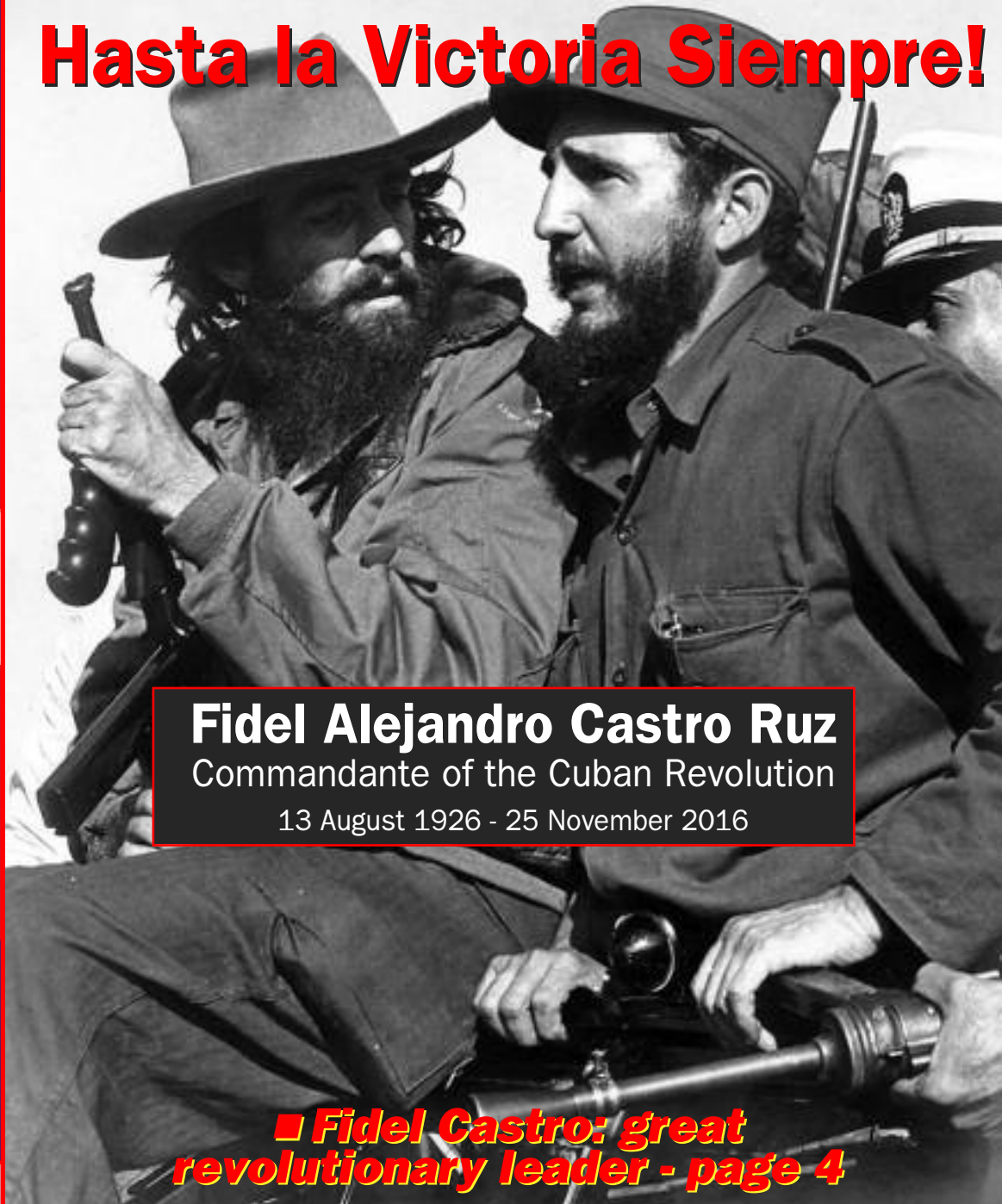


The Socialist Correspondent

£2.00

January 1959: Castro with fellow revolutionary Camilo Cienfuegos entering Havana victoriously.

Hasta la Victoria Siempre!



Fidel Alejandro Castro Ruz
Commandante of the Cuban Revolution
13 August 1926 - 25 November 2016

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

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The Socialist Correspondent

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Fidel Castro

The death of Fidel Castro has evoked two main but diametrically opposed reactions. He is remembered as a great socialist revolutionary and anti-imperialist who stood up for the people against the might of the United States on the one hand; and on the other, he is described as a tyrant who imprisoned thousands of Cubans and denied human rights.

The latter view is the one purveyed by the capitalist media on behalf of their sponsors, and is not surprising. However, that it should be repeated by some people, who claim to be on the side of the poor and exploited, reveals the extent to which capitalist ideas (and lies) have penetrated the labour movement.

Frieda Park, in her article, *Fidel Castro: great revolutionary leader*, traces his life of struggle in the liberation of Cuba and the building of socialism, and his admirable solidarity with other peoples in their struggles against imperialism.

As she writes, "Whilst liberals in the West angst about human rights in Cuba ... Fidel is respected across Africa, Latin America and beyond as a symbol of liberation."

Cuba, when run by the United States and its puppet dictator, Batista, was a "playground for rich tourists and gangsters while the Cuban people suffered terrible poverty and inequality."

Castro led the fight against the Batista dictatorship and successfully overthrew it on 1 January 1959. For the next 50 years he was at the helm and saw off nine US presidents, most of whom organised attempts to assassinate him.

The Cuban health and education systems are acknowledged as among the best in the world but they were not built easily. The defeat of the Soviet Union created massive problems for socialist Cuba, which entered "the Special Period", as the country struggled to survive in the new capitalist world order.



Commentary

As Frieda Park comments, "With the end of the Soviet Union and the weakening of anti-imperialist forces we have seen the consequences as neo-liberalism and war ravage the planet."

The United States, under Obama, adopted a new approach, that of engaging with Cuba. "He (Castro) was wary of investing too much in Cuba's rapprochement with the United States, saying that it needed nothing from that country", reports Frieda in her article.

With the election of Trump as President of the US, Cuba will now face new challenges.

Fidel Castro, Cuban patriot, great socialist revolutionary and life-long anti-imperialist will be missed by the Cuban people and those fighting imperialism throughout the world.

How Trump became President

Jonathan Michael Feldman in his article, *How Trump became US President*, reflects on the factors behind the victory of Trump.

He relates how "the Democratic Party establishment is firmly aligned with business patronage, bourgeois feminism, what used to be called "the Black Bourgeoisie", and corporate environmentalism."

He goes on to explain how the Democratic Party establishment holds on to power, creating obstacles for any left-leaning opposition, including that of Bernie Sanders.

Outlining how the use of identity politics, fragmentation and the militarist 'democracy promotion' business is a key system in the retention of power by the Democratic Party establishment, he writes, "The neoliberals have used gender, race and identity politics as vehicles to legitimating their militarist and neoliberal policies. Fragmentation is neoliberalism's glue. The price of voting against the sexism and racism of Trump ... has been an endorsement of the neoliberal, militarist agenda."

Feldman argues that many journalists



and academics downplay economic and class factors at work behind the rise of Trump.

He shows that in the states where deindustrialisation has been most profound Trump defeated Clinton. In this context, it is incorrect to label all of those who voted for Trump as racist, xenophobic and misogynist.

"In contrast Hillary Clinton was cast as someone who both embraced and benefited from diversity and cosmopolitan virtues" as Feldman writes. However, Hillary Clinton is no left-winger but rather a long-time leader of the neoliberal, militarist agenda.

With Sanders dispensed with, the American people were faced with "a false choice of Right Cosmopolitanism and Right Nationalism", writes Feldman.

Demonisation and regime change

"The war in Syria is about imperialist regime change, as in Libya and Iraq, and reminiscent of the dismemberment of Yugoslavia", writes John Moore.

He details the reasons why the US orchestrated the plan, supported by regional powers, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Israel and Turkey and the rest of the West, to remove President Assad. Moore also looks at the war in Yemen and the situation in Libya and Iraq.

The so-called "War on Terror" and "humanitarian intervention" have left thousands dead and millions displaced and are the root of the emigration problem.

In another article, Alex Davidson, recounts how the International Criminal Tribunal on Yugoslavia has exonerated Slobodan Milosevic, former leader of Yugoslavia, of the charge of war crimes.

The exoneration is buried in the Tribunal's lengthy verdict and has received no reporting in the capitalist mainstream media.

The dismembering of Yugoslavia was another case of regime change in which leaders are demonised, overthrown by military force and then killed. Milosevic's exoneration comes ten years after his death - in suspicious circumstances - in prison.

Fidel Castro: great revolutionary leader

The 20th century was the time when the world was truly turned upside down, with socialist revolutions in countries stretching across the globe and made by people from diverse nations and cultures.

By **FRIEDA PARK**

Fidel Castro's death robs us of the last great revolutionary leader of that period. He will be mourned not only by the Cuban people; by socialists and anti-imperialists world-wide, but by people across Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

People who did not necessarily share all of his politics, but saw a third world country stand up to the United States and win militarily and morally. Fidel's principled vision and political astuteness was at the heart of the development of the Cuban revolution.

He was born into a land-owning family in Oriente province in Cuba. His father was a Spanish immigrant and his mother Cuban. He was intellectually and athletically gifted.

His 1945 school year book said of him "Distinguished student and a fine athlete. Very popular. Will study law and we have no doubt he will have a brilliant future." Little did his Jesuit teachers realise just what form that brilliant future would take.

He did indeed go on to study law at Havana University which is where he got involved in politics. He initially joined the Unión Insurreccional Revolucionaria (Revolutionary Insurreccional Union) and in 1947 went on to be a founding member of the Partido del Pueblo Cubana (The Cuban People's Party), becoming leader of its left-wing. In 1952 he ran as a candidate for the party, however, the election never took place because of Fulgencio Batista's coup.

Moncada Barracks attack

The imposition of the dictatorship allowed the United States to continue to exploit Cuba as a play-ground for rich tourists and gangsters, while the Cuban

people suffered terrible poverty and inequality. With democratic avenues closed, Fidel led plans for an armed insurrection.

This culminated on the attack on the Moncada army barracks in Santiago de Cuba on 26th July 1953. The attack was a failure, with many of the rebels killed. Fidel himself narrowly escaped death and was put on trial. Found guilty and sentenced to 15 years imprisonment he made a speech from the dock in which he famously declared "History will absolve me".

After a mass campaign he was released early in 1955. One of the characteristics, that people who knew Fidel commented on, was his resilience and energy. This was amply demonstrated at this time.



1953, Cuba:
Castro under arrest after the
Moncado Barracks attack.

Out of prison he travelled to Mexico to once more begin to plan for armed insurrection. There he enlisted the support of exiled veterans of the Spanish Civil War to help train his embryonic

rebel force. It was also where he met Che Guevara who became part of the group of 82 who travelled to Cuba on the small sailing craft *Granma* in December 1956.

26th July Movement

This expedition also nearly ended in failure. The group were intercepted as they landed and the majority killed or captured, but a few, including Fidel, Che and other leaders of the revolution such as Raul Castro and Camilo Cienfuegos escaped into the hills of the Sierra Maestra where they re-grouped and began to build support among the peasantry, also developing links into the opposition in the city of Santiago de Cuba.

The movement that was born was named after the failed attack on Moncada – the July 26th Movement. The guerrilla army grew and the movement won the support not only of the peasants, desperate for land reform, but also of the urban working-class.

Only two years after the guerrilla war was launched, on January 1st 1959 Fidel swept into Havana at the head of the victorious rebel army. He was 32 years old, indeed he was one of the older leaders of the revolution most of whom were in their twenties.

The energy he had applied to winning power he then, and for the next 60 years, applied to building and defending socialism in Cuba and opposing imperialism and oppression across the world.

He was known as a voracious reader, developing his ideas not only through engaging with the written word, but in conversation with a wide variety of people.

His lengthy speeches were legendary. His friend, the Colombian writer Gabriel Garcia Marquez described arriving in Havana just after the rebels came to power when Fidel made his first address on television and radio.

As people settled down to listen they did not realise that it would be seven hours long. Gradually they began to go about their daily lives, but with radios

on everywhere it was possible to do that without missing any of the speech.⁽¹⁾

Fidel became the sound-track of the revolution. His contributions were often lengthy, not because they rambled, but because he had such a detailed grasp of any subject he had studied and a trenchant political analysis.

Whatever the problem in any aspect of life in Cuba, Fidel developed an expertise. He travelled extensively across the island, keeping in touch with people in all walks of life. Even when ill-health forced him to give up formal power he continued to write an occasional newspaper column.

His personal life remained just that, his partners and children did not appear in public as political accessories. He actively opposed the cult of the personality and there are no statues, official portraits of Fidel or public places bearing his name anywhere in Cuba.

Success of the Revolution

There are those who wish to deny that the success of the Cuban revolution was founded in Marxism and that Fidel himself was not really a Marxist or a communist or that he only came to these ideas later – that his adoption of Marxism was pragmatic or forced on him by the need for alliance with the Soviet Union.

Deliberately or naively they interpret the tactics adopted at different stages of the struggle as a change of principle by Fidel.

Here is how he describes the process which took in the early years of the revolution when they were pursuing national liberation and radical measures such as agrarian reform, rather than declaring socialism: “If we had launched a socialist programme in those years it would have been a mistake; we wouldn’t have been effective revolutionaries or Marxist-Leninists. I think that we did what revolutionaries should do, because nobody should aspire to a program that is beyond what the objective conditions in a country allow.

“An ambitious revolutionary programme also requires the formation of the necessary subjective conditions, and that is what we did. I think we showed that we were conscientious revolutionaries who were mature enough to take the correct steps in each of those circumstances.”⁽²⁾

“If you ask me for proof, I would say that the revolution itself is proof of this, because someone who did not have



**1994, Johannesburg:
Castro with his friend
Nelson Mandela at Mandela’s
Presidential inauguration.**



**1962, Havana:
Castro and Che Guevara with
Ahmed Ben Bella, leader of the
Algerian struggle for independence
against French Colonial rule.**



**1995, Lobito, Angola:
Castro’s image painted on a wall.**

Marxist-Leninist training could not have interpreted Cuba’s events and could not have drawn up a strategy for making the revolution.”⁽³⁾

US invasion, terrorist attacks, blockade

The revolution earned the immediate hostility of the United States, and Cuba endured the attempted invasion of the Bay of Pigs, terrorist attacks and the illegal blockade.

Fidel himself was the subject of assassination attempts. Though some of them sound far-fetched they were nevertheless a real and serious threat. Fidel’s personal courage in times of war and peace was also an integral part of his revolutionary spirit.

The opposition of the United States made it easier and inevitable that Cuba would build close relationships with other socialist countries and the support of the Soviet Union enabled it to survive and develop its infrastructure.

Cuba, whilst part of that socialist world, also became a leader of the Non-Aligned Movement, countries which were not socialist but had a desire for independence from neo-colonialism. The socialist countries and the Non-Aligned Movement were critical in the latter half of the 20th century in constraining imperialism’s ability

to act.

With the end of the Soviet Union and the weakening of the anti-imperialist forces we have seen the consequences as neo-liberalism and war ravage the planet. Cuba’s internationalism was practical as well as political.

It gave military support to nations in Africa and was instrumental in the defeat of apartheid in Southern Africa.

Whilst liberals in the West angst about human rights in Cuba - a Latin American country in which no one has been disappeared or extrajudicially murdered and in which people have the ability to live healthy lives and fulfil their potentials - Fidel is respected across Africa, Latin America and beyond as a symbol of liberation. One of the first things Nelson Mandela did on his release from prison was to travel to Cuba to meet with Fidel.

Though led by Marxists, Cuba’s revolution was not led by a traditional Communist Party. Whilst embracing the socialist world, Fidel and the Cubans had an analysis that referenced their own conditions from a principled position.

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How Trump became US President

Our story begins in 1972 when a powerful anti-war movement propelled George McGovern into the Democratic presidential nomination.

By **JONATHAN MICHAEL FELDMAN**

At that point, a division of labor between the Democratic Party and a social movement created an organic Left basis for pushing that party to the Left.

McGovern's anti-militarism was constrained by Cold War liberalism linking many politicians and trade unions to the permanent war economy. His defeat led to the rise of the "super-delegates" and rules making it very hard for insurgent campaigns to ever gain control of the party again.

The McGovern loss was followed with various realignments within the Democratic Party tied to the extension of the professional managerial class and gradual abandonment of working class issues.

While the warning bells were sounded long ago, matched in part by various campaigns like those of Jessie Jackson, Ralph Nader and Bernie Sanders, none of these campaigns garnered sufficient support from party elites or could make it past their organizational filtering systems.

One reason is that the Democratic Party establishment is firmly aligned with business patronage, bourgeois feminism, what used to be called "the Black bourgeoisie," and corporate environmentalism. Three key systems accumulate and reproduce establishment power, creating obstacles for the Left opposition.

Political Entrepreneurs

The first system consists of various Democratic Party politicians, and associated funders, who act as political entrepreneurs for identity politics, political fragmentation and the militarist "democracy promotion" business.

EMILY's List⁽¹⁾ which will even back female politicians tied to the war machine is a key network for this kind of activity as was Congressional Black

Caucus PAC which picked Clinton over Sanders. In contrast, grassroots women's groups like Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) backs a comprehensive anti-militarist agenda.



**1987 Washington:
Trump and President Ronald Reagan
at a White House reception.**

The second system consists of a series of non-profit organizations like NOW⁽²⁾, corporate-sponsored environmental groups and various non-profit organizations which cut deals with members of Congress and foundations to reproduce a certain brand of highly atomized, piecemeal politics.

In some cases, there is turnover between the non-profits and the government, resembling the iron triangle relations linking military firms, the Pentagon and Congress.

For example, when labor unions cooperate with environmental groups sometimes the latter become the voice of corporate rationality in addressing climate change.

One pattern is that a staffer works for a Congressman financed by various corporate interests. The staffer trades in their network ties to the Congressperson to gain employment at the non-profit.

When speaking for the "environmen-

talist" interest, the staffer actually helps reproduce the corporate interest. When NOW endorsed Hillary Clinton, they did not simply endorse a woman, but also a leader of the military industrial complex.

Fragmentation is Neoliberalism's Glue

The third system is ideological and even infects various parts of the Left. We can see this in how organizing ideas based on class and economic realities became subverted by newer approaches simply tied to identity.

The neoliberals have used gender, race and identity politics as vehicles to legitimating their militarist and neoliberal policies. Fragmentation is Neoliberalism's glue. The price of voting against the sexism and racism of Trump and his equivalents has been an endorsement of the Neoliberal, militarist agenda.

Sanders was able to abandon the worst elements of identity politics without Trump's baggage and thus was demonized by the Clinton Neoliberals. A similar fate met his predecessors.

Even Trump's critiques of bankers and elites (in his effective closing advertisement) was recoded as the reincarnation of anti-Semitic tropes, i.e. the Neoliberals will use accusations of anti-Semitism as a way to black list deconstructions of class and elites.

Basically a segment of the Left, centered in the academy and think tanks, has been coopted by the Neoliberals and constrains Left movements. The recent presidential campaign illustrates how this works.

The dominant paradigm among various segments of the journalistic and academic elite was that Donald Trump (like many Brexit voters) represented xenophobic right-wing nationalism, with support linked to racism and a white identity crisis.

In contrast, Hillary Clinton was cast as someone who both embraced and benefited from diversity and cosmopolitan virtues. Clinton rhetorically aligned herself with what was cast as the generally progressive direction of the Obama Administration.

Identity Politics

I will now scrutinize two examples of this kind of superficial identity framing promulgated by academics and journalists. One is an interview which Judith Butler recently conducted with *Zeit* on line on October 28th. The other is an article by Amada Taub, "Behind 2016's Turmoil, a Crisis of White Identity" published in *The New York Times* on November 1.

Both interventions displace economic factors and a sin of omission related to how such factors inflate the far-right.

Taub explains that Brexit and Trump's nomination, together with right-wing nationalism in Norway, Hungary, Austria and Greece are byproducts of "white anxiety."

The white majority has often conflated "national and racial identity," and now white people feel that their identity is under threat. Working class whites not

only "enjoyed the privileged status based on race," but also "the fruits of broad economic growth."

As Western manufacturing and industry decline, however, this limits opportunities for new generations in communities affected by this decline. For Taub, the problem is that deindustrialization "creates an identity vacuum to be filled."

Judith Butler, a leading philosopher, echoed these sentiments. In her interview with *Zeit* on line, she explained: "I think that there are forms of right-wing populism that we are seeing now that object to laws that were securing equality between men and women, laws against racism, laws that permit migration and even affirm an ethnically and religiously heterogeneous population."

The goal of "reactionary populists" is "to restore an earlier state of society, driven by nostalgia or a perceived loss of

privilege." The right populists "want to take down state power for the loss of their former world."

"As long as one functions within the notion of the nation-state, one is basically asking for a specific nationality to represent the state and for the state to represent that nationality." Butler's solution is pluralism as well as racial and ethnic heterogeneity.

Yet, are diversity and plurality sufficient? Butler says some right-wingers feel "excluded" as when "their privilege has been lost," with privilege tied to "their white presumption." These losses refer to "a former world in which white privilege could be assumed."

This privilege, I assume refers to a hierarchy which whites had over others, an ability to exclude. Butler admonishes such people who are losing privilege that "it is their job to adjust, to accept their loss and to embrace a larger, more dem-

Fidel Castro: great revolutionary leader

Continued from page 5

Their revolution was an extension of the battles over centuries against slavery and colonialism. Fidel was unhappy at the way the Cuban Missile Crisis was handled by the Soviets when the final negotiations with the United States to resolve it were taken without reference to him.

This independence of thought meant that Cuba saw that Gorbachev's Perestroika would undermine socialism. When the rest of the socialist world collapsed Cuba carried on, now in the most difficult of circumstances.

It survived, partly by making compromises that it would have otherwise found unpalatable such as the introduction of mass tourism and opening up to some capitalist investment. Fidel was clear, however, that these were compromises and did not present them as anything more positive than that.

Serving the Cuban people

The advent of a new wave of leftist governments across Latin America opened new possibilities for Cuba. Swapping medical and other expertise with Venezuela helped the island emerge from the devastating effects of the end of the Soviet Union.

Fidel had a particularly close relationship with Hugo Chavez, the late President of Venezuela, whose untimely death was a severe blow to the prospects for continued left advance on the continent.

Cuba played a significant part in the foundation of ALBA the regional cooperation pact based on mutual support and sharing of resources. As the face of Latin America changed, so Cuba became less isolated and the US more so.

This was one of the factors that led President Obama to re-establish diplomatic relations and to try to open up investment and tourism. The previous strategy of isolating Cuba had completely failed so they, at last, opted for engagement.

Right-wing forces, backed by the US have begun to have significant success in turning the tide of progress in the continent, so new and difficult challenges face Cuba, which has also embarked on a controversial programme of internal economic and social change.



The election of Donald Trump as President of the United States marks a more hostile approach to Cuba, Mexico and other countries of the continent.

Ill-health forced Fidel into retirement in 2008, when Raul Castro took over. As he recovered, however, he began writing articles again for the press and appeared occasionally in public. He was wary of investing too much in Cuba's rapprochement with the United States, saying that it needed nothing from that country.

Fidel Castro could have had a comfortable life as a well-off lawyer and a notable figure in Havana society. Instead he embraced socialism and brought his intellectual ability, courage and dynamism to the service of the Cuban people, its revolution and the oppressed peoples of the world.

He led Cuba through every challenge where the revolution itself was under threat and remained principled and committed to the cause of socialism.

For those generations who did not live through the ferment of revolution, anti-fascist and anti-imperialist struggles of the 20th century his life is a reminder that revolutionary change is possible and that another world can be won.

Hasta la Victoria Siempre!

FOOTNOTES

1. *An Encounter with Fidel*, Gianni Mina – Ocean Press 1991 p11.
2. *Ibid* p119.
3. *Ibid* p116.

ocratic and heterogeneous world.”

The problem is not that the journalists and academics can't see economic (and potentially class) factors at work behind the rise of the far right and Trump.

Downplaying economic and class factors

Rather, they go out of their way to downplay them. Moreover, they prefer intellectual dualisms in which persons aligning themselves with racist politicians can only be defined in this way.

So, when it comes to gender, race and (sometimes) class, intersectionality reigns. But, the racist dimension of the far-right is often taken to be the most significant - if not the only significant - factor. Nevertheless, even racists can have class interests (as can Trump voters more generally).

Yet, while whites may resent Obama's status as president or Brexit voters dislike mass immigration, the current story is not simply one of race, but also one of class and economics. Furthermore, Obama's presidency has been associated with stagnating or worsening conditions for African Americans.

Given the potential ameliorating effects of industrialization in the South what do we make of the current wave of deindustrialization in this region?

Trump won all five core states in the deep South during the Republican primaries: Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina. The percentage decline of manufacturing jobs lost in each of these states during the WTO-NAFTA period (1994-2015) ranged from a low of 19.7% in Louisiana to a high of 40.7% in Louisiana. Trump beat Clinton in all of these states.

In the North, we see similarities. Let us explore the differences in electoral outcomes among ten key states in the industrial belt stretching from Minnesota down to Iowa in the West and into New York and Pennsylvania in the East. Trump lost only four of these states: Ohio, Wisconsin, Minnesota and Iowa.

Generally speaking, aside from Ohio which was won by native son John Kasich, Trump won six out of the seven states in this group experiencing the greatest loss in manufacturing jobs during the WTO-NAFTA period (1994-2015).

Here are the percentage losses in manufacturing jobs in the states Trump lost: Ohio (-30.3%), Wisconsin (-11.6%), Minnesota (-10.6%), and Iowa (-3%).

In contrast the manufacturing job losses in the states Trump won were on average far greater:

- New York (-45.4%);
- Pennsylvania (-45.4%);
- Illinois (-32.8%);

- Missouri (-27.5%);
- Michigan (-26.3%); and,
- Indiana (-16.2%).

Against Clinton, Trump won Ohio, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Missouri, and Indiana. By losing New York, he lost to Clinton's home state.

Factors behind racism

Taub and Butler both emphasize the psychological reaction to economic trauma in explaining the far-right's rise and also tend to demonize Trump and far-right voters by failing to appreciate the potential economic motivations leading to their support. This move, centered on a kind of post-modern reading of the far-right, is problematic for several reasons.

First, accepting pluralism will hardly solve the far-right's rise when pluralism is limited by a politics of scarcity, i.e. as economic conditions worsen, ethnic minorities, immigrants and non-whites will be scapegoated.

While diversity policies may limit racism, in and of themselves they are unlikely to be effective in an era when economic conditions deteriorate. Many whites have lost more than their ability to exclude non-whites.

This March Noah Smith wrote an essay explaining that “Trump has a Point About American Decline” in *Bloomberg News*. Noah wrote: “the economic well-being of the average American - defined as median household income - has fallen since the turn of the century.”

I don't think diversity and multiculturalism are sufficient to trump Trump's appeal with many of his supporters to “Make America Great Again!”

Second, there is a materialist basis of support for racism that can't be reduced to racism per se. As Jacques Ellul argued in his classic study, *Propaganda*, ideology is based on a combination of truth and lies. Simply deconstructing the lies and ignoring the truths cannot explain the far-right's power.

Third, Butler tends to use the discursive, ideological and psychological factors behind racism to displace the materialist factors.

Butler does acknowledge that some right-wing persons blame “the migrants for taking their position,” but they fail to identify the roots of their problems in “an expanding precarity that cuts across economic class, though the very rich continue to profit.”

Correctly, she argues that migrants become scapegoats as some right-wingers fail to analyze the “fiscal and financial policies” which jeopardize many persons.

Yet, she also is quick to devalue any class explanation. She says persons laying “claim to white privilege...may claim that they are ‘excluded’ by migrants, but they actually worry about losing their privilege.”

Yet, if whites worry about losing their jobs or their security, calling a job or such security a privilege would be patently absurd. My point is not to give a pass to racists and national security paranoids, but rather examine how racist politics overlaps with class politics and economic factors.

Economic decline promotes security paranoia as well. Moreover, we might focus on how class and economics each propel what is nominally coded as racist. If the two intermingle, then someone who is a racist might act out of the subjective reflection of their changed economic status, not simply out of their lost “race” privileges.

Fourth, the displacement of the material and objectification of the far-right other is a way for academics and journalists to valorize their own professional interests.

By casting the subjective reaction to objective material developments as their primary focus, Taub and Butler repeat a practice common to the human relations school of management, i.e. psychological reactions to industrial life (rather than changes in industrial realities) are of pre-eminent importance.

In 1947, in an essay for *Commentary* Daniel Bell offered a critique of this school of thinking, explaining that industrial psychologists (rooted in universities) were useful for industries' seeking compliance.

Today, many industrial workers conflicted about globalization's impact on their communities are “acting out,” voting for Trump and Brexit, as a way to make the system pay. Yet, their reactions are reduced to psychic phenomena or the politics of these psychic reactions.

Why? In Bell's era psychologizing workers' attitudes best suited academics' “professional interests.”

As he explained, such persons “the professors in general have an ideology geared to the need.” As academic scientists, “they are concerned with ‘what is’ and are not inclined to involve themselves in questions of moral values or larger social issues.”

De-industrialization and Globalization

Finally, the demonization of Trump voters and the far-right amounted to a kind of problematic application of the idea of “collective responsibility.” Thus, “where all are guilty, nobody is.”

While Trump and far-right voters are

Imperialist wars in the Middle East

The war in Syria is about imperialist regime change, as in Libya and Iraq, and reminiscent of the dismemberment of Yugoslavia.

By **JOHN MOORE**

Some 360,000 foreign fighters are currently in Syria, resulting in over 250,000 deaths. Outside the warzones, foreign sanctions are inflicting severe hardship on the 23 million Syrian population as a whole.

Syrian President, Assad, put it simply: ‘The intervention in Syria is against international law, while the Russians came to Syria after having an invitation from the Syrian government.’

Assad is a target, not just as the last secular nationalist Arab leader, but because Syria has consistently defied western control.

The long-term US aim of encircling Russia and depriving it of its only Mediterranean naval base in Tartus puts Syria in the firing line.

However, the immediate reason for ratcheting up the anti-Assad pressure is control over energy supplies, important for the US as a means of dominating its rivals, if no longer to ensure its own energy needs.

The origins of the war can be traced back to 2009 when Qatar proposed a new pipeline to Turkey to run through

Syrian territory. Assad refused, blocking western control over energy pipelines from the Persian Gulf to Turkey and on to Europe.

... the immediate reason for ratcheting up the anti-Assad pressure is control over energy supplies ...

The origins of the war can be traced back to 2009 when Qatar proposed a new pipeline to Turkey to run through Syrian territory.

Assad refused, blocking western control over energy pipelines from the Persian Gulf to Turkey and on to Europe.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr, in an article in *Politico* (Feb 23, 2016) said: ‘The moment Assad rejected the Qatari pipeline, military and intelligence planners quickly arrived at the consensus that fomenting

a Sunni uprising in Syria to overthrow the uncooperative Bashar Assad was a feasible path to achieving the shared objective of completing the Qatar/Turkey gas link. In 2009, according to WikiLeaks, soon after Bashar Assad rejected the Qatar pipeline, the CIA began funding opposition groups in Syria.’

The Qatari pipeline from its North Pars gasfield was strategically important. According to Kennedy, it ‘would have given the Sunni Kingdoms of the Persian Gulf decisive domination of world natural gas markets and strengthen Qatar, America’s closest ally in the Arab world.’

It would allow Qatar to supplant Russia as the major supplier of energy to the EU, which is the biggest natural gas import market in the world.

Assad opted for an alternative pipeline – bringing energy from Iran’s South Pars gasfield through Syria to ports in Lebanon, with Iran, Iraq and Syria cooperating in the \$10billion costs of its construction.

The Iran-Iraq-Syria pipeline would help not only Russia but Iran, giving the latter control over European energy supplies, as a key producer.

The plan to topple Assad was orchestrated by the US, and enthusiastically endorsed by regional powers, each with its own ambitions – Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Israel and Turkey – with the aim of es-

responsible for helping elect those whom they support, it is reasonable to explore the institutional roots of racism in deindustrialization, globalization and a faulty educational system.

Castigating right-wing voters while glossing over institutional failures will prove fruitless in the long-run, particularly if far-right candidates win (as almost happened in Austria with the narrow defeat of Norbert Hoffer, candidate for the Freedom Party).

Some might object that Taub and Butler correctly offer a moral critique of the racism of white identity politics, yet the “what is” they take for granted is the current regime of deindustrialization and globalization.

Neither explains when discussing Trump’s rise how to alter deindustrialization. Instead, both offer explanations that prioritize the non-economic explanations or delink economic explanations from right-wing politics

Such alternative ideas, readily available to Democrats and the Left, lost favor to identity politics and piecemeal reformism.

Now that politics is in crisis. Trump won 67% of whites without a college degree, 42% of the women’s vote and even 29% of the Latino vote.

Alternative political organizing strategies are needed for the Left to advance beyond the false choice of Right Cosmopolitanism and Right Nationalism.

FOOTNOTES

1. EMILY’s List is an American Political Action Committee (PAC) that aims to help elect pro-choice Democratic female candidates to office. It was founded by Ellen Malcom in 1985. The group’s name is an acronym for “Early Money Is Like Yeast”. Ellen Malcolm commenting that “it makes dough rise”. The saying is a reference to a convention of political fund-raising that receiving lots of donations early in a race is helpful in attracting subsequent donors. The organisation raised some \$60 million for Hillary Clinton’s presidential bid.
2. NOW is an acronym for the American “National Organisation of Women”.

establishing one or more oil statelets under sectarian Sunni rule.

The use of such proxies by America has become increasingly central to its strategy as it accepts that it is no longer capable of acting alone.

The Balkanizing strategy first came to light in a leaked plan from the US Department of Defense and the State in 2012, which sought to set up ‘a declared or undeclared Salafist principality in eastern Syria...’

According to *Wikipedia* Salafism is an ultra-conservative movement within Sunni Islam that developed in Arabia in the first half of the 18th century against the background of European colonialism.

Leading neocon John Bolton reiterated the strategy last year (*New York Times*, 24 Nov, 2015), calling for ‘a new, independent Sunni state... This “Sunni-stan” has economic potential as an oil producer... and could be a bulwark against both Mr. Assad and Iran-allied Baghdad.’

To this end, the US has allowed al-Nusra and IS to function, according to Assad, ‘because they [the US] believe that this is a card they can use for their own agenda’ – ie regime change.

According to the *Wall Street Journal* (August 10, 2014) the US air war focuses on IS targets in Iraq because ‘in Syria, U.S. strikes against the Islamic State would inadvertently help the regime of President Bashar al-Assad militarily.’

For the same reason, France has ‘refrained from bombing the group in Syria for fear of bolstering’ the Syrian government, and Britain likewise has largely confined its airstrikes to Iraq.

This is why US ceasefire agreements with Russia – there have been 5 so far – have not been made in good faith. The US doesn’t want the terrorists defeated. Co-operation with Russia would impose restraints on the US’s ability to wage war on Assad.

While official US policy is ostensibly for working with Russia, and while the US understands that ceasefires allow the terrorists time to re-arm and regroup, hawks in the US administration and military have rejected a ceasefire deal between Kerry and Lavrov, which would involve intelligence-sharing.

Both the Secretary of Defense, Ash Carter, and the head of US joint command in Syria, General Harrigan, have openly threatened non-compliance with instructions to work with Russia.

The calculation is that Russia will become bogged down in an Afghanistan-

style quagmire in Syria. John Kirby, North-American State Department spokesman (*State Department Watch*, Sept 29) spelled out this strategy: ‘Extremist groups will continue to exploit the vacuums that are there in Syria to expand their operations, which could include attacks against Russian interests, perhaps even Russian cities. Russia will continue to send troops home in body bags...’

The US hawks are also pushing for covert strikes on Syria without a UN Security Council resolution. As Lavrov reported during the ceasefire talks: ‘My good friend John Kerry ... is under fierce criticism from the US military machine ... apparently the military does not really listen to the Commander in Chief.’

Why, then, does Russia continue to engage with the US? Because it believes, rightly, that ceasefire talks both expose the US’s warlike intentions and hamper its regime change strategy.

The dangerously provocative US bombing of the Syrian army at Deir Ezzor in eastern Syria on 17 September saw off any chance of the latest ceasefire, taking place two days before co-operation was due to begin. In response to the US attack, Russia escalated the battle for Aleppo, which must be retaken if Syria is to stay unitary.

The victory of Donald Trump could, potentially, offer an opportunity for a better outcome in Syria.

A Hillary Clinton (pictured) presidency would have led to a continuation, and almost certain intensification, of the conflict – freed from Obama’s moderating caution.

Trump has made more pragmatic noises about future dealings with Russia. Overall, his isolationist rhetoric signals a change of emphasis in US foreign policy, but pressure from the US military-industrial complex could push him in directions we don’t yet know.

Mosul

Meanwhile, US action in Mosul in Iraq is intertwined with its Syrian strategy of establishing a terrorist statelet.

The plan, according to Syrian historian Nizar Nayouf, is for the US and Saudi Arabia to allow IS fighters out of Mosul through the single open route – to the West. Pushing IS out of Mosul will funnel it into those areas of eastern Syria outside Assad’s control, from where it can attack the Syrian army.

The complex mix of forces attacking Mosul is a recipe for future sectarian conflict. The forces consist of the Iraqi army, backed by Shia militias organized

in Popular Mobilisation Units (PMU). Iran is backing both the militias and several units of the Iraqi army. Iraq’s aim is to defeat IS and gain control of Mosul.

Alongside, but in potential conflict with these forces, are the Peshmerga troops of the Kurdish Regional Government in Iraq, backed by Turkey. The Kurds want to use the liberation of Mosul as a lever to gain full independence from Iraq, according to the Kurdish prime minister Barzani (*Bild*, Oct 28).

Turkey, which claims Mosul as part of its old Ottoman empire, is supporting the Peshmergas and, in addition, training Sunni Turkmen militias at its base in Bashiqa north of Mosul to counter Shia influence. Its intervention in Iraq has been condemned by the weak Iraqi government, which has threatened war.

This could escalate into a full-scale Turkey-Iran war over Iraq. Short of that, further sectarian conflict is inevitable. Stoking the flames are US marines and special forces are also involved, as well as British special forces.

Beyond regional conflict, the proximity of US and Russian forces in the field increases the likelihood of accidents, any of which could spark a major conflagration.

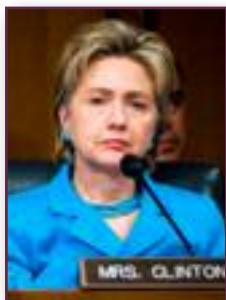
Focusing on Turkey for a moment, Turkish claims on Mosul extend to Aleppo as well as the strip of northern Syrian territory which it wants to deny the Kurdish PKK-affiliated YPG – the ‘wrong’ sort of Kurds.

Turkey’s invasion of northern Syria was given the nod by Russia, as part of a potential pipeline deal from Russia under the Black Sea to Turkey and the EU. The CIA-backed coup attempt against Erdogan was a response to Turkey’s turn to Russia, which had been underlined by Erdogan’s sacking of his pro-Nato prime minister Davutoglu in May.

US Vice-President, Joe Biden travelled to Turkey to ensure Turkish loyalty, as the Turkish paper *Hurriyet* warned that the West could try to sabotage a Turkish-Russian deal through ‘support of terrorist organizations and warmongering.’ Turkey seems currently to be playing both sides.

Meanwhile, Israel, which may have brokered the Turkish-Russian rapprochement, according to oil analyst William Engdahl, has been negotiating with Russia on its own behalf over its newly discovered Leviathan gas field, worth \$95 billion.

Gazprom has proposed buying 30% of Leviathan, according to Natural Gas World website. Israel would benefit from Gazprom’s financial backing to begin exploiting the gas field, as well as



Russian protection of Leviathan from sabotage by Israel's enemies. Obviously the US will obstruct any such deal.

Oil has also prompted improved relations between Israel and Turkey, after Israel paid compensation over the Mavi Marmara killings so as to facilitate a proposed pipeline from Israel through Turkey.

Media

The two battles, for Mosul and for Aleppo, couldn't present a greater contrast in terms of media reporting.

In Mosul, reports focus positively on the 'relentless campaign of strikes [that] has removed hundreds of fighters, weapons, and key [IS] leaders from the battlefield' (*BBC* Oct 29), with no reporting of the thousands of civilian victims, such as the bombing of a girls' school by the US airforce on October 24th.

The huge destruction of other cities by western bombing, with 30,000 dead, according to official figures, and in one example, Ramadi, most of the city's 400,000 made homeless, has also gone unreported.

The four-year battle for Aleppo, by contrast, has become frontpage news – but only after the terrorists started losing. As Robert Fisk observed, the same Islamist fighters now besieged in east Aleppo were 'Only three years ago ... besieging the surrounded Syrian army western enclave of Aleppo and firing shells and mortars into the sector where hundreds of thousands of civilians lived under regime control ... [The] first siege didn't elicit many tears from the satellite channel lads and lassies' while the 'second siege comes with oceans of tears.'

Atrocity reports abound, but are continually being exposed as bogus, often having been committed by terrorists rather than the regime. The 'observers' originating such reports are not neutral but embedded with the Islamists.

The Aleppo Media Center, for example, providing media material to western news agencies, is funded by France – effectively a branch of *Canal France International*, attached to the French Foreign Ministry.

One of the most famous 'humanitarian' photos circulated by the Aleppo Media Center – of a dust-covered boy in an ambulance – was taken by Mahmoud

Raslan, a photographer who himself appears elsewhere posing with the Nour al-Din al-Zenki, a terrorist group that beheaded a 12-year-old boy.

The same goes for the White Helmets, acclaimed as 'international heroes'

US State Department ... revealed that the White Helmets had been given \$23 million by the US, as well as 4 million euro from the Netherlands and 7 million from Germany.

According to Daniel McAdams, executive director at the US Ron Paul Institute, the White Helmets group 'provides an almost continuous commentary of anti-Assad message.'

(*Guardian*, 3 Oct) and nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize (*Independent*, 5 Oct).

US State Department spokesman Mark Toner (April 27, 2016) revealed that the White Helmets had been given \$23 million by the US, as well as €4 million from the Netherlands and €7 million from Germany.

According to the *21stcentury Wire news* website: 'White Helmets founder Le Mesurier... is said to be an 'ex' British military intelligence officer involved in a number of other NATO 'humanitarian intervention' theatres of war, including Bosnia, Kosovo and Iraq, as well as postings in Lebanon and Palestine.' Le Mesurier's connection to the CIA-funded assassination company Blackwater has been well-documented.

According to Daniel McAdams, executive director at the US Ron Paul Institute, the White Helmets group 'provides an almost continuous commentary of anti-Assad message.'

Assad (pictured), in an interview with the Swiss media, was asked directly about civilian casualties: 'I wouldn't say that there are no such attacks on any

building, but as a government, we don't have a policy to destroy hospitals ... for a simple reason: first of all, morally, the second reason is that if we do so, we are offering the militants the incubator, the social incubator that they've been look-

ing for ... It's like shooting ourselves in the foot.'

He continued: 'If we are ... committing all these atrocities ... how can I be President after nearly six years of the beginning of the war? I'm not Superman, if I don't have support, I wouldn't be here.' Meanwhile, Assad's invitation to allow Western reporters in to conflict zones has gone unaccepted.

The media fiction of a moderate opposition is a key element in the propaganda war. In Aleppo, Al-Nusra, which comprises roughly 80% of the 22 brigades of hardened terrorist fighters in Aleppo – supplied with tanks and other heavy weapons from outside powers – is another name for al-Qaeda and has used several name changes to mask its extremist nature.

As David Morrison put it on the *openDemocracy* website (17 Oct): 'Al-Nusra is on the US State Department's list of designated terrorist groups ... To be precise, it was deemed to be an extension into Syria of the group al-Qaeda in Iraq...' Yet the *BBC* (10 O'Clock News, Nov 5) still sanitises them by calling them 'anti-government fighters'.

Yemen

The Saudi war on Yemen has pushed one of the poorest countries in the world to the brink of starvation. 850,000 children face 'acute malnutrition', according to a UN expert.

'Twenty million Yemenis, nearly 80% of the population, are in urgent need of food, water and medical aid,' according to British journalist Julian Borger.

The US navy is blockading Yemeni ports, one of the prime causes of the famine. This blockade, also backed by Britain, constitutes a war crime.

Corbyn has called for a ban on arms sales to the Saudis (Oct 29), while Amnesty has reported British cluster bombs – the very weapons the media accuses Syria of using in Aleppo – in Yemen.

Theresa May (pictured) has, meanwhile, defended Britain's important relationship with Saudi Arabia, and is backed by Labour rightwingers such as Kevan Jones (ex Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Defence) and others.

The UK government says it has no military personnel based in Yemen, a claim disputed by a report by *Vice News* in April. This report, according to Mark Curtis in the *Huffington Post* (Oct 18), 'revealed that British special forces in Yemen... were playing "a crucial and sustained role with the CIA in finding



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US-led arms race in Asia-Pacific region

The US strategic encirclement of China is drawing Japan and other Asian countries into a dangerous arms race.

By **SIMON KORNER**

According to *Wikileaks*, in 2013 Hillary Clinton warned: “We’re going to ring China with missile defence.”

Three years later, Ash Carter, US Defense Secretary, visiting Japan and South Korea in April, underlined US policy to “transform the US-Japan alliance, expanding opportunities for the US armed forces and the Japan Self-Defense Forces to cooperate seamlessly.”

This seamless ‘co-operation’ binds Japan, as well as key ally South Korea, into close military co-ordination with – and dependency on – US technology, and means huge spending increases in the military budgets of both countries.

Japan’s military budget has risen every year for the past five years, reaching £38 billion in 2016. South Korea’s military budget has risen to £27.5 billion.

At the core of this military alliance is the new missile system THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Defence) developed by US high-tech giant Lockheed Martin. THAAD will give the US first-strike capability against China, as well as Russia’s Far East – with the misnamed ‘defence shield’ designed to destroy any retaliatory missiles that escape the first strike. It follows the model set by Star Wars against the USSR in the 1980s, forcing an arms race as a way of undermining the economy.

Both South Korea and Japan have bought versions of this system, and South Korea has, in addition, bought a sophisticated radar system, made by another US producer Raytheon – the X-band radar.

Fan Gaoyue, a Chinese military expert from Sichuan University, commented that THAAD is forcing South Korea “to join the US-Japan missile defense system.” Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said: “The coverage of the THAAD missile defense system, especially the monitoring scope of its X-Band radar, goes far beyond the defense need of the Korean Peninsula.

It will reach deep into the hinterland of Asia, which will not only directly damage China’s strategic security interests, but also do harm to the security interests of other countries in this region.”

Alongside this re-armament comes the recent abandonment of Obama’s proposed ‘no first use’ of nuclear weapons policy – under pressure from Ash Carter and nationalist Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe (pictured).

Japanese re-armament

For its own part, Japan as a major imperialist power is eager to scrap the peace-oriented constitution imposed on it by the victors of WW2.

Like Germany it is seeking to become a ‘normal’ (ie warlike) nation again, to match its economic might. This requires the repeal of Article 9 of its constitution outlawing war as a means of settling disputes.

As it re-asserts its military capability, it has begun to dispute the terms of its surrender after WW2. Its conflict with China over the Senkaku (Japanese) or Diaoyu (Chinese) islands in the East China Sea is the most dangerous of these disputes.

The islands had been claimed by the Japanese during the Imperial era in the late 1800s, but China – along with Taiwan – regards them as conquered territory that should have been handed back in 1945.

The islands have a commanding position over important shipping lanes, through which China brings in 80% of its imported energy – particularly oil from Angola, Saudi Arabia and Iran. There are also rich fishing grounds and potential oil and gas reserves in the surrounding waters. Recent joint US-Japan military exercises rehearsed invading an island, using drones and air

support for ground forces are a clear sign of Japan’s serious intent.

Japan is also producing land-to-sea missiles to station on Miyako island, near the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands, along with troops, to gain control over the islands’ waters. In addition, it is building a new submarine force based in Nagasaki, and producing its first stealth fighter, a co-operative venture between Mitsubishi and Lockheed Martin.

A similar territorial dispute – between Japan and Russia – centres on the Kuril islands, which Russia took over as part of Japan’s surrender in September 1945. Russian foreign minister Lavrov



criticized the Japanese for “demonstrating overtly its negligence of the commonly recognized results of WW2.”

Japanese claims that “not all results of WW2 had been summed up” between Moscow and Tokyo show Lavrov is right to be concerned. Tensions over the Kuril islands fit the broadly aggressive western stance towards Russia, including

NATO expansion in eastern Europe right up to the Russian border.

US Economic strategy: TPP

Alongside the military threat of the US ‘pivot’ to Asia, economic force is being used. Sanctions against North Korea – under UN Security Council resolution 2270 – have been imposed, with the aim of devastating an economy reliant on exports of gold, titanium, rare earth and so on.

This resolution is similar to the punitive sanctions imposed on Iraq and Libya before those countries were destroyed.

On a regional level, the US trade deal, the TPP, aims at deregulating and prising open protected Asian economies to US capital. Obama made it clear what TPP is about: “If the US doesn’t write those rules, then countries like China will.” Oxfam and Médecins sans Frontières have warned that TPP will lower living standards, through bringing in tighter control of patents by big US

pharmaceuticals and the undermining of food security, among other changes.

There is widespread opposition to TPP in Asia, as there has been against TTIP in Europe – with protests against the lack of transparency, democratic accountability and the threat of unemployment. This opposition is coming from domestic ruling classes as well as workers – and increasingly from within the US.

The US's difficulties over bringing in TPP are a sign of its diminishing influence more broadly as the Chinese renminbi rises against the dollar, giving China more control over trade and foreign exchange markets.

The Chinese Silk Road communications network extending westwards, eventually to Europe, shows the scale of China's ambition.

The challenges to US influence in the Pacific are also reflected in its cooling relations with countries like the Philippines, its long-term Pacific base.

Philippine president Duterte has recently demanded that US forces leave Mindanao, in the south of the Philippines, and stopped joint Philippine-US naval patrols of the South China Sea.

Cambodia has given China greater access to an important deep-water facility, further enhancing Chinese maritime dominance. Other Pacific countries are drawing closer to China in terms of trade.

Total trade between China and the Pacific countries almost doubled from \$4.5 billion in 2014 to \$7 billion in 2015 – mostly Chinese exports. While the US will try to stem the tide – Duterte is likely to come under particular pressure – the direction of travel is clear.

Inter-Imperialist Rivalry

The US faces other challenges from its imperialist rivals. Former colonial powers such as France, with its long history in Indo-China, are looking to make inroads into the US sphere of influence in Asia. French investment in the Asia-Pacific region reached \$75 billion in 2012.

At the same time France supports the US containment of China, whose growing power the French fear – particularly in French-dominated parts of Africa.

A French government report this summer concluded: "France has started to re-balance its strategic centre of gravity

towards the Indo-Pacific" – in other words, a French 'pivot' to Asia.

French islands in the Pacific and Indian oceans are to serve as bases for its navy, already co-operating closely with the US, Australia and New Zealand.

Similarly, Britain supports the US 'pivot', fearful of Chinese domination. In 2012, then defence minister Phillip Hammond, acting as the US lieutenant in Europe, rallied Nato powers behind the US 'pivot'.

At the same time, Britain is stealing a march economically against its rivals over China. Britain was the first western power to join the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) in 2015, set up by China as a rival to the World Bank – raising US concerns about the World Bank's loss of influence.

"The UK's decision to join the AIIB as a founding member upset Washington but pleased China enormously," said Philippe Le Corre, from the Brookings Institution.

The Asia-Pacific region is likely to become increasingly dangerous as the US seeks to offset its declining economic influence through military means.

Imperialist wars in the Middle East

Continued from page 11

and fixing targets, assessing the effect of strikes, and training Yemeni intelligence agencies to locate and identify targets for the US drone program."

British personnel are working in the Saudi military command centre, which determines bombing targets. These have recently included a prison in Hudayyah, killing 60 people, and a funeral in Sa'ana killing and wounding 700, as well as numerous hospitals.

Medecins Sans Frontieres has fled the country after four of its facilities were bombed, even though it had given the Saudis the GPS coordinates of its hospitals. Airstrikes have caused two-thirds of the 10,000 deaths in Yemen, with civilian areas systematically targeted.

Yemen occupies a strategic position on the Bab el-Mandab waterway, commanding shipping through the Suez canal. The former British base of Aden was important in protecting the British Empire's traffic with India.

In 1967, the British were forced out by Yemeni forces, which established a socialist republic, since defeated. But control over the vulnerable Bab el-Mandab chokepoint remains an important issue today.

A Saudi victory in Yemen would give the US the ability to disrupt China's world trade, including its vital energy imports, and ensure that Chinese – and Iranian – influence in the region is kept at bay.

Libya

A recent Foreign Affairs Select Committee report (September 14) blamed the former UK Prime Minister, David Cameron directly for the disastrous 2011 military intervention in Libya, with three main criticisms:

- poor intelligence;
- mission creep; and,
- lack of support after the regime's destruction.

Only 13 MPs voted against war on Libya, including Corbyn and McDonnell. According to *The Wall Street Journal*, the committee found that 'the [Gaddafi] threat to civilians was overstated.'

In Libya, there have been protests against imperialist intervention and a revival of support for Gaddafi. Gaddafi's son, Saif, who has been in captivity in Zintan for over five years but who was probably released in April, could become a leading figure.

To ensure any move towards independence is crushed, France and the US

are maintaining divisions. British special forces in Benghazi are supporting anti-Tripoli Libyan General Haftar, despite officially backing the Tripoli 'government'.

Meanwhile, the US has bombed Gaddafi's hometown of Sirte, formerly an IS stronghold, to maintain internecine conflict. As one Libyan source put it: 'Isn't it strange that every time we appear to see a glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel, Western countries come and bomb us back into it?'

The first action by France and Britain in 2011 was to secure the oil refineries. That is still the aim of imperialism now. In September, the four main oil export terminals were recaptured from the militias by the pro-western Libyan National Army.

Oil production had slumped to a sixth of the amount it had been in Gaddafi's time, but is now starting to rise. The potential of Libyan oil is enormous, with possibly the largest oil reserves in Africa, according to the New Arab website.

A recent London meeting between Libyan officials and representatives of the USA, Britain, Italy, France, the IMF and World Bank showed clearly the predatory interests of the imperialist powers who co-operate when it comes to sowing sectarian division and conflict, but compete for a share of the spoils.

Letter from South America

Since 1998, when Hugo Chávez was elected president of Venezuela and started the 'Bolivarian Revolution', South America has been transformed. But now it is in trouble.

By **DAN MORGAN, Chile.**

The few golden years of high commodity prices and a majority of left-wing governments now seem long gone. Economically, growth is slow or negative, apart from in Bolivia.

Politically, reactionary forces have used economic problems to take the offensive. In general, we are seeing the problems and limitations of reforms made within a capitalist framework.

Venezuela

Venezuela is the most worrying case. The Bolivarian revolution changed the constitution and gained power in the executive, legislative, judicial and military spheres.

State enterprises were strengthened or set up but the capitalist sector of the economy remains strong - and in food production and distribution, dominant.

Neither have the mass media been totally democratized; pro-imperialist and reactionary propaganda remains strong.

Despite efforts to diversify the economy, it remains heavily dependent on oil production - and the price fell from over 100 dollars a barrel in 2014 to around 40 dollars this year.

The right wing opposition has unleashed economic warfare, producing shortages and a black market.

It is anguishing to see that the government cannot ensure easy access to food and medicines for the population, after 18 years of the process of 'Twenty-first Century Socialism'.

A system to address this has been started, called CLAP - Local Committees for Supplies and Production. It sounds similar to the JAP - Councils for Supplies and Prices - the system that in Chile in 1973 ensured basic goods for the people, based on committees linked to local shopkeepers.

This worked, as I can testify, but was not widespread enough to prevent the popular discontent that provided the po-

litical basis for the military coup against Salvador Allende.

The father of Chile's current president, Alberto Bachelet, was an Air Force General who coordinated the JAP system; after the coup he was imprisoned and tortured for his pains, dying from an unattended heart attack.

It is to be hoped that the CLAP system will work in Venezuela, because people without supplies of food and medicine will continue to be disenchanted and support the opposition, as over 60% did in the elections last December.

The head of the Central Command of the CLAP, Freddy Bernal, says their role is 'to defeat the economic war', as part of government measures to protect the people from speculation, hoarding, the mafias, infiltrators and the corrupt "who also exist in the various public and private institutions" (speech on the 13th of July).

Chileans who were in exile there tell me that a culture of corruption was deeply rooted, affecting much of life. That will not easily change, but finding the way to do so will be essential for the advance of the revolution.

The Communist Party of Venezuela is small but it may be significant that it calls for mobilization against "fascism, 'entreguismo' and corruption".

Here, 'entreguismo' refers to a section of the Bolivarian movement that is prepared to give in, to hand over power to the pro-imperialist and neoliberal opposition, rather than deepen the revolution.

The only sure way to finally defeat the reactionary forces is to decisively weaken the capitalist sector, and achieve a largely socialist economy.

Brazil

Brazil is the most recent and dramatic example of the reactionary offensive. The Workers' Party won the presidency first in 2002, with Luiz Inacio 'Lula' da

Silva. But first he made a 'pact with the devil' - i.e. a number of center and right-wing parties - promising not to basically change the capitalist economic model.

Worse, neither he nor Dilma Rouseff, his successor, even attempted changes to the hopelessly corrupt political system, but relied on alliances with various corrupt parties - the viciously right-wing new de facto President Temer was the previous Vice-President.

As a historic leader of the Landless Workers' Movement (MST) wrote in 2013: "Today, in order to run for any position, for example, for councillor, you need to have more than one million reais [approximately 2 reais to the dollar]; a deputy costs around ten million. Capitalists pay and later politicians follow orders. Young people are fed up with this bourgeois way of doing politics, strictly commercial. But what is even more serious was the fact that political parties from the institutional left, all of them, adapted to those methods. And, therefore, provoked a sharp aversion to the way political parties act"⁽¹⁾.

President Dilma Rouseff has been deposed, impeached, in a parliamentary coup, in my opinion more for her anti-imperialism, solidarity with other progressive governments on the continent, than for her mild progressive reforms at home.

These social reforms of the Workers' Party presidents lifted 30 million people out of poverty (in this huge country of over 200 million) but without basic change to the political or economic system or the judiciary, let alone the military.

Thus, taking advantage of an economic recession, it has been relatively easy for reaction in Congress to stage an illegitimate, unjustifiable coup.

Dilma was guilty of manipulating budget figures, allegedly, to help win her re-election. Something every past Brazilian president has done, and not a crime as demanded by the constitution to justify impeachment.

She has not been accused of corruption, even political corruption.

The majority of all members of congress (parliament) in Brazil have been

found guilty, or are under investigation for corruption involving personal enrichment.

Fortunately, this coup just might end up rebounding on its instigators. A social movement has arisen to oppose this outrage, with mass demonstrations in many parts of this huge country; it could grow and forge the necessary unity and awareness that more radical policies are needed to win the battle for democracy, let alone social justice.

Argentina

Argentina, as always, is very complex politically. Presidents Néstor Kirchner (2003-2007) and his wife Cristina Fernandez came out of the Peronist party; they were certainly not socialist, but definitely anti-imperialist and progressive.

Rejecting the IMF and its 'adjustment' policies of privatisation and austerity, Néstor led a swift recovery from the economic meltdown of 2001, with rising living standards for all. There were important subsidies for basic services helping the poor above all.

The movement that is Peronism included tendencies ranging from ultra-left to neoliberal. The weakness of the government was the usual corruption by many ministers, and reports of a big rise in Cristina's wealth while President.

One positive result is that Peronism now seems to be definitively divided, with Cristina Fernandez leading the 'Front for Victory' on the left. This was very narrowly defeated in the elections last November, and the new, decidedly neoliberal President Macri set about reversing all progressive reforms.

Increases in electricity, gas and public transport prices of 300 and 400% were announced. Despite legal challenges - the Supreme Court ruled against some of them - there will be huge price increases.

Devaluation of about 50% has led to massive inflation, and there is a great increase in the number of poor. Over 120,000 jobs disappeared in the first six months of this year. Again, there is hope, as a mass movement is developing which may develop solid left-wing policies and the necessary unity.

Ecuador, Bolivia

Other countries which have decisively broken with neoliberal policies are holding firm, despite the general right-wing offensive.

In Ecuador, with Rafael Correa elected in 2006, the 'citizens' revolution' won a new, democratic constitution and radical reforms.

The most highly valued are social advances in education, health and social welfare; economic growth and the reduction in inequality. Workers' rights were strengthened and cooperatives promoted.

A coup attempt in 2010 based on the police was defeated with popular mobilisation and the army. Reaction tries to use sectional demands by indigenous organisations, with finance from NGOs based in the United States, against the government.

In Bolivia, the Movement to Socialism (MAS) government of Evo Morales (since 2006) continues to have strong support and the country has the highest growth rate of Latin America.

The nationalisation of oil and gas resources transformed the finances of this poor country. MAS became the government party from almost nothing in four years, on the back of tremendous popular struggles.

Of course, this meant the entry of opportunists and there have been several examples of expulsions of office-holders caught in corrupt practices. In this volatile country, sectional interests are a

particular problem for the unity of progressives.

Recently, some cooperative miners have been in dispute, even leading to the murder of a deputy minister. As Vice-President Alvaro García explains, this was due to the leaders going against cooperative principles, exploiting employees and sub-contracting to private companies. In the trade unions there are some ultra-left leaders who undermine unity.

Just before a referendum on the possibility of Evo standing for another re-election, mass media used a blatant lie to cast a shadow on Evo's character. This is now admitted by all to be a lie but the damage was done.

This highlights a central problem for progressive governments: the tremendous power of the mass media, dominated by capitalist ownership, and usually voicing the policies of US imperialism. In several countries right-wing parties are in disarray and the mass media are a natural replacement for them as political forces. To her credit, Cristina Fernández in Argentina proposed breaking up the two huge media empires and creating democratic media, but was unable to implement this before her government finished.

These examples of the political battles going on in South America, illustrating the problems for reforms, even radical, deep ones that do not accumulate enough strength and decision to achieve hegemony and meet capitalist and imperialist resistance with socialist counterblows.

To lead the fight for democratic change in the economy and mass media, among other things, it seems that a disciplined, politically educated working class vanguard is needed; often, crucially, to fight corruption in the progressive movement itself.

UK poverty and household debt

British household debt is now more than a third of a trillion pounds, according to a TUC report, *Britain in the Red*.

Last year almost half the UK population had some form of unsecured debt.

At the end of 2015, 3.2 million households or 7.6 million people were in debt, a rise of 700,000 or 28% since 2012.

1.2 million low-income households are estimated to be in "extreme problem" debt. This is defined as households who have to pay out more than 40% of their gross household income on unsecured debt repayments.

The increase in debt since 2012 is in part due to the major extension of student loans. The largest growth of indebtedness is among low-income households that are in employment. In 2015, 9% of these were "extremely over-indebted," up from 5% in 2014.

This situation has worsened markedly over the course of the past year for working households with incomes of £30,000 or less.

Nearly three quarters (72%) of these households hold unsecured debts, and the report finds there has been an in-

crease, from 10-14%, in the number of these who are over-indebted during the past year.

Many more young people are in debt. Student loan debt has grown from £15 billion in 2004 to £86 billion at the end of 2015 - mostly due to university fees.

Mortgages for indebted, lower-income, working households have fallen by one-third.

In contrast, the percentages of these households living in either social or private rented accommodation have doubled.

Taking a left turn on the road to Brexit

The Tories and the interests they represent are in for a bumpy ride as Britain heads towards its possible exit from the European Union (EU).

By **FRIEDA PARK**

Though the Tories were ambivalent about the EU, the Brexit vote was not one that the dominant section of the ruling-class had wanted or planned for and it throws up a number of problems for their Tory government.

Negotiating Britain's exit will be a big job which will take up time and resources. The government has yet to make a clear statement of how it sees a post-Brexit Britain. Politically, economically and militarily what will relationships with the EU, its member states and the rest of the world look like?

Trump's election as President of the United States must change things too. Although it is difficult to know exactly what he will do when he takes office, on the campaign trail and in victory, he welcomed both Brexit and Nigel Farage.

Will this translate into a warmer post-Brexit relationship with Britain? It will be somewhat different from Obama's disdainful put-down that Britain would be at the back of the queue for the US in agreeing trade deals.

As the Lib-Dem's victory in the recent Richmond by-election shows, there is a debate around whether there should be a "soft" or "hard" Brexit. A hard Brexit would mean a radical break with the EU whereas proponents of a soft Brexit wish to maintain membership of the Single Market and Customs Union.

The main problem with the soft option is that it would mean adhering to EU rules and regulations with no say in how they are formulated.

This raises the uncomfortable prospect that, despite voting to leave, Britain would become an adjunct of the EU without any input into it. This is unlikely to sit well with voters who supported Leave.

Proponents of soft Brexit use similar economic arguments as were deployed by the Remain side in the referendum campaign about the economic impor-

tance of trade with the EU. Most importantly, for these commentators, is the threat to the City of London as the financial capital of Europe.

There is virtually no scope for a middle road between the two positions as Britain is negotiating from a position of weakness.

The EU has no incentive to make its departure any easier than it needs to be and has a vested interest in making an example of Britain in case any other countries are foolish enough to follow its example.

There are elections next year in France and Germany and nothing will be done which might encourage Euro-scepticism, all the more so with Trump in the White House.

Unless the EU radically reviews where it is heading, then there will be no concessions around access to the Single

Market and certainly none on the "free movement of people".

Despite the disadvantages of a hard Brexit, the rhetoric of the Prime Minister and her team has begun to veer towards that option.

Given that both hard and soft Brexits represent less than ideal outcomes for capitalism, the option remains of any deal being put to another vote either in Parliament or through a referendum.

Indeed the media were quick to play up the increased share of the vote achieved by the Liberal Democrats at the by-election caused by David Cameron's resignation ascribing it to pro-EU sentiment among the voters. This is clearly trying to create grounds for having a re-vote on EU membership.

There has been outrage across the political spectrum among Remain supporting MPs who now wish input into the formulation of the Government's stance on Brexit.

This is intended to stall the process towards triggering Article 50, prevent it happening or at least maintain membership of the single market. The guerrilla war being conducted against Brexit scored a success when the High Court ruled that the Prime Minister does not have the power to trigger Article 50 without a vote in Parliament.

Regardless of whether this is correct as a point of law or not, the intervention of the Court represents the interests of main trend within British capitalism which opposes Brexit.

Brexit and the Left

Unfortunately, however, it is not only the Tories who have problems with Brexit the left and the Labour Party also have difficulties.

The nature of the EU has not been at the forefront of debate on the left in recent years. Only a minority put forward the analysis that the EU is a thoroughly capitalist project whose interest is in exploiting the people of Europe and beyond.

The Remain supporting left also faces the problem of how to respect the Leave vote. During the referendum campaign some became more zealously committed

EU Student Exchange



European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students includes: Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs

to the EU than even its most ardent supporters on the right.

This passionate attachment to the EU can be understood as a reaction to the xenophobia of the right-wing Brexiters and a fear that without the EU we would be totally at the mercy of an uncontrolled assault by the Tories.

Others were more reluctant Remain supporters who saw the failings of the EU but were concerned about the outcome of a Brexit controlled by the right and the impact of this politically, economically and socially. Material factors also promoted Pro-EU sentiment among certain sections of society.

Trades Unions have declined in membership and influence and some see reliance on EU regulations as a guarantee of rights that we are not able to fight for and win ourselves.

In some sectors EU grants are a major source of funding, especially where there is little or no cash from the British Government.

This also makes a pro-EU sentiment understandable. Then there are those who aspire to work, study, travel or live in other EU countries.

The view from working-class housing estates

The world, however, looks very different from working-class housing estates across the country, where people have reaped no immediate material benefit from the EU, who do not have extensive opportunities to travel and whose children are unlikely to benefit from Erasmus programmes.

There is a danger of a huge division being opened up between middle class people who see benefits from EU membership and working class people who see none.

We can reject austerity, the economics of neo-liberalism and the free-market, which are enshrined in the EU through the Treaty of Rome, The Lisbon Treaty and the Fiscal Compact.

The challenge to the Remain supporting left is how to engage with the Brexit process and create a positive vision for Britain outside the EU.

This is absolutely essential to ensure that the Leave supporting working-class voters are not abandoned to the right. Leave and Remain voters need a progressive alternative.

The urgency of this is further underlined by the outcome of the US Presidential election, where Trump was able to capitalise on working-class discontent with a Democrat candidate who represented the problems of neo-liberalism in the eyes of many.

It will be difficult not to get bogged down in the Brexit debate but we need an agenda which seeks to transcend this.

Post the referendum we must end divisive labelling which sees the middle class as a Latte-drinking elite and the working class as bigoted and ignorant.

The reality is that all our lives are being made miserable by lack of affordable housing, decent jobs and attacks on the welfare state.

Forging unity around the kinds of policies that Jeremy Corbyn put forward in his successful Labour leadership campaign will be vital.

Combating racism must remain central to our work and there needs to be continuous pressure on the Tories while they are grappling with their own problems.



Jeremy Corbyn

We need to stop catastrophising about the negative and challenging situation we find ourselves and look to the positives.

Many are down-hearted, but in Britain we have a huge advantage with Jeremy Corbyn re-elected for a second time as leader of the Labour Party and with hundreds of thousands of people flocking to join it.

We need positive and hopeful messages about what we can achieve.

However, just as the Tories had not done much thinking about Britain's future outside the EU prior to the referendum, neither had the left.

At least we should be clear that we are not going to be cheer-leaders for the interests of the banks and financial institutions, but beyond that what?

Britain outside the EU

We should not be constrained by the straight-jacket of soft versus hard Brexit or limit ourselves to defending rights which might be under threat.

We should think more imaginatively about how Brexit could enable us to develop the British economy and build peaceful and equitable relationships with the rest of the world.

Without EU rules dictating procurement procedures, public bodies could take account of ethical considerations and workers' rights in awarding contracts.

Freed from the stringent capitalist requirements of the EU we can invest to support industry, infrastructure and public services. We can, for example, renationalise the railways, end compulsory competitive tendering and protect the NHS from privatisation.

We can reject austerity, the economics of neo-liberalism and the free-market, which are enshrined in the EU through the Treaty of Rome, the Lisbon Treaty and the Fiscal Compact. We can set our own budget and decide our own taxes.

We would not have to bail out failed banks, but could let them go to the wall instead and use the cash saved to invest in more productive economic development.

Without EU rules dictating procurement procedures, public bodies could take account of ethical considerations and workers' rights in awarding contracts. We can address the vexed question of what a progressive immigration policy might look like.

We can begin to reset our relationship with the rest of the world based on promoting peace and respect for other nations. We should aim to build trade and economic development treaties which are equal and fair.

All of the above measures are impossible whilst we remain within the EU, outside it we can fight for a progressive alternative. The interests of most of those who voted Leave and Remain are not so very different. We all want decent, well-paid jobs, good public services, housing and so on.

A progressive programme for Brexit can undermine the domination of the debate by the right and move it on from xenophobia and fear. It can unite Leave and Remain supporters around economic and social policies which will create a more just, more equal Britain and world.

Olympic gold for the elite

Britain achieved a record tally of medals at the Rio Olympics, a victory that said much about the culture of our increasingly divided and unequal society.

The explicit strategy was to reward sports where there was already a record of success, starving others of funding.

A huge amount, £88 million, went to just three sports – cycling, rowing and sailing. These are sports which are dif-

ficult to access for the majority of the population, requiring expensive equipment and specialised training centres.

This concentration on the elite meant that one quarter of the British team at the Olympics was privately educated.

By contrast, in the last twenty years 470 school playing fields have been sold off and local leisure and sports facilities have been hit by funding cuts.

Childhood obesity has become a major public health problem.

For the elite there is sporting success and for the rest of us the opportunity to join in the flag waving from our sofas.

Of course, it doesn't have to be like this. Tiny, socialist Cuba became the most successful sporting nation in Latin America by providing free universal access to sports facilities for every citizen.

Grammar schools are not the answer

'Why grammar schools are not the answer to our economic and social ills'. That was the title of an article by Jeremy Warner in the *Daily Telegraph* earlier this year⁽¹⁾.

By PAT TURNBULL

He began: 'I have an embarrassing disclosure to make. I failed my 11-plus.

'Fortunately for me, my parents refused to accept the judgment of the educational psychologist - who in despair they sent me to see soon afterwards - that I was of "typical C-stream, secondary modern standard".

'Instead, they paid for a couple of years of private education, after which I was judged sufficiently "clever" to be selected for a direct grant school, which in those days provided an even more elite form of "free" education than the grammar school system that had rejected me.

'Nonetheless, the experience scarred and shamed me, and despite the evident hypocrisy of my position, I have been vehemently opposed to selective state school education ever since.

'Grammar schools were great news for the mostly middle-class children lucky enough to be selected, but extraordinarily divisive for the roughly 75 per cent of the population who were not.

'Evidence that grammar schools significantly improved social mobility is slim to non-existent.

'Research published in the 1960s

found that only 1.5 per cent of 21-year-olds from working class backgrounds attended university, against 12 per cent from non-manual families. More than half of those from manual backgrounds had no O levels, against only 21 per cent from non-manual. Basically, the situation hadn't improved at all since the interwar years.'

Couldn't have put the case better myself – and most grammar school rejects didn't have parents who could afford to take the steps Jeremy Warner's parents did.

Then there were the working class children who passed the eleven plus and whose parents still couldn't afford to send their children to the grammar school because of the cost of uniform and equipment, and because they knew their child would have to leave school and go to work at fifteen anyway for financial reasons.

I would only add that even for those lucky enough to get to grammar school, the future was not necessarily rosy. At the Yorkshire grammar school I went to in the 1960s there was streaming.

Only the top of the three streams was expected to go to university. The B stream was largely destined for office

jobs. As for the C stream, a lot of them left school at 15 without qualifications.

I remember one friend of mine who made it up from the C stream to the B stream and finally stayed on to the sixth form to take A levels. She was a notable exception.

Grammar schools came into being when universal secondary education was introduced in Britain in 1944, but with a divided system: grammar schools, secondary moderns and technical schools, of which there were very few. Selection came on the basis of the 11 plus exam.

However, 'passing' for the grammar school still depended upon where you lived, because percentages going to grammar school varied widely throughout the country depending on the number of grammar schools in the area.

There are still 163 grammar schools in existence in England out of about 3000 state secondaries. There are 69 in Northern Ireland, though none in Scotland and Wales.

A few counties and local authorities in England have kept largely selective school systems, these include Kent, Medway, Buckinghamshire and Lincolnshire. Gloucestershire, Trafford and Slough have a mix.

In Birmingham, Bournemouth and some London boroughs there are a few grammar schools in areas otherwise fully comprehensive.

In areas with grammars there are indications of the inequalities this system

perpetuates. In those areas fewer than three per cent of all children going to grammar schools are entitled to free school meals, compared with an average of 18% in the other schools in the area. The proportion of children with special educational needs is 4.3% in grammar schools compared with 14.2% nationally.

Sadly the stratification characteristic of a class society was not done away with when comprehensive schools became the norm from the 1960s onwards.

Streaming, setting and individualised teaching within the 'mixed ability' class all ensured that it continued. How else can we explain a GCSE exam with 7 grades, plus unclassified? Only the top three grades, A, B and C, really counted.

Then there is the hierarchy of schools themselves exposed by the league tables, and the vicious punishments in the form of 'special measures' visited on the teachers, pupils and parents at the schools that don't make the grade – overwhelmingly working class ones.

So although it is quite right to oppose the reintroduction of grammar schools, the current state of secondary education in Britain is still nothing to celebrate. Even without grammar schools, one comprehensive can be very different in its class intake and academic output than another.

Academies

And then there are academies. The Labour government of Tony Blair established academies through the Learning and Skills Act 2000.

The chief architect of the policy was Andrew Adonis, who developed the policy in his capacity as education advisor to the Prime Minister in the late 1990s.

This is the same Andrew Adonis who more recently suggested demolishing council estates. Academies were supposed to cure the problems of 'failing' schools.

Private sponsors were at first required to put in some money, but this was later dropped. They now receive all their funding direct from the government, which also approves their establishment.

The number of academies has grown rapidly first under the Coalition government and now under the Conservatives. The Academies Act 2010 sought to increase the number of academies, which duly rose to 3,444 at 1 November 2013.

This privatisation of schools, where instead of being run by the local education authority, money is given directly to the charitable trust which undertakes to run the school, makes it even harder to achieve equality of provision.

Academies can introduce their own salaries, wages and working conditions.



Sutton Grammar School, one of five remaining grammar schools in the London Borough of Sutton.

According to the Times Educational Supplement "Some academies require staff to be available during the school holiday, while others put no upper limit on working hours."

The separation of the education service into academy chains makes it harder for unions to operate and for those who work in the schools to stand up for themselves.

Several academies in the London Borough of Hackney where I live do not have staff rooms for their large staffs. One head explained this to me: the staff oversee the children throughout the day, so the children are better behaved and the job is easier. Sounds unlikely, and in any case this is at the cost of the teachers. I have visited new schools designed with enormous central atriums and glass sided classrooms. Pupils – and teachers – are being constantly watched. There is a touch of the old grammar school in some of the things going on. One local academy does not allow their pupils to linger in the streets in school uniform. They are supposed to go straight home and change. It does not allow 'street talk' in the school. This is not about education – it is about control.

Corruption and exclusion

Academies offer the opportunity for personal enrichment. Heads of academies are often paid salaries far in excess of those of heads in local authority run schools.

Then there are the cases of corruption. In March 2016 Perry Beeches The Academy Trust was found to have deleted financial records for £2.5 million of free school meals funding, and that the chief executive was being paid by sub-contractors as well as the trust.

In August 2016 the former principal and founder of Kings Science Academy, the former financial director, and a former teacher who was the founder's sister were found guilty of defrauding public funds of £150,000.

Academies attempt to keep a record of high academic standards by skewing their pupil roll. In March 2005 the House of Commons Education and Skills Select Committee noted that two Middlesbrough academies had expelled 61 pupils, compared to just 15 from all other secondary schools in the borough.

A 2012 investigation by *BBC2's Newsnight* highlighted the practice of 'unofficial exclusion', easing out troublesome pupils who might undermine an academy's stability and position in the school league tables.

Then there is distortion of the curriculum. Academies do not have to follow the national curriculum except in the core subjects of maths, English and science, although they still participate in the same Key Stage 3 and GCSE exams.

An analysis of league table data quoted in 2012, by Terry Wrigley, editor of the international journal *Improving Schools* and visiting professor at Leeds Metropolitan University, showed that 68% of academies relied more heavily on vocational qualifications than the average state school, and that this inflated their results.

Nevertheless in 2011, 60% of pupils in non-academy schools attained five A* to C grade GCSEs, compared to just 47% in the (then) 249 sponsored academies. This year a major study by the Education Policy Institute found no significant differences in performance between academies and local council run schools, and that multi-academy trusts running at least five schools performed worse than local council run schools.

Despite all this, local people have little chance of stopping their children's school becoming an academy.

Nobody, apart from the Education Secretary and the governors, can stop the process of local authority schools becoming academies.

There is no requirement to consult parents, staff, or anyone else. There are examples of schools becoming academies despite almost total opposition from parents and teachers.

The government has dropped its proposal that all schools should be forced to become academies. This is most likely because it has already guaranteed the continued increase in the number of academies through the Academies Act

Continued on page 21

SNP: deficit, decline and wishful thinking

One week after the Scottish National party (SNP) conference in Glasgow in October 2016 the Scottish Government published a draft bill for a second independence referendum to be triggered dependent on the results of the UK wide negotiations to leave the European Union.

By PAUL SUTTON

In it, the Scottish Government sought as closely as possible to duplicate the details of the first referendum in 2014, including voting for 16 and 17 year olds and posing the same question for or against independence, allowing them to capitalise on the advantage of campaigning for a 'yes' vote.

If current opinion polls are to be believed, the chances of the SNP winning a second referendum at the moment are not good.

While Scotland voted 62% to 38% to remain in the EU in the June referendum this level of support has not crossed over into more support for an independent Scotland.

Analysing the results of recent opinion polls John Curtice, Scotland's leading pollster, claimed that "the UK wide vote in favour of Brexit has made little difference to the balance of opinion on independence"⁽¹⁾. A majority were still opposed to it.

Indeed the economic circumstances in Scotland have significantly worsened since the first independence referendum, exposing even more effectively than at that time the significant costs to the Scottish people of leaving the United Kingdom.

Deficit

These were most starkly revealed with the publication of the latest Government and Expenditure Revenue Scotland (GERS) figures in August. They showed a massive difference between revenue raised in Scotland of £53.7 billion, including the take from the North Sea oil and gas sector, and government expenditure in Scotland of £68.6 billion.

This gives a deficit of nearly £15 billion, equivalent to a 9.5% share of GDP which is the highest percentage figure in the EU outside of Greece and more

than double the 4% figure for the UK as a whole.

Were Scotland to be independent and in the EU this would have led to immediate difficulties with the EU Stability and Growth Pact which specifies government deficits must be kept below 3% of GDP.

To meet that target an independent Scotland would have had to double the take from income tax or more likely slash government expenditure dramatically.

If current opinion polls are to be believed, the chances of the SNP winning a second referendum at the moment are not good.

Given that the highest amount of spending in Scotland is accounted for by social protection (mainly benefits and pensions) and health (together amounting to nearly £40 billion in 2015-16, some 52% of total public spending), this would have had massive impacts on the most vulnerable in society.

Closer to home the size of the deficit underlines the benefits of remaining within the UK. Public expenditure in Scotland in 2015-16 was £12,800 per person which was £1,200 per person greater than the UK average.

Public revenue in Scotland was approximately £10,000 per person which is about £400 per person lower than in the UK for the same period.

In short, the rest of the UK subsidises the higher spend in Scotland allowing a higher standard of living in Scotland than would otherwise be the case.

The Barnett formula which underpins this arrangement continues to benefit

Scotland in spite of constant nit-picking criticisms of it by the SNP.

The situation is unlikely to change radically under the new devolved powers assigned to Scotland under the Scotland Act 2016.

This transferred increased financial responsibilities to the Scottish government so that now it has control of some 40% of the budget raised in Scotland and oversight of a much greater figure.

To date it has done very little to exploit these new possibilities.

Tax variations except at the margin have not been attempted and historic debt, such as those amassed under the private finance initiatives and similar more recent ventures, now cost more than one billion pounds a year to service.

Decline

Indeed the SNP government's overall record on economic growth in the last few years remains poor. In 2015 growth at 1.9% was below that of the UK as a whole and prospects for 2016 remain bleak.

While some of this is related to the downturn in North Sea oil other sectors have also performed badly. The contribution of the finance sector, often touted in SNP literature, has remained flat since the financial crisis and the contribution of tourism (broadly conceived) has fallen in the last 10 years (whilst that of the UK has grown).

Public services remain severely constrained by various austerity measures. Only the construction sector has improved and that is now set to slow or reverse as large public sector projects such as the Forth Road Bridge replacement come to an end⁽²⁾.

These trends spell future difficulties for the Scottish economy, not only in terms of attracting and delivering new investments but also in maintaining revenue sources as the Scottish government becomes more reliant on taxes generated in Scotland.

Such difficulties are starkly illustrated by the recent and ongoing collapse of oil prices and revenues from the North Sea. The GERS figures estimate that Scot-

land's share of North Sea revenues fell 97% from £1.8 billion in 2014-15 to £60 million this year.

Oil prices will increase in the future but they are unlikely to reach \$100 a barrel again for a long time.

This does not stop the Scottish government using this figure in planning its future revenue scenarios but it is totally unrealistic.

More likely is the \$60 a barrel figure given as the basis of planning by the Offshore Co-ordinating Group of the Scottish Trade Union Congress in their recent Annual Report.

Additionally, revenues will be depleted by reductions in offshore tax rates and allowances to incentivise investment.

Douglas Fraser, *BBC Scotland's* business editor, commented as follows: "The 2015-16 figure for petroleum revenue tax includes allowances and comes to £562 million in reverse revenue. Next year and for the rest of this decade, the GERS figures could include a negative total for oil and gas. Add to that the factor of clever corporate accountants. A trade union report has been published this week looking into the tax practices of North Sea producers, and alleging a lot of imaginative and opaque ways of transferring prices out of the UK jurisdiction and into a more attractive one for tax liability"⁽³⁾.

There is nothing on the horizon to suggest that an independent Scotland will be more capable of countering this tax avoidance than the UK.

There is however much in its recent past to suggest that the SNP can delude itself on economic forecasting or more uncharitably, seek to pull the wool over the eyes of the Scottish public.

Wishful thinking

The 2013 White Paper setting out the case for Scottish independence included a lot of what are now revealed as overly optimistic figures and claims that are not

now supported by the facts.

Some key ones identified by John McLaren are that, compared to the UK, Scotland:

- contributes more tax per head (in 2011-12 this was given as £1,700 per head whereas in 2015-16 it is £400 lower than the equivalent UK figure);

- has stronger public finances (in the five year period to 2011-12 this was said to be £2,400 per head whereas now in the five year period to 2015-16 public finances in Scotland were weaker by almost £4,300 per head); and,

- has a much higher GDP per head (this was said to be 20% higher ranking Scotland as 8th out of 34 OECD member countries whilst now it ranks as 15th with a GDP only 1% higher)⁽⁴⁾.

McLaren also notes that subsequent revisions to the 2013 figures show lower figures than then stated - in 2011-12 the tax receipts were £500 lower per head and Scottish finances stronger by only £200 per head.

Given this, the oft made claim during the independence campaign by the then Scottish Finance Secretary, John Swinney that he did not recognise the economic figures put before him by

There is ... much in its recent past to suggest that the SNP can delude itself on economic forecasting or more uncharitably, seek to pull the wool over the eyes of the Scottish public.

those opposed to independence can be seen to be deliberately myopic or at best disingenuous.

The Scottish economy, in short, is underperforming and immediate future prospects do not look particularly good.

Brexit has added to the uncertainty

but it does not in itself carry within it a plausible case for independence from the UK.

In October the Fraser of Allander Institute at the University of Strathclyde released a report commissioned by the Scottish Parliament on the implications of Brexit for Scotland.

This confirmed that over the long term Brexit would have a negative impact on trade, labour mobility and investment in Scotland, although less than that on the rest of the UK, with losses dependent on whatever relationship with the EU is finally agreed⁽⁵⁾.

What, of course, such a relationship might be is presently unknown. But what is known is that Scotland is much more closely integrated with the rest of the UK than with the EU.

Given what we already know about the complexities of the UK leaving the EU what does this say about the difficulties in untangling the UK relationship!

In the independence referendum the SNP proposed a window of only 18 months between the date it was held and their favoured date for independence if they had won.

This time period was unrealistic then and would be unrealistic if proposed again. So is any argument that Scotland is more prosperous than the rest of the UK and would be even more prosperous if it were outside it.

Wishful thinking makes bad policy and even worse economics.

FOOTNOTES

1. 'What Scotland Thinks', 18 September 2016.
2. Figures from John McLaren, Scottish Trends, press release 17 May 2016.
3. BBC Scotland news, 24 August 2016.
4. Scottish Trends, press release 24 August 2016.
5. Long-term Economic Implications of Brexit, 6 October 2016

Grammar schools are not the answer

Continued from page 19

2010 by taking away the powers from councils to open new schools, while at the same time leaving them with the responsibility for making sure there are enough school places.

In 2014 the Local Government Association found that 89 per cent of people in England wanted councils to have the power to open new schools, but this wish has been ignored by the government.

But back to grammar schools – why

are they being raised again now?

Perhaps it is as a diversion from exposure of the failings of academies. But perhaps it is also a smoke screen for the cuts in spending on schools.

The government has largely frozen average school spending per pupil in real terms between 2011-12 and 2015-16, and is now committed to freezing school spending per pupil in cash terms up to 2019-20.

It is also proposing to introduce a national funding formula for schools in

England from 2017 onwards.

If implemented, this would largely abolish the role of local authorities in the school funding system.

Maybe the government wants to find ways of concentrating this reduced spending on the elite products of state schools, and maybe re-introducing grammar schools is one of the ways of doing it.

FOOTNOTE

1. *Daily Telegraph*, 30 Aug., 2016.

Challenges for the left in Scotland

The Scottish National Party (SNP) bulldozer continues to roll on in Scotland, flattening the once dominant Labour Party, which it seeks to permanently replace as the party of government.

By FRIEDA PARK

Although the SNP actually lost a seat and its overall majority in the Scottish Parliament at the elections in May 2016, nevertheless Labour fared worse.

It lost 14 seats and the Tories gained 16, beating Labour into third place and becoming the official opposition.

The Tories gained ground by positioning themselves clearly as the party of the Union, their relative growth being a predictable and undesirable effect of the divisive politics generated by the independence referendum.

Labour's problems

Labour's prospects were not helped by the Scottish leader, Kezia Dugdale, who made contradictory statements about Scottish independence during the campaign.

Labour actually fought the election on a platform to the left of the SNP, pressing it on using tax raising powers to fund services. One could make criticisms of the policies, the presentation and the vision, however, there was probably little that could have been done to close the credibility gap that had opened up between Scottish voters and the party that once held sway.

Over many years in local government, Labour councils have administered cuts to services and have lost the trust of voters and staff.

The Party is now paying the price for that and for disenchantment with New Labour. Nor do people currently see a Labour Party in Scotland with the strategy, policies or personnel that demonstrate it has learned lessons and has changed.

The SNP is a well-spun political machine paying close attention to the presentation of issues and the image of Sturgeon herself.

It does not allow dissent among its elected members and its leadership is tight-knit and capable.

The Labour leadership election further exposed weaknesses in the Labour Party in Scotland. It was reportedly the only



Scottish Labour's Deputy Leader, Alex Rowley MSP who backed Jeremy Corbyn.

part of the UK where Owen Smith beat Jeremy Corbyn in the ballot with 6,042 votes for Corbyn and 6,856 for Smith.

Even in Wales, Smith's home territory, Corbyn won convincingly. Having said that a majority of constituencies backed Corbyn in Scotland, as did the Party's deputy leader Alex Rowley.

Dugdale again made contradictory statements denting her own and Labour's credibility. Although she did not support him the first time around, once elected she did not

overtly attack Corbyn and gained new powers for the Party in Scotland to run its own affairs.

Then when the second leadership election was underway she vociferously joined the anti-Corbyn camp.

When he was re-elected she tried to go back on some of the negative statements she had made about him and then the next week was on the attack again over Scottish representation on the NEC.

Ian Murray, Scotland's only Labour MP, joined the failed anti-Corbyn Parliamentary Labour Party coup, but at least has remained consistent in his continued hostility to the leader since his landslide re-election.

Home Rule Labour lobbyists

In addition, there is a strong lobby from some in Labour for yet more "Home Rule", with greater powers for the Parliament at Holyrood, and more autonomy for the Scottish Party.

Unhelpfully some individuals south of the border, such as Paul Mason, have promoted the idea of a "progressive alliance" and support for independence. Advocates of these positions seem not to have learned the lessons of history.

Scottish Labour prides itself on being the party which established the Scottish Parliament and yet all that has achieved is to give politics in Scotland an increasingly insular focus and to fuel support for nationalism and the SNP.

How more of the same would help Labour and working-class politics is a mystery. Such demands also risk making Labour look as though it is opportunistically trying to woo voters from the SNP.

If voters want a nationalist party then they have a much more effective one in the SNP. If there was a "progressive alliance" with the SNP and others at a British level then there would be even less reason for voters in Scotland to back Labour.

Were such arguments to gain the upper-hand, then Labour in Scotland would be further marginalised.

Part of the problem is that, while Corbyn has enthused people hungry for an alternative to join the Labour Party in huge numbers, many of their equivalents in Scotland had already decided that the SNP and independence was the way to get such change.

Whilst there have been new members joining this is not on the scale experienced in other places. The forces for socialist renewal in the Labour Party in Scotland are somewhat weaker, but the right is hardly in an unassailable position.

Nationalism subverts class politics

This is an object lesson in how nationalism can subvert class politics. At a critical time, the left in Scotland is not playing a full part in changing the Labour Party or in returning a future Labour government with Jeremy Corbyn

as Prime Minister. For many on the left in Scotland and generally among the electorate, there is a sense that Jeremy Corbyn is happening somewhere else.

Whilst they might be sympathetic they do not see the seismic upheaval in the Labour Party as relevant to them. We have the SNP and no longer need Labour. A whole reservoir of support that could have been there for Corbyn is not. Worse than that among a minority there is even negativity.

Swathes of the left were won over to the SNP by it posing as anti-austerity; in fact as the only authentically anti-austerity party. Not only that it went on the offensive against Labour, branding it "Tory-lite". Many on the left decried Labour as "Red Tories" and irredeemably neo-liberal.

Corbyn's victory completely demolishes that narrative, however, those committed to the nationalist route have shifted the goalposts. It is now said that Corbyn cannot win in Tory England and his capability as a leader is attacked. (Precisely the arguments of the right.)

If Corbyn cannot win, the argument goes, then the only way for Scots to get rid of the Tory Government remains independence. It was another clever move by the SNP to identify the problem as the "Tories" and "Westminster". This simplistic formulation omits any critique of capitalism.

Corbyn is a Socialist. Sturgeon is not Jeremy Corbyn is a socialist, Nicola Sturgeon is not. When she says that she wants what is best for Scotland her primary interest is in securing a sound base for capitalism.

Would the interests of the people of Scotland be best served by voting Labour and returning a Corbyn government or by voting SNP and undermining that possibility?

Whilst Corbyn stormed to victory again in the leadership battle in the Labour Party, the left-wing candidate for deputy leader of the SNP, MP Tommy Shepherd gained 25.5% of the vote, with

Angus Robertson MP, Leader of the SNP in the House of Commons winning outright in the first round with 52.5%.

It was Angus Robertson who led the SNP's policy change to abandon their policy to leave NATO.

Prospects for Labour in forthcoming council elections look grim, however, should the SNP be as successful as most people expect then their monolithic party management may begin to be challenged.

The Scottish Government has imposed disproportionately high levels of cuts on local authorities, in particular on places like Glasgow. If the SNP were re-

The SNP is no respecter of referenda results. They wish to re-run, if possible, both the Scottish independence referendum and the EU one till they get the result that suits them.

turned in the city then we could expect that to ease up and more cash to be made available, however, it will fall far short of the expectations of the electorate and council employees.

More divisions will inevitably emerge in the party, fuelled also by the differing opinions on when to go for a second independence referendum.

A second Independence Referendum? The SNP is no respecter of referenda results. They wish to re-run, if possible, both the Scottish independence referendum and the EU one till they get the result that suits them.

Or perhaps not even have another EU referendum, but just vote down Brexit in the House of Commons. But when to go for another referendum on independence is a thorny question.

Nicola Sturgeon has indicated that she wishes to be sure of victory before calling for one. Others are less sanguine

wanting an early vote. This includes the former First Minister, Alex Salmon now a Westminster MP. The mass membership of the Party also want to see progress towards independence.

To try and deflect the criticism that the SNP would be ignoring the wishes of the Scottish people by advocating another referendum but to simultaneously keep the hopes of Party members alight, Sturgeon came up with the formula that there would be grounds for another referendum if there was a material change in circumstances such as a Brexit vote with Scotland voting to remain.

Did she expect a Brexit vote when she said this? Not many did so. It is possible that she banked on not having to deal with the problem. However, the Brexit vote did happen and Scottish voters also voted to Remain.

The pressure is now on from SNP supporters to make good and use this pretext to go for another independence referendum. The outcome of any second referendum remains uncertain, in fact recent experience tells us that any referendum result can be unpredictable regardless of what the polls say.

If Teresa May goes ahead and triggers the Article 50 process for Brexit negotiations to commence in March next year, then the timetable for a Scottish independence referendum becomes problematic.

Given that there would need to be time to hold the referendum and negotiate Scoxit from the UK, it may be impossible for Scotland to leave the UK before the UK leaves the EU.

The UK Government will be very reluctant to agree to an independence referendum while attempting to also negotiate Brexit. Of course, that might suit Sturgeon quite well.

In any case, regardless of whether Scotland leaves the UK before or after Brexit it would still have to apply to join the EU. It would not, as the SNP like to suggest, inherit EU membership from its

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The Easter Rising and James Connolly

2016 has been the centenary of the Easter Rising in Ireland. The historical significance of the Rising has been well described elsewhere, but it is worth complementing such accounts with both a wider and a narrower view.

By **BRIAN DURRANS**

On the wider view, the methods used to put it down and to punish its perpetrators were meant to deter future rebellions, not just in Ireland but across the Empire.

It is no tribute to the British colonial occupation of Ireland - Britain's oldest colony - to recognise that more have died and suffered even worse at British hands or from British policies, in other parts of the former Empire.

On a narrower view, its leaders were punished. More narrowly still, the way in which one leader in particular was treated sums up in human terms what 'putting down' the Rising actually meant.

And whether we focus on the suppression and misrepresentation of the political event of the Rising or on one or two of its leaders, we also need to consider wider and narrower consequences of both.

For those at the receiving end, it is no comfort to know that others have had it

worse. Far fewer died, for example in the Irish potato famine in the 1840s than the up to 30 million who died in the late 19th and early 20th century India from the same colonial policy of exporting food rather than leaving it for its producers to eat, yet its impact on the smaller population of Ireland was still devastating.

Of the many more men and women who took part in the Rising and who were tried in secret with no defence counsel allowed, 88 men were sentenced to death.

The work of deterring anyone who might have a similar idea would previously have involved public hangings and leaving the corpses for passers-by to see and reflect upon; but although worse was being done to British, Irish and other soldiers in the battlefields of the First World War, in the city life of the time such a task was better entrusted to the press.

Most publicity therefore focused on the leaders who, over a period of ten days between 3rd and 13th May 1916, were executed individually by military firing squad, one in Cork, fourteen in Dublin.

Roger Casement

The sixteenth leader, Roger Casement, the Irish-born former British diplomat whom the British state had decorated for his exposés of the scandalous mistreatment of indigenous Peruvians and of Belgian atrocities in the Congo, was hanged for treason in London at Pentonville Prison on 3 August.

Opposing the colonialism of others was one thing; opposing that of your employer, especially if it involved tactical collusion with Germany with which Britain was then at war, was quite another.

In a sadly effective PR coup, Case-

ment's reputation was also trashed by the selective publication of pages from his diaries which, whether or not genuine, seemed to justify the additional charge of homosexuality, then not only illegal but unlikely to allow any accused a fair trial, as that of the non-insurrectionist Irish playwright and writer Oscar Wilde had proved only twenty-one years before in 1895.

Then as ever, the ruling class tried to keep such matters confidential to protect a friend but an enemy can expect to be thrown to the wolves. Casement's remains were buried in Dublin; but northwest London's Irish community can commemorate his patriotism at his mausoleum in Kensal Green Cemetery.

As for the fourteen men who were killed in Dublin, as each met his end, others waited in the wings, one day more of them, another day fewer, and some days, and then finally, none at all.

There is no comparison of course at the level of sacrifice or irreversibility, but the phasing of the executions calls to mind the wave-like anti-Corbyn resignations from Labour's Front Bench in June 2016 in the sense that both were designed to demoralise opponents.

The Dublin executions certainly helped sour opinion against insurrection but at the unavoidable price of reminding at least some that colonial occupation was still a problem to be overcome.

James Connolly

One of the last two leaders of the Rising to be executed in Dublin, and one of the seven signatories to the Proclamation of the Irish Republic made on 17 April, was the union organiser, patriot and internationalist, James Connolly, the foremost theoretician of independence with an unmatched understanding of the relationship between class, religion and nation in Irish conditions.

Because he confronted his execution-



Roger Casement's tomb in Kensal Green Cemetery, Kensington, London.



ers not standing but sitting on a chair, his detractors called Connolly a coward.

In fact, he had been so seriously wounded before being captured that the pain alone, or the morphine from his family doctor, made it impossible for him to stand.

Yet at dawn on Friday 12 May 1916, in the barracks of Stonebreaker's Yard in Dublin's Kilmainham Gaol, the supposed 'coward' refused a blindfold.

I recently discussed all this with an Irishman I recently met, a Protestant trade unionist as it happens, who expressed no sympathy for the republican cause.

He neither excused nor condemned Connolly's execution on moral grounds but declared it to have been a political mistake, the biggest the British could have made.

One of Connolly's biographers, Samuel Levenson, quotes substantial evidence from Britain and the US that supports this view, including from the US journal, *The Nation*, which speculates that the decision might as much as double Irish support for independence. ⁽¹⁾ But whether or not the execution of Connolly or the others had this unintended effect, as a matter of fact there was no further Rising in Ireland.

In the meantime, of course, old-style colonialism has almost everywhere been unrooted by what Harold Macmillan called "The Winds of Change".

And more recently the Good Friday Agreement, may open up a new route, in uncertain conditions, to an independent future for the Irish people, picking their way through shifts in Ireland's relationships with a post-Brexit Britain and EU. Yet however that works out, the Rising remains an indelible part of its history.

This Lenin plainly understood when interpreting it six months later in October 1916. He saw it as the expression of different kinds of oppression (national,

CONNOLLY by Liam MacGabhann

The man was all shot through that came today
Into the barrack square;
A soldier I - I am not proud to say
We killed him there;
They brought him from the prison hospital;
To see him in that chair
I thought his smile would far more quickly call
A man to prayer.

Maybe we cannot understand this thing
That makes these rebels die;
And yet all things love freedom - and the Spring
Clear in the sky;
I think I would not do this deed again
For all that I hold by;
Gaze down my rifle at his breast - but then
A soldier I.

They say that he was kindly - different too,
Apart from all the rest;
A lover of the poor; and all shot through,
His wounds ill drest,
He came before us, faced us like a man,
He knew a deeper pain
Than blows or bullets - ere the world began;
Died he in vain?

Ready - present; And he just smiling - God!
I felt my rifle shake
His wounds were opened out and round that chair
Was one red lake;
I swear his lips said 'Fire!' when all was still
Before my rifle spat
That cursed lead - and I was picked to kill
A man like that!

religious, class, anti-royal, anti-landlord) from which a genuine social revolution could eventually emerge, without in the meantime writing-off the Rising as a putsch or mistakenly identifying it as that revolution itself. ⁽²⁾

Connolly's execution

Like the Swedish-American union activist Joe Hill, Connolly was affiliated to the Wobblies, the Industrial Workers of the World.

They died in a similar way, too, Hill in Utah less than 6 months before, and the famous words of The Ballad of Joe Hill - "takes more than guns to kill a man, says Joe, and I ain't dead" - might equally apply to James Connolly himself.

Although Hill had a civil trial and was

made to wear a blindfold, he too was already wounded and tied to a chair. Also, both said or are imagined or reported to have said the word 'Fire' just before the triggers were pulled.

Giving your killers the go-ahead may seem pointless but in reality, or as reported, it's a last chance to assert your agency and both undercuts the authority of the officer in charge and boosts your posthumous reputation, so why would you not say it or imagine your hero to have said it?

Irish poet and journalist Liam MacGabhann (1908-1979) was only seven or eight at the time of the Rising.

In his mid-twenties he published a book of radical poems, one of which - *Connolly*⁽³⁾ - revisits Connolly's last moments from the point of view of a soldier in the firing squad.

MacGabhann captures the qualms such a person might experience, but if romantic poetry revels in moral dilemma - the back of the hand on the fevered brow - he offers neither personal blame nor absolution but political understanding.

In one line, even in a single word, the rifleman's only hope of escaping the guilt of complicity is by identifying at least its immediate cause. Which line or word it is, I'll leave for you to spot.

Liam MacGabhann explained that the poem is based on comments made by the son of a Welsh miner who was part of the firing squad that Friday morning and who later asked Connolly's relatives to forgive him.

FOOTNOTES

1. Samuel Levenson, *A Biography of James Connolly: socialist, patriot and martyr*. London, etc., Quartet Books, 1977, p.329.
2. Levenson 1977, p.330.
3. Liam MacGabhann, *Rags, Robes and Rebels*, Dublin, Eibhlian Press, 1933.

Media silence when Milosevic is cleared

The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague failed to hold a press conference or announce that on March 24, 2016 it deemed that the late Yugoslav and Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic was not responsible for the major war crimes for which he was charged during the 1992-95 Bosnian war.

By **ALEX DAVIDSON**

Instead, the tribunal conveniently buried it in the middle of its verdict against Radovan Karadzic. It can be found in the middle of the 2590 page verdict.

It was only because of the research of journalist Andy Wilcoxson⁽¹⁾, who uncovered the ICTY's ruling in late July, that the exoneration came to light - but it has yet to make international headlines.



Slobodan Milosevic

Radovan Karadzic, the former Bosnian-Serb president was convicted of war crimes and sentenced to 40 years in prison at the same time as the tribunal found unanimously that it "is not satisfied that there was sufficient evidence presented in this case to find that Slobodan Milosevic agreed with the common plan" of the "ethnic cleansing" of Muslims and Croats from Serbian territory.

In fact, the tribunal found the exact opposite to be true.

Much like the Western media hype around the "weapons of mass destruction" lies that led to the U.S. war against Iraq in 2003, Milosevic was called the "Butcher of the Balkans" in the "trial of the century" and was charged with "war crimes" in the midst of the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999.

Arrested in March 2001, Milosevic faced a five-year-long trial, defending himself, when he died in prison on March 11, 2006 under a very suspicious set of circumstances.

Milosevic's death

He died of a heart attack just two weeks after the Tribunal denied his request to undergo heart surgery in Russia.

He was found dead in his cell less than 72 hours after his attorney delivered a letter to the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in which he said that he feared he was being poisoned.

The Tribunal's official report on the inquiry into his death confirmed that, "Rifampicin had been found in a blood sample taken from Mr. Milosevic on 12 January 2006."

And that "Mr. Milosevic was not told of the results until 3 March 2006 because of the difficult legal position in which Dr. Falke (the Tribunal's chief medical officer) found himself by virtue of the Dutch legal provisions concerning medical confidentiality."

The presence of Rifampicin (a non-prescribed drug) in Milosevic's blood would have counteracted the high blood pressure medication he was taking and increased his risk of the heart attack that ultimately did kill him.

As Andy Wilcoxson wrote, "The Tri-

bunal's admission that they knew about the Rifampicin for months, but didn't tell Milosevic the results of his own blood test until just days before his death because of 'Dutch legal provisions concerning medical confidentiality' is an incredibly lame and disingenuous excuse.

"There is no provision of Dutch law that prohibits a doctor from telling the patient the results of his own blood test - that would be idiotic. On the contrary, concealing such information from the patient could be seen as malpractice.

"U.S. State Department cables leaked to *Wikileaks* confirm that The Tribunal did discuss Milosevic's medical condition and his medical records with U.S. Embassy personnel in The Hague without his consent.

(Milosevic) died of a heart attack just two weeks after the Tribunal denied his request to undergo heart surgery in Russia.

He was found dead in his cell less than 72 hours after his attorney delivered a letter to the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in which he said that he feared he was being poisoned.

"They clearly didn't care about medical confidentiality laws when they were blabbing about his medical records to the American embassy."

Milosevic exonerated

The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia ruling stated that in meetings between Serb and Bosnian Serb officials, "Slobodan Milosevic stated that '(a)ll members of other nations and ethnicities must be protected' and that '(t)he national interest of the Serbs is not discrimination'." It also stated that "Milosevic further declared that crime needed to be fought decisively."

The trial chamber noted that "Milo-

sevic tried to reason with the Bosnian Serbs saying that he understood their concerns, but that it was most important to end the war.”

The judgement also stated that “Slobodan Milosevic expressed his reservations about how a Bosnian Serb Assembly could exclude the Muslims who were ‘for Yugoslavia’.”

The ICTY went on to say that “from 1990 and into mid-1991, the political objective of the Accused (Karadzic) and the Bosnian Serb leadership was to preserve Yugoslavia and to prevent the separation or independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which would result in a separation of Bosnian Serbs from Serbia”

Slobodan Milosevic, leader of Yugoslavia, was demonized and compared to Hitler incessantly by the mainstream media as an excuse for NATO



1995, Dayton, Ohio, USA: Slobodan Milosevic signs the Dayton Accords formally ending the Bosnian war.

and the U.S. to sanction, tear apart and kill thousands in the former Yugoslavia.

“It was just like watching the evil strutting Adolf Hitler in action,” wrote

the *News of the World*'s political editor, when Milosevic had the temerity to defend himself in court.

“There were chilling flashes of the World War Two Nazi monster as the deposed Serb tyrant harangued the court.”

To make sure readers did get the Milosevic=Hitler point, the *News of the World* illustrated their diatribe with a picture of Hitler ‘The Butcher of Berlin’, with a picture of Milosevic ‘The Butcher of Belgrade’

The exoneration of Slobodan Milosevic comes 10 years after his death.

FOOTNOTE

1. Wilcoxson, Andy, *The Exoneration of Milosevic: the ICTY's Surprise Ruling*, 1 August 2016, www.counterpunch.org

Challenges for the left in Scotland

Continued from page 19

former status as part of the UK.

This could prove difficult as the collapse in the oil price means that Scotland's likely budget deficit will be much higher than is allowed under EU rules.

To become eligible for membership there would need to be the imposition of swingeing austerity.

There also remains significant opposition within the EU to admitting an independent Scotland, particularly from countries who have their own separatist movements.

A “yes” vote for independence would probably find Scotland outside not only the UK, but the EU as well for quite some time. To deflect attention from these difficulties a Consultation on a Draft Referendum Bill has been published by the Scottish Government.

This offers the illusion of progress towards another referendum without saying anything definite about timing. Sturgeon is also in overdrive demanding that some special arrangement be made so that Scotland can continue to have access to the single market in the event of a hard Brexit. She knows this is a non-starter, but it helps delay having to set a

date. So where stands Scotland now?

Left in Scotland divided and weak

Politics in Scotland is overwhelmingly dominated by the SNP, a fundamentally capitalist party, lacking Labour's historic roots in the trades unions and other sections of the Labour movement.

The hopes of many for change are still unrealistically invested in the SNP and diverted into nationalism.

To renew itself Labour needs to make a break with the failed politics that allowed the SNP to steal its clothes.

It certainly does not need to promote greater Home Rule, devolution or autonomy.

It has won ground by offering some social democratic policies whilst not pursuing any radical structural change. The Tories are now their official opposition in Holyrood.

The left remains divided and as such diminished. In the SNP it is difficult to discern it making progress at a national level in the Party.

The fringe of small left parties is making even less impact on the political landscape than it did during the independence referendum.

The Labour Party remains confused about its identity and purpose and still suffers a major credibility gap with voters. Corbyn supporters who can revitalise the Party and take it in a different direction are proportionately fewer. They have a harder, but an achievable and necessary, task ahead of them.

The hopes of many for change are still unrealistically invested in the SNP and diverted into nationalism. To renew itself Labour needs to make a break with the failed politics that allowed the SNP to steal its clothes. It certainly does not need to promote greater Home Rule, devolution or autonomy.

It does need to win back those in trades unions, on the left and in communities who have become disillusioned.

It can do this best by ceasing to be a conveyor belt for cuts and privatisation and focusing on fighting for the interests of the working people of Scotland.

African National Congress in crisis

Despite considerable pressure the African National Congress (ANC) National Executive Committee (NEC) has rejected calls for President Jacob Zuma to stand down amidst allegations of corruption.

By ALEX DAVIDSON

At a tense meeting of the NEC at the end of November some members - including Government Ministers - called for the President to stand down.

At the conclusion of the meeting Gwede Mantashe, ANC Secretary General issued a statement, 'Following robust, honest, candid and at times difficult discussions, the NEC did not support the call for the President to step down. The NEC resolved that it was more urgent to direct the energies of the ANC in its entirety to working towards the unity of the movement.'

The ANC is due to hold its elective conference in December 2017 at which a new leadership will be elected. Jacob Zuma is expected to stand down as ANC President at that conference but could remain as State President until the 2019 national elections.

The decision of the ANC's NEC comes after weeks of crisis involving court cases and the publication of the report "State of Capture" on 2 November 2016 by the South African Public Protector which concludes that there was evidence of possible corruption at the highest levels of South Africa's government.

The 355 page report implicates President Jacob Zuma and several other government ministers in improper dealings with business, in particular the Gupta family, leading to a position of corporate capture of the state.

The report calls for the President to establish a judicial commission of Inquiry - to be run by a judge selected by the Chief Justice, not Zuma, within 30 days to investigate the matter further

and to report back within 180 days of its establishment.

In response, President Zuma, in a question-and-answer session in Parliament, said, "No one, no matter what position they hold, can instruct the president to establish a commission."

"State Capture" in South Africa refers to those whose who have undue influence on government officials and are able to manipulate them to deliver favours for kickbacks.



March 2012: Jacob Zuma (left) and Atul Gupta at the Gupta-owned New Age (South African Daily newspaper) breakfast in Port Elizabeth.

The publication of this report, which Zuma tried to stop, is the latest in a series of events now engulfing the President in a long-running saga of allegations of corruption.

The corruption charges, related to defence contracts, brought against Zuma and then dropped prior to him becoming President have now been re-instated and are due to be heard in court in the next few months. There are 783 charges of corruption.

The opposition parties have long been campaigning against Zuma. However, since the local elections and the set-back suffered by ANC there is now widespread and open criticism of Zuma including calls for his resignation from within the Triple Alliance. There are now fears that Zuma could pull down the ANC with him.

The opposition parties have long been campaigning against Zuma. However, since the local elections and the set-back suffered by ANC there is now widespread and open criticism of Zuma including calls for his resignation from within the Triple Alliance. There are now fears that Zuma could pull down the ANC with him.

ANC Veterans

A press release issued in October 2016 by 101 ANC veterans was one of the many indications of profound concern within the ANC about the direction of the leadership and the country.

The press release reads in part:

"The pace of events unfolding in the ANC, Government, and civil society severely limits the ability of many within the African National Congress to use the normal internal processes and largely dysfunctional structures to raise concerns and potential solutions; there is simply not the time..."

"The trust between the ANC and communities, built 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."

The press release was issued by 101 ANC stalwarts. The list of signatories was headed by the three surviving Rivonia trialists, Ahmed Kathrada, Denis Goldberg and Andrew Mlangeni.

Other signatories included Cheryl Carolus, former ANC Secretary-General; Frank Chikane; Frene Ginwala, former Speaker of the Parliament; Keorapetse Kgosisile, Poet Laureate; Barbara Masekela, Gertrude Shope and former Cabinet Ministers including Pallo Jordan, Trevor Manuel, Alec Erwin, Sydney Mufamadi and Zola Skweyiya.

COSATU

At a media briefing following the publication of the "State Capture" report, the General Secretary, Bheki Ntshalintali, stated that Cosatu's Central Executive Committee "had resolved to support and lobby for the deputy president of the ANC Comrade Cyril Ramaphosa to take over the reins as the next president of the ANC".

This was despite a call by ANC to its alliance partners to refrain from intervening in the ANC leadership succession until the appropriate time. The ANC

elective conference is scheduled to be held in December 2017.

COSATU'S decision followed that of NEHAWU, the public sector union, which issued an unprecedented statement following the publication of the "State Capture" report, saying that the leadership of President Jacob Zuma in government "is now untenable" and called on him to "take the honourable and courageous decision in the interest of the ANC and our people by resigning as the President of South Africa."

NEHAWU said its National Executive was unanimous in its condemnation of "the manipulation and use of state organs" as well as factionalism within the ANC which was driven by a "parasitic bourgeoisie".

NEHAWU added, "We are making this call whilst being painfully conscious of the poisoned climate of factional contestation within the ANC that would make it difficult for the ANC to arrive at a broadly supported solution to the current tragic impasse."

Nelson Mandela Foundation

The Nelson Mandela Foundation also issued a media release in which it stated: "South African citizens across the land are speaking out and taking action to express their dissatisfaction. The Nelson Mandela Foundation supports the demand to hold to account those responsible for compromising our democratic state and looting its resources.

"Twenty years since Nelson Mandela signed South Africa's Constitution into law and as the third anniversary of his passing approaches, it is painful for us at the Nelson Mandela Foundation to bear witness to the wheels coming off the vehicle of our state.

"We have seen a weakening of critical institutions such as the South African Revenue Service, the National Prosecuting Authority and law enforcement bodies due to political meddling for private interests. We are reaping the results of a political trend of personalising matters of state around a single individual leader. This in a constitutional democracy is to be deplored."

Local Elections

All of this comes a few months after the local elections in August in South Africa in which the ANC saw its share of the vote drop to 54%, its lowest share of the vote in any election since the end of apartheid in 1994. The Democratic Alliance share of the vote increased to 27%. The Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF)

led by Julius Malema secured 8% of the vote in their first local election campaign and became the third largest party in the country.

The ANC lost majority control of the metros: Nelson Mandela Bay, which includes Port Elizabeth, a heartland historically of the ANC, Tshwane (Pretoria), the nation's capital and Johannesburg, the country's biggest city.

Seriously encouraged by the Democratic Alliance's take-over of three major metros, corporate interests and émigré circles are now upping their support. Reportedly large sums are pouring into DA coffers with the 2019 national elections in sight.

According to Peter Bruce: "Ever since the local government elections in August, I'm told, money has been pouring into the DA's coffers - more than R400m of it - as people back them to build a strong and durable campaign for 2019." (*Business Day*, 30 September 2016).

The drop in the ANC's share of the vote was largely due to their traditional voters not voting. ANC put Jacob Zuma at the forefront of their campaign when he is much less popular than the ANC itself and there is widespread discontent with the continuing high levels of unemployment, poverty, inequality and corruption.

Factionalism within the state

There are accusations of factionalism within the state. One of the most recent examples being the charges brought against Finance Minister, Pravin Gordhan (pictured) and two former colleagues at the South African Revenue Service (SARS) for alleged fraud.



Gordhan and two others were due in court on 2 November but the charges were dropped by the National Director of Public Prosecutions, Shaun Abrahams, on 31 October after a public outcry.

The charges related to Gordhan's authorising an early retirement package for his deputy when he was head of the country's revenue service. A few days before the case was due in court some documents emerged showing that Gordhan had been advised at the time that his decision to allow the early retirement package was legal.

The charges against Gordhan followed his affidavit, dated 13 October, in which he asked the High Court to order that he shouldn't intervene in a decision by the country's largest banks to shut Gupta family-controlled company accounts. The Gupta family had demanded that he

intervene.

Gordhan's court papers implicated Gupta family members and their businesses in 72 suspect transactions totalling R6.8 billion. The Gupta family are friends and business associates of President Jacob Zuma.

The Gupta brothers, Ajay, Atul and Rajesh and their families moved to South Africa in 1993 from India and established a company, Sahara computers. The family now have business interests in air travel, energy, mining, technology and the media.

Duduzile, Zuma's daughter, was appointed as a director of Sahara Computers in 2008, six months after Zuma was elected ANC President although she has since resigned.

One of Zuma's wives, Bongi Nguma-Zuma, worked for the Guptas and one of his sons, Dudzane, was a director in some of the Gupta family-owned companies but stepped down in April of this year because of what he described as a "sustained political attack".

There have been allegations that the Gupta family, through their links with Zuma and others in government, had secured key state contracts and influenced government appointments. The Deputy Finance Minister, Mcebisi Jonas, said that a member of the Gupta family had offered to promote him to the Minister's post in 2015 and there are other similar claims.

In August the Gupta family announced that they were intending to sell all their shareholdings in South Africa because this would be in the "best interests of our business, the country and our colleagues".

State Capture

On the day that Gordhan was to be in court before the charges were dropped, the report on "State of Capture" by the former Public Protector, Thuli Madonsela, was released. President Zuma tried to stop the publication of the report but withdrew his court action just before its publication.

The South African Communist Party issued a statement following the release of the "State of Capture" report which said: "The SACP welcomes President Zuma's decision to no longer oppose the publication of the Public Protector's report into so-called "state capture", and the consequent Pretoria High Court order that the report should be published.

"The SACP has been in the fore-front of publicly raising concern and exposing blatant attempts at narrow corporate capture of key state institutions. We have specifically singled out the Gupta

family and their associates in this regard.

“The SACP also expressed its dissatisfaction at the time with the manner in which the ANC’s earlier investigation into the same matter was handled and abandoned.

“The Public Protector’s report should hopefully now shed light on many burning issues, including the reasons why South Africa’s major banks stopped doing business with Gupta-related companies.

“This action by South Africa’s banks was, it should be noted, belated and, no doubt, undertaken less for moral reasons and more for fear of themselves facing international sanctions for complicity in money laundering.

“In this regard it is important to underline that the Public Protector’s report into “state capture” was focused on the Gupta family and senior politicians.

“This targeted focus was appropriate, since we are dealing here with the most brazen forms of narrow corporate manipulation of key parts of the state.

“However, it important to appreciate that the dangers of corporate capture of a democratically elected government and the undermining of its popular mandate by monopoly capital (white and black) go much wider than the Gupta family.

“In the coming days important decisions will need to be made by the leader of our Alliance, the ANC.

“The SACP pledges to be a constructive and principled alliance partner in dealing with the deepening leadership challenges facing the ANC.”

Can ANC be saved?

There have been tensions and divisions within and between the Triple Alliance partners (ANC, COSATU and the South African Communist Party) for some time.

When ANC recalled President Thabo Mbeki (pictured) following the Polokwane Conference in 2007 it was a result of discontent over many years with his government’s economic policy and treatment of the alliance partners.

Mbeki’s recall by the ANC as President of the country was brought about by an alliance of disparate forces within the ANC including COSATU, the SACP and the ANC Youth League, led at the time by Julius Malema, who was later expelled by ANC, and now leads the Economic Freedom Fighters.

The anti-Mbeki forces united around



Jacob Zuma and he defeated Mbeki in the election for President of the ANC at the Polokwane Conference in 2007. Following Polokwane, ANC recalled Mbeki as State President and he was replaced by Kgaleme Motlanthe as interim president until the 2009 election when Jacob Zuma was elected President of the country.

Prior to becoming President and since, Zuma has been plagued by allegations of corruption over defence contracts, Nkandla, his house in Kwa-Zulu Natal and “state capture”.

President Zuma was ordered to pay back a large proportion of the costs of Nkandla but initially refused. He was then ordered by the court to pay.

ANC is now riven by factionalism. In the run-up to the 2016 local elections, 22 ANC members were killed over contests to be selected as councillors.

There is a scramble to be in positions of power to award contracts at all levels. Corporate interests are heavily involved in supporting different factions.

The popular base of ANC is therefore increasingly fragmented into narrow groupings, each scrambling over the other for tenders, for positions on electoral lists and for a slice of the cake for their own particular sector.

At the same time there have been significant advances since 1994:

- some 16 million South Africans (almost 1/3 of the population) benefit from social grants;
- over 3.5 million free Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP)

houses have been built;

- millions of water and electricity connections have been installed; and,
- more than 400,000 solar water heater panels have been installed on the roofs of houses of the poor.

However, despite these massive improvements, the skewed structure of the economy remains untransformed. The post-apartheid economy largely remains in private hands and it is an economy with an excessive reliance on mineral exports.

The state, with its limited resources and rising popular expectations, is increasingly overwhelmed as competing interests and factions scramble competitively over scarce resources.

The Triple Alliance (ANC, COSATU, SACP) Political Council issued the following statement after its three-day meeting (23-26 October):

“Whilst the ANC, with 54% of the vote, still enjoys the support of the overwhelming majority of the people, there has been a significant decline in its electoral support. The Alliance Political Council agreed that this was a message, from the people, that we must do things differently to win back their trust.

“There was agreement that the primary focus must be to move the national democratic revolution onto a second radical phase and more concrete programmes to address poverty, create jobs and grow an inclusive, productive economy.

“The persisting problems of high levels of class, race and gender inequalities, unemployment and poverty, were identified as a major challenge facing our national democratic transformation, and as the cause of many undesirable political tendencies and social consequences facing our society.

“Clamping down on corruption and factionalism.

“The Political Council was clear that there must be decisive action against corruption and factionalism without fear, favour or prejudice.

“The meeting agreed that all Alliance partners will institute a standing process to have their individual leaders at all levels, starting at the national level, to declare their assets and incomes. The Alliance and its components will also institute regular and random life-style audits. This will contribute towards reasserting the integrity of the Alliance and its components.

“The fight against graft will go hand in hand with a firmer implementation of the 1 July 2015 National Alliance Summit declaration on tackling the problem of corporate-capture both within our broader movement and the state.”



South Africa: the art of a nation

By **SARAH STEPHENSON**

The British Museum is hosting an enlightening exhibition covering 100,000 years of South African art until 26th February 2017.

Ndebele house-painting

The first artwork museum visitors encounter is a BMW car colourfully painted with geometric Ndebele house-painting designs, which is on public display in the atrium of the museum.

It is the work of Esther Mahlangu who was commissioned by BMW to create an Art Car for their latest model in 1991 to mark the historic release of political prisoners (including Nelson Mandela in 1990) and the beginning of negotiations, which eventually led to the first democratic elections of 1994.

Ndebele house-painting designs were created in the early-mid 20th century in response to oppressive ethnic segregation.

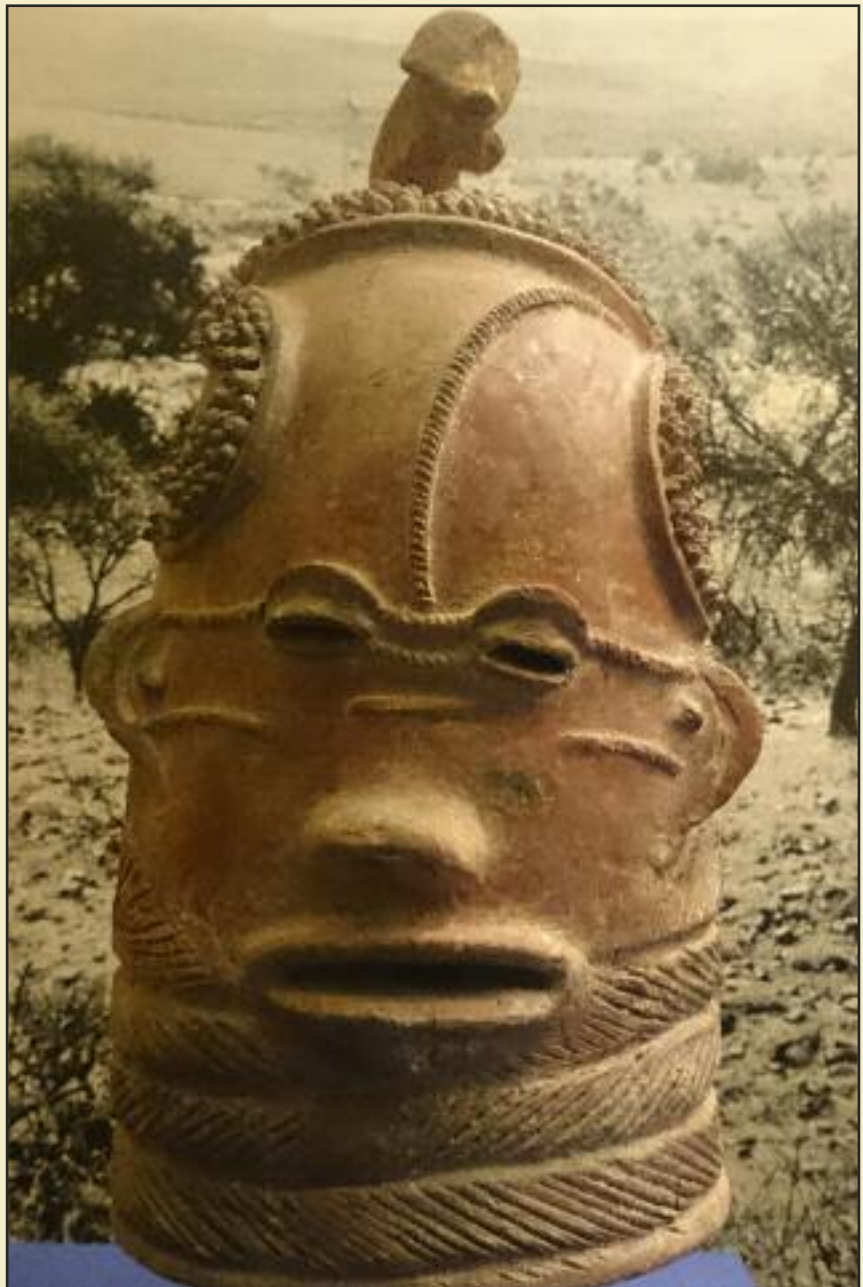
Lydenburg Heads

The Lydenburg Heads (500-900 AD) are seven hollow terracotta sculptures, six in the shape of human heads and one with animal features.

They are the earliest known examples of three-dimensional art in southern Africa. The decoration on the heads is similar to that of domestic pottery typically found at farming sites thus identifying the makers of the heads as farmers.

The decoration on the heads also suggests that the makers practised bodily decoration, notches may perhaps represent scarification, whilst the mouths speak of dental alteration involving the filing or removal of teeth, a practice found in human remains from the period.

It is believed that the masks would have been worn in initiation ceremonies and that they testify to a complex aesthetic sensibility among early agricultural communities, a millennium before the advent of colonialism.



The Mapungubwe gold sculptures

are from the 13th century and include animal figurines, bracelets, bangles and beads. Finds of Chinese porcelain at the site reveal that Mapungubwe was connected to the Indian Ocean trade network.

These sculptures are further proof that there were peoples occupying the land prior to the arrival of European colonists. Indeed, it shows that there was a highly-sophisticated society in existence.

In 1999 the sculptures were designated National Treasures by South Africa's post-apartheid government, and in 2002 it created the Order of Mapungubwe, the highest honour in South Africa - the first recipient of which was Nelson Mandela. At the centre of the award itself is a depiction of the most famous of all Mapungubwe's sculptures, the gold rhinoceros.



UDF Calendar

The African National Congress was founded in 1912 and led the struggle against racial discrimination and segregation. When the National Party came to power in 1948 they introduced apartheid, which led to the creation of the bantustans and millions of people were forcibly removed from their homes and transported to their so-called homelands. Protests continued including against the detested Pass Laws.

One of these protests ended in the Sharpeville Massacre of 1960. The African National Congress and other organisations were banned. The ANC reluctantly resorted to armed struggle, led by their Commander-in-Chief, Nelson Mandela. When Mandela was caught, he was imprisoned and eventually spent 27 years in prison.

The exhibition includes art work produced in the struggle in the 20th Century against apartheid. One example is the 1987 calendar, created by cartoonist, Zapiro, and produced by the United Democratic Front.



JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL
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SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
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AAM Badges

There was an international campaign against apartheid and in Britain it was led by the Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM).

The AAM had been established in 1959 as the Boycott Movement inspired by the ANC's call for an international boycott of all South African products. The AAM continued the boycott for several decades and called for the isolation of South Africa.

The campaign for sanctions against South Africa gained the support of many countries but not that of Britain. Margaret Thatcher, the Tory Prime Minister, resolutely held out against sanctions.

The AAM also campaigned for the release of Nelson Mandela and all South African political prisoners, for the freedom of Namibia and independence for Zimbabwe. Through badges, T-shirts and posters the campaign reached a very wide public.



The ancient rock art of South Africa's First Peoples - the San/Bushmen and the Khoekhoen - found in 1917 on Linton Farm in Eastern Cape depicted human figures (enlarged above) which artist Iaan Bekker incorporated in the country's new coat of arms.