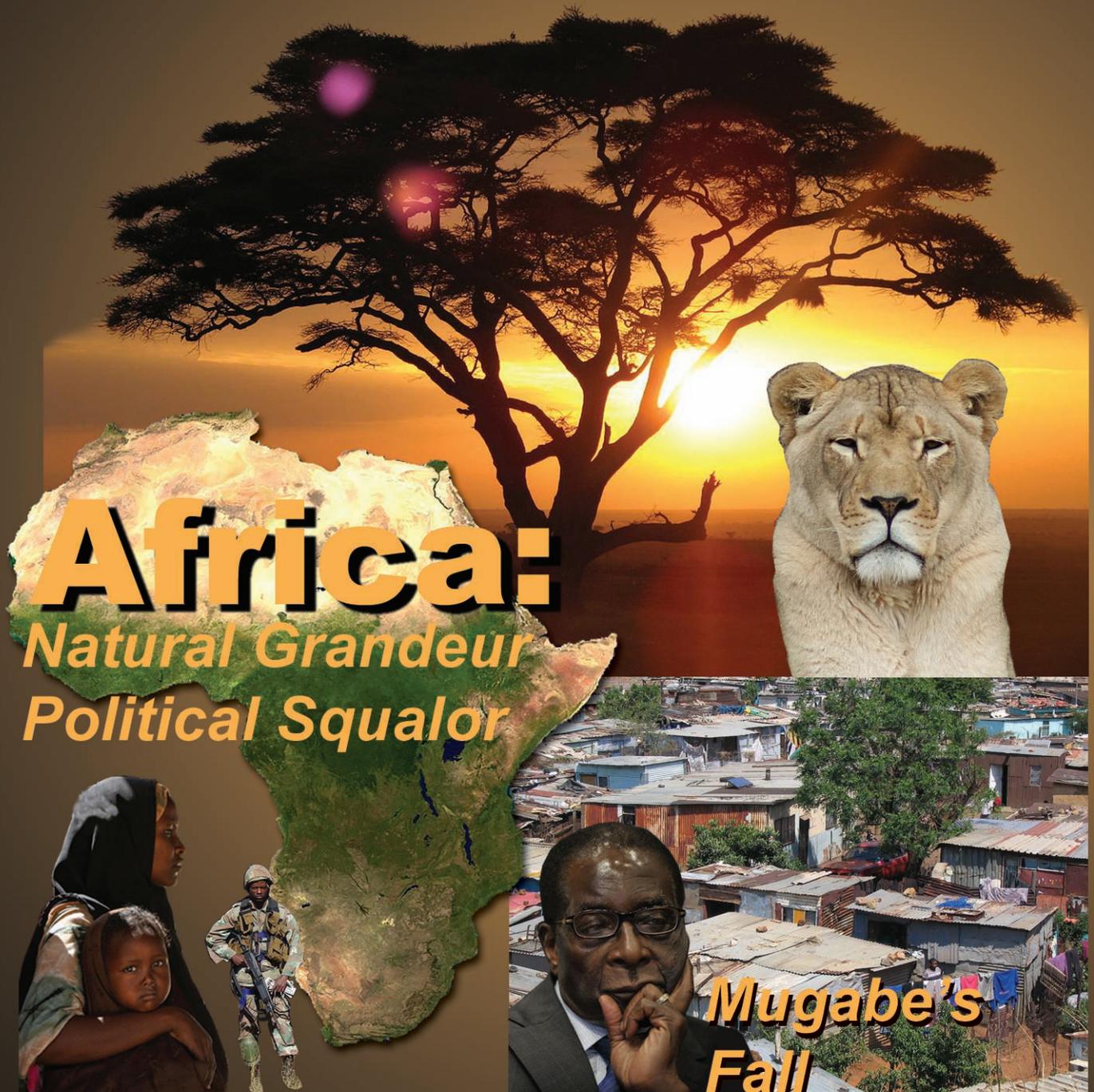


# socialist standard

December 2017  
Vol.116 No.1360  
£1.50

Journal of The Socialist Party of Great Britain    Companion Party of the World Socialist Movement



**also: Free Money  
Unsafe at Any Price  
The Myth of National Self Determination  
Ideology & Revolution (part three)**



# socialist standard

Contents December 2017

## Features

### 10 Africa

The politics of conflict in a resource-rich continent

### 12 Free Money

Nothing grows on the magic money tree

### 14 Roma

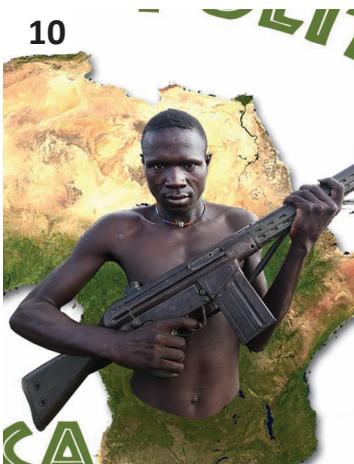
The forgotten people of Europe

### 16 Ideology & Revolution

Concluding the three-part series

### 18 The Myth of Self-Determination

Whether native or foreign, a boss is a boss



## Regulars

### 4 Pathfinders

### 6 Cooking the Books 1

### 7 Greasy Pole

### 9 Material World

### 13 Cooking the Books 2

### 19 Proper Gander

### 20 Reviews

### 22 50 Years Ago

### 23 Meetings

### 24 Rear View

### 24 Free Lunch



## 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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## Mugabe: from 'Marxist' guerilla to fat cat dictator

IN THE late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the major European powers came together at a conference in Berlin to 'carve up' the African territories amongst themselves as part of the 'Scramble for Africa'. European capitalists looted the natural resources and ruthlessly exploited the working population of their African colonies. The racist ideology of white superiority was used to justify their rule. In response, national 'liberation' movements emerged, many of which claimed to be socialist. Robert Mugabe, who led the guerilla war against the white minority regime in what was then known as Rhodesia in the 1970s, was a self-styled 'Marxist Revolutionary'. Some have said that socialists should support these liberation struggles. After all, it was argued, victory would bring freedom and dignity to the African people, and according to Lenin's theory of imperialism, with the loss of their overseas colonies the Western Powers would be unable to buy off a section of their working class, thus hastening the workers' revolution.

However, experience has not lived up to these expectations, and what

emerged in the new states was not socialism, but the rule of emergent local capitalist elites, who, like their colonial predecessors, lived off the labour of the local population. Rival groups competing for power have led, in some cases, to civil war. Although the new local ruling classes did not employ the racist ideology of the European colonialists, they did, however, exploit the ethnic divisions within their own populations. And far from cutting into their 'super profits', Western states found, in many cases, that they could do business with the new regimes.

A case in point is Zimbabwe. After Robert Mugabe achieved power in 1980, he dropped any pretence of being a 'Marxist' and adopted openly capitalist measures, designed to attract foreign investment. Believing that he was a safe pair of hands, Western Powers poured in financial aid. Under his rule, a new local capitalist elite emerged who bought large mansions, expensive cars and sent their children to private schools. As for the majority working population, life was of grinding poverty and unemployment. Unrest in Matabeleland led to thousands, mainly from the minority Ndebele

population, being killed in a state crackdown. As the Zimbabwean economy deteriorated and the living standards of the majority fell, Robert Mugabe's rule became more autocratic and corrupt. In the 2000s, he gave support to seizures of white-owned land by armed groups, which were given over mainly to Mugabe's cronies. When he was forced to resign as President in the aftermath of a military takeover, working class Zimbabweans took to the streets and danced and cheered.

This is not to argue that Africans are unable to govern themselves and were better off under European colonial rule. The new African states, in the absence of a large socialist movement, could only develop capitalism and in the context of the undeveloped state that African economies were left in the wake of colonialism and slavery, and having to compete in a world capitalist market dominated by the western powers, would likely be insecure, authoritarian and corrupt. For African workers to achieve real freedom, they will need to unite with workers in other countries to fight for socialism.

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## A rattle of blockchains

THE THING about revolutions is that it's not always obvious when you're in one. They only reveal themselves in hindsight. Now some are saying there's a new revolution on the horizon that will be as huge as the internet. They claim it will change capitalism, see banks disappear, even abolish global poverty. When we last mentioned this development (*Pathfinders*, October 2015) investment in it stood at around \$360 million. Today it's close to \$2 billion, and this may be only the trickle before the torrent ([ft.com](http://ft.com) - [tinyurl.com/yb5zpdeh](http://tinyurl.com/yb5zpdeh)).

This is the world of the blockchain, and it has implications for socialists too. To understand it though, it's worth understanding something about networks.

Computer networks have in the past followed a centralised model where *clients* are individual computers communicating via a central *server*. This client-server structure dates from the early days when computers were the size of basements and operated via 'dumb' terminals capable only of basic input and screen display.

## "Blockchains could change our world as much over the next two decades as the internet has over the last two"

- source: [zdnet.com](http://zdnet.com) - [tinyurl.com/mp372v5](http://tinyurl.com/mp372v5)

Even when terminals got smarter and became PCs, this structure was inherited, and many businesses still use server systems today.

But there are problems with cost and scalability. The network can only be as big and as multitasking as the server can handle. The bigger the network, the bigger the server, the bigger the costs, and the bigger the risks of catastrophic breakdown if something goes wrong. And while the server does the heavy lifting, today's smart PCs are still behaving essentially like dumb terminals.

Consider for a moment an obvious analogy with the state, and centralised state institutions, or any centralised organisational structure. If one applies a top-down exploded view, every hierarchy looks like this. Such client-server structures are historical legacies which remain universal in the capitalist mindset, yet many of the same problems of cost, scalability and risk apply. In addition, these structures are monolithic and unadaptable, and despite massive social and educational advances, smart workers are still required to behave essentially like dumb terminals.

In computing, a new kind of structure, the peer-to-peer (P2P) network, harnesses

the power of modern PCs by taking the central server out of the equation. Instead files or bits of files are held on multiple distributed computers, or nodes, and can be disseminated directly to any other node independently of other network operations. Having multiple nodes means parallel processing with no bottlenecks, and it's harder to break, because if a node fails alternative routes exist. P2P is therefore faster, cheaper, more scalable and more robust than client-server systems. But is it more error-prone?

In P2P file-sharing networks, multiple copies of the same data are an advantage. But P2P is now running crypto-currencies like Bitcoin, increasingly popular because unlike bank-mediated digital money the transactions are untrackable. Clearly, multiple copies of the same money cannot be allowed (the so-called 'double-spend' problem), so with no central control or validation, and in an anonymous public network where trust cannot be assumed, what prevents Bitcoin inflating and collapsing in chaos?

Enter the blockchain. Strictly speaking, 'blockchain' is the specific Bitcoin

application of a thing called Distributed Ledger Technology (DLT), but as Hoover came to mean 'vacuum cleaner', blockchain is now being used to describe any DLT application.

When you make a Bitcoin transaction, the details are distributed across the entire network. To be sure the transaction is unique (i.e. not a 'double spend') it must be validated. To do this, the system triggers a competition in which freelance 'miners', acting somewhat like accountants, race to validate the transaction in return for a diminishing new-issue Bitcoin payment, which also helps to grow the currency at a controlled rate. Once validated, the transaction is then written into an encrypted public ledger as a permanent record or 'block'. This block is linked to previous blocks and in turn becomes the anchor or link to the next created block, forming an unbroken chain. Any subsequent attempt to tamper with an individual block disturbs the whole chain and results in a network-wide alert. 51 percent of the network, acting in concert, is enough to prevent interference. In plain terms, you can't buy product X on Wednesday and then pretend you didn't buy it on Thursday, at least not unless a network majority allows you to. System integrity is thus maintained, not by central

state or bank control but by what could be called a distributed democracy. Barring a direct and unprecedented hack of the block-creating code itself, it's hard to see a weak point in the system. The strong point is that it offers to cut out all the financial middlemen in capitalist commerce. Business gains would be spectacular, which is why investors are throwing money at this.

DLT can in theory be applied to any field where data validation, transparency and integrity are important. Think big and local government, supply lines, transport systems, food quality and provenance, voting procedures, carbon trading, maybe even accreditation of news stories to prevent fake news.

The truth is, nobody is really sure what it can do, and this has provoked some reckless hyperbole. For example, the claim about abolishing global poverty is patently ridiculous. As tends to happen with emergent technologies, DLT is at the centre of a hype storm while still barely developed and little understood even by its investors. Aside from Bitcoin, no blockchain system has progressed beyond

pilots and beta tests, although there are more than 400 start-ups. Small wonder some pundits are now saying that it has already reached the peak of expectations and is about to freefall into

the 'trough of disillusionment' with its investment bubble bursting.

Yet there remain implications for socialists. DLT suggests a mechanism for a dynamic and decentralised model of socialist democracy and production which avoids the 'double-give' problem in distribution while offering a flexibility and adaptability not associated with traditional centre-periphery structures. More immediately, it could change how workers today understand the word 'organisation'. In the same way that a future subscription-based capitalism could alter mindsets over the need for money (*Pathfinders*, October), DLT shows how you can decouple regulatory oversight from centralised authority. If you don't need a state to ensure that things work properly, but can utilise the 'power of crowds', then an important prop in capitalist ideology is kicked away. Leaders and centralised elite structures engender cronyism, corruption and monolithic thinking yet many workers remain wedded to the supposed need for them, convinced that anything else would result in chaos. DLT may make them think again by showing them the power and flexibility of distributed democracy in action, and not just in socialist theory.

PJS

## Unsafe at Any Price

In August many Americans went to some lengths to view the solar eclipse that was visible, as either a total or partial eclipse, across many parts of the United States. Since looking directly at the sun can be dangerous, it was recommended that people viewed the eclipse through special spectacles that blocked out far more light than ordinary sunglasses. However, one couple sued Amazon on the grounds that the glasses they had bought were defective and had resulted in blurred vision and a blindspot. The glasses in question had in fact previously been recalled by Amazon, but probably not all users would have seen the recall notice, and it does raise the question of how it came about that such a recall was needed. The answer, of course, is the profit motive. Glasses intended for eclipse viewing were sold for as little as \$15, but there were still big profits to be made, by manufacturers, suppliers and retailers.

The UK government website ([www.gov.uk/guidance/product-safety-for-manufacturers](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/product-safety-for-manufacturers)) contains a lot of information about ensuring that products are safe and fit for purpose, and meet the relevant legal and technical requirements. It notes that appropriate production processes 'can also give your business a competitive edge and save costs.' Supplying unsafe products is a criminal offence for manufacturers, and they may also be liable under civil law for any harm done. Changing manufacturing procedures, recalling goods and enduring bad publicity are all likely to hit a company's income and profits, so they do have an incentive to avoid this kind of problem; nevertheless, there are countless examples of unsafe products being marketed.

At the end of September there was a scandal as supermarkets stopped stocking chicken from one factory, after evidence emerged of poor hygiene standards (such as chicken being picked off the floor and being thrown back onto the production line) and the slaughter date being altered so as to stretch the birds' 'commercial life'. Around the same time a woman was awarded massive damages when a vaginal mesh implant made by

Johnson & Johnson was



found to have been launched without a clinical trial and despite a relatively high failure rate; the company had tried to play down unfavourable evidence. It is a different kind of example, but it has even been suggested that 'bags for life' may pose a food poisoning risk if they are used to carry raw foods such as meat and fish.

The US website [unsafeproducts.com](http://unsafeproducts.com) contains many examples of dangerous goods and product recalls. To take just one case, over 100 million vehicles have been recalled because of a problem with a specific brand of airbag, which could shoot metal shrapnel into the driver or front-seat passenger. At least ten deaths and over a hundred injuries had resulted from this defect.

Counterfeit products are also a frequent source of hazards. The consumer does not get what they think they are paying for, and what they have bought may be dangerous to boot. Counterfeit painkillers, for instance, can produce unpredictable side-effects; counterfeit electronic goods may have dodgy circuitry; counterfeit cosmetic and hygiene products many contain unsafe ingredients such as anti-freeze. Producers of counterfeits are of course not worried about any damage to their reputation, being just concerned to avoid any legal entanglements and make a quick buck.

Prosecutions of companies and individuals in charge of them do take place, but often the punishments are tiny. For instance, last year Amazon were fined the (for them) paltry sum of £65,000 for delivering dangerous goods (lithium ion batteries and

flammable aerosols) for carriage by air without appropriate packaging and labelling. Also last year, fifteen cosmetics shops in London were fined a total of £168,000 for selling cosmetics

containing dangerous substances such as hydroquinone, mercury or corticosteroids. A spokesperson for London Trading Standards said that they had a duty to enforce product safety rules, but 'ever shrinking officer numbers and reduced budgets makes it an ever more challenging job'.

Capitalists and the companies they own do not want to produce unsafe goods: they want to make profits. Along the way they may cut corners or fail to carry out proper testing or choose a cheaper or less appropriate ingredient or raw material, all of which have the potential to lead to dangerous goods being sold to consumers. As William Morris pointed out in relation to supplying poor-quality foodstuffs: 'Adulteration laws are only needed in a society of thieves – and in such a society they are a dead letter.' In addition to deaths and injuries in the workplace, what is produced can be dangerous too.

It would be silly to claim that in a socialist society there could never be any cases of unsafe goods being produced. Mistakes may take place in the design or manufacturing process, or the behaviour of certain materials or ingredients may not be properly understood. Production of some potentially dangerous chemicals may still take place if they are deemed necessary, but only with all the appropriate safeguards in place. The aim of production will be to meet human need, not to make a profit, so any unsafe goods produced will be recalled once the problem is discovered, and we can be sure that there will be far fewer such cases than now.

**PAUL BENNETT**

*Correction:* In the letter from Joe Hopkins (Letters, *Socialist Standard*, September) the last words should have been 'a long period of deglobalization' (not 'globalization').

## Russia 1917 - as we saw it

### The Saviours of Russia

In September 1918 the *Socialist Standard* commented on the invasion of Russia by 'the Allies'.

THE HAND of the capitalist is slowly but surely revealing itself in Russian affairs. It will be remembered with what haste the capitalist Governments rushed to congratulate their triumphant (as they thought) fellow thieves upon their overthrow of the monarchy. They did not then stop to lecture on the enormity of "internal dissension" in the midst of war. No, they tumbled over each other in their anxiety to deliver their congratulations – because the 'victors' were of their own kidney.

They made a mistake, however. In the ultimate it proved to be more than the revolutionary capitalist class in Russia could do, once they had broken the tyrannical organisation which had kept the conscripted forces in subjection, to regain for themselves control of those forces. It was not for the want of trying that they failed. They soon got busy butchering soldiers who refused to go on with the war which they had not made, which they had never wanted, and which they realised could bring them no benefit. So the revolutionary capitalists, who were

never for a moment strong enough to establish their authority over the forces and powers of State, were 'recognised' and accepted by their fellow capitalists as the 'representatives of the Russian people,' as the Russian people, as the natural successors, quite as a matter of course, to Bloody Nick and his crew. That they had no power as a Government made no difference.

How different, however, was the conduct of the capitalist Governments toward the Bolsheviks when the latter took the reins from the palsied grasp of the 'triumphant bourgeoisie' ! Their accredited envoys received only 'unofficial recognition, for the purpose of communication.' (...)

Fearful that if the Bolshevik enterprise should meet with success it might prove contagious, they have determined to crush it and restore their friends and allies, the Russian capitalists, to dominance. So we have a 'league of nations' in being against the Bolshevik Government. Under the plea that they are going to save Russia from the Germans they invade the country at various points. 'We come as the friends of Russia,' they declare, and disown any intention of interfering with 'the internal politics of the country.' (...)

As to the claim that they go into Russia as 'the friends of Russia,' this must be translated into 'the friends of Russian capitalists' if it is to have any truth at all. It is only by the continued exploitation of the Russian working class that the Allied



## CENTENARY OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

Articles from the *Socialist Standard*



A selection of 42 articles from the *Socialist Standard* since 1917.  
See page 8.

capitalists can ever hope to recover the many millions which they have advanced, both before and since the outbreak of the war, to Russia, with the object of strengthening her against Germany. (Full article here: [www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/socialist-standard/1910s/1918/no-169-september-1918/editorial-saviours-russia](http://www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/socialist-standard/1910s/1918/no-169-september-1918/editorial-saviours-russia))



### Free is cheaper

IN 1964 a group of American liberal intellectuals calling themselves the Ad Hoc Committee on the Triple Revolution submitted to President Johnson, on their own initiative, a set of proposals to deal with the impact of what was then called 'cybernation'. They argued that the coming of machines that didn't require a large labour force to operate them would lead to increasing unemployment and so less paying demand for goods and services. To remedy this, they proposed to break the link between income and having a job by instituting a guaranteed income for everyone, employed or not.

The socialists of the time saw the 'problem' the Committee perceived of industry being able to provide plenty for all with less living labour as reinforcing the case for socialism, making possible the application of 'from each according to their ability, to each according to their needs' on the basis of the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production. They regarded what the Committee proposed as pitifully inadequate and impossible under

capitalism.

Now, over fifty years later, another group – University College London's Institute for Global Prosperity – has come up with a similar proposal to deal with the same drop in employment and income they expect to result from growing automation. Their proposal is in fact more radical: that 'free housing, food, transport and access to the internet should be given to British citizens in a massive extension of the welfare state':

'The recommendations include doubling Britain's existing social housing stock with funding to build 1.5m new homes, which would be offered for free to those in most need. A food service would provide one third of meals for 2.2m households deemed to experience food insecurity each year, while free bus passes would be made available to everyone, rather than just the over-60s. The proposals also include access to basic phone services, the internet, and the cost of the BBC licence fee being paid for by the state' (*Guardian*, 11 October).

This 'universal basic service' is offered as an alternative to the 'universal basic income' that others have proposed to deal with the same perceived problem of the impact of advancing technology of employment and incomes. From a socialist point of view, it is more

attractive as it would reduce rather than pander to money-commodity relations. There were some members of the Socialist Party members in the 1950s who saw extending free services as the way to socialism (they left).

The trouble is that, as a reform of the 'welfare state', it is envisaged as being implemented under capitalism to deal with the problem of how to deal with people without an income from employment. Its proponents claim that it is 'fully costed' as all reforms have to be these days. They say that 'the value for an individual using all services would represent £126 of net weekly earnings' which could be funded by reducing the personal tax allowance; in other words, by reducing net weekly earnings. Which sounds like the 'redistribution of poverty' that the 'welfare state' has been all about.

A weekly saving of this amount would have the same effect as a weekly basic income of the same amount. It would be a wage subsidy to employers and so would exert a downward pressure on wages. Much better to go the whole hog and abolish the wages (work for money) system through making the means of production the common property of all, so that everyone can have free access to all of what they need.



## Beware of Leaders

IT CAN be a time for their widespread regret, if not mourning, when any of our political leaders reaches the end of their time of dominance and the exposure of their futile dishonesty, leaving them with little more than a badge signifying their removal from the scene. Like Neville Chamberlain in 1938 waving his little piece of paper from Hitler to the crowd at Heston Airport. Like Ted Heath and his Three-Day Week which would replace slump with prosperity. Like Theresa May and her snap general election which was going to sweep away the muddle of Nick Clegg and that Coalition along with hapless Ed Miliband. But also, less enduring, there was John Moore who ended his time as Baron Moore of Lower Marsh. Moore was once favoured by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher with a rocket-like rise up the Greasy Pole to the heights of Secretary Of State for Health and Social Security, where he enforced such changes as to nominate him Mr Privatisation with all the implicit rewards.

### Collapse

One response to this was from Ken Clarke, who during his time has occupied so many ministerial prominences – among them Health and Social Security – along with his preference for cigars, alcohol and jazz music. He assessed Moore as ‘bright and likeable...very popular with the press’ but someone who ‘...knew nothing about either health or social security and, as far as I could see, had no views on the subject. He was soon both overwhelmed and unnerved by the sheer scale of the problems he faced and the expectations he had to live up to’. Another Tory colleague compared him to ‘...a frightened rabbit mesmerised by oncoming headlights’. Except that Moore’s difficulties went rather deeper than that, for in November 1987 in the midst of the chaos of his life as a Cabinet Minister he was struck down by bacterial pneumonia. His desperation was such that his struggle to conceal his condition was undermined when he collapsed at a Cabinet meeting. He chose to be treated at a private hospital which at that time was charging thousands of pounds a day, but soon there was no alternative for Thatcher but to cut his Ministry in two and pass the portfolio for Health to Ken Clarke before, in 1989, sacking Moore from the Cabinet. In 1992 Moore gave it all up, standing down from Parliament to work his talents as Baron Moore of Lower Marsh in the House of Lords – which he attended only rarely – and to return to his former fields of profit gathering in banking and industry.

### Currie

Among the persistent critics of Moore in the Commons was Edwina Currie who at one time seemed to go out of her way to be one of Thatcher’s more unwise appointments. For example there was the occasion when, as a junior Minister for Health, she informed the nation that ‘...in the Winter it was the Northerners who, neglecting to keep warm, die of ignorance and chips’. In her younger days in Liverpool she had spent a lot of time adoring the Beatles in the Cavern Club before she became a rampant Tory through her time absorbing Economic History at the London School of Economics. She was elected to Parliament in 1983 for South Derbyshire, by which time she had amassed a reputation as a ‘virtually permanent fixture on the nation’s TV screen saying something outrageous about just anything... the most outspoken and sexually interested woman of her political generation’ – an assessment suitable to her affair with the future Prime Minister John Major, which lasted some four years when he was a Party Whip hoping to be promoted through the ranks. But then it was Major who, after reaching the heights of Chief Secretary to the Treasury, felt it necessary to end the affair, leaving her distressed but not so much that she could resist accusing him of ‘sexism’ and ‘racism’ and describing him as ‘one of the less competent Prime Ministers’ and later as ‘...too small minded in character, too small in intellect in the end’. And she did not consider it was the end of all affairs, asking herself, as she picked over the memories: ‘I daydream about another affair. Now, who might be interested?’

### Broadmoor

One of Currie’s responsibilities in the Ministry of Health was a Task Force involved in running the Broadmoor Hospital, that nervously guarded and controlled institution where the most dangerous and unpredictable of offenders are confined after being medically certified as in need of restraint as well as treatment. Currie appointed Jimmy Saville to the Task Force, allowing him keys which made him free to roam the hospital with access to every part of it and mingle with the patients including those who were severely disturbed and heavily medicated. That was before the full facts emerged of Saville being himself a highly unstable character, but there was still good reason to act with caution in so threatening an environment. Among the other disturbing events which Currie was active in was as Health Minister in 1988 when she provoked the fury of the dairy

farmers and milk sellers by announcing that most British eggs were contaminated with salmonella. As a result some four million hens were slaughtered with a huge financial loss to the producers which brought about Currie’s resignation as a Minister. The panic and anger did not die down for some years; in 2001 it was revealed that at the crucial time there was a severe epidemic of salmonella in the hens but by then Currie was well into her alternative professions as a TV performer, writer of romantic fiction and the like.



Currie's long since had her chips

In the ideal (for the politicians) world there is often an assumption that when a leader drops out they leave a swathe of affectionately wistful memories. But all our experience of examples of this – Moore, Major, Currie – emphasises it is not so because their period in power followed the established interests of the higher, owning, exploiting class. It is our part to rebuild world society so that it is freer, safer and humane.

IVAN

**UK BRANCHES & CONTACTS**

**LONDON**

**North London branch.** Meets 3rd Thurs. 8pm at Torriano Meeting House, 99 Torriano Ave, NW5 2RX. Contact: Chris Dufton 020 7609 0983 nlb.spgb@gmail.com

**South London branch.** Meets last Saturday in month, 2.30pm. Head Office, 52 Clapham High St, SW4 7UN. Contact: 020 7622 3811.

**West London branch.** Meets 1st & 3rd Tues. 8pm. Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace (corner Sutton Court Rd), W4. Corres: 51 Gayford Road, London W12 9BY. Contact: 020 8740 6677. tenner@abelgratis.com

**MIDLANDS**

**West Midlands regional branch.** Meets last Sun. 3pm (check before attending). Contact: Stephen Shapton. 01543 821180. Email: stephenshapton@yahoo.co.uk.

**NORTH**

**North East Regional branch.** Contact: P. Kilgallon, 29 Nicholson Terrace, Newcastle, NE12 9DP

**Lancaster branch.** Meets 2nd Sun (Jan 3rd Sun), 3pm, Friends Meeting House, Meeting House Lane. Ring to confirm: P. Shannon, 07510 412 261, spgb.lancaster@worldsocialism.org.

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**Newtownabbey.** Contact: Nigel McCullough. 028 90852062.

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**Glasgow branch.** Meets 3rd Weds. at 7pm in Community Central Halls, 304 Maryhill Road, Glasgow. Contact: Peter Hendrie, 75 Lairhills Road, East Kilbride, Glasgow G75 0LH. 01355 903105. peter.anna.hendrie@blueyonder.co.uk.

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## Europe: A whiff of fascism in the air

MANY OF us recognise a rightward swing in British and American politics in recent times and throughout Europe topics of immigration, Muslims and refugees are now dominating election campaigns like never before. In France, Le Pen's National Front. In The Netherlands Geert Wilders EERT Dutch Freedom Party. In Germany, Alternative for Germany (AfD) has made a strong showing. But all those parties have been rejected in general elections. Some, sadly have been more successful.

Despair and deprivation are fertile

The nationalist rhetoric of Kurz has given the extreme right FPO no point of differentiation, making the impending coalition more likely.

In Hungary, Viktor Orban's Fidesz party and in Poland, Jarosław Kaczyński's Law and Justice Party (PiS) have openly embraced far-right policies. Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orban referred to asylum seekers as 'poison' and advocates 'ethnic homogeneity.' To counter the country's declining population he announced a housing grant and loan

spokesman Ivan Metik announced it will only accept Christian migrants when it takes in Syrian refugees under an EU relocation plan. Robert Fico, Slovakia's prime minister, reinforced that message the following year, saying that Slovakia will not accept 'one single Muslim' migrant into the country.' He further stated '... Islam has no place in Slovakia... I do not wish there were tens of thousands of Muslims.'

Political factions almost everywhere have turned immigration into a political football. Ruling nationalist party leaders have seldom dissociated themselves from xenophobic racist violence. During the 2015 election campaign, PiS politicians ranted about immigrants and hate-crimes have multiplied six-fold since 2010.

Capitalism both unites and divides workers. The system compels our fellow workers to unite in order to defend their interests, but it also imposes upon us the necessity to compete individually for jobs. This rivalry creates animosity between workers of different nationalities, regions and religions, by endeavouring to bind the workers of one nation to the idea that they have a common interest with 'their' nation's employers. The only way to overcome these divisions is to strive for the solidarity of all workers, regardless of their nationality, language or faith. Native-born workers may think that excluding migrant workers will help them. But if the employers can hurt one section of the working class, it is easier to hurt the other.

Our fellow workers in Central and Eastern Europe have nothing to gain from the return of nationalisms which ravaged this part of the world several times. Our class is clearly international. We are all interdependent. The Socialist Party maintains that workers must free themselves of patriotism and any concept of national superiority, for without discarding these ideas of the ruling class they will never themselves be free.

'We have to fight against nationalism,' said Jean Claude Juncker, president of the European Commission, 'We have the duty not to follow populists but to block the avenue of populists,' adding, 'Borders are the worst invention ever made by politicians...' ([tinyurl.com/ybnwv99k](http://tinyurl.com/ybnwv99k)).

We can only agree. Instead of nation-states (or transnational trading blocs), we could have instead a worldwide socialist cooperative commonwealth as an alternative way of life.

**ALJO**



ground for the populist demagogue. Political and economic crises bring forth renewed discontent based on old slogans. Nationalist parties have been making significant gains and only too frequently elections in Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia have become contests between the right and the further-to-the-right. Some call it fascism but it is more accurately described as nativism where scapegoating foreigners offers an increasingly successful tactic for gaining political power. Populist regimes have opportunistically seized on refugees and migrants to promote xenophobia for political gain, tapping into fear and prejudice

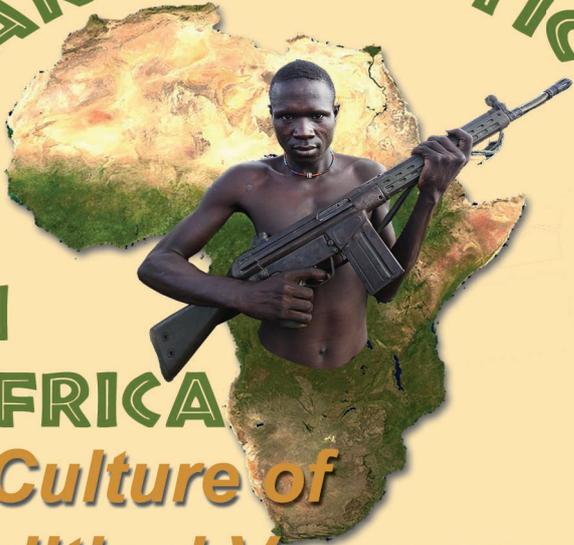
The recent election as Austria's chancellor of Sebastian Kurz of the Austrian People's Party and (at the time of writing) a possible coalition with the Freedom Party of Austria is yet another signal of this shift to the right.

scheme for couples who promise to have babies. Since his election in 2010, Orban has been accused of setting up an authoritarian state, jiggling with electoral laws, placing cronies in the judiciary and media, and squeezing funding for groups critical of his regime. Orban was re-elected in 2014 with more than double the combined vote of the next two candidates. Mainstream politicians are also critical of Orban, but they know that the alternative is even less attractive — the extreme right Jobbik party is Hungary's second-largest.

The Czech billionaire media-magnet Andrej Babis has also been recently swept into power with his own political party, ANO, 'Action of Dissatisfied Citizens', where his anti-immigration policies appealed to many voters who agreed with the Czech president Milos Zeman that the flight of refugees from Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan was an 'organised invasion'.

In 2015 Slovakia's Interior Ministry

# PARTY POLITICS



## IN AFRICA a Culture of Political Vengeance

It is nowadays believed that political opposition parties in most African countries are indispensable to the parliamentary system of democracy in the sense that opposition parties help to promote checks and balances in the way society is governed.

The supposition that opposition political parties when left unchecked may easily become agents of regime change is a fact, especially when we take into consideration the reality that opposition parties in most countries in Africa are fighting to win political power at all costs. Indeed every opposition political party seems to be working for a political revolution in the guise of championing working class political, social and economic interests by overcoming their political and economic marginalization.

But, once in power, opposition political parties easily shed their revolutionary clothes when confronted with the realities of political and economic problems. Opposition political parties in African countries are denied the freedom to pursue their political agendas and are more or less perceived as a threat to political stability.

### 'Marxism-Leninism'

After attaining their political independence some African countries adopted a one-party system of government on the premise that only the doctrine of 'Marxism-Leninism' could succeed in welding the diverse ethnic groups together.

After the end of the Second World War, and the division of the world into West and East, most African nationalist leaders looked to the Soviet Union, China and Cuba for political and logistical assistance in their political struggle against European colonialism. The military and economic development programmes achieved in Russia and China were a political marvel to African nationalists. Modibo Keita in Mali was one of the first African political statesmen to adopt 'Marxism-Leninism' after achieving political independence. Then, in countries such as Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Namibia movements fighting for political independence turned into guerrilla movements given the hostile political conditions existing at that time. FRELIMO, SWAPO, ZANU-PF and MPLA received military assistance and training from China and the Soviet Union. In

Ethiopia and Somalia, Mengistu Haile Mariam and Siad Barre set up single party political dictatorships that attempted to apply a so-called 'socialist' doctrine that was in most cases resisted by those ethnic clans who practised Islamic religion and cultural traditions instead.

Meanwhile, one-party rule was imposed in Zambia and Tanzania, even though neither country suffered from ethnic tensions.

The Marxist conception of the economic conditions giving rise to social classes was seemingly alien to African historic sociological perceptions in the sense that the entrenched dualistic pattern of urban and rural communities to be found existing in every African country posed a challenge to the otherwise authoritarian political programmes implemented by the one-party state.

The one-party state properly defined was the antithesis of parliamentary democracy given that political freedom of any kind was banned. The one-party state was effectively a police state. The rapid growth achieved under one-party political regimes in terms of economic and peasant empowerment remain largely unrepresented and it is fair to point out that creation of co-operatives both in Zambia and Tanzania (Ujaama) did happen to raise agricultural production (peasant farmers) in the respective countries. But because state capitalism – let alone socialism – cannot succeed for long in a single country, unforeseen and unanticipated political and economic misfortunes that began in the Soviet Union led to the vast political changes that contributed to the collapse of one-party states in Africa and beyond. In particular, the wind of change that swept across Eastern Europe and Africa originated from political and economic developments taking place within the Soviet Union after President Gorbachev came to power in 1985, when the old state capitalist regime there began to crumble under its own economic inefficiency.

Without any kind of ideological, military and economic support from the Soviet Union one-party political regimes could not withstand the ever increasing demands for political patriotism by the masses.

In Zambia Dr Kaunda had survived two military coups in 1979 and 1987, while the command economy set up in 1972 was visibly crumbling, characterized by food shortages and rampant smuggling of mealie meal, sugar, cooking oil and kerosene to the nearby Congo (Zaire). In 1985 President Nyerere of Tanzania resigned as head of state and was succeeded by Ali Hassan Mwinyi. Then in 1986 the whole Copperbelt erupted into simultaneous uprising against the UNIP government due to persistent mealie meal shortages and Dr Kaunda reacted swiftly by confiscating privately owned milling companies. Many prominent politicians and Zambia Congress of Trade Union leaders were arrested and detained. In South Africa President de Klerk released Nelson Mandela from 27 years' imprisonment and it was now clear that the political values that Dr Kaunda had strongly held and supported had come to an end. In 1991 the first ever multi-party elections were held and Dr Kaunda and his party UNIP were defeated by the MMD under President Chiluba.

### Contested election results

From 1990 until today political patriotism in Africa has given rise to endless civil wars and ethnic crises that were largely absent under one-party political regimes. Political pluralism, defined as periodic change of government through parliamentary elections, has proved to be a delicate political

experiment in Africa since African political statesmen have shown a reluctance to surrender political power through the medium of the ballot box. Fraudulent elections have been employed and many attempts made to apply corrupt methods by those in power.

Corruption and outright police intimidation sponsored by the ruling parties have seen the suppression of the press and political demonstrations in many African countries. Parliamentary democracy has stalled into a political conflict between the ruling parties and the political opposition.

Why has there been so much violence during and after elections in Africa?

Political elites in African countries show no restraint in manipulating the masses through feeding them lies in order to win their political support during elections. In certain cases the personal ambition of elites are showcased in ethnic animosities that tend to end in violence and even genocide.

African countries face economic crises that are in many cases a consequence of political instability. Civil wars arise from lack of democracy or a complete disregard of the political freedom of the masses. In a divided and conflict ridden country, conventional notions of justice – which encompasses political equity and fair play – are conspicuous by their absence.

The violation of human rights has been one of the lamentable issues highlighted by the opposition parties in African countries. Most governments in Africa are not only based on nepotism, but are corrupt and inept. Political and social insecurity takes the form of trampling upon the political freedoms of the opposition parties. The suppression, coercion and intolerance of opposition parties are significant factors giving rise to political conflicts in Africa.

### **Woe to the vanquished**

Although the international community continues to praise Zambia as a living example of political democracy and peaceful political transitions, the realities on the ground prove otherwise. In 1994 the second President, Frederick Chiluba, amended the Zambian constitution to disqualify the former president Dr Kenneth Kaunda from standing as UNIP presidential candidate.

In 1996 Dr Kaunda was subjected to severe molestation and had also escaped a police-inspired assassination attempt during a political rally in Kabwe in 1994. Dr Kaunda was declared an immigrant and was immediately arrested and put in prison.

The culture of political vengeance is what defines African plural politics as those who are defeated during the election are treated as enemies of the political parties in power.

After winning the presidential elections in 2001 by defeating UPND leader Anderson Mazoka, President Mwanawasa slapped a corruption allegation on Frederick Chiluba in the name of stamping out corruption from the MMD. Chiluba and his co-accused were only declared innocent by President Rupiah Banda in 2010 (after Mwanawasa had died). When President Sata defeated MMD President Rupiah Banda in 2011 he instructed the public prosecutor to withdraw Rupiah Banda's presidential immunity in order to face corruption charges concerning the importation of oil from Nigeria in 2009. Rupiah Banda and his son Andrew were only declared free and innocent when President Lungu became president after the death of Sata

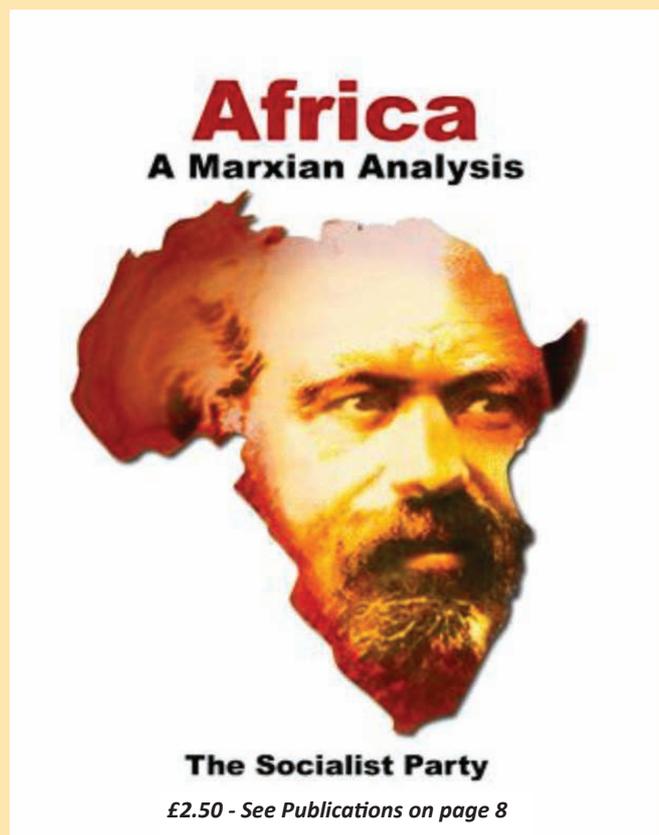
in 2014. The foregoing shows that previous leaders have been subjected to political vengeance by those who come to power.

The political longevity of the ZANU-PF under President Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe was partly due to the charismatic status of Mugabe both within the African Union and Zimbabwe. The lack of a vibrant political opposition within Zimbabwe was betrayed by parochial ethnic and tribal allegiances to the ZANU-PF. Indeed both dictators Mobutu Sese Seko and Idi Amin were ousted from power through outside pressure (Rwanda and Tanzania). Political stability, defined as a cordial political relation between major political players in a given country, remain strained because opposition parties in Africa tend to dispute the results of presidential elections, notwithstanding any endorsement by overseas election monitors.

### **No way out under capitalism**

The common perceptions held by eminent African politicians and intellectuals is the belief that Africa's economic underdevelopment and political instability stems from the biased economic and political relations between Africa and European developed nations (neo-colonialism). Various reports published by the UN special agencies, the World Bank, the IMF and the Economic Commission of Africa reveal that parts of Africa often have the highest growth rates (and birth rates) while the rate of Africa's social poverty remains higher than the rate of population growth. The continent is drought prone. Demography, drought and desertification are a triple threat to Africans' continued existence and a triple source of political conflicts. The situation is exacerbated by a huge foreign debt, the depletion of natural resources, uneven regional economic development, and lack of physical capital as well as institutional decay.

**CEPHAS MULENGA, ZAMBIA**





“Free Money for All” was the headline of a review in the *Evening Standard* (9 March) of a book advocating a universal, unconditional basic income (UBI) paid by the state to every citizen as a matter of right. The writer’s not the only one of course. There’s an international organisation advocating it, the Basic Income Earth Network or BIEN ([basicincome.org](http://basicincome.org)). It’s also the official policy of the Green Party. Richard Branson is the latest billionaire to lend his support to the proposal ([virgin.com/richard-branson/experimenting-universal-basic-income](http://virgin.com/richard-branson/experimenting-universal-basic-income)). However, the scheme is impracticable under capitalism and would be unnecessary – in fact, meaningless – in a socialist society.

It is not the state handing out ‘free money’ that is impracticable but handing it out to everyone unconditionally. The state has long given ‘free money’ to the ‘poor’ but this has not been unconditional – you have to be poor to get it and have to prove that you are poor. In Britain up to 1948 this was paid out locally and administered by Poor Law Guardians. In 1948 these payments were nationalised and called ‘National Assistance’, later ‘Social Security’, and now ‘Income Support’. It’s still basically the Poor Law, though, with the government as the stingy Poor Law Guardians.

What the state is doing is making up the income of the poor to a set minimum – the poverty line – by giving them ‘free money’. It’s a very basic Basic Income.

It is conceivable that this could be made conditional only on proving that you are poor, as is the case now for old age pensioners. So if you are of working age there would be no need for you to prove that you are unfit for work or have been actively seeking employment. As long as you were poor, you would get ‘income support’ unconditionally. Some UBI proponents argue that this might even be cheaper as it would remove the need for so much form-filling, checking and snooping. That’s a language governments understand and pilot schemes are already underway in Finland, Canada and the Netherlands to see if this is true. In the general election the Green Party promised one in Britain. It’s what Richard Branson wants too. Although this would be unconditional (apart of course from having to be poor in the sense of having an income, if any, below a given level), it is not universal. It might even be introduced but it would merely be a cost-saving reform of the so-called Welfare State. So, yes, such a ‘partial basic income’ is something possible under capitalism.

What BIEN, the Green Party and others want is universal ‘free money’, a payment by the state to everyone as a step towards a different kind of society or at least a different kind of capitalism. The big difference is that the ‘free money’

would be paid, not just to the poor, but to every wage and salary worker too, in fact to everyone, even capitalists (‘Green Party unveils manifesto plans to . . . give cash handouts to millionaires by introducing a universal basic income, as the *Daily Mail* (24 May) put it, typically). One major objection to this can be summed up in a single word – Speenhamland.

### Wage subsidy for employers

In 1795 the magistrates in this Berkshire village decided to pay some ‘free money’ out of the Poor Law rate to poor but working farm labourers so as to bring their income up to a subsistence level. This amounted to a subsidy to their employers who were thereby able to continue to pay below subsistence, i.e. starvation wages. The practice later spread to other counties in the South of England. Marx mentions this in passing in Volume I of *Capital*:

‘At the end of the eighteenth century and during the first decade of the nineteenth, the English farmers and landlords enforced the absolute minimum of wages by paying the agricultural workers less than the minimum as actual wages and making up the balance in the form of parish relief.’

In fact, all state payments to workers are a wage subsidy to employers. The tax credits that Gordon Brown introduced are widely recognised as being this, but so are family allowances (which have relieved employers of the need to include an element or so much an element for maintaining a family in the wages they pay).

When in June last year there was a referendum in Switzerland on the principle of introducing UBI its advocates didn’t disguise the fact that its introduction would reduce wages. In fact they openly admitted, even proposed it:

‘Wages are going to adapt themselves to become a complement to Basic Income. For example with an Unconditional Basic Income of 2,500 Swiss Francs, someone who at present gets 8000 Swiss francs from their employer will not get more than about 5,500 or so wages which will come to be added to their Basic Income’ ([rbi-oui.ch/laboratoire-sur-le-financement-du-revenu-de-base-inconditionnel](http://rbi-oui.ch/laboratoire-sur-le-financement-du-revenu-de-base-inconditionnel)).

### Beyond the wages system?

So, everybody would be given ‘free money’ by the state up to the poverty line and this would be topped up by wages paid by their employer. Some, such as the advocates of ‘Fully Automated Luxury Communism’, see this as a first step towards breaking the link between work and consumption. They envisage the part coming from the state in people’s

income gradually increasing until this is where their most of their income comes from – a gradual dying out of the wages system.

That's not going to happen. If the wages system is going to be abolished (as it should be) it won't and can't be done gradually, but what about the state paying everyone a poverty-line basic income? Could this happen?

Capitalism is based on the wages system, on most people being forced by economic necessity to work for an employer to get money to buy the things that they need. A universal basic income paid to everyone would undermine this. While it would not remove the pressure to work for an employer it would put workers in a better bargaining position with their employers over wages. This wouldn't be a bad thing of course, but it would have economic consequences. The higher wages would be at the expense of profits, but profits are what make the capitalist economy go round.

But more, where is the money to come from? Since the state produces nothing it would have to come from taxation but in the end taxation falls on profits (taxes on wages, as both Adam Smith and David Ricardo recognised, are passed on to employers). So, unless wages fall as the Swiss basic-income advocates advocate, UBI would represent a massive redistribution of income from profits, the source of investment, to popular consumption. This would severely disrupt the capitalist economic system which is driven by investment for profit. If, on the other hand, wages did fall, it would represent a redistribution of income within the capitalist class from those employing fewer workers to those employing many; which would cause other problems and disputes.

So, as far as capitalism is concerned, it does not make sense and wouldn't work. It's just not going to happen. Even so, there is quite a bit of common ground in the arguments advanced

in favour of UBI and those in favour of socialism. Both start from the same realisation that we are living in an age of potential abundance but that this abundance is not realised as resources are wasted in mere wealth-shifting activities such as investment banking, advertising, and legal services (our list is longer since socialism would render money and the whole financial system redundant). If these, and other forms of waste, were eliminated then society could produce enough to eliminate poverty, improve education and health care, and provide everybody with a comfortable retirement. This is undoubtedly true. This redirecting of resources currently wasted, together with the removal of the profit barrier, would mean that more useful goods and services could be provided and an abundance – a sustainable abundance – achieved. Socialism would also decouple consumption from work. In other words, what you consumed would no longer be tied to how much you obtained from the sale of your working skills or even to how much work you did (or were deemed to have done). After all, this is precisely what the slogan "from each according to their ability, to each according to their needs" means. But this of course is not going to be possible under capitalism.

So, to sum up: while an unconditional income for the poor is possible under capitalism as a reform of the welfare state, a universal unconditional basic income for everyone is not. The objectives which those who favour it want – a sustainable abundance and breaking the link between consumption and work – can only be achieved on the basis of the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production.  
**ADAM BUICK**



### More hot air about banks

'Shock data shows that most MPs do not know how money is created' Guardian columnist Zoe Williams began her article (29 October). She was publicising the results of a survey of MPs by the banking reform group Positive Money which claimed that it showed that '85% were unaware that new money was created every time a commercial bank extended a loan, while 70% thought that only the government had the power to create new money.'

This reflects not the assumed ignorance of MPs, who actually got it right, but the confused use of the word money. This is now used to describe two different monetary phenomena. First, what in America is called 'fiat money', money issued by administrative decision by the state as notes and coins and electronically. Second, what used to be called 'bank credit', loans banks make to businesses and individuals. This is now called 'bank money', so banks are regarded as 'creating money' every time they make a loan.

This confusion misleads some into

thinking that banks can create money in the same way that the state can, by a mere 'stroke of the pen'. Williams herself wrote that 'all money comes from a magic tree, in the sense that money is spirited from thin air'. But not all money (in the contemporary usage of the word) does, only fiat money – and that doesn't create any new wealth, just more claims on wealth. What commercial banks lend is not 'spirited out of thin air'. It is already existing money that they lend on from what they themselves borrow from depositors and the money market.

Bank lending certainly has the economic effect of increasing spending. It is this that gives rise to the illusion that they are 'creating new money'. But what they are doing is making available, to those who want money to spend, the money of those who don't want to spend theirs for the time being. This is not creating new money, only activating existing money. That's precisely the economic role of banks and their usefulness to capitalism.

As the article (which currency cranks are always citing, though not this passage) in the March 2014 Bank of England Quarterly Bulletin puts it:

'Banks receive interest payments on their assets, such as loans, but they also generally have to pay interest on their liabilities, such as savings accounts. A bank's business model relies on receiving

a higher interest rate on the loans (or other assets) than the rate it pays out on its deposits (or other liabilities). (...) The commercial bank uses the difference, or spread, between the expected return on their assets and liabilities to cover its operating costs and to make profits'.

Their business model is not based on spiriting money up from thin air and charging interest for the loan of it. That would be too good to be true. They have to have the money – or at least have to obtain it fairly quickly, as the German central bank, the Bundesbank explains:

'The banks also keep a constant eye on the costs that may incur by granting loans and creating book money. For example, if the customer uses the new credit balance to transfer money to an account at another bank, from the bank's point of view money will be flowing out. The bank then often has to recover this money, for example by taking out a loan from another bank, or by "refinancing" itself with a loan from the central bank. Alternatively, it can persuade savers to invest cash or credit balances at the bank in the form of savings or fixed-term deposits' ([bundesbank.de/Redaktion/EN/Standardartikel/Service/book\\_money\\_text.html](http://bundesbank.de/Redaktion/EN/Standardartikel/Service/book_money_text.html)).

In other words, in the end (if not immediately) they have to pay for what they pick from the 'money tree'.



**N**ot that long ago, before the arrival of asylum seekers and refugees seeking safety and sanctuary, the target of the populist media and opportunist politicians was the Roma who were fleeing discrimination and persecution in their home countries. To the frustration of many, the Roma were EU citizens and therefore were entitled to go where they pleased within the EU. They were, also to the annoyance of many, largely non-Muslim, being mostly Christian, and so could not be portrayed as a threat to European 'culture'. So instead they were stereotyped as anti-social criminals. And just to make sure, in many places local anti-begging ordinances were passed to turn many of the Roma into law-breakers. Campaigns were initiated by central government and city authorities to evict and remove the Roma from the streets. They were even deported by some countries. In 2008 Equal Opportunities Commissioner Vladimír Špidla said 'Roma are one of the largest ethnic minorities in the EU, but too often they are Europe's forgotten citizens. They face persistent discrimination and far-reaching social exclusion.'

### Nazi genocide

Europe's Roma were driven from northern India between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries by invaders of the Ottoman Empire. The first laws against 'Gypsies' were passed in Germany, and then Hungary, in 1476 when King Matthias of the latter country ruled that all Gypsies be employed as slave-labour. Within a century, anti-Gypsy laws had been introduced in most of the other countries of Europe.

Most people do not realize that the Nazis were just as intent upon the genocide of the Roma as they were on the extermination of the Jews. 'Many groups were victimized [by the Nazis], but only the Jews and the Roma were victims of the Final Solution, victims of genocide', said Prof. Ian Hancock, the director of the Romani Archives and Documentation Center at the University of Texas at Austin. About 1.5 million Roma lost their lives and some countries such as Germany, Austria, and the Baltic states lost their entire Roma populations.

Compensation for Roma survivors of the Holocaust came many decades after the Jewish survivors began receiving their compensation. Petre Matei, a researcher at the Elie Wiesel National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania, said that one of the reasons that the Roma began to receive pensions decades after the Jewish survivors is because there is still a lot of discrimination against the Roma.

'The authorities said, "The Roma had nothing anyway, so what should they be compensated for?"' said Mirjam

Karoly, the senior advisor on Roma and Sinti issues at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. 'They were second-class victims' ([tinyurl.com/yc4jtydp](http://tinyurl.com/yc4jtydp)).

The compensation for Roma survivors has varied from country to country. For example, a year ago, it was announced that Roma survivors in the Czech Republic would get a one-time payment of 2,500 euros. In Romania, survivors began to receive monthly pensions from Germany two years ago. Because the compensation came 70 years after the end of the war, very few of the survivors were still living. Of the 300 Roma Holocaust survivors in Romania who applied for German pensions because they were deported to concentration camps, 200 survivors received the pensions which average approximately 200 euros monthly plus a sum of approximately 12,000 euros which is supposed to make up for the money that they should have been paid in the last 10 years. The other 100 Roma concentration camp survivors did not receive the pensions because they were younger than 11 years old during the war, so the German authorities decided that they were too young to perform forced-labour.

According to Ion Duminica, a Roma researcher at the Moldovan Academy of Sciences, at the so-called 'work-camps', the Roma perished from hunger, typhus and from the cold. There were cases of cannibalism, with parents trying to save their starving children by feeding them dead family members. 'The Roma said, 'We wished that we were executed like the Jews'', said Duminica, who interviewed survivors.

Marin Alla, the director of the Voice of the Roma Coalition, explained 'None of the Roma Holocaust survivors in Moldova currently receive German pensions', although Jewish Holocaust survivors in Moldova who were in camps, ghettos and labour battalions have been receiving a pension of 336 euros per month since 1998.

'They mistreated us then and they still mistreat us now,' said Artur Cerari, the Roma Baron of Moldova who is regarded as the most respected Roma leader in the former Soviet Union.

### Continuing victimisation

Has the victimisation and maltreatment of the Roma ended or lessened? While the average European says they are very comfortable with having someone from a different ethnic origin as a neighbour (with an average result of 8.1 on a scale of one to ten, where ten represents 'totally comfortable' and one 'very uncomfortable'), the situation is completely different when it comes to having a Roma neighbour.

In the Czech Republic and in Italy, almost half of respondents would feel uncomfortable (average Czech score 3.7; average Italian score, 4.0. Slovakia 4.5, Bulgaria 4.8). This is also the case in Ireland at 4.8. Travellers and Roma people remain the most shunned groups by the Irish general public. While two percent said they would 'avoid' Polish people, and

nine percent would avoid Africans, 37 percent would shun Roma people. The findings on attitudes to Roma were the 'direct result of entrenched, institutional and societal racism and oppression', said Maria Joyce, co-ordinator of the National Traveller Women's Forum.

Open discrimination against the Roma continues in several European nations. EU Justice Commissioner Vera Jourova recently singled out Bulgaria's Vice-Prime Minister Simeonov for making racist remarks against Roma people. The current Czech President Miloš Zeman, when asked by a Romani woman for his opinion of Romani people, answered: 'Romani people should stop destroying apartments and should go to work, and then I will consider them normal people'.

80 percent of Roma people in the EU are at risk of dire poverty, the European Commission has stated. In Hungary, Slovakia and Bulgaria, more than 60 percent of Roma children are segregated from other children in schools, according to the Commission's data. Slovakia is still discriminating against Roma children by placing them in segregated schools, despite the threat of fines from the European Union. Romani children in Slovakia are routinely assessed as having 'mild mental disabilities' and are then sent to special schools where they receive an inferior education. Researchers found a pattern of cultural bias among those responsible for placing children in special schools, which resulted in the misdiagnosis of dozens of Romani children.

'Romani children in Slovakia are being failed by a discriminatory primary school system which continues to segregate them and seriously hinders their education, condemning them to lives of poverty and exclusion,' the report said. Slovakia's ingrained prejudices mean Romani children stand less of a chance from the moment they step in the classroom and become trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty, marginalisation and despair.

130,000 children do not attend school in Bulgaria, and the majority of them are Roma. 22 percent of the Roma are illiterate and only nine percent have a secondary education even though it is compulsory, a recent study showed. The government has now organised teams to go around the country to convince Roma parents to send their children to school. But the ruling coalition of conservatives and ultra-nationalists is threatening to impose fines and suspend benefits for parents who fail to enrol their children. And those further to the Right seek to criminalise school non-attendance.

### Excluded from 'nation-building'

Aidan McGarry in 'Romaphobia' ([tinyurl.com/y827f6wy](http://tinyurl.com/y827f6wy)) identifies the exclusion of the Roma as part of the nation-building in European countries. McGarry describes how the new nationalist states that came into being at the end of the First World War needed to point to populations who did not

belong to the mythical nation-state so that by contrast, they could exalt their preferred subjects and create a national unity. Fomenting Romaphobia (and anti-Semitism) allowed nascent nation states to find the outsiders against whom these exalted subjects could unite.

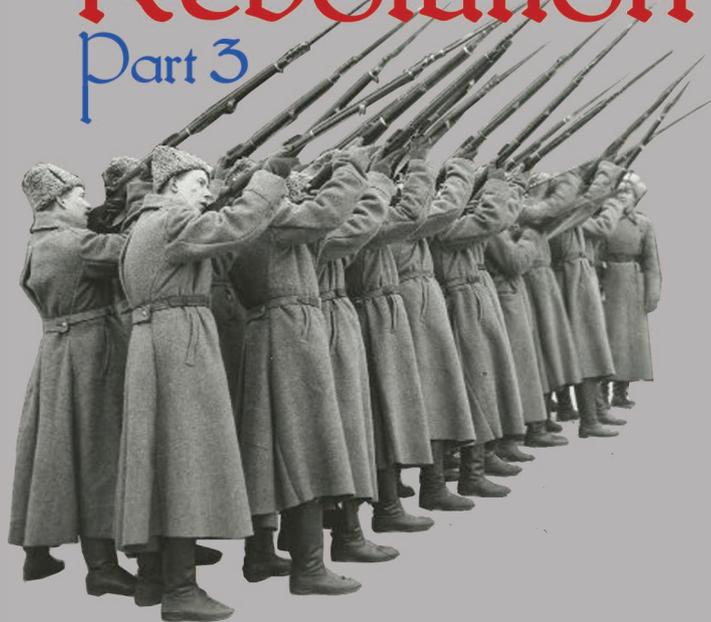
An article at the Telesur website ([tinyurl.com/yaqjr678](http://tinyurl.com/yaqjr678)) explains that Roma people have always been part of the fabric of European societies, but have been allowed to remain on condition of fulfilling the role of the least favoured in society, lower than serfs and in some instances, legally enslaved. The exploitation of Roma labour was used to amass great wealth for the Crown, the Church and the landowners, while the Roma people were kept in degrading conditions and brutalised so they didn't rebel against their lot in life. This ensured that whatever your station in life, there was always someone lower to look down upon and who could be exploited further, in much the same way that the wealth of the ruling class in the UK and the US was in part built upon the backs of black people through colonialism or enslavement.

ALJO



# Ideology & Revolution

## Part 3



*The concluding part of our series on revolutions and the ideology under which they are carried out.*

Russia has always represented an enigma to historians. It is obviously connected to European culture but it is also recognisably very different. The reasons for this have pre-occupied many politicians, historians and economists in the west for centuries; Marx, famously, thought of it as a dangerous bastion of reaction that would confront and oppose the development of socialism. One element of consensus among the attempts to understand Russia's relatively slow economic progress is the overwhelming scale of the country. Until the 19<sup>th</sup> century the population was too small to serve the needs of both agrarian feudalism and the developing capitalism of the cities. A series of military defeats seriously curtailed international trade and the internal market was enfeebled by the population's lack of spending power. The retention of serfdom was a mechanism specifically devised by the feudal lords to chain workers to their estates and prevent them from either drifting off into the vast wilderness to farm for themselves or search for better wages in the cities. This was recognised as a handicap by some of the more progressive elements within the Russian hierarchy, including some of the Tsars. Economically they could not compete with the industrial might of Britain, America and Germany and so were trapped in a backward economic cycle. Many of the powerful aristocrats were aware that industrialisation needed better educated workers and a wealthy middle class, and they feared the political implications (the French Revolution being their nightmare scenario). However these economic changes were unstoppable and the collision

between the anachronistic Tsarist autocracy and emerging capitalism became devastatingly obvious with the disaster of the First World War. Of all the great powers Russia was the least equipped to fight such an industrialised conflict and the stage was set for the Russians to make their revolution.

In 1905 the Russian bourgeoisie entered into a coalition of rebellion which petitioned the Tsar for political change but it was ruthlessly crushed and many were killed. In a concession to the mood of the country together with the need to end a nation-wide strike a parliament (Duma) was promised. When it did not do as it was told, it was promptly shut down by a Tsar who, like Charles I of England and Louis XVI of France, could not countenance any challenge to his power of 'divine right'. In the spring of 1917 the war was going so badly that the Tsar was forced to abdicate and the Duma was again reassembled. Among the political parties present within this parliament were the Russian Social Democratic Party who, like the other members of the 'Second International', gave lip service to the ideas of Marxist socialism but were, in fact, bourgeois reformists.

If they had not tried to continue the war in coalition with liberals and conservatives it is possible that Russia would have followed the traditional path to capitalism. When they made this tragic mistake and the country fell into chaos again the local and regional councils or 'soviets', formed during the struggles of 1905, filled the power vacuum. Not unlike the 'communes' of the sans-culottes during the French Revolution these organisations competed with central government for power. As has been already discussed in depth by this journal in October, the Bolsheviks came to power by promising to stop the war and feed the people. They at least managed the former undertaking



but at the cost of a military dictatorship together with the nationalisation of the means of production that was to give the state complete power over every aspect of Russian life. At first the new regime embraced the soviets but it was only a matter of time before their power was usurped by the Bolsheviks and they survived in name only. As with the English and French revolutions the result was capitalism, or rather in the case of Bolshevik Russia something called state capitalism. For the immense majority, it amounted to the same thing: exploitation by, and subjugation to, a small power elite.

If we look at the ideologies of those competing for power in Russia at that time what do we see? Certainly the liberals and conservatives believed in some of the enlightenment ideals that preceded the French revolution but, ironically, it was Lenin who really admired the Machiavellian tactics of the likes of Robespierre. Lenin's obsession with power and leadership was essentially bourgeois as were, to the surprise of Rosa Luxemburg upon meeting him, most of his moral and cultural values. Why was it then that he so doggedly proclaimed himself and his regime as socialist? Perhaps he was so enamoured by the political insights and intellectual rigour of socialism, especially through the works of Karl Marx, that he was reluctant to abandon them in the light of Russian political reality even after the non-appearance of the anticipated European-wide socialist revolution. He identified himself with socialism to the extent that he was prepared to pervert the concept into its antithesis. Marx's quip about 'the dictatorship of the proletariat' (i.e. democracy) became the excuse for a totalitarian regime. He would not admit the impossibility of creating socialism in one country, especially one that had yet to experience the political consequences of capitalism. The other possibility, of course, is that once he had tasted power he could not give it up and his 'socialism' served as a justification for this. There is little evidence that many understood slogans like 'all power to the soviets' as having anything to do with socialism and, as we have seen, many who did think of themselves as socialist were reformists who did not believe in revolution. Yet again the slogans used were primarily expedients to manipulate those who could enable the elite's rise to power.

The failure of the Bolshevik regime to produce anything remotely resembling socialism is testament to the Marxist understanding of how history proceeds. Without the potential for abundance and the class consciousness created by industrial capitalism, socialism is impossible. That so many of Europe's intellectuals were seduced by Bolshevik propaganda underlines their idealism and the political danger inherent in the ignorance of historical materialism. To paraphrase Marx: 'men create history

but only within the limitations of their historical context'. To understand any political activity it is first necessary to comprehend the tectonics of economic evolution and the historical level of the class struggle it has enabled.

The historical reality of the English, French and Russian revolutions was the political consolidation of the transition from feudalism to capitalism which no superficial ideological differences can conceal. The subsequent history of these countries is entirely due to the economic and political logic of capitalism and has nothing to do with the ideals of Puritan Christianity, The Enlightenment, or Marxism. Socialism will not be ideological in so far as it will resolve the class struggle that has created the need for ideals within which class minorities struggle for intellectual and political supremacy. With its emphasis on reason and its rejection of faith Marxism has its roots within the European Enlightenment, but it is the antithesis of the idealism of Voltaire and Rousseau which, in the hands of Robespierre and Napoleon, became excuses for political authoritarianism – the true essence of all bourgeois ideology. By understanding the class struggle socialists cannot be manipulated by ideology. Once they become the immense majority the revolution becomes inevitable as does the dissolution of all political parties, including the socialist party itself, after its conclusion. Lenin did not live to see the nemesis (Stalin, the gulags and starvation) that his hubris had helped to create for the Russian people. They still await their liberation. Let's hope that it's not another hundred years before this is accomplished, with their help, by a real global socialist revolution.

WEZ



Red Guard, Vulkan Factory



*Recent events in Catalonia demand a restatement of a basic socialist principle.*

The word 'we' is one of the most powerful words, all the more so because its use often passes invisibly. Every time we speak of a 'we' we are also creating a 'them' an other, we are identifying ourselves as a group and placing others outside it. 'We' could be the people that live in our neighbourhood, it could be those with whom we share a common language or accent, or it could be those that go to the same clubs, pubs or parties as us. In daily life we can easily think of ourselves as belonging to a variety of different overlapping communities. But which of these groups is the most important? To whom are you most loyal? To which people do you belong?

Many people will see their national identity as being the most fundamental. After all we have to identify ourselves as a member of a particular nation state when we go abroad, when claiming benefits or applying for a job. What nation we belong to determines what rights and privileges we have, if we find ourselves in a nation other than our own we may find our rights restricted or denied. Our nationality can often form an important element in how we act with the world and how we are placed within it, it can often seem to be as natural and integral a part of us as our gender or hair colour.

A people with a shared culture, language and history, who live in the same place over time naturally develop a strong sense of belonging together. This sense of belonging together and of being tied to a certain geographical place is what constitutes nationhood. A nation is a group of people that has a history of doing things together in a certain geographical area. And just as an individual has a right to choose and to freely express their will so too do peoples who form nations have the right to self determination.

Or at least that is how the myth goes. However, does it really make sense to think of a nation as a homogeneous 'people'

sharing the same interest and expressing its 'will' in the same way as an individual?

Behind the supposed unity of a national identity we will find a whole range of divisions, class distinctions and unequal power relations. In nation-states based on capitalist property relations, which is all of them, there is a fundamental divide between owners of capital – the factories, land, raw materials, means of transport – and sellers of labour-power. The vast wealth of the minority, the class of capital owners, comes from the labour of the majority, the sellers of labour-power – the working class. Market competition compels the capitalist to seek to extract the maximum from the worker. The need to preserve and improve their living conditions drives the worker to resist. This sets up

irreconcilable class struggle at the centre of society. To think of a nation as a homogeneous block with all members sharing the same interest is to ignore the real conflicts that arise from the unequal economic power relations that exist within all nation-states.

Nations can be thought of as imagined communities. The majority of the population will never meet or know each other yet in their minds they imagine each other as being and belonging together. These imaginings will be both semi-mythical and semi-factual in nature. The historical stories told for the purpose of nation building are always ones that have been sanitized and moralized, glossing over all the splits, conflicts and discontinuities that occur within and between the populations that have lived in the same space over time. History taught in a truthful and unpolished way does not have the effect of national building – the history of any one particular area is as fractured as any other.

The nation-state is now the fundamental unit through which political affairs are conducted but despite its seeming antiquity it is a relatively modern invention. The origin of the modern nation-state is tied to the development of capitalism and the demise of monarchical regimes, feudal city-states and principalities. The nation-state came to the fore because it was the form of organisation that most suited the operations of the emerging capitalist class.

If our aim is to bring about a classless society of equals then our attention should be on the real antagonistic relation between the classes not the fake illusions put forward by nationalists. We have to find and create new forms of egalitarian organisation that can supersede the nation-state and capitalism, not help the local capitalist class in the creation of new and ever smaller states.

DJP



## Nutters and Putters

TELEVISION PROGRAMMES (and magazine articles) about Donald Trump are rarely in short supply, thanks to his knack for being a symptom of just about everything wrong with society. The upcoming anniversary of his presidency starting has given another opportunity to try and explain how on earth he got where he is. For starters, Channel 4 have broadcast an epic four-part account of his life called *Trump: An American Dream*, although 'nightmare' would be a better description. Other shows have focused on particular aspects of his rise, such as who his supporters are and his relationship with Scotland.

In *Angry, White and American* (Channel 4), reporter Gary Younge goes on a road trip through Maine, Pennsylvania and Mississippi to speak with people who aren't ashamed to admit on camera they voted for Trump. Younge wants to learn what experiences and mindsets led people to wave the flag and cast their vote for the dangerous demagogue. He's interested in the extent to which economic deprivation has undermined the sense of identity which many white working class (by which he means blue-collar) Americans have had. In places like Johnstown, Pennsylvania, heavy industries used to provide local employment until the markets turned and they stopped being profitable. As factories closed down and jobs were lost, the little financial security felt by many communities fell apart. Trump found support from those struggling financially who believe that he'll revitalise industry back to some mythical golden age. But, as Younge points out, most of Trump's supporters are white, so if economic deprivation was a main driver for his support, then why didn't poor black



and Latino people tend to vote for him? Younge speaks with Erin McClelland, a Democrat congressional candidate who suggests that non-white Americans have always felt dissatisfied by the system, but dissatisfaction among white people is a new thing: black people haven't had wealth and prosperity taken away from them, as white people have. While McClelland is obviously wrong about white people not being alienated by capitalism up to now, it may be that expectations have changed and this has led some voters towards Trump and his allies on the far right.

Trump and the far right have a reciprocal relationship. His most rabid supporters can be found here saluting and chanting 'Heil Trump', and in turn his rise to power has emboldened the movement. According to Younge, the far right and Trump's advisers 'swim in the same pool'. Prominent white supremacist Richard Spencer (who coined the term 'alt right', an odious attempt to rebrand fascism) is visited by Younge at a rally. Spencer's sharp suit and fixed smile can't disguise his abhorrent views, such as promoting a 'white only' ethno-state. Other opinions rattling around inside his tiny brain are just as vile and ridiculous, like 'Africans have benefited from their experience with white supremacy' and 'if Africans had never existed, world history would be almost exactly the same as it is today'.

Those who voted for Trump to 'make America great again' seem to fall into two types: those who explicitly connect him with the narrow-minded racism of the far right and those who choose to ignore the bigotry which comes with nationalism. The latter, when interviewed by Younge, downplay America's slave-owning history and the connotations of the confederate flag.

Over in Britain, we're sadly not immune to Trump's influence.

In *Donald Trump: Scotland's President* (BBC1), reporter Glenn Campbell looks at the links (including golfing ones) Trump has with Scotland. His mother was born on the island of Lewis before leaving its rugged tranquillity for the bustle of 1930s Manhattan. According to those interviewed by Campbell, she taught Trump the value of getting attention, as well as traits like respectability and a sense of community which may have transferred less well to his adult life. When Trump visited Lewis in 2008 he reportedly spent 97 seconds in his mother's birthplace before jetting off to Aberdeen for an inquiry into his plans for a golf resort north of the city. This inquiry was held after local councillors had turned down his proposal, fearing that two golf courses, a hotel and conference centre, 950 holiday homes and 550 houses would ruin the area's natural habitats. The then-First Minister Alex Salmond stepped in and following the inquiry the Scottish government granted the planning application. A few locals have stoically refused to sell their homes to make way for the development, including one who flies a Mexican flag in solidarity with others threatened by what Trump wants to build. Those who agreed the development thought that the promised billion pound investment would justify an area of special scientific interest being built on. However, five years after the project opened, the second course and houses haven't been built and an area which used to be a wilderness now looks manicured. Many regret the decision.

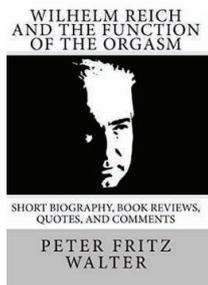
The development of Trump's golf course ('the greatest golf course ever built', according to him) shows that if you wave enough money at something, you tend to get your own way in the end. His rise to power highlights other features of our capitalist society, such as how economic struggles and finding scapegoats in other groups fuel support for the far right, as it did in 1930s Germany. Far from being the trailblazer which his supporters want him to be, Donald Trump represents capitalism at its worst.

**MIKE FOSTER**



## Mass Psychology

**William Reich and the Function of the Organism, Short Biography, Book Reviews, Quotes, and Comments.** By Peter Fritz Walter.



Socialists know Reich as one of those who have tried to combine Marx and Freud, though he was always more Freud than Marx. In the 1930s he was a member of the German Communist Party and wrote

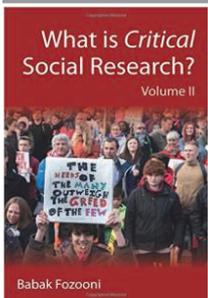
*The Mass Psychology of Fascism* in which he argued that the type of sexual repression that people in Germany had suffered in childhood had contributed to making them prepared to support an authoritarian ideology like fascism. Later, in the 1960s this pamphlet enjoyed a popularity as if it had been entitled 'The Mass Psychology of Capitalism'.

In the meantime Reich had moved on and had become a quack doctor claiming to have discovered a cosmic force called 'orgone' that could cure cancer, leukaemia and the rest. He got himself jailed over this and died in prison in 1957. No doubt he was sincere but people don't have much sympathy for those who offer false hope to cancer sufferers.

Reich always regarded himself as a scientist and was convinced that he had made the same sort of 'scientific discovery' as other scientists. In this book, Walter argues that Reich was nearer to 'the Eastern medical approach' (with 'orgone' being the same as 'chi') and was 'the true founder of the Aquarius Age', i.e. that he was nearer to so-called 'alternative medicine'. There is some truth in this. Walter regards this as a compliment. **ALB**

## Critical Research

**What is Critical Social Research Vol II.** By Babak Fozooni. Fastprint publishing. £8.99.



The blurb on the back says that Babak Fozooni 'writes from a working class perspective' and he does indeed write from a position of wanting to see capitalism replaced by a system without production for sale and without wage-labour. He defines 'critical social research' as social research that goes beyond surface appearances to bring in capitalism as the underlying factor.

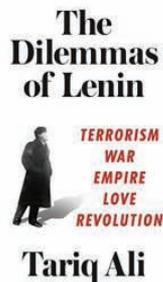
The book is a collection of articles on various subjects ranging from the

psychology of sex to football in Iran and cricket in Afghanistan. The one on 'Guy Aldred and proletarian atheism' is of interest as Aldred moved in the same milieu as us and at one time considered himself an 'impossibilist'. He is more widely promoted and known as an 'anti-parliamentary communist' though he stood for parliament on a number of occasions. The view attributed to him – that the sort of atheism promoted by Richard Dawkins is inadequate – was also expressed in our 1910 pamphlet *Socialism and Religion* ([worldsocialism.org/spgb/pamphlets/socialism-and-religion](http://worldsocialism.org/spgb/pamphlets/socialism-and-religion)) which criticised the atheist/Freethinker approach to religion of trying to refute it by reason without taking into consideration the social conditions that gave rise to it, giving the impression that capitalism without religion would be acceptable.

In the article on football in Iran, Fazooni makes the point that football was promoted by the government as a means of 'nation-building' to rally people round the Iranian state. Football internationals perform the same role of course in 'nations' that have already long been built. **ALB**

## The Dogma of Lenin

**The Dilemmas of Lenin (2017) by Tariq Ali**



Opening this book, you might expect to find a Lenin who is an open-minded, flexible, freethinker. This was not the case – and anyone who has ever met a Leninist will tell you a better title would have been 'The

Dogma of Lenin'.

In the field of so-called 'Lenin studies' (Lih, etc) nuanced critique is supposed to have replaced the 'Great Man of History' approach. So Ali writes 'this book was written to put Lenin in his proper historical context ... Lenin was a product of Russian history and the European labour movement.' And that Lenin would have died in exile without the First World War and the events of February 1917. However, by p.2, comes something of a reversal, and a flavour of the rest of the book 'First things first, without Lenin there would have been no socialist revolution in 1917. Of this much we can be certain.'

Worse still, it suffers from a teleological interpretation, for example; asserting 'this [lack of revolution] is where the Bolsheviks as a party were headed strategically and tactically before April 1917.' And 'Lenin understood that if the moment were not seized reaction would triumph once again'.

Ali argues the Bolshevik victory in the

Russian Civil War demonstrates peasant support. Combined with urban proletariat support in the Russian Revolution, Ali concludes the Russian Revolution was not a 'coup'. A laugh might be forgiven at the statement 'It was only after Bolsheviks won majorities in the soviets that they set the dates for an insurrection'.

And of Bolshevik slogans 'Land, Peace and Bread' Ali makes the unlikely claim that 'behind each word lay a set of ideas encompassing Bolshevik ideology.' Later he states 'Bolshevik slogans were not particularly if at all socialist.'

## Contradictions

Also strange is that Ali claims that Lenin's rage (at Kamenev and Zinoviev exposing his date for insurrection), was both understandable but in the end didn't matter at all. Lenin's peace deal with Germany was 'shameful' but also 'necessary' (and 'compromise' is a word reserved for opponents). 'War communism had been necessary to win the civil war' but in the absence of a German revolution the 'New Economic Policy' was then necessary (and later 'there was no credible alternative'). With no hint of irony is written 'contempt for political chameleons stayed with Lenin all his life'.

Later chapters include one, ostensibly on the contribution of women to the revolution, but seemingly devoted to the women in Lenin's life. Lots of criticism is expressed for 11,000 American troops Woodrow Wilson sent to invade Russia during the Civil War, but very little by comparison for 1.4 million German troops Kaiser Wilhelm II sent Eastwards

## SOCIALISM OR YOUR MONEY BACK

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*A refreshing read...inspiring...a gem...*  
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during the First World War. This can only be explained as anti-Americanism, later confirmed in a dig at American academics.

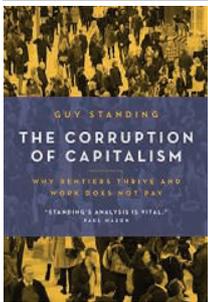
As the final chapter, the Bolshevik-Menshevik split (following whole sections on 'dilemmas' of 'Terrorism and Utopia', 'Internationalism, Socialism, Empires and War') is wholly inappropriate. Both chronologically and in terms of significance of 'dilemmas' it should have come first.

The epilogue is worse than the rest of the book, reprinting an autobiographical Lenin analogy on climbing a high mountain. This is really a 'great man' approach to looking at Lenin, and one we would reject.

DJW

## Standing Orders

***The Corruption of Capitalism: Why Rentiers Thrive and Work Does Not Pay.* By Guy Standing. Biteback £9.99.**



There is a lot of useful information here, on the ways in which present-day capitalism does not run on the basis of a 'free market'. For one thing, there are massive subsidies to companies,

such as the £21m recently given by the government to Toyota to help it modernise one of its UK car plants. The World Bank loaned \$900m to Lidl to help it expand in Eastern Europe. Farming subsidies in both the UK and US go overwhelmingly to a small number of very rich farmers, and the fossil fuel industry has received enormous subsidies to enable it to keep down prices to consumers.

The tremendous rise in the number of patents issued has led to 'intellectual property' becoming a prime source of income for a powerful few, just like copyright rules. Debt, including for housing or student loans, has become big business and, again, a major source of income. The enclosure of the 'commons' has proceeded apace: this covers everything from shrinking numbers of allotments and public parks to the closing of libraries and museums.

Standing sees all this as not just part and parcel of capitalism but as indicative of the rise of a new variety, rentier capitalism. A rentier, he says, 'is someone who gains income from possession of assets, rather than from labour', while a rentier corporation 'is a firm that gains much of its revenue from rental income rather than from production of goods and services, notably from financial assets or intellectual property'. In the US between 1980 and 2000, the share of income going to profits in non-financial sectors fell, while rentiers flourished. Eighty years

## The Return of Memory

OUTSIDE THE Home arts centre in Manchester stands an unsubtle statue of Frederick Engels, removed from Ukraine. Inside the centre is an exhibition 'The Return of Memory', of contemporary works from the 'New East', relating to the centenary of the Russian Revolution, and on till early January.

It includes a number of displays, from videos and murals to photographs and an installation that involves cabbages grown from one of the world's oldest seed banks. Gluklya presents 'Clothes for Demonstration Against False Election of Vladimir Putin', which contains slogans relating to Putin's re-election as president of Russia in 2012: for instance, 'Two terms in office – make the next one in prison', 'Your election is a joke' and simply 'No'.

In 'On Republic's Monuments', Yevgeni Nikiforov shows photos of the fate of statues and other monuments to Bolshevik rulers in Ukraine, a process known as 'Leninfall'. Many were pulled

down or otherwise vandalised; some were painted in the Ukrainian national colours of blue and yellow. 'Freedom Village', by Moon Kyungwon and Jeon Joonho involves photos and a video relating to Taesung, a village isolated in the demilitarised zone between North and South Korea: it is under UN control and has remained basically unchanged since 1953.

In 'One Day the Sadness Will End', Declan Clarke and Sarah Perks present names of people or places who were supposedly betrayed by revolution. Names are added to the list daily, but it seems odd to include Marx and the Luddites alongside Robespierre. The booklet accompanying the exhibition notes that 'revolutions invariably turn on themselves', though with no explanation of this.

In connection with the Engels statue, the same booklet continues these simplistic political views by claiming that the ideas of Marx and Engels 'changed the course of history by inspiring the Russian revolution'....

PB



ago, Keynes referred to the forthcoming 'euthanasia of the rentier', but this has emphatically not happened.

Furthermore, a new class structure has arisen, including a plutocracy and elite, a salariat in relatively secure jobs, freelance professionals, a core working class and a precariat, who are mostly working as taskers in the gig economy. There is no united working class, Standing claims, and any movement against rentier capitalism must be led by the precariat. He states that Corbyn's victory in the Labour leadership election was based largely on his appeal to the precariat, though no evidence for this is offered.

His proposal for what should be done involves ending much of the special features of rentier capitalism, such as subsidies and tax breaks for the rentiers. The labour market should be made into a free market, with employers and workers having roughly equal bargaining positions (which is a real pipe-dream).

He is associated with the Basic Income Earth Network ([basicincome.org](http://basicincome.org)), and suggests paying a 'modest monthly sum' to everyone.

But all this really would leave the real class nature of capitalism unchallenged. There is very little here about non-financial capitalists who, after all, also derive their income from ownership of assets rather than their own work. The companies they control provide goods and services, but the wealth of their owners is still based on profits and exploitation.

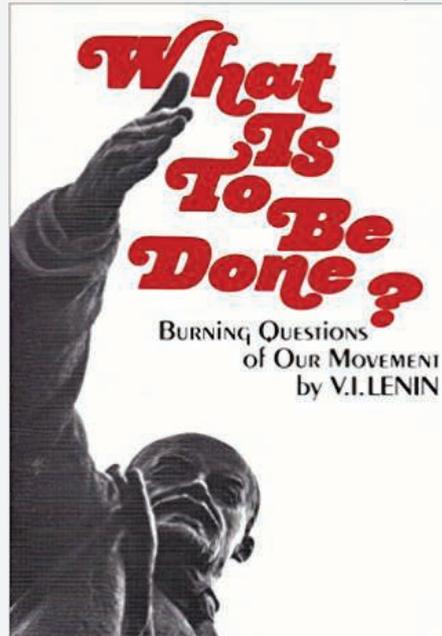
One last point: it is an old observation that at least the capitalists cannot charge us for the air we breathe. According to one passage here, however, this appears no longer to be the case: the air in parts of China is so polluted that a Canadian company is selling bottled mountain air from the Rockies to Chinese city-dwellers at \$10 a bottle.

PB

# 50 Years Ago

## Distorting Marxism

THE THEORY and practice of the Socialist Party of Great Britain is based on Marxism; that is, we accept as valid the main theories put forward by Marx about history, political economy and politics. We accept that the materialist conception of history is a very useful method for examining and understanding social and historical events and changes. We accept that *Capital* is a brilliant analysis of the workings and historical tendency of capitalism and exposition of how the working class are exploited. We accept too that the working class can be freed from wage-slavery only by its own efforts, by taking class-conscious democratic political action to get Socialism. We were unaware that in so doing we were 'emasculating' Marxism and we are not prepared to consider



the allegation that we have distorted Marx's views until and unless Mr. Therrien, or anyone else, produces some evidence.

As a matter of fact it was Lenin and the Bolsheviks who twisted Marx's theories. For Marx the emancipation of the working class had to be the work of the working class itself. Lenin rejected this. In *What Is To Be Done?* he says, contemptuously, of the working class that 'exclusively by its own effort' it can only reach a trade union consciousness. Socialist understanding, Lenin argued, must be brought to them from outside—in Russia by a band of professional revolutionaries organised as a vanguard party. In other words, Lenin and the Bolsheviks held that a vanguard party could free the working class rather than the working class, through its own class-conscious democratic political action, free itself.

(from Reply to a Letter, *Socialist Standard*, December 1967)

### ACTION REPLAY

## 888online - Gambling's Bête Noire

RECENTLY THE online gambling company 888 was fined £7.8 million by the Gambling Commission after it was discovered that thousands of its customers who had voluntarily banned themselves from gambling online were still able to make wagers due to a technical glitch in the system. The

company reported the problem to the commission in February this year which prompted a review of its licence.

Roughly £3.5m has been wagered over a year by 'self-excluded' customers. One gambler bet £1 million, £55k of it stolen from their employer. Sarah Harrison, CEO of the Gambling Commission said 'safeguarding customers is not optional. The penalty package of just under £8m reflects the seriousness of 888's failings' (i newspaper 1/9/2017).

The 888 site currently provides online casino games in download and web-based instant play for PCs, tablets and mobiles, including classic table games

such as blackjack, roulette and baccarat. A Random Number Generator is used to ensure that performance is truly random.

Statements from 888 proclaim their commitment to 'a proactive policy of corporate and social responsibility reflecting the high ethical standards it sets for itself' and emphasise that 'self exclusion' is a tool used by the gambling industry to enable customers to cease playing for at least six months. Should a customer cease gambling with a particular account after a 'self exclusion' period, 888 and other gambling firms are duty bound to close the account and return any residual money to the customer. However, despite all the procedures, in the case of 888 it didn't work.

We need to ask why advice offered by (a) the alcohol industry to 'drink responsibly' and (b) the gambling industries advice to bet responsibly, i.e. to 'stop (betting) when the fun stops' is dubious. Gambling, like smoking and drinking alcohol is highly addictive and creates dependency and social problems. Online betting is the new 'cash cow' of gambling. The puerile advice offered by both industries is ineffective because it puts all the responsibility on the consumer and none on itself. Both gambling and alcohol are lucrative businesses and under capitalism wherever there is money is to be made profit will always be more important than people.

KEVIN

888sport

Login Create Account

Limited Time Offer

Bet £10

Get £30

in Free Bets

+£10 Casino Bonus

Download on the App Store GET IT ON Google Play

Join Open an account & deposit

Bet £10 on any market with odds of 1/2 (1.5) or greater

Get £30 in Free Bets + £10 Casino Bonus

BET NOW

# Meetings

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

## DECEMBER 2017

### BOLTON

**Friday 15 December, 8.30pm**  
**Manchester Branch Social**

Venue: Sweet Green Tavern, 127 Crook Street, Bolton BL3 6DD (across the road from Bolton rail station)

For details see: <http://www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/event/manchester-branch-social-bolton-730pm>

### LONDON

**Friday 15 December, 7.30pm**  
**Seasonal Social**

Socialist Party's Premises  
52 Clapham High Street  
London  
SW4 7UN

For details see: <http://www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/event/seasonal-social-head-office-730pm>

## JANUARY 2018

### DONCASTER

**Yorkshire Regional Branch**  
**Sunday 14 January, 1.30pm**

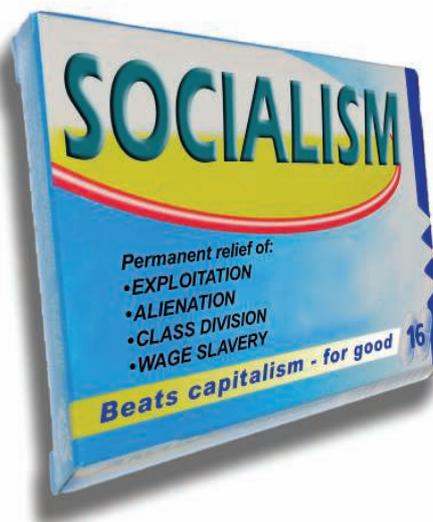
Venue: TBA

### LONDON

**Film Evenings, 4.00pm**

**Sunday 21 January**  
**Good Bye Lenin!** (first in a series of film screenings)

For details see: <http://www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/event/good-bye-lenin-film-head-office-4pm>



**Sunday, 18 February**  
**'The Ballad of Joe Hill'** (film)

For details see: <http://www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/event/ballad-joe-hill-film-head-office-4pm>

**Sunday, 18 March**

**'The Square'** (film)

For details see: <http://www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/event/square-film-head-office-4pm>

Socialist Party Head Office  
52 Clapham High Street  
London  
SW4 7UN

### EC Meeting

**Saturday 6 January 2018, 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.

## 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.

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## Learning from the past

This year is the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Marcus Thrane, an early pioneer of working class organisation in Norway. He along with other workers established the Drammen Labour Union in 1848. The union's call for universal suffrage (granted to men in 1889, women in 1913), better schooling, reduced prices for certain commodities, as well as agricultural subsidies, and the extension of mandatory military service to those with property, were met with a dismissive response from the king. One of the motions at the national conference of 1851 was for revolution. Thrane perhaps fearing the wrath of the ruling class, lobbied against this decision and the motion was not, in the end, carried. The historian Tore Pryser, however, sees Thrane in favour of revolution but not before all other avenues were tried first. The Socialist Party is opposed to reformism but not necessarily individual reforms which may be of benefit to our class. Here are just two of many examples as to why we have been encouraging workers for over a century to take the revolutionary road rather than innumerable well-trodden reformist blind alleys: 'women will have to wait 217 years before they earn as much as men and are equally represented in the workplace, research finds as gender pay gap worsens' (dailymail.co.uk, 2 November) and 'the number of children living in poverty will soar to a record 5.2 million over the next five years' (theguardian.com, 2 November).

## Back to the future

The Socialist Party is an organisation founded on scientific methodology and as such must constantly re-examine its principles and practices. Our Declaration of Principles is no exception yet has

stood the test of time. One principle states in part that 'the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.' Such a statement may seem reserved for a Star Trek future, yet we should remember that capitalism as a system of society with its glaring inequalities, war and want alongside wanton wealth has not always been with us. Socialists argue, however, that it has long outlived its usefulness and scientific research shows that we lived very differently in the past. 'The Ju/'hoansi people of the Kalahari have always been fiercely egalitarian. They hate inequality or showing off, and shun



formal leadership institutions. It's what made them part of the most successful, sustainable civilisation in human history' (theguardian.com, 29 October).

## Stuck in the present

Judging by Donald Trump Junior's recent tweet – *I'm going to take half of Chloe's candy tonight & give it to some kid who sat at home. It's never to [sic] early to teach her about socialism* – he probably thinks Bushmen support the two recent US presidents with that name and primitive communism is found in North

Korea. Another member of the 1 percent, who unlike Trump climbed the greasy pole rather than inherited her wealth, tweeted the following reply: *'fill her bucket with old candy left by her great-grandfather, then explain that she has more because she's smarter than all the other kids'*. This exchange was reported by harpersbazar.com (1 November), who perhaps ought to be thanked for not providing any definition of socialism. We are happy to oblige: 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.

## Reinventing the past

The mendacious mass media says that China is socialist or communist, yet capitalist hallmarks, such as class society, commodity production, profit motive, exploitation of wage labour, markets, etc., exist there as they do worldwide. Further evidence is supplied by a recent article titled *'Always Stay Professional'*. Inside China's Booming Butler Schools, Nothing But the Best Will Do' (time.com, 1 November). Here we learn that some of China's 1,590,000 millionaires wish to live the life of Riley Downtown Abbey style! 'Students pay 50,000 rmb (\$7,500) for a six-week course on food

presentation, how to iron shirts the proper way, and maintaining serene decorum at all times.... Students learn how to choose fine wine but also good Chinese liquor, teach tai chi, perform a tea ceremony and caddy on the golf course. For many, it's another world.' Indeed. '...15-hour days and endless drilling. How to clean a toilet, iron a tablecloth, use tape-measures and plastic blocks to get table placings perfectly aligned. It's a regimen of burns, blisters and bottomless cups of coffee'. The Ju/'hoansi people work only 15 hours a week.

## FREE LUNCH

