

The Socialist Correspondent



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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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Iran Nuclear Deal

President Trump's withdrawal of the U.S. from the Iran nuclear deal has made the Middle East an even more dangerous place. It will further embolden Israel in its attacks on Syria and threats to Iran as Simon Korner explains in his article, *Syria: the West's war will continue*.

Israel's massacre of unarmed Palestinian protesters in Gaza is an example of it being further emboldened in its repression of the Palestinian people.

However, as Brian Durrans argues in his article, *Palestinian defiance to apartheid Israel*, "... there is something about the mobilisation of large numbers of unarmed Palestinians, with its potential to attract support from around the world, that particularly alarms the Israeli authorities..."

Israel fears the development of an international solidarity campaign similar to that which opposed apartheid South Africa.

As Christabel Gurney points out in, *South African lesson of hope for Palestine*, "In the 1970s the situation in South Africa did seem almost hopeless. ... Anti-apartheid activists did not think the end was in sight. But they continued to campaign ... in the end it came quite quickly ... So ultimately the message is one of hope."

The US pulling out of the Iran nuclear deal has another side to it, as Alex Davidson describes in his article, *A more dangerous world with Trump*, with the US' western allies very unhappy with its decision because it upsets their business interests.

Western companies, especially the oil companies, were re-entering Iran following the lifting of sanctions and now they are having to pull out to avoid risking their interests in the US.

Inter-imperialist rivalries have come to the fore since the defeat of the Soviet Union and they are not leading to a more peaceful world.

Tory government in crisis

As Scott McDonald describes in his article, *Tories stagger from one crisis to another*, the government is unable or unwilling to deal with the rail system

Commentary

shambles, the NHS crisis, the Windrush scandal and other issues.

McDonald writes, "The British rail system is in deep crisis after years of privatisation and fragmentation. Thou-



sands of trains have been cancelled ... Virgin East Coast has had its franchise withdrawn ... Four other private rail companies are teetering on the brink of collapse." As he points out, "The call for nationalisation grows stronger and louder ..."

Having lost Michael Fallon, Damien Green and Amber Rudd (pictured below) from her cabinet the Prime Minister may have to sacrifice Grayling as her Transport Secretary.

Elsewhere in the article he refers to the House of Commons joint committee report on the collapse of Carillion, Britain's second largest construction company, and concludes that it is "not just a critique of how Carillion was managed but ... it exposes the corrupt relationship between Big Business ... and the Tory government."



Modern Slavery

Mick Wilkinson traces the growth of modern slavery in Britain in, *Modern slavery: the neo-liberal UK model*, showing that "forced labour in the UK is widespread and increasing, perpetrated by criminal gangs, unscrupulous gang-masters and employment agencies ... who operate almost with impunity within a de-regulated labour market."

He argues that "There is growing anger at labour exploitation ... never-ending revelations of business impropriety, of corporate and political negligence (Grenfell), and, with the fall-out from the Windrush scandal still upon us, at the appalling treatment of migrants."

Women's suffrage

This is the centenary year of some women winning the vote and Frieda Park looks back at that momentous campaign in, *A hundred years of votes for women*.

She points out that not all women got the vote in 1918 but only those over the age of 30; and that it was the first time that all men got the vote at 21 as prior to that working class men were excluded by property/wealth requirements.

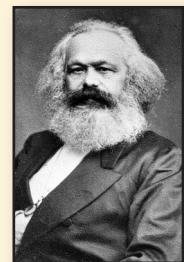
She argues that much of the mainstream media coverage "lauded middle class leaders of the suffrage movement, neglecting the working class women and socialist campaigners who fought for the vote."

She sets out to re-balance the (non-class) mainstream narrative, and takes issue with those today who do not relate gender and class issues. She argues, "For working class women cuts to benefits, poor and unequal pay, lack of child care and rising prices for basic goods mean that their enemy is not men so much as the system which imposes these conditions on them."

In a separate article, *1915: Remembering a rent strike victory* she reports on the unveiling of a statue in Glasgow of Mary Barbour and her army of working class women, men and children, which - through a rent strike in 1915 - forced the government to introduce the Rent Restriction Act.

Marx at 200

2018 is the bi-centenary of the birth of Karl Marx. Paul Sutton in his, *200 years on, why Karl Marx was right*, recounts Marx's life as a revolutionary in theory and practice and concludes that "in the range of concepts Marx introduces to explain capitalism is a richness of theory that has not since been equalled."



In commemorating Marx's bi-centenary, Paul Sutton writes that Marx "remains a source of continuing inspiration for those seeking a different and a better world"

Tories stagger from one crisis to another

The Tory government in Britain is staggering from one crisis to another.

By **SCOTT McDONALD**

The list of issues includes the Grenfell Tower fire, the shambolic state of the rail system, the NHS crisis, the Windrush scandal, the collapse of Carillion and the Brexit negotiations.

Prime Minister, Theresa May, has lost close friends and allies, Amber Rudd and Damien Green, from her cabinet and before them Defence Secretary, Sir Michael Fallon. Chris Grayling could be next to go.

Grayling, Transport Secretary, is in charge of Britain's rail system, which is in deep crisis after years of privatisation and fragmentation.

Thousands of trains have been cancelled or delayed across great swathes of the country as new timetables are introduced bringing misery to thousands of people. It is reported that people are losing their jobs because they have been late for work so often.

Virgin East Coast has had its franchise withdrawn, the third instance of the East Coast franchise being removed. Virgin East Coast, which is owned by

Stagecoach (90%) and Virgin (10%), had its contract terminated in June and its operations were passed to the government-owned operator of last resort, London North Eastern Railway (LNER).

Four other private rail companies are teetering on the brink of collapse.

Meanwhile the rail unions have been

Windrush scandal

Amber Rudd was forced to resign as Home Secretary when an audit of documents threw up several memos to and from Rudd discussing targets for deportations for 2018-2019.

These memos included one she wrote to Prime Minister May setting-out her intention to increase deportations by 10%.

The revelation sharpened the focus on the role of the Prime Minister, the architect of the "hostile environment" policy that ended up persecuting the Windrush generation.

In 1948 the ex-troopship 'Empire Windrush', arrived at Tilbury Docks from Jamaica with 482 Jamaicans on board, emigrating to Britain. These were the first group of migrants from the West Indies to help re-build post-war Britain and many others followed from all over the Commonwealth.

A 1971 law gave them indefinite leave to remain in Britain. Over the years since, they and their families have made a great contribution to British society. However, many did not formalise their status because they were children who arrived on their parent's passports and never applied for their own.

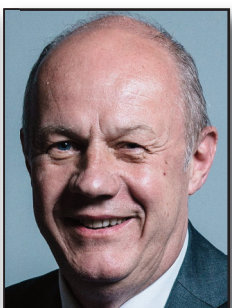
Some of these, in the "hostile environment" created by Mrs May, have suf-

GONE



Sir Michael Fallon

GONE



Damien Green

GONE



Amber Rudd

NEXT TO GO?



Chris Grayling

taking industrial action for over two years to put safety first rather than private profits.

The call for rail nationalisation grows stronger and louder as the crisis deepens and already has majority public support. The Tories have lost the argument and are faced with an ever-deepening crisis on the railways. Grayling may have to be sacrificed.



An ever-deepening crisis on the railways - calls for rail nationalisation grow

ferred abominably. Anthony Brian, who lives in Edmonton, North London, decided to go abroad after 50 years living in Britain.

As a consequence of not having the 'correct' papers he subsequently lost his job, was detained twice and was almost deported to Jamaica, a place he does not know. His case is far from unique.

The Tory government was forced into making an apology to the Windrush generation and then, when Rudd was found to be lying about deportation targets, she resigned.

NHS

The National Health Service in the UK is under pressure, underfunded and understaffed. The growing crisis is blamed on an ageing population by the Tory government.

However, if one compares the UK healthcare system with other countries it becomes obvious that government policy is the problem leading to a system in crisis.

The UK has historically spent less on health when compared with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development averages. U.K. health spending per head is markedly lower than other countries such as France, Germany, Sweden and the Netherlands.

The figures for the number of hospital beds shows this dramatically. (See table above)

The social care system is in meltdown, there is a lengthening of queues for treatment and the NHS uses agency staff at a huge cost. High rates charged by agencies are a problem but the staff shortages in the NHS are the root of the problem.

Mark Porter, the British Medical Association council chairman, says reliance on agency staff is a "sign of stress on the system and the result of poor workforce planning by government. We need to address the root causes of the recruitment and retention problem in many parts of the NHS".⁽²⁾

Peter Carter, chief executive and general secretary of the Royal College of Nursing, said that instead of relying on agencies, efforts should be made to retain a skilled and experienced workforce.

He said, "A lack of investment in nurse training and cuts to nurse numbers mean that trusts now have no choice but to pay over the odds for agency staff and recruiting overseas."⁽³⁾

Jeremy Hunt, the government Health Secretary, introduced curbs on the use of employment agencies in the National Health Service, but then scrapped NHS

HOSPITAL BEDS per 1000 PEOPLE⁽¹⁾

Country	Beds per 1000 people
Germany	8.13
Poland	6.63
France	6.13
Spain	2.98
Turkey	2.68
UK	2.61

bursaries for student nurses, midwives and allied professionals and replaced it with tuition fees and loans in August 2017.

Since the change UCAS revealed a 23% reduction in applications in England for courses beginning the following term.

Carillion

Carillion was the UK's second biggest construction company until its collapse. It went into liquidation in January 2018 with liabilities of nearly £7 billion and just £29 million in cash.

Yet it had paid a record dividend of £79 million and large bonuses to senior executives for performance in 2016.

Thousands of people lost their jobs, it left a giant pension deficit and huge debts. Much of its work was on public sector contracts and its collapse brought into focus the disastrous nature of PFI.

It also highlighted the corrupt relations between big business and the Big Four accountancy and audit firms.

A House of Commons joint committee investigated the collapse of Carillion and its report is devastating in its criticisms. "Carillion's business model was an unsustainable dash for cash. The mystery

The House of Commons joint committees' report ... exposes the corrupt relationship between Big Business, the accountancy Big Four, and the various so-called Regulators.

The Government was still awarding huge contracts to Carillion after it became clear that it was in deep financial trouble. The report is ... an indictment of 21st century British capitalism.

is not that it collapsed, but how it kept going for so long.⁽⁴⁾

"Richard Adam, as Finance Director between 2007 and 2016, was the architect of Carillion's aggressive accounting policies. His voluntary departure at the end of 2016 was, for him, perfectly timed.

"He then sold all his Carillion shares for £776,000, just before ... their value plummeted. These were the actions of a man who knew exactly where the company was heading once it was no longer propped up by his accounting tricks."

The Report is also highly critical of its auditor, KPMG, advisers including Deloitte and EY as well as the Pension Regulator. "KPMG audited Carillion for 19 years, pocketing £29 million in the process ... KPMG should take its own share of responsibility for the consequences."

"By the end, a whole suite of advisors ... were squeezing fee income out of what remained of the company. £6.4 million disappeared on the last working day as the directors pleaded for a taxpayer bailout.

"Chief among the beneficiaries was EY, paid £10.8 million for its six months of failed turnaround advice as Carillion moved inexorably towards collapse. The Pensions Regulator's feeble response to the underfunding of Carillion's pension scheme was a threat to impose a contribution schedule, a power it had never – and still has never – used ... The Pensions Regulator failed in all its objectives regarding the Carillion pension scheme. Scheme members will receive reduced pensions. The Pension Protection Fund and its levy payers will pick up their biggest bill ever."

The Report is not just a critique of how Carillion was managed but it exposes the corrupt relationship between Big Business, the accountancy Big Four, and the various so-called Regulators.

The Tory Government was still awarding huge contracts to Carillion after it became clear that it was in deep financial trouble.

The report by the two House of Commons committees is in fact an indictment of 21st century British capitalism.

FOOTNOTES

1. OECD Data at www.data.oecd.org
2. *Guardian*, 3 June 2015.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Joint report, *Work and Pensions Committee / Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee*, UK Parliament, 16 May 2018.

A more dangerous world with Trump

Since Trump became President of the United States the world has become an even more dangerous place.

By **ALEX DAVIDSON**

Trump's withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal; unequivocal support for Israel, its war crimes and recognition of Jerusalem as its capital; support for the Saudi Arabian devastation of Yemen; and the continuing undermining of Syria, including parts of the country being occupied by US forces, are just some of his actions which have made the Middle East an even greater powder keg.

Iran nuclear deal

When President Trump withdrew the U.S from the nuclear deal with Iran he was criticised by all of the other signatories to the deal, including Britain, France and Germany.

The 2015 agreement, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), was signed by Iran and the 5 Permanent members of the U.N. Security Council (Britain, France, Russia, China and the United States) plus Germany (P5+1). The JCPOA limited Iran's nuclear programme and allowed international inspectors into its facilities in return for the lifting of sanctions.

Trump regarded the deal with Iran as one-sided and "horrible" and as President he vowed to walk away from it. All the other signatories to the deal tried to persuade him and his administration to stick with the deal.

Federica Mogherini, EU Foreign Policy Chief, said "it was not in the hands of any single country" to terminate a deal that had been endorsed by a U.N. Security Council resolution and was "crucial" for world security. The deal had been struck when Barack Obama was U.S. President. But, walk away Trump did, despite the fact that Iran was complying with the agreement.

The International Atomic Energy Authority (IAEA) has said that it has the "world's most robust verification regime in place in Iran" and its inspectors have

certified 10 times since 2016 that Iran is fulfilling its nuclear related commitments under the JCPOA.

Barack Obama said, "I believe that the decision to put JCPOA at risk without any Iranian violation of the deal is a serious mistake."

Ayatollah Khamenei, Iran's Supreme Leader, in response, called for the European powers to protect Iranian oil sales from U.S. sanctions and to continue to buy Iranian oil and for European banks to safeguard trade with Iran. If this does not happen Iran has threatened to resume its enrichment of uranium.

Khamenei added, "The Islamic Republic cannot deal with a government (U.S.) that easily violates an international treaty, withdraws its signature and in a theatrical show brags about its withdrawal on television."

The European allies of the U.S. are very concerned about the U.S pulling out of the deal and the likely imposition of sanctions against those companies who continue to do business with Iran.

In anticipation of Trump pulling the U.S. out of the deal many European companies pulled back from business with Iran in fear of their U.S. business being sanctioned.

The Russian company, Zarubezhneft, has signed a \$700 million contract to develop two small fields that European oil companies, the UK's BP and Germany's Wintershall AG had hoped to be part of but are now unlikely to join due to U.S. sanctions.

Russian trade with Iran doubled to more than \$2 billion in 2016, the year that sanctions were lifted by the nuclear deal.

Royal Dutch Shell, which had been negotiating with Iran to develop a giant oilfield there, decided in March the sanctions risk was too great. In May, China Petroleum and Chemical Corporation, or Sinopec, a huge Chinese state oil company, sent a delegation to Tehran to complete a \$3 billion deal to develop the oilfield.

China National Petroleum Corp., another state-owned company, has an option for the \$1 billion investment pledged by Total for a natural gas develop-

ment in Iran that the French company is considering leaving because of U.S. sanctions. Patrick Pouyanné, Chief Executive of Total, said, "What would not be good neither for the U.S., nor for Europe, is if at the end only Russia and China can do business in Iran."

China is by far Iran's largest business partner, buying about 1/3 of its oil exports, bringing bilateral trade to a record \$37 billion in 2017, up 19% from the previous year. China sees Iran as a trade

corridor for its "One Belt. One Road" initiative.

Israel

Israel was determined to break the Iranian nuclear deal and spent a lot of time and effort lobbying the Trump administration. In April, on the eve of Trump's decision on the deal, Israel's Prime Minister Netanyahu, in a carefully staged show, "revealed" Iranian files which the Israeli intelligence services claimed to have obtained.

Netanyahu claimed that the files proved Iran had lied when denying the existence of a secret nuclear weapons programme before 2003.

The Observer newspaper reported (6 May 2018) that Trump associates had hired Black Cube, an Israeli private security firm, to carry out a "dirty ops" campaign against Ben Rhodes and Colin



Ayatollah Khamenei



Lausanne, 30 March 2015: Federica Mogherini of the EU at the top table leading the negotiations for a Comprehensive agreement on the Iranian nuclear programme. In attendance were: John Kerry - US; Javid Zarif - Iran; Sergei Lavrov - Russia; Wang Yi - China; Frank-Walter Steinmeier - Germany; Philip Hammond - UK; and Laurent Fabius - France.

Kahl, top advisers to Barack Obama and his vice-president Joe Biden, in order to undermine the Iran nuclear deal.

Black Cube is an Israeli private intelligence agency, founded in 2010 and includes on its Board, Major General Giora Eiland, former head of the Israeli National Security Council. The company brings together “a select group of veterans from the Israeli elite intelligence units that specialises in tailored solutions to complex business and litigation challenges.”⁽¹⁾

Black Cube used a fake company to make approaches to people associated with some of President Obama’s aides involved in the Iran deal with a view to discrediting them.

The company initially denied any con-

nection to the spying operation but *The New Yorker* reported that the same fake company was used to contact Rose McGowan, one of the principal accusers of the disgraced film tycoon, Harvey Weinstein. One of Weinstein’s lawyers had hired Black Cube to stop publication of sexual misconduct allegations.⁽²⁾

The withdrawal of the U.S. from the Iran nuclear deal is a victory for Israel, which has long campaigned against the deal. Israel has been itching to attack Iran. It will now be preparing to attack Iran if that country resumes its nuclear programme.

In 2018 Israel used the F-35 fighter aeroplane in combat, the first country to do so. Air force Chief, Major-General Amikam Norkin said, “We are flying the F-35 all over the Middle East and have already attacked on two different fronts.”⁽³⁾ The F-35 is manufactured by the Lockheed Martin Corporation.

The U.S. is not alone in supplying arms to Israel. Britain issued £221 million worth of arms licences to defence companies exporting to Israel in 2017. This is a huge increase from 2016, when it exported £86 million worth of arms, which already was a big increase from 2015, when it was £20 million.⁽⁴⁾

Israel has felt emboldened by a number of factors:

- its overwhelming military capability over other countries in the Middle East, including the widely held view that it is a nuclear power;

- divisions in the Arab world especially between Saudi Arabia and Iran; the U.S. recognising Jerusalem as its capital and moving its Embassy there⁽⁵⁾;

- its illegal occupation of Palestinian territory, its continuing expansion of settler communities; and its impunity in killing unarmed protesters in Gaza.

The US pulling out of the Iran nuclear deal has fired-up inter-capitalist rivalries, emboldened Israel, and made the world even less safe.

FOOTNOTES

1. See website, www.blackcube.com Under the heading “Harvesting in the Cyber World” it claims that “Black Cube has developed innovative tools and methodologies to handle massive amounts of data. We unearth useful information for our clients and map all potential sources of interest by trawling the deep web and harvesting information from typically inaccessible areas of the internet such as the Dark Net”.
2. Guardian online, 8 May 2018.
3. Kubovich, Yaniv, “Israel launched World’s First Air Strike Using F-35 Stealth Fighters”. Haaretz
4. These figures were gathered by the Campaign Against the Arms Trade.
5. Only Guatemala, Honduras, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau and Togo voted with the U.S and Israel on the Jerusalem issue at the United Nations.

Israel was determined to break the Iranian nuclear deal and spent a lot of time and effort lobbying the Trump administration.

Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (pictured), in a carefully staged show, “revealed” Iranian files which ... (he) claimed proved Iran had lied when denying the existence of a secret nuclear weapons programme before 2003.



Syria: the West's war will continue

The Syrian war is not about to end, in spite of progress towards peace. It is hard to speak of positive outcomes in the Syrian war.

By SIMON KORNER

Over 500,000 people have been killed. At least 11 million have been displaced - 6.1 million of these internally. Nevertheless, there are elements that can be regarded as moving in a positive direction.

First, the Syrian army is winning the war on the ground. Assad remains the country's leader, and Syria has a chance of regaining its sovereign territory - against all the odds and western intentions. This means that Syria will remain a secular, unitary state, a bastion of Arab nationalism, with a diverse and tolerant society - apart from areas under enemy control.

Syrian troops have cleared out the terrorists from Douma in eastern Ghouta, near Damascus, and have re-established control over all the southern suburbs of Damascus, according to *Jane's Defence Weekly* (April 30).

So the mortar and rocket attacks that have killed 11,000 civilians in Damascus since 2012 are over.

Over 65,000 civilians have so far returned to liberated eastern Ghouta, demonstrating their desire to live in government-held areas.

The extremist militias in these enclaves have gone. The al-Qaeda fighters among them were evacuated to Idlib in the north-west and to Jarablus in northern Aleppo province - areas in which infighting al-Qaeda factions are in control.

Meanwhile the (fewer) IS-aligned fighters were sent to the eastern Syrian desert on the Iraqi border, where IS has its last remaining territory - effectively under US protection.

The terrorist-linked White Helmets have also left as part of this evacuation, and with their propagandist purpose waning have had their US funding frozen.

The group's terrorist links have been confirmed since the liberation of eastern Ghouta - with the discovery of a tunnel

linking their HQ to a terrorist bomb factory 200 metres away, from where the Failaq Al Rahman group fired mortar rounds into the centre of Damascus.

With the Syrian army released to fight elsewhere, its current targets are Deraa in the south, the Golan Heights area on the Israeli border, and Idlib, where it faces the Kurdish-based and US-backed Syrian Defence Forces (SDF).

A second sign of progress is that Russia has demonstrated it can limit western aggression, and has begun to broker peace talks, the tenth round taking place this July.

The April 14 missile strikes by the US, UK and France revealed the new balance of forces clearly. The western attackers were forced to heed Russia's warnings of counterattacks, and carefully avoided causing significant damage and any Russian casualties. Syrian air defences, provided by Russia, intercepted significant numbers of missiles.



**Recep Tayyip Erdogan,
Turkey's President.**

Thus, in spite of American global military superiority - with the US spending at \$554.2 billion a year compared to Russia's \$69.2 billion - Russia has emerged as a credible military adversary.

US top brass now accept "we're back in an era of great power competition," as Admiral John Richardson put it. This end of unipolar power means regime change wars will be harder for imperialism to wage in future.

Third - and related to Russia's enhanced position - Turkey's allegiance to US strategy has been weakened.

Not only has its stated aim of ousting Assad now been dropped, but its relations with Russia - after the low-point in 2015 when Turkey downed a Russian fighter - have improved.

Turkey is furious with the "US territorial guarantee of a de facto Kurdish state", according to Patrick Cockburn (*Independent*, 3 Feb).

A recent meeting in Ankara between Turkey, Russia and Iran consolidated Turkey's shift towards Russia, including growing economic ties.

Turkey has agreed a major natural gas pipeline deal with Russia, along with the purchase of a Russian-built nuclear reactor. It is also buying Russia's state-of-the-art S-400 anti-missile systems, technologically superior to anything in the West.

Russia, for its part, appears to have given Turkey the nod to occupy Afrin earlier this year, as a way of encouraging this broader realignment.

Reacting against the Russia-Turkey relationship, assistant secretary of State Wess Mitchell has warned Turkey against leaving the US sphere, saying it was "in the American national interest to see Turkey remain strategically and politically aligned with the West."

And Turkey's plans to buy 100 Lockheed F-35 fighter planes from the US mean that this alignment is unlikely to end soon.

A fourth positive sign is that the US strategy of establishing an Israel-style Kurdish statelet in northern Syria has run into difficulties due to the Turkish invasion of the north using the Islamist militias of the Free Syrian Army as its



ground troops.

The fact that Nato allies are fighting on different sides in a war, with the US backing Turkey's old enemies the Kurds, is inconvenient, to say the least.

Finally, not only has Hizbollah become battle-hardened and ideologically strengthened through its Syria involvement – with increased standing in Lebanon as a result – but its ally Iran is less isolated, particularly in its relations with Turkey, so that any Israeli, Saudi or US attack on Iran could see Turkey remaining neutral.

Moreover, the unilateral US abrogation of the Iran nuclear deal has forced

European powers to try to defend their capitalist interests involving Iran – Airbus, VW, Peugeot, for example – in opposition to US sanctions which cover any trade with Iran.

The importance of Iran, Syria and Hizbollah is that they provide an arc of resistance to US and Israeli designs on the region.

Looking now at the negative elements of the war, it is clear that if the US can't destroy secular Arab nationalism, it will try to make Russia pay a high price for its strategic advances and sabotage any Russian-brokered peace.

To that end, it is constructing a large

new base in northern Syria, big enough for 1,200 troops. It already has ten bases in Syria, officially housing 2,000 US soldiers, with at least double that number operating unofficially.

Its occupation of over half the Syrian energy fields in the eastern desert area around Deir Ezzour – as well as its control over the country's most fertile agricultural land – means that it will "be able to keep Syria poor and under-resourced" in future, according to Joshua Landis, Syria specialist at the University of Oklahoma.

In addition, the US commands the strategically important main road from

Syria: the West's war will continue

Iraq to Syria, allowing it to divide the two countries and also block Iranian transport links with Syria and Lebanon, weakening mutual co-operation between the anti-imperialist forces.

Although the western military setbacks have produced divisions within the US ruling class, with Trump's populist promises of a US draw-down of troops ("We'll be coming out of Syria, like, very soon") being countered by the Pentagon saying it will decide when, and if, such a draw-down occurs (*Los Angeles Times*, April 4), there is little sign of western involvement diminishing.

France has pushed hard – as it did in Libya – to retain a strong US presence in Syria. Britain too has played a major role in ensuring the continuation of the war, most recently with its bellicose rhetoric over the alleged chemical attack in Douma.

Although the western military setbacks have produced divisions within the US ruling class ... there is little sign of western involvement diminishing.

France has pushed hard ... to retain a strong US presence in Syria. Britain too has played a major role in ensuring the continuation of the war, most recently with its bellicose rhetoric over the alleged chemical attack in Douma.

Accusations of chemical attacks by Assad are likely to continue, providing a pretext for the ongoing western occupation and further attacks.

This despite the fact that Syria gave up its chemical weapons in 2013, with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) confirming that its capacity for producing them had been destroyed.

The misleading news stories that fuel western attacks will also continue – stories provided by sources such as the Syrian Human Rights Observatory (SHRO), quoted frequently by the BBC as being independent, in spite of the fact that the SHRO receives funding from the Foreign Office to the tune of nearly £200,000.

If US troops do reduce in number, in line with Trump's statements, regional powers will be used to do the West's dirty work – thus not a sign that peace

is dawning.

As Trump put it on April 13: "We have asked our partners to take greater responsibility for securing their home region, including contributing large amounts of money."

For financial reasons the US is refusing to pay the \$200 million it had promised for postwar reconstruction, particularly of Raqqa, which is still in ruins and lacks water and electricity.

In addition, the US No Assistance for Assad Act rules that US funds may not be used for reconstruction in areas under Syrian government control.

The US will in effect 'subcontract' the war to regional powers. One strategy under consideration is to send Saudi Arabian troops into Syria, alongside soldiers from Qatar and the UAE, and perhaps Egypt, raising the risk of a direct Saudi-Iran war. Mercenaries under Erik Prince's Blackwater USA company would replace US troops, with the cost borne by the Gulf states. The US role would then be to provide air power and co-ordination.

Israel, the US's main regional partner, is already upping its role in Syria. Having launched over 100 air raids since 2012, Israeli attacks have grown bolder.

A major assault in late April on an underground Syrian missile base in southern Hama destroyed 200 cruise and ballistic missiles.

This was followed by its biggest attack on Syria since 1973 – hitting many Iranian military sites in Syria and pushing Israel and Iran closer to war. An earlier attack on Syria's T4 airbase killed 7 Iranian soldiers.

Israel is hoping its attacks will provoke a major Iranian response. This would then give it a pretext for a wider destruction of Iranian military and nuclear assets in Syria and possibly in Iran itself – alongside the US, more hawkish now with John Bolton as National Security advisor.

Even if a war doesn't come about, Israel believes that Iranian involvement in Syria is draining that country's resources and sowing divisions within the leadership, according to former intelligence chiefs in the Israeli Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center.

Meanwhile, regional power Turkey may well refuse to leave northern Syria, despite having agreed in principle to Syrian territorial integrity.

Having supported the western missile strikes in April, it is already appointing mayors in the parts of Idlib province it occupies, defying Russian pressure to hand the territory back to the Syrian government. Russia's agreement over Afrin may come back to haunt it.

Meanwhile, Syrian government attempts to regain administrative control over Kurdish-held territory – offering the Kurds protection from Turkey – have so far been rejected by the Kurdish leadership, meaning the war there will continue.

To sum up, the new phase of the war sees Syria "divided into three zones, each under a different authority and supported by a different foreign sponsor," according to Patrick Cockburn (*LRB*, 5 April).

By far the biggest area, with 12 million people, is under Syrian government control, supported by Russia and Iran.

A large triangle of land in the north and east of the Euphrates, with a population of about 2 million, is held by the Kurds supported by the US.

In the north, Idlib province, Afrin city and northern Aleppo province are controlled by al-Qaeda forces, under Turkish control, also with a population of 2 million.

On the diplomatic front, the US wants to revive the Geneva talks, in order to challenge the ongoing Russia-Turkey-Iran talks, which support Syrian territorial integrity. So far, Russia and Turkey are willing to participate at Geneva, but Iran is not.



John R. Bolton, Donald Trump's hawkish National Security Advisor.

It is increasingly clear that the Syrian war has been disastrous for the US and its allies, exposing the limits of their power. Even the BBC accepts it is a "strategic catastrophe" (*Today*, April 26).

And now the scale of the allies' destruction is emerging, with a report by UK-based Airwars that over 9,600 civilians have been killed by western bombardments in Syria and Iraq – 10 times higher than previously admitted.

Despite this failure, and despite peace having been established in 70% of the country, the conflict is set to continue. Western power and credibility are at stake, as well as control over Syria's energy resources.

1915: remembering a rent strike victory

On International Women's Day, March 8th, this year a statue was unveiled in Govan in Glasgow to Mary Barbour and the working-class women, men and children who campaigned for fair rents in 1915.

By **FRIEDA PARK**

The movement was dubbed “Mrs Barbour’s Army” by Willie Gallagher and came at a time of increasing working class activity, including opposition to the imperialist slaughter of the First World War.

The chair of the Remember Mary Barbour committee the former Labour MP for Maryhill, Maria Fyfe said: “Mary Barbour led the working class campaign against rent rises during the

First World War. With demand outstripping supply, and the law on the side of the landlords, poor housing was offered at ever increasing prices. Mary Barbour and her army of women fought and won rent restriction legislation against all the odds.

“A century on, the private rented sector is once again growing dramatically, while affordable social housing is ever harder to access. Average rents in the

private sector are rising faster than inflation yet standards for too many properties remain scandalously low.”

Maria’s words bring the issue bang up to date. Remembering our history is a lesson for today. We are still fighting for the same basic necessities of life and through that struggle we can win.

Scottish Labour’s new leader, Richard Leonard, proposed a “Mary Barbour Law” which was agreed at the Scottish party conference. It would enforce fair, affordable rents in the private sector and ensure private rented properties met the same standards as social housing.

The 1915 rent strike

Fuelled by the First World War, people flooded into Glasgow to find jobs in the



The statue of Mary Barbour by sculptor, Andrew Brown at Glasgow, Govan underground station.

Picture: Brian Purdie

1915: remembering a rent strike victory



**8 March 2018 (International Women's Day)
The unveiling of the Mary Barbour statue at Govan Cross, Glasgow.**

shipyards and other industries.

Many men were also away fighting and landlords believed they could raise rents with impunity. They were very much mistaken as working-class women organised to resist the rent rises. Starting in Govan, those taking part continued to pay their old rent, but refused to pay any increase.

Helen Crawford, who was secretary of the Glasgow Women's Housing Association and went on to join the Communist Party when it was established, told how the women fought back: "The Glasgow Women's Housing Association took up this issue, and in the working class districts, committees were formed, to resist these increases in rents.

"Cards, oblong in shape, were printed with the words:

**'RENT STRIKE.
WE ARE NOT REMOVING.'**

and placed in the windows of the houses where rent increases were demanded."

They resisted intimidation by the landlords and the strike grew to involve around 20,000 tenants by November 1915 - continuing to spread.

When intimidation failed, the landlords went to court to get eviction notices. In each tenement one woman

would keep watch and on the approach of Bailiffs attempting to enforce the evictions, she would ring a bell or rattle a ricketty bringing the other women out to resist them.

Bailiffs were prevented from entering



**Mural of Mary Barbour in the
Clutha Bar, Glasgow.**

the buildings by crowds of women and children and driven back by flour bombs and other missiles being hurled at them.

Matters came to a head when a landlord in Partick took a group of rent strikers to court for non-payment. A huge

demonstration converged on the court and the women were joined by striking shipyard and engineering workers.

Concerned at this show of working class strength and the impact it might have on the war effort the Government became involved, ordering the release of the rent strikers.

In a matter of only weeks, Parliament passed the Rent Restriction Act, the first of its kind in Europe.

It fixed rents at pre-war levels for the remainder of the war and for six months after. A resounding victory for the working class women and men of Glasgow.

Mary Barbour (1875 - 1958)

Mary was the daughter of a weaver and her first job was as a thread twister. Her political activity began in the Socialist Sunday School and the Cooperative Womens Guild. She also campaigned against the First World War.

It was her leadership of the Rent Strike, however, that brought her to prominence and, at a time when there were few women holding office, in 1920 she was elected as an Independent Labour Party councillor for the Fairfield ward in Govan.

Declaring herself a socialist, in her election address she said: "I do not wish to draw any distinction between men and women's questions because essentially they are one, but I am convinced and have always advocated that women should take their full share of public work."

She would not draw the distinction, yet much of her work was devoted to improving the lives of working class women which she no doubt also saw benefiting children, families, communities and men as well.

She established wash houses, public baths, play areas, free school milk for children and was instrumental in setting up the first family planning clinic in Glasgow. She was the first female Bailie of the city and one of the first female magistrates.

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100 years of votes for some women

The 100th anniversary of some women getting the vote in parliamentary elections was heralded with a media fanfare and gatherings of the great and the good.

By **FRIEDA PARK**

Much of this lauded middle class leaders of the suffrage movement, neglecting the working class women and socialist campaigners who fought for the vote.

What was also under-reported were the restrictions which limited the number of women who actually got the vote and, significantly, that it was the first time that all men got the vote at the age of 21. Prior to that working class men were excluded by property/wealth requirements.

The 1918 Act gave the vote to women over the age of 30 if they were a registered property occupier or married to a registered property occupier with a rateable value greater than £5.

They were also entitled to vote if they were a university graduate in a university constituency. It was 10 years later that all women got the right to vote on the same basis as men.

It was not until 1948 that one person one vote was introduced with the abolition of the right of graduates and business owners to extra votes.

So far unremarked upon was that 1918 also saw the election of the first woman to the House of Commons, Constance Markievicz, who stood for Sinn Féin.

Markievicz was sentenced to death along with the other leaders of the Easter Rising in Ireland but had her sentence commuted to life imprisonment because she was a woman.

As Sinn Féin do not recognise the legitimacy of the UK parliament she did not however take up her seat. Whilst living in Britain she was an active campaigner for votes for women.

The right to vote and the working class
Throughout Britain in the late 19th and early 20th centuries women were employed in factories and mills and were integral to the working class.

Women formed trade unions and campaigned round issues like shorter working hours, better pay and also the right to vote.

It was from these movements of working women in Europe and the United States that International Women's Day was born, with its first official celebration in 1911.

Early socialist pioneers also advocated for women's rights including the right to vote. Working class women saw obtaining the vote as a means of achieving their other social and economic goals.

There was economic and political unrest among the whole working class at this time, not only in Britain but across Europe. Opposition to the First World War was growing and in Glasgow there



**Constance Markievicz
photographed in uniform with a gun**

was the victorious rent strike led by working class women (see previous article, page 11).

1917 saw the Russian revolution overthrow capitalism and establish socialism, the ultimate expression of working class power.

Faced with these challenges the British ruling class opted to try to head off increasingly militant extra-parliamentary struggles by extending the franchise.

Since then it has attempted to manage (and lower) working class expectations

through parliamentary politics and co-opting its party, the Labour Party.

The high point of this strategy was the triumph of Tony Blair, New Labour and the removal of the commitment to socialism from the Labour Party's constitution.

But the working class, however low its expectations, still needs someone to champion it and New Labour moved too far away from that role.

Now a hundred years on we are seeing a challenge to managed, consensus politics with Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party posing an alternative to austerity and confrontational foreign policy.

Gender, class and the vote

The relationship between class, gender and other forms of discrimination and oppression which are rife in capitalist society is perhaps not discussed as much as it should be.

Attempts to do so are sometimes met with stiff opposition from the liberal establishment who portray any mention of class as somehow undermining a commitment to women's rights and the struggle for equality.

Describing herself as a socialist and a feminist, Laura Pidcock, the new Labour MP for North West Durham, was criticised when she said she would not "hang out with Tory women" who are "no friends of mine" and "an enemy to lots of women".⁽¹⁾

In response Conservative MP Kemi Badenoch said: "For us, a woman in power is more important than lots of women taking orders from men."⁽²⁾

Pidcock was also predictably upbraided in the *Guardian* by Anne Perkins who sanctimoniously instructed her that: "there are Tory feminists Laura"⁽³⁾

Despite the tut-tutting from the *Guardian*, one imagines that Pidcock's remarks were uncontroversial back in her constituency where its mines and steel industry were laid waste by the Tories under our first female Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher.

Whatever the credentials of these so-called Tory feminists they do not extend to lifting the burden of austerity which falls unequally heavily on their working

100 years of votes for some women

class “sisters”.

For working class women cuts to benefits, poor and unequal pay, lack of child care and rising prices for basic goods mean that their enemy is not men so much as the system which imposes these conditions on them.

That women are more badly affected by austerity makes these economic and political struggles women’s issues, but they are also issues that they have in common with working class men.

Whilst challenging discrimination from men, women taking the lead in campaigning round the issues that affect them is critical to undermining those backward attitudes. It is harder to maintain that women are in any way inferior when confronted by the likes of Mrs Barbour’s Army.

Whilst engaging in battles round issues affecting women, men can come on side too as they are also affected by the same issues. A class approach challenges discrimination and builds unity and equality rather than seeking division.

In her essay, *Revolution and Womanhood: on Clara Zetkin’s Selected Writings*, Angela Davis says: “Working-class and racially oppressed women confront sexist oppression in a way that reflects the real and complex objective interconnections between class exploitation, racist oppression, and male supremacy. Whereas a white middle-class woman’s experience of sexism incorporates a relatively isolated form of this oppression, working-class women’s experiences necessarily place sexism in the context of class exploitation and Black women’s experiences further incorporate the social factor of racism.”⁽⁴⁾

For some middle class feminists like Badenoch and Perkins there is a sisterhood that transcends class, however, working class women cannot change their circumstances by indulging such illusions.

Identity politics, a term which belittles the oppression of women and the effect it has on their lives, can have negative consequences.

Putting gender first or denying the centrality of class oppression can lead to supporting women because they are women and not for their policies.

Hilary Clinton’s campaign tried to mobilise on that basis, but was asking women and men to support a female candidate who was a war-mongering neo-liberal.

This is not a kind of politics that will advance the cause of women and in fact will set it back. Bernie Sanders as Dem-



1915: Emmeline Pankhurst boarding a train.

ocratic Presidential candidate in the US would have been preferable to Clinton. An anti-austerity government under Jeremy Corbyn will do more for women than the Tories under Theresa May.

The Pankhursts

The Pankhursts, or at least a couple of them, were prominent in the media-fest round votes for women.

Whilst Emmeline and her daughter

Christabel received the most publicity as leaders of the suffragette movement and founders of the Womens Social and Political Union (WSPU) the two other daughters of the family were virtually ignored.

Sylvia and Adela Pankhurst were socialists active in the working class movement and both became estranged from their mother.

Along with tactical differences they both felt that the movement had to adopt a more socialist and working class orientation taking up other issues central to the lives of working class women such as wages, housing and working conditions.

Both split from the Womens Social and Political Union, with Sylvia’s group being expelled. She went on, with working class women in the area, to set up the East London Federation of Suffragettes.

More or less shipped off to Australia by her mother, Adela went on to be a founder of the Communist Party of Australia though she later espoused anti-communist and extremely right wing views.

Sylvia had also been active in communist politics, but parted company as she took an ultra-leftist stance at odds with the Communist Party’s policies.



1932: Sylvia Pankhurst in Trafalgar Square opposing British policy in India.

She was active in the working class communities of the East End of London setting up cheap restaurants, a toy factory and offering legal advice to women.

Political differences with her mother strained their relationship but she was cut off completely by Emmeline for the crime of having a child outside wedlock.

She campaigned against the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, eventually moving to the country. When she died there in 1960 she was given a state funeral.

Emmeline had been a founder member of the Independent Labour Party but moved far from those roots to become an enthusiastic supporter of the First World War, encouraging women to play their part in sending their menfolk off to be slaughtered.

She and Christabel mobilised the WSPU to support the war effort. Emmeline stood for election as a Conservative Party candidate in 1927.

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Angela Davis

Modern slavery: the neoliberal UK model

Despite having ratified a range of international conventions prohibiting forced labour and modern slavery, and committing to protect their victims, successive UK governments have failed to adequately meet their responsibilities in these regards.

By MICK WILKINSON

That is in part because a cross-party political obsession with market ‘flexibility’ has created the conditions in which such abuses flourish and in part because the machinery of labour standards enforcement has been allowed to wither on the vine.

Undocumented migrant workers are particularly, though not exclusively, vulnerable. As the ex-Director General of Immigration Enforcement told the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee in October 2017, “There’s probably over a million foreigners here illegally at the moment.”

They are forced to live an ‘underground’ existence and are vulnerable to appalling exploitation, forced labour and worse, their irregular status and twilight existence rendering them outside of the protection of labour-related enforcement agencies.

Indeed, since 2010 the government’s emphasis on tackling illegal migration and working runs counter to, and impedes their protection.

Forced labour

Forced labour exists across the UK, it is widespread and increasing, perpetrated by criminal gangs, unscrupulous gangmasters and employment agencies, who operate almost with impunity within a de-regulated labour market and a light-touch enforcement regime. This has been evident for at least a decade.

In 2006 Anti-Slavery International’s seminal *Trafficking for Forced Labour: UK Country Report* uncovered forced labour in ‘agriculture, construction, domestic work, food processing and packaging, care/nursing, hospitality and the restaurant

trade,’ relating how people were trafficked and ‘forced to work in motorway services, as casual labour in ports, doing laundry and in nail parlours’ and made to engage in ‘illicit activities such as shoplifting, pick-pocketing and the sale of pirate CDs and DVDs on the street.’⁽¹⁾

Victims are recruited across the globe with promises of agency work, work in the hospitality sector, modelling, etc.

More recently, forced labour has been uncovered in the car wash trade and in UK fishing fleets and children have been trafficked to work in cannabis farms and the sex trade by bogus scouts for Premiership football teams.

Perpetrators are constantly changing their modus operandi to remain beyond the machinery of enforcement.

Conditions for those in forced labour are appalling – research in to the activities of UK gangmasters⁽²⁾ found physical and sexual abuse to be endemic, alongside racism, threats to individuals and to their families.

Victims describe being in a constant state of helplessness and fear, unable to access health and welfare facilities, and some were suffering from mental health difficulties.

They were often living in conditions that Environmental Health officers described as ‘an accident waiting to happen’, with sometimes a dozen workers living in two or three bedroomed houses, with inadequate fire protections,

others have been uncovered in roof crawl spaces, in cramped caravans, in animal pens, even locked in factories overnight.

Employment agencies

Some employment agencies insist on periods of unpaid probation work, non-payment or underpayment of wages is routine, as is the taking of outlandish and illegal charges from wages.

Agencies employ a range of threats against those refusing to work extended shifts or in unsafe conditions.

It is important to note that these are not the activities of a ‘few bad apples’ – such practices are endemic across the temporary labour market and they are hidden within a labour market environment that is awash with worker exploitation.⁽³⁾

Since the early 1990s, when John Major’s government abolished agency licensing, and the UK became one of the least regulated labour markets in Europe, the number of gangmasters (estimated at 10,000+) and private employment agencies in the UK has proliferated.

This trend continues apace - since January 2012, the recruitment industry has seen a three-fold increase in the total number of registered UK agencies, now sitting at a record high number of 27,788.

The labour market has become increasingly casualised and ‘flexible’ to the point that the UK currently has more temporary workers than any other European country.

This was not accidental, since 1979 governments of all complexions have actively reshaped the conditions of employment to that end. It is most evident in the widespread outsourcing of short-term contracts to the point that 80% of UK employers now subcontract parts of their business.

Successive re-tendering of contracts further reduces employment standards and the security of workers.

These conditions, combined with a concerted assault on the ability of trade unions to mobilise sent a message out to employers that traditional worker pro-



The Anti-Slavery International (1839 -) is the successor organisation to the Anti-Slavery Society which was founded in 1823 to abolish slavery throughout the British Empire.

Modern slavery: the neoliberal UK model

tections could be circumvented almost at will, certainly in the non-unionised workplace – and much of the temporary labour market was, and remains, non-unionised.

New Labour did little to halt the ‘race to the bottom’ in terms and conditions. As Employment Minister, from 2002 onwards, Alan Johnson made it a personal mission to resist the EUs Temporary Agency Workers Directive on the grounds that ‘there may be a danger that an equal treatment requirement would impose administrative burdens that discourage the use of agency workers.’

It wasn’t until 2010 that the UK signed up to limited rights for agency workers on equal pay.

Another contributory factor was New Labour’s move to encourage the flow of temporary migration to the UK by expanding the existing temporary worker schemes and adding new programmes, so that the number of work permits issued to foreign born workers rose from 40,000 a year in the mid-1990s to over 200,000 a year in 2004.

By 2011, the number of non-UK nationals in employment stood at 2.56 million, an approximate rise of 1 million on the 1998 figure. This sent out a clear message that the UK government was prepared to tolerate if not encourage worker exploitation.

Hostile environment

Meanwhile, prominent government figures - Prime Minister Blair, ministers Blears, Woolas and Reid - colluded with the tabloids to generate a ‘hostile environment’ for undocumented migrants, accusing them of ‘jumping the queue’ for council houses and seeking to “steal our benefits, steal our services like the NHS and undermine the minimum wage.”⁽⁴⁾

From 2008, New Labour’s civil penalty regime imposed significant fines on those employing the undocumented, thus pushing them further down the food chain in to the hands of the very worst of exploiters.

At the same time, Blair’s much repeated mantra of ‘bogus’ and illegal asylum seekers served to legitimate a ‘culture of denial’ at the Home Office,⁽⁵⁾ rendering hundreds of thousands whose applications were rejected with no recourse to social welfare and so at the mercy of unscrupulous employers. (Independent Asylum Commission, 2007)

New Labour’s commitment to unfettered markets made them slow to tackle the growing evidence of modern slavery.

Eventually, in response to a groundswell of public pressure following the Morecambe Bay cockle-picking tragedy

of 2004, the Gangmasters Licensing Authority (GLA) was established.

However, its remit was limited to those supplying labour for agriculture, forestry, horticulture, shellfish gathering and food processing and packaging, so that workers in other sectors where exploitation was rife, including in construction, care, and hotels, hospitality and cleaning, were left to the care and protection of the all-but redundant Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate.

There followed, in 2006, the much-trumpeted opening of the UK Human Trafficking Centre in Sheffield.

As with the GLA, however, it ran to a shoe-string budget, and whilst it produced some effective, if short-lived, public education campaigns and provided occasional training packages to police and immigration officers, it had no powers to instruct individual police forces or immigration facilities to prioritise the search for victims of modern slavery.



Tony Blair, one of the founders of New Labour

This was a serious omission, given that to this day it fails to be an operational priority for front-line officers of either agency and given that by August 2017, Will Kerr, the National Crime Agency’s Director of Vulnerabilities was estimating the numbers of contemporary slaves in the UK to be in to the tens of thousands, as he explained “The more we look for modern slavery the more we find evidence of the widespread abuse of the vulnerable. The growing body of evidence we are collecting points to the scale being far larger than anyone had previously thought.”

That should actually surprise no-one, because Conservative-led governments since 2010 have unleashed a perfect storm of social and economic measures that are forcing an ever-increasing number of the most marginalised – including British nationals - into the hands of the exploiters.

The intensification of the neo-liberal

economic model has variously involved benefit caps, benefit sanctions, the huge and rapid growth of zero hours contracts and the gig economy.

These have combined to create a vast pool of ‘the new precariat’ at the tail end of the labour force.

In addition, the ‘hostile environment’ for undocumented migrants begun under New Labour has been ratcheted up continuously since 2010.

Alongside the dog whistle politics of the appalling “Go home or face arrest” billboard vans, Prime Minister Cameron announced that the wages of illegal workers could be confiscated as the proceeds of crime, the threat of civil penalties for employers was increased from £10,000 to £20,000 for each undocumented migrant employed, new duties were imposed on banks to check the immigration status of their customers, and private landlords, their tenants.

This hardly generated an environment in which undocumented migrants might be encouraged to come forward and identify their exploiters to the authorities.

As for enforcement, for all Theresa May’s assertion that tackling modern slavery was a government priority, successive administrations since 2010 have neutered the response of the most relevant agencies.

The Conservatives’ ‘red tape challenge’ and their assiduous adherence to the 2005 Hampton Review recommendations to reduce the regulatory burden on businesses, has seen a huge reduction in labour-related inspections.

Alongside that, the police and immigration services have been subjected to extensive and disruptive reorganisations, with approximately 20,000 police officers lost and equally swathing cuts made to Border Agency staff. Both services have also seen huge funding cuts.

Meanwhile, whilst the GLA (Now the GLAA) by a country mile the most effective of the labour standards agencies, is no longer limited to agriculture and fisheries, its resources have been only slightly increased, which might leave the cynic to wonder if the agency is being deliberately set up to fail.

Seemingly oblivious to the collective impact of these measures on tackling modern slavery, in 2014, as Home Secretary, Theresa May announced the appointment of Kevin Hyland as the UK’s first ever Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner to ensure “that modern slavery issues are tackled in a coordinated and effective manner across the whole of the UK.”

Thus far his role has tended towards that of a critical friend, pointing out inadequacies but having little authority to

rectify them. Unfortunately, the government's economic, social and immigration policies were not considered part of his remit.

May followed this with a Modern Slavery Act 2015, that she proudly cites in parliamentary debates as evidence of her proactive approach, but which is innocuous to the point of embarrassment.

The then Director of Anti-Slavery International termed it 'a modest little bill, with much to be modest about.'

At the Act's core is the much-vaunted section 54, requiring commercial organisations with a turnover of £36m and above to publish a statement setting out what steps they have taken to ensure that modern slavery is not occurring in their business or supply chains.

Thus far, no sanctions are attached and recent studies suggest that lip service is being paid to the requirement.

Thousands of victims

Enforcement outcomes to-date have been pitiful.

In 2010, Labour MP Emma Reynolds asserted in the 2010 Parliamentary debate on Trafficking: "With our country's pitiful rate of conviction for trafficking, all too often such gangs and pimps enjoy impunity. There is still not enough being done to help and to protect the victim."

Precious little has changed. In February 2017, on the publication of a joint report with the Chief Inspector of Borders & Immigration, the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner announced that there was "a strong chance we are missing thousands of victims of modern slavery at our borders."

In October, he gave account to Parliament of a "chronic weakness" in police responses, that was allowing organised crime groups behind people trafficking and slavery to "act with impunity".

In December, the National Audit Office report on the overall governance of the UK response to modern slavery related: 'The Home Office has an incomplete picture of the crime, the victims and the perpetrators. Accountabilities within the strategy are unclear, oversight of victims' support is inadequate and few cases lead to prosecution or conviction.'

It continued: 'Until the government is able to establish effective oversight of the modern slavery system as a whole it will not be able to achieve its objective of significantly reducing the prevalence of modern slavery.'

In April 2018, a *Times* newspaper investigation⁽⁶⁾ revealed that only 6% of crimes recorded by police forces under the Modern Slavery Act had led to

charges. The West Midlands force had recorded 295 offences in two years, but these had resulted in only 4 charges being brought – let alone convictions!

There is also a considerable body of research affirming that public awareness campaigns are having little impact on the ability of front-line workers across the statutory and voluntary sectors to identify and appropriately report on modern slavery indicators.

... trade unions must be encouraged back in to every employment sector, every workplace - none are more attuned to the indicators of labour exploitation, none more dedicated to its eradication.

For instance, many police forces continue to demonstrate insufficient understanding of the nature and scale of modern slavery and human trafficking⁽⁷⁾ whilst 87% of NHS professionals report lacking the knowledge to identify victims.⁽⁸⁾

A range of different local authority services, from children's services and migrant integration teams, to housing and environmental health officers, have sometimes contributed to the identification of modern slavery, in the era of austerity budget constraints, their capacity to so do is has been significantly compromised.

Exploitation widespread

These findings reflect badly on the government's commitment to tackling modern slavery.

There is an inevitability to them, because operational responses predicated on the mantra that exploitation is an aberration - the product of a limited number of bad labour providers refusing to abide by the rules - are doomed to failure.

The reality is that exploitation is widespread and embedded precisely because the rules of the game, the UK's neoliberal model, encourage and facilitate it.

So how can modern slavery in the UK be tackled and eradicated?

The neoliberal framework created the malaise, if it is to be tackled, that framework needs to be progressively dismantled.

Private employment agencies and gangmasters add precious little to the productive capacity of the nation, they are essentially exploitative and should be

phased out in favour of state-run labour exchanges.

Zero hours should be abolished, decent labour standards strictly and proactively enforced. It is not acceptable that a vast pool of undocumented labour be left on the margins of society at the mercy of criminal exploiters.

There should be a one-off amnesty that enables them both to join the regular workforce and to identify their exploiters to the authorities.

Social policies that force people into exploitative labour - for instance, benefit caps and benefit sanctions - should be abolished.

Root and branch reform of the asylum process is an essential.

Last, but not least, the trade unions must be encouraged back in to every employment sector, every workplace – none are more attuned to the indicators of labour exploitation, none more dedicated to its eradication.

Just a short time ago, such measures would have appeared unrealistic. Public attitudes are rapidly changing.

There is growing anger at labour exploitation, particularly of the young, at the never-ending revelations of business impropriety, of corporate and political negligence (Grenfell), and, with the fallout from the Windrush scandal still upon us, at the appalling treatment of migrants.

The door is ajar, a future progressive government should have the confidence to push through it.

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Swing to Labour in local elections

Before looking at the results of the English local elections held on 3 May, it is worth asking why these elections mattered and what they mean for the next General Election?

By **BRIAN DURRANS**

Not because the long decline in the expectation and capacity of local government to meet the needs of their communities against national governments' erosion of the social wage has suddenly stopped in its tracks: on the contrary, continuing cuts and privatisation of local services have been worse than ever.

Few need reminding that austerity is made in Westminster, not the town hall. ⁽¹⁾

Local elections compared with general ones

Compared with a general election in which each parliamentary constituency returns one MP, local elections are more complicated in several respects.

How they are organised, for example: this year, voters had the opportunity of choosing every single councillor who would represent them in each ward of all 32 London boroughs and, outside London, in Kingston on Hull.

Elsewhere, only one third of councillor positions were up for election in 34 metropolitan boroughs, 16 'unitary authorities', and 54 district councils.

All councillors faced the voters in half of the twelve other district councils, and a third of them in the remaining six.

In the four London boroughs of Hackney, Lewisham, Newham and Tower Hamlets, and, outside London, in Watford, there were also elections for local mayor. ⁽²⁾

Also, of course, this set of local elections was confined to England whereas general elections cover the whole UK.

Further complications in how local election results might be interpreted concern the relative weighting of local and national issues when voters make their choice of councillors or party.

How party organisers and councillors prioritise canvassing suggests that a higher proportion of those voting in

local elections are more loyal supporters of whichever party they vote for, compared with those voting in a general election.

Another difference between the two kinds of elections is that in the seven-week campaigning period for a general election national broadcasters are required by law to treat the main parties equally.

For this reason, electors in 2017 were for the first time able to hear the case for Labour, including the hitherto vilified Jeremy Corbyn making that case, on a suddenly if only temporarily level playing-field. ⁽³⁾

Corbyn's two successful leadership contests and the party's amazing ability under his leadership to convert an 18% Tory lead into a hung parliament cannot mask the fact that winning the party machine itself to match the clarity and commitment at the top has been a slower process.

Despite significant advances, there have also been setbacks, some of them very public. But nowhere has the foot-dragging been more disheartening than at the level of councillor selection, where resistance to the democratic spirit of the party's newer, pro-Corbyn members has been most in evidence.

Turnout and reasons for voting

Turnout, obviously enough, is a good measure of how important an election is to those eligible to vote in it. I may have overlooked something but a careful on-line search yielded no information on the

turnout in the May local elections: perhaps surprising but also interesting because, by ignoring turnout, analysts refuse to take seriously the difference in motivation between local elections and national ones.

When I called the Electoral Reform Society, thinking they might be bothered about turnout figures, they said they didn't have any to hand but recommended a BBC website I'd already looked at where they said I could find the average turnout figure of 36%.

I looked again and still couldn't find it, but if for the sake of argument we take this not-yet corroborated figure as accurate, and the more reliable equivalent for the 2017 general election as 68.7%, ⁽⁴⁾ the local election appears to have generated only about half the enthusiasm that the general election did.

Even so, was there any correlation in these local elections between a higher turnout, a higher vote-share to Labour, and candidates openly supportive of the party's leadership? I haven't analysed the figures to come up with any evidence of this but if there were such a correlation it would be neither surprising nor fully account for most of what happened on polling day.

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Improvements in this area may come with the long-anticipated democracy review, but by and large the political allegiance of the candidates Labour fielded in 2018 was not as closely aligned with that of the leadership and mass membership as it is likely to be next time round.

Summary of results - 3 May 2018

Number of councillors in all 150 councils⁽⁵⁾

Labour	2,350	+79	Con	1,332	-35	LibDem	536	+75
Green	38	+8	UKIP	3	+123	Other	144	-4

More detailed breakdown, main parties only⁽⁶⁾

Party	Labour	Conservative	LibDem
Popular vote	35%	35%	16%
Swing	+8%	-3%	-2%
Councils	74	46	9
Councils +/-	Steady	-4	+4
Councillors	2,350	1,332	536
Councillors +/-	+79	-33	+75

There is no comparably balanced coverage in local elections, and Corbyn's opponents in his own party and among its MPs, and in the Conservative Party and its media, so far from abandoning their destructive mission during the weeks before the local polls, hit him with everything they could lay hands on.

These included ridiculous claims that he was a Czech spy, a Russian puppet or a Syrian stooge, and - never off the agenda - either weak on anti-Semitism or guilty of it himself.

So it would have been extraordinary indeed if Labour had done well in the local elections despite the abysmal reputation of a divided government.

Some of Labour's enemies cleverly chose to talk up the party's chances, and some of its possibly less thoughtful friends followed suit for the excusable reason that a better result might be expected from a more optimistic standpoint.

When the results were finally counted, what really was a remarkably solid performance had been set up in advance to be proclaimed at best a disappointment and at worst a failure.

Conclusion

The local elections mattered to party strategists and the commentariat as indicating how the main parties were shaping up for the general election in 2022, or earlier still.

What the results mean for Labour is that the party did significantly better than it might have feared. They provided no excuse (as they were hoped to) for a

further coup or challenge to Corbyn's leadership.

On a wider perspective, as the consolidation of left politics in the Labour Party has so far withstood the worst its opponents could throw at it, and as the Conservative Party has yet to find a mis-



Jeremy Corbyn



Theresa May

sion beyond neoliberalism (whatever the result of its divisions over Brexit), the ruling class can't afford to wait too long.

If Jeremy Corbyn's Labour is on course to form the next government, and if Theresa May or some even less competent Tory leader is unlikely to get a credible alternative bandwagon on the road, then the establishment is left with only two 'regular' options, keeping both in the wings until it's time to choose between them.

The first option is already familiar: an escalating programme of demonising and misrepresenting Corbyn and the Labour

Left to sabotage its electoral appeal. If that doesn't succeed in preventing a Labour government - and there are already signs that the elite has overplayed its hand - more of the same would mean trying to destabilise that government, a game of dangerously higher stakes and no guaranteed success.

The second option, running in parallel, is a barely-disguised attempt to create a vehicle for anti-socialist, pro-EU positions that would braid together Tory 'remainers', those in Labour seriously out of step with its new politics, and offer Liberal Democrats a choice of joining or oblivion.

Among many questions confronting such an entity is what popular parts of Labour's 2017 election manifesto it could poach to stand a chance of getting elected without also poaching Labour's plans for paying for them.

Behind both options, if neither works, lurks the 'irregular' option of playing the ruling class's wild-card, on the face of it a Queen or a Knave, imposing a government of national unity, or with some comparably ill-fitting label, and putting the unity and resolve of our still-fragmented pro-Labour movement to the greatest test, which, at least on present evidence, it might well fail.

But if the work that needs to be done can be done quickly and well, even that irregular option could be off the agenda.

FOOTNOTES

All web sources were accessed on 17 May 2018.

1. <https://www.lrb.co.uk/v38/n24/tom-crewe/the-strange-death-of-municipal-england>

2. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom_local_elections,_2018#Analysis

3. Alex Nunns, *The Candidate: Jeremy Corbyn's improbable path to power*. New York/London, O/R Books, second edition, 2018, p.310. For how Labour successfully exploited this opportunity, see Nunns, ch. 16; also, in a previous issue of this journal, <http://www.thesocialistcorrespondent.org.uk/articles/how-corbyn-cut-through-exclusive-interview-with-a-senior-labour-stratagist/> [sic] and Steve Howell, *Game Changer: eight weeks that transformed British politics*, Cardiff Bay, Accent Press, 2018.

4. <http://www.ukpolitical.info/Turnout45.htm>

5. <http://www.bbc.com/news/topics/cz3nmp2eyxgt/england-local-elections-2018>

6. abbreviated from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom_local_elections,_2018

Palestinian defiance to apartheid Israel

This article was completed on the 70th anniversary of the founding of Israel in 1948 and the very different Palestinian Nakba ('Catastrophe')⁽¹⁾ which led up to and accompanied it: a process of systematic repression that has been going on ever since. Never have these two commemorations stood in starker contrast.

By **BRIAN DURRANS**

On 14 May, at the opening of the new US embassy in Jerusalem - timed to set the scene for the following day's independence celebrations - President Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu proclaimed the event 'historic' when it simply marked just one more endorsement of Israel's contempt for international law and was boycotted by most of the world's diplomats.

But the dominant feature of the moment, and of the last month and a half, was the determination and courage of Gaza, on the eighth day of the 'Great March of Return', a series of weekly protests, together with expressions of Palestinian culture and socialising, on the Gazan side of Israel's perimeter fence. Instead of factional insignia, almost everyone carried the Palestinian flag.

On Trump's and Netanyahu's 'historic day' alone, in what Israel's own *Ha'aretz* newspaper described as a bloodbath, fifty-nine Gazan Palestinian demonstrators were shot dead by Israeli troops.

The final death toll and numbers of the injured for the whole period of the mass protests are still being calculated and no doubt more will die from their injuries or from further attacks.

The immediate repercussions of this carnage are hard to predict and its longer-term consequences even more so, but it is becoming clear that the struggle for Palestinian rights has reached a new stage both on the ground in Israel-Palestine and in the international arena.

Allied with Israel's increasingly open aggression against Syria, events are now moving so quickly that rather than try to record or anticipate them, which by the time you read this will in any case

be chronicled elsewhere, it may be worth reflecting more broadly on these new developments.

In doing so, I want to argue, first, that Palestinian resistance and global solidarity have been most successful when they are co-ordinated, and that this needs strengthening, and solidarity work expanding, as the case for regarding Israel as an apartheid state gains traction.

This was already foreshadowed in the formulation and reasoning behind the Palestine National Boycott Committee's call for 'Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions [BDS] against Israel until it complies with international law and universal principles of human rights' (9 July 2005).⁽²⁾

The second point is that building solidarity will be easier to do if we recognise that Israel's domestic and foreign predicaments are also co-ordinated.

The Great March of Return

For seven Fridays from 30 March (Land Day, commemorating the great upsurge of resistance in 1976 to Israel's further confiscation of Palestinian land) up to Nakba Day on 15 May, the 'Great March of Return' brought out tens of thousands of Gazans on their side of Israel's perimeter fence to demonstrate that the right to return to the homes from which they were forced out remains a key demand of all Palestinians.

According to the United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OCHA), fifty-three Gazans lost their lives and of the 9,800 people injured more than half needed hospital treatment from 30 March up to 11 May.

Up until 13 May, not a single Israeli casualty has been attributed to any of

these demonstrations or incidents arising from them.

Even before the massacre on 14 May, the UN Secretary-General had called for an independent investigation of the excessive use of force (especially of live ammunition) against unarmed demonstrators.⁽³⁾

Comparison with the previous sixteen month period suggests that there is something about the mobilisation of large numbers of unarmed Palestinians, with its potential to attract support from around the world, that particularly alarms the Israeli authorities and confronts them with a dilemma.⁽⁴⁾

When resistance is steadfast and principled in its objectives and strategy, it commands respect, as many other colonial regimes, including apartheid South Africa, discovered to their cost.

Everywhere TV and computer screens turn ordinary Palestinians into icons of courage and sacrifice. Israel spends a fortune on propaganda to soften its image but Gaza on 14 May, without even the excuse of retaliation for rocket attacks, exposed the sheer brutality of the Occupation for all the world to see.

Potential consequences

It is one thing for the United Nations Secretary General to call for an inquiry, but potentially quite another if a body like the International Criminal Court (ICC) was to get involved, despite reservations about its willingness or capacity to pursue offenders among imperialist powers rather than minor dictators.

Through its Chief Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda, the ICC issued an unprecedented statement on 8 April, well before the casualties had reached their maximum: 'Since 30 March 2018, at least 27 Palestinians have been reportedly killed by the Israeli Defence Forces, with over a thousand more injured, many, as a result of shootings using live ammunition and rubber bullets. [...] Violence against civilians - in a situation such as the one prevailing in Gaza - could constitute crimes under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, as could the use of civilian presence for the purpose of shielding military activities.'⁽⁵⁾

Different enemies, same excuses

In another recent and ongoing development, this time in the wider region, Israel has become engaged in military activity of an extent and intensity not seen since the war with Lebanon in 2006.

On 9-10 May, following US withdrawal from the international nuclear agreement with Iran, and just before the US embassy transfer, Israeli jets attacked multiple targets in Syria, a sovereign state, in clear violation of international law.

For discussion of the wider context of these and other military developments, (see Simon Korner's article on page 8); but since the focus of this article is on the Palestinian struggle and its increasingly global character⁽⁶⁾, I refer briefly to these international attacks to show how the terms used to justify them rely on distortions like those meant to excuse the repression of Palestinians themselves.

The latest Israeli attacks on targets in Syria have been spun as retaliation for attacks launched from Syria on Israel itself. This fails to acknowledge, however, that Israel had been attacking Syria for several weeks before; that Iranian and Lebanese (Hezbollah) combatants operating in Syria are not an invading force but are there at the invitation of Damascus; and that no attack launched from Syria has so far hit Israel itself but rather the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, recognised by international law as part of Syria.⁽⁷⁾

Likewise, Israeli attacks on unarmed Palestinians in Gaza are spun as 'anticipatory retaliation' against breaches of the perimeter fence that would jeopardize the security of the present inhabitants of some of the villages from which some of those now exiled in Gaza were originally expelled.

The Israeli siege of Gaza alone would justify the anger of its imprisoned population, but that anger, especially when channelled into a shared demand for the political right of return, is treated by Israel as a threat to its own sovereignty.

Israeli propaganda brackets Gazans with Hamas, Hamas with Iran and Iran with Syria. It quotes with impunity anyone it claims to speak for Hamas with categorical assertions of what the present leadership of Hamas stands for.

Why should Israel, which in 1967 occupied the Syrian Golan Heights as well as the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza, treat Syria with more respect than the Palestinians?

The common denominator here is aggrandizement, an obsession with 'security' even though Israel's own borders are left deliberately undefined, and contempt for the lives of those outside the dominant section of society.

The first casualty of war, and perhaps also of colonial occupation, may be not just Truth but also the ability to paint your way out of a corner.

Israel and apartheid

Now that Washington has finally admitted that the so-called 'peace process' is dead - hardly news since it has shown no sign of life for nearly forty years - Israel has not even this illusion with which to distract its more thoughtful friends or milder critics who object to at least some of its violations of international and humanitarian law, but who have not yet faced up to the argument that Israel qualifies as an apartheid state.

The current legal definition of apartheid, established by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court in 1998, became operational in 2002.⁽⁸⁾ If the ICC was to find Israel

guilty of apartheid, the consequences could be far-reaching since apartheid qualifies as a crime against humanity, and states would then be legally obliged to impose sanctions not only against Israel itself but also against other states complicit with it, until the apartheid system was dismantled.

Consistency and seizing the moment

To put the recent upsurge of resistance into context - for the high level of commitment shown in recent days didn't spring out of nowhere - it is worth noting that Palestinians last year continued, as they have been doing for decades, to resist (and remind the world of) Israeli Occupation in the West Bank, Jerusalem and Gaza, inequalities imposed upon them inside 1948 Israel itself, and in the refugee camps and the diaspora elsewhere, by such means as demonstrations, strikes, prisoner actions, boycotts and social media campaigns.

Actions by and in support of Palestinian prisoners, including children, took place inside Palestine/Israel with co-ordinated expressions of solidarity across the world by ordinary citizens and their political representatives.

Although Palestinians and their supporters are rightly wary of over-personalising the struggle, partly because it can put individuals even more in harm's way, but also because it's appropriate to the necessarily shared character of the struggle itself, Israeli vitriol against Ahed Tamimi and her family and those who responded by rallying to her side made her almost a household name.

Social media recorded her outside her own house slapping an Israeli soldier after her cousin had been shot in the head at close range, and the Israeli media and their followers were frantic for disproportionate revenge.

Her detention, shocking interrogation and subsequent imprisonment for what amounts to a symbolic act, not least when contrasted with a barely longer sentence a soldier around the same time for killing an unarmed Palestinian youth, deserves more than a shrug of despair or a temporary expression of anger.

At the very least, it poses the question on a global scale as to whether such contrasting treatments of people according to their ethnicity within a single political system does not meet the definition of apartheid.

For the Tamimi family, as for millions of other Palestinians, resistance has become routine, now and then exposing them to real danger, but never abandoned.

Palestinian resistance is both routine and strategic, the latter planning activi-



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ties around dates and anniversaries already etched into people's political memory.

Last year's political prisoners' strike was of that character, and so has been the Great March of Return. As a result of media coverage of the bloodbath in Gaza, millions of people around the world would have heard or understood the meaning of the Nakba for the first time.

Going global

Palestinians have long learned self-reliance in their dealings with Israel.

Regional allies would be great to have, but resistance cannot depend on unreliable or short-lived support from any government.

In this sense, the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions [BDS] movement, and the development of solidarity in civil

society and extending wherever possible into political and economic assistance by governmental and wider institutions, keeps Palestine on the global agenda.

Before the age of the internet and social media, such a claim might have seemed fanciful, but is fully justified on present evidence of how quickly and profoundly people's views are changing and their voices heard.

FOOTNOTES

1. Although appropriately commemorated on the same day (15 May) the Nakba was not a single event but a series of brutal and terrifying experiences at the hands of Zionist militias which left 15,000 Palestinians dead, eradicated 400 villages and expelled 700,000, of whom 80% became refugees in the West Bank, Gaza or in nearby countries.

2. Omar Barghouti, *BDS: Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions. The Global Struggle for Palestinian Rights*. Chicago, Haymarket Books, 2011, appendix 2, pp.239-247. This book clearly explains the global thinking behind the BDS call. The Call itself is also available online: <https://bdsmovement.net/call>.

3. <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/one-palestinian-killed-and-hundreds-injured-gaza-during-ongoing-demonstrations>.

4. 'Not a single rocket has been fired into Israel from Gaza in over two months, yet since March 30 Israel has killed more Palestinians in Gaza than it did in the previous 16 months, during which time militants launched over 60 rockets and mortars.' (<https://972mag.com/youre-far-more-likely-to-be-killed-protesting-in-gaza-than-firing-a-rocket/134952/>).

5. <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/ali-abunimah/icc-warns-israeli-leaders-over-gaza-killings>. As Palestinian journalist Ali Abunimah, notes in the same article, 'Bensouda's reference to using civilians for "shielding military activities" appears to be a nod to Israel's claims that the Great March of Return mass rallies organized by Palestinians [...] are a Hamas ploy to shield "terrorist" activities. However, as an investigation by Human Rights Watch determined, and observations by journalists have confirmed, there have been no such "military activities" by Palestinians taking part in the demonstrations.

The festival-like rallies have brought out tens of thousands demanding an end to Israel's blockade of Gaza and the right of return for refugees.'

6. By its 'increasingly global character' I mean two things: first, how Israel's practices and resistance to them in Israel and the occupied territories attract international attention; and second, how Palestinian resistance itself on the ground is now increasingly co-ordinated with solidarity actions of various kinds across the world, whether political, diplomatic, economic or cultural, and at whatever level they are conducted, from individual consumers choosing to boycott Israeli goods to pension funds or corporations divesting from Israeli enterprises to governments and international bodies imposing sanctions.

Thus, whilst there's a big difference in 'security' terms between (say) an air-strike on Syria and an Israeli sniper killing a Palestinian in Gaza, one might be no less important than the other in terms of its impact on wider public understanding. That is hugely important, given Israel's overwhelming dominance over Palestine in military power; and it endorses the Palestinian 2007 call for BDS [see note 2].

7. 'The strike was carried out in response to a barrage of 20 rockets that were fired from Syria at Israeli military outposts.' (<https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/israel-launches-extensive-syria-strike-after-iranian-rocket-barrage-1.6073938>).

8. "The crime of apartheid" means inhumane acts of a character similar to those referred to in paragraph 1 [e.g. murder, extermination, enslavement, forcible transfer, torture, rape, persecution on basis of political, racial or similar grounds, enforced disappearance, other inhumane acts causing great suffering or serious injury to body or to mental or physical health - i.e., apartheid is classified among the most serious crimes against humanity] committed in the context of an institutionalized regime of systematic oppression and domination by one racial group over any other racial group or groups and committed with the intention of maintaining that regime[.]' (<https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%202187/v2187.pdf>, Article 7, paragraph (h) p.94).

For the most rigorous consideration of how apartheid relates to Israel, see the report by Richard Falk and Virginia Tilley, *Israeli Practices towards the Palestinian People and the Question of Apartheid*, Palestine and the Israeli Occupation, Issue No. 1, Beirut, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), 2017, pp.[iii-v], 1-64. (https://electronicintifada.net/sites/default/files/2017-03/un_apartheid_report_15_march_english_final_.pdf). The report's Executive Summary (pp.1-9) is strongly recommended as a short primer on the subject.

Unlike Israel, Palestine (as represented by the Palestinian Authority, which is formally but not in reality a representative body of Palestinians as a whole) is a member of the International Criminal Court, but it has so far succumbed to pressure from Israel, the US and others not to seek to bring Israel, or culpable individuals within Israel, to the ICC on charges connected with apartheid or war crimes or similar. The UN Security Council has the authority to refer any state to the ICC in respect of a situation in which a crime of such kind has occurred in that state's territory even if that state is neither a member of the ICC nor lodged a declaration with it to observe its legal code. Although it keeps the ICC at arms-length, therefore, Israel would still be vulnerable to such a move but for the protective US veto on the UNSC (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Criminal_Court). Despite the real opportunities a legal route could offer whether or not Palestinians embark on such a course will depend not only on their own judgement but also on support or obstruction by other powerful interests (as in the threat of the US veto in the UNSC): <https://theconversation.com/why-palestine-joining-the-international-criminal-court-could-be-a-total-game-changer-39603>.

(All online sources accessed between 13-15 May 2010)

S. African lesson of hope for Palestine

Chief Albert Luthuli, who was President of the African National Congress in the late 1950s and 1960s, described apartheid by explaining what it meant to black people in South Africa.

By **CHRISTABEL GURNEY**

Based on her speech to the West London Palestine Solidarity Campaign Conference.

“I would like tell you what apartheid really means to us. It means that our men cannot move from country to town and from one part of town to another without a pass. Now our women too will be unable to leave their houses without a pass. It means that 70 per cent of my people live below the breadline. It means that in my own province of Natal 85 per cent of children are suffering from malnutrition. It means massive unemployment. What apartheid means is a long tale of suffering. In a word, it means the denial of dignity and of ordinary human rights.”

Anyone reading this today would be reminded of conditions on the West Bank and Gaza.

Looking more closely, there are close similarities between apartheid South Africa and the situation today in Palestine - and in Israel - but there are also very important differences that have implications for political action.

British responsibility

In 1910 the Union of South Africa was set up as a federation of four provinces

with different histories but with one thing in common - that the Africans formed the majority of the population but they were dominated by whites.



1961: Albert Luthuli in Oslo.

As with Israel and Palestine the British had a lot to answer for. At the time of the Union Africans trusted that Britain would not relinquish sovereignty without guarantees of some rights - but they got nothing.

South African whites claimed a historic right to the land, but in South Africa as in Israel in fact they pushed out the local population.

Dutch sailor Jan van Riebeeck set up a refreshment station in the Cape in 1652. Later the settlers claimed that the Xhosa people did not migrate south to South Africa until later, but this was not true.

The Act of Union was swiftly followed by the Land Act in 1913 which gave whites, who made up one fifth of population, 87 per cent of the land.

Africans who formed the vast majority of the population were allocated 13 per cent. The land was without any of South Africa's rich mineral resources and it was fragmented and split up.

The movement of Africans into so-called white areas was regulated by pass laws. In the early years of union many of the later features of apartheid were present but in ad hoc ways.

To fast forward to 1948, a significant year for both Palestine and South Africa, the National Party unexpectedly won the whites-only election and quickly introduced apartheid. Apartheid schematised

and translated what was already common practice into law.

The first step was to introduce rigid population classification: so-called Bantu, Coloured and Indian and so-called European or white.

People's whole lives depended on how they were classified. A powerful short story by the African writer Alfred Hutchison, published in the left-wing magazine *Fighting Talk* in the 1950s, describes the chaos caused in the life of its protagonist when his classification was changed from Coloured to African.



1948: Palestinian refugees.

Land

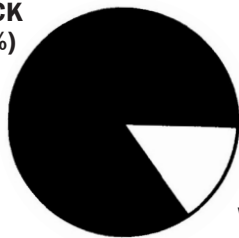
The 1959 Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act formalised the land situation and created a new political set-up. The Act deprived Africans of citizenship in South Africa. It set up a federated South Africa with one white state and nine Bantustans and allocated all

Africans to a supposed nationality group - Xhosa, Zulu, Tswana, Sotho etc., whether or not they had ever visited their so-called 'homeland'. Africans had no rights in so-called white South Africa.

Subsequently four of these Bantustans - Transkei, Ciskei, Venda and Bophuthatswana - were given spurious independence. The Bantustans were totally dependent on the white government for funding and were run by client elites

The total population of South Africa in 1983 was estimated to be just over 31 million.

BLACK (85%)



WHITE (15%)



Apartheid's most fundamental division is that of land. Whites are allocated 87%.

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hated by most of their supposed citizens.

Those living on the land as subsistence farmers were forcibly moved to the Bantustans and often dumped on the veld with basic housing and no facilities. It has been estimated that by 1983 some 3.5 million people had been uprooted.

Indians and 'Coloureds' had no land allocated to them. They were forcibly moved to segregated townships like Lenasia outside Johannesburg and Mitchell's Plain in Cape Town.

Interracial marriage and sex became illegal. Primary and secondary education under the Bantu Education Act became totally segregated. Higher education under the inappropriately titled Extension of University Education Act became almost entirely segregated.

People were pushed out to townships outside the main city centres. In Johannesburg the migrant multiracial community of Sophiatown was bulldozed.

Hospitals were segregated. Everyday life - transport, entrances to public buildings, parks - was strictly segregated.

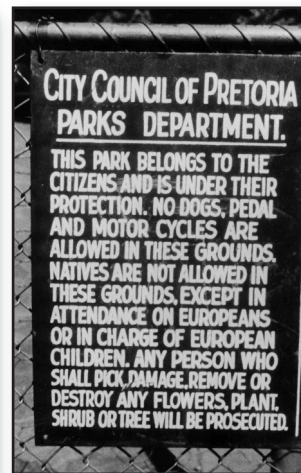
In spite of land segregation, hundreds of thousands of Africans lived in the new townships around the perimeters of the so-called white towns.

In the major cities Africans still outnumbered whites by two to one. All apartheid did in the major towns was to move Africans out of the centre to under-resourced and overcrowded townships. But they were only allowed to live there as long as their labour was needed, and as long as they had an employer who would vouch for this.

The movement of African workers was regulated by the pass laws and they had to carry their pass with them at all times. Every day thousands were arrested for not carrying their pass. It has been estimated that 12.5 million people were arrested between 1948 and 1981 for breaches of the pass laws.

In addition to those who lived with their families in the townships, many were migrant workers who had been forced to leave their families behind in the rural areas, with consequent problems of alcoholism, violence and societal breakdown. The crucial point was that - unlike in Israel - the whole economy was dependent on black labour.

Whites had one of the highest stan-



dards of living in the world; with the industrial boom of the 1960s there were very few poor whites.

Every sector depended on black labour: mining, manufacturing, agriculture, and domestic services. There was total job segregation and huge wage differentials.

The government set up factories in the so-called border areas, adjacent to the Bantustans, but this involved big transport costs. As the manufacturing sector grew more Africans lived in the major conurbations.

Because of this by the 1980s the whole system was breaking down. And the economy needed more skilled labour - white immigration could not provide enough. This was one of the underlying causes of the Soweto uprising in 1976.

In an attempt to provide more semi-skilled labour, the apartheid government tried to cram more young people into the existing schools - without spending more money for adequate school buildings, staffing and educational equipment.

Coupled with the growth of black consciousness this was a tinder box ignited by the decision that more teaching would be conducted in Afrikaans.

Also in the 1970s workers once more started to organise, and in an attempt to contain the new unions the government changed the law - a move which badly backfired. Repression on the other hand was horribly similar to that in Palestine.

South Africa professed to have a rule of law. But under the 1967 Terrorism Act detainees could be held indefinitely in solitary confinement with no access to anyone from the outside world.

As resistance grew, the government imposed States of Emergency in 1985 and 1986, and in the 1980s thousands were arbitrarily detained.

As in the West Bank and Gaza it was young people who were protesting, and were being picked up and brutalised. In the 1980s troops went into the townships

teargassing and shooting people - in many ways like the atrocities in Gaza in recent weeks.

Throughout the apartheid period, South Africa depended, as does Israel, on the West - on the countries of Western Europe and the US. This support took the form, not of subventions and aid, but of trade and

economic investment: this was absolutely crucial.

In the 1960s it depended as well on Western countries for arms supplies and military knowhow. Western countries, including Britain, were very quick to denounce apartheid, but very slow to do anything about it.

One significant success of the international solidarity movement at the UN was the mandatory arms embargo imposed in 1977, after the murder of Steve Biko and the banning of above ground organisations, including the Christian Institute, that couldn't be characterised, as the government was quick to do with other groups, as Communist. And there is a lesson there, that the campaign for an arms embargo appealed to a wider constituency than the campaign for boycott and sanctions.

Western governments only imposed sanctions really late on, in the 1980s, and very partial ones. In fact what happened was that the corporates moved out because South Africa was no longer economically attractive.

This was because of a combination of internal unrest and the international campaign. In the 1970s the situation in South Africa did seem almost hopeless. The South African government was intransigent, most South African whites - if not all - were racist and arrogant; the apartheid regime seemed impregnable.

Anti-apartheid activists did not think the end was in sight. But they continued to campaign - and the inspiration for that came from knowing that situation of total injustice and that people resisting inside the country were suffering so much more than those who supported them from the outside.

But in the end it came quite quickly - although it was very difficult. So ultimately the message is one of hope. I am sure the same applies to Palestine and this perspective should inform our discussions today.

Cuba 2018: unity and commitment

Sixteen of us from Britain went on the Cuba Solidarity May Day study tour to Cuba. At Havana Airport on the way back the toilets were blocked and there was no water supply.

By PAT TURNBULL

Not pleasant for the travellers - even worse for the Cubans who would have to unblock them. When we arrived at Gatwick the toilets were working.

But what did Cuba have that we don't have here in Britain? We found that out on our thirteen day visit to the socialist island in the Caribbean, ninety miles from the USA.

One of Fidel Castro's first announcements after his triumphal entry into Havana in 1959 was that the army barracks of the dictator Batista would be turned over to become schools.

Our first visit was to the Abel Santamaria School for the Visually Impaired in Havana, which is part of this spacious school complex set in grassy tree lined grounds.

Some 57 pupils of all ages from all over Havana go to the school: 44 are day pupils, 9 are boarders, and 4 are in day places. All the pupils study the same curriculum as the rest of the school population: maths, Spanish, history, English as a Foreign Language, science, civic education, labour education, computer science.

They have aids to help them, and special additional classes relating to their disabilities to help them in their future life. There are paediatric and ophthalmological services, psychiatric help and language therapy. Some pupils have additional intellectual disabilities.

The school works 24 hours. There are 47 teachers of whom 35 are masters in special education. Others are finishing university diplomas and PhDs.

All their studies are free - lifelong education is free for everybody in Cuba. The staff is very stable with an average age of 40.

The job is very rewarding; we were told how beautiful it was to see them learning the same subjects at the same time as other students, to see them start work at the same time.

Pupils visit their old school and say thank you. Not only beautiful for them, but beautiful for society.



Miguel Diaz-Canel (58) who succeeded Raul Castro as Cuba's President of the Council of State and the Council of Ministers on 19 April 2018.

Before that he served as Higher Education Minister and Deputy Prime Minister.

The teachers also do outreach work to support the 94 additional students who are in the general education system, right up to university, where 18 former pupils are currently studying. They train other teachers how to teach them and provide the necessary additional educational equipment.

We visited the Federico Engels School later in our trip, also a well designed school in plenty of space.

It was opened on January 27, 1978 by Fidel Castro and has a collage of photos of him in the hall. 2,500 students aged 15 to 18 study there; it is a vocational pre-university school for the sciences.

The school has 274 workers of whom

125 are teachers. There are more girls than boys at the school, and we were reminded that most of the top scientists of Cuba such as doctors are women, and that women make up 53 per cent of the Cuban national parliament.

We were also told that cleaning brigades of students clean the school, and that the uniforms worn by all students are available at nominal, subsidised prices.

The school was built in three years, along with hundreds of others, despite the US blockade and the limited resources. 500 smaller secondary schools in the countryside were also built.

From visits to the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples and the Cuban Workers' Confederation (their trade union congress) we learned more about Cuba.

Cuban internationalism

Cuba sent fighters to help the people of Angola win their freedom. Cuba took away nothing from Southern Africa except their dead soldiers, more than 5000 of them.

Cuba is a poor country and their only wealth is the Cuban people - they can't export money or raw materials.

But they offer to their friends their people, and they give it generously, in the form of doctors, teachers, literacy programmes, health care.

Cuba has 50,000 workers in 64 countries of whom 25,000 are doctors. The Latin American School of Medicine in Cuba has produced 20,000 graduates from everywhere, including students from the USA who could never afford to study in their own country.

The illegal blockade by the USA hinders trade not only with the US itself, but with other countries who would trade with Cuba - like Nigeria, as we later found out, who would like to benefit from Cuba's cheap medicines and favourable trading agreements.

Foreign banks have been fined. Cuba produces nickel, one of its few raw materials, but if a product contains more than five per cent Cuban nickel, it cannot be exported to the USA.

The lack of hard currency affects im-

Cuba 2018: unity and commitment

ports of raw materials, tools, some food-stuffs. The blockade forces Cuba to move away from the Americas to far continents. They pay triple the prices to import certain medicines because of the blockade.

When the USSR and the other socialist countries went down in 1990, Cuba lost more than 85 per cent of its trade.

Previously the socialist countries had paid prices for Cuban sugar and other products well above the exploitative prices offered by the leading capitalist countries.

Cuba had to adjust in a cruelly short time, and go through the 'Special Period in Peacetime'. Cuba's buying capacity shrunk from 8.139 million pesos in 1989 to 2.0 million in 1993.

To make matters worse, in mid 1992 the Toricelli Law passed by the US government gave the US President the power to apply economic sanctions against countries that have trade relations with Cuba, and prohibits trade with Cuba by subsidiaries of US companies located in third countries.

This law was a clear attempt to bring the Cuban people to their knees through hunger.

But Cuba has adapted and survived. In particular, they had to reformulate their policy on sugar where now the cost of production did not match the international price.

Land was turned over to other products. Whole towns had been built around sugar production, so there was a big cultural problem. People were sent away on courses, to learn to produce other things – vegetables, fruit, preserved foods, most of it organic. Largely the communities were re-orientated and preserved.

The Cuban economy is now run mainly on rum, cigars, nickel, cobalt and tourism.

Cuba was forced to think of tourism as a source of income in the 1990s, and open up to foreign investment.

It has also extended its private sector, whose role is to support public provision – 47 per cent of the state budget goes on health, education and social security.

Previously Cuba had no history of taxation, most of the product being used directly to provide services. Taxes on the private sector are still low, however, to motivate the sector. Private sector workers have the same legal employment rights as those in the public sector.

Cuba has strict anti-drugs laws, and for good reason. The country is caught in the middle between the main client – the USA, ninety miles to the north – and the main producer, Colombia, to the south.

A priority is to prevent the country from being the drugs haven it was under Batista, and to protect society, and the youth in particular, from the harmful effects of drugs.

As well as severe legal measures, Cuba has community based group addiction therapies, mainly to combat the effects of alcoholism. In one polyclinic we visited, two of the three psychiatric therapy groups were for alcohol addiction.

For more on this issue, there is an excellent book *Drugs and Lies - two aggressions against Cuba* by Juan Francisco Arias Fernandez, Editorial Capitan San Luis, Havana.

... in 1959 there were 6,286 doctors, solely in the towns and in private practices. Infant mortality was 60 per 1000 live births. Life expectancy was 60. There was only one medical school.

In 2017 there were 90,161 doctors, 46,302 of which were family doctors. Infant mortality was 4 per 1000, life expectancy 78.45 years.

Health Care

Cuba's second great achievement, as well as free universal lifelong education, is free and universal health care.

There are four elements in the Cuban health system: promotion, prevention, cure, and rehabilitation.

Family doctors are the basis of all this. They live in the community and know every household, all the home conditions, the state of hygiene, the risk factors for families and individuals. They classify patients in four categories: healthy, risk factors, sick, and severely sick or disabled.

In the small town of Vinales we met Dr Frank and Nurse Sandra, who both come from and live in the town. They have another doctor and nurse in the practice.

There are 22 doctors in Vinales, one for every 700 inhabitants. The doctor's surgery runs from 8 am till 12pm; there's an hour for lunch, and then until 5pm the doctor mainly makes home visits. One day a week there is a surgery till

8.00 pm and on Saturday it is open till 12pm. The doctor sees about 10 to 12 patients per day, mainly in the morning.

The Vinales polyclinic works 24 hours, and there is a hospital in the nearest large town of Pinar del Rio. At the hospital there is a social workers' department.

When a patient leaves hospital he or she receives a discharge certificate, and a social worker follows up with home visits.

Doctors and nurses can attend continuous upgrading courses which, like all education in Cuba, are free. A masters or PhD increases their wage.

We also learned from our visit to the family doctor that maternity leave in Cuba is a year on full pay.

There are day care centres for pre-school babies and children which are very cheap – 2 CUCs (Cuban convertible pesos), less than £2 per month.

Schools run till 4.30 or 5.00, and pedagogical assistants run free after school programmes after that. Sick pay in Cuba is 70 per cent of full pay. 80 per cent of medicines used in Cuba are produced by Cuba itself.

Polyclinics are the next stage up in the Cuban health service after the family doctor. We visited two. At one we learned some Cuban history: in 1959 there were 6,286 doctors, solely in the towns and in private practices. Infant mortality was 60 per 1000 live births. Life expectancy was 60. There was only one medical school.

In 2017 there were 90,161 doctors, 46,302 of which were family doctors. Infant mortality was 4 per 1000, life expectancy 78.45 years. There were 13 medical schools and two independent faculties. There is 100 per cent cover of all rural and urban areas.

The Polyclinic 'Luis August Turcios Lima' covers 45,442 people, including five People's Councils. It has 823 workers of which 211 are doctors, 192 nurses and 34 dentists.

There are three basic working groups each with 15 family doctors. There is also a day care centre for 40 elderly people open from 8am to 5pm. to look after them while the family is at work.

The clinic also has 86 collaborators from 13 countries: 42 from Venezuela, 25 from Brazil, plus others. 53 of them are doctors.

We asked about salaries and found out that a family doctor earns 1,400 pesos per month, and a nurse 900. We were assured that there was no shortage of mental health beds for severe cases. The Psychological Hospital in Havana has 800 patients.

The key to Cuban health is to give attention to patients at community level,

to offer universal care at that level, thus avoiding congestion in hospitals.

The justified pride in Cuban health care was expressed in the words: 'Our primary health care has no comparison' and perhaps a little sharply: 'Maybe the hospitals here are not as beautiful as yours, but we care about the people.'

We visited the Republic of Chile Cooperative Farm in Vinales and were greeted by the President of the Board, a parliamentary representative of the farmers.

This cooperative was created by Fidel Castro on October 6, 1973. On September 11, 1973 President of Chile Salvador Allende died heroically, fighting the coup d'état; that is why Fidel proposed the name.

The farm produces tobacco, beans and root veg, fruit and other products. It has 50 members, 39 men and 11 women, and a directive board elected every two and a half years.

It has an assembly every month and any decision passed by 50 per cent plus one vote is binding.

The farm also has a primary school and a secondary school, which together have 128 students, a family doctor, bakery, shops and a barber, provided by the state.

Each worker makes a profit on what he or she produces. The profit corresponds to the individual or semi-collective effort of the workers and their efficiency.

The farm has operated on this basis for fifteen years after it was approved by the assembly, and it has yielded good results. The farm produces mainly organically, with biological control of pests.

The average age of cooperative members is 54, and retaining young people is a problem. Farm work is hard in the tropics and the young don't like it.

Study in Cuba is almost compulsory, the president told us, and the young very often don't return, even though they go to agricultural college, and even though agriculture is well paid.

Cuba subsidises health, education, social security, electricity and transport – it cannot afford to subsidise agriculture as well.

Mechanisation was going ahead with equipment from the Soviet Union, and when the socialist countries disappeared, it was like the apocalypse.



Calixto Garcia University Hospital in Havana
In 2017 the hospital carried out over 3,500 surgeries of which, 1,500 were scheduled surgeries, said the Head of the Orthopedic Service, Dr. Juan Diaz Quesada. Dr. Diaz Quesada highlighted the advances of emergency and scheduled traumatology surgery. An average of 2,000 patients in 2017 were treated in the hospital's emergency ward in addition to 700 outpatients.

(From the Cuban News Agency [ACN] - 24 Jan. 2018)

Farmers had to start using the old methods again, like ploughing with oxen, which luckily many farmers had kept.

There was a lack of fertilisers until they saw they could produce their own, and also produce food for the animals.

There is a project for solar energy with a state company; the farm has given over eight hectares of land to them. The aim is to provide electricity to the national grid.

The president told us about another problem that has got worse for Cuba - hurricanes. Last century there were only four or five bad hurricanes. In the past eighteen years there have been fourteen.

Last year Hurricane Irma destroyed agriculture and damaged thousands of houses, surgeries, factories and farms on the northern coast when it hit.

'But we will never be defeated!' the president said.

They have a housing problem in Cuba. 90 per cent of Cubans own their own homes, so high rents are not an issue. However, there are not enough homes and almost 40 per cent of them need repair.

Getting materials for restoration and repairs is a big problem, particularly because of the US blockade.

But, unlike London, Havana has no homeless people sleeping on the streets. And unlike other poor countries, it has no shanty towns either.

Federation of Cuban Women

Our last visit was to the Federation of Cuban Women, one of Cuba's many mass organisations.

The federation was created in 1960 on August 23. Some 58 years on, there is a federation organisation in every one of Cuba's 168 towns and 15 provinces.

There are 81,000 grass roots organisations. This is how the federation learns the different problems of women in different places; they visit women in their homes.

The federation has more than 4 million members, nearly 91 per cent of women 14 years old or more.

It is self-financing with a subscription of 3 Cuban pesos a year (15 cents in dollars), but even that is waived if you can't afford it.

The federation gets no money from the government; it is an NGO, but not one against the government, because the revolution has given women the possibility of development.

Women in Cuba have physical, economic and political autonomy.

Despite the many ways in which Cuban women are supported, there is a falling birth rate. The federation proposed that there should be a modification in maternity leave so that it could be taken by the mother, father or grandparent. This was adopted in 2017.

All these are the achievements of Cuba - things to remember if you have to call the man with the plunger because your hotel toilet is blocked, or if you think the room is scruffy, if you find the food a bit samey, or if you get bored with people muttering 'Taxi?' as you go by. Your CUCs (Cuban convertible pesos) are contributing to keeping a little beacon alight in the Caribbean.

And our group was privileged to celebrate the first of May, Workers' Day, with 1.6 million residents of Havana in Revolution Square, watched over by Jose Marti, Che Guevara and Camilo Cienfuegos, and under the slogan 'Unity, Commitment, Victory'.

As Rob Miller of Cuba Solidarity said at the post May Day International Solidarity Conference: 'Cubans should be very proud – we are very proud of Cuba.' And as the Cuban speaker said: 'They have the power, but we have the truth.'

Short-circuiting history in China

BOOK REVIEW BOOK REVIEW BOOK REVIEW BOOK

The Slaves of the Cool Mountains by Alan Winnington

Review By **GINA NICHOLSON**

When considering the task of building socialism, one naturally thinks first of the problems involved in transforming capitalist society – the economics, the entrenched capitalist powers, and the ingrained attitudes in the mass of the people.

But additionally the new Chinese People's Republic, and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), faced older problems than capitalism.

In his astonishing and fascinating book *The Slaves of the Cool Mountains*, Alan Winnington told of the extraordinary conditions existing in the far south west of China, in the almost inaccessible Cool Mountains and along the border with (then) Burma; and the necessarily thoughtful and flexible approaches of the CCP workers to the situations they found there.

In 1957 Winnington travelled first – by horseback and (mainly) on foot - to the land of the Norsu people in the Cool Mountains. This was a seven-day journey from Kunming, the capital of Yunnan province.

There the People's Liberation Army (PLA) had come across a slave-owning society, with some elements of feudalism; a people fiercely territorial and imbued with a hatred and contempt for the Han Chinese.

Periodically the Norsu warriors had descended from their mountain fastness to capture Han Chinese and take them back as slaves to their own villages.

What had evolved was a system entirely dependent upon slave-owning. (See table).

Bondsmen themselves - and even separate-slaves - could, and did, also own slaves.

Apart from the nobles, most people lived at subsistence level and production from the land was very low. Usury was common and crippling – inability to pay debts was a way even Norsu people themselves could become slaves.

In the past the Han Chinese had

ruthlessly oppressed and exploited the Norsu and other peoples. Furthermore the Kuomintang, losing the war against the PLA, recently had pillaged, raped and killed in this area.

This had a mixed effect for the PLA, who were, of course, Han Chinese. They



1949: soldiers of the People's Liberation Army enter Beijing

were initially viewed with hostility and suspicion, but they paid for everything they needed and behaved well and cour-

teously. Thus people began, grudgingly, to trust them.

The CCP workers explained to Winnington how they had negotiated with the Norsu slave-owners a peaceful transition to more advanced social relations.

The young Chinese state put enormous resources into compensating the relatively rich so that they could maintain their standard of living while freeing their slaves.

It was bribery; but since most of the former slave-owners understood (a) that their own living conditions would improve and (b) there really was no alternative, it worked, albeit not without some difficulties.

Where a few nobles resisted, their slaves tended to run away or even, in at least one case, killed their owner's sheep and went on strike.

Of course, many slaves, once freed, had difficulty in developing initiative or a will to work. Dealing with this problem involved developing learner-households, often led by a CCP worker.

Nevertheless, by 1957 when Winnington visited the Norsu, the trans-

A system entirely dependent upon slave-owning

In one area - which was agreed to be typical - Winnington obtained the following figures:

	HOUSEHOLDS	INDIVIDUALS
Nobles	30	123
Bondsmen	825	3,737
Separate-slaves	358	1,426
House-slaves	0	955

formation was well advanced.

The Wa people, described as headhunters in the Encyclopedia Britannica, had developed a similarly protected social system.

Here, on the Burmese border, surrounded by jungle, their villages were as simple to protect as were the Norsu on their mountains. Each Wa village was surrounded by dense thornwood and could only be entered through a well-defended tunnel.

“This region was never under even nominal control by Chiang Kai-Shek or previous Chinese rulers, but because it is remote and marches with the north Burma jungle, large numbers of Kuomintang soldiers fled here as the People’s Liberation Army pressed down from the north and east in 1948 and 1949. Jabuei, the ... leader of the Wa, spent most of his time in those years organising the Wa people to fight and destroy these remnants, disorganised troops who hid in the jungle and made raids on the Wa villages for food, women, liquor and opium. He led the Wa in battles that wiped out hundreds of them until the Kuomintang forces in the area were reduced to fewer than 100 men.” (Chapter 12).

When the PLA arrived in this area they found a half-starved people who lived on the jungle most of the time. What farming there was remained extremely primitive.

Children went naked until the age of 11 or 12, and adults “wore nothing but a strip of cloth”.

Only about five per cent of the Wa were slaves when the PLA arrived. A good reason for this is that the level of production was so low that a slave could produce little more than was needed for his own maintenance.

The elders reported that slavery had only existed among them for some 60 years. Unlike among the Norsu, Wa slaves had full civic rights and could vote. Once a slave married he or she was automatically freed.

Headhunting was a problem, but not normally practised upon foreigners or influential people in their own communities. The sorcerers required sacrifices, sometimes of human heads, in order to mediate with the ‘ghosts’ to allow the crops to grow, or to cure diseases.

On one occasion not long before Winnington arrived, a young man, egged on by sorcerers and



Alan Winnington

Born in London in 1910, he joined the Communist Party in 1934.

He spent six years as chief sub-editor of the *Daily Worker*. In 1948 he was sent to China, where he rapidly became an internationally significant foreign correspondent, and he was with the victorious Chinese Communist Party leadership as the People’s Liberation Army entered Beijing in 1949.

From 1950, he was one of only two Western journalists to observe the Korean War from the North Korean side. His factual reporting of the experimental use by the Americans of bacteriological warfare outraged that country’s leadership.

He was branded a traitor by the media and in 1954, at the end of the Korean War, when Winnington expected to be able to travel home, the British Government simply refused to renew his passport. Thus, he was stranded abroad, unable to travel except within the socialist bloc, and lived in exile for the next 20 years. The decision to ban him from receiving a passport was not lifted until 1968.

Winnington spent his remaining years in the German Democratic Republic. He died on 26th November 1983 aged 73.

older men, went to a neighbouring village and cut off the head of a man living there. He expected to be hailed as a hero; but other wiser people, who were committed to the newly prosperous life being developed with the aid of the CCP workers, saw that this would make unnecessary difficulties with the neighbour village and set a bad example.

Headhunting died out fairly quickly

and easily.

As with the Norsu, malaria and other diseases were common and the sorcerers gained prestige and goods by claiming to attempt cures by supernatural intervention. The modern medicines which the Chinese government made available were useful in countering this superstitious practice.

Also like the Norsu, the Wa people suffered from feuds between families.

“Among the Wa it is traditional that you cannot settle anything without a drink, and you cannot settle anything when you are drunk. This leaves a remarkably small margin of time when anything can be settled. It is always easier to start a feud than to end one.” (Chapter 13)

The Wa had no respect for human life, and many coveted the modern weapons the newcomers carried. Life was difficult for a time; however “Communist work-teams were able to live inside the barricades of a few selected villages, build houses and settle down under the sighing bamboo” (Chapter 13) and gently pursue their work of bringing the Wa into the twentieth century.

The third people visited by Winnington posed a different problem from the two previous ones, who had already advanced some way in class society. “Happy-go-lucky and improvident, the Jingpaw people feast recklessly when food is there, drink, sing, play and sometimes fight, letting tomorrow look after itself.” (Chapter 18).

Only just emerging from a classless society – primitive communism – the Jingpaw resisted the introduction, for example, of payment for work done.

The PLA “had a stringent rule ... that not one thread of cotton [might] be taken from the public without payment. This rule was not a political asset among the Jingpaw. They regarded insistence on paying for things as a sign of ‘bad heart.’” These people feasted while anyone had food, and afterwards subsisted on picking “a bare living from the jungle”.

However, no doubt helped by contact with other more advanced people, feudalism was beginning to grow, and at a fairly rapid pace.



Alan Winnington with some of the slaves he met.

Continued on page 36

Eight weeks that transformed politics



BOOK REVIEW BOOK REVIEW BOOK REVIEW BOOK

Game Changer by Steve Howell

Review By **ALEX DAVIDSON**

Game Changer is an insider's account of the eight weeks from Theresa May's announcement of the 2017 General Election through to polling day, which as the sub-title of the book states, "Eight Weeks That Transformed British Politics".

When Mrs May called the snap election the Tories were more than twenty points ahead of Labour in the polls and the question being put in the mainstream media was "how big would her landslide be?"

In a dramatic election Jeremy Corbyn and Labour's campaign transformed British politics. Labour won its best vote for twenty years and the largest increase in its vote share since 1945. Far from winning a landslide, the Tories were left without a majority.

Steve Howell was at the centre of Corbyn's election machine. A member of the Labour leader's strategy group he was involved in all the key campaign decisions. From the outset he believed that

Corbyn's campaigning skills, enthusiastic army of supporters and inspirational message could produce a surge in support.

Understandably, the author deals with the political rift in the Labour Party but doesn't dwell on it.

He joined Corbyn's office just after the Copeland by-election when Labour lost the seat. This had triggered another round of rumours and speculation about another challenge to Corbyn's leadership.

He relates how the political rift had produced a staffing structure that was "almost unfathomable" There are two parts to the national Labour machine, the staff working for Corbyn in Parliament (the Leader of the Opposition Office, known by the acronym LOTO) and those based at the Party's headquarters (referred to as "Southside").

Following Corbyn's victory in the second leadership contest some sort of parity had been established between the two

parts of the organisation. This had given LOTO more say in the day-to-day running of the party organisation. However, as Howell reports "relations were not easy to say the least."

The book details the campaign, its highs and lows, and shows that Labour's message and campaign enthused thousands of people.

Key moments in the election campaign are recounted, analysed and given a 'behind-the-scenes' insight. These include the Labour Party's manifesto and its leak; the Tories' manifesto and its "dementia tax"; the Manchester and London terrorist attacks.

Labour's leaked manifesto

The Labour Party manifesto was the most radical in living memory and included promises to nationalise the railways, water and energy; scrap student tuition fees; invest more in the NHS, housing and schools; and stop foreign wars of aggression.

Before the manifesto had been finally agreed or officially launched it was leaked to the *Daily Telegraph* and *Daily Mail*, both of which ran with similar headlines: "Corbyn's manifesto to take Britain back to the 1970s" (*Daily Telegraph*); "Labour's manifesto to drag us back to the 1970s" (*Daily Mail*).

The leak gave the manifesto two bites of the cherry and meant that more people would be aware of its key messages. These key messages resonated with millions of people.

Commenting on this Steve Howell writes, "In attacking our plans, the Tory media was deluding itself about public opinion and doing us a favour. Their scaremongering about nationalisation, far from making us less popular, helped to achieve the opposite by connecting Jeremy with policies a majority of the public supported."

In terms of the leak, he comments that "If my theory is correct that the leak is more likely to have come from a Tory-supporting source than a Labour one, it failed spectacularly. The idea that the manifesto would be our Achilles heel was hopelessly wrong. Their tirade gave our policies more publicity than we could



Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn launching the party's general election campaign on 9 May 2017 in Manchester.

have anticipated in our wildest dreams.”

Printed copies of the manifesto sold out within days. Online more than 2.4 million people visited Labour’s website to read it.

Social Media

From the start of the election campaign Corbyn had been gaining about 50,000 new Twitter followers every week taking him over the million mark by the time of the manifesto launch.

The manifesto leak sparked a surge in voter registrations, from a daily rate of 50-60,000 it went to over 100,000 following the manifesto leak. Of those registering, a third were 24 years of age or younger and another third were 25 to 34 years of age.

Howell recounts one of the highlights of the social media campaign when Jeremy Corbyn “gate-crashed” Theresa May’s appearance on ITV’s Facebook Live. Jeremy’s post asked May why would she not debate with him on television.

The question and her lame reply was a massive hit on Facebook and Twitter. Jeremy’s video about it on Facebook was viewed 3.76 million times. His tweet racked up 2.69 million impressions.

Tory manifesto bombshell

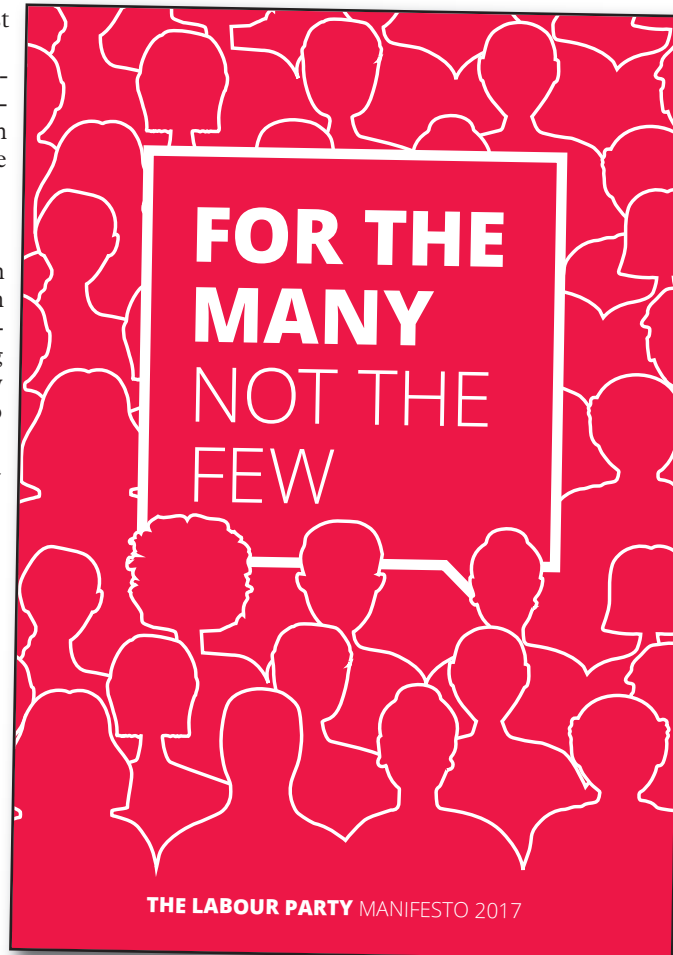
Two days after the Labour Party manifesto launch the Tories launched their manifesto on 18th May. It was extremely thin but it contained a bombshell in what became known as the “dementia tax”.

A proposal to include the value of someone’s house, rather than just their savings, when calculating whether or not they would have to pay for their own social care was greeted with an outcry.

In the afternoon following the Tory manifesto launch Labour’s team worked on their response and came up with the strapline, “Tory triple whammy for pensioners.”

Steve Howell worked on the key messages and graphics for the Labour press conference the following day and what would work on social media. What emerged was an image with the strapline above three giant boxing gloves saying on each in turn: “No triple lock”, “No winter fuel allowance”, and “Pay for care with your home.”

He used some of his digital budget to buy “dementia tax” on Google Ad-



Words. An advertiser can bid for a term so that their advert appears next to the Google search results when people look for that subject.

People seeking information on the Tory proposal would see at the top of the page a link that would take them to a Question and Answer site exposing how the “dementia tax” would hit people.

The Tories played up “inter-generational inequality” to justify the “demen-

“We stand for unity across all ages and all regions in our country.

“It is simply wrong to claim that young people can only be given a fair deal at the expense of the old, or vice-versa ...

“It’s not a war between generations, it’s a unity of generations to create a better society for all”

ta tax”. A section of their manifesto, “A Restored Contract Between the Generations” stated that, it would “require great generosity from one group to another – of younger working people to pay for the dignified old age of retired people, and of older people balancing what they receive with the needs of the younger generation.”

This cynical approach was a classic case of “divide and rule”. The real issue was the huge and growing disparity between a very small, hugely wealthy, minority and the vast majority of the people of all ages. The combined wealth of the 1,000 people on the 2017 *Sunday Times* Rich List was £658 billion, a 14% increase on the previous year.

In preparation for a speech by Jeremy Corbyn, Howell sent an email to Seumas Milne and Andrew Murray, Corbyn’s speech writers suggesting the speech should be on the theme of “uniting generations”.

He suggested that it should spell out that the Tories have made it impossible for young people to buy a home and are now “making their parents use their home to pay for their care”.

Two days after the launch of the Tory manifesto Jeremy Corbyn, speaking at a rally in Birmingham, said, “The Tory manifesto must be the most divisive for many elections. They are now pitching young against old.

“Their manifesto is typical of what a very well known person once called a nasty party, as they attempt to set one generation against another. For pensioners they offer a triple whammy of misery: Ending the ‘triple lock which protects pensioner incomes, means testing the Winter Fuel Allowance and slapping a ‘compassion tax’ on those who need social care by making them pay for it using their homes.

“Some claim that cutting support for the elderly is necessary to give more help to the young. But young people are being offered no hope by the Tories either – loaded with tuition fee debts, with next to no chance of a home of their own or a stable, secure job. We stand for unity across all ages and all regions in our country.

“It is simply wrong to claim that young people can only be given a fair deal at the expense of the old, or vice-versa ... We say that if we all stand together we can build a fairer Britain...

Eight weeks that transformed politics

“I find it deeply offensive that we should get into this discussion and debate. Older people who’ve made such a fantastic contribution to our society, and in retirement continue to make that contribution in voluntary activities in inspiring people, in supporting young people. And young people who seek the advice and solace of older people. It’s not a war between generations, it’s a unity of generations to create a better society for all”

Manchester bombing

On 22nd May there was the terrorist bombing of the Manchester Arena as thousands of people, mainly teenagers, were leaving an Ariana Grande concert. Political campaigning was suspended.

When campaigning resumed, Corbyn gave a speech about the atrocity in which he said: “Many experts, including professionals in our intelligence and security services, have pointed to the connection between wars our government has supported or fought in other countries and terrorism here at home ... an informed understanding of the causes of terrorism is an essential part of an effective response that will protect the security of our people that fights rather than fuels terrorism. We must be brave enough to admit ‘the war on terror’ is simply not working.”

The Tories and much of the mainstream media attacked the speech, with the *Sun* calling it “incendiary” and that it “will spark outrage”. The defence secretary, Michael Fallon, dubbed the speech “ill-judged” and proof that Corbyn was “soft on terrorism”.

However, a YouGov poll found that a majority (53%) agreed that wars the UK has supported or fought are responsible, at least in part, for terror attacks on Britain. This was more than twice the proportion who think they are not responsible for terror attacks (24%).⁽¹⁾

London terrorist attack

At 10.04 pm on 3 June, the final Saturday before polling day, the attack on London Bridge began when three terrorists drove a van into pedestrians on London Bridge and went on a stabbing rampage in the nearby restaurants and pubs. Seven people were killed and many more were injured. The three perpetrators were shot dead by police.

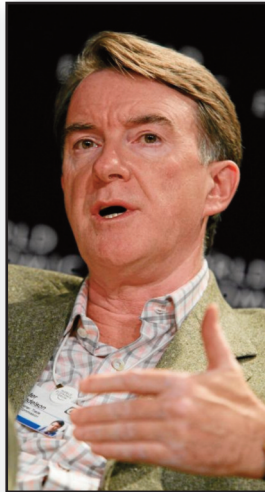
The BBC used a clip from an old Laura Kuenssberg interview with Jeremy Corbyn after the terrorist attacks at the Stade de France and the Bataclan theatre in Paris.

The clip had been used in a *News at Six* report nearly two years earlier which

Some of the many Labour right-wingers who oppose Jeremy Corbyn



Chuka Umuna



Lord Mandelson



Lord Blunkett

the BBC Trust had ruled as inaccurate and a breach of impartiality because it gave the false impression that Corbyn was opposed to the use of lethal force in such circumstances.

The clip’s accompanying text said Jeremy Corbyn was “not happy” with a shoot-to-kill policy “in the event of” a terror attack on Britain’s streets. The text was at odds with the BBC Trust ruling and Corbyn’s position that he supported the use of whatever force was necessary to save lives.

The page became the top trending item on the BBC website and was shared widely across social media by Tory supporters. Later that day the *Sun*’s website ran the story with the headline, “Jez gun row – Video of Corbyn saying he opposes shoot-to-kill policy rises to the top of BBC website in wake of London attack.”

Objections were raised with the BBC, whose reply said that the complaint upheld by the Trust was “not against the

online story but against the broadcast piece” and that they were “happy that we have broken no election rules.”

Jeremy Corbyn in a speech in Carlisle made his position clear: “I will take whatever action is necessary and effective to protect the security of our people and our country. That includes full authority for the police to use whatever force is necessary to protect and save life as they did last night ...”

He went on to respond to Theresa May’s comments following the attack when she had proposed “stamping out extremism in the public sector” and that there were difficult decisions to be made about dealing with extremism.

He said, “And, yes, we do need to have some difficult conversations starting with Saudi Arabia and other

Gulf states that have funded and fuelled extremist ideology ... We have to get serious about cutting off the funding to these terror networks, including ISIS here and in the Middle East.”

Howell reports that the Labour campaign bought ‘shoot-to-kill’ on Google AdWords so that people using that search term would be offered a link to Corbyn’s Carlisle speech.

Game Changer

The election result saw the Tories lose their overall majority rather than win a landslide.

Labour’s share of the vote saw its biggest advance from one election to another since 1945. In 2015 Labour’s share of the vote was 30.4%. In 2017 its share of the vote rose to 40%.

Peter Mandelson in an interview on the BBC’s Radio 4 ‘World at One’ the day after the election, said, “I was wrong (about Jeremy Corbyn). I am very surprised, an earthquake has happened in British politics and I did not foresee it.”

After acknowledging he had been wrong, and now adjusting to the new situation he said that “he remained unconvinced by Corbyn’s ability to win a majority down the line.”

This position was taken up in other interviews later that day by other Labour right-wingers, including Lord (David) Blunkett, who called on Corbyn to “heal the rift” with the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) by allowing it to elect the

The huge increase in Labour Party membership since Corbyn became leader, taking it to over 500,000 members, gave the campaign a huge number of ‘boots on the ground’, far more than the Tories.

shadow cabinet. Chuka Umunna, who had previously ruled himself out of a shadow cabinet ministerial role under Corbyn said he was now prepared to take one.

Jeremy Corbyn did not bow to that particular pressure and re-appointed to his shadow cabinet those who had been loyal and who had helped run an extremely positive and successful campaign.

Howell, in summing up the campaign, refers to the British Election Study, which tracks the opinions of 30,000 respondents before, during and after an election.

The study concluded that the campaigns mattered more than “any British election in recent memory” and that Labour had been successful in winning over a majority of the switchers (people who changed from one party to another during the eight weeks) as well as a majority of those undecided at the outset.

Whilst acknowledging that the Labour campaign was aided by the “wooden” performance of Theresa May and a disastrous Tory manifesto, he lists five factors contributing to Labour’s success:

■ Jeremy Corbyn is a great campaigner and “message carrier”. His authenticity, honesty, compassion and beliefs res-

onated with people. The Tories singled out Corbyn for attack on the basis that they thought he was a liability for Labour.

■ The huge increase in Labour Party membership since Corbyn became leader, taking it to over 500,000 members, gave the campaign a huge number of ‘boots on the ground’, far more than the Tories. Hundreds of thousands organising online and on the ground outplayed the Tories big money machine.

■ The Voter registration campaign led by Labour in which nearly 3 million people registered over the course of the campaign. There was a surge in applications

after the Labour Party manifesto leak and on deadline day (13 May) there were 622,389 new registrations.

■ Social media. Labour overwhelmingly won this aspect of the campaign as the Facebook and Twitter figures show.

■ The strategic decision, contrary to conventional wisdom, to tackle tough issues pro-actively.

This meant taking on perceived weaknesses such as Brexit, Jeremy Corbyn’s leadership and national security, believing that these could actually be strengths if re-framed rather than reacting defensively to the Tory mainstream media’s narrative.

This book, written by an insider in Labour’s election campaign, gives a vivid account of an outstanding campaign, which over-turned a twenty point deficit in the polls against all the odds, secured Jeremy Corbyn’s position as leader, weakened May’s position and prepared the way for a Labour victory at the next election.

FOOTNOTE

1. Matthew Smith, ‘Jeremy Corbyn is on the right side of public opinion on foreign policy’, YouGov, 30 May 2017.

Jeremy Corbyn is a great campaigner and “message carrier”. His authenticity, honesty, compassion and beliefs resonated with people.

The Tories singled out Corbyn for attack on the basis that they thought he was a liability for Labour.

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200 years on, why Karl Marx was right

In Trier in Germany, where he was born on 5 May 1818, and where he lived for the first 17 years of his life, the 200th anniversary of the birth of Karl Marx's was marked by major events and significant media coverage.

By **PAUL SUTTON**

In London, where he lived for twice that number of years, the anniversary went practically unnoticed, with just a few lines of press coverage in some newspapers and practically none in the electronic media.

Marx would not have been unduly surprised since he had drawn the conclusion from many years work with British trade unionists in the First International that the English lacked 'revolutionary fervour'.

By contrast, he saw German progressive thinkers as more ideologically advanced but held back by the slower development of capitalism in Germany compared to the UK.

British trade unionists were leaders in class struggle but lacked theory; the leaders of the German working class knew theory was important but lacked depth in the practice of organised class struggle.

To make a revolution theory and practice had to come together. Marx's life was a living statement of this truth.

Theory

Marx is best known as a theorist, the author (sometimes with Engels) of more than thirty books, studies, lectures and addresses published in his lifetime and half that number written but not published until after his death.

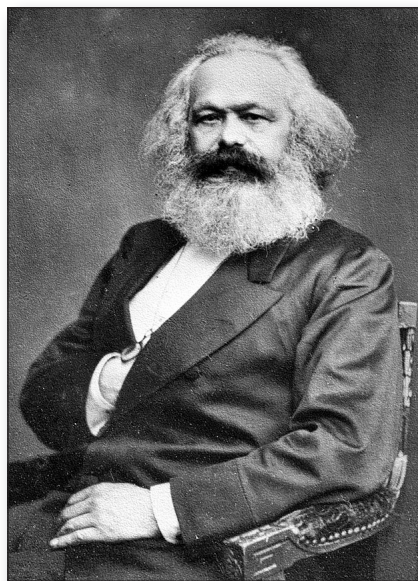
In addition, he wrote insightful political commentary, principally for German publications but also as a contributor to the *New York Tribune*.

Marx did not find writing theory easy since he was constantly revising his work, sometimes to the extent of writing completely new drafts to include new research.

That is why only the first volume of *Capital* (1867) was published in his lifetime, the others were written in part or as extensive research notes and pub-

lished by Engels after Marx's death. Other manuscripts remained unpublished until as late as the 1930s.

It is therefore important to see Marx's thinking as a continuing development which began with criticisms of philosophy and religion and moved on to politics and economics, encompassing all these elements within an approach that emphasised political economy as the key to understanding historical and contemporary change.



Marx in 1875

As such, concepts such as 'alienation' which Marx identified in the early 1840s were revised and given new meaning as his understanding of capitalism developed.

Similarly with 'class struggle' and the historical development of capitalism as outlined in *The Communist Manifesto* published in 1848.

Or even later still a more sophisticated interpretation of 'surplus value' than set

out in earlier works.

Marx is therefore not easy to read since there are many sources feeding his thinking and many reformulations of earlier ideas and concepts.

There is no simple formulation of his thought although he, as well as many since, have pointed to the 'Preface' to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* published in 1859 as setting out his ideas succinctly.

In it he sets out the main elements of 'the materialist conception of history' which emphasises identifying the mode of production and how it is changing as the key to understanding economic and social change.

This he thought could be identified with some precision and scientifically. By contrast, politics and other ideological forms were more difficult to determine although ultimately subordinate to economic and social change.

However there is much more to Marx than his 'materialism' and there have arisen in consequence many interpretations of what he wrote, some of which were codified into academically inclined 'schools of Marxist thought' or nationally based 'Marxisms' allied to various communist parties.

Marx loved controversy and no doubt he would have dismissed as ignorant and unfounded much of what was said by others to be 'Marxist'. However, what is clear from his theoretical contribution is his belief that his approach as it finally emerged was in some sense 'scientific' and thus capable of being applied by others if understood correctly.

It was this that distinguished it from other forms of socialism under discussion at the time and especially French socialism which was rooted in experiences derived from the French Revolution.

And it was this approach which his closest collaborator Engels sought to promote in his later commentaries on and development of Marx's theoretical work.

Finally it was also this element which was later emphasised by the communist party in the Soviet Union in its presentation of Marxist theory as 'scientific socialism'.

Practice

'The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways: the point, however, is to change it'.

These words written by Marx in 1845 also appear on his memorial headstone at Highgate cemetery in London. They point to Marx the practising politician, or more exactly to Marx the 'revolutionary'.

Marx began to seriously engage with politics when he was appointed editor of *Rheinische Zeitung* in 1842. He then promoted the interests of the radical German bourgeoisie and political reform to limit the power of the Prussian autocratic state. This brought him into conflict with that state and he was forced to move first to Paris and then Brussels.

These years saw him continuing his involvement with various German political movements but also a broadening of his theoretical interests to recognise the key role of the working class in capitalist development, boosted by his contacts with revolutionary groups in Paris and Brussels.

The product of this, and from 1844 his close association with Engels, was the *Communist Manifesto* published just as the revolutions of 1848 began sweeping through Europe.

Marx anticipated and expected a great deal from these revolutions but in the event they proved short-lived with the counter-revolutionaries gradually gaining the ascendancy and restoring the old



The first edition of The Manifesto of the Communist Party, published in German in 1848.

order, forcing Marx to flee to London in 1849.

There he became involved first with the many political refugees from all over Europe who had been forced out by the counter-revolution and then with attempts to revive the Communist League of which he had briefly been

with Engels a member.

Much of this political activity was time-consuming and ultimately unsuccessful. Marx therefore 'retreated' into serious study of political economy along with some regular political journalism, although he maintained frequent contacts with 'revolutionaries' throughout Europe, who would meet him socially in London.

Then in 1864 Marx was the leading force in establishing the International Workingmen's Association (First International) in London and emerged as its key figure as it sought to unite the labour movements across Europe and to chart the way forward theoretically and practically for the working class in its everyday activities.

This brought Marx into direct contact with revolutionary leaders in Italy, Germany, France, Belgium, Switzerland, Spain and Russia as well as with English trade union leaders some of whom were broadly supportive of its aims.

This collaboration was far from easy and there was much controversy but eventually Marx got the International to commit to his theoretical understanding of capitalism, including the aim of the common ownership of the means of production; and the necessity for political action by the working class to advance its specific interests.

Its high-point in 1869 however was cut short first by the Franco-Prussian war of 1870 and then the following year by the Paris Commune.

Marx like many others did not anticipate the Commune but once it had begun supported it although he thought it unlikely to succeed.

This unfortunately proved to be the case and when it was defeated Marx was again involved in supporting the many French refugees who fled to London.

He also wrote an influential analysis of it entitled *The Civil War in France (1871)* which explored some of the political forms a revolution led by the working class should take.

Increasing ill-health from this time on gradually took hold of Marx curtailing his political activities, although he did travel to Germany and Switzerland and right at the end of his life to Algiers to seek cures for his medical conditions.

During this period he continued to write and maintained if anything an even closer collaboration with Engels. He also followed political events in Europe, especially in Germany and even learnt Russian to better understand a country he regarded throughout most of his life as the bastion of reaction in Europe.

The political practice of Marx points to the many difficulties not to say major



Marx's birthplace, now Brückenstrasse 10, in Trier. The family occupied two rooms on the ground floor and three on the first floor. Purchased by the Social Democratic Party of Germany in 1928, it now houses a Marx museum.

200 years on, why Karl Marx was right

setbacks in making a revolution.

Failure is more likely than success unless all the conditions for revolution are in place. These can be anticipated in part but again may be overtaken by events forcing premature support.

In all circumstances however it is the working class which is to be promoted and the international potential of the working class to act together that must be encouraged: or again as set on Marx's memorial in Highgate 'Workers of all lands Unite'.

Legacy

In anticipation of the 200th anniversary a number of books and television programmes appeared in Germany.

In Britain several academic books were published and to its credit the British Library mounted a small exhibition featuring Marxist memorabilia, including his ticket for entry to the British Museum Reading Room which he used to research and write *Capital*.

However as noted in the opening lines the anniversary was deliberately ignored in much of the British media and if not, then Marx was contemptuously dismissed as irrelevant and mistaken, and his followers even more so.

This is a much repeated mantra but the very frequency of its repetition is testament to the continuing strength of Marxism as a critique of capitalism: "the most searching, rigorous, comprehensive critique of its kind ever to be launched. It is also the only such critique that has



**Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx.
Seated: Marx's daughters:
Caroline, Eleanor and Laura.**

transformed large sectors of the globe. It follows, then, that as long as capitalism is in business, Marxism must be as well." (Terry Eagleton, *Why Marx Was Right*, 2011, p. 2).

Eagleton has hit the mark here as he does in the rest of the book in which he effectively debunks those who seek to deliberately misrepresent and caricature Marx. Capitalists cannot escape Marx

however much they may wish to do so!

Or as a German author of a recent book on Marx put it: "a revival of Marxist thinking has been in full swing since the 2008 financial crisis. The economists on our business pages were only able to explain the market as a system that worked. But the crisis forced us to confront Marx's alternative: what if the markets are latently catastrophic?" (Thomas Steinfield in *The Guardian* 4/5/2018).

We now know, thanks to Marx, to economic history and to the evidence of our own eyes that this is precisely what they are!

Marxist theory of course has its weaknesses including a dismissal of the peasantry as a political force, an underestimation of the strength of nationalism, an incomplete understanding of imperialism and capitalist globalisation, and an unfinished political theory of the state.

But in the range of concepts Marx introduces to explain capitalism is a richness of theory that has not since been equalled. Similarly if Marx understood revolutionary change as necessary for human development he did not underestimate its difficulty or shirk from committed political practice to achieve it.

Marx was right far more than he was wrong. That cannot be said of many people 200 years after their death and is why he remains a source of continuing inspiration for those seeking a different and a better world.

Short-circuiting history in China

Continued from page 29

The problem that confronted the political workers was how to bridge the gap between this primitive way of life and what was going on in the rest of China.

Hostility to the Hans, belief in sorcery, and the lack of practical education through experience of class society, were among the obstacles the political workers had to overcome.

The Chinese state provided massive relief and aid goods. But the political workers felt that this society had to move in the direction of producer co-operatives.

"... rather naively,' said one worker, 'we had at first imagined that the primitive communal way of life – with collective working and division of the crop among those who work the land – would be helpful in setting up producer co-operatives. Actually we found that exactly

the opposite was true.'" (Chapter 19)

Added to nervousness of this "new-fangled nonsense" were low attendance at work and primitive egalitarianism.

Low attendance was for a variety of reasons. Birthdays were not counted every year, but every six days, and no-one worked on his birthday. Nor was any work done on the anniversary – similarly marked – of the death of a relative. Further holidays were for marriages and for "the time-consuming requirements of love-making." (Young unmarried people were free to engage in promiscuous sex).

Then distribution of the harvest according to work done came up against the staunch collective conscience of these people. Those who received more, by virtue of more work done, felt selfish and isolated; those who had less felt they were being robbed. Nevertheless, by degrees and because production, and therefore the general standard of living, did in

fact grow, the producer co-operatives gradually succeeded.

In his conclusion Winnington describes the method applied to the Norsu as 'Reform by Peaceful Negotiation' as a result of which there is an intervening stage before the advance to socialism, during which the land is privately owned and worked.

Among the Wa and the Jingpaw, however, it was possible to apply a different method, that of 'Direct Transition to Socialism' because among these people the class divisions were unclear or of little importance. The main task in such cases, despite the obvious difficulties, was of raising the level of production. Winnington notes that all over China minority peoples were undergoing similar processes to the three that he visited.

All quotations from 'The Slaves of the Cool Mountains'.