fit their narrow partial interests.

Maclean's parents were from Gaelic-speaking stock driven to Glasgow in the wake of the Highland Clearances. His father, a potter, was broken by silicosis and died at 43 leaving a widow and four children deep in poverty and protestantism. By 1900, Maclean was a teacher, Marxist and Third Lanark supporter. He would miss a meeting for a match. When they won the League in 1904 he was a long-standing member of the Social Democratic Federation (SDF). John saw beyond the giant cranes of the Clyde to an increasing global marketplace requiring falling costs of production. He was neither then, nor later, against automation and deskilling. Bringing new men - and women - into the army of labour was a strength not a weakness. It was the ability of Labour and the trade unions to maintain control that was the question. Process

innovations were to be traded for shorter working hours. He organised successful outcomes to a series of strikes in the industrial unrest preceding the Great War. He ensured the claims went beyond the feasible iced with 'transitional demands' impossible to grant within the system. His 'fighting theory' was the lessons thus learnt would propel the movement forward.

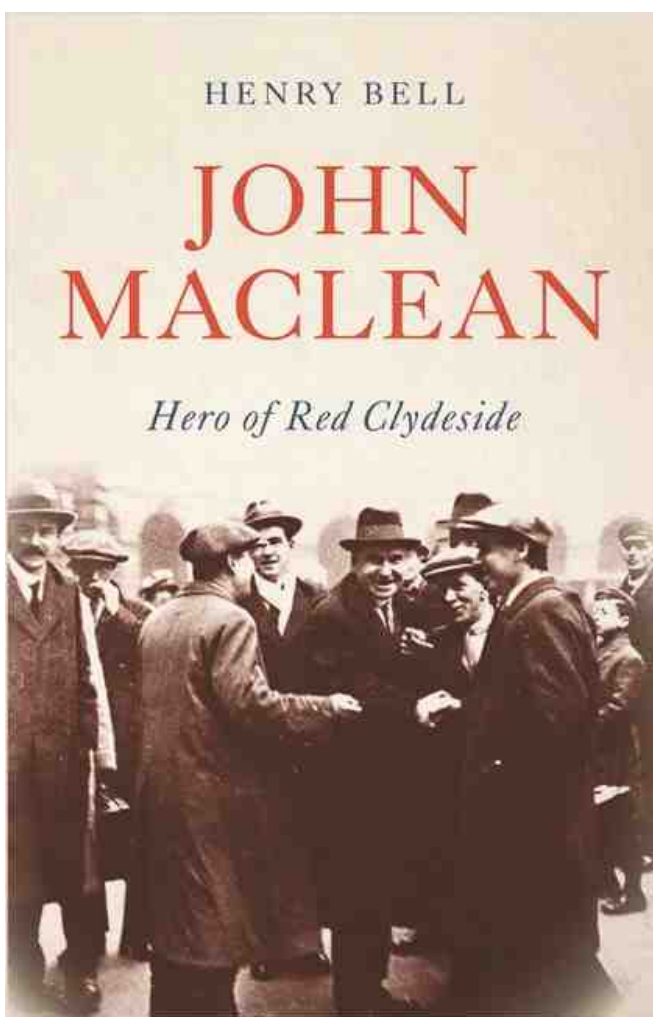
It was the War that made him the figure he became. He was no paci-

June 1917 he went straight back to agitation, arguing it was the duty of workers to 'go slow' to use their power to prevent 'the war after the war' that threatened with America. In May 1918 back in court he refused to plea, representing himself and using the court as a platform to indict capitalism and argue for class war.

As the war drew to its bloody close in early November 1918 the Cabinet decided, 'Our real danger now is not the Boches but Bolshevism'. The next months were to be in the rapids of the revolution. There was a campaign for a 40-hour week to absorb returning workers from the front. While Maclean was preaching revolution, others were organising a strike. Maclean was in the coalfields promoting a popular uprising. On 31st January, four days into the strike, there were violent clashes between the strikers and police in Glasgow's George Square. The Government mobilised troops and tanks. Cowed by the military presence the mass action withered and died.

This wind of change brought sectarianism not struggle as the left turned on itself. Maclean was playing - not that he knew it - the endgame. He re-emphasised his support for the Irish struggle and followed the Bolshevik view that one path to world communism

was to be through the nation. His antipathy to the damage to the cause from the CPGB sycophants prancing to Moscow's tunes saw him in February 1923 establish a Scottish Workers' Republican Party. In favour of independence and the re-creation at national level of the communism of the clans, it was all too late. The moment - if there was one - had been missed. His final warning before he died in November was the emerging threat from the 'British Fascisti'. There was a magnificent funeral and wake before the nationalist and social-





# The limits of knee-jerk liberalism

**Don Flynn**  
ON  
Immigration  
Policy

**Drawbridge Britain: Love and Hostility in Immigration Policy from Windrush to the Present**

**Russell Hargrave**  
Eyewear Publishing, £16.99

**T**he recent history of British immigration policy is often presented as a record of one stupid mistake after another. For the right wing, the errors have stemmed from a lamentable tendency to bumble into the delusions of multiculturalism. For the liberal left, the mess has its roots in a failure to modernise conceptions about the country's international interests from those which prevailed during the epoch of empire.

Both outlooks generate enormous scope for contrary narratives which point one way if you are a neocon of the Douglas Murray ilk, or a weary pedagogue pleading for us to learn the lesson of history in the manner of Robert Winder.

Neither current has proven especially persuasive in convincing ordinary people that they should sharpen up their views on the issue of immigration, and either pitch for the radical closing of borders to dangerous foreigners (ie 99.999% of them), or stop worrying and learn to love chicken tikka masala.

This brief book falls into the latter category and succeeds as well as other accounts which take

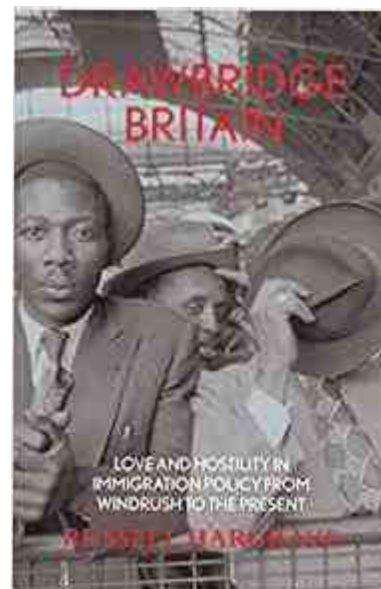
a similar stance in telling a story marked by the callousness and inhumanity which so much of government policy directs towards newcomers. But does it do any better by explaining how things have turned out as they have, not as a consequence of second-rate professional politicians who have never been up to the task, but as a contingency shaped by the character of capitalism as it emerged during the second half of the 20th century and continues today?

No, it doesn't. The absence of any international perspective on the subject, situating the movement across the planet in the economic and political conditions that prevailed during these years means that attitudes towards migration are seen as a cranky cultural phenomenon that has its roots in the peculiarities of the people of these northern European islands which will only be corrected by the patient practice of lecturing them on their folly.

We should be beyond this point today. The history of immigration in any period needs to be located within the wider framework of the development of the economic and social system. For capitalist societies this means looking at the way working classes are being summonsed into existence in specific forms, only to be dissolved back into inchoate masses as commodity production

is shaped by technological change and new relations are required between capital and labour.

Hargreaves gets the dates of the major events in the history of UK immigration policy mostly right and injects a strong feeling of outrage at the injustices that are integral to the story. But the 'kneejerk liberalism' that he alludes to in his account will never be sufficient to turn the tide against the exploitation of the vulnerable position of migrant newcomers under modern-day capitalism: only the emergence of class struggle which embodies an internationalist perspective will be adequate to that task.



# The Blair Government reconsidered

**Duncan Bowie**  
on a  
revisionist  
history

**Heroes or Villains**  
**Jon Davis and John Rentoul**  
Oxford University Press £25

**T**his is certainly a revisionist work. The authors' novel approach treats the Blair government of 1997 to 2007 as a coalition between Blair and Gordon Brown, which explains why Brown's image appears with Blair's on the book cover. The book is also unusual in that it focuses on the process of Government rather than on the actual dominant policy issues.

The main sources of the study, other than the voluminous Alistair Campbell diaries, are a series of contributions by former cabinet members (including Blair himself) and senior civil servants, including cabinet secretaries, to seminars

held at Queen Mary College and latterly at King's College, London.

The book is full of extended and often revealing quotes from these sources, which go far beyond traditional published sources.

Rentoul, a journalist before turning academic, published one of the early and more favourable biographies of Blair, while Davis has experience in the private sector and within the Cabinet Office before publishing an academic study of Prime Ministers and Whitehall.

The book focuses on how the rivalry between Blair and Brown impacted on the processes of government, relative to the processes in previous administrations and with some reference to later administrations, though the Brown premiership of 2007 to

2010 is largely avoided. This is politics before the Global financial crisis. There is considerable material on how senior civil servants reacted to the Blair/Brown regime and the move from a cabinet led decision making process of the Thatcher/Major era to the so-called sofa government of the new regime. The regime is seen as a coalition between the two rival gangs led by Blair and Brown respectively, with Ministers (and to a lesser extent civil servants) forced to take sides.

Campbell and Charlie Whelan feature strongly as the rival spin doctors. There is little mention of the role of parliament in the decision-making process, little mention of the Labour party and no

**Continued on page 28>>**

## BOOK REVIEWS

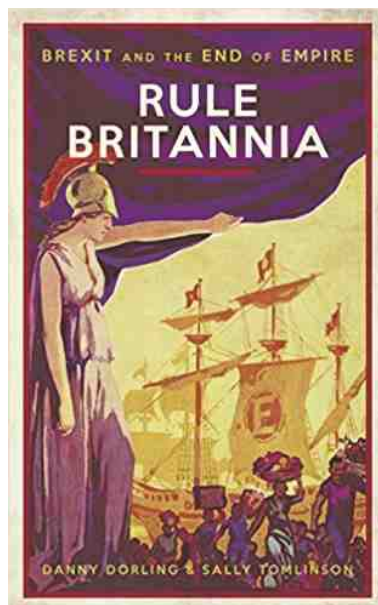
# Hangover of Empire

**Glyn Ford**  
on Brexit

**Rule Britannia: Britain and the End of Empire**  
**Danny Dorling and Sally Tomlinson**  
**Biteback £12.99**

**B**rexit was the consequence of the brutal hangover of Empire. Delusions of grandeur hobbled the intellect of both politicians and public as the education system impressed on pliable minds a history and heaven that never was. It was the exploitation of Empire that underpinned the core economy and rising living standards in the nineteen and twentieth centuries. The subjection and destruction of peripheral countries and communities across the globe allowed Britain's rulers to grow fat while liberally scattering crumbs to the under-class. The end of Empire left Britain beached on a falling economic tide.

Europe became the scapegoat for our own failings. The self-same over-regulation strangling British industry was paradoxically allowing that of our continental competitors to compete with the rest and the best. Austerity was not a political choice but a necessity. High social standards threaten the bonuses of hedge fund managers and needed to be levelled if Britain was to thrive. The spell of tougher EU financial regulations opened the floodgates for



finance to lavishly fund Leave, Tories and both.

Jack Straw with his malevolent last minute introduction of a flawed PR for the 1999 European Elections gave UKIP the opportunity they relished, while Cameron running behind in the 2005 Tory leadership election fed the beast with a short cut to the front on the promise of a referendum and the Party absconding from the mainstream European Peoples' Party into bed with deniers, fruitcakes and fascists. The Referendum was

a train crash waiting to happen. Even forewarned by 2014's near debacle in the Scottish Referendum, Cameron didn't change track.

Against the expected narrative, for Dorling and Tomlinson it wasn't the male, stale and pale of Labour's heartlands that broke expectations in June 2016 rather it was the rage against the machine of the older, less well-off, less-well educated middle England Tories. The villains of the piece were to be found in the South East not the North East. The result would have been different with any one of a financial level playing field, a media that challenged Leave's lies, the absence of deliberate voter suppression, or just a Labour campaign aimed at Labour voters rather than collaboration with Cameron.

Rule Britannia echoes Captain 'Titus' Oates' famous last words, 'I am just going outside and I may be some time'. For the authors a narrow win would merely have compounded the problem and prevaricated any solution. Now England and the English have to reconnect with reality or face not only life outside the European Union but the dissolution of the English Empire, following on from the British a short century ago, as Scotland leaves and Ireland unites. Will Labour be part of the problem or the solution?

>>>Continued from page 27

mention of the Conservative opposition. The story is told as if election manifestos, party politics and general elections are all irrelevant. Even the media role is seen from the perspective of the rival manipulations of Campbell and Whelan.

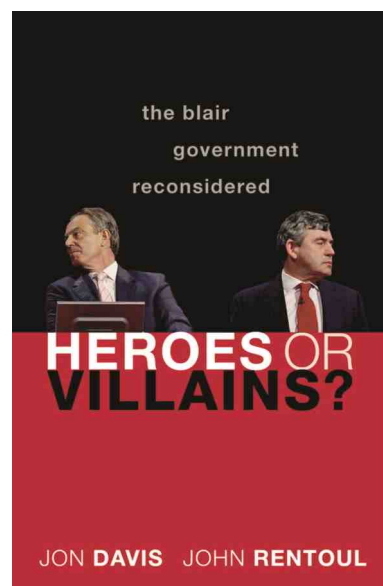
This is a very top down narrative, but in being so probably accurately reflects the perspectives within Whitehall and presents a more realistic analysis of governance in practice than previous narratives, which is somewhat depressing to those who view politics as a competition between contrasting ideologies or principles. This is a power struggle between rival power bases, rather than a struggle between 'Old Labour' and 'New Labour'.

In the two 'policy' chapters, the authors present a detailed study of the relationship between No 10 and the Treasury (the focus being

more on who was in charge of economic policy rather than on policy differences, though Blair was more pro-European Monetary Union than was Brown). The chapter on the Iraq War sets out a justification for Blair's policy rather than supporting the conclusions of the Chilcot report.

The authors in fact present a much more positive view of the Blair government and certainly seek to promote Blair's style of government over that of Gordon Brown who is seen as the jealous and obstructive rival, who never forgave Blair for becoming Prime Minister in 1997 rather than himself, always impatient for the succession. A book well worth reading, and one which puts forward a sound if somewhat disturbing basis for its conclusions, however depressing this may be for those who take a more principled if ide-

alised approach to how politics should work in practice.





# Labour rebirth

**Dave Lister**  
on Corbyn

**Jeremy Corbyn and the Strange Rebirth of Labour England**  
**Francis Beckett and Mark Seddon**  
Birkbeck Publishing £20

This is an important book, containing some excellent judgements. The authors explain at the beginning that it was originally going to be titled 'The Strange Death of Labour England', a reference to George Dangerfield's classic work 'The Strange Death of Liberal England', but the election of Jeremy Corbyn as Labour leader and Labour's encouraging results in the 2017 general election persuaded them that there was hope for the future after all. Although they insist that they are talking only about England, it is clear that much of what they say is applicable to Britain as a whole.

Two thirds of the book is about the period from the rise of Thatcherism to the resignation of Ed Miliband as Labour leader. The authors' main thesis is that the post-war period up to 1979 was a time when England became more progressive and civilised. During about half of this period Labour was in power and introduced the legislation that achieved this result. By the 1970s the gap between rich and poor was the narrowest it had ever been. There were plentiful jobs and homes and local councils had the ability to make important decisions, including over educational provision for their area.

All this changed with the election of Margaret Thatcher's Conservatives. Right to buy created the housing crisis that we have today. Unions were legislatively restricted. Wholesale privatisations took place. The Blair governments introduced some positive measures such as the minimum wage, but generally refused to use their huge 1997 majority to restore what had been lost.

Clearly the election of Jeremy Corbyn as Labour leader opened up new possibilities. The authors show how the creation of Momentum by Jon Lansman and Michael Meacher played a key

role in harnessing the idealism and energy of young people, many of whom had previously been outside the political process. The power of the national press to frustrate Labour was reduced as young people were more likely to consume social media, and Momentum used this to good effect.

The authors emphasise the point that they are not Corbynistas and are uncomfortable with personality cults. But they are firm Corbyn supporters nonetheless, although they acknowledge that he has made some bad mistakes and they are

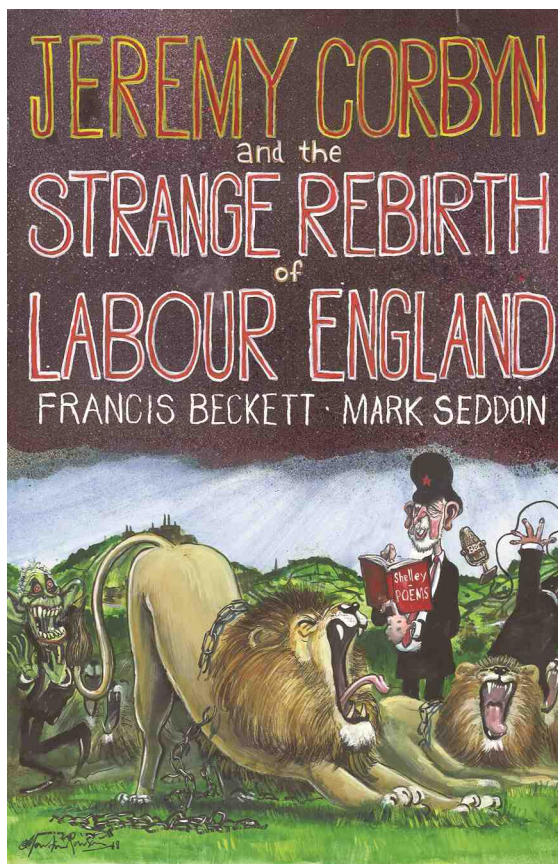
with such noble aims has managed to harbour so many quite malevolent and unpleasant people..."

The authors further claim that although Corbyn and his closest associates are from the hard left of the party, the policies in the 2017 election manifesto are classically social democratic. They believe that Harold Wilson and Tony Crosland would have understood the intent if not all the content of these policies. As a result, we saw the largest increase in Labour's vote in an election since 1945. The policies on university tuition fees and building council

homes were especially popular. Since then, as Beckett and Seddon outline, the 2018 local election results show some loss of support in some white working-class areas but also some astonishing successes in some middle-class heartlands which had been solidly Tory for a very long time. They conclude that if Corbyn were "to go tomorrow we can be sure that the next leader will believe in something, and that something will have to do with righting the balance between the rich and the poor, between the powerful and the powerless. That is Corbyn's legacy, his achievement."

The authors do not cover the current situation, which unfortunately looks less promising for Labour because of Brexit. At the time of writing, the 2019 local election results show Labour losing significant ground to the Liberal Democrats and Greens because of its failure to

come out clearly on the Remain side. Corbyn seems to be in a state of denial about this and Momentum released a statement that could have been written by Dr Pangloss. Hard-line Leave supporters are equally unhappy with Labour's stance. We can only hope that this case of one step forward and one step back is a temporary phenomenon and that over time we will return to a situation in which the election of a majority Labour government is at least conceivable. Easter is over but the future of so much and so many depends on this resurrection.



less than enamoured of some of his close advisers. They point out that Andrew Murray and Seumas Milne have a background in the hard line "Tankie" faction of the CPGB and criticise them for trying to distance Corbyn too much from his supporters when his main strength is in relating to people, particularly the young. There is also concern about the conduct of some of the sectarians who have joined or re-joined the Labour Party in the wake of Corbyn's election. As they say: "What the present authors wonder is how in recent years a party

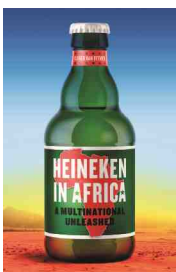


## BOOK REVIEWS

## Beer wars

**Nigel Watt**  
on Neo-colonialism

**Heineken in Africa**  
**Olivier van Beemen**  
**Hurst £20.99**



An island of perfection in a sea of misery". That's the way some Dutch Heineken managers see it. A much nastier reality is revealed by the diligent research of Olivier van Beemen. Heineken is one of the biggest players in the beer industry all over Africa. And beer is big in Africa. There are risks but profits are huge. Heineken refused to talk to the author until this book came out in Dutch. Fearing bad publicity when the English version was threatened finally made them talk, but they refused to comment on specific criticisms.

The company has been close to ruling regimes: in Ben Ali's Tunisia, in Apartheid South Africa, in pre-genocide Rwanda and in Burundi today where Heineken helped the president win an illegal third term. When, as in the Congo, the brewery was in a rebel area it collaborated with the rebels. The company has been extra helpful to governments – keeping the bodies of dead leaders in the brewery 'morgue', lending the company house at Boma to President Kabila. These relationships did not stop Heineken

depriving the friendly governments of revenue by finding clever ways of repatriating profits – and of promoting sales, even to the extent of painting advertisements for beer on school buildings (catch them young).

Starting up in Mozambique in 1917 Heineken negotiated such big tax concessions that the state would only benefit if a lot more beer was consumed. The recruitment of 'promotion girls' is what eventually got the company into the most trouble. It started in Nigeria and spread to thirteen countries. The company organised training for sex workers who went to bars to sell beer. Some were prostitutes when they were recruited and those that were not complained about the short skirts they had to wear and the consequent reaction of the customers. This practice was exposed as a scandal in the Dutch media and dented Dutch pride in their flagship company.

Rwanda provides the most fascinating chapter in the book and it really gives the reader the feel of that terrible time in 1994. Heineken had close relations with the Habyarimana government up to April. (In fact the Chairman of Bralirwa was on the president's plane when it was shot down.) Beer

production continued until the brewery was captured and the beer fuelled the atrocities. Relations were cool with the new RPF regime and, given France's shameful role in the genocide, Heineken crassly appointed a Frenchman as the new manager. Then there was a terrible ambush when many workers were killed.

Is Heineken so different, you may ask, from any other multinational company? I doubt if it is worse than the other big players, AB Inbev (includes South African Breweries), Castel and Diageo (Guinness). In fact Heineken has, over the years, formulated policies on workers' rights and on working in conflict areas but it has always been slow in implementing them. Of course, like any capitalist business it is focussed on making a profit. The difference is the product. As I remember from my time in Burundi, beer as well as being by far the biggest social drink, is also important to both sides at times of conflict: in the Congo, Rwanda and Burundi there could be war and all forms of chaos but the brewery had to continue pumping out the stuff so that the army and the rebels were fuelled for battle.

This book is well written and well translated. It provides an unusual – and interesting – perspective on Africa.

## Polycentric Communism

**Duncan Bowie**  
on ideological dispersal

**Red Star over the Third World**  
**Vijay Prashad**  
**Pluto £12.99**

Prashad is an Indian communist, based in London as Director of the Tricontinental Institute for Social Research. The first section of this book reads as a standard Leninist history of the October revolution – Lenin was right on everything, it was a popular revolution not a coup, the Mensheviks were traitors and Kerensky was a bourgeois liberal.

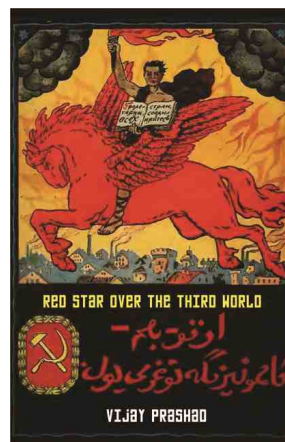
The book then gets more interesting, giving a narrative of the export of revolutionary ideas to 'third world' countries, focusing on the application of Marxism to countries which were peasant rather than urban proletariat dominated. In a short book, the geographical coverage is impressive though the detail is necessar-

ily lacking. Prashad covers, although briefly, Central Asia, India, China, Latin America, Mongolia, Korea, Indonesia, Vietnam, Cuba as well as the impact on European communists' relationship with their colonies and pan-Africanism.

The book is readable, including images and even a few poems. It also gives unusual prominence to the role of women's movements. Prashad introduces lesser known figures such as the Peruvian theorist, Mariategui, the Afro-American poet, Claud McKay, the Turkish socialist feminist Naciye Hanim and the Indonesian Tan Malaka. It touches on the difficult relations between the centralist Comintern and national communists and argues in favour of a polycentric communism, which was not driven by the interests of the Soviet Union.

Overall, a useful book and a

pleasant change from traditional Eurocentric and Soviet centric histories. Prashad provides an introduction to lesser known communisms. Regrettably the book lacks an index, references and a bibliography for further reading, which would have enhanced the book's usefulness.



# Academised politics

**Andrew Coates**  
on Grand Theory

**Grand Hotel Abyss. The Lives of the Frankfurt School**  
**Stuart Jeffries**  
**Verso £18.99**

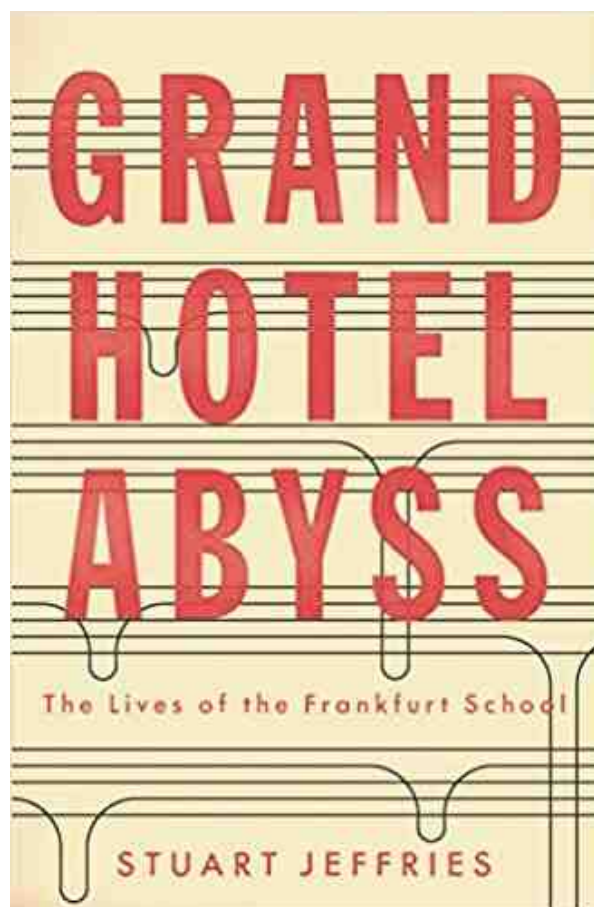
The believer in the 'actuality of the Revolution', György Lukács, remarked that in the Grand Hotel Abysses, you looked at the world wrapped up in comfort. They were Mandarins. Even an admirer, Gillian Rose would say "instead of politicising academia, it academised politics." After Stalinism and the Nazi regime, the Frankfurt theorists would come, for writers like Perry Anderson, to embody the pessimism born out of Western Marxism's divorce between theory and political practice.

The Frankfurt thinkers did not become famous for Grünberg's programme of investigation into the history of socialism and economic theory. A growing scepticism was not just affected by the defeat of the post Great War German Revolution. They questioned Marxist ideas about humans defining and liberating themselves through work. Modern capitalism took labour in its grip. It equally took over leisure through the 'culture industry'. Walter Benjamin saw the Paris arcades, as spaces in which a 'new social world', 'temples of capitalism' took shape.

This picture of a few – now out of the way – enclosed shopping passages, has inspired many later writers. Benjamin aimed to "recast Marxisms for a new consumerist era in which we were in thrall to commodities." As Jeffries points out, the Frankfurters are remembered largely for the importance they gave to analysing culture as an 'instrument of capitalism'.

If you want Grand Theory the Frankfurt School offered it in plenty. The Grand Hotel Abyss deftly weaves through Benjamin's celebrated efforts to undermine Marxist, more properly Second International politics, and belief in its leading role in the inevitable progress of History.

This could be said to extend Georges Sorel's attack on the bourgeois Illusions of Progress (1908). 'Negative thinking' in the writings of Adorno and Marcuse was not just a break with the optimistic positivism that the French writer attacked. It was a reaction to the failures of socialism; the Nazi victories and the Soviet show trials and gulags. What if, "the forces that were to bring about the transformation are suppressed and appear to be defeated?"



Jeffries does not stand back from probing this aspect of the Frankfurt school. That reason has turned out to be a new form of domination, when they tried to demolish it 'with its own tools.' The Grand Hotel steps into the murky waters of the Hegelian inspired dialectics employed to demolish the claims of 'the Enlightenment'. A famous episode, when Adorno confronted Karl Popper, saw their pretensions challenged. The defender of the Open Society, who for all his faults as a political thinker had a deep knowledge of scientific method, maths and formal logic,

which was not the case for the Marxist Hegelian, ended up talking across each other. The writer whose work was an attack on positivism was charged with...positivism.

The Frankfurt School are often described as terrific snobs who regretted the loss of traditional high art and intellectual modernism and scorned mass culture. Jeffries calls some of their writings on this "incredibly patronising". Marcuse also talked in Freudian terms of the manipula-

tion of sexuality and need: Eros was controlled and subordinated. His search for a new revolutionary subject to replace the working class in the "one dimensional society" saw his books being taken up by New Left movements which, if often transient, were at the forefront of calls for sexual and social liberation. More detached Adorno and Horkheimer reacted with hostility to the protests of the 1960s, and attacked student activists who disrupted the, their, universities.

The Grand Hotel Abyss is full of memorable detail. One is a meeting between Sartre and Marcuse. The existentialist turned New Leftist managed to give the author of One Dimensional Man the impression he had read his works in depth, without ever having opened a page. This was just as well. Marcuse managed to cite favourably in that book, at length, Roland

Barthes' *Le Degré zero de l'écriture* without twigging that Barthes was attacking Sartre's idea of 'committed' writing.

Jeffries achieves that hard task of making abstract ideas accessible. It interweaves biographical material on the thinkers' Jewish background, their fraught relationship with Marxism and the socialist movement, and the shadows of Nazism and Stalinism. Jeffries suggests that, after a period of neglect in their writings, a revival of interest in the potentially emancipatory side is underway. That may well be true. In the meantime, this is a terrific book to get people going.



## VIEW FROM WESTMINSTER



# Trumps everything

After an embarrassing state visit **Rupa Huq** ponders whether the future's orange

**Rupa Huq is MP for Ealing Central & Acton**

**T**he whirlwind known as the Trump bandwagon consisting of El Presidente, his legions of bum-wipers, family members including offspring of various wives along the way and security detail has now left our shores. The man is certainly an enigma but the break from the norm that places him firmly outside even the usual Republican Party tradition is worrying on many levels. George W Bush expressed his disgust for the man and didn't vote for him.

Times change and Bush Junior choking on a pretzel seems to be an incident from another era, notwithstanding its prelude to an unnecessary and ill-judged, if not illegal, war. We appear to be in the age of right-wing hard-men with the likes of Putin, Orban, Bolsanaro and Farage. Many thrive on demonising vulnerable and minority communities in their path to power. There certainly is a long list of categories Trump's offended: his mocking of a disabled reporter, his comments on grabbing women by the nether regions, his caging of Mexican kids that he separates on the border from parents, the Muslims which he banned from the US... these have all raised eyebrows as well as opprobrium.

Nothing is off-limits: he's insulted royalty in Meghan Markle who he called "nasty", Theresa May for her handling of the EU and has little regard for the international rules based order be it NATO, the UN, EU or Paris Climate Change agreement. For those desiring a no deal Brexit, his trashing of the WTO is most unwelcome too.

He tends to give jobs to friends and family: the middle east is now subject to a



redrawing of its boundaries by his son in law in what is promised to be the "deal of the century" but scepticism abounds after unilaterally moving the Israeli embassy from Tel Aviv to shared Jerusalem and withdrawing funding from UNWRA the UN's human rights arm which funds Palestinian refugees amongst other things. Trump prefers to put up walls rather than building bridges. The sabre rattling over Iran after tearing up the nuclear deal causing hardship and suffering to innocent civilians via punitive sanctions is not the action of a man of peace.

In the end, this latest visit went off as the one the year before including audience with the Queen, angry protests, balloon shaped like a Trump-baby and awkward pics with Theresa May. In 2018 he'd had to swerve to avoid London from his route. This time a day's recess was contrived so that he didn't have to address Parliament which John Bercow was dead set against. The PM, who rushed over with indecent haste to suck up to him on his election in desperation for post Brexit trade deals, is now a lame duck alas. Indeed the most controversial moment was his revelation that the NHS 'would' be up for grabs in a future trade deal. He didn't seem to be the world's biggest expert on our health service. When "America

first" is his mantra and he's a businessman good at sealing deals to his benefit he's not too fussed about world-class treatment for all free at the point of use. Indeed when questioned on the NHS he seems to not even have a vague acquaintance with the initials but he did stress how everything would be on the table.

I was never for banning Trump outright but felt allowing him the rarity of a state visit was wrong – he was only the third ever US President in history to get one. Jeremy Corbyn was right to boycott the state dinner and right when he said before Trump's election when the orange faced one was blathering on about no go zones of London that he ought to come and see Finsbury Park Mosque. Had I entertained him I'd have taken him to Ealing's synagogues and its mosques, our Quaker meeting house, Polish church and other ecclesiastical community to demonstrate the multi-faith patchwork harmony locally.

Twice in a row now Britain has become a part of Trump's ego trip and now increasingly imminent re-election campaign. Apart from the first George Bush and Jimmy Carter it's very rare for US Presidents not to get a second whack. Let's just hope that the sad slogan from the early days of mobiles 'the future is orange' doesn't come to fruition. **C**

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