

THE SOCIALIST CORRESPONDENT

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US & CHINA

background to the
escalating conflict



How the West spied on the world

DENIS GOLDBERG

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Much hope has been invested in the outcome of the US Presidential election and the desire to unseat the increasingly fascist Donald Trump. There would be positives if that were to happen, but whoever is in the White House he will continue, as Trump did, to represent the interests of US capital.

The US versus China

In *The US versus China – who runs the world?* Frieda Park looks at why the United States has reacted with such ferocity in ramping up sanctions and bans on Chinese companies. Whilst China's economy has grown and it has developed its political, economic and military power globally, it is still nowhere near being able to challenge the US's superpower status. But what it is doing very effectively is developing world-leading digital companies like Huawei and Ant. Many of these companies are privately owned or are private/state partnerships. As well as China's cutting-edge companies, its success with state intervention in the economy is a direct challenge to free market neo-liberalism, a model whose failure has been definitively demonstrated by the requirement of governments everywhere to intervene massively in their economies to deal with the effects of coronavirus.

Spies and lies

It is not only China that is painted as an enemy in the west. The right wing and liberal media are united in their attacks on so-called Russian interference in western elections. This has been so hyped that it is almost taken for granted, yet the evidence does not stack up. In *Cyber Warfare Villains – Russia or the UK?* Alex Mitchell exposes the Intelligence and Security Committee (ISC) report's failure to substantiate allegations of Russian interference. It blamed the lack of evidence on spooks not having looked hard

enough. However, the retiring head of MI6, Andrew Younger, in a recent interview with *The Financial Times* (30/9/20) stood by its record arguing that the main threat remained terrorism and saying, "I haven't seen in the UK any occasion where this stuff [Russian interference] has made a strategic difference...". Yet the ISC used this non-evidence as a basis for arguing that Britain should boost its offensive cyber warfare capabilities, calling for more resources for the National Offensive Cyber Programme set up by GCHQ and the Ministry of Defence. This year a National Cyber Force was also established and Britain hosts the NATO Intelligence Fusion Centre at RAF Molesworth.

Further evidence of the way in which the west dominates the world of spying is revealed by Alex Davidson in *How the West spied on the world...and still does*. He relates the fascinating story of the development of spying hardware built into communications systems by Crypto AG. Crypto was a Swiss firm founded in 1952 and secretly bought by the CIA and the West German spy service. In all, 120 countries were sold apparatus which enabled their communications to be decrypted by the US National Security Agency (NSA). These included, Iran, India, Pakistan, the Vatican and the United Nations. Although the Soviet Union and China did not buy into Crypto, communications to them from others could be intercepted, for example from Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania and Yugoslavia. The information gathered was actively used by the west to intervene for example, in the Egyptian/Israeli negotiations at Camp David in 1978, and to aid the British during the Falklands war. Crypto continued in use until 2018 when it was sold off, its capabilities having been superseded by the use of software. We are now all spied on through our use of search engines and social media and the NSA has a huge

capacity to process all that data fed in from Google, Facebook etc.

Britain

Though defeated in a referendum in 2011, proportional representation (PR) is again being mooted as a way of engaging voters and making the electoral system more democratic. In *The winner is... First Past The Post*, Brian Durrans argues that PR would actually produce less of what the electorate wants with more horse-trading of policies. Most importantly it would dilute a clear class divide making radical change harder.

And in *Tory game plans*, Frieda Park looks at the government's negotiations with the EU over a trade deal. The Tories continue to pose as defenders of national sovereignty and now say that they want to retain powers to apply state intervention in the economy. This is another significant departure from neo-liberalism. The left needs to ensure that the Tories are not allowed to occupy this ground. We must make our own case for the retention of state aid and how it should be used.

Denis Goldberg

We have the second part of our commemoration of the life of Denis Goldberg by Brian Filling. *Denis Goldberg - Hero of the struggle for South African liberation Part 2: Exile, Campaigning, Return to South Africa*. This deals with the period of Denis' life following his release from prison when he was in exile and then his return to South Africa where he continued to fight for the ideals of freedom and equality for all. The personal and political challenges remained huge but Denis continued the struggle, inspiring many others with his message. In his words, "Understanding the world is not enough. As human beings in society, we are called upon by our humanity to change the world, to make it a place of greater equality..."

The US versus China who runs the world?

by Frieda Park

The most critical feature of world politics is the USA's increasing conflict with China. The primary driver for this is the US desire to maintain its position as the world's only superpower. Whilst China, despite its increased economic, political and military strength, is still far away from any threat of overtaking it, the United States is not going to sit about and wait for that to happen. That is why Biden is as much a China-hater as Trump. It is one thing that the two candidates in the race for the Presidency try to outdo each other on. In office Biden is more likely to pursue a less bellicose strategy, but it will be one which aims to achieve the same results. He equally wants to protect US supremacy. Of course they don't really care about any of the political expressions of this conflict – liberal democracy, human rights, the rule of law etc. What they care about is who runs the world.

No takeover of China

Whilst the US thought that it could easily co-opt China as it began to encourage the development of capitalism and opened its economy as a low-wage workshop for manufacturing, that has proved not to be the case. Just as, presumably, Britain thought returning Hong Kong would be a back door into China. It has been a back door for capital, but one China has increasingly used for its own ends. In fact, China has a very definite view of itself as a world power and has sought to develop its economic, financial,



PHOTO BY THOMAS LOMBARD

Alibaba HQ at its corporate campus in Hangzhou

political and military capabilities to that end. Crucially it has developed world-leading companies in digital communications and banking, the keys to future economic development. The strategic and economic importance of tech industries has been reflected in shifting Chinese economic priorities from the 8th five year plan in 1991, when the priorities for industrial production were: basic machinery, integrated circuits, communication equipment, basic raw materials and light-weight cars, to the 13th five year plan in 2020 whose priorities are: energy storage, integrated circuits, 5G networks, biotech and genomics and new energy vehicles. This ambition is completely unacceptable to the United States.

Despite the huge amount of trade between the two countries, the US seems to be following a strategy of decoupling from China. The US Senate has passed legislation that could ban Chinese companies from listing shares on American stock exchanges. The legislation may also ban Chinese companies from raising funds from American investors. Many Chinese companies,

especially in digital industries, are effectively banned from operating in the US.

Other western countries who might have preferred to take a different path have been cowed by the US, with Britain caving in to ban the involvement of Huawei in developing the 5G network. France too will have an effective ban as its cyber security agency will not renew licences for telecoms development if companies use Huawei products after the licences expire, so Huawei's involvement will be phased out. Germany is also set to impose restrictions, which will effectively squeeze Huawei out.

Now there is a US ban worldwide on anyone selling any micro-chips to Huawei. Some believe that this will make it virtually impossible for the company to operate. China is trying to build capacity to produce such vital components itself but that is not something that it can do overnight. However, it is making progress hence the increased frenzy in the US to try to strangle Huawei now. Yangtze Memory Technologies Co, a joint public/private company,

has announced that it can make chips as advanced as the best Samsung produces.

Ant Initial Public Offering

Another current example that highlights Chinese strategic development and leadership in this field is the floatation on the stock exchange of the private fintech giant Ant. It will be listed on the Shanghai and Hong Kong stock exchanges and it is expected raise more than \$30bn, making it the biggest ever Initial Public Offering (IPO). From being a private company, after the IPO it will be owned by its share-holders. It is thought that it could achieve a market capitalisation of \$300bn – bigger than any bank anywhere in the world. There are those in the White House who would like to undermine the IPO, indeed in 2018 the US blocked Ant's acquisition of MoneyGram which would have given the company global reach in money transfers. It is also significant that Ant is floating in China, whereas its parent company went public in the US.

Ant is a spin off from Alibaba, which started out as an online retailer, developing sophisticated financial tools to facilitate transactions. Alibaba was floated on the New York stock exchange in 2014 and at that time was the biggest ever IPO in the US. The company was founded in 1999 by Jack Ma (Ma Yun). Ma is the second wealthiest person in China with a net worth of \$48.2bn and is ranked by Forbes magazine as the 20th richest person in the world. Now retired from Alibaba, and in common with other very wealthy people, he likes to style himself as a philanthropist. For example, he recently pledged to support Prince William's Royal Foundation Earthshot prize to a tune of £3m. Two years ago the Chinese Communist Party confirmed that Ma was a member, the People's Daily listing him as one of the leaders in the country's "opening up and reform" process. Another interest-

ing connection is that a private equity firm owned by a grandson of Jiang Zemin (President of China from 1993-2003) bought an early stake in Ant.

Ant grew out of the need for Alibaba to have an on-line payments system to retail goods but it quickly developed a wide range of financial services accessible easily and quickly on a mobile app. Its system can apparently decide whether to grant loans within three minutes. It is huge, making 25 times more payments last year than PayPal. Its main services are;

- Off-line and on-line payments
- Money transfers
- Giving users access to credit
- Brokering loans
- Enabling users to invest in financial instruments such as money-market funds, stocks and bonds
- Setting up insurance such as life, car and medical insurance

Users can do all that on their mobile phones through this one app. The Economist magazine describes Ant as: "...the world's purest example of the tremendous potential of digital finance." Its wide usage – over 1bn active users – and the fact that they use it for so many things also gives Ant an enormous trove of personal data about individuals which can be exploited commercially.

Problems for US strategy

As China's economy grows, particularly in areas of strategic importance, the US perceives a real threat to its dominance, however there are dangers in its total confrontation

As China's economy grows, particularly in areas of strategic importance, the US perceives a real threat to its dominance, however there are dangers in its total confrontation approach.

approach. It may not succeed in crushing China but rather will make it more self-reliant as it develops its own alternatives to goods and markets barred by the US.

The other problems that the US has with this approach are increasing tensions with its allies who may want to take a different tack with China preferring to engage, contain and undermine it; US tactics may also potentially encourage the development of an opposing power block, or at least a set of alliances, with not only China but also Russia and Iran as key players. In addition, there are many developing countries where China is gaining more influence. As well as technological self-sufficiency, China is trying to build alternatives which might circumvent or negate US sanctions and bullying, such as making the Yuan an international currency and alternative payment and banking systems, as well as being able to provide goods, hi-tech communications and infrastructure.

Through its Belt and Road initiative and other acquisitions and investments, China also controls a lot of infrastructure in other countries and not just in the developing world. For example, it bought the port of Piraeus when the EU demanded the Greek government privatise it. There are a couple of examples here in Britain: the Chinese company CGN is a major financier of Hinkley Point C nuclear power plant development and Petrochina has a 50% share in the Grangemouth oil refinery along with Ineos. Such investments in the west might be vulnerable to the pressure coming from the US, but China has swathes of such interests across the developing world and elsewhere.

(One example of international unhappiness with the US posture of sanctions and bullying, though not in this case about China, was the recent vote at the United Nations Security Council where the US was defeated over a move to extend the arms embargo against Iran. Only

the US and the Dominican Republic voted for it. Russia and China voted against and all the others, including Britain, abstained.)

Coronavirus success and failure

Added into this situation is the impact of coronavirus and government responses to it. The United States is at one end of a spectrum of how badly or well it was dealt with, having failed badly; China is at the other end where it has been highly successful. It is a bit varied, but there is some correlation between countries that pursued robust lockdowns, testing and tracking systems, and their economies being predicted to recover more quickly. Whereas those who declared that they wouldn't shut down the economy and were weak on trying to eradicate the virus will suffer most - ironically protecting neither the economy nor their citizens. However, there are some other factors at work, like previous experiences of SARS epidemics and the structures of economies. The latest prediction from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development is that China will be the only G20 country to record a growth in GDP in 2020 - 1.8%, whereas the United States is predicted to contract by 7.3%.

So the outcome of the coronavirus pandemic might further shift the ground against the US economy and in favour of China. Coronavirus has already undermined capitalism's faith in the nostrums of neo-liberalism, as advanced capitalist countries have been forced to intervene massively in economies to keep them afloat and stave off potential civil unrest. China's successful state-supported development of capitalist companies is a further challenge to the west and neo-liberalism.

From The Socialist Correspondent 10 years ago

“Cubans work throughout the world where there is need and are recognised to be most effective at delivering health care and other services in emergencies. As the Haitian film director, Claudette Coulanges said ‘The Cubans do what no one else does: they go into the countryside to provide medical care for people living far from cities.’... By contrast, the wealthiest country in the world, the United States, sent an occupying force of troops to Haiti rather than doctors.”

Issue 10 Autumn 2010

Charity: more take than give

Helen Christopher

CYBER WARFARE VILLAINS RUSSIA OR THE UK?

by Alex Mitchell

Britain is expected to ramp up its offensive cyber warfare capability in the face of alleged threats from Russia and China. Egged on by right-wing Tory MPs, the government is shifting focus from Islamist extremists to targeting its “strategic rivals”, with the new Labour leadership’s enthusiastic backing. The row over the delayed publication of a Parliamentary report on Russia has obscured the report’s main conclusion that the government should beef up its response to supposed hostile state meddling in British public life.

The summary report on the alleged threat from Russia prepared by Parliament’s Intelligence and Security Committee was published in July 2020 after a 17 month delay. The report recommended a coordinated strategy be adopted by government, including new legislation, to combat “hostile state activity”. The Committee backed a so-called Fusion Doctrine and a Whole-of-State Approach, whereby “security, economic and influence capabilities [are deployed] to protect, promote and project our national security, economic and influence goals”. [1] The word ‘influence’ has to be understood in relation to the neo-conservative theory that Western democracies are in competition with a range of anti-Western ideologies including Islamist ideas and illiberal and populist politics.

Russian meddling – lack of evidence

The government’s reluctance to publish the Russia report aroused expectations that the Intelligence and Security Committee would

reveal evidence about the Russian menace and uncover serious gaps in the UK’s defences. The Committee was indeed critical but this stemmed from its frustration that its enquiry had turned up so little. It was miffed in particular by the condescending attitude of the Security Service (MI5), which responded to the Committee’s call for evidence with a memorandum of six lines, and by the insubstantial testimony from other agencies, the Secret Intelligence Service (MI6), the Home Office, Ministry of Defence and the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ). This lack of proof of Russian maleficence, the Committee decided, was because the intelligence agencies had not looked for evidence hard enough.

It believed there was “credible commentary that Russia had tried to influence the 2014 Scottish independence referendum” and was “spreading disinformation through the internet to undermine trust in democracy and in democratic institutions”. [2] Shortly before the report was finally published, Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab claimed that “Russian actors had almost certainly sought to interfere” in the 2019 election using illicitly acquired government documents. The claim was part of a Tory smear campaign against the Labour Party, while the evidence for the alleged meddling in the Scottish independence debate is unimpressive.

During the 2019 general election, Jeremy Corbyn used leaked government documents detailing the talks between the UK and the USA on a free trade agreement to prove that Washington wanted “total market access” for its companies to UK mar-



The NATO Intelligence Fusion Centre

kets, including for health care and pharmaceutical products. Corbyn stated that the talks, which had been going on since 2017, “were at a very advanced stage” and that the documents showed that, contrary to Tory denials, “the NHS is on the table and up for sale”. The 451 page dossier from the Department for International Trade had been posted online on the Reddit website by ‘Wilbur Gregorator’ on 23 October 2019, who Reddit (part of an American media group that also owns the Discovery TV channel) later claimed was based in Russia and was linked to “a disinformation campaign”. However, the dossier was itself undoubtedly genuine, having been obtained from a hack of the then International Trade Secretary, Liam Fox’s, personal email account. [3] Instead of defending the Party, Lisa Nandy, the shadow foreign secretary, in responding to Raab’s contention on the Andrew Marr show on 19 July 2020, said that neither she nor Labour leader Kier Starmer would have disclosed the leaked dossier if they had known it came from Russian agents. She went on to advocate sanctions on Russian

The claims made against Russia derive from a Cold War mindset that attributes almost everything said on Russian or Chinese social media to the Putin regime or the Chinese Communist Party.

and Chinese officials in retaliation for human rights violations against their own citizens.

Russian foreign ministry official Konstantin Kosachev described the parliamentary report's conclusions as "unfounded, unsubstantiated and unconvincing". Nevertheless, with most media commentary taking the allegations of meddling for granted, it is not surprising that an opinion poll revealed that nearly half the population believe that the Russian government has interfered with the 2016 EU referendum and the 2017 and 2019 general elections (by 49, 46 and 47 percent respectively). [4]

The claims made against Russia derive from a Cold War mindset that attributes almost everything said on Russian or Chinese social media to the Putin regime or the Chinese Communist Party. Former Conservative MP Dominic Grieve, who chaired the intelligence and Security Committee, claimed there was "growing evidence of Russia's spreading of disinformation through the internet to undermine trust in democracy and in democratic institutions, as well as its covert attempts at exerting influence" in Britain's public life. [5] One of the Committee's witnesses was the neo-conservative historian and columnist Anne Applebaum. We do not know the content of her testimony, but in articles for *The Washington Post*, she recalls how in the 1980s the USA "pushed back" at Soviet propaganda by assembling an inter-agency Active Measures Working Group to monitor the opinions of ordinary Soviet citizens and use these to gain traction for "a Western response" to destabilise and demoralise. "There is no systematic US or Western response to Russian, Chinese or Islamic State disinformation," she averred. According to Applebaum, for two decades, the Russian government and companies controlled by Putin's cronies have corrupted Western businesses and politicians to "undermine democracies" and "spread Russian authoritarianism" in Europe and the

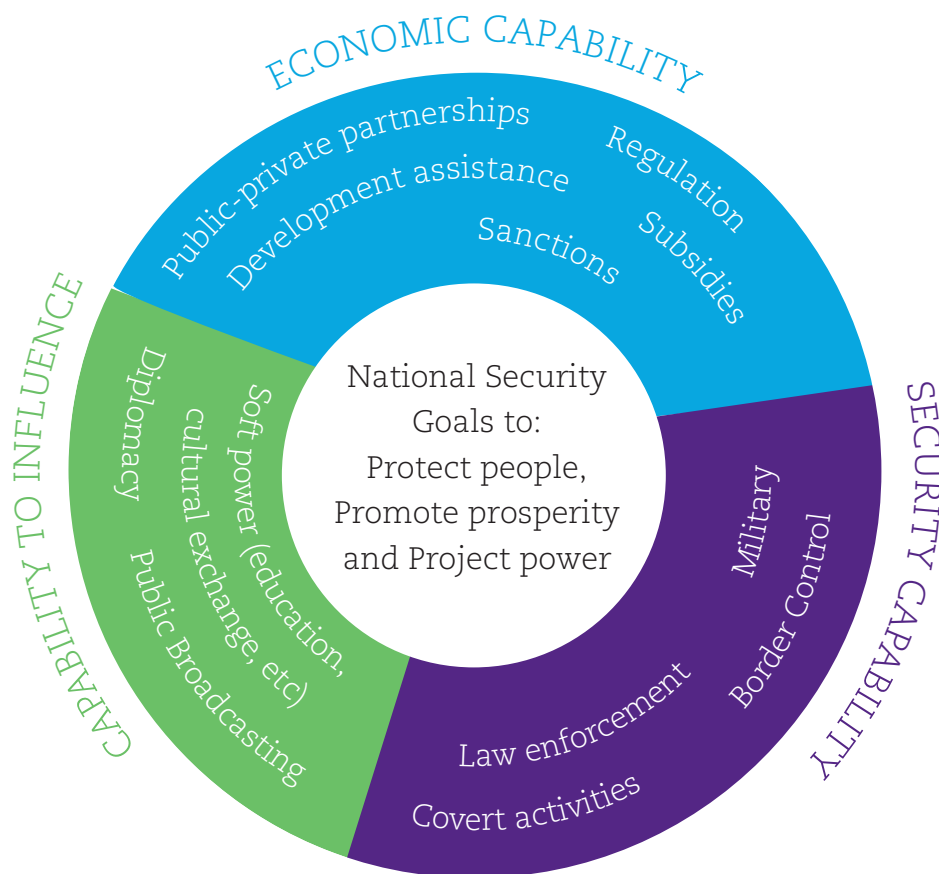
Middle East. Russia's goals "are to weaken the European Union, soften up NATO and make the European continent safe for corrupt Russian money." [6]

The claim that the Kremlin has an agenda to spread disinformation in order to undermine trust in democracy is mistaken. The Western narrative portrays Russia as its antagonistic 'other', belying the true complexity of their relationships. Sociologist Lilia Shevtsova considers that "the key factor in the West's misperception of Russia is a determination to see only a single, dominant trend, which does not exist." [7] It results from a continuing Cold War mentality.

Russian foreign policy goals are openly stated. In 2016, Sergei Lavrov, Russia's foreign minister, explained that NATO's expansion into Eastern Europe had undermined the chance of establishing a secure foundation for European security. It had created "a new subjugation" whereby the new NATO member states could no longer take important decisions without the say so of Brussels or Washington. [8] Moreover, Russians are far from being alone in pointing out the hypocrisy of some politicians in Western Europe and North America, who talk so much about democracy and the rule of law while they wage war in other peoples' countries. The pot should take care before calling the kettle black.

Furthermore, the views aired on Russian social media come in all shapes and sizes. There is considerable commentary on international affairs from a variety of political perspectives, just as there is in English language social media.

The Scottish independence referendum aroused the interest of Russians because the issues mirrored debate within the Russian-speaking community about the rights of a people to declare independence. In early 2014, many people in Crimea and the Donbass pushed to secede



The UK Government's Fusion Doctrine is to deploy security, economic and influence capability for a coordinated approach to national security

from Ukraine and to re-join Russia. Volunteer troops from Russia were despatched to these provinces and fighting ensued between them and the Ukrainian armed forces and irregular fascist militia. Secessionist uprisings were put down by the Ukrainian authorities in Kharkov and Odessa but Crimea and much of the Donbass broke away. A large majority of Russians supported these actions and thus there was exceptional interest in the debates going on at the same time in Scotland and in Veneto, where an unofficial plebiscite was organised on independence from Italy. A non-binding referendum was also held in Catalonia later in the same year. The debates on Russian social media in 2014 spilled over from more local concerns to the rights of regions with their own traditions to autonomy.

By contrast, Russian social media commentary on the EU debate in Britain attracted less interest and was more balanced in terms of what the result might entail for the Russian Federation. Russian posts reflect Russian attitudes and these can make for uncomfortable reading for those unfamiliar with their national context. For example, a Russian blogger might cheer the annexation of Crimea and Scottish or Venetian independence yet condemn the secession of Chechnya and basing laws upon the Sharia. Regrettably, some commentators use racist and disparaging slurs when posting on world events, not so different from the vehement tone adopted by many in the West. Be that as it may, the spill-over from Russian debates accounts for the impression that "Russian actors" attempted to

influence the Scottish referendum and it also explains why evidence is lacking for a similar degree of "meddling" in the EU referendum and subsequent UK general elections.

Media commentary does not take place in a regulated arena, of course, and governments, corporations and rich business people attempt to shape the discussion in their own interests. It includes fanning hype on social media by re-posting comments to amplify the message. Even Anne Applebaum has admitted that "a shutdown of Russian bots will still leave swarms of American bots free to deceive American voters. By its very nature, social media makes disinformation campaigns possible on a larger scale than ever before." [9]

Evidence of Western meddling

Although the Intelligence and Security Committee were patently unhappy with the intelligence agencies' condescending attitude towards its investigation, its recommendations are sure to be adopted. Certain of those recommendations received no publicity in the national press but they reflect the assertions made by Anne Applebaum that the Kremlin's threat to democracy must be countered actively, just as the West sought to do during the Cold War against the USSR.

"The UK, as a Western democracy, cannot allow Russia to flout the rules-based international order without there being commensurate consequences," the Committee stated. "The Kremlin has shown a willingness and ability to operate globally to undermine the West, seeking out division and intimidating those who appear isolated from the international community. The West is strongest when acting in coalition" and such cooperation should seek to "attach a cost to Putin's actions." Britain should therefore work closely with its Five Eyes intelligence partners (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, USA and UK) and NATO, including "the NATO Intelligence Fusion Cell at RAF Molesworth". [10]

Formerly a nuclear-armed cruise missile base run by the US Air Force, RAF Molesworth was re-designated as an intelligence hub operating alongside the CIA base at RAF Croughton and is under the authority of the US Commander-in-Chief in Europe, whose operation is located in Stuttgart. The NATO Intelligence Fusion Centre was established at Molesworth in 2006 to provide electronic and satellite intelligence to NATO forces in Afghanistan and from 2008 for American forces in Africa (i.e. Libya and Somalia). [11] Countering the Russian regime, the Committee suggested, should not stop at counter-espionage and

preventing cyber-intrusion, money-laundering or the bribery of public officials but also involve offensive cyber warfare. It called for more resources for the National Offensive Cyber Programme set up by GCHQ and the Ministry of Defence in 2014. Until now, the Committee's report suggests, offensive cyber campaigns have been directed at the Islamic State and other jihadi extremists operating abroad. The scope of Britain's cyber warfare offensive should be widened, the Committee advocated, not only to weaken Russian economic and political influence in Asia and Africa, but also be extended against China, Iran and North Korea. "As a leading proponent of the rules-based international order it is essential that the UK helps to promote and shape rules of engagement, working with our allies ... for a common international approach in relation to Offensive Cyber [operations]" the Committee concluded. [12]

In May 2019 the GCHQ Director, Jeremy Fleming, spoke to a reception for NATO ambassadors held at Lancaster House, London, on the occasion of NATO's 70th Anniversary. Echoing the wording of the as yet unpublished Intelligence and Security Committee report, he talked of the need to work together to tackle common threats and to be prepared for cyber-attacks against NATO countries. He stressed that deterrence should go beyond cyber security and that what was needed was a framework that promoted the "responsible projection of a nation's cyber capabilities". [13] The GCHQ webpage states that: "We help to manage the threats to us and our allies from hostile states around the world. Our work also contributes to promoting the UK's prosperity and ensuring that the rules-based international system is upheld." [14] In other words it involves economic espionage, propaganda and offensive cyber-intrusion against countries deemed hostile to the UK. This year Britain established a National Cyber Force – a joint unit of the Ministry of Defence and

GCHQ – with an initial budget of £76 million and specialist staff of 500. Just who the unit's intended targets are has not been disclosed officially, but, with the current hubbub over Hong Kong and the supposed threats to UK's critical national infrastructure from China, the People's Republic must surely be included alongside Russia. Unfortunately, this escalation in hostilities is not just backed by the conservatives but by much of liberal opinion on the grounds that John Bull should stand up to "two overbearing foreign powers with hegemonistic tendencies", as *The Observer* newspaper put it, for "balanced, bounded relationships". [15] The fact that all the emphasis has been put on alleged Russian and Chinese "bad behaviour", while ignoring the intensification of cyber warfare by Britain itself, is deeply worrying.

[1] Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament, 2020, Russia, HC632, London: HMSO: paras. 12, 84 and 85.

[2] Dominic Grieve, The Russia problem can't be delayed out of existence, *The Guardian*, 23 July 2020

[3] Marco Silva, General Election 2019: What's the evidence that Russia interfered? BBC News, 11 March 2020 at <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/blogs-trending-51776404>>.

[4] Michael Savage, The Opinion/Observer poll: Nearly half think Moscow affected result, *The Observer*, 26 July 2020.

[5] Dominic Grieve, The Russia problem can't be delayed out of existence, *The Guardian*, 23 July 2020.

[6] Anne Applebaum, columns in *The Washington Post*, 4 August 2017; 29 June 2017; 16 October 2015; and 25 July 2016.

[7] Lilia Shevtsova, Russia's dual response to the West creates confusion on both sides, *Financial Times*, 1 September 2017. (12) Intelligence and Security Committee: para. 18, 21 and 26.

[13] GCHQ post, Director GCHQ addresses NATO cyber defence pledge conference 2019 on 22 May 2019 at <<https://www.gchq.gov.uk/news/director-gchq-addresses-nato-cyber-defence-pledge-conference-2019>>.

[14] GCHQ webpage at <<https://www.gchq.gov.uk/section/mission/strategic-advantage>>.

[15] Lead opinion article, *The Observer*, 12 July 2020.

My Country 'Tis of Thee by W. E. B. du Bois

Of course you have faced the dilemma: it is announced, they all smirk and rise. If they are ultra, they remove their hats and look ecstatic; then they look at you. What shall you do? Noblesse oblige; you cannot be boorish, or ungracious; and too, after all it is your country and you do love its ideals if not all of its realities. Now, then, I have thought of a way out: Arise, gracefully remove your hat, and tilt your head. Then sing as follows, powerfully and with deep uncton. They'll hardly note the little changes and their feelings and your conscience will thus be saved:

My country tis of thee,
Late land of slavery,
Of thee I sing.
Land where my father's pride
Slept where my mother died,
From every mountain side
Let freedom ring!

My native country thee
Land of the slave set free,
Thy fame I love.
I love thy rocks and rills
And o'er thy hate which chills,
My heart with purpose thrills,
To rise above.

Let laments swell the breeze
And wring from all the trees
Sweet freedom's song.

Let laggard tongues awake,
Let all who hear partake,
Let Southern silence quake,
The sound prolong.

Our fathers' God to thee
Author of Liberty,
To thee we sing
Soon may our land be bright,
With Freedom's happy light
Protect us by Thy might,
Great God our King.

The original **My Country 'Tis of Thee** is a patriotic American song and once vied with The Star Spangled Banner to become national anthem. It is sung to the same tune as God Save the Queen. W E B du Bois was an outstanding black American academic and activist. We will be looking more at his life and work in the next issue of *The Socialist Correspondent*.

HOW THE WEST SPIED ON THE WORLD... AND STILL DOES



Argentinian soldiers during the Falklands war

by Alex Davidson

The American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the West German Federal Intelligence Agency (BND) secretly owned the Swiss company Crypto AG it was revealed on 11 February 2020 by *The Washington Post* and the German public broadcaster, ZDF. [1] The intelligence agencies used Crypto AG's encryption communications equipment to spy on some 120 countries for over fifty years until the company was sold in 2018. Similar accusations had been made before but with fuller access to the CIA and BND's histories this is now the most definitive account to date of the operation. [2]

The spy agencies rigged the company's devices so they could easily break the codes that countries used to send encrypted messages. The decades-long arrangement, among the most closely guarded secrets of

the Cold War, is laid bare in a comprehensive CIA history of the operation. The account identifies the CIA officers who ran the programme and the company executives entrusted to execute it. It traces the origin of the venture as well as the internal conflicts that nearly derailed it. It describes how the United States and its allies exploited other nations, took their money and stole their secrets. The operation was first known by the code name "Thesaurus" and later "Rubicon." The CIA report concludes, in a self-congratulatory fashion, that, "It was the intelligence coup of the century."

How the spying worked

Crypto AG, based in Switzerland, made millions of dollars and its clients included Iran and other countries in the Middle East; many Euro-

pean, Asian and African countries; military juntas in Latin America; nuclear rivals India and Pakistan; as well as the United Nations and the Vatican. The Soviet Union and China never purchased Crypto's equipment and so were not directly subject to its surveillance. However, a number of countries which had close relations with the Soviet Union did use Crypto's equipment thus giving the CIA access to messages from them to the Soviet Union. These countries included Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania and Yugoslavia.

The founder of Crypto AG, Boris Hagelin, had a close relationship with William Friedman from their first meeting in 1937. Friedman was also a cryptographer and he ran the research division of the US Army's Signals Intelligence Service from the 1930's. Friedman became Chief Crypt-

tologist for the American National Security Agency (NSA) when it was formed in 1952, the same year as Crypto AG was founded. Hagelin developed encryption machines, which he sold to the US during World War II for use by soldiers in the field, making him a millionaire. After the war Friedman came to a gentleman's agreement with Hagelin in which Crypto AG would not sell secure machines to certain countries. As a consequence some 120 'targeted' countries were sold machines whose messages could be decrypted by NSA.

Hagelin moved Crypto AG from its original headquarters in Sweden to Zug in Switzerland. As Switzerland was a neutral country the company could do business throughout the world with virtually no restrictions. In 1960 the CIA and Hagelin entered into a licensing agreement that paid Hagelin \$855,000 and renewed his commitment to the earlier gentleman's agreement. In 1967, Hagelin was approached by the French intelligence service with an offer to buy the company in partnership with German intelligence. Hagelin rebuffed the offer and reported it to his CIA handlers.

The Gehlen Organisation

At this point in the story it is pertinent to look at the predecessor to the German Federal Intelligence Service, the Gehlen Organisation, which was set up by the Americans immediately following the end of the Second World War. General Reinhard Gehlen had been chief of the anti-Soviet espionage department in Hitler's Military Intelligence Headquarters. Chief of the Department of Foreign Armies East was his official title. Gehlen's final meeting with Hitler was in late February 1945. When Hitler's armies collapsed later in 1945 General Gehlen escaped with the most important files of his department, which he had secreted in the Bavarian mountains, and delivered himself and his service as a going concern

to the Americans. The files were a treasure trove possessing "the most comprehensive documentation on the USSR" and revealing that Gehlen "had built up in the occupied areas of the Soviet Union powerful networks of informers". [3]

In August 1945, General Gehlen was flown with his principal colleagues to the United States in the private plane of General Bedell Smith, Eisenhower's Chief of Staff. He described it in his Memoirs as "flying to Washington at a time when the Russians were still dealing with the other three powers in London over plans to prosecute war criminals". [4] General Gehlen was formally discharged from prisoner-of-war status by the US and returned to Germany in July 1946, where he and his fellow Nazis formed the Gehlen Organisation, financed by the Americans, with their headquarters in the former SS officers estate at Pullach near Munich.



In 1956 the Gehlen Organisation was transferred to the German Federal Government becoming the West German Intelligence Service (BND). Until his retirement at the end of 1968 General Gehlen was in supreme command of the West German secret service. One of the many colleagues of Gehlen, who returned to post-war Germany was Erich Huttenheim, who had been head of the cryptanalytic unit of the cipher department of the High Command of the Wehrmacht. [5] He used the name Erich Hammer-

schmidt and worked for the Gehlen Organisation and its successor the BND. He was one of the architects of Operation Rubicon.

CIA and BND buy Crypto

After the 1967 rebuff from Hagelin the Germans did not give up on the idea of buying Crypto. In a meeting in early 1969 at the West German Embassy in Washington, the head of that country's cipher service, Wilhelm Goeing, outlined the proposal to buy Crypto AG and asked whether the Americans were interested in becoming partners. CIA director Richard Helms approved the idea and dispatched a subordinate to Bonn, the West German capital, to negotiate terms. In the discussions the Americans got German agreement to exclude the French from the deal. Hagelin was bought out in the joint CIA/BND deal for £5.75 million. Liechtenstein based law firm, Marxer and Goop, helped hide the identities of the new owners of Crypto through a series of shell companies that required no shareholder names in registered documents.

From 1970 on, the CIA and its code-breaking sibling, the National Security Agency (NSA), controlled nearly every aspect of Crypto's operations — presiding with their German partners (BND) over hiring decisions, designing its technology, sabotaging its algorithms and directing its sales targets. Foreign governments were paying good money to the U.S. and West Germany for the privilege of having their most secret communications read by them, Britain, the other Five Eyes countries and Israel. [6]

To protect its market position Crypto and its secret owners engaged in smear campaigns against rival companies and plied government officials with bribes funded by the CIA. There are many examples of the use made of Crypto by the West.

- In 1978, during the Egyptian-Israeli peace negotiations at the US President's retreat at Camp David, the

NSA secretly monitored Egyptian President Sadat's communications back to Cairo and fed the information to Israel.

- In the 1981 Falklands War the Americans provided Britain with military intelligence via their monitoring of the Argentinians' messages.
- In 1989 the Vatican's use of Crypto devices proved crucial in the US hunt for the Panamanian leader, Manuel Antonio Noriega. When Noriega sought refuge in the Apostolic Nunciature - the equivalent of a papal embassy - his whereabouts were exposed by the mission's messages back to the Vatican City.
- *The Washington Post* also reported that the US was well aware of the planned assassinations of many opposition leaders in South America.

James Bamford's investigations

In the 1980s James Bamford was researching for his book *The Puzzle Palace* about the US National Security Agency (NSA) and came across references to the "Boris project" in William Friedman's papers. Bamford also discovered that a former NSA director, Lt. General Marshall Carter, had bequeathed his papers to the research library at the Virginia Military Institute. These papers included personal handwritten correspondence from Carter's counterpart in Britain at Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) about "listening posts, cooperative agreements and other sensitive topics". [7] Following the US Senate's Church Committee hearings Bamford also got most of the US Department of Justice's report on its criminal investigation of the NSA. [8] This contained a good deal of information about the NSA-GCHQ close relationship. Bamford wrote to George Gapp, the GCHQ senior liaison officer with the NSA, indicating that the papers implicated GCHQ in Operation Minaret, the illegal NSA programme directed against Ameri-

can citizens. The NSA history dryly noted that "GCHQ was not amused about the disclosure".

That close relationship with the US led GCHQ to become a place to store the huge amounts of telephone call data that American intelligence agencies were scooping up. This helped to cement the close relationship between GCHQ and the Post Office. For instance, the two collaborated extensively on ways to automatically recognise who is talking during a phone call.

Following the publication of Bamford's *The Puzzle Palace* President Reagan issued an Executive Order in 1982 which eliminated the prohibition on re-classifying documents. The NSA raided the Virginia Military Library, stamped many of the Friedman documents secret and ordered them to be put back into the vault.

CIA buys out BND

Hans Böhler, one of the top sales representatives of Crypto, frequently travelled to Arab countries selling cypher machines. Iran had always been one of Crypto's most loyal customers despite the fact that in 1979 when the Shah was overthrown a new regime took over. In March 1992 Böhler was arrested in Iran and after nine months of interrogation he was released after bail of US \$1million had been paid. BND raised the money and it was transferred to Crypto through their covert mechanism. Böhler had been unaware of the secret ownership of Crypto, but following his imprisonment and interrogation in Iran, he became suspicious and with the assistance of other distrustful Crypto employees he delved into its murky world. In 1994 the CIA learned that Böhler was about to disclose the secret relationship between Crypto and Western Intelligence. The CIA wanted him bought off rather than taking legal action to keep him quiet. However, Böhler refused and it was decided to take out a lawsuit which restrained him from talking to the press. The

CIA's strategy was to draw out the process for years. However, this was in the early years of German re-unification and the issue shook the German government so BND was pulled out of Crypto in 1994. Secretly the CIA bought out BND for \$17million and so was now the sole owner of Crypto.

In 1995 Scott Shane of *The Baltimore Sun* interviewed Böhler, and as this was in breach of Böhler's restraining order, the CIA saw their chance and went for an out-of-court settlement. Böhler was forced to declare there were no grounds for his accusation against Crypto and Crypto agreed to pay his legal bills. With the settlement Böhler had been silenced.

The CIA/NSA continued to use Crypto to spy on the world's spies, military, diplomats and governments long after the end of the Cold War until it was sold in 2018.

Spying moves from hardware to software

With technological developments and the move, in terms of importance, from hardware to software, Crypto had become less relevant and, squeezed by encryption technology, it was overtaken by companies and platforms such as Google, Microsoft, Yahoo, Facebook, YouTube and Apple.

According to James Bamford, and confirmed by the whistleblower Edward Snowden, NSA's metadata collection programme now "targets everyone in the country old enough to hold a phone". Bamford wrote, "The gargantuan data storage facility NSA has built at Utah will eventually hold zettabytes (1,000,000,000,000,000,000) of information. The massive super computer that the NSA has built in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, can search through it all at exaflop (1,000,000,000,000,000,000 operations per second) speeds." [9], [10]

Crypto had served its purpose of spying on the world for decades and was sold in 2018. It was broken into two parts: Cy One Security in a management buy-out and Crypto International AG. Cy One's only customer is the Swiss government. Following the revelation of the secret ownership of Crypto in February 2020 by *The Washington Post*, the Swiss government withdrew the export licence of Crypto International AG. In July 2020 Crypto International AG laid off 83 of its 85 staff. The CIA and BND documents indicate that the Swiss government was aware for decades of Crypto's long denied secret owners. Not for the first time this brings into question Switzerland's cherished claims of neutrality.

Crypto AG's spying on the world may have ended but surveillance and spying by the CIA, NSA and its allies including GCHQ continues with new, even more sophisticated methods and it is done on an industrial scale as revealed by Edward Snowden.

[1] Miller, Greg, "The Intelligence Coup of the Century", *Washington Post*, 11 February 2020.
 [2] Ward, Mark, Technology Correspondent, "How GCHQ Built on a Colossal Secret" *BBC News*, 5 May 2014.
 Carrera, Gordon, Security Correspondent, "How NSA and GCHQ spied on the Cold War World", *BBC News*, 28 July 2015.
 [3] Dobson, C., and Payne, R., p.104, "The Dictionary of Espionage", pub. Grafton, 1984.
 [4] Gehlen, Reinhard, p.26, "The Gehlen Memoirs", pub. Collins, 1972.
 [5] Wehrmacht: German armed forces of all three services from 1933 to 1945.

[6] The Five Eyes are the intelligence agencies of the USA, Britain, Australia, New Zealand and Canada.
 [7] Bamford, James, "The NSA and Me", *The Intercept*, 2 October 2014.
 [8] The US Senate Committee to "study Governmental Operations with respect to Intelligence Activities" was chaired by Senator Frank Church and became known as the Church Committee. It was set up in 1975 to investigate abuses by the CIA, NSA, FBI and the Internal Revenue Service. This led to the Department of Justice's criminal investigation which was never concluded.
 [9] A zettabyte is a measure of storage capacity and is sextillion bytes (10²¹).
 An exaflop is one quintillion (10¹⁸) floating point operations per second. To match what a one exaflop computer system can do in just one second, you would have to perform one calculation every second for 31,688,765,000 years.
 [10] Bamford, James, "The NSA and Me", *The Intercept*, 2 October 2014.

Patriotism?

by Peter Latham

"Everybody hated the British." The words of the Afrikaaner guide who took us round the Zulu battlefields still ring in my ears. The Zulus beat the British at Isandlwana, but British power still triumphed over the gold and diamonds of the Reef. My passport says I'm British but I'm not proud of it. Nor ashamed, as neither I nor my forebears did any of these things. I feel proud of my family roots among the cotton mills, canals, railways, coal mines and factories of Bolton and Manchester. Manchester – the city of Engels the revolutionary, whose reports of working class life in 1844 helped bring later reforms at state level, from public health to council houses.

I am English, but scornful of the Englishness of John Major with his cricket, fair play and warm beer – what rubbish. I'm conscious of being from the North and the culture that goes with

it: Ewan McColl, and the Beatles, who were local lads from the other end of the East Lancs Road; Barry Hines, Nicholas Montserrat and the Brontës. Strange that one of the first feminist novels should be written by a conservative. Charlotte opposed the 1832 Reform Act and admired the Duke of Wellington, but that is "British" life for you. Elizabeth Gaskell thought that the Viking influence gave people similar character traits of loyalty, stubbornness, and determination on both sides of the Pennines.

Living in London brought me closer to the un-melting pot of races and nationalities. I used to cycle along Railton Road past Brixton market. There was a radical bookshop where I bought my cherished copy of the Communist Manifesto. Every home should have one. All this and more is my Englishness and if asked I'll say I feel proud of it, but I never use the word "patriotic." I think nationality must be more cultural than anything, although like Gaskell other writers attributed some character traits to nationalities, as if there was an inherited component. I'm wary of this. Class rela-

tions probably play as big a part in character evolution, e.g. the buccaneering merchant class became the expanding colonialists.

Nationality is surely a journey: it is where you take yourself as well as where you come from. Nationalism is no help to me. I doubt if there is an international working class, at least not yet. The Russian soldiers who fought with their backs to the Volga saved me and my parents from fascism, and I admire them greatly. They have a different national heritage with a humanity of their own.

There is more to learn about the humanity of one's own nationality, and of other peoples' – from Shakespeare and Austen to Vaughan Williams and Delius, from Winston Graham's *Poldark* novels to the Caribbean heritage of Andrea Levy, or from Athol Fugard to Olive Schreiner of the Karoo. I don't follow sport, but others do. Solidarity – keep exploring, meeting people, learning, thinking and acting. It all counts.

TORY GAME PLANS

by Frieda Park

Behind the incompetence and bluster the Tories have game plans in relation to Brexit and coronavirus and they are having some success.

Brexit

They have put state aid rules at the centre of the final phase of the Brexit negotiations. Of itself this is interesting. Neo-liberalism as a means of running capitalism has shown itself to be totally unfit during the coronavirus pandemic. Johnson/Cummings are not alone in toying with more state intervention, not just to address the current crisis, but as a more permanent feature of capitalism. Of course this does not mean that they will stick to their guns; quite the reverse, we are likely to see significant compromise with state aid powers being watered down.

The Tory strategy seems to have nonplussed many on the left, which is in danger of ceding ideological ground to the Tories who may pose as “national champions” on the side of British people and industry while the left concentrates on trying to pick holes in their motivation. Attacks on how the Tories intend to use the powers are taking priority over the principle. It would of course be no surprise if they used the powers to bung their mates some cash, prop up Britain’s parasitic economy or buy votes in working class con-



PHOTO BY SHANLUAN

Are we being protected?

stituencies. But far better for us to clearly welcome any retention of state aid powers and to challenge the Tories not to give ground to the EU on this. We should set out a left alternative for how state aid should be used to benefit the British economy and people. The core of the Lexit argument, after all, was that the key benefit of leaving the EU would be to have sovereign control over economic and industrial policy.

The Tories have also been condemned for snatching economic powers back from the devolved administrations to create a UK

single market. It is assumed uncritically that devolved administrations will use these powers in a more progressive way than any central government. This is again to confuse politics with principle. There is absolutely no guarantee that, for example, Scotland whose current government wishes to align itself with the EU, will use devolved powers for good purposes. What is there to prevent a race to the bottom of competing nations and regions cutting taxes and offering incentives to attract business? Although it eventually backed down, postponing the introduction of the new tax, the

SNP proposed in its last manifesto to halve and then abolish airport taxes. It was said that this would bring jobs to Scotland, but where would they have come from? Airports and communities in the north of England no doubt. The antithesis of a planned economy working in the interests of all.

Then there is the hoo-ha about the Tories proposing to break international law by reneging on treaty obligations. Now that trade deal negotiations are going badly, entirely predictably, the government is seeking to use the threat of breaking the commitments in the EU Withdrawal Agreement to gain leverage. They may have planned this all along as a piece of brinkmanship or it may have been incompetence in not spotting the implications of the Withdrawal Agreement for the integrity of the UK single market or a bit of both. The move has invoked a storm of outrage among the liberal media and other European governments and resignations by top law officers. However, it would be more impressive if they applied these standards to the many other breaches of international law that happen daily. In effect there is one international law for rich countries and another for poor countries. To give but a few examples of illegal actions by the rich and powerful devastating poorer countries and their peoples:

- The 2003 invasion of Iraq
- US sanctions - against Cuba, Venezuela, Iran and China, which extend US law to cover third countries and companies trading with those countries
- Israel's continued flouting of UN resolutions, its illegal occupation of neighbouring lands, building settlements on Palestinian land and more
- The denial of asylum seekers right to safety

Where is the outrage for the hundreds of thousands of people killed by regime change wars, deprived of food and medicines by imperial powers seeking to dominate the world in their interests? However blatant a breach of international law threatened by the Tories, no one is going to die, be made homeless, live

national response again minimising the seriousness of the situation. Whether individuals understand and follow these half-baked rules or not – the problem is that business and profit have been put before controlling the virus. Where we are heading now is where the different central and devolved governments

The Tory strategy seems to have nonplussed many on the left, which is in danger of ceding ideological ground to the Tories who may pose as “national champions” on the side of British people and industry while the left concentrates on trying to pick holes in their motivation.

out their lives in a refugee camp, go hungry or be deprived of health care or education. However, it will upset the relationships between western powers and their interests, a much more heinous crime in the eyes of the establishment.

Coronavirus

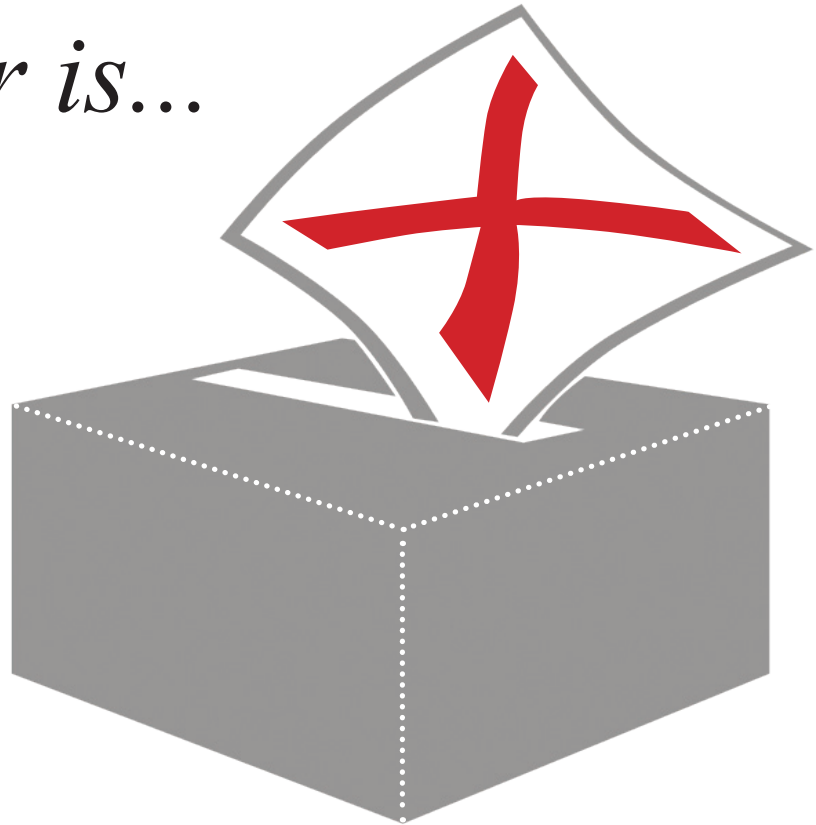
At the start of the coronavirus pandemic the government had to deny that it was pursuing a herd immunity strategy as, at that point, people were generally outraged at the loss of life it would entail. Yet that is now exactly where we are, with businesses, leisure and education opened up and people mixing freely with the pretence that face-masks and patchy distancing and sanitising measures will mitigate the risks of passing on the virus. They will not; the evidence is there for us all to see in the rising number of Covid infections, hospitalisations and deaths. A patchwork of local restrictions has replaced a coherent

wanted us to be at the start – older and vulnerable people isolated and others freely mixing. But that will not stop people suffering and dying as young people too can have serious effects from Covid and it will be passed on.

There is plenty of incompetence in how the strategy has been pursued – the chaos of students starting university without forethought about testing and support for the thousands forced to isolate for example. But overall there is a plan which is being effected across the UK and by all the governments of the UK. It is business as usual and herd immunity. The UK government and the devolved administrations might look as though they have lost control – they have certainly lost control of the virus - but they are achieving their central objective of keeping the economy going while the population is plunged into uncertainty and once again people are suffering and dying unnecessarily.

The winner is...

FIRST PAST THE POST



by Brian Durrans

In August 2020, over half the readers polled by the centrist *LabourList* online magazine were unhappy with Keir Starmer's first three months as party leader. A less topical question, but clearly on the magazine's radar, concerned the UK's electoral system. In the same poll, three-quarters of the responders favoured some form of Proportional Representation (PR) over the existing First Past The Post (FPTP) system. [1] A concerted effort is underway to have PR adopted as Labour policy for parliamentary elections. [2] What is all this about and why should the Left care?

Systems explained

The last time electoral systems were widely debated was in the referendum of May 2011. Voters then preferred FPTP over the ranked-choice Alternative Vote (AV) method by a margin of 2:1. Unsuccessful in 2011, the main, non-party political champion of AV, the Electoral Reform Society (ERS), now prefers PR. Before getting into the politics, here is what the initials mean:

FPTP: Voters choose the candidate or the candidate of the party they most want to win in their constituency. Whoever has most votes is elected MP. If your favourite is unlikely to win, you can vote for a lesser favourite to try to defeat your least favourite (tactical voting). FPTP deserves support because it roughly corresponds to people's personal experience of a society divided by wealth and privilege, and makes Labour the key battleground for getting leaders and policies appropriate to the needs of working people.

AV: Rejected in 2011, the Alternative Vote system has voters rank any number of listed candidates in order of preference. Only first preference votes are counted initially. Anyone getting more than 50% of these is elected automatically. Failing that, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated and their second choices allocated to those remaining. If one candidate then has more than 50% of the votes in this round they are elected. If not, the one with the fewest votes is eliminated and their second preferences are reallocated (or third preferences if they

were the second choice of someone who voted for the first candidate to be eliminated). This continues until one candidate has 50% or more of the vote in that round of counting, or until there are no more votes to be distributed. Since you can put your numbers where you want, AV also allows tactical voting. Voters' top choices will tend to be the same as with FPTP, but with AV second and even third-best choices can produce results fewer want but more might tolerate.

PR: Proportional Representation is not a system of voting at all but the idea, favoured by the ERS and other opponents of the existing system, that the share of a party's MPs out of the total returned to Westminster will be the same as its share of the total votes cast by the electorate. If a party gets a third of the votes, they then get a third of the MPs. The ERS suggests how parties might determine who gets onto the ballot paper, and how voting is done, in order to achieve the 'proportional' outcome it prefers, for which neither FPTP nor AV is appropriate. [3]

Is 'fairness' fair?

Those rooting for PR, however, declare their goal is 'fairness' but are unsure how to achieve it. Entrenched power and influence outside popular control mean elections are conducted on an unlevel playing-field. But being 'fair' to all electors in an unfair system only perpetuates the unfairness. Compare levying a fixed fine for a given offence regardless of the offender's ability to pay. The actual unfairness is more obvious in this example and more insidious in respect of PR, but in both the principle is the same. Like AV, PR uses centrism against the Left. Labour's only chance of overcoming the unlevel playing-field is to campaign nationally and constituency by constituency for a programme that meets people's needs, accords with their experience and understanding and inspires confidence in its practicability. By whatever means it is achieved, even the prospect of PR would deter such campaigning by reducing its potential effect. Accommodating to the unlevel electoral playing-field, rather than trying to overcome it, keeps the field biased to the right, and the more right the field the more right the centre too. Early in his leadership Corbyn observed that Labour's leftward move also pulled the centre with it.

Engaging with people directly on the key issues and encouraging them to use their votes independently of media propaganda nearly won Labour the 2017 general election. This is a risk which PR is designed to mitigate, however well-intentioned some of its supporters, who argue that equalising the value of all votes cast is essential for a high turnout, and for extending political engagement against apathy and cynicism ("why vote when my party can never win in my constituency – or why not vote for a second-best party with a better chance of winning?"). This argument, however, is based not just on an electoral view of politics but on an abstract view of elections them-

selves. The job of politics, and of elections as part of politics, is not to keep the status quo running smoothly, or at all, but to create something better. It is not a matter of doing something once every five years or of opting for second-best when you do it. Both FPTP and PR provide an incentive to campaign between elections on issues that matter to people in any constituency, but only FPTP encourages canvassing in marginals, hitherto key to winning elections overall. In the run-up to the AV referendum in May 2011, the AV lobby made much of various organisations having adopted this system for their own internal elections, but the comparison was a confidence trick. In a perceptive article for the spring 2011 issue of this journal, a few weeks before the referendum, Calvin Tucker pointed out that such organisations "are largely composed of members who share a common interest and, by joining, adopt the common purpose of the group [... but that] a whole country, such as Britain, is nothing like that." [4] The 2011 referendum result was also a verdict on Nick Clegg's Liberal Democrats who negotiated the referendum as a fee for joining David Cameron's Conservatives in a Coalition government to inflict austerity on the British people to pay for the 2008-09 financial crisis. Under Ed Miliband, Labour supported AV, albeit with much dissent on both the left and right. Pro-AV, arch-Blairite Peter Mandelson acknowledged that the result reflected opposition to Clegg and austerity but added that the AV lobby failed to do what he called the "groundwork", implying that it wouldn't make that mistake again. The rejection of AV in 2011 has not stopped FPTP being misrepresented as a key problem for democracy. Mandelson's "groundwork" continues.

Class politics or horse-trading?

Labour today retains most of its 'Corbyn surge' members. More members and supporters than ever before have witnessed and drawn

lessons from the tactics used by the ruling class and its apologists to prevent a left government, and attempts to shift the party to the right are provoking vigorous opposition. In the meantime the party's links with the trade union movement remain strong.

The more Labour fades as a national force, or seems to, the more tempting PR might seem to the left as offering a reasonable presence in parliament as someone else's joint or junior partner. Conversely, the stronger Labour appears to be, as it really was in 2017, the more of a headache FPTP is for the establishment. But for whichever reason the idea of ending FPTP is up for discussion, the more likely it is to happen. There is no innocent weighing of Labour's options in respect of electoral systems while the noise of grinding axes fills the air.

Over the decades, Labour governments have suffered not from FPTP but from not winning big enough majorities or mobilising their supporters to tackle entrenched privilege. Real democracy, advancing popular demands, means decision-making close to people's experience. A progressive party out to win an election via FPTP has every incentive to sort out its divisions and policies in advance by drawing on that experience – as Labour attempted in 2017 and less successfully in 2019 – and to remain accountable to members and supporters. Hard-won manifesto commitments are not the property of party mandarins to negotiate away without members' permission.

The discipline and participation needed in this task is akin to that necessary for the best possible slate for factional contests in a broad-based organisation. By making a greater virtue of post-election horse-trading than of fidelity to manifesto commitments and the work that went into them, PR would both devalue elections and further alienate people from politics when it is critically important to more

To realise its potential Labour needs to confront privilege, mobilise its members in struggle and win an outright parliamentary majority. It will not be easy, but without FPTP it could take longer than the planet can afford.

actively defend and advance their interests. If the voting methods geared to deliver PR turn out to be as complex or opaque as implied by their advocates' coyness about them, politics could appeal even less when it should be drawing people in as never before.

Labour and parliament

The Labour Party's first two spells of power under Ramsay MacDonald were as minority governments in 1924 and 1929-31. The powerful Liberal Party tolerated some social welfare reforms, especially to mitigate the effects of the 1929 financial crash and the ensuing Great Depression, but not the scale of reform needed in the coal industry. Recent research shows the second Labour government enjoyed an upsurge of working class support after the General Strike, but this was not harnessed to push more radical reforms against Liberal obstruction.

Only with the Attlee landslide in 1945 did Labour get a clear parliamentary majority and the opportunity to enact radical social-democratic measures covering industrial organisation, services, and welfare, in response to popular demand in the wake of the World War 2 alliance that defeated fascism, and for a social wage to keep pace with achievements in the socialist republics.

With a slim majority in 1950 and under hawkish pressure to cut the social wage in favour of military spending, the party lost to the Tories the following year, belatedly returning to government under Harold Wilson in 1964-1970, initially with a 4-seat majority then rising to 96 in 1966. But heavy so-called defence budgets and continuing decline of the British economy left the party little room for winning elections with measures favourable to its core working class supporters. The party's influential right wing replaced the Liberals of MacDonald's time to keep Labour governments in step with the establishment.

Losses by Scottish Labour left the 1974-79 Labour government, led first by Wilson then by James Callaghan, exposed to deals with smaller parties, most damagingly in the 1977 Lib-Lab pact with David Steel's Liberals. After the party's defeat by the Conservatives under Margaret Thatcher in the aftermath of the 1979 'Winter of Discontent', Labour swept into government in 1994 as New Labour with Tony Blair as PM and a majority big enough for major social welfare improvements in key fields like nursery education but squandered on neoliberal excesses such as PFI outsourcing in the NHS and lying to justify its support for the Iraq war.

Despite successfully stabilising sterling in the financial crash of 2008-09, Gordon Brown's decision to make the public rather than the bankers pay led to Labour's electoral defeat in 2010. During this phase, as in the latter part of the earlier Wilson government, Labour's majority may have freed it from obligations to smaller rivals but by then the leadership was more aligned with neoliberalism than with its own support base.

Finally, defeat of the socialist bloc in 1989-90 left capitalist ambition unchecked, with immediate (and still continuing) consequences for the lives of millions, not least those in Britain who had hitherto assumed, albeit with diminishing confidence, that Labour would look out for them. In the wake of that experience and nine years of banking-crisis austerity, an unlikely Labour backbencher was catapulted almost by accident to nearly become PM in 2017.

To summarise: the ability or determination of Labour governments to implement popular policies has been too often thwarted by narrow majorities, forced compromises and ideological bias. Far from a panacea for these problems, ditching FPTP would only entrench them. To realise its potential Labour needs to confront privilege, mobilise its members in struggle and win an outright parlia-

mentary majority. It will not be easy, but without FPTP it could take longer than the planet can afford.

Unity is Strength

For Labour to pass some form of PR into law it would first need to win an election by the existing FPTP or do sufficiently well to be able to vote it through with the help of predictably eager MPs in smaller parties. Labour's General Election manifestos in 2017 and 2019 are silent on the UK's voting system although the Constitutional Commission, which the 2017 manifesto said would recommend ways of "extending democracy", might have addressed the issue. The challenge to the anti-FPTP lobby in Labour and other parties, including a minority of Tories, is that they depend on Labour members being resigned to binning or filleting popular policies in the Party's last two manifestos for the next scheduled election in 2024.

Claiming PR would be 'fairer' than FPTP prompts comparison with Harold Wilson's slogan of 'a fair

day's work for a fair day's pay.' PR 'fairness' perpetuates the unlevel field on which elections are contested (gross media bias being only the most obvious) by pretending that allocating a party's MPs in proportion to the vote it achieves against odds already stacked against it somehow cancels out the bias. Wilson's slogan perpetuates exploitation by ignoring the inescapable condition of capitalism that employers pocket the difference between the value of their employees' labour and the wages they are paid. Each claim of fairness disguises its opposite. Remembering that justifies optimism and determination.

Labour has a proud history of connecting local with national and international aspects of struggle for a better future. Despite shortcomings, Labour's approach to Parliament and therefore parliamentary elections is integral with that, not detached from it. Key elements of the original socialist Clause IV of the party's constitution have of course been lost, yet the party remains – even in Tony Blair's amendment - officially committed

to "a community in which power, wealth and opportunity are in the hands of the many, not the few" – in other words, not merely to 'having a voice' in parliament. [5] Whatever the differences between the defeated/discredited AV and devious routes to PR, claims that any of them is 'fairer' or 'more modern' than FPTP make no sense in political reality, except to serve the interests of the 1%. The answer to divide and rule has always been "unity is strength" and that applies as much to deciding an electoral system as to any other aspect of class struggle.

[1] <https://labourlist.org/2020/08/55-of-labourlist-readers-predict-a-tory-government-after-the-next-election/>
[2] <https://labourlist.org/2020/08/hundreds-of-party-members-are-calling-on-labour-to-back-proportional-representation/>
[3] <https://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/voting-systems/what-are-voting-systems/proportional-representation/>
[4] Calvin Tucker, "A vote for AV is a vote for cuts", *The Socialist Correspondent*, no. 11, spring 2011, pp. 11-12
[5] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clause_IV.

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SECURITY & COOPERATION IN EUROPE

Were the Helsinki accords doomed to failure?

Finlandia Hall Helsinki

by Mark Waller

There are many anecdotes about the heady days of the 1975 Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), which took place in Helsinki, Finland and resulted in a major though doomed effort to reduce cold war tensions between East and West in Europe. The conference had acquired a deeply symbolic importance. The story goes that as members of delegations assembled in the lobby of Finlandia Hall prior to the signing of the final document, an unsummoned lift descended and the doors opened with a ping. There was no one inside. “Ah,” remarked Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko with customary deadpan style, “the spirit of Helsinki!”

The tale is likely spurious and there are numerous versions. But it

reflects something of the sense of expectation that the CSCE mustered. Today, it’s hard to see it without the heavy irony of hindsight, where the spirit of Helsinki was a mere void. And yet, if we’re to understand the foreign policies of the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries in Europe during the worst years of the Cold War, we need to look at why the ‘Helsinki spirit’ was so much talked about at the time and what it tried to do.

Fake history

One problem with the history of the CSCE is that it’s been massively distorted by piecemeal accounts or blatant ideological hammering concerning the Soviet Union’s role in it. There are few people around

nowadays willing or equipped to delve into Soviet history to try to set the record straight, especially when it comes to things like foreign and defence policy and many branches of domestic policy between about 1950 and 1985. The availability of sources is scant and dwindling. You find that in bourgeois academia just about any old negative interpretation or gaping omission concerning Soviet activity will pass. Fake history abounds.

Some examples: the CSCE was a human rights agreement that ultimately sank the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries in Europe; in 1969 Finland niftily took the initiative to get the CSCE off the ground to ease Soviet pressure on Finnish neutrality; the CSCE was

part of the superpowers' efforts to ease tensions following the Cuban missile crisis; the CSCE was a triumph of the Federal Republic of Germany's (FRG) more open policy towards the East.

While some historical accounts look at the true origins of the CSCE, there seem to be none that provide any context, probably for fear of seeming to give too much credit to the Soviets. And yet from the early 1950s onwards the problem of how to avoid another conflict centred on Europe was a major Soviet worry. Only a short time before, it had lost 27 million of its people in the war against Nazi Germany. Aggressive, red-scare anti-communism was rampant in the US. The formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in 1949 by 12 capitalist states, ostensibly "to secure peace in Europe", sought, as NATO's current description of its origins states, to counter "the threat posed by the Soviet Union" [1] – though its founding charter actually made no mention of either the Soviet Union or Communism. From the Soviet perspective, lack of international recognition of post-war borders in Eastern Europe was a further source of insecurity. And to compound the problem, in 1952, the US had pitched the Soviet Union into a more fearsome round of the nuclear arms race by exploding the world's first thermonuclear bomb.

Collective security

In August 1953, the Soviet Union proposed that there should be an international conference of the four powers (the US, Britain, France and the Soviet Union) that had been occupying Germany since the Nazi defeat in 1945. The Soviet Union proposed the reunification of Germany as an independent and neutral state, but did not suggest what social or economic system should prevail.

In February the following year, foreign ministers of the four powers met in Berlin. The Soviet proposal

concerning the basis for German unification was rejected by the US, and the conference went on to look at other issues, including the aftermath of the Korean War. It was at this conference that the Soviet Union proposed having a treaty to safeguard collective security in Europe. This proposal took the form of a draft agreement, which Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov presented to his counterparts.

Very briefly, the proposed treaty would be open to all European states regardless of their social systems; it would include the FRG and German Democratic Republic (GDR) on an equal basis; commit the parties not to use force against one another and settle disputes by peaceful means; the parties would consider an attack on one of them as an attack on all; and they would pledge not to enter into any coalition or alliance that would contravene the purpose of the treaty. The US and China would not be parties to the treaty but would have observer status.

The Soviet proposal was the only such initiative that aimed to take a holistic view of European security. It sought to take account of the emergence of NATO and to include all European states under the umbrella of common security. The proposal was the first step on a long path towards what would later become the CSCE and the Helsinki Final Act.

But at the time it was rejected on the grounds that the US was excluded and, rather speciously, that it aimed to undermine NATO and to wreck nascent plans for a European Defence Community. Undeterred, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet adopted the proposal of the foreign ministry (worked out by Molotov and Gromyko) that the Soviet Union seek to join (or "participate in") NATO and that the US would not be excluded from an envisaged European security treaty, which was termed a General Agreement on Collective Security in Europe.

While some historical accounts look at the true origins of the CSCE, there seem to be none that provide any context, probably for fear of seeming to give too much credit to the Soviets.



Left to right: US Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev, US President Gerald Ford and Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, Helsinki 1975

Molotov's memo to the Presidium that accompanied the proposal pointed out that Soviet membership of NATO would check the aggressive intent of the bloc's architects "and would emphasise its supposedly defensive character, so that it would not be directed against the USSR and the people's democracies." Molotov wrote that it was more than likely that the three Western powers would reject the Soviet suggestion, and that this would expose the inherently aggressive design of NATO, but he pointed out that if they welcomed the idea, it would radically change NATO's character. In the end the three Western powers rejected the Soviet initiative. [2]

Had Germany been reunited as a neutral country, as the Soviets proposed, the subsequent history of Europe would have been a lot less fraught with tension and danger. In 1955, the Western powers ended their occupation of Germany, which was then made a sovereign state (the FRG), injected with massive economic aid, made a forward base for NATO forces and admitted to the pact as a full member. The same year, the Soviet Union and socialist countries established the Warsaw

Treaty Organisation, with the proviso that it would disband in unison with the dismantling of NATO.

But the Soviet Union continued to press its proposal for a new European security arrangement at all subsequent meetings of foreign ministers. It was not until over a decade later that the idea began to gain traction as a number of West European states became more receptive to the notion of reducing tensions between the socialist east and the capitalist west. This was so particularly in the FRG, where centre-left Social Democrats succeeded the rightwing Christian Democratic Union and abandoned the policy of refusing contact with any state that had diplomatic ties with the socialist GDR.

The Soviet Union, a strong proponent of neutrality and non-alignment as buffers against imperialist expansion, realised that it would be best if the idea for a new security order in Europe came from a neutral source. It first sounded out Austria, which proved lukewarm and equivocal. It then it discussed the idea with the Finns, with whom it had a treaty of friendship and mutual assistance. Finland, under President Kekkonen,

was keen to carve out a role for itself as a mediator and peace broker within the big power matrix, a position it subsequently developed and on which it still prides itself today.

The upshot was a proposal from Finland, launched in May 1969, for the start of multilateral negotiations for what would be called the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. Successive rounds of negotiations, first in Helsinki in 1973, then in Geneva from 1973 to 1975, and finally in Helsinki again in August 1975, produced the Final Act, [3] which was signed by the heads of state and government of 35 participating states.

Helsinki Accords

The Helsinki accords were not a binding treaty that would be ratified, as the Soviets had initially hoped, but rather a series of commitments. On the other hand, the CSCE affirmed the status the two Germanys and the post-World War 2 borders in Eastern Europe, and established sophisticated ideas of common security within the European framework. The Final Act also extended the idea of security

to include economic cooperation, cultural cooperation, humanitarian commitments, cooperation in the fields of education, science and technology, transport, environment, and security and cooperation specifically in the Mediterranean region. In the area of 'hard' security, it established confidence-building measures concerning military manoeuvres – points that linked up with other East-West negotiations on reducing conventional forces in Europe. It did not cover nuclear arms reduction, which was dealt with in other forums.

The agreement embraced many of the long-pursued goals of the socialist states in setting clear principles that would guide inter-state relations, covered in part in the Final Act's so-called 'decatalogue':

- I. Sovereign equality, respect for the rights inherent in sovereignty
- II. Refraining from the threat or use of force
- III. Inviolability of frontiers
- IV. Territorial integrity of states
- V. Peaceful settlement of disputes
- VI. Non-intervention in internal affairs
- VII. Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief
- VIII. Equal rights and self-determination of peoples
- IX. Co-operation among states
- X. Fulfilment in good faith of obligations under international law

Follow-up CSCE meetings were held in Belgrade in 1977, Madrid in 1979 and in Vienna from 1986 to 1989. But while the CSCE did make some

headway in establishing better relations between the East and West, for the most part its commitments and principles were not realised. The US and its NATO allies pushed relentlessly for nuclear superiority over the Soviet Union and ratcheted up their propaganda war against the socialist countries.

Scuppered by West

Most of the CSCE agreement remained unimplemented. Moves to improve contacts between citizens of East and West and develop the various forms of non-military cooperation fared best between the USSR and the other socialist countries and neutral Finland, Sweden, Austria and Switzerland. All of them complied well with getting the CSCE accords publicised and known, through the media and public events. But ramped up tensions, caused by the 1979 NATO decision to deploy a new generation of first strike nuclear weapons in Europe targeted at the Soviet Union made the normalisation of relations that the CSCE sought practically impossible.

The Soviet perspective, rooted in Lenin's analyses of the potential for peaceful coexistence between socialism and capitalism, proved astute: where possible peaceful relations, dialogue, a reduction of tensions and cooperation should be pursued, but socialist countries could never forget that at every twist and turn, imperialist states would seek to undermine socialism. Which is what happened.

Perhaps the CSCE never stood a chance. Henry Kissinger, US Secretary of State under presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford, had no time at all for the CSCE: "We never wanted it but we went along with the Europeans [...] It is meaningless – just a grandstand play to the left. We are going along with it." [4] Ford, who signed the Final Act on behalf of the US, was equally cynical: "We are not committing ourselves beyond what we are already committed to by our own moral

and legal standards." [5] The British government, under Harold Wilson, never attached much importance to the CSCE, viewing it as a "Soviet ploy designed to undermine Western cohesion". [6]

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries, the CSCE was revamped as an instrument of imperialist policy. The 1990 Charter of Paris changed the CSCE into the OSCE (the O stands for organisation). The charter remodeled the forum as a new component for neoliberal change in Eastern Europe, the highlight of which was the development of capitalist market economies across the East as the hallmark of "freedom".

[1] <https://www.nato.int/wearenato/why-was-nato-founded.html>

[2] <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/molotovs-proposal-the-ussr-join-nato-march-1954>

[3] <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/5/c/39501.pdf>

[4] <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v39/d243>

[5] <https://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/document/0248/whpr19750725-021.pdf>

[6] https://www.researchgate.net/publication/298011691_A_very_British_vision_of_detente_The_United_Kingdom%27s_foreign_policy_during_the_Helsinki_process_1969-1975

The West, Putin and the left opposition

by Gregor Tassie

The 20th century was defined by two transformative events in world history. Firstly, in 1917 the October Revolution established a socialist regime planning to abolish unemployment, poverty, and illiteracy, introduce sexual and racial equality, and universal free health care and education. Secondly, the defeat of fascism in 1945 in Europe and Asia led to a socialist system embracing one third of the world's population. This in turn led to capitalist countries – in order to prevent revolutions – announcing pension schemes, unemployment benefits, free education, and health services. The Soviet experiment lasted 74 years, since when the welfare state in western countries has been pushed back by neoliberal economics and globalisation. Capitalism has ruled triumphant, with American 'exceptionalism' throwing huge numbers into greater poverty and destitution and regional wars ensuring profits for arms traders. Reprising Reagan's depiction of the Soviet Union as an 'Evil Empire', today Russia has once again become the world's bogey man.

Challenging the US

Among the causes for US annoyance is the Eurasian project to form alliances outwith its influence. Following its end, several strategic alliances emerged in the wake of the Soviet Union: The Commonwealth of Independent States which collaborates on economic, political, and military issues between former Soviet states; the BRICS countries of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa which present an alternative to the IMF



Boris Yeltsin with Vladimir Putin

and World Bank and the dominance of the US dollar in world markets [1], even though Brazil and India have adopted neoliberalism closer to the US model; and of great importance is the Shanghai Cooperation Group of five former Soviet republics, China, India, and Pakistan, which covers half of the world's population. Belarus, Mongolia, and Iran enjoy observer status. The pact involves military, economic, cultural, and political cooperation and supports sovereignty and non-interference in international relations. Putin has spoken of a common political, military, cultural, and economic association from Vladivostok to Lisbon on the Atlantic.

In pursuing 'exceptionalism', the US has attempted to transform the world in its favour, economically, politically, and militarily. Putin has said that the US has used 'almost uncontained hyper use of force in international relations.' [2] NATO membership expanded to the Rus-

sian border and located an anti-missile shield in eastern Europe. This was opposed by Putin: 'I would rather disagree with a case he [Obama] made on American exceptionalism, stating that the United States' policy is "what makes America different. It's what makes us exceptional." It is extremely dangerous to encourage people to see themselves as exceptional, whatever the motivation.' [3] Putin argued for a multi-polar world order without dominance by any one state to the detriment of others, notably Russia and China. His words fell on deaf ears and were met with hostility. The 2006 US Congress Act on Belarus and Russia led to American funding of opposition groups in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus. Sixty US sanctions have been imposed on Russia since 2014. [4]

The 'Orange' Ukrainian revolution was led by nationalist/fascist groups (funded largely by the US State Department) who committed atrocities against trade unionists

in Odessa and elsewhere. The 2014 coup d'état instigated civil war with the Donbass and Crimea claiming self-determination. The decision of the Donbass elected leaders (mostly communists and socialists) to oppose Kiev was popular, as was Crimea's reunification with Russia which was backed by referendums. Collections of medical aid are made in Russian workplaces and many Russians have volunteered to fight against the fascists, joined by communists from Spain, Italy, and France. Putin's position led to his popularity rising massively.

Russian self-sufficiency and cooperation with CIS and BRICS states have prevented sanctions from having desired effect. Putin states that the West suffered more from sanctions than did Russia, claiming that many European workers lost their jobs while Russia created jobs from production of banned items to the value of 5 billion euros. [5] Yet the collapse of oil prices has weakened the rouble, and wealth remains concentrated in Moscow with many regions having declining living standards. Putin stopped the sell-off of the countries' resources yet recently land was privatised as was the huge railway network. The current unemployment rate is 5% and poverty levels are rising. State pensions and the health system have been restructured and education is being privatised. The trade unions (31 million members) were sanctioned by Yeltsin for supporting his impeachment in 1993 and again they opposed Yeltsin when he tried to remove their right to control social benefits. This was enforced by Putin who also removed the right of the Trade Unions to attend the Council on Labour Relations.

Putin

Putin's service in Dresden in the 1980s allowed him to grasp the threat of demonstrations linked to treachery by Party leaders and to the overthrow of socialism. Returning to Leningrad he made an alliance with

the 'liberal' Sobchak - a former KGB operative - leading demonstrations against Gorbachev. Putin became head of the security services responsible for expropriating the outlawed Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The rapid switch to capitalism caused huge unemployment and poverty. In Yeltsin's flagging 1996 election campaign, Clinton provided dollars to fight the threat of the reborn Communist Party. A Putin ally, Medvedev stated, 'Everyone knows Yeltsin didn't win the election'. [6] This leads one to question other election rigging since.

Putin as president has proved himself a very astute politician, able to play off different societal groups. In 2003 he openly criticised oligarchs stating that they could no longer influence policy and centralised state power in the Kremlin. [7] Several oligarchs were arrested, and assets seized. It was about this time that oligarchs like Khodorkovsky were championed by the western media while Putin was demonised. Putin calls himself the 'greatest nationalist in Russia'. [8] He said the 'collapse of the USSR was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century'. [9] In 2016 he told journalists, 'I still like communist ideology and have never thrown away my party card.' [10] He has positively compared Christianity with socialism, 'freedom, brotherhood, equality and justice are all in the scriptures.' Sociologists have defined his position as pragmatic, anti-western, and Eurasian. [11] Putin sensed the loss of Russia's prestige and played to the nostalgia for Soviet life.

A childhood friend of Putin, Sergey Roldugin, told me that he teaches Putin to play piano and that Putin granted funds from the infamous Panama scandal to buy musical instruments for talented children at St Petersburg Music Centre. [12] He rewarded his home city by building new opera houses and concert halls. There is however a degree of vanity, inculcating a personality cult with the media showing Putin posing

bare-back on a horse. He uses prison jargon and has expressed racist and sexist opinions publicly. With a current dearth in political leadership, Putin has no viable contender.

The ruling United Russia (which Putin is not a member of) is a bloc of self-seeking entrepreneurs and bureaucrats. There are long term problems because the wealth from exports of oil and gas will dry up eventually, amid mounting ecological disasters and vulnerability to green energy investment. There is a declining birth-rate. The scandal about a huge housing scheme in Moscow, which was bulldozed to permit exclusive private housing for the elite is typical. Protests, like the demonstration in Khabarovsk, are a regular phenomenon today. The September 2020 elections saw United Russia lose control of several cities and towns. Navalny's anti-communist and anti-Putin bloc took several seats including the leading communist's in Novosibirsk. The elections were typical in terms of apathy accompanied by a low turnout and vote rigging. [13]

Navalny and the Skripals

Blogger Alexei Navalny gained prominence mostly through exposing corruption and by being helped by western media. Educated at Yale and a shareholder in five energy companies, Navalny was chosen by *Prospect*, *Time*, and *Foreign Policy* as among the world's top hundred people in 2011-13. In the 2013 Moscow mayoral election he got 27% in a turnout of 33% and raised over \$3 million but bids to stand for president were thrown out because of convictions for embezzlement. Navalny's twitter followers amount to 2 million but in Russia nobody really thinks he is serious because he is so pro-western.

The Skripal assassination attempt is one of many carried out against oligarchs, mafia figures or former KGB officers. During the 'wild west' of the 1990s there were literally thousands of such killings in open

gang warfare on Russian soil. In the case of the Skripals, or indeed the Litvinenko case, it may be former agents seeking revenge. That Novichok was kept at Porton Down a few miles from Salisbury appears to be rather bizarre. The Navalny case fits into the same scenario almost perfectly in casting blame and fitting timely political purposes. The UK and German authorities' refusal to share their findings in relation to the Skripals with Russia is strange, and apportioning guilt without evidence is in itself deeply suspicious. What has Russia to gain by assassinating opposition figures and former spies?

The left alternative

The Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) has 42 deputies in the Duma - down from 1995 when they had 157 seats. Their 'stolid and uninspiring' [14] leader Gennady Zyuganov won the first round of the 1996 presidential election taking 40% of the vote. Elections have invariably suffered abuses or been rigged. [15] Certainly low turnouts indicate that many are cynical about the electoral process. Parties require 200,000 signatures and six months notice for candidature. Several left parties are banned from operating legally. Current election law grants the CPRF, whose mem-

bership is 160,000, almost 2 billion roubles which allows considerable dominance over other left parties. It has its own TV station and several newspapers. The Communists of Russia led by Maxim Suraikin split away on ideological grounds, arguing the CPRF took a soft line on religion and private enterprise by including many businessmen as election candidates. Suraikin defines his party as Bolshevik and Zyuganov's party as Menshevik. Looking at their policies and practices it is hard to deny this. CPRF deputies have been jailed for embezzlement and other criminal activity. [16]

In the 2018 presidential election the CPRF put up an entrepreneur, Pavel Grudinin - a former member of Putin's party whose wife had a Swiss bank account. He won just 11% of the vote. There are as many as 17 socialist groups, including the Left Front, and youth organisations following the same tenets as the former Young Communist League. In last year's opinion polls 70% of Russians wanted a return to the social and economic benefits of the USSR. Reflecting on the past has shown for many that the best years were in the Soviet period when the country pioneered science, culture and sport and was a bastion for peace and cooperation.

Putin has proved a very able politician in taming oligarchs and opposing American expansionism. He has shown himself determined to defend sovereignty and he draws the trust and admiration of many who remember the USSR's position on peace and security. Under Yeltsin and Putin, however, capitalism has failed to offer anything better, bringing only corruption and poverty to ordinary people. The left will have to unite behind a strong socialist programme to present Russia with the way forward and an alternative to a failed system.

- [1] Elvira Nabiulina, Voice of Russia, 12/7/2014
- [2] Putin - 2007 Munich Security Conference
- [3] Putin, New York Times, 11/9/2013
- [4] Center for Strategic and International Studies
- [5] Putin - 20 Questions TASS 2019
- [6] "Fraudeberichten uit Rusland". nos.nl. Time 24/2/2012.
- [7] Putin - 20 Questions TASS 2019
- [8] Vedomosti - 15/6/2018
- [9] Putin, Message to Federal Council 25/4/2005
- [10] Vedomosti, 2016.
- [11] Michel Elchaninov, In the head of Putin, Allgemeine Zeitung
- [12] Interview BBC Radio 3 - April 2003
- [13] Kommersant - 14/9/2020
- [14] Helsinki elections Commission csce.org
- [15] <http://www.okrug.info/hot-summer-how-elections-were-rigged-in-russia-perovo-moscow.html>
<https://novayagazeta.ru/articles/2020/07/08/86195-russia-explained-42>
- [16] Communists of Russia.ru

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President Alexander Lukashenko

BELARUS

HOLDING OUT AGAINST ANOTHER COLOUR REVOLUTION

PHOTO BY OKRAS

by A. MacIntosh

On August 9th Belarus held a presidential election according to its constitution and as supervised by the independent Central Election Commission. The USA and the EU condemned the outcome as they have done every time in the last 25 years that Belarus voters have freely chosen to re-elect the incumbent Alexander Lukashenko with large majorities. Immediately western media reports predictably followed their governments in denouncing the results as fraudulent and rigged by “the last dictator in Europe”, while holding up liberal opponents as freedom loving democrats brutally oppressed by “an authoritarian regime”. Equally predicably there followed an upsurge of street protest in the capital Minsk by ad hoc groups of western enamoured liberals and hard right nationalist opponents of the government and its Soviet inspired policies.

Each weekend there followed large demonstrations primarily in Minsk attracting young liberals and nationalists alike and calling for “the regime” to be overthrown, for intervention from abroad, and that the election be declared null and void. The government has pushed back, mobilising security forces against any risk of a western backed colour (read counter) revolution as proved so disastrous in Ukraine in 2014, where fascist elements and oligarch-backed economic liberals subsequently came to power. The opposition set up a coordinating committee, including leading cultural figures aiming to negotiate a transfer of power. The government and the constitutional court responded quickly, declaring the committee unconstitutional and arrests swiftly followed.

How do Lukashenko, Belarus elected representatives and supporters in Russia view these disturbing events?

“They [the west] do not need Belarus. Belarus is a springboard, as usual, to Russia...They need to remove this government and install another one which will appeal to a foreign state to send in troops and provide support. They need a market here to sell their products.” President Lukashenko 28/8/20.

“Belarusians see the situation clearly, and they tried to intimidate them, to silence them...But we are developing a certain immunity... Let’s imagine these people came to power. God forbid. They will use exactly the same methods: intimidation and humiliation of dissenting voices. This is the flip side of democracy, liberalism, freedom of speech that they supposedly promote.” Sergie Klishevich, representative in the Belarus National Assembly 26/8/20.

“The cynical assault against Belarus was planned a long time ago. Today

it is connected to the presidential election held on 9 August. Its strategic goal is to destroy the Belarusian statehood and our union, thus weakening the CiS states and their integration ties.” Gennady Zyuganov Chair of the Russian Federation Communist Party 28/8/20.

In short they are clear sighted and will resist all attempts to bring Belarus into the orbit of the EU and NATO thereby posing a further security challenge to Russia right on her border.

Belarus – a short history

Belarus is a landlocked country the size of England and Scotland combined, lying between Poland and Russia with the Baltic states to the north and Ukraine to the south. It has been fought over for centuries. A sovereign state only since 1991, between 1921 and 1991 Belarus was a Soviet republic and part of the USSR.

Occupied by the Germans during World War 1 it was split in half between Poland and Soviet Russia in 1921 by the Treaty of Riga. From 1921 to 1939 the Belarus Soviet Socialist Republic (BSSR) created modern state institutions. Feudal lands were appropriated, farming collectivised, and industrial development given priority. Education for all and an enlightened socialist culture was the order of the day. This was in contrast to Polish ruled western Belarus where indigenous society and culture were remorselessly attacked with the imposition of a reactionary national Catholicism which, for example, denied the right to own land to Belarusians who would not convert.

In September 1939 the Red Army reoccupied western Belarus and the Polish landlords were quickly displaced with over 3,000 farms handed over to the peasants. Belarus was devastated by the fascist invasion of the USSR, between 1941 and 1945 losing 2.5 million citizens, a third of the population, including

the destruction of the large Jewish population. The Great Patriotic War remains a formative experience in Belarus. By 1944 there were 300,000 partisans fighting the retreating Germans who left behind them: 600 villages burned to the ground of which 200 or so simply ceased to exist. In return, the partisans were credited with killing or wounding half a million German soldiers. The population did not return to pre-war levels for 30 years. Belarusian collaborators retreated with their fascist masters and many were resettled elsewhere in Europe and in America by western powers to provide a cohort of nationalist and anti-communist agitation throughout the Cold War and up to the collapse of the USSR. Back in Belarus, in contrast, the partisan leaders were recognised as Soviet heroes and went on to provide the leadership of the BSSR up to 1980s.

Between 1945 to 1991 Belarus enjoyed a golden age: a time of rising productivity, full employment, free education and health care for all. Further, Belarusians benefited from the enormous opportunities offered throughout the USSR and shared in its international prestige.

Belarus avoided much of the social malaise and economic crisis suffered elsewhere in the USSR in the years leading up to 1989, and indeed was well governed and readily able to see off an incipient nationalist movement at the time led by a small group of intellectuals. What Belarus was unable to avoid however was the catastrophic fallout from the disintegration of the USSR due to the counter-revolutionary actions of the Gorbachev leadership which let anti-communism and sectarian nationalism run riot across eastern Europe. When Russia declared itself independent from the USSR, Belarus followed suit and declared independence on 27 July 1990, followed a year later by a suspension of the Communist Party of Belarus. In September 1991 the Supreme Soviet of Belarus,

apart from one vote, voted unanimously to declare the end of the Soviet Union. That one vote against was cast by Alexander Lukashenko.

Who is Lukashenko?

Born in 1954 to a peasant family, Alexander Lukashenko graduated in 1975 with a teaching qualification in history after which he spent two years in the frontier troops as a political instructor. He worked in various roles in the Communist Party up to 1980 before re-joining the army for a further two years upon which he retrained in agricultural college, eventually being appointed director of a collective farm. In 1990 he was elected as deputy to the Belarusian Supreme Soviet. One of his first political actions was to create a group in parliament called “Communists for Democracy” which wanted to keep the Soviet Union but ensure it was governed with greater democratic accountability. His initiative came too late to have any influence as the USSR fell apart in 1990-91. As gangster-like privatisation and graft swept over the old USSR, Lukashenko was elected chairman in 1993 of a parliamentary commission to investigate corruption in state institutions. It was his performance in this public role that established him in the minds of many Belarusians as a man of principle rooted in Soviet values, and led to his election as President in 1994.

Stewart Parker, remarking on his character in 2008 stated: “Lukashenko’s outspoken opinions and criticisms came from an ideological base. He could not tolerate corruption or hypocrisy. His political education has been the classic texts of Marxism, extolling egalitarianism and the principles of a nation [serving] the best interests of its working people.”

Lukashenko’s heroes were the war partisans who led the country during his formative years of the 1970s and 80s.

How has Lukashenko stayed in power?

The west from early on in his rule found fault and tarnished Belarus as a hangover Soviet dictatorship. Belarus refused to follow the playbook set by the Washington consensus that demanded wholesale dismantling of state participation in the economy and state funded social security. As a result Belarus has long been marked down for regime change and replacement by an EU/NATO compliant bourgeois democracy with the virulent anti-communism that pervades the Baltic states and Poland.

On each occasion since 1994 that Lukashenko has won a new mandate in regular elections, the western “international community” has alleged fraud and vote rigging. Such allegations are made evidence free and it is simply enough in the west to dismiss a vote for Lukashenko of 70-80% as inconceivable and to ignore that each election has been certified as free and fair by Belarus’s independent Election Commission. Such western criticism has an ulterior motive and aims to overturn the Belarusian constitution and political order.

In Belarus the state asserts its sovereignty and competence over society and the economy and has limited the scope for private property and finance capitalist control. There is no oligarchic class of businessmen dominating society as in Ukraine, which can provide a focus for a reactionary opposition. Quite the contrary, it is the state which applies Soviet socialist principles to restrict the risk of asset stripping of state-owned property and land.

Lukashenko is a believer in the power of the state accountable to its citizens, to provide employment and social services for all. On that score Belarus has been successful. Its population of 9.5 million has remained stable since 1991 unlike the depopulation of the Baltic states which send their young people west

to find precarious work in the EU. The value of state pensions has been maintained. There is full employment. The economy retains a large and diversified industrial sector. Development is evenly spread with graduates, for example, sent to less-developed regions as specialists. The World Bank has acknowledged that health provision is progressive in that poorer households “benefit relatively more than the better off”. The number of doctors per head of population is higher than in most of western Europe and the USA and Belarus has one of the most comprehensive child immunisation programmes in the world. Under 5 mortality rates fell between 1991 and 2018 from 15.2 to 3.4 per thousand live births. Currently the equivalent figure in the UK is 4.3 and the USA 6.5. It is no coincidence that Belarus has one of the best GINI coefficient scores for equality of income in the world. In other words, there is no rent seeking oligarchic elite dominating society.

Another colour revolution?

It makes little difference what Lukashenko might do to satisfy demands for reform from within and without since only total capitulation and defeat will do as far as the imperialists are concerned. The USA expects a similar result to Ukraine in 2014 when that country was split in two with the larger part handed over to the most corrupt elements of the business class, while the Donbass sought alignment with and support from Russia.

Since 1991, by preventing an oligarchic class emerging in Belarus, the government has prevented the nationalist and liberal oppositions achieving anything like close to a political tipping point, despite the vocal support they have from abroad. Those that have sought to challenge Lukashenko have been drawn from state bodies and have not had independent financial means and media to project themselves to voters. The most recent

example is Victor Babariko, a former banker who was debarred in August 2020 by the Electoral Commission because his campaign was backed by foreign entities. He has subsequently faced allegations of money laundering. The opposition found a substitute in Svetlana Tikanovskaya, a 37 year old teacher who had no previous political experience and attracted 10.1% of the popular vote. Tikanovskaya nevertheless was provided with a huge western media platform and subsequently relocated to Lithuania. She is held up as a human rights icon of resistance to Lukashenko. In Lithuania she met US Under Secretary of State Stephen Biegun to discuss “strengthening democracy and human rights in the country”.

Human rights violations alleged in western corporate media provide the licence necessary for western governments to intervene in a multiplicity of different ways in the internal affairs of Belarus. The west has backed street demonstrations that have continued to occur from week to week since August. The Belarus police and security services have responded robustly but mindful of any opportunity the opposition and its western backers will take to denounce examples of brutality and unlawful detention. The protesters forefront powerful images of young people dressed in white holding up flowers to riot police, and invite western journalists to write about the evils of Lukashenko and his security apparatus.

To date, Lukashenko has the measure of his opponents and has the backing of Russia and China. Lukashenko is experienced, competent and committed to preserving Soviet principles of statecraft which have served the majority of working people in Belarus well. There is reason to be optimistic that Belarus will reject the imposition of bourgeois, nationalist democracy that would quickly lead to the enrichment of a few at the expense of the majority of working people and their families.



DENIS GOLDBERG / 11 APRIL 1933 - 29 APRIL 2020

Hero of the struggle for South African liberation

PART 2 / EXILE, CAMPAIGNING, RETURN TO SOUTH AFRICA

by **Brian Filling**

Denis Goldberg, along with Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki and four others, was sentenced to life imprisonment in the 1963-1964 Rivonia Trial in South Africa. The race laws of the apartheid system meant that Denis was sent to Pretoria prison as he was white while the others were sent to Robben Island. Following Denis's release in 1985 after 22 years in an apartheid prison he came to Britain and worked in the African National Congress (ANC) office in London. He became a very effective spokesperson for the ANC addressing many thousands of people in the UK, Europe, North America and the United Nations about the struggle against apartheid and he had the same effect everywhere, inspiring audiences and capturing the media. I organised his first speaking tour of Scotland shortly after his release from prison in 1985 and he returned frequently over the next thirty years. The Anti-Apartheid Movement's campaign for the boycott of, and sanctions against, South Africa during the years of the Thatcher-led Tory government in Britain was boosted by Denis's speeches and tireless campaigning. The campaign did not move Thatcher nor her Tory government but it drew thousands into the boycott movement and to solidarity with the African National

Congress and the South African people. Trade Unions in Britain were staunch supporters of the Anti-Apartheid Movement and Denis was a great favourite at the annual conferences of the Scottish Trade Union Congress and of UNISON, the UK public services trade union, which made him a life member, as did the Fire Brigades Union; and the Civil Service Union held wonderful 'Nights for the ANC' in Edinburgh.

Denis's speaking style was neither that of a firebrand nor tub thumper. He had a great ability to condense complex ideas into short, sharp, accessible messages and his speeches were informative, gentle in tone, laced with humour, and inspired his audiences into action. He had people laughing out loud and then brought tears to their eyes as he vividly described apartheid and its horrific crimes. In a lecture he gave in Germany he spoke of the deaths of detainees under apartheid, "some were dropped into the deep Southern Ocean from helicopters, some were thrown into crocodile infested rivers to remove the evidence of the brutal illegality. Murder had become a sport for some 'protectors of the state.'" [1]

He also enthusiastically took on the role of creating and distributing

ANC merchandise, all of which carried the ANC logo or symbols. It was great publicity as thousands of people identified themselves publicly with the ANC and the merchandise raised a lot of much-needed funds.

Mandela becomes President

The struggle against apartheid by the South African people, led by ANC, and supported by a world-wide solidarity movement, led to the release of the remaining Rivonia prisoners and eventually that of Nelson Mandela on 11 February 1990 after 27 years in prison. It took another four difficult years before the apartheid regime was forced to concede elections. ANC won the first democratic election overwhelmingly and Nelson Mandela was inaugurated as President on 10 May 1994.

At the presidential inauguration of Nelson Mandela, I sat beside Denis and his wife, Esme, in the amphitheatre of the Union Buildings in Pretoria listening to the Presidential address in what had been the government buildings of apartheid presidents - Verwoerd, Vorster, Botha and De Klerk. As we watched the South African air force fly-past overhead, with the new South African flag emblazoned on the

wings of the planes, Denis remarked that he couldn't quite believe that these planes were now on the side of the people rather than conducting mayhem on the Front-line states. Denis joked how, as he sat in his prison cell down the hill from Union buildings, he had attempted to do a 'Uri Geller' and bend the wings of the aeroplanes during the Apartheid-era Presidential fly-pasts while he was incarcerated. [2] All over the amphitheatre old friends and comrades were meeting, shaking hands, embracing, exchanging stories, rejoicing in their victory. Some who had travelled the world as exiles from apartheid had been sworn in the previous day as Members of Parliament in Cape Town. Some were about to become Cabinet Ministers. It was a momentous day. One of those emotional meetings was between Denis and his comrade, Andimba Toivo ja Toivo, now Minister of Energy in the recently liberated Namibia. They recalled when they had first met as young men in the Modern Youth Society, in the 1950s in Cape Town. [3] Andimba said that he couldn't quite believe that he was standing with Denis in the citadel of apartheid watching the Presidential Inauguration of Nelson Mandela with whom he had spent 16 years on Robben Island while Denis had spent 22 years in Pretoria Central prison.

Delegation to South Africa 1994

The Anti-Apartheid Movement in Britain was dissolved on 29 October 1994, six months after the South African election, which signaled the end of apartheid. The successor organisation, Action for Southern Africa (ACTSA), was immediately formed. The following day a thirty-three strong Scottish delegation departed from the UK for a ten-day visit to South Africa. Denis had been invited to join the delegation as a special friend of many people and organisations in Scotland. The delegation was given a tour of Parliament in Cape Town by a pleasant,

but apartheid-trained, tour guide. After a few interjections by Denis the tour guide generously handed the tour over to him. Denis then proceeded to give the delegates a history of the building from an anti-apartheid perspective including describing the absurd tri-cameral parliament, which had given seats to Indian and Coloured members in separate chambers but not blacks, whilst retaining majority control for the Whites.

During the visit many meetings were held with the new leaders of the country including Cyril Ramaphosa. The meeting was running over time and we were due to visit the Cape Town Rape Crisis Centre. The women delegates left the meeting to avoid being late and then had a heated discussion as to whether men should be included in the visit. It was agreed that Denis, who had organised the visit to the Centre, and I, as leader of the delegation, should accompany the women. On arrival at the Centre, Denis was rapturously welcomed by the South African women who saw Denis as a

great supporter of their work. In the discussions that followed they made the argument that men needed to be included in their campaign if the horrendous problem of rape was to be overcome in their society. Denis's connection to, and support for, the Cape Town Rape Crisis Centre continued long after that visit including successfully bidding for large-scale funding from Comic Relief.

Other highlights of the trip included meetings with Denis's fellow Rivonia trialists. Govan Mbeki, then Deputy President of the Senate, hosted us in the members' tearoom in Parliament in Cape Town. He recalled his visit to Scotland in 1990 to speak at our Sechaba International Conference and the fact that he was named after the first Principal of Lovedale Institution, William Govan, of Glasgow. He also talked about the huge issues facing the new South African Government and the struggle against apartheid which had led to his and Denis's imprisonment.

Raymond Mhlaba, the new Premier of the Eastern Cape, met us in the

Denis Goldberg with Brian Filling at Glasgow Transport Museum 2013 The locomotive in the background was built in Glasgow, and spent its working life in South Africa. The display describes apartheid and explains that black people were prohibited from driving trains and many other jobs on the railway.



government offices in Bisho in the Transkei. Raymond spoke about his and Denis's arrest at Lilliesleaf farm thirty years before and the difficulties he and his Provincial Government were facing in bringing together part of the old Cape province with the apartheid Bantustans of the Transkei and Ciskei in one of the poorest provinces in South Africa. The meetings with Govan and Raymond underscored the fact that apartheid and colonialism had been a crime against humanity. The principles, courage, ability and optimism of these men, who had spent decades in prison, shone through as did their commitment to a non-racial South Africa.

Community H.E.A.R.T.

As he was remaining in Britain to be with his family, Denis had decided to establish a charity, Community H.E.A.R.T. (Health, Education and Reconstruction Training) to assist with the reconstruction and development of his country. It was launched in the South African High Commission in London on 27 April 1995, the first anniversary of the first democratic election in South Africa, with Denis as Director and myself as chair of the Board. Denis worked extremely hard to make Community H.E.A.R.T. successful. He launched the "Book and Ten Pence Appeal" which involved the collection, sorting and packing of books, which were then sent by container to South Africa. This took him all over Britain, speaking to all kinds of audiences, from former members of the Anti-Apartheid Movement to a speaking tour round Edinburgh's independent private schools. Three million books were eventually sent from the UK to South Africa. Not only did he travel extensively throughout Britain and Ireland but he combined it with the establishment of Community H.E.A.R.T. in Germany and regular speaking tours there.

I was requested by Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU) to approach Nelson Mandela, after his release

from prison, to ask if he would accept an Honorary Doctorate from the university. He accepted on the understanding that the university agreed to assist with the reconstruction and development of the new South Africa. Denis, on behalf of ANC, visited the university to discuss how it could assist, and following those discussions, Professor David Walsh, Dean of the Faculty of Health, and myself visited South Africa just before the election of 1994. Denis introduced us to the Medical University of South Africa (MEDUNSA) and there began a productive connection between the two universities. Community HEART through its fundraising provided a mobile clinic for the university. We also visited the University of the Transkei (UNITRA) in the Eastern Cape which led to that university adopting a problem-based nurse training curriculum assisted by GCU. Several senior university staff were seconded to UNITRA and MEDUNSA to assist with the development of the new programme and some of the South African staff undertook placements at Glasgow Caledonian University. This very positive and mutually beneficial partnership was facilitated and nurtured by Denis over the years.

At the end of one of our many visits to South Africa when we were returning to the UK Denis could not find his passport. We went to a police station in Johannesburg to report the loss and while we were waiting in the queue Denis remarked to me that there might be a difficulty as his South African Identity Card listed his last known address as "Pretoria Central Prison". On hearing Denis's explanation of the lost passport the desk officer took the Identity Card and disappeared into the back office. Some fifteen minutes later we were surrounded by a crowd of police men and women, who began toyi-toying! [4] After this celebration of one of their heroes we were informed that the missing passport would not be a problem and they would arrange the necessary travel documents.

Not long before Denis died I was talking to him on the phone about GCU's continuing work in South Africa. He was gratified to know that the university's connection with South Africa was continuing with, for example, Vision Science students undertaking placements on the Phelophepha Health Train which traverses rural South Africa bringing much needed health care. It is a mutually beneficial arrangement. The students see more well-developed cataracts in their two weeks on the health train than they are likely to see during the whole of their course in Glasgow and their own eyes are opened to a wider world. The South African patients receive much-needed attention and treatment which otherwise would be unavailable in rural South Africa.

Community H.E.A.R.T. held a number of very successful book launches in South Africa House with South African authors including Denis's fellow Rivonia trialist Ahmed Kathrada (Letters from Robben Island) and Luli Callinicos (The World that made Mandela). Denis's autobiography, *The Mission: a life for freedom in South Africa*, was launched at large events in Glasgow, Manchester and London. [5]

Denis's love of, and interest in, children was another of his characteristics. Becoming President of the Woodcraft Folk, a progressive children's organisation in Britain, in which Esme and their children had been active members, was just one expression of this.

When Denis's wife, Esme, died in 2000 Denis asked me to conduct a rationalist commemoration of her life at the funeral in London. It was quite an event as it brought together Denis and Esme's family, many of Esme's friends of all age groups from many different parts of the world, British and South African comrades and friends. It was not long afterwards that their daughter, Hilly, died. It was a hard time emotionally and Denis was exhausted by the

work with Community H.E.A.R.T. It was time for a new start. Denis retired as Director of Community H.E.A.R.T. and was elevated to the position of Honorary President.

Return to South Africa

Denis returned to South Africa in 2002 with his new wife, Edelgard, as he had been appointed Special Adviser to the Minister of Water and Forestry Affairs, Ronnie Kasrils. [6] He enjoyed this role as it took him all over the country and allowed him to meet, hear the concerns and take action to provide clean water and sanitation for thousands of people deprived by the apartheid system. Denis and Edelgard eventually settled in Hout Bay near Cape Town. Denis hosted braais for visiting delegations from Action for Southern Africa (ACTSA) UK, often in the evening of their first day after visiting Robben Island. There could have been no better introduction to South Africa, its history and the challenges it faced, than an “audience” with Denis. Denis retired from his work in the department of Water and Forestry Affairs in 2006 and devoted his energies to work in the Hout Bay community including becoming a Patron of the Kronendal Music Academy. He also continued to deliver lectures and to comment on current affairs in South Africa as well as visiting Britain on many occasions.

On 4 August 2011 Denis and the Lord Provost unveiled a plaque in Glasgow City Chambers to commemorate the 30th anniversary of Nelson Mandela receiving the Freedom of the City, the first city in the world to bestow the honour, while he was still incarcerated on Robben Island in 1981. To coincide with this event the Lord Provost and the City Council sponsored the publication of *The Glasgow Mandela Story*. In the Foreword Denis wrote “Glasgow was my launching pad into the warm atmosphere of Scottish hospitality, comradeship and the forming of friendships that have endured to this day.” [7]



Denis Goldberg with the banner ‘Nelson Mandela - Freeman of Glasgow’ created in 1981 by the artist Jim Cathcart on the occasion of Mandela being awarded the Freedom of the City while he was still in prison. Glasgow was the first city in the world to do this.

Following Denis’s return to South Africa I visited Denis in Hout Bay on many occasions. Staying with Denis in his house surrounded by his art collection was like living in a wonderful art gallery. Denis was justly proud of his art collection which he bequeathed to his House of Hope. (8) This is a project which aims to bring together the different communities of Hout Bay, still separated geographically, as one of the legacies of apartheid. The House of Hope will provide space for community activities including music, arts and culture.

During the Zuma Presidency, Denis and many others became deeply concerned with the problems of opportunism, corruption and self-enrichment bedeviling the African National Congress. In 2016 a press release, signed by 101 ANC veterans, was issued. The first three signatories on the list were the three surviving Rivonia trialists, Ahmed Kathrada, Andrew Mlangeni and Denis Goldberg.

The press release read in part, “The trust between the ANC and communities, built over up over so many

years, is now severely under threat. Communities that have looked to the ANC for leadership and who we should serve, increasingly see self-enrichment, corruption, nepotism and the abuse of power - the moral high ground that the ANC enjoyed is being lost.

As stalwarts and long serving members of the ANC we have a profound responsibility to the movement and the country to ensure that the principles and values of the ANC are not destroyed. We believe that the overwhelming majority of our citizens embrace the values of the Freedom Charter and the Constitution of our country and share this view.”

Jacob Zuma was replaced as ANC President by Cyril Ramaphosa in December 2017 and was recalled by the ANC as President of the country in February 2018. Cyril Ramaphosa was then elected President of South Africa.

Being ‘human’

While on a speaking tour in Germany in 2018 Denis became ill and returned to South Africa where he

was diagnosed with lung cancer. He bore his terminal illness bravely and continued with his activities. During his illness, although unable to travel, Denis continued his connection with Britain and became one of the Patrons of the Nelson Mandela Scottish Memorial Foundation whose aims are to create a statue of Mandela in Glasgow and to conduct educational activities about apartheid, Mandela, his life and struggle and his connection with Glasgow, Scotland and the UK. (9)

On one of his last visits to the UK, the City of Glasgow College presented Denis with their inaugural Global Scholar award. Denis was accompanied by his son, David, his grandchildren and myself. In his acceptance speech Denis talked about the meaning of 'humanity'.

"I have looked at people in class conflict between owners and workers and the middle people, very well paid, who do the work of maintaining disunity and inequality among people in those conflicts and wondered about what it is to be human... To be scholars, to try to understand our world in isolated academic ivory towers is to deny our innate human equality. Knowl-

edge is for me and many millions of people, a guide to action... Understanding the world is not enough. As human beings in society, we are called upon by our humanity to change the world, to make it a place of greater equality... What I have learned through good times and bad, is that to be human, in the words of Nelson Mandela, 'We must so live our lives that we respect and advance the freedom of others.'

Denis Goldberg certainly lived his life in that way.

Brian Filling is Honorary Consul for South Africa in Scotland and Chair of the Nelson Mandela Scottish Memorial Foundation. He was Chair of the Scottish Committee of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, 1976-1994.

(Correction: In Part 1 of this obituary in The Socialist Correspondent Issue 38, the opening paragraph was omitted. It reads "Denis Goldberg was sentenced to life imprisonment by the Apartheid state along with Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and five others in the 1963-1964 Rivonia Trial. Separated from the others because he was white, he served 22 years in Pretoria Central Prison before being released in 1985." Our apologies for that error.)

[1] Denis presented a paper "South Africa, the transition to democracy and the banning of torture" on 25 June 2009 at the Heinrich Heine University, Dusseldorf, Germany. The paper was published in The Socialist Correspondent, p.24, Issue 6, Autumn 2009.

[2] Uri Geller is an illusionist and self-proclaimed psychic, famous for his spoon-bending.

[3] For Denis and Andimba's activities in the Modern Youth Society see, Denis Goldberg: Hero of the struggle for South African Liberation, Part I: Background, Rivonia Trial, Prison, The Socialist Correspondent, Issue 38.

[4] Toyi-toyi is a South African dance associated with protest and struggle.

[5] A review by Tony Dykes of The Mission: a life for freedom in South Africa, pub. STE, South Africa, 2010, can be found in The Socialist Correspondent, issue 9, Summer 2010.

[6] Edelgard Nkobi was the widow of Zenzo Nkobi, the eldest son of Thomas Nkobi, Treasurer General of ANC. Zenzo was the photographer of the Zimbabwean liberation movement (ZAPU). Edelgard and Denis worked on cataloguing his archive when they were together in Hout Bay, Cape Town. Edelgard was German and was instrumental in the creation of Community Heart in Germany.

[7] Filling, Brian, The Glasgow Mandela Story, Preface, p.5, pub. ACTSA Scotland and Glasgow City Council, 2011; 3rd edition, pub. ACTSA Scotland and South African Seasons, e-book, Kindle, 2016.

[8] Denis Goldberg Legacy Foundation House of Hope: www.denisgoldberg.org and www.goldberghouseofhope.co.za

[9] Nelson Mandela Scottish Memorial Foundation, www.mandelascottishmemorial.org

HONOURS AND AWARDS

1988 Albert Luthuli African Peace Award presented by a group of twelve US organisations

1997 Glasgow Caledonian University Honorary Degree

2000 MEDUNSA (now Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University) Honorary Degree

2009 South African National Order of Luthuli "for his commitment to the struggle against apartheid and service to the people of South Africa"

2010 German Cross of the Order of Merit presented by the Federal Republic of Germany

2012 South African Military Veterans Medal

Mahatma Gandhi Satyagraha Peace Award

City of Glasgow College Global Scholar Award

2016 Freedom of the City of London (with the other surviving Rivonia Trialists and their defence team)

2018 Heriot Watt University (Edinburgh) Honorary Degree

2019 Isitwalande Seaparankoe (the highest honour of the African National Congress)

University of Cape Town Honorary Degree