

# THE SOCIALIST CORRESPONDENT

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## CLIMATE EMERGENCY

Can capitalism save the planet?

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# COMMENTARY

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The continuing Brexit crisis is a crisis of the British ruling class and the future of Britain as a world power. It also threatens the integrity of the UK itself with the prospect of Scotland breaking away and moves towards the re-unification of Ireland. So while the media and the political parties are absorbed in manoeuvring round parliamentary procedures, Britannia, one way or another is sinking beneath the waves that it once ruled.

In *General Election in sight at last*, Alex Davidson explores the extraordinary events of recent weeks in relation to Brexit. No doubt there will be more developments as we go to press. Davidson also explores the background of Dominic Cummings, adviser to Prime Minister Johnson and architect of his strategy – *Dominic Cummings, Boris Johnson's éminence gris*.

The confrontational tactics of the Johnson government have served to unite the Remain majority in parliament to attempt to block No Deal. It has turned ruthlessly on its own MPs who dare to dissent, expelling recent ministers and Tory grandees and forcing others out. The government can't govern, so a General Election is now inevitable. Labour has been shifted further in the direction of Remain, but to win it needs to get the support of Leave voters as well as Remainers, so an election fought solely on the issue of Brexit would find it squeezed. The timing will be crucial, but it will need once again to focus on the possibilities offered by Labour's unifying programme to end austerity, transform public services, create jobs and provide opportunity for all.

## Climate Emergency

A lynchpin of Labour's policy is the commitment to a Green New Deal to tackle the threat of climate change, whilst simultaneously using

it as an opportunity to create new jobs in green industries and transport. That is why they dub their approach a Green Industrial Revolution seeking to achieve climate justice. In *Socialists and climate crisis* and *Can climate catastrophe be stopped?* Frieda Park and Brian Durrans explore Labour's policy in more detail and consider how progressive forces can be mobilised to prevent the destruction of our planet. It will not be easy to force capitalism to act as it operates in the interests of individual profit over collective need. In his review *Capitalism and global warming*, David Wickham assesses the work of Andreas Malm who analyses how, what he calls "Fossil Capital", initiated global warming. This model has been integral to capitalist development.

Trying to make capitalism do the right thing will be no substitute for state planning and intervention to create a green economy. This can ensure that individuals and communities benefit both by halting climate change and in their daily lives through better jobs, housing and transport.

## The Middle East

There are many tensions across our globe and threats to peace. In *Shifting alliances in the Middle East*, Simon Korner looks at the relationships of the significant countries at work in the region. The United States failure to achieve regime change in Syria has led to a shifting power dynamic with Russia, Iran, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates becoming more assertive. China is also playing a role through its Belt and Road initiative.

The US has seen Iran's emergence as a regional power, resisting the US, Saudi Arabia and Israel, as a particular threat. This was why it pulled out of the Iran Nuclear Deal so that it could apply further sanctions and ramp up the war rhetoric. So far Iran

has not caved in to threats or aggressive actions, responding in kind by shooting down a US drone and seizing a British oil tanker in response to Britain seizing one of its.

A measure of how far US power has lost its stranglehold has been Turkey's new willingness to collaborate with Russia. Turkey is a member of NATO and a long-standing ally of the US and is not moving out of those camps, but nevertheless this shift is significant.

The United States continues to pursue policies in the area designed to create conflict, war and instability which has allowed Russia to step in to support forces resisting US power and it is now playing a significant diplomatic role in the region.

## Austerity Britain

Back here austerity continues to take its toll, quite literally as life expectancy decreases. Quite reasonably we have come to expect that the lives of the next generation will be better than those of the one before. However, inequality and poverty are, for the first time, rolling back people's life chances as Steve Bishop explains in *Lives cut short by austerity*. Pat Turnbull shows how the lives of ordinary Londoners are disregarded in the pursuit of profit in *The London plan for developers or for people?* And it is not only services that have been cut, but people are now denied access to justice too through cuts to legal aid. But that is not the only way justice is denied to working class people. In *No justice, no peace*, Frieda Park looks at how the state conspires to protect the rich and powerful and deny justice to working class people. Grenfell, Hillsborough, Orgreave, Bloody Sunday, Stephen Lawrence, victims of Jeffery Epstein and more the list is long.

# GENERAL ELECTION IN SIGHT AT LAST

by Alex Davidson

There will soon be a General Election in Britain. The only question is 'how soon?' With a stalemate in Parliament over Brexit, and the government virtually unable to govern due to losing its majority, there will have to be an election.

The parliamentary majority ruling out a 'No Deal' exit from the EU and the Johnson-led Tory government failing to get the necessary two-thirds majority in their bid to call a General Election under the Fixed Term Parliament law means that the Brexit saga will continue. In the meantime, the Tory Party is seeing its sharpest divisions over decades come to a head. 21 Tory MPs have been expelled from the Party for refusing to support the government - these include previous Cabinet Ministers in the recent May government and several Tory grandees.

The Johnson government in coming into office, following the failure/ineptitude/shambles of the May government, immediately pursued their 'do or die' approach to leaving the EU on 31 October with or without a deal. Johnson hit the ground running as Prime Minister promising to exit the EU on 31 October with "no ifs, no buts", and announcing spending plans to tackle crime and increase police numbers, and promising more funding for schools and hospitals. This was followed quickly by proroguing Parliament and then the expulsion of Tory dissidents over their opposition to 'No Deal' and their disobedience. This scorched earth approach had all the hallmarks of Dominic Cummings, Johnson's chief political adviser, who had been appointed immedi-

ately following his assuming office as Prime Minister. Although Cummings claims he has never been a member of the Conservative Party he has had a long association, working for senior Tories including Iain Duncan Smith, Michael Gove and Boris Johnson. (see article: Dominic Cummings: Boris Johnson's *éminence grise*)

Dominic Cummings was the Director of the 'Vote Leave' campaign and is widely credited with its success. A Channel 4 dramatisation, 'Brexit: the Uncivil War', in which Cummings was played by Benedict Cumberbatch, tells the story of the internal dynamics of the Leave campaign in which Cummings resisted being ousted, out-manoeuvred Farage and Arron Banks, and won the Referendum despite the opposition of the Tory, Labour and Liberal Democratic parties.

There is strong opposition to Cummings and his approach from many Tory MPs. Sir Roger Gale MP said, "The fact that at the heart of No 10, as Prime Minister's senior adviser, is an unelected, foul-mouthed oaf throwing his weight around is completely unacceptable. I think that if the Prime Minister doesn't have Dominic Cummings frog-marched out of Downing St. himself, then chances are it won't be the Tory rebels or Mr Corbyn that brings down this administration, but Mr Cummings."

The blood-letting by the new Tory leadership may well mark the end of the decades-long bitter divisions over the EU and Britain's role in the world. However, the Tory in-fighting is not over yet.

## Churchill's Three Circles

The divisions within the Tory Party reflect divisions within the British ruling class. As a party they have been divided over the EU prior to its inception as the Common Market through its evolution into the EU, and this has continued with varying intensity ever since. British capitalism's declining position following the Second World War, and the advance of socialism, was the context for these divisions. There was the view that socialism in Europe could only be stopped by a strong relationship with the nuclear-armed and militarily superior United States. Whilst maintaining the special relationship with the USA, Britain also strove to play a central role in Europe, mainly through NATO, and at the same time tried to continue as a world power with its interests outside of Europe, mainly in its ex-colonies.

Churchill promulgated this 'Three Circles Theory', which held that Britain was assured of a unique influence in international affairs owing to her triple role as the main partner of the United States, chief Western European power and leader of the Commonwealth, the assumption being that all three roles could be harmoniously combined. However, by the early 1960s, it had become apparent that Britain was no longer strong enough to ride three horses at once and had to decide which of them was likely to carry it furthest. The decision to give priority to Britain's Western European interests over the special trading and financial links with the Commonwealth was taken by the Macmillan govern-



*Dwindling band. Boris Johnson at his first cabinet meeting*

ment although not without dissent within the Tory Party.

The Three Circles were effectively amended to 2 key circles (the EU and the USA) and a secondary third half circle with the relegation of the Commonwealth by Prime Minister Macmillan in the early 1960s. This was confirmed by Prime Minister Heath with entry into the European Community in 1972, although this was only after several rejections. Despite disquiet with the EU, and its moving to ever-closer political union, the hitherto dominant position of the British ruling class has been to remain in the EU.

However, the 2016 EU Referendum result threw all the political parties (and the dominant view in ruling class circles) into difficulties given that they had all been for remaining in the EU and expected to win. Prime Minister Cameron, whose idea it was to call the referendum,

resigned immediately, whistling his way out of Downing St as if it had all been a game. The ensuing competition for the Tory leadership exhibited their disarray. Cameron's successor, Theresa May, almost immediately, called a snap election, believing that Jeremy Corbyn was so discredited that she would win by a landslide. Both the Tory and Labour Parties accepted the result of the referendum and put it into their manifestos. The Liberal Democrats, contrary to their name, did not accept the result of the referendum and campaigned to remain in the EU. In the electoral campaign Jeremy Corbyn surprised the capitalist media and the right-wing in the Labour Party, reflected the anti-austerity feeling in the country and mobilised thousands of people whilst the Tories got it all wrong. The result was that the Tories went from a majority to a minority government, dependent on the Democratic Unionist Party

(DUP) in Northern Ireland. The Liberal Democrats were reduced to a rump in Parliament.

Mrs May then continued to lead an inept, incompetent and divided government. The negotiations with Brussels were pathetic, maybe deliberately, in view of the dominant view in ruling class circles, especially the City, to remain in the EU. The Withdrawal Agreement Mrs May brought back from Brussels was defeated three times in Parliament and finally she resigned. Boris Johnson, won the contest for the leadership of the Tory Party, seeing off some twelve other candidates, and became Prime Minister. He promised to deliver Brexit, 'do or die', on 31 October. Johnson argued that he would negotiate a new deal with the EU, removing the Irish back-stop, or would leave without a deal. However, he came up against the coalition of anti-no dealers (Labour, SNP, Lib Dems, rebel Tories) who passed a

motion to stop a No Deal happening on 31 October.

## The EU's position

With 'No Deal' off the table the EU has little or no incentive to make any concessions or a new offer to Britain on its withdrawal from the EU. An extension to Article 50, further delaying Britain's exit, suits the EU. It provides more time for pressure to build for a second referendum and the decision being reversed. Why would the EU want to do this? The EU has always made it plain that their red lines, the so-called Four Freedoms, the free movement of goods, services, labour and capital within the single market, will not be compromised. It has to be understood that the EU is a capitalist association, competing with other major long-established capitalist powers such as the USA and Japan whilst partnering with them against newly emerging capitalist rivals, China and Russia. The EU would prefer Britain, in its diminished role, to remain in their club as opposed to an Atlanticist arrangement between Britain and the USA. The EU will therefore agree to an extension of Article 50 beyond 31 October as the incoming EU president, Ursula von der Leyen, has already stated. [1]

The EU, under German hegemony, has pursued neo-liberal capitalist policies of austerity and is also pursuing ever-closer union. Replacing Jean Claude Juncker as the new President of the EU, Ursula von der Leyen, currently Germany's Defence Minister, is the longest serving member of Chancellor Merkel's cabinet. She maintains a family tradition as her father, Carl Albrecht, worked as one of the first European civil servants from the establishment of the European Commission in 1958, first as the Chef de Cabinet to the European Commissioner for Competition and then as the Director-General of the Directorate for Competition from 1967-1970. From 1976-1990 he was Prime Minister of Lower Saxony. Von der Leyen has long been a dedi-

cated advocate of ever-closer union of the EU. In 2011 in an interview with Der Spiegel, she expressed her preference for "a united states of Europe – run along the lines of the federal states of Switzerland, Germany or the USA." [2] In 2015 she was reported as saying, "perhaps not my children but then my grandchildren will experience a United States of Europe." [3] With this view she is at one with President Macron, who has been pushing hard for an EU Defence Force and ever-closer union along with Chancellor Merkel.

## The Labour Party position

It is an unfortunate fact that the Labour Party, most trade unions and even many on the Left would like Britain to remain in the EU, wrongly seeing it as a defender of workers' rights, a force for peace, benign internationalism and opponent of racism. The EU's record, on the contrary, is that of an increasingly interventionist imperialist force (Middle East, Balkans, Africa), racist in its treatment of migrants, a bulwark against any moves by member states to resist austerity (Greece) and has a continuing strategy of privatisation (eg the 4th Railway Package currently being implemented). The slogan of 'Remain and Reform' is only that, a slogan. The various treaties of the EU make it impossible to reform. (See article: Remain and Conform)

Jeremy Corbyn, Labour Party leader and long-time critic of the EU, has been corralled, due to the political weaknesses of his supporters and the overwhelming dominance of the right-wing in the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP). The Labour Party's original position of accepting the result of the 2016 Referendum for Britain to leave the EU has been eroded over the three years since the referendum to a position of seeking another referendum and to include the option to remain in the EU. Sir Keir Starmer, Labour's Brexit Shadow Minister, and an ardent Remainer, has worked steadily to

win this change of position. Remember his off-line speech at the Labour Party conference when he called for a second referendum?

The Labour Party's position against a 'No Deal' Brexit became the fulcrum of their opposition to the Johnson-led Tory government's strategy for exiting the EU. Johnson's argument was that he wanted a deal with the EU minus the Irish backstop but that to get a deal with the EU he had to retain the 'No Deal' card. The Tory proroguing of Parliament, thus limiting the time available, concentrated minds and led to cross-party unity (Labour, SNP, Liberal Democrats, rebel Tories and all the other Remainers) in what is a Remainer Parliament to oppose 'No Deal'. A cross-party resolution to prevent a 'No Deal' exit on 31 October from the EU was carried against the government.

## General Election on whose terms?

The Tory government's response was to call for a General Election but this failed because they couldn't get the necessary two-thirds majority required by the Fixed Term Parliament Act. The Labour Party and the other opposition parties in Parliament united around preventing Johnson calling an early election before 'No Deal' with the EU had been ruled out. A snap election would have been on one issue, namely Brexit. The Tories would have presented themselves as the only party able and willing to deliver Brexit as against a Remain-supporting Labour Party. In that scenario the Tories would have hoped to win back those who had voted for the Brexit Party and that Labour would lose votes to the unambiguously (never having accepted the referendum result) Remainer Liberal Democrats.

Right-wing Labour are content with the direction of travel of the Labour Party on the Brexit issue and

Tony Blair, and many others, who have lambasted and tried to unseat Corbyn at every opportunity, are now somewhat re-assured that he is more of a prisoner to their politics. However, that doesn't mean that they will give up trying to oust him.

By ruling out 'No Deal' the Remainers hope to gain time such that they can achieve their aim of a second referendum and reverse the decision to Leave the EU.

The SNP, who are arch-Remainers, were very happy to join those blocking a no-deal exit from the EU as a staging post for a reversal of the EU Referendum result of 2016. They are riding high in the polls and with the Tories in a mess over Brexit and the resignation of their Scottish leader, Ruth Davidson, they also see an opportunity for winning a second referendum on Independence. The Liberal Democrats, unambiguously Remainers, have recruited several of the MPs who formed The Independent Group (TIG), which then became Change UK, including Chukka Umunna and Luciana Berger, originally right-wing Labour. Chukka Umunna is going to contest the Cities of West-

minster and London constituency in the forthcoming election for the Liberal Democrats. Having chosen to move from Streatham to fight this seat one must assume that he shares the view that the City would prefer to remain in the EU. The Liberal Democrats, discredited by their years driving austerity in the Coalition government with the Tories, are now hoping to be re-charged as the main Remain party.

Interestingly, an amendment to the anti-no deal Brexit bill, in the name of Stephen Kinnock, proposed by 17 Labour MPs in Leave-voting constituencies, will bring back to Parliament May's original Withdrawal Bill with the changes agreed by the Tory-Labour cross-party additions before the breakdown of talks. This amendment was passed by default in the House of Commons because the Tories did not provide Tellers in a ruse to perhaps frustrate the anti-no deal bill. If the "May plus" Withdrawal Bill when put to Parliament were to be passed, however unlikely, or if Britain were to exit the EU beforehand, then the forthcoming election would take place in a different context.

In the coming election, Labour has to retain all the seats it won in 2017 and add another 64 to govern alone. In England and Wales, 35 of the 45 most winnable Tory-held seats and 16 of the 20 seats Labour won most narrowly in 2017 voted Leave in 2016. In Scotland, where the 2016 Remain vote overall was 62%, Labour won its 7 seats in 2017 narrowly over the SNP.

An election held on the issues of austerity, crises in the NHS, education and housing, food banks, zero-hours contracts and all the other matters afflicting the mass of the people would be more conducive to a Labour victory than that fought around the issue of Brexit, given the likely stance of the Labour Party.

[1] Otterman, P., "Ursula von der Leyen: hard Brexit would be massive blow for both sides", *The Guardian*, 18 July 2019

[2] "Ursula von der Leyen: Germany's next Chancellor?", *The Guardian*, 12 March 2014

[3] "Juncker calls for Collective EU army", *Deutsche Well*, 8 March 2015

# THE SOCIALIST CORRESPONDENT CONFERENCE 2019

## CAPITALISM IN TURMOIL – HOW CAN THE LEFT MAKE PROGRESS?

Saturday 9th November 9.30am – 5.30pm

Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL (please note the change of venue – still in central London)

Topics and speakers include :

### WORLD POLITICS

Instability, war and changing alliances

#### Brian Filling

- Inter-imperialist conflict
- US-China trade war
- Russia, the EU and conflicts with the USA

#### Pat Turnbull

- 70th anniversary of NATO

#### Simon Korner

- The Middle East

### BRITISH POLITICS

Britain's ruling class in crisis

Noah Tucker, Labour Councillor, St Ann's Ward Haringey (speaking in a personal capacity)

Gary Lefley, Chair of Chingford & Woodford Green CLP (speaking in a personal capacity)

#### Frieda Park

- The war in the Tory Party
- Brexit
- The future for Labour

# DOMINIC CUMMINGS

## Boris Johnson's *éminence grise*

by Alex Davidson

Given the significant role of Dominic Cummings in Boris Johnson's government as his Chief Special Adviser, or *éminence grise*, it is worthwhile to look into his background, beliefs, thoughts and actions.

<b>1971</b>	Dominic Cummings was born to an oil rig project manager and a special needs teacher. He was educated at a state primary school then Durham School, an independent boarding school, and later attended Exeter College, Oxford University.	<b>2007 - 2010</b>	Worked for Michael Gove, Shadow Minister of Education, as his Special Adviser. (Andy Coulson, [1] the former Director of Communications at Downing Street, forbade the employment of Cummings by Gove when the Tories came in to government in May 2010, and managed to keep him out until the end of that year. This was because Coulson knew Cummings would disobey orders issued by him and others from the centre).
<b>1994</b>	Graduated from Oxford University with degree in Ancient and Modern History.	<b>2010 - 2014</b>	In Government as Special Adviser to Michael Gove, Minister of Education.
<b>1994 - 1997</b>	Worked on projects in Russia.	<b>2011</b>	Dominic Cummings married Mary Wakefield, Commissioning Editor of <i>The Spectator</i> . She is the daughter of Sir Humphrey Wakefield and Lady Mary Cecil Gray. Her family own Chillingham Castle in Northumberland.
<b>1999 - 2002</b>	Campaign Director, "Business for Sterling", the campaign against Britain joining the Euro.	<b>2015 - 2016</b>	Director of Vote Leave campaign.
<b>2002</b>	Director of Strategy for Ian Duncan Smith (Leader of Opposition).	<b>2019</b>	Chief Special Adviser to Prime Minister Boris Johnson.
<b>2003 - 2005</b>	Director, New Frontiers Foundation think-tank.		
<b>2004</b>	Led campaign against North East Assembly. Following which he privately studied mathematics, physics and games theory at his family farm in Durham.		

### Cummings' Blog

Dominic Cummings writes extensively in his blog. [2] He is a great admirer of Bismarck, whom he often quotes. One of his blogs was published on 9 January 2017 in *The Spectator*. [3] It is a 20,000 word analysis entitled: "How the Brexit referendum was won".

He opens his 20,000 word piece on the referendum with a quote from Bismarck:

"In politics, there is the added fact that one is largely dependent on the decisions of others, decisions on which one was counting and which then do not materialise; one's actions are never completely one's own. And if the friends on whose support one is relying change their minds, which is something that one cannot vouch for, the whole plan miscarries... One's enemies one can count on – but one's friends!"

This quote, as well as referring to the *Vote Leave* campaign, will now no doubt be used by Cummings in reference to the more recent shenanigans in the Tory Party in Parliament.

Following the success of the *Vote Leave* campaign he was excoriating in his criticism of the May Tory government's handling of the matter. In his blog, "On the referendum No 25: a letter to Tory MPs and Donors on the Brexit shambles", [4] he wrote:

"*Vote Leave* said during the referendum that:  
1) promising to use the Article 50 process would be stupid and the UK should maintain the possibility of making real preparations to leave while NOT triggering Article 50 and

2) triggering Article 50 quickly without discussions with our EU friends and without a plan 'would be like putting a gun in your mouth and pulling the trigger... The Government immediately accepted bogus legal advice and triggered Article 50 quickly without discussions with our

EU friends and without a plan. This immediately created major problems... The government's nominal policy, which it put in its manifesto and has repeated many times, is to leave the Single Market and Customs Union and the jurisdiction of the ECJ. This requires preparing to be a 'third country' for the purposes of EU law. It requires building all the infrastructure and facilities that are normal around the world to manage trade. This process should have started BEFORE triggering A50 but the government has irretrievably botched this.

Having botched it, it could have partially recovered its blunder by starting to do it afterwards. No such action has been taken."



Cummings has contempt for Westminster and Whitehall and many of his comments are worth bearing in mind if there is ever a Left Labour government.

"This set of problems derives partly from the fact that the wiring of power in Downing Street is systemically dysfunctional and, worse, those with real institutional power (Cabinet Office/HMT officials etc) have as their top priority the maintenance of this broken system and keeping Britain as closely tied to the EU as possible. There is effectively zero prospect of May's team, totally underwater, solving these problems not least because they cannot see them — indeed, their only strategy is to 'trust officials to be honest', which is like trusting Bernie Madoff with your finances. Brexit cannot be done with the traditional Westminster/Whitehall system as *Vote Leave*

warned repeatedly before 23 June 2016."

He also does not shy away from other issues confronting the Tories: "Further, lots of what Corbyn says is more popular than what Tory think tanks say and you believe (e.g nationalising the trains and water companies that have been run by corporate looters who Hammond says 'we must defend'). You are only at 40% in the polls because a set of UKIP voters has decided to back you until they see how Brexit turns out. You only survived the most useless campaign in modern history because Vote Leave killed UKIP. You're now acting like you want someone to create a serious version of it."

Cummings was correct and the Brexit Party emerged, as the 'more serious version', winning the European elections only weeks after its formation. In his pointing to a possible Labour election victory he warned Tory MPs and Donors: "Every day that you refuse to face reality increases the probability not only of a terrible deal but also of Seumas Milne shortly casting his curious and sceptical eyes over your assets and tax affairs".

[1] Andy Coulson, former editor of the *News of the World*, was found guilty of the charge of conspiracy to intercept voicemails and sentenced to 18 months in prison on 14 July 2014. He was released five months later on 21 November 2014. He faced a retrial on two other charges of conspiracy to cause misconduct in public office but in April 2015 the Crown Prosecution Service dropped the retrial

[2] dominic.cummings.com

[3] blogs.spectator.co.uk/2017/01/dominic-cummings-brexit-referendum-won and, "on the referendum No 21: branching histories of the 2016 referendum and 'the frogs before the storm', 9 January 2017

[4] "On the referendum No 25: a letter to Tory MPs and Donors on the Brexit shambles", 23 May 2018

# SOCIALISTS & climate crisis



by Frieda Park

Articles in this edition of *The Socialist Correspondent* both point the finger of blame at capitalist industrial development for climate change and argue for the urgency of developing a broad alliance of forces to find just solutions to the climate emergency.

## Left leadership

To ensure that we are successful in preventing climate catastrophe and in ensuring that the measures we implement to achieve this can actually become opportunities to create a more just and equitable planet then the left must lead the campaign. If capitalism is left to its own devices then action will always remain limited by competition and may in fact fail to halt global warming with the most serious consequences. To protect corporate profits, individuals will be made to bear the costs. The current dominance of neo-liberal thinking, wedded as it is to the market and against the state, suggests an up-hill battle on this front. But if capitalism is struggling to address this crisis then it is a golden opportunity to argue for the benefits

of state intervention to regulate economic activity in the interests of all and for socialism as the system which is capable of acting in the collective interest of humanity.

Whilst there is a broad consensus that climate change is real and of the role of burning fossil fuels in that, the individual and national interests of some are represented by climate change denial as expressed by the likes of Donald Trump. This was exemplified by his announcement in 2017 that the USA would withdraw from the Paris Agreement on Climate Change Mitigation.

Yet even individual capitalists know that they cannot sustain profits in a scorched planet hence we are beginning to see a public discourse on stopping climate change. Sir David Attenborough was interviewed on the topic by Prince William for the edification of the attendees at the Davos World Economic Forum. Of course this was also a fig leaf to cover the lack of urgent action on the issue. It got plenty of publicity, however, as do the Extinction

Rebellion protests which have been happening in towns and cities across Britain this year: likewise the school climate strikes.

## Climate protests

The climate protests are welcome and positive mobilising people and taking the message out onto the streets, but they have their limita-



tions. To be successful campaigns need to be broader and focused on unifying demands.

Extinction Rebellion was established in 2018 by academics and its jargon-laden and sometimes incomprehensible values and principles reflect a certain liberal culture which is more likely to be alienating than welcoming whatever its intentions. For example, it says it “Welcomes everyone and every part of everyone.” (?) It believes the climate emergency is “beyond politics” and “left and right” and it wants the government to establish, and be led by, a citizen assembly on the issue, like a giant “well informed” focus group. It therefore, doesn’t really

say much about policy and believes that by mobilising 3.5% of the population in direct action it can achieve change. It has no democratic structure, but provides a kind of mapping diagram of how it operates. It is a registered company. 63% of its cash comes from crowd funding and the rest is from grants and big donors like LUSH, the bath bomb company which perfumes every high street and the Children’s Investment Fund.

Whilst it has publicised the issue in well-coordinated demonstrations and stunts, unfortunately that is all it is likely to achieve. Its single issue anti-politics means that it will fail to appeal beyond its core supporters or to make much progress. Like similar movements of the recent past it will peter out. In the meantime the media are happy to give it plenty of air time

as against campaigns which do see the matter as political and about social as well as climate justice.

## What about the workers?

Unions and workers in industries which will be affected by a move to a zero carbon economy are understandably concerned to know how such a transition will be managed and are unlikely to be reassured by Extinction Rebellion and others who say that is something for someone else to sort out. There are legitimate questions around how all this will be funded and what will happen to workers whose jobs may become redundant. Even the Green Party, which places itself on the left, fails

to fully address such issues and its programme makes no mention of trades unions.

Yet if climate change is to be halted and the left is to lead the campaign with collectivist and progressive solutions, if wide sections of the community are to be won over to see the advantages of a green new deal, then these vital issues must be addressed. In a welcome initiative the Campaign Against Climate Change Trade Union Group has produced a report entitled: One Million Climate Jobs: Tackling the Environmental and Economic Crisis. The report is supported by seven trade unions, including Unite and by the National Union of Students. It argues that it is economically viable to create a million jobs in renewable energy, improving energy efficiency

by insulating homes and public buildings free of charge and hugely expanding cheap public transport to get people and freight onto cleaner forms of transit.

Tackling climate change must not be solved at the expense of individuals and communities. Corporations should be taxed to pay for this, rather than charging us all more for power, transport, food etc. There need to be clear plans for workers to be able to move into green jobs with guarantees of work, training, salaries and respect for their skills. Workers and communities should be able to feel proud that they will be contributing to a green, sustainable future for their children.

Labour’s Green Transformation Policy and its different off-shoots, like the Green New Deal and the Green Industrial Revolution provide exactly this opportunity. It is founded on principles such as: dignity at work, social justice, equality and international solidarity. It spells out the links between the green transformation and jobs, improved quality of life in cities, protecting the environment, access to sustainable energy, housing, public transport, sustainable farming and the countryside, government planning and international action. Labour is not just committed to addressing climate change, but to achieving climate justice.

To make this happen Rebecca Long-Bailey, Shadow Secretary of State for Business, Energy and

Industrial Strategy says: “We will need a government that is truly representative and responsive to the public interest, willing to invest to safeguard our future, as well as unashamedly interventionist. We will need modern and participatory democratic institutions, rolling back the privatisations that have led to rip-off energy and public transport costs. Ultimately, tackling the environment and climate emergency will require the UK to reimagine its energy system, transport, agriculture, housing – its entire economy – so that it works for the many, not the few, long into the future.” [1]

[1] *The Guardian* 27/4/19



by Brian Durrans

As socialists, we are committed to saving the planet from environmental disaster. Humanity has 11 years in which to do that: just over a decade to start getting global warming under control. Would socialism make the job easier? Undoubtedly. But since capitalism is unlikely to be eradicated on that timescale, there is no alternative for socialists but to work within it while trying to gather support for a socialist alternative. Could people mobilised across the country for, and ideally in, a programme of sustainable reconstruction be won for socialist values and help win or consolidate

working class power? Certainly, if it were done right and the proper arguments made.

### It's already happening

From the late 1940s to the early 1990s, frustrating capitalism's inherent drive to war by blocking a nuclear holocaust created opportunities for socialist advance, even if, in the advanced capitalist countries, the left was too divided to take them. But, aside from losing the socialist bloc that once kept imperialism in check, there are two very important differences between

the Cold War and now. First, if a nuclear holocaust was and still is a potential catastrophe waiting to happen, global warming, according to the great consensus of scientific opinion, is a catastrophe already underway, which only swift, radical and practicable measures can arrest or reverse. Second, since the end of the Cold War millions of people have now experienced the war-mongering, austerity and polarisation of neoliberalism and, at least in the UK and to some degree in the US, there are welcome signs of greater unity, confidence and engagement on the centre-left.

In October 2018, the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the UN's highest-level body for assessing the science related to climate change, presented evidence justifying a new target for mitigating the rise of ground-temperature from 2° to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and revised its policy recommendations accordingly. [2] The difference of 0.5°C between the previous target and the new one represents a huge challenge but with solid justification. It represents, for example, the difference between retaining at least some coral reefs and losing them all; or between moderate and substantial migrations of species.

IPCC recommendations already take account of practicability, so for governments or other interested parties to ignore them or try to amend them to make implementation easier, affronts both reason and humanity. Whatever the target, for every country, sector of the economy, transnational corporation or private company that fails to meet that target in its own operations, others will need to do even more to compensate if the global goal is to be met. The moral argument is unassailable, and socialists must be to the fore in making it.

There is no guarantee, however, that most of the main players (nation-states, corporations) will willingly or even unwillingly do what is needed, however obviously it is in their own short- or longer-term interests. Some fractions of the ruling class in the US or Brazil (for example) appear indifferent to the longer-term consequences of withdrawal from climate-change consultation (Trump) or of accelerating the destruction of the Amazonian rainforest (Bolsonaro). We are encouraged to focus on individual or elite transgressions rather than on the unsustainable global neoliberalism they are locked into. Only powerful movements capable of deploying both at local and international levels, and very soon, might hope to bring neoliberalism to heel.

### Green New Deal

One grassroots option is to push the issue to the top of the agenda in any organisation by treating climate change as an emergency requiring special powers at the highest level – an explicit recognition that it is too serious for 'business as usual'. [2] The downside of merely bandying-about terms like 'emergency' is that the declaration ends up as an alternative, rather than a prompt, to what needs doing. Once such a declaration is made, which itself should involve mobilising opinion, those responsible must be held to account for acting on it.

Another option is to apply pressure wherever votes can be cast, in debates, for motions, in elections, so that people who are concerned about this set of issues can make a difference, whether in trade unions, co-ops, political parties, community groups, etc. One person might, for example, care most about air pollution, another about food quality, a third about housing or jobs. Provided campaigning is to the fore, the crisis encourages people to widen their knowledge of less familiar aspects of the global problem, grasp the logic of short-term profiteering and public austerity which connects them all together, and quickly appreciate why collective action is better than private moaning. No-one learns faster than an activist.

The best available campaigning tool for tackling the climate emergency is the Green New Deal, which links policies together so they can be easily understood. Labour is pledged to ensure all its manifesto commitments meet the climate change mitigation targets it would work towards in government and aims for more ambitious outcomes wherever practicable. For example, it is now looking to decarbonise the power sector by the early 2030s, nearly two decades sooner than the previous target date of 2050.

How this will be done, how our homes and other buildings will be

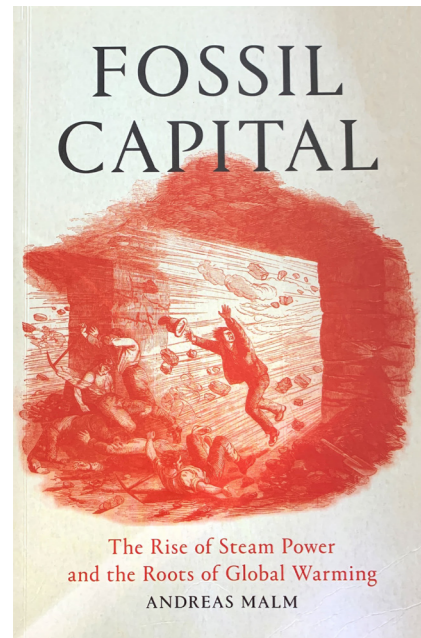
heated and sustainable and carbon-neutral transport systems put in place are being planned in detail by specialists in the shadow environment and climate change team, working closely with expert advisors inside and outside the Labour Movement. That much might be expected, but lessons are also being learned from elsewhere, including the US where the Green New Deal has quickly turned into a mainstream issue for debate and activism, [3] and France, where the Gilets Jaunes are a reminder that the cost of shifting from fossil fuels to low-carbon alternatives cannot be borne by those least able to afford it. Importantly, the working class and others hard-hit by neoliberalism are vital allies in the fight for a green economy, provided the government is on their side.

Labour's Green New Deal is (optimistically) one general election away from becoming government policy, an ambition for other countries to share. It joins the party's domestic strategy with addressing global climate justice by fixing a broken economy for sustainable jobs, fairness, security and a shared sense of purpose: for the many, not the few, across the world and yet unborn. In order to meet its deadline, neither the US nor the UK version of the Green New Deal can be a socialist programme. It is nonetheless an implicit rejection of a politics of greed and indifference, and if it can muster the support it deserves, above all from the working class and its allies, who knows where it might point us? But first, we have a planet to save.

[1] [https://report.ipcc.ch/sr15/pdf/sr15\\_spm\\_final.pdf](https://report.ipcc.ch/sr15/pdf/sr15_spm_final.pdf).

[2] <https://labourlist.org/2019/05/why-labour-has-pushed-the-government-to-declare-a-climate-emergency/>

[3] <https://www.npr.org/2019/02/07/691997301/rep-alexandria-ocasio-cortez-releases-green-new-deal-outline?t=1562232470653>.



# CAPITALISM & GLOBAL WARMING

FOSSIL CAPITAL - the Rise of Steam Power and the Roots of Global Warming

by Andreas Malm published by Verso 2016

review by David Wickham

We all know that burning fossil fuels is the primary cause of global warming. The first aim of Andreas Malm's book is to show that the introduction of coal-fired steam engines was a strategic decision by British mill owners to counter worker militancy during the industrial conflicts of the first half of the 19th century. It goes on to show how the steam engine welded an energy source to a specific set of social relations of production to create a self-sustaining capitalist totality, the Fossil Economy, first in Britain and then globally. Finally, Malm argues that unless we confront the vested interests that sustain the Fossil Economy, "business as usual" in the lexicon of climate change politics, we seriously weaken our chances of avoiding a global catastrophe.

## From cotton to CO2

Malm's choice of the British cotton industry as a starting point is entirely logical. Cotton drove the British industrial revolution. By 1850 Britain's CO2 emissions were twice those of the USA, France, Germany and Belgium combined: Britain was the historical heartland of global warming

Until the 1830s, the cotton industry was predominantly powered by water mills. Workers were housed in dedicated "colonies" located around waterfalls and near rivers. Water had its drawbacks,

primarily its "irregularity" caused by the weather. But it was cheap, unlike coal. Watt's steam engines were used as back-up when water failed. Malm shows how between 1825 - 1848, the ferocious conflicts between mill owners and workers drove the transition from water to steam. These were the years of the Factory Movement, Chartism and the first General Strike. When the workers won their demand for a 10 hour working day, mill owners could no longer adjust working hours to the rhythm of the weather: from now on they had to follow the clock. And that spelt the death knell for water.

The owners' response to the 10 hour day was to turn, *en masse*, to steam. Steam engines could be installed in factories built in "populous towns" where there were plenty of workers to replace strikers. And they were not dependent on the weather. Once steam overtook water, there could be no going back. Water's dependence on the weather meant that co-operative management was necessary to ensure each mill received its share. As competition between individual capitalists intensified, each needed control of his own energy source. Malm illustrates how co-operative management runs counter to the dictates of private property when he describes the failure of the Irwell Project in Lancashire, a system of reservoirs and sluices proposed by Robert Thom ("the Watt of water") in the 1820s.

...greater affluence in the west generates more pollution in the developing world at an ever-increasing rate.

After tracing the switch to steam in the USA which followed the British pattern, Malm turns to present day China "the chimney of the world". Once it joined the WTO in 2001, China became the destination of choice for investment by globally mobile capital in industries producing goods for export. What made China so attractive was its carbon-intensive energy and transport infrastructure built during the 1990s and its abundance of cheap labour. Malm highlights the correlation between low wages, high profits and high emissions concluding that, "If Manchester was 'the chimney of the world' in the 1840s, the PRC (Peoples Republic of

China) assumed that position in the early 21st century because globally mobile capital seized upon it as its workshop". Pollution has been exported to China.

China's example allows Malm to expose the hollowness of the eco-modernist idea that increasing affluence decreases pollution. The opposite is true: greater affluence in the west generates more pollution in the developing world at an ever-increasing rate.

## What now?

The final chapters of the book are devoted to climate change politics. Malm examines environmentalist demands such as the "Emissions Embodied in Trade" (EET) measurement system as well as Anthropocene theories. By targeting consumers or "mankind" as a whole, both approaches fail to identify those, a tiny minority of mankind, who made the investment decisions.

So what is to be done? Geo-engineering says that injecting sulphates into the atmosphere using a fleet of privately-owned planes to create a global parasol will slow down global warming. But what if it all goes wrong? Back on terra firma there are those who argue for a "transition" to Renewables (Wind, Solar, Geothermal, Hydro) as the solution. The problem is the word "transition" because, as Malm points out, replacing the current fossil infrastructure would require capital write-offs on an unprecedented scale. Some "transition". Renewables are certainly part of the solution. But they do have their problems, essentially the same problems as water - weather and geographical location. These problems can be solved if, says Malm, energy policy is subject to public control and international co-operation, something that Fossil Capital will resist with all its power.

For Malm, the term, Fossil Capital, is not limited to the energy sector

because "Energy makes everything work". Without it, no economic activity is possible. Thus Fossil Capital is a concept that describes a totality of capitalist surplus value extraction grounded in specific historical conditions.

With public control, great changes can be achieved. Malm reminds us how, during the Second World War, entire economies were subject to state planning around a single objective to achieve turnarounds in a very short time. However, he also reminds us, capitalism was not opposed to a war economy; the turnaround will not be easy. To achieve the Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change's target of keeping the global temperature increase below 2°C, Malm points out, the scientific consensus is that global emissions must peak by 2020 and thereafter reduce by 3% pa. This means a reduction of 5%- 10% pa in the developed world to give the developing world some breathing space. The movement combatting climate change is growing rapidly and globally. Our task argues Malm is to put this combat at the top of the political agenda.

The scope of Malm's book goes far beyond this review. Historically it covers not only 19th century Britain and the USA but also 16th century England, 10th century China, Islamic Andalusia and 16th century Egypt. Philosophically it reinterprets both Historical Materialism and Marx's economic theory alongside judicious use of insights from Lukács, Adorno, Benjamin and Althusser. Politically it provides a historical materialist framework for the climate debate which goes beyond the blanket demand to "change the system". It would have been instructive to have an analysis of nuclear power as part of the solution. Likewise, an analysis of Fossil Socialism, which Malm says no longer exists and is therefore not part of the problem, would have been helpful. These are minor criticisms of a masterpiece.



# SHIFTING ALLIANCES IN THE MIDDLE EAST



US navy ships in the Strait of Hormuz

by Simon Korner

The failure of the US regime change strategy in Syria is changing the power balance and shifting alliances throughout the Middle East – particularly affecting Russia, Turkey, Iran and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

## Russian influence

The most significant consequence of Syria's survival as a viable unitary state – other than for the Syrian people's peace and sovereignty – is that it has enhanced Russia's influence in the region both militarily and diplomatically. Russian intervention – at the invitation of the Syrian government – not only saved Syria from the fate of Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Yemen but allowed Russia to hold onto its important Mediterranean naval base at Tartus and keep alive the oil pipeline plan from Iran through Iraq and Syria, a project delayed by the Syrian war. This pipeline represents a direct counter to Qatar's western-backed pipeline through Saudi Arabia and Jordan – which seeks to displace Russia as Europe's main energy supplier – and

which Syria refused to sign up to. It was after this refusal that the CIA began sowing the seeds of war in Syria. A further Russian gain from the failure of western intervention has been economic. It has been awarded post-war reconstruction contracts by the Syrian government, worth \$200-500 billion, according to *Foreign Policy*.

Diplomatically, Russia is now regarded by both the UN and all the regional players as a stabilising force. The UN requested Russian help to bring order to Idlib – the province in north-western Syria that remains under Islamist control. It was also asked to help draft Syria's new constitution. Russia's diplomatic influence shows too in the fact that Netanyahu has consulted Putin on Syria – over tactical questions to avoid military clashes and larger issues such as Iran – while Moscow recently hosted talks between Palestinian parties. Russia's position in Syria has been helped by the vacuum left by Arab and Gulf states forbidden by the US

from normalising diplomatic ties with Syria.

Russia – and Syria – are actively repatriating refugees, most urgently from the hell-hole camp at Rubkan, which is near the American military base at Al-Tanf in US-held south-eastern Syria. James Jeffrey, special representative for Syria, has admitted that here, 30,000 Syrian civilians have been refused food, water and medicine lest the US be seen as responsible for their well-being in the future. By mid-June, Russia reported that it had successfully evacuated 14,347 people, mostly women and children, from Rubkan, part of the 1,299,977 internally displaced persons who have now returned to their homes in Syria. No other country is playing this role.

Further evidence of increased Russian influence is its proposal for a new security system in the Persian Gulf to include all the regional players, as well as the UN Security Council, the League of Arab States, the Organisation of Islamic Coop-

eration and the Gulf Cooperation Council, with plans to convene an international conference which would set up a collective security organisation. This runs counter to US attempts to create a western coalition to patrol the Strait of Hormuz: it has asked Germany, France and Britain to join. So far, the only willing partner in helping enforce US sanctions has been Britain, which has sent two warships.

Russia's strengthening ties with Iran, and its success in driving a wedge between the US and Turkey, have reinforced its position as the key power in the region.

## Turkey manoeuvres

Turkey's turn away from the US towards a closer relationship with Russia is a second major consequence of the failure to effect regime change in Syria. This was a change forced on it following Syria's recapture of Aleppo from Al Qaeda forces in December 2016 – which signalled the beginning of the end of the Syrian war. It is an opportunistic move on Turkey's part, making a deal with Russia in order to preserve its own position in Syria. But with 10,000 troops and 200 armed vehicles in Idlib province, and control over Islamist militias, Turkey also has real clout. This is the case not only in Idlib, but also in north-eastern Syria. Here, Turkey has been threatening an offensive to drive out the US-backed Kurdish YPG, which has links with the PKK, a banned 'terrorist' group in Turkey. For now, it has set up a so-called safe-zone with the US, in effect an illegal occupation zone inside Syria along Turkey's south-eastern border. Turkey says it will remove the Kurds from this narrow strip with or without US co-operation.

Overall, Turkey's long-held ambition to rebuild its lost Ottoman empire is being realised by playing off Russia and the USA. Its aim is permanently to annex Syrian territory and thus extend its so-called Middle Corridor. "We are not only just Turkey,

but also Damascus, Aleppo, Kirkuk, Jerusalem, Palestine, Mecca and Medina," Turkey's Interior Minister said recently.

It is in Idlib province where the changing relationship between Turkey and Russia can be seen most clearly. Both sides agreed a ceasefire in September 2018 and set up a demilitarised zone. The ceasefire deal, made in Sochi, agreed that if Syria held back its army from an offensive to retake the province, Turkey would isolate the extremist Hayat Tahrir al Sham (HTS) from the 'moderate' groups within the so-called National Liberation Front, a coalition of 11 Syrian Islamist militias under Turkish control. But instead HTS has gained ground and sucked in fighters from these groups – though in some battles, the two rival groups have joined forces against the Syrian army. 90% of Idlib is now under HTS control. Thousands of Syrian civilians are captive, effectively hostages. The sheikhs of several villages in western Aleppo have written to the Syrian government pleading for army intervention. According to *FranceNews24*: "[The Russian-Turkish buffer] was never fully implemented as jihadists refused to withdraw from a planned demilitarised zone."

Syria's long-withheld offensive in Idlib is underway, supported by Russian bombing to clear the highways – the Sochi agreement stated that it could move forward if the demilitarised zone was not honoured. But Syrian progress northwards has been difficult, with severe losses – made harder by Turkish troops actively reinforcing rebel forces in the province, and western powers calling for a halt to the Syrian advance.

The contradictory nature of Turkey's relations with Russia is illustrated clearly by its decision to buy the Russian S-400 air defence system, facing down US threats of "severe consequences", including sanctions against Turkey's military-industrial complex and the ending its F-35 fighter plane

deal. This appeared to threaten the US alliance with Turkey, an important NATO power that polices the Black Sea's outlet to the Mediterranean, as well as being part of the US encirclement strategy of Russia.

But Turkey's move is ambiguous. At the same time as buying the advanced Russian air defence system, it has also promised to buy the US Patriot missile defence system – so long as it can jointly produce it. Turkey insists it will keep the US and Russian weapons apart, to prevent Russia from gaining access to US stealth technology.

Clearly, Turkey is not about to leave NATO or the US sphere of influence. For one thing, the US's massive air base at Incirlik in southern Turkey would prevent it. And Turkey has longstanding military and trade links with other NATO powers. Germany, Italy and Britain are the largest importers of Turkish products and Turkey is buying surface-to-air missiles from Eurosam, a joint French-Italian consortium, as well as fighter plane engines from Britain, one of its main weapons suppliers.

It's worth remembering that Turkey's warmer relations with Russia are new. Only 4 years ago Turkey shot down a Russian fighter and its Islamist militias killed the pilot. Nevertheless, the thaw in Turkey-Russia relations does represent a blow to US influence, as underlined by the recent completion of the major TurkStream pipeline from Russia to Turkey that cements the two countries economically.

This US strategic weakening becomes more significant when seen in combination with Turkey's turn towards China as well as Russia – becoming a "dialogue partner" with the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation in June 2019 and, in order to secure loans from China and Chinese companies for infrastructure projects in Turkey as part of the Belt and Road Initiative, it has refrained from criticism of Chinese treatment

of Uyghur Muslims in Xingjiang, a region Turkey has traditionally regarded as Turkish (East Turkistan). In 2018 Turkish-Chinese bilateral trade was \$23 billion, making China Turkey's third largest trading partner, particularly important given Turkey's high unemployment (15%) and high inflation (25%).

Although Turkey is unlikely to move further towards China for now. Its shift is described by oil industry analyst F.W. Engdahl as a "pirouette" to the east rather than a "geopolitical pivot"; however, for the US to have allowed a major NATO partner such a degree of autonomy in foreign policy represents a significant loss.

### Iran emerges

A third consequence of the war in Syria has been Iran's emergence as a major regional power. By intervening in Syria, at the invitation of the government, Iran has consolidated an arc of anti-imperialist resistance linking Syria, Hezbollah and the Houthis in Yemen – as well as strengthening important links with Russia, China and Turkey. Its robust response to the bellicose US threats against it has demonstrated its growing confidence. It faces the latest version of an anti-Iran coalition – signalled in 2017 by major US arms deals with Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states worth \$350 billion, with the aim of building up Saudi and Gulf power and diminishing the role of the Palestinians, Egypt and Jordan.

US economic warfare against Iran, along with the unilateral US withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal (the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action), has led the world close to major war, with Netanyahu egging on Europe to act alongside the US against Iran, invoking British appeasement of Hitler as an analogy. The strategy of "maximum pressure", echoing the US build-up to war against Iraq, includes accusations that Iran is interrupting the flow of oil through the Strait of Hormuz. The announcement of Michael Pompeo,

US Secretary of State, that the US would defend freedom of navigation was an assertion of US military control over the region – including control over supplies to America's European allies. John Bolton, US National Security Advisor, has warned that "any attack on United States interests or on those of our allies will be met with unrelenting force." And US President, Donald Trump, threatened "the official end of Iran" (Twitter, May 19, 2019).

Yet the US has refrained from striking Iran, not because Iran's military capability is so great – the 2016



Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Vladimir Putin at the opening of the TurkStream pipeline

Iranian defence budget was \$15.9bn, similar to Turkey and Israel, and far less than Saudi Arabia, whose military budget is \$60bn – but because of its preparedness against attack and its clear willingness to defend itself. Iran's shooting down one of the most sophisticated US drones in June, estimated at costing \$200 million, with an Iranian-made surface-to-air missile costing as little as \$20,000, is a sign of its capability, showing it can hold its own by establishing clear rules of engagement. The US has come to understand that Iran is serious about using swarms of cheap missiles against other targets in the Middle East if attacked – including Gulf oil installations, airports, military bases and, of course, shipping. Its rockets could also saturate Israeli missile defences, allowing substantial numbers to pass through.

Iran's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Abbas Araqchi, has made clear Iran's strong defensive posture against US sanctions and pressure: "If Iran cannot export oil, naturally it will not just sit and watch while others continue to do so. If we cannot export, then others will not be able to either." According to a Goldman Sachs derivatives specialist: "If the Strait of Hormuz is closed, the price of oil will rise to a thousand dollars a barrel representing over 45 percent of global GDP, crashing the \$2.5 quadrillion derivatives market and creating a world depression of unprecedented proportions."

Neither was Iran's position weakened by the British seizure of an Iranian tanker in Gibraltar acting, according to Spain's acting Foreign Minister, Josep Borrell, on US instructions. Nor by the consequent tit-for-tat seizure of a British tanker, with both ships released following a British climbdown. British navy patrols in the Strait of Hormuz have been unable to reassure the UK oil industry that their tankers are safe. British oil companies are changing the registrations of their ships and removing the British flag so as to sail safely through the Strait or, like BP, using proxy vessels instead.

And there is a paradox. Iran has been let down by European weakness in resisting US threats over sanctions. The EU's Instex exchange system, which was designed to get

round US restrictions, doesn't apply to oil. Thus Iran is facing an estimated \$10 billion loss in oil revenue – hitting the most vulnerable in society, particularly in terms of access to medicines and food. In the face of US economic and diplomatic warfare, Iran has responded by lifting some restraints on its nuclear programme, enriching uranium above the limits agreed under the nuclear deal, and amassing stockpiles. In other words, US pressure has led Iran back to a policy of boosting its nuclear capacity (so far marginally), which it was willing to trade away for an easing of the American economic stranglehold.

Iran's military position has been further consolidated by its growing alliance with Russia, forged during the Syrian war. Russia has recently stated that, "Iran has always been and remains our ally and partner ... [and] contributes substantial efforts to bring peace to Syria and to stabilise the situation in Syria." Underwriting this alliance, the two countries are currently reinforcing their military links in what "may be considered a turning point in the relations of Tehran in Moscow along the defence trajectory," according to Hossein Khanzadi, Iran's top admiral. He added, "A joint Russian-Iranian exercise is expected to be held shortly... in the northern part of the Indian Ocean, including in the Strait of Hormuz."

As with Turkey's turn to Russia, it is important not to overstate the closeness of relations – after all, Russia sided with UN sanctions against Iran as recently as 2010. On the other hand, Russian backing is a factor the US and Israel must now consider in their war-gaming.

The same can be said of Iran's move towards China. Dependent on Iranian energy supplies, China has become a secondary victim of US economic warfare against Iran and has flouted US sanctions by storing Iranian oil in huge facilities in China, with the oil still officially owned by

Iran. This close China-Iran co-operation is reinforced by Iran's involvement in the Belt and Road Initiative.

Other Iranian alliances have consolidated the arc of resistance. Iran has delivered new weapons to Syria, where its influence is significant, and to Hezbollah, which it supports financially – though US sanctions have recently forced it to cut back on this aid. Like Iran, Hezbollah has emerged strengthened by its key role in the war in Syria, as well as by its contribution to the fight against ISIS in Iraq. Despite its financial tightening, it now has thousands of highly trained Special Forces and a formidable arsenal of precision rockets. It has invented and used a new high-explosive rocket, runs intensive courses on the use of its drones, and has managed to keep open weapons supply routes between Syria and Lebanon. Hezbollah experts are currently helping the Yemeni Houthis assemble Iranian-designed weapons to hit Saudi targets – a perfect illustration of the benefits of the anti-imperialist alliance. Nicholas Blanford, Atlantic Council senior fellow and expert on Hezbollah, described the group as "the most formidable of all the Iranian proxies in the Middle East."

### Cracks in the Gulf

Finally, though not directly a result of the Syria war, cracks are showing between the Gulf states, not only the Saudi quarrel with Qatar, but the shift in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) position as it faces up to the failure of the Saudi invasion of Yemen. "We want to be out of all this," an Emirates official said recently, threatening the Saudis with the loss of an important ally. The UAE announcement that it intends to draw down its troops from Yemen follows successful Houthi attacks on Saudi targets – attacks that could easily include UAE sites too. But the UAE is far from withdrawing from Yemen – its aim being to extend its influence. Through its proxy Security Belt militia in the south of the

country it is stoking secessionist violence in Aden against Saudi-backed forces, as part of a bid to secure the south of the country as its own sphere – in rivalry with the Saudi strategy for Yemen. A separate southern state would give the UAE control over the vital Bab-el-Mandeb seaway.

The weakening of its alliance with the Saudis has been speeded up by its concerns over the prospect of a US-Iran war, as the UAE sees Saudi hawkishness against Iran as a problem – particularly given that Iran is the UAE's main Gulf trading partner. Iranian-US tensions could result in the triggering of a wider Gulf conflict, says Ryan Bohl of right-wing US thinktank Stratfor. "An expatriate exodus could happen with few Iranian rockets. The Europeans and Americans working there would be the first to flee and that would cripple financial services and real estate."

In this light, it was significant that the UAE broke with the US and Saudi Arabia in refusing to blame Iran for the June tanker attacks in the Gulf.

### Threat of war

Overall, it would be a mistake to underestimate the war danger facing Iran – and likewise to overestimate the difficulties of US strategy in Syria and elsewhere. A wounded beast is at its most dangerous – so we must expect it to lash out. Yet the recent changes in the pattern of Middle East alliances suggest US hegemony is less secure now than it was before it intervened in Syria. As Hezbollah's leader, Hassan Nasrallah, pointed out in June this year, there are inbuilt contradictions in America's anti-Iran war-drive: assuming the US goes to war against Iran and defeats it, how could it continue to extract the huge amounts of protection money from the Gulf states it currently receives? It would have removed the cause of their alarm and with it its own hold over them.

# No justice, no peace...

## Why is it so hard for working class people to get justice?

by Frieda Park

We are 2 years on from the Grenfell Tower fire. It was an avoidable tragedy in which 72 people died, victims of a system which put austerity and greed before people. The enquiry into the fire drags on but we do not need to await its results to know that it was caused by cuts to services, reductions in building standards and the lack of accountability of the outsourced Tenant Management Organisation in Kensington and Chelsea. All this was done legally; all this was designed to serve the interests of profit not people. In the year following the fire the profits of Rydon, one of the main contractors responsible for installing the cladding, went up by 50%. Meanwhile thousands of people still live in unsafe flats with the same cladding that Grenfell had. There are still survivors living in unsuitable temporary accommodation.

This is also the 35th anniversary of Orgreave, where striking miners were brutally attacked and many wrongfully arrested by the police. The court case against the miners collapsed due to falsification of police evidence and alleged perjury. Despite the clear injustice done to the miners who were trying to defend their jobs and communities, the Tories continue to resist the call by the Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign for an enquiry. No doubt this is because the police were acting at the behest of the then Tory government under Margaret Thatcher in a concerted conspiracy against the miners and their union. In short, the British state has no interest in pursuing justice for the victims of its own crimes.

The war against the miners was waged openly and secretly with MI5

spying on the workers and acting against them through dirty tricks and smears. A vivid account of this is set out in Seumas Milne's 1994 book *The Enemy Within* (Verso). However, Tories were not the only villains of the piece. Labour leaders too conspired with the state to defeat the NUM. Robert Maxwell, who is infamous for stealing the pensions of his workers in the Mirror Group, was one of those. He had links to intelligence agencies, including MI6, the KGB and Mossad. Maxwell bought the Mirror Group, owner of the *Daily Mirror*, four months into the miners strike. It was widely read by miners and was Labour supporting. Maxwell himself had at one time been a Labour MP. Who better then to lead the charge against the NUM and its leadership and in what better newspaper? At the time the political editor of the Mirror was Alistair Campbell, now expelled from the Labour Party for voting for the austerity-heavy, Tory-light Lib Dems. Campbell personally penned an article claiming that a large donation received by the NUM from Soviet miners was unaccounted for. This was followed immediately by further false allegations that the NUM was being funded by Colonel Gaddafi.

### The (in)justice system

Wrongful arrests and imprisonment are described as miscarriages of justice, as though this were a minor blip in an otherwise impartial and well-functioning system, but this obscures the biases in laws and how they are enacted, and the establishment cover-ups to protect their own. The justice system can be stacked against working class people at a number of levels.

**1) The law itself.** Some laws overtly favour property, the rich and the powerful. Anti-trade unions laws are designed to prevent working class people from challenging injustice at work, winning a greater share of the wealth they produce and even just being able to organise themselves. Housing policy and the reduction in building standards disadvantage working class communities and were the root cause of the deaths at Grenfell.

**2) Access to the law.** Legal Aid was first set up in 1949 as one of the reforms which established the Welfare State. People were to have not only health services, education etc, they were also, for the first time, entitled to assistance to access justice. Like every other part of the welfare system legal aid has been subject to huge cuts. Originally around 80% of the population were covered by the scheme. By 2008 this had reduced to 29% and since the recession and austerity there has been further 80% cut to the budget. Certain types of cases have been particularly badly hit including family cases, benefits claims and asylum cases. There has been a reduction in social welfare cases of 99%, housing 50% and family cases 60%. The number of parents forced to represent themselves before the family courts jumped by 20,000 in 2013-14 to 58% of the total with many of them being mothers from poor backgrounds.

It was recently reported that relatives of the victims of the Manchester Arena terrorist attack applying for legal aid to be represented at the inquest, have been required to declare whether they have any



assets worth more than £500 which could be sold to help cover the costs.

It is not only a lack of resources which can deter people from seeking and getting justice. Any such battle may require courage, time and energy to pursue your case, things not always available to those with hard lives and who may already be traumatised by their experiences.

In these ways the state openly stacks the legal odds against the poor and the vulnerable in accessing justice.

### 3) Justice frustrated by cover-ups

More sinister have been the organised cover-ups where the state and/or the rich and powerful have committed crimes and the system has

conspired to drag its heels or actively frustrate the process of justice. The judiciary, civil servants, the police, army, politicians and the press have lied, stalled, vilified victims and done everything to protect their friends and the integrity of the state. Hillsborough is a case study of how the state pulled together to prevent the truth about what happened on 15th April 1989 from emerging. The campaign of the families of the 96 killed for that truth to be revealed also stands as a tribute to working class solidarity. The police and management of the football ground at Hillsborough blamed fans for the problems which arose. This was reported by the press, particularly the Sun newspaper, which printed outrageous smears against the Liver-

pool fans and blamed them for what had happened. Such is the anger in the city about its coverage that today, 30 years on, it is still difficult to buy a copy of the Sun there. Initially the deaths were ruled to have been "accidental" and the judiciary blocked subsequent attempts to get enquiries or to have the cases re-opened. The police continued to put blame on the fans. It took till 2016 to have the deaths ruled as manslaughter due to gross negligence. Into the 2000s police officers, civil servants and politicians continued to peddle the lie that the disaster was at least in part caused by drunken fans, this includes Prime Minister Boris Johnson who in 2004 also accused Liverpool of "wallowing in its victim status".

In Ireland, injustices perpetrated by the British army against the republican community in the North are legion with undercover activities of dubious legality and collaboration with loyalist paramilitaries. None was more notorious than Bloody Sunday. On Sunday 30th January 1972 the army opened fire on unarmed civil rights protesters in Derry. 13 people died on the day with a 14th dying later. Immediate investigations by the British government cleared the army of blame. Bloody Sunday has had two enquiries but it was not until 2010 that the 12-year long Saville enquiry reported and at last admitted that the demonstrators were peaceful, represented no threat and contrary to the lies of the army no bombs were thrown.

Though Jeffery Epstein will not now stand trial for the sexual exploitation of women and girls due to his apparent and convenient suicide in prison, revelations continue about his links to the rich and powerful. Those in his circle included Donald Trump, Bill Clinton, Ehud Barak and Prince Andrew. Virginia Roberts Giuffre who alleges that she was coerced into having sex with Prince Andrew also says that she was originally recruited by Epstein at Trump's Mar-a-Lago resort when she was a child. Epstein's accomplice in his cruel business was Ghislaine Maxwell, daughter of the newspaper magnet and enemy of the miners, Robert Maxwell. But will Epstein's demise spell the end of the search for justice? If the truth were

strike and Bloody Sunday and sometimes it is simply a disregard for the lives of working class people as with Grenfell. Sometimes it is to protect the corrupt.

The outcomes of campaigns have seen (sometimes) individuals face charges for what they have done, but it is the system that is to blame. The individual soldiers at Bloody Sunday pulled the triggers that killed innocent people, but the chain of command, the culture they operated in and their very presence on the streets of Derry were the ultimate reasons the massacre happened.

This is not about rooting out the bad apples. While the wealthy and corporations have preferential treat-

# LIVES CUT SHORT BY AUSTERITY

by Steve Bishop

The general expectation that the life chances of successive generations should be greater than those preceding them has been a widely accepted goal of social policy for almost a century. The assumption has been that we will live longer, be healthier and enjoy a greater standard of living than our parents and grandparents.

Even the brutal assault initiated by the Thatcher regime, on the post war social democratic achievements of the NHS, Council housing, comprehensive education, nationalised industries and local government, was given the ideological fig leaf that the benefits of greater wealth for a few would 'trickle down' to benefit us all. Such a smokescreen could not fool all of the people all of time but as long as enough people continued to benefit the myth of a benevolent, people friendly capitalism could be pedalled. The Blair/Brown years of Labour government did little to disabuse the population of this notion and, if anything, exacerbated the view that a general increase in wealth at the top would benefit those at the bottom. As life expectancy in general continued to rise this illusion could continue to be sustained. A decade into the austerity programme initiated following the 2008 financial crisis however, the landscape is changing.

## Life expectancy decreases

The British Society for Population Studies (BSPS) is a London School of Economics supported society with the stated objective, "to further the scientific study of biological, economic, historical, medical, social and other disciplines connected with human populations and to

contribute to the public awareness of them." In July the BSPS held a conference in London to consider the issue of "Stalling Life Expectancy", addressed by a range of keynote speakers, concerned that since 2014 life expectancy in the UK has fallen by just over a year for both men and women.

Early warnings of this trend were denounced by the Department for Health as "a triumph of personal bias over research", but in a climate where we are also witnessing a widening gap in life expectancy between the rich and the poor, this cannot be ignored. The trend, first noticed in 2013 following decades of increasing life expectancy, indicated a flattening out before starting to decline for increasing numbers, with the poor and the newborn the worst affected.

Danny Dorling professor of social geography at Oxford University, and organiser of the BSPS conference stated, "Our faltering life expectancy rates show we have now got the worst trend in health anywhere in western Europe since the second world war. To achieve that, we must have made a lot of bad decisions."

The trend in the UK flies in the face of improved life expectancy levels found in other parts of the world, including Hong Kong, mainland China, Japan and Scandinavia. The Department of Health claims that flu epidemics, triggered by harsh winters, were killing the weak and elderly, raising mortality rates and reducing life expectancies. However, this claim contradicts data which shows that five of the seven winters between 2011 and 2017 had above-



Margaret Thatcher, the architect of austerity

average temperatures, making them unlikely triggers of flu epidemics.

Recent data produced by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) supports the concerns. The ONS figures show that from 2006 to 2011, life expectancy at birth of females in the UK rose by 12.9 weeks per year, but between 2011 and 2016 the rate of increase dropped by 90% – more than in any other country analysed – to 1.2 weeks per year. Among males, only in the US was there a greater slowdown in life expectancy growth at birth than in the UK, where improvements dropped by nearly 76%, from 17.3 weeks per year between 2006 and 2011 to 4.2 weeks per year between 2011 and 2016. The trends in the United States are a salutary warning of the direction of travel in the UK, where a decade of austerity has had a dramatic impact upon health, welfare and social care services. The austerity programme pursued by the Tory government, initially propped up by the Liberal Democrats and more recently given a lifeline by the Democratic Unionist Party, has resulted in an estimated £30bn being taken out of essential public service provision in the past decade.

Many epidemiologists are now arguing that a causal link between austerity and early deaths cannot be discounted. Dr Lucinda Hiam, an honorary research fellow at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, has stated, "Life expectan-

**ORGREAVE**  
TRUTH AND JUSTICE CAMPAIGN



Hillsborough and Bloody Sunday provide two examples of a concerted conspiracy by state actors to cover up illegal killings and of the tenacious and dignified struggle of communities for justice.

**4) Corruption in high places.** Whilst Hillsborough and Bloody Sunday gave rise to their share of perjury and conspiracy, corruption within the state is also something which its agents act to cover up and of itself can lead to denial of justice. The murder of Stephen Lawrence, the failure to investigate it properly and pursue prosecutions at the time was in part a result of racism, but the role of corrupt police officers who had links to criminals, including the father of one of the killers, also played its part.

to emerge, the consequences could be devastating for the establishment where rich and powerful people feel able to exploit others with impunity.

## Justice and class

Wealth, power and the interests of capitalism exert a fantastic amount of influence over the justice system from the formation of laws to how the system operates. This is used to systematically prevent both working-class organisation and individuals and groups from accessing justice. Through formal and informal connections state actors and wealthy individuals operate to suppress the truth and disadvantage the powerless. Sometimes this is overtly political as with the miners

movement and access to justice and the state conspires to support them, then we will continue to see terrible injustices done to working class communities and individuals. Whilst campaigns and individuals have been represented by committed lawyers determined to achieve justice, critical to the ability of working class people to right wrongs has also been their capacity to organise and fight through their trade unions and community organisations. These have been battles in which much has been learned about the true nature of the state and the interests it represents.



Billboard outside mansions in Rich Lane, Kensington and Chelsea. Photo by Paul Farmer

cies started to stall just after the austerity cuts were introduced. That alone does not prove the latter was the trigger for the former. However, no other plausible suggestion has since survived scrutiny, so it is hard not to conclude austerity cuts are involved.”

In US cities such as Baltimore the difference in life expectancy between richer and poorer districts can be as much as 20 years. Not far behind, in the UK the same comparison for Kensington and Chelsea reveals a life expectancy difference of 16 years.

According to the 2019 edition of the Bloomberg Healthiest Country Index, Canada’s 16th-place ranking far surpassed the United States, which dropped slightly to 35th place. Life expectancy in the US has been trending lower due to deaths from drug overdoses and suicides. It is also worth noting that Cuba was placed five spots above the US, making it the only nation not classified as “high income” by the World Bank to be ranked so far up. The UK came in at 19th behind many other European nations including Spain, Italy, France and the Netherlands.

### Inequality

In the UK it can be no coincidence that unearned income, from property, interest, dividends and investments rose by 40% between 2010-11

and 2015-16. For the top 10% that has meant an annual average increase in unearned income of £38,000 a year at a time when household income averaged £25,000 in 2015-16, according to latest HMRC data. This data goes on to show that more than a quarter of the population had no unearned income, relying entirely on paid employment, the value of which fell in real terms over the period, not paying enough to keep up with inflation. Those with unearned income outside of the top 10% made just £28 on average, modest income on some modest savings, a far cry from the figures earned by those at the top.

This disparity in income is inevitably reflected in a disparity in life chances as the tax system rewards those with wealth, rather than those who work to create wealth. Poor life chances mean less chance of succeeding in education, more chance of engaging in risk taking behaviour, indulging in poor diet choices, succumbing to the escapism of drugs and alcohol and, therefore, a greater likelihood of reduced life expectancy.

It would not be difficult to predict which areas of Baltimore or Kensington and Chelsea would house those enjoying the fruits of massive unearned income dividends and those getting by on average household income. For those on low pay or benefits the scenario is even more bleak.

Labour Shadow Chancellor, John McDonnell, commenting on the HMRC figures stated, “An economic model that rewards wealth creators less than wealth extractors is not sustainable economically or morally.”

Clearly a Conservative government of any hue is not going to change this situation. Having established a corporation tax haven based low wage, low regulation economy, precisely to make life easier for transnational corporations and the City of London, they will not change their spots, however many election friendly promises Boris Johnson may make about investing in the Northern Powerhouse.

A Labour government under Jeremy Corbyn fired by a manifesto addressing the needs of the many not the few, as in 2017, could begin to turn the tide with mass popular support. The wealth divide in the UK is increasingly in danger of becoming an even greater health divide than at present. Redressing that imbalance can only begin with better life chances, an economy which guarantees job security and a health and social care system which truly provides support freely from cradle to grave.

Even that would only be a start, tiny steps on the road to an economy which guarantees peace, health, homes and jobs for all its citizens, but steps that must be taken.

# The London Plan

## for developers or for people?

by Pat Turnbull

For five months this year the draft London Plan has been through an Examination in Public. This is the last stage of a process which started about four years ago. In it a team of three government appointed planning inspectors has been sitting in City Hall, headquarters of the Greater London Authority and the Mayor of London, listening to planning employees, representatives of local councils, developers and speakers from community organisations like the London Tenants’ Federation and planning network Just Space putting their various views on the draft as presented. It is the job of the Inspectors to decide whether the plan is ‘sound’. It is up to the Inspectors to decide that on the basis of various criteria, among them the National Planning Policy Framework, which is a government policy. To what extent do they, however, have to consider Londoners’ actual real needs?

One problem with trying to plan in the anarchy of capitalism is that in four years a lot can change. Also, there is a great deal that planners at their desks in City Hall have no control over. This is particularly true with the run-down of the local state and the rise of unchecked market forces.

### Unaffordable housing

The biggest problem faced by Londoners is the severe shortage of housing at a cost most people can afford. The rich from all over the world are looking for a place to park their money, as an investment, or even as a vehicle for money laundering and British developers are only too keen to oblige. So every space in London, it seems, is being

covered with towers of expensive flats, because housing cheap enough to meet Londoners’ needs doesn’t make the same huge profit.

This year is the hundredth anniversary of the first council housing in Britain. In 1919 Parliament passed the Housing Act which promised government subsidies to help finance the construction of 500,000 houses within three years. It is also the fortieth anniversary of the 1979 election of Margaret Thatcher, whose policies had such a disastrous effect on housing provision. By giving council

the private rental market so that there is no limit on rents and no security for tenants.

The current conservative government and its previous coalition with the Liberal Democrats have also slashed funds to local councils, who are now scraping around for every penny. By 2020, local authorities will have faced a reduction to core funding from the Government of nearly £16 billion over the preceding decade. That means that councils will have lost 60p out of every £1 that the Government had provided to spend on local services in



tenants huge discounts to buy their rented homes, she initiated a process which has ended up with forty per cent of ex-council flats sold through right-to-buy being rented out more expensively by private landlords, as the Commons Communities and Local Government select committee found in 2016. At the same time the Thatcher government de-regulated

the last eight years. In this situation many encourage private house building which brings in extra government funding and council tax. They don’t have the wherewithal to build homes themselves, and if they do right-to-buy means they can be sold on the private market within three years, or even sooner, if the tenant of the new home was already a council tenant.

One recent new council home was sold within seven hours.

So planners are in an unenviable situation but, all the same, critics of the latest London Plan feel strongly that they could have done better.

### Private developers

To begin with, there is an unhealthy emphasis on growth, named 'Good Growth' in the policies, which only begs the question, good for whom? A high target of overall figures for house building has been set on the basis of a prediction that London will grow by 2041 to 10.8 million. There aren't really any sound bases for this prediction and in any case, who will these people be who swell London's population? With the type of housing being built, mainly as an investment or a pied-a-terre, low paid workers will continue to be living in cramped, expensive and poor quality private rented homes, in hostels or on the streets and in the parks, like one local Portuguese catering worker.

Certain standards for house building have been loosened in the draft London Plan. The density matrix which has applied up to now will be abolished. Instead, judgments about how dense building should be will be based on 'good design', a notoriously subjective criterion. London Authority planners have argued that the density matrix is pointless as it has not been adhered to. London community planning network Just Space has countered that the answer is to enforce it, not to abolish it.

London is now scattered with a patchwork of 47 Opportunity Areas. These act as magnets to developers who want to cover every inch with tall buildings to get the maximum profit from London's ridiculously high land values. Restrictions are weakened in these Opportunity Areas to make this easier. This is at the cost of everything that is already there, because the area is almost treated like a blank canvas. Cheap(ish) rented housing, cheap workspace, public

leisure facilities, bits of green space, everything is up for grabs.

Councils' powers to resist have been weakened. If developers appeal a planning refusal, it costs councils money and the developers often win. Council planning committees have become very timid in turning applications down, even where it is clear that all it is is a developer's money grab. There is also the incentive that every flat built brings some kind of income to the council, whether it meets the real needs of local people or not.

Yet there is still this pretence of planning. The Greater London Authority's own Strategic Housing Market Assessment indicates that 78 per cent of the backlog for house building is for social rented housing - what used to be council housing. The London Plan policy is to build 66,000 new homes each year, of which 43,000 would be 'genuinely affordable' (whatever that may turn out to mean). Up to now the average numbers built per year has been about 30,000; developers deliberately restrict the numbers to keep the cost of housing high. So the planners are trying to persuade private developers to build a few more 'affordable' units in order to avoid having to go through a viability assessment. In fact, with their huge expensive teams of consultants, the developers run rings round depleted council planning departments and get permission for practically anything anyway.

There is a further problem with this emphasis on growth at all costs. These ambitious figures for house building have been broken up and fed down to the local councils so now the councils are scraping about for bits of land on which to meet these targets. Housing is being crammed in ever closer, standards of daylight, sunlight and green space are all threatened and most of it still too expensive to meet ordinary Londoners' needs. Take the term 'affordable'; this includes, for example, London Living

Rent homes aimed at people with a household income of up to £60,000 and shared ownership homes aimed at households with an income of up to £90,000. The median household income in London is around £32,000. The average household income in social rented properties is about £17,500. By what standards are these homes affordable? Yet developers get off with providing a handful of just such homes as these to meet their obligations to include affordable housing. Unfortunately the Mayor of London has muddied the waters still further by adding a new category, London Affordable Rent, which is supposed to be the equivalent of social rent, but is in fact about 50% higher than current council rents. So even the cheapest housing built is becoming more expensive.

There is a great deal for a future well intentioned Labour Government to sort out on the housing front, should one get elected.

## From The Socialist Correspondent 10 years ago

"The SUN splashed General Dannatt's attack on the Labour government for not backing the troops in Afghanistan and leaving the army to fight the Taliban with 'one arm tied behind its back'. Two days later, David Cameron announced that Dannatt had agreed to join his Conservative team. Eton, Sandhurst and News International all working together again just like old times."

Autumn 2009 – **Murdoch does not back losers**

James Thomson

# REMAIN & CONFORM

by Gary Lefley

The idea of 'Remain and Reform' is attractive. We stay in the European Union (EU), keep the bits we like, chuck the bits we don't, and transform the EU into a socialist, or at least a social democratic, pan-European body. The problems arise when we ask ourselves two basic questions:

**a) If we stay in the EU, which bits do we reform and which bits do we keep?**

**b) How do we do it? Practically, how do we reform the EU?**

Without solid answers to these two questions, Remain and Reform lacks integrity and can appear as a ruse to win broader support for staying in the EU, with reform as little more than a sop. The questions are frequently side-stepped on social media, except for vague generalities, or posting links to other sites, such as Europa.eu or articles by Yanis Varoufakis. I have ploughed through these links. Europa.eu, the official website of the EU, is obscurantist and in any case, cannot be expected to offer up serious reforms of itself. Still, a patient read of its pages indicates that the institutions of the EU are not open to democratic reforms driven by its Parliament.

Varoufakis is clear on the big-business origins of the EU, its weaknesses and failings. Interestingly, he states emphatically that the EU was created to serve monopoly capitalism and cannot be reformed, (<https://youtu.be/jec9rBFqwcw>). He calls instead for it to be transformed, albeit using existing EU institutions and rules. When it comes to describing a practical process for this transformation, the hyperbole and rhetoric is engaging but the detail is absent. He doesn't answer the ques-



The programme of Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell would be threatened by the EU

tion, how? How do we take control of the EU to actuate this transformation? What is the process? While he dismisses the possibility of reforming the EU, he nevertheless clings to the notion of using existing EU institutions and rules to expedite the transformation. In short, having dismissed a reformist approach he then embraces it, in a confused and utopian fashion. Yet, until the 'how' question is nailed, we are left with idealistic assumptions about the EU constitution and the possibility of reform. This does not change by swapping the word 'reform' for 'transform'.

### Free movement of capital

I return to the two questions. Firstly, which bits do you want to reform? If you can't identify these then it's a nice but meaningless throwaway line.

For example, any social democrat worth his or her salt will want to abolish the free movement of capital. Free movement of capital helps to entrench the owners of capital, rather than parliament, as

masters of the economy, and places the Treasury, workers and everyone in between at the mercy and whim of company boards whose only loyalty is to corporate profit. The excellent programme of policies that John McDonnell is promoting up and down the UK, under the banner "The Road to Re-building the Economy", will be in jeopardy if, as widely predicted, there is a mass flight of capital out of the country in response to the election of a Corbyn-led Labour government. For these policies to have any chance of succeeding it will be necessary to control the movement of capital. We should remind ourselves that McDonnell's economic programme is social democratic and nothing like as radical as the former Clause 4 of the Labour Party's constitution, removed during Blair's leadership, which called for the public ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange.

So, to question **b) How do we reform the EU to abolish, as an example, the free movement of capital?**

The free movement of capital is enshrined in several EU Treaties, including Rome, Lisbon and the Single European Act. Those treaties can only be rescinded or amended with the unanimous ratification of all 28 member states. I'm all ears if someone can explain to me how that might be achieved. But given that pro-capitalist parties of one shade or another – mostly explicitly right wing – are in government across EU states, the realpolitik suggests that simply is not going to happen.

### The EU is reform-proof

Some look to the EU Parliament as their hope for a programme of



The European Parliament Strasbourg

reform. Unfortunately, the result of the recent EU parliamentary elections saw it shift even further to the right, with a core of neo-fascist parties represented and conservative parties making concessions to the far right. But in a sense that isn't the issue. The real problem is that the EU Parliament is not empowered to introduce legislation. Legislation can only be introduced by the unelected EU Commission. So even in the extremely unlikely event of the vast majority of MEPs being socialists, they could not abolish the free movement of capital.

In short, significant reforms to EU policy require the reform of its constitution, and that requires unanimous ratification. The EU constitution, embodied in its treaties, has been constructed in such a way as to make significant reform all but impossible. As a consequence, Brussels is effectively more accountable to the 20,000 corporate lobbyists based there than it is to national governments or its own parliament. This reflects the underlying genesis of the Common Market/EU. As Varoufakis stated, it was conceived in the image of monopoly capital. It's principal objective was to create a set

of institutions that could promote the interests of capital without accountability to, and interference by, elected parliaments. It has been hugely successful in this, to the point where the EU leadership can now dictate to national governments, as it has done with Cyprus, Ireland, Italy, Spain and, most notably, Greece.

We have to face up to the practical realities of how we move from where we are to where we want to be. Socialists want another Europe. As a starting point, that means: genuinely democratic and accountable institutions; progressive social policies; an anti-racist approach to immigration; a foreign policy based on peaceful cooperation, non-interference and fair trade; an economic strategy that breaks with neoliberalism, austerity and the upward transference of wealth. Given the EU's purpose and constitutional obduracy, the chances of achieving these preliminary social democratic measures through a reformed EU are negligible.

Another Europe, and indeed another world, is possible. But that new Europe requires us to think outside the box - a revolutionary approach

if you wish - to the existing political and economic institutions of free-market capitalism. It requires new alliances and relationships of socialist and social democratic parties with people's movements. These are precisely the relationships that Jeremy Corbyn has been cultivating at conferences across the continent. Our vision of another UK, another Europe and another world is dependent on building these relationships with other progressive parties, movements and states within and beyond the EU, starting with the 44 countries of Europe and the 7 trans-continental Euro-Asian states. But there is also potential for political and economic treaties beyond Europe, with for example, the 53 nations of the Commonwealth and the 120 members of the Non-Aligned Movement.

### The EU is not for changing

The reality is that developing a positive relationship with the EU from the position of an independent social democratic UK is more achievable than chasing the improbable fantasy of reforming an immutable, resistant EU bureaucracy. The other reality is that remaining in the EU really means accepting it as it is because there is little we can do to transform it from within. This effectively means conforming indefinitely to structures, policies and practices that have been designed to serve the interests of the few at the expense of the many. Remaining means accepting the following features of the EU:

- unrestricted movement of capital
- legally binding commitment to a free market, prohibiting publicly owned, state-subsidised monopolies
- ban on independent trade deals with states outside the EU
- continuing, legally enforced erosion of free-collective bargaining (judged to be in breach of the EU's 'right to conduct business')

- racist immigration policy
- political and economic interference in the internal affairs of member states
- trade policy that is designed to maintain African states in neo-colonial servitude
- foreign policy that embraces regime-change imperialism
- rapid €20 billion build-up of the EU Armed Forces
- legal system that subordinates UK law to the EU Court of Justice
- constitution described by Tony Benn as "explicitly capitalist" that

cedes UK democratic sovereignty to an unelected, unaccountable Brussels elite

- inevitable mobilisation of EU institutions against a Labour Government committed to an anti-capitalist transformative social-economic programme

In short, rather than answer Question a) "If we stay in the EU, which bits do we reform and which bits do we keep?" the centrists have quietly ignored it because they know there is no answer to Question b) "Practically, how do we reform the EU?"

The Blairites and Watson's faction, Change UK, the LibDems, and a

majority of Tory MPs - in harmony with the CBI, Chamber of Commerce, Institute of Directors, Bank of England, the Treasury, all the high street banks, and most of the establishment media, including the Times and Financial Times - all wish to remain in the EU, not in spite of the above but because of it. They embrace the EU's institutionalised neoliberalism. They are perfectly aware that Remain and Reform really means Remain and Conform. Indeed, they are banking on it to defeat Corbyn, trash Labour's manifesto and restore the Labour Party as a compliant option for the establishment, and for monopoly capital.

## Twitter waves the flag

### Protests in Hong Kong - 'social' media block accounts

by Lars Moerking  
from *Unsere Zeit* 23.8.19

So it wasn't a million who took to the streets in Hong Kong. On the 'March of Millions' last Saturday, however, hundreds of thousands are reported to have gathered according to, among others, the South China Morning Post.

A new feature this weekend was that there were also mass demonstrations by supporters of the regime. In the Tamar Park the demonstrators demanded an end to the violent protests. According to the organisers there were 500,000; the English speaking media gave no figures, in fact most did not report it at all.

Twitter entered the conflict with a 'precautionary' blocking of 200,000 user accounts. The US led company, according to its own explanation,

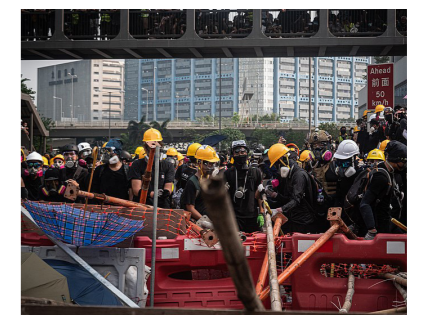
took action against users who had Chinese state support to discredit the demonstrators against the Hong Kong government. Facebook too let it be known that they had blocked accounts, which included ones which showed violent actions by the demonstrators.

As 'German Foreign Policy' reported last week, the US government is also supporting the 'Anti Peking protests'. An instrumental organisation of US foreign policy, the state financed National Endowment for Democracy, handed over almost half a million dollars in the year 2018 alone to opposition organisations in Hong Kong.

In addition Hong Kong billionaire Jimmy Lai, who has furnished the opposition with large sums for years, and systematically assisted

them with his media company Next Digital, was received in July in Washington by US Vice President Mike Pence and foreign secretary Mike Pompeo. US president Trump also warned China against the use of force in Hong Kong. Otherwise agreement in the trade war he is conducting against China will be 'very difficult'.

Anti-government protesters, August 2019



# Can we challenge US internet monopoly?

by Dan Morgan, Chile

This is getting serious. Now it's affecting me directly, and also everyone else. The US trade war with China was ratcheted up several notches with Trump's threat of a tech war. Huawei is the second biggest smartphone maker globally, and doing well here in Chile [1]. So, when Trump declared war on Huawei, we all had to decide how to react. Do we accept US domination of telecoms and the internet? Is US technology to be the only one available? Trump seems to have backed down for now, aware of the damage this war would do to US tech companies, apart from other considerations. My question remains – does the domination of US tech companies represent a problem or danger, not just commercially but in terms of avoiding control by an oligopoly and for data security?

## China and Huawei

I place no trust in China. I really do not know whether its capitalist road of development will turn into full-blown imperialism, using that word in a Marxist sense. We are seeing export of capital, one of the key features of imperialism, in Chile this is in mining and possibly railways. There is a new 'scramble for Africa', its land and natural resources, with China playing a notable role. On the other hand, China's development is clearly different from the modern capitalist norm, and its involvement in other countries is based on mutually beneficial development and trade. It has one military base outside China, compared with the USA's 800. The state plays a major role and President Xi boasts of the big reduction in poverty which itself



goes against the neoliberal trend. The aims of their last Party Congress hinted at something better than 'normal' capitalism, at least. Does anyone know what 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics' really means? Whatever the real nature of China's state, now and for the future, it is a competitor with US imperialism, and therefore a potential ally for states that challenge US domination. Along with Russia it is helping Venezuela, for example, in its struggle to maintain independence.

Following the same logic, it must be right for socialists and others who aspire to independence from US corporations to support alternative companies in the sphere of technology. I will continue to have a Huawei phone, and use whatever software it develops as an alternative to Google's monopoly. Spying by Huawei? It's enough to make a cat laugh. Everything that passes through Google, Facebook, Microsoft or Amazon systems must go through the huge (enormous, gigantic) memory stacks in Utah that belong to the US National Security Agency. The US state already knows more about us than we ourselves know (for people who use the internet, that is). Evidence for Huawei spying? Nil.

## An independent internet?

The furore raised about possibly losing the use of Google software raises important questions. I try to minimise my dependence on US monopoly systems, not support them commercially and also to try and reduce their access to my electronic activity. I use open source



software when possible. For example, I use Ubuntu (a form of Linux) instead of Windows – I find it easier to use and practical. It comes with Libre Office (free) instead of Office. It can handle .docx and .xlsx files with no problems. I have known researchers who found Libre Office limited for advanced graphics and analysis, but for most people it has no disadvantages and is easy to use. I much prefer it to recent versions of Office. My Internet browser



is Mozilla Firefox (also open) and there are other options. The search engine I use now is DuckDuckGo (funny name, stores no personal data, no advertising) not Google. Another alternative is Ecosia – based in Germany, clicks on its adverts generate revenue which has led to 50 million trees being planted. There are secure alternatives to gmail also. My Huawei phone, however, came with Google installed and, of course, Facebook and WhatsApp are US companies. Huawei will produce an alternative to Android but connection to

Facebook and WhatsApp will be important, as long as most people continue to use those systems. Facebook is already censoring posts from people I know, as well as organisations critical of Israel. It also shows posts in a variable rather than chronological order, does not enable threads on topics and tells me lies such as that a political friend 'likes' the campaign of a pro-fascist politician. It was threatened that new Huawei phones will



not be able to use it. Good - if it means people use alternatives! They exist. On a WhatsApp group here, a member in Argentina objected to the use of Facebook for photos, and suggested Diaspora. This is an open source alternative to Facebook with some attractive features. Affinity groups seem to be well organised. Does it make data spying impossible? I'm not sure but it is certainly better than Facebook, and possibly secure. Of course, the big problem is convincing people you want to communicate with to use it.

There are several options to use instead of WhatsApp. All use encryption and some do not even require personal identification such as a phone number. Telegram, a Russian system, is one, and Threema, based in Switzerland, another. So there are alternatives to many dominant internet software systems. Activists who want to change our political system, or who just challenge aspects of neoliberal politics, would do well to consider



weaning themselves off Google, Facebook and WhatsApp, among others. Big Brother is watching us now, and this can be stopped or at least greatly reduced.

[1] Phone communication in Chile was dominated by three oligopolist companies until four years ago. No real competition. A UK based company did some market research three years ago and found bad service and high prices. They came in and have cleaned up – 5 million customers now in a population of 17 million! They are the only company to offer 4G locally, so we had to buy Huawei phones to get any decent reception, the best phones available at a reasonable price.

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Protest against original TPP University of Chile

## CHILE & the Trans-Pacific Partnership

by Dan Morgan, Chile

The clearest sign yet that politics in Chile have changed: the TPP-11. Whatever is that?

For years now, new kinds of international ‘trade’ treaties have been secretly negotiated – one for countries around the Atlantic, and one in the Pacific area. For the Pacific, the grand title now is “Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership”. The less formal name is ‘Trans-Pacific Partnership’ or TPP. It was negotiated by 12 countries – and not just national politicians but also, crucially, representatives of trans-national corporations. Then Donald Trump withdrew the USA from the treaty, so now we call it the TPP-11. These treaties are much more than free trade treaties, as commerce

accounts for only 5 sections of 30. The key points give enormous powers to the trans-national corporations in sections dealing with protections for foreign investment and intellectual property rights. China, significantly, is not a signatory. It is not going to open up to blackmail by trans-national corporations. Other countries, such as Vietnam and Canada, have not signed certain sections.

### Chile

So what happened in Chile? Governments of the right and ‘centre-left’ (mainly the latter) took part in the secretive negotiations, agreed everything and expected a rubber-stamp ratification in Congress. All free trade agreements had gone through on the nod before, and this was to be no different. It was not to be. Some troublesome ecologists

and indigenous people began to make noises about the threat to the free use of traditional seeds. Other economists raised questions about national sovereignty. Some members of Congress, deputies of the Broad Front and Communist Party, began to take notice. Soon there was a fully-fledged campaign fuelled by active WhatsApp groups – mainly ecologists and left-wing deputies. The TPP requires implementation of the International Convention for the Protection of New Varieties of Plant, that facilitates the patenting of traditional seeds by subterfuge. It reinforces and extends the rights of corporations to sue national governments that do anything to infringe on their ‘reasonable expectations’ of profits from activities in the country. It sets up yet another system of international arbitration, where corporations can sue governments, but not

the other way round. It is biased in favour of the companies. Repeat work for arbitrators depends on the agreement of the corporations, among other factors.

Four aspects of the treaty limit national sovereignty, in favour of the trans-nationals. They are the prohibition of requirements for technology transfer, restriction on policies for public contracts and for publicly owned companies, and the prohibition of export taxes. So policies aimed at real national economic development, moving away from the extractivist model of export of raw materials and unprocessed products, are blocked. The drastic changes in economic life needed to implement a Green New Deal would be blocked. Stimulating production of high value-added products, let alone high technology industries, would be stifled. Increasing labour rights and conditions, encouraging cooperatives and new public enterprises, could all be punished by biased international arbitration. Nationalised companies could not be given special conditions to compete with the trans-nationals – shades of the European Union. This could include, for example,

improvements in labour rights or wages. The ban on export taxes would mean, for Chile, there could be no tax on the export of copper concentrate. Such a tax would force companies to export only refined copper, or products with even more value-added and so boost the national economy. At the moment, concentrate accounts for 7 of every 10 ships exporting copper, so a ban or high tax would lead to a great reduction in CO2 production.

Could governments prevent the import of pesticides or pharmaceuticals suspected of being dangerous, while studies are made, in order to protect the population? No, that is specifically prohibited under Article 7.9, point 10 of the treaty.

In short, what is promoted as just another free trade agreement is in fact a treaty to tilt the balance of power severely towards trans-national corporations. National sovereignty goes out the window. It bans public policies which would move development away from the present model.

In Chile’s case, it already has free trade agreements with all the

countries involved in the treaty and a government study predicts an increase of only 0.12% of GNP as a result of signing. Lots of TV time was dedicated to promoters of the treaty all using ‘free trade’ arguments but hardly ever mentioning other aspects which are all negative for Chile. But, armed with facts and powerful, concise and rigorous arguments from academics like Hassan Akram and José Gabriel Palma, a campaign of e-mails, press conferences, some TV time, lobbying and marches convinced many deputies to vote against the treaty in the House. All the Communist, Broad Front, Socialist and Democracy Party deputies voted against, plus most Radicals and three Christian Democrats. This, even though the President of the Democracy Party was Foreign Minister when the treaty was being negotiated and is strongly in favour of it. So the vote in favour was 77 to 68, a narrow victory. It is now in the Senate, where ‘traditional’ politicians have more sway. However, politics in Chile have changed, and the neoliberal consensus favouring big business and trans-nationals will not be the same again.

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# THE CIA'S COLD WAR IN THE ARTS

by Gregor Tassie

'Sire – over what do you rule? 'Over everything, said the king, with magnificent simplicity.'

*The Little Prince, Antoine de Saint-Exupery*

In her book, *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters*, [1] Frances Stonor Saunders sets out the story of the clandestine war waged by the CIA against progressive forces in the arts and the socialist world from the end of the second world war.

'During the height of the Cold War, the US government committed vast resources to a secret programme of cultural propaganda in western Europe. A central feature of this programme was to advance the claim that it did not exist. It was managed, in great secrecy, by America's espionage arm, the Central Intelligence Agency.' [2] The ultimate aim was the promotion of a world of *Pax Americana*, a new age of enlightenment, otherwise called The American Century.

## The CIA

The origins of the CIA lay in the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) which was closed by Truman in 1945 because he wanted nothing to do with a peacetime 'Gestapo'. The head of OSS was William 'Wild Bill' Donovan, whose recruits were sons and daughters of the elite Vanderbilt, DuPont, and JP Morgan families – the 'Park Avenue Cowboys'. On his deathbed in 1959, Donovan's last demented words were "I can see Russian troops marching into Manhattan across the 59th Street Bridge outside my window." Wild Bill was one of the chief architects of the CIA.

The CIA was the successor to OSS, recruiting British Special Operations Executive (SOE) agents such as Malcolm Muggeridge. [3] As Saunders writes, 'this was the elect who had not been elected'. [4] When the

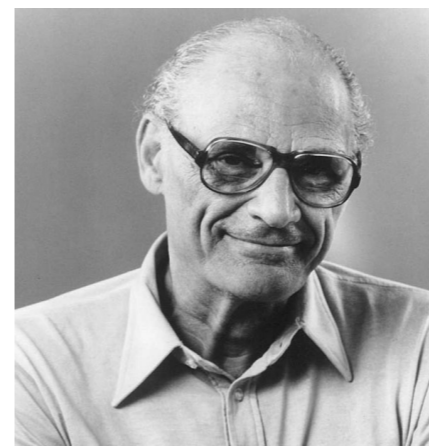
CIA was set up under the National Security Act in 1947, nowhere was it allowed to gather intelligence or intervene secretly in other countries, yet the elastic phrase 'such other functions' provided a loophole to avoid going through the US Congress. [5]

## Origins of CCF

The CIA decided to counter socialist ideology through the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF). This body was financed by the US Government and by the Ford, Carnegie and Rockefeller Foundations. While Hitler was writing *Mein Kampf* the Nazis were allegedly supported financially by Henry Ford, [6] for which Hitler awarded him the cherished Grand Cross of the German Eagle in 1938. [7] The Ford Foundation was to benefit 'worthy' causes and the fight against communism was deigned wholly appropriate.

The man given the task of setting up a front organization was ex-Wall Street lawyer Frank Wisner whose most recent work in military intelligence had been recruiting a 'whole load of fascists after the war, some really nasty people. He could do that, because he was powerful.' Under Wisner, the scope of CIA operations 'grew like a hydra'. It went from 302 employees in 1949 to almost 6000 worldwide and a budget of \$82 million by 1952.

Michael Josselson was an officer in the US Intelligence Section of Psychological Warfare in West Berlin who Arthur Koestler called one of the 'scum of the earth'. He was multi-lingual, with a wealth of contacts, and collaborated with Nicholas Nabokov at the Information Control Division of the US Army.



Arthur Miller

They had the chore of 'declassifying Nazis' and controlled the German opera and orchestra companies, radio and media. Josselson and Nabokov would be the guiding figures of the CCF.

## Targeting progressives

The 1949 Scientific and Cultural Conference for Peace in New York became the first target. It was attended by 800 delegates including Lillian Hellman, Aaron Copland, Arthur Miller, Leonard Bernstein, and Norman Mailer. The short-term aim was to interrupt speeches and disrupt the Soviet delegation, which included Fadeyev and Shostakovich. Advantageously, after 3 days, the Supreme Court expelled the Soviets. \$3000 was provided for hiring 'demonstrators and hecklers'. Arthur Miller wrote, 'every entrance of the Waldorf Astoria would be blocked by a line of nuns praying for the souls of the participants, who had been deranged by Satanic seduction.' [8] A month later the same tactics shifted to the Paris World Peace Congress. In 1950 the Congress for Cultural Freedom was formally established in West Berlin including anti-communists James Burnham, James T. Farrell, Tennessee Williams, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., actor Robert Montgomery, chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission David Lilienthal, John Dewey, Bertrand Russell, Benedetto Croce, Karl Jaspers, and Jacques Maritain. The organization's secretary general

was former Russian aristocrat Nikolai Nabokov, cousin of the famous writer and a second-rate composer, for whom CCF offered an opportunity to promote his own music. The purpose was to show the best of western life under capitalism, ignoring the arts in socialist countries and 'highlighting' problems under communist rule. It was run from Paris, Berlin and New York, publishing 35 magazines worldwide and enjoying extensive access to the western mass media. It funded festivals promoting the American way of life. Music Festivals highlighted avant-garde music from Messiaen, Boulez, and Stravinsky. Similarly, exhibitions of 'new' art were to show that socialist-realism was no longer the front-runner.

The British branch of the CCF was established in 1951 including T.S. Eliot, Isaiah Berlin, Lord David Cecil, the British Council, BBC Third Programme and Richard Crossman general secretary of the Labour Party. Woodrow Wyatt and Hugh Gaitskell became key figures. [9] Together with Denis Healey and Rita Hinden they launched *Socialist Commentary*, and attended events paid by the CCF promoting 'Atlanticism', an early fruit of which was Crosland's *The Future of Socialism* which became the bible for Gaitskell's Labour Party. Healey supplied the CIA with information on Labour Party members and trade unionists. [10] Gaitskell as Labour Party leader made a fierce attack on the 'fellow-travelling' left at

Richard Crossman



the 1960 conference - 'some found themselves asking who he was travelling with.' [11] CCF financed the Fabian Society's magazine *Venture*. When Labour won power in 1964 Josselson wrote, 'We are all pleased to have so many of our friends in the new government.' [12] The UK was not the only sphere of activity. In West Germany Willy Brandt 'was financed by the Americans' and seemingly was 'perfectly at ease about this'. [13]

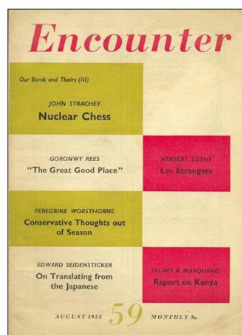
This was an era when fake news was not only developed, but exploited to an unprecedented extent. From the pre-war indulgence towards Soviet life, the art world quickly changed its stance with distinguished figures in the arts adopting a markedly anti-communist line and snubbing association with socialist countries. Many left-wing writers, artists and musicians were black-listed, perhaps the one who suffered most was the great Paul Robson who lost his passport. The composers Marc Blitzstein, Leonard Bernstein, and Aaron Copland signed a petition against the expulsion of Hans Eisler in 1948 and organised a concert in support. Bernstein was black-listed by the New York Philharmonic and CBS. In 1952 and 1966, when he was invited to the Vienna Philharmonic, he was threatened with the withdrawal of his passport. [14] Bernstein backed down, however he later hosted a fundraiser for the Black Panthers, writing, 'the FBI conspired to foment hatred and violent dissension among blacks, among Jews and between blacks and Jews. [15]

## Promoting the west

The CCF music festivals starred Yehudi Menuhin, von Karajan (a former Nazi) and Pierre Monteux. Louis Armstrong, Dave Brubeck and Dizzy Gillespie who became 'good-will ambassadors' for CCF.

Painters who would normally struggle suddenly found fame and fortune. 'Mark Rothko, Jackson Pollock,

David Smith - artists of the school that came to be known as Abstract Expressionism - were thrust into global fame with help from the feds.’ [16] Interestingly Nelson Rockefeller who bankrolled the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) called abstract expressionism ‘free enterprise art’. Saunders wittily describes it ‘Yanqui Doodle.’ Great wads of dollars were thrown at sponsoring of exhibitions promoting American freedom in the arts, ‘Pollock became a weapon in the Cold War.’ [17] ‘Langley’s Ivy-trained spooks did what no intelligence service has ever done or will ever do again: they bankrolled the avant-garde.’ [18] Rockefeller’s MoMA played its part. ‘In terms of cultural propaganda, the functions of both the CIA’s cultural apparatus and MoMA’s international programs were similar and, in fact, mutually supportive.’ [19]



On another level, the Congress directly financed beleaguered artists: When the Polish composer Andrzej Panufnik arrived in London, the CCF granted a yearly fellowship of \$2000. “He declared himself entirely ready to cooperate and collaborate with us for he is entirely sold on the ideals of the Congress for Cultural Freedom.”

In 1951, the CCF launched a Paris-based magazine *Preuves*, whose object was to undercut Sartre’s influential *Les Temps Modernes*. Simone de Beauvoir and “the left bank intellectuals were the target”. When Pablo Neruda was nominated for the Nobel prize, the CCF campaigned actively against him, however instead Jean-Paul Sartre won it – causing considerable

embarrassment for the Americans. Neruda went on to win in 1971. Writers who benefitted from CCF largesse included Ted Hughes, Gunter Grass, Jorge Luis Borges, Czeslaw Milosz, Hannah Arendt, Saint-Exupery, George Orwell, and Saul Bellow [20]. The London-based *Encounter* published between 1953 and 1991 regularly sold 34,000 copies, as did the Berlin *Der Monat*, both were originally funded by CCF. Trying to grab the moral compass, and manipulate public opinion, the so-called “New Left” promoted liberal social-democracy and ‘the CIA cultivated disillusioned leftist intellectuals, individuals like André Malraux, Arthur Koestler, Ignazio Silone, and Stephen Spender.’

## CCF exposed

In 1967, the Congress was exposed as a CIA front organization. The *Saturday Evening Post* disclosed that for decades the CIA had been manipulating people through dozens of magazines presenting the West as a haven for free arts and culture. By then the Vietnam War changed the picture dramatically. Young people were carrying banners with Ho Chi Minh and Che Guevara in protest, a sign America had lost the agenda reinforced by the release of the Pentagon Papers, the Watergate affair, and impeachment of Nixon. The CCF rapidly lost its image, with writers and artists disassociating themselves from it. ‘A negative stereotype emerged of a CIA peopled by ruthless, Jesuitical, “ugly” Americans whose view of the world was distorted by a wilderness of mirrors.’ (21)

CIA funding for CCF halted in 1967, yet the Ford Foundation continued financing the renamed Association for Cultural Freedom until its end in 1987. One of its affiliates, the European Intellectual Mutual Aid Fund later merged with George Soros’ Open Society Foundations which was originally set up to help Eastern European countries to move from socialism to capitalism.

[1] Frances Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters*, The New Press, New York, 1999 (Published in Britain as *Who paid the piper? The CIA and the Cultural Cold War*, Granta 1999) Unless otherwise stated all quotes are from Saunders book.

[2] Saunders, Op Cit i.

[3] Malcolm Muggeridge, *Esquire*, January 1973

[4] Saunders, Op Cit 36.

[5] Final report of the Church select committee to study governmental operations with respect to intelligence activities, Washington us government printing office, 1976.

[6] According to Frau Winifred Wagner; she had met with a very enthusiastic Ford a few days before his meeting with Ludecke. ‘The philosophies of Ford and Hitler were very similar;’ she recalled. ‘Ford was very well informed about everything going on in Germany.... He knew all about the National Socialist movement.... Ford told me that he helped to finance Hitler with money from the sales of automobiles and trucks that he had sent to Germany.’ Frau Wagner claimed that, when she informed Ford that Hitler was still in need of money, he made a remark about being willing to support a man like Hitler who was working to free Germany from the Jews.

[7] Allen, Michael Thad (2002). *The Business of Genocide: The SS, Slave Labor, and the Concentration Camps*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press. pp. 14, 290.

[8] Arthur Miller, *Timebends*,

[9] Saunders, Op Cit 116.

[10] Saunders, Op Cit 330.

[11] Saunders, Op Cit 331.

[12] Michael Josselson to Daniel Bell 28/10/1964. Saunders, Op Cit 331.

[13] Stuart Hampshire, interview, Oxford, December 1997, Saunders, Op Cit 351.

[14] <https://vault.fbi.gov/leonard-bernstein>

[15] Leonard Bernstein, *The New York Times*, 22 October 1980.

[16] Josef Joffe, *America’s Secret Weapon*.

[17] Abstract Expressionism, *Weapon of the Cold War*, *Artforum*, vol. 12, no. 10, June 1974, 43-54.

[18] Josef Joffe, *America’s Secret Weapon*.

[19] Eva Cockroft, *Abstract Expressionism: weapon of the cold war*, *Artforum*, vol. 12/10, June 1974.

[20] Saunders, Op Cit 352.

[21] Saunders, Op Cit 33.