

# CHARTIST

**For democratic socialism**

**#301 November/December 2019**

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## Ditching the Tories

**Laura Parker**

**Julie Ward**

**Europe Matters**

**Don Flynn**

**Duncan Bowie**

**Tory troubles**

**Mary Southcott**

**Turkey attacks**

**Hassan Hoque**

**Islamophobia**

**Denis Wong**

**Hong Kong**

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**Extinction Rebellion**

**plus**

**Book reviews & regulars**



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# CHARTIST

For democratic socialism

## Editorial Policy

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

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

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

Contributions and letters deadline for

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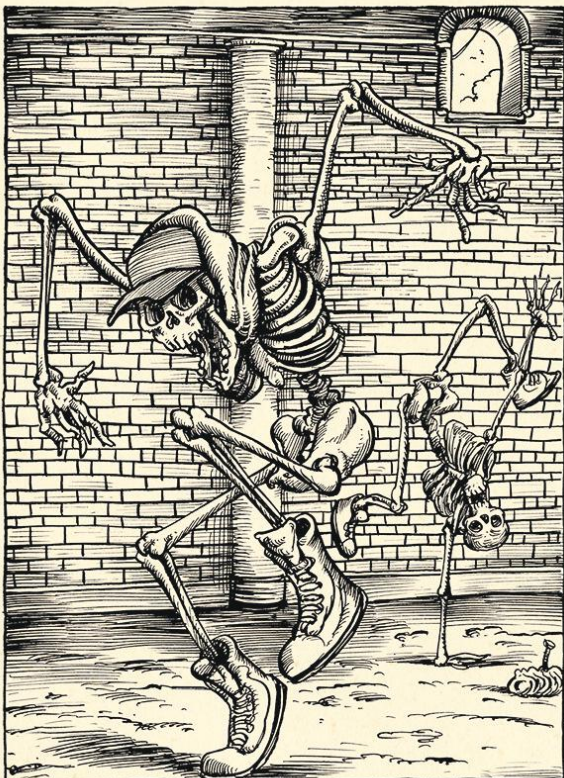
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Cover by Martin Rowson

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FOR DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM

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## OUR HISTORY

# OUR HISTORY - 87

## May Day Manifesto (1968)

**T**he original draft of the manifesto was published in 1967, being revised for publication as a book by Penguin the following year. The original Manifesto was produced by a working group of socialists associated with the New Left

Review, who described themselves as 'intellectual socialists working in universities, technical colleges, schools and research institutions', with three editors: Edward Thompson, Stuart Hall and Raymond Williams. The revised version, building on extended discussion within a set of specialist working groups, was edited by Raymond Williams. The manifesto sought first to analyse social realities within the context of the 'new international capitalism and a new kind of imperialism which are at the roots not only of the British economic crisis, but of the world political crisis and the realities and dangers of war'. The extracts below are taken from the section on 'Two Meanings of Social Democracy' and from the final section on 'The Politics of the Manifesto'.

"It has always been argued that the critical choice, for a socialist, is between a programme of violent change – the capture of state power – and a programme of electoral change – the winning of a majority in parliament. Tactics, values, organisation seem to hang on that choice; the shape of a future society is prefigured by the road we choose.... Socialists can no longer go on restricting their view of socialist advance to the achievement of more powerful Labour majorities in parliament. With no other political strategy but the winning of a parliamentary majority, it is as a movement, with its habitual forms of activity geared solely to the electoral process, acquiescing in the precise mechanisms which are intended to contain it.... If the

party becomes real, as a campaigning democratic institution, it is at once a focus of genuinely alternative power.... It is not in the obsolete perspective of the choice between 'revolution' and 'evolution' but in the actual perspective of the choice between a political movement and an electoral machine, that we have to look, in Britain, at the situation and condition of the Labour party."

"We believe that the Left should develop its own Socialist National Plan, moving from an increased solidity of defence to detailed developments and proposals... We reject consensus politics, but that necessary hardening must go along with a new flexibility, where the real opposition is already formed and forming. We look forward to making certain specific connections, in campaigns and in publications. We want to ask members of the major single-issue campaigns and of the existing organisations of the Labour movement to discuss with us and others the bearings of their own urgent work on the whole analysis we have offered.... We want to connect with what is still strong in Britain: a democratic practice, a determined humanity, an active critical intelligence... What we are seeking to define is an active socialism of the immediately coming generation; an emerging political

process rather than the formalities of a process that is already, as democratic practice, beginning to break up and disappear. We are looking to the political structure of the rest of the century, rather than to the forms which now embody the past and confuse recognition of the present. This manifesto is a challenge, and it asks for a response."



## Printer ad

# Love Socialism, Hate Brexit

Parliament has put Boris Johnson in a ditch but he is far from dead. Opposition parties led by Jeremy Corbyn have exposed the hypocrisy and holes, lies and deceptions at the heart of the Prime Minister's revamped deal with the European Union.

Significantly it keeps Northern Ireland in the customs union, with a border in the Irish Sea, something Johnson vowed never to do and pushes the DUP under a bus in the process. Furthermore the Withdrawal Agreement Bill (WAB) removes worker's rights, consumer protections and environmental standards from the Treaty, relocating them in the legally non-binding Political Agreement. Labour has rightly said this deal is worse than the May deal: this brings shame on the 19 Labour MPs who voted for it and for an accelerated three day debate.

As we go to press it looks likely the EU will agree a flex-extension of Article 50. All that stands between Johnson and an early general election is his refusal to take no deal off the table. Corbyn is right to insist on this as a precondition. A pre-Christmas election would not be a wise move, better to string Johnson out with scrutiny of every last clause of this zombie government's WAB, which threatens to inflict enormous and unnecessary harm on British people.

Make no mistake, this is the hard right wing of the Tory party in government. As **Don Flynn** explains, the expulsion of 21 one-nation Tory MPs represents a fundamental shift to a national populist regime. **Duncan Bowie's** survey of Tory divisions going back to the days of Peel and the Corn Laws indicates this is the most significant split in the Tory Party in over 100 years.

The nationalist populist drum-beat against the courts, parliament and Europe will grow and lies behind the rise in race hate crime associated with Brexit supporting Tories. **Hassan Hoque** explores the little reported and unchecked growth of Islamophobia inside the Tory Party where no promised independent inquiry has occurred. **Andrew Coates** exposes the ideological roots of extreme right populism which underpin the rise of Farage, Le Pen, Salvini, Trump and other authoritarian demagogues.

Labour's Brighton conference committed the party to campaign for a People's Vote, with John McDonnell and other shadow ministers speaking out at the million strong PV march on 19<sup>th</sup> October. This should now be a priority. A confirmatory vote with a remain alternative is the best way to resolve the impasse and create a clearer space for Labour to unfold its popular democratic socialist programme for economic, social and environmental recovery after ten years of Tory austerity, cuts and division.

While **Peter Kenyon** reflects on lessons of the Brexit battles, whether a referendum or general election, as **Laura Parker** and **Julie Ward MEP** make clear, Labour must make a positive case for Europe. We are an internationalist party. Unlike the campaign of 2016 our focus must be on the benefits of working through the EU: benefits for peace and security, benefits for jobs and frictionless trade, benefits for free movement and travel, benefits for science

education, arts and welfare. Above all cross-national cooperation is the only effective way to deal with corporate tax dodgers and the climate-environmental emergency.

The threat to Labour is clear. Johnson and co are seeking to rebrand the Tory Party with an end to austerity. Sajid Javid's spending review and budget plans are unashamed electioneering bribes. **Dennis Leech** explains that the policies behind the discovery of the magic money tree, so elusive for Theresa May, is based on a number of economic myths. Labour must expose the inadequacy and hypocrisy of the uncoded promises.

Extinction Rebellion and student protests have pushed the threat of human-made global heating up the agenda. **Nigel Doggett** takes a closer look at the achievements and weaknesses of XR.

Internationally we have seen protests grow against oppressive regimes, most notably in Hong Kong against a puppet regime under a tyrannical Chinese Communist Party. **Denis Wong** explains how the street protests for democratic liberties started and why they will continue.

Elsewhere Donald Trump's maverick foreign policy has given a green light for Turkey's authoritarian President Erdogan to launch a military assault in Northern Syria against Kurdish forces.

**Mary Southcott** reports on the consequences with a more detailed historical look at the evolution of the Turkish state since Ottomanism.

Labour faces a huge challenge to build support across the UK in the face of unfavourable opinion polls. England is split with a number of Northern and Midland Labour seats vulnerable to rightist populist siren calls. If the Brexit Party challenges the Tories, Labour could reprise the Peterborough by-election win, but certainly not in other parts of the UK especially Scotland. **Gerry Hassan** dissects the rise of the Scottish National party and the fall of Labour. The departure of 'liberal' Ruth Davidson damages the Tories prospects but Scottish Labour needs to embrace a more radical devolution case and keep open the door to a second Indy ref.

Elsewhere Labour has to make its case for an international recovery programme based on sustainable development—the Green New Deal is a good basis, with investment, taxation and borrowing to fund its ambitious redistributive programme.

We need to expose the myth of 'Getting Brexit Done'. Exit would take years while the British economy sinks further under the weight of drawn out negotiations on trade deals with the likes of 'America First' Trump and entanglement in new structures for tighter borders and protectionism.

Labour has an attractive alternative vision of a new society based on equality, social justice, sustainable wealth creation, redistribution from rich to poorer and international cooperation. It's called democratic socialism. Whether a referendum or General election comes Labour should ready itself to mobilise its half million members and supporters across the labour movement to fight the campaign of our lives. The stakes could not be higher.

## Labour faces a huge challenge to build support across the UK in the face of unfavourable opinion polls

# The Break-up of Britain?

Paul Salveson surveys views of post-Brexit Britain

It's about Brexit but it's more. What's going to become of the North of England in the next ten years? Assuming that Brexit goes through in some shape or form, the economy of the North will take a big hit, and it's unlikely to be short term. Some major companies have already said they'd up sticks and leave. Replacing those, and the jobs that will be lost, with thousands of new, dynamic SMEs seems a bit unlikely. A recent *Guardian* article by Aditya Chakraborty ('Salvaging the union will need imagination – and we've lost it' October 17<sup>th</sup>) speculated on the destructive impact of Brexit on the integrity of the UK, particularly through Scottish independence. Other commentators have suggested that a united Ireland will become virtually inevitable, and Wales may well follow Scotland's lead. The assumption that 'England' will soldier on, embattled, alone and increasingly right-wing and isolationist, hostile to its neighbours, is widely shared.

In much of the debate on Brexit and 'the break-up of Britain', it's assumed automatically that 'England' will continue as a single entity, with perhaps a bit more devolution here and there to 'city regions'. Real devolution is not on the Tories' agenda.

The North of England will be the biggest losers from Brexit, despite having largely voted 'leave' in 2016. The reasons for that leave vote were many and complex, not least a deep-rooted sense of abandonment by an ill-defined elite. The decline of the great traditional industries of the North, roughly coinciding with joining the EU, created a potent but often unconscious sense of grievance which lacked a clear focus. 'Europe' provided it, encouraged by the rhetoric and bigotry of the 'leave' campaign.

Across the North of England there is a tangible sense of 'victimhood'. Whether it is lack of investment in transport, poor health care or the decline of once-great towns, it's there. The perpetrators of this are sat somewhere 'down south', perhaps in the corridors of Whitehall and Westminster. 'They' don't care

about 'us'.

Why doesn't this find political expression, in the way that Scottish and Welsh grievances have coalesced into support for progressive nationalist parties? The Scottish historian (and passionate European) Chris Harvie once described English regionalism as "the dog that never barked". Of course, 'The North of England' isn't a nation, you could even argue whether it's a 'region' or an amalgam of three separate regions (Yorkshire, The North-east and the North-West). Yorkshire, with perhaps the strongest identity of the three regions, has a young but growing 'Yorkshire Party' and has a handful of local councillors. In local elections it typically gets about a third of the vote, which isn't bad. There is an equivalent in the North-East but nothing that aims to represent Lancashire, Cheshire and Cumbria. Perhaps there was a time that the Labour Party could claim to be 'the voice of the North' but that is becoming less and less the case.

The different parts of 'The North' as a whole have much in common with each other, notwithstanding the myth of Lancashire v Yorkshire antagonism. And it is a myth, played out in country cricket and good-humoured banter, but not much else. At the time of the Scottish independence referendum, there was much traffic on social media about 'the North' joining with an independent Scotland. It got hundreds of thousands of 'likes', though it misses the point. 'The North' has much in common with the Scots, but joining an independent Scotland probably isn't a sensible approach, even as a debating room topic. For one thing, it's three times as big as Scotland, in population terms. But – for the long-term – the idea of a quasi-independent 'North of England' may not be quite as fanciful as it seems. Put aside the jokes (and the potential is massive, e.g. of cloth-capped soldiers on border patrols) and there could be something in it.

In his *Guardian* piece, Chakraborty quoted the work of Benedict Anderson who wrote in *Imagined Communities* that the nation 'is an imagined communi-

## The Break-up of Britain

Crisis and Neo-nationalism

TOM NAIRN



ty'. In other words, it is created, no 'nation' has always been there and many across Europe are quite new. Many have disappeared or become parts of different nations, willingly or unwillingly (often the latter).

Whilst nations often begin as works of imagination, taking decades and sometimes centuries to emerge as real, existing nations with a state apparatus, sometimes the process can be accelerated by external events, typically wars and revolutions but also major shifts within existing states. I would argue that the United Kingdom is going through just such a change, albeit a largely non-violent one (putting aside the legacy of the Troubles in Ireland).

A distinctly 'Northern' consciousness is taking shape which in years to come may find political expression in a party which could have similarities with civic nationalist parties within and beyond the UK. As the prospect of a Tory England which enshrines free market economics with a myopic, isolationist approach to the outside world becomes ever more possible, the alternative of a progressive and outward-looking federal Britain with the North of England working with Scotland, Wales, Ireland and other English regions may become increasingly more attractive. **C**

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



# Green Surge in Central Europe

**Dave Toke** on hot air and cold air

**G**reens in Switzerland, Austria and Germany have surged in recent elections and are now threatening to overhaul social democratic parties as the main alternative to conservatism and populist far right parties. The green message of environmental protection, with climate change as a central issue, gels with the need for an internationalist narrative of social solidarity with others. It is proving to be an increasingly effective counter to the xenophobia served up by populist and right wing politicians. The two things, global action to save the planet, and help for refugees and international citizenship rights (such as the EU) are dismissed by Donald Trump as 'globalism'. Yet this emerging dominant counter-narrative of internationalism is providing the right wing with its strongest challenge in Europe.

## Withdrawal Bill sad story

As the Withdrawal Bill is debated I can but only reproduce a couple of comments about what the prospect is for environmental protection. James Murray of Business Green, says of the non-mention of environmental protection in the initial draft of the Bill: So, no environmental protections in the bill, no deal as default at end of 2020, nothing to stop deregulatory blitz from 2021 onwards besides government's say so and public pressure. While Colin Baines adds: 'It's almost like the gov't that lobbied against legally binding renewable energy targets, recycling targets, energy efficiency targets, low carbon fuel standards, had to be forced to clean up (dirty) beaches, & still refuses to clean up the air is a danger to our environment.'

## German renewable energy foul-up

Despite the growth of renewable energy in Germany to 47 per cent of electricity supply in the first half of 2019, the German Government's policies seem to be holding progress back. New contracts for renewable energy are being given out for very cheap prices. However, the Government has managed to restrict wind power with planning rules leading to only partly filled quotas for



German Greens

new generation in its auctions for contracts to supply the energy. Meanwhile it is managing to stop solar pv expanding as much as it could by capping contracts for developers well below the number of people that want to set up solar farms. On top of this the Government has had a low ambition for offshore windfarms. At this rate Germany's renewable energy sector, which has grown from very little since the 1990s, will be overshadowed in a few years by the UK. What a disgrace that would be considering the lacklustre policies pursued by the Conservative Government in the UK!

## Outdoor air conditioning in Qatar

The sad state of global warming has been illustrated by Qatar's plans to install air conditioning to cool OUTDOOR temperatures. The Washington Post has reported that plans are afoot to install air conditioning in markets and streets. Qatar's sweltering temperatures have risen by around two degrees Celsius in the last century or so. Given that the air conditioning will be powered by oil and gas generation we can see a vicious feed-back loop as more energy is used to cool places down and in turn the energy used to power air conditioning needed to do this creates emissions which heat the planet up even further. Of course we are waiting for the FIFA World Cup in 2022. It is being held at night to reduce the

heat suffered by players and spectators – but don't count on that being a solution! Writing in GQ magazine Jay Willis says:

"Few other regions of the globe, however, have the luxury of being able to spend billions of dollars to mitigate climate change's most dangerous impacts, both present and future".

## Could Extinction Rebellion put Greenpeace in the shade?

As the world hots up and Extinction Rebellion (XR) mount more protests the sheer scale of XR fundraising may be dwarfing funds that used to go to Greenpeace. Left Foot Forward reports that over half a million pounds was donated to XR in the first part of October. Of course the two movements are quite different in organisational terms. Greenpeace is a 'top-down' organisation which won't be embarrassed by activists ignoring what the majority of Greenpeace supporters actually want (as happened when some XR people ignored the vote against disrupting the tube). So there we have a choice. Bottom up has the edge of enthusiasm, whereas top-down has the advantage of being able to put limits on its actions more easily. But Greenpeace also has the advantage of being able to publish reports and makes statements about what should happen as an alternative. Maybe XR can try and focus a bit more on that in the future as well as the mobilisations **C**

**Dr David Toke,  
Is Reader in  
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University of  
Aberdeen**

**His latest book is  
*Low Carbon  
Politics*,  
Routledge (2018)**

## TORY TROUBLES

# Conservative Party sheds its One-Nation image

**Don Flynn** says the Tory wolf of private property is now out

**T**he Conservative Party once prided itself as being the choice for people who wanted a 'safe pair of hands' on the tiller of national government. It was supposed to be political fellowship that could be trusted to be sensible, moderate, and above all non-ideological. Belief in the role of ideas as a force directing the movement of history was something the left went in for. No respectable person could be expected to muddy themselves in that mire.

This disdain for philosophical outlooks was tosh of course. As Gramsci made plain to anyone thinking more deeply about these things, the best ideology is one that hides itself in plain sight. It consists of ideas that are so pervasive across society that they appear more as an emotional response to the way we think things ought to be rather than a process of rational reflection.

The conservatism of the modern Conservative Party had its heyday in a Britain where towns and cities were clusters of industries and businesses offering something approximate to a decent wage for a hard day's work. Local high streets bustled with grocers, butchers, newsagents, chemists and chandler's shops which met the needs of households who lived just ten minutes walk from their weekly shop. Outright homelessness was held at a level where it was more-or-less invisible to most ordinary citizens, and the blameless poor (widows, pensioners, the chronically ill) had a social welfare system to fall back on.

This was a society which provided the Conservatives with their formidable cadre – reckoned to number over a million people in the 1950s. Centring on the cheap beer served at the local Conservative Association club, the party was a hub for merchants and shopkeepers, craft conscious tradesmen, regular attenders at the services of moderate protestant churches, and the womenfolk who organised the local fetes and charitable functions.

According to the figures for membership of the party that were being quoted during the recent leadership contest, there are somewhere



between 140,000 and 180,000 people registered in Conservative ranks today. They are not just very different people from the directors of local builders' firms, managers of the high street banks, and grammar school head teachers of yesteryear. In many ways they should be seen as the descendants of the people who rose up against this old Tory party back in the 1970s and 1980s, denouncing the people they had been closest to as 'the establishment', and who overthrew them through a series of policies that obliterated the social forces that had held the old localism together.

Municipal government lost its local identity during these years as it was reduced to a mere conduit for implementing national policies which required the sale of public assets and a role limited to commissioning the cheapest possible services from private corporations. Bank branches shifted from their austere role as the supporters of 'sound' business to profligate dispensers of the easy credit which later fuelled the debt crisis. The physical shape of communities changed in fundamental ways, as shops on high streets closed down and even local pubs went into steep decline.

Membership of the Conservative Party dwindled during these years as the organisation lost its organic connection with the communities it considered itself to be part of. What was left of its husk was thinly populated by the true believers of the Thatcher revolution. Advocates of the de-mutualisation of building

societies (my, those windfalls look good!), speculative investors in the assets that now bubbled up across the economy, right wing libertarians with a visceral hatred of the nanny state. In a few words, the chasers after the rents that could be extracted from fellow citizens as more and more of the life force was drained from the public realm to reappear as something which could only be obtained on a commercial contract.

Now it rested on representatives of a social class for whom greed equals good, the Conservative Party could not be anything other than a 'nasty party', pushed into ever more right wing, extremist stances by a determination to render the whole of society as a business opportunity for anyone with the wherewithal to make the initial investment.

The ascendancy of the caste of ruthless wannabe Gordon Gekkos at least has the effect of laying bare the ideological nature of the Conservative Party. This is a political movement that will go anywhere to defend its most fundamental principal: that the rule of private property is sacrosanct and its preservation is its foremost mission, even if it leads to the evisceration of the civil society that has sustained the liberal and civic values which it claims as being its special endowment to British society.

The gloves are off. Politics is increasingly seen as a battle between two ideological stances which stand in full opposition to one another. The task for Labour is to make sure that it comes out on top in this battle of ideas. **C**

**Don Flynn is ex-Director of Migrant rights Network & Chartist Managing Editor**



# Labouring on

**Peter Kenyon** highlights lessons to be learned from Brexit in or out



**D**ear Reader – I'm writing this on Saturday 26 October. We know the EU Council has agreed a further extension of Article 50 in principle, but not for how long. We may have to wait until Tuesday. We know the Zombie Government led by Prime Minister Boris Johnson plans to table a motion on Monday to dissolve Parliament under the terms of the Fixed Term Parliament Act, which requires a two-thirds majority to pass, to hold an election on 12 December. There are parliamentarians thinking through ways of thwarting the Zombies and maybe enabling the British electorate to decide whether to Leave the European Union or Remain. I could join the speculation. But there will be plenty of that before this edition of Chartist reaches you. In any event the matter could actually be decided, not by 31 October as Johnson boasted, but not long afterwards.

More interesting, let's reflect on a few of the key lessons to be learned for the future – in or out.

My hope is that the issue of our future membership remains to be decided. What is inescapable is a widespread and profound ignorance among the electorate about our relationships with the other member states of the European Union built up over the last 45 years. Travelling round the EU, I never cease to marvel at the display of the EU flag alongside the national and local flag of the town or city I am visiting. Most vivid is

that of the German Bundestag, where one of the four corner towers is reserved for the golden stars on a blue ground. Tales of a lack of awareness about local facilities in the UK funded by EU taxpayers (including we Brits) abound.

We are living in a country in political denial about the origins of and evolution of what is today the largest democratically governed international bloc in the world of which we are/were a full member. Shouldn't our politicians be proud to be interviewed and photographed for domestic political purposes against a background of both the EU and national flags? How else could our membership become embedded in our national psyche?

So much collectively agreed legislation and regulation now shapes our daily lives, and so few of us are aware of the benefits. So much has been drowned out by the lies of the Brexiteers and Leave campaigners. So next time you go for a paddle off Bournemouth Pier just remember the absence of sewage floating in the sea is in part thanks to the EU and the blue flag scheme – gettit blue flag. Those who could afford a holiday in one of the other EU states might be aware that you don't have to clean your teeth in bottled water, just turn on the tap – water quality standards are regulated across the EU. Then there is the EU regional aid and investment that has been allocated to the most deprived areas of the UK for decades, in an attempt to aid those people who

have felt left out, or ignored by the Westminster government.

If by some parliamentary feat, the UK is still in when you read this you won't have to worry about supplies of essentials – whether food or medicines for a while longer. Operation Yellowhammer will have been put on hold again. Millions of pounds will have been wasted on 'preparing for Brexit' instead of being invested in social care, preventative medicine, hospital staff and educational budgets. But that extension of Article 50 will never make up for the loss of investment in the UK that started in the months leading up to the EU referendum in 2016. That is when business uncertainty started its cancerous invasion of the UK economy.

The future of UK manufacturing particularly that in overseas ownership has been severely dented, and may never recover without an interventionist Labour government. The absence of a loud clamour from the Labour Party Leader Jeremy Corbyn disclaiming the insanity of the Brexiteers' aims poses a real handicap for Labour's electoral prospects. And that assumes that there will be a 'deal' to leave. As for the future, if the UK is negotiating from outside the EU, we will all have to wait a long time before a new trading relationship is defined. In any event, if the Zombie Government is not defeated, we can only look forward to a very much poorer future, culturally, politically and economically. **C**

**Peter Kenyon is a member of Chartist EB and City of London CLP**

## SPENDING REVIEW

# Tories scrap their own rules in election bribe

**Dennis Leech** argues Sajid Javid has demonstrated that austerity was a political choice not an economic requirement

In his autumn spending review on 9 September the Chancellor Sajid Javid announced that the government was “turning the page on austerity and beginning a new decade of renewal.” He has backed up his words with extra spending commitments and ripped up the fiscal rules that he inherited from his predecessor. It was a radical statement in preparation for a pre-election radical budget.

He claimed he can do this because the austerity programme, that George Osborne instituted in 2010, has been a success in laying the foundations of a stronger economy. But in fact he is planning a political spending splurge intended to outflank Labour that has nothing to do with good economic management.

Osborne’s policy was to reduce both the fiscal deficit and the national debt by cutting spending on health, education, housing, local council services and so on. The result has been misery for millions who rely on public services or benefits with underfunded schools and hospitals and a rise in homelessness.

The idea was that austerity would be expansionary: eliminating the so called structural deficit, and getting government debt falling as a percentage of GDP, creating space for the private sector to flourish. But it was all based on a series of myths.

Myth one: ‘the government is like a household, only bigger’. Osborne used graphic language around this analogy, with phrases like “Britain can only spend what it can afford.”, “we have maxed out our national credit card”. It is obvious that a household cannot spend more than its income, and if it finds itself with debt that it has to repay it must economise. An indebted household must either cut its spending or increase its income; then its debt will fall unambiguously.

But it is not like that for a government because the aggregate income of society is affected by its spending. The reason is that

money circulates and spending by one person is income for others. Income received by any household is spending by others. So when an austerity government cuts its budget, income is lost by its employees and suppliers, which forces them to cut back, reducing the income of their suppliers, and so on. Hence both public and private sector household incomes are reduced with a resulting fall in gross domestic product.

A report by the New Economics Foundation published in February found that, using figures from the Office of Budget Responsibility and the Institute for Fiscal Studies, it was possible to estimate the size of this effect in terms of lost output resulting from Osborne’s austerity regime: it has resulted in slower growth in every year since 2010. It estimated the true cost of nine years of austerity budgets. It found a cumulative loss of output of £100 billion per year. That is, 5% of GDP, totaling £3629 per household, or £1495 per person annually in reduced living standards.

‘Expansionary austerity’ was never going to work; it has been tried and failed many times in the past. Essentially the Tory administrations have repeated the mistakes of the 1920s when governments prioritised balancing budgets in the name of sound money, with dire consequences for the lives of millions of citizens.

Myth two: ‘deficit and debt can be reduced by government spending’. Austerity policies are often counterproductive because of their effect on GDP. The burden of debt - the ratio of debt to GDP - can increase because they cut the income as well as the debt. This is most especially likely to happen when there is spare capacity, evidenced by involuntary unemployment or underemployment. So the effect of austerity on the deficit or the debt burden is ambiguous. This is why the debt has not come down as a percentage of GDP and has contributed to the slow recovery from the crash of 2008.

Myth three: ‘debt is a burden passed down to future generations’.



**Sajid Javid announces his spending review**

Every loan has a lender as well as a borrower. For every debt there is a corresponding asset. Government borrows by selling gilt edged securities. So if government borrows more there is an equal increase in private wealth as people hold more government bonds.

Therefore debt is a transaction within a generation: government borrowing is owed to private individuals in society. Government debt cannot be passed down to the next generation without also passing the corresponding assets in the form of bonds. The issue of the burden of debt is a distributional question between people in the same generation and not one of intergenerational fairness.

Myth four: ‘government spending crowds out private investment and thus hampers growth’. This is only true if the economy is at full capacity working which has not been the case for many years. When there is spare capacity there are unused resources available that can be put to work by private investment.

By breaking and not replacing the fiscal rules derived from thinking based on these myths, Sajid Javid has demonstrated the truth of the aphorism that austerity is a political project not an economic necessity. **C**

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# Should Extinction Rebellion (XR) switch tracks?

**Nigel Doggett** on the strengths and weakness of the XR campaign

**T**his autumn's XR climate campaign action story has had a stunning impact, but the tactics of some supporters sparked bitter disagreements and jeopardized wide public support, notably actions hitting commuters from poorer London districts on the very public transport systems that are part of the solution. It remains to be seen whether it can shed its largely privileged white image.

While the climate strikers led by Greta Thunberg demand that politicians listen to the science and act, XR is following a strategy applying past non-violent action experiences to the unfolding emergency, as set out in the book *Common Sense for the 21st Century* by XR's co-founder Roger Hallam.

The XR protests have galvanized people and pushed the Overton window, the range of ideas that are openly discussed in public debate. But we need to achieve results and Hallam acknowledges that while the chances of success are limited, we must not give up. Unfortunately his underlying analysis is confused and open to criticism, even from those who share his objectives.

Climate change is deemed a 'wicked' problem due to its multi-dimensional and multi-level nature, so transition studies stress action at many levels and arenas, including city initiatives, local government, the transition towns movement and voluntary organizations. But Hallam seizes on the failures of central government, understating the role of diverse civil society groups to sustain and deepen the transition. (Two positive examples among many I would set against the negatives: the website BusinessGreen highlights numerous initiatives to shrink companies' carbon footprints that are necessary whatever their form of ownership or control; and a sea change is underway in many trade unions who see the time is up for old carbon-based technologies.)

Hallam believes that as reform (defined as progress in small incremental steps) has failed we need a 'revolution' (albeit peaceful and non-Leninist). This risks lapsing into semantics, and failure so far does preclude real reform. Besides, the

same dilemmas in achieving sustainable (in both senses) wholesale change remain. It is a staple of democratic left politics that neither parliamentary/governmental nor grassroots action can transform society: they must complement and enable each other.

None of his examples of successful non-violent direct action from East Germany in 1989, Alabama in 1963 and Nepal in 2005, nor other oft-cited cases from Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King to more recent movements in the Middle East and Eastern Europe are comparable to the climate emergency. They all faced discredited and repressive regimes, and none had to move so fast on so many fronts as we need now. Hallam attributes direct action at Kings College by himself and others as the cause of agreement to disinvest from fossil fuels. However, numerous other institutions are disinvesting, including most recently University College London, under sustained criticism and pressure more than disruptive action. In the heart of capitalism, maybe recent warnings by the likes of the Governor of the Bank of England are a greater influence than he admits.

XR demands the UK government:

1. Tell the truth by declaring a climate and ecological emergency;
2. Act now to halt biodiversity loss and reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2025
3. Create and be led by [my emphasis] a National Citizens' Assembly on climate and ecological justice.

Hallam argues that the current regime has lost legitimacy by its failure to act; and principled non-violent campaigns can gain such legitimacy through citizens' assemblies. But the role of such a new body could raise more problems than it solved. It would face political challenges as dependent on technocratic, arguably partisan, advice and lacking representativeness and legitimacy, thereby risking diverting attention from the problem in hand.

Climate assemblies such as in the London Borough of Camden are a useful innovation in the formulation of principles, building popular consent and initiating local actions in tandem with the levers of democratic



**Extinction Rebellion protest**

government. It's doubtful if they could (or should) replace the current system, however flawed it is. Clearly even a committed government would need popular pressure to overcome fossil fuel interests, but so would any new regime; it is inconceivable that a nascent citizens' assembly could manage this. It would be foolish to ignore the democratic legitimacy of Parliament, regional Governments and many local authorities who have declared a Climate Emergency. We should instead be pressurizing all institutions (and people) to live up to their rhetoric.

Hallam even proposes the Citizens' Assembly go beyond 'Legislation to transform the economy and society to respond to the existential climate and ecological emergency' to draw up 'other social legislation which follows the will of the assembly rather than the former political class' and 'a new constitutional settlement which creates a genuine participatory democracy...'. He doesn't say whether it will require 9 to 5 on weekdays or the full 24/7 to surmount three such daunting challenges!

XR has grown meteorically in the last six months, picking up academics, lawyers and celebrities among thousands of people from all walks of life, including environmental lawyer Farhana Yamin, who has joined after experience of the limitations of climate negotiations including the 2015 Paris COP. Its strategy is likely to evolve accordingly. Success in forcing the necessary changes will require a society wide mobilization on the scale of a world war, and to be effective XR must avoid both rhetorical and programmatic excesses. **C**

**For details, including a free downloadable pdf option, see [RogerHallam.com](http://RogerHallam.com)**

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

## BREXIT

# Our future lies through Europe

**Laura Parker** looks at the history of Britain's chequered relationship with Europe and says remain and reform must be at the heart of Labour's manifesto offer

Since joining what was then the EEC in 1973 the UK, including British Labour, has been very ambivalent towards 'Europe'. This stems from a profound historical reason, namely that the EU was not 'our' creation. It is seen as an expansion of the Napoleonic administrative structures which are different from the British. There is an apocryphal quote from a senior diplomat at the time of the establishment of the first pan European structures in the 1950s that a European Union is a terrible idea, that it won't get anywhere and if it did, it would not last...

The formative period of the Common Market and what has since become the EU coincided with British decolonisation. British governments had that in their focus rather than Europe. But despite that focus for the left, the world continued to turn and we have needed to update our position. Through engagement with the EU we can take the massive opportunities to tackle tax evasion and transnational corporate power. We can only really be effective against the Googles and Facebooks of the world with taxation at multi-national levels. Similarly with the climate emergency: action is needed at a pan-European and global level. Attempts to deal with a crisis of this magnitude at the level of the nation state simply makes no sense.

The downside of the EU is that we have seen the dominance of neo-liberalism, enshrined in the Maastricht Euro criteria. But these are the creation of the Member States and a reflection of the politics of the individual Member States - not an inherent inevitability.

There are those who say we can't implement a socialist programme because of the Maastricht Treaty. This is not the case. There are of course areas where reform is needed. But to take one frequently cited example, of public ownership: look at the state owned rail across numerous European states. National ownership can happen and it does.

Other Lexit arguments are disingenuous. The idea some peo-



Anti-Brexit demo on October 19

ple propose, that out of the ashes of the UK's exit from the European Union, socialism will arise phoenix like is clearly unrealistic in almost any circumstances - and impossible to imagine if our exit from the EU is under the management of a Johnson-led reactionary Tory government, as appears may still be the case at the time of writing.

## There is now a clear route through to Remain, but we need a clear message to convey this on the doorstep

On immigration we have got to be more honest with people about what is really going on. I'm pleased that at this year's Labour Party Conference a far more progressive policy motion was passed, including a commitment to freedom of movement.

The 2016 Referendum vote was in many ways a result of a lack of empowerment, the consequences of Thatcherite deindustrialisation, devastating working class areas, and globalisation which has left many communities impoverished and feeling neglected.

The Corbyn project must find a way of dealing with these beliefs and connecting to these people.

To win a general election we have to have and clearly present a positive vision of a radically transformed society - in which power as well as wealth are distributed. In the policy agenda which he has been fleshing out since the 2017 general election, we can see the scale of ambition of John McDonnell in this regard: plans for massive regional investment; the promotion of in-sourcing for local government, helping to regenerate local communities whilst putting an end to the profit before people philosophy of private outsourcers; a clamp down on tax evasion and avoidance and more.

If we can get our messages out there, we can win.

The big problem is that between us and the people is a media and establishment which we have to take on.

In terms of Europe, we need a commitment to remain, reform and transform in our manifesto. Obviously, this is a debate which will continue within the Party: Conference was clear that Labour is now fully committed to a public vote, a second referendum, as the only way to resolve the Brexit crisis, but no decision has yet been made about the position Labour would take in that second referendum.

What is abundantly clear, and we should be saying more frequently and loudly, is that under



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the Tories, we have had three totally wasted years. Had Jeremy Corbyn been Prime Minister after Brexit, he would have gone to the EU with a clear position, with already well established relationships with European leaders, and with Keir Starmer, who knows what he is doing. Instead we have had high-handed arrogance from our Prime Ministers and a series of utterly incompetent Tory Brexit secretaries who have had no idea what they want or how to negotiate.

Our 'divorce' from the EU is inevitably a hugely complex process. As the fifth biggest economy in the world, obviously the process of disentangling the UK from the EU is going to be very complicated. The UK economy is massively intertwined with that of Europe. No one explained this properly in 2016. People adopted ideological positions quite without reference to any practical considerations.

Now we need a radically different approach from 2016 if there is another referendum. We can't have 'Remain HQ' in central London, stuffed with white middle class men churning out press releases about GDP. We need to put front and centre the woman from Manchester Trade Council voicing the concerns of working people about their issues - jobs and pay, rights at work, family security, community matters, environmental clean-up, water quality. We don't need a campaign based on fear and threats but a strategy that educates, informs and provides a positive vision for a future with our European friends and neighbours.

There is now a clear route through to Remain, but we need a clear message to convey this on the doorstep. I very much welcomed the statement Jeremy Corbyn made at Conference, delivered with total clarity and conviction, that Labour is fully behind a public vote and option to remain. As Jeremy himself said, this is not that complicated. It is now also absolutely clear that Labour is the only party adopting a position which genuinely can bring the country together, whilst the Tories have been pushing their extreme Brexit and playing with people's futures through championing a destructive no deal and the Lib Dems prepared to turn their backs on the 52% who voted leave through championing a parliamentary revoke of Article 50.

I am concerned that we do not adopt the position that we will be



Marching for Remain on PV demo October 19

rule takers and not rule makers which would be desperately damaging. Many of those who voted to leave in 2016 were voting for more control; with a Norway-like deal, we will get the opposite.

Since 2016 far too much debate has been played out in the media but not in communities. We should have purposefully taken

## **The Green New Deal policy is a great example of how we could promote more radical pan-European policies**

the wider debate out into the party and the country, trying to understand more why people made the choices they did and making the case for Europe. We didn't do the hard yards.

Meanwhile positions have hardened. The initial compromise was right—to argue for a soft Brexit, a deal which would have been a reasonable reflection of the very close referendum result, which large numbers of those who voted to remain, as well as those who voted to leave, would have accepted. That option was blown out of the water by May, with her hard red lines, and has now been compounded by Johnson, making any cross party approach impossi-

ble. This was seen in the negotiations earlier this year, which it was right for Jeremy and his team to participate in.

Corbyn himself has not been given enough credit for stopping Brexit to date. There has been a lot of facile and banal commentary over the past three years blaming Labour. But it is the Tories who have blocked real progress and Labour who have ensured that we have not already been landed with a damaging Tory Brexit. It is Labour which can now stop a catastrophic no deal - and I hope that all Labour MPs will support the leadership in doing this.

Campaigners have to build on our remain position. We have to defend the Labour party position and seek to build real alliances across the party. We should also be setting out the difference which staying in, and working to reform, the EU could make for British people.

The Party of European Socialists in the European Parliament has a comprehensive range of policies related to workers rights which a Labour government could champion, including scrapping zero hours contracts across the EU and ensuring that all wage under-cutting is brought to an end.

Our recent adoption of the Green New Deal policy is a great example of how with a Labour government in the EU, we could promote more radical pan-European policies - on infrastructure, green business creation, ambitious environment targets - which would have tangible impacts in terms of levels of investment and job creation - and also demonstrate UK leadership in the EU, over time helping people embrace more positively Europe as something we are an active part of, rather than something done to us.

The truth is that whenever it and if it comes, any second referendum is going to be difficult to win. Sequencing is not as big an issue as deciding our policy. There are limits to how effective we can be in a General election with our current position, for all that I applaud its basic intent - which is to enable Labour to speak to people however they voted in 2016. However, without committing clearly to Remain and reform all the evidence is that we will lose more votes from Labour Remain supporters than we will gain from Labour Leave voters. The key is having a clear position.

## ISLAMOPHOBIA

# Legacy of Islamophobia

**Hassan Hoque** on ahistorical views and Islamophobia rife in the Tory Party

In a recent article in the *Guardian* Owen Jones brilliantly dissected the implications of a recent YouGov poll which found a horrifying 60% of Tory members believe Islam “is generally a threat to western civilisation”, 54% believe Islam is “generally a threat to the British way of life” and 40% want to limit Britain’s Muslim population and yet 8% of members think there is a problem of Islamophobia or racism within the Conservative Party. Yet the Tory leader commitment to an independent inquiry remains undelivered. It would be disingenuous to say that Islamophobia only exists within the right. Research published by the Independent found a quarter of Guardian readers think that Islam poses a serious threat to Western civilisation and the British way of life.

Islamophobia “has passed the dinner table test” and become socially acceptable said Baroness Warsi (Co Chair of the Conservative Party and a member of the Cameron Cabinet) in a 2011 speech. In her book *The Enemy Within*, published in 2017, she provides an eye witness account, stories and emotions centred around the experience of being Muslim in Britain today. Her book provides a powerful argument against our shift from a discourse of multiculturalism to British values, and the government’s controversial Prevent and anti terrorism strategy. Her critique of the government’s policy of non-engagement with Muslim organisations in the UK and a dangerous disregard to the role played by our foreign policy is persuasive. Is it not hypocritical, she asks, that the government will not engage domestically with Wahhabi-inspired groups and yet, at the international level, Saudi Arabia, the home of Wahhabi Islam, is embraced as a strong ally?

Just as racism gained some form of legitimacy from mainstream science and pseudoscience in the 19th and early 20th century, modern day Islamophobia has an academic genealogy. As with most things uttered by Boris Johnson, when he writes ‘There must be something about Islam’ which is holding Muslim countries and communities back, he’s not saying something new. His argument is a clumsy



**Warsi condemns Tory racism**

rehash of the orientalist scholar Bernard Lewis’s infamous essay, ‘What Went Wrong’, published shortly after 9/11. The argument is that the success of Muhammad in establishing not merely the Muslim religion, but also a state dominated by that faith, served to create a society that is totalitarian by its very nature.

But what about Saudi Arabia, Iran or even the “Islamic State” in Syria, are they not totalitarian? These modern iterations are totalitarian precisely due to being modern. A key distinction of the modern nation state that we take for granted is its monopoly over the law. If you take the two largest premodern Muslim states, the Ottoman Empire and the Mughal Empire, both had two separate spheres of law. Siyasa (legislation enacted for the public benefit issued by a government and backed by political authority) and religious law (each religious community living according to their understanding of religious law).

Just over three generations after the death of the Prophet Muhammed, Caliph Harun Al Rashid (763 CE), offered Imam Abu Hanifa the eponymous founder of the first Islamic school of law the post of Chief Judge of the empire and in effect made his interpretation of Islamic law supreme in the Empire. Abu Hanifa refused, a decision which led to his imprisonment, torture and death. 16th and 17th century Ottoman officials constantly complained of litigants in court strategically choosing a school of law to improve their legal position

An extreme case for testing this distinct way of separating church and state can be seen by how

Islamic jurists debated Xvetodah marriages, a form of marriage practiced by Zoroastrians which included brother/sister, father/daughter and mother/son couplings. Rarely practised and limited to cousin marriages by the Zoroastrians in the 1400s, it left a strong impression on Muslim scholars who nonetheless allowed Xvetodah marriage as long as Zoroastrians did not come to Muslim courts for this type of marriage to be adjudicated

The most notable example would be to compare the British and Mughal government’s approach to the Hindu practice of Sati (widow burning). It was regularly sensationalized by European travellers to India from the 1500’s onward until the British finally prohibited the custom in 1829. The governor who banned sati described it as an “inhuman and impious rite” that was “revolting to the feelings of human reason” and could not be tolerated by “the government of a civilized nation.”

In contrast to the British, Mughal officials were instructed by the emperors to try and dissuade the widow from her course of action. William Hawkins (d. circa 1613), a British East India Company agent who visited the court of the emperor Jahangir (r. 1605-27), notes that he witnessed many times the emperor himself offering widows all sorts of financial and social support in an effort to sway her.

Challenging Islamophobia requires addressing the historically illiterate narrative that reduces Islam’s history to the past 100 years. In the last Conservative Party conference a panel discussion titled “Challenging Islamophobia” ended up being dominated by discussions on Muslim extremists, Islamists, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Egypt and the history and content of Islamic law. “The panelists emphasised anything but the real lived experiences of British Muslims” according to Baroness Warsi. It would be akin to a panel discussion on challenging anti-semitism being reduced to talking about the policies of the Israeli government. Far from challenging Islamophobia, the Conservative party is perpetuating it from the highest levels. **C**

**Hassan Hoque is a member of Chartist EB and Bethnal Green and Bow CLP**



# The Far Right Comes in From the Cold

**Andrew Coates** on the ideologists guiding the far right today

**T**he right has changed; it has embraced the ideas of its outliers.' David Renton begins in *The New Authoritarians* (2019). 'In the US and Europe, conservatives have made alliances with those previously consigned to the margins.' Formal political agreements between conservative and centre-right parties and the far right are rare (Austria's coalition between the Conservative ÖVP and the racist Freedom Party FPÖ, and the participation of Bart De Wever's hard right Flemish N-VA into Belgium coalitions are the biggest exception). But there are convergences around 'national populism'. This brings the politics of national sovereignty and identity, attacks on 'globalist elites', and, above all, fears about "ethnic change".

The Christchurch Mosque massacre of March 2019 brought some of the ideas of the far right to international attention. The murderer of 51 people had published a Manifesto, *The Great Replacement*. This echoes the ideas of the European 'identitarian' movement, and the French far-right writer, Renaud Camus (*Le grand Remplacement* 2011). Douglas Murray had written in *The Strange Death of Europe* (2017) that European civilisation is "committing suicide". The Spectator writer continued, that both a lack of faith in Europe's traditional values and the "mass movement of peoples into Europe" were at fault. Murray is far from advocating violence to halt "white genocide". Yet he cited Camus and rejected the idea that our homelands could be "great melting pots".

In the introduction to *Key Thinkers of the Radical Right* (2019) Mark Sedgwick listed four themes of these extreme theorists. Apocalyptic visions of catastrophes, an obsession about "global elites", the use of the Nazi jurist Carl Schmitt's 'friend-enemy' distinction, and the "metapolitics", an overarching ideology. Many modern radical right-wingers are oddities. Moldbug's neo-reaction" and an engineered authoritarian state is an Internet curiosity. Decentralised, and web-based, these ideologies have still had an

impact. The influence of the 'alt-right' white nationalists in Donald Trump's election, illustrates how the fringe interacts with the rest of the US right.

The floating signifier of the "elite" has had wide international echoes. In France, recycled as a distinction between la France périphérique looked down by metropolitan liberal elites, it's at the heart of debates around the writings of Christophe Guilluy. The European Union, "rootless cosmopolitans", the 'Nowhere' people, stand for the "enemy" opposed to the native 'Somewheres' in the language of the pro-Brexit camp, including some of the left. The word has become so commonplace that few bother to clearly define which social group or class it refers to.

**The voices that pit old communities against urban elites, dosed with a vague critique of neoliberalism, enter the same territory as the pro-Brexit nationalists**

In his most recent book Guilluy draws comparisons between Hilary Clinton's elitist scorn for the 'deplorables' who backed Trump, the 'hysteria' in the UK against the alleged racism of the lower classes who backed Leave, and French anti-fascist unity against Marine Le Pen (*No Society*). This 'moral posture' looks more like national neo-liberalism and its trade wars. It heralds, with British parallels, a concession to the extreme-right's agenda of putting national sovereignty first without any clear economic justification.

David Renton argues against calling the politics of this mixture of national populism extreme right views 'fascist'. Historically the comparisons back him up. Not only is there no Nazi Germany nor Mussolini in Italy. The contrast can be made with countries without these regimes. In the late 1930s the French *Les Croix de feu* peaked at nearly

three quarters of a million members. The Leader, La Rocque could declare, that he had only "to push a button to mobilise in less than two hours 20,000 men ready to sacrifice their lives." Bravado aside, during that decade France had not just fascist rhetoric but paramilitaries who would try to put these words into action – as they did during the Vichy regime.

Today Marine Le Pen's Rassemblement National (RN) has around 25,000 full members, a muscular security service, and the ability to hold vast rallies. It has MPs and hundreds of local councillors. The RN topped the polls in the European elections (24.31%). The Brexit Party also headed the UK European results. It is a private company owned by Nigel Farage. Classed on the extreme right by much of the European media, it contains alongside former Tories, ex-UKIP, and other hard right-wingers, a 'red-brown' tendency, headed by the former Revolutionary Communist Party member, Claire Fox. Fox and her comrades see in Brexit an assertion of 'democracy'. Yet the Spiked faction's anti-Parliamentarian and anti-internationalist shift comes close to the far right's focus on the manipulations of hidden 'elites'.

The left cannot respond by taking over the language of these 'outliers' and giving it a different content. Those who wish to erect borders, those who appeal to the identity politics of the 'Somewhere' people are not going to draw together a constituency that will help support left governments or parties. The voices that pit old communities against urban elites, dosed with a vague critique of neoliberalism, enter the same territory as the pro-Brexit nationalists who attack cosmopolitan globalists. National populism feeds off political confusion. It looks as if it is becoming, if not a new fascism, at least a place within which extreme right ideologies can flourish. To give a voice to the discontent fueling their successes we need our own way of speaking to people. This is something that the Labour Party's radical social and economic policies have begun to do. **C**

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

## SCOTLAND

# Scotland & the end of the Empire State

**Gerry Hassan** on self-government, the weaknesses of Labour (and Tory) opposition to the SNP and the need for a new constitutional settlement as the Brexit imbroglio unfolds



**I**n the shadow of Brexit, Scotland - like much of the rest of the UK - finds itself in a very strange place. British politics is in many senses dead. Only the zombie UK Parliament and Boris Johnson's Tory Government with no mandate refuses to recognise it. Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland all now march to divergent political rhythms and cultures - with each having different dominant political parties (SNP, Tories, Labour, DUP, respectively). Brexit is driven by an increasingly reactionary, fractious English nationalism - with the add-on of a divided, nervous Wales for now.

The SNP are by far the leading party of Scotland and likely to remain so for the foreseeable future. But they are now twelve years into office and dominant as much by default as through positive action. These include the nature of multi-party politics, a divided opposition, and the significant negatives of the Tories and Labour. The recent Panelbase poll put the SNP on Westminster voting intentions on 39%, up 2.1% on 2017; with the Tories on 21% (-7.6%); Labour 20% (-7.1%) and Lib Dems 13% (+6.2%) - on a national swing this would give the SNP 48 seats (+13), Tories 5 (-8), Lib Dems 5 (+1) and Labour one (-6).

The state of the SNP is paradoxical. Impressive from afar, filled with members (120,000 plus) and monies, and with a reputation for competence in office. Meanwhile, SNP ministers and politicians talk with a confident progressive language that Labour south of the border can only look on in envy. But the picture is now beginning to slowly change as years of office take their toll and the difference between rhetoric and reality become increasingly stark.

## Ruth Davidson's resignation has revealed that she had made little impact on detoxing the Tory image in Scotland

Scotland, despite appearances and talk, is not a social democracy and the SNP are not a social democratic party. Instead, their policies - no tuition fees, free care for the elderly which has just been expanded to all ages, a long freeze on the council tax recently rescinded - all point to a defensive social democracy for professional and middle class Scotland.

There are other signs of Scotland's championing of humanity and wanting to do

things differently from Westminster, as an embryonic welfare state begins to emerge with the slow devolution of such powers, but as for now it only covers a small part of the overall welfare budget. As telling, after twelve years in office and a decade of Westminster imposed austerity, the gaps and inadequacies in their record and the state of the country are increasingly obvious.

### The State of Scotland's Opposition: Tories, Labour, Lib Dems and Greens

In this situation you might think the opposition parties to the SNP would thrive, but this is not the case. The Tories had an Indian Summer renewal under Ruth Davidson but she has now gone as leader due to Boris Johnson and Brexit. This has left behind the reality that Davidson remade the Tory appeal around her own brand and personality with no real substance beyond that. Her resignation has revealed that she had made little impact on detoxing the Tory image in Scotland.

As for Scottish Labour, the party enjoyed a flip in its downward trajectory in 2017 when it surfed the Corbyn bounce and came back from one seat in 2015 to seven - having won 41 in 2010. It is now back to its lifeless, moribund, miserablist self, sulking in

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the corner and pining for the return of the good old days.

It has had no influx of new Corbynite members and energy, such people having joined the SNP and to a lesser extent, Scottish Greens, post-2014. It has no grassroots Momentum initiative, and no real idea how to do opposition politics let alone challenge the SNP.

The party is on to its ninth leader in twenty years – Richard Leonard, a former trade union official and economist – who recently scored the ignominy of a 7% voter satisfaction positive rating (40% seeing him negatively; 53% didn't know). The Lib Dems under Scottish leader Jo Swinson have a little more spring in their step, but will struggle even more north of the border to make traction when memories of the Cameron-Clegg coalition and its harsh cuts are still so recent.

This leaves the big question of where the political opposition to the SNP comes from. One particular dimension is where any serious centre-left critique to the SNP's centrism comes from. It has become more and more self-evident that the absence of such a political argument and force hinders Scottish politics, and gives the SNP leadership a degree of freedom of manoeuvre which is ultimately not helpful for anyone. Further, it aids a political agenda on domestic policy not that different from New Labour: pro-corporate capitalism, pro-lobbyist, and supportive of privatisers and out-sourcers.

Labour's troubles mean it is incapable of fulfilling this role for now. The Scottish Greens could be one political force that could undertake this – sitting with six seats in the Scottish Parliament and being pro-independence, holding the critical votes that the SNP need to have for a parliamentary majority on this. Yet, there is an ineffectiveness in how the party does its politics which means it lacks a radical edge and doesn't have much to say beyond its middle class comfort zones to the majority working class communities of Scotland.

Thus many people have been talking about the prospect of a new party of the left for the 2021 Scottish elections. But that is a lot easier said than done, as the previous poor performance of RISE (that came out of the Radical Independence Campaign - RIC) in the 2016 elections showed.

All of this takes place in the



**Richard Leonard - Scottish Labour Leader**

context of the Brexit debacle, the increasing right-wing direction of British politics, and the multi-layered crises of the British state, which long predates Brexit and was given institutional and popular form by Thatcherism.

#### **Indyref2 and Labour's problem with Britishness**

This is the backdrop against which the SNP are progressing the claim to indyref2 – requesting a Section 30 order from Westminster to make any referendum legal, binding and agreed by all sides in the way 2014 was. This will undoubtedly be refused at first ask from a Tory Government, but a subsequent vote looks very likely.

The Corbyn leadership has said if they form a government they will not 'block' an indyref, but do not want one in the 'formative years' of an administration. This stance makes sense for any potential Labour government and as a pre-election position, given the party may find itself needing the votes of SNP MPs to enter and remain in office. The SNP understand this and will not agree to support Labour without guarantees; not surprisingly the rump Scottish Labour Party completely disagree with Corbyn on this.

This still leaves the SNP facing strategic challenges about how to win a future vote such as the role of a Scottish currency, the finances and economics of independence, and the issue of a 'hard' border between an independent Scotland in the EU and a rUK outside it. All of these could trip up independence, but it does look likely that the positive case for the union – already problematic in 2014 – has become even more threadbare and lacking a progressive credo, being dragged down by the disaster nationalism of Brexit.

Labour are considering the idea of a federal plan for all Britain with Baroness Pauline Bryan, Corbyn's constitutional spokesperson in the Lords, working on a detailed package. Some Labour members and activists hold faith that this will be comprehensive in its scale of reform and ambition, plausible and feasible to implement. This ignores that for all of its history Labour have opposed the idea of political federalism and upheld the idea of parliamentary sovereignty.

It also matters that Labour has to deal with the English dimension of regionalism versus an all-English solution, the semi-detached nature of Scotland and Northern Ireland, and critically, how federalism relates to and tackles the huge systemic economic and social inequalities that disfigure the UK.

Labour's problems here are informed by its historic constitutional conservatism clinging to the wreckage of the traditions and mythologies of the British state – something as powerful a trait on the left as the right of the party.

But another feature, examined by myself and Eric Shaw in our recently published 'The People's Flag and the Union Jack', has been Labour's failure to take on the dominant reactionary forms of Britishness and absence of telling a counter-story of left patriotism. This would be anchored in the progressive, enlightened values of Britishness which Labour and other radicals have created and championed: a story which has become increasingly problematic to tell and sell.

Whatever the future shape of the UK and its politics Labour has big questions to address about how it understands Britishness and the four nation politics of the UK.

This terrain will become even more urgent and critical as the Scottish and Northern Irish questions become even more acute. For some on the left and in Labour salvation is still to be sought by the maintenance of the British state and the UK despite everything. But for many others on the left, the potential end of the UK as we know it is not a cause for mourning, but rather an opening and a liberation allowing for a new political settlement across the peoples and nations of these isles and the final demise of the Empire State which has harmed and oppressed people for too long. **C**

## ANTISEMITISM

# Getting to grips with antisemitism

**Richard Kuper** makes a constructive critique of No Place for Antisemitism

In August 2019 the Labour Party published a web page called No Place for Antisemitism. It contains what is a downloadable 1000-word leaflet and three links: to an article by Jeremy Corbyn published in the Evening Standard; to the IHRA definition of antisemitism; and to an introductory short course run by Birkbeck University.

The statement begins: "Antisemitism has no place in our Party. Hatred towards Jewish people has no place in our society."

And it explains:

This page aims to provide Labour members and supporters with some basic tools to understand antisemitism so that we can defeat it.

Jewish Voice for Labour (JVL) immediately responded to it with "A cautious welcome" because it:

- recognises the need for open discussion in order to confront bigotry, and specifically antisemitism;
- explicitly states that anti-Zionism is not antisemitism, and nor is advocacy of a single democratic state with equal rights for all;
- sets the stage for an open discussion about Israel-Palestine in which the legitimacy of critical positions is not ruled out in advance; and
- states that over the coming months, the party will produce educational materials on a number of specific forms of racism and bigotry, starting with this one on antisemitism.

But we also stressed that there were elements in the message we disagreed with, in particular its discussion of "many key historical issues: Zionism, the Nakba, Britain's historical role, settler colonialism and more". We further stressed that "we do not see any justification for the privileging of one ethnic group within the state of Israel at the expense of others".

And we endorsed Clive Lewis who had recently written: "Expulsions alone will not solve Labour's antisemitism crisis. Political education about antisemitism can help to ensure a socialist politics based on real equality becomes the common

sense across the party".

In our approach we start from the fact that "antisemitism is a form of racism". It has its own forms of specificities, certainly (as do all forms of racism), but it is important not to elevate it above all other forms of bigotry. It needs to be set, rather, in the context of equalities, human rights and anti-racism more generally. At the end of Labour's statement there is a nod in this direction with a promise to launch "a programme to educate our members and empower them to confront oppression, wherever it arise (with) our first materials (being) on antisemitism". We are concerned that no others have yet been published.

Before developing some of the reservations we expressed, let me first state my general agreement with the statement's (all too) brief words on antisemitism as a hatred towards Jews; on conspiracy theories; on Holocaust denial or minimisation. JVL has attempted to spell out its view of What is – and what is not – antisemitic misconduct, which is fully in accord with these generalised statements and, I believe, adds some real substance to what is found in Labour's leaflet.

Labour's statement is on weaker ground when it comes to three broad areas:

- its incredibly attenuated history of Israel and Zionism;
- its condemnation of "anti-Jewish tropes" but with no guidance as to how to recognise them (nor how not to misidentify them); and
- The threat to freedom of speech: it is fine not limiting "legitimate criticism of the Israeli state or its policies or diluting support for the Palestinian people's struggle for justice, their own state, and the rights of refugees and their descendants", but everything hinges on the word "legitimate". Again, no guidance is given.

The trouble is that, when saying "we are launching a programme" on antisemitism this document appears not to be the first step but the entirety of the programme. It just isn't such a programme. It is totally lacking in guidance on key issues, for instance:



- guidance about the complexities and nuances of what is or is not antisemitic. While this applies to racisms of all kinds, it is a particularly vexed issue with antisemitism because of the attempt in recent decades to delegitimise certain kinds of criticisms of Israel as antisemitic. Referring us on to the IHRA definition is no answer. As repeatedly pointed out (e.g. by ex-Appeal Court judge Sir Stephen Sedley), that fails as a definition because it simply does not define. Nobody knows how to apply it and its examples of things that may, taking into account the context, be antisemitic, is no help.

Large sections of the Zionist movement today take particular exception to any description of Israel as an apartheid society and to the BDS movement, both of which they claim are antisemitic. Most objections to Israeli anti-apartheid week each year, for example, assert they are such. They are not. These are perfectly legitimate expressions of opinion which would only be antisemitic if argued for in ways which express hatred of Jews. Yet Labour's statement is silent on this.

- guidance to the complexity of the history: any history of the region cannot be limited to the effects of the Holocaust and simply saying that, since 1948, "Zionism means maintaining that state" as Labour's statement does.

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Missing is the Balfour Declaration, the British mandate, the establishment of the state of Israel by dispossession, the Palestinian nakba, the occupation of 1967, the increasing exclusion of Israel's own Palestinian citizens from full citizenship, and – perhaps most important in recent years – the elimination of all forms of political Zionism with any purchase on reality other than an expansionist ethno-nationalism.

- guidance as to what to do about people who are found to hold views which we disagree with and deem to be racist. “Zero tolerance” is not a programme for education – but seems to be suggested as the prime weapon in our armoury for dealing with antisemitism. It is not. In a society in which all kinds of racism are prevalent, some are bound to

surface from party members and in our wider milieu. Ignorance is often a major factor, aided in the age of social media by a willingness to pass things on without engaging with their content in any serious way. People who express such ideas need to be engaged with constructively wherever possible. As socialists we believe in the transforming power of education, deliberation, reflection – and argument. So it appears does this document. But it says nothing about how to provide it.

In July 2018, in an attempt to make the IHRA definition fit for purpose, Labour's NEC drafted a serious commentary on it called NEC Code of Conduct: Antisemitism. Withdrawn in the face of a barrage of orchestrated opposition from the Board of Deputies of British Jews, the

Jewish Chronicle and more, the code was set to be redrafted. As far as we are aware, it hasn't. Something like it is desperately needed if Labour is to be able to engage in a serious educational discussion around antisemitism and in the development of serious guidelines for disciplinary bodies charged with dealing with allegations of antisemitism.

Indeed JVL's What is – and what is not – antisemitic misconduct was submitted as a contribution to their development. In their absence we would urge people to fall back on the old NEC Code of Conduct and our contribution to the discussion.

In the meantime, we as Jewish Voice for Labour, are developing our own educational workshops on antisemitism. These are available to any trade union Labour branch or CLP. **C**

# No Surrender - a Republican Case against British Exit

**Steve Freeman and Phil Vellender** explain why Ireland is the sticking point for any withdrawal

**T**he Tories are desperate to win the next election and are now having to cut a deal over Ireland. The essence of Tory Brexit is to leave the single market and customs union. Nobody voted for this. It was not on the ballot paper. Any agreement along these lines, or indeed any other agreement, must be put back to the people in a ratification referendum.

However, leaving the single market and customs union has opened up a fundamental contradiction of an open border within Ireland and the 1998 Good Friday Agreement. This peace treaty accepted Northern Ireland would remain in the UK with a peaceful economic and social integration of Ireland through the institutions of the European Union. Ireland has always been the major stumbling block for Tory Brexit.

## Irish republicanism

Irish republicanism has long opposed British Crown powers used in Ireland with the aim of a united Irish republic. The fight for

popular sovereignty, the rights of nations to self determination and the right for the Irish people to ratify constitutional treaties was recognised by the Good Friday Agreement.

This might seem irrelevant in the rest of the UK. It is, however, part of a wider European democratic culture and heritage and relevant experience for republicans in England, Scotland and Wales. It informs any republican case for a democratic solution to the problems posed by the 2016 EU referendum.

## New Irish Deal

The Johnson government's proposals to leave the single market and customs union have made Northern Ireland a special case by removing the UK backstop. This has been dubbed “Two borders for four years” with a ratification vote in Northern Ireland, initially to confirm the deal, but with confirmation votes repeated every four years.

Johnson's new proposal keeps the whole of Ireland in the Customs Union. Northern

Ireland, as one of the constituent ‘nations’ of the UK, would now have unique arrangements. This is a concession to secure a deal which meets the interests of the City of London.

Furthermore, Her Majesty's Government (HMG) has recognised that Northern Ireland has a right to ratify the withdrawal treaty with the EU. This right to ratify is confined to the Northern Ireland executive and Assembly rather than the Irish people. But there is no reason why the people of Northern Ireland and indeed the rest of Ireland, as in 1998, could not vote to ratify any deal.

The republican case is that these rights should be extended to Scotland which like Northern Ireland voted to remain in the EU. Every national parliament (Scotland and Wales) should have the right to ratify and should extend this to the people. Although there is no English parliament, the people of England should have the same right to ratify any agreement. **C**

**Phil Vellender is a member of South Thanet CLP**

## TURKEY &amp; SYRIA

# Turkish 'Peace Operations'

**Mary Southcott** says Turkey's attacks on Kurds in northern Syria need to be seen in a wider context



Turkey begins invasion of Northern Syria

As soon as President Trump announced the withdrawal of US troops from Syria, another big man politician, Turkish President Erdogan, launched his Peace Spring operation against the Kurds who had been fighting with the US against ISIS. The Kurds have done most of the fighting, and much of the dying, in the battle to destroy ISIS which Turkey initially supported, having much in common, an Islamic Caliphate.

For Cypriots, awaiting a peace settlement and the removal of Turkish troops from a reunited Cyprus, this brings back memories of the Turkish Peace Operation in 1974 and Operation Olive Branch against Afrin in 2018. President Erdogan was not in charge in 1974, the Social Democrat Bulent Erdogan was, but what they share in common is the need to keep the MHP, the Nationalist Movement Party, the Grey Wolves, on board.

The Turkish Cypriot Leader, expected to meet with his Greek Cypriot compatriot in Paris in November 2019 to find a Cyprus settlement, made some anodyne remarks about war and Erdogan turned against him just as he did when the Afrika editor wrote that Afrin was similar to the 1974 Cyprus invasion.

It is time to think about Turkey in the context not just of the current invasion and clearance of the corridor in north Syria. We need to go back to WWI which was the War of Ottoman Succession. So many recent wars flow from Ottoman geography and its Byzantine mixing of different minorities based on religion. Do we study their war of Independence (1918 – 1923), the huge ethnic cleansing and exchange of population with Greece and the extermination of about a million Armenians, the Lausanne Treaty and Ataturk's version of secularism, safeguarded by the military by coups in 1960, 1971, 1980 and the failed one in 2016? Have we followed Turkey's war on the Kurds or the Cyprus partition? It was always a mistake to see Turkey as a model for a moderate Muslim state during the Arab Spring.

Turkey has had much European money for holding back Syrian refugees. One of the excuses for this war is to create a Kurdish free corridor, a security zone, in northern Syria so some refugees can return. Turkey's buying Russian S400s, and British firms supplying arms for the current attack, create a conflict of interest for NATO which has no article 50 and has turned a blind eye to Turkey's lack of human rights for Alevites as well as Kurds. There is even the proposal for acquisition of British Steel by the Turkish Armed

Forces Assistance Fund (Oyak).

Turkey's treatment of the Kurds, who Trump says are "no angels", means the imprisonment of Abdullah Ocalan, the leader of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and their designation as terrorists, and Salahattin Demirtas, the elected representative of the People's Democratic Party, the HDP and their former Leader.

We need to examine our relationship with Turkey. A recent book *Why Turkey is AUTHORITARIAN*: from Ataturk to Erdogan, by Halil Karaveli, for the Left Book Club, (Pluto Press), helps with the background. The author acknowledges what happened to the Armenians, and points to Bulent Ecevit, Turkey's Prime Minister, 1974, 1977, 1978-79 and 1999-2002, as the only 20th century politician who bucked the authoritarian trend. When asked for his proudest achievement, Ecevit did not reply invading Cyprus or the Ocalan arrest but giving workers trade union rights. None of his legacy survives in today's Turkey.

Ataturk and Erdogan can be seen as the same side of a right wing nationalist coin, the Kemalist and the Islamist. President Erdogan's grip on power is loosening. His AKP lost the 2019 local elections, the rerun Mayoral election in Istanbul, and now his former Foreign Minister, Ahmet Davutoglu has broken with the AKP

**Mary Southcott is a member of Chartist EB and Bristol Labour**



forming his own party.

The real divide in Turkey is not between religious and secular but between rich and poor. Karaveli makes comparisons with Bonaparte III and warns that not only in Turkey but in the UK and USA, the Sans Culottes are voting for the Aristocrats! Ecevit criticised the intelligentsia for being "haughty and spineless, lazy and dyspeptic, or fearful and lacking in belief". Turkey has stayed right wing authoritarian, not because people are backward but partly because the progressives' contempt for them has contributed to the disabling of the left. The recipe is to take democracy seriously because it teaches humility to intellectuals, to heed the concerns of the majority and to interest themselves in their concerns.

Other interesting insights from the book cover the Cuban Missile Crisis, the quid pro quo for Khrushchev's withdrawal was the US withdrawal of its missiles aimed at the USSR in Turkey. Ecevit told Jimmy Carter that the USSR was less of a threat to

Turkey than Greece. The US encouraged the Turkish military to get rid of Ecevit, leading to three years of right wing military dictatorship, hundreds of thousands of leftists imprisoned, some tortured to death. Neoliberal economics were imposed and Islam bolstered as a counterweight to the left.

The Grand National Assembly voted against the US using the Turkish bases for their attack of Iraq in 2003 when Erdogan had just become Prime Minister, the military arguing this would lead to Kurdish secession. After this Erdogan changed track. In the Ergenekon trials of the deep state in 2012, 325 military officers were sentenced to life imprisonment on trumped up charges but freed in 2014. The reality emerged via Wikileaks. The Eurasian faction in the military, looking to relationships with Russia and China and obstructing US-Turkish relations, were purged.

By 2012, nine thousand university students, journalists, lawyers and trade union activists were serving

prison sentences for "terrorist activities". Ironically when the 2016 coup happened it was by remnants of the Eurasian military who took on the Gulenists, who were pro US. The Russian supported attack on Afrin in 2018 risked US retaliation not least because they had trained and sided with the Kurdish troops fighting IS that Turkey had supported.

If you learn anything from this book, it is that most Turkish despots are got rid of when they fall out of favour with the US but not until thousands on the left have been sacrificed, or in this case Kurds and others living in northern Syrian. You can see the Turkish Foreign Minister, Merlut Cavusoglu on Hard Talk but most onlookers in this David against Goliath fight believe the Kurds have been betrayed by the US. Their administration seems to be rolling back from Trump's decision to pull out, leaving Turkey to invade, the Kurds to release their ISIS prisoners, the Russians to move into the vacuum and Assad to stay in place. There is a threat to destroy the Turkish economy. We need to watch Turkey. **C**

# Millions excluded from voting

**Phil Pope** makes the case for widening the UK franchise

**S**ocialists should support proportional representation because it is fair, but it will also make it easier to add millions of people to the electoral register.

Filling in electoral registration forms seems like a necessary chore, but we can do away with this requirement which effectively de-registers people every time they change address.

Under our current system, we need to know that people vote in the constituency where they live. Otherwise, parties would bus their supporters around the country to vote in close-run marginal seats. A proportional representation system, as well as frustrating the practice of gerrymandering, makes it irrelevant where people vote. As well as being able to use any polling station one finds convenient, this also means that exactly where each voter is currently living becomes irrelevant for the electoral register.

Five groups of people are excluded from registering to vote. Nearly 100,00 prisoners are denied the vote as punishment (though this may have no effect other than adding to their alien-

ation from society).

Half a million people live in various tax havens and are given no representation at a national level. Over 700,000 British citizens living abroad have lost the right to vote in the UK under the 15-year rule. About three million foreign nationals living and working in the UK are not allowed to vote in national elections (though we do allow Commonwealth and Irish citizens).

Then there is a diverse group of people who, though they have the right to vote, face increased barriers to staying registered and casting their votes. Rough-sleepers; people living in hostels, B&Bs, or caravan parks; sofa-surfing youngsters; travellers of various kinds; seasonal workers; those temporarily living abroad; people hiding from stalkers or fleeing domestic abuse; and lastly millions of students and private renters who change their address frequently.

It is possible for all these to vote but we know from census data that at least four million of these people are missing from the electoral register. All told over eight million people could be

added to the electorate. Though it is fair to assume that many of these will be unlikely to vote, many others will be naturally progressive voters from under-represented and marginalised sections of society.

Labour conference voted to "extend equal rights to vote to all UK residents" but this only addresses the legal exclusion of some of these groups, and none of the practical barriers to registration.

If we no longer need to re-register when we change address, we could simply register to vote once and remain registered until the day we die. Immigrants could register to vote when they apply for residency and remain registered until they emigrate.

The technical issues of preparing a new national registration system would be relatively trivial and a huge amount of work of continually updating local registers would be saved. If socialists are not already persuaded to support proportional representation on the grounds of fairness, they should also consider the electoral advantage of helping to enfranchise millions more voters. **C**

**Phil Pope is co-chair Bristol Labour LCF**

## HONG KONG

# South Park ban escalates action

**Denis Wong** on democracy in Hong Kong and the troubles in achieving it

**W**hen the Hong Kong government proposed its extradition bill in February this year, few people could have predicted the popular reaction that took place. Following a small protest demonstration of about 12,000 on 31 March 2019, multiple subsequent demonstrations took place, peaking at about one million participants, out of a total population of about 7.4 million. Then, due to government disregard and disproportionate police action, peaceful demonstrations developed into large-scale violent street clashes that continue to this day showing no sign of abating. It is not the intention to describe the detail of how those events unfolded here. It is instead to offer a few pointers to a macro-global situation and to a micro-personal one, that mainstream press seems to miss.

The macro-global situation is illustrated by the banning in China of the US cartoon series *South Park* in July because of an episode which portrays the main character, Randy getting caught attempting to sell weed in China and getting sent to a work camp similar to those Beijing has been using in the Uyghur minority province of Xinjiang. Whilst this seemingly has nothing to do with Hong Kong, it comes within the context of other dealings between Beijing and other non-Chinese corporations, in particular the US National Basketball Association.

The NBA got into trouble because the manager of one of their 30 teams issued a message on the social media site Twitter that happened to include the words: "Fight for freedom, stand with Hong Kong". The NBA quickly distanced itself from the message in an attempt to salvage business in China worth an estimated USD500 million annually, but left itself open to criticism, not least from the producers of the *South Park* cartoon Trey Parker and Matt Stone.

They issued an apology, whose sarcasm is blunt, which read: "Like the NBA, we welcome the Chinese censors into our homes and into our hearts. We too love money more than freedom and democracy. Xi doesn't look like Winnie the Pooh at all. Tune into our 300th episode this Wednesday at 10! Long live the



**Hong Kong demonstrators**

great Communist Party of China. May the autumn's sorghum harvest be bountiful. We good now China?"

This seemed to hit the mark because no sooner had this message been issued, protesters in Hong Kong took to the streets again, but this time not to demonstrate or to vandalise but to project onto a large screen the offending episode of *South Park* on a main street in Hong Kong. Through an episode of *South Park*, not without context, the citizens of a key working class district were both entertained and educated about censorship in the People's Republic of China.

The micro-personal situation is less comical, mainly because it is more rational. This is illustrated by that street screening which has the triple irony of a cartoon episode that (indirectly) portrays a mass detention that Beijing would prefer to forget, that is banned because of this and that allows an apology to point to those ironies. To boot, there is the additional irony of the NBA experiences mirroring those of *South Park*.

Over the years, Hong Kong has become a highly educated society, progressing from a post-war period when the only thoughts were of feeding the family, to one where intellectual and artistic expression has become possible, where ironies can be understood, exploited and enjoyed.

Thus, when a threat to that freedom is mounted - as in the proposed government extradition bill - then opposition will grow, as it has done. The problem, of course, is that the

government and its barely concealed patron, the Chinese Communist Party, lack that irony leaving them only one means to deal with the situation - physical violence.

To date, over 2,000 protesters have been taken into custody, some of whom have been clearly mistreated. For the protesters on the outside to leave them to their fates is hardly an option and so the struggle has now expanded, especially after thugs became involved on the streets, assaulting protesters and innocent bystanders whilst police looked on. The overall situation becomes repetitive, of ironies raised by protesters then subsequently brutalised through the actions of the government and its patron. A problem sits within the escalating physical violence of the situation, where Beijing naturally wants to portray that as coming from protesters and not the government.

For concerned onlookers, it is firstly a matter of staying alert to these developments and the implicit messages within them. Secondly, it is a matter of communicating with Chinese mainland people, many of whom are highly literate and intelligent, studying and working in the UK.

Of course, a part of that conversation must deal with the state of our own democracy, whose failings have recently become apparent. Any thoughts of fixing someone else's democracy must naturally start with our own, which up to now at least has escaped the worst aspects of state violence. **C**

**Dr Denis Wong is a Manchester based academic and writer**



# Their History

**Duncan Bowie** considers previous Tory divisions and sees nothing new about nationalism and protectionism

**H**aving for fifteen years written the *Our History* column on the history of the British labour movement, it seems odd to turn to the history of the Tory party. As the Conservative party has had its biggest split in nearly a century, it is perhaps the time to reflect on previous Tory divisions.

Although the issue of Europe has caused divisions within the Conservative party for at least the last forty years, successive Conservative leaders have until recent months held the party together – despite the party having both pro EU leaders (Churchill, Eden, Macmillan, Douglas-Hume, Heath, early Thatcher, Major, Hague, Howard, Cameron, May) and anti-Europe leaders (late Thatcher, Duncan-Smith).

It is generally accepted that the modern Conservative Party (or at least the Conservative Party as we have known it) was founded in 1834, with the Tamworth manifesto speech of Sir Robert Peel which is widely regarded as the first statement of conservative principles, intended to distinguish his position from that of the previous Tory prime minister, the Duke of Wellington, who had strenuously opposed the 1832 Reform Bill. Peel accepted that reform measure, seeing it as final with regard to suffrage. He nevertheless recognised that the need for further reform of civic and religious institutions would be kept under review, proven abuses corrected and real grievances redressed.

The Conservatives would reform to survive, but opposed 'a perpetual vortex of agitation'. The new party was however to split in 1846, when following two years of famine in Ireland, Peel pushed through parliament a repeal of the Corn laws, a tax on the import of corn. Many Conservatives were protectionists and after losing their case over keeping the Corn laws, voted with the Whig opposition against Peel's Irish Coercion bill. This forced Peel to resign as Prime Minister and Conservative party

leader. The Whig Lord John Russell became Prime Minister and Peel and his supporters including the earl of Aberdeen and William Gladstone, both future Prime Ministers, joined the Whigs and Radicals to create the Liberal Party.

Edward Stanley, later Earl of Derby became leader of the protectionist Conservatives, supported by Benjamin Disraeli – both were later to promote the 1867 Reform Act, with Disraeli advocating 'One Nation' Conservatism, a relatively centrist position that was to act as the basis of the Conservative party for the next century. This was despite the emergence of hardline groups such as the 'diehard' opponents both of House of Lords reform and Lloyd George's radical budget in 1910 and the imperialists led by the 5<sup>th</sup> Lord Salisbury (colonial secretary and leader of the Lords) in the 1950's and 1960's. The Conservative party did not however split over either of these issues.

The second major split was also over tariff reform. Joseph Chamberlain split the Liberal Party in 1886 over the issue of Irish Home Rule, and together with Lord Hartington (later the Duke of Devonshire) established the Liberal Unionist Party, which operated in coalition with the Conservatives between 1895 and 1905 and formally merged with the Conservative party in 1912 to create the Conservative and Unionist Party, which remains the formal name of the Conservative Party today. However, in 1903, Chamberlain, at the time colonial secretary, instigated a new campaign for tariff reform, supported by the Tariff Reform League, arguing that imperial trade should be given preference over foreign trade.

When Balfour's cabinet refused to endorse imperial preference, Chamberlain resigned from the cabinet. The divisions then led to Balfour's resignation as prime minister, leading to the Liberal victory in the 1906 election, with the Liberals (previously split



**Robert Peel**

between anti-imperialists and imperialists) united around the free trade banner.

From 1911 to 1916, the Conservatives had separate leaders in the Commons and the Lords, with Bonar Law, a supporter of tariff reform and opponent of Irish home rule, only becoming overall party leader in 1916 to be succeeded in 1921 as Commons leader by Austen Chamberlain, a tariff reformer like his father. Bonar Law was reinstated in 1922 as overall party leader when Stanley Baldwin led a backbench revolt which withdrew the Conservatives from the Lloyd George coalition government, in which Chamberlain served as chancellor of the exchequer.

The issue of protection and common markets remains an issue within the Conservative party, with many Brexiteers advocating a return to preferential treatment for trade with the Commonwealth.

This represents a somewhat nostalgic view of the historic imperial tradition of the pre-modern Conservative Party. Boris Johnson is now seeking to promote himself as a one-nation Tory in the Disraelian tradition but finding this difficult to combine with his attempt to revive the somewhat older tradition of the Conservative Party as the defenders of Britain as an imperial power – the Trumpian Britain First and Britain can be Great again!

Disraeli perhaps succeeded in combining these two notions, and Joseph Chamberlain sought to present himself as an advocate of both social reform and imperialism. In the modern era this is proving a little more difficult for Boris Johnson and perhaps a much more significant split in the Conservative Party than those of 1846 and 1906 is now unavoidable. We can only hope so, though we should not gloat and be conscious that as in the 1886 split in the Liberal Party, the Labour Party is also at risk of splitting over those issues of protectionism and nationalism that also bedevil the Brexit debate. **C**

**Duncan Bowie is  
Chartist Reviews  
Editor**

## YOUTH VIEW

# End the scourge of domestic worker slavery

**Alice Arkwright** sees migrant women, particularly domestic workers, in the frontline of fight against sexual abuse and exploitation

**C**ontrary to stereotypes of women moving for their family or spouses, women are increasingly making up a large proportion of labour migrants around the world. Around 50% of the 244 million people who live and work outside of their country of origin are women.

Globally and in the UK, working migrant women are concentrated in the often underpaid, undervalued and informal care and domestic sector, which exposes them to discrimination rooted in sexism and racism, exploitation and gender-based violence.

Latin American Women's Rights Service survey of migrant women in cleaning, hospitality and domestic care this year found that over 60% of workers faced breach of contract including illegal deduction of wages and 40% of women had experienced discrimination, harassment or unreasonable treatment.

From the Grunwick strikers to today, migrant women have always played a vital role in the fight for equality at work. In recent years we have seen frequent examples of their actions making headlines in the UK. Campaigns including those at university campuses by outsourced cleaners and organisations that work to improve the lives of domestic workers have largely been led by migrant workers. They serve to challenge stereotypes of passive migrant women and show the diverse make up of working class groups fighting for equality and dignity in the UK.

Groups of predominantly migrant workers at LSE, SOAS and Kings College have won successful campaigns for cleaners and security staff to be brought in house where they had been previously been outsourced. These outsourced contracts offered far worse terms and conditions compared to other university staff. At LSE an in-house worker would be offered six months fully paid

sick leave, good parental pay and pension benefits compared to an outsourced worker who would receive the statutory minimum.

The treatment of low paid workers is one example of the impact of marketisation of higher education and highlights the double standard of universities that tout themselves as progressive organisations whilst exploiting staff.

Filipino, Chinese and Vietnamese groups have also come together to revive the historic Old Baths Community House in Hackney which acts as a base to campaign for migrant women's rights, support refugees and migrants in navigating the UK's hostile environment and runs women's empowerment projects. The Mayor of London this year committed £35,000 to the reopening of the house.

Another example of the work of migrant women fighting for their human rights are organisations, such as the Voice of Domestic Workers and Kalayaan, set up by and for domestic workers. Domestic workers are people, predominantly women, who enter the UK from outside the EU to accompany their existing employer to work in a private household. Due to the hidden nature of their work and the conditions of their visa, domestic workers are recognised as being at very high risk of slavery and abuse.

In 2012, the UK government changed the rules so that domestic workers could only enter on a 6-month non-renewable visa and were not allowed to change employer whilst in the UK. This meant workers were tied to abusive employers. After a damning review that criticised the government for exposing women to conditions of slavery and trafficking, the law was changed in 2016 so that workers could change employers during the 6-month period to find a safe way out of exploitation. However, it is still not possible for domestic workers to apply to extend or renew the visa and they have no recourse to



'Justice for Cleaners' ran successful campaigns for cleaners

public funds.

Kalayaan have demonstrated that this change has made no difference to the levels of abuse experienced by women. Their data shows that 85% of domestic workers under the new visa reported psychological abuse, over 50% reported not being given enough food at work and 83% said their employer had taken their passport.

The reality is that many women stay with abusive employers as it can be extremely difficult to find other work with only months or weeks left on their visa and with no recourse to public funds, they can find themselves destitute and extremely vulnerable without work.

Many women also end up moving to other abusive households as they are faced with no other option, which completely undermines the reasons for allowing workers to change employers. It can also be very difficult for women to evidence their right to be in the UK and change jobs as employers often take their passport.

Campaigners are therefore arguing that domestic workers must be able to apply to renew or extend their visa to have a better chance of finding decent and safe employment.

These different examples highlight the precarious and often dangerous nature of many migrant women's work. They also underline the importance of these individuals and organisations fighting exploitation and standing up for workers' human rights. **C**



**Alice Arkwright** works for the TUC



# Villain Problem

**Patrick Mulcahy**  
on a performance that transcends the script

**J**oker', a DC comic book villain's origin movie, has more in common with the television series, *'Gotham'* than the *'Batman/Dark Knight'* films of directors Tim Burton and Christopher Nolan. It is an attempt – and a financially successful one – by director Todd Phillips, who co-wrote the screenplay with Scott Silver, to humanise the Joker, played variously by Cesar Romero (in the cheesy 1960s TV series), Jack Nicholson (in Tim Burton's 1989 *'Batman'* reboot), Heath Ledger (who won a posthumous Oscar for his performance in 2008's *'The Dark Knight'*) and Jared Leto (in *'Suicide Squad'*, the less said the better).

Set during a city-wide sanitation workers' strike, the film tells the story of a troubled man, Arthur Fleck (Joaquin Phoenix) who lives with his mother (Frances Conroy) and works with vigorous energy but no comic timing as a clown-for-hire. He aspires to be a stand-up comic too but doesn't have the craft. He's a sad man who chooses to wear a happy face so as not to think unhappy thoughts. He is driven by fantasies: that the popular television talk show host, Murray Franklin (Robert de Niro) could treat him as a son; that his single mom neighbour (Zazie Beetz) notices him and is by his side during his most testing moments. Up to a point, the fantasies aren't signalled visually, though their schmaltziness is a big clue.

However, *'Joker'* has two other aspects that make it culturally relevant. Firstly, it shows the danger of giving a mentally troubled man a gun. After he is assaulted trying to retrieve an 'everything must go' sign that he uses at work, Arthur is handed a weapon by a colleague. He then uses it to kill three city workers, an act that is perceived as heroic. Secondly, the clown mask is used as a 'Guy Fawkes' style symbol of dissent, specifically against the wealthy. Arthur's act inspires a movement to kill the rich.

Would a Hollywood studio mass-market a film that has serious concerns about wealth inequality? *'Joker'* is set squarely

in the past, with cinemas showing *'Zorro the Gay Blade'* and *'Blow Out'*, so we're in 1981, the year in which an assassination attempt was made on President Ronald Reagan and *'Dynasty'* first aired on US television. Phillips doesn't critique the rich too harshly. The three rich guys bother a young woman on a subway train when Arthur gets involved, bursting

relies on his medication. He doesn't receive any mail. He isn't respected at work. The clown outfit and make-up confirm his invisibility. It takes a trip to Arkham Hospital for Arthur to discover the truth about his childhood, leading him to an intentionally murderous act.

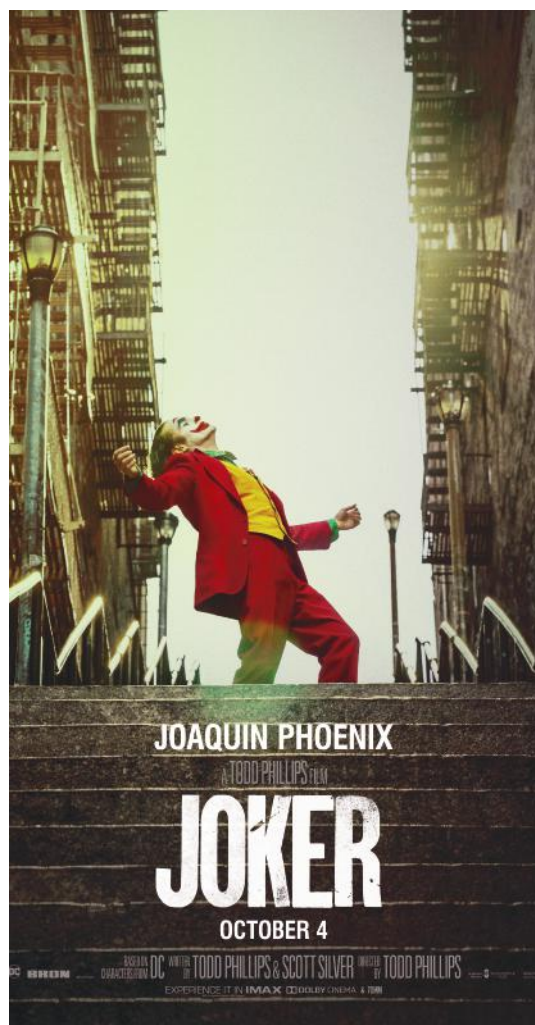
The violence in *'Joker'* is graphic – a far cry from the comic book fighting you see in the Marvel Cinematic Universe. Arthur is increasingly homicidal, on a route to self-destruction. His counselling (and medication) abruptly end.

The film suggests that we shouldn't acclaim a clown as a leader. It is possible to see the film as a critique of populism, with the people opting for alternative figures to deliver a more hopeful future. Fleck is an utterly hopeless leader-substitute. The film also argues for a better way of dealing with mental illness in ways that instil self-satisfaction in those individuals scarred by trauma.

*'Joker'* is too crude a film to be likeable, right down to the performance of 'Send in the Clowns'. It relies too much on ineffective cops not doing their job properly to allow Arthur to evade arrest. Yet, watching him in clown make-up dancing and showing off his concave belly, mainstream audiences are finally seeing Joaquin Phoenix. The actor has been more associated with independent fare in films such as *Her* and *You Were Never Really Here*. Even playing Johnny Cash in the 2005 Oscar winning

biopic, *Walk the Line* didn't make him a household name; he lost out in the Oscars to the late Philip Seymour Hoffman. Phoenix is known for his loner-intensity, but he is also willing to eschew likeability and dominating a scene. Here, audiences respond to his weight-loss for the role, his portrayal of a man fighting a losing battle in his desire to connect with others. Phoenix's characterisation isn't best served by his director – his performance really transcends the script. It is however the reason to see the film.

**'Joker' is on general release**



into nervous laughter. He shoots out of self-defence.

Talk show host Murray openly ridicules him, screening footage of Arthur floundering at a comedy club. He then invites him on the show as a guest.

If *'Joker'* was set in 2019, the big finale wouldn't happen. Arthur would be assessed before he went on the air. You question whether footage of an unknown comedian on try-out night would really exist let alone end up on television.

Phoenix's Arthur is on a downward trajectory from the start. He

## BOOK REVIEWS

**Peter Kenyon**  
on a  
sceptical  
account of  
Labour's  
future

## Against all the odds

**Left for Dead? The Strange Death and Rebirth of the Labour Party**  
**Lewis Goodall**  
**William Collins £20**

**L**ewis Goodall is living proof that social mobility once existed in the UK. A working-class lad

brought up in Birmingham, who made it to university and into political journalism. At the time of writing his account of the Labour Party he was with Sky News, which he has now left to return to the BBC Newsnight programme. He uses this life experience and that of his family to help illustrate the downs and ups of Labour in a Prologue titled Longbridge. His father worked there at the Rover plant. What happened is a vivid illustration of working-class vulnerabilities to globalisation and New Labour's indifference to their fate.

He describes on his earliest political memories, his Grandfather telling him that Margaret Thatcher 'made the rich richer and the poor poorer' and his Mother nodding sagely as he did so. Goodall joined the Labour Party aged 15 years old. Though he has since eschewed political party membership.

As a teenager he signed up for the Aim Higher programme, one of New Labour's many initiatives to

aid social mobility, which he credits for his own professional progression. In the first chapter 'What went before: New Labour and the Left', Goodall contests the oft cited allegation that New Labour was 'Tory-lite.' For all its faults, the Labour government was not a Conservative (or conservative) one and did things that a Tory administration would never have countenanced. He illustrates his argument with data from the Institute of Fiscal Studies showing the distributional impact of Labour between 1997 and 2000. "New Labour was redistributing money hand over first", he claims. But over time the centre-left lost the means to address voters' concerns. New Labour's default lais-

sez-faire attitude to globalisation was suicidal. What was the point of Labour in government? "Why not replace them with stewards of the free market .....i.e. The Conservative Party? And true enough. As soon as Labour's economic credibility was damaged beyond repair in the late 2000s, that is precisely what the public did," he writes. Chapter 2 'The Curious Case of Jeremy Corbyn' explores the man whose biggest virtue is perhaps to restore the magic of possibility. Goodall likens Corbyn's ascendancy to that of Margaret Thatcher, 40 years earlier. He insists Corbyn's

reconstituted certainty that the private sector is an unalloyed bad in any circumstance." This has enabled Labour under Corbyn to wash its hands of responsibility for the New Labour governments symbiotic relationship with the private sector.

But Corbynism we are told is more than just Corbyn. In terms of domestic policy there are two strands – one that relies on the past, the other yet to materialise, rooted in community, the environment and a readiness to experiment. There is battle still to be fought.

In Chapter 4 'The A-word', Goodall explores Corbyn's authenticity, in Chapter 5 'Corbyn The Culture Warrior'. Corbynism he concludes is a 'bourgeois force in a working class party with a potentially revolutionary leadership'. In Chapter 7 'The Takeover' explores the stark differences between Corbyn and previous Labour Party leaders and the battles for control within the party nationally and in local government. Reading Chapter 8 'Fear and Loathing in the Labour Party', I found myself at odds with the author. He relies over heavily on a tiny sample of current instances of uncomradely behaviour. As he concedes: 'If the 120-year(ish) history of the party tells us anything, it's that no one tradition dominates in perpetuity...'

In Chapter 9 'The night everything changed: The 2017 General Election', Goodall's role as a political reporter provided a rich seam of material to explore that idea. He conclusion is unsettling: "Those people who haven't two half-pennies to rub together will be less and less likely to vote for the left....." To ram that point home, he adds a Postscript 'Grandad' in which he sets out his concern that with both main political parties ideologically polarised there will be nowhere for people like his working-class grandad to go. A troubling, but necessary read – otherwise the left might be dead, despite Corbyn.

LEWIS GOODALL



The Strange Death and Rebirth  
of the **LABOUR PARTY**

rise did not happen out of nowhere. In Chapter 3 'What is Corbynism', he seeks to explain the phenomenon. He identifies four strands; anti-austerity economics, an anti-war foreign policy, ending Blairism and entrenching a left-wing approach within the Labour Party and transforming the Labour Party into a mass membership/member-led organisation.

By comparing Corbyn's economic policies to those of his predecessor, Ed Miliband, Goodall unearths one of Corbyn's troublesome obsessions – "[he] has an un-



# Avarice and ideology

**Glyn Ford**  
on Treason

**Hitler's British Traitors**  
**Tim Tate**  
**Icon £25**

**H**ere is a tale of treachery and betrayal distorted in the smoke and mirrors of chauvinism, class and conceit. As Tate shows, Britain had its fair share of traitors driven by avarice and ideology, prepared to sell the country out for money, power or both. Winners shape history. Churchill believed the British were better than those continentals. There were to be no collaborators and quislings here. As far as feasible they were brushed from history. Thus after the war Churchill forbade any trials on the Channel Isles - the only part of the British Isles occupied by the Nazis - not even for those who loaded the islands' Jews onto the boats shipping them to the Concentration Camps to be liquidated without trace. The broader establishment, with the collusion of the Secret Service and courts, did the same during the war.

The activities of Britain's Fifth Column ran the gamut from labelling lampposts with sticky-backs 'This is a Jew's War', through sabotage, arson and spying all the way up to plans for civil insurrection, stockpiling weapons and coup d'états. The upper-class perpetrators faced gentile harassment, while the lumpen-proletariat were hunted down by poachers turned gamekeepers. Maxwell Knight, a key fig-

ure in MI5's wartime operations, had earlier run an industrial espionage unit for Sir George Makgill - an ultra-conservative business leader with a visceral dislike of trade unions - then moved on to briefly join the British Fascists before being recruited in 1929 by MI6 to investigate communist groups in Britain.

The First World War soldiers' ditty sums it up. 'It's the same the whole world over. It's the poor that gets the blame. It's the rich wot gets the gravy. Ain't it all a bleeding shame'. Three British Fifth Columnists were sentenced to death during the war. Two were executed. George Armstrong, a petty criminal with serial convictions, when in New York in Autumn 1940 consorted with German agents and wrote a letter offering to spy for Germany. He was immediately arrested on his return to the UK in March 1941, was tried under the Treachery Act where conviction carried a mandatory death sentence and hanged on July 9. He had not actually passed any intelligence to Germany.

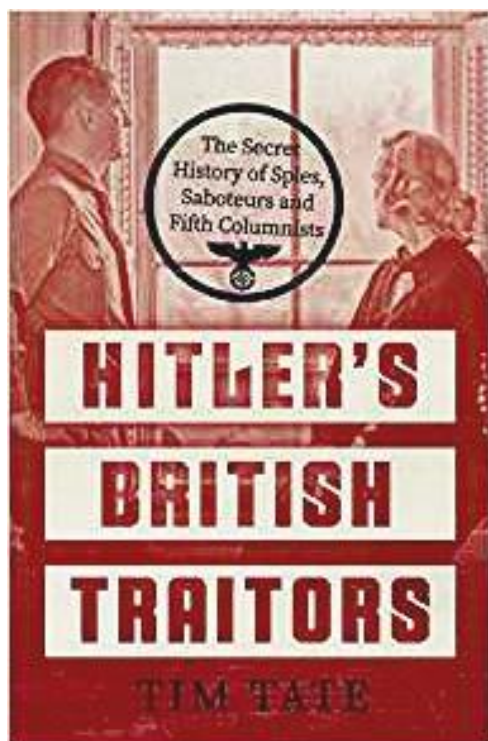
Earlier another traitor, forger and prostitute Dorothy O'Grady had been caught in the act of sabotaging telegraph poles on the Isle of Wight while in possession of sketches of military installations on the island. She escaped execution on appeal and was sentenced to 14 years penal servitude. The last was Duncan Alexander Scott-Ford, drunkard and braggart, seaman and thief, who ashore in Lisbon was plied with drink and money by German agents in exchange for information about British shipping. Threatened with exposure and violence, sailing back to Britain he made detailed notes on the warships guarding his convoy. He never passed them on. He had been spotted and followed by British Intelligence in Portugal. He was twenty-one when he hung.

Hitler's British Traitors were on the other side of class and privilege and handled with kid gloves. Christobel Nicholson, a doctor married to the former head of the Royal Navy's submarine service Admiral Wilmot Nicholson, was arrested for copying and concealing documents including naval intelligence stolen from the US Embassy for onward transmission to Germany. The basis of her defence was that if she was a traitor then so was her husband, a distinguished Admiral, as after all he had seen the telegram and had taken notes of letters between Ambassador Joseph Kennedy and President Roosevelt that had been stolen. She was acquitted.

Another reader of these telegrams from Churchill (then First Lord of the Admiralty) to Roosevelt asking for secret shipping aid was Conservative MP Archibald Ramsay. Anti-semitic to the backbone and rejecting Oswald Mosley and the BUF as all too moderate, he founded the Right Club whose clandestine membership infiltrated MI5, the Police, Army and the War Secretariat as they planned to follow Quisling's example in Norway with a coup and meanwhile were actively engaged in feeding intelligence to Germany. His punishment was internment under Regulation 18B. Released in 1944 he returned to the House of Commons where his last political act, the month before the 1945 General Election, was an attempt to introduce legislation compelling Jews to wear a yellow badge in public.

Another group of coup plotters contained Lord Tavistock, Admiral Sir Barry Domville, General John Fuller, John Beckett and Benjamin Greene. Domville was the former Director of Naval Intelligence, Fuller - a guest at Hitler's fiftieth birthday - was a celebrated military strategist, Beckett a former ILP MP who had gone into the BUF with Mosley before lurching further right and Greene a cousin of Graham. They organised under the front of the British Council for Christian Settlement in Europe. They got as far as designating the make-up of their Coalition Government for National Security. In May 1940 there was a crackdown. Beckett and Greene were merely interned and Tavistock went scot-free, not even being questioned. While in July Ironside was eased out by Churchill. As for Fuller in 1941 he was occupying a sensitive position in the Ministry of Supply. As late as July 1943 a new fascist underground group organised by the Duke of Bedford had nominated Fuller as their Leader.

Tate's work on recently declassified archives are a wonderful snapshot from an unusual angle of all that was wrong with Britain in the thirties and forties. Hence some of Britain's traitors miss the cut. For example, there is no mention of the 56 British and Colonial soldiers - one of whom picked up the Iron Cross - who volunteered to join the Waffen-SS Britisches Freikorps late on in the war modelled on the 5,000 strong 'Legion of French Volunteers against Bolshevism' and who fought on the Russian Front. Perhaps that's another story!



## BOOK REVIEWS

# Militants in Paris

**Duncan Bowie**  
on the  
seeds of  
Third World  
Nationalism

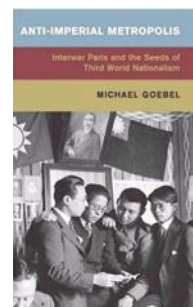
**Anti-Imperial Metropolis**  
**Michael Goebel**  
Cambridge UP £21.99

This is a fascinating study of the milieu of colonial migrants in Paris between the wars. Goebel, a German, and previously a specialist in Latin American history, has trawled through the records of political and social organisations. The book maps the location in Paris of different migrant communities – Chinese, Vietnamese, Algeria, Moroccan, Tunisian, Malagasy, West African, and Latin American. He has analysed the social, personal and political lives of different groups. The book looks at the political connections between different communities and examines how cross-national networks grew.

He examines the role of the French Communist party in sponsoring different national groups (and the complex relationships

which followed) and the links with the Berlin based League Against Imperialism. Many of the future leaders of independent countries were active in this milieu – well known figures such as Zhou-Enlai, Deng Xiaoping and Ho Chi Minh, but also the Algerian nationalist Ferhat Abbas, the Tunisian Habib Bourguiba, the Martinican Aime Cesaire, the Peruvian Marxist Jose Mariategui, the Malagasy Jean Ralaimongo, the Senegalise Lamine Senghor and Leopold Senghor and many lesser known anti-colonialists (at least lesser known to this reviewer), who were also prominent in their nation's independence struggles.

The book includes photographs of some of these young militants in the clubs and on the streets of the French capital. It demonstrates the extent of interaction and connection between different anti-colonialist leaders and a perhaps surprising degree of mutual support and soli-



arity, enhanced by the common use of the French language, which must have provided an important grounding for their future struggles in their home countries. Now available in paperback, the book supplements earlier studies of transnational anti-colonial movements such as Jonathan Derrick's 2008 study Africa's Agitators (previously reviewed in *Chartist*) and Erez Manela's 2009 book *The Wilsonian Moment*, and should encourage further research on this important subject.

# Alliances against racism

**Bob Newland**  
on fighting  
colonialism  
and racism

**British Communism and the Politics of Race**  
**Evan Smith**  
Haymarket £24.99

This book is based on a PhD completed over a decade ago but is a valuable source of information and discussion at this time of the rise of right-wing nationalism and associated racism in both Britain and throughout the world. The book is centred around the role and development of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) from the 1940s to the 1980s but explores the development of the Movement for Colonial Freedom (MCF) and the Anti-Nazi League (ANL). It also examines the evolution of the far right including the National Front and British National Party. It is a fascinating read for students of communist history, the development of the new left and of course those engaged in the past and present in the fight against racism. The book has five major sections: The End of Empire and the Windrush Moment, Anti-Racism and Building the 'Mass Party', The Crisis Emerges 1970-75, The Great Moving Right Show 1976-79 and Babylon's Burning, Into

the 1980s.

Smith explores in great detail the development of the CPGBs anti colonial and anti-racist activity, evidencing the pioneering character of this work and the contradictions it raised within the wider Labour moment. As the story unfolds, we see large scale recruitment to the Party of activists from the colonies particularly from Africa and the Caribbean. Later many of these become disillusioned and move out of the Party into a variety of other organisations. The Sino-Soviet split is seen to enhance that separation as well as the growth of Black Consciousness and other organisations in Africa, the Caribbean and the United States.

Whilst being presented as a study of the role and development of CPGB policy and actions, the book extensively explores changes in the world, the evolution of the issue of race with the ending of the Empire and rising levels of black immigration and the impact of successive Labour Governments introducing immigration laws tainted by racism. Running throughout the narrative are excursions into specific events and struggles giving a per-

sonal flavour to a well researched study of this important subject. These include Grunwick, Red Lion Square, the Battle of Lewisham and Southall and Blair Peach.

As an activist in MCF, later Liberation, from 1965 through to the late 1970s, I found the sections on the development and role of MCF particularly interesting. As evidenced in the book, it was clear that CPGB members, as individuals, played a significant role in both its fight against colonialism and in moving it forward in the 1970s to play a leading role in the fight against racism. While it may be true, as Evan Smith quotes, that Fenner Brockway was anxious that MCF should not be seen as a Communist front, I would argue that was also the policy of the CPGB. In my experience Communists worked amicably alongside Labour Party members and others in MCF treating each other with great respect.

No review can do this book credit for the detailed and open approach to its subject. I would highly recommend it to all those interested in the history of the CPGB, the fight against racism and fascism in Britain and the development of the New Left, the SWP and the ANL.





# Proletarian

**Andrew Coates** on  
a Soviet  
Frenchman

**Maurice Thorez. A Biography**  
**John Bulaitis**  
**I.B. Tauris £28.99**

**M**aurice Thorez described himself in a conversation with Stalin as a Frenchman with 'the soul of a Soviet citizen'. John Bulaitis suggests that this biography of the French Communist leader can be read as a "history of the PCF through the prism of its general secretary". The dominant figure in French Communism for over thirty years, the General Secretary of the Parti Communiste Français (PCF) was despite being unfavourably compared to his Italian counterpart, Togliatti, able to 'do politics'.

A major actor in France's twentieth century history, the Thorez led PCF had an impact on the progressive legislation of the Front Populaire in 1936-37 and as Minister of State in the immediate post-war government. He also presided over a party that reflected his pride in being a Stalinist, with its own cult.

Maurice Thorez benefits from the 'archival explosion' that has followed the collapse of that Soviet citizenry. In his extensive research, Bulaitis begins with the origins of Thorez's attachment both to the Soviet Union and to 'working class struggle'. The Communist's adoptive father was a miner, his family, Catholic. Thorez, too young to be conscripted in the Great War, as a miner he

joined the CGT miners' union and the French Socialist Party.

For Bulaitis the French Communist Party was not created as a conjunction of accidents. Annie Kriegel called its Bolshevism an 'ideological graft'. These ideas took hold, however, in a European context in which the party of Lenin held hopes for a European Revolution that needed entirely new parties to carry it to success. In the resulting dispute inside French Socialism, Thorez took the majority side in the Congrès de Tours (1920). He joined the supporters of the new

Third International whom Léon Blum accused of creating a party with "a sort of military chain of command whose orders are formulated at the top and transmitted from one rank to another down to the mere members."

Despite winning the vote inside the French Socialist party (SFIO, the French section of the Second International) the French communists did not make much headway. Bulaitis covers the rise of Thorez from activist to full timer, to regional and national party leadership and pre-eminence in 1930 with deft clarity. But perhaps many will have at the back of their minds Jacques Julliard's description of the history of the early PCF as marked by "purges, liquidations, witchcraft-trials" as Stalinist orthodoxy was imposed.

During this 'bolshevisation' of French Communism two rivalries stand out. The first was with Jacques Doriot. The Mayor of Saint-Denis, hostile to the 'class against class' strategy that labelled Socialists as "social fascists", he was forced out in 1933 (when the party was down to 32,000 members) at the moment when the Moscow run Comintern was about to change the line. Far from welcoming the Popular Front and its radical social legislation, Doriot began a red-brown drift. He ended with collaboration and death "strafed by an allied war plane" in 1945 while fighting for the Nazis.

The other conflict was with the leading Communist André Marty. Marty's career spanned the 1919 Black Sea Mutiny, the role of Commissar of the International Brigades in Spain, marked by ruthless crushing of dissident leftists (which Bulaitis does not cover in detail) and official PCF representative in Algiers to de Gaulle's Free French forces. Thorez had first clashed with him in 1927 over relations with the Socialists. A post-war bid for greater influence and radicalism failed. The impression is that Thorez resented his efforts to act as an independent representative of the views of Moscow. The PCF expelled him 1952 with the accusation that he was a police spy. Calls to defend Marty's innocence are still out there on the Web.

In outlining these and other details of French Communist history Maurice Thorez does not lose sight of its protagonist nor of the

historical backdrop. The contentious role of the PCF during the Hitler-Stalin pact, Thorez's escape to Moscow and war years in the Soviet Union, the National Front for Liberation that brought the Communists into the heart of the Resistance, led to the political highpoint of his "career as a communist politician". After October 1945 Thorez was minister of state, and on two occasions, deputy prime minister within a coalition government. In 1946 the PCF scored 28.6% of the vote and had 800,000 members. The biography reminds us of a 1959 rally, opening with "by the people of France to their greatest son, the best French disciple of Stalin, the great artisan of workers' unity". There was never a Communist led Cabinet, still less a Communist France.

The 1950s saw Thorez handling badly Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin's crimes. He supported the crushing of the 1956 Hungarian revolution. The party was ambiguous even hostile to the independence struggle of the "evolving nation" of Algeria. Large sections of the intelligentsia found new radical left vehicles in anti-Stalinist parties such as the Parti Socialiste Unifié. Thorez kept his loyalties. In 1961 "brimming with enthusiasm" he welcomed Khrushchev's ambition to "surpass, economically and culturally the United States". The designated successor, Waldeck Rochet, took the helm in 1964. But for a decade "the thought of Maurice Thorez remained the reference point for PCF politics".

While the PCF vote was down to 2.49% at the last European election commentators have found echoes of Thorez elsewhere. Some find them in the anti-globalist tirades of Marine Le Pen's Rassemblement National and Jean-Luc Mélenchon's call to federate the People against the Oligarchy.

John Bulaitis is more cautious. Thorez "displayed skill and acumen," and an "ability to relate to ordinary French people." His life "can be viewed as reflection of the intertwined hopes and tragedies of the communist movement in the twentieth century". *Maurice Thorez* is a remarkable achievement, an indispensable reference point that helps us consider that legacy.



**maurice thorez**  
**a biography**  
**john bulaitis**

## BOOK REVIEWS

## Supporting African nationalists

**Duncan  
Bowie**  
on an  
African  
memoir

**The First Communist in Fort Jameson**  
**Nigel Watt**  
**Books of Africa £15.99**

**F**ort Jameson is in Zambia, formerly Northern Rhodesia and is now called Chipita. The town was originally named after Leander Jameson, famous for the 'Jameson raid' on the Boer Transvaal and later prime minister of the Cape Colony. Nigel Watt was never actually a communist though as a progressive teacher in a colony, he was no doubt regarded as such by the colonial administrators.

This is Watt's memoir.

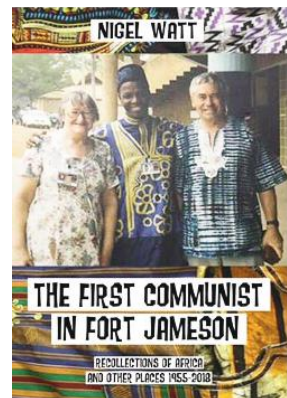
One of *Chartist's* more regular reviewers, Nigel Watt has been involved in voluntary service in Africa for 50 years. As a conscientious objector to national service on leaving a Quaker school in 1954, he undertook non-military service on a farm in Worcestershire, before joining International Voluntary Service for Peace. After university and trav-

els to Russia, India and Afghanistan, Watt became a teacher in Zambia at the time of decolonisation.

He rose to become director of International Voluntary Service and later became director of the Africa Centre in London, promoting musicians and poets as well as solidarity meetings and escorting Prince Charles round an African exhibition. Most of the book is about his time in sub-Saharan Africa with his late wife, Edyth, and the book is both a travelogue and a survey of post-colonial politics and development. The Watts worked with many of the African nationalist leaders including Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, Hastings Banda of Malawi, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, as well as many lesser known figures.

Watt has written a history of Burundi, now in its second edition, and the memoir includes material on the peace movement in that

country, which like Rwanda, suffered a genocide. In his eighties, Watt is still involved in Quaker peace camps, publishing African literature in his Books for Africa publishing enterprise and serving on an electoral commission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. His house in South London still operates as an informal Pan-African centre.



## McDonnell (and others) on Marx

**Andrew  
Coates**  
on a Marx  
memorial  
volume

**Marx 200. The Significance of Marxism  
in the 21st Century**  
**Edited by Mary Davis**  
**Praxis Press/ Marx Memorial Library £10**

**M***arx 200* is an edited selection of contributions made to a conference to mark the bicentenary of the birth of Karl Marx. Held by the Marx Memorial Library, the aim was to look at whether Marxism is a "living theory which enables us to understand social reality," and "as a practice if it helps to change our world".

In *Marx as a Force for Change Today*, John McDonnell affirms that Marx has an important place within the traditions of British socialism. Marxism may have been "used to justify some of the most brutal regimes of the last century." But Labour's Shadow Chancellor rejects attempts to bind Marx's "analysis of society and body of ideas" to these oppressive states. Trying to "cut through the massive weight of historical abuse of his work" McDonnell initiates one of the most useful threads in this book.

He looks at Paul Mason's picture of 'cognitive capitalism' based on global markets, financialised consumption, immaterial labour and immaterial capital. This reminds the reader that Marx was to see, during the 1860s, in the example of

co-operative factories, 'the first sprouts' of a new 'mode of production' growing from the old. Are alternative forms of society, 'post Capitalism', Labour's 'another world is possible' a modern version of the same vision? Labour's plans for social ownership, and the party's social and green programme, McDonnell suggests, could be seen in this light.

Many of the other papers look at Marxism's capacity to 'understand' society and history. Marx is not just of biographical interest, but also for David McLellan, of 'contemporary concern'. His alternative to capitalism remains an appealing picture of a "society in which people can live fulfilled and non-alienated lives". Neither McLellan nor the other contributors follow up McDonnell's reference to a time when, in "one third of the world...Marx served to justify the established order".

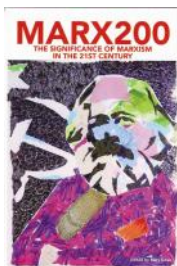
In discussing Marx's critique of political economy, Ben Fine talks of 'financialisation' and commodity fetishism. John O'Neill introduces the 1920s and 1930s debates on the socialist calculation of prices and planning in the modern context of ecological thinking. Neither writer asks hard questions about the 'socialist' economies that collapsed at the end of the 1980s.

Alan Blackwell offers a more

fruitful use of Marxism. Writing on Artificial Intelligence and the daunting sounding, 'abstraction of cognitive labour' he looks into the basis of 'info capitalism' and the 'networked' world. The "implications of treating information as a commodity" are many. The 'knowledge economy' and the 'business models of social media' have many downsides. They end in the 'commodification of personhood'.

Blackwell's succinct article helps the reader understand the cumbersome, if informative book, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism* by Shoshana Zuboff. Ursula Huws also sounds a note of caution about socialists riding the wave of technological advance and the possibilities of 'post capitalism'. The 'history of expansion and commodification' is also one in which 'capitalists are using new technology to organise and discipline' workers.

There are sixteen contributions in *Marx 200*. These are just some that struck the reviewer. The book is an excellent introduction to many live debates within different Marxisms (plural). The Marx Memorial Library is to be congratulated on this productive conference.





# Us versus AI

**Peter Kenyon**  
on putting  
post-  
humanism  
out of  
business

**Clear Bright Future: A Radical  
Defence of the Human Being**  
**Paul Mason**  
**Allen Lane £20**

Your choice. I jest not. That is the author's challenge in the first line of the Introduction. Mason's default position is that we are capable of shaping our futures, despite the threats from economics, Big Data, artificial intelligence and politicians eroding our rights and freedoms once thought of as universal. As Pankaj Mishra, a pre-publication reviewer concluded: "Everyone should read it."

His Introduction is an unusually brief, and hence refreshing, encapsulation of his central thesis "We need a radical defence of the human being", he concludes. The book is written in three parts: Part 1 'The Events' starts on a motor-bike while filming a riot. The date – 20 January 2017. The place Washington DC. Donald Trump's presidency is one minute old. His account is finely illustrated with vivid quotes from Trump supporters empowered to unleash hatred against their fellow Americans.

They are the enemy. They put a racist, tax dodger in the White House. Such people, Mason states, are on the offensive in every continent.

In the first chapter in Part One entitled 'Day Zero', Mason challenges the academic left for theorising human helplessness dating back to the 1950s and now coalesced into a growing academic and philosophical movement called post-humanism. Mason proclaims one of his aims is to put the post-humanism industry out of business. He concludes 'Day Zero' by identifying Karl Marx as the only thinker in the humanist tradition to date who successfully combines realism with a definition of human nature that stands up in the 21st century.

Expanding on the populist leader thesis, Mason sets out in Chapter 2 'A General Theory of Trump' that to re-establish order, an army of individuals who can

think independently and mean what they say is needed. The extent of the challenge is set out in a detailed account of the rise and rise of Trump from his candidacy declaration in June 2015. The links between his financial backers and their subsequent roles in his government are chilling reading.

This leads neatly on to Part 2 'The Self' in which Mason asks what happened to our human

resistance in France in the early 1980s, mass privatisations, and the ascendancy of international institutions like the IMF and the World Bank which globalised neoliberalism and binned any remaining illusions of economic sovereignty.

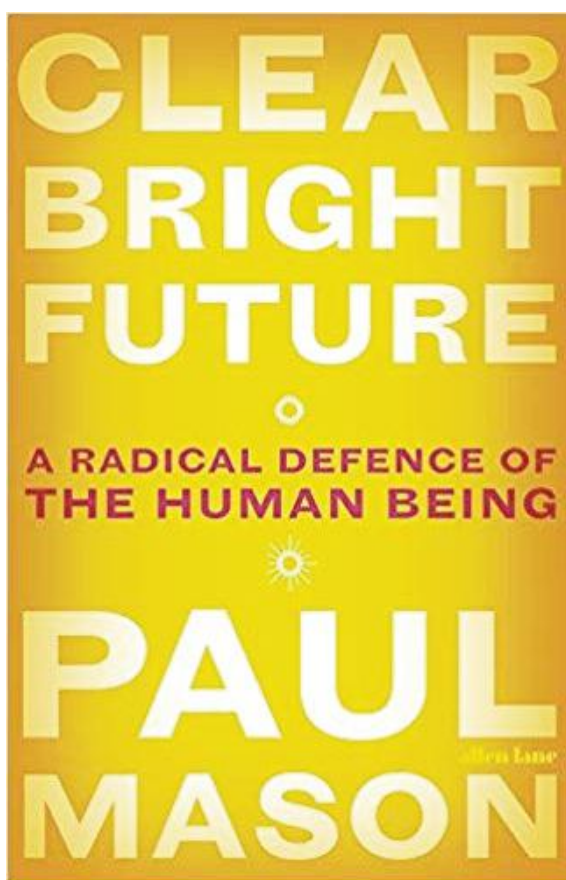
Chapter 4 cryptically entitled: 'Telegrams and Anger' explores the clash between economics and politics from the Congress of Vienna to the present day, via the 'End of History' (not). "To understand the acute crisis of identity that millions are now living through, we have to trace the process whereby both the geopolitics and the economics fell apart at once", Mason writes.

In the next Chapter 5 'The Crack Up', he catalogues the resistance movements, suppressed by ruling elites, and now the world is finding out if you don't want the future, what you are going to get is the past.

Chapter 6 'The Road to Kekistan' documents the revival of white supremacist and neo-Nazi movements linked to techno-conservatism. It is a chapter packed with detail about on-line targeting and fake news including the attacks on feminism via online gaming in a systematic effort to reverse the loss of male biological power through birth control and equal rights legislation. Ditto civil rights. Mason warns:

"The emergence of widespread popular anti-humanism does not just hold open the door for some fascists with stupid flags, it opens the doors for our surrender to machine control..." In Part 3 Mason seeks to 'Demystify the Machine'. Yes, they can emulate

us. But in Chapter 9 'Thinking machine' he asserts that Artificial Intelligence has to be programmed with an ethical system reflecting a view of human nature, and we need a global ethical framework to keep technology under control. He concludes with a series of chapters in Part 5 'Some Reflexes' to reinforce his central thesis that it is up to us, each of us, to sustain a radical defence of humanity.



psyche over the past 30-years.

Like Lewis Goodall in 'Left for Dead', Mason notes the contribution the post-WWII economy made to enabling social mobility as well ending poverty and unemployment, and providing a bit of

dignity at work. In Chapter 3 'Creating the Neo-Liberal Self' he describes what has replaced it as a social catastrophe. He presses the case for talking about neoliberalism and self-image. Rather than a definition, he prefers to explore the relationship around which the neoliberal system has mutated and improvised. Four clear phases are set out in a breath-taking journey through monetary policy introduced in the USA and the UK, the crushing of

## VIEW FROM STRASBOURG



Julie Ward is a  
Labour MEP for  
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# Proof positive for Europe

**Julie Ward** asks why did we stay silent on the benefits of the being an EU member for so long?

**T**he British debate on Brexit centred on the dangers of leaving the EU. Indeed, we know that the cost of Brexit to the UK economy is already £66bn whilst Johnson's bad "deal" would lead to an annual loss of income of £2,000 per head, after 10 years.

However, whilst being honest about the impact, we must make the positive case for continuing membership of the EU. If we can secure a confirmatory referendum, a positive campaign is the only way forward to unite the country. As Cicero wrote in 64 BC, "There are three things that will guarantee votes in an election: favours, hope, and personal attachment. You must work to give these incentives to the right people."

Being an MEP since 2014 I have experienced first hand the common cause we share with 500m other citizens and that must be front and centre of why remaining is the best option for everyone.

The EU is first and foremost a peace project. It was born out of the ashes of two World Wars. As Churchill said, "there must be an act of faith in the European family." This act of faith is the European Union and since its foundation, we have now seen the longest period of peace in Europe for over 2,000 years.

The original Treaty of the European Union states in its first Article that it stands for a "society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail". We are living through unprecedented and uncertain political times.

The only way to tackle the issues and injustices we now face, such as climate change, must be at a pan-European level.



Following the global climate protests, we now see climate change at the top of the agenda of the new European Parliament and the Commission. President-elect Ursula von der Leyen has promised that the European Green Deal must become Europe's hallmark. She has much to prove, but the EU already sets standards way above most Member States when it comes to environmental protection.

The EU has already ensured legislation to cut its emissions substantially – by 80-95% compared to 1990 levels. This includes boosting the EU's 2030 emissions target from a 40% reduction to at least 50%. There will also be a priority to legislate for the first European Climate Law within the new Commission's first 100 days of office.

One of the EU's four freedoms is the ability we now have to travel and work in 28 countries without visa and immigration restrictions. EU citizens can live, work, study and start a business within the area. This has brought down barriers and has created prosperity alongside peace. (Many also fall in love, marry and have children, developing families and friendships that transcend national boundaries.)

We are no longer the sick man of Europe. Thanks to our membership of the world's largest trading bloc with over 500 million consumers, representing 23% of global GDP, the UK is now the fifth largest economy in the world. In 2018, UK exports to the EU were £289 billion (46% of all UK exports). UK imports from the EU were £345 billion (54% of all UK imports). Our membership fee for

frictionless trade costs us 0.4% of GDP, which is less than an eighth of the UK's defence spending. The UK cannot replace such a substantial loss with Free Trade Agreements, and standing alone we will have reduced bargaining power.

The EU urges a closer union of the 'peoples' of Europe and from my own experience working in the arts I have seen first-hand the positive benefits of exchange programmes (eg. Erasmus+) for the most excluded young people including NEETS and those with disabilities.

We are also bound and protected by the European Convention on Human Rights which protects the most vulnerable in our society, as well as the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, which guarantees EU-based protections in employment, equality, and privacy.

There is so much more the EU does through collaboration that affects our daily lives whether through research and innovation, security agreements and the right to receive emergency healthcare in any member state through the EHIC card. New EU legislation addressing corporate tax evasion is due to be implemented on January 1st, 2019.

It is regrettable that we needed to go through such a divisive process of self-harm in order to realise what we risk losing. All current polling suggests the country has changed its mind and if given a chance would vote against Brexit.

Now is the time to champion what it is to be not only British, but European. We are not isolationists we are internationalists - those values are worth fighting for. **C**

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