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Das Kapital

The 150th Anniversary of
the Publication of Marx's
Great Work



*also: A World Without Commodities
Destroying the Hand that Feeds Us
Crime and Capital*



socialist standard

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Introducing the Socialist Party

The Socialist Party is like no other political party in Britain. It is made up of people who have joined together because we want to get rid of the profit system and establish real socialism. Our aim is to persuade others to become socialist and act for themselves, organising democratically and without leaders, to bring about the kind of society that we are advocating in this journal. We are solely concerned with building a movement of socialists for socialism. We are not a reformist party with a programme of policies to patch up



capitalism.

We use every possible opportunity to make new socialists. We publish pamphlets and books, as well as CDs, DVDs and various other informative material. We also give talks and take part in debates; attend rallies, meetings and demos; run educational conferences; host internet discussion forums, make films presenting our ideas, and contest elections when practical. Socialist literature is available in Arabic, Bengali, Dutch, Esperanto, French, German, Italian, Polish, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish as well as English.

The more of you who join the Socialist Party the more we will be able to get our ideas across, the more experiences we will be able to draw on and greater will be the new ideas for building the movement which you will be able to bring us.

The Socialist Party is an organisation of equals. There is no leader and there are no followers. So, if you are going to join we want you to be sure that you agree fully with what we stand for and that we are satisfied that you understand the case for socialism.

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'Might is Right': Famous Last Words?

WHEN THE Russian bloc collapsed, it was widely believed that the Cold War had ended and that the danger of a global nuclear war had passed. Since the 9/11 attacks, the received wisdom is that the threat to humanity lies not so much in a war between the major powers, but in acts of terrorism carried out by groups, such as ISIS and Al-Qaeda.

Yet, here we are, in the 21st Century, facing a nuclear confrontation between the United States and North Korea. Much of the discussion has focused on the volatile behaviour of the two protagonists. In response to threats made against the US by Kim Jong-un, the North Korean president, Donald Trump's reply -- 'fire and fury like the world has never seen' -- signals that he is prepared to nuke the country with the potential loss of millions of lives. Kim Jong-un has countered by threatening to fire four missiles towards the sea around Guam, a US territory.

However, this is more than a tale of two narcissistic psychopaths. The trading of threats and insults between the two

countries is nothing new. In January 1968, North Korea seized a US spy ship, *Pueblo*, and held the crew prisoner for eleven months, and in June 1994, President Clinton drew up plans for a pre-emptive strike against the country.

The origin of this conflict can be traced to the end of the Second World War, when Russian forces occupied the northern part of the Korea peninsula and American forces occupied the remainder, thus ending thirty-five years of Japanese rule. In 1950 the North, with the backing of Russia and China, launched an invasion against the South, and the US and its allies, including Britain, retaliated by sending in troops to beat back the North Korean and Chinese forces. Fighting continued until a truce was declared in 1953.

The Korean Peninsula became a focal point for the geopolitical struggle between the Russian bloc and the Western states for the control of global markets, which defined the two countries. North Korea emerged as a state capitalist dictatorship, fraudulently claimed by its

rulers to be Socialist. South Korea is an openly capitalist state, backed by the US, which stations thousands of troops there.

After the USSR collapsed, North Korea became more reliant on its remaining ally, China. With its increasing international isolation, the state has become less able to provide for its workers, many of whom are on the verge of starvation. Thus the ruling class relies more heavily on a repressive and well armed state, and its provocative military manoeuvres are partly designed to rally the population against what they define as the outside enemy, the US, but also to send a warning that the regime cannot be overthrown in the way that Saddam Hussein and Col Gaddafi were. It is this context that has driven the North Korean state to develop nuclear weapons.

To seek a solution to this crisis, we should be concerned less with the sanity of Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un, but more with the insanity of the capitalist system that creates the fertile ground for such crises.

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The Activism Gap

GIVEN THAT women are not especially rare in the general UK population, why are there not more of them in the Socialist Party? Is this a specific failing on our part, or more of a general trend? If it's a trend, what other trends are there, and what changes are taking place?

There are, to be sure, various 'activism gaps'. Young people are in general less politically engaged than older people, black and minority ethnic (BME) groups less than whites, and indeed the party spectrum itself divides somewhat along income and education lines, from high-end active association with the Tories, Lib Dems and Greens to low-end activity (or former activity) in Ukip, with Labour partly straddling the higher and middle strata.

A recent House of Commons research paper looking at UK political party membership sets all this in sobering context. Overall, levels of engagement in any kind of activism are low. Around 26 percent are involved in some kind of sporting or cultural activity, 12 percent in religious or volunteering pursuits, and just one percent in any form of politics (House of Commons Briefing Paper Number SN05125, 28 March 2017).

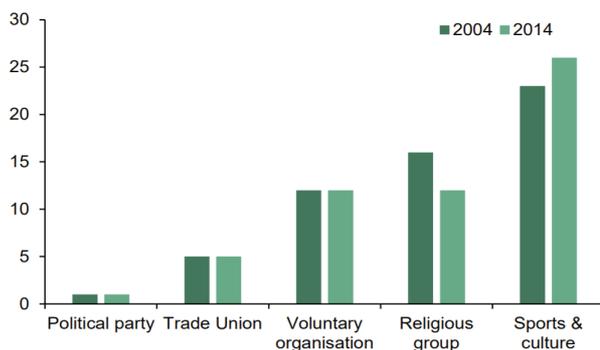
The report notes the late increase in political interest among young people, from 32 percent in 2015 to 48 percent in 2016, underscoring a similar rise among the general white population from 51 to 60 percent, while observing that interest among BME groups has remained static at 35 percent. But there's a big difference between labour-intensive political activism and instant, cost-free political voting, and here's where the activism gap becomes obvious: "The largest disparity between the social make up of party members and electors is for gender. While 50.1% of electors were male, 67.2% of party members were men."

This echoes the findings of an April 2004 Electoral Commission (EC) report which stated: "Women are significantly less likely than men to participate in campaign-orientated activities, such as contacting a politician and donating money to, working for, or being a member of, a political party. Women are also less likely than men to join voluntary organisations. Overall, a statistically significant activism gap by gender exists in the UK" (tinyurl.com/orjweuu).

While today the female vote is roughly proportional to the male vote it wasn't always so, and studies in the 1920s when women were able to vote showed that in practice they often chose not to. A 1960s study found that "In all societies for which we have data, sex is related to political activity; men are more active than women" (EC 2004).

It would be remiss not to ask the awkward question whether some form of historical or biological determinism is at work. First, could it be that the historical subjection of the female sex through recorded history has left an indelible mark whereby women now collude in their own political exclusion? To some extent

Figure 11 Percentage of people actively participating in selected organisations (%)



expectations play a part. The Electoral Commission suggests that 'women have a weaker sense of political efficacy than men; they have lower confidence that they can influence the political process'. But expectations change. Given the speed at which recent history has put up or taken down regimes and behaviours in just a few years or even weeks, it's hard to picture women in liberal democracies wallowing in a continued sense of impotence just because it was historically so.

History is in any case not written into the genes, but what about prehistory? Could there be a deeper genetic legacy from the earliest times when pre-humans first invented the sexual division of labour (SDL) for purposes of mutual convenience? The classical argument is that women, having far greater investment and risk in child breeding, would choose to exert their social control there, while men, being largely untaxed by the process and anyway uncertain of their paternal credentials, would have looked elsewhere for theirs. This 'classical SDL' theory, once favoured by Engels and popular among socialists including William Morris, maintained that SDL was cooperative and not intrinsically oppressive or unequal until the arrival of property society made it so. However SDL is now thought to be modern, not ancient. Kuhn and Stiner, 2006, suggest that SDL emerged as late as the Mid-Palaeolithic, from 250-30,000 years ago, giving homo sapiens a survival advantage over the (probably) non-specialising Neanderthals then dominating Eurasia, and moreover this would have happened mostly in the ecologically-diverse tropics rather than in northerly latitudes. In some tribes, females hunted and men gathered (tinyurl.com/y97skyeg). So the thinking in anthropology circles has moved away from 'men and women are different, and that's ok' to 'men and women are the same, and that's ok!'

But still, discounting deterministic causes, women are not standing up for political change as much as men, and this remains a mystery. The self-disabling 'too busy at home' argument is largely a myth today, with 40 percent of women in the workplace and outnumbering men in unions. The Electoral Commission report identifies other factors, like 'self-relevance' and gender representation. Asked whether they agreed with the statement 'Government benefits people like me', women with a local female MP agreed more than men (49 percent to 38), and the reverse was true for seats with a male MP. Some studies in the US support this finding, others flatly contradict it. A 2011 review argues that knowledge is key: "At lower levels of political knowledge, women's lower political knowledge depresses their participation in politics. The participation gap disappears at higher levels. These findings complement existing scholarship that finds women hold themselves to a higher standard before engaging in political activities such as running for elected office (*Social Science Quarterly*, 26 July 2011). In other words, men rush in where women fear to tread.

What could we do to address this activism gap? The EC report suggests 'support systems', while some on the left advocate 'special mechanisms' (eg Lyndsey German, 2006, isj.org.uk/theories-of-patriarchy). Such notions of positive discrimination run the risk of patronisingly perpetuating what they set out to solve. But we could do more ourselves, first to emphasise female 'efficacy' in our uniquely open democracy, and by offering more members something to do at the outset. Members could write more articles geared towards women and BME groups. Considering that a quarter of the population likes cultural activities, we could provide more social events. And we could construct a 'Teach Yourself Socialism' A-Z Wiki on our website to systematise what is currently a rather random DIY approach to learning. Such efforts may not close the gap, but they could help to narrow it.

PJS

Workplace democracy

Dear Editors

The essence of socialism is democracy within the workplace. That's each employee having an equal say in the production and distribution of products, sourcing of raw materials, and everything else relevant to the business. Equating socialism with the former Soviet Union and countries with centrally-planned economies is just asinine and deliberately misleading. It's the old chestnut of 'Socialism has been tried and it has failed.' What country ever had a majority of businesses where there was a democratic say for all the employees? It's not about storming the Winter Palace either. The state will always prevail over those sort of tactics. Transitioning from our present economic system run by private tyrannies to one where democracy was extended into the workplace would be a real revolution. What we think of revolution is really a 'meet the new boss, same as the old boss' type of conjuring trick. Democracy within the workplace is what the establishment fears most and for good reason.

Louis Shawcross, Hillsborough, Northern Ireland

Reply:

You make some good points but the use of the word 'employee' is misleading. Workplaces in socialism will be democratically organised, but those working there will no longer be 'employee', i.e. will no longer be working for wages for an 'employer'. It sounds as if you might be advocating worker control of 'businesses' producing for sale on a market with a view to profit; which wouldn't be socialism –
Editors

Deglobalization?

Dear Comrades

I read Stefan's article 'Deglobalization: Is globalization going in reverse?' (*Socialist Standard*, May). Stefan's treatment of this extremely complex phenomenon is thought-provoking.

Despite a weakening of intergovernmental institutions, are there not deeper structures of globalization – not necessarily in the political sphere – that remain intact?

There is an inherent carrot versus stick relationship introduced into the arena of international business by existing treaties on trade: 'Profit' v 'Regulation' however mild. The abandonment of international trade treaties would perhaps result in a more laissez-faire, colonial frontier type

freedom of exploitation and expropriation. Down this turnpike the destination could be the hell of war.

At this juncture it would perhaps be unwise to rule out a come-back of globalization in the fairly near future or to assume that we are on the threshold of a long period of globalization.

JOE R. HOPKINS, Florida, USA

Reply:

Good point – in particular about 'deep structures'. The crucial deep structure is that of capital itself, because a relentless drive to expand is intrinsic to capital as self-expanding value. Even protectionist governments are under constant pressure to accommodate this drive.

As Marx put it in *Grundrisse*:

'Capital is the endless and limitless drive to go beyond its limiting barrier. Every boundary is and has to be a barrier for it. Else it would cease to be capital – money as self-reproductive' (Notebook III/IV).

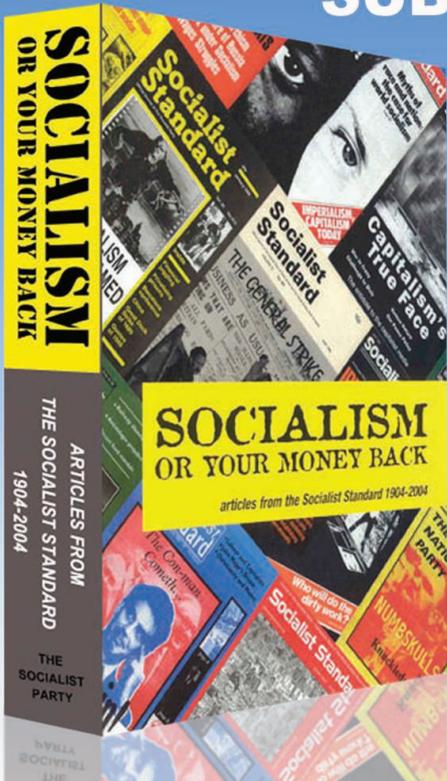
And again:

'Capital by its nature drives beyond every spatial barrier... Capital must strive to tear down every spatial barrier to intercourse, i.e. to exchange, and conquer the whole earth for its market' (Notebook V).

Nor is there any reason to expect capital to halt at the limits of the planet of its birth. – *Editors*

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THE INDEPENDENT

Russia 1917 as we saw it

The Bolsheviks seized power in November (October under the old Russian calendar). The Socialist Standard commented on it in January 1918. In March we mentioned Lenin for the first time.

“The doings of the Bolsheviks is the topic of the moment. They dwarf all other events connected with the war. We are not in a position to say much regarding the position of affairs in Russia, for we have little information regarding it beyond the lying messages of our masters’ lickspittles. These reptiles send home accounts which in their obvious animus show what while concoctions they are, seemingly oblivious of the fact that it is patent to all that were terrorism reigning in Russia to the degree they pretend, they would not dare write their filth, whether it were true or not, for fear of becoming a sickening disfigurement to a lamp-post. Whatever may be the final outcome, the

Bolsheviks have at all events succeeded in doing what all the armies, all the diplomats, all the priests and primates, all the perfervid pacifists of all the groaning and bleeding world have failed to do – they have stopped the slaughter, for the time being, at all events, on *their* front.

How much more than this they ever intended to do the future may reveal. They may have higher aims, yet to be justified by success or condemned by failure; but it is an astounding achievement that these few men have been able to seize opportunity and make the thieves and murderers of the whole world stand aghast and shiver with apprehension.

The British Ambassador would not recognise them, but the British Ambassador is coming home, we are told, and some one “in marked sympathy with the Bolshevik Government” is to be appointed in his place. The Germans arrest Socialists all over Germany, and are at once reduced to denying the fact when Bolsheviks declare that Socialists

everywhere are under their protection. The Bolsheviks publish their demands, and immediately the Allies’ war aims are whittled of most of their truculence and proclaimed from the housetops. Verily, not all the decisions of capitalist hirelings can hide the fact that all the belligerents are uneasy in the face of Bolshevik success. (January 1918)

Quite recently the penny sensations came out with scare headlines proclaiming that Lenin and Trotszky, the Bolshevik leaders, were in receipt of German pay. Shortly after came an official denial from M. Litvinoff, the plenipotentiary of the Bolshevik Government, “denouncing the documents as forgeries, the work of some agent of the ex-Tsar’s secret police, or of some agent of the German Government, which is anxious to get rid of the Bolshevik regime, lest it should prove infectious and kindle the fire of a revolution in Germany.” Thus are we enlightened concerning the activities of those in other climes.” (March 1918)



Crises and consciousness

SOCIALISTS HAVE often speculated on what might spark off the emergence of the majority desire for socialism that is an essential prerequisite for its establishment. One school of thought has been that it will be a final, catastrophic economic crisis. There have been various theories as to what might provoke this – the rate of profit falling too low, external markets becoming exhausted, the banking system collapsing. In other words, that the capitalist economic system will break down mechanically forcing people to realise that socialism is the only way out.

Although these theories of final collapse are flawed and don’t stand up to economic analysis, capitalism is a system characterised by regular economic downturns, some large, some small. So we can get some idea of how people react in a big economic slump, as in the 1930s and after the Great Crash of 2008.

‘From Hitler to Trump: populist leaders profit from fear’ read a headline in

the *Times* (13 June) reporting on a study in the American scientific journal, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*:

‘From the rise of Hitler to the election of Narendra Modi in India, the link is often made between populist nationalism and recession. Now this study seems to have found strong evidence for it ... Drawing on a survey of people across 69 countries they found that when unemployment rose, people were more likely to say they preferred “a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections”’.

The study is not that impressive. It doesn’t seem to be much more than a glorified opinion poll in which people were in effect asked ‘in a time of economic crisis would you like your leader to be dominant or prestigious?’ And it dabbles in ‘evolutionary psychology’ and in likening human behaviour to that of monkeys and apes (we’ll take that seriously when they discover a band of gorillas led by a female equivalent of Mrs Thatcher).

So, the study doesn’t add anything to what we already know – that in an economic downturn an increased number of people turn towards nationalism, often of a populist type led by a ‘strong leader’. The point is that they

don’t necessarily turn to a movement to replace capitalism by socialism. A slump is not especially conducive to the emergence of socialist consciousness.

One reason why a turn to nationalism seems a way out in an economic downturn would be that people can imagine a national solution. They are wrong but that doesn’t seem completely unrealistic. And, as we are talking about a cyclical not a final crisis, the economy does eventually recover and unemployment drops.

This is not to say that no crisis of any sort could not be conducive to the emergence of a mass socialist consciousness. But it would have to be a global crisis which, unlike a cyclical economic crisis, would not eventually rectify itself.

In his 2006 novel *The Last Conflict* socialist Pieter Lawrence imagined the global crisis which sparks off the change to socialism as being the world having to face the problem of a comet hurtling in the direction of Earth. A more immediate candidate for such a crisis would be rapidly increasing global warming. We are not there yet (fortunately) and it may never get that bad (hopefully), but, if it did, people would be faced with a choice of the end of the world or the end of capitalism. A no-brainer, surely.



Changing Leaders Leads to No Change

IT WAS a crowd scene which absorbed half an inner page of that popular national newspaper. A split-second record of the Wilderness Festival, a musical event near the Oxfordshire village of Charlbury. And whose was that particular face, shimmering and unsmiling and well groomed among the hair and the beards, gazing across to his left at a woman dressed expensively and fashionably absorbed in the performers?

Cameron

He is resident locally in a grandly assertive house (Wilderness is unusual for being an expensive event in the world of pop music). And he is David Cameron, so recently the ex-Etonian Honourable Member of Parliament for the local constituency of Witney and then Her Majesty's Prime Minister and First Lord of the Treasury. His presence that day at the Wilderness was an example of his attempts to justify his assurances that he is one of us so that we would all share in the prosperity which he would bring into our lives. For example immediately after his victory in the 2015 election, which swept away that cumbersome Coalition with Nick Clegg and his LibDems, Cameron spoke to us all from the open air in Downing Street 'I truly believe we are on the brink of something special in our country; we can make Britain a place where a good life is in reach for everyone who is willing to work and do the right thing...As we conduct this vital work we must ensure that we bring our country together...we will govern as a party of one nation, one United Kingdom. That means ensuring this recovery reaches all parts of our country, from north to south, from east to west'. These brave words did not act as one of those historic pledges because soon afterwards Cameron was swept from his post as Prime Minister by the power-ravenous Theresa May taking full advantage of the result of the EU referendum which in many cases persuaded voters in the more impoverished constituencies to express their anxieties and frustration by opting for Brexit.

Poor Kids

For example a report from the Child Poverty Action Group gave an idea of what had actually happened to child poverty, which Cameron was promising to eliminate, during his time as Prime Minister: In the UK in 2014-5 there were

3.9 million children – 28 percent – living in poverty. Work does not provide a guaranteed route out of poverty in the UK. Two-thirds (66 per cent) of children growing up in poverty live in a family where at least one member works...Child poverty blights childhoods. In addition the Institute of Fiscal Studies has stated that child poverty will rise by 400,000 overall during 2020: 'Ministers have to face up to the reality that we're on course for the biggest rise in child poverty in a generation'.

In the event Cameron did not have to face up to whether this forecast was accurate -- and what he might offer as a remedy for the problem -- by the simple ruse of reacting to the result of the EU referendum by throwing up his much-prized job as Prime Minister. Pretty soon afterwards he also resigned from being an MP, which left him even more freedom from chasing through any promises about solving some social problems while making an appearance at events like the Wilderness.

His successor had run a lengthy, subtle campaign to win the top job herself so that when the day came she could reflect on the procession of defeated opponents with her own version of the same style of promises we had grown to expect from Cameron. She could even spell out her thoughts in the open, on that very same doorstep before that same shiny black door: 'The government I lead will be driven not by the interests of the privileged few, but by yours. We will do everything we can to give you more control over your lives. When we take the big calls we will think not of the powerful but of you. When we pass new laws we will listen not to the mighty but to you'.

Baldwin

Those words can be interpreted as May's salute to one of her predecessors who came into Ten Downing Street in the nineteen twenties. Stanley Baldwin was the Conservative MP for Bewdley in Worcestershire from 1908 until May 1937. During that time he was three times Prime Minister, from 1923 until 1937. He came from a wealthy family who owned Baldwins Ltd – a huge complexity of coal, iron and steel work in Bewdley. His time in government was marked by some crises in national and international events, such as the General Strike, the abdication of Edward VIII and the widespread unemployment during



Stanley Baldwin

the slump of the Thirties. Abroad there was the rise of dictatorships in Italy and Germany and the outbreak of war in 1939. During all this time Baldwin displayed a ruthless manipulative style in managing British capitalism and its appendages, which earned him a varying reputation. He originated some enduring descriptions of some of the people he dealt with; for example there were the press barons Lords Rothermere and Beaverbrook and their enjoyment of 'power without responsibility, the prerogative of the harlot throughout the ages' and his sketch of his party in 1918 as 'a lot of hard-faced men who look as if they have done very well out of the war'. On the other side there was Winston Churchill telling us that 'I wish Baldwin no ill but it would have been much better had he never lived'. The mixed feelings about Baldwin were expressed in the delay to raise a typical monument to him after his death in 1947, apart from a blue plaque in Westminster and a stone seat beside a minor road at The Burf Worcestershire. But recently there has been a successful scheme to produce a life size bronze statue for display in Bewdley Guildhall. A keen supporter of this was Theresa May who declared to the organisers 'Stanley Baldwin should be recognised as one of the most significant figures of twentieth-century British politics. It was he who coined the phrase 'One Nation' to describe that fundamental aspect of the Conservative approach to politics'. So the statue was made and stands now for everyone to see and admire. Perhaps at the same time they will also reflect on the extravagant wealth personified by Baldwin and his class.

IVAN



It's not overpopulation, it's the system



'We must find new lands from which we can easily obtain raw materials and at the same time exploit the cheap slave labour that is available from the natives of the colonies...'- Cecil Rhodes

PEOPLE NEED to wake up and learn that the world is not what much of the media would like us to believe it is. We are frequently told that Africa suffers from too many people. Yet Africa is blessed with a rich bounty of natural resources and has the potential to support its rising population well into the foreseeable future. The continent holds around 30% of the world's known mineral reserves. These include cobalt, uranium, diamonds, and gold, as well as significant oil and gas reserves. The Pambazuka website reminds us that Ethiopia is five times the size of the UK yet the UK's population of 66 million is just over three-quarters that of Ethiopia's at 83 million. Uganda's land-area is comparable to the UK's, yet with a population of only 33 million. Ghana is approximately equal to the size of the UK, however, Ghana is populated by only 25 million people, far less than one-half the UK's population. Somalia is 2.6 times the size of the UK but has a population of only 9 million. Professor William Moseley of Macalester College explained that "There's about 13 Somalis per square kilometre, which is much lower density than what we're seeing in our own drought-stricken

state of Oklahoma. Yet we tend to focus on the population issue." Africa is still one of the world's least densely populated regions.

Africa presently does not grow enough food to feed its own population but it certainly has the ability to grow enough food to feed itself plus some. Many African countries have the advantages of fertile soil and the possibility of year-round farming and more than one harvest per year. About a quarter of the potential arable land of Africa is being cultivated presently. For example, well over 50 per cent of Uganda's arable land, some of the richest in Africa, remains uncultivated. Even here, an increasingly high proportion of the cultivated area is assigned to cash-crops (cocoa, coffee, tea, groundnuts, sisal, cut flowers, etc.) for export. Uganda could expand its current food production significantly and not only be completely self-sufficient but help to feed neighbouring countries. This vast acreage of rich farmlands across the continent has the capacity to support the food needs of future generations of Africans.

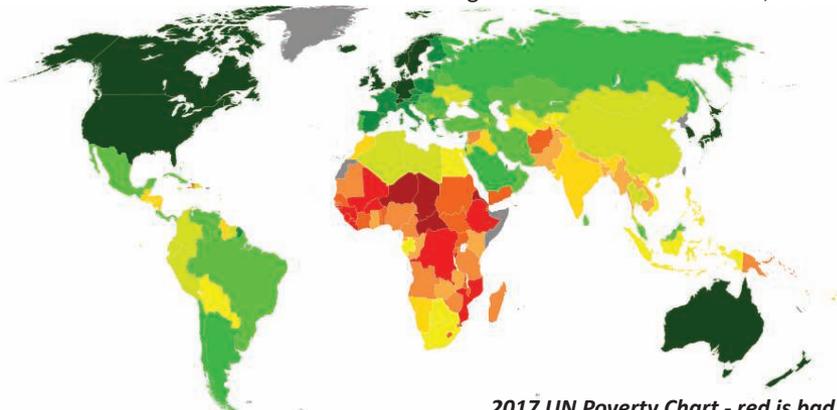
Of course, it would be foolish to deny that Africa's population is not rising. Of the countries where women average more than five children, almost all are in Sub-Saharan Africa, which now accounts for 12 percent of the world's population and will account for more than a third by 2100. The population of Niger is projected to increase by 274 percent during the next 35 years. In Niger, women have on average more than seven children, and

men consider their ideal to be more than twelve. But with land divided among so many sons, the size of a typical family plot has fallen by more than a third since 2005, meaning there is little long-term hope for feeding children.

There are also mounting problems with increased urbanisation and its effects. In 1950, no city in sub-Saharan Africa had a population greater than one million. It is now estimated that over 50 cities have a resident population of over one million people and by 2025, more than 80 cities in sub-Saharan Africa will acquire populations of over one million. By 2050, about 56 percent of Africans will probably live in urban areas. In a couple of decades Nigeria will reach a population about as big as that of the present-day United States in a country roughly the size of Arizona, New Mexico, and Nevada. A typical apartment block is known as a "Face Me, Face You" because whole families squeeze into 7-by-11-foot rooms along a narrow corridor with up to 50 people sharing a kitchen, toilet, and sink.

Africa seems to be the embodiment of all the social ills of capitalist exploitation and it has been systematically plundered for its raw materials and human labour. Conditions for our fellow-workers in Africa has revealed capitalism in all its naked brutality with its extremities of misery and suffering. A peasant gets peanuts for growing peanuts because that is the going rate for peanuts on the world market. If the price of peanuts is raised, the local exploiter will gain at the expense of the importer, and the peasant still gets peanuts. It is now no utopian fantasy but a practical proposition to suggest we can live in a world without waste or want or war, in which each person has free access to the benefits of civilisation. We certainly have the knowledge and the technology. All that is missing is the will and desire for change that can make that next evolutionary advance possible; a belief in ourselves as masters of our own destiny. And how soon this happens depends on us all – each and every one of us.

ALJO



2017 UN Poverty Chart - red is bad

Analysing an economic system



Glasgow slum, 1871

One criticism of Marx's *Capital* is that, written 150 years ago, it is describing conditions in mid-century Victorian Britain which have long since disappeared. It does do this, but this is to miss the point. Marx was analysing an economic system, not the particular political, sociological and historical conditions under which it happened to operate in his day. It was written not, or not just, as a criticism of conditions in mid-Victorian Britain but as an analysis of capitalism in general, of the capitalist economic system as such irrespective of the conditions in which it operated.

As Marx was writing in mid-19th century Britain, most of his concrete examples are drawn from the experience of capitalism in and up to that period. Then, the main industry was textiles whose products were exported throughout the world; the main source of energy was burning coal in steam engines; and the dominant form of ownership of means of production was a factory owned and managed by an individual capitalist family.

Marx's examples are drawn from the 1860s but, even before he died in 1883, things had begun to change. The production of machines was becoming more important than textile production; coal was about to be used to raise steam to drive electricity-generating turbines; the joint stock company with limited liability was becoming the dominant form of capitalist ownership. But these developments did not alter how capitalism worked as an economic system. It continued to operate in the same basic way that Marx had analysed.

Technology and the political and sociological framework are even more changed today but capitalism as an economic system still works in the same way. The fact that Marx never saw a motor car or an aeroplane or radio, television, electronic computers or knew of nuclear power or genetic engineering does not affect his theory.

Political economy

The subtitle of *Capital*, when it was translated into English in

1887, was 'A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production'. It was this, but a strict translation of the original German would have been 'A Critique of Political Economy', a subtitle used in more modern translations.

'Political Economy' was the name applied by David Ricardo, author of *The Principles of Political Economy and Taxation* (1821), and others to the study that they were engaged in of the production and distribution of wealth in a market economy. They imagined that they were discovering a natural process just as other scientists were. Marx's major criticism of them was that in reality they were analysing one historically-evolved, and ultimately passing, way of organising the production and distribution of wealth, which he called 'the capitalist mode of production'.

Nevertheless, the 'economic laws' they posited still acted as if they were natural laws, even though they came into being only under specific social and historical conditions. The Political Economists saw the 'natural' way to organise the production and distribution of wealth, and which they regarded as being distorted by political interference, as: factories and other workplaces owned by capitalists; production carried out by wage-workers; and the capitalist owners aiming to make a profit by investing money in production and selling what was produced at prices established by the market.

On the basis of these assumptions (and policy recommendations) they sought to work out how wealth would be distributed between capitalists, wage-workers, and those who owned land and other natural resources. They also sought to work out how the prices of goods produced for sale (which they called 'commodities') were determined. They correctly identified this as having something to do with the time taken to produce them.

Marx made his own contribution to this analysis and in particular solved the mystery of how profit could arise if all commodities exchanged at their labour-time values. His solution was to make a distinction between what workers expended in production ('labour') and what they sold (their 'labour power') and for which they were paid a full price as their wages. He showed that profit arose not in circulation but in production, out of the difference between the value of what wage workers produced, which belonged to their capitalist employer, and the value of what they were paid for the sale of their labour-power, a difference he called 'surplus value'. The adepts of political economy didn't like this any more than they liked being told that what they were studying was not the natural laws of production and distribution. Their successors, realising where a labour theory of value might lead, abandoned this approach and began to analyse the economic system in terms of how businesses experienced it.

Greed is irrelevant

The concept of 'surplus value' is key to Marx's analysis of capitalism as an economic system. He saw the driving force behind production under capitalism as being to maximise the amount of surplus value. This was not because capitalists were greedy, but was something imposed on them by the economic laws of capitalism. These laws forced capitalists to re-invest in production as additional capital most of the profits they made.

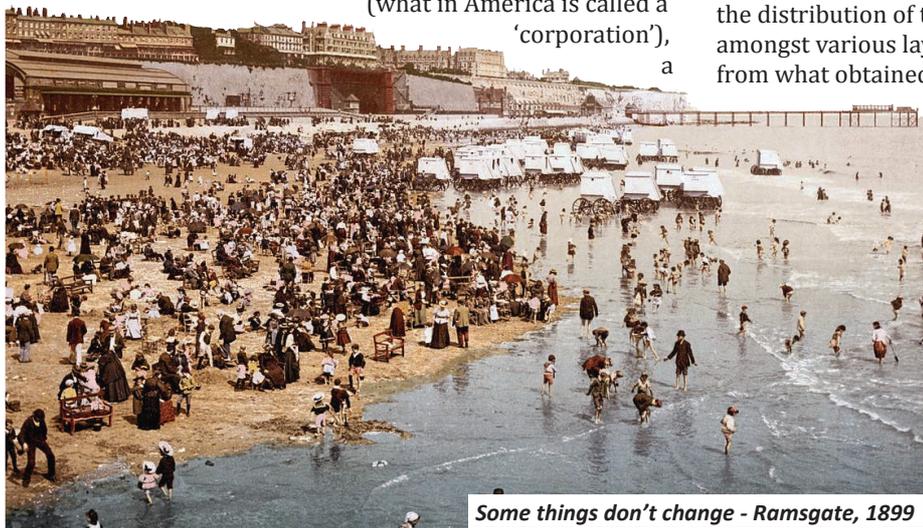
Capitalists, he argued, were in competition with each other to sell their products and make a profit. To win what he called 'the battle of competition' firms had to reduce the unit cost of what they produced so as to be in a position to sell more cheaply than their rivals without impinging on their own profits. A firm could achieve this by reducing the time needed to produce its product, or, what is the same thing, increasing the productivity of its workforce, but this involved equipping them with more efficient machines, bought out of previously made profits. The first firm to do this would make a temporary 'super-profit' but this would disappear as other firms, to stay in the race for profits, also bought more productive machines and the market price for the product fell, restoring profits to their 'normal' level.

Capitalist competition thus results in a race to reduce costs by increased productivity, mainly through the installation of more efficient machines. The tendency under capitalism is for most profits to be reinvested in production as further capital, for more and more capital to be accumulated by being invested in expanding the means of production and so both production and employment (though the first at a faster rate than the second). This economic 'growth' is built-in to capitalism and is not a free choice of those running capitalist enterprises, so it can't be reversed. It's a drive that will last as long as capitalism does.

Forms of enterprise

One consequence of Marx's analysis of capitalism as an economic system operating according to its own economic laws is that the institutional form in which a capital is embodied and treated as a single unit – whether the individual capitalist owner of Marx's day, a limited liability company

(what in America is called a 'corporation'),
a



Some things don't change - Ramsgate, 1899



Leadenhall Street, J Hopkins, 1837

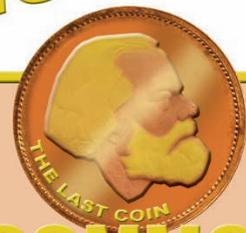
state-owned enterprise, or even a worker-run cooperative – is incidental. What is decisive is that, whatever the institutional form, commodities are being produced for sale on a market with a view to profit; which means that the enterprises are subject to the economic laws of capitalism and have to keep on re-investing profits in more modern machinery in order to keep costs down and stay in the battle of competition.

Also incidental is the distribution of that part of profits that is not re-invested in production but is used for the consumption of those who manage units of capital. Those who 'personify capital' (Marx's term) can be individual capitalists, company directors, big shareholders, or government officials. They don't have to be bloated men in top hats smoking a cigar. In the history of capitalism there has also been a wide variety of personal beneficiaries of capitalist production, from individual capitalist owners (an almost distinct breed these days) to top level state officials, civil and/or military. In fact the Britain of Marx's day was itself exceptional in having a landed aristocracy in a position to command a share, in the form of ground-rents and royalties, of the surplus value extracted from the workers by their immediate employers. That Marx's analysis of capitalism was not tied to conditions in mid-century Victorian Britain is shown by the fact that the same economic laws, the same economic drive to accumulate capital out of surplus value created by wage-labour, operated also in the former USSR. The institutional framework there – the absence of individual capitalist ownership and the almost total state ownership of the means of production, and the distribution of the consumption part of surplus value amongst various layers of state officials – was quite different from what obtained in the West. Yet capitalism existed there.

Even the abolition of private capitalists and capitalist private property rights is compatible with the existence of capitalism.

Marx's analysis of the way capitalism works is valid wherever there is sectional ownership and control of the means of wealth production and where production is carried out by wage-workers for sale on a market with a view to profit. As this is undoubtedly still the case today, Marx's *Capital* remains valid and relevant.

ADAM BUICK



In explaining the conditions under which commodity production and money exist, Marx helps us understand the characteristics of a new society in which they would no longer exist.

A new society without commodity production, money, and markets? A society where production is carried out solely to meet our human needs, with all the social wealth held in common. Why is this idea still so widely ridiculed as a utopian daydream, even by those who are deeply dissatisfied with the ‘status quo’? ‘That sounds nice but it’ll never work’—is the predictable response we hear.

It seems to our critics that we socialists are offering nothing more than wishful thinking. But the notion that commodities, money, profit, private property, wages, etc. would no longer exist in a socialist world is actually premised on understanding why such things exist under capitalism in the first place. Once we have understood the why (and how) of such economic forms, it becomes possible to imagine the social conditions in which they would no longer have any room to exist.

This crucial relationship between understanding the fundamentals of capitalism and grasping the essence of socialism as its alternative points to the continued importance of Karl Marx’s *Capital*, particularly its first volume, which was first published 150 years ago. Even though Marx—as many have pointed out—does not provide a ‘blueprint’ for socialism in his book, his critique of capitalism brings the characteristics of that new society into view by clarifying the fundamental boundaries and limitations of capitalism as one historical ‘mode of production’ among others that had existed or might exist in the future.

A short article like this cannot cover all the ways that *Capital* traces the boundaries of capitalism beyond which lies a new and unprecedented society, so here we will limit ourselves to the crucial first chapter in which Marx analyses the commodity, which he describes as the ‘elementary form’ of wealth under the capitalist mode of production.

Use-value and exchange-value

Today the terms ‘commodity’ and ‘product’ have become almost synonymous because we are so accustomed to the reality of production for the market, but Marx clearly distinguishes between the two. He uses the term ‘commodity’ to indicate products that are produced for exchange, so that they not only have a ‘use-value’ that meets a particular human need (as any product does), but also an ‘exchange-value’ on the market.

Under capitalism, the vast majority of products take the commodity form, as Marx notes in the opening sentence of *Capital*: ‘The wealth of those societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails, presents itself as “an immense accumulation of commodities”’.

There is ‘wealth’ in any mode of production, which is to say material products that meet human needs, but only

when capitalism has taken hold of a society do the vast majority of those products take the form of ‘commodities’ bought and sold on the market. Although commodity production existed under some of the pre-capitalist modes of production, it was subordinate to the dominant production relations in which the products of human labour did not take the form of commodities.

And even under capitalism we can see some examples of products of labour that do not take the commodity form. The tomatoes grown in a family’s garden for its members’ own consumption, for instance, would have the use-value of satisfying their hunger, but no exchange-value under those circumstances.

At the end of the first section of Chapter 1, Marx sums up the distinction between product and commodity, noting that to produce commodities one must not only produce use-values, but use-values for others or social use-values, and that these useful things must not only be produced for others but also transferred to them by means of exchange. He notes, in contrast, how the ‘quit-rent-corn’ and ‘tithe-corn’ produced by the mediaeval peasant for the feudal lord and parson, respectively, are not commodities, even though produced for others, because there is no exchange between the two sides.

The distinction between product and commodity (and between use-value and exchange-value) is not at all difficult to grasp, but it has great significance to the case for socialism: it reminds us that there is nothing eternal about production for the market, which has, in fact, been the exception, not the rule, over the course of human history.

‘Social relations between things’

Marx explains the conditions under which products take the commodity form, writing that, ‘as a general rule, articles of utility become commodities, only because they are products of the labour of private individuals or groups of individuals who carry on their work independently of each other’; adding that these ‘producers do not come into social contact with each other until they exchange their products’. Since these private individuals or groups operate apart from each other, with an eye only to the market, it is only in the act of exchange that the ‘specific social character of each producer’s labour . . . show[s] itself’.

This state of affairs is quite different from the examples raised earlier of the gardening family or the medieval peasant. In such cases, the social relations between those involved in production and distribution are clear from the outset, rather than being established by means of exchange. The family members already form a unit, just as the (subordinate) relationship between peasant and feudal lord is clear to begin with, and the products of labour produced under those conditions are then distributed in line with those specific relations

Instead of ‘direct social relations between individuals at work’, what we have under capitalism, as a system of generalised commodity production, are ‘material relations between persons and social relations between things’. This creates what Marx calls the ‘fetishism of commodities’, where



'definite social relations between men' assume 'in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things'.

An overriding characteristic of capitalism as a society of generalised commodity production is the roundabout way in which production is carried out. Instead of the members of society

directly producing useful things to meet their own individual and common needs, we have production carried out for the market. And only those goods that are successfully sold can meet those human needs and constitute a part of the aggregate social labour. This is an almost ridiculously complex way to organise production.

Yet those who take this system for granted dismiss a more straightforward and transparent approach to production and distribution as infeasible. Part of the reason is the notion that without the 'invisible hand' of the market to regulate production and exchange, a society would bog down in hopeless inefficiency or descend into the despotism of a select group dictating production and consumption. But really it is the capitalist system itself, as a system of commodity production, that is mired in inefficiency and inequality.

As already noted, objects of utility can only meet human needs under this system if they are successfully sold—otherwise they will rot or rust on the shelf. On top of this, society is unequally divided between a small minority of those who own and operate the means of production (whether as individuals, corporate directors, or state bureaucrats), on the one hand, and the overwhelming majority of workers obliged to sell their labour-power to those owners in return for a wage.

But even the ruling class under capitalism is not the master of the market economy. Marx explains in chapter one that the exchange of commodities is fundamentally determined by the labour time socially necessary to produce them, rather than being under the conscious control of human beings. In this way, the economy manifests itself as a force of nature, whose behaviour is far more difficult to anticipate than the weather. We live in a social world that is beyond human control, even though production is carried out by human beings.

Getting along without commodities

Near the end of chapter one, Marx contrasts the absurdly complex and roundabout system of capitalist commodity production with other ways to organise production, where products would not take the commodity form. These are some of the most illuminating passages in all of *Capital* regarding the possibility of a new society beyond capitalism.

Marx begins, tongue-in-cheek, by looking at the fictional case of Robinson Crusoe, who is producing for his own needs, using the resources available on his island. He must do a 'little useful work of various sorts' to satisfy his wants, but he knows that 'his labour, whatever its form, is but different modes of human labour'. 'All the relations of Robinson and the objects that form this wealth of his own creation are here so simple and clear as to be intelligible without exertion.' None of the objects of utility that Robinson creates would confront him as commodities, since there would be no need for any sort of exchange.

The second example Marx raises is production in Europe in the Middle Ages. What 'characterises the social relations of production' here is 'personal dependence'. That is, 'instead of independent man, we find everyone dependent, serfs and lords, vassals and suzerains, laymen and clergy'. But precisely because these social relations of personal dependence exist from the outset and form the 'ground-work of society', Marx explains, 'there is no necessity for labour and its products to assume a fantastic form different from their reality'; rather 'they take the shape . . . of services in kind and payments in kind'. The social relations between the individuals engaged in production 'are not disguised under the shape of social relations between the products of labour'.

In his next example, Marx looks at production in the case of 'labour in common or directly associated labour', taking as his example the 'patriarchal industries of a peasant family' that produces some articles for their home use. 'The labour-power of each individual . . . operates in this case merely as a definite portion of the whole labour-power of the family', much like the example raised above of a family growing tomatoes in its garden. The aim of production is to meet the needs of the family members, rather than supply the market, so once again we are dealing with simple products or objects of utility—not commodities.

If we expand the case of Robinson or the family to a social scale, we have in essence the production relations in a new socialist world. This is what Marx sketches in his next example, where he describes an 'association of free men' who are 'carrying on their work with the means of production in common' so that the 'labour-power of all the different individuals is consciously applied as the combined labour-power of the community'.

The only difference in the characteristics of labour in this society with the example of Robinson on his island, Marx explains, is that now everything is social instead of individual. One portion of what is produced would be 'consumed by the members as means of subsistence', while another portion would serve as 'fresh means of production' and thus remain social.

There is no need in this society for its members to confront each other as individual commodity producers or to first come into a relationship via exchange because they are already in a relationship from the outset as the common holders of the wealth and resources of society, much like the ties between family members in Marx's earlier example. In socialism, therefore, the 'social relations of the individual producers' are 'perfectly simple and intelligible' and there is no need for commodities or money to exist.

Here we have only scratched the surface of how Marx's analysis of capitalism can stimulate an understanding of the characteristics of socialism as a commodity- and money-free world. The better we understand the essential characteristics of capitalism and how they determine the social problems we face, the clearer will be our image of socialism as a realistic alternative and means to overcoming those problems.

MIKE SCHAUERTE

DESTROYING THE HAND THAT FEEDS US

It would be correct to say that most true socialists see almost all of society's problems as a direct and inevitable outcome, or by-product, of the capitalist system. The threats and damage caused to our environment, become to socialists a symptom alongside all the other obscene and alarming 'givens' such as

warfare, starvation, homelessness and so on that we face as a world community. A system based, as it is, on profit and continued growth 'at all costs', places unsustainable demands on the planet's reserves – be they mineral, biological or social – and, in the end, must logically collapse. And yet, faced with irrefutable evidence of catastrophic damage to these reserves, the vast majority of people do not seem able, or perhaps do not wish, to make the connection and, alarmingly, seem ready at every opportunity, whether through relaxed social intercourse, elections or even by going to war, to stand by and defend a system that is patently failing, dangerous and serves them so badly.

The word 'environment' can mean many things, such as where we are at a particular time, or perhaps our immediate surroundings, but here the word is synonymous with what is also known as the 'natural world'. Thus the term 'environmentalist' is a person generally thought to have a keen interest in (preserving and caring for) the 'natural world'. The term 'natural world' is an interesting one as it suggests or implies that it exists as a separate entity, independent and apart from humanity – a place we can visit and leave as we wish. It is likely, also, that most people would wish the 'natural world' to continue to exist, unthreatened, undamaged and just how they imagine it should be; that is to say, with rivers and seas full of fish, woodlands verdant and alive with birdsong, endless square miles of unspoilt jungle, vast pods of whales in pristine, icy oceans or palm trees nodding gently next to lapping azure seas on Pacific islands. Sadly, though, the environment could not be less detached from the human species and in reality is the source of all the fundamental elements needed to sustain life. To damage it, therefore, is to damage ourselves.

Capitalism sees the environment, or natural world, in a rather different light. For capitalism, the natural world is an unwanted obstacle, a hindrance to expansion and growth; it is of no consequence to capitalism whether there are a dozen wonderful, species-rich ancient woodlands in the path of HS2. If it means increased profit and productivity, then they can be cut down with impunity. The great sadness is that capitalism is not a deranged despot or vicious psychopath but simply



a construct – a means of arranging our affairs, distributing wealth, relating to each other and interacting with the environment.

With simple and logical examination it can be easily demonstrated that the dreadful damage that is being wrought on the environment and the natural world can

be reversed or, at least, dramatically reduced by ending capitalism and establishing a new world order that puts the environment and people – the 'natural world' – first; a society predicated on free access to wealth, equality and a deep respect for wildlife and the environment – these things would be second nature to all people. Capitalism's relentless conditioning of people to believe that the way to happiness and fulfilment is the acquisition of more stuff would be a forgotten malaise of the past, the idea that everything needed to be led by an economy and profit an outdated and arcane notion.

The facts relating to all the various ills that face the environment and, therefore, by definition, us, are there to be seen with only rudimentary investigative skills – corporations and politicians cannot censor everything. But to want change the individual needs to believe that there is an alternative way in which society can be managed and, equally, what it is about the environment or natural world that is intrinsic to their lives, indeed why the natural world is essential to their lives. Furthermore, what would the continued decimation of the environment and other species with which we share the planet mean to them?

Capitalism does not put a true value on the natural world, so, given its blatant ability to brainwash people and very successfully maintain itself, people feel part of capitalism and not part of the natural world. The stark reality is that there is no other planet to escape to and unless capitalism is brought to an end worldwide, and by true democracy, the true value of nature, the natural world and the environment will never be understood by future generations; like the dodo, once gone it will be gone forever.

Nature and the environment are truly beautiful and priceless – and therein lies the problem for the socialist within a capitalist society – nature is priceless.

GLENN MORRIS

THE REAL

P R O J E C T



their rent. They know they may be evicted if they complain to the landlord about damp in their flat, say, or be concerned about what will happen if they have another child. Losing a job or suffering long-term illness may make keeping a roof over your head difficult, and these and other considerations all add to the fear of being homeless.

For many people their wages are barely enough to live on, resulting in constant concern about paying for food and heating. Being unable to afford a holiday or Christmas presents for the kids can be extremely stressful, and anxiety about surviving on a pension is also commonplace. Concern about being unable to repay a student loan can be worrying, too.

Those who are struggling to make ends meet may well have recourse to pay-day lenders or buying household goods from shops that charge sky-high interest rates. Even borrowing on a credit card can create difficulties. Being unable to repay the right amount at the right time can lead to enormous problems as debts mount up and what is owed comes to have little connection to the sum originally borrowed. Fear of being in this kind of situation

can really take over a person's life, and even lead to them committing suicide.

Living on state benefits of one kind or another can also be extremely worrying. Quite apart from the fact that the money received in this way is rarely truly adequate, and the continual pressure to demonstrate that you genuinely are looking for a job, there is the constant fear of having the benefit taken away, of being declared fit to work as a result of some arbitrary medical test or losing housing benefit through having 'too many rooms'.

We do not want to exaggerate and say that all workers live in constant fear of losing their job or their home, but the possibility is always there, and people are often reminded of it by what happens to a relative, neighbour, colleague or friend. Nor are we saying that this is some kind of deliberate plot to frighten and harass workers, just that it is a genuine situation. Real Fear has nothing to do with the EU but is an intrinsic part of working-class life under capitalism.

PB



Supporters of Brexit use the expression 'Project Fear' to describe the views of those who wanted, and perhaps still want, Britain to remain in the European Union. The Remainers, it is suggested, used scaremongering to claim that leaving the EU would be a step into the unknown, where nobody knew what awaited. Putting fear into people's minds was supposedly not a valid political or economic argument.

But in fact a much wider situation involving fear can be identified. For capitalism makes great use of fear among the vast majority of people: fear of unemployment, losing one's home, insecurity, and so on. In some cases the word 'fear' may be an overstatement, so in what follows we will mostly speak of worry or anxiety, but all too often there truly will be fear in workers' minds.

Firstly, people may worry about not finding a job at all, or not finding one that pays enough for them to live on or that makes appropriate use of their abilities and qualifications. If they have a job, they may be anxious about keeping it or being put on short time or, alternatively, having their hours extended without extra pay. If they are on a zero-hours contract or working elsewhere in the gig economy, they may worry about having enough work or being treated reasonably by their employer. Standing up for their interests at work may lead to victimisation. Even those in relatively prestigious occupations such as university lecturers are increasingly being faced with the threat of redundancy or being placed in an 'at-risk pool'.

With the housing situation becoming more and more problematic, many people do fear being unable to find somewhere adequate and affordable and within suitable travelling distance of their place of work. They may worry about being unable to keep up with their mortgage or paying



Crime &

Any community has to have an agreed set of principles concerning the behaviour of its members. As a social species we depend on each other to exist. Our interaction, therefore, provides the cohesion necessary for our survival. Historically these rational principles of behaviour have been subverted by the powerful to serve their needs. In a class-divided society these principles are used to rationalise the wealth and power of the minority. Socialists recognise this and exhibit the relevant contempt for the implicit hypocrisy in trying to rationalise rules that enforce inequality and the social injustice that it represents.

Rational rules of behaviour have been replaced by laws that are enforced by the state. But there still have to be definitions of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour within any community and, given the anachronistic political structures of capitalism, how should a socialist approach this anarchy of social rights and duties? We have to live within this sick culture but should we respect and internalise any of its laws and rules; do we have the right to reject them all as merely exercises in bourgeois hypocrisy?

It may be claimed that since the state has the power to enforce the law and its constraints upon socialists that it is of no importance how they feel about it. Socialists are realists and, unlike liberals, we do not loudly articulate a sense of personal injustice when it is our time to suffer the consequences of a system that speaks of justice whilst imposing its antithesis. What is important to us is that when the great majority individually encounter the 'justice system' and its failures, inadequacies and hypocrisies that they should understand the manifest underlying political realities which this represents rather than simply rely on accusations of corruption or incompetence regarding individual members of this system.

Some attempt to legitimise 'The Law' in terms of democracy. They claim that our 'representatives' in parliament only legislate in the name of their voters and if this is rejected by the wider community then they will be removed in the next election. What is ignored within this idealistic portrayal of the contemporary political structure is the obvious fact that it is the system itself (of which parliament is a vital component) that is the cause of the very injustices it attempts to legislate against. Happily socialists do not have to resort to the silly quasi-religious theories of a violent and greedy 'human nature' to understand crime; we know that where institutionalised inequality, and the

consequent innumerable injustices this maintains, exists so will individual 'immorality' and criminality. That we can subvert parliament by sending socialists there as delegates of mass consciousness to destroy it will represent one of the greatest moments in political history.

It may come as quite a surprise to many that the 'justice system' represents injustice to socialists. In the hope of deterring the usual dismissal of this perspective, which typically involves references to our so-called utopian dream of a 'perfect society' or, as mentioned earlier, some half-baked theory of a destructive element within 'human nature', let us take a cold hard look at some of the realities of the symbiotic nature of the relationship between the justice system and the criminals it persecutes. Without criminal activity there would be little or no need for today's lawyers, judges, court functionaries, silly wig makers, police, police cars, forensic scientists, prisons, police dogs, cell cleaners, justice software, police radio technology, specialist helicopters... the list is endless. That the state finances a great percentage of all this is testament to how desperate the ruling class is to hold onto their wealth and power. It is a grotesque spectacle to perceive



Capital



how the state feeds parasitically on the criminals it creates.

And what are some of the laws that all of this effort and expense go into imposing; arbitrary and irrational prohibition of some stimulants, strike breaking, enforcing homelessness (evictions), prosecuting the poor for illegal benefit claims, persecuting 'illegal immigrants', breaking up demonstrations, enforcing traffic violations, curtailing rights of access, arresting the hungry for 'shoplifting' and the weary and dispossessed for 'vagrancy'. But, I hear you ask, what of the violent bullies of organised crime and the fear and corruption they create? Can no one take moral responsibility for their own actions? If we accept the stupidity and injustice of the activities of the state listed above can we allow it some credibility for opposing so-called organised crime? We might be able to understand violent crime in its capitalist cultural context but can we ever accept that its perpetrators are not morally culpable?

At this point some readers will become aware that we are entering the philosophical realm; specifically the timeless debate between the proponents of determinism and those who believe in 'free will'. Philosophy has the ability to both inspire and intimidate; we read the works of the great minds that have pondered on such questions with a mixture of awe and frustration. Frustration because there seems to be no definitive answer; we may reach personal conclusions but these cannot be subjected to scientific experiments which will decide which hypothesis is correct. Socialists are committed materialists and this implies a belief in a level of determinism. As already described we think that criminality exists primarily because of the capitalist culture of institutionalised social injustice – in short, it is because of the way society is organised.

But can we really just shake our heads with sadness when the likes of Hitler and Stalin are put on trial by history? We all need the guilty to be made to recognise their responsibility for the cruelty and subsequent suffering that they have been complicit in creating. Not to punish in the name of revenge but to impose consequences for acts that the community deplors. We know that the two individuals mentioned could not have committed the crimes they did without the complicity of thousands, sometimes millions of others. We are also aware that such mass complicity is a product of a terribly sick human political culture but we need to insist on individual moral culpability. Why? Because the answer: 'I did what I did because I was ordered to' cannot excuse the individual of

responsibility. No healthy human community can function with such an immature moral vacuum at its heart. Does this imply that by imposing moral values on society we are forced to live an illusion? This is an uncomfortable situation for socialists because we pride ourselves on our realism; but not to grant individuals a level of moral integrity seems to dehumanise them. It's hard to retain compassion for others (and yourself) if you regard our species as merely deterministic machines.

Will socialism be able to resolve or 'bring to a synthesis' (as we Marxists would say) this profound social contradiction? It is an intriguing possibility; but don't wait until that inevitable day comes when you or someone you love finds themselves a victim of crime before you contemplate these questions. Such things are not just esoteric philosophical distractions; they are at the heart of who you are and what kind of society you wish to live within. Join us in our revolutionary activity which alone can transform justice from an intellectual aspiration into a political reality.

WEZ



Are you *happy* with the way things are?

WITH AUSTERITY, inequality, war, environmental problems, the rise of so-called populism? But are you also struggling to find some response that will do more than just repeat the efforts of previous decades, which have led to this mess?

We think there is an effective response to the current situation. One that doesn't just deal with small changes to the present system, so leaving the underlying causes untouched. One that really gets to the root of what is wrong, that truly addresses inequality, poverty, war and the rest.

In a sense, what is needed is very simple: make the resources of the planet the common property of the world's people. Ensure that they are controlled democratically and used to meet human need. Let people have free access to what has been produced. Enable people to have proper control over their lives. Avoid all the waste of resources that goes with the money system (banks, insurance, credit cards and so on). Grow food and build houses because people want them, not in order to make a profit.

In the Socialist Party we call such a set-up socialism. This means a classless society

where there is no division between the rich and powerful on one hand and the great majority of the population on the other. It means a society with no state or government, since these exist to defend the interest of the rulers. It means a world with no countries or borders. It means a world where people work together for the common good, not for the interests of a small class of owners.

Socialism is in complete contrast to all forms of capitalism, which necessarily involve class ownership, production for profit, the wages system, and varying degrees of poverty and insecurity. Capitalism cannot be made to work in the interests of the vast majority, which is why socialists do not advocate reforms of the present system.

Don't be misled by labels. What we stand for has no connection with what the Labour Party and the Left advocate; state ownership is state capitalism, not socialism. Nor does it have any connection with the system that existed or exists in the USSR, North Korea and so on; these are particularly authoritarian versions of state capitalism.

The only solution is a revolution in the economic basis of society carried out by an overwhelming majority, who want and understand socialism. If this idea interests you, get in touch with the Socialist Party and learn more about our ideas.



Another one bites the dust

VENEZUELA. ANOTHER country to add to the long list of failed attempts to make capitalism work in the interest of the excluded majority of wage and salary workers.

It began well enough with the election of the populist army officer, Hugo Chavez, as president in 1999. His government diverted oil revenues (Venezuela has more proven oil reserves than Saudi Arabia) from luxuries for the rich to provide better housing, health care and education and subsidised food for the poor.

He proclaimed himself a socialist and that his government was implementing '21st century socialism'. North American and West European Trotskyists beat the drum for him. Some moved to Venezuela to help build 'socialism' there. For them, this was it. But it didn't last.

With the world-wide slump that followed on from the crash of 2008,

the demand for oil fell and so too did its price. The Venezuelan government resorted to printing money to maintain its social reforms and then to price controls to try to prevent the inevitable rise in prices this led to. A black market developed. The currency depreciated and import controls were introduced. Venezuela ended up with a siege economy.

Chavez died in 2013 and his successor, Nicolas Maduro, was left to pick up the pieces and face the growing discontent of the better-paid workers.

For apologists for ordinary capitalism, Venezuela represents another failure of socialism. According to the obnoxious Tory MEP Daniel Hannan, writing in the *Sun* (3 August), 'Venezuela isn't remote from socialism. It's a textbook example. Chavez and Maduro set out to replace the market with a system of state production and distribution.'

Actually, they wanted to regulate the market using state intervention to make it work to benefit people especially the poor, not to replace it (not that socialism is a system of state production and distribution, though it will replace the market). Hannan had earlier inadvertently let slip the correct characterisation of the economic system in Venezuela when he quoted Noam

Chomsky:

'I never described Chavez's state capitalist government as "socialist" or even hinted at such an absurdity. It was quite remote from socialism.'

Incidentally, this must be the first time that *Sun* readers have been introduced to the concept of state capitalism. Chomsky, however, was being a bit disingenuous as he is on record as expressing support for what the Venezuelan government was doing. Hannan quotes him as having previously talked of a 'better world' being created there. Taking both of Chomsky's statements together, they imply that he thinks that a policy of state capitalism can create a better world.

Well, it can't. The most it can do – and did do to an extent in Venezuela – is to bring about a temporary improvement in the living conditions of some workers. The point is that this can't last, because capitalism cannot be made to work to meet people's needs. Pursued over a long period – and the Chavists have been in power for 18 years now – such a policy will fail, creating the sort of economic and political conditions that now exist in Venezuela.

Venezuela represents a failure not of socialism but of government-financed reformism. Yet another.



From The UN To Anarchism

IN RECENT years, the BBC has developed an interesting sideline in polemics: broadcasters like Adam Curtis, Dominic Sandbrook and Simon Amstell have appeared on our screens presenting their original interpretations of society's changing cultural and economic trends. Refreshing as it is to see thoughtful critiques of capitalism on the telly, alternatives are rarely discussed. So, it's a nice surprise to see an anarchist get an hour of screen time to make his case, in *Accidental Anarchist: Life Without Government*, part of BBC4's Storyville strand, as well as in one of *Newsnight's* video podcasts.

Why this particular anarchist has been able to get his views on the Beeb is the career path which led to his viewpoint. Carne Ross began work in the government's Foreign Office in 1989, with the optimism that came with the fall of the Berlin Wall. Between 1998 and 2002 he was the UK state's expert on Iraq at the UN Security Council, where he negotiated on issues such as weapons inspections and sanctions, and took pride in being a 'ferocious negotiator'. Ross says that the effect the economic sanctions on Iraq had on the Iraqi people was just 'paper suffering' to the UN because of its distance from those affected. Noticing the divide between governments and the majority led him to doubt the whole system's effectiveness. His trust in the state was finally lost after the death of Dr David Kelly, the expert on biological warfare and UN weapons inspector who, according to Ross 'was driven to suicide by the disgraceful campaign of vilification by [Tony] Blair's officials after he was revealed as the source of a BBC story that the Number Ten 'dossier' alleging the threat from Iraq had been considerably exaggerated' (www.carneross.com). Ross resigned his job in the Foreign Office in 2004 after giving then-secret evidence to the inquiry into the Iraq war. He told it that at no time did the government judge that Iraq held 'weapons of mass destruction' which posed a threat to the UK, despite what we were told. He says that the public was lied to over the



reasons for going to war, and this is 'the worst thing any government can possibly do'. He now feels ashamed of how he acted in his previous life.

Ross' journey to anarchism is unexpected because he's managed to change his mindset away from the acceptance of the system which is encouraged and needed by those working at that level for the state. His role allowed him to see first-hand how governments act, so in a way he was better placed than many to see the system's faults. Far from being the 'accidental' anarchist of the show's title, he has thought about what he's experienced and reached a perfectly reasonable interpretation.

Ross tells us that he grew up to believe the economy works like a machine, complicated but understandable, and now believes that society is too complex to fully comprehend, let alone control. He even finds a government minister – Rory Stewart OBE – who admits that politicians don't have nearly as much power over our economic and political system as most people assume. Because of this, Ross argues, our framework of leadership isn't tenable. Instead, he says, 'No-one should have power over another. People should govern themselves' (www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-40796891/carne-ross-the-diplomat-turned-anarchist).

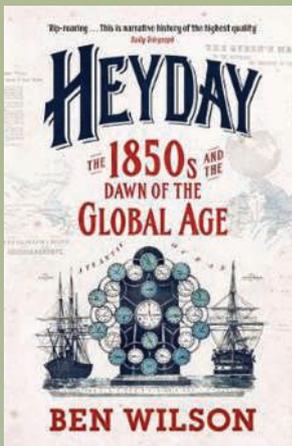
As proof that self-organisation can work better for everyone, Ross gives some examples of where people have worked together in a more equitable and effective way. Members of Occupy New York used their experience in planning and organising to co-ordinate aid for victims of 2012's Hurricane Sandy more efficiently than the government's efforts. And in the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire, the community arranged support for survivors quicker than the state. It shouldn't take a disaster to make people come together, although other attempts at greater co-operation and self-organisation have developed in difficult circumstances. Rojava, an area of northern Syria, is run according to the political ideology of Abdullah Ocalan, a leader of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) who was inspired by anarchist Murray Bookchin. While hierarchies still exist there, people living

in Rojava are able to directly contribute to decisions affecting their community, and there is more gender equality and less sectarianism than elsewhere in the region.

According to Ross, the peak of anarchism was in 1930s Spain, before it was crushed by Stalin's forces and Franco's fascists won the Spanish Civil War. He says that anarchist ideals live on there now, such as in the town of Marinaleda in Andalucia, where the populace occupied land and buildings and established a farming co-operative with many municipal tasks organised together. Of course, these and any other examples have to work within capitalism. Ross doesn't seem to see this as much of a setback, and cites 'worker owned co-operatives like John Lewis' (*ibid*) and the Brazilian city of Porto Alegre, where the population has had input into funding decisions which improved public services, as examples of where ideals of self-organisation have flourished. While he's surely overstating how radical John Lewis and the other examples are, he's more on the ball when he adds wryly that the shabbier a group's assembly room is, the more democratic it will be.

Ross favours a 'gentle revolution [which] should begin with direct democracy' (*ibid*) in workplaces and the community. This would involve worker-run groups, which could then join up to manage larger-scale projects. He suggests that these groups would be more legitimate than politicians, and therefore would replace them. Whether governments would allow themselves to be shunted out in this way isn't considered here. As Ross worked within the state, he should realise it won't just offer to relinquish its power. The same applies to corporations: how realistic is it for co-operatives to out-perform them without adopting more cut-throat strategies to remain competitive? Unfortunately, the programme doesn't go into detail about how far Ross thinks his examples of self-organisation can go towards replacing capitalism itself. However, they demonstrate that people can work together co-operatively and equally, and this is certainly a step towards revolution.

MIKE FOSTER



Heyday, Mayday

Ben Wilson: *Heyday: the 1850s and the Dawn of the Global Age*. Weidenfeld & Nicolson £8.99.

This history covers the period from 1851 to 1862, from the Great Exhibition in London to the early part of the American Civil War. Britain was at the height of its power at this time, producing 70 percent of the world's steel in 1851, for instance, and the book's original hardback edition was subtitled 'Britain and the making of the modern world'. But there were challenges to this pre-eminence, mainly from Germany and the USA.

One of the themes is technological progress, from the development of the telegraph to the growth of railways, and how this related to the expansion of production, the emergence of a global market and the rapid dissemination of news and other information. The discovery of gold, in California and Australia, resulted in massive population movements, appalling consequences for native peoples and enormous riches (though usually not for those who dug the gold). The gold rush also led to the development of faster ships and an international market for grain and other goods, as there was little agriculture in the areas where the gold was to be found.

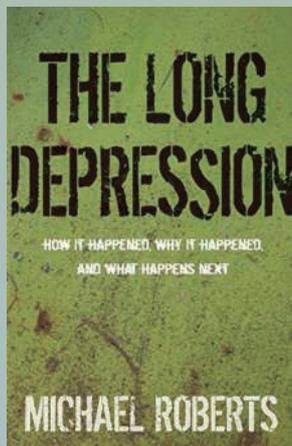
Behind all this, however, was slavery, and the dependence of much of the industrialised world on cotton grown in the American south. Over a billion pounds of raw cotton was shipped from ports such as New Orleans to the mills of Lancashire, and arguments over the future of slavery and the possible secession of the slave states resulted in much uncertainty. When the Civil War cut off supplies, the production of cotton on a mass scale spread to countries such as Egypt and India, where the price of cotton rose so much that local manufacturers could no longer afford to purchase it as a raw material.

The other commodity that exerted a global influence was opium, which Wilson claims 'dictated geopolitics'. Britain had already gone to war with China to enforce its own terms on the opium trade, and this continued with the shelling of Guangzhou in 1856 and the military occupation of Beijing in 1860. Hong Kong had become 'one of the key hubs of global trade and finance'. Lord Palmerston won a big parliamentary majority in the so-called Chinese Election of 1857, as British electors backed his bellicose policies in the Far East. 'Free' trade was one of the rallying cries of nineteenth-century capitalism, but it was generally imposed and maintained at the point of a gun.

The 1840s had been a period of economic depression and food shortages, but the 1850s were seen as a decade of boom. Yet in 1857 there was a global financial crash, with bumper grain harvests leading to a big drop in prices, and a realisation that plenty of bank loans would not be repaid. A New York-based bank failed, and many businesses collapsed.

Wilson gives a vivid picture of all these developments and more, including the Crimean War, Russian expansion in the Far East, the Indian Rebellion, and events in Japan. Capitalism expanded on the way to becoming a truly global system, but hundreds of millions of people suffered from poverty and war while this was happening.

PB



The slump

The Long Depression. By Michael Roberts. Haymarket Books. 2016.

There is a tendency within some flavours of Marxism that has been said to have correctly predicted 6 of the last 3 recessions. The temptation to rely on inevitable crisis and the collapse of capitalism has a silvery allure for some. This book does not join that chorus, but it does seek to make crises of capitalism

subject to (at least theoretically) predictable laws.

Roberts positions himself as a heterodox within the already heterodox school of Marxian economists. He sees Marx's examination of the tendency for the rate of profit to decline as the root cause of recessions and depressions (he defines a depression as: 'countries growing at well below their previous rate of output... and below their long term average' and he notes the usual definition of a recession is: "two consecutive quarters in real GDP").

He sees a potential explanation for Krontatiev long waves in his model:

'Depressions... appear when there is a conjunction of downward phases in cycles of capitalism. Every depression has come when the cycle in clusters of innovation have matured and become "saturated"; when world production and commodity prices enter a downward phase, namely, that inflation is slowing and turns into deflation; and above all, when the cycle of profitability is in its downward phase. The conjunction of these different cycles only happens every sixty to seventy years.'

Following Marx, he defines the rate of profit as the surplus value (S) divided by variable capital, wages (V) plus constant capital, the value of machines, tools and ingredients (C). He notes that the tendency is for the organic composition of capital (the ration of C/V) to increase: that is for machinery and tools to replace human labour, as capitalists compete to improve the productivity of the labour they employ. This then reduces surplus value, leading to a withdrawal of investment.

'The continual process of an upward cycle in profitability – as the rate of surplus value rises faster than the organic composition, in turn replaced by a downward cycle as the law as such gains ascendancy – explains the cyclical nature of capitalist accumulation.'

The problem with this approach is that it can't explain why crises cause some capital to lose value and become obsolete. In his chapter on the rate of profit, Marx discusses how the falling rate of profit is compatible with ongoing growth in the mass of profits (due to expansion, investment, etc.) This is before he identifies the counteracting tendencies (increasing intensity of exploitation; depressing wages below the value of labour power; cheapening elements of constant capital; relative overpopulation; foreign trade; and the increase of stock capital). Roberts does address these counteracting tendencies, but sees crisis arising out of them temporarily being overwhelmed by the rising organic composition of capital.

If it were a falling rate of profit alone, merger and expansion would be sufficient to escape and renew growth for a while

longer.

The Socialist Party has tended towards the view that it is disproportionate investment and expansion of production that causes crises and slumps. There are strict conditions to enable capital expansion, accumulation and reproduction going on, requiring all the different branches of industry to broadly grow together. Since each capital is seeking to grow at the fastest possible pace, driven only by the expectation of profit, it becomes inevitable that one sector over-invests and has its reproduction choked by relative under-investment either in consumption or in key components.

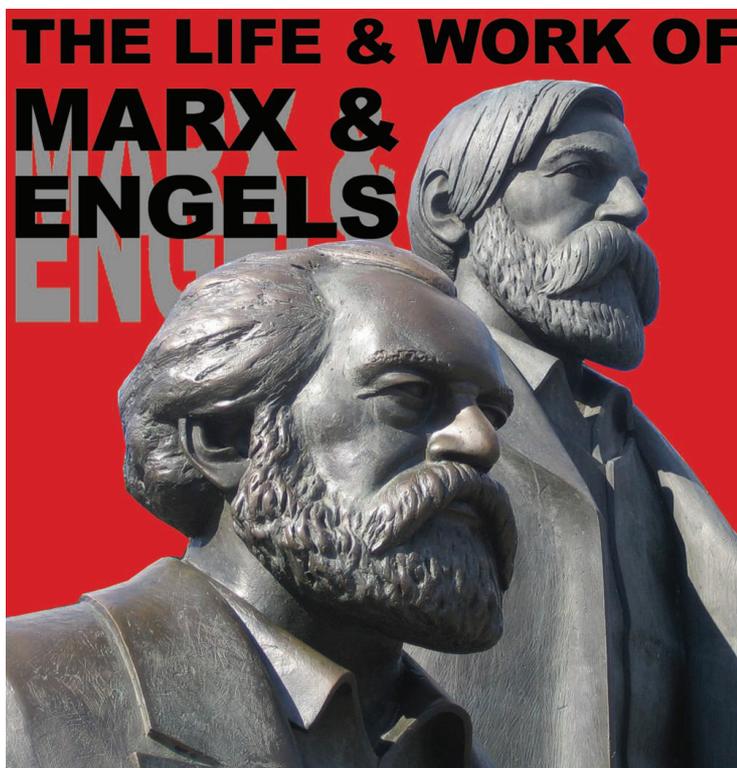
This view of crisis means they are not governed by an underlying regular process, but by an ever increasingly likelihood of accident and happenstance. Even a state-run economy could not overcome these tendencies, since even if it were possible to plan every commodity exchange in such a way as to provide growth: accidents, happenstance and misjudgement would still mean inevitable crises.

Roberts provides a wealth of empirical data showing long run trends towards a declining general rate of profit. He has debated with Paul Mattick Jr. whether official statistics can meaningfully be mapped onto Marx's categories. (<https://thenextrecession.wordpress.com/2017/06/05/paul-mattick-and-validating-marxs-law-a-critique-of-the-long-depression/> -- this is worth reading in itself). We agree that they cannot, not least because of the level of misrepresentation and manipulation that goes into formulating them.

At the least though, if the measures show distinct trends, that is useful for trying to read the developments of the economy. His tables showing all the US recessions since the mid 19th century provide a salutary reminder of how frequent and endemic they are: indeed, we would agree that they are not just inevitable, but essential to capitalism's ongoing existence, as they are followed by the clearing of bad investments and creation of new room for growth in the economy.

Where we would certainly agree with Roberts is that the only way within capitalism, ultimately, to exit a crisis is the destruction of the value of capital; and, further, that capitalism will eventually find new scope to grow (although at what human cost in misery?) unless the working class take a conscious political choice to abolish capitalism: that is the only way in which it will collapse.

PIK SMEET



Friedrich Engels spent most of his working life in Manchester and Salford, and was frequently visited there by Karl Marx. Now the Working Class Movement Library in Salford is hosting an exhibition on their lives and work, on till the end of September. Sadly, though, there is apparently little hard evidence for the oft-told story that the two of them drank together in the pub now called The Crescent, a couple of hundred yards from the Library.

The exhibition consists mainly of copies of various works by and about Marx and Engels, plus information boards. The topics covered include the two men's backgrounds and upbringing, their families and personal lives, their political activities and the historical and economic background to these. There are photos, taken as they were being demolished, of the streets where the father of Lizzie and Mary Burns (Engels' partners) lived. Various copies of the Communist Manifesto are displayed, including the one published on its centenary in 1948 by the Socialist Party.

The fair point is made that the main legacy of Marx and Engels 'was not a political programme or doctrine, but a detailed methodology for further inquiry.' It is also noted that it needs to be discussed whether Marxism is responsible for the crimes of Stalin and Mao, but disappointingly nothing more is said on this matter: after all, the straightforward conclusion is that Marxist ideas are in no way to blame. Importantly, it is made clear that Marx and Engels considered that the

emancipation of the working class was the task of the working class itself (as in Clause 5 of the Socialist Party's Declaration of Principles), and this is contrasted with Lenin's view that socialist consciousness had to be brought to the working class from outside.

All in all, an informative exhibition which displays a range of books and other documents from the Library's collections. A pamphlet containing the wording of the information boards and some illustrations is available from the Library (51 Crescent, Salford M5 4WX; www.wcml.org.uk).

PB

**WORKING CLASS
MOVEMENT
LIBRARY
SALFORD**



50 Years Ago

Aberfan

THE ABERFAN Tribunal promised that there would be no whitewashing. They produced a report full of memorable phrases (“bungling ineptitude”; “subterfuge and arrogance by the National Coal Board”; “eight years of folly and neglect”) and they laid the blame for the disaster on the National Coal Board, its headquarters, its divisional board, and four of its officials.

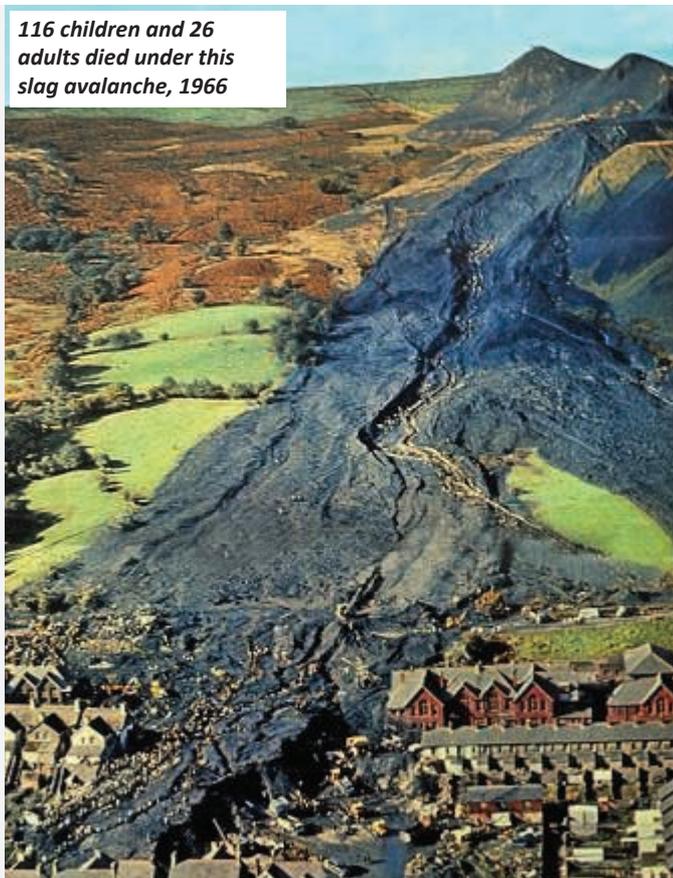
In this, the tribunal followed the accepted pattern of all enquiries into disasters. Somewhere, somebody—a railway signalman, an airline pilot, a ship’s captain—makes a mistake or breaks a rule. It is all too easy, afterwards, to point the finger.

Very few people care to wonder about the context in which the ‘mistakes’ are made, the rules ‘broken’.

Only in passing, for example, did the Aberfan tribunal deal with the basic cause of the disaster, which was the very existence of the slag heaps, up on the mountain above the doomed village. Tipping waste from coal mines is, after all, the simplest and cheapest way of disposing of it. In South Wales, the valleys cannot be used for the tips because that is where the pit heads and the houses must be built. So that the stuff is dumped onto the mountains, where it is a continual eyesore and menace.

Of course they could stop tipping but, as the tribunal said

116 children and 26 adults died under this slag avalanche, 1966



ACTION REPLAY

Sky and the market for sports coverage

IN JULY Sky re-aligned its sports channels, dropping the numbered services in favour of separate channels devoted to their core sports ‘properties’, including cricket, Formula One, golf, and two football channels (with one specifically dedicated to the Premier League), and three channels dedicated to general sports coverage.

The change reflects Sky’s concern at the threat to its dominant position in the UK broadcasting market from viewers watching of sport via the internet both legally and illegally. Roughly 10 percent of live sports viewers use illegal streams. With each passing year viewers become more adept at circumventing legal ways of watching live sport. This is why the Premier League has stepped up attempts to combat pirate viewing streams which deprive Sky of viewers and revenue.

Sky’s rebranding can also be seen as an attempt to protect its position against upstart rivals offering sports content at a cheaper price. In Germany DAZN, which broadcasts sport on demand via the internet for only £ 9.99 a month, has been rapidly collecting rights to

broadcast sport since its launch last year and is already posing a challenge to Sky.

Other threats are other looming to traditional broadcasters. Amazon, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube have already begun live streaming sports in the US, and will soon try and show marquee sports events to a UK audience. There is also the risk of sports leagues streaming their content directly to the fans, as Major League Baseball and the National Football League do in the US. If this happens over the next decade or so, the foundations on which Sky has built its commercial empire will become more than a little shaky.

For sports themselves, the future is just as uncertain. Games are competing against each other more ferociously than ever before, and some sports may realise they are not as popular and worth less than they imagined. But surely competition and business rivalries are the very ingredients that constitute capitalism?

If the sports economy is seen as a large cake Sky Sports is used to enjoying the largest slice. With every potential rival that enters the lucrative Sports TV arena (streaming or otherwise) the risk to Sky’s market share increases, their share of the cake may diminish and create unhappy shareholders. This is a mirror image of the inherent ruthlessness of capitalism.

KEVIN

on this very point “. . . the reflection that to stop tipping could bring about the closure of the Merthyr Vale Colliery may well have led to the quick suppression of those doubts . . .”

Of course they could deposit the stuff underground but this, said the tribunal, was neither “technically feasible now nor economically practicable” (*The Times* estimated the cost of removing the tip complex alone at £3 million).

Thus the tribunal accepted the economic confine within which capitalism’s industry operates. It accepted that anything which is not economically practicable must be rejected, it accepted that people must live in the constant need to work for their living. It accepted that, although a certain amount must be done to mitigate the hardships of this social set-up, in the end we must make the best of it.

The economic practicabilities of capitalism have a lot to answer for, in coal mining more than in most other industries. Aberfan was only the latest, if one of the most unusual, of the disasters caused by the ‘economic’ production of coal.

(*Socialist Standard*, September 1967)

Correction: the photo last month was not of Konni Zilliacus, the Labour MP, but of his father, the Finnish Nationalist of the same name. Our apologies.

Meetings

For full details of all our meetings and events see our **Meetup** site: <http://www.meetup.com/The-Socialist-Party-of-Great-Britain/>

SEPTEMBER 2017

CARDIFF

Saturday 2 September, 11.00am to 1.00pm

Street Stall

Queen Street (Newport Road end), Cardiff, CF10 2BJ

WIGAN

Saturday 9 September from 11.00am Wigan Diggers Festival

Venue: Gerrard Winstanley Gardens, The Wiend, Wigan, WN1 1PF
The Socialist Party will have a stall at this event

CANTERBURY

Saturday 16 September from 12.00 Noon

Street Stall

In the Parade pedestrian precinct, CT1 2JL

Phone 07971 715569 for more information

LONDON

Saturday 23 September from 10.30am To 4.00pm

Stall at West London Peace Fair

Venue: St Michael and All Angels Church Hall, The Avenue/ Priory Avenue, Bedford Park W4 1TX. Near tube: Turnham Green (just opposite).

OCTOBER 2017

LONDON

Sunday 8 October 3pm

SOCIALISM, WHAT IT IS AND HOW TO GET THERE

An open discussion, bring your ideas. Free entry and refreshments. Socialist Party premises, 52 Clapham High St. SW4 7UN

CANTERBURY

Saturday 14 October from 12.00 Noon

Street Stall

In the Parade pedestrian precinct, CT1 2JL

Phone 07971 715569 for more information

LONDON

Saturday 21 and Sunday 22 October, 10.30am – 5.00pm both days

Autumn Delegate Meeting

Venue: The Socialist Party's premises, 52 Clapham High Street, London, SW4 7UN

Declaration of Principles

This declaration is the basis of our organisation and, because it is also an important historical document dating from the formation of the party in 1904, its original language has been retained.

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e. land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.
2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.
3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation

of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

EC Meeting

Saturday 7 October 2017, 52 Clapham High Street, London, SW4 7UN.

Correspondence should be sent to the General Secretary. All articles, letters and notices should be sent to the Editorial Committee.

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p4: Graph, House of Commons BRIEFING PAPER Number SN05125, 28 March 2017

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p22: Aberfan, 1966, author unknown

p24: A Distressed Vessel, 2005, Author Unknown, PD; US/ARVIN Kill Prisoner, Vietnam, 2017?, Author Unknown, PD; Gold Key, 2005, Swiss Banker, PD; Patrick Stewart, 2004, Patrick Caughey, PD

On the road to nowhere

Two academics list some actual and proposed responses to the 'refugee and migrant crisis', which include international summits – seven in 2016 alone – and an island between Italy and Tunisia, before advancing their own: 'a set of

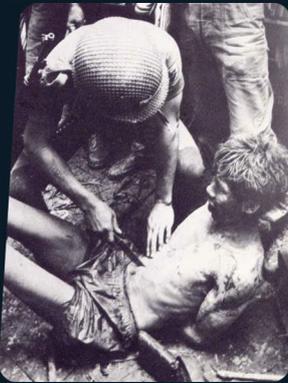


loosely-connected self-governing units we call "Refugia", brought into being mainly by refugees and displaced people themselves, with some support from sympathisers' (theconversation.com, 7 August).

They see Refugia as 'a utopian solution to the crisis of mass displacement'. The Oxford dons are correct about one thing – their proposal is Utopian, but not a solution: creating more countries in a world where competition between them can result in war (one reason for the 'crisis' in the first place) and leaving the real culprit, capitalism, intact will fail. In a socialist world of production for use not profit, there will be no more refugees seeking escape from war and want. The only borders will be natural ones and citizens will be free to migrate where they want.

Another dead end

The actor Mark Rylance asks 'who can remember the dreadful battles of the First World War commemorated recently without remembering that World War One was meant to be the end of war?' and wonders 'when will we stop this madness?' before imploring us to join Stop the War. STW was formed following the September 11



attacks of 2001. The sponsors involved include some past Labour MPs and Jeremy Corbyn plus the dead hand of the Socialist Workers Party. Left wing groups are selective about the wars they oppose and have come out in favour of dictatorships e.g. North Vietnam if such are under attack from the West. By contrast, the Socialist Party has the unique record of opposing both world wars, in fact all wars other than the

class war since its formation in 1904. Wars are not fought in our interest and are not worth the shedding of a single drop of working class blood. We make our opposition to capitalism, its wars and other attendant 'problems' clear. Here is one example from the front cover of the October 1968 edition of our Journal: VIETCONG, NO! MAO, NO! CHE, NO! SOCIALISM, YES!

Silk roads

"If the Chinese gain control of the Donglang region, they will hold a commanding position in the Chumbi Valley and would gain the ability to essentially cut off India's access to the northeastern states in case of a conflict," says The Diplomat. Border skirmishes were once a common occurrence along the 2,520-mile frontier zone, the most notable of which was the month-long Sino-Indian War of 1962 (theweek.co.uk, 7 August). The ongoing tension between these countries is of no surprise to socialists. The expanding sphere of influence of capitalist China started before 1962 and spread to Korea, Mongolia, Vietnam, Laos and Tibet. These days, Chinese capitalist interests extend into Eurasian and African regions through the Belt and Road Initiative. Other competing Asian states such as India and Japan seek similar expansion of their interests and for the time being are working together on an alternative Silk Road.

Streets paved with gold?

'Could gold finally have a purpose? New research says it could help in the fight against cancer' (cnbc.com, 7 August). Sultan Erdogan has, it is rumoured, gold-plated toilet seats in his gigantic 1,150 room palace. Tens of thousands of tonnes of it collect dust in vaults throughout the world. But we do not need to turn to Thomas More's *Utopia*, where bathroom fixtures are made of gold, to find other uses for this metal. Contrary to what the article suggests, there are various, established medicinal uses for gold and the metal is also employed in other fields including electronics, dentistry and photography. The vast stockpiles of gold in a socialist world would likely mean an end to its extraction through mining and, consequently, associated pollution and fatalities.



Revolutionary road

This road is unique in that you cannot be lead there. Should a majority of us come to understand and desire socialism we will be able to explain to the next generation, any visiting aliens or cryogenically unfrozen humans – probably capitalists – that 'People are no longer obsessed with the accumulation of things. We've eliminated hunger, want, the need for possessions. We've grown out of our infancy.' Actually, that is what Captain Picard says in the year 2364. A socialist world of free access and production for use has been possible since the last century. Let us not wait until the 24th.



FREE LUNCH

