

# The Socialist Correspondent

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Labour Leader  
Jeremy Corbyn

THURSDAY  
8 JUNE - 2017

Vote  
**Labour** X

FOR THE MANY  
NOT THE FEW

Labour's election manifesto pledges

 **Nationalise railways,  
Royal Mail & water**

 **End NHS privatisation**

 **Build council houses**

 **End zero hours  
contracts**

 **End support for  
wars of aggression**

 **Tax the rich & big business**

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**Discussion, debate and authors' opinions:** To encourage the broadest possible discussion and debate around the aims of exposing capitalism and promoting socialism, we hope our readers appreciate that not all the opinions expressed by individual authors are necessarily those of The Socialist Correspondent.

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# The Socialist Correspondent

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## British General Election

The Labour Party, led by Jeremy Corbyn, provides the possibility of a different Britain. Nationalisation of the railways, ending privatisation of the NHS, building council houses again, ending zero hours contracts and stopping support for wars of aggression, are among the popular policies presented by



Jeremy Corbyn

Labour at this General Election.

The Tory campaign amounts to repetition of the slogan, "Vote for Theresa May for a strong and stable government", thus avoiding drawing attention to their record of austerity in government.

The Tories have grasped the Brexit nettle and are intent on running a presidential-type campaign, aiming to use right-wing Labour's continual back-stabbing and the Tory-media's vilification of Corbyn to present him as a weak leader unsuitable to conduct the Brexit negotiations.

However, as Scott McDonald in his article, "Labour: for the many not the few", points out, Jeremy Corbyn may have been vilified daily for over two years but "he has won two leadership elections, built the largest party in Britain and developed policies in favour of the many not the few."

To do this, and survive, he has shown remarkable strength and resilience, contrary to the view of him projected by the media."

## Tory weakness

May's refusal to take part in televised debates with Jeremy Corbyn, indicates that the Tories are conscious of their, and her, weaknesses and their fear that their austerity policies and attacks on working people would be exposed.

The Tories understand the weakness of a presidential-type campaign. Would-be presidents can trip up, hence the protection of May from proper public scrutiny and, not surprisingly, the Tory-dominated media

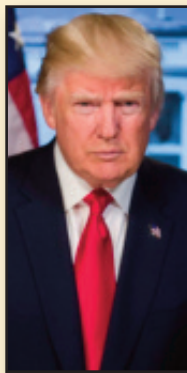
## Commentary

are complicit in this.

One of Labour's policies is to build a million homes in five years, with half of them being council houses, to begin to deal with the appalling housing crisis across Britain. In this issue, Pat Turnbull details the extent of this crisis, using the example of London.

## Dangerous Trump

In "Trump: the USA's elected monarch", Alex Davidson outlines how dangerous and unpredictable Trump is.



Trump

The new US President has already ordered a military strike in Syria based on unproven allegations, despatched an aircraft carrier and warships to the Korean Peninsula, and dropped the largest non-nuclear bomb in the US arsenal in Afghanistan.

He has surrounded himself with generals, militarised foreign policy and he has his hand on the nuclear button.

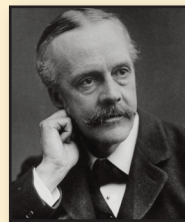
Trump's long-time personal support for Israel may be especially dangerous for Palestine, and indeed, the whole of the Middle East.

## Palestine

Some 1500 Palestinian prisoners in Israel's jails are on hunger strike, ignored by the so-called "human rights" loving British media.

In this issue we have published Marwan Barghout's letter, explaining why he is leading the hunger strike, which seeks to change the cruel and inhumane practices of the Israeli regime meted out to Palestinians.

In his article, "Palestine still haunts British politics", Brian Durrans outlines Britain's shameful historical role in cutting up the Middle East



Arthur Balfour

through the British-French secret deal drawn up by Mark Sykes and Francois Georges-Picot, which led to the Balfour Declaration, the creation of Israel and the dispossession of the Palestinians.

## Russian revolution

This is the centenary year of the Russian Revolution and Gina Nicholson looks back at the October Revolution and the many other revolts and revolutions in numerous countries around that period.



Lenin

Gina's article shows the determination of the capitalist powers to crush those workers' movements. Fourteen capitalist countries invaded Russia with the aim, in Churchill's words, of "strangling the Bolshevik baby in its crib."

They did not succeed at the time, nor for some seventy

years, but they never gave up, and were eventually successful. The defeat of the Soviet Union set-back the struggle for peace, national liberation and socialism throughout the world.

In this centenary year, we are reminded of the difficulties of making, and defending, a socialist revolution in the face of powerful capitalist forces determined not to give up their wealth, privileges and power.

However, it also allows us to reflect on the successes of the Russian Revolution, in creating a better life for the mass of the people, the all-important role of the Soviet Union in defeating German fascism, holding back US, British and other imperialist aggression, and its crucial support for national liberation throughout the world, including Vietnam, South Africa and Palestine.



# Labour vs Tories and back-stabbers

**The Labour party led by Jeremy Corbyn promises a different Britain, for the many not the few. A Labour government that would: nationalise the railways; end NHS privatisation; build council houses again; end zero hours contracts; and end Britain's support for wars of aggression.**

**By SCOTT McDONALD**

The Tories' strategy for the election is based on the slogan of "Vote Theresa May for a strong and stable government."

This is posed against an allegedly weak Jeremy Corbyn and a divided Labour party. The Tory-dominated mainstream media has parroted this mantra.

Theresa May has refused to take part in televised debates. She claims she wants to talk directly to the public but only appears in front of Tory supporting audiences, waving placards about voting for a strong and stable government.

She has been accused of merely delivering "robotic soundbites" and even her erstwhile cabinet colleague, George Osborne, on his first day as editor of the *Evening Standard*, criticised this approach in a lead article, which said, "There's nothing wrong with repeating election campaign slogans; the problem comes when the election campaign amounts to no more than a slogan".

Jeremy Corbyn has been vilified by the mainstream media, and the majority of the right-wing Parliamentary Labour Party, since he entered the leadership race of the Labour Party.

It has continued throughout the last two years, in the course of which he has won two leadership elections, built the Labour Party into the largest party in Britain and developed policies in favour

of the many not the few.

To do this, and survive, he has shown remarkable strength and resilience, contrary to the view of him projected by the media.

Theresa May, learning the lesson of Gordon Brown's dithering over calling an election, did a U-turn and called a snap General Election, and since then



**Jeremy Corbyn has built the Labour Party into the largest party in Britain and developed policies in favour of the many not the few.**

the mainstream media have been united in their presentation that the Tories will win overwhelmingly.

The polls, many commissioned by the media, have been used to justify this assertion. The recent local elections will encourage the media to continue to repeat that the Tories will win the General Election by a landslide.

The Tories believe that they only have

the election to lose. Hence the refusal to take part in televised debates with Jeremy Corbyn.

Under pressure May has agreed to appear on the BBC TV's *Question Time* but still refuses to debate with Corbyn. The Tories' austerity policies and the damage done to working people and their communities would be exposed in a debate with Corbyn speaking for the many not the few.

## Brexit

The concentration by the Tories on the Brexit issue and May's spats with EU leaders plays into their tactic of taking votes from UKIP and emphasising their contention that they will stand up to the

EU in the negotiations.

The local election results in England reflect the success of this tactic.

UKIP lost all their existing 142 council seats with the bulk of their votes going to the Tories.

In Scotland, the Tory tactic since the referendum on Scottish independence in 2014, and especially since the UK General Election of 2015 has been to portray themselves as the main opponents of independence and in opposition to a second referendum.

Presenting themselves as the party most implacably opposed to Scottish independence has paid off. Thus, the

Tories became the second largest party in the Scottish Parliamentary election of 2016, pushing Labour into third place.

In the recent Scottish local elections the Tories made significant gains whilst Labour's share of the vote continued to fall and many council seats were lost.

## Tory Strategy

The Tories have re-engaged Lynton

Crosby as their campaign strategist after their success in the 2015 election. Previously he guided John Howard and the Liberal Party (ie the Australian Tory Party) to four election wins in Australia and Boris Johnson's two successful Mayoral campaigns.

All parties understand that there is an air war (TV, radio, social media) and a ground war (knocking on doors, phone calls, leafletting). Mark Wallace, writing in the *Conservative Home* website, said of the 2015 election, "The Conservative air war was visible for anyone to follow – the assault on Labour's fiscal credibility, the image of a weak Ed Miliband being propped up by a strong SNP, the starkly drawn dividing lines on such as welfare reform and the deficit."<sup>(1)</sup>

However, the Tory ground war was deliberately played under the radar. Wallace continued, "At the Conservative conference in Birmingham in 2012, Stephen Gilbert, the Prime Minister's Political Secretary, outlined the election strategy... "Speaking in a closed session to senior activists set out the programme for the Tory Stealth Win that was painstakingly effected beneath the radar of Labour, the media – and indeed pollsters."

It was known as the 40/40 strategy in which the campaign would focus on defending 40 Conservative-held seats and attacking 40 others held by Labour and the Liberal Democrats.

Wallace added, "Having picked the seats and selected the candidates, the next step was to understand key voters in each constituency. Part of Lynton Crosby's role was to lead on the polling and analysis in each target constituency; how had they voted in the past, why had they done so, what might make them stick with the blues or switch, and so on.

"He believed there were more potential swing voters than people realised and, in particular, that Liberal Democrat supporters were more amenable to voting Tory than others realised.

"This laid the foundation for the ground war: without it, the ground campaigning, phone calls and leaflets would have been far less effective.

"If the concept of the 40/40 strategy was a precision strike to win a majority, Crosby's research (later bolstered by Jim Messina's<sup>(2)</sup> data) was aimed at delivering a precision strike to win a majority in each seat.

"The majority would be won by cam-



**27 January 2017: Theresa May, first foreign leader to meet US President Trump.**

paings targeted directly at a relatively small number of groups, each composed of a relatively small number of people in a relatively small number of seats.

"The Conservative approach was, in effect, a rather secret war, carried out below the radar of the watching national media ..."

"The Tories 40/40 strategy was executed using Team 2015, who were activists moved around to the target seats.

"They were encouraged by assistance with transport, special days and free curries and enabled with a very clear picture of voter's likes/dislikes provided by the database created by Crosby and his team."

#### **Rigged Election in 2015?**

Some 14 police forces sent files to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) referring more than 30 Tory MPs and officials for alleged offences of over-spending in the 2015 General Election campaign.

These allegations - highlighted by *Channel 4 News* and the *Daily Mail* - of bus loads of Conservative ac-

tivists being sent to key seats, whose expenses were reported as part of national campaign spend rather than falling within the lower constituency limits. The bus loads were Lynton Crosby's Team 15.

The CPS reported that, "Although there is evidence to suggest the returns may have been inaccurate, there is insufficient evidence to prove to the criminal standard that any candidate or agent was dishonest."

The CPS is continuing to investigate the Tories' National Treasurer.

The Tories have already been fined £70,000 by the Electoral Commission in March of this year for wrongly reporting national spending on election campaigns

at three by-elections in 2014 and the 2015 UK General Election.

Presumably the Tories have adopted the same Lynton Crosby tactic again in the 2017 election and are prepared to take the hit.

#### **Use of Nationalism**

In the 2015 General election the underground ground war was complemented by the very visible air war, of which the use of nationalism was particularly effective in the targeted areas.

The Tories used the SNP to portray a situation in which, if Labour won, Miliband would be in the pocket of Salmond, the SNP leader at the time.

It was a very effective tactic devised by Tory campaign strategist, Lynton Crosby.

"With typical shrewdness and ruthlessness, Crosby identified the surge of Scottish nationalism in recent years as a wedge that could be used against Labour, both in England and Scotland." (Andy Beckett, *Guardian*, 8 May 2015)

"The Tory emphasis on the threat of a SNP-Labour coalition helped claw back voters from the Lib Dems and UKIP – placing the Conservatives on course to claiming today's majority." (Corey Charlton, *Mail* online, 8 May 2015)

Nationalism is being used again in the 2017 General Election.

The Tories grasped Brexit and are using the spats with Juncker and the EU leadership to wind up English (and British) nationalism.

In Scotland they are using the threat of another independence referendum to garner to themselves the anti-independence vote.

In the 2015 election Labour were squeezed by English and Scottish nationalism. It is happening again in the 2017 election.

The Tories hope to increase their majority in the House of Commons, which they could then use in their negotiations with Brussels and at the same time pursue their reactionary agenda domestically.

They will be working hard to fulfil the predictions of a landslide by pollsters and the media.

However, the leading psephologist, Professor John Curtice, is more cautious.

He wrote, "Her (Theresa May) hope and expectation is not simply that she will win but that she will win big. And with an average lead in the Britain-wide polls of no less than 16 points that would

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**Sir Lynton Crosby**

# Abnormal times for UK local elections

Normally the UK governing party in the course of its term would lose seats in the local elections as the opposition makes gains. However, we do not live in normal times.

By **GEORGE HARDCASTLE**

British politics is dominated by two constitutional issues: Brexit and Scottish independence.

The Labour Party leadership tries hard to move onto the ground of Tory inflicted austerity and cuts to public services including those of local authorities and social care.

However, the other parties and the mainstream media bang on about the constitutional issues. Any talk about austerity and its effects on the working people are pushed to the side.

Of course, the Labour leadership are also undermined by their own side. The Parliamentary Labour Party attacks Jeremy Corbyn at every turn and the media vilifies him.

The Labour Party is divided over its approach to Brexit, and in Scotland it is

divided over how to deal with the independence issue.

The Tories grasped the nettle of Brexit and their divisions over the issue are covered up, at least for the moment.

The SNP only think about independence and when to call the next referendum and the Tories try to sweep up the anti-independence opposition in Scotland.

It was against this background that the local elections took place in Scotland, Wales and large parts of England. National politics dominated these local elections (Brexit in England and Wales, independence in Scotland).

The general outcome was the Tory Party made gains, the Labour Party lost ground, the Liberal Democrats made little movement, the SNP made gains and

suffered some losses, and UKIP votes evaporated to the Tories.

## Scotland

In Scotland, the Tories took seats from the SNP in what were historically traditional Tory areas.

For example, in Aberdeenshire the Tories gained 9 seats to become the largest party with the SNP losing 8 seats.

In Argyll and Bute, the Tories gained 5 seats. In Angus, the Tories gained 5 seats and the SNP lost 6.

In Perth and Kinross, where the SNP had led a minority administration prior to the election, the Tories gained 7 seats and are now the largest party.

The Labour party had very few seats on any of these councils prior to the election and that remains the same.

In Dundee, often referred to as the YES city after returning the highest vote favouring independence, the SNP lost their overall majority of the council.

In East Lothian where the SNP had been the largest party, Labour is now

## UK LOCAL ELECTIONS - OVERALL RESULTS

Thursday 4 May 2017

Party	Seats	+/-	PNVS%*	Swing%*
Conservative	1,899	+563	38%	+8%
Labour	1,152	-382	27%	-4%
Liberal Democrat	441	-42	18%	+3%
Independent	162	n/a	n/a	n/a
Green	20	n/a	n/a	n/a
UKIP	1	-143	5%	n/a
SNP	431	-7	n/a	n/a
Plaid Cymru	202	+33	n/a	n/a

\*As elections were not held throughout the whole country, the BBC calculated a Projected National Vote Share (PNVS) and Swing. These aim to assess the UK-wide vote as if the results were repeated at a General Election.

the largest party.

The SNP became the largest party in Glasgow but were disappointed not to win overall control. The Tories, who had one councillor prior to the election, now have 8. In Renfrewshire the SNP became the largest party gaining 2 seats whilst the Labour Party lost 11 seats and leadership of the council.

### Wales

It was widely predicted that the Tories and Plaid Cymru would make considerable gains in Wales.

However, this did not come to pass with Labour retaining control of Cardiff, Swansea and Newport.

The Tories won one council, their stronghold of Monmouthshire.

### England

There were 27 county council elections, 7 single-tier unitary authorities, 1 Metropolitan Borough, 2 local authority mayors and 6 Combined Authority Mayors up for election in England.

Of the County Councils,

Labour lost control of Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire. Labour held their only unitary authority (Durham) and the only Metropolitan Borough up for election (Doncaster) was held by Labour. Overall the Tories gained 563 seats and Labour lost 382 (see table).

UKIP lost all their existing seats (143) but gained one seat.

Of the two local authority mayors up for election, Labour won Doncaster in the first round with 32,631 votes (50.9%) against the Tories with 13,575 votes (21.2%).

Labour also won North Tyneside with 29,655 votes (56.4%) against the Tories with 16,164 votes (30.7%).

In the Mayoral elections in England, Labour won convincingly in Greater Manchester (Andy Burnham) with 359,352 votes (63.41%) against the Tories with 128,752 and Liverpool City



**Labour's  
Andy Burnham  
is the new Mayor  
of Greater  
Manchester with  
63.4% of the vote.**

Region (Steve Rotheram) with 171,167 votes (59.3%) against the Tories with 58,805 votes. Both Labour Mayors were elected in the first round.

In the West Midlands, the ex-Managing Director of John Lewis, Andy Street, who had spent £1million on his campaign prior to the cap on election spending, won narrowly for the Tories against Labour (48,578 votes against 46,400) after the second round.

In the West of England region, where 6 of the 9 constituencies are Tory, the Labour candidate although beaten, came very close. The Tories got 70,300 (51.6%) votes against Labour's 65,923 (48.4%) after the second round of voting.

In the Tees Valley the Tory received 40,278 votes against Labour's 39,797 after the second round of voting.

The Tories won Cambridgeshire and Peterborough with 56.9% of the vote winning with 88,826 votes against the Liberal Democrats with 67,205 votes after the second round.



**Labour's  
Steve Rotheram  
is the new Mayor of  
Liverpool  
with nearly  
60% of the vote.**

## Labour vs Tories and back-stabbers

Continued from page 5

seem a safe bet on her part. Yet it could be a bigger gamble than it seems."

He went on, "... even if the Scottish Conservatives revival is in evidence on June 8, it may deliver Theresa May no more than a small handful of seats.

"Meanwhile south of the border, there are relatively few marginal Labour held seats the Conservatives are likely to gain even with a 16 point lead.

"There are only just over 40 Labour held seats that are vulnerable to the 4.5% swing to the Conservatives that is implied by the current polls... it needs to be borne in mind that it took as much as a seven point lead over Labour for the Conservatives to secure their small overall majority of 12 in 2015."<sup>(3)</sup>

Since Professor Curtice wrote that piece the local elections have been held and he has written under the banner headline, "Don't be fooled by the local election results – the Tories still face an uphill battle in their bid to crush Labour"<sup>(4)</sup>

His conclusion, following the local elections, was that it was, "Good, but perhaps

not as good as the party (Conservatives) would like. That seems to be the message for the Tories that emerged from the local ballot boxes yesterday ... at 38% the BBC's projection of the English county council results into a national share of the vote ... was enough to put the party as much as 11 points ahead of Labour ... However, this 11-point lead was rather less than the 17-point lead currently to be found on average in the opinion polls. More importantly it is only four points above the lead that David Cameron secured in the 2015 general election."

The Liberal Democrats will hope to regain some of the seats they lost to the Tories in the last General Election, particularly in south-west England.

The SNP hope to hold most of the 56 seats they took in Scotland in 2015. The Greens are only standing in three seats in Scotland, standing down in all others to lend the SNP their support. The Tories will target some seats in the north of Scotland and the Borders currently held by the SNP, and will be aiming to pick up UKIP votes in Labour-held seats, particularly in the north of England.

Following the results of the local elec-

tions, the Labour party have been given a little hope in Scotland and will hope to retain Wales, fend off the Tories in their English-held seats and win seats with a small Tory majority. The Tories are concerned that the huge increase in Labour Party membership under Jeremy Corbyn will be turned into an army of activists in England that could threaten their seats with a small majority. These include, Gower (Tory majority 27), Derby North (41), Croydon Central (165), Vale of Clwyd (237), Bury North (378), Morley & Outwood (422), and Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport (523).

### FOOTNOTES

1. [http://www.conservativehome.com/the\\_torydiary/2015/06/the-computers-that-crashed-and-the-campaign-that-didn't-the-story-of-the-tory-stealth-operation-that-outwitted-labour.html](http://www.conservativehome.com/the_torydiary/2015/06/the-computers-that-crashed-and-the-campaign-that-didn't-the-story-of-the-tory-stealth-operation-that-outwitted-labour.html)
2. Jim Messina was in Barak Obama's campaign team.
3. John Curtice, *Herald Scotland*, 19 April 2017.
4. John Curtice, *The Independent*, 6 May 2017.

# Trump: the USA's elected monarch

Donald Trump as President is “more like a monarch. He likes the court. His court has all sorts of players and it even has courtiers”, according to Chris Ruddy, the head of *Newsmax Media* and a friend of the President.

By **ALEX DAVIDSON**

The White House is full of gossip about which players are in or out of favour and who currently has the ear of the President's daughter, Ivanka Trump, and her husband Jared Kushner.

President Trump appointed his daughter as his official assistant and she is acting as the quasi-First Lady while Trump's wife remains in New York.

Kushner has been appointed Senior Adviser to the President. Jared Kushner was the architect of Trump's digital, online and social media campaigns, enlisting talent from Silicon Valley to run a 100-person social media team dubbed “Project Alamo”.

Trump works in the oval room with a huge entourage that includes Steve Bannon, the White House Chief Strategist, Wilbur Ross, the billionaire in charge of trade policy and Reince Priebus, Chief of Staff.

Trump's presidency began in chaos. And as the chaos unfolded so did the palace intrigue.

Aides routinely leaked stories about their colleagues to the media and then complained about reports in the same media about infighting in the White House.

Meanwhile Trump continues to go straight to the public via Twitter and condemns the fake news media.

Under the slogan “Make America Great Again” on the wall of Bannon's office there are four columns of tasks and policies.

Some of these have been ticked off including freezing federal hiring and withdrawing from the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade accord but other policies have proved more difficult to implement. At the second attempt, Trump managed to get Congress to pass a bill to replace Obamacare.

Trump has struggled to get Congress to appropriate significant money to pay

for the extension of the current wall on the US-Mexican border; and when he tried, by executive order, to ban citizens



**Donald J. Trump, POTUS No. 45**



**Jared Kushner and Ivanka Trump**

of several predominantly Muslim countries from entering the United States his efforts were poorly implemented and ended up being blocked by the courts.

Trump sacked acting Attorney General, Sally Q. Yates, for insubordination, after she took the decision that the Department of Justice would not defend Trump's executive order. Yates effectively over-ruled a finding by the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel, which had already approved the executive order.

In the first 100 days of his presidency Trump nominated 58 people for senior government jobs that require Senate confirmation, of which 25 have been approved.

At that stage in their presidencies, Obama had nominated 190 and Clinton 176. Republican presidents have tended to be slower than Democrats but Trump still trails the two Bush's 85 and 95 nominations in their first 100 days.

This is another reflection of Trump's inexperience, limited contacts in government circles and distrust of people.

## **FBI Director sacked**

The dismissal of James Comey as Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) on 9 May 2017 ended the long deteriorating relationship of Trump and Comey, who regularly collided publicly and privately.

Comey is only the second director to be fired in the FBI's history. President Clinton sacked William S. Sessions in 1993.

Following the leaking of Hillary Clinton's private emails and an investigation by the FBI, James Comey on 6 July 2016, used a lengthy press conference to clear Clinton of any criminal activity although he did characterise her use of a private email server while she was Secretary of State, as “extremely careless”. This conclusion by Comey, not to recommend criminal action against Clinton, was met with scorn by Trump.

Senior Democrats like Senate Minority Leader, Chuck Schumer, criticised Comey for the way he handled the reporting of the FBI's investigation.

On 28 October, 11 days before the presidential election, Comey sent a letter to Congress announcing that he was reopening the investigation, saying FBI agents had discovered a new cache of



Clinton emails. Democrats denounced Comey and said they had lost confidence in him. Trump referred to the FBI Director as "brave". Two days before the election the FBI announced that there was nothing new in the latest email batch.

There is a debate in the US about how much the leaking of Clinton's emails and the FBI investigation cost Clinton the election as, up until then, she was ahead in the polls. It is alleged that Russian hackers supplied Wikileaks with the Clinton emails stolen from her campaign team.

#### Russian connections investigated

Trump sacked his first national security adviser, Michael Flynn, after the retired general did not disclose his conversations with Sergei Kislyad, Russian Ambassador to Washington. Flynn has been subpoenaed for his documents relating to his Russian connections after refusing to hand them over.

The FBI is still investigating whether any of Trump's campaign aides had "inappropriate" contacts with Russian officials and possible ties to alleged Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election.

It was amidst this FBI investigation that Trump sacked Comey as FBI Director. That investigation is continuing but no longer led by James Comey. The investigation involves National Intelligence, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the National Security Agency (NSA), the National Geospatial Intelligence Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency as well as the FBI.

Two days after Trump sacked Comey he had a meeting with Sergei Lavrov, Russia's Foreign Minister, in the White House. It has been reported that they only talked about international issues, including de-escalation zones in Syria.

#### Militarisation of Foreign Policy

While he has largely pursued the domestic policies he advocated in his campaign, Trump's foreign policy does not resemble the man who criticised Japan and China at every rally and warned Obama not to strike Syria.

James Mattis, Defence Secretary, on a visit to Tokyo, called the US-Japan alliance a "model" in stark contrast to Trump's campaign rhetoric. A few weeks later Trump dined and golfed with Japanese Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe, during a three-day summit.

Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson, helped persuade Trump to honour the "One China" policy under which the US



**Jared Kushner: multi-millionaire real estate investor, newspaper owner and President Trump's son-in-law and Senior Adviser pictured against a backdrop of 666 Fifth Ave, New York which Kushner Companies purchased in 2007 for \$1.8bn and One Times Square, New York in which Kushner purchased a majority stake in 2015 for \$295million.**

views Beijing as the seat of government.

This is after Trump had suggested in December that he might abandon the policy.

Trump is attempting to use China to put pressure on North Korea although he has said that if China won't help then the US may go it alone.

However, one of the US's main concerns is the huge imbalance in trade with China amounting to some \$350 billion. The US and China have just signed a new trade deal following Trump's meeting with President Xi Jinping.

The deal, according to the *New York Times*, covers US beef exports, fracked natural gas exports and US firms offering electronic payment services all in return for, among other things, Chinese exports of cooked poultry products.

In early April Trump stood beside Jens Stoltenberg, NATO secretary-general, and said of the transatlantic security alliance: "I said it was obsolete. It's no



**General "Jim, Mad Dog" Mattis**

longer obsolete."

During the 2016 race for the presidential nomination Trump bristled when critics said that he lacked the temperament or experience to be Commander-in-Chief. The chaos of his early days in office resurrected those concerns in some quarters.

Malcolm Rifkind, former British Foreign Minister, said, "Given his (Trump) volatility and inexperience that's what keeps me awake at night especially, as during his campaign, he asked what the point of nuclear weapons was if you could not use them."

Trump's approach to the issue of North Korea, including the sending of US warships to the region does not bode well in this regard.

Denis Wilder, a former top CIA official, who served under Bush, says one trait of the Trump administration is "the militarisation of foreign policy"

Trump has surrounded himself with generals, used the military to strike Syria based on unproven allegations, dropped the largest non-nuclear bomb in the US arsenal in Afghanistan and despatched an aircraft carrier and warships to the Korean peninsula.

David Gergen, a former White House adviser to Gerald Ford, Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton, says that the "deepest fear" for many is that Trump will "stumble into a conflict due to his impulsive nature."

Bob Corker, Republican head of the Senate foreign relations committee, stated that, "it seems like, on all fronts, that things have moved to a more traditional foreign policy. From the standpoint of our country's national interest, it just seems to me we are in a much better place."

Trump has put his son-in-law, Jared Kushner, in charge of brokering peace in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Kushner is from an orthodox Jewish family and married Ivanka in a Jewish ceremony in 2009. Ivanka studied Judaism for one year before converting to the Jewish faith and marrying Jared.

President Trump has been a long-time supporter of Israel. In 1983, the Jewish National Fund bestowed upon Donald Trump the "Tree of Life" award, presented to individuals for their outstanding community involvement and their dedication to the cause of American-Israeli friendship. Trump served as Grand Marshall in the Salute to Israel Day Parade in New York in 2004.

Trump's first overseas visit since becoming President is to Israel, Saudi Arabia and the Vatican.

# Chemical attack in Syria: who benefits?

On 4 April 2017, chemical weapons were used in the rebel-held town of Khan Shaykhun, Idlib, in Syria. A storm of indignation swept the Western world. Assad and the Syrian government were immediately, literally within minutes, blamed for the attack.

By **ALEX DAVIDSON**

On such occasions, it is pertinent to ask the question: who benefits?

On 6 April, the United States fired 59 tomahawk missiles at the Syrian government's Shayrat Airbase, killing and injuring people at the base and putting it out of action, in response to the alleged chemical attack by the Assad government.

President Trump, until then criticised by the US "liberal" media, such as the *New York Times*, overnight became a national hero.

The incident is now confined to history by the western media but the question remains: who would benefit from the chemical attack on Idlib? Why would Assad arouse the anger of the west and invite American intervention?

With the assistance of Russia, Iran and Hizbullah, he is winning the war which has been ravishing Syria for years.

It is extremely difficult to see what Assad and the Syrian government had to gain from a chemical attack on Idlib.

**So, who had something to gain by the chemical attack?**

There are jihadists from a variety of countries, several Syrian sects and militias, who are fighting Assad and against each other, and then there are their Arab allies, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates.

And, there is Israel, of course. They all have an interest in arousing the west to intervene against their enemy, the Assad government.

The Syrian government surrendered

their chemical weapons in a deal overseen by Russia and the US some time ago.

Some of the western media put about the story that the Syrian regime may not have declared all their chemical weapons but that has never been argued very forcefully and no proof has ever been offered.

The western media published an unproven assumption that Assad was the culprit as the only truth. They didn't wait for an investigation or proof but immediately blamed the already demonised Assad. Trump responded by doing what he had always urged Obama not to do. He ordered US military intervention in Syria.

The answer to the question: who benefitted from the chemical attack is most likely to be those forces who have long wanted the United States to intervene against Assad.

You can choose from a variety of players in the region. However, one thing is absolutely clear: Assad and the Syrian government had absolutely nothing to gain.



**2013 September**  
John Kerry, US Secretary of State (pictured top left) and Sergei Lavrov (top), Russia's Foreign Minister at the final negotiation session on destroying Syria's chemical weapons.



**2014 February**  
Britain's air-defence destroyer, HMS Diamond escorts MV Ark Futura (top) transporting chemical weapons from Syria.

# Palestinians human rights hunger strike

**For further information: [www.palestinecampaign.org](http://www.palestinecampaign.org)**

**On Monday 17 April, over 1,100 Palestinian prisoners held across jails in Israel began a historic hunger strike under the leadership of Marwan Barghouti. Now, their numbers have grown, with over 1,500 prisoners committing to the strike.**

Family members of the imprisoned are also refusing food in solidarity. Palestinians of all political persuasions are standing firm behind the hunger strikers and their demands for their human rights to be respected.

Since 1967, more than 800,000 Palestinians have been detained under Israeli military orders.

This number constitutes approximately 20 per cent of the total Palestinian population in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) and as much as 40 per cent of the total male Palestinian population.

Every Palestinian family has been subjected to having one or more members incarcerated, subjecting the Palestinian

people to one of the highest rates of incarceration in the world.

Israel's treatment of Palestinian prisoners includes the use of torture during interrogation, solitary confinement, numerous cases of gross medical negligence in cases of acute health issues, alongside the routine denial of visits.

The prisoners are calling on Israel to end its violations of human rights conventions in the treatment of Palestinians detained within Israel's prison system, often without charge.

Marwan Barghouti, leader of the Hunger Strike, had a letter published in the *New York Times* on 16 April 2017. This is reproduced below:

## Why we are on hunger strike

**By MARWAN BARGHOUTI**

HADARIM PRISON, Israel. Having spent the last 15 years in an Israeli prison, I have been both a witness to and a victim of Israel's illegal system of mass arbitrary arrests and ill-treatment of Palestinian prisoners.

After exhausting all other options, I decided there was no choice but to resist these abuses by going on a hunger strike.

Some 1,000 Palestinian prisoners have decided to take part in this hunger strike, which begins today, the day we observe here as Prisoners' Day.

Hunger striking is the most peaceful form of resistance available. It inflicts pain solely on those who participate and on their loved ones, in the hopes that their empty stomachs and their sacrifice will help the message resonate beyond the confines of their dark cells.

Decades of experience have proved that Israel's inhumane system of colonial and military occupation aims to break the spirit of prisoners and the nation to which they belong, by inflicting suffering on their bodies, separating them from their families and communities, using humiliating measures to compel subjugation. In spite of such treatment, we will not surrender to it.

Israel, the occupying power, has violated international law in multiple ways for nearly 70 years, and yet has been granted impunity for its actions. It has committed grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions against the Palestinian people; the prisoners, including men, women and children, are no exception.

I was only 15 when I was first imprisoned. I was barely 18 when an Israeli interrogator forced me to spread my legs while I stood naked in the interrogation room, before hitting my genitals.

I passed out from the pain, and the resulting fall left an everlasting scar on my forehead. The interrogator mocked me afterward, saying that I would never procreate because people like me give birth only to terrorists and murderers.

A few years later, I was again in an Israeli prison, leading a hunger strike, when my first son was born. Instead of the sweets we usually distribute to celebrate such news, I handed out salt to the other prisoners. When he was barely 18, he in turn was arrested and spent four years in Israeli prisons.

The eldest of my four children is now a man of 31. Yet here I still am, pursu-

ing this struggle for freedom along with thousands of prisoners, millions of Palestinians and the support of so many around the world.

What is it with the arrogance of the occupier and the oppressor and their backers that makes them deaf to this simple truth: Our chains will be broken before we are, because it is human nature to heed the call for freedom regardless of the cost.

Israel has built nearly all of its prisons inside Israel rather than in the occupied territory. In doing so, it has unlawfully and forcibly transferred Palestinian civilians into captivity, and has used this situation to restrict family visits and to inflict suffering on prisoners through long transports under cruel conditions.

It turned basic rights that should be guaranteed under international law - including some painfully secured through previous hunger strikes - into privileges its prison service decides to grant us or deprive us of.

Palestinian prisoners and detainees have suffered from torture, inhumane and degrading treatment, and medical negligence. Some have been killed while

Continued on page 13

# Palestine haunts British politics

The dispossession of the Palestinian people haunts British politics - domestic as much as foreign - like no other issue and never more than now.

By **BRIAN DURRANS**

What can be learned from British government policy on Palestine about a hundred years ago?

Much effort has gone into trying to identify the parts played by imperial and more specifically Zionist interests<sup>(1)</sup> when the future of Palestine was being shaped in the first few years of the First World War up to the game-changing Balfour Declaration of 2 November 1917. Yet two other, closely-interrelated, factors influenced imperialist thinking about Palestine at that time.

One factor was the rise of revolutionary Russia; the other, how a potentially re-assertive British working class might be managed through the uncertain decades to come.

These merit attention by way of background to the place of the Palestinian cause in Britain and to false accusations of anti-Semitism currently targeting the Labour Party and any voices raised in support of Palestinians<sup>(2)</sup>.

## 1915-1917

That British policy on Palestine didn't emerge fully-formed, or in a vacuum, is confirmed by its provisional and opportunistic development in relation to inter-imperial rivalry, internal UK politics and the specific circumstances of the Middle East itself.

This is evident from three stages in the formulation of this policy during the First World War, all marked by centenaries celebrated, mourned or at any rate observed, around now.

## McMahon-Hussain

Two of these centenaries have already come and gone, attracting little attention. The first, on 24 October 2015, recalled the letter written one hundred years earlier by Sir Henry McMahon, British High Commissioner to Egypt, to Hussain bin Ali, the Sharif of Mecca.

McMahon offered support for an in-

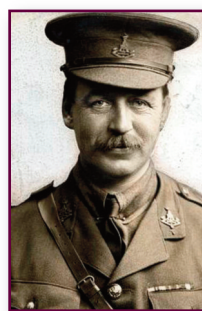
dependent Arab kingdom under the Sharif if the latter would organise an Arab revolt against the Ottoman Empire, Germany's ally at the time: an offer which the Sharif assumed included Palestine<sup>(3)</sup>.

But the McMahon promise was spectacularly undermined by the second event recently commemorated in another centenary with an only slightly higher profile: the Sykes-Picot Agreement.

## Sykes-Picot

Concluded by British and French negotiators Mark Sykes and François Georges-Picot, this secret deal was ratified by their two governments on 16 May 1916, and annulled the McMahon promise of less than seven months before.

Its later revelation caused embarrassment in London and Paris and outrage across the Arab world which is still felt today. Already anticipating the defeat of Germany and of its Turkish ally, the deal



**Colonel Sir Tatton Benvenuto Mark Sykes, (1879-1919)**



**Francois Marie Denis Georges-Picot (1870-1951)**

partitioned the Ottoman Empire in a larger carve-up of the region, which, in reflecting the primacy of British imperialism, also accommodated the lesser interests of former rivals.

Britain would be the only power with strategically crucial maritime, thus both commercial and naval, access to the region both at the eastern end of the Mediterranean (exclusive control of a stretch of coast and an arc of hinterland from just south of Haifa northward almost to Lebanon) and in the Persian Gulf.

At the same time, of its current wartime allies, France would receive a share of influence appropriate to its status as a junior partner (directly in Turkey, indirectly in Syria and with a role subsidiary to Britain's in Palestine) and Russia an even smaller say in Palestine on behalf of Orthodox Christianity.

Sykes-Picot was the first formalisation of Palestine as a geopolitical asset of Western imperialism. This does not mean, however, that the 'asset' was of use only as territory in the logistics of running an empire.

One clue to what else it was about is the fact that its secret was revealed and justifiably denounced as proof of imperialist double-dealing, on 23 November 1917, after the victorious Bolsheviks came across the Russian copy of the Agreement left behind by the previous administration.

## Balfour

The third, best-known and most notorious of these events during the First World War is the Balfour Declaration, issued just eighteen months after the Sykes-Picot Agreement was signed, and prompting both Zionists and their critics to a flurry of activity before its centenary this year.

That Balfour himself was no moist-eyed humanitarian is underscored not only by his record of suppressing dissent as Chief Secretary for [British-occupied] Ireland and later against the Boers (as settler-colonists, perhaps the Israelis of their day).

Also, still in South Africa, by importing cheap labour from China seen even at the time as a form of slavery; in Europe by promoting Anglo-French relations as an entry-ticket to the First World War; and, not least, by strongly opposing entry into Britain of Jewish refugees from

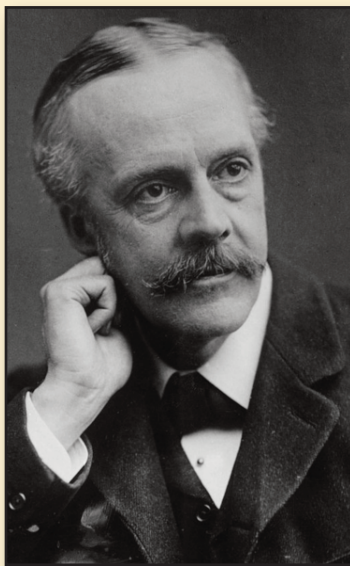
the pogroms of eastern Europe.

The Declaration was agreed by the British Cabinet on 31 October 1917 and conveyed two days later in a letter from Foreign Secretary and former Conservative Prime Minister Arthur James Balfour to former Conservative MP and pillar of the Jewish community Lord Rothschild, who was close to Chaim Weizmann and other leaders of the Zionist Federation.

The letter reads as follows (the actual Declaration is indented to distinguish it from the rest of the letter although the original text does not make this a sharp distinction):

*Dear Lord Rothschild,  
I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet:*

*His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing*



**Arthur James Balfour, 1st Earl of Balfour. Conservative Prime Minister (1902-05) and Foreign Secretary (1916-19).**

**He was born in Whittinghame House (below) in East Lothian, Scotland. His grandfather and father were Scottish Tory MPs. His uncle was the Earl of Salisbury, the three-time Tory Prime Minister for 13 years beginning in 1895.**



*shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.*

*I should be grateful if you would bring this*

*declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.*

*Yours,  
Arthur James Balfour*

The Declaration and the letter are not synonymous. The Declaration itself was

## Why we are on hunger strike

Continued from page 11

in detention. According to the latest count from the Palestinian Prisoners Club, about 200 Palestinian prisoners have died since 1967 because of such actions. Palestinian prisoners and their families also remain a primary target of Israel's policy of imposing collective punishments.

Through our hunger strike, we seek an end to these abuses.

Over the past five decades, according to the human rights group Addameer more than 800,000 Palestinians have been imprisoned or detained by Israel - equivalent to about 40 per cent of the Palestinian territory's male population.

Today, about 6,500 are still imprisoned, among them some who have the dismal distinction of holding world records for the longest periods in detention of political prisoners. There is hardly a single family in Palestine that has not endured the suffering caused by the imprisonment of one or several of its members.

How to account for this unbelievable state of affairs?

Israel has established a dual legal regime, a form of judicial apartheid, that

provides virtual impunity for Israelis who commit crimes against Palestinians, while criminalizing Palestinian presence and resistance. Israel's courts are a charade of justice, clearly instruments of colonial, military occupation. According to the State Department, the conviction rate for Palestinians in the military courts is nearly 90 per cent.

Among the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians whom Israel has taken captive are children, women, parliamentarians, activists, journalists, human rights defenders, academics, political figures, militants, bystanders, family members of prisoners. And all with one aim: to bury the legitimate aspirations of an entire nation.

Instead, though, Israel's prisons have become the cradle of a lasting movement for Palestinian self-determination.

This new hunger strike will demonstrate once more that the prisoners' movement is the compass that guides our struggle, the struggle for Freedom and Dignity, the name we have chosen for this new step in our long walk to freedom.

Israel has tried to brand us all as terrorists to legitimize its violations, including mass arbitrary arrests, torture,

punitive measures and severe restrictions. As part of Israel's effort to undermine the Palestinian struggle for freedom, an Israeli court sentenced me to five life sentences and 40 years in prison in a political show trial that was denounced by international observers.

Israel is not the first occupying or colonial power to resort to such expedients. Every national liberation movement in history can recall similar practices. This is why so many people who have fought against oppression, colonialism and apartheid stand with us.

The International Campaign to Free Marwan Barghouti and All Palestinian Prisoners that the anti-apartheid icon, Ahmed Kathrada, and my wife, Fadwa, inaugurated in 2013 from Nelson Mandela's former cell on Robben Island has enjoyed the support of eight Nobel Peace Prize laureates, 120 governments and hundreds of leaders, parliamentarians, artists and academics around the world.

Their solidarity exposes Israel's moral and political failure. Rights are not bestowed by an oppressor. Freedom and dignity are universal rights that are inherent in humanity, to be enjoyed by every nation and all human beings.

Palestinians will not be an exception. Only ending occupation will end this injustice and mark the birth of peace.

## Palestine haunts British politics

approved by the Cabinet as a statement of government policy, and information on the process of drafting it, and who was involved, illustrates some of the interests and sensitivities at stake<sup>(4)</sup>.

But it appears that Balfour had a free hand in how he referred to the final version in the letter itself.

By introducing it explicitly as sympathetic to Jewish Zionist aspirations - an unnecessary comment in view of the main content of the Declaration itself - he may be trying to sugar the pill of its first caveat.

### Balfour's two caveats

The first caveat to the promise about a Jewish homeland in Palestine is this:

*it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine.*

Although the Declaration says that what Britain is willing to help with is a 'homeland' rather than an actual state, the distinction was never more than tactical, partly to allay the fears of non-Jews in Palestine.

As set out in the Declaration, the statement about the rights of Palestinians is unequivocal and most often quoted as proof of Britain's perfidy in the matter, given that Britain has done nothing since 1948 to ensure that Israel abides by it.

And yet the perfidy consists not only in failing to honour a commitment but in the bad faith of the commitment itself.

In a memorandum dated 11 August 1919, prepared for the Paris Peace Conference cementing the new imperial order following the First World War, Balfour wrote:

*In Palestine we do not propose even to go through the form of consulting the wishes of the present inhabitants of the country [Palestine] [...] Zionism, be it right or wrong, good or bad, is rooted in age long traditions, in present needs, in future hopes, or far profounder import than the desires [and] prejudices of the 700,000 Arabs who now inhabit that ancient land.<sup>(5)</sup>*

Decoded, this orientalist form of racism privileges a biblical narrative and lobby-argument, both familiar to non-Jewish Europeans, over the mere desires and prejudices attributed to the majority of Palestine's inhabitants, whose own traditions, needs and hopes are no less rooted in tradition or deserving of respect.

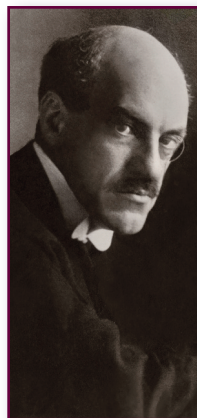
Less attention, however, has been given to the second caveat in Balfour's Declaration. This caveat asserts that in trying to create such a Jewish homeland in Palestine, nothing shall be done to prejudice

*the rights and political status enjoyed by*



**Winston Churchill pictured in 1911 when he was Lord of the Admiralty.**

In 1920, Churchill, then British Secretary of State for War, publicly praised Zionism as far preferable to ... world communism "under Jewish domination".



**Edwin Montagu**



**Lord Curzon**

*Jews in any other country.*

Given the two-faced character of his first caveat, it is hardly surprising that this second caveat is also more devious than it initially appears.

If in his letter Balfour's introduction to the Declaration sugars the pill of its first caveat, the second caveat sugars the pill of the Declaration's core promise itself.

The 'good news', as it were, is that we are going to give your own homeland in Palestine; the 'bad news' (as Edwin Montagu spotted) is that this could fuel anti-Semitism through the suspected dual or displaced loyalty of those British citizens who are Jewish.

The terms of the second caveat might have allayed the fears of the wealthier fraction of the Jewish community but left the majority more vulnerable to prejudice, including many first- or second-generation immigrants, and bearing in mind also that most Jews counted among the working class and many were prominent in working class politics and wider progressive movements.

An earlier draft of this second caveat (the Milner-Amery draft of 4 October 1917<sup>(6)</sup>) hints at the caveat's intention by specifying that the promise of a 'national home' for them in Palestine will not prejudice "rights and political status enjoyed in any other country *by such Jews who are fully contented with their existing nationality*" (emphasis added), which would have immediately raised the question as to what evidence there might be of someone being less than 'fully contented' with being British and the related question as to what treatment under the law such a person might be entitled or expect.

### An attack on the working class

The Declaration thus offers British Jews at least the promise or dubious privilege of split loyalty, one effect and probable intention of which would have been to discourage some from joining with others to overcome the problems that capitalism creates for all workers, and thus to create or deepen divisions in the working class between Jews and non-Jews.

Balfour's anti-Semitism is widely recorded<sup>(7)</sup> and it has been argued that he favoured a Palestinian homeland for Jews to reduce the numbers of Jewish refugees who would otherwise come to Britain.

Being a promise of the British government alone, however, the Balfour Declaration did not ensure, nor did it pretend to ensure, that any other country would likewise regard Jews in its own borders as entitled equally to citizenship where they lived as well as the right to live in a Jewish homeland in Palestine.

That there was not complete unanimity in the government about the implications of the Balfour Declaration is suggested by reservations expressed about it by Edwin Montagu, the only

Jewish member of the Cabinet, appointed as Secretary of State for India in 1917 but before the wording of the Declaration had been finalised.

Lord Curzon, the former Viceroy of India and still influential in government (he would succeed Balfour as Foreign Secretary), was another critic.

Montagu feared that a Jewish homeland in Palestine would prompt anti-Semitic pressure to send Jews 'home' to Palestine and undermine the rights they enjoyed in the countries where they already lived.

At the same time, he rejected the idea that Jews were entitled to rule over Palestine<sup>(8)</sup>.

Montagu, nonetheless, like Curzon and all their other colleagues, remained an imperialist and never questioned whether the British were any more entitled to rule over that or other countries than Jews were to rule over Palestine.

The lack of enthusiasm for the Declaration by those whose main interests were British India, unarguably the 'Jewel in the Crown' of the empire, suggests that if it was not obvious that a client state in Palestine would best serve British imperialism directly, something else might be said in its favour.

The toehold on the eastern Mediterranean coast provided under Sykes-Picot, and the extensive footing in the Gulf, and in Aden, meant that trade and naval needs were already catered for. Perhaps a Jewish 'homeland' in Palestine can be better understood as part of a geopolitical calculus, transcending even running and defending the empire from rivals, to address, from at least 1917, a concern that the working class at home might gain strength and even emulate the working class in Russia<sup>(9)</sup>; and, in due course, that Arab nationalism might threaten its regional interests in the future.

Taken together, then, the two caveats to the Declaration's sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations bring together with great clarity the domestic and foreign prejudices of the British establishment.

Even when failing to make decisions that are necessarily in its own best enlightened self-interest, the ruling class never forgets the link between home policy and foreign policy, even if the Labour Movement sometimes does. Neither the Declaration nor Balfour's letter that enclosed it said anything specifically about the working class because it didn't need to; the meaning was implicit.

### Imperial calculation

As for the international implications, the benign tone of the Declaration - sympa-

thy with, viewing with favour, using best endeavours - is standard diplomatic disguise for imperial calculation and arrogance - arrogance because, with no more altruism than fencing a stolen laptop in a pub, the land being offered by Britain was not Britain's to offer.

The British establishment were concerned about the revolutionary developments in Russia ... Whitehall memoranda reveal a deeper worry about the effect of the revolution not only on the outcome and likely duration of the war, but on the balance of power after it.

.... Zionist interests which found favour in the Balfour Declaration, were now ... prising Russian Jews away from the revolution and German Jews from the Kaiser, a strategy articulated even before the Balfour Declaration.

Neither, for that matter, were its imperial territories, in Africa, India and southeast Asia, which the Cabinet may have thought this act of sham benevolence would help keep more securely and profitably in British hands than in those of its rivals or (God forbid) those of their actual inhabitants.

The British establishment were concerned about the revolutionary developments in Russia, but the early exposure by the world's first socialist state of the secret Sykes-Picot Agreement was only one of its concerns.

Whitehall memoranda reveal a deeper worry about the effect of the revolution not only on the outcome and likely duration of the war, but on the balance of power after it.

From an uncertain beginning, when the future of Palestine might have turned out differently, Zionist interests which found favour in the Balfour Declaration, were now pursued with the intention of prising Russian Jews away from the revolution and German Jews from the Kaiser, a strategy articulated even before the Balfour Declaration.

Although in neither case was this successful at the time, British appeals to Russian Jews in the name of Zionism were tried again after the War as part of the attempt at defeating the revolution through military intervention.

In 1920, for example, Winston

Churchill, then British Secretary of State for War, publicly praised Zionism as far preferable to what he claimed were (Russian) plans, articulated by Trotsky, for world communism "under Jewish domination"<sup>(10)</sup>.

The British establishment, in whatever related ways they would later 'play the Israel or Jewish homeland in Palestine card' before and after the founding of the Israeli state itself in 1948, recognised from the start its potential to divide the domestic working class, undermine the new state in Russia, and strengthen their own position.

### FOOTNOTES

1. Bearing in mind the recommendations of the *Chakrabarti Inquiry* (30 June 2016: <http://www.labour.org.uk/page/-/party-documents/Chakrabarti-Inquiry.pdf>, p.12), the term 'Zionist' or 'Zionism' refers here to the political position promoting an exclusively Jewish state, synonymous since 1948 with Israel.

2. Including the broad-based (non-party-aligned) Palestine Solidarity Campaign and at least two senior Conservative MPs. The involvement of the Israeli embassy in these shenanigans was recently exposed by an undercover reporter for *Al Jazeera*: <http://www.aljazeera.com/investigations/thelobby/>.

3. Avi Shlaim, *Israel and Palestine: Reappraisals, Revisions, Refutations*. London, Verso, 2009, p.3.

4. Leonard Stein, *The Balfour Declaration*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1961.

5. Alan Hart, *The False Messiah* (vol. 1 of *Zionism: the real enemy of the Jews*). Atlanta, Clarity Press, 2009, p.103, quoting Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939, vol. IV (London, HMSO).

6. Stein, 1961, p.664.

7. Hart 2009, p.81.

8. Part of these calculations was that Jews in the US would pressure their country to join the War, for which Balfour himself argued at the War Cabinet meeting on 31 October 1917, the same day the Declaration received government approval: Doreen Ingrams, *Palestine Papers: 1917-1922: Seeds of Conflict*. London, Eland, 2009, p.16.

9. Hart 2009, pp.96, 99-100.

10. Hart 2009, p.96.

# Housing for whom? A view from London

**In 1977 I was a young teacher. I was sharing a private rented flat with my husband and another couple. Just before I had my first child we got a Greater London Council flat in Hackney.**

**By PAT TURNBULL.** This article is an edited version of a talk given to Ealing Central and Acton Constituency Labour party.

It was tiny and on the fifth floor without a lift, but I was very excited and happy. No teacher in London would get a council flat in London nowadays.

In 1982 with two children we got a transfer to a bigger three-bedroom flat, a spacious, airy and light maisonette on another council estate.

Today in Hackney if you want a transfer to a three or even two-bedroom council home, you are advised to move to Newcastle, Sheffield or Wales. There is no automatic transfer any more when you have two children of different sexes.

In the 1990s our estate was knocked down and rebuilt. This was a painful process in many ways, but at least it was completed in five years or so. And I got a new home on the rebuilt estate, although I had to become a housing association tenant to do so.

Nowadays estate regenerations like Woodberry Down and Colville estates in Hackney started in 1999 and are projected to continue till 2032 - that is if the plans are not revised again.

And whereas most of our estate was rebuilt as social rented housing, Woodberry Down and Colville are having whole areas of demolished council housing replaced by housing for market sale.

On Woodberry Down the original 2000 council rented homes will be replaced by 5,557 homes, of which only just over 1000 will be social rented - not council, by the way, but Genesis Housing Association. Most of the rest will be

The Conservative government of the 1980s started the process of encouraging and incentivising Right to Buy, which cost so many council rented homes. Currently about a third of these Right to Buy homes in London are being rented out at market rents.

expensive housing for market sale.

There are big worries about what kind of London we are creating.

Already 57 per cent of approved development sites above 15 homes are above the recommended density levels - many more homes crammed onto an area, and often in very tall buildings.

People are concerned about how housing targets are arrived at and how unequal they are. So, already crowded and

still working class Tower Hamlets has a target to deliver 4000 homes a year, while leafy Richmond has a target of little more than 300.

At the Old Oak Common Opportunity Area, 24,000 homes are planned. Local residents are concerned that they will have a mini-Manhattan on their doorstep.

And the vast majority of all these planned homes are market homes for sale, far beyond the pockets of most Londoners.

## How have we come to this?

The Conservative government of the 1980s started the process of encouraging and incentivising Right to Buy, which cost so many council rented homes. Only one in six were ever replaced.

Currently about a third of these Right to Buy homes in London are being rented out at market rents.

Councils were not allowed to use the receipts from the homes sold to build replacements. All receipts went to the Government to spend as they chose.

The same government deregulated the private rental market so that there is no longer any control over levels of rent, and no security of tenure.

Housing associations were then touted as the alternative providers of social rented housing to the councils, and were given generous government funding to take on the responsibility.

Councils all too readily transferred many estates to housing associations.

Now, as the government funding has been deliberately withdrawn, housing associations are increasingly seeing themselves as developers of private rented housing and expensive shared ownership homes, and less and less see themselves in the role of providing social rented homes.

They, like the developers, are attempting to cash in on the inflated housing market in London. Further changes in the law and planning regulations have given developers the upper hand in the London housing market.

And they make no bones about it - their interest is in keeping the supply of housing at a certain level, so as to keep



**1970s council housing in north London:  
Ferry Lane estate, Haringey.**



the prices high. So whereas the desired level of house building in London is at least 50,000 new homes per year, it has been half that.

At the same time, the big builders and developers are making record profits.

In 2015 Tony Pidgley, founder of Berkeley Homes, the developer of Woodberry Down estate, took home £21.5 million.

Then there is the issue of 'affordability'. This term's use has become degraded so that it is meaningless.

It includes so-called affordable rent at up to 80 per cent of market rent, shared ownership, and now starter homes for sale at up to £450,000 in London. All are actually unaffordable to most Londoners.

Social rented homes, what used to be known as council homes, are the only type of home genuinely affordable to most Londoners.

But even taking the absurdly broad use of the term 'affordable', the most recent figures we have show 'affordable' homes as only 13 per cent of total numbers of homes being built.

The annual need for additional social rented homes in London has been assessed at 15,700 – in 2013/14 only 3,580 were completed, and now even that has slowed to a trickle.

Social rented homes are now the only genuinely affordable homes for most Londoners. But not only are they not being built, they are actually being lost.

The proportion of London's households who live in housing that is council owned had by 2014 fallen by half over the previous 30 years to only 23 per cent.

In the past ten years, 8000 net social rented homes have been lost through regeneration of housing estates, where council homes have been knocked down and replaced by market homes.

And developers – and sadly councils – now have their greedy eyes on the rest of London's 3,500 council estates, homes to thousands of Londoners.

Everyone is trying to cash in on the

inflated housing market. But this is unstable.

Just before the crash of 2008, the then Labour government saw stretching ahead a vista of home ownership extending to broader and broader sections of the population.

In the nine years since, we have seen instead home ownership become unaffordable even for professionals for whom

Social rented homes are now the only genuinely affordable homes for most Londoners. But not only are they not being built, they are actually being lost.

... housing that is council owned had by 2014 fallen by half over the previous 30 years to only 23 per cent.

it was the norm. The average London house price has catapulted by 86 per cent in the past ten years. Nationally, the number of households who own their own homes has fallen by 200,000 since 2010.

Professionals are being forced into the inflated rents and insecure tenancies of the unregulated private rental market.

At the same time, working class families, who once had the security and quality of council homes, are being forced into this same private rented sector, where their landlords are often being subsidised by public funds through housing benefit.

The transfer of government funding from building public housing, in the form of council homes, to individual housing benefit, which took place from the 1980s on, has left all these families – and single people – vulnerable to changes in government policy.

95 per cent of government spending on housing during the course of this parliament (£21 billion in 2015) will go

through the benefits system, with just five per cent invested in new homes.

Recipients of Universal Credit, which is in any case lower than the benefits it replaces, may initially have to wait three months to receive their money. Private landlords are likely to evict; many now refuse to take people on benefits anyway.

But even tenants of housing associations risk eviction, because their assured tenancies – as opposed to council secure tenancies – allow for automatic eviction as soon as they fall two months into arrears.

I mentioned earlier the instability of the inflated housing market. Cracks are already appearing. Sales of luxury housing on large schemes like the Earls Court development, have slowed down.

In November last year, Capco the developer's sales rate was down to one per fortnight.

At this rate, it would take 200 years to sell all the 7,500 homes planned for the site. So councils trying to cash in themselves by using council owned land for large private housing developments are playing a risky game.

Not only is this housing far too expensive for most Londoners, and therefore does not meet need, there is a serious risk that it will never be built, or if built, never be sold.

Instead of using precious public land to build council homes, and facilities for their tenants and other local people, councils will have lost this land for no public gain at all.

There was never a golden age in housing for Londoners. There was always a lot of sub-standard private rented accommodation.

Council estates suffered from neglect and lack of expenditure from the 1970s on. Most people always had to make sacrifices to save if they wanted a mortgage.

But what we have seen is a steady, and now rapid, worsening of housing provision for most Londoners. Things are far worse than they once were.

And so we pose the question – housing for whom, and how do we get it?

# The Socialist Correspondent

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# Is this really the end of neo-Liberalism?

The 2008 financial crisis has generated a thriving book business as commentators from a number of viewpoints have sought to explain its causes and its consequences.

**PAUL SUTTON** reviews the book, *How Will Capitalism End?* by Wolfgang Streeck, (Verso: London 2016).

Much less popular but far more interesting are the few analyses which link 2008 to a failing capitalism and the prospect of its demise.

One of the first to appear was a collection of essays by five academics working within a radical critical tradition with the title *Does Capitalism Have A Future?* (2013). It reached no specific conclusion but did foresee a looming period of crisis for capitalism during which it would be difficult for capitalism to renew itself.

Wolfgang Streeck's book - *How Will Capitalism End?* - develops this radical critical approach, but with a more pronounced Marxist interpretation, and reaches a conclusion that capitalism is in its final phase before its demise, which if not imminent is nevertheless inevitable.

The principal focus of the book is on the advanced capitalist countries of the European Union, including the United Kingdom, and the United States. The period with which it is most concerned is the neoliberal one, beginning in the mid-1970s and now coming to an end.

## The Keynesian Interlude

Prior to this period, Streeck identifies a Keynesian period stretching for thirty years from the end of the Second World War.

In this period the working class made significant gains as a result of "a historical compromise between a then uniquely powerful working class and an equally uniquely weakened capitalist class that was as never before on the political and economic defensive" (p. 190).

To survive the capitalist class had to "promise politically guaranteed full and stable employment, steadily rising prosperity, redistribution of income, wealth and life chances in favour of ordinary people, social protection in the workplace through strong trade unions and

free collective bargaining, and beyond the workplace through a comprehensive welfare state" (p.190) all of which was "underwritten by governments making extensive use of the Keynesian economic toolkit" (p. 78).

Streeck believes this period was a unique configuration brought about not only by the mobilisation of labour in the Second World War but its operation after the War in "more or less closed national economies" (p. 21) that gave advantages to the working class and enabled a temporary alignment of capitalism and democracy, including social democracy.

Redistribution was from the top to the bottom stimulating economic growth and allowing significant gains in standards of living for the working class, which in turn generated legitimacy for a capitalist market economy. It was brought to an end as economies became more internationalised and as economic growth began to falter.

The neoliberal model which followed turned all this upside down beginning a process of redistribution from the bottom to the top alongside a weakening of the political power of the working class through the de-alignment of capitalism and democracy.

Streeck calls this period Hayekian after the founding theorist of neoliberal economics. Globalization increasingly became "the dominant political-economic formula for the legitimization of neoliberal capitalism" (p. 22) and states became located in markets, rather than markets in states.

The superiority of the private over the public sector became the dominant motif and finance capital the leading economic sector, turning the financial sector "into an international private government disciplining national political communities and their public governments, without

being in any way democratically accountable" (p.24). The 2008 financial crisis was the inevitable outcome.

## Neoliberalism Dissected

The impetus driving the development of the neoliberal state came from four successive crises.

The first was the global inflation of the 1970s which in both the USA and the UK saw the introduction of monetarist policies under Reagan and Thatcher including high interest rates, high unemployment rates and attacks on trade unionism, all to force a return to 'sound money'.

The second was the explosion of public debt in the 1980s and the third rapidly rising private debt in the 1990s, resulting in the creation of the debt state in the most advanced capitalist countries.

The 1980s were marked by "the plundering of the public domain through underfunding and privatization" (p. 69), alongside policies of aggressive deregulation of financial institutions and other measures in favour of the private sector.

For the working class it was marked by the onset of stagnant wages, rising economic inequality, declining trade union membership and falling participation in national elections.

This was followed by 'privatized Keynesianism' in the 1990s which saw the replacement of public debt with private debt and the shift of aggregate demand caused by cuts in public spending into private consumption, feeding a booming private sector and creating super profits for finance capital.

In Streeck's words: "Instead of the government borrowing money to fund equal access to decent housing, or the formation of marketable work skills, it was now individual citizens who, under a debt regime of extreme generosity, were allowed, and sometimes compelled, to take out loans at their own risk with which to pay for their education or their advancement to a less destitute urban neighbourhood" (p. 84).

Sub-prime mortgages, the single greatest proximate cause of the 2008 financial crisis in the US, were a characteristic expression of this policy.

'Privatized Keynesianism' crashed in 2008 to be replaced by a fourth and final phase - the consolidation (austerity) state. Streeck analyses this in depth for the EU though he makes it clear that it is also characteristic of the USA, albeit in a slightly different form.

The consolidation state has two key features. The first is to foster and maintain creditor confidence with the objective of making a state "attractive for financial investment by making it clear to the financial markets that the state is in a position to service its debt" (p. 122).

The second is the imposition of austerity through cuts in public expenditure since any offsetting increases in state revenue (taxes) would be seen as market unfriendly.

In this process "states become less like sovereigns and more like firms: instead of overriding markets, they are to be responsive to them. Whereas the politics of democratic society was to protect society from 'the vagaries of the market', the politics of the consolidation state protects financial markets from what are for them the vagaries of democratic politics" (p.134).

It is difficult to see such a state in any other way than as a gigantic confidence trick on the vast majority (the 99%) of the population.

#### After the Financial Crisis

The 2008 debt crisis saw the state bail-out the bad debts generated by the unregulated private sector but it is now this very same finance driven private sector (the 1%) that is imposing conditions on the state!

In the process "citizens lose out to investors, rights of citizenship are trumped by claims from commercial contracts, voters range below creditors, the results of elections are less important than those of bond auctions, public opinion matters less than interest rates and citizen loyalties less than investor confidence, and debt service crowds out public debt" (p.124).

In the end, there is nothing left to decide politically, so politics becomes distant and decayed, or rather is redefined as managerialism by the central banks: "Today, in Phase Four, with monetary expansion (quantitative easing) and fiscal austerity coinciding, the prosperity, relative and absolute of millions of citizens depends on central bank executives, international organisations, and councils of ministers of all sorts, acting in an arcane space remote from everyday experience and entirely impenetrable to outsiders, dealing with issues so complex that even insiders often cannot be sure what they are to do and are

in fact doing" (p. 20).

The policy of quantitative easing is a case in point. This involves central banks "buying up financial assets of diverse kinds, handing out new cash, produced out of thin air, to private financial firms" (p. 19).

The sums involved are equivalent to trillions of US dollars yet there is no guarantee of success: "Although quantitative easing has completely failed to counter deflationary pressures in an economy like Japan - where it has been relied upon for a decade or more on a huge scale - it is steadfastly pursued for lack of alternatives, and nobody knows what would happen if cash-production by debt-purchasing was ended" (p. 19).

In short, economic management by the seat of your pants, in a system increasingly out of control, and destined to fail.

An example of the "death from a thousand cuts or multiplicity of infirmities" (p. 13) which Streeck now believes are beyond the capacity of capitalism to remedy, leading to its end "even if we cannot know when and exactly how capitalism will disappear and what will succeed it" (p. 58).

Capitalism collapses through the number and intensification of its own internal contradictions and not by the action of any organised opposition, and certainly not by that of the working class which has been individualised, marginalised and rendered powerless as neoliberal capitalism "disintegrates from within" (p. 35).

The future is neither socialism nor barbarism/the mutual ruin of the contending classes but a void. This is a sombre and bleak conclusion. Is he right?

#### End Game for Capitalism?

The conclusion rests on a reinterpretation of Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (1944) to negate Polanyi's belief that capitalism will engender a resistance to it which will modify its worst effects.

Neoliberalism does not allow this because it ruthlessly 'commodifies everything', including labour, rendering resistance through a Polanyian 'counter-movement' impossible and with it any chance for the reform of capitalism, yet alone its overthrow.

Since neoliberal capitalism cannot rectify itself it succumbs to its own success.

But is neoliberal capitalism so all-conquering? Signs have already emerged that at least some of the 99% are seeing through the confidence trick.

The vote for Brexit and the election of Donald Trump, whatever their merits and demerits, show rebellion against the 1% as do the emergence of populist

movements on the Right and the Left.

Admittedly this is as yet amorphous but it is not insignificant, even if Streeck believes that a successful resistance to neoliberalism through the restoration of democracy (as opposed to the current ruling oligarchies) and the "de-globalizing of capitalism" (both simple and difficult) will lead not to the end of capitalism but its "re-embedding" (p. 199).

The 'counter-movement' may yet come to life and force change with who knows what consequences, the creation of a new paradigm reinventing capitalism or better still its welcome demise.

What final assessment can be made of Streeck's original and insightful analysis? There are two major criticisms.

Streeck presents an invaluable study of the capitalist mode of production in its present form in the advanced capitalist countries, the core Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries.

He does so through a discussion focused almost exclusively on the social relations of production. The technical forces of production are largely overlooked except for occasional references to technological displacement impacting the working class and increasingly the middle class through electronicization and robotization, leading to mass under/unemployment or employment which is precarious at best and immiserating at worst.

Such technical developments need to be more central to any fully worked-out Marxist or Marxist informed analysis, particularly since they are crucial to how the capitalist mode of production is transformed or ended.

Second, while Streeck has shown how all parts of the capitalist system are related to the whole he has not examined the whole but only a part of the whole, the OECD.

One looks in vain for discussions of China, or Russia, or the so-called emergent capitalist or developing countries. To be fair, this is beyond any one person to attempt in any one book but it is essential to a full understanding of how the capitalist mode of production operates in the current world.

Streeck's approach is an advance on even the best informed critical studies examining just one aspect of the current capitalist system, such as inequality or austerity, since he does relate the parts to the whole, but the whole is now global and the widest vision is needed to understand it.

Streeck makes a very good start but there is still a long way to go to see the full picture.



## CENTENARY OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

# Russian revolution and other revolts

The October Revolution was greeted with horror by the capitalist classes of the world and several armies were despatched in an attempt to defeat it.

By GINA NICHOLSON

Those armies included troops from Czechoslovakia, Poland, Romania, France, Greece, United States, Estonia, Japan, Italy, Republic of China, Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom.

In Britain, future British prime minister Winston Churchill, who served as war minister during much of the intervention in Russia, spoke of "strangling the Bolshevik baby in its crib."

That revolution was not a single isolated incident, but the most important and far-reaching element of a complex movement.

The Russian people were not alone in rising up against the injustices of their rulers in 1917. A number of different but related causes led to mutinies, revolts and revolutions in many other countries across Europe.

## First World War

The immediate cause was the war itself. Seventeen million died in the First World War, including seven million civilians. More than a million soldiers were wounded or killed in the battle of the Somme alone.

A deep disgust arose not only with the killing but also with the glorification of war, as expressed in Wilfred Owen's poem, *Dulce et Decorum Est*.

Then there was the effect of the war on the standard of living of the mass of the people. There were serious shortages of food and other supplies due to the difficulty of trade in wartime.

Then peace came and the armies were demobilised, adding to or creating unemployment. Germany, Austro-Hungary, Italy, France, Britain all suffered crippling surges in the cost of living. Even in Spain, for example, which was neutral in the war, the same suffering occurred.

The further development of industry in the nineteenth century, especially the spread of the railways, had vastly

assisted communication between peoples, including the spread of socialist ideas and news of workers' struggles.

And the development of capitalism itself, in which the growing working class felt the effects of increasing exploitation, had, even before the war began, given rise to powerful workers' struggles.

Finally, the ideas of communism, the spectre haunting Europe, had flourished.

## Italy

The Italian Biennio Rosso (two red years) lasted from 1918 to 1920, involving strikes, mass demonstrations and factory occupations. More than a million industrial workers struck in 1918, even more the following year. Many factories were occupied. On July 20-21, 1919, a general strike was called in solidarity with the Russian Revolution.

Turin metal-workers struck in April 1920, demanding recognition for their

## DULCE ET DECORUM EST - by Wilfred Owen (pictured below)

Thought to have been written between 8 October 1917 and March, 1918.

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,  
 Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,  
 Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs  
 And towards our distant rest began to trudge.  
 Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots  
 But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;  
 Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots  
 Of tired, outstripped Five-Nines that dropped behind.  
 Gas! Gas! Quick, boys! – An ecstasy of fumbling,  
 Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time;  
 But someone still was yelling out and stumbling,  
 And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime . . .  
 Dim, through the misty panes and thick green light,  
 As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.  
 In all my dreams, before my helpless sight,  
 He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.  
 If in some smothering dreams you too could pace  
 Behind the wagon that we flung him in,  
 And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,  
 His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;  
 If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood  
 Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,  
 Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud  
 Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,  
 My friend, you would not tell with such high zest  
 To children ardent for some desperate glory,  
 The old Lie; Dulce et Decorum est  
 Pro patria mori.



## CENTENARY OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

'factory councils', which were seen as the models for a new democratically controlled economy running industrial plants, rather than as a bargaining tool with employers.

Armed metal workers in Milan and Turin occupied their factories in response to a lockout by the employers.

Factory occupations swept the "industrial triangle" of north-western Italy. By September 3, 185 metal-working factories in Turin had been occupied.

By 1921, the movement was declining due to an industrial crisis that resulted in massive layoffs and wage cuts. The revolutionary period was followed by the violent reaction of the Fascist blackshirts militia and eventually by Mussolini's March on Rome in October 1922.

### Germany

In war-weary Germany, two admirals decided without authorisation to send the Imperial Fleet to engage the British Navy on 24 October 1918 - and the sailors mutinied.

The spark fell on tinder-dry ground, and the slogan 'Peace and Bread' was raised. Around 4 November, delegations of the mutinous sailors dispersed to all of the major cities in Germany.

By 7 November, the revolution had seized all large coastal cities as well as Hanover, Brunswick, Frankfurt and Munich. In Munich, a "Workers' and Soldiers' Council" forced the last King of Bavaria, Ludwig III, to abdicate. In the following days, the dynastic rulers of all the other German states had abdicated.

On 9 November, a group of 100 Revolutionary Stewards from the larger Berlin factories occupied the Reichstag and formed a revolutionary parliament.

Workers' and Soldiers' councils were established quickly, almost entirely controlled by social democrats (the SPD and the USPD). They took away power from the military commands but there were almost no confiscations of property or factory occupations. The leadership of the SPD were concerned to prevent a genuine social revolution and demanded elections for a national assembly.

There followed a struggle between revolutionary (but divided) elements and those who wished to avert a social revolution.

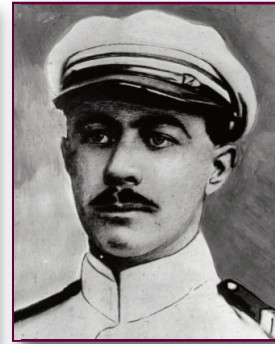
The January Revolt at the beginning of 1919 called for the overthrow of the social democratic government but failed



Rosa Luxemburg



Karl Liebknecht



André Marty

to win over the troops and was brutally quelled at a cost of 156 lives.

Following this the alleged leaders of the January Revolt had to go into hiding, but Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht (leading members of the newly formed Communist Party, pictured above) refused to leave Berlin, were discovered, arrested and brutally murdered.

Following this some Council Republics were proclaimed, a wave of strikes amounting to a general strike took place and escalated into street fighting in Berlin.

The strikers were attacked by the Freikorps, which killed about 1200 people. There was virtual civil war in Hamburg and Thuringia. The last council government to be toppled, on 2 May, was the Munich Soviet Republic.

In 1919 a new Constitution was written and adopted in the city of Weimar, from which the Republic got its unofficial name. It lasted until 1933.

### Hungary and Finland

The Hungarian Soviet Republic was a short-lived independent communist state which lasted from 21 March to 1 August 1919, led by Bela Kun.

It was the second socialist state in the world to be formed after the October Revolution in Russia.

The Finnish civil war was lost by the Reds (social-democratic peasant and worker paramilitaries) in May 1918.

### France

In France, war-weariness, unemployment and the high cost of living contributed to 'the rising wave of strikes and the huge workers' demonstrations for bread and progress, against Clemenceau's military dictatorship and against the military intervention in Russia.' (André Marty, *The Epic of the Black Sea Revolt*). The news of this filtered through to the soldiers and sailors despite press censorship.

On 11 November 1918 the armistice was signed and the mass of the people, particularly the soldiers, looked forward

to peace.

However on 18 December a French army division landed at Odessa where the French fought beside the Russian White Guards against Ukrainian soldiers.

The French soldiers and sailors were dismayed; they had thought the war was over but they were still fighting, and

against a workers' republic.

In this situation the Bolsheviks made headway with their pamphlets and newspapers, published in French, which, Marty comments, 'were eagerly accepted and read' because they 'displayed a remarkable knowledge of the situation and the everyday needs and demands of the French soldiers and sailors.'

The Bolsheviks thus managed to counter the propaganda spread by the French commanders, which portrayed the revolutionaries as criminals, child-eaters and rapists, and to explain the significance of the Revolution.

By February, 1919 there was serious agitation in the ranks of the French army; and towards the end of March the army was partially neutralised.

First, soldiers refused to march. A battalion of infantry was supposed to seize Tiraspol but as soon as the guns began firing the battalion fell back, taking along the artillery and cutting telephone communications. The men were disarmed and evacuated to Morocco.

Then two companies of infantry refused to march to Kherson. Marty comments: 'They disorganised the front . . . and thereby made it easier for the Red detachments to capture the city.' There were many similar incidents.

Then a company of Engineers drove away their officers and gave their arms to the (Soviet) workers. Odessa was evacuated on April 5, with whole French units singing the Internationale. The officers generally fled. 'The French army had turned into a disorganised throng with every trace of military discipline gone. It became necessary to send it back to France.'

### Finally came the sailors' mutinies

André Marty (pictured above) was chief engineer on board the destroyer Protet, at Galatz in Romania. He and a number of others had planned to seize the ship and take her to Odessa to join the revolution, but this plan was betrayed by spies and Marty and three others were arrested on April 16.

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Three days later a revolt broke out upon the battleship **France**, lying off Sevastopol, where the ship had been shelling the Red Army soldiers as they approached the city. The next day the crews of the sister ships - the **France** and the **Jean-Bart** (the Admiral's flagship) - gathered on deck, sang the Internationale and hoisted the red flag.

The troops which had landed from these ships abandoned their positions and proceeded to the shore.



Lenin

The sailors threw their ammunition boxes into the sea. The warships were forced to sail for France.

Marty, imprisoned on the cruiser **Waldeck-Rousseau**, made contact with the crew and on April 27 they too mutinied, imprisoned their officers and took over the radio. The ship left Odessa and sailed for France.

For three months similar mutinies and demonstrations occurred on all the warships in the Black Sea. The blockade of Odessa was broken.

As the warships returned to France, information about the Russian revolution and the mutinies began to spread. Committees of sailors were formed almost everywhere.

In Toulon the crew of the battleship **Provence**, and of the battleship **Voltaire** at Bizerte in North Africa refused to sail for the Black Sea. The unrest spread to Itea in Greece and to Vladivostock. Everywhere sailors were demonstrating.

The French government were forced to demobilise the army, disarm the warships and recall all forces of intervention from Russia.

### Britain and the Hands off Russia campaign

Although Marty sourly remarked that 'the British bankers and lords, as has always been their custom, let others do their fighting for them,' in fact a Royal Navy squadron, consisting of cruisers and destroyers, was sent to the Baltic in 1918, the commander of which, Rear-Admiral Edwyn Alexander Sinclair, promised to attack the Bolsheviks 'as far as my guns can reach'; British troops landed at Archangel and Baku; and a British Empire force including Canadian, Australian and Indian troops, also intervened in Russia.

In Britain an unprecedented period of militancy, strikes and trade union development had been interrupted by the start of the imperialist war, and thousands of workers had enlisted, drawn by war's 'terrible attraction . . . the wild excitement, the illusion of wonderful adventure and the actual break in the deadly monotony of working-class life.' [William Gallacher, *Revolt on the Clyde*].

But while the official leadership supported the war, a new tendency began to grow among working-class organisations which opposed the war on political grounds.

Having sent hundreds of thousands of workers to the front, the employers were short of labour in a period which demanded increased production, particularly of munitions. Therefore exploitation increased.

In a few cases wages were increased, but as the war continued prices rose faster than wages and the working class suffered while the employers made huge profits - which were 'estimated to have increased by £4,000 million during and owing to the war.' (Morton and Tate, *The British Labour Movement*).

Indeed the suspicion that profit was the main motive for the war grew, not only among the workers. The poet Siegfried Sassoon, a young officer decorated for bravery, wrote an open letter of protest to the war department, refusing to fight any more. "I believe that this War is being deliberately prolonged by those who have the power to end it," he wrote.

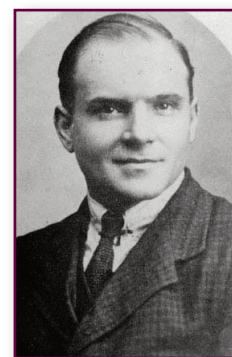
The labour movement, notably the rank and file, recovered from the pause the war had brought. There were big wartime strikes, first of the South Wales miners and the Clyde engineers in 1915.

The Clyde strike gave birth to the Clyde Workers' Committee (at first called the Labour Withholding Committee) which was 'pledged to resist the Munitions Act, support of which by the union officials its initial manifesto stigmatised as "an act of treachery to the working class"'. (Allen Hutt, *The Post-*

*war History of the British Working Class*).

Boilermakers in Southampton struck in September 1915 in defence of trade union conditions; in the new aircraft industry, a national committee was set up which forced concessions in November 1917 from the then Minister of Munitions, Winston Churchill.

Hutt remarks: 'Trade union membership mounted rapidly as the war continued. In 1913 the Trade Union Congress counted less than 2¼ million affiliated members; in 1918 over 4½ million were in its ranks.'



William Gallacher

Not just trade union militancy but a growing socialist consciousness characterised the movement. Particularly in Glasgow was this the case, where the Marxist agitator and educator John McLean was extremely active and very

popular among the workers.

With the Russian revolutions of February and October 1917, came an upsurge of delight, confidence and clarity among the working class.

William Paul, in his pamphlet *'Hands Off Russia'*, warned: '...the ruling class, which has been unable to defeat Socialism intellectually in the domain of ideas, is now attempting to defeat a Socialist Government in Russia with such weapons as the blockade, starvation, assassination, spies, corruption, and armed naval and military forces . . .'

In August 1918 the Metropolitan police struck, to the consternation of the government. All their demands were met except union recognition, but since the government negotiated with the union leaders this amounted to de facto recognition.

When the Manchester police threatened to strike they also secured their demands.

In 1918 there had been mutinies at the British army camps in France. By 1919 the army was in ferment. The government was slow to demobilise, having an eye on events in Russia and the possibility of intervention, but the conscript soldiers were in no mood for that.

There were mutinies at Folkestone, Dover, Brighton, Salisbury Plain and Isleworth. Thousands of troops arrived in London voicing their demands. Effectively this movement prevented the use of conscript troops in Russia - but there was little or no contact with the organ-

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ised working class.

1919 was a peak year for strikes. Workers on Clydeside struck for a forty-hour week, and when a peaceful demonstration in George Square was attacked by police and the workers routed their attackers.

The miners struck, demanding a wage increase, a six-hour day and nationalisation of the mines. This strike was defeated by government duplicity but the battle continued on other fronts. 300,000 Lancashire cotton workers staged a successful strike for a wage increase and a forty-eight hour week.

The railwaymen had been in negotiations which the government deliberately dragged out, and then made a 'definitive offer' demanding cuts – a clear provocation.

The railwaymen struck, and despite an attempt to buy off the locomotive men, the strike was solid. The government caused the strike pay to be withheld and leaked plans to starve the strikers into submission.

The Co-operative movement made strike pay available and accepted vouchers from strike committees for food.

The London newspaper workers – compositors and machine-men – refused to set or print newspapers until the railwaymen's case was fairly put.

The NUR entrusted the task of publicity to the Labour Research Department, which rose magnificently to the task.

By the end of a week, the strikers had won.

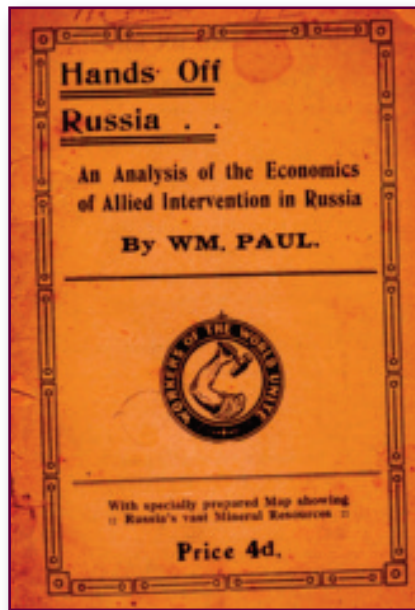
In London the young Harry Pollitt had taken up work as a boilermaker and was thus in a good position to pursue political work among the dockworkers.

In the summer of 1919 the 'Hands off Russia' movement was formed as a response to the military attacks on the young Soviet republic and the stream of 'filthy propaganda' poured out by the press in Britain.

On August 6 the British government issued a 'Declaration to Russian Peoples', stating that they had 'no intention of interfering in Russian politics', but the actions of the British military authorities and their support of anti-Soviet forces indicated otherwise.

British troops had landed at Archangel in the north and in the south at Baku. The British government was sending arms to Poland to support that country's anti-Soviet efforts.

On May 10th 1920, the same day that the Polish army captured Kiev, the London dockers refused to load arms marked for Poland on the ship the *Jolly George*. The coal-heavers refused to coal the ship. The owners were forced



to back down. It was a relatively small victory but it electrified the entire British labour movement. A week later the Dockers' Union banned the loading of any arms for use against Russia.

A motion was put to the Labour Party Conference proposing a general strike. While this motion was not passed, it nevertheless became the policy of the movement.

Then the Polish army was beaten back by the Red Army to the gates of Warsaw.

Seriously alarmed, on the 3rd of August the British government threatened war against Russia.

On Wednesday 4th August the Labour Party headquarters telegraphed all local



Harry Pollitt

labour parties and trades councils urging that demonstrations against war on Russia be held the following Sunday, August 8th.

The *Daily Herald* newspaper came out with the headline 'Not a man, not a gun, not a sou'. 'The demonstrations broke all records.' (Allen Hutt).

The Labour Party executive reported that it was 'one of the most striking examples of Labour unity, determination and enthusiasm in the history of the movement.'

Following this a joint meeting of the Labour Party (including MPs) and the T.U.C. set up a Council of Action to implement the policy against war on Russia. It was authorised to call for 'any and every form of withdrawal of labour' which might be required.

Three hundred and fifty local Councils of Labour were set up. Every major city and town was covered. Telegrams were sent to the workers of France and Italy, inviting them to join in the proposed strike.

The British government 'surrendered unconditionally. It advised the Polish government to cease its military actions against Russia . . .' (Morton and Tate).

Lenin commented: 'This Council of Action, independently of Parliament, presents an ultimatum to the Government in the name of the workers – it is the transition to the workers' dictatorship . . . The whole of the English bourgeois press wrote that the Councils of Action were Soviets. And they were right.'

In Britain the capitalists feared a revolution but it didn't happen. When the workers' demonstration in Glasgow's George Square beat back the attacking police, troops from the south were sent to maintain order, because the Scottish conscript soldiers could not be trusted to go against their own people.

But it did not even occur to the workers' leaders on the Clyde to make common cause with them. William Gallacher remarked, "We were carrying on a strike when we ought to have been making a revolution."

In most countries in Europe, some of the requisites for revolution were present. Large sections of the working class were engaged in determined struggle for their own conditions and in defence of the workers' revolution in Russia.

Workers, soldiers and sailors, acting together or separately, forced the capitalists to give up their attacks on the young Soviet state.

But the revolutionary forces were disunited, and there was no organization yet capable of uniting and leading the working class to a lasting victory, despite heroic efforts in a number of countries.



# A picture of how the Soviet people lived

In 1984 the Soviet publisher Novosti Press brought out a short book by Georgi Kublitsky called *'The Soviet People'*.

By **PAT TURNBULL**

Kublitsky was born in the Siberian city of Krasnoyarsk on the eve of the First World War. He became a land surveyor but in 1939 published his first book; 'The Soviet People' was his forty-third.

At various times he had visited all the Soviet republics, and wrote this book to give people abroad a picture of the people of the Soviet Union. What follows are edited extracts.

Looking back at life before the revolution, which shaped out differently for different peoples, I have attempted to trace the radical changes that came about after the establishment of Soviet rule.

The State Department Store in Moscow, or GUM, is the largest of its kind in the country. I went there to check some of my impressions. At least every third person spoke a language I couldn't understand. There are over a hundred nationalities and ethnic groups in the Soviet Union.

I managed to exchange a couple of words with at least three dozen people. I did not understand their language but they all spoke Russian. In all I spoke to people of thirteen nationalities, not counting Russians.

What if the people of the Soviet Union were suddenly to forget Russian? I am afraid we would have a modern version of Babel.

How would an Uzbek and Estonian, for instance, understand each other, when their mother tongues have only one thing in common – the technology of the scientific and technological revolution?

Supposing this happened during the construction of a large factory, the kind of project usually employing builders of up to forty nationalities?

The federal state of the Soviet Union, which came into being in 1922, brought together some peoples whose development was at the average European level

and others who were ethnic groups retaining elements of primitive society.

The new Soviet government inherited from tsarism a very difficult situation. The extreme variety of peoples, the great differences in the way of life, living standards and in religion, the consequences of the tsarist government's great-power chauvinism and the nationalist tendencies cultivated by the aristocratic and capitalist classes among some non-Russian peoples – these and many other circumstances greatly complicated the

**The Soviet Union - in 1984 - holds first place in the world for output of oil, iron ore, iron, steel, cement, coke, tractors and electric locomotives, and accounts for twenty per cent of world industrial output.**

carrying out of the policy, proclaimed by the Soviet government, of equality and the drawing closer together of nations.

Russia, or the Russian Federation, is only one of the fifteen constituent republics of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The other Soviet Socialist Republics are Armenia, Azerbaijan, Byelorussia, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kirghizia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldavia, Tajikistan, Turkmenia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

After the revolution of October 1917, the new fully independent state entities – at the time Russia, Ukraine, Byelorussia, and the Transcaucasian Federation (Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia) - emerged and developed in difficult conditions.

Weakened and devastated by the long imperialist First World War, the country was in the throes of a bitter civil war and also had to counter the attacks of for-

eign interventionists. Surviving maps of civil war operations show that there was a period when the Soviet-held territories shrank to the size of a small red patch. If there had been no military alliance between the republics, the enemy would probably have attained his end.

When the three-year civil war ended in the defeat of the forces of counter-revolution, the peoples felt a natural desire to build a peaceful life by joint effort. At the end of 1922 delegates from the republics began to gather in Moscow for a congress that was to proclaim the formation of a multinational state.

Apart from the consequences of wartime devastation, the country had not yet recovered from the horrible famine of 1921. Caused by a disastrous drought, it took millions of lives. The railways were not working normally and it took delegates from remote places three to four weeks to get to Moscow.

In 1922, when the Congress of Soviets proclaimed the formation of the USSR, the country was producing not more than one per cent of the world's industrial output. Its coal output was one-thirty-fourth and oil output one-twelfth of the US figures. Iron and steel output had sharply decreased. Cars were a rarity in the streets. Most people in the countryside had never seen a tractor.

The Soviet Union was certainly not in the best shape when it was launched. Today it holds first place in the world for output of oil, iron ore, iron, steel, cement, coke, tractors and electric locomotives, and accounts for twenty per cent of world industrial output.

## Just one example - Azerbaijan

The name of Transcaucasian republic Azerbaijan means the Land of Flames.

At Surakhany, in Azerbaijan, there is an extant ancient temple of fire worshippers. Pilgrims from neighbouring Persia and even distant India would flock here. Crowding in the courtyard they would devoutly gaze at the bluish tongues of fire flickering in the air.

The name, the 'land of flames' would probably have got lost in the turbulent flow of centuries but for a very earthly



## CENTENARY OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

circumstance that explained the phenomenon of the undying flames: it was natural gas, the companion of oil, that was burning as it escaped from the depths of the earth.

Oil was first obtained at Baku in the 8th century AD. Doctors prescribed the sticky dark liquid for treating skin diseases. Later, Baku oil was used in Russia by icon painters as a paint solvent and also by army technicians for making combustible hand grenades. When people learned how to produce kerosene and petrol from oil, the world was seized by an oil fever from which it has not recovered to this day.

In the 1870s Baku became the main oil producer in Russia. At the beginning of the 20th century its oilfields yielded almost as much oil as all the other oil regions of the world. Orange tongues of flare gas blazing in the dark night now justified the old name – the 'land of flames'.

The Baku oilfields attracted both labour and capital, which sped the construction of railway lines and ports.

At the same time, while supplying the whole of Russia with oil, Azerbaijan imported even kerosene lamps, evidence of a lopsided economic development so typical of a colonial province.

The October 1917 revolution and the subsequent formation of the USSR put an end to this situation by creating conditions for the comprehensive economic and cultural development of each autonomous republic.

When the region between the Volga and the Urals, and later Western Siberia, outstripped Baku in oil output, Azerbaijan already had its own chemical, engineering, metallurgical and ore-mining industries.

Radioelectronics and instrument making also developed on a par with the manufacture of natural silk fabrics, carpets, cotton wares and many other consumer goods.

Azerbaijan has very great experience in oil production and readily shares its know-how with other fraternal republics. One can see its expert oil workers in any new oil-bearing region of the USSR.

Southerners were foremost in developing Siberia's oil deposits in conditions of eternally frozen ground and bitter frosts. The Azerbaijani Academy of Sciences and research institutes have devised new methods of drilling wells and

of off-shore oil extraction.

Baku oilmen began to drill in the sea shortly after the revolution. Isolated ventures gave way to large-scale production in keeping with established technology.

The Caspian is a very unquiet sea and not without reason its main port was named Baku, which means 'city of winds': up to 280-300 stormy days are recorded here annually.

In olden days no one had a good word to say about Baku. Maxim Gorky, the famous Soviet writer, who travelled much in his youth, crossing vast Russian expanses on foot, said that the Baku oilfields impressed him as 'the worst of hells', while when viewed from a distance the city outskirts resembled a heap of ruins.



**Circa 1895: Azerbaijani oil workers digging an oil well by hand in the Bibi-Heybat suburb of Baku.**

The poet Vladimir Mayakovsky, who called at Baku in the 1920s, was unpleasantly struck by the complete absence of vegetation in its streets.

Local people like to show their city from a vantage point, from Nagorny Park, for instance, to which one can get by cable car. It affords the view of the city descending in an amphitheatre to a crescent-shaped bay.

Mayakovsky would surely change his opinion, were he to visit the city today. A garden promenade runs all along the bay and greenery spreads as far as the eye can see, making up twenty square metres of planting per head of the city's population. As for the total, the city's population has hit the 1,500,000 mark.

Since the soil on which the city stands is virtually barren, earth is brought here from faraway foothills to plant olives, figs and cypresses. Saplings are watered

every day until they take firm root.

The Caspian is an inland sea with no exit to the ocean. Some people are inclined to regard it as a huge salt lake. Nature's 'error' has, however, been partly rectified by man.

Among the ships in Baku harbour you will probably see those of the river-sea type which call at many European ports, getting there via the Volga, the river that flows into the Caspian.

The water reservoirs of the Volga's eight large hydropower stations have transformed Russia's main river into a deep waterway connected by canals with the Baltic, White and Black seas and, through them, with the Mediterranean and Adriatic.

During the construction of an auto plant in the town of Togliatti, ships suitable for river and sea navigation brought various cargoes from Italy directly to the local port.

Another Caspian problem, however, is pending solution. The falling level of the Caspian is a grave problem that concerns both Azerbaijan and the adjoining lands of the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan and Turkmenia. The southern coast is Iranian territory.

The 1930s saw a drop by more than 2.5 metres. As a result, the approaches to the ports have grown shallow and only dead beacons amid sandy dunes indicate that the sea was once here.

As a result of the last lowering of the water level, the Caspian has lost an area roughly equal to 1.5 times that of the Sea of Azov or one-third that of the Adriatic Sea.

Is there a solution? A costly project has been under consideration for more than ten years. The plan is to transfer part of the flow of the country's copious northern rivers to the basin of the Volga, the Caspian's main tributary.

The steady flow of northern waters into the Volga, the longest river in Europe, with a series of hydropower stations, is expected to increase electricity output by thousands of millions of kilowatt-hours and, most important, build reserves for irrigating arid Volga lands. This measure will also stabilize the level of the Caspian.

Now that the data has been collected and research completed, the government has taken a decision to start the first stage of the work, to be completed by 1990.

# The Spanish civil war 80 years on

The Spanish Civil War remains hugely significant despite the 80 years that have elapsed since its outbreak in 1936.

By **FRIEDA PARK**

The fight to defend the democratic, Republican Government against a fascist military uprising, the heroic resistance of the Spanish people and the assistance brought to them by the International Brigades still inspires people today.

It was seen clearly at the time by socialists, communists and progressives as vital to stopping fascist advance in Europe, a judgement which proved correct when the fascist victory in the Civil War and “non-intervention” by Western democracies emboldened Hitler’s aggression in Europe.

The Republic was defeated by General Franco’s (pictured) fascist forces on 28th March 1939 when they took Madrid and on the 1st of September Hitler invaded Poland, signalling the start of the Second World War.

Strikingly in an age dominated by neo-liberalism and its individualism and selfishness, the Spanish Republic and the Civil War show that a different set of values can prevail.

Society can be made better by collective effort and that within us all there is the possibility of courage and self-sacrifice for the common good. It was also an outstanding example of internationalism in action.

The Civil War, therefore remains important as a political example when hope sometimes seems to be in short supply.

It has had other ramifications as well, giving rise to debates which rage on today, particularly round the differences on the left within the Republican forces.

In Spain itself there are far greater concerns about how the Civil War and ensuing dictatorship has scarred society and politics. The pact of oblivion (or forgetting) and the historic compromise

closed down discussion of the war.

It was argued that the best way to ensure a transition to democracy was not to talk about the Civil War or what happened under Franco. There was no national debate, far less any reckoning or justice.

Consequently, no-one was held to account for fascist crimes and fascists remained powerful in the establishment. Even to this day republicans can be wary of speaking out and the right resists efforts to expunge symbols of fascism.

For years there was no acknowledgement of the suffering of republicans and the crimes of Franco. In Spain the Civil

Russian Revolution of 1917 sent shockwaves through the capitalist class across the continent.

It was determined that ordinary people should not succeed again in overthrowing its system of exploitation and oppression.

Throughout Europe working-class movements were viciously suppressed, with leaders such as Luxemburg, Liebknecht and Gramsci executed or imprisoned.

In addition capitalism was falling deeper into crisis. The rivalries that had led to the 1st world war were unresolved.

As the working class continued to battle against attacks from capital, so capitalism resorted to fascism to impose its will.

In Germany and Italy, Hitler and Mussolini came to power and ruling circles everywhere hoped that fascist aggression would be turned against the Soviet Union.

Therefore, the advent of the Second Republic in 1931 signalled a challenge to reaction both in Spain itself and more widely in Europe.

Initially the government introduced reforms including improving the conditions of those working on the land, more autonomy for Catalonia and curbs on the power of the church and the army.

All of this incensed the right and a campaign of destabilisation, non-compliance with laws and reprisals against militant workers and peasants ensued.

This included an attempted coup in 1932 led by General José Sanjurjo. The Spanish Civil War did not, then, come out of the blue. The willingness of the right to use anti-democratic means and military force was evident right from the inception of the 2nd Republic.

This destabilisation and the decision of the Socialist Party (PSOE) to stand on its own, rather than in alliance with other parties led to the defeat of the left in elections of 1933.

There then followed bitter repression



**1940: SS Commander and leading Nazi, Heinrich Himmler (centre left) next to Francisco Franco in Madrid.**

War is not history but is still a live part of people’s personal experiences.

These are some of the reasons that interest in the Spanish Civil War remains high.

## The Republic and the Civil War

The background to the Civil War was rooted both in the specific economic, political and social conditions of Spain and in the wider context of Europe in the first part of the 20th century.

The victory of the working-class in the

of workers and peasants, with worsening conditions for ordinary Spaniards. In 1933 a general strike, which became an armed uprising in Asturias, was brutally put down by troops commanded by General Francisco Franco.

This experience led the left to realise that unity to defeat the right was essential and in January 1936 the Popular Front was formed. It was an alliance of left republican groups, socialists and communists and in elections the following month it won power. (The anarchists, who were particularly strong in Catalonia, did not participate in the Popular Front.)

The breadth of the political forces supporting the republic ranged from liberal capitalists, through socialists, communists, anarchists and trotskysts.

Apart from some pockets of industry, such as in Catalonia, much of Spain had failed to develop economically and was dominated by land-owning aristocrats.

The Catholic Church was allied with these forces and was particularly reactionary.

Although workers and peasants endured the greatest hardships, others such as small business people, and middle-class professionals were frustrated by this state of affairs so it was not only the working-class and the peasants who wished to see change.

The fight for the republic involved all these forces and was not, therefore, a simple fight between left and right, socialism and capitalism or revolution and reaction as it is sometimes misrepresented.

It was a fight for democracy against fascism, but within that each political trend and class had its own objectives. When the war broke out uniting these to defend the republic became a central task.

Destabilisation re-started following the left's victory, with right-wing violence, including the killing of some military officers loyal to the government.

Other officers who might have supported the new government had already been purged under the previous reactionary administration.

The plot to overthrow the Republic was in train as soon as the Popular Front government took office and only five months later the army revolt began.

A central figure was General Franco who had honed his skills in oppression and practiced his brutality in the Spanish colonial army in North Africa.

That army was crucial to the uprising and got to Spain in transport provided by Hitler and Mussolini.

Despite the previous coup attempt, key figures in the Government did not



**Soldiers of the 11th International Brigade at the Battle of Belchite on board a Soviet T-26 tank.**

take the threat from the military sufficiently seriously and it was unprepared for the rebellion.

However, Franco and the right also underestimated the resistance of the Republican Government and the people of Spain. They believed that they would have a swift victory as the bulk of the Army and the Civil Guard, supported them.

They had also prepared for and planned this coup better than the previous attempt. That the easy victory did not happen was due to the determined resistance of the Spanish people. The ensuing Civil War lasted nearly three years.

On one side there was the Spanish ruling class, the aristocracy, the Army and the Catholic Church and on the other the legitimate government of Spain and the people who elected it.

It was already an uneven military contest, made much worse by the support given to the rebels by the fascist governments of Italy and Germany, which sent arms, including tanks and aircraft, and troops. It has been estimated that around 108,000 trained regular soldiers from Germany, Italy and Portugal fought for the rebels.<sup>(1)</sup>

The odds, stacked against the Republican Government and exacerbated by external fascist support were further worsened by the policy of "non-intervention".

This was the refusal of western democracies to sell arms to the Republic. Even although fascist countries were openly supporting the rebels, countries such as France and Britain maintained

the fiction that the war was a purely Spanish affair.

In reality, of course, they knew the score but at that time were more positive about fascism. They were happy to see the Spanish workers crushed and any threat of socialism expunged there. They were even more happy to support fascist aggression, believing that it would be turned against the Soviet Union, the first workers state.

For its part, the Soviet Union did respond to the needs of the Spanish people, although they did not send troops in any numbers as that could have provoked an even more fierce and united reaction against both it and the Republic.

Only around 2000 Soviet military personnel served in Spain, however, it supplied 800 aircraft, 360 tanks, 1555 military pieces, half a million rifles along with ammunition and equipment and food.<sup>(2)</sup> Supply lines were the subject of constant attack by rebel forces reducing the aid that got through.

Further support came in the shape of the International Brigades, 35,000 men and women from 50 countries who volunteered to defend democracy from fascism: 2,500 of them came from Britain and Ireland.<sup>(3)</sup>

The Brigades were organised under the auspices of the Comintern, the international organisation of Communist Parties, with communists playing a leading role in recruiting volunteers, supporting the republic and fighting on the front line.

The contribution of the Brigades has acquired great symbolism in terms of internationalism and heroism, however,

## The Spanish civil war 80 years on

their military contribution was not tokenistic, it was vitally important to the defence of the Republic.

Some Brigaders were veterans of previous wars and brought much needed military expertise to the Republican forces, helping train the inexperienced militias.

They were also in the front line and played a decisive role in key battles, often at a heavy cost. Of the 500 members of the British Battalion involved in the Battle of Jarama in February 1937, 136 were killed and approximately the same number injured.<sup>(4)</sup>

### The Republic

What the Republic was about is often lost, with the focus on the war. The coming of the Republic signalled a widespread desire for change in Spain.

It was a country being held back by the stranglehold of reactionary institutions and the power of the aristocracy. Workers and peasants suffered harsh conditions and the Catholic Church and reaction stifled social and intellectual life. The Republic sought to overturn this order and in doing so challenged the power of the forces which propped it up.

In its new constitution Spain was defined as: “a democratic Republic of workers of all types, structured around freedom and justice. All its authority comes from the people.”<sup>(5)</sup>

It separated church from state and ended state funding for the clergy, also introducing civil marriage and divorce. It banned those in holy orders from teaching. It gave women the right to vote.

The spirit and principles of the new democratic constitution were developed further in policies enacted by the Government between 1931 and 1933.

Measures included:

- Attempts to restructure and reform the Army, one of the bastions of reaction.

- Secularisation of education, with religious symbols being removed from schools and a plan to ban the church from running schools. (In the end there was not enough time to implement this before the election of the right in 1933.)

- A major programme of school building was undertaken with 10,000 new schools completed in order to address the problem of the 1 million children who were not receiving an education,

- Setting up the Misiones Pedagógicas to tackle illiteracy, running at 50% of over 10 year olds. It was particularly bad amongst women.

- Making culture available to all, especially to rural areas and cinema and theatre performances were promoted. Federico García Lorca’s touring com-



**Poster from the Spanish trade union, UGT showing a caricature of a foreign-supported Franco followed by a general, capitalist and priest.**

pany La Barraca was an example of this.

- Catalonia was granted autonomy and the process of granting similar status to other parts of Spain was started.

- Reform of Labour laws and contracts and conditions became subject to agreement of joint committees of workers and bosses. The right to strike was guaranteed.

- Landowners were prevented from bringing in outside labour, while local labourers were unemployed.

- Steps were taken to reform agriculture. Workers were given the right to take over abandoned estates and compulsory purchase of aristocratic estates and neglected land was introduced.<sup>(6)</sup>

Despite the right-wing government rolling-back these gains, the election of the Popular Front in 1936, which was pledged to resume the process of reform, raised expectations.

However, the military rebellion against the government meant that these hopes could not be properly fulfilled.

Nevertheless, throughout the conflict the Government continued to do as much as it could to implement progressive policies in education, culture, land reform, workers’ rights and the emancipation of women.

Schools continued to be built, literacy programmes implemented, children’s camps, education centres for workers and cultural militias were established.

Even when war broke out, social advances were still a priority. In 1937 the education budget was bigger than the that for the military.

Steps were taken to protect the na-

tion’s cultural heritage from destruction during the war and art works were evacuated from the Prado in Madrid. Private ownership of art was labelled a “social crime”.

### The left and the ultra-left

Whilst the war was one of democracy versus fascism, political developments in Spain meant that this was not only about who won elections, but also about a deeper democracy involving people more directly in creating a society that would meet their needs.

With the dire threat posed to the Republic by the fascist military uprising, there was a divide within the Republic about the direction of social change. The ultra-left believed that pursuing revolution was the best guarantee of the survival of the Republic.

For communists and socialists, however, the priority was the defeat of fascism, without which there could be no further social transformation.

Whilst there were areas where popular control was being implemented, they argued that the conditions did not exist for revolution throughout Spain and that pursuing such a line would lead both to failure and be a dangerous diversion, undermining the anti-fascist fight. This debate rages on today and is the fault-line which divides a socialist or communist analysis of the civil war from a Trotskyite and to a lesser extent anarchist analysis.

A main advocate of the revolution first line was the Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista (POUM) which was a small quasi-trotskyite split from the Spanish Communist Party (PCE).

This led it into conflict with the Republican Government and the Communist Party as it diverted efforts from the central fight to defend the republic into supporting its own objectives. This reached a low point in May 1937 when the POUM and the anarchists fought against the Republican Government in Barcelona.

Anarchism had a longer tradition in Spain and strong support in parts of the country. It was a significant force in the defence of the Republic and, after the war broke out, anarchists joined the Government in November 1936 holding four ministerial posts.

However, they too often pursued counter-productive policies such as forced collectivisation. They were sometimes responsible for meting out indiscriminate violence which did not serve any real military purpose.

They found it hard to accept the discipline and centralisation of the war effort which, combined with their desire

to concentrate on developing anarchist models in areas they controlled, meant their forces were not always effectively deployed in the defence of the Republic.

Ultimately the Anarchists joined the coup within the Republic during its last days instigated by those who wished to sue for peace with Franco.

Some well-known representations of the Civil War, like George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia* and *Land and Freedom* by Ken Loach support the ultra-left narrative.

The critiques of these views by International Brigaders receive little publicity, while Orwell and Loach remain fêted.<sup>7</sup>

Loach has his central character rip up his Communist Party card, yet the reality was that as the war went on support for the PCE grew spectacularly.

In 1922 it had only 5,000 members, which by the start of the Civil War had increased to 30,000. In the next five months this swelled to 100,000 and by the time the Party was legalised in 1977 it had over 200,000 members.

This was not a Party that had sold out the Republic or the people of Spain, but one which had won their huge respect, not only during the war but in the resistance to the dictatorship after the war ended. This was due to the correctness of its political line which made unity to defeat fascism and the war effort the priority for the Republic.

It also argued for the centralisation of that effort to combat the powerful, well-armed and professional fascist military forces. Communists showed themselves to be brave and well-organised and without the contribution of the PCE, communists world-wide and the Soviet Union, the Republic would not have survived as long as it did.

### The Defeat of the Republic

Despite the heroic struggle of the Spanish people the fascists continued to gain ground. Desperate to try to change the attitude of western democracies the Government decided to withdraw the International Brigades.

Their final parade was in Barcelona on 29th October 1938, where they were movingly addressed by Dolores Ibárruri (La Pasionaria). Final appeals for help were ignored and the Republic faced defeat.

Throughout the entire duration of the



**1936-39: A Republican anti-fascist banner in Madrid which reads, 'Madrid shall be fascism's grave.'**

war Madrid held out. Of course, Franco pushed to take the capital early on, but was rebuffed by the resistance of the Madrileños, the militias and the International Brigades, including the British Battalion, which played such an important role at Jarama.

A grotesque triumphal arch, built after the war, still stands at the furthest point Franco reached on the edge of the city until it finally fell on 28th March 1939.

Wherever he advanced Franco maximised the level of destruction and his troops committed atrocities on Republican soldiers and civilians alike.

The bombing of the Basque town of Guernica was one example of this deliberate targeting of civilians aimed at de-



**1936 Dolores Ibárruri - 'La Pasionaria'**

stroying physically and psychologically the Republican people of Spain. Such acts were precursors to the continued savage repression of Republicans in the ensuing decades.

A better understanding of the nature of state power might have helped the Republican government realise the threat from the military and pre-empt it.

Disunity on the left and misguided, diversionary attempts to foment revolution did not help either, however, the main reason for the Republic's defeat was that it was up against a professional, well equipped and disciplined army, whilst its forces were comprised of volunteers; ordinary citizens, untrained and ill-equipped who had no military experience.

Furthermore, the obscene policy of non-intervention prevented it getting help and arms that it needed to survive. Non-intervention, however, did not prevent other fascist powers sending troops and arms to assist Franco.

Ultimately it was the ruling classes of Europe and Spain that defeated the Republic by effectively supporting the anti-democratic fascist coup. In doing this they emboldened other fascist powers in Europe and paved the way for the Second World War.

### FOOTNOTES

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# Experience of Haiti: exclusion by election

**On November 20, 2016 Jovenal Moise was elected President in Haiti bringing to an end a long period of delayed elections and interim rule in a country which has suffered more than most from both the ravages of foreign intervention and misgovernance by a corrupt elite.**

**By KEN CABLE**

The election result was welcomed by the so called 'core group' of international actors – the ambassadors in Haiti of the United States, Canada, Brazil, France, Spain and the European Union, plus the special representative of the Organisation of American States and the Secretary General of the UN – who have collectively acted as 'trustees' of what is nominally an independent country.

The result was also welcomed by the elite who saw another of their number occupy the presidency thereby consolidating what in effect has come to be a neo-Duvalierist regime, responding to their needs and above all excluding from power those who sought to change the system but were met in the past with force and terror, and now with systematic political manipulation which has discredited politics and led to widespread political alienation.

The election was won on a turnout of around 20% of which Moise won just over half, and the three other main centre-left candidates 40%. In reality Moise has become president with less than 10% of the registered voters.

The contrast with December 1990 which saw the left-wing radical Aristide voted in by 67% on a turnout of 80% in Haiti's first free election could not be starker.

A coup nine months later forced Aristide abroad and while he was restored four years later the momentum for fundamental change of his early months in power was never rekindled.

The result was that the wholesale uprooting of the Duvalierist system of government, whose dictatorship lasted from 1957-1986, was never achieved.

Indeed, 'Baby-Doc' Duvalier who succeeded his father 'Papa Doc' Duvalier as president and dictator before being forced out of the country by a

popular uprising in 1986, returned in 2011 and lived in Haiti until his death in 2014 under the effective protection of then President Michel Martelly.

Martelly was elected in March 2011 following contested elections which had seen the party of Aristide banned from running and widespread political manipulation, intimidation and fraud in both registration for the elections and in the vote count.

The first presidential election was in November 2010. The official result of that election, on a low turnout of 23% showed the level of political distrust and alienation already felt in the country.

It put Manigat first, Celestin second and Martelly third, but since none had won the 50% plus one needed a second round would follow with only two candidates allowed. Martelly should have been eliminated as the third place candidate.

He was not. Following riots and protests by his supporters as well as opposition to the declared results by Manigat, the Organisation of American States (OAS) appointed an observer mission to study the election results. It reversed the

second place result to confirm Martelly as the run-off candidate.

The reasoning, methods and report of this mission were later shown to be false by the Washington based Center for Economic Policy Research (CEPR).

To which should be added the fate of Ricardo Seitenfus, previously the Special Representative of the OAS in Haiti, who had highlighted political manipulation and foreign intervention in the process leading up to the November election, casting doubt on the elections as a whole, and who was promptly dismissed for his troubles in December 2010.

However, with the new run-off candidates announced, the US ambassador to Haiti, Kenneth Merten, was reported as saying it was 'a good day in Haiti again' (*The Economist*, 4 February 2011). He was even happier a month later when Martelly, as the preferred candidate of the US, won with 68% of the vote, again on a low turnout.

Martelly continued through his presidency as he had begun. Elections for the Senate, which should have been held and which would have likely gone against him were postponed, rendering the Senate inquorate and powerless while similarly those for the Chamber of Deputies were also not held. Nor were those for local government.

In the end Martelly was able to rule by decree. In the lower levels of government he was able to appoint supporters many of whom had links in the past with the Duvaliers when they were in power.



**Jovenal Moise**

**Michel Martelly**

**'Baby Doc'**

**'Papa Doc'**

Indeed, Martelly himself had been a prominent opponent of Aristide and a supporter of Duvalierist tendencies in Haiti, with links to those who staged the September 1991 coup against Aristide.

The regime he constructed drew on the Duvalierist legacy not only in appointees but in the way he commandeered state resources for the enrichment of himself and his family. He rewarded himself with generous funding for multiple trips abroad and established nine special ‘development’ funds overseen by him and administered by his cronies.

His regime is best described as ‘neo-Duvalierism’ and while it attracted its critics abroad the ‘core group’ remained broadly in support of the government while the majority in Haiti grew ever more alienated and opposed, with street protests about almost every aspect of life in Haiti a daily reality.

The elections which could be postponed no longer demonstrated the depth to which Haiti had sunk under four years of Martelly’s misrule. Three were scheduled for 2015. The first in August to elect some Senate and Chamber of Deputies seats, the second in October to conclude these elections and simultaneously hold the first round of the presidential elections, and the concluding presidential election in December.

The August elections were marked by violence, intimidation, and fraud among other numerous irregularities reported by both Haitian and international observers.

The official turnout was given as 18% but was in all probability lower. Widespread protest by Haitian civil society organisations about the conduct and results of the elections was ignored.

The October elections, while marginally better organised, saw widespread fraud and ballot stuffing, along with attempts to rig the election observation process in favour of pro-regime candidates. The turnout was officially given as 26% but again was most probably lower. Moïse was announced as the lead presidential candidate with 33% of the vote and Célestin second with 25%. Once again local observers documented numerous irregularities.

Nevertheless, the international observer missions of both the OAS and the European Union, which had in part financed the elections, described the two elections as successful exercises in democracy and urged the process to continue.

Massive protests promptly followed and while the OAS did partly revise its conclusions the EU refused to do so. However, in the end Martelly was forced to postpone the scheduled final round of the elections and establish a commission to examine the results.

It reported massive irregularities in the October elections but Martelly decided to ignore most of its findings and set a new date for the final round at the end of January 2016. This only further intensi-



**April 2004: US marines in Haiti’s capital, Port-au-Prince.**

fied the opposition and finally the elections were suspended indefinitely.

Martelly relinquished office in February 2016 and was succeeded by Privert as interim president. In the face of continuing pressure from civil society and political parties Privert established the Independent Commission for the Evaluation and Verification of Elections (CIEVE).

It concluded that “the electoral process was marred by serious irregularities, grave incoherencies and massive fraud” and recommended a re-run of the election (Haiti Support Group et al, *Democracy Discouraged: International Observers and Haiti’s 2015 Elections*, September 2016).

The CIEVE’s conclusions were accepted by elections observers, journalists, civil society and most political parties in Haiti. Opposed was Martelly’s party (including Moïse), the US and the EU, who withdrew their election funding and in the case of the EU stood down its observer mission.

The election was set for October 2016 but then delayed for a month when Hurricane Matthew hit Haiti, killing hundreds and making thousands homeless.

It was finally held in November but by then widespread disillusion had set in among the majority of Haitians and Moïse and the neo-Duvalierists were able to celebrate victory and further consolidation of power.

As the CEPR wrote shortly after the election: ‘Haiti’s elections no longer serve as a means of representative democracy, but have become a theatrical performance to ensure international legitimacy and a steady flow of profit and power to the country’s corrupted elite and their local allies’ (Jake Johnston,

February 13, 2017).

It is a conclusion which is difficult to dispute and which does nothing to resolve the many problems of the country.

At the moment Haiti is politically quiet, even demoralised, but anyone with a knowledge of the country knows it will not last and that without warning political turmoil will erupt again.

The slogan when it last did so, from 1986-90, was *dechoukaj*, which in Haitian Creole means ‘uprooting’ and was then applied to the symbols and substance of the Duvalier dynasty and its leading supporters.

It was prematurely brought to an end by the elite and their international backers but for the Haitian masses *dechoukaj* remains as unfinished business which the next time promises to be more thoroughgoing and destructive than the last and to mark a real end to the regime.

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# The world turned upside down

New world wealth study\* reveals

**8<sup>\$</sup>**  
**BILLIONAIRES**

own as much as the  
poorest half of  
the world, i.e.

**3.6**  
**billion**  
**people**

Below:  
1920  
Bolshevik  
poster,  
Lenin sweeps  
from the world  
monarchs,  
capitalists  
and clergy.



\* OXFAM  
REPORT  
**An Economy  
for the 99%**  
[http://oxf.am  
/Znhx](http://oxf.am/Znhx)

- About one fifth of the world - more than 1500 million people - live in countries affected by conflict.
- More than 45mn were displaced due to conflict or persecution: more than 15mn among these are refugees.
- The income of the 1% richest people was equal to the wealth of the other 99%.
- Be it in developing countries or in the so-called 'developed countries', the right to work is denied to more than 200 million people.

Sources: United Nations & Oxfam.

\$ The 8 richest men in the world

1. **Bill Gates** - \$86.0bn - Microsoft (USA)
2. **Warren Buffett** - \$75.6bn - Berkshire Hathaway (USA)
3. **Jeff Bezos** - \$72.8bn - Amazon.com (USA)
4. **Amancio Ortega** - \$71.3bn - Inditex, Zara (Spain)
5. **Mark Zuckerberg** - \$56.0bn - Facebook (USA)
6. **Carlos Slim** - \$54.5bn - America Movil (Mexico)
7. **Larry Ellison** - \$52.2bn - Oracle Corporation (USA)
8. **Charles Koch** - \$48.3bn - Koch Industries (USA)
8. **David Koch** - \$48.3bn - Koch Industries (USA)